



ventnorensis

journal of the ventnor botanic garden friends' society

"We too often become desensitized with the Garden. We casually walk past something flowering for the first time at Ventnor, in the UK, or even for the first time in cultivation, and we have become used to it"

Volume 19 No. 2 Summer 2012

spring/summer opening times

10am to 5pm until 1st November 2012

For Visitor Centre, Garden Cafe, Plant Sales and Greenhouse.



exhibitions/events

9th – 10th August
7.30pm

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare
Outdoor theatre. The Festival Players (embracing the former Theatre Set-Up) return to Ventnor Botanic Garden. Tickets £12.50 adult, £10 concessions, available on the night.

6th – 28th August

Inspired by Wight

1st – 14th September

Vectis Quilters

15th – 21st September

St Lawrence Art Group

Parking Charges

We need to clarify that Parking Charges are for Steephill Cove and Cricket Club visitors only - they are not for Garden visitors. To improve the experience for Garden visitors we wanted to remove the time limit imposed by parking meters.

Based on our interest in promoting sustainability we have a green travel scheme which means those arriving by foot, bus, or bicycle receive a 25% reduction on their entry. This means that Exhibition-only entry for someone arriving on foot is £1.50 instead of £2.

Our challenge is to put VBG on a firm financial footing after withdrawal of the Council subsidy in order to save the Garden and improve it. For example, we would love to rebuild the playground to incorporate sustainable materials, plant tunnels, and features unique to a botanic garden, but this takes resources.

For regular playground users we have added a number of options: a playground pass, a pay as you go Friends membership, a monthly family pass, or a limited number of free tickets available through the Ventnor Childrens Centre.

For other charges, see page 26.

John Curtis

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society

President

Brian Kidd

Chairman

Philip Le May - Tel: 853824

Treasurer

Jean Kelley - Tel: 853221

Secretary

Rosemary Stewart - Tel: 292107

Membership Secretary

Virginia Newbold - Tel: 874246

Events

Sally Peake - Tel: 731403

Ventnorensis Editor

Roz Whistance - Tel: 753090

Editor Friends' Website:

www.ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk

Jane Cheverton - Tel: 856855

Gardening Volunteers

Wednesday mornings 10.00 am

Jean & David Kelley - Tel: 853221

Curator

Chris Kidd

Garden Address

Ventnor Botanic Garden

Undercliff Drive

Ventnor

Isle of Wight

PO38 1UL

Telephone: 01983 855397

Fax: 01983 856756

email: admin@botanic.co.uk

Contents

Regulars

Curator's Notes	2
Chairman's Message.....	5
Editor's Letter	11
Plant Profile.....	12
Weather	16
Your Questions Answered.....	25

Notice Board

CIC News	4
RHS Offer.....	4
AONB Grant.....	9
Discounts for Members.....	10
Join the Friends.....	14
Website Appeal.....	22
Open Gardens.....	23
Entrance Fees.....	26
New Members.....	28

Features

Design Walks.....	6
Birthday Celebrations.....	9
Volunteer Tour Guides.....	17
TV Cameras to VBG.....	18
Butterflies and Moths.....	20



Printed on the Isle of Wight
on 50% recycled paper
using vegetable based inks



Curator's Notes

"Ventnor Botanic Garden is one of the most unique and important gardens in Britain."

This is something we've all known for years, but the reason I've used quotation marks around the bold statement above is that it is a direct quote from none other than Dr John David, the Royal Horticulture Society's Chief Scientist. Dr David visited us in June this year in order to take a look at our Puya collection, having "dropped everything" when he heard they were in flower; to catch an early train down from Wisley on a Saturday morning. The opportunity to visit us, and then see his favourite group of plants in flower was too good to miss; for me it was an absolute pleasure to see a leading academic in awe of our Garden.



Dr John David

I think we too often become desensitised with the Garden at Ventnor. Seeing it every day we don't have the opportunity to compare it with other public gardens. We casually walk past our plants: nearly every month something is flowering for the first time at Ventnor; for the first time in the UK, or even for the first time in cultivation, and we have become used to it. So when an expert in their field visits, perhaps it makes us look at the Garden with fresh eyes.

A word of caution at this point. This self congratulation and back-slapping mustn't disguise the fact that in many ways the functionality of Ventnor is many years behind our competitors. The pangs from the introduction of an entry fee bring us back to the reality that this Garden now needs to include many other facilities to fulfil the expectations of our visitors. By this I don't mean a fantastic café with top quality food as delivered by Martyn, clearly marked out routes through the Garden and pristine toilet facilities. We need to interpret our Garden, to explain what it is we do, and why the Garden looks different from any other. Why do we leave leaves under the Cork Trees in the Mediterranean? Why leave empty spaces which seem to cry out for

'Nearly every month something is flowering for the first time at Ventnor, for the first time in the UK, or even for the first time in cultivation - and we have become used to it'

planting? Why don't we label all of the plants? Why don't we have spring bedding? And why, in the name of Betsy, don't we have a rose garden?

Quite how we do this, I'd love to know. At the Design Walk in June one of our guests came up with a brilliant suggestion for a problem that has vexed us, and botanic gardens the world over; for years, and believe me, more than one PhD has been successfully defended in this particular field of expertise! (I'm not about to explain it here, let the copiers visit us in person to find out!) So, I throw out the challenge, how do we explain our concepts, philosophies and principals to the widest audience? You know where to find me . . .

Chris Kidd
See Plant Profile, P12

CHRIS KIDD

In our minds he always was, but Chris Kidd is now officially the Curator of Ventnor Botanic Garden



Lesser periwinkle *vinca minor* at VBG by David Whistance

Press release

11 JULY 2012. Last evening in a flurry of activity two law firms completed the signing of a 125 year lease for the Ventnor Botanic Garden (VBG) by a Community Interest Company.

John Curtis, Director of the CIC signing the lease with the IoW Council added, "This is one step – we have many, many more ahead of us. We finalised the transfer with minutes to spare before the busy season, so we are scrambling to finish our new entrance and putting the final touches on our pricing." The Garden will no longer receive a subsidy from the IoW Council and must be financially sustainable on its own.

"We have been working hard to secure the future of the Garden and now we can return to developing its potential," said Phil Le May, Chairman of the Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society. "It is a new day and a new opportunity for the staff," commented Chris Kidd, Curator.

Martyn Cutler, the chef at the VBG Café, said: "Something exciting really is happening at Ventnor Botanic Garden. We just hosted our first evening garden tour and dinner with dishes made from IoW sourced ingredients and we are looking forward to moving our cream tea out into the Palm Garden."

The VBG CIC has clearly set out its themes: botanical excellence, education, and sustainability. An Education Coordinator will join the staff in September to spearhead delivery of courses for all ages. The CIC has a steady stream of developments planned alongside established events such as Hopfest, summer theatre, and guest lectures. Chris Kidd enthused: "This week we had Susyn Andrews down from Kew establishing the scientific basis for our National Collections. Two weeks ago we had Dr. John David, the world expert on Puyas, in the Garden marvelling at our flower spikes. It is exciting to be at VBG now."

Special Offer from the RHS!

I now have all the paper work for anyone who would like to take advantage of membership of the Royal Horticultural Society. **If you join through the Friends and pay by Direct Debit you will save 30% off the cost of membership**, receive a £5 RHS voucher ... and the Friends get £5 for introducing you. This offer is until the end of January 2013.

If you would like the forms please contact Rosemary at rosemary@onwight.net or tel: 292107

Chairman's message

I was reading the other day about the Quiet Garden Society and wondered how this might apply to my own garden and to Ventnor Botanic Garden. The idea of a garden as a place of tranquillity appeals to most of us even if it is only in certain areas that this can be achieved.

Thirty years ago this month I met Bob Sharpe, the previous owner of my garden, in the Bonchurch Inn and we immediately became firm friends. Bob had just retired from 'The Met' and set about reclaiming the one acre and three roods that makes up Rosemount here in The Pitts. The name gives away its origins, being Great and Lesser Pitt or quarry.

Fast forward 28 years and I took over to finish what Bob had started. The most recent project has been the restoration of the mid-19th Century Vine House complete with Old Vine.

I do more than just enjoy the peace and quiet of this intriguing and magical space, complete with cave, partly due to the fact that I am on my own. Not so many are ready to climb the 41 stone spiral steps which take you to the first level – with only another three to go. At the top of the steps each day I take in the astounding views out to sea (or am I really just getting my breath back?) which calms my mind in readiness for the patience required to get on with the garden. We are a strange but delightful bunch of oddities, us gardeners.

So yes, my garden is quiet and when I get up there so is my life.

Phil Le May



*Tranquil: Watsonia pillansii - Best Red Form,
by Rosemary Stewart*

**Which part of VBG would you recommend to be a Quiet Garden and why?
Answers to the Editor please for the next edition of Ventnorensis.**

Friday Design Walks with John

“Everyone who feels passionate about VBG come and join me on Friday walks round the Garden ...”, said John Curtis at the Open Meeting at the Cricket Club in March. “These walks will be for you to share your thoughts on how the Garden will work in future. Everything, from how much you think locals could contribute to the Garden to where the tea shop should be, is open for discussion. We will walk around the Visitor Centre, the Garden, the car park ... anywhere you want, and develop our plans collaboratively.”

Thus, the Friday Design Walks were born and there has been a great deal of interest. There were 20 of us on the first one. We started at the entrance and at once there was lively discussion on first impressions for visitors and what to do about parking. John is very keen to make the entrance to the Visitor Centre more welcoming, with plant sales, an information centre, and maybe a small top level café. It will be the start of a choice of trails for visitors after they have paid for entrance beside the shop and walked out to the Top Lawn. We looked at other possibilities for the Top Lawn, then went down through the Mediterranean to the Palm Garden and finally looked at having the exit through the Herb Garden and shop.

A fortnight later we were joined by Richard Wright and photographer from the County Press and started off at the Greenhouse. Plant sales will be moving to the entrance so what to do with the space? Would it be good to include the compost area in a visitor trail and house the garden equipment down there? In the Southern Hemisphere Garden we agreed there is a need for information boards in different areas with details about what to see that week. Before we left we discussed initial designs for a possible new logo based on the Puya flower (see Plant Profile, P12).

Walk Three attracted over 50 people all eager to see what is on the other side of the road! This area is what John calls the Secret Seven – the seven acres of land housing the plant propagation glass houses. We walked to the top of the path and discussed using the area as an overflow car park, more plant sales and a small café with tables to look at the great view. It could also be an educational area for children to learn about hands-on gardening, with vegetable plots to grow food for the cafe. We met Chris Watts who looks after the weather station and Richard and Dorothy, the beekeepers, in full kit. One or two local residents were anxious about the wildlife. There would have to be a safe walkway to and from the main garden.

The fourth walk started with a look at the outbuildings on the car park. John has plans to convert the present garden staff room and toilets into the main office and staff area. Members applauded the idea of converting the tractor shed into an art gallery with an artist in residence in the summer. At the top of the Meadow we reviewed the possibilities for small outdoor events. We all agreed that the



Left: John introducing Martyn Cutler and his team with the delicious buffet. Right: A trip down the Tunnel!

Playground needed to be upgraded and equipment made from natural materials. John suggested he needs a Children's Design Walk before decisions are made! Further along it seemed a good idea to plan a cliff trail to include the Hop Garden, the old hospital incinerator, old sundial and perhaps look-out stands near the cliff. Casual walkers would not be barred from entrance but we should hope that they would be honest or at least spend money on refreshments.

So to our adventure on the 1st June! "Would you like to go down the Tunnel?" said John. An excited chorus of "Yes, please!" rang out across the lawn. "My grandson will be so envious!" said one member. We split into two groups because there is not much room out under the cliff. The path had been cleared and made safe and we could just about see. The view is great and John amused us by suggesting romantic summer suppers could be served out there . . . No wonder our slogan is 'Something exciting is happening at Ventnor Botanic Garden'. In the south east corner under the trees we suggested a picnic area. The new chef would like to prepare hampers for picnics in the Garden so this would be a lovely sheltered spot with good places for children to run about.

This led easily into our last stop in the Palm Garden for a glass of Pimms and a taste of Martyn Cutler's delicious buffet. Martyn told us that all the food is sourced on the Island and freshly prepared. He and his team are making their own bread and cakes and are offering an imaginative menu. We sat at tables in the sunshine and agreed that things were looking very good for the future of the Garden.

For the next few walks John would now like to approach each specific part of the Garden, looking in detail at the direction for the area in terms of botany, layout, and so on. He will introduce the member of the garden staff who is in charge of that area and we will hear and discuss his ideas for development. It will also help with a deeper consideration of the plants in each area.

We are pleased to see anyone who would like to join the walks so look out for the dates. One or two holidaymakers have asked to come and given some good feedback so you are all welcome.

Rosemary Stewart



BARDON VECTIS STONE CENTRE

Specialising in Natural Stone and Reformed Garden
Paving, Walling, Edgings, Decorative Aggregates
and Driveway Block Paving

LARGE DISPLAY AREA AND CLEARANCE SELECTION

OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

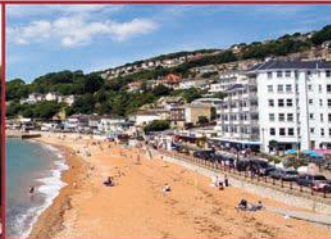
Just off the Blackwater Main Road,
St George's Down, Newport PO30 3BX

Contact: (01983) 538114

www.bardon-vectis.com

^T ^H ^E
MET
WINE - TAPAS - COFFEE

Seated inside or outside,
overlooking glorious Ventnor beach
The Met offers a very warm welcome
and truly memorable experience
any time of the day.



Open from 9.30am daily

The Met • Esplanade • Ventnor • Isle of Wight • PO38 1JP

01983 855441 tapas@metwinebar.co.uk www.metwinebar.co.uk

Visit our new beach and gift shop and our
quaint tea rooms, *Queenies*, next door to The Met



Friends secure AONB grant

The Friends' Society, with the help of Irene Fletcher, has secured a £9,500 grant from the AONB Partnership. At their last meeting the Friends also agreed to ring fence £3000 in match funding, and St Francis School, which will benefit from the grant, will contribute significantly in kind and financial contributions in terms of transport.

The funding is for all children at St Francis School and it is hoped parents, carers and teachers will also benefit. The new school building will be located in the heart of the AONB and the funding will provide an exciting programme of environmental and heritage activities, including walks, talks, visits, workshops and exhibitions.

Children will learn about and celebrate what is on their doorsteps. For example, the Victorian Heritage on their beaches; the Second World War history on the Downs; and of course Ventnor Botanic Garden and its environs. The project will involve local businesses within the AONB, The National Trust, The Wildlife Trust and local 'celebrities', bringing this special area alive for the children.

There will be more about this exciting project in the next Ventnorensis.

Courses at Ventnor Botanic Garden

A new programme of courses, workshops and lectures will commence in September. The popular Gardening Club will be resurrected and will commence in September with a daytime and evening class running once a month for 10 months of the year.

The VBG Certificate in Plantsmanship course will also recommence one morning a week for a year. This covers the rarely-taught subjects relating to horticulture which we all want to know about, including such topics as the Plant Hunters, Native Plants, and Plant Families.

There will also be a series of one-off talks, walks and lectures.

For more information, please contact Irene Fletcher on irene.fletcher@jow.gov.uk or call into the Botanic Garden.

The 40th Anniversary celebrations



were a great success. The wind and light rain did not deter the intrepid guests on the guided tour. We all enjoyed watching Major General Martin White cut the delicious chocolate VBG cake made by Martyn Cutler and his team and enhanced with fireworks! Read the full report on the VBG website <http://www.botanic.co.uk/news?id=29>

Gardening volunteers

We meet every Wednesday morning at the far end of the car park. Bring hand tools and a drink to have at coffee break. All welcome. Ask for Kate.

DISCOUNTS for members

The following suppliers have kindly agreed to give discounts to Friends' Society members. Please be aware that discounts and other benefits of VBGS membership are subject to change. **Remember to take your membership card with you – a discount will only be given if you show it.**

Eddington House Nursery Eddington Road, Nettlestone/Seaview:
10% discount

Deacons Nursery MoorView, Godhill: 10% discount.

Ryde House Nursery Binstead Road, Ryde: 10% discount.

Do not forget your Membership fee includes **10% off** for the Gift Shop, Cafe, Plants and Seeds. Just show your Membership Card.

Please do visit and show that we appreciate suppliers' support and goodwill.

COCO DESIGN CO



Graphic Design & Illustration signs | artist impressions | logos | brochures | flyers | adverts | books...
Telephone: 07530 867318 & 01983 854006 simone.whitehurst@googlemail.com

Dear members...

I'd like to think that if those who are railing against the introduction of charges to the Garden were to see this Issue of *Ventnorenensis* they might start to think again. We are so fortunate in our rare plants that we almost take them for granted, says Chris Kidd, P2; it is a place imbued with history, as broadcaster John Sergeant found, P19; it doesn't just grow plants, it is a showcase for rare moths, P20. Then there is the community. Ventnor Botanic Garden draws out goodwill and gives back a sense of belonging, as Kate Ingre's volunteers are finding, P17; and the whole community is actively involved in making the place better, with John Curtis's Design Walks, P6.

I must apologise that this Summer issue is rather later than usual. As the final signing over of the Garden from the IoW Council has been imminent for so very long it seemed sensible to wait until, finally, we could put in print that Ventnor Botanic Garden is in the hands of the CIC – see P4.

The workmen have laid the new covering for the approach to the Visitor Centre so there is a clean, flat welcoming area for everyone, enhanced with the display of plants for sale. There will be steps and a ramp for wheelchair access. The ticket desk is in the shop.

As well as the infrastructure, a new chef, Martyn Cutler has been installed who is using the produce of the Garden to create lovely food. At the Garden's 40th Birthday party he had made some wonderful canapés using herbs and spices grown here. Grab a copy of Style of Wight magazine to see his bread recipe, as well as Chris Kidd's Garden news.

So come and spend time, and if you can't just now, relish the fact that so much is being done to secure the Garden until you can.

Copy date for the next Issue: September 20th

Roz Whistance, Editor



Suggest a caption?

*We'll publish our favourites in the next Issue of *Ventnorenensis*!*

Puya at VBG

The genus *Puya*, like all bromeliads, is found naturally in the New World. The distribution of the hundred and ninety or so species is through Andean South America, Northern Brazil, Guyana and Costa Rica. The overwhelming majority of these are truly tropical species, rare in cultivation, mostly held in North American collections under glass – where they are cultivated at all. The genus is sometimes subdivided into two sub-genera, *Puya* and *Puyopsis*. The easily visible difference being subgenus *Puya* has sterile flowers at the tips of the inflorescence, subgenus *Puyopsis* doesn't. Were we a garden on the mainland with a rich history of cottage garden-inspired pastel, banks of ornate rose beds or pleached beech hedges, that would be more than we needed to know about *Puya*. But, thankfully, we are not, and *Puya* is of very great interest to us as we are one of the very few gardens able to grow any of its spectacular and domineering plants.

As hinted at above, the prospect of success with *Puya* in the Britain is remote. A tentative, groping attempt at a NCCPG collection in Somerset was thwarted many years ago by the, frankly, normal winter conditions for that part of the UK. Though some species have been introduced to the English garden as long ago as 1928, *Puya* has clung to Britain by its very so' western edges, or languished in the pestilent confines of creaky botanic glasshouses ever since. Until very recently *Puya* was represented by less than five per cent of its species in the RHS Plantfinder. And those, with the very best will in the world, were never named correctly, hybrids, or

simply phantom entries borne from attention seeking nurseries rather than collectors with actual plants in actual pots. Should anyone wish to see a *Puya* in flower, they would need to visit Tresco on the Isles of Scilly. Every year for about 16 years. And hope for the best.

Alternatively, a little known municipal garden on a holiday island near Portsmouth had a clump of *Puya*, whipped from Tresco as seed from a plant which had flowered in 1995. This unpromising clump did what the larger Andean *Puya* need to do, that is sit tight and slowly expand over a dozen or so years into a dangerous spiky pineapple ready to thrust out a three meter high flower spike covered in turquoise flowers. One needs to see this spectacle only once to be thoroughly addicted, and at Ventnor we had the initiative, the ability and the desire to want to see these



Dr John David dropped everything to see our Puya in flower

flowers again and again. We made the informed decision to gather as many Puya from as many sources as possible.

Opportunities to acquire the giant Puya in the UK are usually dependant on existing stocks flowering and hopefully bearing seed, so nearly all plants trace their ancestry to Tresco at some point. It looks increasingly likely that many of the Tresco Puya are themselves hybrids, and so their resultant progeny are very varied, even as young plants. From this variation has arisen much confusion and promiscuous name changing, so plants in gardens and the trade have exported into the marketplace specimens claiming to be species which they are not.

The observant reader will perhaps have noticed that until now I have not mentioned any species names for the large Puya in cultivation; this is borne from my belief that in all likelihood true *P. chilensis*, *P. berteriana* and *P. alpestris* are not available in the UK. Having made great effort to collect as many plants thus labelled, VBG now has, on the face of it, an unpleasant hybrid mess – hardly the basis for a prospective National Collection. But, and this is where it gets exciting (well, as exciting as it can be for a second rate botanist recovering from renal problems) this documented collection of hybrids can be the raw material for scientific research, research using the plants at VBG, real plant science at our botanic garden. And they are damn glorious in flower.

A final paragraph should be written for our other species in the subgenus Puyopsis. We have a dozen of these, not all verified as yet as we await flowers with some accessions. The Puyopsis are every bit as difficult to grow as the Puya, even less hardy and distinctly rarer in cultivation as a result. For example, Dr David from the RHS, whose group of choice are the bromeliads, had never seen *P. spathacea* nor *P. dyckioides* before his visit in June. Inflorescences of both, and an un-named species in bud at the time of writing, will be collected for preserving by Susyn Andrews in July.

Last word should go to our latest acquisition, the Godfather of all the Puya, *Puya raimondii*. Previously I have only known this plant from a now dead specimen grown at the late lamented Alpine House at Kew, and from pictures and apocryphal stories of it in the wild, wild High Andes. Flowering once in its century spanning life, only to die and release a million seeds, this is truly (final word): awesome.

Chris Kidd



Puya. Photograph by Julian Winslow

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION* / RENEWAL* FORM

*Delete as appropriate

Please send to the Membership Secretary with your payment and/or the Standing Order Authority.

TITLE		FIRST NAME		SURNAME	
ADDRESS					
E-MAIL					
Telephone					
Name of Second Member at the same address					
Name of Junior member and date of birth					
Membership Rates with effect from 1 January 2011 The Membership year runs from 1 st Jan to 31 st December.					
Individual	2 nd at same address	Junior*	Non UK	Individual Membership	£
£15	£7	£2	£18	2 nd Member same address	£
New Members joining after 1 st July pay reduced rates:				Junior Member	£
Individual	2 nd at same address	Junior*	Non UK	Non UK Member	£
£8	£4	£1	£10	Optional Donation	£
				TOTAL	£
For New Members joining after 1 st October a Full Year subscription covers to 31 st December the following year				Signature	Date

Membership Secretary **VBGF5** Virginia Newbold 4 Woodland Grove Bembridge PO35 5SG

STANDING ORDER AUTHORITY

To be sent to the Membership Secretary **NOT** to your bank

To THE MANAGER			
(Name and address of Bank)			
Pay to the account of	Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society	National Westminster Bank	Ventnor
Isle of Wight	Sort Code 54-41-31	Account No. 05441358	the sum of

£ AMOUNT IN FIGURES AND WORDS

immediately and thereafter every 6 January until you receive notice from me in writing

Reference to be quoted (to be completed by VBGFS)

This order cancels any existing order in favour of this Payee

Signature

Date

NAME OF ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED

BANK SORT CODE ACCOUNT NUMBER

giftaid it

By completing this Gift Aid declaration you enable Ventnor Botanic Gardens Friends' Society to claim tax back from the Government at no cost to yourself.

I/We would like Ventnor Botanic Gardens Friends' Society to reclaim tax on any eligible membership subscriptions or donations made by me/us until further notice.

My/Our details are:

First name

Surname

First name

Surname

Address

Postcode

To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must at least equal the amount the charity will claim in the tax year.

Weather in the Garden

(January to May 2012) by Chris Watts

As well as being generally cooler than in the late nineties and early noughties, recent winters have also embraced a spell of more extreme conditions. Two winters ago, this cold spell came in January, last winter in December, and as if on a rota, this time it was the turn of February. So after an uneventful January, the first fortnight of February was bitterly cold. Several nights saw the temperature fall to -3°C or less, with the lowest at minus 3.8°C early on the 12th. Casualties in the Garden due to the frost included echiums and sparmannia. I should however sing the praises of the volunteers, who were still at work in the potting shed on the coldest day of the whole winter, when the maximum temperature rose to only 0.9°C on the 8th!

The weather recovered during the second half of February, and this was the forerunner of a lovely March. It was a settled month, with the pressure averaging 1027mb; there was plenty of sunshine, and unprecedented warmth towards the month end when on the 29th the thermometer reached 21.5°C . Rainfall was badly needed, however, and the cry at the beginning of April was 'when is it coming'?!

We didn't have to wait long. April lived up to its name, bringing showers and longer periods of rain with thunder (25th) and hail (11th, 19th, 25th) in the mix. The price to pay was a month colder, wetter and less sunny than March, and pressure averaged just 1003mb. It became very windy later in the month, and damage was reported near to Plant Sales on the 25th and 26th: victims were eucalyptus and pittosporum. By the month end, the cry was 'when is it going to stop raining'?!

This time we had to wait a little longer, as for three more weeks in May it was much of the same – cold, wet and a bit dreary. But suddenly it was summer: in the space of two days maximum temperatures rose from 14°C (20th) to 25°C (22nd), and they remained high for over a week. So following a dismal start, May's averages were restored to respectability!

	Mean Temp $^{\circ}\text{C}$	Air Frost Duration Hrs (No. of nights)	Sun Hrs	Rain mm	Wet Days (1+ mm)	Rain Duration Hrs
Jan	8.1++	0 (0)	78.6+	59.2—	8	33.0
Feb	5.5	105 (8)	82.7—	21.7—	4	11.0
Mar	10.1++	0 (0)	200.8++	18.5—	5	15.6
Apr	9.1	0 (0)	171.6—	119.4++	19	61.5
May	13.1+	0 (0)	202.5—	39.6—	10	32.1

Note: Cols 2, 4, 5 No sign: about average

++/— : significantly above/below average

+/- : modestly above/below average

Volunteer Tour Guides

So there it was, our mission – should we choose to accept it – was to provide visitors with information on our Garden and a chance to have a walk around with us. So my wonderful volunteers and I have taken this challenge.



Telling our story: Kate Ingrem with the Tour Guides

I'm so delighted – we have conducted our first daily volunteer tours of the Garden, and I know it is just the start of something amazing.

Over the past few weeks we researched, planned, talked, walked, and I have done a lot of listening (the best way to learn!) until we had something really special awaiting our visitors.

We've looked at other attractions to see just how they do it (Kew, Westonbirt, Chelsea Physic, Wisley, Cambridge Botanic Garden, Osborne House, Quarr Abbey and Brading Roman Villa to name but a few), but whilst we can draw on their information it has again shown that Ventnor Botanic Garden is unique and that we need to do this the way that best suits us and our Garden.

Every volunteer sees the garden differently, interprets it differently, likes different bits and tells our Garden story in their own way – and it is wonderful to have the opportunity to pass this on to others.

I have provided the basic information on areas, history and plantings but it is the Volunteer Guides who are bringing the Garden to life (no pressure!!!!).

It is of course a learning curve. We haven't really done it like this before and I am sure not all will always go to plan – but that's no problem, there is no right or wrong way, and sorting out what is not quite working will be another step on the way to providing a wonderful visitor experience that I hope the volunteers are enjoying.

Since June tours have been running on a Tuesday and Thursday (with a Sunday once a month thrown in for good measure), they are free – donations welcomed – and our own volunteer tour guides are enlightening visitors, bringing the Garden to life and having fun.

I hope the volunteers are finding it enjoyable and I am always here to help with any concerns or worries. Mistakes can be sorted if they occur; information can be supplied if required – my aim is that everyone involved enjoys talking to visitors and enjoys showing off a Garden that we are all so proud of.

Continued on page 23 ...

Britain's First Photo Album

VBG was recently featured in a television programme about Victorian photographer Francis Frith, hosted by John Sergeant

Francis Frith was an enterprising gentleman. Born in 1822 he became a pioneering Victorian photographer in the 1860s, when he embarked upon a project to photograph cities, towns and villages throughout Britain.

Frith was born in Chesterfield to a Quaker family and even as a young man had an acute business acumen. He developed a wholesale grocery business in Liverpool and by the age of 33 he sold it for £200,000, equivalent to £15 million today! This enabled him to travel, in particular to Egypt and the Holy Land, a passion he had developed reading travel books as a child.

From 1856 until 1860 when photography was still in its infancy, he took with him three plate glass cameras with which he captured stunning black and white images. These he developed in an airtight, lightproof tent in the stifling heat of the desert. On his return he won a medal at the Great Exhibition in 1861 for his exhibition of pictures. Astutely, he published these in portfolios with notes and sold them for ten shillings each, the estimate sale of these reaching approximately £3 million today.

In 1860 he married Mary Ann Rosling, also from a Quaker family and they set up home in Reigate. Here it was he established the first and probably the most important photographic company in the world. Over the next 100 years he and a team of photographers took hundreds of scenes throughout this country.

The idea of the television series was to take some of these images and see what remains today. In September last year the producer, Stephen Taylor Woodrow came to the Island to visit both Blackgang Chine and Ventnor Botanic Garden. He discussed with Chris and Jonyth the way in which the Garden would be depicted. He had a Frith picture of the Royal National Hospital taken from the Cricket Ground and he wanted to see what had remained from that era. After looking at the exhibition of the hospital and a brief tour of the Garden, he said that the film team would be returning at the end of the month, with John Sergeant as presenter of the series.

It was with some trepidation that Chris and Jonyth greeted the team, as neither like having their photographs taken. However they were immediately put at their ease. John Sergeant discussed the manner in which he wished to proceed and then in a very relaxed manner took Chris and Jonyth separately to film and record some of the history of VBG and how it has developed into a prestigious garden.



Reluctant TV stars Chris and Jonyth show John Sergeant round the Garden

The series was shown on BBC2 during March this year. Neither Chris nor Jonyth told anyone about it so Jonyth says she was amazed how many people saw the programme, even friends ringing from the mainland! She said she enjoyed the experience and is always pleased to help in any way to advertise this Island gem.

With so many photographs taken, members may like to look at the website to see areas they are familiar with, as the pictures are a real history of our past. The website is www.francisfrith.com

Plant a seed . . .

You've always wanted your own little bit of Ventnor Botanic Garden?

A colourful online seed catalogue has appeared on the VBG website where seeds from the Garden can be purchased. Easy to navigate, the pages are attractive and a click under the lovely photo will give further information. www.botanic.co.uk, click on VBG Online Shop and select Seeds.



Flutter by and hover

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS in the Garden

Ventnor Botanic Garden lies on the route of the recently established Ventnor 'Butterfly Town' Walking Trail, a walk of approximately eight miles, which provides the opportunity to observe a wealth of different butterflies, including one of the rarest in Britain, the Glanville Fritillary.

Although not a primary butterfly habitat in itself, the Garden has nevertheless produced sightings of some scarce species, such as Large Tortoiseshell (observed and photographed in the New Zealand Garden in April, 2011) and, in previous years, Camberwell Beauty, and Monarch. It is intended, as mentioned in the last edition of *Ventnorensis*, to compile an ongoing species list for both butterflies and moths.

A number of day-flying moths are to be seen in the Garden, for example Jersey Tiger, and Hummingbird Hawkmoth which has the ability to hover like a hummingbird in front of flowers whilst feeding. However, it is during the hours of darkness when the vast majority of moths become active.

The monitoring of moths, by attracting them to a source of ultraviolet light, has yielded some excellent results over the last two years, the highlight being Portland Ribbon Wave, *Idaea degeneraria*, a Red Data Book species. Its only known colony is on the Isle of Portland (hence its name) in Dorset, but the numbers seen during the course of these two years indicate that there is probably an overlooked colony here at Ventnor Botanic Garden.

1. Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Photograph by Peter Hunt

2. Portland Ribbon Wave. Photograph by Fred Woodworth

3. Portland Ribbon Wave caterpillar. Photograph by James Halsey



4



5

The wingspan of the Portland Ribbon Wave measures between 25 and 32 mm, and its flight season is stated to be mid-June to mid-July and late August to September. However, in 2010, the first specimen in the Garden was seen on 15th May, an exceptionally early date.

The Portland Ribbon Wave overwinters in its larval stage, stated to be late July to late May. Despite this relatively extended period of time, the larval food plant in the wild is unknown but in captivity, the caterpillars have fed on dandelion (*Taraxacum*), knotgrass (*Polygonum*), bramble (*Rubus*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), traveller's joy (*Clematis vitalba*) and lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*).

Returning to the Garden, one individual was observed flying in the hop growing area, but the remainder have all been found in the Herb Garden: the first of 2012 was seen here on 27th May. But why the Herb Garden? What is attracting the moth? Hopefully, these questions may be answered this year through keen observation and diligent monitoring.

Portland Ribbon Wave caterpillars remain elusive, but should you find any please record your findings in the **Butterfly & Moth Sightings Log Book Journal**, housed in the Visitor Centre.

Copies of 'Butterfly Town' Walking Trail are available from Seasons, High Street, Ventnor

Rob Wilson

FOOTNOTE:

An illustration of the Portland Ribbon Wave appears in volume 6 of "British Entomology", published in the 1830s. The author, by a quirk of coincidence, is the namesake of the Garden's new mentor, John Curtis! The nineteenth century John Curtis died on 6th October, 1862, so this year marks the 150th anniversary of his death.

4. Jersey Tiger. Photograph Peter Hunt

5. Large Tortoiseshell. Photograph by Rob Wilson

Website volunteer wanted

No specialist knowledge or programming required - training given in simple Content Management System. You just need to be enthusiastic about communicating via the internet and willing to learn new computer skills. Would suit a keen Friend with an interest in writing on local issues and/or photography. This is an optimistic and exciting time to get more involved and this role will put you at the heart of all that's happening!

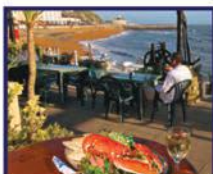
You will regularly update the website from home at times to suit you, with potential to develop and improve it. Attendance at committee meetings six times a year is desirable. The current webmaster (Jane) is standing down for personal reasons, but will be happy to guide and support whoever takes over.

Call Jane Cheverton on 856855 for a chat about it or email website@ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk If you know anyone not currently a Friend, but who is a supporter of VBG and may be interested, please mention it to them!

www.ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk

There's nowhere else quite like it...


**THE
SPYGLASS
INN**



FREE HOUSE • LIVE MUSIC • GREAT FOOD

Open for food all day ~ Fresh local seafood

Esplanade, Ventnor 01983 855338

thespyglass.com



Volunteer Tour Guides. Continued from page 17 ...

We are also meeting once a month to keep each other up to date, to share and laugh at stories, to listen to and iron out any concerns and walking the Garden as a group to highlight our highlights.

As if that wasn't enough, very shortly the information booth will be up and running. (I need to find a better name for it – all suggestions welcome – Volunteer Information Point (VIP Lounge) or is that going too far!?) This will be situated by the pond and we hope that it will be manned and womanned during the busiest times of day, to provide a point of contact for any wondering and wandering visitors.

Meet and greet and plant clinic are up and running now too – watch this space!

Something exciting is happening at Ventnor Botanic Garden but something exciting is also happening with volunteering at Ventnor Botanic Garden. To all the volunteers, thank you so much for all that you do, it is very much appreciated.

Kate Ingrems

Open Gardens 2012

EVENTS

As reported in the previous Issue, this year the Friends have been providing refreshments and/or plant sales at gardens open under the National Garden Scheme. Entrance fees and produce or raffles sales were therefore in the hands of the NGS, so apologies for misleading information in the previous Issue. The season is proving a great success, with around 200 people attending the first Open Garden at Blenheim House in Ryde despite inclement weather.

At time of going to press VBG had raised £1,269.80 from providing refreshments and/or plant sales at the first four Open Gardens of the season.

Sunday 9 September 12.00 to 5.00 **West Meades, West Green, St Helens, PO33 1XA**
Patsy and Jack Thompson

Description: The gardens which surround the revamped Art Deco style house have been almost completely redesigned and planted during the last eight years. It is full to bursting with perennials, shrubs, clematis and climbing roses which lead to an enclosed vegetable garden. The plan is to provide a garden of surprise and delight throughout the year.

Disability information: Garden accessible by wheelchair but gravel paths may be bumpy

Location: 3m SE of Ryde. Approach village from west along Carpenters Rd (B3330). On entering village take 1st L. House borders West Green overlooking Culver Down.

Proceeds from Refreshments and Plant Sales run by the Friends will be donated to VBGFS. Please bring any plants you can spare and remember to label them, including the flower colour if possible, please.

Vic Hickin

The only one-stop-shop for all Island made products



- Textiles
- Jewellery
- Glass
- Cushions
- Pottery
- Woodwork
- Sculpture
- Cards
- Paintings
- Photography
- Candles
- Cosmetics
- Meat & Poultry
- Cheese
- Cakes
- Preserves
- Chocolates
- Fresh Veg

Bullen Road (the former Bullen Mead Nursery),
Ryde, PO33 1QE

01983 564949

Open Daily 9 – 5, Sunday 10 – 4

www.madeonisleofwight.com

Neighbours in Bembridge asked the gardeners at VBG the following questions:

‘Having just dug up a dead shrub I have found what look like wire worms in the soil around the roots. Could these be the cause of the death of the shrub and are they likely to affect other things in the garden? If so what can I do?’

Answer: These are likely to be millipedes which can sometimes be a secondary problem to vegetable growers, but in this instance they are simply cashing in on the free meal afforded by your shrub’s recent demise. There are almost certainly shelves full of complex chemicals still available from garden centres to rain death and destruction upon these hapless creatures should you so wish. Alternatively the majority will have been removed as you pulled the dead plant up. Wait until next year and replant with a healthy plant and you should have no problems.

‘Have you any idea how I can get rid of Mind Your Own Business, *Solieriolia soleirolia*, the creeping perennial with tiny flowers and leaves. The previous owner of my garden planted it because it looked pretty!’

Answer: *Solieriolia soleirolia* or “Mind Your Own Business” is on the one hand an invasive nightmare, on the other a gentle creature which will succumb to any weedkiller available – or even my preferred method (on a small scale) of boiling water. It becomes difficult where it has worked its way through plants, so in such instances it’s a matter of removing it as best as possible by hand. So, as long as you’ve plenty of boiling water and a lot of time to spare . . .



Puya in flower detail, by Rosemary Stewart

Forum space is reserved for members’ questions and discussion. Ask the experts, share your own experience and tips or air your views. Please send gardening questions to the Editor by early August (to give VBG staff time to respond) or comments by 18th August for publication in the Autumn Ventnorenensis. Email rosalind.whistance@btopenworld.com, phone 753090 or post to R Whistance, 11 Martine Close, Freshwater, PO40 9ND

Entrance Charges

By the time you receive this edition, entrance charges will be in place. As a member of the advisory board to the CIC I have been party to the lengthy research and deliberations as to how to get the balance between securing the future of the Garden financially and not overcharging. We took into consideration the fees of 33 other gardens, from the Eden Project @ £23 to Logan Botanic garden @ £3.50. The final agreed figure of £5 is well below the average and I, as well as some other advisory members were arguing for a figure of £7.50.

As for the Friends we have tried to come up with differing amounts for those with separate requirements, especially our members who live off the Island and only come 5-10 times a year. Simon who is now at the Royal Botanic Garden of Wales said to me at the 40th Birthday Bash that they charge the same £52 annual entrance as our combined membership fee and £37 annual entrance charge. Do also remember that we are granted a number of discounts in the shop, plant sales and the café. I do understand that this is not going to appeal to all but I can only suggest that to remain a Friend is to support the Garden while the CIC invests to improve it. It is a considerable level of risk that the CIC is taking on but with all your support and attendance at events etc. we can build something to be really proud of.

Philip Le May

The new Community Interest Company needs your support more than ever! Please stay with us!

Entry fees will help to keep the Garden moving forward, paying for the staff and upkeep. Money raised by the Friends' Society will help with education, buy plants and establish national collections to enhance our wonderful Garden and keep its local, national and international reputation.

VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN ENTRY FEES

MEMBERS ONLY

Your Membership of the Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society **will now include 10% off entry fee, café, plant sales and seeds**

EXISTING FRIENDS' ANNUAL PASS£32.00

(Added to £15 Membership = £47, giving unlimited entry for Friends and their children for less than £1 per week!)

COUPLES - 40% OFF SECOND PASS£20.00

(Second Member at same address £7)

NEW FRIENDS' ANNUAL PASS£40.00

FRIENDS' PAY AS YOU GO ANNUAL PASS£4/month

FRIENDS' TWO YEAR PASS£60.00

FRIENDS' GUEST PASS£3.50

BOOK OF 6 TICKETS.....£20.00

(only available to Friends & Guests)

VOLUNTEERS (We love our volunteers!)FREE

GENERAL ENTRY FEES 2012

ADULT (50% off return visit in the week)£5.00

FAMILY (3 or more from one family)£12.00

CHILDREN under 16 (Children under 6 FREE)£3.00

SENIORS (Over 65)£4.50

(Bring your grandchildren for free!)

STUDENTS (In full time education)£3.00

GREEN TRAVEL25% off

(You arrived on foot, by bicycle or bus)

REGISTERED DISABLED£3.50

CARERS.....FREE

(Registered, full time, one to one helpers/carers)

STEEPHILL COVE VISITORS PARKING£5.00

GROUPS Groups/Coach Parties of 10 or more people.....£4.00
(booked in advance)

SCHOOL VISITS (booked in advance)£1.00

MEMBERS OF VENTNOR CRICKET CLUB

6 MONTH PASS.....£30.00

PLEASE REFER TO THE VBG WEBSITE FOR FULL DETAILS

Annual General Meeting 2012

The Chairman, Mr Philip Le May reported on another exhausting year but, at last, there is an exciting future for the Garden with the announcement from the IWC that John and Mylene Curtis are the preferred bidder. Their new Community Interest Company was due to take a 125 year lease in the near future. The importance of the Friends to the Garden and the new CIC is paramount and it will be a true partnership.

In June we said goodbye to Curator, Simon Goodenough, and wished him well in Wales. We also thanked valued staff who took voluntary redundancy. The Royal Garden Café kindly hosted the event.

Through the year we held horticultural talks and practical activities with events for the children. The Hop Picking Day was very successful with a taste of last year's brew afterwards! We held Spring and Autumn Plant Sales as well as five Open Gardens which had varying degrees of success due to terrible weather. Donations were received from a Waitrose collection, our two corporate sponsors, The Garlic Farm and Liz Earle, and the Worshipful Company of Gardeners. We spent funds on the four mosaics by the old smugglers' museum, the restoration of the Palm Garden wall and new archway, a large range of rare and exotic plants and new signs around the Garden where the Friends have provided funds or a donation or legacy has been given.

Mr Le May thanked all the helpers for these events and particularly mentioned members of the Executive Committee for their work during this transition year. Last but certainly not least all the Volunteers who donate the equivalent of 2-3 man days work per week in the Garden under the leadership of Kate Ingram. We all thank the staff for sticking with it during what has been the most stressful and depressing time but the light at the end of the tunnel is shining brightly for 2012 and beyond.

The Financial Report and Accounts were accepted. An EGM will be held later this year to discuss increases in the subscriptions, pending confirmation of the details of the proposed entrance charges and discounts for members. Officers elected: Chairman, Philip Le May: Secretary, Rosemary Stewart: Treasurer, Jean Kelley. Committee: Tina Bailey, Jane Cheverton, Jo Haigh, Nicky Hayward, Vic Hickin, Evelyn Knowles, Virginia Newbold, Ken Payne, Sally Peake, Ros Whistance, Jan Wyers.

Mr Brian Kidd, President, thanked Mr Le May for steering the Friends through such a turbulent time, which was warmly acknowledged by everyone present. The meeting was followed by a presentation on Clematis by Margaret Morris.

New members

A very WARM WELCOME to these friends who have recently joined the Society.

Mr R and Mrs C Cummins.....	Cowes
Mr EV Everitt.....	Cannington Somerset
Mrs H Jenkins.....	Cowes
Mrs E and Mr G McGibney.....	Ventnor
Prof P McGuffin and Prof A Farmer.....	London
Mrs C Peel.....	Bembridge
Mr C and Mrs H Peplow.....	Thorley
Mr R and Mrs S Pitt.....	Colchester
Mrs J Walters.....	Ventnor
Mrs S and Mr P Wellington.....	Ryde

If you are a UK tax payer the Society can benefit financially if you sign a Gift Aid form. If you have not already completed a form and wish to do so please see the application form enclosed in this magazine. Simply complete the Gift Aid section and send to the Membership Secretary at the address shown.

Honorary member Alan Titchmarsh

Corporate members

We would like to thank our corporate members for their continued support.



LIZ EARLE
NATURALLY ACTIVE SKINCARE



Eddington House Nursery

10% Discount
for members who show their card!

**Eddington House Specialist Plant Nursery
For Island Grown Alpines and Perennials**

www.eddingtonhousenursery.co.uk

This secret garden is a little gem, located opposite St Helens Church just outside Nettlestone in a peaceful setting. This family run business led by one of the Islands youngest and most passionate horticulturalists Ian Chadwick specialising in Island grown alpines and perennials. A range of fascinating plant advice is available for the professional to the occasional gardener. Eddington House Nursery can also be visited at its fantastic display stand at all the major island shows and events

**Eddington House Nursery
Eddington Road
Nettlestone/Seaview
PO34 5EF**

**Open 10:00 - 17:00
Tel 01983 612841
Mob 07837 589478
(Opposite St Helens Church)**

OPEN 7 DAYS
A WEEK
9AM - 5PM



THE GARLIC FARM

ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

EAT at our restaurant where our

renowned chef creates tasty garlic dishes and

much more. **SHOP** in our unique

farm shop where a treasure trove of unusual

and gourmet treats await you. In our Education

& Heritage Centres you can **LEARN**

all about garlic and the history of the farm.

At weekends **ENJOY** a ride

around The Garlic Farm on our tractor trailer.

TASTE our range of pickles & garlic.

THE GARLIC FARM
FOR ALL THINGS GARLIC AND MUCH MORE

The Garlic Farm, Mersley Lane, Newchurch, Isle of Wight, PO36 0NR

Tel: (01983) 867333 www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk

