

The University of Oxford

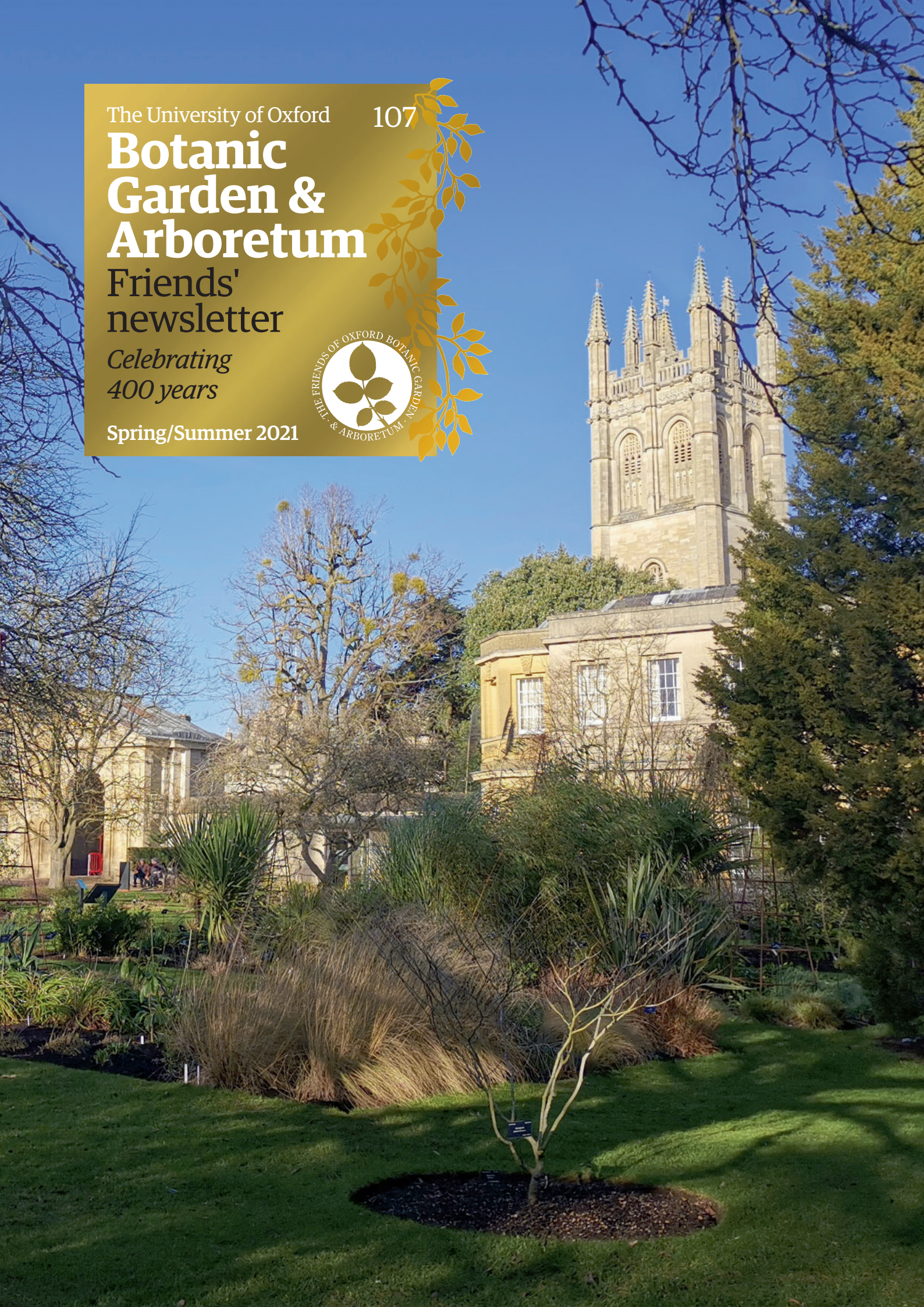
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Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'
newsletter

*Celebrating
400 years*

Spring/Summer 2021



From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood

A face covering featuring tropical foliage from the Glasshouses



Winter bulbs emerging

In the first edition of a very important year for OBG, we are delighted to share with you many success stories, despite the adversity brought about by the pandemic. This edition has a particular focus on our Apprentices at the Garden and Arboretum, each of whom share updates on their progress and what they enjoy so much about working here.

Responding to changes in guidance has brought opportunities as well as challenges. For example OBG's Buyer and Merchandiser, Tanya Clarke, introduced a 'click and collect' shop service, and new products including bespoke OBG-branded face coverings. Meanwhile the Autumn Science Lectures moved online, requiring considerable planning and 'digital infrastructure' in place, an effort led by Lauren Baker. The series saw a triumphant

20% increase in attendance on 2019. Using the same platform, our series of Winter Lectures began with a successful and deeply engaging talk by Adam Frost; we await the rest of the series in keen anticipation. Practical courses are more challenging of course, and for the time being, remain on hold. Nevertheless, between the lockdowns, Nienke Abbing managed to lead four workshops to create botanical Christmas wreaths and door hangings at the Garden in December.

Last October saw an extraordinary fungal display at the Arboretum triggered no doubt by the heavy rain. Our 'Fungus Foray' - also delivered online in 2020 - engaged with audiences as far afield as Mexico and Australia. Both the horticultural and arboricultural teams are as busy as ever. On p. 6 you will find out how we are preparing the Water Lily House pool for a breathtaking display of water lilies this spring and see some of the beautiful plants that

have bloomed under glass in recent months. The Rock Garden is now reconfigured with rocks, paths and plants in place, along with new interpretation boards. Entitled '*A Greek Odyssey: Sibthorp's voyages in the footsteps of Dioscorides*', these explain the importance of the *Flora Graeca*, published in the 1800s based on Oxford botanist John Sibthorp's surveys across Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, accompanied by his illustrator Ferdinand Bauer. Our 'living *Flora Graeca*' promises to be an explosion of colour this spring thanks to the efforts of Curator Mark Brent and his team. Do come along, if you are able, to enjoy the new planting.

At the time of writing, both the Garden and Arboretum are covered in snow, and the first of the winter bulbs are emerging. The 400th Anniversary of the Botanic Garden is upon us, and we look forward to sharing the many exciting events, projects and activities with you as they blossom throughout 2021.



The fountain in the snow



The first of the snowdrops

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Witch hazel (*Hamamelis mollis*) in blossom in the snow

From the Director

By Simon Hiscock

Welcome to 2021, the year we celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Botanic Garden. As I write in late January signs of the 'certain spring' are all around us. At the Botanic Garden and Arboretum the witch hazels are looking stunning and sharing their delicate perfume with all around. Snowdrops and aconites are in full flower and the first crocuses are opening. Sweet scents permeate from *Sarcococca* and *Chimonanthus*, whilst a more intoxicating perfume radiates from stunning pink *Daphne bholua*. These harbingers of spring lift the spirits in the midst of a third lockdown and, like the vaccines, bring hope of better times to come.

Even though we are in lockdown again, botanic gardens and arboreta have been allowed to remain open for people to take local exercise and enjoy the benefits nature brings for their mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, the pandemic has seen people engage with the natural world like never before. This is certainly evidenced at the Arboretum, where we have seen record numbers of visitors since reopening in June 2020 after the first lockdown. Between 15th June and 1st December 2020 the Arboretum received 42,000 visitors compared to a five-year annual average of 35,000. The Botanic Garden also saw record numbers from September to December such that by 1st December 2020 the total visitors to both sites passed 100,000.

Amid all the current uncertainties we are still busy preparing for the 400th



Sarcococca blossom

Anniversary, which focuses on a week of celebrations beginning on 25th July, the day the founding stone of the Garden was laid by the Vice-Chancellor in 1621. Pandemic guidelines permitting, during the week there will be a Friends' 30th Anniversary party on the Monday when Peter Beales Roses Ltd will reveal the new rose created for the 400th Anniversary. Then, on

Tuesday, Alice Oswald (Professor of Poetry) will perform new material and be joined by fellow poets and musicians. A musical thread will continue through the week with performances by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a new composition from the Oxford Lieder Festival. There will also be celebrations of botany and plant sciences, as well as art, a food festival, wellbeing activities and a family-friendly birthday party.

Earlier in the summer an exhibition at the Weston Library, *Roots to Seeds*, curated by Dr Stephen Harris will celebrate 400 years of botanical science at Oxford. More details of this and the week of celebrations will be available on a dedicated 400th Anniversary webpage this spring; this will be updated regularly as lockdown restrictions are eased and guidance on delivering events changes.

Following successful online delivery of our 2020 Autumn Science Lectures and the ongoing 2021 Winter Lectures, we are confident that if needed, we will be able to deliver many of our 400th Anniversary events and activities online or at least partly so, should social distancing and events guidance dictate - so please do check the website regularly as we move ever closer to July's celebrations.

As Friends your support for OBGa has never been more important than it is now, during these very challenging and uncertain times. I sincerely hope that we will all be able to come together in July to celebrate the birth of this wonderful Botanic Garden and look forward to its exciting future.



Daphne bholua

News from the Garden

By Mark Brent

There is a fallacy that in the winter, gardens enter a period of slumber and everything goes into hibernation; walking around the Walled Garden in early January shows that this is far from true. We are all in need of some horticultural therapy in these difficult times, and the emergent blossoms of *Galanthus*, *Helleborus*, *Chimonanthus* and *Hamamelis* (the latter of which is releasing its scent by the fountain) are lifting the spirits of the Hardy team and our visitors in equal measure. Pots planted with tulips and other bulbs give further hope of a much-needed spring.

Common advice at this time of year is to spend time thumbing through seed catalogues and observe the garden from a warm side of a window (which we do!) but work continues in the collections regardless: the taxonomic beds are being given a comforting blanket of

mulch, the Merton Borders are being given their annual cut back and the paths and edges are being sharpened in preparation for what will be a significant year for the Garden. The Glasshouse team are equally hard at work cleaning the water lily pond, which will include a new planter for the *Victoria cruziana* that has been constructed by the Arboretum team from our own timber resources.

Back in the autumn, progress was made on the reconfiguration of the Rock Garden. A collaborative effort with the Arboretum team saw an additional 40 tonnes of rock



New rocks in place in the Rock Garden



The first blossom of 2021 (*Hamamelis mollis*)



Work under way in the Rock Garden

Updates from the Garden's Apprentice Horticulturists

Laura Quinlan

Since starting at the Oxford Botanic Garden as an Apprentice in October last year, I'll have learnt so much about the world of horticulture and botanic gardens. My day-to-day activities range from fundamental horticultural tasks such as weeding, pruning and mulching, through to specialist tasks including epiphyte display construction, hazel path edge weaving and collecting data on phenology. I have helped

to cut back the Merton Borders, pruned apple trees and roses, re-potted spring and autumn flowering bulbs, pruned in the Water Lily House pond, helped to plant out 150 rhododendrons at the Arboretum and gained lots of new skills along the way.



Although the pandemic has interrupted the apprenticeship training both at the college and at the Garden, I am excited to expand my knowledge and gain further skills with another nine months left to go. The horticultural teams at OBGA have shared their passion and dedication, for which I am very grateful. Their knowledge and professional expertise have enriched my training alongside the experienced staff at Abingdon and Witney College.

During my first role in horticulture, this experience has been and will continue to be invaluable; providing me with the skills and experience I need to further progress my career in the sector. At the end of 2020 I successfully passed my externally assessed examinations.

Mei Yee

During my time at Oxford Botanic Garden I have had the pleasure of working with knowledgeable and dedicated people who



New interpretation boards installed in the Rock Garden

transported to the Garden. This has been assembled into a 'cliff' for the cultivation of rock-dwelling Mediterranean flora. New interpretation panels have been installed which describe in detail John Sibthorp's travels across the Levant and the pre-eminent *Flora Graeca*. Horticulturalist Russell Beeton has continued to add plants to the Rock Garden that he propagated from seed and cuttings; a welcome gift of two Smyrna figs brought back from Greece will be planted against the wall along with several hundred bulbs to add colour this spring. Plans for the remaining area of the Rock Garden include cultivating species from Sicily and Sardinia, with a particular focus on Mt Etna. This planting will complement the Director's research carried out on the mountain. Meanwhile, further developments have taken place in the Walled Garden. Ruth has extended the Literary Garden across the southwest corner of the Garden (beyond the Medicinal Beds). As explained previously, plants that have literary connections have

have proved invaluable to my education. Coming to the Garden with no professional training in horticulture I have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience and I believe that this apprenticeship will be a launchpad for my future career.

Working under glass has given me the opportunity to see plants from around the world thrive and has encouraged me to further my knowledge on tropical plants. In the Rainforest House, I helped with the re-landscaping of a new bed, featuring plants from subtropical Japan. It was satisfying to plant up an entire bed and watch it grow and progress in the following weeks and months. I also had the opportunity to work with aquatic plants, including the giant water lily *Victoria cruziana*, in a very different environment.

My previous experience has been limited to houseplant care, so working with the Hardy team outside has been a great learning

been selected. Work will be completed in time for the 400th Anniversary. The installation of new mist propagation benches in our nursery houses, paid for generously by the Friends, will enable more consistent and reliable propagation. During the last year we have strengthened links with other botanic gardens internationally, and exchanges of plant material will enhance our collections further, helping us to meet our conservation objectives.

As ever your continued support of the work we do in maintaining the Botanic Garden is appreciated by the horticultural team - more so than ever at the end of a very challenging year, and the start of a very exciting one. Thank you.



Richard East moving compost on a very cold January day

opportunity for me. The Hardy team have given me a range of invaluable skills such as rose and apple tree pruning and herbaceous border care. From the basics of bed maintenance to getting comfortable with machinery, I have built a strong foundation of knowledge that will serve me well wherever I go in the future.



Update from the Arboretum's Apprentice Arborist

Will Blake

When I arrived at the Arboretum in October of 2019 I had no prior experience of arboriculture, but over the past year I have gained a wealth of knowledge on trees and insights into the day-to-day work of an arboretum. There are a great variety of tasks here, including tree climbing, chainsaw work, tractor driving and tree planting as well as basic animal care for our pigs, sheep and cattle, wood working skills, and machine maintenance. I worked at a plant nursery before I came to the Arboretum, and have particularly enjoyed working in our shade frame full of exotic and endangered plants such as the Japanese Chichibu birch (*Betula chichibuensis*) and the East Asian conifer *Taiwania cryptomerioides*.

I have learnt so much, not only from the team at the Arboretum, but from my time at the Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA). The past year has been disrupted due to the pandemic but this has been minimised by being able to work online; I greatly appreciate having a tutor who has 'real world experience' in the industry and an understanding of the challenges of the job. I see this position as a good stepping stone in my career, enabling me to move towards roles that I once would never have dreamed possible.



News from the Glasshouses

Progress under glass

By Lucinda Lachelin

It has been sad that Friends and visitors to the Garden have not been able to see all that is thriving under glass this past autumn and winter due to the necessity to protect the public from Covid-19. This is of course a temporary measure and we do all hope that the Glasshouses will reopen again soon.

In the meantime we have been hard at work in recent weeks, with our biennial clean of the pond in the Water Lily House this January. It has been a slightly more complicated affair than in most years because we have replaced the old wooden box in the centre of the pond that holds our giant Amazonian water lilies (*Victoria cruziana* and *V. amazonica*). The former box was falling apart so has been replaced with a sturdy new one that the Arboretum team constructed. We hope that this will last for several years. We also plan to grow more *Nymphaea* in 2021, therefore concrete pedestals are being put in place for these to sit on. Meanwhile



Fishing!

the fish in the pond have evidently been happy, given that they have multiplied, and so catching all of them – especially the suckermouth catfish (*Hypostomus plecostomus*) – was challenging! Whilst the pond is being cleaned and refilled, we are housing the fish in temporary heated tanks.

2020 ended with a woodland themed Christmas display in the conservatory, featuring a large wreath of dried hydrangea heads collected from the Garden as well as a small 'Tolkien's pine' (*Pinus nigra*) propagated from seed of the tree that Tolkien famously sat beneath, that fell in the Garden a few years ago.

Behind the scenes in the Glasshouses

By Louisa Hall

In July our new propagation facilities were installed courtesy of funding received from the Friends, replacing the old failing facilities that didn't perform adequately. The units were bespoke for the nursery houses and included an enclosed misting bench and a partially enclosed dry sand bench for the propagation of both tropical and temperate plants. We have replaced the industry standard 'wet

leaf' sensors, which are often too wet, with a relatively new climate control system and we have found it to be a huge improvement. Combined with finer misting nozzles, we now have extremely successful propagation environments.

A *Hoya* vine in bloom in the Upper Range

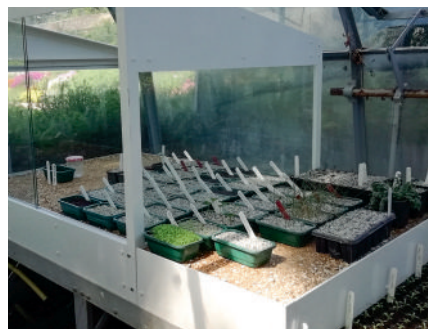


In the autumn we commenced the final phase of re-soiling and planting the Lower Corridor. The tired soil, as elsewhere in the Glasshouses, makes for very challenging growing conditions so it was a relief to refresh the beds; the work started in 2019 with the propagation of the plants which were grown on in the nursery houses. In September, the remaining two thirds of the corridor was cleared of plants and the old soil was replaced with a double-layer glasshouse soil mix. We then replanted and the corridor is already showing good growth.

The accompanying photographs show some of the 'botanical treasure' that has been thriving under glass in recent months.



Curious green flowers of 'Amaryllis' *Hippeastrum calypttratum*



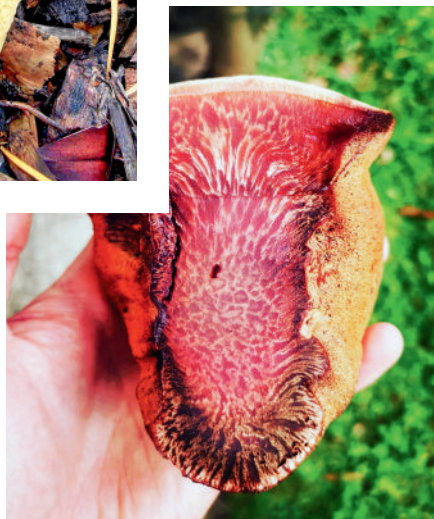
Temperate dry sand bench



Tropical mist bench

News from the Arboretum

By Ben Jones



Clockwise from top left: *Decaisnea fargesii*; *Geastrum triplex*; *Fistulina hepatica*; *Ramaria stricta*. Centre: *Mutinus caninus*

I am pleased to welcome Joe Gardom to the Arboretum team, who joins us from the National Trust, where he has been working as a Ranger. Joe has a background in conservation and arboriculture and brings with him extensive experience from the National Trust. It is with great pleasure that we welcome him to the team, and I am delighted to say that he has made a very positive start to his time with us.

One of the highlights from the autumn last year was the abundance of fungi that sprang up across the Arboretum. Whilst it is always enjoyable to see some of the usual suspects, it was exciting to see species that appear less frequently. Curious stands of *Mutinus caninus* or the 'dog stinkhorn' had not been observed for many years at the Arboretum, so it was interesting to see the fungus make an appearance in Fern Gully.



Joe Gardom

Meanwhile collared earthstars (*Geastrum triplex*) were another highlight; although relatively common at the Arboretum, the species was particularly abundant last autumn. The unusual diversity and abundance of fungi last year was presumably triggered by the exceptionally wet October.

Through the winter months, the team will be focusing on seasonal activities such as coppicing birch, hazel and sweet chestnut. The material generated from the coppice will be used at the Botanic Garden and Arboretum. For example the hazel rods and stakes will be used for hedgelaying. We also have an exciting planting list of trees and shrubs to work through. Some of these new plantings form part of the restoration of the Serpentine Ride; others will contribute to the ongoing development of the conservation collection.

On the Acer Glade

By Will Blake

On the Acer Glade, we recently felled a large Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*). While it is a pity to see such a large, historic tree removed, it was a necessity because it posed a risk to people's safety. The tree had dropped several large branches in recent years, including two in quick succession at the end of 2020. Because the tree had lost several limbs in the past, the other cedars in the canopy had filled the void, resulting in an intricate mass of large knuckles and crossing branches, making pruning impossible. We enlisted contractors who reduced the tree to a standing 'monolith', using a Mobile Elevating Working platform (MEWP). The monolith was then felled early this January. Arborist Joe Gardom counted over 160 tree rings, showing that the tree was planted at some point between the 1850s and '60s.



The felling of the Atlas cedar

Education at OBGA

By Lauren Baker and Nienke Abbing

Last autumn we adapted our traditional Autumn Fair and ran a month of carefully planned celebrations under the theme 'Celebrate Autumn Colour'. The Arboretum is a beautiful place to visit when the trees put on their spectacular display of autumn colour and we worked with local businesses to provide food and coffee for our visitors. We also ran a 'gnome-making' workshop, which proved very popular and gave families the opportunity to use resources harvested from the Arboretum. Our 'Fungus Foray' took place online this year and has attracted an audience from as far afield as Mexico and Australia. It is still available to view online here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MH1KI7iQac&feature=youtu.be.

The Autumn Science Lectures were also delivered online for the first time in 2020, which required considerable planning. The series saw a triumphant 20% increase in attendance and we are using the same model to run our programme of Winter Lectures this year.

We are in the midst of planning activities for our 400th Anniversary year, which will culminate with a week-long celebration including activities for all age ranges at the Garden at the end of July. You can expect regular updates in the run-up to July as the schedule is finalised.

We continue to deliver education sessions to schools when they are able to reach us. Our new portfolio of resources includes



A Christmas wreath

a new KS4 Evolution and Classification session, which was trialled and delivered with success at the Arboretum, as well as a new KS5 Conservation and Biodiversity session, which ran successfully at the Botanic Garden. Several primary school sessions were delivered when restrictions permitted, including 'Winter Woodland' at the Arboretum and 'Botanical Christmas' at the Garden, which made use of festive greenery and spices, and involved creating decorations for the trees in the Conservatory. If you had the chance to visit the Garden whilst our Christmas display was in the Conservatory, you may have read some of the messages the children wrote for our visitors.

Practical courses were delivered at the Garden in December. These had to take place outdoors and were led by Nienke Abbing. Four workshops saw the creation of botanical Christmas wreaths and door hangings under the shelter of gazebos on the events lawn. Finally, one of OBGA's ongoing projects seeks to sow, plant and establish 400 trees within and around Oxford. We are working with organisations, schools, communities and landowners to achieve this ambition. One of the landowners we work with is one of our Friends, John Brimble at Hinksey Heights who, in December, kindly showed Nienke around a potential site for planting trees. We will continue to work on this project throughout 2021. Please do take a moment to find out more about this project and see how you might be able to help: www.obga.ox.ac.uk/400-trees



A festive door-hanging



Wreath-making at the Botanic Garden



Gnomes made using wood from the Arboretum

Research and Engagement

By Chris Thorogood

Urban community-led conservation: a case study from the Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are a 'text book' region of plant species richness and endemism. Over the last year, we have been working in collaboration with various partner organisations to examine and document aspects of the internationally important flora of the Canary Islands and identify opportunities for conservation work. In the longer term, with modern glasshouse facilities, we hope to place greater focus on this unique and important island flora in our own plant collections here at Oxford.

This Christmas, I accompanied local ecologist Matías Hernandez Gonzalez on excursions across the islands of Lanzarote and La Graciosa to carry out vegetation surveys, and had the opportunity to take part in a community-led effort to 'rewild' brownfield sites around the city of Arrecife using plants propagated from natural populations around the island. This approach to conservation using native species creates green spaces that require little or no long-term intervention, and benefit the mental health



and wellbeing of local communities. Together with residents, we created an urban restoration garden



A newly planted cardon

of native species including the iconic cactoid succulent 'cardones' (*Euphorbia canariensis*), the lavender 'matorriscos' (*Lavandula pinnata*) and 'veroles' (*Kleinia nerifolia*).

Veroles grown in recycled plastic bottles



The team after planting the community garden

Shedding light on photosynthesis in carnivorous plants

In recent years, OBGA has developed a collections-based research programme with a particular focus on carnivorous plants. These extraordinary plants have evolved all manner of leafy traps to capture insects



Nepenthes growing at the Botanic Garden

(predominantly), thus acquiring nitrogen in nutrient-leached environments. How did such a strategy evolve? Cost-benefit models predict that investment in carnivory only 'pays off' in environments where nutrients are scarce but light is plentiful. This is because the features that make a leaf effective at attracting and catching insects make it less efficient at catching light (for example a bright yellow funnel, rather than a flat, green blade). There needs to be ample sunlight to compensate. Moreover, the nutrients that are derived from the ensnared prey can be redirected from the traps to other parts of the plant that are better at capturing light. Finally, a strategy to endure nutrient-leached soils enables carnivorous plants to grow relatively free of competition from other plants. Together, nutrient-poor and light-rich conditions created the perfect crucible for the evolution of carnivory. Recently we published a commentary that explores these trade-offs and how prey intake affects photosynthesis in the



Yellow funnel-shaped traps of *Nepenthes pervillei* growing in the Seychelles

carnivorous pitcher plant *Nepenthes*. You can read the commentary here:

<https://academic.oup.com/aob/article/126/1/iv/5848403?login=true>

We are continuing to expand our collection of carnivorous *Nepenthes* under glass to support this research. Do visit our growing collection of these extraordinary plants in the Cloud Forest House if and when you are able to this year.

Friends' Section

News

From the Friends' Chairman,
Sarah Taylor

Introduction

A little before Christmas, we lost a dear and valued friend and colleague, Jennie Turner. Helen Potts pays her a moving tribute in her article on the Bobarts Group later in this newsletter. In turn, it seems appropriate that the latest in my series of articles on the people who make the Friends work should be on Helen, Jennie's partner and successor as organiser of the Bobarts Patrons' Group.

Helen Potts

Helen's adult life began as a modern linguist at Durham University, before she joined Lloyds Bank International. This gave her the opportunity to live abroad, with postings in Uruguay and New York. She met her husband when they were both working in Hong Kong for a few weeks, and she subsequently switched to a job in the City where she soon realised that what she really liked about international banking was the 'international' element not the 'banking'. Fortunately, the travel bug had been sated to some extent by then, so she settled down to married life and a family. The Potts had three children together. Helen has a step-son too, and four grandchildren.

In 2007 they moved from North West London to Oxford, taking on a large garden in Iffley. Helen had always been a keen amateur gardener but following her husband's death in 2009 her life has revolved increasingly around all things gardening.

Helen considers herself very fortunate to have room in the garden for both formal and informal areas. She sometimes has to remind herself, when she has to share the space with hungry deer and geese, that she is lucky to have water meadow and riverbank, with the occasional visiting heron or a still rarer kingfisher more than compensating. She loves the hands-on work of a garden and knows that an hour's weeding soon calms her whatever is going on in the world. Like, I suspect, many of us, she gardens by trial and error, so borders evolve according to whether the plants seem happy or not. The result, I am told, is stunning. She grows vegetables and cutting flowers from seed in raised beds. She likes the versatility of pots and, being a Yorkshire lass, takes great delight in propagating plants from cuttings (getting something for nothing!) for her own garden and to sell on Open Day. With characteristic generosity, she has opened the garden as part of Iffley Village's NGS day each year since 2009.

Helen began helping Jennie Turner with the Bobarts Patrons' Group in 2012, organising visits around Oxford and more recently putting together residential trips



Helen Potts

to gardens further afield (a trip to Norfolk is planned for this September). In September 2019, she became a Director of the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum when Jennie retired from the post. When Helen first got involved, she had not appreciated what magical places the Garden and Arboretum are, nor just how big a difference they make both in Oxford and in the wider world (literally). She has told me that she is regularly amazed by the scientific work going on and is now very firmly committed to supporting OBGA in any way she can.

Helen maintains London links through the Worshipful Company of Gardeners which she joined as a Freeman in 2014, taking the Livery in 2015, and becoming a Court Assistant in 2018. She believes that it is a privilege to be part of something as historic as the Livery Companies of the City of London though in their more relevant and modern guise, supporting many gardening-related charities and activities through the Company. She has recently been appointed Trustee to the Company's new charity, Future Gardeners, which provides horticultural training, targeting those who have faced challenges in their lives and who would benefit from gaining confidence, skills and the opportunity of training and employment.

With her contacts, charm, intelligence, knowledge, and generosity put to the service of the Garden, we are incredibly lucky to have someone of Helen's calibre and commitment on board. She will carry forward the Bobarts Patrons' Group just as Jennie would have wanted, and her contribution to the wider community both of the Friends and of the Botanic Garden and Arboretum is already immense.

Membership

By Rebecca Mather

A big thank you to all those Friends who bought Gift Memberships at Christmas. This has boosted the number of Friends

for this year and we hope that the new Friends will remain Friends as they enjoy the benefits membership brings: visiting partnership gardens, Summer Party, 10% discount on Gift Shop purchases, regular coffee mornings. Please think about Gift Memberships all through the year!

As you all know the celebrations for the 400th Anniversary of the Botanic Garden will happen in the week commencing 25th July. I plan to have an attractive gazebo and stand promoting the Friends in the Garden throughout the event and lots and lots of volunteers will be needed! It should be fun. Please let me know if you would like to help out: rebecca.mather28@gmail.com.

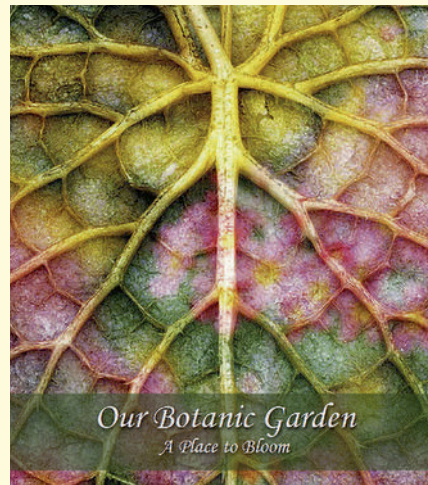
Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum (FBGF)

By Harriet Bretherton

Fourteen botanic gardens have now joined the FBGF. The number of members of the Friends groups and the relationship with the universities varies enormously, as does whether entrance to the gardens is paying or free.

The FBGF produced its second newsletter in mid-November. You can find it here: <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/files/fbgfnewsletterautumn2020pdf>

Eight botanic gardens have contributed - Belfast, Aberdeen, Dundee, Durham, Ventnor, Hull, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Most talk about how their plans have changed due to Covid-19. Dundee Botanic Garden on the other hand has produced an anthology entitled *Our Botanic Garden - A Place to Bloom*. It comprises work by professional and amateur artists, photographers and writers. Its launch opens the 50th anniversary year of the Dundee Botanic Garden which is this year.



Cover of the Dundee Botanic Garden anthology

Events

Wednesday 7th July 2021

The Friends' Opera *La Diavolessa* (The She-Devil)

By Baldassare Galuppi

Sung in English by New Chamber Opera
and The Band of Instruments

At New College, Oxford

5.00pm Pre-performance talk by
Prof Michael Burden, Director of
New Chamber Opera

6.30pm Opera performance in the
Warden's Garden (open from 6.00pm)

La Diavolessa was composed in 1755 by Venetian composer Baldassare Galuppi, with a libretto by Carlo Goldoni. Between them they invented *opera buffa* and were hugely popular. It is a tale of two couples – one aristocratic, one penniless, one of whom tries to trick a wealthy man out of his treasure – and the confusion that follows the wrong identity!

The opera will be performed in the lovely surroundings of the Warden's Garden at New College, or in the chapel if wet. There will be a 75-minute interval for picnicking in the cloisters.

Tickets £44 to include a welcoming glass of sparkling wine in the cloister garden. £3 for the pre-performance talk.

Tickets: Due to the present situation and uncertainty as to whether the opera can take place, including a possible limit on numbers, we are asking you, in the first instance, to register interest in purchasing tickets and how many you might require. Tickets will be reserved on a first come, first served basis.

We can then send out a booking form to those who have registered interest when the situation is clearer.

Please register interest by:

Email: Freya Jones at
fobgaticketing@gmail.com

Or write: Friends' Opera: Freya Jones,
35 Cuddesdon Road, Horspath OX33 1JD
Or phone: leave voice mail message and
contact number on 07472 365001

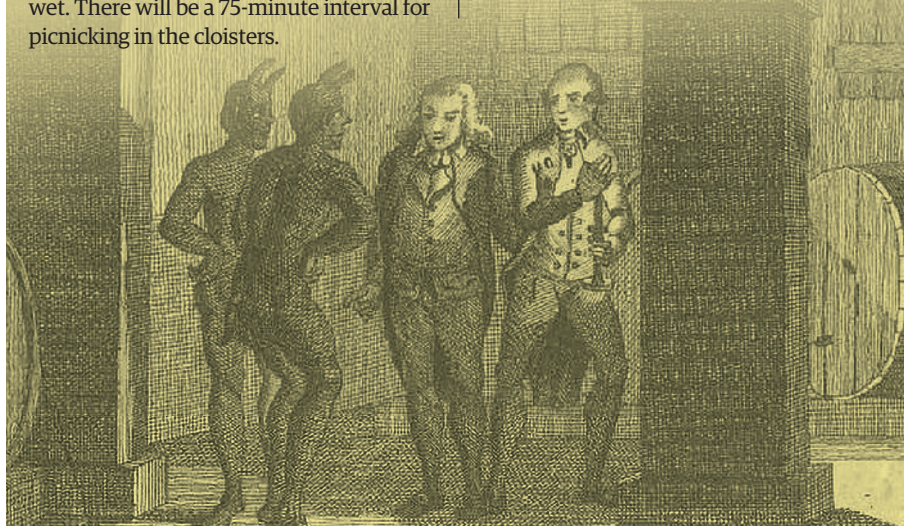


Illustration from the 1795 publication of Goldoni's libretto

First Friday of the Month

Coffee Mornings

In normal times, the Friends' coffee mornings take place in the Garden or at the Arboretum on the first Friday of every month (except January and August) and are an opportunity for Friends to get together. Coffee mornings begin at 10.30am; there is no fee and no booking is required, just turn up.

However, as the situation regarding getting together in groups and visiting public spaces is still unclear at the moment, we suggest that you check on the website <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/upcoming-friends-events> for the latest news on coffee morning dates.

Special message to all gmail users

Gmail has a disconcerting way of filtering messages into different categories. You may miss emails from us because they have been filtered into the Promotions or Update categories. It is advisable to apply a filter to move any emails from Friends' Administrator to force them into your Personal or Primary Inbox. In particular you may not receive your emailed copy of the newsletter magazine that is published three times a year. The dates this is usually sent out are as follows:

Mid-March / Early July /
Early November

If you need any help with applying a filter to move our emails into your inbox then do contact the Friends' Administrator: friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk

Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden and Arboretum. Our ticket office staff do not have access to the membership database (for data protection reasons) and can't let you in free of charge if you don't have your membership card!

Message to all email users

If you are not receiving regular e-bulletins with news of Friends' events by email, it will be because, for some reason, we do not have your current email address. Please send an email with your name, to the Friends' Administrator: friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk.



Friends' Garden Visits

By Harriet Bretherton, Pauline Coombes, Jane Annett, Esther Whiting and Diana Naumann

Welcome to this summer's programme of garden visits. We have planned - we hope not too optimistically - 11 exciting, varied visits. Our programme includes a few favourites, two double visits and some 'firsts'.

By coming on a visit, you will be supporting the Friends and, through the Friends, the Botanic Garden & Arboretum at this particularly difficult time. We will also be marking the 400th Anniversary of the founding of the Oxford Botanic Garden in 1621 and the 30th Anniversary of the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum. We therefore hope to celebrate the two anniversaries with you and to welcome you on the garden visits during the summer months.

Visits: Because we still have your and our health and safety at the forefront of our planning, we remain guided by advice provided by garden owners, the Botanic Garden and the Government in terms of numbers, physical distancing, facilities, refreshments availability. Therefore, should the gardens or the FOBGA feel it is unsafe, or it is contrary to Government regulations at the time, elements within each visit may change or not go ahead as planned. Coach trips will hopefully take place again in 2022.

Booking tickets online: Due to unforeseen hiccups, this is still not in place. It may be before the year's end. To Book Visits - see enclosed Booking Form.

Credits: Any Friend in possession of a credit from last year's cancelled or postponed garden visits should contact Freya Jones directly (fobgaticketting@gmail.com / 07472 365001) in order to redeem their credit.



The Garden Visits team (from l to r): Pauline, Harriet, Jane, Diana and Esther

Thursday 13th May, 2.30pm

Private visit to Upton Wold

Upton Wold, Northwick Estate,
Moreton in Marsh, Glos GL56 9TR

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Ian Bond

Hidden away in undulating Cotswold landscape, Upton Wold Garden has been created over 45 years, originally with the help of landscape architects Colvin & Moggridge. Our private visit to this garden, with its exceptional collection of shrubs, unusual plants and trees - including National Collections of *Juglans* (walnut) and of *Pterocarya* (wingnut) - is a treat not to be missed. Yew hedges, herbaceous walk, pond, canal, vegetable and woodland gardens, the walnut arboretum and labyrinth, all make this a garden of interest for any plantsman. A wonderful opportunity to walk around and enjoy a true gem. Afternoon tea provided.

- Friends £25, guests £30
- Maximum 30



Upton Wold



West Woodhay House

Friday 21st May, 2.00pm

Private visit to West Woodhay House

West Woodhay, Newbury, Berks
RG20 0BS

By kind permission of Mr Harry Henderson

West Woodhay House Gardens are spectacular. We will be welcomed with an introduction and then tour the garden. Originally planned post Second World War, the gardens have been extensively developed. Early on, an arboretum was planted, taking advantage of acid soil pockets, thereby allowing azaleas and lavender to coexist. In 1999, the walled garden was replanted to a design by Veronica Mackinnon with a magnificent fruit cage and glass and steel sculpture. The Jubilee Garden, created in 2012, lies to the east of the walled garden. Five circles of weeping trees and six large stones celebrate both the London Olympics and Her Majesty's 60 years reign alongside the family's ownership - 'Thrown and Birth'. Then in 2018, the delightful Italian Garden was sympathetically built within the old Vanbrugh Church foundations; a tranquil garden with a Mediterranean feel, entertaining work by William Pye with a reflective water feature of slow flowing rills. Tea and cake will be served.

- Friends £22, guests £27
- Maximum 30

Tuesday 25th May

Private double first visit to Morton Hall and White Cottage

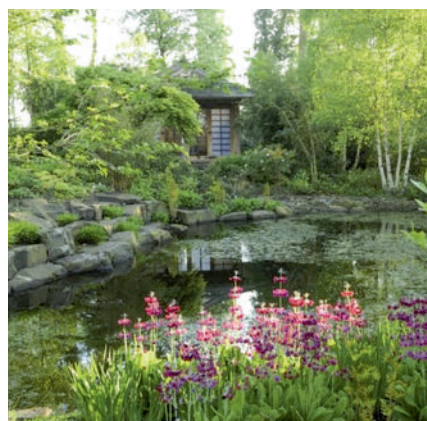
10.45am

Morton Hall Garden

Morton Hall Lane, Redditch B96 6SJ

By kind permission of Mr René and Mrs Anne Olivieri

New to our Friends' visits programme are these two contrasting gardens. Morton Hall Garden has been extensively renovated to take full advantage of panoramic views. We will be given a guided tour either by the owner or the Head Gardener. The eight acres of gardens and park encircling the house were designed by landscape architect Charles Chesshire as a succession of distinct 'garden rooms'. While each of these rooms has its individual character, defined by landscape, planting style and colour scheme, there is a strong sense of continuity.



© Val Corbett

Morton Hall House

1.30pm

White Cottage

Earls Common Road, Stock Green, Inkberrow B96 6SZ

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs S M Bates

White Cottage is about 15 minutes away from Morton Hall and, before the owners begin our visit with an introductory talk at 1.30pm, you are welcome to picnic in the garden. The two-acre garden has large herbaceous and shrub borders, an island bed, a stream and bog garden. Formal areas with lily pond and rose garden. Alpine rockery and new fern area. Interesting trees. Plants for sale. Refreshments provided at the end of the visit.

- **Friends £30, guests £35**
- **Maximum 30**



White Cottage

Friday 11th June, 2.30pm

Visit to The Old Rectory, Quinton

Preston Deanery Road, Quinton, Northants NN7 2ED

By kind permission of Mr A Kennedy and Emma Wise

Another first. A wonderful opportunity for our Friends to visit this special garden. Its three acres were redesigned by Anoushka Feiler over an intense period during 2014-2015. The garden intertwines the historical perspective of a Georgian garden with a modern aesthetic, creating a space that is peaceful and inspiring in equal measure. Formal and informal areas combine through a series of garden rooms that seamlessly blend, with areas dedicated to supporting wildlife, creating a hub for outdoor family living, for reflection, contemplation and growing organic produce. An amazing example of a 21st-century garden not to be missed!

Though tea is not provided, you are welcome to bring a picnic tea to enjoy in the garden.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 30**



© Clive Nichols

The Old Rectory, Quinton

Thursday 17th June, 2.00pm

Private visit to The Manor House Gardens, Bledlow

Off Perry Lane, Bledlow, Nr Princes Risborough, Bucks HP27 9PB

By kind permission of Lord and Lady Carrington

The Head Gardener will welcome the group and introduce this wonderful garden, originally created by the late Lord and Lady Carrington. The front lawn is dominated by a large cedar and a beech tree. Other interesting elements are the traditional walled garden, the herbaceous border bounded by a beech hedge, a wrought iron gazebo over which a rose (*Rosa 'Phyllis Bide'*) is trained, an avenue of *Prunus lusitanica* leading the eye to a mural of Vertumnus, the god of vegetation, by Owen Turville and a garden, created in memory of Lady Carrington, is composed of her favourite flowers and shrubs. The croquet lawn is surrounded by mixed borders and The Coracle Garden, planted with blue, white and yellow flowers, has a coracle-shaped fountain by William Pye. There's also a sculpture garden to explore before tea and cake are available in the Summer House.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 30**



The Manor House Garden, Bledlow

Sunday 20th June

Double private visit to St Mary's Church followed by The Malt House Garden, Iffley Village

2.00pm

St Mary's Church

Church Way, Iffley Village, Oxford OX4 4EJ

By kind permission of the Rev'd Andrew McKearney

Our double private visit begins with a guided tour of an architectural gem, notably the Church of St Mary the Virgin, a late Norman and largely unchanged building standing in the heart of Iffley Village. Exquisite stone carvings along with John Piper's 'Nativity Window' and Robert Wagner's 'The Flowering Tree' window are some of its highlights, making for a memorable visit.



Iffley Village Church

3.30pm

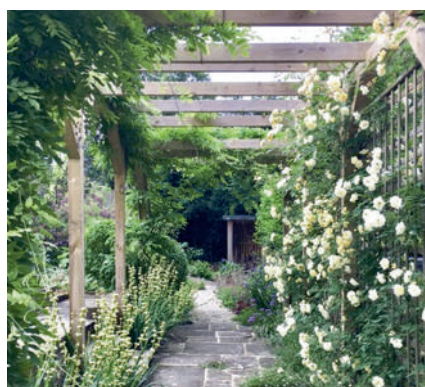
The Malt House

98 Church Way, Iffley Village, Oxford OX4 4EF

By kind permission of Helen Potts

We will then be welcomed by Helen Potts to The Malt House, her secluded delightful 1.8-acre garden of mixed borders, raised vegetable beds, terraces, specimen trees and a water meadow fronting the Isis and Iffley Lock. Please note the garden is on different levels with some steep steps. Refreshments included.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 30



The Malt House



Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

Tuesday 29th June, 2.30pm

Private visit to Rooksnest

Ermin Street, Lambourn Woodlands, RG17 7SB

By kind permission of Rooksnest Estate

Rooksnest is an exceptionally fine English garden mostly designed by Arabella Lennox Boyd. Kevin Jordan, Head Gardener, will give a short presentation about the garden. Its ten acres feature glorious rose and herbaceous borders, a pond, herb and organic vegetable gardens with glasshouses along with many fine specimen trees and shrubs. The orchard and terraces have recently been renovated. A visit not to be missed. Refreshments provided at the end of the visit.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 30



Rooksnest

Thursday 1st July, 2.00pm

Visit to Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

Hill Close Gardens, Bread and Meat Close, Warwick CV34 6HF

By kind permission of Hill Close Gardens Trust

Set in the heart of Warwick, Hill Close Gardens are rare survivors of Victorian detached, hidden hedged gardens once

used by townsfolk who lived above their businesses with nowhere to grow flowers, fruit, vegetables, keep a pig or relax after work. This unique set of 16 gardens, featuring four Grade II Victorian summerhouses, are the only ones now open to the public in England. Your two-hour guided tour outlines their rescue from development in the 1990s, revealing the individual lives of the garden owners and tenants - auctioneers, drapers, bootmakers. A fascinating garden visit into another era. Tea, coffee and cake included at the visit's end. Plants from nursery and produce from the gardens for sale.

- Friends £15, guests £20
- Maximum 30

Thursday 8th July, 2.30pm

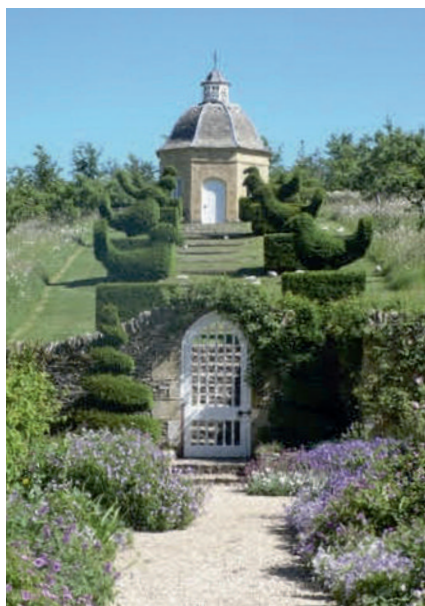
Private visit to Rockcliffe Garden

Upper Slaughter, Nr Cheltenham, Glos GL54 2JW

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Simon Keswick

The garden at Rockcliffe is the perfect blend of informally planted trees and shrubs and generously filled borders, balanced by a good strong structure of hedges, topiary and pleached limes. It recalls the best of 20th-century gardening, but has a contemporary edge to the layout, not surprising as Emma Keswick has designed gardens for others. We will be given a tour either by the owner or the Head Gardener, Spencer Devaney. The crisp simplicity of a long canal is offset by the softer planting of *Cornus controversia* 'Variegata' overhanging a sunken pool nearer the house. The eye is drawn across a shallow valley towards a dovecot approached through an avenue of topiaryed yew birds. Refreshments are included at end of our visit.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 30



© Andrew Lawson

The dovecot and topiary birds at Rockcliffe**Wednesday 14th July, 6.00pm****Private visit to Radcot House****Radcot, Bampton, OX18 2SX**

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Robin Stainer

The owners have been developing their three-acre garden over 20 years, extending its structure and planting newly created areas with stunning designs giving surprise, contrast and colour. The planting is dramatic yet harmonious. Interspersed throughout the garden are delightful, often witty sculptures, with convenient seating at key viewing points. A garden not to be missed. Wine and nibbles will be served during the visit as a summer celebration. Bring umbrellas in case of rain.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 30**



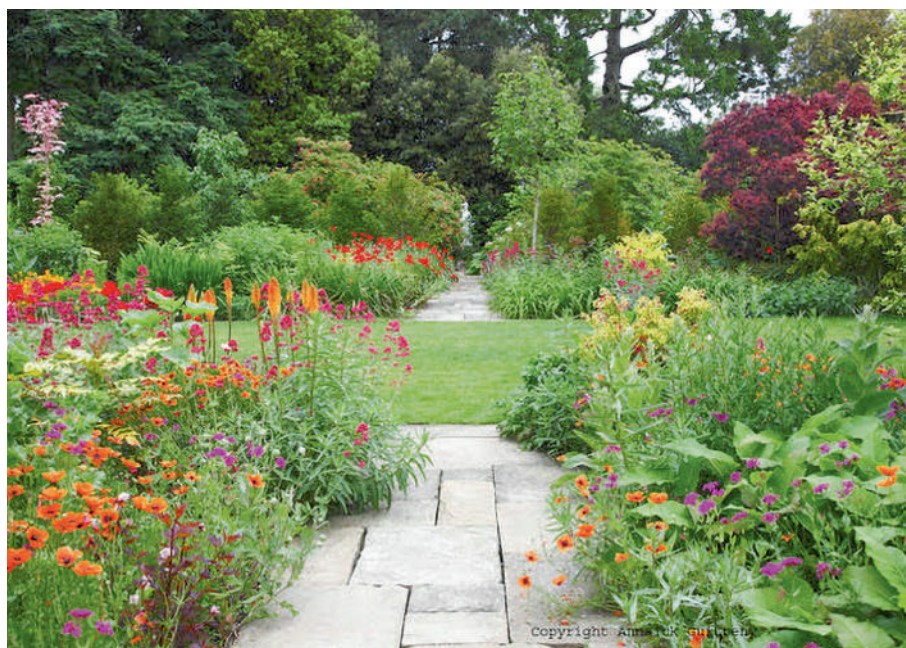
© Marcus Harpur

Radcot House**Tuesday 27th July, 2.00pm****Private visit to Malverleys****Malverleys, Fullers Lane, East End, Newbury, Berks RG20 0AA**

Malverleys is an English Flower Garden set within the grounds of a country estate. Since 2010, the ten-acre garden has been designed by Head Gardener, Matthew Reese, in conjunction with the owners. A guided tour by one of the experienced gardeners will reveal an abundantly planted terrace and long borders, a stumpery with ferns and unusual plants, a topiary meadow

and a parterre. Tall yew hedges enclose themed rooms, including a Cool Garden, Flame Borders, the Cloister Garden and a large pond garden that reflects the dynamic planting on all sides. A walled garden contains areas for fruit, vegetables, and cut flowers, alongside the White Garden and Laburnum arch. The succession of hard-working garden plants alongside the unusual and rare, means there is always something of interest to see. There are quite a few unavoidable steps. Refreshments included.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 30**



© Annick Guttery Photography

Malverleys

The Danby Patrons' Group

By Maura Allen

2021 brings the hope that we may restart our specially tailored activities for our Patrons. As well as being able to participate in the very many visits and activities which have been arranged by the Friends' Garden Visits and the Bobarts team, we have a number of events moved from 2020 (the year that never was). Exploring the surroundings of Mt Etna and nearby Sicilian gardens with Prof Hiscock and Dr Thorogood, both world leaders in the botany of the Mediterranean, from the wonderful base of the Donna Carmela Resort, is booked for early October. Fingers crossed we will all feel safe to travel again well before this date. To complement this, we will

be organising a series of small Mediterranean themed events in the Garden and Herbarium including our postponed wine tasting. Prof Stephen Harris and Serena Marner are very eager to share many more of the hidden treasures of the Oxford University Herbaria for the Patrons' group. Writing this from a very safe and warm summer in Tasmania I feel very lucky to have escaped the worst of the confines of lockdowns and all the struggles it brings with it. I will continue to administer the Danby Group from afar and hope to be back in the UK in 2021 to reunite with family and friends. If you would like any more information about the Danby Patrons' Group, please email me on mea@armitstead.com.

The Bobarts Patrons' Group

By Helen Potts

2020 ended on a very sad note for the Bobarts, with the death of our founder, Dr Jennie Turner, in late November. Jennie was involved with the Friends from 1999, and was a passionate supporter of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum to the end of her life. In fact, she enjoyed an afternoon in the Garden the day before she suffered a stroke, from which she did not recover. Jennie was a keen gardener herself, knowledgeable, very friendly and always happy to share her enthusiasm for all things gardening. She will be missed by the group. (A full biography can be found in Newsletter 103, Autumn/Winter 2019.)

Her spirit will live on through this exceptionally friendly and enthusiastic group of garden visitors. Whilst the pandemic put a stop to most of our intended visits in 2020, it was with a great sense of achievement that we managed two outings in the late summer, to Kiftsgate Court and Radcot House, thanks to their generous and accommodating owners. We are very grateful to them for giving us such pleasure in a difficult year. As gardeners and garden lovers, we didn't need Covid-19 to tell us what we have known instinctively for a long time: just how important it is to get out and enjoy gardens, gardening and green spaces of all types and sizes.

In 2021, we will reinstate many of the visits to gardens that were cancelled last year, taking in an Oxford college and a private visit to the Arboretum, and our three-day visit to Norfolk. We will have our first midsummer-evening party in a member's garden. Moving with the times and staying safe at home we are planning a live video tour of parts of the collections of the University Herbaria in March.

As OBGA celebrates the exceptional anniversary of 400 years since its founding this summer, underlining the historic importance of our extraordinary Garden



Jennie Turner
1939-2020

and Herbaria here in Oxford, we hope to find ways both to lend our support and to join the festivities. We would be delighted if you would consider joining us at this special time, recognising the important role of OBGA in the University and the world of science far beyond.

The Bobarts Group was launched by Jennie Turner in 2004, as an extra tier for the Friends of OBGA. Our members, along with the Danby Patrons' Group, enjoy all the benefits of the Friends plus a programme of small group visits to the University collections and to some of the best gardens and estates in the area. We aim to visit the widest possible range of gardens in terms of style, size and location and we are generously assisted in this by the garden owners and those who work in the institutions whose gardens we visit. We are grateful to them for facilitating our visits.



Cornus 'Norman Hadden', Iffley

The Director and all who work in the Garden and Arboretum appreciate the benefits your Bobarts patronage brings, and especially after this very difficult year. We're not out of the woods yet but the work of OBGA doesn't stop. Please consider joining this special group - you'll be very welcome!

Calendar

2021

Please check on the website: <https://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/upcoming-friends-events> for the latest news regarding forthcoming events and coffee mornings.

April

Tuesday 13th April, 10.00am and 11.30am

SOLD OUT

Fritillaries at Magdalen College

Wednesday 21st April, 2.00pm

A FEW TICKETS AVAILABLE

Springtime at Evenley Wood Garden

Thursday 29th April, 10.30am and 2.30pm

SOLD OUT

Private visit to Rycote Park and Chapel

May

Thursday 13th May, 2.30pm

Private visit to Upton Wold

Friday 21st May, 2.00pm

Private visit to West Woodhay House

Tuesday 25th May, 10.45am

Private double visit to Morton Hall and White Cottage

June

Friday 11th June, 2.30pm

Visit to The Old Rectory, Quinton

Thursday 17th June, 2.00pm

Private visit to The Manor House Gardens, Bledlow

Sunday 20th June, 2.00pm

Double private visit to St Mary's Church followed by The Malt House Garden, Iffley Village

Tuesday 29th June, 2.30pm

Private visit to Rooksnest

July

Thursday 1st July, 2.00pm

Visit to Hill Close Gardens

Wednesday 7th July, 6.30pm

New Chamber Opera

Thursday 8th July, 2.30pm

Private visit to Rockcliffe Garden

Wednesday 14th July, 6.00pm

Private visit to Radcot House

Tuesday 27th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Malverleys

The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum,

Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ.

All Friends' enquiries, including those about Friends' events, should be made to the Friends' Administrator.

Tel: 01865 610303

E-mail: friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk

Web: www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk

The Friends Office is staffed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell with help from Isabella Raeburn. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.

