



Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society

Affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society

Newsletter Winter 2019

Chair's Report from the 105th AGM, 12th November 2019:

At a time in our national life when words like *turbulent*, *fractured*, *populist*, *uncertainty* and *instability* are used to describe events and attitudes, it is a welcome relief to give a report on a society now in its 110th year where stability, tradition, team-work, collaboration and co-operation are our preferred vocabulary. There is, somehow, a reassurance in the continuity of the society that most gardeners find in the continuity of the seasons.

Our horticultural calendar has been stuffed full with a cornucopia of colourful and nutritious contrasting events and activities. The seed swap in February was well attended and satisfied attendees went home clutching packets of flower and vegetable seeds. The discussion about gardening and mental health was well received and it was gratifying to see how much exposure the subject has had subsequently in the press, magazines and on the television. In April we had another very successful quiz night and the following month the popular plant sale attracted large numbers and made a significant profit for the society's funds.

Visits to villages where a number of residents open their gardens are always enjoyable and in June Aldham was no exception. Our two shows in June and September were, as usual, a lot of hard work for committee members, their families and friends – but that hard work was rewarded by the sight of large numbers of smiling visitors enjoying an event that has changed little since the society began. We still use some equipment that was probably purchased before some of us were born.

At this stage I would like to pay tribute to Ellis and Co, a local estate agent, for their light touch support of the society. They ask for no more than that their logo is displayed on the handbook and their banner is hung at shows. In return they pay for the printing of the handbook as well as the ever-popular Grimsdyke brass band who entertained us royally again at the Autumn show. That sponsorship allows us to be equally generous with our charitable donations and this year the Committee approved a donation to the new RHS garden near Manchester as well as our regular gift to Perennial – previously The Gardeners' Benevolent Society, which helps gardeners who have fallen on hard times.

A coach full of us enjoyed the 3-day trip later in June – it was our first trip overseas – we went to the Isle of Wight – as well as visiting a selection of gardens in Hampshire. We were hardly back in the Suburb before the highlight of our year – the joint opening of 14 gardens and an allotment for the National Garden Scheme, or as it is commonly called, the Yellow Book. It was our second such opening and we built on our experience of 2017 to make it bigger and better. Visitors came from far and wide and we raised £9,000 for the charities involved. This again involved a huge amount of work from a large number of people. In previous reports I have paid tribute to members of the society's committee. However, I make absolutely no apology for repeating that it is a pleasure to chair a group of people who work so well as a team while at the same time showing initiative to do jobs that they see need doing. It is a very effective combination and based on mutual trust and friendship. Their tasks include running shows, writing and producing the handbook, arranging the NGS opening, organising trips and talks, writing articles and producing newsletters, making and serving teas, managing membership matters, producing and delivering posters and many more. One activity that we're discontinuing in future years is Suburb in Bloom in its present format. The committee could not justify the costs, financial and temporal, involved in running an event for which the same small number of people entered each year and shared the honours. There is a cup available and we'll be looking for innovative ways in which this can be awarded in future.

I have said that I will not name individuals this year but there will be two exemptions; Barbara Perry will be stepping down from her role as tea coordinator that she had held for many years. During that time she and her team have earned an enviable reputation for her cakes. Indeed many visitors come as much for the teas as for the horticultural exhibits. I have written to thank Barbara thanking her for her service and enclosing a garden token but am pleased to also have the opportunity to thank her publicly. I'm also pleased to re-assure you that there is a robust succession policy.

When I am introduced to someone as an 'old friend' I gently correct them and say that I'm a long-standing friend. A long-standing friend of the Horticultural Society is Hilda Williams who has been ever-present at Fellowship for as long as I can remember. She has greeted us with her warm smile at meetings and events – and has moved chairs and furniture to a degree that would be daunting

to many half her age. Hilda was 100 earlier this year and I would like to present her with these flowers in appreciation of our affection and gratitude as well as an acknowledgement of the milestone earlier in the year.

We don't need reminding that we are very privileged to live in such a leafy area of London and that most of us have gardens. Even if we don't, we have easy access to the Heath, the Heath Extension, Bigwood and Little Wood, Central Square, Mutton Brook and Northway Gardens. A walk in any of these is good for our mental health and we must make sure that they survive for future generations. As current custodians of the Horticultural Society we are in a position to influence this. Fortunately at a time when local horticultural societies are closing down at an alarming rate we continue to prosper with nearly 400 members – true, it is getting increasingly difficult to engage younger generations and to get volunteers for posts in the society, but we have a responsibility to continue for as long as possible.

I have spoken of the past and present. What of the future? As well as our regular events detailed in the handbook we will continue our program of outreach to local schools, the community library and allotmenters. The relationship with the allotmenters – which historically has sometimes been somewhat remote – has become gratifyingly close with shared events and activities. With the allotmenters we are encouraging gardeners to try to reduce the use and abuse of plastic – though anyone who has been following the series of articles in The Garden magazine knows the difficulties with compost sacks and plastic pots. Re-use and re-cycle become the mantra. It would also be good to explore further the gardening/mental health relationship at the local level.



Hilda Williams receives a bouquet to celebrate her 100th Birthday from Chris Page

Horticultural Society Hon. President

In June 2001 Jonathan Ross and his wife, Jane Goldman, then newly moved-in residents of Hampstead Garden Suburb and newly appointed Hon Presidents of the Horticultural Society, paid their first visit of many to open our June Flower Show in the Free Church Hall, Northway. In the early years they were often accompanied by their children and/or their dogs. When they opened the show, they were presented with L-plates, since they were self-confessed non-gardeners at the time, but said they were looking forward to learning by example from members.

Over the years, they drew the crowds, judged children's scarecrow competitions, launched the society's Suburb centenary garden on Willifield Green and ate a lot of home-made cake at the shows. In 2019, after 18 years, it was time to step down, so, at our recent AGM, Chair Chris Page expressed everyone's heartfelt thanks to Jonathan and Jane for the time they had given so freely and the fun they had brought to the many shows in which they had been involved.

At the AGM on 12 November, the new Hon President of the Horticultural Society expressed his pleasure at being elected. **Stephen Crisp** has no need of L-plates. He is Head of Horticulture for the United States Embassy in London where he has worked since 1987. He is a committee member of the London Gardens Network, champions apprentices and is an RHS Britain in Bloom judge. He is also an RHS Show garden judge and selection panel member and was elected an RHS Associate of Honour for services to horticulture in 2017.

Stephen's association with us goes back many years. In 2008 he designed and installed the centenary garden on Willifield Green, which remained there till 2013. At the time of our own centenary in 2009, he redesigned and refurbished the attractive plot outside Fellowship House, which we took over from the London Borough of Barnet and maintain to this day.

Marjorie Harris



Stephen Crisp - the new Hon President of the Horticultural Society

Perpetual Trophies and Special Awards

Presented by Hon. Vice-President Michael Franklin at the 105th AGM on 12th November 2019

JUNIOR CUPS

FREYA BEEDLE

WINIFRED PRICE CUP (5-8 years)

ROSA COURY-REID

JACK RUMBOLD CHILDREN'S CUP (9-11 years)

ZARA SHATTOCK

TONY HOLTON AWARD (12-15 years)

RUTH BEEDLE

ALICE DENNANT MEMORIAL CUP

Cut Flowers from Seed

MARTIN BLACK WILDWOOD CUP	Dahlias
JUDY BLENDIS LADIES' BOWL DUDMAN CHALLENGE CUP	Cookery Domestic Economy
SUJATA DEAKIN MAURICE BREWER MEMORIAL CUP	Roses
JOHN WISEMAN FLORAL CUP RHS BANKSIAN MEDAL	Cut Flowers
VALERIE MARSH FELLOWSHIP CUP	Pot plants
PETER MASON NORMAN WHEATLEY CUP (Joint winner)	Sweet Peas
CHRISTOPHER MATTHEWS W.FERRIER CUP	Delphiniums
KEN MURRELL CHAMPIONSHIP VASE 30 TH ANNIVERSARY CUP	Horticulture Vegetables
YVONNE OLIVER MARSHALL ROBERTS CUP	Preserving
CHRIS PAGE LEONARD POTIPHAR CUP	Best Vegetable in Sept
NORMAN WHEATLEY CUP (Joint winner) MILLENNIUM CUP	Sweet Peas Suburb in Bloom
JANET TOWERS BRYCE-HARDMAN TROPHY	Flower Arranging
CORONATION CUP	Cut Flowers
DAVID WHITE GLADIOLUS CUP KARTON CENTENARY CUP	Gladiolus Best Cut Flowers in June
AUGUSTA WOLFF MERRIMAN FRUIT CUP	Fruit

Barnet Beekeepers Talk

The AGM and Prize Giving were followed by a talk given by Barnet Beekeeper, Pat Morgan. The first half of Pat's talk was particularly relevant for horticulturalists as she told us about how gardeners in the Suburb play a vital role in growing the sorts of flowers that bees can forage in over the entire growing season. Huge arable fields, by contrast, with just one harvest, do very little to help support pollinators. Pat went into helpful detail about the best varieties of flowers to grow through the year. Surrounded as we are with so many privet hedges in the Suburb, it was sad to learn that the honey from privet flowers is renowned for tasting particularly disgusting! The second half dealt with managing the hives and the all-important business of extracting the precious honey for human's delight. Keeping bees is clearly a demanding, fascinating and very rewarding activity and the talk was a timely reminder of how much we all need to do in our gardens to support pollinators.

Pat Morgan

RA Allotment Committee's harvest supper

AN Autumnal Arrangement of seasonal flowers provided a fitting centrepiece at the RA Allotment Committee's harvest supper in the Fellowship House on Saturday, September 28.

Arranged in a tall vase were dahlias, sedum, hydrangeas, roses, rose hips and green myrtle leaves with figs and pomegranates at its base. All the flowers, hips and leaves were from the garden of Frances Phillips, of Eastholm Allotments, who put together the arrangement. Placed on a table offering many dishes comprised of ingredients from local allotments, the display symbolised the "home-grown" character of the feast.

The occasion, attended by some 40 allotment holders, Horticultural Society members and those of like-minded persuasion, saw the presentation of the Phyllis Young Trophy for the best allotment plot. This trophy, first awarded 33 years ago, is presented in memory of a local resident and keen allotmenteer who was instrumental in the formation of the Allotments Committee half a century ago. Its holder for the coming year will be Ruth Beedle whose plot on the Temple Fortune Hill site fulfilled to a superlative degree the requirements of the judges who, during a mid-summer walkabout, looked for maximum use of space, range and health of plants and a general orderly environment.

To reflect the inflow of new tenants on the 12 Suburb allotment sites a special award was created for Best Newcomer. This was won by Laurence and Augusta Wolff whose plot on Big Site exemplified dedication and artistry.

Both winners received the latest edition of Alan Buckingham's Allotment Month by Month. Just in case there is room for improvement.

Peter Hodgson



Rainbow over Big Site

Congratulations to former Hort Soc member, Jean Neal who received the Legion d'honneur at the French Embassy on 11 November 2019.

Events for 2020

Thursday 13th February: Trip to Anglesey Abbey
Saturday 7th March: Quiz Night
Thursday 2nd April: May Webber, talk on butterflies
Saturday 9th May: Plant sale
Saturday 13th June: Great Easton Open Gardens
Sunday 21st June: Flower show July.
3,4,5th July: Three-day trip Gardens of North Devon
Thursday 30th July: Aston Pottery and Rousham
Saturday 5th September: Flower Show
October: Talk by Philip Colman, History of Finchley Nurseries
Tuesday 10th November: AGM and Prize Giving
Saturday 5th December: Christmas Singalong

GARDEN GIRL

TURNING THE TABLES ON WINTER GLOOM

So the festive season is here and gone in an instant and what are you left with? The toffees in the Quality Street selection tin and a sense of doom and gloom. January is bad enough but at least it gives one pause to recover, but oh, February: bored now, can we have Spring please? OK so you've got the Annual RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch <https://de.eventeri.com/g/rspb-big-garden-birdwatch-event/24602993.amp> but that alone will not feed your horticultural hunger. Last year I planted good old-fashioned narcissi February Gold, their cheery little upturned yellow faces lived up to their name, flowering en masse in patio planters. I'm not usually one for wishing my life away, but watching their shoots appear at soil level in January did pump up the pace a bit!

Confined to barracks, throwing woeful gazes at the barren garden day after day, I was starting to get on my own nerves. So Diane and I took ourselves off to Myddelton House Gardens in Enfield: <https://www.visitleevalley.org.uk/en/content/cms/nature/gardens-heritage/myddelton-house-gardens/> On a still dry day the low, misty light levels created a sense of suspended animation, giving you pause to admire the contorted skeletons of hazel and willow, fiery cornus stems, ghostly frame of rubus cockburnianus. Robust hellebores and euphorbias, winter aconites, snowdrops. The thick gnarled stems of climbing roses and wisteria coiled around a maze of pergolas. How many of you have been eye to eye with rounded clumps of mistletoe, attached to the low-slung branches of their host tree? Too cold for you? Not at all: "There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing" (Alfred Wainwright, A Coast to Coast Walk.) Honestly, a secluded, vibrant walk (no-one else brave enough?) followed by a toasted teacake and a cappuccino, actually made me nostalgic for snow. How ephemeral winter is. Enjoy the unique qualities all four seasons have to offer.

Why not come on our coach trip to Anglesey Abbey, to celebrate the snowdrops on Thursday 13th February 2020

THREE BAD MOOD BUSTERS FOR WINTER

Floral winter displays welcome you home with their vibrance and fragrance



THREE SEASONAL GARDENING QUOTES

"There is nothing in the world more beautiful than the forest clothed to its very hollows in snow. It is the still ecstasy of nature, wherein every spray, every blade of grass, every spire of reed, every intricacy of twig, is clad with radiance."
William Sharp

"Of winter's lifeless world each tree
Now seems a perfect part;
Yet each one holds summer's secret
Deep down within its heart."
Charles G. Stater

"The twelve months...
Snowy, Flowy, Blowy,
Showery, Flowery, Bowery,
Hoppy, Croppy, Droppy,
Breeze, Sneezy, Freezy."
George Ellis