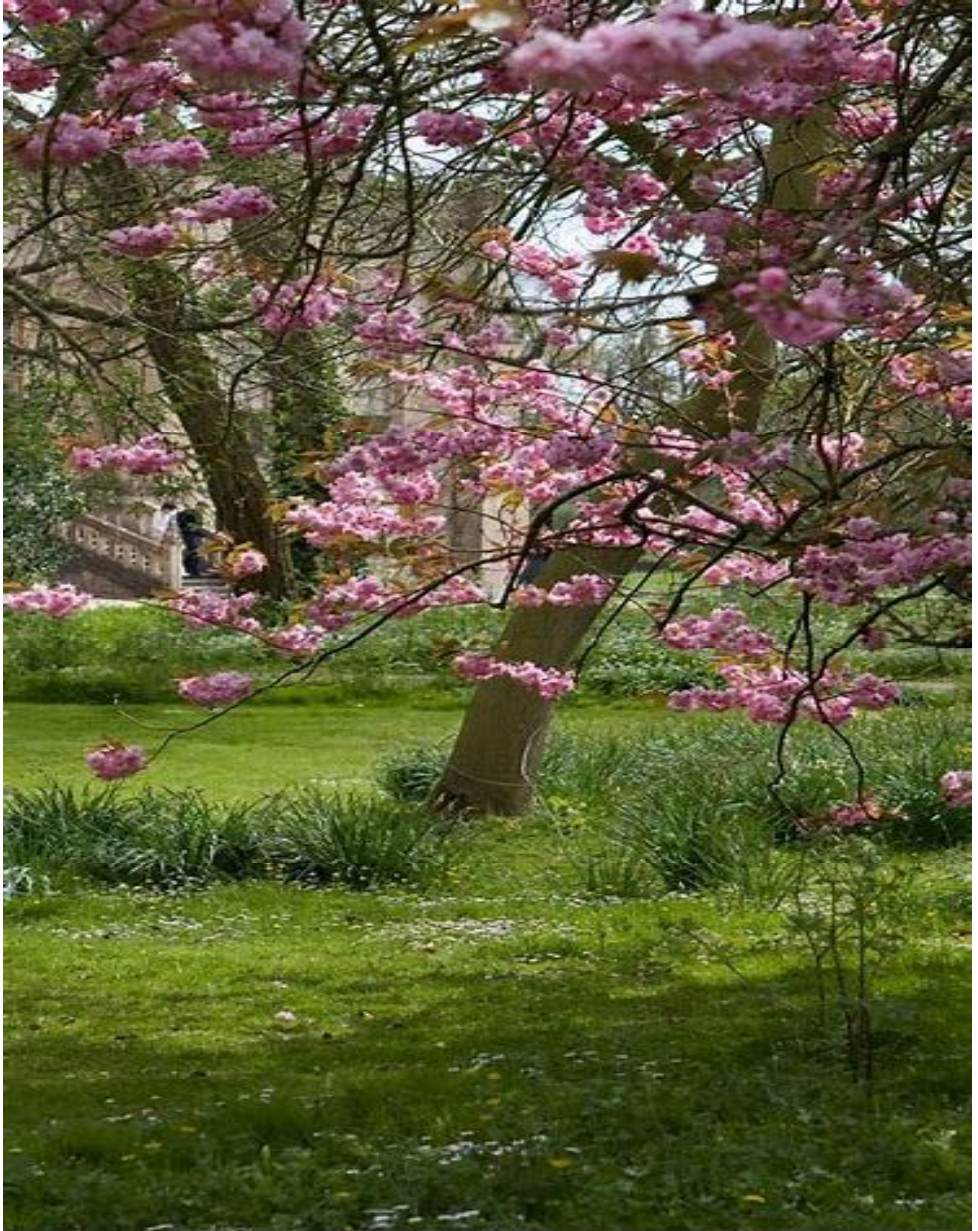




**Somerset
Federation of Gardening Clubs**
Magazine

Issue LXVIII

Spring 2024



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Speakers & Judges List

To access the updated Speakers & Judges list your Club registered contact will need to request/or already have access details to a Private area. There have been a large number of amendments over the last few months. Please use the updated list to book speakers and judges.

To help us keep this up to date we would appreciate nomination of speakers and judges that could be useful for other clubs. Please ensure the speaker and/or judge is aware of their nomination.

Introduction
I Watched a Blackbird
By Thomas Hardy



I watched a blackbird on a budding sycamore
One Easter Day, when sap was stirring twigs to the core;
I saw his tongue, and crocus-coloured bill
Parting and closing as he turned his trill;
Then he flew down, seized on a stem of hay,
And upped to where his building scheme was under way,
As if so sure a nest was never shaped on spray.

Hullo Everyone,

Well I have been given the task to introduce this issue of the Federations' magazine and I have big shoes to fill, for our dear Wendy has now retired her position as secretary from the committee and who we all miss very much. I for one am sorry to see her leave, she has been of great help and support to our committee, no least to me, we all wish her well.

My introduction I fear, may not be as interesting as Wendy's previous ones and I've been undecided what to write about, so I just thought I'd share with you some frustration in my life as a 'gardener'! I say this word loosely as to be honest, I really believe gardening is a natural gift, you can either succeed or not...at least in my case. For example, I grew from seed last year some chilli plants, did I have a bloom or any sign of a chilli, I did not...! I grew some beetroot, the rabbits ate them! The cucumbers curled up into something resembling small gherkins, the tomatoes only provided enough food to feed 'The Borrowers'. Some years are better than others I guess! But what is pleasing is that our camellias never fail to amaze, most probably because I didn't plant them. Amongst the red, cream and pink varieties, we have a beautiful white one that blooms each Christmas and as the weather was pretty mild over the recent festive season, I was as usual able to include one (unharmd by frost) in our Christmas table arrangement. We now wait for the other shrubs to bloom and looking closely at the early buds, we should be in for a treat.

Now a new year has begun and trying to be as positive as possible, I am going to attempt to sow those seeds again, if I fail, well you know what they say, "if at first.....etc., etc.,"

I wish you all the very best for the coming months and enjoy your gardening!

Mo (Plomgren)





**SOMERSET FEDERATION OF
GARDENING CLUBS**

Annual General Meeting



Wednesday 29th May

**Doors open 6.15pm
for 7pm start
Followed by
an Illustrated Talk**

**Shipham Village Hall,
New Road, Shipham
BS25 1SG**

**Kindly hosted by
Sandford & District
Gardening Club**

Refreshments - Raffle - Plant Sale

Chairman's Corner

A very cold mid-January evening, with a temperature of minus 6 degrees outside and a bitterly cold northern wind blowing straight down from the Arctic! One of the disadvantages of living in our village is that at this time of the year, the sun barely gets above the combes especially now that trees cover the hills making sunlight even more defused. In our garden, the sun only reaches the top half causing frost remaining for days in the areas directly behind the house. Fortunately, most of the plants do survive with the exception of a long bed of agapanthus which we have to protect from December until around the middle to the end of March. I build a frame from thick hoops of 1" garden hose tied together by eight foot lengths of bamboo and cover by thick



polythene; up until now this has enabled the plants to survive the extreme cold and they do eventually flower profusely during the summer.

As I sit here in front of our new long burner (a great buy!) burning less logs and throwing out more heat, watching the flames across the logs, I remember times gone by when our previous two little dogs were here, Benjie and Toby and the many walks we did up on the hills and into the combes. As Benjie (the eldest) got older, we'd not go so far but just up to what is known locally here as Hare Knap and then we would come to a path that



led down into Hodderscombe. Continuing up meant a longer walk and Benjie was now realising if he turned off, it was a shorter path home! As time passed, this was the normal route and when we reached the level crossing the stream into a glade with the most magnificent mature trees, he would for some unknown reason, sit and wait for me under a particular tree and always the exact spot, to wait for his 'treat'! It was a mystery to me why he chose to sit

in this place but every morning, it was the same!

Two years after we lost Benjie and Toby, Louie - as I've written about before - came into our lives, a compilation of both 'the boys' and what a joy he is, never chasing squirrels, rabbits, birds, or livestock, ignoring them all and walking off the lead, so it's a great pleasure to have his company! One day, I took the 'old' path down into

Shepherd's Combe into where Benjie used to sit and wait for me....not having took Louie there before, I was completely amazed that he had run ahead only to sit under the same tree, in the same spot as Benjie used to..... can someone explain that to me!

Life is wonderful, isn't it?

Well, I hope you are making plans for your gardens (or window boxes or hanging baskets) as Spring so they tell me, will soon be here and with Easter early this year, let's hope it brings some warmth and sunshine.

I look forward very much to seeing as many of you as possible in May this year at Shipham for our AGM, in the meanwhile, my very good wishes and happy gardening!

God Bless

Erl

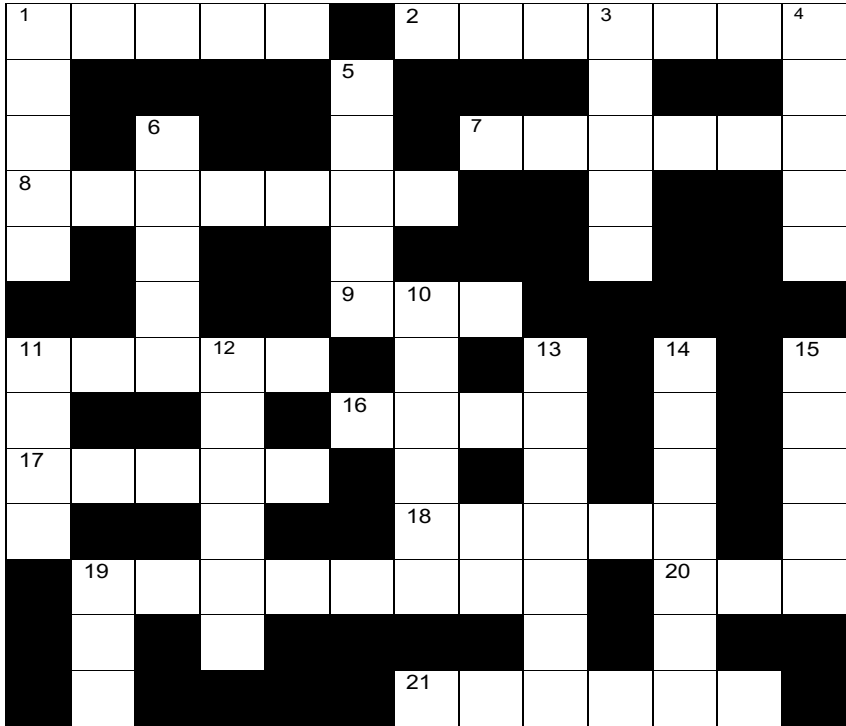
SPEAKERS AND JUDGES ANNOUNCEMENT

It is ESSENTIAL that before you book a speaker, the UPDATED list on the 'members' website is checked. This list is updated as the corrections, deletions and additions are received. If you do not have access to the 'members website' then get your authorised contact to request details from: webmaster@SFGC.org.uk



The printed copy of the Speakers and Judges list is no longer printed and any old copies should be destroyed.

Crossword by John Dunster



Across

1. Sort of peach that's not expensive.
2. Standard bargain in the vegetable line
7. New clippers required ashers broken
8. Were yet producing a slow grower
9. Plant that comes up in May
11. Riddle is put back before the day before
17. Bulb to bring tears to the eyes
18. Plant that means a great deal to us
- 19 & 16 No fancy aboreal feature we hear
20. The hush in the wood
21. Bean smuggler

Down

1. Form of lacy cross found on a tomato
- 3 & 19 Peats sprinkled around a small flower
4. One takes steps to destroy them
5. Sickly looking like a neglected garden
6. Vegetables we had in the South East
10. Too early for the May flower
11. Give up making pots
12. They're blooming big fiddles
13. Neat gin for plant growth
14. Father's herb taking a journey
15. Left to support a tree

Answers found on page 13

A letter from Canberra

“Do not despair at being an unsung hero. Always keep in your heart the desire to do what is right for mankind.”

Maejima Hisoka, Japanese statesman 1835-1919

I've contributed to the SFGC Magazine for some 6 years now, mostly about Australian flora and fauna. I've sometimes drifted into things non-garden, so diverse as family convicts and Australia's High Court. I hope the articles have been of interest. Please let Erl or David know of anything antipodean on which you'd like me to write and I'd be happy to oblige.

This time, it's a story about unsung heroes.

The world, and especially England and Australia, was captivated by the dramatic rescue of English sailor, Tony Bullimore, in the Southern Ocean in January 1997.

During the single-handed, Vendée Globe round-the world Yacht Race, a call came through on 6 January from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority that distress beacons of the individual yachts skippered by Thierry Dubois and Tony Bullimore had been activated.

HMAS *Adelaide*, a guided missile frigate, was ordered to sail from Perth that afternoon to effect the rescue, some 1300 nautical miles south-south-west of Perth and in waters just north of the Southern Ocean ice cap limit. They were daring rescues, with high winds, large waves and freezing-cold temperatures.

An RAAF plane located Dubois and dropped a Sea Rescue Kit including a life-raft.

Dubois abandoned his yacht and swam to the life-raft. He was rescued by a helicopter from the *Adelaide*.

The RAAF plane also located Bullimore's upturned yacht, the *Exide Challenger*. When Bullimore first made global headlines, he was feared dead after his vessel had capsized. But rescuers in a zodiac from *Adelaide* found him alive sheltering on a hammock in an air pocket in the upturned vessel. He surfaced and was returned safely to the frigate.



In the media frenzy, little was said of others who supported the Bullimore and Dubois rescues. Without the supply ship, HMAS *Westralia*, the Bullimore and Dubois stories may have been different.



Fellow parishioner and Lions Club member, Tony Lodomirski, commanded the *Westralia* at the time. This is his story.....

Westralia, formerly RFA *Appleleaf*, was leased then purchased from the Royal Navy in 1994 and based at Perth. The 40,000-ton vessel (when fully displaced with 20,000 tons of petroleum cargo) had been modified by the Royal Navy as an “underway” replenishment tanker, transferring marine diesel and aviation fuel and potable water to other navy ships whilst at sea.

As Commanding Officer of the *Westralia*, I had just returned from the Eastern States during the evening of 5 January after Christmas and New Year at home. In the early morning of 6 January, I was at my desk reading correspondence when the phone rang just after 6 am. After pleasantries with the Sydney based Fleet Operations Officer and a comment “why are you ringing me so early in the morning my time” (there’s a three-hour time zone difference), I was briefed on the situation in the Southern Ocean and then asked how quickly I could be ready to sail if required.

Westralia was on an “extended notice for sea” with nearly half of the 80-odd crew on leave for another week. I replied that I should be fully ready in 48 hours after storing the ship, recalling key personnel from leave and completing mechanical maintenance. On 7 January, the ship was brought to 8 hours notice for sea as it was evident that *Westralia* would need to refuel the rescue ship, *Adelaide*. Knowing that the tanker was at sea allowed the frigate to maximise its ability to use any favourable sea conditions and weather windows to proceed at speed to and remain at the search area.

Westralia sailed on 8 January with a reduced complement but with a competent and experienced team to undertake underway replenishment of the *Adelaide*. Some 10 additional personnel were seconded from other ships. As well as an Executive Officer and Navigating Officer, I had an Officer of the Watch whom I had recalled from Tasmania after she had only stepped off the plane to commence her leave!



Having cleared the outer limits of Perth's Fremantle port, *Westralia* proceeded in a southerly direction towards Cape Leeuwin and then in a more south-west direction awaiting further direction.

As with any ship that is designed to have its machinery near constantly running and not shut down and idle for prolonged periods of weeks, *Westralia* experienced one mechanical break down after another for the next six-odd hours. At midnight, I was on the verge of advising Maritime Headquarters that the ship was no longer reliable and unable to remain at sea. If this outcome had been realised, it would have then altered the manner in which *Adelaide* planned her rescue mission as she would have had to be extremely fuel conscious and know her point of "no return".

But then after midnight with the weather and sea conditions abating, *Westralia* just "clicked" and "hummed" without further problems for the remaining five days at sea.

On 9 January, having neared the 45th degree of latitude, I received a satellite telephone call from the Maritime Commander advising that the *Adelaide* had rescued both yachtsmen. After *Adelaide* had completed the rescue, we were able to refuel *Adelaide* on her return journey.



On 13 January, *Adelaide* berthed in Fremantle Harbour for media coverage of the return to shore of Dubois and Bullimore. *Westralia* proceeded straight to Fleet Base West, south of Fremantle.

SFGC members may be interested in how ship transfers take place at sea ...

The Bullimore rescue simplistically typifies why having an underway replenishment capability, or “a mobile bowser” with you is important. It allows warships the freedom to proceed at speed, to operate far away from, and not be reliant on, land-based fuel supplies and to remain at sea for longer periods than a normal fuel supply would allow.

Underway replenishment has evolved since World War One, with the German Navy being the most progressive in the 1930s, then the US Navy and Royal Navy during World War Two. While

conceptually the principles for the conduct and manoeuvring of ships are proven and remain unchanged, the technology and sophistication of machinery used in underway replenishment keeps changing such that the human physical presence and involvement is safely and progressively being diminished.

The transfer of liquids underway is done by either trailing a hose behind the tanker or passing hoses from either side to the ships being refuelled. The transfer of palletted stores/ammunition/missiles or personnel is done from the abeam position by high line transfer cables to the receiving ship or by helicopter transfer. Three simultaneous transfers can usually be done by most modern ships.

The *Westralia* could conduct two simultaneous replenishments (i.e. one ship each side) and facilitate the transfer of personnel by helicopter from the flight deck transfer point, with personnel winched up or down from the hovering helicopter.

In 1998, a fire started in the main engine room of the *Westralia* as a result of a ruptured fuel hose. The ship was at sea at the time. The engine room was drenched with carbon dioxide to isolate the fire and prevent it from reaching the 20,000 tonnes of highly flammable fuel on board. Sadly, four sailors were killed.

Westralia was decommissioned in 2006.

The Royal Australian Navy, like the Royal Navy, has a very good ship transfer safety record. Each transfer requires meticulous planning and execution. The approaching ships must not get too close when abeam as the vessels can be “sucked together” by pressure waves.



We must remain vigilant at all times should one of the vessels suffer a steering or power failure. The risks to crews, vessels and the environment are high if the connected rig is pulled away to its full extent and an emergency breakaway cannot be expediently executed.

Fortunately, these mishaps are rare thanks to the skills and dedication of officers and crew.

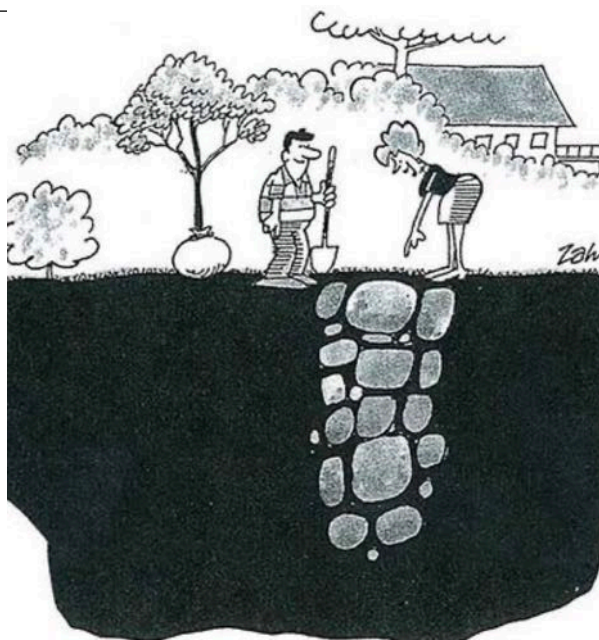


With special thanks to Tony Ladamirski and the RAN.

Some photos, news and other reports from the internet.

Bill Upton

February 2024



Supporting and Protecting Our Natural World.

Symmetry

'What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?'

This shot of outstretched wings reminded me of William Blake's poem 'Tyger'
'There is indeed such fearful symmetry made by the hand of God I wonder?
The arrangement and intricacy of feathers is just awesome.

Most visitors are cautious when they first see my geese. They usually have a story to tell about being chased or worse so 'Will they hurt me?' is the question.



In fact geese are rather peaceful birds unlike hens that can be spiteful to each other. Hence the term 'pecking order.' and 'hen pecked.' Geese bond as a team in their daily lives especially when there are goslings. The whole group takes responsibility for the youngsters who get short shrift if they step out of line. If one member dies the rest will be bereaved for some time clearly looking for the 'lost' family member.

Geese are creatures of routine much of which involves looking after their feathers. In the morning their first job is to wash in the pond, splashing, dunking their heads in water, turning somersaults and generally getting drenched. Only then do they think of food by which time squirrels have eaten it but there is always grass. Next comes thorough preening and resting. This pattern is repeated several times daily but there is always one goose on guard looking for possible predators.

Towards the end of the breeding time geese moult, losing feathers that are not acting efficiently. All the feathers are streamlined along the body and wings absolutely smooth and flawless to make them aerodynamic. They are made of keratin like our hair.

Recently I have been retrieving fallen feathers. Here is what I found -- so many different types each with a very specific use from the large tail feathers or quills (top left) to the tiniest cheek feathers (bottom left) I do not know all their uses but down feathers are clear to see and I am trying to find out other uses for example what is the purpose of the tiny, stiff feathers next to the down for they must surely have a use.

Each feather has a separate parallel strand of feather material called a barb extending laterally from the quill. Each barb then carries on both sides tiny little hooks called barbules. These lock the barbs together. If the hooks become unstuck the bird passes its beak along the barb to zip them together again so making them completely smooth. No wonder they must groom so fastidiously

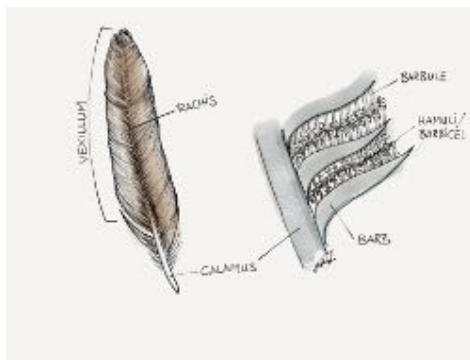


To Do.

Pick up a feather and pull the barbs apart from the tip downwards. Then pass your fingers the other way and it will zip together again. A hand lens will help to see this detail.

Make a quill pen from a tail feather, Cut off the end at an angle, dip it in ink or paint and use for writing or drawing.

Did you know that Charles Dickens wrote his manuscript for A Christmas Carol with a quill pen?



Di Redfern

Crossword Answers

Across

- | | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1 Cheap | 2 Parsnip | 7 Shears | 8 Yewtree | 9 Yam |
| 11 Sieve | 16 Tree | 17 Onion | 18 Lotus | 19 Plane |
| 20 Ash | 21 Runner | | | |

Down

- | | | | | |
|----------|---------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1 Calyx | 3 Sweet | 4 Pests | 5 Weedy | 6 Swede |
| 10 April | 11 Stop | 12 Violas | 13 Gentian | 13 Passage |
| 15 Larch | 19 Pea | | | |

THE SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS NEEDS YOU

To help us to grow the Federation, we need new committee members.

Ideally people with ideas and comitment, willing to work in a team. You will be willing to take on a specific role suitable to your talents. We meet three times a year to consolodate our work.

Contact the Chairman - Erl Plomgren -
chair@SFGC.org.uk - 01278 741152



A Mini-Reserve

In the Autumn 2023 edition, I wrote of my previous garden in Cumbria. At the end of the article, I suggested I might write about the wildlife that came to live in the garden, making it, in effect, a little nature reserve. Here, then, are just some of the wild creatures that graced my garden and gave me so much pleasure by bringing it 'alive' – a good place to be for them and us!



The long grass in the copse at the back of the bungalow was home to Field Mice and Bank Voles, a good food supply for the local Barn and Tawny owls. These small creatures do not have long life spans, and this old vole – pictured - was both deaf and nearly blind, and allowed me to get close enough to feed it with sultanas!

Another little creature we occasionally came across was a Shrew and I was delighted one day to come across a family of baby shrews tucked together in

the leaf litter next to a concrete path!

Swallows nested in various places. In 2011, I did a survey of the wildlife in the garden and counted 12 swallow nests. Some nested in the garden outhouse every year. I opened the window each spring in readiness for their return, knowing I would once again put up with the awful mess they made because of the pleasure they brought. A piece of washing line strung across the room encouraged them to perch there, so containing most of the droppings in one



place on the floor, which I could then periodically remove.



Other Swallows nested in an old chicken coop at the back corner of the copse. When the coop was starting to fall down, we took it to pieces and then piled up the wood in the same place and let the honeysuckle, already growing there, ramble over it, continuing to provide a home for wildlife. Its aroma would be enjoyed subsequent to the heady smell of hawthorn, hedges of which surrounded the property and provided important cover for

flocks of House Sparrows when a Sparrowhawk suddenly appeared and spooked them all.



Nest-boxes gave homes to Blue-tits, Tree Sparrows and, occasionally, Wasps!

The trees themselves attracted their own insect wildlife – here are Buff-tip Moth caterpillars defoliating a Downy Birch.



The wildflowers in the long grass attracted a good number of insects, including a variety of butterflies. Bees nested in the grassy tussocks.



Hedgehogs were plentiful then and we'd often see them shuffling and snuffling around the garden and copse. One summer's day, a rustling in the long grass on the hedgerow bank alerted my attention and I found several young Hedgehogs woken by the sun's warmth. I had been unaware of their nesting place!

A tame male Chaffinch, Spink, would fly round each window of the bungalow to see which room we were in and then tap on the window to get attention so that we would feed him. When, returning from a trip, and our car would draw up at the gate, he would fly to the gate, perch on top and then follow the car up the drive, impatient for us to go inside and bring him some food!



And how can I forget Harry the Hare? One summer, a leveret shared our front garden for a week or two, nibbling a bit of this and a bit of that and hiding in the herbaceous beds and a patch of lawn I had happened to let grow long for a change.

I haven't space to tell of the Weasel, Stoat and Fox, the Lizard with two tails, the Starlings nesting in their nest-boxes, the Willow Warbler that nested in the long grass in the copse, or other feathered friends that we added to our list.



I've just room to mention the various fungi that could be found in the autumn ... whilst trees bore their autumn fruits. Oh, and the French Partridge, Pierre, who visited all the local gardens one autumn, plus



the flocks of Yellowhammers that would enjoy the scattered seed I put out regularly in the winter for the resident birds – a patch of moving, vibrant yellow to brighten up the dullest days!

It was a garden for wildlife – for all seasons. A garden to escape into and feel part of the wonderful life that was always going on around us whether we were aware of it or not.



Erika

California Dreaming

Daffodils, tulips, and full-blown spring may still be a while away but in a quiet corner, under the pale-limbed trees, the dog's tooth violets are emerging like curls of dark chocolate enfolding the strawberry pink flower buds.



However their delicacy belies their toughness. *Erythronium dens-canis* is native to the deciduous woodlands of central Europe that are not unacquainted with extremely cold weather. In our milder, more ambivalent springs the dog's tooth violet emerges early enough to outrun the general clutter of spring green.

Their name refers to the shape of the pointed white tuberous roots just like a dog's fang, but the 'violet' epithet is a mystery. Perhaps it is that they like similar conditions to violets: moist but not waterlogged soil, under light tree canopy, or tucked under overhanging branches.

Buy *Erythroniums*, if you can find them, potted and already growing: they resent drying out. You can expect to lose up to half if they are bought as bulbs and planted in the autumn. So if you are lucky enough to have clumps that have become congested or even blind, split them after flowering, as you do snowdrops, and replant them immediately so they can get their roots down and anchored into the warming soil before they once again become dormant. Or make a gardener of a friend and give a few pots away. You'll know where to find some if you lose them.

The American trout lilies, *E. revolutum*, flower a little later. They hail from the western seaboard of the United States often staining the ground pink beneath the giant redwoods, alongside spring-swollen streams. *Erythronium tuolumnense* comes from the central parts of California in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Their small sunshine yellow flowers are, however, slow to increase in this country and seem rather shy flowering, unlike the bold and beautiful *E. 'Pagoda'*. This popular hybrid produces quantities of California gold flowers and is vigorous and easy to grow in a rich leafy soil under the shade of deciduous trees.

A native of the high chaparral, *E. californicum*, has won an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society for its cream flowers with golden eyes and white anthers. *E. californicum* 'White Beauty' is an especially beautiful form with its strongly marked leaves and petals that reflex back to reveal a pool of dark red that sets off the cream anthers. Plant it in a dark corner where its flowers will open like stars in a night sky. A few years ago *E. c. 'White Beauty'* was crossed with *E. hendersonii* to produce *E. 'Jeanette Brickell'* where the central red splash is accentuated by crimson styles and anthers. And another fine selection, *E. californicum* 'Snowgoose', boasts exceptionally large, tall, creamy white flowers over heavily mottled leaves.

But perhaps the most elegant of all these charming Californians is *E. hendersonii*. Its bowl of shining, deep green leaves produces dark stems of lilac-pink flowers with purple centres and anthers. It needs to be grown in a well-drained position among deciduous tree roots that will provide it with showers of rain in winter and spring, followed by a summer drought. It's worth taking some trouble to find just the right spot for such a treasure, then on an April morning its pointed buds will open, the pink petals will flare back like tiny martagon lilies, and all the long winter wait will have been worth while.

Sally Gregson

Talaton Garden and Produce Association



Well, hello Springtime! Talaton – that little East Devon gem of a village- is slowly emerging from the wintery blues. We have been incredibly lucky in terms of storm damage, and it seems that once again we have been on the periphery of the major winds. Alas, we have not avoided the rain and farmers have not been able to get on the land and what were originally poor roads are now, in places, resembling a battle area with plastic cones guiding people between the potholes. The little River Tale

and the bigger River Otter have both been at capacity, seen their banks crumble and have carried tons of good farmland out to sea at Budleigh Salterton.

All is not gloom! A good Association programme is planned for the coming year. A potentially interesting and maybe controversial item will be on the agenda – production of a Constitution. It is something of a mystery that a 70 plus year old Association has not had a constitution but, in spite of all the old documents being incredibly interesting there is hide nor hare of a Constitution. Should we be a Club, an Association etc – there will be divided opinion, no doubt.

The increased membership of £5 per family has not affected the membership numbers and indeed the show was a huge success. It has allowed a bit more leeway in our spending. Our usual annual events are now pencilled in including Plant stall, Open Gardens, Show (this year to include a Nature Photography class) Pumpkin Competition and stall at the Christmas Fair. This year, a wee bit of a gamble, we have a trip to Arlington Court in North Devon booked. It will need good publicity to get the coach filled but will be a good trip. In case like this we will try to attract people from neighbouring Clubs.

We are very lucky in having a wonderful and very knowledgeable speaker, Andrea Rye, who is with us mid-year for a talk on Alcoholic Plants! Hopefully this will involve audience participation. Further on at the AGM she will talk on Spices. Early in the year we have a talk by Julia Tremlett of Bickham House whilst a visit to the house and garden is also on the programme.

So, the sun is beginning to venture out and the garden is beginning to ease back into life. Probably some things are a bit early, as are my bees in their quest for pollen. Climate change? Who knows? Whatever the cause there is certainly change and failing rapid reversal then maybe as gardeners this is something to which we will have to adapt.

One thing never changes – the competitive spirit of Talaton men in their quest for glory in the Men's cake class of the Annual Show. Long may it reign.

Chris Harwood

(Chairman , Talaton Garden and Produce Association)

The early years of the Portishead Horticultural Society 1863 to 1939

During the long dark months of the Covid lockdown and having nothing better to do, I decided to write up the history of the Portishead Horticultural Society & Show.



I was very fortunate in so far as previous Secretary's had retained some early press cuttings and minute books dating back to November 1913. The minute books were interesting, and they were also beautifully written up with fabulous handwriting and glorious dialogue and prose. I am not sure that the current minutes will be of similar interest in 100 year's time.

The Portishead and District Horticultural and Floral Society was started by Dr Charles Wigan whose family-owned Clarence House on the High Street in Portishead which had a large garden and employed gardeners. It was recorded that the aim of the Show was "to promote Industry in general and horticulture in particular and to conduct competitive exhibitions". The Show attracted exhibitors from gardeners across the district including Clevedon, Yatton, Stapleton, St Michaels Hill and as far as Durdham Down. So the title "and District" was truly representative. A press cutting from the time said that Dr Wigan's "vegetables came out very strongly, his cucumbers being gigantic, whilst his fruit appeared very luscious and spoke highly for the attention and skills of the gardener". Dr Wigan also exhibited a wasps nest under glass which attracted a lot of attention, apparently he captured the nest on the Monday before the Show - which goes to show he was very enterprising. The Show's visitors were entertained by Portishead Town Band.

The Show has been held annually, with exception of the War Years at a variety of venues, sometimes in Assembly Rooms and as it expanded in various fields in Portishead. The Show title has also changed, by 1914 it was the Annual Show and Carnival, subsequently the Portishead Flower Show and Country Fair and in 2019 relaunched as the Portishead Summer Show.

The 1914 Show was held on the 28 July, the day that the declaration of the First World War was made. Thanks to a comprehensive report in the local press we know that Mrs Hall on opening the Show made the following comment "We stand here today under the shadow of a great calamity - already we feel the first pulse of disaster, and what may follow who can tell". There are some other poignant comments in the Accounts report for that day - the first being "The committee are of the opinion that, taking into consideration the effect caused by the Declaration of War on the day of the Show, the financial result cannot be considered unsatisfactory" it went on to say "It is earnestly hoped that Peace conditions will prevail when our next Show is held". Sadly as we now know that was not the case.

The Show was so popular that in 1920 the Committee asked local shops if they would consider changing their half day closing day from the Thursday to the Friday to enable them and their employees to come to the Show. The Shopkeepers agreed

and it is noted that the Urban District Council subsequently agreed to a change in a local by law changing the closing day for the week of the Show. Notwithstanding shops now open most days I very much doubt that the current Committee would have the nerve to ask Portishead Town Council to change a by law especially for the Show.

The Show was held in very high regard by the great and the good of the local area - we had a lot of Vice Presidents in 1930 including Lord Wraxall, Lord Erskine the local MP, Sir Charles Miles and Lady Fry. Nowadays we count ourselves lucky if we get Sir Liam Fox, MP along, although to be fair we do get a lot of support from the presenters of the local BBC.

Most Shows are run by volunteers who sit on the Committee and some of us may receive an honorarium for our efforts. I was therefore interested to read that at one point a member of the Committee proposed that the Society should "make a presentation of a gold Cigarette case" to Mr Culverwell. He was, at that point, providing a field and was also the Honorary Secretary. The proposal was accepted by the whole of the membership. On another occasion a roll top desk was commissioned and presented to a longstanding Committee member. I have no idea what these items would have cost but they were extremely generous gestures of thanks and I hasten to add bear no relation to what Committee members would receive today on retirement.

The early minute books provide an insight into what entertainment they had at the Show. These included Madame Zouare a lady palmist, a six legged puppy exhibit, a Phrenologist, Beauty Competition for children under 13, Best looking Baby and The Most Shapely Ankle and Leg to be judged by Dr Cresswell. All of which would be considered totally inappropriate today. For the 1934 Show entertainment was in the form of Mr Saxon Brown - a Strong Man who cost £12 down and 25% of the takings. I looked this gentleman up on Google and found that his party piece was having a very strong neck, and he would challenge five men to pull a rope around his neck, his neck was so strong he was able to resist the pull. He also snapped horseshoes in half with his hands. In addition to being the General Secretary I am also the Arena Events Secretary - I have not previously considered a strong man as suitable entertainment but perhaps a Tractor Pull might be something we should consider. The last Show before the second World War had a Machine Gun Display as one of the main attractions, why I have no idea!

to be continued....

Linda Hodgetts

Beautiful Brunneras

Look Out! Look Out!
Jack Frost is about!
He is after our fingers and toes;
And all through the night,
The gay little sprite
Is working where nobody knows.

He'll climb each tree,
So nimble is he,
His silvery powder he'll shake.
To windows he'll creep,
And while we're asleep,
Such wonderful pictures he'll make.

Scottish Poet and Author Thomas Nicoll Hepburn (1861-1930)

When I was a small child, this lovely little poem, 'Jack Frost', was often recited to me by my mother more decades ago than I will admit to!

The wording of the poem is certainly relevant at this time of the year when we gardeners do our utmost to protect our precious, tender plants and shrubs from Jack's icy, but nonetheless often deadly, effects.

But there is one Jack Frost who is always a welcome sight in our garden, and unlike his namesake, this Jack Frost does not adversely affect our planting at all!!

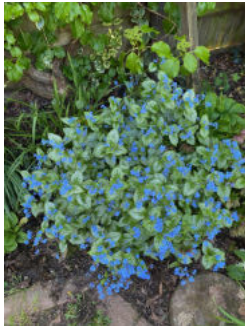
I'm talking about *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost', one of the most well-known cultivars of the *Brunnera* genus of flowering perennial plants.

In Norse mythology, Jack Frost is a minor demi-god called Jokul Frosti meaning "icicle frost." Jack, or Jokul is traditionally held responsible for the frosty fern-like patterns found on windows on cold winter mornings.

These frosty patterns are replicated in the most spectacular markings on the slightly hairy, heart shaped leaves of many of the Brunneras, and especially on the appropriately named *Brunnera* cultivar 'Jack Frost'.

I became hooked on Brunneras during a visit some years ago in later Spring to the Marjorie Fish gardens at East Lambrook when my eye was caught by a series of fabulous mounds of beautifully marked foliage.

The striking foliage was topped by a cloud of dainty sky blue flowers that resembled those of the Forget Me Not. Intrigued, I looked at the label: it was *B. macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'. The love affair with Brunneras began.

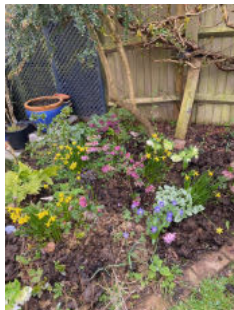


Otherwise known as the great forget-me-not, or Siberian Bugloss, Brunneras are rhizomatous perennials, native to the woodlands of Easter Europe and North West Asia. Bugloss comes from Greek meaning ox tongue, probably because of the roughness and shape of the leaves.

There are only **three** different species of *Brunnera*, with most garden worthy plants being derived from *B. macrophylla*. They have different forms ranging through almost entirely silver, to cream variegation and spotted patterns.

Brunneras are happier in shady spots. They like morning sunshine but full sun is likely to scorch the leaves and they dislike dry conditions. They are often used in woodland gardens along streams or ponds – as I saw in the Marjorie Fish gardens - and in naturalized areas as a specimen plant or clumped together as a border.

The flowering period for Brunneras is March, April, May and June. They are perfect for some areas of our garden where we have established cottage garden planting. Currently, three 'Jack Frost' Brunneras mix happily amongst the Hellebores, Primroses, Sillia Siberica, Muscari, ferns, Hostas, Tete a Tetes and other Spring flowers in a border that has just the right conditions.



Clumps slowly spread by creeping rhizomes to form thick ground covers. Don't worry about invasion though! Ours have remained beautifully behaved!

Brunnera flowers are more often blue, though some species have flower sprays that are white. We have one such white flowering variety, 'Mr Morse',



planted in a corner of an old stone cattle trough, situated under a Pergola. It sends up elegant, pure white flowers on narrow stems in early spring, its heart-shaped leaves veined with silver very similar to that of Brunnera 'Jack Frost'.

Brunnera 'Betty Bowring' is another white flowerer, its elegant appearance accentuated by star shaped flowers in a pristine white hue. When the flowers have gone, the foliage remains, forming the usual lush clump and continuing interest.

I read somewhere that some gardeners remove the flowers of the Brunneras, preferring to have the focus on the striking foliage. Why would you want to lose 50% of the Brunnera's beauty I ask myself and besides, the flowers are visited by smaller bees and bee-flies that are happy to forage under shade.

Numerous cultivars are available which are valued as groundcover. Some even possess variegated foliage, such as *Brunnera macrophylla 'Variegata'*, best grown, as with all Brunneras, in moist but well-drained soil in part shade. *Brunnera macrophylla 'Hadspen Cream'* is another variegated Brunnera

We've been lucky enough to gain 3 of our 'Jack Frosts' babies; two carefully replanted in our garden, and another taken to our Garden Club's spring Plant sales. We plan to add more varieties of Brunneras this year.

Brunneras come back every year; they are clump forming, flowering, low maintenance, fully hardy, rodent resistant, slug and snail repellent, do well in pots and they attract pollinators.



Grow them! What's not to like?

Julie Hill - Sampford Peverell Gardening Club

The Getty Center and Gardens

Los Angeles, like most urban sprawls, has plenty of concrete, cars -- and even more cars!! But, for the garden lover, there are pockets of beauty and tranquillity, one of which is The Getty Center situated in the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains and overlooking (on a clear day!) the city of LA, the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.



The building itself - housing several museums and galleries - is mainly clad in white travertine marble which is also used for much of the paving.

The Getty Center gardens, plazas, fountains and terraces reflect the sunny, arid character of Southern California with purple Jacaranda trees, Kentia palms, tree ferns, Philodendron and Crape Myrtles. At the south promontory of the Center, a hot and arid zone is filled with cacti, aloes and other succulents.



Five water gardens adorn the landscape. The water from the fountain's jets in the arrival plaza rise up to

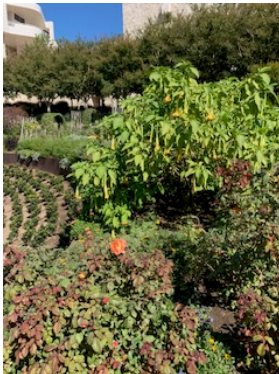
meet sprays of Plumbago, Rosemary and Ceanothus. A cascade from this pool then reappears as a spring in the Central Garden before rushing downhill to the Azalea Pool.



The Central Garden is an amazing sight; designed by Robert Irwin, a native of Southern California, who has spoken of this feature as 'a sculpture in the form of a garden aspiring to be art'. Descending down into the Garden, you tread a zig-zag pathway bordered by London Plane trees which weave together to form a green canopy over the path. The stream also criss-crosses the path before finally plunging down a stepped stone wall or 'chadar' of the kind seen in Mogul gardens in India. The water ends by becoming a mirror on which seems to

float a maze of red, purple and ping Azaleas.

Other impressive features of the Central Garden are the parasols of bent industrial-steel bars with fuchsia Bougainvillea flowing over and through them.



Only one quarter of the Getty Center site is taken up by the buildings, the rest of the land is given over to an astonishing array of plants, flowers, vines, shrubs, grasses and trees all of which have been so thoughtfully incorporated into the landscape.

So - if you ever visit Los Angeles, I thoroughly recommend a visit to The Getty Center!

Chris Martin

The Can Do Allotment

There's no getting away from it life is getting more expensive. Economies have to be made and that included our allotment on the other side of Minehead. I was very sad to give it up but we used the car to get there and as it was on a slope access was limited for my husband with mobility problems.

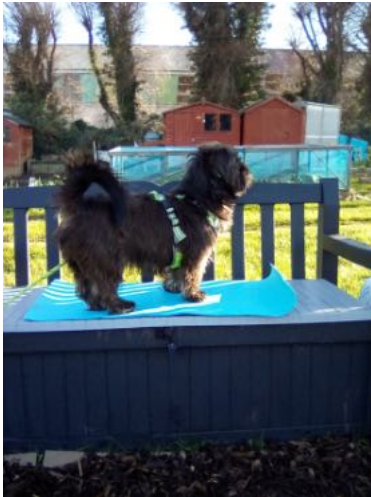


However we came up with a new plan which didn't include compromising on all the lovely fresh fruit and veg, we'd get another one! In fact we've managed to secure a lovely half size plot on an allotment just behind the house. Previously it had a very long waiting list but we were lucky and didn't have to wait too long.

Having a bit of previous experience I was pleased that the plot came complete with a mains water trough, was reasonably level and not too overgrown. One of the great joys is discovering what the previous tenants have left you. In this case a number of currant bushes which I have yet to confidently identify. I did try rubbing the stems to detect the smell of blackcurrant which one gardening book told me to do but this just yielded a woody scent definitely not blackcurrant, hey

ho I wanted redcurrants anyway, delicious as a jelly with roast Lamb.

We also have an old cherry tree covered in Ivy. There's signs of life in the branches above and though we've not pruned yet for fear of Silver leaf we are gradually removing the Ivy to give the tree a chance. Some stems are so thick they required the Lopers. Then there's the Gooseberry patch a thorny subject between Husband and Wife! He says it's more acupuncture than agriculture, she says it's a waste of an established bush to get rid and just think of that Gooseberry Fool in the summer.



I know we are lucky to get another chance and plan to make this plot as practical as possible. We bought a storage bench to both keep the tools on site and have somewhere to sit down. Then we made a broad path through the plot with a temporary wood edging and bark topping. Ah, bark that reminds me, Rusty. I wrote an article about our new dog for the previous Federation Newsletter, I'm pleased to say he's coming along nicely. He's a particular fan of the new bench, budge up lad and let the oldies have a seat please!

Rachel E. Hill

Roses

I have been growing and exhibiting roses for over thirty years and breeding them for over ten. I would call myself an amateur rose breeder and this is how I produce my new roses.



The roses used are grown in fairly large pots in a cold greenhouse. They are pruned in December or January and will flower mainly in May and June. Each morning I will remove petals from each rose that is just opening to reveal its stamens, these need to be fresh and are usually yellow. I then carefully take off the stamens from this rose using thumb and finger or tweezers. These stamens grow on the outside of the stigma which is the female part of the flower and that is left for later. I put the fresh stamens in a very small,

plastic container and label this with the name of the rose used. I warm the stamens up and later after shaking the container the yellow, powdery pollen will be released. This rose is a male, pollen parent and on a good day I may have pollen from over ten different roses to use.

Each early evening I return to the roses to make my crosses using the fresh pollen provided that morning. Each rose, which had stamens removed, can now be pollinated using a different rose pollen. I decide which crosses I want to try and using a small paint brush I rub the brush tip in the pollen and transfer it onto the now exposed stigma in the middle of the rose. Each individual cross is labelled putting the female rose name first and the male pollen rose second.



After a few weeks the hips will become visible and are left for about twenty weeks when they will be orange – red in colour and ripe. Some will have rotted off as well. I begin extracting the rose seeds from their hip, they are soaked in water for a day and transferred into a vermiculite garotta mix in a poly bag with the cross label as well. All the bags are then stored in the fridge for about seven weeks. In early January, in the greenhouse, all the seeds are sown individually into wooden boxes of good compost and labelled up. The seeds that germinate will emerge from February onwards up until May. They will continue to grow and will produce their new flowers from June onwards. I will then

decide which ones to keep, which won't be many, out of the thousand or so I have to choose from.

The next stages are perhaps for another article. My rose crosses are specific but if you want to use a ripe orange hip from your garden in the Autumn and extract the seeds you can adopt my methods or just sow the seeds in January. If your hips have been open pollinated by insects you will get your own new roses.



of

A Heap of Barbed Wire.

There can't be many climate change deniers left among the gardening fraternity. On the 8th of March last year I went to the vegetable garden to find asparagus spears, which seem to come up earlier each year, poking through the snow. Many trees and plants flowered twice both before and after the very dull wet August we endured last year. One tree in particular that I look forward to flowering in late autumn and early winter is *Colletia armata*.



Last year it flowered in August much earlier than usual. I normally look forward to its sweet almond scented flowers from mid to late October sometimes well into December. It is usually covered in insects, especially butterflies, bees and hoverflies. It seemed they would all miss out on the last of big meal of the year. I needn't have worried, come early October it started flowering again. It hung onto its flowers through wind and storms providing it's usual late bounty. It literally hummed with life, there were all manner of bees and butterflies jostling for position. Hornet mimic hoverflies, *Voucella zonaria*, appeared in large numbers.

Colletia armata is found in South America particularly Chile and Patagonia. It is covered in quite vicious spines, I have heard it described as 'not so much a tree as a tangled mound of barbed wire'.

For that reason I crown lift it every so often because weeding under it would be painful.

Our tree arrived in the bucket of a friend's tractor, he suggested with a grin that we planted it under our daughter's bedroom window! It had been in a very large plastic pot and become root bound. It was also extremely heavy. Having resorted to an angle grinder to release it from its pot, we found it too heavy to shift around the house. We dug a hole and rolled it into a spot close to where it had first landed. There is very little soil in our yard, it's mostly hard packed stone and rubble, but armed with a mattock and metal spike we made a hole just big enough. Released from its pot it began to thrive.

What it lacks in charm for the rest of the year it more than makes up for when it flowers.

Sally Hawkes

Please Note

When a member of a club needs to contact the Federation please ensure it is **the registered authorised contact** who does the contacting. For accessing the Speakers and Judges Register or a query about an entry on the website or anything regarding your Club it is only the registered authorised contact we can reply to. Contact via email is preferred as research can be carried out and a quick reply given.

The Garden at Night Time.

Our gardens are just as busy during the night-time as they are during the day - perhaps even more so, as a variety of nocturnal creatures emerge from their day time hideaways. A night time shift using similar or the same resources! We may be unaware of all this activity but let us see.

Perhaps they have a better time than the daytime inhabitants because there are few, even no, interfering humans around trying to dictate what is and what is not to go on!

Late autumn and winter are ideal times for watching and indeed listening because no late hours have to be kept except by choice. Watchers need to be still and patient for some time so warm clothes are a must and something waterproof to sit on unless you have the luxury of a garden room or porch in which to sit.

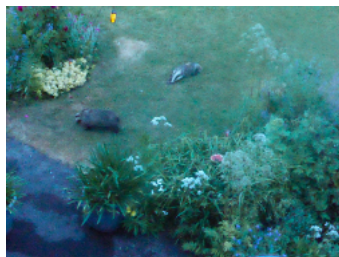
Which creatures inhabit the night? There is a huge range - birds, mammals including bats plus hedgehogs, foxes, badgers, deer and various small mammals such as mice, rats and voles. Then there will be amphibians, reptiles and a myriad of insects such as beetles. Each has a routine uninterrupted by humans.

The night time garden can be noisy with wildlife and it is easier to hear since there is little competition from traffic, lawnmowers, chainsaws or strimmers. Life for the night shift can proceed untroubled except for life and death battles between predator and prey.

The evocative hoot of the tawny owl is often heard in late autumn right through to January or February. Most are familiar with the 'twit-twoo' call but may not realise that it is two owls talking to each other, the 'twit' being a female and the 'twoo' the male. Most of the calling is to establish territories ready for the spring breeding season or to find a mate.

Occasionally there may be alarming even harrowing calls this time from female foxes searching for a mate. Or when sitting quietly a fox, badger or hedgehog may come on the scene searching for food that may even have been put out deliberately. Hedgehogs are noisy as they snuffle through dead leaves. At any hint of danger they can roll up into a tight, prickly ball. Unfortunately badgers can unroll them and find a tasty meal inside.

Moths flit through the night sky. There are 2500 moth species in the UK compared to 59 butterfly species. Each has its own time of fulfilling its life cycle. Some never eat but mate, lay eggs and then die. They have fantastic names such as the Death's Head, Hawk moth, Pale Tussock, Vapourer, Old Lady, Angle Shade and many more.



Moths are excellent pollinators together with beetles, flies and even mosquitoes. There are flowers that deliberately produce fragrance and nectar especially through the night. They are usually white or pale in colour to show up in the dark. Favourites are evening primrose, tobacco plant, sweet rocket, honeysuckle, night scented phlox, echinops, salvias and verbenas. If planting more it is best for them to be in blocks for ease of access for pollinators.

Evening Primrose. It self seeds very prolifically



Caterpillars tend to eat mostly at night having hidden under leaves during the day,

The same applies to snails and slugs. By shining a torch for a while it is likely that you will spot caterpillars as the one here, the mullein moth, that is tucking into a Mullein plant (*Verbascum*) its main food.

It will not be a surprise to find that moths and therefore their caterpillars are in decline for the usual reasons of climate change, habitat loss and

the use of toxic chemicals. There is another - light pollution that disorientates flying creatures so that their circadian rhythms are interrupted . Flying, mating and finding food is harder. Birds also are affected by disturbed sleep.

It is joyful to light up the garden especially at this time of year but be careful to have the lights pointing downwards or shield their tops in some way and remember to turn the lights off when not in use.

Book recommendation.

My Garden and Other Animals by Mike Dilger who is the naturalist for The One Show. He lives locally at Chew Stoke and describes with humour how he and his partner created a wildlife garden from scratch.

Diana Redfern

National Garden Scheme

Volunteer required for the position of County Organiser to lead the team in Bristol, Bath and S. Glos.

This is a great opportunity to meet and work with some wonderful people while raising much needed funds for Nursing and Health Charities including, Macmillan, Marie Curie and Hospice UK.

Great Gardens, Great Cake!

Please contact Su Mills to arrange an informal chat about the role at: su.mills@ngs.org.uk Tel 01454 615438

More information on the NGS website www.ngs.org.uk

THE GREAT WHITE CHERRY



Each spring of my childhood it seemed as if the garden had turned white. Banks of white rhododendrons glistened as the spume of blackthorn faded. Sheets of white violets spread through the orchard beneath snow-white clouds of blossom. Some twenty trees grew in this orchard; they were of a single variety called *Tai-haku*, the Great White Cherry, and the heart-leap they provided on the cusp of May was to me one of Nature's kindest blessings.

The history of this tree is as remarkable as it is romantic. *Tai-haku*, translated as great white flowers, is a tree of legend in Japan. Revered for the purity of its flowers - unlike most white cherries the white bears no hint of cream or pink - it grew in temple gardens, its origins lost in the mists of time. But by the late eighteenth century *Tai-haku* had vanished from cultivation. The few Western visitors to Japan came home with tales of a mythical white cherry

tree with blossom so dazzlingly pure that only God could see it clearly; as the years passed, the story continued, God decided with sorrow to remove this most beautiful of trees from physical sight until such time as humankind acknowledged the unity of the spiritual and earthly worlds again.

In the 1920s, Captain Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram, world authority on Japanese cherries, was asked to identify an elderly white-flowering cherry tree in a Sussex garden but the variety baffled him. On a visit to Japan he was shown an eighteenth century painting of the supposedly extinct white cherry and he realised that the tree in that Sussex garden was none other than Japan's legendary *Tai-haku*. Captain Ingram took cuttings of it and soon *Tai-haku* was thriving again, not just in Britain but in its homeland of Japan. Today, every Great White Cherry is descended from that Sussex ancient.

A picture springs to mind whenever I read about *Tai-haku*. A May night in my childhood; a full moon wakes me, a nightingale is singing from the woods beyond the silvered garden. I have recently learnt the history of *Tai-haku* and am enthralled. I slip outside into an enchanted landscape, down the path to the orchard. A little breeze ruffles the branches of the cherry trees and snow showers of petals float around me and settle silently at my feet. The nightingale sings on, its liquid notes now softly rising, now churring low. Then through these trees of eastern legend, through the blossom and the moonlight, a barn owl flies on white wings.

Miranda Gudenian

Member Clubs

Cheriton Fitzpaine

Cheriton Fitzpaine is a small rural village 7 miles from Crediton. Most people have a garden, and there are also allotments for keen vegetable growers.

Our Garden Club was founded in 1926 and is still going strong. We celebrate our Centenary in 2 years.



We have over 50 members and are a very active, social and inclusive Group. We meet monthly, not always in a formal session (sometimes in the Pub for skittles), and have access to a bar. Since speakers have become so expensive, we tend to look amongst our own members for help. Each year we have two Shows, in the Spring and Summer, with plant stall, raffle and cafe.

This last year, we had a Quiz with a Garden theme, when our Chairman Andrew Dean and his partner, Ann Nixon had arranged flowers and vegetables around the room, and we (divided into groups) had to answer.

In July we had an evening visit to the Allotments (Ann is the Chairman of the Association). We had a brief history of the plots, and then went around and talked to various plot holders. There were some ingenious arrangements to water plants, and we saw some lovely vegetables.

To encourage flower arranging, we had two workshops led by a local florist: hand-tied and Christmas Wreath. Non-members are invited, and often join.

At Christmas we drew on our funds to have a dinner for over 70 people, the food being cooked by a local farm shop. The raffle had many items donated by local farm shops, and supermarkets.

Mary Nunn, Vice-President.



The Hardy Plant Society (HPS)

The HPS is a registered charity started in 1957 by the late Alan Bloom, a famous plantsman, to promote interest in and knowledge about herbaceous perennials. These are plants that die off in the winter but come back into growth in the spring and last at least 2 years; they encompass a wonderful array of different colours and shapes eg salvias, delphiniums, hardy geraniums, hostas, hardy chrysanthemums and penstemons.

Our current President is Roy Lancaster, a man with a wealth of gardening knowledge.

There is a National HPS and then lots of local groups around the country; you need to join the National HPS before you can join the local group. Costs are £17 (£19 for joint membership) for the National group and £5 (£8 for joint) for our local, Somerset, group. Once joined, you receive two magazines a year from the National HPS as well as the chance to buy seeds once a year that members have sent in from

a vast array of plants at very good prices. There is also a photographic competition you can enter and more information is available on the website (www.hardy-plant.org.uk).

There are specialist groups that can be joined, for example the Snowdrop group, the Peony group and the Variegated plant group.

The local Somerset group of the HPS (www.somersetgps.com) is a friendly welcoming club of about 160 members with an active and varied programme of garden related events. From September to April there are monthly talks given by local and national speakers on a wide range of topics and are always of interest (previous programmes can be found on the website). These are held in West Monkton Village Hall on a Saturday morning, doors open 10.30 for chat and tea and the talk starts at 11am. The talks are free for members and guests are very welcome to attend (£5 charge). There is usually a Flower and Pot Plant of the Month competition as well as a bookstall and plant stall at each meeting. Once a year, there is a Plant Sale in the hall, where there are many quality locally grown hardy plants at very reasonable prices as well as some specialist nursery stalls (entrance £1 or you can hire a table for £5 if you are a member and have lots of plants to sell). We are also involved in running two plant fairs in the year, one in early spring at Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Holt Farm, near Blagdon and the other in June at Batcombe House near Shepton Mallet. During the summer, there are several garden visits organised, either by coach or self-drive. We have visited some lovely places over the years, both locally and further afield eg the Orchid festival at Kew Gardens; they usually involve lots of plant buying at the nurseries, and tea and cake. We also send out 2 newsletters a year (online these days to save postage).

The date for the Plant Sale for this year is 27th April at West Monkton Village Hall (10-12.30pm, entrance £1), the Early Spring Plant Fair at Yeo Valley Organic Garden is on the 23rd March, 10am-3pm and the Summer Plant Fair is 15th June, 12-5pm.

We welcome new members to join us, whether experienced or novice gardeners who have an interest in knowing more about perennial plants and look forward to meeting you at one of our events.

Kay Savage

25 Year's Old and Still Growing! Sampford Arundel Gardening Club

There are undoubtedly gardening clubs with longer histories than ours but that doesn't blunt our pleasure and pride at reaching our 25th anniversary.



Sampford Arundel is a small village to the west of Wellington with a sleepy air but a strong community. We have an active church, a school, a hall and two popular pubs.

And, of course, a thriving gardening club. The club is growing in membership and is in a healthy financial position. We draw members from surrounding villages and from Wellington itself, and gained further members when Wellington Gardening Club sadly closed. Ten

years ago we expected about 20 members to turn up for a meeting but now it is around 35.

We meet nine times a year for a talk and twice a year, in May and June, to visit an event or garden. The subjects of our talks vary between those that are very focused on gardening, such as garden design, use of colour or specific plants, to wider topics, such as wildlife in the garden. Perhaps the most fun was when we had birds of prey swooping around the hall!

Speakers and garden visits are, of course, getting more expensive, for reasons we fully understand. Luckily, we have the income and reserves that allow us to meet these increased costs. How do we do it? Members pay £5 a year to belong and £2 to attend a talk. Visits and events are at cost, unless subsidised by the club. Clearly this would not meet the cost of nine speakers a year and we have another source of income, from plant sales.

The club had always had a stall at the annual local fete, selling plants brought in by members. This brought in about £200 a year. One year the weather was awful and we were left with a car boot full of plants. They looked destined for the compost heap but our Treasurer said, why don't I put them on my garden wall and see if passers-by will buy them. They did! Over the years, trade has increased and we have added a 6' x 4' trestle as the wall is not big enough. It's a great feeling when someone buys a plant but even better when they buy £70's worth!

Pots of spring bulbs, especially tulips, sell well, as do dahlias, but anything we have spare goes out, including runner bean plants, brassicas, etc. We have even had non-members making donations. The most exciting was a large oleander in a fine pot. This didn't sell for ages, perhaps because it was a lot more expensive than a pot of tulips, but then someone came back to buy it on the same day that it had been sold to another customer.

Quality is all important. We only sell plants that we would be happy to buy and look likely to thrive. None of those tired, limp, half-dead specimens you sometimes see outside supermarkets! The downsides are the amount of time spent tending to the sale table and the disappointment when thieves strike. It is so disheartening to find that the honesty box, and contents, has disappeared. The most blatant was a man who loaded up the boot of his car and just drove off. The third time he did this we were waiting and had a free and frank discussion about his conduct. He hasn't been back!



We are having a bit of a do to celebrate our anniversary. We had a drink of fizz and a slice of cake, made and decorated by one of our members – thank you Carol – on the day and the club is subsidising a celebratory meal at a local hostelry. Later in the year, we are also subsidising a coach trip to visit the Cowbridge Physic Garden and Dyffryn Gardens, in South Wales. If the weather is kind, it should be a great day out.

Here's to the next 25 years!

Nick Matthews - Sampford Arundel Gardening Club

Longburton Garden Club

Longburton is a small village three miles south of Sherborne in Dorset. The Garden Club started 40 years ago after a resident put an advert in the local newsletter.



The club kicks off the year with a social together, and thereafter meets in the Cam Vale Community Hall on the 1st Thursday evening of every month, with talks on garden-related topics, such as 'Low Maintenance Gardening' or 'Herbaceous Perennials'.

In the spring we have a Plant Sale to boost our funds, and in the summer we have an outing to a garden, such as Rosemoor or Hestercombe. After a summer break the club resumes in September, with more talks and an AGM, rounding off the year with a Christmas dinner and game of skittles in the local pub.

The photo shows a recent meeting where we all made Christmas wreaths.

The club is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society, and also has Gold Club Membership with Sherborne's Castle Gardens which gives our members many discounts.

We currently have a membership of about 45 and would welcome anyone who would like to join us. The annual subscription is £15 and guests are welcome at £2 per session.

Wincanton & District Gardeners

Since our last article we have been having some very interesting talks at our meetings. We have been learning about Preparing Fuchsias, Walking Kilimanjaro and what plants are Sweet and which have the most Sugar Sources.

We have a Flower of the Month Competition at each meeting where our members bring along their flowers to be judged by the members. We vote with dried runner bean seeds.

We have another very full and interesting programme coming up this year and all items will be added to our website as they occur.

Our outing this year in June will be to RHS Wisley.

We held a very successful annual lunch at our local Dolphin Hotel and was attended by 20 plus members and was enjoyed by all.

We are always looking for new members so if you would like to join us our annual membership fee is £7.50 or just £2.00 per meeting if not a member. We serve tea and coffee with biscuits and also have a raffle to make much needed funds. Our membership is growing each month at the meetings which we are pleased to see.

Our Annual Flower Show will be held in the Wincanton Memorial Hall on Saturday 7th September and is open to all including novices.

It is now time for all gardeners to think about preparing for the coming season, so get out your wellie, tools, seeds and plants and start planning for a bumper year ahead.

We all hope after this awfully wet season the sun will be kind and give warmth for our growing period.

Gill D'Arcy Association Secretary Wincanton & District Gardeners.

Spring Arriving

As the long hard winter fades away
Spring begins showing its face
Dead of the hedgerows suddenly begin
To bloom like fine green lace.

Flowers that have been long underground
Suddenly are pushing towards the sun
New life begins to start showing all around
Children are outside once more having fun.

Everywhere that was dark and cold
Once again is all fresh and green
Brown of the hedges has faded away
Spring has begun to be seen.

Blossoms on trees, birds flying high
Dawn choruses being sung so early
Doors are flung open and windows are wide
Spring has arrived in a hurly burly.

Lambs are all jumping around in the fields
Meadows are blooming in a wonderful way
People are walking not rushing anymore
Spring has at last come here to stay.

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Final Cuttings

From a somewhat elevated (I was going to say lofty) position I would like to add a few comments as seen from a distance. Basically, these words add up to a tribute to all those who have beavered away to keep a sense of community and a shared interest in things gardening alive through some very testing times. Gardening clubs large and small - and some are very tiny indeed - have a huge role to play as centres of social activity, as have all those other groups where people get together and are able to enjoy contact with friendly faces on a regular basis.

Every month we pop along to the local hall and meet and chat and listen to an erudite or interesting speaker whose impressive knowledge we vow to recall and implement - but we don't - but that's not the point. More importantly, we have met and enjoyed the company.

And it doesn't happen by itself. These events need organising and it is you, dear reader, who does the organising. So my first tribute goes to all of you who do this, yes, with a sense of duty perhaps but more because you think it important and you enjoy doing it .

All over Somerset well over a hundred clubs are thriving. You probably know your neighbours and cooperate with them .You also are in touch with the County Federation which provides some services for your benefit. Again the Federation doesn't run automatically and my next tribute goes to the Committee members who meet, discuss and gossip twice a year and get things done.

The Committee never has had a Chairman who has done so much good (and no harm at all !) as Erl, brilliantly supported by the cheerful Committee Members. Wendy Williams stepped down as Secretary after a number of years - our grateful thanks for all she has done. Her position, and this shows how resilient folk are, has been taken by Catherine Gregory whom we wish every success and offer a big thank you.

So, these few words comprise a tribute to all of you who just keep things going for the benefit of others. Thank you!

Pip H

Editor: Pip has been a stalwart of the Federation and was a founding member and deserves praise for his dedication and hard work over many years. Being the Federation President is well deserved.

