



Winter Scene Looking Towards Cobham

Photo: Jo Latimer

Winter 2018

Spring Show 2018

The Spring Show on Saturday 17th March is our biggest event, with two hundred and forty three entries last year, featuring Spring flowers, floral arrangements, fruit and vegetables, crafts, a junior section and a cookery corner. If you haven't entered before, give it go, there will always be something in the garden that you can enter – that pot of primroses and grape hyacinths on the patio might just catch the judge's eye! You have until the Thursday before the show to look around the garden at the new season's blooms and foliage and decide on your winning exhibits! If you are a flower arranger, check the website for more info - not all the flowers need to be home-grown. If you love to cook, try the domestic classes! There will be advice about how and when to register your entries and on presentation of exhibits at the February meeting - if you need to know anything else, just ask!

We also have our popular tea room, offering home-made cakes - bring your friends, bring your Mum! Please also pop some 'invitations' (to be provided) through neighbours' letter boxes before the day.

Exhibitors in the main classes must already be fully signed up MGA members to enter, however, the domestic and junior sections are open to all, so there is something for everyone. If you would like to be involved, but do not wish to exhibit, contributions of home-made cakes for the tea room and all offers of help setting up on Friday night and helping on the day will be gratefully received. We also have to clear up afterwards, dismantle the tables and store away cloths, society vases etc. so it is a busy day – the more helpers the better!

There will be a plant stall and raffle, so contributions of plants and raffle prizes will also be welcomed.

Forthcoming Events

Monday 12th March - talk by Victoria Golding from Kent Wildlife Trust: 'Wildlife on your Doorstep'
Members' Show: a) Pot of 3 Hyacinths b) Members' choice
(See more info below on entering the Members' Show – this is also on our website)

Saturday 17th March – Spring Show (see above)

Monday 9th April - talk by Caroline Halfpenny on Monet's Garden
Members' Show: a) 3 stems Polyanthus b) Members' choice

Monday 14th May – talk by Dr Ann Kneif on Italian Influences on the Gardens of Kent
Members' Show: a) 3 stems Rhubarb b) Members' choice

Recent Events

January 13th 2018 – AGM

Our Christmas Social and AGM was cancelled in December due to icy conditions and held in January instead. We start the year keen to enjoy our gardens, learn new skills and keep up the friendships we have built up over the years. We also hope to make new friends through sharing a common interest with new members, so if you know anyone who you think would enjoy what we do, or would just like to meet more local people, bring them along to the next meeting! The annual membership fee is still £20, or alternatively, non-members pay a small visitor's fee on the door.

Huge thanks to our retiring Club Secretary and Treasurer, Hazel Borrow, Show Secretary, Claire Williams, Programme Secretary, Gail King, and long-serving committee member, Joan Colyer, for their dedication and amazing work. Our grateful thanks too, to Barbara Macknish for her term as Chairman - we are happy to say Barbara has been re-elected this year. Barbara, in her yearly round up, also thanked Mike Hughes and Jo Latimer for all their hard work in producing the Club Newsletter. Gill and Brian Carpenter proposed each other for the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Jill Pask, now Show Secretary, will be assisted by Lesley Foxwell. Hazel Borrow offered to take on the role of interim Programme Secretary – this post is now held by Sue Adams, with Gail King continuing to organise our wonderful outings. Moya will be looking for volunteers to help with the plant stall, Rosemary will continue in her vital role of selling raffle tickets, and if you have any donations of raffle prizes, please give them to Marion Johnson. We also have some new committee members, the list goes on... all of the 2018 officers and committee can be found on the website.

Members Show, February to November 2018

One class is the 'selected item' and is specified with a different seasonal item every month.

The other class, Members Choice, can be anything from the garden which is perhaps looking spectacular on the evening, or is of special interest.

The entries are judged by a club member during the tea interval and points out of 10 are awarded for each exhibit. These points are totalled at the end of the year and the entrants with the most points from each class receive a cup and prize money of £2.50 at the AGM.

2017 Cup Winners:

Selected Seasonal Item – Sharon Sperling & Sue Adams

Members Choice – Winifred Hughes (with a phenomenal 118 points!)

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

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk

A Few Reminders

MGA Membership cards – we will have a card again this year instead of the book - information on shows, show rules, club officers etc. is on the website: www.meophamgardeners.com. However, it is recommended that members keep the book for handy reference.

Millbrook Garden Centre – good news! We have been offered 10% discount on all plants so long as your membership card is produced at the till to prove that you are a fully paid up member of Meopham Gardeners. Please note that the discount only applies to plant sales.

Provender Trade Cards – these are held by Hazel, Barbara, Gail, Roy and Claire. Provender Nurseries is in Leydenhatch Lane, Swanley, BR8 7PS.

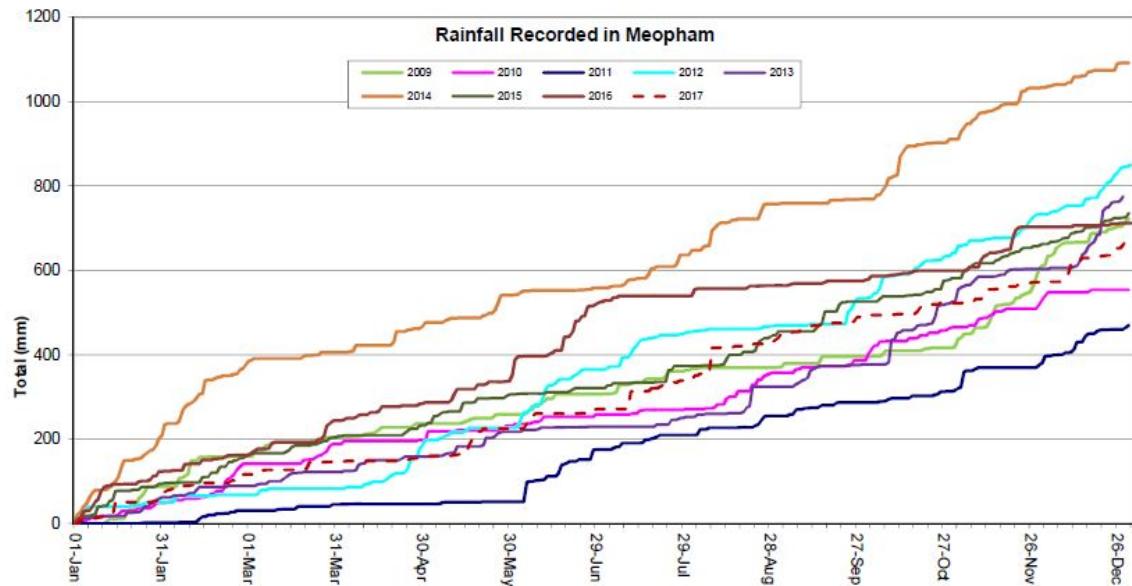
Monthly Raffle – if you have any gardening-related articles suitable for the raffle, please bring them to any meeting. We will happily accept wine and chocolates too!

Items for Sale – if you have any tools or pots in good condition but have no further use for them why not try selling them? Larger items can be advertised on the notice board. If items are sold, all the club asks is for 10% of the sale price. For expensive items, a donation would be appreciated.

Climate Summary for 2017

The total rainfall recorded for 2017 was 677mm or 26.7". During the meteorological seasons the rainfall was as follows: Winter (Dec - Feb) 125.5mm, Spring (Mar-May) 109mm, Summer (June-Aug) 210mm and Autumn (Sept-Nov) 136.5mm.

The graph shows the cumulative rainfall recorded during the year along with the same data for the previous 8 years. Locally it was a fairly normal year for rainfall and sunshine with temperatures slightly above the average taken from 1981-2010. This is the averaging period referred to below.



January was mostly dry and settled with below average temperatures in the south-east. February was often wet, windy and mild. It was very mild on the 20th with 18.3°C recorded in London. **Storm Doris** caused problems on the 23rd, however **Storm Ewan** on the 25/26th was less damaging. The unsettled weather continued but March ended warmer with Gravesend recording 22.1°C on the 30th. It was unseasonably warm at the start of April with Cambridge reaching 25.5°C on the 9th. Temperatures returned to normal until a late cold snap 24th - 27th damaged apple blossom and tender plants. May became more unsettled and wet mid-month with widespread thunderstorms in the south-east during the morning of the 29th. Early June was significantly wet but very warm air arrived on the 16th and every day from 17th - 21st somewhere exceeded 30°C, the first time this has happened

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in June since 1995. The highest temperature was 34.5°C, at Heathrow Airport on the 21st, the highest June temperature since 1976. The month ended cooler and wet.

Early July was unsettled but warm in the south-east. Heathrow reached 32.2°C on the 6th. A brief very warm spell mid-month ended with thunderstorms and the rest of the month was wet and quite cool. Temperatures and sunshine were about average but many parts of the south-east had over twice the normal rainfall. August continued cool and wet. Lightning and heavy rain on the 8-9th caused flooding on the M20. It was warmer for a time mid-month and a maximum temperature of 29.3°C was recorded at Frittenden on the 29th. September started dry and sunny, however, the rest of the month was unsettled, with an unusually high number of rainy days. **Storm Aileen** affected parts of north-west England and Wales on the 12th and 13th. From the 20th onwards it was generally warmer with mostly southerly winds, which brought mainly cloudy weather with rain at times and some morning fog patches. Temperatures and sunshine were generally below normal but rainfall was above average in the south-east.

The first week of October was changeable and the rest of the month was dominated by a warm moist airflow bringing some unusually high temperatures, notably 23.5°C recorded at Manston on the 16th associated with ex-tropical hurricane Ophelia. The storm brought up dust from the Sahara and gave a very strange colour to the afternoon sky on the 16th. Three people died during **Storm Ophelia** with two more dying while carrying out repairs after the storm. **Storm Brian** arrived a few days later but was less damaging. There was a widespread ground frost on the 29th. The south-east was particularly dry with under 25% of the average rainfall. November began with relatively quiet weather and it was briefly mild on the 20th-22nd, when it turned very wet in parts of Wales and north-west England. The last week was generally cold, with widespread overnight frosts, though snow showers were mostly restricted to high ground, but reached lower lying eastern areas on the 30th. Temperatures and rainfall were around average but sunshine was well above average. The cold weather continued into December. **Storm Caroline** brought strong winds on the 7th and this was followed by a cold wintry spell from the 8th - 16th, which brought widespread frosts and snow especially the Midlands. It was generally mild from the 17th to 25th, but after Christmas there was further snow mainly affecting the north. **Storm Dylan** brought further strong winds on the 30th/31st. Temperatures and rainfall were about average with above average sunshine.

The list below summarises temperature anomalies in UK winters since 2005/06. Things have been very varied. 2009/10 was the coldest winter since 1978/79 but a number have been notably mild.

2005/06 Close to average. The mean temperature was 3.9C which is 0.2C above average.

2006/07 Much milder than average. The mean temperature was 5.6C which is 1.9C above average.

2007/08 Milder than average. The mean temperature was 4.9C, which is 1.2C above average.

2008/09 Colder than average. The mean temperature was 3.2°C, which is 0.5°C below average.

2009/10 Much colder than average. The mean temperature was 1.6°C which is 2.1°C below average. In many parts of the UK this was the coldest winter since 1978/79.

2010/11 Colder than average. The mean temperature was 2.4°C, which is 1.3°C below average.

2011/12 Milder than average. The mean temperature was 4.5°C, which is 0.8°C above average.

2012/13 Slightly colder than average. The mean temperature was 3.3 °C which is 0.4 °C below average.

2013/14 Much milder than average. The mean temperature was 5.2°C which is 1.5°C above the average.

2014/15 Close to average. The mean temperature was 3.9°C which is 0.2°C above the average.

2015/16 Very mild. The third warmest in the series from 1910. The UK mean temperatures was 5.5C which is 1.8C above the average.

2016/17 Very mild. The UK mean temperature was 5.0C which is 1.3C above the average

Statistics taken from the Met Office Climate Summaries

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In the News

INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE

From Canada to the UK, governments work hand-in-glove with the industry to promote its technology over the heads of the public. Scientific bodies and regulatory agencies that supposedly serve the public interest have been subverted by the presence of key figures with industry links, while the powerful industry lobby hold sway over bureaucrats and politicians. For instance, Monsanto played a key part in drafting the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights to create seed monopolies and the global food processing industry had a leading role in shaping the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. From Codex Alimentarius (Food Code meetings), the Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture aimed at restructuring Indian agriculture, to the proposed US-EU trade deal (TTIP), the powerful agribusiness lobby has secured privileged access to policymakers to ensure its preferred model of agriculture prevails.

In her numerous documents, Dr Rosemary Mason has highlighted high-level collusion and subterfuge that has served to keep glyphosate on the commercial market. Claire Robinson and Jonathan Latham have described how an industry-backed campaign set out to smear science and scientists which were critical of proprietary technology. Also, Carol Van Strum and Evangelos Vallianatos have indicated fraud and corruption involving the US Environmental Protection Agency that have resulted in industry interests prevailing at the expense of public health and the environment.

<http://independent.academia.edu/RosemaryMason>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/02/24/the-secret-history-of-the-epa/>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/02/02/industrial-agriculture-and-the-agrochemical-industry/>

<https://www.independentsciencenews.org/science-media/the-goodman-affair-monsanto-targets-the-heart-of-science/>

GLYPHOSATE

At the recent Codex (food code) meeting in Berlin, there was an attempt to define genetically engineered (GE) food ingredients as 'biofortified' and therefore mislead consumers. This contravened the original Codex mandate for defining biofortification. The attempt was thwarted thanks to various interventions, not least by the National Health Federation (NHF), the only health-freedom INGO represented at Codex. But the battle is far from over.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/01/11/dishonest-and-disgraceful-monsanto-attempts-to-gain-backdoor-entry-for-ge-foods/>

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

One of the myths perpetuated by the pro-GMO lobby is that critics of GMOs in agriculture are denying choice to farmers and have an ideological agenda. The narrative is that farmers should have access to a range of tools and technologies, including GM crops.

However, GMOs have been illegitimately placed on the commercial market due to the bypassing of regulations. Steven Druker's book Altered Genes, Twisted Truths (2015) indicates that the commercialisation of GM food in the US was based on a massive fraud. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) files revealed that GM foods first achieved commercialisation in 1992 but only because the FDA covered up the extensive warnings of its own scientists about their dangers, lied about the facts and then violated federal food safety law by permitting GM food to be marketed without having been proven safe through standard testing.

The story of GM crops in India has been a case of blatant violations of biosafety norms, hasty approvals, a lack of monitoring abilities, apathy towards the hazards of contamination and a lack of institutional oversight mechanisms. GM mustard is being undemocratically forced through with flawed tests or no tests and a lack of public scrutiny: in other words, unremitting scientific fraud and outright regulatory delinquency.

Don Westfall, vice-president of Promar International back in 2001, was quoted by the Toronto Star (9 January 2001) as saying that the hope of the GM industry is that over time the market is so flooded with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that there will be nothing you can do about it; you just sort of surrender.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/01/09/gmos-global-agribusiness-and-the-destruction-of-choice/>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/11/10/gm-food-crops-illegally-growing-in-india/>

ARCHIVED PETITIONS

We came across this article recently, so if you have signed any petitions this result may be a warning your efforts may have been thwarted by government procedures.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/6113>

The Web links can be activated by going to www.meophamgardeners.co.uk and viewing the newsletters.

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Some photos of Snowdrop Day 2017



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