

# Amersham Gardening Association

[www.amersham-gardening.org.uk](http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk)

## August 2018 Newsletter

### From the Treasurer – an apology

For the plant sale in May we borrowed several “bum bags” for the people selling plants to collect money in. As usual, I emptied these into my backpack on the Church forecourt when we finished the sale. I then went home, counted the cash and banked it. A couple of weeks later I was told that the owner of the bags had found £120 in notes folded into a separate section of

one of the bags. It was our money. So, the final profit on the plant sale was £573.97; £120 better than I reported in the last newsletter.

Next year I will bring all the bags home to empty them properly in greater safety than is possible on the Church forecourt.



### From the Chairman

Well, it has been a challenging year in the garden with heavy snow before Christmas, more snow at the end of February and drought conditions for the last six weeks. In spite of the sorry state of the lawns they will probably recover, but I suspect that not all of our cherished plants will survive – for the optimists among us the loss of a plant will allow us to replace it with something new without any feelings of guilt.

Judging has taken place for the Regional stage of Britain in Bloom so let's hope the judges were impressed and that we do as well or better than we have in the last few years. This year we are also in the UK Finals and judging for this will take place in August. I am sure that I speak for all our members when I thank

all the Amersham in Bloom team for their efforts – hopefully these efforts will be rewarded by the judges, though whatever the judges think, Amersham has certainly benefitted from the team's efforts.

The Plant Sale in May was very successful and our thanks go to Janet Philpott for organising the event and to all those members who assisted in their various ways.

The AGA trip to Kent in June was enjoyed by many of our members - thanks to Jeanne Harrison for organising the trip. A report on the holiday is included in this Newsletter.

Colin Ross

### With this newsletter

Booking form for the afternoon outing to Huntsmoor on September 5<sup>th</sup>  
Entry form for the Amersham in Bloom show on September 9<sup>th</sup>  
Booking form for the quiz night on October 25<sup>th</sup>

## Visit to Malverleys and Hardy's Plants 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018

On a lovely sunny day in June we arrived at Malverleys, a beautiful garden near Newbury. Matt Reese is the head gardener with an impressive gardening pedigree. He writes the "Plantsman's favourites" for Gardens Illustrated magazine.

After refreshments we had a short talk by Matt followed by a tour of the garden which was started in 2010. Malverleys shows what can be accomplished when talent combines with wealth and traditional Jekyll-inspired planting in 10 intensively gardened acres.



Tall yew hedges surround many of the themed gardens including a cool white garden, a hot garden with many lovely statues. The cloister garden clad with various roses, the pond garden and the terraced long borders were stunning. The Wedding Ring border so named after Matt lost his wedding ring there! Vegetables and flowers were housed in an amazing walled garden.

It was a pity there was only one loo for 40 people which meant some missed the initial talk and we were late leaving for our lunch stop at the Watership Down pub in Whitchurch. Here we encountered several problems at this busy pub. The coach driver refused to go up the lane to Hardy's as he came with a much bigger coach than the one requested. However, Hardy's came to our rescue by sending a car for those who could not walk up the lane and kindly transported our purchases back to the coach.



At Hardy's, a guided tour of the greenhouses was too hot for some and had to be shortened for the rest. We were disappointed with the nursery as it became clear many of their best plants had been taken to various exhibitions. In spite of this many plants were purchased in true AGA style.

Joan Clark



## Visit to Milton's Cottage and Garden, Chalfont St Giles



The evening of July 3<sup>rd</sup> proved to be a perfect, warm and sunny summer evening as our group gathered at [Milton's Cottage](#) to start our visit. A grade I listed building, the cottage was the home for less than 2 years to John Milton and his family, who had escaped there from London in 1665 to avoid the Great Plague. As a consequence of the restoration of the monarchy, Milton had lost his job, his pension and his sight (he had been secretary /scribe to Oliver Cromwell). He was fortunate not to have been sent to the Tower of London for treason since he had held firm views in favour of the execution of Charles 1<sup>st</sup>.

The cottage houses a valuable and important collection of Milton's first editions, demonstrating his radical political and social ideas. Some rare pamphlets are included, some of which, had they been found in people's possession at that time, would of themselves have carried the offence of treason. More importantly, here is to be found the original copy of his famous poem *Paradise Lost*, described as one of the most influential poems in the English Language. It is alleged that it was in this cottage that Milton had the inspiration to write *Paradise Regain'd*.



The cottage retains its 17<sup>th</sup> century features, with low beamed ceilings and high thresholds. There are only a few rooms downstairs, kitchen, study, living room. There are a several small rooms upstairs, which would have been reached originally by a step ladder, this has now been replaced with a staircase, however, the upstairs is unsafe for visitors.

Behind the bust of Milton in the garden (on the left) is a sculpture of Eve under an apple tree – and there is a serpent in the apple tree.



As well as literary references in the cottage, the garden is maintained as a "unique literary garden" and is the only grade II listed English Heritage Historic Garden in the Chilterns. Plants such as fennel, myrtle, laurel, roses and acanthus, and quotations on glass, reference many of Milton's works. The death by drowning of his friend, which is immortalised in the poem *Lycidas*, is represented by a fountain. This garden is a small, quiet and charming setting which is quite unspoilt by the rigours of modern gardening fashion.

Our thanks to Kelly at the cottage for her hospitality and for making our visit so enjoyable with her interesting talk on the life and times of John Milton, and guiding us through the cottage and highlighting its literary treasures, not forgetting our thanks to the kind volunteer for helping us discover the hidden meanings within the garden.

Helen Morgan

## Waltham Place Organic Farm and Gardens, 17<sup>th</sup> July

Never has a garden trip been so Brexit like, it totally divided opinions. A select band of members set off to navigate the outer reaches of Maidenhead on a slightly cooler and less sunny day. Fortunately everyone

eventually arrived in one piece as a falling tree limb landed just ahead of one of our cars. Seconds later the car would have been pinned down. Was this mother Nature taking her revenge on gardeners?



As we set off round a parched and wild garden we noticed that every cubic metre of air above the plants was alive with pollenating wild bees, hover flies and butterflies. Plant choices were unusual, massive towers of spotted hemlock, swathes of horse tail cow parsley (oh sorry I mean pimpernel), and acres of rank grasses surrounded the helipad and distinguished the garden from the usual flowery bowers we normally admire. All became clear as we followed behind our guide, a knowledgeable etymologist / lepidopterist. That grass which some might define as scruffy grass was in fact *Poa annua*, the valuable food source of the meadow brown butterfly. Yet more brown butterflies hove into view. These were gatekeeper butterflies; caterpillar food source fine grasses such as bents (*Agrostis* spp.), fescues (*Festuca* spp.), and meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.), as well as common couch grass (*Elytrigia repens*). It is unusual to see couch grass cherished in a garden, but it is also favoured by the ringlet butterfly we spotted.

Various fritillaries flitted about, but we failed to see the Purple Hairstreak. However we did manage to see the chequer board pattern of the Marbled White, and a personal first for me was a close look at the magnificent iridescent green, red and black six spotted burnet moth.



We were slightly relieved not to be there at night, as over 500 types of moth have been found there. So that explained the tangles of grass, for the caterpillars and the flower choices many of which were rich in nectar. Irises, marjorams, erynguims, monardia, thalicticum and pollen rich day lilies and romneya, a fine white Californian tree poppy, lined the herbaceous borders. Which were unusual by having semicircles of beech, instead of the more usual divisions of yew making a rhythmic pattern of embayments along the borders. Though quite why there was bracken growing on the terrace next to the drawing room window was not explained.

There were several different gardens, the Memorial garden (for a small child), Japanese garden, winter garden, herb and vegetable gardens, all full of slightly unusual plants, visited by rare (ish) butterflies, bees and hover flies. I thought it was like being in the wilds of uncultivated Europe where the ecosystems have not been compromised by agricultural chemicals. Quite impressive so close to London, although others said they would take a strimmer to it.

As I said, it polarised opinion. Worth a trip on a Wednesday when it is open to the public, if you are thinking of re-wilding your garden or if you are interested in butterflies.

Jane Jenkins



## Four days in the gardens of Kent, June 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>

### Penshurst Place

A historic garden dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. More than a mile of clipped yew hedges divides a series of garden rooms, filled with an exciting array of flowers. There is a long border on either side of a path, divided by yew buttresses into a series of garden rooms with different colour themes in each, and a large rectangular pond complete with fountain and water lilies. Near the house is a parterre of roses surrounded by box hedges.

A very fine way to start our four days of garden visits



### Timbers

This is a private 5 acre garden stocked with unusual hardy plants and designed with owner Sue Robinson's flower arranger's eye. Of particular note are the parterre, the colour combinations in the herbaceous border, fruit lawns, fine mature trees, and the large wildflower meadow flowing down into the valley below the garden. The apple sculpture was especially interesting; again there was a rectangular pond with fountain and waterlilies



## Walmer Castle

Originally a Tudor fortress, the castle has evolved into a homely residence for many well known names from the Duke of Wellington to the Queen Mother. Outside discover the majestic sea view and 8 acres of magnificent gardens including the Broadwalk Gardens and the Queen Mother's Garden. Again there was a large rectangular pond with waterlilies – and an incredible number of bright blue dragon flies. The cloud-pruned yew hedges provide a magnificent background for long borders leading up to the castle, and it is possible to walk all round the castle through the (now dry) dry moat that contains a number of interesting trees and shrubs.



## Salutation Gardens

Known as the Secret Gardens of Sandwich, this restored garden is hidden away behind high walls opposite the riverside quay. The Lutyens and Jekyll gardens spread out from the Grade 1 listed manor house – now a hotel. Many original features have been reinstated, such as the characteristic double borders with their changing ripples of colour. Other areas include woodland and productive gardens, as well as an area of exotic tropical planting near the entrance – and, of course, plant sales in the area we were served tea and cake. Salutation is well on the way to recovering from the devastating floods of a few years ago.



## Goodnestone Park Gardens

Jane Austen visited her brother when he lived at Goodnestone, which dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The 15 acres of garden include outstanding trees, a gravel garden, 'the best walled garden in Kent' with clematis, cornus and wisteria, as well as a parterre and terraces, and again a large pond with waterlilies in the walled garden. The woodland area was rather disappointing; apart from a few magnificent specimen trees (including two large magnolia grandiflora in full bloom), much of the area was obviously awaiting redevelopment. The nursery is run by Francis Plumpton and concentrates on selling stock propagated from plants growing in the garden. Needless to say, we bought plants.



## Frith Old Farmhouse.

A private garden tended by Doctors Gillian and Peter Regan, it is a riot of plants growing as if in the wild, developed over 40 years. No neat edges or formal beds, but several hundred interesting and unusual plants. Very much a "Marmite" garden – some loved the informality and twisting uneven paths, others hated the need to trek through a "jungle" to see anything, not to mention the crumbling (but picturesque) walls, and areas where there seemed to be just junk and rubbish. However, no-one could fault the magnificent self-seeded martagon lilies, which apparently were acquired originally from the Cambridge botanic gardens.

It was a pity that the magnificent Paulonia had finished flowering.



## Downderry Nursery

This was an unexpected bonus. Debbie and Paul had seen the signpost for this lavender nursery when they went for a walk one evening, so we made a slightly earlier start than planned for our last day, and followed the signposts through increasingly narrow and twisting lanes. As ever our driver Brian rose to the challenge and brought there safely, and we spent an hour or so admiring (and buying) a fascinating variety of lavenders.



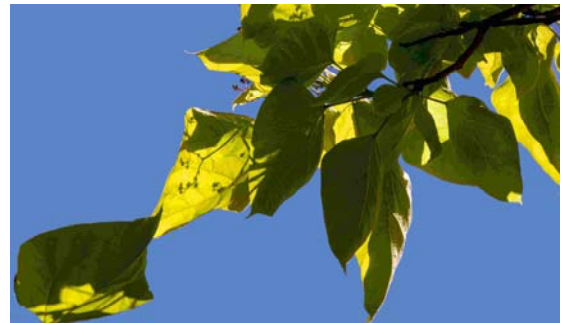
## Great Comp Gardens

Described as 'a paradise for Garden Lovers'. Great Comp is a wonderfully quirky 7 acres of garden, with beautiful and rare plants, surrounding a 17<sup>th</sup> century manor house. There is an Italian Garden, romantic ruins and one of the most comprehensive and exciting collections of salvias in Europe. William Dyson, the Garden Curator, runs the nursery specialising in salvias. For some of the group, this was the highlight of the week.



## Leydens

A private garden owned by garden designer, nursery owner and author Roger Platts. Next to his home and nursery, the garden has a relaxed air with densely planted curving borders bursting with a broad range of shrubs and perennials. We were privileged to be allowed into the private garden – Leydens is mainly a nursery providing many mature plants for the clients of Roger's designs. Roger also treated us to a display of his collection of vintage cars and a historic tractor in the hay meadow. Again we bought many plants – to the extent that we exhausted their supply of plastic bags!



Brian really came into his own on the final lap of our journey. There had been a major pile-up on the M25, so he came off the motorway at Leatherhead and found a most interesting route home through Oxshott and all sorts of places that some of us had forgotten existed.

Thank you, Jeanne, for a fascinating four days – and for arranging much better weather than last year.

## Forthcoming meetings

**There is no meeting in August.**

**Afternoon visit to Huntsmoor, Stoney Lane Bovington, Herts**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2 to 4 pm – own transport**

This two acre garden has year round interest and is highly recommended by those who have visited it. It contains many special trees and shrubs. A large lawn with herbaceous border gives way to a formal rose garden and onto a central Koi pond with waterfall and rockery. A walk through the specimen trees, past a wildlife pond and bog garden brings you to a newly

formed border, a log cabin and a spectacular view of rolling English countryside. There are a few parking spaces in the drive for those with limited mobility and there is more parking in a nearby field. Access into the garden is easy and there are plenty of places to sit.

See the booking form with this newsletter.

**27<sup>th</sup> September: Sabatino Urzo, RHS plant trials, past, present and future**

Sabatino Urzo is Team Leader for the trials team at RHS Wisley so is well qualified to update us on this subject. His team spearheads the assessment of award-winning plants of fruit, vegetables and ornamentals in a process to receive the prestigious RHS AGM. He is also involved in RHS holidays to Italy. He came from a farming family and developed a passion for gardening when very young by helping his grandfather grow fruit and vegetables on the family farm in Pozzuoli, a small town just outside Naples. He then got involved in plant cultivation and design at his father's

nursery and gained a BSc in Plant Production at the University of Naples and an MSc at the University of Pisa in management and design of green areas and landscapes. He has studied design and floral display at Greenwich College, and was a horticultural trainee at Chelsea Physic Garden. He undertook further training at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Edinburgh before joining Wisley in 2010. He describes himself as an energetic public speaker, so we shall look forward to the experience.

**25<sup>th</sup> October: Quiz night**

**See the booking form with this newsletter.** If you are inviting friends to join you, please try to make up tables of 8. Otherwise people will be allocated to tables at random. We will provide water, but feel free to bring along your own wine, soft drinks and snacks. For the raffle at our monthly meetings, members of the

committee buy the prizes out of AGA funds. For the quiz night raffle we are soliciting donations of prizes from members – perhaps a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates or an exciting plant. Please let Carol Barratt ([carol.barratt@btopenworld.com](mailto:carol.barratt@btopenworld.com), 01494 725127) know if you can donate a prize.

**22<sup>nd</sup> November: Dr Sandy Primrose, GM crops, Saints or Satan?**

Sandy Primrose is a scientist and author. His professional life started in academia and then within pharmaceutical, diagnostic and life science companies. He advises government on matters such as detection of food fraud and the safety of novel and genetically engineered foods. He also works as a consultant helping early stage companies in the healthcare field and helping venture capital groups with due diligence. Sandy is a very keen gardener and lectures extensively on plants, horticulture and gardening. He is passionate

about teaching and has written an 'easy to understand' book which describes the principles of gene manipulation and genomics. His talk will update us on the current status of genetic manipulation in our everyday foods. I remember reading in The Garden last year that genetically engineered orange flowered petunias were on sale illegally in garden centres in the UK – perhaps he can shed light on how this should have been prevented.

**20<sup>th</sup> December: Xmas social evening.**

This is your chance to socialise with fellow members, and for new members to meet and talk to other members. As usual, wine and soft drinks will be provided from the Association's funds, and the food will be "pot luck" - members whose surname begins with A – K are asked to bring along a sweet dish or fruit, and those whose surnames begin with letters L – Z a savoury dish. We will provide plates and plastic cutlery,

but if you can, please bring "finger food". There will be a table quiz, entertainment and a raffle. We are soliciting donations of prizes from members – perhaps a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates or an exciting plant. Please let Felicity Vickery (01494 726284, [felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk)) know if you can donate a prize.

## It's on the label – triumphs of design over utility

Our cat is not a fussy eater, although he makes a fuss when he wants to be fed. However, we like to give him a variety of different flavours of meat or fish in jelly, and he seems to like one brand that offers four different pairs of fish or meat in each dozen packs of food. On the back of each pack of food is a list of the contents (eg salmon and saithe, or turkey and liver) in 24 languages. This could be very useful for me when travelling, if I bothered to memorise the list, so that I would at least know some basic menu items. There is a problem with one of the flavours – the panel that contains English and the other languages that I recognise is printed in white on a yellow background, so that it is completely unreadable.

Perhaps more seriously, last year we were on a family holiday in a large apartment, and it was my turn to cook dinner. The apartment offered a very limited range of cooking utensils, so I decided that chicken mini-fillets in a cheese and tarragon sauce would be easiest. I went

to buy some cheese sauce granules in the supermarket, then remembered that one of the family was gluten intolerant, so checked the ingredients. Quite correctly, there was a list of ingredients, in order of quantity, and with possible allergens in bold type. Unfortunately, the whole package was in a Gouda cheese rind yellow, with the printing in white – again completely unreadable.

Some years ago my then local council produced a very useful leaflet of services available to visually impaired people. It was printed in cyan on white. Readable with moderate difficulty by someone with good eyesight (but much improved by reading through rose-tinted spectacles to darken the pale blue ink). However, for someone with impaired vision, and especially if using blue tinted spectacles to reduce uv damage to the eye, it was completely unreadable. The recent NHS Health Check leaflet “Change your life in 20 minutes” is at least printed in black, but with a shaded blue background, so reducing readability on the left hand side of each page.



Looking at the various bottles and spray cans in the garden shed, I see that the information is at least clearly readable. However, it is incomplete information. Unlike food labelling, where all ingredients must be declared, in order of quantity, most garden products list only the main active ingredient. There is a problem with this. A recent report showed that various herbicides containing glyphosphate were more damaging to cells in culture than glyphosphate alone, because of other ingredients. This may be important. Glyphosphate is on the list of possible cancer causing chemicals (although the evidence is unclear), and damage to cells in culture is one of the ways of assessing the possible risk of causing cancer. We are not told what other active (or inactive) ingredients are in these products.

## Two misnamed dahlias



A couple of years ago I bought two dahlias, one labelled Bishop of Llandaff and the other Bishop of York. When they flowered, I could not tell them apart; both were the same shade of red. Then on the AGA visit to Belton House last year I saw a splendid display of both of these – and Bishop of York is yellow. Obviously, my plant had been misnamed.

The misnaming goes further. This year I bought plants of both Bishop of York (yellow, left) and Bishop of Canterbury (pink, right), to fill one of the planters where last year's tubers had failed to grow. York and Canterbury do not have Bishops, they have Archbishops.



Should we ask for these two dahlias to be upgraded to reflect their archiepiscopal status?

## Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email [felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk)

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting.

If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 014494 784913, email [libbym6740@gmail.com](mailto:libbym6740@gmail.com)

**Please remember the raffle at each meeting.** The profit on the raffles makes a very useful contribution to our expenses; subscriptions alone do not cover the cost of meetings and speakers.

**Publicity.** If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact [david.bender@btinternet.com](mailto:david.bender@btinternet.com)

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham  
Robertson's butcher, Chenies parade  
Van Hage garden centre  
Little Chalfont Library  
Amersham Library  
Amersham Community Centre

Amersham Council Offices  
Amersham Station  
Coleshill Village Hall  
South Heath Garden Centre  
Bevan's Greengrocer

## Committee and Contact Details

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Newsletter Editor	David Bender	<a href="mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk">newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>

### Discounts for members – remember to take your membership card to claim your discount

[East Building & Timber Supplies](#), 43 - 47 Chiltern Ave, offer a 10% discount on compost, gravel and pebbles, etc to AGA members.

[South Heath Garden Centre](#), Meadow Lane, South Heath, Great Missenden, HP16 9SH, offer a 10% discount on some items.

### Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at

<http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

### Local events

If you know of local garden events, open gardens, etc, please email [newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk) to let us know as early as possible, so that information can go out in the newsletter and on the website

### Photos from outings

You can see lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>