

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN FLORILEGIUM SOCIETY

Newsletter

WINTER / SPRING 2023 No. 53



Hello to all,

*What a year it's
been as we
slowly moved
out of Covid
and coped with
a neighbouring
war, 3 prime
ministers, the
death of the
Queen, extreme
temperatures
and a failing
economy ... but
we must go
forward.*

Despite all of this, the Florilegium has had an increasingly positive 2022 with more and more members attending meetings and submitting paintings.

We had a wonderful program of speakers such as the Linnean Society's Paper Conservator, Janet Ashdown, our own now-published Sarah Morrish, Simon Croson on beekeeping, Joe Studholme expounding on Joseph Banks, a fascinating private tour of Carl Linnaeus' collection at the Linnean Society and an exuberant exposé by Timothy Walker on the genus *Euphorbia* . . not to mention Lucy Skellorn's delightful presentation on Benton End, the original home of Cedric Morris's The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing in Suffolk.

The Physic Garden re-opened the Cool Fernery, looking wonderfully white and re-stocked, while the rest of the glasshouses are progressing toward completion for this year's 350th anniversary.

The Florilegium participated in the education department's 'The Big Give Christmas Challenge' fundraiser, donating £250.00 helping to reach their target to support the learning team's activities this coming year.

The Gallery's refreshing refurbishment has provided a rotating exhibition space for themed Florilegium prints from our archives. The next show will feature the work of our Society's Founders and New Members. High-resolution prints backed on foam board and labelled will add to the clean and contemporary look now in the Gallery. Upon completion of the exhibition, artists will be gifted the print which was chosen for the show.

We also welcomed a few new members to the Society in November and look forward to their fresh input throughout the coming years.

To conclude, I must say that each and every time I go through our collection for whatever reason, I am filled with overwhelming pride at the quality of our artists' work and passion for the continuation of our ethos, to support the Physic Garden through our paintings.

Warmest wishes for a healthy and peaceful 2023.
Mary Ellen

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Future Meetings

I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who has an idea or request for a future lecture/outing . I will be happy to investigate your suggestion.

Contact me by email : paldon@btinternet.com

Looking forward to hearing from you

Pam Donoghue (Programme Secretary)

Please keep further articles coming. Remember this is your newsletter so please send any news articles, comments, memoirs, write a piece about your studio or useful tips, exhibitions dates, anecdotes etc and send to:
guywillameves@hotmail.co.uk

Yours
Guy

The Revival of *Benton End*

By Lucy Skellorn

On the outskirts of Hadleigh in Suffolk, Benton End is set for a revival, having been acquired by the Garden Museum in London. It was once home to the celebrated artist plantsman and award-winning breeder of bearded irises, Sir Cedric Morris (1889–1982).

Morris resided there for over 40 years with his lifelong partner, artist Arthur Lett-Haines. Together they ran the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing – a sanctuary for a diverse range of influential artists, writers, musicians, and botanists of the 20th century.

Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling were among their students. Vita Sackville West, Beth Chatto, Paul and John Nash, Elizabeth David, Constance Spry and Benjamin Britten all frequented the house.



*Cedric Morris
Courtesy of Sarah Cook*

In November 2021 the Garden Museum and the Pinchbeck Charitable Trust jointly announced plans to revive and restore Benton End as a new centre of gardening, art, and creativity. The Pinchbeck Charitable Trust acquired the property, a private home since Morris' death in 1982, and have now transferred ownership to the Garden Museum.



The revived Benton End aims to support and inspire artists and gardeners of all ages and to encourage freedom of invention, enthusiasm, and enjoyment, in the spirit of the original ethos of Morris and Haines.

Cedric Morris famously bred tall bearded irises, naming 90 cultivars, many of which carry the 'Benton' prefix. He was a vice chairman of the British Iris Society, won the Foster Plaque for Iris breeding in 1949 and gained the highest accolade, the Dykes Medal for his Iris 'Benton Cordelia'.

These irises have enjoyed a revival in recent years not least through the dedication of one particular individual - the former head gardener of Sissinghurst Castle, Sarah Cook. She has tracked down

over 36 cultivars and holds the National collection. A Chelsea Gold for her display in 2015 catapulted these historic irises to the fore of the gardening world, becoming widely available in nurseries and a must for any enthusiast.

Morris made a garden as influential in its day as Sissinghurst; it became one of the first modern gardens of naturalistic design, revered by botanists and gardeners alike, developed as it was for the study of the unusual plants he found, chosen with a keen artist's eye. An avid plant hunter, Morris collected many specimens whilst visiting the continent on his winter painting retreats.

The intention is not to return the garden to its former incarnation, or to attempt to mimic a time and a certain energy that cannot be recreated, the ambition is to garden in the spirit of Cedric, to celebrate his style and influence through the plants that he grew and cultivated to form part of the story of this plantsman's garden in Suffolk.



The Garden Museum plans to begin work renewing Morris' garden in 2023. Redeveloping the house will be a longer-term project, aiming to restore Benton End's post-war bohemian glamour and atmosphere, build an exhibition gallery and spaces for learning dedicated to the art of the garden, and to make the building more accessible.

Garden Museum Director Christopher Woodward says: "This would not be a rural outpost of the Garden Museum. The new Trust will be a hybrid of the Garden Museum and the heritage of Benton End and its neighbourhood. It will not be a museum, but once again a house where things happen."

*To support the project
please sign up to
regular newsletters at
www.bentonend.co.uk
and follow @bentonend
on instagram.*

Work to preserve the house and garden is ongoing, ensuring that the rich history of Benton End is not forgotten and that the house and garden can be open to the public in future years.



The GLASSHOUSE

Restoration Project

The Thomas Moore Fernery



Glasshouse photographs

Guy William Eves



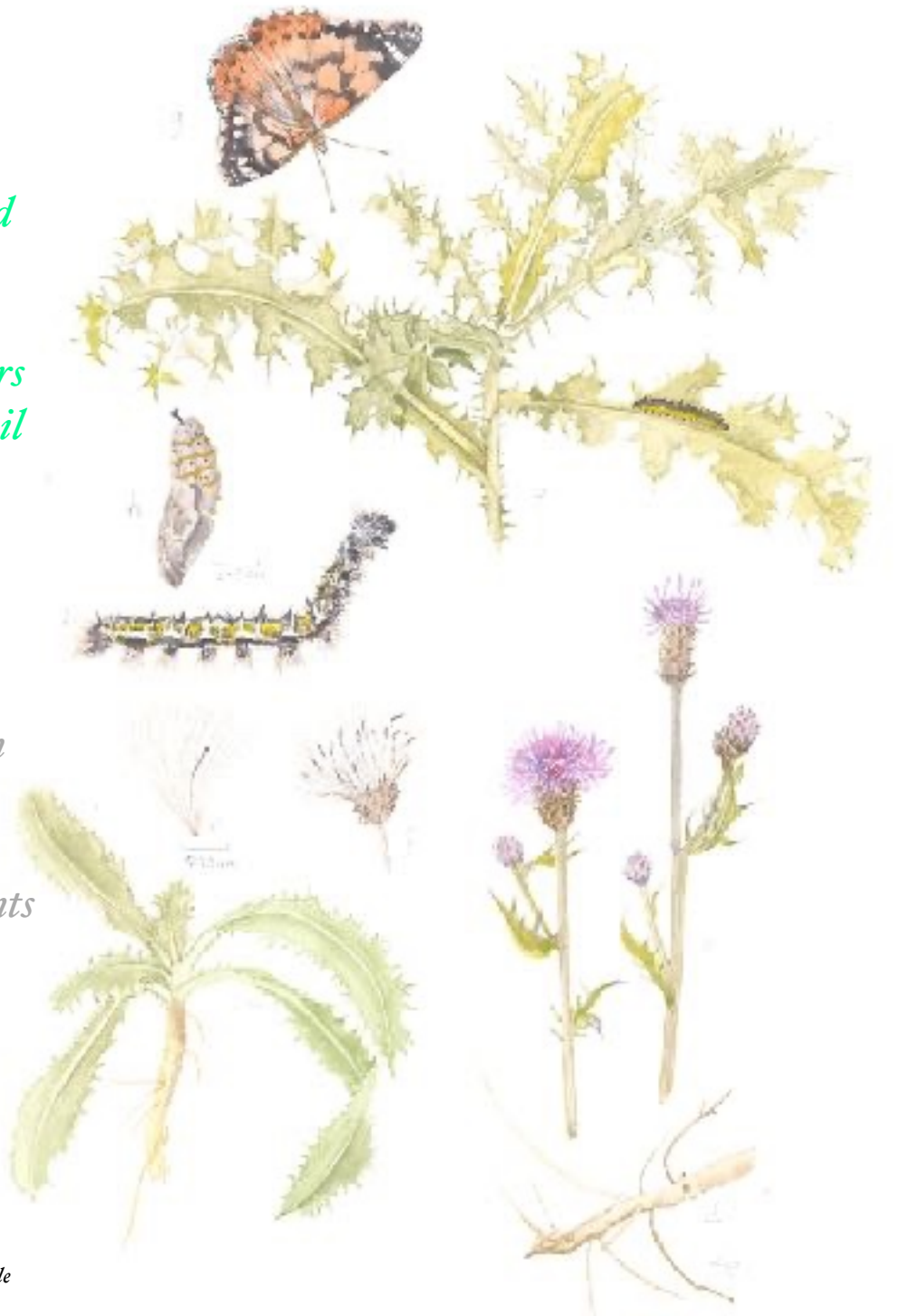
Plants for Soil Regeneration

An Illustrated Guide

Authored by Sally Pinhey and Margaret Tebbs

This book is a comprehensive, beautifully illustrated guide to the plants which farmers, growers and gardeners can use to improve soil structure and restore fertility without the use and expense of agrichemicals.

Information based on the latest research is given on how to use soil conditioning plants to avoid soil degradation, restore soil quality and help clean polluted land.



Creeping thistle

Six chapters cover: soil stabilisation and aeration; nitrogen fixation; green manures; herbal leys; phytoremediators; and soil mycorrhiza (plant-fungal symbiosis). Climate range and soil types will be provided for each plant, along with their soil conditioning properties.

Each plant will have a comprehensive description opposite a detailed illustration, either in colour or ink, and all will be cross-referenced. The book allows the reader to identify the plants they need quickly and find the information necessary to begin implementation.



Chicory

This book is the culmination of some 4 years work, starting with the persistent idea in Sally's mind that if the abilities of plants to condition soil were known better, they could be used much more to restore soil depleted of its natural resilience by agrichemicals.

Originally visualised as a project for developing artists, it metamorphosed into a critical work providing information for anyone with land, on any scale. The chapters cover Soil Health, Nitrogen Fixing Plants, Cover Crops and Green manures, Micro organisms, Fungi, Plants that decontaminate soil (Phytoremediators), 56 Illustrations, Weeds and Invasive Plants, Hedges and Trees and Case Studies. 5 volunteers contributed to the illustrations and the remainder were done between Sally and Margaret, Margaret drawing on her pen and ink skills and many years of experience at Kew. Margaret also conducted a step by step case study of her no-dig system for vegetable gardens.



Buckwheat

CABI the publishers were brilliant at indexing and cross-referencing so that information can be reached from any starting point. Plants are accessed under both their English and botanical names.

For farmers locked into the factory farming system involving investment in heavy machinery and regular use of expensive chemicals, a complete switch to sustainable or organic farming looks impossible. Their remit is to produce large quantities of cheap food. But farming does not have to be entirely organic to benefit from fewer inputs. With better knowledge of the plants and careful timing of intercropping, a gradual switch can be made.

The change of eligibility for subsidies that comes with Brexit places more emphasis on soil quality, and more recently still, the huge price rises in agrichemicals is making regenerative farming a necessity.

The illustration is of Sea Buckthorn, *Hippophaë rhamnoides* a robust hedge plant that fixes nitrogen in the soil and produces a super-food berry rich in vitamins. Chicory, *Cichorium intybus*, *Cirsium arvense*, *Fagopyrum esculentum*, improves soil drainage with its long tap roots. Creeping thistle, is a persistent weed needing management, but is food for pollinators, Buckwheat provides a gluten free flour and matures in a short season.



Sea buckthorn

EUPHORBIAS

BY TIMOTHY WALKER

Timothy Walker needed little introduction to his established fans, but Mary Ellen mentioned his lectureships and books before he began. He set off at a cracking pace maintained throughout and accompanied by excellent photographs of his subjects and a generous delivery of witty asides. He gave us a whistlestop tour of some of the 2000 species that are found in UK gardens and around the world.

Oxford Botanic Garden has the national collection of this popular garden plant genus. Timothy accounted for the plant's success on many fronts. They adapt easily to different growing conditions, hybridise prolifically, can be self-fertile and are fast growing. They store their own water, have good dispersal mechanisms, and seeds are still viable after long dormancy. As the sap is highly toxic, they have few predators. The stems are fast growing, not woody, and the sap is judged to be the most corrosive on earth.

The flowers are simple but distinctive, having both male and female flowers in a cup of specialised bracts, quite separate, but within the same inflorescence. The male flower has only one stamen and matures at different times to the female

flowers to limit self pollination. The seeds of all euphorbias have a fat reservoir to aid dispersal. They are taken by ants, which, after eating the fat, leave the seed at a suitable depth underground for germination.

Euphorbias have the potential to become serious weeds. Timothy showed us photos of *E. esula* and *E. terracina* which have become invasive in N. Dakota and S.E. Australia respectively, *E. hyberna* has a natural predator in the moth *Hyles euphorbiae* which adopts the toxicity for its own protection. *E. lathyris* has opposite leaves and is called molewort, possibly because the sap was used for burning out warts. The wild *E. paralias* grows on Holkham beach in Norfolk and *E. portlandica* grows out of rock on Portland Bill. *Daphne nivea* which looks similar is an example of convergent evolution and mimicry.

E. characias is the most common garden plant in having contrasting black nectaries in the flower bracts, and *E. wulfenii* is a similar sub-species. *E. dendroides* disconcertingly loses its leaves in summer droughts. Macaronesia is home to many species, *E. stygiana* and *E. mellifera* which grows into a tree in Tenerife. Curiously, *E. balsamifera* grows both in the Canary Islands and in Arabia, far too far apart to cross pollinate, but both well suited to their habitats.



Euphorbia sikkimensis

In East Africa, candelabra varieties resembling cacti are used for stock-proof fencing, and fishermen use it as a form of sustainable fishing. The fish die so quickly from the poison in the water that they are still edible. *E. antisiphilitica* in

Mexico is used for waxing coats and lemons by using the scum from boiled sap. Madagascar is home to several species of which dominate the prickly forests in the south of the island.

*Euphorbia characias & ribes*

In India small species are *E. nari* and *E. gusiformis*, while in the Himalayas similar species *E. sikkimensis*, *E. shillingii* and *E. Wallichii* are indigenous. Australia is home to *E. sarcostemmoides* and the poinsettia is extensively cultivated in Mexico for the Christmas trade. In the Caribbean *E. tithymaloides* is good example of a 'ring' species.

In Oxford Botanic Tom Price designed a garden using *E. cornigera* mixed with ornamental grasses. *Euphorbia myrsinites* looks good with species tulips and *Iris reticulata*. *E. palustris* is also good in a bog garden with autumn colours. In their book 'Colour by Design' Sandra and Nora Pope recommended *E. characias*, *E. palustris*, *E. polychroma* and *E. griffithii* with *Papaver* 'Saffron' for an orange garden. At Kiftsgate Court Gardens *E. cyparissias* is planted with geraniums and bluebells where they check each other's robust growth. A look-alike Mediterranean garden designed at Sissinghurst by

Dan Pearson is planted with *E. rigida* and *E. characias*. They are never watered there. *E. rigida* while being frost hardy prefers a rich soil and full sun, while the deep purple 'Portuguese Velvet' likes a sunny but well-drained position. *E. polychroma* and *E. cyparissias* look good with alliums growing up through them and also go well with purple sages and blue camassias. *E. cognata* looks good with dark purple tulips and irises and does not need staking while *E. cornigera* fills out the backs of beds with a good contrast.

The place of garden cultivation of plants endangered in the wild is often contested as they tend to hybridise when they would not do so if geographically separated, but Timothy's own students made a good job of propagating and distributing *E. stygiana* which is endangered in the Azores. They discovered that wrens ate the seeds and

*Euphorbia griffithii*

AMANDA WARD

Biography

By Helen Allen



Such very sad news of Amanda Ward (née Vincent) wife of the late Gerald Ward CBE, and much-loved mother and grandmother, who died suddenly on 15th July 2022 while on holiday in Scotland with her family.

Amanda Ward was born in London, 1942. After leaving school Amanda studied art at the Byam Shaw Art School in London. She lived in the Far East for three years where she began a silk screen printing business and was commissioned to paint children's illustrations. Upon returning to England she furthered her studies under Neil Forster focusing on landscapes.

Amanda then went to the English Gardening school at The Chelsea Physic Garden where she gained a diploma under the tuition of Anne-Marie Evans.

Amanda exhibited regularly and her work is held in many collections; she is probably one of the most talented botanical artists no-one has really heard of. Amanda contributed paintings for the Highgrove Florilegium and Transylvania Florilegium and was an associate member of CPGFS, contributing a painting of Teasle *Dipsacus fullonum* to the archive.

She was a valued member of the Highgrove Florilegium working group and also the artists' representative on the Transylvania Florilegium selection panel.

I met Amanda in 2000 at the very beginning of the Highgrove Florilegium project. A group of us came together to form a working committee under the chairmanship of Professor David Cadman whose wife Elizabeth was also an incredible botanical artist. David Cadman was involved in the Prince's School of Traditional Arts as well as the Prince's Charitable Foundation. Over the years, we worked together on the project and Amanda often came to classes I held in my studio; not that she needed instruction but we all benefit from sharing ideas.

When the Transylvania project became a reality, I became the project manager and from an extensive list of botanical artists, made that first and most important choice of characters, team players but independent spirits, able to motivate themselves and get on with the job in hand. Amanda ticked all the boxes and she was a hoot and so easy to get along with, absolutely nothing fazed her.

Five of the artists, including Amanda, made 2 visits, four of whom are CPGFS members!. Her work was beautiful with a grace and energy not many possess.

*Detail - Hungarian Clover, Trifolium
pannonicum from the Transylvania Florilegium.*



Charm Offensive



Jasmina Cibic

Artist Jasmina Cibic approached me through my Instagram account in July 2022 with the following intriguing message: “I am an artist working on a project “Charm Offensive” for the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in New Zealand and I would like to invite several scientific/botanical illustrators from various parts of the world to collaborate on the project.

I am looking at the problematic of Latin naming and the impossibility of changing the names that are politically sensitive. Each illustrator will receive a single Latin name of a plant and make the drawing without reference to any written description or visual material relating to the plant. They must not attempt to use Internet search engines and it is important that they create an illustration based solely on their experience and their professional interpretation of the plant's Latin name.” I accepted the challenge and was given the following plant: “*Linnaea borealis*” to paint. Happily in this instance my botanical knowledge was limited so I didn’t know what the plant looked like. I was inspired by the Northern Lights colour palette for the blooms and the local plant life whilst on holiday in Portugal this summer.

She writes:

"Plants are perhaps most instrumental of all forms of life and botany itself has been central to the expansion of empire. Its emergence as a scientific discipline was a direct consequence of colonial voyages. Botanists became agents of empire and the discipline with it's concept of ordering and naming according to European powers-became integral in ordering up the wealth of the empire as a vast project to universalize knowledge. The local knowledge would be erased, including the local names. This led to the destruction of worlds taking place within the colonial project.

Hans Sloane, Joseph Banks, James Cook, Carl Linnaeus- are some of the white men who aided the establishment of scientific racism as well as colonisation. Ordering up of the world became very important for the establishment of national and political powers that still order our contemporary condition which still searches

for different forms of life that can be commercialised. In the act of telling history and how we tend to think of historical events, the landscape, as well as culture, many times falls into mere backdrop of the central narrative. They are presented as passive, non-changing stages upon which historical events can take place. This goes hand in hand with a colonial take on nature as a passive element which can be mastered. Whereas nature, landscape and culture are not fixed. They can easily be manipulated, weaponised by human actors. It could be as simple as destroying the ecosystem, or making fences, barriers. Control, dispossession of certain populations. This includes us all as artists as well. This project, apart from looking at how history is told, also wishes to create a community of artists to suggest an Alternative Garden of History and how new cultural capital can be an agent that presses on current forces of political and national power. Can we return the names of plants?"

In the installation there are illustrations by 12 international scientific/botanical illustrators that are exhibited alongside 12 illustrations of gated gardens. This is the entry into Jasmina's film *The Gift* that is made entirely from gifts of culture to political/national organisations. Link here: <https://vimeo.com/693223987>
At a recent Florilegium visit to the Linnean Society I was stopped in my tracks by a large portrait of Carl Linnaeus from 1739, clutching a sprig of the '*Linnaea borealis*'. He first formally described the plant in *Species Plantarum* 1753 and it was said to be his favourite plant. If only he knew...we are still talking about him!

(This show runs until 12th February 2023 at The Dunedin Art Gallery. <https://dunedin.art.museum/assets/2022-exhibitions/Jasmina-Cibic/Jasmina-Cibic-Charm-Offensive.pdf>)

Deborah Lambkin

By way of explanation.

'Previous to receiving the name of the plant I would illustrate, *Carex solandri*, I was only aware that the plant would be named after a European plant collector.



Deborah Lambkin

The illustration on page 20 should officially be called Carex solandri, but of course it is an imaginary Carex solandri which was the conceptual idea for the exhibition. This illustration is of an imagined grass

As it turned out, I already knew that *Carex* was a grass of some kind. N.B. *Carex* is a sedge, not a grass. (ed.) I have sketched grasses previously but I had never fully examined any. From the moment I knew I would illustrate a grass, I became more aware of them all around me. I examined them, but not too closely. I was more interested in the general look and feel of the plants, how they arched and waved in the wind and that some have ‘barbs’ on their leaf edges.

I was also aware this plant was named after Daniel Solander, Swedish botanist and plant hunter with Sir Joseph Banks as I have read quite a bit about them both previously.

Before I put pen to paper I thought about how I would like my illustration to appear. I wanted the character of the grass with strong parallel waving shapes, but also with a couple of vertical magnified sections, to ‘anchor’ the piece to the page and give the illustration some structure.

I regularly work from Herbarium Sheets in Kew Herbarium where the larger plant specimens are folded to fit the herbarium sheet, which results in some sections of the plant being upside down. Many botanists who collect plants use this technique and I think it possible that Solander may have too, this is why I have incorporated this ‘plant folding’ into my illustration. It shows the plant in the form that the plant collector would have seen it.

This ‘plant folding’ can create quite a congested, discomfiting composition for an illustration, which needs to be turned this way and that to follow the structure of the plant through from root to tip, almost like a puzzle. At the same time the stems lead a pathway through the congestion and offer the possibility of an unravelling.

Landscape Rebels

Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich

After the wonderful talk by Lucy Skellorn I was talking with Margaret King, founder of The Florilegium about the latest exhibition I was involved in and had work selected.

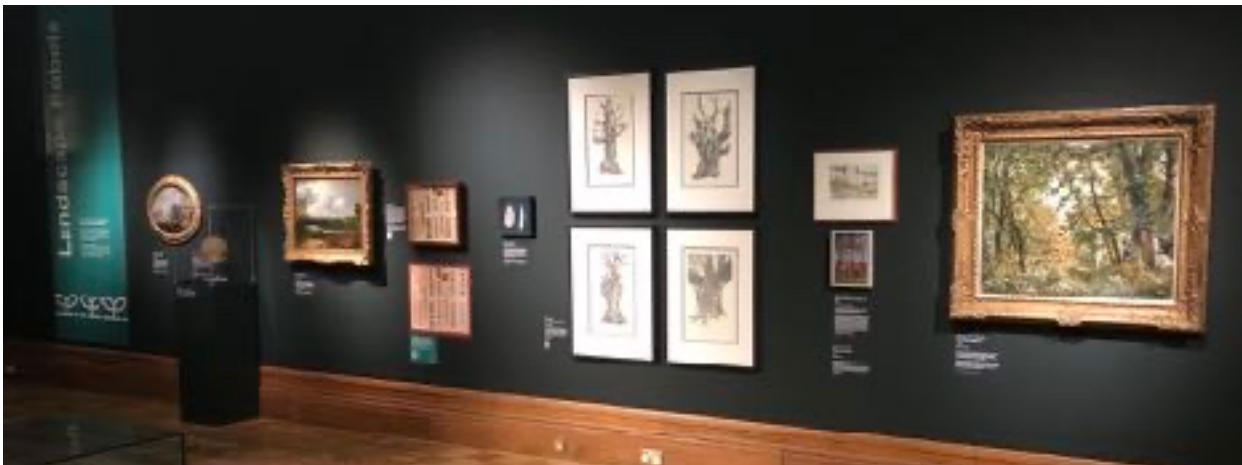
While flicking through the pictures of the exhibition on my iPad, Margaret asked who, why, no one knew about this to which I replied that as had been mentioned in the earlier talk, that I was also, like Cedric Morris, not very good at promoting myself. Margaret then insisted I include an article and the pictures in this next issue. Thank you Margaret.

I have had work selected for an exhibition called Landscape Rebels. The four drawings are of trunks of historic trees in Christchurch Park Ipswich. Two Chestnuts, both now in the permanent collection of Colchester & Ipswich Museum, one Oak and the oldest tree in the park, a Yew which is over 600 years old.

They are part of an exhibition called Landscape Rebels at the Wolsey Gallery, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich. The exhibition also includes works by Constable, Monet, Turner and Cedric Morris and is on until 16 April 2023.

They have been on and off the drawing boards for over four and a half years and total 900 hours of work. The Yew took 300 alone but I was doing the foliage almost needle for needle!

I was not sure how many of the four drawings there would space for but Emma Roodhouse, *Collections & Learning Curator (Art) Colchester & Ipswich Museums* included all four works. I am so happy and pleased, possibly the only time they will be displayed all together.





Unfortunately I did not have time before the exhibition to have the Yew tree scanned so the image is just a ping on my phone.

Top - Two Chestnut tree trunks both now in the permanent collection of Colchester & Ipswich Museum



Oak Tree

My love of drawing natural forms such as the trees in Christchurch Park has inspired me to document and capture the majestic, twisting, textural forms of these historic tree trunks. Trees that have witness both historic events and the everyday passage of time over the centuries.



Candida Groom

Grootbos

PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE - GANSBAIL

South Western Cape

GROOTBOS STATISTICS

A luxury eco-reserve close to the Southern tip of Africa tucked between mountains, forest and sea. There really is no better way to describe it than the smallest plant kingdom.

Grootbos is the brainchild of the Lutzeyer family who in 1991 first set eyes on a small farm on the fynbos slopes overlooking Walker Bay – an unbelievably beautiful sight. In 1994 Michael Lutzeyer sold his business interests in Cape Town and decided to develop a bed and breakfast business on the site for local visitors. This soon began attracting visitors from across the globe. Since then, through a combination of hard work, enthusiasm, vision and strong family cooperation, the Lutzeys have turned the reserve into a world leader in progressive luxury tourism.

The work of this inspirational man and his team have developed far more than a luxury private nature reserve.

It now boasts:

3500 Hectares of pristine wilderness
100 Endangered plant species
907 Plant species: 7 species new to science discovered here
3 Milkwood forests over 1000 years old
The wonder of the Marine Big Five. Over 23 mammal species found on the reserve.

Their mission-statement:

At Grootbos, we go beyond simply conserving this pristine wilderness we call home. We're constantly researching, innovating and pioneering new ways of doing things – in order to transform the lives of community members as well as preserve 3500 hectares of botanical and wildlife treasures

I could write so much about the various facets of this visit because every part of Grootbos is interrelated and centred around the **FOUR Cs**; **CONSERVATION, COMMUNITY, CULTURE and COMMERCE.**

In the nearby township is a centre where meals are provided, food crops grown and tended and sports facilities for the youngsters including, hockey, football, rugby and a girl's surfing team to name but a few. The Foundation provides coaching.



The Grootbos Private Nature Reserve is the commercial, eco-tourism site with glorious lodges and a world-class restaurant, both of which provide for the Grootbos Foundation that encompasses community and culture with conservation at its heart. The Fynbos is outstanding and its variations central to everything Grootbos stands for.



Education is key to offering young people in the community the opportunity to learn skills in horticulture, tourism and conservation that enables them to seek employment. The Foundation site has an education and meeting rooms, a commercial nursery tended by Green Futures students and an entomology lab with a huge collection of insects, pollinators being of huge importance to the biodiversity of this incredible place. International interns also come to study and research at the Foundation.

NO INSECTS - NO PLANTS

The best way to really find out more about this wonderful place, the Fynbos and its people is to visit their very comprehensive website beginning with the Florilegium:

<https://www.grootbos.com/en/florilegium>

THE GROOTBOS FLORILEGIUM

Vicki Thomas and a painting Michael Lutzeyer bought some years ago were the



inspiration for The Grootbos Florilegium.

The collection of paintings began with local South African artists and one or two in-comers. Vicki and Michael think and dream 'big' but also make these dreams and thoughts a reality. First there were the South African artists, then some very fortunate internationals. Then there were the glorious prints and the Grootbos Florilegium book which will be launched on 1st September 2022 at a gathering at Grootbos. Thinking even 'bigger', Michael wanted to build an art gallery and centre



for botanical art and education at Garden Lodge. He found funding from the wonderful Hannarie Wenhold and whilst we were at there, the foundations were laid. We each placed a small flower or leaf into the wet cement and were struck then by the reality of this huge project and the very short time in which all aspects were coming together. Needless to say some bubbles were also imbibed to toast the new venture.

MY GROOTBOS ADVENTURE October 2019. THE INVITATION

An email from Vicki Thomas, one of the most talented contemporary botanical artists, and a great way to start the day. A very exciting project to look forward to. *Warm greetings from the Western Cape. - It is with great excitement that I can now tell you our plans for your visit to South Africa to begin your artwork for the Grootbos Florilegium. Michael Lutzeyer has been so generous and has set aside five nights for your stay at the luxury lodge, all accommodation and wonderful food included. The date of arrival will be 17th September and depart on 22nd September, 2020.*

For a variety of reasons I was not able to join this group of international artists but then COVID struck and the 2020 trip was cancelled.

Meanwhile the South African artists were working away at their paintings. Their work is quite incredible, joyful and inspired by the dramatic and colourful landscape and plants. Then, another opportunity came to travel to Grootbos in September 2021 but this was not viable for some of us as South Africa was still on the Red List.

Finally the opportunity arose in late November and I flew out to join a small party of artists who were to become the Omicron Grootbossies. I am a happy

traveller, and enjoyed the journey despite delays and endless paperwork. The drive from Cape Town with friend and fellow botanical artist, Jenny Malcom, through Betty's Bay and Hermanus to Gansbaai and the turn off to Grootbos brought back memories of an East African childhood and previous visit along the Garden Route. The signpost is so small one could easily miss it but along the track, the gateway opens onto the massive area of land that is Grootbos.

I was immediately overwhelmed by the huge views and glorious colour of the landscape around me rolling down to the ocean in the distance. My Cottage was number 11 at Garden Lodge which was the other side of a shallow flat valley from the main Forest Lodge housing the restaurant, shop, library/games room and a swimming pool. My cottage appeared to grow straight out of the Milkwood forest with glorious views. Our studios were already set up for us in our cottages.



That first evening, we gathered, a group of friends all of whom knew at least one or two people. We were seven artists and three spouses. It was great to see Anita from the Netherlands, Verena from Germany, Jee Yoon from Korea, Carol from the States and Laura, and Jenny from UK. Vicki Thomas was our host along with Chris Lochner an inspiring botanist and illustrator who is based at Grootbos.

By this time we were itching to get out into the countryside and to see the diversity of plant material and the terrain that surrounded us. The first day was about familiarising ourselves with where we were and watching a presentation about the Grootbos Foundation. We spent some time looking at the collection of framed paintings already in the Grootbos Florilegium collection and on display for visitors. The paintings have been used in many different ways. Each painting of a plant also has an accompanying 'vignette' of the same size showing the pollinators, things that explain or enhance, amuse (including mice and frogs) inspire and also details, such as magnifications. Many variations of these paintings and 'vignettes' have been created, some enlarged, and others combined in so many different ways as to provide visitors with beautiful prints and cards to remind them of their time at Grootbos, the Fynbos and their contribution to the Foundation.



Settling into a routine happened very quickly as we begin to see the enormity of the task in hand. Daily walks and drives to other parts of the reserve helped us to understand the differences in terrain and plants particular to certain valleys or stony hill-sides. Looking for potential pollinators encircling and alighting on a chosen flower were all part of the mystery and delight of the project. Seeing and recognising the relationships between plants, birds, insects and fauna as we walked and watched opened up our understanding - NO POLLINATORS - NO PLANTS, a simple equation.

Some of the very showy plants such as *Proteas*, *Mimetes* and *Haemanthus* had already been painted but Vicki and Chris lined up specimens from which we would choose our first two choices. Then these were narrowed down and two plants allocated to each artist. As Laura said recently it was a bit like 'speed dating'. Then excellent specimens were either brought to us. Then there was the challenge of keeping the plants alive - large wash basins and baths were essential - I had 2 baths, 4 wash basins and a sink. Many happy hours were spent drafting, drawing, sharing microscopes and laying out first drawings. Help was at hand and there were endless discussions over meals and walks.



My first plant was *Dipogon lignosis* the Cape Sweet Pea or Klimop. I found a particularly fine specimen climbing up through a stand of *Helichrysum dasyanthum*. As always it was hard to know what to leave out but one of the benefits of being with a group such as ours was the wealth of help and advice on botany, composition and materials. Chris Lochner gave me two tubes of watercolour paint which are the truest most vivid version of Quin Magenta (QOR) I have ever used. The 'vignette' had to be set out in such a way that individual elements could easily be cut from the background to use in other printed complications. The pollinator in this case was *Xylocarpa caffra* the Carpenter Bee, male and female forms.



My second painting was of *Otholobium bracteolatum* a shrubby legume with inflorescences of blue/violet/white pea-like flowers. Very hairy sepals and stems, the leaves being quite thick, wedge shaped and glandular. *Otholobium* has a number of pollinators, beautiful and quite ugly in terms of a painting. I painted just the Cape Honey Bee *Apis mellifera capensis*. Other pollinators include *Zizeeria knysna* Sooty Blue Butterfly, *Buprestidae*, *Curculionidae* Weevil and *Reduviidae* Assassin Bug.

The quick scans of unfinished work were taken on my mobile phone so the quality is questionable.

The Omicron Grootbossies were caught by COVID at the end of November. Four of us returned to Heathrow and Quarantine for 10 days. Deeply annoying and very expensive but an opportunity to crack on with the drawing.

The paintings had to be at Grootbos by the end of March which was a rush and I would have preferred more time for the additions to the 'vignettes' such as the site of blackened Fynbos after setting controlled fires, with new growth emerging, more magnifications and some of the weird and wonderful insects we came across. I would also have liked to be more creative with my compositions but circumstances prevailed.







Over the years I have been very fortunate to be involved in some wonderful florilegium societies and projects; each one a joy and the thought that my work contributes to the conservation of species in a different and lasting form.



Dipogon lignosis Cape Sweet Pea with *Helichrysum dasyanthum*.
Otholobium Bracteolatum Strand Dotty Pea
Sketchbook pages for *Dipogon lignosis*



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