

ventnorensis

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society Journal

'The love, joy and enthusiasm we
all have for the Garden keeps us
all - volunteers and Friends - in a
united camaraderie' - *Trish Brenchley*



VOLUME 26 NO. 1 SPRING/SUMMER 2019

Spring/summer opening times

10am till 4pm daily

For opening times, and for information about special events for adults or children in the Visitor Centre, *edulis* Restaurant and Plantation Room Café, and for Plant Sales and Greenhouse, please call the Garden on 855387 or check website, www.botanic.co.uk.

Exhibitions/Events

APRIL

9th 8.00pm – 9.30pm Marc Tuckey hosts a Botanic Ghost Walk. Learn of the horrors where an old hospital once stood ...

16th 8.00pm – 9.30pm Marc Tuckey hosts a Botanic Ghost Walk. Learn of the horrors where an old hospital once stood ...

17th 7.00pm Botany Club: Who Cares About Moss?

A talk by George Greiff. How bryophytes live and why that should matter to us.

21st 12 noon – 4pm Easter Sunday Lunch. At *edulis* restaurant. Booking advisable.

MAY

6.30pm – 10.00pm Plant-based dining evening. A variety of plant-based dishes made by our talented chef, Brad Roe.

22nd 8am: Friends' trip to Folly Farm – fully booked!

25th 2.00pm – 4.00pm Plant Sale at VBG.

29th 2pm Botany Club: A Wildflower Walk in Pelham Woods, St Lawrence. Hosted by Hazel Trevan. Contact Rosemary Stewart. See Page 25 for details.

JUNE

12th 2.00pm Botany Club at

Sandown Meadows: A walk with Steve Egerton-Read of the Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust. All welcome. Contact Rosemary Stewart. See Page 25 for details.

18th 6.30pm – 10.00pm Isle of Wight Produce Dining Evening. A variety of dishes made using local produce, courtesy of our talented chef, Brad Roe.

JULY

10th 2.00pm Botany Club: Kingston Smallholding. Simone Dickens, and her husband David look forward to showing us round their unique small farm and garden. All welcome. Contact Rosemary Stewart. See Page 25 for details.

20 – 28th Secret Art Exhibition and Sale: Buy a painting and find out later the name of the artist. See Page 16a in aid of our Horticultural Apprenticeship Scheme.

21st 10.00am – 5pm Vegan Festival A unique day packed with things exclusively vegan.

26th 2.30pm – 4.00pm Theatre in the Garden – The Wind in the Willows. Booking advisable.

28th 7.00pm – 9.00pm Theatre in the Garden – A

Midsummer Night's Dream. Booking advisable.

JULY/AUGUST

Flowering of the Amazonian Water Lily Witness midnight Lily opening. Tropical House pond, with Chris Kidd. Booking advised.

AUGUST

1st 6.30pm – 10.00pm South American Dining Evening. A variety of South American-style dishes made by our talented chef, Brad Roe.

22nd 6.30pm – 10.00pm Carnivore Feast Dining Evening. A variety of meat-orientated dishes made by our talented chef, Brad Roe.

24th – 25th 10.00am – 5.00pm Wellbeing Festival. Designed to enhance health and wellbeing, the perfect excuse to relax and have some 'you' time.

29th 6.30pm – 12.30pm Seafood Dining Evening. A variety of seafood dishes made by our talented chef, Brad Roe.

SEPTEMBER

22nd All day: Hops Festival: Celebrate VBG Botanic Ales, made from our own hops – maybe you helped to pick them! Live music, real ales, barbeque.

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society

President

Brian Kidd

Chairman

John Bagshawe - 731799

Vice Chair

Jane Clark - 263355

Treasurer

Tim Woodcock - 872519

Secretary

Jenny Parker - 730668

Publicity

Rosemary Stewart - 292107

Membership Secretary

Caroline Peel - 872375

Events

Caroline Peel - 872375

Editor Friends' Website

Colin Smith - 856578

Email: smith3c@hotmail.com

www.ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk

Ventnorensis Editor

Roz Whistance - 753090

rosalind.whistance@btopenworld.com

Gardening Volunteers

Wednesday mornings 10 am

Bridgette Sibbick - 867739

Curator

Chris Kidd

Garden Address

Ventnor Botanic Garden

Undercliff Drive, Ventnor

Isle of Wight, PO38 1UL

Telephone: 01983 855397

Fax: 01983 856756

Contents

Regulars

Opening Times	Facing Page
Curator's Notes	Page 2
Chairman's Message	Page 4
Plant Profile - Leucadendron.....	Page 6
John Curtis's Spring Update.....	Page 8
Weather in the Garden.....	Page 12
Editor's Letter	Page 13
Pope's Plants - Palm Garden	Page 14

Notice board

Dates for your Diary.....	Facing Page
Discounts for Members.....	Page 18
Gardening Volunteers	Page 23
Botany Club	Page 25
New Members	Page 32
Honorary Members/Patrons	Page 32
Friends' Foundation Fund	Page 32
Plant Sale	Inside Back

Special Features

Hanging Tree Fern	Page 3
Tree Frogs and Hand Prints	Page 10
Meet the Apprentices	Page 11 and 20
AGM of CIO Report	Page 17
Thank you for the Garden.....	Page 19
Battlefields to Butterflies.....	Page 20 and 30
Secret Art	Page 23
Meet the Chairman	Page 24
Jean and David Kelley	Page 26
Green Spaces for Health	Page 27
Harold Hillier Award.....	Page 29

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society Registered Charity No. 1174751



Printed on the Isle of Wight
on 80% recycled paper
using vegetable based inks



Chairman's postscript

As she steps down after three years as Chairman, **Sally Peake** recalls some of the highlights of her tenure



As I stood down from the Chair and applauded the passing of the role to John Bagshawe at the AGM, I was overwhelmed by so many kind comments and letters. The editor asked if I might summarise these for the record – aargh! It is not my style to do anything quietly. I charge 'over the top' and I have been supremely grateful that the Committee has been "committed" (some connection here I suspect) and supportive throughout so any praise due is as much theirs as mine.

So, for this piece, I decided to record the little stories – pinpricks of delight for me personally in the development of our wonderful Society – which build a bigger picture.

Back in July 2016, I sat on the grass at home with John Curtis and briefed him on our Vision: the distillation of the Society's ambitions for its future. Our mutual excitement and optimism for this future was a goal that continues to be worth the challenge of achievement. The Friends have the strength and skills to make the long-term future of the Garden secure and sustainable where John Curtis' CIC has led the way by exploration.

Some of my personal memories have been solitary:

- checking on the Hop Yard interpretation boards and finding people reading them (not vandalising!)
- finding the plinth for the sun recorder for the first time and realising that this shaded spot was once the brightest point in the Garden. It will have its day again.
- meeting a lizard at eye level whilst admiring *Salvia africana lutea*. I didn't know they could climb foliage but many have been seen:
- being pushed around the Garden in a wheelchair by Lucy de Ville, when my arthritic knee was protesting, as we placed her beautifully framed poems for 2017's *Celebrate!*
- sharing the magic of the dawn summer solstice in the meadow with so many early risers
- the overwhelming success of Secret Art (put this year's event in your diary now. 20-28th July)

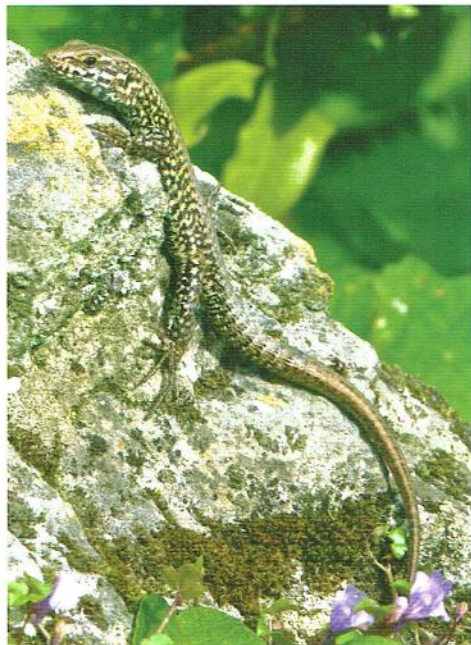
There has also been sadness and frustration as people have moved on, but I am ever optimistic that VBG has the potential to create the most amazing interactive community, with staff, volunteers and Friends all working together for the benefit of the Garden.



Bowing out: Sally hands over at the AGM



Stepping up: John Bagshawe becomes Chairman



Levelling with a lizard: One of Sally's highlights

My involvement with the Apprenticeship Scheme has been particularly rewarding. (See Apprentices, Page 11) I have been privileged to be involved at every stage from choosing our candidates for interview through enabling them to thrive and succeed within VBG. David Pearce was the first in this new era to complete his training with us and move on to RHS Wisley. Four months later he wrote:

"I have somehow managed to make it onto one of the oldest, well-renowned and best horticultural course in the world; my eight fellow Diploma students are incredibly knowledgeable and come from all around the globe. I am the youngest of the lot."

His thanks encompassed us all – staff, volunteers and Friends with, rightly, special praise for Trish who works so tirelessly to keep the apprentices focused and open to every opportunity to gain experience and skills.

It was the letter from Trish and current apprentices, George and Adam, that Chris Kidd read at the AGM. I was hugely moved. One sentence stands out:

"The love, joy and enthusiasm we all have for the Garden keeps us in a united camaraderie that spreads through all the volunteers and Friends."

That says it all ...

Leucadendron

Chris Kidd celebrates a spectacular plant that is notoriously hard to grow. Even at VBG it has broken hearts

There are over 80 species of the Proteaceae genus *Leucadendron*. All are from South Africa's Western Cape province, straying towards the west side of the Eastern Cape, except for three species from KwaZulu-Natal. All are calcifuges who despise phosphorous. These facts make them both ideal plants for Ventnor Botanic Garden and the hardest of plants to grow in our soil. The name *Leucadendron* comes from the Greek *leukos* (white) and *dendron* (tree), alluding to the remarkable *Leucadendron argenteum*, or Silver Tree, of the Cape Peninsula. The inflorescences, or cluster of flowers, are solitary, actually usually rather dull, and terminal. Sexes are found on different plants, something we refer to as dioecy; this is very unusual in the Proteaceae family. Along with so many other plants, *Leucadendron* is grown extensively for the cut flower market, but it is for its involucral leaves rather than the insignificant flowers that it finds favour. The bracts remain in colour for weeks before and after the flowers are fertile.

You will find examples of *Leucadendron salignum* and *L. laureolum* in our South African Terraces, their colourful arching stems with red or orange coloured bracts reaching into the blue skies. They are most colourful in late winter and into the spring, but can become overwhelmed as the fire of their short-lived companion plants begins to show. You will also find the hybrid between these two species, *L. "Safari Sunset"* and *L. Safari Sunshine*", though truthfully all of these plants tend to be rather short lived at VBG. It is in the Antipodes that much hybridisation has occurred by horticulturists, New Zealand responsible for the Safari cultivars, and Australia for the splendid *L. "Sundance"*.

Arguably the finest prize to grow of all *Leucadendrons* is *L. argentea*. This has broken many hearts at VBG since Hillier days and onwards. Simon Goodenough tried the plant several times on the "old" South African terraces within what is now our Mediterranean Garden. These very small terraces created on the steep south facing slopes gave the required perfect drainage and sunshine in winter; essential to keep the frost at bay, but the lime within the mortar slowly reduced the acidity of the imported soil therein to the detriment of all the Proteaceae and neighbouring Australians. When we moved both these collections to their new homes in 2005 no *Leucadendrons* were left.

We had envisaged the new home for the soon to be arriving *Leucadendrons* to be in an area referred to as "the triangle" below the recently deforested terraces of our new Southern Hemisphere garden. The triangle had a remarkable forest of its own, comprising bracken, some ghastly evergreen oaks, a long dead specimen tree of no known identity with a large cast iron plaque below, its dedication to "Happy Times".

My hope was to remove all the soil and its loveless growth, the surrounding pathways acting as a boundary to the inevitable creep of alkalinity, effectively make a giant pot of acid soil. Peter Brown spent two days digging the soil out, then another harvesting lower greensand to make a pit meters deep. Pete very nearly lost his entire JCB into the hole. We then spent days bringing in our own compost made from leaf mould, greensand and waste peat compost. When complete we collected not just *Leucadendrons* but other South African Proteaceae too, including the iconic King Protea, *Protea cynaroides*, and Restios from Cornish nurseries for planting.

These early *Leucadendrons* were very successful, but the ongoing march of Magnolias towards the skies began to cast winter shadows onto the triangle. The alkalinity has returned to a more normal degree, and the *Freylinia lanceolata* next to the wall made a bid for total domination, which has only recently been headed off. Against these changes, we've taken a scattergun approach to recent reintroductions and planted *Leucadendrons* throughout the whole terrace. This may well be the best approach going forward as it gives a more natural looking presentation to the shrubs where our original triangle looked like the miserable area of municipal glasshouses where these difficult but spectacular plants are usually held.



Leucadendron salignum in our South African Terraces.
Photograph by Julian Winslow

Growing our sustainability



*Magnificent: Magnolia
Campbellii heralds spring*

The Curator has explained how the Garden has 'expanded' this year (see Page 2). Here VBG's Director describes other innovative steps taken to offset the costs of the Garden

Once again the Magnolia Campbellii 'Charles Raffill' has offered a sky borne carpet of uplifting giant pink petals to herald the arrival of longer days and the warmth of spring. One day the new Magnolia Walk leading to the buoy will offer future generations a similar treat. Today the trees are just waist-high youngsters. When we say we garden on a thirty-five year horizon this is what we mean.

The real star of this winter has to be VBG@Home, which offers the talents of our Curator and gardeners outside the boundaries of the Botanic Garden. From plant selection to sourcing, from design to planting, VBG@Home is a unique service from an innovative garden. Imagine VBG@Home clients walking through the treasure chest of a wholesale nursery with a Kew-trained Curator, aka Chris Kidd, to guide them – grownups returning to the feeling of being a kid in a candy store.

As one of, if not the only, financially self-sustaining botanic gardens in the world, this revenue stream has literally kept the Garden open this winter. Chris Kidd has developed an ethos of delivering our promises and making invoices transparent, simple and clear which means clients enjoy working with us (more than can be said of many contractors!) as we help them transform their gardens, create legacy arboretums or restore habitats. The original strategy to develop a new stream of funding to allow us to recruit more gardeners is delivering. We have added a garden supervisor and look ahead to adding more resources. As the life's journey is never a straight line, the first supervisor we hired received an 'offer he couldn't refuse', so we are interviewing candidates again. Trish Brenchley, our apprentices and all our volunteers have worked hard to maintain the level of presentation we need at VBG while the VBG@Home crew has been out bringing much needed funding into the Garden. If you feel this is a misguided strategy please send a large cheque and we will change tack.

Since we left the Council in 2012, revenue streams in weddings, VBG products, VBG@Home, Accommodation and Wellbeing have all been created. They brought in more than 30% of our 2018 revenue. Take a look at botanic.co.uk to get a feel for what we have launched. If you shop online from our website you can have a hug from the staff member of your choice next time you visit!

You will see we are relaunching Laura Jennings's beautifully curated shop under the name 'Puya Boutique Shopping' with a new logo featuring the lantern installed to let more light into the space and improve visitor impact on arrival. 'Boutique Shopping'

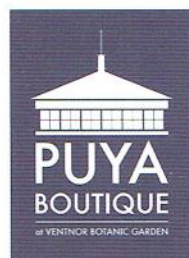
signifies the experience of finding treasures – something active and enjoyable. The strategy is to create a superb destination retail operation which just happens to be located at Ventnor Botanic Garden. You will begin to see standalone Puya Boutique Shopping advertising in the coming months. We are the only National Collection of *Puya* in the UK; hence the new name. A single *Puya berteroniana* flower is also the centrepiece of our VBG logo.

We will promote *edulis* Restaurant in the same way. At the Botanic Garden we take our plants seriously – especially the edible ones. That is why we created *edulis*, which means 'edible' in Latin. Ethnobotany, the use of plants by humans, is a real interest of ours. Our Head Chef, Brad Roe, builds his dishes with ultra-fresh ingredients hand-picked daily in the Botanic Garden. Trays of exotic salads and microherbs are brought in throughout the day by our gardeners straight from VBG's mist benches and cut straight to the plate – no food miles, no washing, and no refrigeration. This is good both for the planet and for human health. Oyster mushrooms follow a similar journey from the fruiting chamber to the plate. *Cornus capitata* (Himalayan Strawberry Tree) fruits find their way into Brad's jarred product. You will see more edible plants threaded throughout VBG this year. Where else can you enjoy Tomato caviar; the delicate orange berries of *Solanum villosum*, an African superfood, but at Ventnor Botanic Garden?

As a Botanic Garden, we can deliver on the trend for plant based dining with aplomb – especially with a talented chef in house. (We believe the term vegan has been hijacked, so we talk about plant based dining.) Look out for new tastes like *Drimys winteri* (Winter's Bark) on our menus. Drake's Sailing Master, Captain William Winter, landed in Chile in 1577 and bartered with the locals for the bark he saw them chewing to ward off the effects of lack of fruit and vegetables in the off season. Aptly named, Winter's Bark is very high in Vitamin C and prevents scurvy, a challenge to sailing voyages in those days. A mix of ginger, chilli, cinnamon and pepper bombards your tongue, rather forcefully gnawing the raw bark. Brad is busy taming the effects for his dishes. We even gave some to Goddard's Master Brewer, Nigel, to experiment with for our next beer in the Botanic AleSM series. The Chileans used dried ground Winter's Bark as a substitute for pepper. As society searches for meaning and authenticity in modern times, dining on real plants with real stories and no brands or packaging fills a deep need to reconnect with the natural world and reduce man's impact on it. As an innovative modern Botanic Garden, you should expect no less from us.

I am pleased to announce that the General Manager from Osborne House, a real English Heritage veteran, is joining us as General Manager. And guess what his name is ... Rob Flower.

2018 was a difficult year for us for all the wrong reasons. As always I therefore encourage you to come and see us, buy a Garden pass, shop in Puya, dine with Brad in *edulis*, enjoy the tranquillity of the Garden, bring your friends, buy a case of Botanic AleSM and help us stay open. Keep an eye out for Dr Hill Hassall's Eucalyptus Cordial – rather refreshing in a springtime G&T ...



Shop upgrade: the stylish Puya Boutique



**DR HILL HASSALL'S
BOTANICS**

Pick-me-up: a superior tonic for a G-and ...

Global garden

It might be a comparatively small garden on a small island off the end of Britain, but the seeds cast by VBG spread far and wide.

Sally Whibley received this photograph of an echium from her friend who lives on Isle de Oleron in the Bay of Biscay. Sally says: "She took a couple of my seedlings home with her last year and is very pleased with the results – as are the little tree frogs."

Tree frogs? Look very carefully and you'll see how they're using this as something of a multi-storey frog-park!

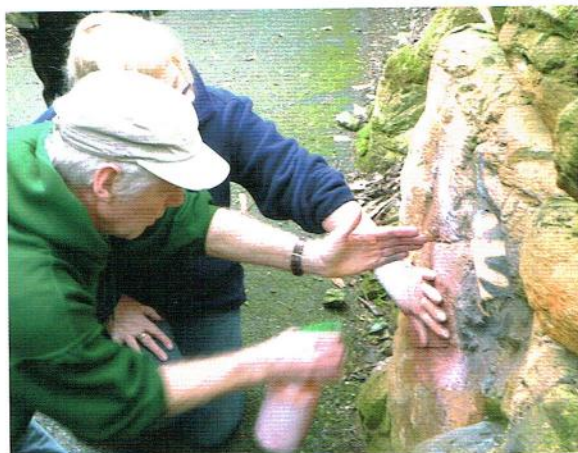


Echium home: arrows point to where the tree frogs are basking



Photograph from Pixabay

... and in other overseas news ...



Spraying, not spitting: finishing the Dreamtime artwork the British way

A lady originally from New South Wales was having a pre-Garden coffee and enjoying reading in *Ventnorenensis* about the making of the rock paintings in the Australia garden. Carol Smith, from a tiny place called Wollombi, said, however, that the Aboriginal method of applying the paint was rather more raw than here in the Garden. "They would fill their mouths with the pigment, place their hand on the rock, and just spit!"

Adam The Apprentice

The Friends' Society funds training for two apprentices. Adam Cooke is approaching the end of his first year. He talks to Roz Whistance

RW: What brought you here?

A: My dad and my brothers are gardeners. My dad is more of a landscape gardener, but I always helped them out when I was younger, so when I saw this opportunity I grabbed it.

R: What was the attraction?

A: I thought it would be good experience. Lots of plants to learn about and friendly people.

R: Is it as you expected?

A: It's a lot better. I learn a lot just through working here, and also get set work through the IW College.

R: Is it easy to make the time for the college work?

A: Sometimes you get home and just want to relax. It's best to chip away at it slowly. We get sent more when that's done.

R: Is there anything you particularly enjoy doing?

A: I like all of it. Especially the people I work with. I don't mind early mornings, or working when it's hot. Cold and wet is the worst.

R: Which parts of the Garden have you worked in so far?

A: I like working in all areas of the Garden. Everything from propagating to the hardcore landscaping.

R: Has this project George has been involved with inspired you?

A: Yes. I've been told there will be opportunities for me, and George is trying to involve me in the last few 'adventures' to do with the project. Also I'm going with the Friends to Folly Farm. I doubt I'd have ever gone there without the Friends.

R: Have you formed a long term plan?

A: Not really. I'm enjoying the moment, and with this training could always join my brother and my dad.

R: Any regrets in becoming The Apprentice?

A: No regrets at all. It's also helped my confidence. A year ago I doubt I'd be doing this interview. Working here has really helped me come out of my shell.



Blossoming in the Garden: George Tyler and Adam Cooke

Tall story

George and Adam are working in the Palm Garden. George's recent experience with Battlefields to Butterflies [see Page 20] has not only given him confidence and enthusiasm; it also enabled a bit of serendipity.

"These *Trachycarpus fortunei* were brought back from China by Robert Fortune," he explains.

"He mainly brought them back for Osborne House, for Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, and some were planted there, and the others in the first batch were planted here."

"When I went to London for the Project, commemorating the fallen soldiers, we were given a tour of Brompton Cemetery. The guide said 'This is the grave of Robert Fortune'. I said 'The horticulturalist?' It was an amazing coincidence. He was the man who brought the palms here to VBG."

George has a photograph of Fortune's grave on his phone. If that's not dyed in the wool enthusiasm for his topic, I don't know what is.

Roz Whistance

See Pope's Plants, Page 14

Weather in the Garden

(October 2018 – March 2019) by Chris Watts

Up to the end of October it looked as though rainfall for the year would fall below the norm, but then enough rain fell during November and December to ensure that 2018 reached the average. December was particularly wet, the wettest month of the year and the 15th - the wettest day of the year. However from Christmas Eve onwards, until January 14th inclusive, the weather remained dry – a total of 22 days. This is quite impressive occurring during a winter period. January continued to be reasonably dry, followed by an average February and March. The rain turned briefly to sleet for a few days late in January and early in February, but there was nothing too serious and no lying snow.

Over this six month spell there was a steady progression through the alphabet of named storms, the latest to date being Gareth on 12th March, but none brought anything too serious apart from a casualty in the Australian Garden where an Acacia fell victim. However, two months were notable for their warmth, December and February. Mean temperatures for both were about 3°C above average. Although those for December were not as dramatically high as three years ago (2015), nevertheless they were still remarkable. The count of flowers in bloom on New Year's Day was 207, a good number although Chris opined that it might have been higher given the temperatures. February started with a cold spell, and the only air frost of the winter came during the early hours of the 3rd. The thermometer dipped below freezing at 1.30am and did not rise above until 8.30am, seven hours later. But February quickly turned mild, and extremely mild and spring-like by the month end, with the mercury registering between 14°C and 15°C on the 25th, 26th and 27th. Yes, I know, the use of mercury has been banned from present day maximum thermometers due to environmental concerns, but where it is still in use in the older instruments it is very accurate and equal to any modern day electronics by its ability to respond instantly to brief spikes of heat.

It took another four weeks until the end of March for temperatures to reach the mid-teens again, but it will take a little bit longer to reach the highest temperature of this six month period which was 21°C on the 13th October. We might be there by the time you see this article, dear reader. Fingers crossed!

	Mean Temp °C	Rain mm	Wet Days (1+ mm)	Soil Temp °C 1ft depth	[1]	[2]	[3]
October	13.2	38.1—	4	13.3	3.1	0	16.0
November	10.8++	96.9	13	10.6	2.0	0	15.4
December	9.5++	142.4++	14	9.1	3.9	0	29.7
Year 2018	12.5++	747.9	107	13.1	-3.5	9	29.7
January	5.8	39.8—	6	6.2	0.0	0	15.0
February	8.2++	59.9	10	6.9	-1.6	1	14.3
March	9.7++	49.0	12	9.4	3.4	0	11.1

[1] Lowest temperature °C

[2] No of air frosts

[3] Wettest day rain total in mm

Dear members . . .

Being out in gardens and spaces is quite a theme of this issue. New Chairman John Bagshawe is a super keen volunteer who is never happier than when with the VBG echium (Page 25). We are sad to say goodbye to good Friends Jean and Dave Kelly who have given so many years of commitment (see Page 24.) Indeed, so indebted are we to them for their years of commitment, we have arranged for a plaque to be placed in the garden in tribute and thanks.

Our newest committee member, Dr Peter Coleman, writes about the huge range of the benefits of 'Green Spaces' (see Page 27). Being outside, among flowers, trees and sea not only improves our health physically but mentally too. Just as his article arrived in my inbox I heard *Ramblings* on Radio 4 where Claire Balding walked with Emma Mitchell, who had regained her health through walking. She even wrote a book to share what she learnt: Emma Mitchell – *The Wild Remedy: How Nature Mends Us*.

Just as our little cherry trees are starting to bloom and show their potential another item on the radio resonated: a book was serialised on Radio 4 that was all about cherry trees. The story of the development of new varieties by 'Cherry' Ingram was fascinating and reminded me of one of the first editing jobs I had to do, of an article written by a British expat who was living in Japan. It was about Cherry Blossom Time in Tokyo, when everyone goes out to be among the trees, taking their saki, and, such are the



Japanese blossom

crowds in the parks, sitting virtually on top of one another. (The British writer of this piece noted with some alarm that the Japanese lacked a sense of personal space.) The reason for the sheer numbers of people out together is because of the very short time that the blossom lasts – and this, I learned via Radio 4, was because of the limited variety of trees. But that, of course, was then.

Back to our own Garden, and those just setting out on their love and commitment to horticulture. Our apprentices are gaining so much from their experience here, and are giving us so much too. When you've read about what they have gained from their experience here (Pages 11 and 20), do think about giving to the Friends Foundation Fund, which could fund another young person if it grew sufficiently (see Page 32).

Roz Whistance, Editor

Please may I have your contributions for the Autumn edition of Ventnorenensis by 5th September.

The Palm Garden - changes over the years

Records, be they written or photographic, have been made of changes over the years, says **Colin Pope**. Now we have our database - but that doesn't mean identification is always plain sailing

The Palm Garden was the only ornamental part of the grounds of the original Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, founded in 1868 by the inspiration of Dr Arthur Hill, physician and naturalist. The Walled Garden was used for the production of fruit and vegetables, and the rest of the grounds were used for recreation.



Fig. 1 The Palm Court, undated but pre 1930, looking west

young plants in 1849 and it was the introductions in 1849, and more especially in 1860, which established the plant into permanent cultivation in Britain.

From the earliest collections, distributions were made, including to the garden of His Royal Highness Prince Albert at Osborne House. It was very much an experiment to see whether these exotic-looking plants would survive outdoors in this country but, in 1871, William Robinson wrote that a Chusan palm in Her Majesty's gardens at Osborne "had stood out for many winters and attained a considerable height."

The Royal National Hospital, at its inception, received many generous gifts, and this continued over the years. It has been suggested that Prince Albert sent over six palm trees from Osborne to the Hospital. Prince Albert died in 1861. In 1871, the first royal gifts are recorded and they included plants from the Veitch nurseries, the largest group of family-run plant nurseries (based at Chelsea and Exeter) in Europe in the 19th century. Five hundred bedding plants and eight palm trees were sent to Ventnor. The gift from Queen Victoria of eight palm trees, were planted "on a piece of flat ground to the left of the path leading down from the hospital to the tennis courts". This must have been considered to be a sheltered place close to the Hospital suitable for the cultivation of 'tender' plants. There was a stone wall on the western boundary, which still survives, a yew hedge sheltering the tennis courts to the south, and a row of *Macrocarpas* to the

The Chusan Palms, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, were of course the signature plants and they must have been quite a novelty when they were first planted. The Victorian plant hunter, Robert Fortune, a Scotsman, was sent by the Horticultural Society to collect plants in China, resulting in the introduction to Europe of many new and exotic plants. Amongst these was the Chusan Palm, which he first saw on the islands of Chusan (now Zhoushan) off the coast of east China. He collected

east. The unusual (at the time) presence of palm trees gave the name of 'Palm Court' to this area.

The earlier Chusan palm at Osborne has not survived, nor all of the original eight palms at Ventnor. Nevertheless, this group of Chusan Palms in the Palm Garden remains as one of the original introductions into this country. The palms settled in well. There must have been both male and female plants and, from an early date, they produced fruit, and seedlings started to appear. Unfortunately, it is not straightforward to identify which of the palms present today are originals. Keith Brewer, a gardener who was at VBG in 1972, is pretty sure that ten of the largest were already pretty mature when he started. However, these are likely to have been a mixture of originals plus early seedlings allowed to grow up.



Fig. 2 The Palm Court looking east, 1930. *Macrocarpas* behind

Apart from the flagship palms, other plants would have been grown in the Palm Court. An undated photograph of the Palm Court (Fig. 1) shows Chusan Palms and Cordylines grown in lawn beds, and plants growing against the wall. In a photograph (Fig 2) dated 1930 the palms are larger and Yuccas also appear.

Some further information about Palm Court can be derived from Dr Eric Laidlaw's writings. He was Deputy Superintendent from 1947 until the Hospital closed in 1964 and was the author of *The Story of the Royal National Hospital, Ventnor*. Writing in the late 1980s, he says that the Palm Court had altered a good deal but along its western wall there were still three Camellias, white, red and pink, which seemed about as large in 1942. It was the tradition that the white flowers decorated the Christmas dinner table for the nursing staff.

The early flowering Camellias against the wall in the Palm Garden were a much loved feature for many years, but sadly only one survives. It is by the archway and is the red flowering plant, listed in Mr Roy Dore's 1986 inventory as *Camellia japonica mathotiana*. This plant is a survivor: when the Visitor Centre was constructed in 1999 it was cut to the ground. Dr Laidlaw also says that further along the wall was a Chocolate Vine, *Akebia trifoliata*. This may also have been a survivor from the original Palm Court and could be the wall plant in the Fig. 1. The plant survives today so, together with the Chusan Palms, the red Camellia and possibly some of the Cordylines could be the only original survivors in this part of the Garden.

When Ventnor Urban District Council took over the land in 1970 and Sir Harold Hillier started the Botanic Garden, the Palm Garden was seen as a good place to grow half hardy plants: many of the plants there today are from the original Hillier introductions. He introduced the clumps of Japanese Banana, *Musa basjoo*, an interesting group of evergreen trees in the southwest corner; the Ichang Lemon, *Citrus ichangense*, and the



Survivor: *Camellia japonica mathotiana*, was cut to the ground but with the Chusan Palms and some *Cordylines* it could be the only originals in this part of the Garden

Aspidistras in the shade below the wall. The winter of 1978/79 was particularly severe and Hillier wrote, in early summer 1979, that all these plants were surviving with little damage. One of the bananas, he wrote, "has been cut to the ground but is breaking vigorously." However, other tender plants put here by Hillier, such as the Cycads, were lost.

The Great Storm in October 1987 caused the loss of the row of *Macrocarpas* to the east of the Palm Garden but the Palm Garden itself was relatively sheltered and came off lightly. All of the Chusan Palms survived. Following the devastation, Simon Goodenough constructed the circular path and beds, planted with *Agapanthus*, which are such a feature of the Palm Garden today. He also built the raised bed on the north side of the main path where he planted the Canary Island Palm which has gone on to be one of the oldest and largest in the Garden.

A group of fine evergreen trees against the wall in the southwest corner survives from the Hillier days. These are *Magnolia grandiflora* Goliath, *Magnolia delavayi*, *Michelia doltsopa*, *Eriobotrya deflexa* and *Eriobotrya* sp. The two *Magnolias* are champion trees but the others have become crowded.

We hold a database of the Garden's plant acquisitions. It requires ongoing updating as the collection is added to, and existing accessions are re-determined or have name changes. An example of this relates to the unidentified *Eriobotrya* referred to above. In the database it is described as "something Hillier got from Kew" and it has been labelled in the Garden as *Eriobotrya* sp. ever since.

When Dr Owen Johnson, the dendrologist who has spent the last 20 years recording over 60,000 trees in the UK and is Registrar of the Tree Register, visited the Garden in 2017, he re-determined the tree as *Quercus lamellosa*, a species of oak native to the Himalayas. He wrote "Crowded mature tree, leaves 20 x 7cm, quite thin, 18 pairs of imperfectly parallel veins, scraps of orange flock underneath in July and on shoots."

Quercus lamellosa is somewhat tender in this country, and only grows well in the mildest regions of the southwest, having reached a height of 8m at Caerhays in Cornwall. Ours is 6m high with a trunk thickness of 22cm. However, we all make mistakes, and unfortunately this tree is not *Quercus lamellosa* but is in fact an *Eriobotrya* as listed by Roy Dore. It has still not been identified to species level but there are only ten species of *Eriobotrya* and ours seems to fit the description of *E. hookeriana*.

The Palm Garden has moved on but it is an interesting part of the Garden because it retains recognisable survivors from the early days of the Hospital and Hillier. Originally, the Palm Court was seen as a sheltered spot to grow tender plants, but today Chris Kidd considers it to be a rather cold and shady part of the Garden and certainly not a place to try a new plant on the borderline of hardiness.

See Tall Story, Page 11

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society AGM

The inaugural Annual General Meeting of the CIO. February 2019

Our change of status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) meant that our AGM had to be earlier than usual this year. Not only that, Chairman Sally Peake and the Committee needed to make sure all complied with the Charity Commission's rules. Hon Treasurer Tim Woodcock, particularly, had lots of work to do to present the accounts in the required format.

So, the meeting was on a dark February evening and we suddenly panicked that we may not be quorate. Who on the Isle of Wight goes out after dark on a winter's evening? Well, the Friends do, and we were thrilled to number nearly 40 members! That surely shows how much we all care about Ventnor Botanic Garden.

Sally gave her Chairman's Report, updating the members about activities in the last year and fundraising efforts. Sally also announced she would be stepping down as Chairman after a busy three years. She reassured us all she would not be leaving the Committee "as there is still much to do"! Sally is passionate about education and will continue to look after the apprentices and guide school visits, among other things.

Tim Woodcock then gave his financial report saying that of the £47,000 from membership fees, fundraising and gift aid, £40,000 was passed back to the VBG CIC, mainly to pay for our two apprentices and their mentor Trish Brenchley. This year we have also purchased visitor audio guides for the CIC, which are being set up for the summer season.

Caroline Peel, Membership Secretary, encouraged us all to recruit new members. She has negotiated two free Garden passes a year for every member of the Friends' Society, and three for two members at the same address.



Handing over: Sally Chairing the AGM

Vice Chairman, Jane Clark, organised the election of trustees, officers and committee members. As a CIO we need trustees, and those appointed last year are required to step down at the first AGM. All four trustees offered themselves for re-election along with three additional committee members. They were all duly elected. A new member was voted on to the Committee: Peter Coleman, a retired Ventnor GP with a love of gardening, had been co-opted onto the Committee at the beginning of the year and we are looking forward to his insight on health and well-being.

Jane then thanked Sally for all her hard work in the Chair.

The meeting was closed and Chris Kidd updated members on the year in the Garden. He then presented the Harold Hillier award to Stan Hayden.

And finally – don't worry, next year our AGM will be back to April and its lighter evenings!!

Jenny Parker; Hon Secretary

TRUSTEES 2019:

Sally Peake
Tim Woodcock
Jane Clark
Caroline Peel
John Bagshawe
Rosemary Stewart
Jenny Parker

COMMITTEE 2019:

Chairman: John Bagshawe
Vice Chairman: Jane Clark
Hon Treasurer: Tim Woodcock
Hon Sec: Jenny Parker

Sally Peake
Caroline Peel
Roz Whistance
Rosemary Stewart
Colin Smith
Peter Coleman

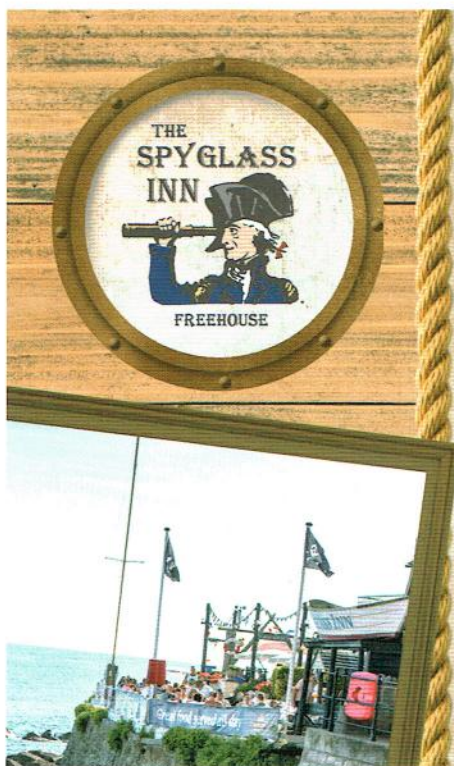
DISCOUNTS for members

Friends should always carry their membership card. The Garden has agreed that VBGFS members are allowed two free entries per year; with immediate effect. Look out for other benefits, such as 10% discount from Deacons Nursery, Godshill, on showing your Friends' Membership Card.

Data protection

Our mail-out labels are printed electronically with a computer. This means that we are subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act. Provided all our members agree to their names and addresses being placed on an electronic database it will not be necessary for us to register the list, thus saving us money.

The Executive Committee undertakes not to let the list be used for any purpose other than for promoting the activities of the Friends' Society. If, in spite of this undertaking, any member objects to his or her name being electronically recorded, please inform the Secretary.



Award-winning Island family run pub.

Recent winner of the *
My Isle of Wight Award,
Best Place to Enjoy an Island Ale.

Settle back with unrivalled views of
the English Channel, enjoy freshly
caught seafood and live local
music most days.

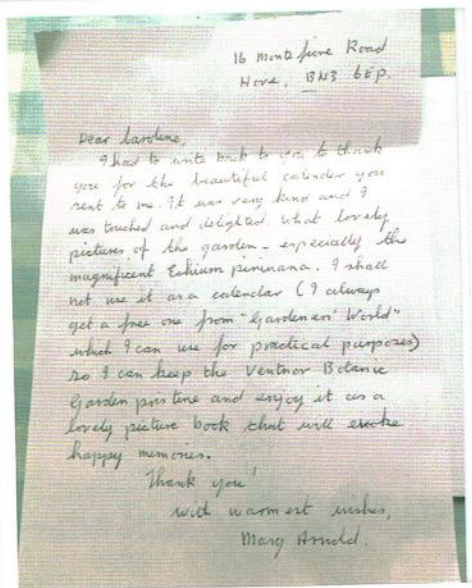
Esplanade, Ventnor, PO38 1JX 01983
855338 | thespyglass.com

f/spyglass.inn thespyglassinn
@SpyglassInn

Happy memories

Membership Sec Caroline Peel likes to look after our Members near and far, and sent a VBG calendar to loyal Friend Mary Arnold. She won't be using it though - it's too good to spoil.

Here are some reasons for loving the Garden as she does ...



Happy memories: Mary Arnold will keep the VBG calendar intact



Growing up: VBG's terrapins



Fruitful: trimming the banana plants is a fun job for volunteers



Benchmark: a place to rest



Companionable: Jean and Jonyth at the Christmas lunch

From Battlefields to Butterflies

... from apprentice to committed horticulturalist

George Tyler is brimming over with enthusiasm. He is describing his involvement in *Battlefields to Butterflies*, the project that commemorated gardeners who fought in the Great War, by creating a garden at the Hampton Court Flower Show.

"I've always had the upmost respect for all soldiers and veterans, and so to commemorate them in such a way – in a horticultural way – is a perfect commemoration."

George is VBG's senior apprentice, now nearing the end of his training, but it was a year ago when he first heard about the project. "The Friends, as kind as they are, had paid for me to go and work over at Tresco on the Isles of Scilly. I came back (a few days late because of the Beast from the East) and that same month was in contact with Mike Fitt, the Chairman of the Royal Parks Guild. It was Sally [Peake] who had put me in contact with him."



Osbourne Ceremony

Mike, former director of the Royal Parks in London had devised the project to commemorate WWI soldiers who had fallen, and specifically 24 soldiers who had been gardeners in the Royal Parks.

"Each student going up to the project was given a particular soldier to represent. I, and students from Osborne House, were involved because two of these soldiers were from the Isle of Wight: Charles Mew worked at Richmond Park, and Ernest Johnson at Osborne House, then part of the Royal Parks."

Within weeks George was at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, home of the Chelsea Pensioners, to brainstorm the project. "The Pensioners themselves are amazing people. The stories they have – what they've been through ... To make that connection to people who were so close to those memories that we were commemorating, that's what made it so special."

The majority of the students attending the project were from the Royal Parks in London. "I was the only one from a botanic garden, and that carries a lot of weight in horticulture – I didn't realise that at first. Ventnor Botanic Garden is very prestigious, the people in London said how wonderful it is that I'm from a botanic garden."

Workshops happened every couple of months, the object initially to decide on the design and feel of the commemorative garden. "It was a consensus from all the students that we wanted not so much to do a garden approved by horticulturalists and botanists, but to represent a battlefield. If you could actually walk through it, you

could experience it. That led on to the idea of a transitioning from a WWI trench to a wild flower meadow."

The project, George explains, was influenced by artist and author, Sir William Orpen who had fought in the war and returned to the battlefields just a couple of months into peace time to find nature had healed itself. One of his paintings was entitled Battlefield to Butterflies. "Mike wanted our garden to represent that transitioning from the WWI battlefield, with dead plants and torn land, into a wildflower meadow – almost to pass through time as you physically walk through."

George is proud that his own suggestion for a plaque was adopted: a shovel crossed with a weapon topped with a helmet formed a symbolic cross.

He and his fellow students went to Hampton Court to see the garden being built, and later in the week acted as stewards. "It was amazing to actually see it go from paper to reality," says George. "Because when you go through the trenches – and the height of the trench and everything is historically accurate, your head is just above the trench – you immerse yourself in the battlefield." He adds: "In a comments book, so many people wrote that they felt such emotion when walking through the garden, that it hit them hard as they thought about these fallen World War I soldiers."

For George that wasn't, and isn't, the end of the project. His involvement has meant he has been introduced to all sorts of people who could be useful contacts for his future. "Mike invited me to a breakfast at Chelsea Flower Show where I met top people in horticulture – directors of Kew, Wisley and the RHS." He describes Mike's ebullient 'come and meet George' cries to all sorts of people including BBC presenters. "I am so grateful to Mike. I've only been in horticulture for a short time and consider myself so lucky. I have so much to thank Mike Fitt for."



Hampton Court WWI Garden



Hampton Court stewards



Gardeners remembered

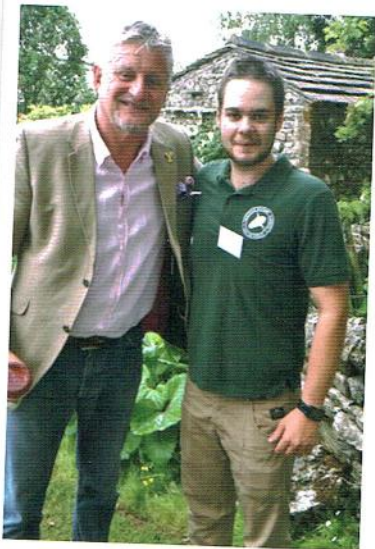


Chelsea Flower Show



George with Sue Biggs, Director General of the RHS

Battlefields to Butterflies has also given George an insight into garden design, and clearly added to his zeal for horticulture. His enthusiasm is infectious, and the project has compounded his ambition to stay at VBG beyond his apprenticeship, which finishes in June. "I've really grown an attachment to this place. The staff here are incredible. I've got so much to thank them for, and to the Friends' Society. I wouldn't be where I am now without them."



*Being shown round Hampton Court
by Mark Gregory*

THE ROYAL

EXCELLENCE SINCE 1832

THE PERFECT VENUE FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION

Here at The Royal, our aim is to make every occasion a memorable one. We cater for events ranging from grand, corporate dinners to the small, intimate family and friends gatherings, with a range of menu options to choose from.



We have 3 private rooms available, room hire fees are subject to date and timings.

Appuldurcombe Room - up to 150 guests | Albert Room - up to 40 guests | Brasserie - up to 20 guests

To enquire or make a reservation, please contact our Events Manager

★★★★

01983 852186

www.royalhoteliow.co.uk | enquiries@royalhoteliow.co.uk | Fax: 01983 855395

THE ROYAL HOTEL, BELGRAVE ROAD, VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT, PO38 1JJ

UNPARALLELED QUALITY • SUPERB SERVICE • AFFORDABLE PRICES

Shhhh . . . Secret Art is Back And it's Absolutely Fabulous!

20 – 28 July 2019



Shhhh
.....It's a Secret

"Darling, your jacket! Is it a Lacroix? It is, isn't it, a Lacroix! I love it darling!"

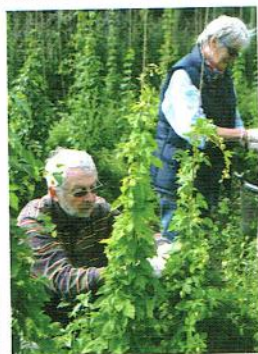
Such was the looking-glass world of the characters of the BBC's *Absolutely Fabulous*. Give something a label and it's worth admiring. Something unknown, not so much. Yet the lines of the jacket, the fabric, the style, are just the same. The jacket is a discovery by its owner:

And this is how **Secret Art** works. Pieces will be displayed anonymously. Visitors captivated by a particular piece will want to snap it up, take it home and display it on their wall. Later they will look at the Friends' website and discover the name of their artist. It is art dealing at its most pure.

The first Secret Art event, in 2017, was a huge success. The preview evening gave artists and sponsors an opportunity to meet and network, Friends and friends could buy art.

As before, proceeds will go to the Friends' Society's Horticultural Apprenticeship Scheme, and if you are in any doubt as to the value of that initiative read George Tyler's account of his involvement with Battlefields to Butterflies, and Adam's burgeoning enthusiasm for horticulture.

Each piece of art will be sold for £60. Secret Art will run from Saturday 20th July – Sunday 28th July 2019.



Gardening Volunteers

Help is always required in the Garden and we warmly welcome new recruits to work with the Garden staff and dedicated volunteers, either in a friendly group on a Wednesday morning or at other times to be arranged. No qualifications or previous experience is required and apart from sensible clothing and a flask of refreshment, bring your own hand tools.

For further information for Garden volunteers
please ring Bridgette Sibbick - 867739



Meet the Chairman

John Bagshawe grins cheerfully when it is suggested that he was badgered into accepting the role of Chairman of the Friends' Society. "But I'm grateful that I was persuaded – because, and I hate to say it, it's what people always say – but it's an honour to be asked."

We are enjoying a delicious coffee on the recently-expanded terrace outside the Plantation Room and looking down on the wonderful spring Garden.

"The reason it's an honour is that the Friends' Society is a really worthwhile organisation, and it is keeping the Garden going. That's the crucial point. Without the Friends and the volunteers, the Garden wouldn't be as it is now."

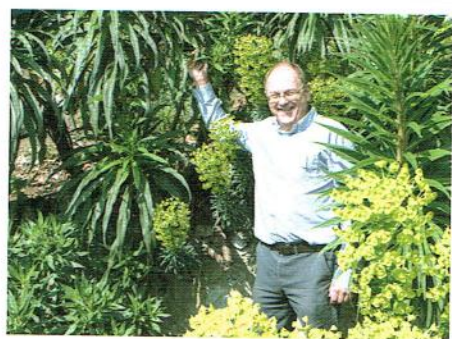
John's love for the Garden has been something of a whirlwind affair. He has only lived on the Island since the beginning of 2017, after he and his wife Karen put in a bid for the house in which they now live. "We didn't expect to get it, but we don't regret the move at all."

He was brought up on a smallholding and always loved the outdoor life – though he was sent away to school – "or Colditz!" – at the age of eight. His career was in insurance. "There were interesting times and not so good times. It was becoming very 'tick-box', when all I wanted was to do a good job for my clients." It was through work that he met and eventually married Karen, who already had a place on the Island. The decision to move permanently was easy.

John soon became immersed in Island life, becoming a Church Warden at St Catherine's, Ventnor; joining the Undercliff Singers, as well as the Isle of Wight Hockey Club. "I have played hockey since I was at school and have played to a reasonably high standard. The Isle of Wight team I have played for has just been promoted. Well done to the team!"

He also began volunteering at the Botanic Garden, and hasn't looked back. "My area has been the physical side of it. I don't like the potting or collecting seeds. I like to see an area that's overgrown, then cutting it back. Then you look behind you and say 'Oh I've done that today. I'd rather do that than collect seeds or propagate, but we have a great team who enjoy this, which is great for the Garden.'"

It is always an enjoyable time, a lot of fun with lots of banter, he says. "I'd like to get the volunteer numbers up. The Garden is my passion and there must be a lot of people on the Island who have the time and would benefit from coming out for a couple of hours or more a week."



John clearing the beds of echium. 'I love echium. Clearing them is like losing your children!'

We wander along the paths, through New Zealand to Australia, John pointing out the newly orderly beds he and other volunteers have just tackled. "We cut back palm trees, prune banana trees, where can you do this outside in the UK, not many places? In winter it's great fun pushing over the echiums when they've died off." He adds: "We could do with more people to do the heavy work, men and women."

John's vision goes beyond the day-to-day gardening, as important as that is. As Chairman he aims to find ways of making more people feel part of the Garden. "What we do is for the benefit of the Garden, and I would love that everyone, especially the local's can feel that they are part of the Garden. As Friends we would also love to have enough income to fund more apprentices, and we are actively looking at increasing this, including with the Friends' Foundation Fund."

[See Friends' Foundation Fund, Page 32]

Botany Club

We now have some trips organised for our group who like to go out into the countryside with a knowledgeable leader and look at wildflowers, birds and butterflies or visit an interesting garden. We collect £5 in the hat for the Friends or donate towards any special conservation group. More trips might be arranged but these are now in the programme:



Guernsey Goats at Kingston Smallholding

Wed 17th April at 7pm at VBG: "Who Cares About Moss?" – A talk by George Greiff. How bryophytes live and why that should matter to us.

Wed 29th May at 2pm in St Lawrence: A Wildflower Walk with Dave and Hazel Trevan from Pelham Woods. We will go along the cliff to St Lawrence Shute and down the Cripple Path back to Pelham Woods – or there will be a choice of a shorter version.

Wed 12th June at 2pm at Sandown Meadows: A walk with Steve Egerton-Read of the Hampshire & IWT Wildlife Trust. The walk will be round the new reserve, where we will see lots of flowers, butterflies and birds.

Wed 10th July at 2pm: Kingston Smallholding: The designer of *Ventnorenensis*, Simone Dickens, and her husband David look forward to showing us round their unique small farm and garden. Their neighbour Helen Keats will allow us to walk through her arboretum. Plenty of parking.

Autumn: Colin Pope has agreed to take us on a fungus foray, depending on the season. Further information to follow.

Please let me know if you are interested in joining us and I will send you more detailed instructions about where to park etc. All are welcome.

Rosemary Stewart
rosemarystewart@icloud.com

Thank you Jean and Dave Kelley

When they move to the mainland they will be greatly missed, says
Rosemary Stewart

One day, back in 2007, an enthusiastic couple of gardeners joined the Wednesday volunteers and soon became part of the gang. They were Jean and Dave Kelley. They took part wholeheartedly in the activities of the Friends and worked with us to help make money for the Garden when it was dependent for funding on the Isle of Wight Council.

One day we were weeding in the car park and I casually asked Jean what she had done for a living. I discovered she had been in finance ... and we were looking for a new Hon Treasurer at the time! So I twisted her arm and she cheerfully took over the job from Trevor Lupton at the AGM in 2008. She looked after us so well, coping with the vagaries of the computer system and the advent of the CIC until she in turn persuaded Kay Grist to take over in the middle of 2013.

During this time we celebrated the 21st birthday of the Friends, when Alan Titchmarsh came for our Open Day; Prince Charles and Camilla came to open the Arid Garden; we picked the first hops and celebrated with a lively weekend Hopfest; the mosaics went up; we said goodbye to Simon Goodenough; and VBG became a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Dave meanwhile was working hard in the Garden, contributing ideas and supporting the Friends at events. Then he found his new vocation – as the VBG Squirrel Man! Squirrels were beginning to be seen more often so he bought some feeders, put up dreys and kept a watchful eye. Now there is a growing population which gives so much pleasure to the visitors who are lucky enough to spot them. All this time Dave has been very generously buying nuts for them out of his own pocket as his donation to the Garden.



Sadly, the Kelleys will soon be moving to pastures new in Norfolk to be near their family, and we shall be very sorry to lose them. We wish them every happiness for the future. They have donated three trees: Snowdrop Tree *Halesia Carolina*; Olive tree, *europaea*, and a variegated Hedgehog Holly, *Ilex aquifolium ferox* "Argentea".

Thank you Jean and Dave for all your hard work, generosity and good company over the years. Come and see us again soon!



Jean and Dave Kelley: Years of wholehearted enthusiasm

Health and Wellbeing Benefits of Green Spaces (and blue ones)

Being outside is good for you - it's official. **Dr Peter Coleman** looks at new research that says it's not just a physical dividend

Many of us will recall our parents telling us to go and play outside because 'it's good for you' and we may have said the same to our own children. Indeed the first publicly funded green spaces, public parks, were officially designated in the nineteenth century, in the belief that it would be good for the health of the general public.

It now turns out that these pragmatic beliefs were in fact correct and there has been mounting evidence, in reputable and reliable public health research, that there are significant benefits to physical and mental health, and to social wellbeing, in having access to green spaces. One paper in the British Journal of Psychiatry goes as far as suggesting that the evidence supports the conclusion that green spaces can play a pivotal role in population level mental health.

This is particularly relevant in the modern world with expanding urbanisation resulting in increasingly limited access to green spaces. The Landscape Institute has actually published a position statement which says: "Healthy places make people feel comfortable and at ease, increasing social interaction and reducing antisocial behaviour, isolation and stress."

There is good evidence that living close to green spaces buffers life stresses, even without physically accessing these spaces, but the benefits are even greater when green spaces can be accessed. The benefits have been demonstrated regardless of age, differing cultures and socioeconomic status.

Green spaces also give the opportunity to increase physical exercise, known as 'green exercise', and this has been shown to have significant benefits to physical and mental health as well as social wellbeing, particularly when undertaken as a group activity. However, the research also shows benefits to physical health in just accessing green spaces, even without increased physical activity, and even more surprisingly just living near such a space can improve physical health. Indeed there is one study which shows that hospital patients recover more quickly and are discharged earlier if they can see greenery from their ward or enjoy the benefits of a hospital garden.



Caption: The perfect place: Green space next to the sea, VBG delivers health

Spaces which are well-structured and safe have been shown to give the greatest benefits, partly because people feel comfortable to make use of them.

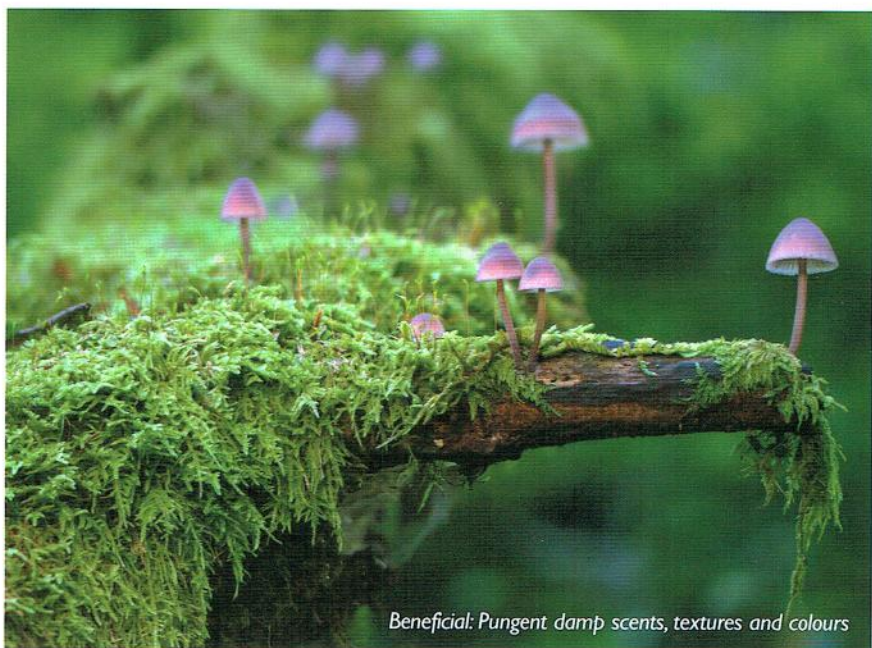
It has been shown that the presence of green spaces can reduce rates of obesity and even reduce death rates from a number of different physical conditions, including heart attacks and strokes. More research is now underway to understand what benefits can be gained for those suffering from specific conditions, in particular those suffering from dementia and their carers.

In recent years studies have also shown that similar benefits can accrue from access to 'blue spaces', which can include inland waterways, lakes and coastal areas.

As a safe, well-structured green space, close to the coast, one would expect Ventnor Botanic Gardens to be the perfect place to deliver the greatest benefits to the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Having worked as a GP in Ventnor for thirty years, and recently retired, I was elected to the committee of The Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society, with the aim of raising awareness of and promoting the potential health and wellbeing benefits, which the gardens can deliver to the local population. There is already a programme of volunteers who can undertake gardening tasks under the supervision of skilled gardeners. This is clearly an activity which can increase physical exercise and its attendant health benefits as well as the social aspects of group activity.

There are many different groups of people who could benefit from access to the Garden, and it will be a challenge for the future to develop projects, which will attract and enable access for such groups.



Beneficial: Pungent damp scents, textures and colours

THE HAROLD HILLIER AWARD

Stan Hayden - Unsung Hero

The Harold Hillier Award was given to the Island by the Hillier Family in memory of Sir Harold, who was instrumental in bringing about Ventnor Botanic Garden. It was to be presented to a person who has made a significant contribution to horticulture on the Island. While Simon Goodenough was Curator of VBG the award was resurrected and the recipient has been chosen by the Curator and the Friends' Society annually.

At the Friends' Society AGM in February, Chris Kidd had the pleasure of presenting the Award to Stan Hayden. Stan had started his horticultural career as an apprentice with the South Wight Borough Council and Chris looked back at that time as the Golden Era.

"We might not have appreciated it then but now we are reaping the benefits of the energy and resources that were put in by local authorities to horticulture, parks and gardens, particularly in the training of young apprentices.



Wisdom: Stan Hayden receives the Harold Hillier Award from Chris Kidd

"After many changes through the years Stan now works for John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance, the large company responsible for parks and open spaces on the Island. What makes Stan so special is that, despite the gradual decline in local government resources, his solid training has enabled him to keep up his standards. Without the wisdom of a lesser individual than Stan those parks would not be there and look like they do now.

"Stan has put in more effort than was required from the job description in order to keep the parks and open spaces rolling. Ventnor Park has won the prestigious Park of the Year twice in the last five years at the South and South East England In Bloom, and has won Gold and Silver Gilt awards. Stan has always wanted to improve conditions for people, specifically in Ventnor and hence round the Island too. There are not many in the world of contracting environmental services now who could claim, with an honest face, to have achieved what Stan has done. I think the words that sum him up best are Unsung Hero!"

Stan said he was absolutely astounded when Chris first mentioned the award to him. He had just done his job over the years, not realising how much he had been putting in. He said it had been getting harder and harder every year with less money to spend to keep things looking as good as possible. He thanked the Friends warmly and said how much he appreciated the award.

In 2016 Ventnor Park won Park of the Year Award at the South and South East England In Bloom Awards. Stan received the awards on behalf of the Council. It has also won Trip Advisor certificates of Excellence.

Rosemary Stewart

Reclothing the landscape

Mike Fitt, Chairman of The Royal Parks Guild, explains his vision to create a commemorative garden, which inspired all ages

'Battlefields to Butterflies' a project based initiative remembering all those parks, gardens and grounds staff who died during 'the war to end all wars', known as the Great War.

It was in 2014, whilst listening to a commemoration of lives lost at the Battle of the Somme, as part of the WWI centenary commemorations, that I came across the words of writer and war artist William Orpen, who not only described the devastation of war and its horrors but also nature's ability to clothe the shattered landscape in wild plants and young trees, full of wildlife. Reflecting on this image of transformation and hope, it occurred to me that recreating a tiny part of this natural 'garden' might be a way to commemorate all those forgotten parks, gardens and grounds staff who died in the conflict, including 24 men from the Royal Parks.



**A Grave & Mine Crater at La Boisselle - August 1917 -
William Orpen ©IWM (Art.IWM ART 2378)**

William Orpen describes the scene upon returning to the Somme battlefield in August 1917:

"I had left it mud, nothing but water, shell holes and mud the most gloomy dreary abomination of desolation the mind could imagine; and now, in the summer of 1917 no words could express the beauty of it. The dreary, dismal mud was baked white and pure – dazzling white. White daisies, red poppies, and a blue flower, great masses of them, stretching for miles and miles. The sky is a pure

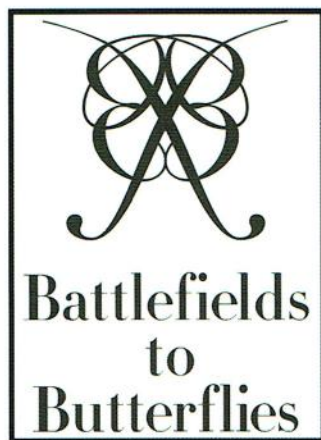
dark blue, and the whole air, up to a height of about forty feet, thick with white butterflies; your clothes were covered with butterflies. It was like an enchanted land but in the place of fairies there were thousands of little white crosses, marked 'Unknown British Soldier' for the most part."

Mesmerised by Orpen's work and sentiments, believing this could be the basis for a World War I commemorative project, I approached Guild member and landscape architect, Jo Gibbons, for advice. Very generously, Jo offered the services of her landscape practice and in the discussion between us, the concept of 'Battlefield to Butterflies' was born and a working group formed.

A long list of partners joined us to develop and install a series of temporary, commemorative 'gardens' at various sites which included the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show, and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

Integral to this journey of remembrance were horticultural apprentices, gathered from various organisations, including the Royal Parks, and Pensioners from the Royal Hospital Chelsea who helped with the design of the commemorative features, particularly the permanent memorial installed at Brompton Cemetery.

Chelsea Pensioners laid the foundations for a permanent wildflower meadow at the site of the Chelsea Pensioners' monument in the cemetery, to honour the 2,625 Pensioners buried there. The meadow was based on a seed list, provided by Kew Gardens, of the flowers which sprang up in French fields after the Battle of the Somme and included poppies, cornflowers, loosestrife, mallow and cranesbill.



How the Press reported the project

Andrew Scattergood, Chief Executive of The Royal Parks, said: "Today, we have hundreds of gardeners and grounds staff maintaining our 5,000 acres of historic parkland. But 100 years ago, staff such as these would have been called away from their families to fight a devastating war, with some of them destined never to return."

"We must always remember the huge sacrifice made by our predecessors. And, as we mark the centenary of the end of World War I, it is an honour and a privilege for The Royal Parks to commemorate the courage and immense bravery of all the gardeners and parks staff who lost their lives in this most terrible of wars."

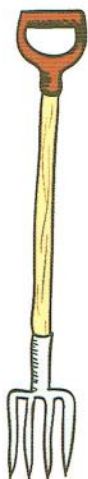
Mike Fitt, chair of The Royal Parks Guild, said: "We must never forget how The Royal Parks staff boosted the war effort. It is particularly poignant that former park keeper for St James's Park, William Charles Gould, who died in 1915, is buried here at Brompton Cemetery, where this permanent memorial will be installed."

"We wanted to pay tribute to those who lost their lives to the horrors of war. But also to show that after destruction, there is hope. By recreating the meadow of wildflowers that sprang up in the turbulent terrain of the Somme, we wanted to highlight nature's ability to restore itself after destruction."

Ron Wilmore, Grounds Manager at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, said: "The Chelsea Pensioners have really enjoyed working with the horticultural apprentices and are keen to ensure the close relationship continues through future initiatives. It has been an opportunity to share experiences and to learn from each other while creating something everyone can be proud of."

Membership News

We are delighted to welcome the following new members as Friends:



Pamela Ackroyd, Freshwater
Maggie Aldred, Sandown
Carol Bartlett, Goring, Berks
Peter and Rebecca Coleman, Ryde
Ann Denness, Whitwell
Diana and Hans Herzog, St. Lawrence
Patricia Lockwood, Chale
Andrew Middleton, St. Lawrence
Valerie and Robert Pitts, Ventnor
Arabella and Paul Sandford, Newport
Wendy Sims, Newport

Honorary members

Alan Titchmarsh
Simon Goodenough
Brian Kidd

Patrons

Gilly Drummond OBE
Penelope Hobhouse

A gentle reminder... Please ensure you have updated your Standing Order to reflect the increase in membership fee, which came about at the beginning of this year. Single membership is £20.00 p.a. and joint membership costs £30.00. As well as receiving two copies of *Ventnorenensis* a year you will also receive some free admission passes to enable you to bring friends – who may want to become Friends once they've seen the Garden!



The Friends' Foundation Fund

They say many hands make light work.

The Friends' Foundation Fund is a way of supporting our core education projects. If lots of us give a little, regularly, we will have a bedrock that can be used to pay for our apprentice's education – maybe to bring in a third apprentice, which would benefit the Garden and set another young person on a life in horticulture. By setting up a standing order for just £3 a month, or an amount of your choosing, this could be achieved.

The bank details are as follows: **Nat West, Shanklin 54-41-31**

Account Number: 49648292

Account Name: VBGFS – Foundation Fund

• VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN FRIENDS SOCIETY •



PLANT SALE

— at —

VENTNOR BOTANIC
GARDEN



May 25TH SATURDAY



2-4 PM





THE GARLIC FARM

ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

FREE
ADMISSION

The complete garlic experience!





RESTAURANT, FARM SHOP, ALLIUM CAFÉ, FARM WALKS, TOURS & FREE TASTINGS

7 DAYS A WEEK 9AM-5PM

"Beautiful place, great food...the highlight of our trip" "Garlic Heaven"

The Garlic Farm, Mersley Lane, Newchurch,

www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk | PO36 0NR | 01983 865 378  

Open 9am-6pm during School Summer Holidays