

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN FLORILEGIUM SOCIETY

Newsletter

WINTER 2021 No. 50



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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: guywilliameves@hotmail.co.uk

Autumn issue 2021 - due out August 2021
Copy and pictures by mid August please.

Yours
Guy



CPG *Spring briefing*

Mary Ellen Taylor

Chair Chelsea Physic Garden Florilegium Society

On Monday, 18 January 2021, I attended the Chelsea Physic Garden Spring Briefing chaired by our Director Sue Medway, for staff and volunteers. Because of the global pandemic and being in Lockdown 3, this year it was held via Zoom.

Attendees numbered 75+ which was quite exciting and Sue greeted all, then we muted our microphones so all could get underway.

The meeting lasted 3 hours and was charged with an energy and enthusiasm I have not seen before. Each department head gave their update and plans going forward, showing that despite adversity, unity and creativity has woven its way into the CPG team. It was extremely positive and invigorating.

There is much to relate and due to the length of the meeting notes, I would like to share some important highlights below. I will be sending more instalments over the next few months via email.

NB: All Florilegium members will be invited to the next Quarterly Meeting via Zoom in April and details will follow in due course.



SUE MEDWAY

2020

- 37,965 visitors (70,686 in 2019)
- Operating Deficit of -£330.4k
- Forced to suspend retail trading as not a “going concern”
- Majority of visitors were Friends vs. paying visitors (and no doubt London-based)
- 60% of staff on reduced hours and salary
- Outstanding support from Friends
- >90% of venue hire bookings carried over to 2021
- Majority of learning activity delivered digitally
- Massive support for the Glasshouse project

2021



Obviously very difficult to predict as lack of certainty remains, we will be vigilant and deal with it as it comes. Venue hire is more or less back up and running with most cancellations from 2020 rebooked for 2021.

- Operating Deficit of -£348k (budgeting for this possible deficit)
- All visitors enter/exit from Royal Hospital Road fully accessible - inclusive
- Glasshouse project phase two

“A very big thank you for all that staff and volunteers have done and for our support.

I want you to hear the most from your colleagues about what is going on throughout 2021. However, I think as we have seen right at the beginning of the year – 2021 could be even more difficult as we transition out of the effects of the pandemic and to whatever the “new normal” will become – already suggestions of restrictions for winter this year.

We are optimistically only budgeting a deficit of a further £348k this year – and actively looking at ways to secure grant funding to help us with that. This estimate was before the current lockdown measures which will continue to constrain our activity.

We have been cautious; we do not believe that things will return to 2019 or before, in 2021. We can weather the storm for now but will continue to be vigilant and cautious – whilst also taking calculated risks.

There will be a time when:

You, our volunteers feel confident and able to return to the Garden and we will know that it is safe to have you here with us

We have venue hire back up and running

We have our active vibrant public programme.

We have the Florilegium Society back to their routine of meetings – the English Gardening School up to speed, the Café working at full capacity and we are confident to reopen retail

Some of those look more reachable than others at this stage. Much depends on the vaccination programme, better weather, new variants of the virus and infection rates.

For now, what we know is that under the current guidance we will reopen on 24 January.

We are working on a new reception/shop space off of Royal Hospital Road one entrance and exit for everyone – trial for our future plans.

Will hear the outcome of our second round Lottery application (as explained in Sue Savill's report below)

Before I close can I thank you all for your hard work, commitment and support throughout last year. We have achieved a huge amount, not just for the Glasshouse project but as an organisation in the last few years. I could not be prouder of having the opportunity to help steer our future as we take another step closer to our 350th anniversary. I can't do my job without all of you – frankly I wouldn't want to.

Whatever the outcome of our lottery application we have learnt so much - have come so far there is no turning back we are setting the future course of the Chelsea Physic Garden for the next 100 years.

Thank you all."



SUE SAVILL

Update on Glasshouse Restoration Project

Behind the scenes: 70+ documents had to be completed - whole CPG effort and culmination of two years and a half year's work. Design Team working up Glasshouse Restoration plans, CPG colleagues leading their respective areas of work supported by external consultants – overseen by the Project Team reporting to the Project Board and CPG Board.

We are currently in the 'Development Phase' and we still have £150 K to reach our target by 31 March.

We will know NHLF outcome on 17 March and if we get the green light, we will move into the 'Delivery Phase'. So many considerations, most important being where to store the plants during the reconstruction (polytunnels in garden?), can CPG be open to the public during this time, etc.

If we reach the Delivery Phase, actual glasshouse restoration would take place between 2022-2023 to open August 2023 for 350th Anniversary.

If we don't make the NLHF, the extensive work and assessment done to date can still influence future work we would like to do, on a different scale and fundraising will still be a priority.

31 January 2021

Wuhan

Botanical Gardens, China

By Emma van Klaveren Dip CSBA

I am a Painting Member of The Chelsea Physic Garden Florilegium Society and also a Member of ABBA: The Association of British Botanical Artists.



In March 2020 the new ABBA President Elaine Allison asked the Association if anyone would like to support a special exhibition organised by The Lian Center, in Wuhan Botanical Gardens, China 'in a desire to bring hope and energy as a healing power to the people of Wuhan'.

Since they opened in 2017, they have staged more than 60 exhibitions but this was their first international one. It was, in their words 'inviting national and international botanical artists to paint Chinese endemic plants.

Our hope is that the exhibition could make people ponder the relationship between humans and nature. It is our responsibility to have a right way to live on our finite, life-giving planet to protect life's commonwealth.' I was very glad to be involved by painting a branch from the Chinese and ancient Ginkgo *biloba* tree. ABBA President Elaine Allison and Member Sandra Doyle also contributed their paintings of *Paraistolochia praevenosa* and *Davidia involucrata*-see illustrations.





Emma van Klaveren 银杏 *Ginkgo biloba* L.



Elaine Allison butterfly *Ornithoptera rothschildi* on *Paraistolochia praevenosa*



Sandra Doyle *Davidia involuocrata*

On May 31st, the exhibition was launched at the Wuhan Botanical Gardens, in conjunction with the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Hubei. Hubei is one of the regions with the richest plant resources and plant species in China, and one of the regions with the richest biodiversity in East Asia. Due to the social distancing regulations, the exhibition was moved outside to a covered area in the Gardens. Mr Hu Guangwan, a researcher and curator of the herbarium of the Wuhan Botanical Gardens, introduced the exhibition, through a live broadcast. Twenty family members of the medical staff from the frontline of anti-epidemics visited the exhibition and all these staff visited the exhibition during the Preview period. The exhibition included 82 botanical paintings; 4 were selected from "Curtis's Botanical Magazine", of characteristic Hubei plants in the 19th century; 12 were from Britain, Germany, Japan, Turkey, Australia and Nepal; and 66 paintings from 40 local botanical artists represented by Professor Zeng Xiaolian, the Chinese male version of Shirley Sherwood. The famous ornamental plant *Davidia involuocrata*; a rare plant unique to China, *Liriodendron tulipifera* known as "Chinese tulip tree", as well as *cherry blossoms*, *rose*, *rhododendron* and other common garden plants in Hubei were included.

Tens of thousands of Wuhan audiences visited this exhibition and it received much praise. This special exhibition also received positive reports from dozens of well-known domestic media including People's Daily, China Environmental News, and Hubei Daily. Wuhan TV saw Weibo, Hubei Tourism Sina Weibo and other media live broadcast the event, and more than 500,000 netizens watched the event online. During the exhibition, the organizer selected ten plant paintings and gave them to heroes who contributed to the fight against the pandemic.

With thanks to The Lian Center and China Academy of Sciences for information in this article.

Stamford Community *Orchard Group Project*

Barbara Clemence

In November 2018 I received a phone message from a lady who used to live in our village and had visited my open studio, enquiring if I would be interested in doing a commission to illustrate six heritage apples for the Stamford community orchard group(SCOG) project who are based in Stamford. Lincs.



Allington Pippin

I contacted her and agreed to take examples of my work to their Christmas meeting at the Crown Hotel Stamford, for them to view, after which they made very nice comments about my illustrations. I was then asked if I would like to be involved

with the painting of six local heritage apples. They had been awarded a grant from South Kesteven Council to commission six paintings which would be reproduced as cards and prints for sale, also to aid the teaching of the local heritage apples to local groups and schools. This was the beginning of a lovely journey into the world of local apple enthusiasts from the Stamford Community Orchard Group.

The Apples they chose for me to illustrate were Lord Burghley -Brown's Seedlings - Barnack Beauty - Schoolmaster - Godspeed's Nonsuch - Allington Pippin all growing locally in their community orchards.

In the spring of 2019 I went along to the Stamford Community Orchard to collect the blossom of the six apples I was to illustrate and take photographs for reference. The Barnack beauty was not in blossom in the orchard, so we drove over to Barnack, a Burghley Estate Village about 5 miles south of Stamford. This is also the village where Adam Frost broadcasts for gardens world. There I found a very old apple tree full of blossom, growing in small back garden of a village cottage, half of the trunk was completely hollow.

When I had completed the illustrations of the blossom, I arranged a meeting with Chris Hulbert and Denis Smith who are the apple specialists, to approve them before I proceeded with the fruit illustrations, which they did.

In October I met up with them at the apple day in Stamford to collect the apples to complete the paintings. By November I had completed all of the paintings and arranged to meet up with the committee at their November meeting at the Crown Hotel Stamford for approval.



Barnack Beauty



Brown's Seedlings



They were all delighted with the finished designs, it was discussed which was then the best way to have them printed. I recommended Steve Meadwell who I have used for scanning and printing, a graphic designer in Market Deeping not far from Stamford. We made an appointment to meet up to discuss the design, Chris and Denis wrote the text to be printed on the cards.

The cards were printed ready for launch when Covid 19 struck so everything was put on hold. It was then decided to have a small invited gathering of the group at Burghley House to launch the cards and prints. Everything was organised, a marquee was erected, the press was invited when the second local down was declared so once more every thing was cancelled, so we wait for the spring 2021.

Through this lovely project, meeting these enthusiastic people I learned about their aims to preserve local heritage apples, to plant local community orchards for local residents to enjoy. Part of their work involves identifying local fruit trees, often the variety can be pinpointed by their experienced team by looks alone, they consider all aspects of the fruit by shape colour, taste and smell, a cross section, the stalk, blossom, and leaves.



The ultimate step is to send a fruit sample for D N A analysis, it will be then matched with a named variety on the national data base, or may come back as an unknown, or it may fit a description of a lost variety from an old growers' catalogue, then it can be claimed accordingly.

A grant of £7000 helped the S C O G to buy and plant 100 named apple and pear trees, run training courses for villages and primary schools in south Lincs. and Rutland. They also helped to set up and manage small community/school orchards on public land.

They also run an apple day in October with stalls of over 100 named apples in Stamford, with an apple press with cider for tasting and identification for unknown apples. The 2019 show was a huge success with over 800 visitors, as well as talks in the cellar bar room by guests from across Europe.

If you would like to see more about this remarkable group please visit their web site.

It has been a pleasure to be involved in this project and meet such lovely knowledgeable people.



Top to bottom

Lord Burghley

Peasgood Nonsuch

Schoolmaster

SUE J WILLIAMS

Beans in a time of lockdown

Members may remember a fascinating talk by Adam Alexander a couple of years ago about the great number of heirloom bean varieties grown throughout the world.

His travel stories, discovering the growers and the various ways the beans were cooked and stored were accompanied by lovely photographs of gardens, markets, vegetable plots and gardeners. Many of us were delighted to have the opportunity to buy little packets of beans he had collected.

Inevitably I forgot to plant them for the next season, but was delighted to discover them just at the moment we entered a strict lockdown last March. I had a small packet of “Syrian Small” and one of “Vermont Cranberry” and planting time was perfect. The “Vermont Cranberry” is an American heirloom variety with delicious long pods, and it produced prolifically – eating them pod and all when young and then just the little beans, keeping some to grow on next year. The “Syrian Small”, highly endangered because of the wars, is more like a small broad bean, to be eaten whole. I have kept some of these to sow this year – who knows...



Syrian Small



Vermont Cranberry

THE YEAR 2020 AT

Chelsea Physic Garden

Frances Sampayo Deputy Director (Visitor Experience)

In the near 350 year history of Chelsea Physic Garden many things have happened both within and outside of the walled Garden. Yet within living memory for the staff, volunteers, artists, and visitors connected to CPG, there has never been a year like 2020. The global pandemic has challenged us all more than ever before, and as a green space within the heart of London, our relevance within our local community has never been more clear.



As an organisation we had been closely monitoring the escalating coronavirus situation and constantly began to adapt our operations to mitigate the risks the pandemic might present. It seemed that green spaces would be permitted to stay open as the nation went into Lockdown, but on Saturday 21st March we joined with Kew Gardens and the RHS in taking the decision to close, following a surge in people visiting outdoor attractions and concerns for safety that arose from this.

Arriving at work on the following day, Mothering Sunday, will stay with me for a long time. I was there to talk to visitors who arrived without noticing that we had closed, to help prepare the Garden for a period of closure and to turn the materials for our Kokedama workshops in to kits for people to take home and make within the safety of home. Throughout the pandemic a small team of staff, alongside the horticultural team, continued to have a physical presence at the Garden. This was for a myriad of reasons mainly driven by security and health and safety.

Whenever I came to the Garden, I would enjoy talking to people admiring the display of tulips the Hort team had arranged, through the Swan Walk gates. As they marvelled on their daily walks, they promised they would return when we opened, and returned they did. When we reopened in June, we became a haven for our local community. People came here to breathe.

Despite all of the challenges of 2020, we were a space for 38,000 visitors to come and connect with nature, and a further 6,000 people took part in our Learning activities (both digitally and onsite). This was achieved through a team effort, of love for the Garden and passion for our charitable purpose. The Horticulture team worked hard, they have still be able to

present the Garden fantastically through the summer, autumn and winter. Highlights included a wildflower display on the upper lawn, a sunflower display in the Miller beds, and reopening the glasshouses safely when we could. This has all be achieved with limited support from their dedicated team of volunteers who have helped where possible throughout the year, and with a reduced number of staff as the team worked on rotation to ensure personal safety and wellbeing. Thanks to everyone's commitment to CPG we have provided the background for school trips, reunions with friends, weddings, celebrations, and somewhere where you could have a much-needed sense of normality.

As an organisation we have been pushed to be more creative and adaptable than ever before. We have taken risks and opportunities which have helped us attract new audiences whilst keeping our established visitors entertained. In August, we launched 'The Lawn Sessions' a series of live music nights at the Garden, these were followed by 'The Year of the Monkey' a live theatrical promenade around the Garden, our very first House Plant Market, and terrifying Spooky Tours of the Garden for families and adults alike. Visitors at these events often said they felt comfortable and safe coming to the Garden, and as a result of this for some these events provided them with their only opportunity to see live music or theatre this year.



In Summer 2020 we were able to host a work experience student who was keen to learn more about the curation, ahead of starting an art history degree. We offered them the opportunity to curate an exhibition of Florilegium works built around a theme. After much research, they decided that the theme of Family had been so important throughout 2020 that this exhibition would be an opportunity to explore the theme of family through plants. All of the works exhibited were of Pelargoniums, with interpretation beside each piece. It was a fantastic opportunity to provide someone with and I hope that we can do this again in the future.



We have continued our work on the Glasshouses Restoration Project, and submitted our application for Round 2 Funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in November (we will hear back from their committee in March as to whether we have been successful or not). The Glasshouses Restoration Project has seen a full review of the Living Collection held within the Glasshouses. This remarkable piece of work has unearthed many interesting stories about our cultural heritage which we hope to bring to life for our visitors through new interpretation onsite. As part of this, we will present our collection in as an accessible way as possible.

The Hothouse Challenge, a fundraising appeal which was launched to raise funds for the Glasshouses Project, has to date raised almost £700,000. Monty Don has even encouraged people to support our fundraising appeal. In a statement he says:

“Ever since I first visited, as a young man back in the early 1980’s, I have always loved Chelsea Physic Garden as a garden and for its long and fascinating history. It was not until later that I discovered that I have a personal connection with the Garden through my ancestor,



the botanist George Don, who was a foreman at the Physic Garden in the early 1800's, so perhaps the connection is my blood. In its past, the Garden has been fortunate in having supporters who have stepped in to safeguard its future. This benevolence has meant that it has been protected as a site for learning about plants. So I am delighted that The John Browne Charitable Trust has chosen to support the fundraising for the Garden's elegant Victorian glasshouses. The project will have a far-reaching impact because it is so much more than the conservation of these important buildings. Plants, of course, will feature centre-stage, and many of their fascinating stories are waiting to be shared with a wider audience."

When you are able to return safely to the Garden (which I know cannot come soon enough for many of you) you will find some things to have changed although the beauty of the Garden remains a constant. One of the biggest changes is that all visitors will now enter CPG via Royal Hospital Road, not Swan Walk. Supported by funding from the Cultural Recovery Fund (£428,200 to support CPG during the Coronavirus pandemic) we have turned the retail area into a new Visitor Welcome Space. We took the difficult decision to cease our retail trading operations as they were no longer a 'going concern'. It is our hope that in time, reinstate these operations but in the interim we are trialling the new Visitor Welcome Space in this area.

All of our visitors will now be able to enter the Garden through Royal Hospital Road, rather than splitting visitors between Swan Walk and Royal Hospital Road. Whilst we will still use the Swan Walk entrance to the Garden on occasion, Royal Hospital Road is a safer entrance, with a wider footpath on the road itself and it is accessible for wheelchair users. We will monitor the impact of this new visitor welcome area on the wider visitor experience at the Garden.

Part of the reason I am so excited about trialling this new visitor welcome space is that it is helping us remove barriers and promoting inclusivity for our staff, volunteers, and visitors. The aspiration to make CPG a *Garden for All* was outlined in the 2019 Learning Strategy. Over the past few years we have had a lot of opportunities to reflect on our role in society and have been taking steps to become a more inclusive and welcoming space.

Along with the new Visitor Welcome space we are launching a PhD Doctoral research opportunity in partnership with the University of Westminster to provide blind and partially sighted visitors with a better visitor experience through embedding audio descriptive techniques across CPG. Anne Edwards, Head of Volunteers, has been helping the University of Westminster Team develop a video introduction to CPG using audio descriptive language to help make the tour a multi-sensory experience. My favourite part of the script was when describing the cork

tree, the narrator said, ‘if you put your arms around the tree your arms would not meet on the other side’. This really helped bring the scale of the tree to life in an engaging multi-sensory way we can all enjoy.

Another way we are becoming a *Garden for All*, was to complete an audit of our signage across the Garden, to identify where we are using outdated terminology and language. We will be replacing this signage over the coming months, and will be creating training for all staff on volunteers on terminology to make sure we are using inclusive language in our written interpretation and in how we verbally communicate with visitors. We are also creating learning modules on colonial heritage and participating in Black History Month for the first time in October 2021. The Black Lives Matter movement of 2020 and subsequent conversations about the legacies of colonialism in the heritage and horticultural sector have identified really interesting topics which we have been working to address behind the scenes, and now have a stronger network of peers throughout the sector to further develop this work. If you would like to discuss this with me further, I would be happy to talk about this work.

As part of the Glasshouses Project, the CPG team have worked closely to develop a new approach to the stories we tell in the Glasshouses, and how we can use this approach to inform the wider Garden. This includes spotlighting the histories of some of the women connected to the Garden’s history for the first time as part of our permanent interpretation, such as Elizabeth Blackwell and Professor Mary Gibby.

In my role as Deputy Director (Visitor Experience) my drive has been to bring together the two main departments in my jurisdiction of Visitor Operations and Learning.

I want to make sure ‘every visitor learns something whilst at the Garden, and that every learner has a great visitor experience’. Something we learnt through speaking to visitors throughout the last year, was that *wellness* was a big motivating factor for visitors. We are making 2021 the *Year of Wellbeing*, and aligning our programme with the ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ identified by the New Economics Foundation. These 5 ways are: to connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give. There are plenty of ways to achieve all of these ways to wellbeing at the Garden but we have a varied programme of activities to help all visitors leave with their wellbeing improved.

In late 2020 we achieved the Gold Award from the Green Tourism board! Which is incredibly positive news. We have steadily been making improvements to the sustainability of our site and operations over the past two years and can now proudly display our new award! We will be putting a bigger emphasis on combating climate change in all areas of our operations, and visitors themselves will also be given clearer communication about how they can change their behaviour to help combat the climate emergency following a visit to CPG.

It is difficult to set out our expectations for the year to come, but we know it will be a year of adaptation. We know that like much of this year our main audience will be those living within the local community who can access us without public transport. We see potential to become more visible in communities such as Wandsworth, Lambeth and even in Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea itself. Visitors will be motivated by an opportunity to develop personal wellbeing through connecting with nature, in a safe and secure environment. Nationally collected statistics show that audiences continue to feel safest in visiting outdoor venues so we will again have a role to play in connecting people to place post lockdown.

To ensure our visitors can do this, for us internally a key theme this year will be '*adaptation*' as we continue to adapt our role and position in response to the Pandemic. We will see that some of our events and daily visitor offer may change in their structure and approach. Particularly events such as Heralding Spring, where our offer core offer will be a self-led trail around the Garden as opposed to talks, in-person tours and an opportunity to buy all your spring plants. Social distancing, timed ticketing, increased hygiene measures for example will all remain in place, and we will continue to do these with a CPG flourish! We have plans to launch a new website in late Spring, to help us better connect with our visitors digitally, and have just announced a photography competition to keep visitors engaged with us whilst in their local area.



We hope that we will be able to welcome many of you back to the Garden this year. Thank you so much for your continued commitment to CPG.

An unexpected botanical art horde in the middle of

Alison Brown

Vietnam



In those hazily distant days when one could freely travel the world, I was lucky enough to spend a few days in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon to most of us), and to visit the Museum of Traditional Medicine there.

What a fascinating, memorable, find, and occupying one of the City's lovelier old wooden buildings, recently restored, with a history of its own! The museum's exhibits are spread over 6 compact floors. Sadly, there is no botanical garden to accompany the museum.

The Museum explores the country's use of herbal medicines throughout its long history, with relics on display that take one back as far as the Stone Age. It is a real 3D pharmacopoeia: rooms of drawers, cabinets and pharmacy jars full of local medicinal herbs, roots and heavens knows what, sadly with no English explanation of contents or medicinal purposes. Amongst them are jars in which pickled snakes and lizards stare unblinking and unwelcomingly back at you (Snake wine), and further jars in which roots (bamboo and various tree roots) have been intricately carved into shapes of Chinese deities or worthies.

Further rooms display medicinal equipment in stone, metal and beautifully carved woods. And teapots galore – a different one for every day of the year it seemed. The museum houses a medical science library including valuable pharmaceutical and acupuncture tracts written over eight centuries.







The Museum celebrates a number of famous physicians and herbalists going back as far as the 13th century. I was interested that the most famous of all, Tue Tinh, a Zen monk who lived in the mid 1300s and who is revered as the father of Vietnamese medicine, apparently specialised in paediatrics. Another pleasing discovery was the fact that the Vietnamese have long believed in the medicinal value of wine, though their recipe of sweetened alcohol that has to be stored for at least 100 days underground in stone jars probably would not earn it many points in Parker's wine guide.

From a botanical art point of view crammed into one long, narrow room is a large display of about 80 botanical paintings of medicinal plants and flowers in identical wooden frames. Each bears the plant's Latin name (or an attempt at it).



Frustratingly I could find nothing about who painted them or when. They do not appear to be that old, and many seem to be by the same hand. As you will see from the accompanying photograph(s) they share bold colouring and a clear, somewhat simplified style, that I hesitate to call naïve, but very charming and identifiable. Whilst they would have benefitted from a little social distancing, they were a real treasure trove of delight, and made the excursion to the museum well worthwhile - whether or not you are medically inclined.

Isn't it wonderful to realise that the purposes and pleasures of botanical painting are universal?

Sarah Morrish

Pods and seeds of Common milkweed Asclepias syriaca

'Unfortunately, I had sent the wrong size image for inclusion in the last newsletter that was to accompany my piece on Common milkweed. Guy has kindly offered to publish the image at an appropriate size. The illustration was created using sepia fine line pens and I used two nib sizes 003 and 005, the two finest to capture the intricate detail and texture of the pod surface and softness of the pappus, whilst still depicting form. The paper I favour most for pen and ink work is Strathmore Bristol 500 Series Plate surface'.



Successful aliens in **Thurnham Lane**

Gillian Barlow

There are three plants growing in my lane which are very successful naturalised aliens, offering welcome signs of spring, emerging even before celandines, violets, wood anemones.

With big soft round leaves making a brilliant green carpet as they overlap and jostle for the light, spreading like a rivulet along the edge of the road, pushing under the scrappy hedge to take over a damp strip of woodland. It is known as Winter heliotrope, so named for the flower's lovely vanilla scent which fills the air especially on damp days. The name *Petasites* derives from the Greek word *petasos*, a broad-brimmed hat, although that name better describes the bigger leaves of the British native *P. hybridus*, once picked as improvised sunhats, or to wrap butter for market. *P. fragrans* is daintier looking, often with pink petals or rays, introduced as a desirable garden plant from Italy in 1803 – or 1806 from the North Africa Mediterranean, depending which book you consult. The recent CPG Gardeners' Newsletter compiled by Allison Napier had a photo of CPG's own plant, pinker flowered than my local one.

The first one to flower is Petasites fragrans, in the Compositae family, (now Asteraceae)





The second alien plant in the lane is Trachystemon orientalis, in the Boraginaceae family.

It is much bigger than the British native Borage, whose blue flowers might adorn a glass of Pimms. All parts of both plants are edible and, (according to *Dorset Perennials* website), it is eaten in Turkey as 'aci hodan' (bitter borage), I guess with the texture of bristly spinach. Preferring damp woodland, it is native from Eastern Bulgaria to the western Caucasus. First recorded as naturalised in Britain in 1868, it had been introduced as a garden plant in 1752. The common name is 'Abraham-Isaac-Jacob', a name evidently given to other Borages such as *Pulmonaria*, the suggestion being that as their flowers change colour from blue, to lavender, to pink as they age, they evoke three generations of the founders of Judaism....according to the above interesting website.

However, although *Trachystemon* looks like a bigger common borage, its petals don't change colour, but remain blue until they fall, rolling back tightly to leave the long stamens protruding in a pointed cone. New furled leaves are appearing now among the remnants of last year's still green but now tattered heart-shaped leaves, grown huge during the year, and the first flower buds are just becoming visible. Both this plant and *Petasites* like cool damp conditions, and their leaves tend to flop on hot sunny days, perking up again at night. Each colony makes a rich green tide spread by rhizomes roots.



A third alien plant heralding spring for me is Alexanders, (Smyrniium olusatrum), a robust umbellifer which has colonised some waste ground beside the nearby M20 bridge.



It was introduced as a food plant by the Romans. All parts could be eaten, according to Richard Mabey's wonderful book *Flora Britannica*. The bunchy florets could be pickled, 'like miniature cauliflowers' he writes, and it was 'the parsley of Alexandria', hence our common name for it. The leaves start appearing in November, looking like angelica, or dark green celery. The stems can be eaten like celery, blanched, but very strong tasting. Fully grown at 4 or 5 feet tall, it is a magnificent sight with its greenish yellow umbels and big leaves here towering over a thicket of thuggish brambles. Introduced as a food plant, it's interesting that it grows near the site of a long-vanished Roman villa which was excavated for the second time in advance of the Eurostar track being laid, making it tempting to imagine this little colony being an escaped but far from ghostly descendant of the villa's kitchen gardens.

Julia Trickey

Remembering Nigel Pickering

It is with sadness that I pass on the news that one of our newest members, Nigel Pickering, died at the beginning of this year, after being initially diagnosed with a brain tumour in September 2019.

Nigel returned to botanical art after retiring as a GP and started attending my class in Bath. His attention to detail was a joy to behold and this was recognised at the RHS Botanical Art Show 2019, when he was awarded a gold medal for his paintings of the 'Treasures of the Richtersveld'.

I encouraged him to get involved in the CPGFS, as I could see that he would be a valuable member. I'm only sorry that he was not able to get as fully involved as he would have liked before the illness took hold, and that more of you didn't have the chance to get to know him.



Katherine Tyrell

Remembering Janet Pope

*I learned last night that Janet Pope MA (RCA),
DipAD, FLS, FSBA, CPFGS, IAPI has passed away.*

Janet has been very seriously ill in recent years. When I met her with her Potatoes exhibit at the RHS Botanical Art Show in 2019 we had a very long chat. She knew full well that her condition was terminal and that she had limited time left - and she was VERY determined to make the most of it!

I remember being so very pleased for her that she could get to exhibit one of her favourite subjects at the prestigious RHS Botanical Art Show show - and win a medal. I took a photo of her to record the event - and I think both she and I knew I was very likely to use it in this sort of post.

Her extremely unusual and refreshing exhibit of Potatoes - shoots, roots, skin, flesh - *Solanum tuberosum* ('Red Emmalie', 'Highland Burgundy Red', 'Pink Fir Apple', 'Violetta', 'Shetland Black' and Salad Blue'.) can be seen below - and on her website. She won an RHS Silver Medal for her exhibit.

Janet graduated from the Royal College of Art London in 1973, followed by a British Council Scholarship for 18 months to study traditional textile arts and crafts in Romania. Returning to England, she started a knitwear company, then a special-interest tour company, followed by a womens' tailoring business. In 2009 Janet joined a local botanical painting class, which led to the SBA Distance Learning Diploma Course graduating in 2012, and her current interest in botanical painting.

Janet Pope being presented with her Daler Rowney Award at the SBA Botanical Art Exhibition in 2013.





Botanical Art and Illustration Janet was an extremely skilled botanical artist. She had studied initially for a Diploma in Art and Design and then graduated from the Royal College of Art, London with an MA in 1973. She had also been awarded a British Council arts scholarship to study traditional textile arts and crafts in Romania. On her return she demonstrated her entrepreneurial flair by establishing first a knitwear company, then a special-interest tour company, followed by a womens' tailoring business.

Her interest in botanical art was stimulated by a local botanical painting class followed by the SBA's Distance Learning Diploma Course. She graduated from that in 2012

She lived and worked in rural Herefordshire where gardens, orchards and hedgerows provided her with an endless supply of plant material. Her botanical art was painted - with great attention to detail and growth habit - in watercolour.

She was also a

- Fellow of the Society of Botanical Artists;
- an Artist Member of the Chelsea Physic Garden Florilegium Society - which is where I saw her last
- a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London (elected 2015) and
- a member of the Institute for Analytical Plant Illustration.



In 2016, at the Society of Botanical Artists' Annual Exhibition, Janet Pope was awarded The Joyce Cuming Presentation Award for her exhibit of a group of three Autumn Fruit paintings: *Pyrus communis* Perry Pear; Kiwi and *Mespilus germanica* Medlar. Sadly Janet was unable to attend the ceremony due to treatment for her illness. The Joyce Cuming Presentation Award is probably one of the most prized awards. It comprises a sterling silver Almoner's plate, which is a legacy from Joyce Cuming and a certificate. The reason I always pay attention this award is that the Judges also produce a list of people who were Highly Commended during the selection process.



The Joyce Cuming Award (2016)
for a group of three Autumn
Fruit Paintings by Janet Pope.

Martin Allen

DELVING INTO THE Newsletter archive 5

There was a fascinating article by Richard Nicolle with the title “The Internet: Gallery? Publication? Or Tool?” in the fifth newsletter from January 1998 which of course I was side-tracked into reading whilst supposed to be looking for my own contribution, but you know how it is.

He wrote some amazing things that I feel should be preceded with ‘reader, little did he know’ from some disembodied voice out of the ether:

“It’s becoming the ‘in’ thing to have a website on the Internet, which is a concern, because it becomes cluttered with tripe.” and “But will anyone find it? Searching the Internet can be very disappointing and frustrating if you’re looking for something specific. It is so vast.”

I’m sure no-one could have predicted the infinite number of funny cat photos possible in the future, that have made it still ‘vaster’.

Today, the Internet is so much an integral part of my day that I felt rather bereft when my computer needed to be mended over the holiday period. And lately it has become such a large part of my botanical art life with viewing exhibitions online, reading blogs, nosily meandering through artists’ websites, classes by Zoom shouting “you have to switch the camera on! It’s at the bottom of the screen! It looks like a camera. Can you see it! Yes. It. Is. There. Look again!” at the screen, still less the opportunity to hear someone you know sound like a dalek because their broadband bandwidth suddenly drops too low. Swings and roundabouts, but I wouldn’t be without it and I expect it will be a greater part of our lives in the future when they get the holograms and printed food sorted.

I do miss real-life exhibitions though and my article in Newsletter 5 was about a trip to Cambridge, of which I can remember vaguely seeing the paintings but have not the faintest recollection of how I got to Cambridge as I don’t think I was driving at the time, with good reason I imagine. I notice reading through that I am quite opinionated again, though to be fair that is literally the point of the article - to write about what I thought of the exhibition.

EXHIBITION AT THE FITZWILLIAM CAMBRIDGE

By Martin Allen

During the summer a private visit was arranged for members to view the Broughton Art Collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, timed to coincide with their current exhibition "A Gardener's Roses".

We started with a selection of about thirtyfive paintings that were chosen by the Curator to best represent the whole of the collection. They were informally placed around a private room, propped upright against the wall on a long cupboard top, mounted but not framed.

When looking at any exhibition of paintings I like to get an overall 'emotional feel' for what I am looking at, so invariably look at everything quite quickly from a distance to get an impression of the whole. I think this brief fairly detached walk round stops you from becoming overwhelmed by either the sheer number of paintings or their quality so, rather than feel inferior, you feel inspired and creative. I then walk around more slowly, studying each picture in turn, looking at detail, composition and technique. Then, finally, I go back and look at those paintings I enjoyed the most.

For me, a highlight in this collection was seeing some original Redoute (1758-1840) images. We are all so used to seeing good reproductions of his work, but the originals

are on another level entirely. The emotional immediacy and colour was so much more intense, particularly on a large carmine pink double peony... it glowed, apparently the effect comes from painting on vellum. Rather surprisingly, Redoute did not paint particularly finely or neatly, and he frequently seems to suggest veins (albeit fairly accurately) rather than faithfully reproduce what was in front of him. Nor was the leaf colour exact, varying from a blue-green to a yellow-green, which if you saw it in real life would probably make you concerned with the health of the plant, and yet it works extremely well as paint on vellum. His style here leans towards the artistic rather than the botanical; decoration slightly over description. When you stand about 150cm (4.5 feet) away from the picture it resolves into a magnificent three-dimensional image that is not as apparent closer to the painting.

As a complete contrast, the paintings of Peter Withoos (1654 – 1693) were intensely worked small pieces, the image resolving at about 30cm (1 foot) away. I think this illustrates a very good point about finding the right viewing distance for a painting. The effect is rather like focusing on a camera. If I had looked at the Withoos pictures at 150cm their beauty would have been lost, yet viewing from this distance brought out the best from the Redoute paintings. The flowers that Withoos had chosen to illustrate were delicate and charming, like cranesbills, whereas Redoute produced magnificent peonies and magnolias. In fact a painting of

a rather subtle pale yellow hibiscus by Redoute had neither magnificence or charm and one was left feeling faintly dissatisfied with it. Perhaps it is possible to change one's style to bring out a better emotional response from the viewer, rather than make all flowers conform to the one style as most artists do. Easier said than done.

There was a very fine painting by Maria Sibylla Merian (1647 – 1717), a *Hypericum* surrounded by stunning life-like insects, to which the flower paled somewhat in comparison. This is often the case with artists; where they find their subject intensely fascinating (in this case the insects), their paintings are invariably better observed.

An interesting *Datura rosei* by Augusta Withers (active 1827 – 1865) seemed almost to be painted in geometric patterns. Having never seen the plant growing it is difficult to comment on how accurate her depiction is, it did look somewhat contrived and yet Mrs Withers was such a good colourist it is hard to imagine her exaggerating a pattern. This is an area where art critics can fall foul, especially if their botanical knowledge is not extensive.

Gill Saunders, in her book 'Picturing Plants' (Zwemmer 1995) commenting on a print of *Gloriosa superba* (p77), writes "...but there is a tendency to decorative embellishment, as in the spiralling flourishes to the tips of the leaves...". However, the image as depicted is correct, the plant does grow like this and the comment is unfortunately misleading to the unwary. (Incidentally, it is a very interesting book, with original ideas, and I would recommend it.)

A similar comment, which I feel is misleading for similar reasons, is made by David Scrase in the Fitzwilliam Museum handbook 'Flower Drawings' (Cambridge University Press 1997) when he describes Ehret (1708 – 1770) as "...possibly the finest botanical draughtsmen of all...". Surely the Bauer brothers, Miss Drake, Barbara Cotton, even Redoute and Walter Hood Fitch, (and there are at least 10 contemporary

artists) are all in another league entirely to Ehret. Why does it seem that art curators are blind to Ehret's faults as a Botanical Illustrator?

Painting body-colour on black paper, tasteful posies of flowers and groups of flowers in urns similar to Dutch oil paintings were other ideas that I thought would be interesting to experiment with.

The exhibition of rose paintings in the public galleries did not, to my mind, contain the same quality of technical skill as we had seen previously. Though most were extremely competent, I have found that people tend to rate a painting highly merely because it is old. Not the best criteria for judging the skill of an artist!

There was a tightly coloured *Rosa gallica versicolor* by Peter Withoos, nicely composed but the petals were a little heavy and the whole looked slightly overworked, lacking some freshness, but a charming painting.

Two pupils of Redoute, Nathalie D'Esmeard (1798 – 1872) and Princess Louise D'Orleans (1812 - ?) had very high quality paintings on display, the drawing style similar to Redoute, but the painting technique was finer and more delicate in its application.

There were many paintings that reminded me of examples by modern artists like Wilfred Blunt, Raymond Booth and Rory McEwen which shows how very difficult it is to be original, or that ideas come back into fashion – take your pick.

However, the shock of the whole exhibition had to be the most appallingly twee (though beautifully executed) miniature flower decoration by Franz Bauer (1758 – 1840) surrounded by a rather nauseous verse by Sir Joseph Banks, intended for someone royal. What is the world coming to when you see a painting by someone who is the epitome of scientific illustration that is so unashamedly commercial?

Still, it helps us put it all into perspective, it is after all only paint on paper and best not to take it all too seriously.

Well, I think younger me didn't realise that artists have to make a living and therefore paint what sells or what someone else has commissioned, and nor are they trying to impress random viewers writing things up for a newsletter a couple of hundred years or more later having seen the paintings in a very different context to that which the artist envisaged. Not quite sure why I mention Wilfred Blunt as being an artist, as the only painting I can recall is the snowdrop in the front of "The Art of Botanical Illustration" which is very good, but is one painting enough? Maybe I confused his name with someone else? And who were those "at least 10 contemporary artists" as good as Ehret at the time? I've no idea now, though I have since seen Ehret's watercolour drawings in his sketchbooks at the Natural History Museum and they are much more attractive (far better in my opinion) than his finished more-stylised paintings; he was definitely an excellent draughtsman.

You can see that I am, at that time, still absolutely focused on technical skill of the painting and I confess it was only many years later when I realised that technical skill doesn't always make a good painting. I was teaching a class of eight-year-olds how to paint plants 'like an artist' and one child, whose hands were bandaged and supported with splints (I didn't ask why), drew his wildflower with a ruler as he couldn't do anything freehand, then could barely hold his brush let alone keep within the lines and yet ended up somehow with a stunningly exciting image of three self-heal flower-heads talking to each other as if seen through a mist and drawn by a Japanese artist. I thought it was genuinely beautiful with great wall appeal (for an adult to create let alone a child), although I suspect he

would have rather been able to produce something like the other children did, as you do when you are eight.

The botanical problems I mention in the piece are now easily solved by a quick visit to an internet search engine where you can scroll through several photos of the plant in question to answer whatever question you have about the artist's depiction. Unless it's a rare plant, in which case for all the internet's current vastness, you are stuck. In the same manner I found some links to the paintings I looked at, so whilst you can check to see whether you agree with my opinions you can only do it for some of them – for the others you'll just have to take my word for it.

The Redoute pink double peony
<https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collections/drawingsandwatercolours/31723>

Peter Withoos images in the collection
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/search/results?query=withoos&images=on&operator=AND&sort=desc>

Peter Withoos *Rosa gallica versicolor*
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/object/30561>

Maria Sibylla Merian *Hypericum*
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/object/4823>

Augusta Withers *Datura*
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/object/24630>

That twee Franz Bauer
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/image/media-14791>
 or possibly
<https://collection.beta.fitz.ms/id/object/22901>
 as I can't quite remember which one it was.

Julia Trickey

botanical art talks

I am adding new speakers all the time and, as the CPGFS is full of experienced artists, do get in touch if you would like to present a talk - julia@juliatickey.co.uk

With ongoing pandemic restrictions, Julia Trickey has been pondering how to best meet the needs of students of botanical art whilst also supporting fellow botanical artists. Consequently, she has put together a series of talks for and by those that are passionate about the subject.



4 FEBRUARY 2021 **500 ORCHIDS AND COUNTING...** **Painting orchids for the RHS** **Deborah Lambkin**

Deborah Lambkin has been the official orchid artist to the Royal Horticultural Society since 2005, painting awarded orchids for the RHS Orchid Committee. Deborah has completed over 500 orchid paintings of a wide variety of orchids for the RHS collections. Deborah will talk about her work as a botanical artist, her processes for managing orchids for painting and the painting techniques that she uses.



18 FEBRUARY 2021 **BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION IN PEN AND INK** **Lizzie Harper**

Lizzie will discuss the equipment and techniques she uses to draw plants in pen and ink. She'll use examples of her published work to explain the difference between clear line drawings, diagrams and tonal pen and ink works (completed with stippling and building up of tone). Lizzie also explains how she adds a top layer of watercolour without compromising detail.



4 MARCH 2021 **ILLUSTRATING THE GIANT VICTORIA WATERLILIES** **Lucy Smith**

Lucy will talk about her ongoing project, documenting the giant waterlilies of the genus *Victoria* through botanical illustration. This will include background to this project - inspiration, planning and some of the challenges. She will show details of the work previously completed and in progress, including watercolour and pen and ink illustrations of the waterlilies' unique flowers and giant leaves.



18 MARCH 2021

COLOUR IN REALISTIC BOTANICAL ART

Martin Allen

A use of complex colour is an important element in creating a realistic or life-like image. Martin will look at how this can be achieved in terms of mixing and applying watercolour paint through step-by-step images and also discuss why it works.



15 APRIL 2021

ROSES... CAPTURING A MOMENT IN WATERCOLOUR

Mary Dillon

In recent times, Mary has been captivated by the beauty and intimacy of roses. She will explore the stages of making a larger than life botanical painting of Roses. looking at composition and how to bring a sense of dynamism to a painting before focusing on how she uses layers of wet and dry painting techniques in her painting.



29 APRIL 2021

STRANDLINE AND MARINE DISCOVERIES IN PEN AND INK

Sarah Morrish

Sarah will share with you many aspects of the pen and ink illustration process using strandline and marine discoveries as subject matter, ranging from shells, mermaid's purses, barnacles, sea urchins, crabs to seaweeds. There will also be time to discuss the range and differences of pens that she uses.



20 MAY 2021

EGG TEMPERA: MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Carrie di Costanza

Carrie will discuss the materials and techniques she uses for working with egg tempera. Topics will include the process of making the binder, mixing the paint, and creating luminous effects by layering semi-opaque layers of paint.



27 MAY 2021

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN A PERPETUAL JOURNAL

Lara Call Gasteringer

Join Lara as she explains the concept of her perpetual journal. Creating a seasonal sketchbook over years can benefit botanical artists in their work and understanding of the plants around them. Lara has maintained her journal since 2001 and has become more observant and confident as a naturalist and botanical artist. She is known on Instagram for encouraging others to start and maintain their own perpetual journals.

FOR FULL DETAILS

<https://www.juliatrickey.co.uk/talks.html>



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