



Photo: Mike Hughes

Winter 2020

Spring Show

The Spring Show on Saturday 21st March is our biggest event 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 information - not all the flowers need to be home-grown. If you love to cook, try the domestic classes! Just in case ... We shall have a *Late Entry Table* on the morning of the show. It is for Sections 1 & 2 only (floral and veg) and applies only to classes you haven't otherwise entered. 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!

Exhibitors in the main classes must already be fully signed up MGA members to enter, however, the domestic and junior sections, crafts and floral arrangements 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 tearoom and all offers of help setting up on Friday night and helping on the day will be gratefully received. We also need 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.

Doors open at 3pm so come along and enjoy a cup of tea and slice of home-made cake - bring your friends, bring your Mum! Please also pop some 'invitations' (to be provided) through neighbours' letter boxes before the day.

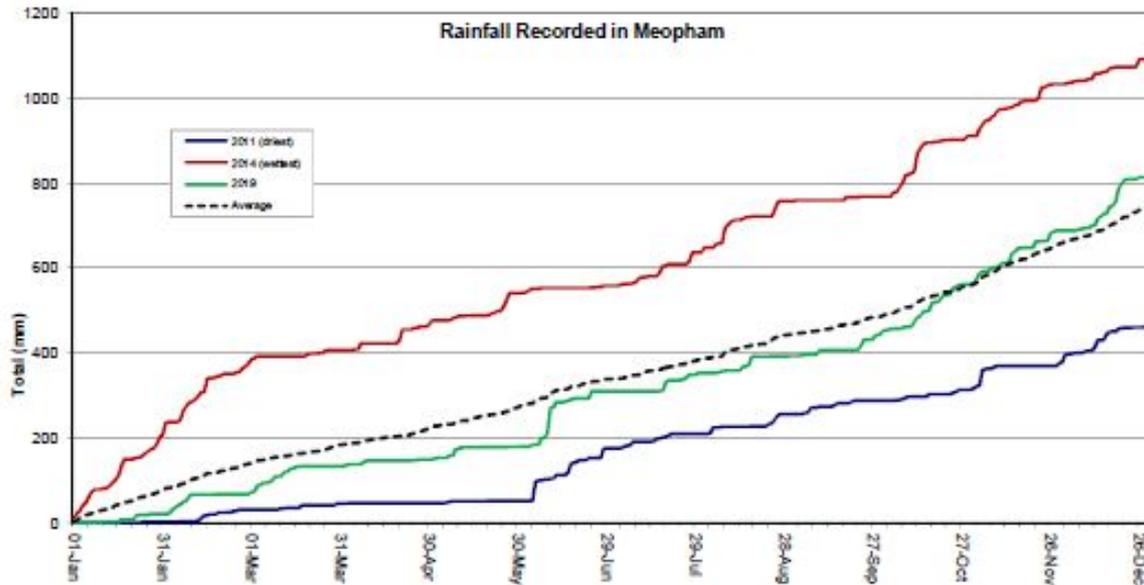
For information relating to the Meopham Garden Association go to our website at

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk

Climate Summary for 2019

The total rainfall recorded for 2019 was 814mm or 32". During the meteorological seasons the rainfall was as follows: Winter (Dec - Feb) 129mm, Spring (Mar-May) 112.5mm, Summer (June-Aug) 213.5mm and Autumn (Sept-Nov) 294mm.

The graph shows the cumulative rainfall recorded during the year along with the same data for the 2011 (driest), 2014 (wettest) and the average over the previous 10 years. 2019 was drier than our recent average until the last 2 months of the year. It was also warmer and sunnier than average but not as warm as 2017 or 2018. The averaging period referred to below is 1981-2010.



Both January and February were amongst the driest we've recorded in the last 10 years. The coldest part of the winter was in early February when approximately 70mm (3") of snow fell (2nd). Overall February was sunnier and warmer than average with 21.2°C recorded at Kew Gardens on the 26th – a new record for the UK winter maximum. Warmer than average temperatures were also recorded for March, April, July and December. On July 25th a new UK record temperature of 38.7°C was recorded at Cambridge Botanical Garden. Record-breaking temperatures were also recorded for both the Easter and late-August bank holiday weekends. Temperatures exceeded 30°C somewhere in the UK on 10 days during the summer. Only November was colder than average.

There were 5 named storms that affected the UK during the year. Locally 61mm of rain fell in a short time on June 10th and 30mm fell on December 20th. Flooding towards the end of the year was exacerbated by rain falling onto already saturated ground.

(Source: Met Office Website and locally recorded rainfall)

In the News

Learning from Gandhi

In 1930, Gandhi led a 'salt march' to the coast of Gujarat to symbolically collect salt on the shore. His message of resistance against the British Empire revolved around a simple everyday foodstuff. The tax on salt represented 8.2% of the British Raj tax revenue, the essence of colonial oppression at the time. Even though salt was freely available to those living on the coast (by evaporation of sea water), Indians were forced to purchase it from the colonial government. Colin Todhunter suggests we devise new campaigns that engage with people's everyday concerns - like access to safe, wholesome, affordable, 'open source' food.

Today, it is independence from the corporate tyranny of global agribusiness, and, for much of the world, independence from the US - which for a long time has been using food as a geopolitical tool to create food deficit areas, boost reliance on US exports and create dependence on oil-based chemical-intensive agriculture and ultimately the petro-dollar.



The problem revolves around how to raise informed awareness (not spoon-fed mainstream media narratives) of these and other issues and how to make the public connect world events with their everyday lives.

<https://theecologist.org/2016/feb/01/salt-gmos-resistance-fertile>

GMO Myths and Truths: A Citizen's Guide to the Evidence on the Safety and Efficacy of Genetically Modified Crops and Foods, 4th Edition. By Michael Antoniou PhD

Some argue that the case against genetically modified (GM) crops and foods is based on emotion, not science, and that to oppose GM crop and food technology is to be anti-science. They also claim that GM crops offer higher yields and better nutrition, that they are safe for health and the environment, that they reduce agrochemical use, and that they are needed to feed the world's growing population.

Using scientific and other documented evidence, this book exposes all these claims as false. It summarizes the facts on the safety and efficacy of GM crops and foods. It also points to many hazards, risks, and limitations of genetic engineering technology such as harm found in animal feeding and ecological studies, which in turn indicate risks to health and the environment posed by GM crops and foods.

The book explains why new genome-editing techniques, which are being promoted as crucial to the future of food and agriculture pose similar risks to health and the environment as old-style transgenic GM methods, and why consumers should insist that these products are strictly regulated and labelled.

Stifling Information on Dangers to Health

The UK-based Independent online newspaper recently published an article about a potential link between air pollution from vehicles and glaucoma. However, when environmentalist Dr Rosemary Mason sent the Independent (and health officials) a report pointing out that the European Chemicals Agency classifies glyphosate as a substance that causes serious eye damage and is toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects, it was ignored. Even in UK towns and cities, glyphosate-based Roundup herbicide is still being sprayed on weeds and super-weeds which have become Roundup-resistant. Public health is being endangered.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/12/05/dont-look-dont-see-time-for-honest-media-reporting-on-impacts-of-pesticides/>

Faltering Life Expectancy

The Observer on 23 June 2019 asked: Why is life expectancy faltering? For the first time in 100 years, we are dying earlier. The UK now has the worst health trends in Western Europe. Importantly, there has been a worrying change in infant mortality rates. Since 2014, the rate has increased every year. Certain experts blame it on 'austerity', fewer midwives, an overstrained ambulance service, general deterioration of hospitals, greater poverty among pregnant women and cuts that mean there are fewer health visitors for patients in need.

While all these explanations may be valid, Dr Rosemary Mason, says "there is something the mainstream narrative is avoiding. We are being poisoned by weedkiller and other pesticides in our food and weedkiller sprayed indiscriminately on our communities. The media remain silent." Poisoning of the UK public by the agrochemical industry is the focus of her new report – Why is life expectancy faltering: The British Government has worked with Monsanto and Bayer since 1949.

<https://off-guardian.org/2019/07/29/life-expectancy-falters-in-the-uk-slow-death-but-fast-profits-for-the-agrochemical-sector/>

Interview with Rosemary Mason (Edited Extract)

For almost a decade, Rosemary Mason has been writing open letters and sending reports she has compiled to media outlets and prominent officials and agencies in the US, the UK and Europe to question their decisions and/or to inform them of the dangers of pesticides. She has been relentless in exposing conflicts of interest, fraudulent science and institutionalised corruption in regulatory processes surrounding glyphosate and other agrochemicals. In 2010, she published a second photo-journal 'The year of the bumblebee: observations in a (her) small nature reserve.' But in 2011, the moths were disappearing and the orb web spider had gone from the hedge. The local council was spraying glyphosate-based herbicides on Japanese knotweed in the valley below and close to our reserve. So, in August 2013 and August 2014, we sent samples of river water and tap water for analysis. The levels of glyphosate in tap water had increased ten-fold, from 30 ppt to 300 ppt. These concentrations stimulate the growth of breast cancer cells in laboratory settings. In August 2013, we asked the council to stop the spraying. Despite the dangers, they stubbornly refused.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/11/01/agrochemical-apocalypse-interview-with-environmental-campaigner-dr-rosemary-mason/>

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