

Chichester Organic Gardening Society Newsletter 88 January 2023

Notes from the Committee

A Happy New Year to everyone. This autumn was the first session for nearly 3 years when we were able to enjoy an uninterrupted programme, although numbers attending were still not as high as a few years ago. Given the age profile of the membership, something that was discussed at length at the AGM (see below), this is unlikely to change significantly in the foreseeable future. But on the positive side, those who are there always enjoy an informative and sociable time.

Only the hardy types are gardening at the moment. You can probably guess who they are! Here's hoping, though, that the cold spell at the beginning of December did its job in killing off lots of pests and diseases in the garden. Certainly, it was frigid enough to kill off some of the geraniums that the editor of this newsletter brought into her north-facing conservatory and then forgot to nurture properly – a salient lesson to us all.

We just heard the sad news about Chris Bryan, who died unexpectedly last month. Several of us visited his large organic garden in Brandy Hole Lane and admired his plants and also the Autumn Ladies Tresses orchids growing wild in his lawn.

Autumn 2022/Spring 2023

26th September – a talk by **David Standing, former head gardener at Gilbert White's Garden in Selbourne**. After his retirement David continued to research the history of the garden, including the detailed diary Gilbert White kept from the 1750s until the 1770s, recording – among other things – first flowerings or appearances of plant and quantities of inputs including the dung used for growing melons in which he was especially interested. David showed us many of the plants that Rev. White cultivated and which are still grown in the garden today, including varieties not much grown nowadays. As a keen historian of the garden, he also displayed watercolours of the garden painted at various times. The general consensus was that it was a good meeting and a group visit to Selbourne might make an interesting summer visit.

31st October – AGM and Harvest Supper – only 10 people attended but it was a lively meeting and sociable supper. Full details of the AGM are to be found in the minutes circulated online by Penelope. The main points to note are that the 2022 Committee was re-elected unchanged and there followed a lively discussion about finances, which are more precarious than in years gone by. This is due to a mixture of declining numbers at meetings, more expensive speakers (especially as the cost of travelling to meetings had gone up) and the decline in income from other activities like shows and plant sales. Alexander Damper, who was Penelope's guest, suggested that, as demographics was a problem, contact be established with the University, as students were increasingly concerned about environmental issues and also liked to cultivate plants in their rooms. A number of actions were initiated to try to relieve the financial pressure (see below)

28th November 2022 – Maggie Haynes from Tuppenny Barn talked about the activities of the charity in recent years and the development of the Outside Living Classroom. A lot has happened since our last visit as a society! The charity provides opportunities for vulnerable people in the local community to learn essential life skills around health eating and sustainability and includes horticultural therapy sessions, young carer wellbeing sessions and collaboration with Stonepillow, the homeless charity. During lockdowns, it provided vulnerable local families with a food parcel scheme and set up a separate 'not for profit' delivery scheme for those who needed food. The latest project is the construction of a community shop and café to the highest environmental standards, which will equip vulnerable young people and adults with the skills needed to work in a café or shop. It will also provide financial resilience for the charity, which lost 80% of its income during lockdowns.

As usual Maggie's energy and dedication to the community are an inspiration, but she did admit that she was getting tired and looking for someone else to take up the challenge. She will be a hard act to follow!

Although the talk was advertised widely both locally and at the University, attendance was only 17, which fell far short of covering costs.

30th January 2023 – Brian Henham from the Manhood Wildlife Group will speak about the wildlife that visited his garden during lockdown, and how we gardeners can support nature in coping with the climate crisis.

27th February - members evening but with the added attraction of a talk on soil by Transition's Mark Hobson. Surely this is a topic of vital interest for all of us. In preparation for the coming season please bring any seeds you have to swop, whether home-saved or commercial but please make sure they are clearly labelled.

27th March – a talk by Chichester Physio about health and safety in the garden. None of us is getting any younger, so advice on preventing sprains and pulled muscles in particular is ever more essential.

24 April - Spring Fling and Plant Swop. This is a break from our tradition of holding this event on the last meeting of the spring in May or June. Only one member brought seedlings last year as most of us had planted out or given away our young plants by then. April, on the other hand, seems a more promising time so we are giving the change of date a whirl in 2023. Please bring your plant swaps and a contribution to the Bring and Share Supper. We hope to raise a few more funds this way.

5th June – the Committee has some ideas but this is still to be confirmed.

Other News

10th November - Tree in Memory of David Scott

After all the pandemic delays a flowering Sorbus (crab apple), sourced from Paul Barnett, a local grower, was finally planted on the grassy area at New Park Community Centre. Committee members plus Susan Maudsley-Maguire and assorted partners attended a small, informal ceremony, where we toasted David's memory in organic apple juice. A plaque will be attached in due course. Many thanks to Justin Jones of CDC who did the heavy digging and joined in with such friendliness and to Alli McDonald-Hughes of NPC who facilitated the arrangements.



Green Fairs – we had a table at both Transition Chichester's EcoFair on 1st October and the Students Union Green Fair on 28th November. Although we had an enjoyable time and chatted to lots of fellow stallholders, no new members were signed up and it is doubtful that we will continue attending these events in future, unless more volunteers come forward.

Membership fees- would all those members who do not pay by Standing Order and have not yet sent a cheque or cash to the Treasurer please get their subscriptions to Liz, the Treasurer. Contact details below.

Last Words

The warm November brought out a new crop of climbing roses in the editor's garden, which were then frosted like cake decorations in the freezing weather. Amazingly they survived to be finally destroyed by the wind and rain!



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