

Balsall &
District



May 2020

Newsletter

PRESIDENT: Jackie Tomnie
CHAIRMAN: Ivor Stansfield
SECRETARY: Angela Shaw 01676 534562
TREASURER: Helen Jones 01564 772645
NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Marion Keeley 07973911313 Web site: www.bdhs.club

Dear Members,

With lock – down continuing, here is another electronic newsletter. Helen Jones is continuing to send out email messages in between, to show that your Committee has not forgotten you! It is impossible for anyone to foretell how the pandemic will progress, despite statistics suggesting that things are slowly starting to improve. **With this caveat in mind, a Social Evening has been tentatively pencilled in for Thursday 27th August.** The evening will be held at Helen's farm between Chadwick End & Temple Balsall, where there is lots of space for social distancing and car parking. The event will be a 'bring your own' affair in respect of chairs, refreshments, glasses, plates, cutlery etc. It is proposed that members could bring their plug plants for display, possibly photographs with a horticultural or 'lock-down' theme, as well as items grown or made by members. There will be NO formal entries, judging or prizes. However, should further restrictions or the weather require the event's cancellation, this will be easy to do with little cost having been incurred to our Society. Thank you, Helen for offering to host this.

At present, the BDHS holiday to Cornwall in early September remains on and we still have monthly speakers booked from end of September onwards. This year's cancelled Annual Show has been re-booked for 17th July 2021 at St. Peter's Church Hall, Balsall Common. It is hoped that our Annual Dinner, also cancelled this year, will be on 18th March 2021 at the Village Hall on Station Rd.

Sadly, mid - April saw the passing of two of our members, Ann Clowes and Melva Brown, neither of whom had enjoyed good health for a while. Member Wendy Boulton also lost her husband Trevor at this time, following his lengthy struggle with dementia. Trevor taught art to generations of pupils at the Heart of England School in Balsall Common, with his talent and popularity extending into adult art classes and Warwickshire Watercolourists. Our thoughts are extended to all families who have not only faced loss, but also separation from family members and friends at a time when mutual care and support is needed most.

With best wishes to you all,

Marion

Tales from Fen End Farm

As I had some positive feedback from my first article, here is another offering. The soil has really dried out and much of it is now sown with crops for harvesting later in the year. Some of the oil seed rape is already taking on its familiar yellow hue as the flowers start to open, and the corn is mid – calf in height. Our biggest field, 'the Twelve Acre' as it is known, has been planted with peas for animal feed and these have germinated well. The two scarecrows made from re-used plastic bags seem to be keeping the birds and rabbits from eating too many, with the loose ends of bin liners flapping in the wind. Neither scarecrow is glamorous nor traditional, but they work! Some of our grass fields are being allowed to grow tall for hay and silage crops, which will also serve as animal fodder for the winter.

The two permanent fields of animal pasture, 'the Cow Field' and 'Gravelly Hill' are awash with Meadow Buttercup, Common Daisies, and various grass species (I'm not good at identifying these). Each has some medieval ridge and furrow, and both run down in a slope – Gravelly hill more so than the Cow Field.

With the very wet winter, many pale pink flowers of Lady's Smock or Cuckoo Flower or Milkmaids (or *Cardamine pratensis* if you prefer), have appeared at the base of the slopes. I don't ever remember seeing so many and it just shows what lies dormant waiting for the right conditions. A positive of the very wet winter! The hedgerows are now a cascade of white Hawthorn blossom, added to by Greater Stitchwort, Cow Parsley and Jack by the Hedge or Garlic Mustard. The white is punctuated by cerise from the Red Campion, purple from the Common Vetch and blue from the Bluebells. The fragrance of Bluebells is a delight.

Since April's offering, the Swallows have returned and so has the Cuckoo. Whilst Swallows will perch on the telephone and electricity cables to twitter, trying to spot a calling Cuckoo is nigh on impossible, despite its apparent proximity! I have had more success spotting the skylarks warbling high up in the sky. As well as Pheasants, we also have a pair of Red – Legged Partridge on our arable land. They have a distinctive call, and run fast into take - off on whirring, arched wings, before gliding low over the crop in the field.

There has been a huge increase in insects with wasps, flies, ants, ladybirds and more butterflies appearing. I've seen all manner of bees from slim line honey - bees to enormously fat bumble bees. The south – facing wall of our cottage wall is very popular with Mason Bees who readily disappear into the old brickwork. Typical of May and especially where water is nearby, the air is full of Mayflies with their trademark long, wispy tails.

The eggs in the Blackbird nest on the side of our garage hatched (I never went close to see how many), and for a short period I could watch the parents fly back and forth with food in their beaks. Sadly, this ceased abruptly with the nest becoming empty. I can only assume that a predator took the youngsters before they fledged. A Sparrow Hawk was seen by my husband swooping in to kill a pigeon on the other side of the garage and there are always rats on a farm. On the farm pond the three Moorhen chicks became two, but these are thriving. They are no longer cute, black fluffy balls, but more like gawky adolescents as their feathers appear and their legs lengthen into adult size. The frogs are now silent, and a Grey Heron has been flying in to feast on frog spawn. Thus, the natural world continues, red in tooth and claw (and beak!)



Mrs Moorhen out with the kids



Sparrow Hawk at lunch

A tribute to Nancy Felthouse

Nancy had been a member of this Society for over 20yrs, and along with husband David, regularly supported our many events from monthly meetings, social evenings, and coach trips, to entering classes at our Annual Show. She also entered the plant pot / flower stem competitions at monthly meetings and always completed the monthly puzzle on the back of the Newsletters. With her good friend Jean Wood, she regularly produced the table decorations for the Annual Dinner.

Nancy was a keen gardener and belonged to two local flower clubs. She was also a longstanding member of the Balsall Common Country Market and the Bentley Heath Country Market. Talented in handicrafts as well as flower arranging, she made and sold items including greetings cards for the markets and was a helper at both every week.

She was a valued member of our Society & the wider community and will be sadly missed.

Jackie Tommie

Tributes to Ann Clowes

Ann had also been a member of this Society for more than 20yrs and joined the Committee shortly after becoming a member, a post she still held at the time of her death. She opened her garden several times for our summer social evenings and had a vast knowledge of plants and gardens around the UK. Armed with this knowledge, she took over organising the Society's coach trips in 2014. Many members relied on Ann's encyclopaedic knowledge of plants when visiting gardens on our trips. The cry would go up, 'What's the name of that plant?', to which the response was always "Where's Ann?"

Ann belonged to The Cottage Garden Society, regularly helping on their stand at Gardener's World Live at the NEC and was also a member of the Warwickshire branch of Plant Heritage. She was a member of the Art History Appreciation Group at Hampton – in – Arden and had a good eye for art and antiques. She will always be remembered for her quiet contributions to many areas of our Society.

Jackie Tommie & Alison Watson

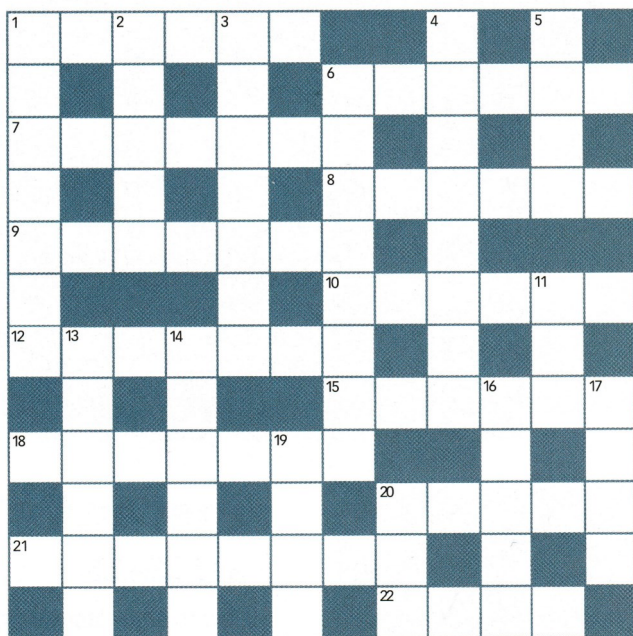
Ann was a lovely kind and gentle lady with a huge love and knowledge of plants, as was demonstrated in her delightful garden. We will always remember her ready chuckle and sense of humour. Our daughter and son – in – law also got to know Ann well as she allowed them to keep their bees in her field for some time, until they moved to their new home in Marton. Ann was always welcoming and appreciative of the honey and they all got on very well, especially as our daughter was able to learn more about her great passion of gardening from Ann. Daughter and son – in - law were very pleased when Ann accepted their invitation to visit Marton last year, to see the house & garden and new apiary. They, as well as us, are very saddened to learn of Ann's death.

Celia & Cyril Davis

A tribute to Melva Brown

Melva and her husband moved to Balsall Common with their two children about 23yrs ago. She was a very outgoing and sociable lady, including into retirement and after becoming widowed 5yrs ago. As well as enjoying the meetings and activities of BDHS, she was a regular member of the congregation at St. Peter's Church and attended the reflective 'Quiet Mornings' at Temple Balsall. She was a member of the Mothers' Union, the W.I. and Berkswell Flower Club. Melva arranged flowers for the National Trust at Baddesley Clinton and at St Peter's, often using foliage from Ann Clowes' garden. Most Saturday mornings she could be found meeting up with her friends for a 'cuppa' and a piece of cake at the Country Market at the Village Hall. Our condolences go to Claire & Ian and their families.

Doug Timmis



ACROSS

- 1 Family of moisture-loving perennials commonly called marsh marigold (6)
- 6 Plant parts where photosynthesis takes place (6)
- 7 Royal fern is a suitable name for _ *regalis* (7)
- 8 *Convallaria* is better known as lily of the _ (6)
- 9 _ oak, a name for *Quercus petraea* (7)
- 10 This French city gives its name to a type of carrot (6)
- 12 Small, aphid-like pest that sucks the sap of conifers (7)
- 15 *Lilium longiflorum* is the formal name for fragrant, festive _ lily (6)
- 18 *Chamaedorea elegans* is a popular houseplant known as _ palm (7)
- 20 The common name for *Primula elatior* (5)
- 21 A highly nourishing, organic fertiliser (4,4)
- 22 Type of hoe with a blade set at a right-angle to the shaft (4)

DOWN

- 1 Evergreen family of shrubs producing scented, star-shaped blooms, also called Mexican orange blossom (7)
- 2 Small, rounded, greenish fruits with flesh rich in vitamin C (5)
- 3 _ baskets are ideal for aerial displays of trailing blooms (7)
- 4 Young trees (8)
- 5 _ *pinguifolia* 'Pagei' is a popular member of this family of shrubs, mostly from New Zealand (4)
- 6 Leaves and flower heads of this aromatic plant are dried for use in sachets and potpourri (8)
- 11 Immature bud, on a potato, for example (3)
- 13 _ tree, a monstrous name for *Dracaena draco* (6)
- 14 These showy summer bloomers with scaly bulbs are great for pots and borders (6)
- 16 Family of deciduous trees also known as linden (5)
- 17 Describes mature, ready-to-eat fruit (4)
- 19 Spiny shrub family commonly known as gorse (4)
- 20 - man's beard, or clematis (3)

APRIL PUZZLE ANSWERS

1. Plum x Apricot
2. Tangerine or Orange x Grapefruit or Pomelo
3. Broccoli x Chinese Kale
4. Blackberry x Raspberry
5. Heuchera x Tiarella
6. European Raspberry x European Blackberry x American Dewberry x Loganberry
7. Blackcurrant x North American Black Gooseberry x European Gooseberry
8. Cabbage x Radish
9. Key Lime x Kumquat
10. Mandarin Orange x Ichang Papaya

Six brave entrants attempted this unusual puzzle; Wendy Boulton, Val & David Cotterrell, Laura Eden, David Felthouse, Wendy Jenkinson and Gill Whitehead. The winning name pulled from the hat was Gill Whitehead.

MAY TOPICAL TIPS

Cannas and Dahlias can be hardened off and planted out but protect from late frosts.

Harden off bedding plants but only plant them out when all risk of frost has passed.

Flowering shrubs, which have finished flowering on last year's wood, should be pruned and their flowering shoots cut out.

Rhododendrons may be moved. Ensure to lift with a good root ball. Any newly planted trees and shrubs need to be watered regularly until established.

Trim box hedges as soon as new growth is four or five leaves long.

Old Cyclamen finishing flowering should be allowed to dry off and stood outdoors for the summer.

Divide large clumps of primroses when they've finished flowering.

Feed and water container plants.

Water lilies can be lifted and split. Pond plants can be planted.

Plant up hanging baskets and tubs but protect from late frosts.

Dead head daffodils and tulips, feed them if the leaves are still in growth.

Divide congested clumps of daffodils after the leaves have died down if flowering has been poor.

Cut back clumps of spring flowering perennials such as Pulmonaria and Doronicum to encourage fresh growth.

Divide Hosta as they come into growth.

Continue successional sowings of salad crops.

Sow French and runner beans, carrots, cauliflowers, sprouting broccoli and leeks.

Earth up potatoes.

Feed strawberries with tomato fertiliser every week or two and place straw under the plants to keep fruit clean, to help protect from botrytis and to discourage slugs and snails.

Hang pheromone traps in apple trees to reduce damage by codling moth caterpillars.

Feed lawns with high-nitrogen fertiliser and mow once a week, gradually lowering the blades with each cut.