



Verdigris Roundhead

Photo: Jo Latimer

Autumn 2016

AGM & Christmas Social

We will be holding our AGM on Monday 12th December. The meeting will start at 8pm. This is your chance to discuss the future of our club, vote for the new committee members and maybe even volunteer for the committee yourself.

After the business part of the meeting there will be a slide show of member's photos taken throughout the year and a chance to chat whilst enjoying festive refreshments.



Meopham Garden Association

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

- 12th December 2016** **AGM and Christmas Nibbles**
- 9th January 2017** **NO MEETING**
- 13th February 2017** **Gardener's Forum & Seed Swap**
- 19th February 2017** **Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsoll Street**

Once again Barbara Macknish will be opening her garden to the public between 11am – 3:30pm to view her magnificent display in aid of the Eleanor Lions Hospices. There will be a plant stall and teas will also be available. Entry is £1.

Recent Events

8th August **Parks and Gardens of Flanders**

Melanie Gibson-Barton is an expert on Belgium and Belgian history, Flanders being her second home and the love of her life. Her talk sped us past colourful window boxes, topiary, tiny gardens with not an inch of space wasted, modern features such as closely stacked logs, caged stones and rusted metal sculptures. Moving on from a potted history of the tulips, Melanie explained that Belgium is the world's largest producer of Begonias, at an incredible 60 million per year. It also produces tobacco, used to make cigars, and is known as 'Little Cuba'.

WW1 Langemark Cemetery is the most visited, it is beautifully kept, with very moving sculptures. Melanie also told us that one of the legacies of war is that a staggering 200 tons of munitions are dug up per year. We were led through the many beautiful features of Antwerp and Brussels, a pop up carpet of flowers, made of 750,000 closely packed Begonia heads by 120 volunteers, the City of Glass - massive greenhouses containing enormous aged plants, and we listened to stories of many famous dignitaries, florists and artists of Flanders. It was a fun, fascinating and at times, poignant evening.

9th September **Coach Trip to Runnymede and the Savill Gardens**

Thank you to Gail King for organising our Runnymede boat trip and visit to the Savill Gardens. It was a terrific day out, including a ploughman's lunch on the boat as we cruised along the Thames from Runnymede to Windsor. The afternoon was spent at the gardens which host an amazing collection of hydrangeas and we enjoyed the enormous herbaceous borders that were bursting with colour in blocks of pink, orange, red, yellow and purple. The New Zealand Garden is home to Queen Elizabeth's collection, including giant ornamental grasses and unusual intriguing specimens with brightly coloured centres. Immaculate Livingstone palms in the hothouse, huge geraniums scaling the walls and every tree and plant looking incredibly robust and well-cared for. Our visit ended with a cream tea in the spectacular Savill Garden visitors centre.





Meopham Garden Association

12th September

Full Frontal Gardening

Our speaker, Fern Alder was originally a potter who, took a degree in Garden Design and then in Horticulture, and has won awards including a Silver Gilt at Chelsea and a Special Achievement award. Fern explained that her idea to 'clean up and green up our streets' began in the tiny front gardens of her own street in Rochester and the local fly-tipped corner plots. She gained the backing of councils and her fascinating story emphasised the community feeling generated by the project, which with the help of volunteer co-ordinators has spread through the Medway area.

17th September

Autumn Show

Despite the dry weather and several members saying they had nothing in their garden, there was a good display on the day. There were 164 entries from 18 adults and 17 juniors, the same numbers as last year. The judges were very complimentary of the exhibits and reminded us that we are known to have the highest standard of all the local horticultural village shows. They were all keen to know the dates of next year's shows so they could keep the days free to accommodate us.

The award winners were as follows:

Stevens Cup	Barbara Macknish
Championship Cup	Barbara Macknish
Goodwin Cup	Barbara Macknish
Townsend Vase	Pauline Beech, Enid Lander & Marian Rolt
Coronation Cup	Enid Lander & Rosemary Divall
National Vegetable Society Medal	Lorraine Davies
Douglas Nicholson Award	Moya Church
Top Tray Award	Moya Church
Hill Cup	Marian Rolt
Harvel Floral Bowl	Enid Lander
Bill Roberts Cup	Lesley Foxwell
Garden News Shield	Moya Church
Everard Bowl	Jill Pask

Barbara and I would like to thank Janet and Olly Oxford for their valuable help in setting up the hall on Friday night and to all those who stayed behind and helped clear the hall on Saturday after the show. Also thanks to the tea room helpers, Rosemary for the raffle and Moya for the plant stall.

On the whole, I feel it was a good show despite the preceding dry weather and would like to thank all the people who entered for their support and to the one new entrant. She won 2 thirds in her first show!

Claire Williams

12th October

Harvest Supper

On Monday 10th October, members and friends enjoyed a wonderful social evening. The food was so tasty and plentiful that it was hard to believe that just a few members had provided it. Due to an earlier class in the large hall, a very quick set up was required and the hall looked lovely by the time everyone arrived. Thank you to Gail King and Elizabeth Thomas for organising the evening and to Joan Colyer for her tasty desserts.

For information relating to the Meopham Garden Association go to our website at

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk



In The News

Despite drenching with "Provada", a few troughs and pots always continue to harbour vine weevils, either from incomplete coverage or having been missed altogether. We have found that submerging them in water for a couple of days is effective in killing the grubs without damaging the plants in any way. Regular inspection and 48-hour dunking might well be an effective way of combatting this pest and avoiding the cost of insecticide or nematodes. It is, of course, also safe for edibles like strawberries.

Bees

Julie M. Rodriguez, writing for Inhabitat, notes that we've been hearing of dangerous declines in bee populations for years – and the United States has finally added bees to the endangered species list for the first time. The listing is limited to seven species of yellow-faced bee – the only native bees in the Hawaiian Islands. Because of the isolation these species experience living at sea, they've been especially vulnerable to environmental threats, such as human development, the loss of native plant species, wildfires, and feral pigs. 23 pollinating species in Britain have gone extinct over the last 150 years.

<http://inhabitat.us1.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=af74c97af19743c9bc6f6b0b3&id=b9da7f3072&e=d7354b4263>

A new study, published this month (November 2016) in the journal Nature Communications, looks at wild bee populations relative to the use of neonics on the oilseed rape in England over 18 years, from 1994-2011. Researchers found that extinction rates went up with the pesticide use on the plants, which are widespread throughout the country.

"The negative effects that have been reported previously scale up to long-term, large-scale harmful multi-species impacts," Dr. Nick Isaac, a co-author of the report, told the BBC. "We can be very confident that Neonicotinoids are harmful and the correlation is three times more negative for foragers than for non-foragers."

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/08/17/18-years-data-links-neonics-bee-decline>

Cornell Faculty Refuse to Defend GMO Crops (by Jonathan Latham)

Who would have thought that at Cornell University, arguably the most highly regarded agricultural university in the world, no scientist would speak for the benefits and safety of GMOs?

Last year I was invited to debate the merits of GMOs at Colby College in Maine. Also invited were food activist Jodi Koberinski, Stephen Moose (University of Illinois), and Mark Lynas of the Cornell Alliance for Science and prominent advocate of GMOs. Soon after Lynas heard I was coming, however, he pulled out of the debate.

It's not the first time. Most memorably, in 2001, I attended a court case in which the British government abandoned prosecution of two of its citizens who had pulled up GMOs planted for a scientific experiment. The government preferred to lose the case rather than have the science of GMOs inspected by the judicial system. The defendants were duly and unanimously acquitted, with the judge describing them as the kind of people he would like to invite to dinner.

This avoidance of public debate is part of a pattern and the reasons are simple: in any fair fight, the arguments for the safety and benefits of GMOs fail.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/10/05/cornell-faculty-refuse-to-defend-gmo-crops/>

Phosphates

An article in Wild Kent – the magazine of Kent Wildlife Trust – highlights the problems caused by excessive amounts of phosphate in domestic cleaning products, particularly those for dishwashers, but it is also present in some dairy and meat products we consume. Phosphate is difficult to remove from waste water and so finds its way into rivers with the effluent from sewage treatment plants. It is also present in the runoff from farmland where artificial fertilizers are used.

Phosphate is a plant nutrient and in waterways it encourages the growth of algae at the expense of the aquatic plants that insects and fish rely upon for food and shelter. In severe cases phosphate triggers algal blooms that smother everything, depleting oxygen in the water, eventually suffocating aquatic wildlife and even polluting rivers from which we source drinking water. The article recommends changing to products such as "Ecover", "faith in nature", "bio^D", "PlanetClean", and "Sonett".

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