



Rushcutters

Photo: Gail King

Spring 2015

June 8th 2015

Evening Garden Visit to Rushcutters

Our June meeting will be held at the garden of Hilary Moore at Rushcutters in Shorne, meeting there at 7pm. The garden is over several levels and is of medium size. It is packed full of plants with mature trees and a natural stream running through it from one side to the other.

Light refreshments will be available. There is no charge for members but a suggested donation of £3 to the St Christopher's Hospice would be appreciated.

St Christopher's Hospice was founded by Dame Cicily Saunders. When it was built at Sydenham in 1967, it was the first of the modern hospices. It now covers the whole of South East London. Hilary is an active member of the wives fellowship and through their fundraising they are able to sponsor 3 doctors.

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

May 11th	Growing Vegetables in Containers	Vanessa Jones
June 8th	Evening Garden Visit	Rushcutters, Shorne
July 13th	Alan Bloom and Bressingham	Stephen Harmer
August 10th	Roses	Peter Cox
September 11th	Coach Trip to Bressingham Gardens	

The cost of the outing is £22/person which includes entrance to the gardens. The ticket includes all of the attractions (steam train rides, Dad's Army museum etc.) as well as the gardens. Please contact Gail King if you would like more information.

Recent Events

February 9th Member's Forum & Seed Swap

Our year began with a lively Members' Forum and the first opportunity to see what was available in the seed swap.

February 15th Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsall Street

Once again Barbara Macknish opened her garden to the public to view her magnificent snowdrops and hellebores which looked stunning in the Spring-like sunshine. The opening and subsequent sales of snowdrops has raised over £1100 for the Eleanor Foundation.

March 9th Highgrove Roy Winter

At the time of this talk we were hoping to run a trip to Highgrove so it was timely to see what HRH Prince Charles's garden had in store for us.

March 21st Spring Show

Visitors to the 2015 Spring Show were greeted by the colour and fragrance of a wonderful display that filled Meopham Village Hall. This display was particularly an achievement highlighting our named hyacinths- Blue Delft and the daffodils- Bravoure, which were very well represented by competitors. My thanks to all of those who took part in this class which was the largest for many years.

The show was very well supported with over 200 entries received from 20 competitors, and 17 young people, including 2 entrants in the children's older category. The young people were representing Meopham Rainbows and helpers, members' grandchildren and neighbours. Thanks to all of those who encouraged the young people. As we still have grant funds left, we were able to give all the young people a small gift as well as giving prizes to highlighted winners.

There was also a good result for all adult entrants as I am very pleased to say that every adult entrant to the show received at least one prize this year too. It was a very good show for all those who entered. Congratulations to the award winners. The Diploma for Best Bloom went to Rosemary Divall. Barbara Macknish won the Melliker Cup, the Hasler Vase and the Chairman's Cup. Lorraine Davies won the Harvel Spring Challenge and Elizabeth Thomas won the Oldham Goblet. The Meryl Burgess Salver was shared by Enid Lander and Pauline Beach.

Thanks to all those who helped setting up, judging, stewarding, donating cakes, helping in the tearoom, plant stall and the raffle. Thanks particularly to Claire and to all the exhibitors who made the show possible.

Sharon Sperling

March 27th

Greenfingers Quiz Night

Millbrook Garden Centre

In a close fought contest the two MGA teams shared the honours when they could not be separated after 3 tie-breaks. Sadly there was only one other team present on what was a fun evening in support of the Greenfingers gardening charity.

April 13th

Ranscombe Farm Wildlife

Richard Moyse

Ranscombe Farm is a 620 acre site consisting of woodland, grassland and arable farmland situated between Cuxton, Cobham and the M2. The wildflower charity Plantlife manage the site to encourage a wide variety of wildflowers some of which are found nowhere else in the country. The wildflowers attract insects which in turn attract birds and other species to the site. Part of the site is farmed but some of the arable land is just ploughed to allow certain wildflowers to germinate, some after many years of lying dormant in the soil. They have coppiced chestnut woodland and have created openings to allow other species to thrive.

They are open every day and entry is free.

Springtime in the Garden: (photos Mike Hughes and Jo Latimer)





In the News

Geraldine Wright of Newcastle University and colleagues offered bees a choice of sipping on pure sugar water or a sugar solution containing very low doses of neonicotinoids and found that honeybees and bumblebees drank more from pesticide-containing solutions, implying that naturally foraging bees would do likewise. They are attracted to the stuff that actually is having a negative impact on their motor function and their ability to forage and collect food. Separately, a team of Swedish researchers found that oilseed rape sown from seeds coated in neonicotinoids reduced wild bee density, solitary bee nesting and bumblebee colony growth.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2015/0422/Are-bees-getting-hooked-on-nicotine-laced-pesticides>;

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/bees-are-addicted-to-pesticides-based-on-the-chemical-structure-of-nicotine-10198122.html>

The European Union's executive body on 24 April 2015 approved the import of 19 genetically modified organisms (GMOs), sparking criticism from environmental advocates who say the action is a gift to corporations and a slap in the face to democracy. An online search found no reference to this action from the BBC.

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/04/24/approval-gmo-imports-moves-eu-closer-monsanto>

In an acclaimed new book, "Altered Genes, Twisted Truth", American public interest attorney Steven Druker reveals how the US government and leading scientific institutions have systematically misrepresented the facts about GMOs and the scientific research that casts doubt on their safety.

<http://www.nationofchange.org/2015/03/08/jane-goodall-and-steven-druker-expose-us-government-fraud-over-gmos/>

Since the mid-90s the Ukrainian-Americans at the helm of the US-Ukraine Business Council have been instrumental in encouraging the foreign control of the Ukrainian agricultural industry. Following the US-engineered right-wing coup in the Ukraine, American corporations Monsanto, John Deere, Du Pont, Cargill have seized the Ukrainian Market. These events will soon reshape the market for agricultural products in the EU and could spell ruin for Europe's farmers. One questions why the BBC fails to keep the public informed.

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/land-grab-in-ukraine-is-monsantos-backdoor-to-eu-agriculture-spells-ruin-for-europes-farmers/5441245>

The World Health Organization has now publicly classified glyphosate, the active ingredient in Monsanto's herbicide Roundup, the world's most widely-used weed killer, as "probably carcinogenic to humans." B&Q seem to stock only glyphosate-based weed killers and apparently no longer stock Neudorff, an alternative weed killer, but it is available from our local Millbrook Garden Centre.

<http://inhabitat.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=af74c97af19743c9bc6f6b0b3&id=a738f0fcfb&e=d7354b4263>

In a recent op-ed on "Truthout", Alex James reports on how the (US) FDA has never formally safety tested Genetically Engineered crops for human consumption. Consumer groups are demanding labelling, but U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack once again floated the idea of using barcodes to identify foods that contain GMOs as an alternative to requiring food manufacturers to put labels on such products.

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/03/02/consumers-want-gmo-labels-not-barcodes>

Gardening Which? for May includes planting and biological pest control schedules and a comprehensive article on hardy geraniums. Unfortunately they still recommend Glyphosate to kill weeds - see WHO report above.

Permaculture for Spring 2015 has an article on the use of woodchips for growing food and includes an example of an insulated composter that reaches 65C. Charles Dowding discusses the construction and use of hot beds both in the greenhouse, for propagation and warmth, and outside for growing early crops.

Counterpunch discusses the 'green revolution' that was promoted by the oil-rich Rockefeller family. Poorer nations adopted agribusiness's petrochemical-dependent agriculture that required loans for inputs and infrastructure development. Propaganda suggested that these countries would earn dollars to prosper (and repay the loans) by adopting mono-crop, export-oriented policies. It entailed uprooting traditional agriculture and trapping nations into a globalised system of debt bondage, rigged trade relations and the hollowing out and destruction of national and local economies. GMOs, the control of seeds and further corporate-controlled inputs represent the second coming of the green revolution. Around the world traditional food production and retail sectors are being hijacked by mainly US corporate interests which undermine health, food security, environments and livelihoods. NAFTA enabled the plunder in Mexico, now the Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture is playing a similar role in India and various bilateral trade agreements will do it elsewhere.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/04/29/agribusiness-and-the-four-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse/>

<http://www.countercurrents.org/todhunter050315A.html>

The BBC programme From Our Own Correspondent (FOOC) reported from the Tigray region of Ethiopia where thousands of local people gathered to work terracing a steep valley in order to hold back the runoff from annual rains and so make the formerly dry, dusty area suitable for the production of crops.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-32348749>