

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

New Year and already five new members. Welcome to David & Heather Howell, Richard & Carol Heginbotham and Pat Middleton. However, it is with sadness that we must also record the passing of Pam Ellis and Brian Hitchens, whose families we keep in our thoughts at this time.

What a lot of typing I've done this week! Since the end of 2016, I've been writing every quarter for the Balsall Bugle. Living in Fen End and with the VE Day anniversary approaching, I've just finished an article on RAF Honiley. For those of you who are local and receive the Bugle, look out for a couple of familiar names – this pair pop up everywhere!

When not typing, it's been a joy to get out in the garden and do some tidying up in the sunshine. My hens, Mabel and Matilda, moulted just before Christmas (brrrr!) but have now re-feathered and I'm waiting for them to start laying again. I've also been helping to tidy up at Temple Balsall ready for the annual Snowdrop Sunday on Feb 16th. As usual I will be stewarding and I'm hoping for some good weather that afternoon.

With best wishes,

Marion

SPEAKER REPORT

Hidden Gardens of Herefordshire -Alun & Jill Whitehead

This couple moved to Herefordshire some 22 yrs ago, having been attracted by the county's Hereford cattle, black & white houses, cider mills & presses. At Aulden Farm, they have established a 3 acre, informal country garden around their old farmhouse and they open for NGS. They prefer a naturalistic style to attract lots of wildlife. Jill is fond of statuary and has dotted pieces throughout the garden. The Whiteheads also hold a National Collection of Siberian Iris. They enjoy visiting other people's gardens, particularly the less well known. NGS gardens are a favourite – Jill is always on the lookout for a particularly good piece of cake! Below is their list, to which I've added my jottings.

Ivy Croft, Ivington Green, Leominster HR6 0JN (NGS) *Open 6th & 13th Feb, 9 – 4.30.* Old cider house garden, good spring colour. Approx. 200 varieties of snowdrops, plus crocus, cyclamen, dwarf iris, and hamamelis in profusion. Hydrangea are good later in the year. Often opens with Aulden Farm.

The Weir Garden, Hereford (NT & NGS) West of Hereford overlooking the River Wye. Reflects the gardens of the 1920s with Roman temple – like statuary. Good for narcissi.

The Old Corn Mill, Ross - on - Wye, HR9 7LW (NGS) *Open 23rd Feb. & 29th March, both 1 – 5pm.* Naturalistic planting with statuary throughout. April is a good month to visit.

February

Sat. 8th Feb., 10am – 4pm, £5

John Massey's Open Garden,
Ashwood Nursery,
Ashwood Lower Lane,
Kingswinford, DY6 0AE
www.ashwoodnurseries.com
01384 401996

Sat. 15th Feb., 11am – 4pm £4.50

Snowdrops at Hill Close Gardens,
Bread & Meat Close, Warwick,
CV34 6HF

Fri. 14th – Fri. 21st Feb.

National Nest Box Week
www.birdspot.co.uk/bird-boxes/national-nest-box-week

Sun. 16th Feb., 2 – 5pm

Snowdrops, Aconites & Hellebores
at Temple Balsall Church, B93 0AN
Free parking & entry, donations
welcome.
Teas & snowdrop sales.

Thurs. 27th Feb. at 8pm

Our monthly meeting in the Village
Hall 'Plants that Excite' by Dr
Andrew Ward whose Notts. garden
we visited 13.06.19

March

Sat. 14th March, 10am – 4pm £5

John Massey's Open Garden
(see above)

Sat. 14th & Sun 15th March, 10am – 5pm

Open Days at Ralph Court Gardens,
Hereford, HR7 4LU

Thurs. 19th March, 7 for 7.30pm £21

Our Annual Dinner in the Village
Hall

Thurs. 26th March at 8pm

Our monthly meeting in the Village
Hall
'Wildlife Kate' by Kate MacRae

Bryan's Ground, Stapleton, Presteigne, LD8 2LP (NGS) Arts & Crafts house and garden built 1913, was popular with literary visitors such as George Bernard Shaw. Re-developed 1993 by current owners. 3 acres of gardens and a further 5 acres of woodland.

Wilton Castle, Ross - on - Wye, HR9 6AD (English Heritage) Originally a motte & bailey castle dating back to Domesday. Three properties on site; the old castle walls (used as planting pockets), old manor house ruins from the English Civil War and a later Georgian house. Not always open to visitors but there are good views of the site from the public footpaths surrounding it. Picturesque when the daffodils are out.

Brobury House, Bredwardine, HR3 6BS (NGS) Victorian house with restored Victorian glasshouses and cold frames. Formal gardens near the house, becoming more naturalistic as the trees take you down to the river. Has the first brick-built bridge across the river. Extended season for autumn colour. Also pick – your – own grapes!

Court of Noke, Pembridge, HR6 9HN (opens by appointment) Site dates from Domesday, present house built in 1700s. Current owner is an architect who designed the Princess Diana Memorial and the present Chequers. Has fruit 'palaces' rather than fruit cages! There is a turf maze which sheep 'mow' as it is very difficult to use a conventional mower.

Glan Arrow, Eardisland, HR6 9BW (NGS & Eardisland Open Gardens Weekend) A former mill so lots of water and a good variety of moisture – loving plants. Roughly 4 acres, with clipped box borders, a white garden and a ha – ha in a herringbone shape.

Riverside, Eardisland, HR6 9BW (Eardisland Open Gardens Weekend) A small garden down by the river. One of 10 gardens opening in the village over a weekend.

Weston Hall, Ross – on – Wye, HR9 7NS (NGS) Owned by the same family for 4 generations. Old established trees, 150ft long twin herbaceous borders. Huge veg garden with an espaliered apple as the demarcation line between the veg and the lawn. There is a modern viewing tower, but it blends in with the garden.

Titley Mill, Titley (open by appointment) A romantic garden in a valley, restored by its retired actor owner. Close to the River Arrow and Offa's Dyke. Is a garden for all seasons with tulips under the apple trees, a camassia meadow and many roses in lots of pretty pastel shades.

Rhodds Farm, Lyonshall, HR5 3LW (NGS) Good mix of formal & naturalistic styles, with plenty of water, a greenhouse and a dovecote. The borders appear to meander up to the woods. There is a cairn in the field beyond. A hay meadow which failed has been transformed into a gravel garden.

Ashley Farm, Stansbach, HR6 9LN (open by appointment) An old farm which used to breed Hereford cattle and make cider. There is an excellent veg garden, mostly in raised beds. The garden contains canals. Lots of cider apple trees have been planted, as well as a wood of native trees.

Long Barn, Eastnor, HR8 1EL (open by appointment) Besides the gardens, hand woven carpets are also made here.

Lawless Hill, Sellack, Ross - on - Wye, HR9 6QP (NGS) Lies at the top of a steep drive on a slope, with lovely views across the river. There is a Japanese influence, clipped box resembling steps and sculptured clouds. A natural swimming pool has been fashioned above the garage!

Brockhampton Cottage, Brockhampton, HR1 4TQ (Sept for NGS) A 75 acre estate owned by a co – founder of Crocus, the on – line plant company. The house is on a promontory and the garden, designed by Tom Stuart – Smith, has views sweeping down to a lake. Trees from America have been planted in the garden to reflect the owner's country of birth. There is a 5 acre wildflower meadow with orchids. In the Arts & Crafts village, there is a stunning thatched church.

Grendon Court, Upton Bishop, HR9 7QP (Sept for NGS) Opens with Brockhampton in September for NGS, and also designed by Tom Stuart – Smith. The gardens look out to rolling countryside. Box and hakonechloa grass feature. Livestock in the garden includes real hens, corrugated iron sheep and metal moorhens!

Perrycroft, Malvern, WR13 6DN (NGS) Built by the Arts & Crafts architect Charles A. F. Voysey between 1893-4. He was also a designer of wallpapers, fabrics and furnishings, prior to designing houses. His belief was that the hall is the heart of the home and Perrycroft's is spectacular. The gardens come right up to the house, with an original summerhouse. The garden gate leads out onto the Malvern Hills. The ancient hillfort, British Camp, can be seen from Perrycroft.

Elton Hall, Elton, Ludlow, SY8 2HQ (open by appointment) Previously owned by a pioneer of cider apples and once had a National Collection of Echinacea. This is a garden for the autumn and has an extensive veg area. The owner collects quirky statuary – his 2 daughters are the pelicans and puffins. Buildings include a castle built for the girls when they were young, a very ornate poultry coop, an Arabic building and a rickety bridge leading to a hermitage.

Two gardens on the list but no longer opening to the public are Galanthus Gallery and The Lyndalls.

A capacity audience enjoyed the slides of these stunning gardens, many of which are not well known. Not surprisingly your Committee are considering a coach trip to this part of the world!

NOTICEBOARD

Thank you! A beautiful hand – painted (by Jennifer) card was received before Christmas from Robert & Jennifer Leeming to thank the membership for the gifts of flowers and a trowel at our AGM.

BDHS Holiday to Cornwall with a touch of Devon! 1st- 4th September 2020 We are planning to run a 4 day, 3 night holiday to visit some gorgeous gardens. The cost will be £420 per person (£75 single room supplement for the trip). This includes coach travel, 3 nights' bed, breakfast and evening meal at Penmere Manor, Falmouth, and entry to the gardens. We plan to visit a selection of large and small gardens, some with introductory talks & some with guided tours. We hope to visit Trebah, Pinetum, Bonython, to name but a few. Also, an afternoon in St Ives where you can visit Barbara Hepworth's Garden or have a mooch round the galleries or sit on the beach and eat ice cream. On the way home, a visit to Devon & RHS Rosemoor. Numbers are limited, spouses / friends are invited to join us.

If you would like to come in what will be a packed, interesting & fun few days, please contact Helen ASAP. Email helen@manorfarmknowle.co.uk or phone 01564772645 for booking form

Obituary for Brian Hitchens by President, Jackie Tomnie

Brian joined our Society in 1993, holding the roles of Secretary and Show Secretary from 1996 – 2010. Whilst a committee member, Brian had a profound effect in moulding our Society into what it is today. He was a very laid back, quiet person but had a clear vision of where the Society could be improved. Some 20yrs later, many of his ideas are still in place today.

In 1993, he changed the seating for meetings from 'cinema style' with an aisle across the width of the Village Hall, to the current, more friendly, curve down the length of the hall. As Secretary in 1996 he introduced the 4 page newsletter, including a review of the speaker, a 'noticeboard' and the puzzle on the back page. In 1997 he stunned the committee by suggesting that the 1998 '50th Anniversary' Flower Show should move from the Village Hall to St. Peter's. There were far fewer members than today and even less show exhibitors, and the committee was concerned that there wouldn't be enough entries to fill the larger St Peter's Hall. Brian felt that more entries could be created by giving every member one plug plant in the Spring to grow on to exhibit at the show. The plug chosen was a golden yellow begonia, in keeping with the 50th theme. Many members, who had never entered the show before, nurtured their plugs so that St Peter's was lit with a golden blaze of colour. Plug plants for the show continue to be given out to members today and the show has remained at St Peter's, going from strength to strength.

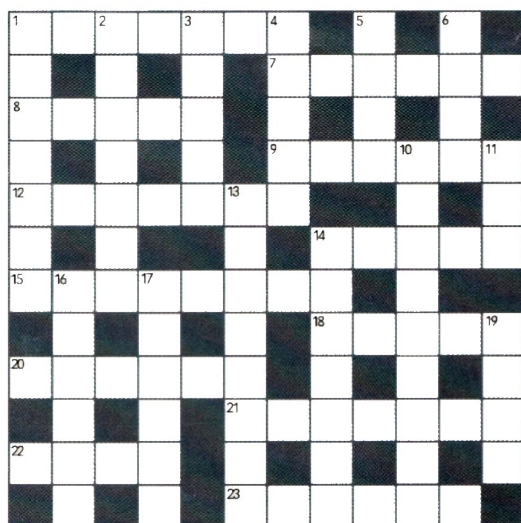
Brian was also keen to improve the quality of our speakers. Alison and Gill were recruited to book speakers and under Brian's direction, developed a strategy of visiting major flower shows and other horticultural group meetings to talk to the plantsmen & women, in order to create our varied calendar of speakers. In my view, this is the major reason for the continued success of our Society.

My abiding memory of Brian is of him walking across St Peter's Hall half an hour before judging began, totally invisible behind a large box of even larger exhibits, and the stewards rushing to create enough space for his plants on the show tables. One particular year, he exhibited a flowering stem of a plant which emitted the smell of rotting meat. As visitors wandered round, you could see their noses wrinkle and brows furrow as they wondered where on earth the smell was coming from!

About 25yrs ago, Brian with wife Elaine, were instrumental in organising the Balsall Common Open Gardens. Initially, a few gardens opened but as more joined in, they graduated to the National Gardens' Scheme. It lasted 14 years, raising money for the Helen Ley Home as well as NGS charities.

Brian stepped down from the Society's committee about 10 years ago when he and Elaine left Balsall Common to live in Malvern. However, they retained their membership, attended our meetings from time to time, and more recently were awarded Life Membership. All members owe a debt of gratitude to Brian for the thriving society we enjoy today. His funeral is at Pershore, 3pm, 10th Feb.

COMPETITIONS PAGE



ACROSS

- 1 The botanical name for poplar (7)
- 7 A shrub with attractive foliage and profuse blooms (6)
- 8 China _ is a common name for *Callistephus* (5)
- 9 A young plant that arises naturally, for example on some bulbous plants (6)
- 12 A sincere name for *Lunaria annua* (7)
- 14 Latin name for a spruce tree (5)
- 15 Botanical name for a plant with daisy-like blooms, also called pincushion flower (8)
- 18 Gardens facing this direction get the most light and sun (5)
- 20 Pot _ , a collection of mixed dried flower petals (6)
- 21 *Physalis alkekengi* is better known as _ lantern (7)
- 22 _ berry is a name for amelanchier (4)
- 23 *Salix* _ is the formal name for woolly willow (6)

DOWN

- 1 Soft, juicy fruits with a single stone (7)
- 2 Colourful plant used in window boxes (7)
- 3 _ and ladies, a name for arum (5)
- 4 Type of cabbage with crinkly leaves (6)
- 5 The part of a plant where photosynthesis takes place (4)
- 6 Tulip _ , a fungal disease that can occur during a cold, wet spring (4)
- 10 Term for a plant with thick fleshy leaves or stems adapted for water storage (9)
- 11 _ rose, the common name for *Rosa x odorata* (3)
- 13 Refers to the parts of the world with a hot climate encouraging lush growth (8)
- 14 *Passiflora*, or _ flower (7)
- 16 A spring flowering bulb with yellow, white or purple blooms (6)
- 17 Area for growing decorative plants (6)
- 19 Part of the plant left attached to a side-shoot when it is removed for propagation (4)

ANSWERS

November 2019 Puzzle – ‘Tiptoe Through the Tulips’

I gave you 14 varieties of tulips to find in this wordsearch and all entries were successful. They came from Wendy Boulton, Helen Clarke, Barry Clarke, Mary & Edward Cotterrell, Laura Eden, Sylvia Farley, Nancy & David Felthouse, Barbara Haynes, Inger Heeramanek, Margaret Sears, Sue Timmis and Gill Whitehead.

The winning name pulled from the hat was Helen Clarke.

January 2020 Puzzle – ‘Guess the Birdie’

Answers: 1.Robin 2.Wren 3.Starling 4.Magpie 5.Jackdaw 6.Mistle Thrush 7.Blackbird 8.Blue Tit 9.Woodpecker 10.Pigeon 11.Song Thrush 12.Crow 13.Goldfinch 14.Hedge Sparrow 15.Chaffinch

This was a puzzle on **GARDEN** birds and the clue for number 13 foxed some of you. Whilst Partridge was the correct number of letters, it is a bird of arable and grassland rather than the garden!

Entries were received from Wendy Boulton, Jane Brennan, Barry Clarke, Val & David Cotterrell, Mary & Edward Cotterrell, Celia & Cyril Davis, Laura Eden, Sylvia Farley, Nancy & David Felthouse, Barbara Haynes, Inger Heeramanek, Ruth Hickson, Margaret Sears, Gill Westlake and Gill Whitehead.

All correct & winning name pulled from the hat was Jane Brennan.

MONTHLY PLANT COMPETITION

FLOWER STEM 1. Marion Keeley (Clematis ‘Freckles’) 2. Alison Watson (Prunus x subhirtella ‘Autumnalis’) 3. Helen Goodwin

POT PLANT 1. David Cotterrell (Iris reticulata) 2. Celia Davis (Orchid) 3. Felicity Hill (Begonia)