

**Somerset
Federation of Gardening
Clubs**

Issue XLVI

Spring 2014

Points of Interest

'Twas ever thus

Chairman's Corner

Cautionary Tale

***Bishops Palace
Gardens Update***

Final Cuttings



*To attempt to stem the tide of reform
is like Dame Partington at Sidmouth
Trying to hold back the Atlantic
With her house broom*

Debate on Reform Act 1832



INTRODUCTION

There is a sound of abundance of rain.



1Kings xviii v.41.

Just as a matter of interest Noah's ark was as big as a medium size church. Made out of gopher wood, perhaps cedar or cypress, it measures in the region of 500 feet long, 80 feet wide and 50 feet high. This was a three storey construction with just one window positioned in the roof, the whole forming a flat - bottomed boat. For those of you who wish to make future preparations, more details can be found in Genesis Chapter VI.

You have probably noticed that the jackdaws, rooks, chaffinches and robins have been going round two by two. Even Noah would point out that, at this time of the year this is part of the natural circle. And we are certainly grateful for the respite in the weather, living as we do in an unpredictable world where the unexpected takes us by surprise.

This has happened at Combe St Nicholas Horticultural Society who had prepared themselves to host this years' SFGC Annual General Meeting. Out of the blue, they found that the village hall had to be commandeered for the European Elections with the result that we no longer had a venue for the event.

Very quickly the AGM had to be rearranged and will now take place in Wells Town Hall on Thursday 8th May 2014 at 7pm. Your hosts will be the Wells and District Gardening Club.

You and your guests can spend time enjoying the sights of Wells and visit the Bishop's Palace Gardens, to which concessions for members have been negotiated. ALL delegates will be able to visit the gardens for £3 per head. Details enclosed.

SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2014

THURSDAY 8TH MAY AT 7pm - IN WELLS TOWN HALL

The business meeting will be followed by a talk by

James Cross, Head Gardener, Bishops Palace

"The Bishop's Palace Gardens of Beauty and Reflection"

Your hosts, Wells and District Gardening Club, will provide

refreshments and hospitality

Details 01749 679182

The Town Hall will be open from 6pm.

A Local Tradition for 100 Years

In July, Wambrook Flower Show celebrates 100 years of local flower shows. Originally called the Bewley Down Flower, Vegetable and Dairy Show, it was held in a large marquee on a field in Bewley Down just south of the Somerset border. World War One intervened a few weeks later postponing the second show to 1919. The local show area ' was initially restricted to those who lived, were employed or owned land in Bewley Down (which straddles Wambrook, Chardstock, and Membury) but grew over the years to include 11 parishes: Wambrook, Chardstock, Membury, Yarcombe, Stockland, Whitestaunton, Combe St Nicholas, All Saints, Churchill, Chard Borough and Chard Parish and boasted it was the " *best flower show between Taunton and Exeter.*"

In 1944, the decision was taken to hold a flower show and fete in aid of the Red Cross at The Berea in Wambrook and call it Wambrook Flower Show. This show went back to it's roots and, as it was organised on a much smaller scale, the 'local show area' was once again restricted to Wambrook and Bewley Down. Many of the same people were involved in its organisation as officers, committee members, judges and businesses e.g. Jarman and Co, Chard seed merchants and nurserymen, which donated a large not-for-competition display of flowers and vegetables to be auctioned off at the show's conclusion. Since 1944, the show has continued, unabated, until the present day and is currently held at the Cotley Tithe Barn, Cotley, Wambrook.

Please join us as we celebrate our Centenary on



Saturday 26th of July at the Cotley Tithe Barn, Cotley, Wambrook

A local history book covering the first years of the show, which includes all the show committee meeting minutes and Chard and Ilminster News show notices and reports, has just been published. Bewley Down Flower Show 1914—1939 is available from the publisher Beechwood Books, and retails for £10.00.

Please contact marjied@btinternet.com to order a copy.

In the last newsletter, Clubs were invited to send their tips for keeping members interest in the club going; Sandford Gardening Club kindly responded.

They greet every person attending, and asking them to sign the register so that any visitors or new members can be welcomed by name at the start of the meeting. There is an interest table where information on events at other gardening clubs, open gardens, their gardening club programme and photograph album of their activities (so that visitors and new members can see what they do as a club) and any other communications received, such as the Somerset Federation Newsletter.

One member has a very nice garden and she brings a small arrangement of flowers each month, this does provoke quite a bit of interest. Each month different members serve refreshments. At the end of the meeting, members are asked if they have any useful tips or advice.

A Cautionary Tale

As gardeners we should all be careful in the garden—this is to remind you just one of the reasons why.

During the summer my daughter in law came home very early in the morning after a night shift (she is a nurse) and went into the garden as she often does to unwind, strolled round, let the chickens out, then spotted dear old granny's bonnet or aquilegia if you wish, she had lost her support cane, picked it up bent down to replace it, did not see another cane and yes you've guessed it very nearly lost her eye.

The cane thrust up through her cheek past the eye, and according to the specialist missed her eye by about the width of a piece of paper, it then went into the eyelid.

After several visits to Bristol Eye Hospital, 8 stitches in her cheek and 6 very painful ones into her eyelid, she is OK but so very lucky not to have lost her eye.

I have not spared the details as I feel it important to remind fellow gardeners how easy it is to have an accident. All the canes in the garden now have corks on or plastic hats,

PLEASE DO THE SAME

Barbara Rahn Wells and Dist. G.C.



'Twas ever thus 1740 –1940

The eighteenth century collector of American plants, Peter Collinson was, like all gardeners, passionately attached to his plants. ' Every particle of Earth goes through my fingers' he wrote. Woe betide the enemy who destroyed his plants. Moles he drove above ground are dispatched with enthusiasm. Other intruders munching his treasures met with his fury. He complained, '..... Most unfortunately a Black Snail Eat of the flower bud before it was discover'd' These, as with beetles etc he would smoke out or squirt them with a 'Hand Engine' filled with tobacco water. He may even have had, like some of his fellow gardeners, seagulls with clipped wings to eat the worms and snails.

Two hundred years later similar contraptions were on the market. A friend of mine was taught by a kindly old schoolmaster who ordered a fool-proof device he saw in the newspaper for ridding the garden of slugs and snails. He sent off the requisite two shillings, confident in a good investment which arrived by post. Unwrapping it, the gentleman saw, with dismay, two flat pieces of wood.. 100% effective in killing snails and slugs'.

Two bob was a month's pocket money in those days.



ROOM FOR ONE MORE?



Most of us have one or two favourite plants, ones that we head for determinedly at plant sales and covet in other people's gardens but some of us, like me, go a step further and develop a fascination bordering on obsession, for a particular group of plants. I admit to being wholly obsessed with one species of plants, the sempervivums or house leeks as they are commonly known. In fact the house leek, *sempervivum tectorum* is the one that you can see growing on some old tiled roofs- it's not the ones that grow on snowy, craggy mountain slopes-these are the aristocrats and these are the sort I love. Hating the rain, loving the sun these little rosettes occur in amazing varieties, small tight green rosettes, large spiky leaved, soft velvety covered with a lacy cobweb of fine white hairs and from these species come the cultivars, several thousand different varieties with magical names like *Jungle Fires*, *Tordeur's Memory*, *Lilac Time*, *Aladdin* and *Gallivarda*. In the spring these plants, quiet and sulking in the endless rain of our winters, suddenly begin to swell up, new rosettes form to enlarge the clump in its terracotta pot and the colours become much brighter, or change completely. Some, dull green in winter suddenly blaze into brilliant crimson, others turn from drab shades of greeny brown into deep, vibrant purple, and a mass of them side by side, are as colourful as a flowerbed

How did my fascination with these hardy unusual perennial alpiners start? I can pinpoint it to a plant sale on a dismal day, when, I noticed a rather furtive looking figure leaning against a wall with a small pile of plastic bags at his feet. Drawing near I saw that each bag was carefully labelled and contained a wizened looking object the size of a tiny bristly seed head. The names on the labels are strange "*sempervivum pumilum*, *s. arachnoideum*, *s. macedonicum*" I'd heard of sempervivums before but I was intrigued by these odd packets and on an impulse bought 12 packets, planted them in small pots as instructed by the seller, two thirds John Innes 2 and one third grit, labelled them carefully and waited. A few weeks later and I found the original rosettes, all pleasingly different to look at, had swelled up, and produced little additional rosettes-and the labels had mysteriously vanished, as labels tend to. This was the start, I wanted more, lots more with names and I started collecting them at every opportunity. My husband found dark red Reggy green and red Mahogany and plum coloured Bronco at Chelsea and I found Greyfriars and lovely pinky purple Engels at Sherborne Fair but that was still not enough.

After a bit of research I found my quest had ended when I visited Sally and Howard's amazing collection of sempervivums at Fernwood nursery in Devon. The garden is devoted to sempervivums and their close cousins, *jovibarba* which are displayed on long concrete benches where you can browse to your heart's content and get all the help you need. A visit there, plus another, and another, swelled my collection with *Georgette*, *Thunder*, *Lively Bug*, *Midas* and many others. Now all round the front of our house my 170 strong collection, including of course the original twelve, are arranged in terra cotta pots of varying sizes, as the plants expand and have to be repotted into larger pots, and each pot is labelled with black labels stuck firmly into the pots to deter mischievous blackbirds from pulling them out. I have to ask myself "are you satisfied now? Haven't you got enough, and the answer is of course "No!" Have I really any more room? Yes! Another visit to my friends in Devon is planned for next week. www.fernwood-nursery.co.uk will be my next port of call!



Fronika



Chairman's Corner



The time has come for the Federation to take its' second step into the World of Technology! Following the success of the e-mail experiment, with more of you each month using this system, the committee have decided to build the Federation its' own website. With this in mind, we welcome Tina Franklyn onto the committee who will become our website manager (welcome on board Tina!) and thank you Richard Fox (Wellington Gardening Club) for the recommendation and introduction.

Digressing a moment or two, I would not be at least surprised to find amongst our membership, a few people like myself, namely a member of the 'flat earth society'! Ipads, Iphones, tablets, smart phones, downloads, apps, etc., etc., what they all mean I have no idea, but having said that, I do understand what modern technology can do for us all.

Having spent a number of years working in one of the nation's largest leisure organisations, computer systems revolutionised the company I worked for and completely changed the way we operated. Thinking about computers in the way I think about my car helps; like the complexities of computing, I have the same problem with oversteer, understeer, big ends, manifolds, etc., I don't understand any of it, but I know where the fuel goes, where the oil has to go, what the tyre pressure should be and obviously I can start the engine and drive! Having that skill can take me to visit family and friends, to go on holiday, to go shopping - the list goes on! Well, the same premise can be used with computers, find out how to switch it on, steer the mouse, click on the internet and the world is your oyster, there is nowhere you can't go in an instant. So much can be learnt and any question can be answered.

In my day it was the Encyclopaedia Britannica that was the font of all knowledge, in comparison with the internet, it's a grain of sand on a beach. I think it is inevitable in this day and age that we all in one way or another have to embrace technology. As things stand, I believe in many ways it assists us in our daily lives, however, as we go forward there is a possibility that we could all become dependent on it (if we haven't already!) then I think it could become a problem, but then with all change, some find it easier to adapt to - than others. I am sure the same things apply now as they did in the nineteenth century when we moved into the industrial age!

Well after all that, back to topic at hand, the Federation website will enable us to communicate much more effectively with all our members, and allow clubs to advertise their events through the year, it will be able to display each club's contact details (providing they wish to do so) information for insurance, cost of membership, contact details for committee members and so on.

I will of course keep you all up to date with developments.

In closing, I hope you all have a 'happy and successful gardening summer'!

God Bless
Erl



Hon. Treas. as Virtuous Woman



Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is above rubies. Proverbs XXI 10

The same could be said of a Treasurer and the following list of enticements in the search for someone reliable to fill the role should not be employed. More cautionary messages.....

1. If you have always wondered what Creative Accounting is all about, all will soon be revealed.
2. For advice on tricky little matters of finance you can always get in touch with our ex Treasurer Doris, a real wizard in these matters, at present, of course but only temporarily enjoying H.M.'s hospitality.
3. Say goodbye to those Empty Pocket Blues.
4. This is naturally an appointment of some prestige, for you will soon be rubbing shoulders not only with the local bigwigs but also bank managers, solicitors, J P's and magistrates.
5. Don't worry about equipment. You get a cheque book, a biro and a strong box thrown in; this time without the false bottom, which left with the last incumbent.
6. This is a difficult ask, as they say nowadays but we do need someone who is honest.
7. Never mind all that head spinning mathematics, just concentrate on an illegible script
8. Don't forget, we're in this for profit, so we are looking for a mean spirited, tight fisted old miser.
9. By the way, Betty and George wish their successor the very best of British luck from the sunny Maldives. We were rather fortunate last year to come across such an understanding magistrate.
10. Cooking on television is all the vogue, so why not try your hand at cooking the books?
11. If you've always wanted to lay your hands on some quick ready cash you'll be in the right job.
12. It can be a bit of a lonely position but our last Treasurer found plenty of compensation in the petty cash and vintage wines.
13. If you are good at wangling money out of people then you're the person we are looking for.
14. I don't have to remind you of the awful trouble we had with Geoffrey and his false bottom.
15. OK so you can't count. That'll be the least of your worries.
16. Right here is the solution to the school fees problem.



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FEDERATION E-MAIL

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News from Bishop's Palace Gardens,

It has been a very busy winter in the gardens despite the non stop rain. With all the box blight last year we decided to take it all out and replace with *Euonymus japonicus* 'Green Rocket'. Lots of people kindly gave to the appeal for the replacement plants and we raised £1900, which is enough to replace all the box. The blight appeared in 2012 probably brought in with some plants that I should have quarantined. It spread through all the box that wet summer and returned last year. Spraying can keep it at bay but never stop it. Possibly disease resistant strains will be found and bred.

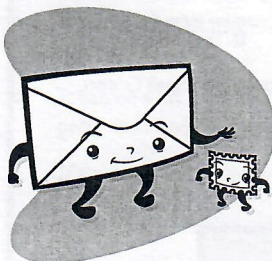
With the help of John Horsey's students we have created new areas for planting around St Andrews Well to be planted up this spring with many shade and moisture loving plants including Japanese Acers for colour and height. We will soon start developing a new area of garden in the inner gardens which will be opposite the Adam and Eve sculpture and contain a St Andrews cross hedge and plenty of rich colours especially purple, linking with the Bishop theme.

The snowdrops were amazing this year and the daffodils, Camassias and other spring bulbs will flower right through until May. Last year we found Bee and Pyramid orchids in the gardens which had blown in from the nature reserve above Wells or possibly introduced by wildlife. BBC Radio Somerset even discussed it with me! We have managed the arboretum in a more meadow like style since 2004 and the rate at which wild flowers appear has been surprisingly quick.

Amanda has been busy in the Community Garden creating a new wildlife pond and with her volunteers she is about to plant lots of new apple trees kindly donated by Gaymer's. Amanda will be running a number of courses through the year please check our website for details.

The gardens have been planted for interest throughout the year from carpets of snowdrops in February, roses in June, the hot border in late summer and autumn colour. Come and see all the changes the gardeners are always happy to answer any horticultural questions. We also look forward to seeing some of you before this years AGM in Wells, during the afternoon of 8th May.

James Cross, Head Gardener



POSTAGE PROBLEMS

You may have noticed from all the enclosures that there will only be one communication this Spring. With rising costs and postal restrictions, it is difficult to accommodate all the bits and pieces.

Consequently your copies of the NGS booklet will await your collection at the General Meeting in Wells in May.

Another reason for you and your members to come along.

FINAL CUTTINGS

This is possibly the first time in a newsletter that I have not had the pleasure of welcoming a new club to our membership. Either a sign of these austere times or have we reached saturation point? Nevertheless, many of you have made pleasurable contact—it is always good to have a chat with members in far flung places and to feel the Federation has something to offer.

In the near future we shall be offering much more with the establishment of a web site; more of this in due course. Contact is the key to success and though I sent out 240 change of contact forms and received 20 back, I can only assume we have got things right in the main. If we have not and if this newsletter reaches the wrong person, please get in touch, either with me or with the Federation's e-mail address :

somersetfedmail@gmail.com.

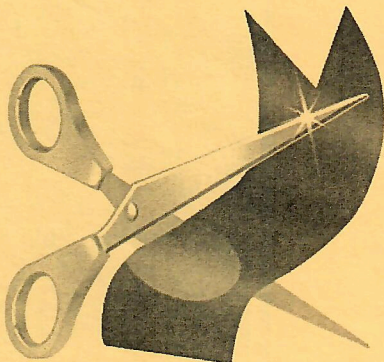
The Calendar of Events is enclosed so Hon. Secs. please ensure others see it.

You should also be in possession of 'A Year on My Allotment' by Ted Gill of Weston Super Mare. Other copies will be available at £ 1.50 per copy from Hon. Sec.

Finally, we spare our thoughts for our member clubs on the Levels whose lives have been overturned by the winter events. An unimaginable situation, which for those of us who live on higher slopes find it impossible to grasp. We all wish them a sunny recovery. I should like to record my personal thanks to Judy Combes who, happily and efficiently has transformed my scrappy script to the legible, well presented document before you.

Now to mow the moss and sort out the necropolis of the borders and on behalf of your Committee I would like to wish you much sunshine at Easter and beyond.

I look forward to seeing many of you in May.



Pip Harwood Hon. Sec.

01749 679182

