

DEVON NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2011



**2011 and 2012 EVENTS * *ARMERIA* 'BRUTUS'
GREENCOMBE * COOMBE TRENCHARD**

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THE MISSION

The NCCPG seeks to conserve, document, promote and make available Britain and Ireland's rich biodiversity of garden plants for the benefit of everyone through horticulture, education and science

DEVON GROUP PLANT FAIRS 2011

Sunday 18 Sept: **Tavistock Pannier Market** 10-3

organiser ①

① Tim Ellis, see page 2

SEE GREEN EDGED PAGES FOR AGM DETAILS AND BOOKING FORM

EDITOR'S NOTES

Biodiversity has been a theme in several events that have taken place this year and the Bicton meeting in October should be an interesting day. Several articles in this newsletter highlight this important feature in our gardens. There are still a few more Plant Fairs to come and events to take place this autumn but already a programme of events is forming throughout the county for next year and some are mentioned here with more details in the next newsletter.
Malcolm Pharoah

MEMBERSHIP RATES:

Single £25

Joint £40

Student £15

Gardening clubs & non-commercial groups £40

Corporate £70

Cover: *Armeria* 'Brutus'

Copyright: Julian Sutton

Back cover top: Greencombe

Copyright: Steve Morton

Back cover bottom: Comma on *Echinacea*

Copyright: John Turner

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Midsummer has come and gone, but I hope we are all enjoying the fruits of our labours.

I know the weather has yet again been unpredictable, but it has certainly brought up some oddities in my garden. I just about remember scattering some *Echium* seed about 5 years ago- having given up trying to get year old plants to survive the winters- when I came across a whole group of foot high plants which I can only assume germinated as a result of the winter cold spell. So I'm very pleased.

I'm also very pleased with the progress our group has made this year. Not mentioning names! But our Secretary and Group Organizers have something to do with it! In the committee we are now far more forward planning, working in a cohesive way; and I hope you have been enjoying the benefits of it. I certainly enjoyed our first bus trip for a very long time to the Tea estate, our Summer Lunch, the Combe Trenchard event (which we hope to repeat next year), and the visit to the Gigantic multi storied glass house at Braunton, which houses a world collection of Abutilons.

Incidentally amongst other initiatives in the coming year, we hope to organize more bus trips so as to allow members to travel to the more distant events in our large County. I would very much like to see more members going to other events outside their region.

Can I yet again remind you of our bio diversity conference on the 8th October at Bicton College. Please would you all try and come to this event, as we do want to make this a success.

Rob Wagstaff has asked me to remind all Plant Collection holders that part of the grant of £2000 allocated by the committee has still to be taken up. Two grants have been made so far, but I am sure that to maintain these many wonderful collections, some of you would still require support.

On a national level, we and nearly every other County have successfully resisted any increase in subscriptions- at least for this year- but it is coming. I am hoping we can suggest in these difficult times, other alternatives to national office, than simply increasing subs. So await further developments.

I'm now back to the garden. Best wishes to you all.

John Turner. Chairman. 5/8/2011

ARMERIA ‘BRUTUS’: a Devon Mega-Thrift

Most of the world’s sea pinks are native to the Iberian peninsula, and on the Portuguese coast lives the stoutest species of the genus, *Armeria pseudarmeria*. Unlike the familiar low cushions of *A. maritima*, it makes a tight, upright clump. Herbaceous shoots bearing leathery glaucous leaves up to 2cm wide are crowded at the top of a partially buried, unbranched woody rootstock, from which roots branch off some distance below the surface. It is, in other words, a tussock on a trunk. The flower heads are large, up to 4cm across, with white or pink petals. They stand proud on stiff 50cm stems. The green bracts around the heads have conspicuous clear, papery margins.

Old plants on the Kew rock garden and in a wall at Jenkyn Place, Hampshire grabbed my attention in spring 1990. Their delicious scent of garden pinks with just a hint of garlic was part of the attraction. It soon became clear that this was a plant represented in name alone in the seed exchanges. Various requests turned up only anonymous needle-leaved thrifts (hybridization is a big issue when growing *Armeria* species) as well as, bizarrely, *Silene armeria*. Back then at least, the few plants I could find offered by nurseries looked no more like the real thing.

A full 10 years later, Sarah and I managed to track down both *A. pseudarmeria* and a natural hybrid with *A. alliacea* which had been collected in the Lisbon area. Both proved easy perennials in a sunny, well drained position. Seed raised from the two plants grown together, with no narrow leaved species present, gave a range of plants from which we selected a single, very desirable seedling. This tall plant has very large, pure white flower heads, bracts with particularly wide scarious (papery) margins, and – most important – a good fragrance (see cover picture).

As good Totnesians we named our hybrid ‘Brutus’, for Brutus of Troy who, long ago in the mists of someone’s overactive imagination, sailed up the Dart to land at Totnes and ‘found the British race’, whatever that means. Even today, one can become a true Briton by kissing the Brutus Stone, clearly marked in the Fore Street pavement. The observation that both Ashburton and Torquay once had bruiteers’ stones from which the bruiteer, a South Devon town crier, made pronouncements gives us a clue as to how this odd tale might have attached itself to Totnes in the 19th Century. Whatever the reason, Brutus has eclipsed the shadowy Saxon figure of Totta as the presiding spirit of the town, and is a worthy namesake for this brute of a plant.

As a selected hybrid seedling, *Armeria* ‘Brutus’ should be propagated vegetatively. Basal cuttings taken in spring will root, if slowly. It is also possible to divide it by cutting vertically through the rootstock of the bare-rooted plant, a truly hair raising business. Left alone, however, it is a long lived and highly satisfactory garden plant.

Julian Sutton. Desirable Plants, Totnes, Devon.
www.desirableplants.com

NO NETTLES REQUIRED

Full of enthusiasm after the spring members meeting, I managed a rousing article about the fascination of biodiversity and how to encourage it in our own patch. I had been expecting to be bored by worthy exhortations to recycle and give up all the things we work for to make life fun and easier, but what we got was inspiring insights into the possibilities opened up by people who really knew their stuff and could convey their own passions.

There is something about seeing the parts of a puzzle fitting together. “Do we want another Titchmarsh?” was the first thought: not the world’s most riveting speaker, but it didn’t matter. By the time we had been melted by the most mouth-watering butterfly pictures, the details of “how” were absorbing; he can sneak up on a butterfly when it’s perched for the night, move it gently into a suitable spot for photographing, and be ready for it’s reawakening in the morning. My mind boggles at the challenge of catching images of the ones that only live round the tops of oak trees. Best story of all was the Large Blue, now nearly extinct in this country. A previously good area had none; attempts to re-introduce them had failed. The grazing sheep had gone, so the grass had grown long; long grass means no thyme plants; no thyme means none of the particular species of ants that liked it; the caterpillars that used to sing to attract the ants and fling themselves down to be carted into the ant’s nest to be fed and cosseted until they pupated showed their charms in vain. Re-introduce the sheep, the thyme, the ants, and butterflies flourished again. A brilliant example of how things fit together.

I thought I knew about the Eden Project and their ability to find ways of making money (e.g. the lemonade system: sell expensive- but good – lemonade in posh bottle; cut and transform bottles into goblets; sell goblets to same customers) but I hadn’t realised how much they did with the money. The challenges of hosting the world’s largest rain forest in captivity: the joys of quarantining trees and removing all the little friends that come with the plants; one little friend that slipped through took them 2 years and a quarter of a million pounds to eradicate. They do lots of public service works at home and abroad.

Unfortunately my report got eaten by the computer, and I lost heart at the thought of re-writing. But now we have another chance, at the “No Nettles Required” day at Bicton College on 8th October. A full day, 10a.m. to 4p.m. including meal and coffees etc. for £15.

A talk from Dr. Ken Thompson, who manages to combine really useful research and scholarship with ability to talk English; a guided visit to the grounds (weather permitting); and Liz Charter, chief biodiversity officer to the Isle of Man. Questions panel.

So if you missed the spring meeting, YOU HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE!

Caroline Wood. Publicity Officer

OPEN TO ALL GARDENERS AND PLANT ENTHUSIASTS

Plant Heritage Devon Group takes a final look at garden biodiversity for 2011

Saturday October 8th 2011
Bicton College, East Budleigh
10 am - 4 pm

NO NETTLES REQUIRED

‘The reassuring truth about wildlife gardening’

With **Dr Ken Thompson**

Author and retired Senior lecturer- Sheffield University
(See March RHS Garden Magazine)

Two further speakers on both wildlife and garden plants

Question time panel

Plants for sale, books, displays, specialist groups. Information

Full lunch at the college £15

The latest survey results on how best to encourage the birds, bugs, and butterflies – whilst still enjoying the plants we love
An exciting day which should amuse, inspire and inform

Tickets from: **Diane Rowe 01884 840545**
and

Helen Brown 01404 850941

There is a possibility of a bus running from North Devon - with various pick up points. Please let us know if you are interested in joining a bus

We intend to give a brief account of events that have taken place in each of the three areas of the county. So to start it off we include in this newsletter the delights in the north of the county.

A year with North Devon

26th February. Like a pair of beautiful book ends our year of Plant Heritage events begins and ends at Marwood Hill gardens. 2011 kicked off in February with talks given by John Carter and Sarah Chesters who kept us enthralled with advice on water gardens and the latest developments at the RHS Rosemoor education centre. John's talk was a mixture of nomenclature, planting tips and a great deal of humour while Sarah left me wishing I still had young children who could gain from her passion and enthusiasm for getting young people interested in the natural world.

17th May. Despite it being a rather wet and mizzly day we were rewarded with outstanding colour and beauty when we visited the gardens of the 'Old Glebe' and 'Sherwood' for our 'Azaleas Galore' event in May. In the morning Nigel Wright took us around 'Old Glebe', his beautiful garden and rhododendron nursery, explaining

as we walked around how it has grown and developed over the years. I think we were all rather taken with his rope bridge.



After a picnic lunch we met up again at 'Sherwood' where Vaughan Gallavan, head gardener to Lady Quicke, gave us a guided tour of this glorious, wooded valley garden. The shade loving *Epimedium* had many of us searching amongst their leaves for the plant labels. We were particularly impressed by *Epimedium stellulatum*

'Wudang Star'. The stunning Knap Hill *Azaleas* were still



flowering at their best, and gave us their full force of colour, although I'm not so sure about all that orange!

23rd June. On a bright and sunny morning, Paul and



Helena Petrides
w e l c o m e d
u s i n t o t h e i r
d e l i g h t f u l
p l a n t s m a n ' s
g a r d e n i n
C r o y d e .



The garden was originally owned by Dr Tony Rogerson and his wife Marney an

accomplished plantswomen, who together carried out much of the initial hard landscaping and planting. Sadly by the time Paul and Helena purchased 'Langtrees' the garden had become overgrown and one of their first tasks was to remove nearly 50 native trees. After a lot of hard work and by providing shelter to the garden, they now enjoy an enviable microclimate that allows many slightly tender plants such as *Albuca shawii*, *Moraea hutonii*, grevilleas and *Sphaeralcea fendleri* to survive and flourish - that's even after the past two winters. Dotted around the garden there



were numerous places to sit and enjoy the different vistas and views beyond. I think I tried them all out, but I'm not sure that Paul and Helena, who are both "passionate about plants" get much of a chance to use them. They're always so busy in this constantly evolving garden.

We recharged our batteries with a splendid buffet lunch provided by the ladies from 'The Harracott WI' before we moved on to St. Brannocks WI in the afternoon.

I have to say, that it was here that I had a serious case of glass house envy, not that I have room for one as big as this!

One half of this magnificent stepped glasshouse is unheated and supports a grape vine that reaches up to the very top of the structure, making it a simple thing to harvest the fruits on the tiered levels. Also on this unheated side was an enormous lemon verbena, *Pelargonium's* and a collection of tender *Hibiscus*, many with flowers the size of saucers.

The other half is filled with *Abutilon* of every colour, *Passiflora*, *Salvia*, *Plumbago* and at least half a dozen enormous *Brugmansia (Datura)* shrubs with their huge and pendulous, trumpet shaped flowers. The perfume was almost overpowering. We ended our day sitting out on the lawn with Colonel and Mrs Smith Bingham who gave us a lovely tea. I went home feeling full but very contented.



14th July. A small band of us set off for the village of Berrynarbor to find out first hand how they prepare for Britain in Bloom. With not a patch of cloud in the sky it looked like we would be in for a good day and we were not disappointed.



We began our day at 'Harpers Mill' a garden nestling about half way down the steeply wooded Sterridge valley. Affectionately known as the 'Two Tim's', the owners of this informal garden, Tim Jones and Tim Davies, have created a fantastic wildlife haven with a wealth of interesting and unusual plants. The garden offers a wide range of growing conditions from shaded woodland edge, damp streamside and pond to well drained sunny areas. While

one area supported a number of delicate *Thalictrum* I could see from all the plant labels that it also hides a growing collection of *Galanthus* with over 100 named varieties at the moment (another visit in the Spring maybe?). We all admired the huge clump of *Heuchera cylindrica* 'Greenfinch'. The sunny slopes, have been developed



as wild flower meadows and are cut on a rotational basis to provide a constant supply of flowers during the summer months. The uncut areas were alive with Large Skippers and other butterflies, and numerous small dragonflies. I could have happily spent the whole day just sitting in the shade by the fernery or under the old fruit trees watching all this wildlife. But we had a rendezvous with Wendy Applegate, the organiser for 'Berry in Bloom' so by midday we headed on down

the valley. It's a bit hair raising driving down this road, with very little between the passengers seat, the edge of the road and a very deep valley.

Anyway, we all got safely to the bottom and met up with Wendy at 'The Lodge' an Edwardian country house and garden where - before being shown around by Phil the owner and chief gardener - we were able to sit and enjoy our picnics in the welcome shade of the trees.

Have you ever wondered what sort of work goes into Britain in Bloom? With Wendy as our guide we were taken around this beautiful and ancient village and heard all about the year long preparations that go into this fiercely competitive event.

The name Berrynarbor is derived from past manorial



lords, the Berry and de Nerbert families and although it had traditionally been a farming village, nowadays it has a mainly retired population of around 800.

Work usually starts in February with a team meeting (in the pub) to set an agenda for the year, which includes everything from planting and watering of hanging baskets, deadheading, weeding, and litter picking, to organising major fundraising events for 'Berry in Bloom' such as coffee mornings and the open garden days.



It did rather seem to me that every 'get together' is followed by tea and home made cakes!

Our last stop of the day was 'Hawkesridge', a steeply sloping garden owned by Jenny and Robin Downer. The garden has only been a few years in the making and is cleaved out of the rock face. My first impression of the garden was movement and colour. The movement was created by *Dierama* and grasses – a particularly effective

grass was the ornamental weeping lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) – these nodding panicles were interspersed with bursts of colour, which came from the yellow daisy like flowers of *Inula hookeri*, *Lavandula* and numerous annuals. The newly planted scree/alpine border enjoyed the perfect conditions of sharp drainage and full sun and was already a riot of colour. And guess what? We ended the day with tea and home made cakes!

I think the things that have stood out the most for me this year have been the passion and endless enthusiasm of the garden owners and their willingness to share this with others. Long may it last.



Our year has not finished yet; we still have our final event at Marwood to look forward to. Apart from being able to enjoy the garden with its fabulous autumn colours we will have two talks to enjoy. The first will be given by Jo Hynes in the morning who will be telling us about her national collection of hardy *Cyclamen* and her recent plant hunting trip to Israel. In the afternoon, Howard and Sally Wills will tell us about the plants and gardens that they saw on their trip to New Zealand. Of course, these will be separated by the famous 'Marwood lunch', after which you will definitely want to have a walk around the garden. Hope to see you there!

Maggie Morton

Photographs by Steve Morton. There are more pictures of all these events in the Plant Heritage Events galleries on the website www.stevemortonphotography.co.uk

AREA EVENTS 2011

All events in each area are open to members and members' guests. Charges (including tea and cakes) except where otherwise stated: members £3 per day and members' guests £5. All events will take place whatever the weather. May we ask you to respect the owners' privacy and not enter before the time specified.

EAST DEVON

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Tel. 01271 861610 Email: Maggie.Morton1@btinternet.com

SOUTH AND WEST DEVON

Area Co-ordinator: Jan Wagstaff, North Boreston, Halwell, Totnes TQ9 7LD
Tel: 01548 821320 Email: jan.wagstaff277@gmail.com

Friday 23 Sept **Salvias - hardy and not-so-hardy species from around the world**

An illustrated talk by salvia enthusiast Robin Middleton who has one of the largest collections in the UK – as seen on BBC Gardeners World October 2010.

7 pm for 7:30 start at West Hill Village Hall, near Ottery St Mary. Plants for sale.

Cost Entry £6 Contact Helen Brown on 01404 850941 or helenlittleash@hotmail.com

Sat 8 October **Bicton College, East Budleigh 10 am-4 pm. Tickets £15 See poster**

A day where we look at biodiversity in the garden - the last in our series and we have been very lucky that Dr Ken Thompson who has written many books, and who spearheaded the Sheffield University 5 year study of wildlife in the garden has agreed to come down to talk to us. The title **'No nettles required'** is taken from his book. The programme will be supported by two other speakers and further details as poster.

A full lunch, and coffee throughout the day will be included in the ticket price. An unmissable opportunity to hear the latest on the myths and magic of wildlife gardening. A look at wildlife in the countryside - and their habitats; growing the plants we love; and successfully balancing the two in the garden. We as individual gardeners are able to offer 'des res' environments for some creatures. Grouped as a whole we can surely be a force to try & halt the decline of some British wildlife.

Sat 15 October **Talks & Lunch at MARWOOD HILL GARDENS, MARWOOD near BARNSTAPLE EX31 4EB**

Contact Maggie Morton 01271 861610. Booking Essential

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 am Talk by Jo Hynes. Jo has a 1-acre country garden set in the rolling farmland of mid Devon & is a National Collection holder of hardy *Cyclamen* (excl *persicum* cvs.). Having recently visited Israel, Jo is going to give us a talk about the trip & her National collection.

12:00 pm Walk around the garden followed by: Lunch in the tearoom.
2:00 pm Talk by Howard & Sally Wills about their trip to New Zealand & the plants & gardens they saw there. Plant sales & raffle.
Cost £12.00 for the day. Lunch included (Please state choice of a meat or vegetarian alternative when booking places).

AREA EVENTS 2012

Sat 11 Feb TALKS AND LUNCH AT 'MARWOOD HILL GARDENS'

Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610 **Booking Essential**

10:30am Coffee

11:00am Talk & demonstration of propagation by Julian Sutton of Desirable Plants. Julian is well known to many for his propagation knowledge & skills & for the unusual plants he grows & sells at the Plant heritage Plant Fairs.

1:00pm Lunch in the tearoom

2:00pm Walk around the garden followed by: Tea. Plant sales and raffle

Cost £12.00 for the day. Lunch included (Please state choice of a meat or vegetarian alternative when booking places).

Wed 7 March WINTER LUNCH AT RATTERY VILLAGE HALL. BOOKING ESSENTIAL

10.45am Coffee & plants sales prior to a talk by Chris Burchall "Herbaceous plants for shady areas", followed by lunch at 1.00pm. Meat or vegetarian alternative (please state choice when ordering tickets) puddings & coffee. Please send SAE for tickets (£12 for members and guests) to Mrs E Pickard, 11 St Peter's Close, Elburton, Plymouth PL9 8NU. Cheques should be made payable to Plant Heritage Devon Group.

Directions **From Totnes take A385 west towards the A38 and Plymouth; turn R where signed Rattery & then follow NCCPG signs in Rattery village.**

Tuesday 17 April Coach trip to 'Elworthy Cottage Plants' Elworthy & 'Greencombe' West Porlock

Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610. **Booking Essential** as we will need to know coach numbers by 1st December.

Please see the article about Greencombe in this newsletter.

Friday 11 May Visit to 'Chine' in Drewsteignton & 'Stone Lane Gardens' Chagford

Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610. **Booking Essential** as numbers are limited (20)

Wednesday 13 June Visit to 'Lower Ash Farm' Rose Ash

Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610. **Booking Essential** as numbers are limited (15)

Thursday 21 June Visit to 'Foamlea' at Morteheo & 'Beachborough' at Kentisbury

Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610.

Thursday 19 July Visit to 'The Old Vicarage' at West Anstey & 'Knowstone Manor' at East Knowstone

Visit to see the National Collections of *Leucanthemum* and *Buddleja*. Contact Maggie Morton, 01271 861610.

BUTTERFLIES – THE FAST FLIERS

As a lead-in to our bio-diversity conference I thought I would give you a second article about some of the butterflies that continue to intrigue me. In my first article I dealt with some of their general but very interesting habits.

I'm now going to deal with a particular and I suspect a familiar group to all of you - if I mention nettles and *Buddleja* - then of course you immediately think of Red Admirals or to give them their proper classification, the exciting Nymphalidae. All in the group have attractive female names e.g. the Red Admiral is *Vanessa atalanta*.

Let me first reiterate, that the preponderance of butterflies depends on many important factors. The principal ones are the weather and the amount of available food. A period of good, dry, sunny weather is required - something we cannot of course control. Only the Speckled Wood will reluctantly fly in cloudy conditions. The availability of food plants is where we can come in. All butterflies once they become adults will immediately require at least two or three days of nectar from flowers or to take sugars from decomposing fruit. Otherwise they will not survive. So their lives are already very tenuous.

Of the 50 plus species that visit our country, 21 are in the family mentioned above. They have in common the characteristics of all being beautiful, largish, rather furry insects, who are able to fly at all heights (whether at ground level or right over the top of huge native trees - some other classes are the opposite keeping close to the ground and just ambling along). And they are fast. So they are an exciting group!

They consist mainly of the Fritillaries, Painted Lady, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Comma (see back page), Red Admiral, Purple Emperor and White Admiral. You will not see either of the latter two unless you go to the New Forest, and even then you will somehow need to sit in the top of a large tree, be patient and wait...and wait. You will however see all of the others, particularly from July to September in your gardens. Some much earlier depending upon how they got to you.

In my opinion, although I have received reports of over 30 species being recorded this year in one of our member's garden, the West Country is not such a good area for butterflies, except for the rarer Fritillaries, compared say to the chalk downlands of Sussex. We simply do not have the climate or the varieties of wild flowers. But we can make up for some of these disadvantages by growing our own flowers.

Contrary to belief neither the Red Admiral nor the Painted Lady breeds here. Both migrate here but in milder winters some Red Admirals might survive. Many depend on the climatic conditions of their breeding grounds and safe passage to England. Painted Ladies start a mass migration from northern Africa in February. They visit Cyprus and other Mediterranean countries before eventually arriving here. Red Admirals come in from the continent from June onwards. So the Red Admiral caterpillars you might see on our nettles will not normally survive our climate.

The small Tortoiseshell, Comma and Peacock all breed here. They lay eggs on nettles and the Commas also on Wych and Common Elm and Hop vines. You will later in the year see the clusters of caterpillars working together and even moving to another plant en masse (called "companies"). Whereas most butterflies only live between two and six weeks,

Peacocks, Commas and Small Tortoiseshell can live up to 11 months, and can hibernate here over winter, often in garden sheds or old tree trunks. That is why you will often see them on a warm day in early spring. The main broods will hatch later in the year.

So there are two important things we can do to encourage these insects to visit our gardens. First provide flowers for nectar and then plants upon which they will lay their eggs, which will eventually be food for the hatching caterpillars.

At our forthcoming conference you will be given lists of plants. For all these high fliers, food plants which are 'musts' are buddlejias, daisy-like flowers, hardy *Geranium*, *Eupatorium* and *Verbena*. All butterflies in the main are attracted particularly to the colour pink. Favourite wild flowers are Ivy, Daisies and Thistles.

I don't know about you but nothing thrills me more than when these beautiful insects allow you to get very close - some even settle on you - whereupon you can almost stroke them. Perhaps one day they may become tame! However I am not sure butterflies would see that as a blessing!

John Turner

AWARD FOR OUR PRESIDENT

At this years Hampton Court show, our Devon President, Chris Bailes was presented with the Veitch Memorial Medal by Princess Alexandra for his work with the RHS and Rosemoor in particular.

Chris has recently retired as Curator at Rosemoor after twenty years in charge of the gardens. He came to Rosemoor when the gardens were given to the RHS by Lady Anne Berry and has been instrumental in developing the gardens as they are today.

He is now associated with Chelsea Physic garden in London although he also finds time to guide parties of gardeners to exotic destinations throughout the world.

DON'T BIN IT!

With your newsletter, you will have received a copy of Devon's Programme of Events for 2011.

Please don't bin it! Give it, if you can, to a relative, friend or neighbour - anyone who might be interested in joining Plant Heritage, here in Devon or further afield. We hope that you and your guests will join us at events and plant fairs throughout the year.

Your Newsletter

During the winter months we plan to re-visit the content and format of this newsletter.

What would you like to read? All suggestions for new and regular features, comments on layout and designs and offers of future contributions would be very welcome.

Please do take this opportunity to influence events before the next newsletter arrives on your doorstep!

Contact the editor, Malcolm Pharoah on malcolmpharoah @btinternet.com
Or write to Lower Tithe Barn, Marwood, Barnstaple. EX31 4EB

DIRECTIONS TO DARTS FARM

Darts Farm is 3 minutes from the M5 Junction 30. Take the A376 towards Exmouth and follow Brown Signs to Darts Farm. Postcode for 'sat nav' users is EX3 0QH

DIRECTIONS ONCE AT DART'S FARM

Above Cotswold Outdoor. Park at the far end of the car park – closest to Topsham and go into Cotswold Outdoor, up the stairs and the room is behind you.

DETAILS ABOUT THE VENUE

Darts Farm is a food lover's haven with home grown mud-caked vegetables, artisan cheeses, organic bread, local wines, sauces, preserves, cakes, cordials, biscuits and more. The on-site master butcher, fishmonger and Cider maker are all experts in their field and provide only the best local produce. Darts is also home to a selection of hand picked high quality retailers such as Orange Tree, Fired Earth, The Aga Shop, RSPB, Cotswold Outdoor, a florist, beauty therapist and Pilates studio, as well as their own restaurant, gift, garden, children's clothes and toy departments.

CAPTURING NATURE

One of our members, Steve Morton, has brought together a keen interest in photography and a fascination with computers and software. The result is a new website featuring beautiful images of gardens, flowers and landscapes – along with more personal photographs of family and friends. Steve is married to Maggie, our North Devon Area Events Organiser, and has now added galleries of recent Plant Heritage events to the site: our visit to **Tregothnan** and the **Coombe Trenchard Arts and Crafts Festival**, with more to come.

All the images are freely downloadable for non-commercial use although an acknowledgment of source will be much appreciated. Visit www.stevemortonphotography.co.uk

South and West Area Winter Lunch Wednesday 7th March 2012 at Rattery Village Hall

Coffee and plant sales from 10.45 am followed by an illustrated talk by Chris Birchall of Tale Valley Nursery (holder of two National Collections) at 11.30 am

“Herbaceous plants for shady areas”

Lunch at 1.00 pm: main course, choice of desserts and coffee.

(Please state if vegetarian dish or other dietary requirements when ordering tickets)

Booking essential Tickets £12 per person

Please send SAE to:

Mrs E. Pickard, 11 Peter's Close, Elburton, Plymouth, PL9 8NU

Tel: 01752 492765

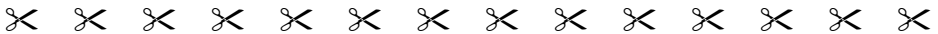
Cheques should be made payable to Plant Heritage Devon Group

DEVON NCCPG
AGM
12th November 2011
Dart's Farm, Topsham, Exeter
10AM – 4PM

- 10.00 COFFEE AND PLANT SALES
- 10.45 AGM
- 11.30 Overbecks and its gardens.
- A talk by Head Gardener Catrina Sanders
- 1.00 LUNCH
- 2.15 Chris Brickell CBE, Plant Travels in China, Asia and Patagonia

For directions see page 16

TICKETS, AS USUAL, WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION ON THE DAY. THIS IS PURELY TO SAVE YOU THE COST OF AN SAE. IF, HOWEVER, YOU WOULD LIKE ME TO SEND YOU YOUR TICKETS, PLEASE ENCLOSE AN SAE. PLEASE SEND YOUR TICKET APPLICATIONS AND CHEQUES MADE PAYABLE TO **PLANT HERITAGE DEVON GROUP** TO FELICITY DUDBRIDGE, COTLEY HOUSE, DUNSFORD, EXETER EX6 7BH. FOR ANY PROBLEMS, EMAIL FELICITY@THEDUDBRIDGES.COM, OR PHONE 01392 811647 DURING THE DAY. PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE A PLANT IDENTIFICATION TABLE SO DO BRING YOUR SPECIAL PLANTS.



TICKETS: £15

The AGM itself is FREE to all Plant Heritage members but please apply for tickets so that we can anticipate numbers.

NAME(S)

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The AGM speakers

Our two speakers for the A.G.M. are both experienced horticulturalists. In the morning we have Catriona Saunders who was an archaeologist for 10 years, before embarking on a second career in horticulture in her late twenties.

On completing her training, she worked first as a self-employed gardener and then in a private garden. Her employment with the National Trust began with a four year stint as Senior Gardener at Knightshayes Court, in Devon.

She moved to The Courts as Head Gardener in early 2005 and tended the seven acre garden with two other full-time staff, one part-timer and 10 volunteers. She has since moved to Overbecks, Salcombe, where she is Head Gardener.

In the afternoon we are so lucky to have Christopher Brickell as our speaker on the 12th November as he does not normally give talks any more!

Chris was Senior Scientific Officer and Botanist at Wisley from 1960 to 1969 before becoming Director of Wisley from 1969 to 1985; he then became Director General of the Royal Horticultural Society from 1985 till he retired in 1993.

During that time he chaired the RHS Advisory Panel on Nomenclature and Taxonomy from 1994 to 2002 and is a member of a number of RHS Plant and Trials Committees as well as serving on the UK Plant Breeders' Rights Controller's Advisory Panel for herbaceous plants (Plant Variety Rights Office). He is interested in the conservation of both wild and cultivated plants and in 1978 he initiated the formation of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) and the establishment of National Plant Collections.

A past Trustee of RBG Kew and RBG Edinburgh, he has published many botanical and horticultural papers and articles, particularly on monocotyledonous genera and *Daphne* as well as on horticultural taxonomy, and is the author of a number of books on botanical and horticultural topics. Until 2005 he was consultant Editor of the Plantsman and has recently been Editor-in-Chief of a number of prestigious RHS reference books.

He has led and taken part in a number of botanical expeditions to China, Georgia, Central Asia, Sikkim, Turkey, Greece and Patagonia, and continues to maintain his involvement in nomenclature, taxonomy, and the stabilization of plant names.

Arts and Crafts Garden Festival

In association with Plant Heritage Devon Group

As the day approached all eyes were turned to the weather. Gone was the glorious summer (April) to be replaced by ominous forecasts of gale force winds and heavy rain (June). With preparations now well underway for the Plant Heritage stand, the question on everyone's lips was: will the gazebo stand up and if not, then what? In the event, Tim Ellis saved the day: not only had he had the foresight to locate us with our back to the prevailing weather, he then managed to pull the 'rabbit out of the hat' and conjure up a fully functioning marquee on the morning that we assembled to set out our stall.

In the event, things were perhaps a little better than anticipated and not even the worst weather could eclipse the truly magnificent and historic setting that is **Coombe Trenchard**. It is a tribute to the organisers that a very considerable number of visitors turned out for the event, encouraged perhaps by the range of entertainment on offer. The 'Speakers Yurt' was a big attraction with many keen to see Toby Buckland (of Gardeners' World) and other speakers, including our own John Carter, who gave a characteristically spirited talk on the National Plant Collections at Rowden Gardens.

Food was of outstanding quality with locally sourced, organic and fair trade produce on offer from the Food Groove, a traditional hog roast and much else besides; diners were serenaded by a string quartet and could later watch a traditional Edwardian croquet match. There were many specialist nurseries exhibiting on both the formal lawn and in Barn Park and an impressive range of artisan crafts - from garden furniture and metalwork, to watercolours, Devon Cider and floral chocolates. Nothing it seemed could dent the enthusiasm of the assembled crowd, although one had to feel more than a little sorry for the ice cream and dessert vendor: it was just not 'strawberries and cream' weather.

Back to Plant Heritage and to a very worthy team effort. Several collection holders contributed magnificent display plants: John and Galen Carter's *Iris ensata*, *Astilbe* from Malcolm Pharoah at Marwood Hill Gardens, *Rhodohypoxis* and *x Rhodoxis* from Chris and Lorraine



Birchall, a display of *Betula* from Stone Lane Gardens, *Agapanthus* from Dick and Lorna Fulcher and *Sempervivum* from Howard and Sally Wills. Caroline Wood did an outstanding job with the display

boards which managed to be both eye-catching and informative. There was a constant small crowd of visitors around the marquee, many of whom stepped inside to read more about the collections – even attempting to fathom Howard’s mathematical analysis of the structure of sempervivums.

Keeping with our aim to **‘bring Devon’s National Plant Collections to the people’** we were also able to sell smaller plants provided by collection holder – this took an enthusiastic team of volunteers: Hilary Sanders, David Squire and Derek Burdett, braving the weather with great fortitude. We also ran for the first time in recent years a Plant & Garden Tombola with a range of small, medium and super prizes (some generously donated) – this was organised by Maggie and Steve Morton and Pauline Burdett, with more than a little help from her daughter Heidi, taking time out from postgraduate study, to promote the event to all comers. Top marks must go however, to our Chairman, John Turner, who stood out in pouring rain and heavy drizzle for the entire two days of the festival and in consequence managed to recruit a record number of new members.

In the end though it was the equipment which made everything possible, not to mention the hard work and energy of the ‘heavy team’ who assembled and dismantled the marquee and assorted equipment in the most difficult of conditions: Tim Ellis, David Ross and Julian Sutton. Many thanks to all the members who turned out to support us – we hope that you enjoyed the festival as much as we did and that you will be back again, with friends and guests in 2012.

Penny Ross

For a more personal account of the event, please read Caroline’s blog on our website: www.plantheritage.devon.org.uk

Photographs © Steve Morton
www.stevemortonphotography.co.uk



GREENCOMBE

In April of this year, Steve and I visited the gardens of Greencombe in Somerset for the first time. After enjoying a pub lunch in Porlock Weir we ambled gently up to Greencombe for the 2pm opening. As we entered the gates (there to keep the dogs in) we caught our first glimpses of the delights to come and by the time we'd walked up the drive to the house I was itching to be let loose. After ringing the bell for attention we were met at the door by Joan Loraine, owner of this enchanting garden, and she proceeded to give us a very lively account of the garden and its best attributes at this time of the year.



We had chosen to visit in April to see her National collection of *Erythronium* and when I asked Joan how many she had in her collection she replied “Lots and I’ve still got so many more seeds from Canada to sow”. Sadly Joan is now wheelchair bound so relies on her trusted team to carry out the more strenuous work in the garden but as you might expect after 45 years, she obviously knows the garden intimately.

Greencombe is a terraced strip of 3.5 acres on the edge of an ancient woodland between Porlock and Porlock Weir, and looks out to the

Bristol Channel. Some of its beauty comes from the borrowed landscape that surrounds it. But only some, because this is a garden full of its own magic. It was started in 1946 by Horace Stroud, who set out the bones of the garden surrounding the house. He later went on to purchase the woodland to the west, which he then incorporated with the original garden.

The present owner, Joan Loraine, took over the garden in 1966 with no gardening skills. She has ‘learned on the job’, and now, as well as maintaining and developing the garden, she holds four National Collections, of *Erythronium*, *Polystichum*, *Vaccinium* and *Gaultheria*.

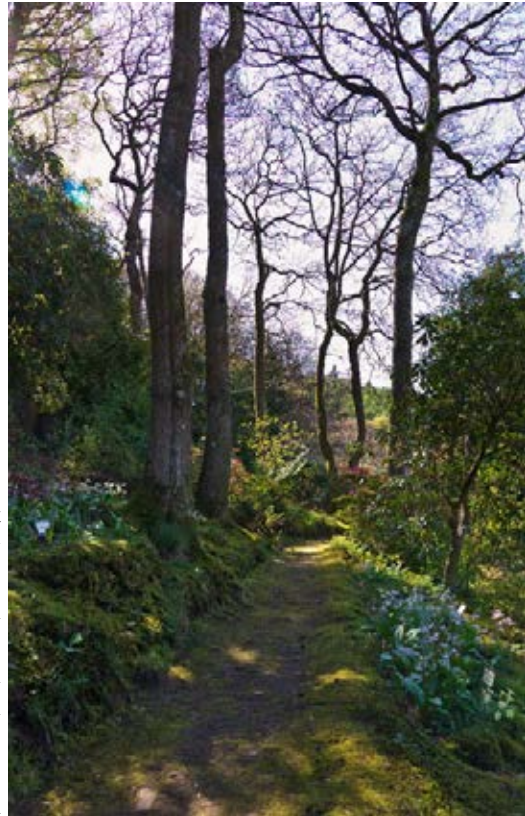


Her knowledge and experience are awe-inspiring, as is her delight at passing on her gardening know-how and plantsmanship.

At the time we visited, in April, the woodland was ablaze with *Rhododendrons*, azaleas, and *Camellias* and many shade loving perennials including *Trilliums*. Daffodils and primroses abound, and the borders were bursting with colour, with the promise of more to come later in the season. As for the *Erythroniums*, they did not disappoint either - planted as they were on banks beside the path, we were able to examine them in great detail and they were all very clearly labelled.



Photographs by Steve Morton. There are more pictures of Greencombe in the Gardens and Flowers galleries on the website www.stevemortonphotography.co.uk and see the back page.



As you will see in the programme of events for 2012, we are going to visit Joan's garden at Greencombe and also visit the nursery of Jenny Spiller at Elworthy Cottage Plants in April. We are hoping to run a coach for this event with pick up points at several locations. If you are interested in joining us on this trip, please get in touch with Maggie Morton (page 2) so we can judge if this is feasible otherwise we will visit the garden and nursery by cars.

Maggie Morton

PLANT TALK: Devon Website

As contributions to the NEWS and BLOGS pages have grown, we have decided to separate items into "NEWS & VIEWS" and "PLANTTALK". The latter features items on plants, horticulture and members' gardens and includes a series of excellent plantsman's articles from Julian Sutton and others.

All new blogs still appear on the HOME page-the news items are in black typeface and Planttalk in green. On visiting the NEWS/BLOGS page (orange tab) toggle between the two categories by clicking on the links at the top of the page.

Keen to contribute a blog, but still a bit uncertain about the technology? Help and support is always available and live demonstrations will be available at this year's AGM at Darts Farm. Please contact Penny on 01363 866401. penny.ross@btinternet.com
www.plantheritagedevon.org.uk

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

DEVON POND PLANTS. Unbeatable range of locally grown hardy water loving plants grown near Kingsbridge, South Devon, by a knowledgeable enthusiast. Visit my nursery by arrangement to buy potted or bare root plants; check availability at www.devonpondplants.co.uk. Mail order also available. The usual water lilies, irises and oxygenators plus a wealth of interesting and unusual varieties. Please ring David Kerr on 01548 521286

FANTASTIC FUCHSIAS AT SUNDIAL GARDEN, 700+ varieties, many rare (100+ hardies); 200+ named pelargoniums. Also good range of hardy plants with a sprinkling of treasures for the connoisseur. Pleasant mature garden being rescued and replanted including many hardy fuchsias, open daily all year, café and shop. On the A35 at Offwell, Honiton. Tel: 01404 831549. Fuchsia/Pelargonium catalogue £1.50 + S.A.E. or on www.sundialgarden.co.uk

ELWORTHY COTTAGE PLANTS, Jenny Spiller, Elworthy Cottage, Elworthy, Lydeard St Lawrence, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3PX. Tel:01984 656427. Clematis & Unusual Perennials, especially hardy geraniums, geums, grasses, ferns, epimediums, pulmonarias, crocosmias, campanulas, snowdrops and violas. Open 10.00am to 4.00pm Thursdays mid March to end July. Visitors welcome at other times March to October, please ring first. 1 acre plantsman's garden open at same times as nursery, admission £2. Groups welcome. Plant list: 3 x 2nd class stamps. www.elworthy-cottage.co.uk

BREGOVER GARDEN NURSERY, Middlewood, Nr. Launceston, East Cornwall PL15 7NN. (off the B3254) Interesting range of hardy border plants, Crocosmia, Violets. Catalogue: 3 x 1st class stamps; SAE for violet list. Open from March to mid October, Wednesdays 11am to 5pm. Nursery and cottage garden at weekends by appointment. (NGS opening end of May) Tel: 01566 782661.

Bicton College Horticulture and Floristry courses based at RHS Rosemoor from September 11th.

Diploma in Floristry Level 2 (over 2 years) Wednesdays 9-30 to 17-00
 Garden Design (March start) Tuesdays 13-30 to 16-30
 Planting Design (March start) Tuesdays 13-30 to 16-30
 RHS Basic Garden Planning. Fruit and Vegetable Growing Level 2
 Tuesdays 9-30 to 13-00
 Visit www.bicton.ac.uk or ring 01395 562300 for more information.

Rates for advertising in this Newsletter

Classified Ads	per issue		3 issues	
	£10	£25		
Display Ads	Black & White		Colour	
	per issue	3 issues	per issue	3 issues
Quarter page	£15	£45	£15	£45
Half page	£25	£70	£30	£85
Full page	£40	£110	£50	£140



