

The University of Oxford

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Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'
newsletter

Spring /
Summer 2023



From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood

Front cover: The Woodland Barn at Harcourt Arboretum by drone.

In this issue the OBGAs team shows how varied is the work of a botanic garden and arboretum. From *ex situ* conservation, and managing extensive meadows and coppices, to delivering large-scale community engagement programmes: no two seasons are the same.

As I write, we have begun our Winter Lecture series at the Mathematical Institute. The renowned garden designer Sarah Eberle gave a colourful and insightful glimpse into the development of an RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden. It was a great pleasure to see many of you in person once again at the lecture. Do check our 'What's on' page for further information about the assorted programme of events and courses on offer.

The last few issues of the Friends' Newsletter have focused, justly, on the Botanic Garden's 400th Anniversary. Now our focus is shifting to the Arboretum, where a significant community engagement project is underway. Funds were awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to help Harcourt Arboretum develop a new Visitor and Learning Centre. The overarching aim is to unlock the Arboretum's unique natural heritage,



Visitors at the Arboretum Autumn Fair



Artists performing at the Autumn Fair

landscape and collection of threatened trees to a diverse audience, especially those who are not visiting currently. And it's working: our last Autumn Fair attracted more people than ever before.

Project Manager Lesley Best and her team are busy building partnerships with local communities, and working with Oxford University's Department of Psychiatry and Social Prescribing Partnership to nurture research into wellbeing through access to nature. In the longer term we plan to establish the

Arboretum as a new hub for mental health and wellbeing research, much as Wytham Woods has become an icon of ecological research dating back to the 1940s.

In the future we plan to create new all-weather education facilities, café and shop, to transform visitor experience at the Arboretum. A key benefit of the project will be an increased awareness of the importance of plants and biodiversity in addressing global challenges.

We hope you enjoy reading about all the exciting work afoot.

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An NLHF activity day created seed creatures with families

From the Director

By Simon Hiscock

2021 and 2022 focused on the Botanic Garden as we celebrated its 400th anniversary, but in 2023 our focus turns to the Arboretum, which celebrates its own anniversary this year. In 1963, 4.6 acres of pinetum within Knowle Plantation, part of Nuneham Park estate purchased by the University in 1947, was placed in the hands of the Botanic Garden for development as an arboretum. Over the next 60 years Harcourt Arboretum, as it became known, developed and expanded with the acquisition of more of Knowle Plantation and the surrounding parkland, so that today it consists of 130 acres of diverse habitats ranging from pinetum and native woodland to restored wild flower meadows.

2023 also sees the development phase of the NLHF-funded 'Gateway to Nature' project reach its critical phase ahead of the application for delivery phase funding. This year the project must meet its targets of engaging diverse new audiences with the Arboretum and delivering developed concept plans for a new Visitor and Learning Centre. Engaging with new audiences was a key aim of last year's Autumn Fair, which having attracted over 3000 visitors, became the most successful event ever held at the Arboretum. The prospect of an all-weather Visitor and Learning Centre and a new and improved accessible path network (thanks to the Friends' fundraising campaign) will

be transformative in unlocking the huge potential of the Arboretum to engage people with nature and biodiversity.

Overall, last year's visitor numbers to the Arboretum and the Botanic Garden were extremely good, with a combined total of 229,556 visitors, exceeding the record of 211,620 set in 2019. Since then the proportion of visitors to the Arboretum has grown considerably as people realised the benefits natural green spaces could bring to their physical and mental health during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the Arboretum's 130 acres could welcome far more visitors than it currently does and the 'Gateway to Nature' project will make this happen.

Leading the fundraising for the Visitor and Learning Centre, as well as for much-needed new glasshouses at the Botanic Garden, are Julia Iball and Benjamin Heller, who oversee fundraising for GLAM (Gardens, Libraries and Museums) capital projects. They joined GLAM last year and if you have not met either of them yet, I am sure you will at one of the many events scheduled at the Garden and Arboretum this year.

I would also like to welcome Oxford's new Sherardian Professor of Botany, Lars Østergaard, from the John Innes Centre, who replaces Liam Dolan. Professor Østergaard will be based partly at Oxford and partly at the John Innes Centre for the next two years as he transitions to his new role full-time; we look forward to Lars playing an active role with OBGA.

Finally, I must mention a most beautiful object crafted by our friend Philip Pullman from wood of the former black pine and a piece of 5000-year Irish old bog oak. This pencil box was gifted to OBGA to help raise money for its capital projects. In an essay about his experience creating the box, Philip says: "I was delighted to be asked to make a box from the wood of the famous Tolkien tree, the many-trunked black pine that had stood in the Botanic Garden for over two hundred years. I love making things out of wood, and it would give me a good excuse to leave my desk for a while and go to the workbench." We are currently talking with colleagues in the Development team on how best to use this unique treasure for the benefit of OBGA.



News from the Garden

By Mark Brent



The Merton Borders in the frost

This winter has been less than kind to the Garden. A prolonged autumn gave rise to false hope when bulbs such as *Narcissus bulbocodium* on the riverbank came into flower several months too soon. We experienced a cold snap which left its mark on some of the more tender species. It has been some years since we've seen plants such

as *Euphorbia stygiana* blackened by frost.

The cold also had an impact on the annual New Year's Day flower count in which we saw 75% fewer species in bloom. However we are confident that our most treasured plants will recover, and the nursery houses are well-stocked.

We are recruiting a new Senior Botanical

Propagator to improve our ability to raise plants across the Garden and Arboretum to enhance our collections. Biosecurity is of increasing concern and many botanic gardens have moved to raising plants solely from seed to avoid exchanging soil among institutions. Over the coming year we will strengthen our own processes to protect our collections from disease without hampering their development. Schemes such as 'Plant Healthy' are on our radar.

In the Lower Garden Jim Penney is making the most of the winter dormancy to construct a small area adjacent to the pond to exhibit some of the local rare native flora we are growing as part of our ongoing conservation programme. We have been experimenting with new ways to establish rare species in reserves; this *ex situ* planting will enable us to test how, for example, we might use hessian matting as a planting substrate. An interpretation board highlighting our work with the Freshwater Habitats Trust will be installed in due course.

Joining us from the National Trust for Scotland's School of Heritage Gardening at Threave is H el ene Tronc. H el ene currently looks after the geographic collections in the Walled Garden, the Rock Garden and the parasitic plant collection and has an infectious enthusiasm and French flair for horticulture.

Snowdrops are often referred to as 'harbingers of spring' at a time when there is little else in flower. As I write, they are beginning to announce themselves around the Walled Garden, giving cause for optimism.

Helping a plant on the brink

By Mark Brent

Conservation of rare native species is of strategic importance to OBG. With permission from Natural England, seeds of the rare native, greater broomrape (*Orobanche rapum-genistae*), were collected from Ashford Hill reserve in Berkshire in July 2020. We inoculated potted *Cytisus scoparius* with the seed, and saw the first shoots appear last summer.

Orobanche rapum-genistae is extinct in Oxfordshire. Using seed collected from plants grown at the Garden we were able to reintroduce the plant to Shotover Park, Headington - where records indicate the plant may once have grown - with the support and permission of Julian Cooper of Oxford City Council and Natural England.

Shotover has the ideal heath-like conditions for this species. Our horticulturists will be monitoring the site over the next 18 months, after which we hope to see the *Orobanche* established and flowering. It will be a significant achievement if we do.



Mark Brent, H el ene Tronc and volunteer Park Rangers Ivan Wright and Jacqueline Wright introducing *Orobanche rapum-genistae* at Shotover

News from the Glasshouses

By Kate Pritchard



Dorstenia in flower in the nursery house - a focus of research at OBGA

Landscaping the Rainforest

by Kate Pritchard

This winter we have been landscaping the Rainforest House to create beautiful and engaging plant displays.

We have replaced 24 tonnes of soil by hand! The structure of the new two-layered compost we have used provides an excellent medium for plants to grow well, from the ground up.

Preparations began three years ago with the selection of plants to create the displays. The propagation of key woody or hard-to-propagate plants followed and these are now growing well. Other plants were lifted and potted to be cared for in the nursery during the landscaping phase.

Botanical Horticulturist Louisa Hall cultivates the collection in the Rainforest House, and it was with Louisa's expert and skilled planning and guidance that we undertook the landscaping and planting. A particular puzzle was where to position the large, mature cycads which needed to be moved across the glasshouse. *Cycas rumphii* and *Ceratozamia robusta* had grown so large they were shading out other plants and dominating the prime cultivation spot we needed for tropical economic crops. Colleagues from the collections came together to winch these two enormous and spikey gymnosperms to their new bed. We are grateful for the generous help with the Rainforest House landscaping from our volunteers Adam English and Philippa Towler.

Do visit this spring and immerse yourself in a rainforest where you can meet some of the world's most valued crop plants such as commercial varieties of coffee and banana, growing alongside their wild relatives from Africa and Asia. Our collection of plants will take you around the globe to discover the source of some of the world's most traded and delicious commodities.



Moving *Cycas rumphii* in the Rainforest House



Amorphophallus konjac in the Waterlily House



Moving *Ceratozamia robusta* in the Rainforest House

News from the Arboretum

By Ben Jones



Above: a newly-laid hedge. Below: *Daphne bholua* 'Darjeeling'

The year started with a blaze of colour which is always welcome on the shortest days of winter. Witch hazel, mahonia, daphne and winter sweet have painted and perfumed the Arboretum with their pastel shades and almost intoxicating fragrances. These plants give a hint of what's to come as we head towards longer, brighter, warmer days of spring, with snowdrops, bluebells, and then rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias.



During the winter months the meadows are grazed. This year we have a hundred Castlemilk Moorit store sheep which will spend their time on Pylon Meadow and in Palmer's Leys. The sheep cut back excess grass and their cloven hooves push down yellow rattle seeds, helping them

establish. Castlemilk Moorit is a rare breed of domestic sheep. During the early years of the twentieth century the late Sir John Buchanan-Jardine began a breeding programme on his Castlemilk Estate in Dumfriesshire.

Using Manx Loghtan, Moorit Shetland and Wild Mouflon, he developed the breed to enhance his parkland and provide fine, kemp-free, Moorit-coloured wool.

Coppicing is important at this time of year. The Arboretum's coppice is situated between the end of Acer Glade and the Serpentine Ride and contains three species: hazel (*Corylus avellana*) birch (*Betula pendula*) and sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). The birch and hazel are cut to supply the Botanic Garden with



Decaisnea fargesii in fruit in the autumn

staking material, whereas the sweet chestnut and hazel are used at the Arboretum for hedgelaying. We lay approximately 100 m of hedging each year with the help of our volunteers every Wednesday.

If you would like to be involved in the work of the Arboretum, you can find information on our website: <http://www.obga.ox.ac.uk>, under the 'What's on' section, including information about our practical courses such as forest bathing, nature photography, plant identification. If you would like to hear more about the exciting work going on at the Arboretum, do join our monthly 'Insight Tour' which takes place on the first Wednesday of each month.



Castlemilk Moorit sheep in the meadow

Education at OBG

By Tegan Bennett, Catherine Vivian and Lauren Baker

Autumn was a busy but successful period for the Education team. In addition to the usual school visits, the team delivered a series of well-attended public engagement days at both sites and has continued to develop activities relating to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)-funded 'Gateway to Nature' project at the Arboretum.

October 9th saw the return of the Fungus Foray at Harcourt Arboretum, in which over 600 visitors took part. On the same day, at the Garden, a collaborative event with IF Oxford was run, called 'Plants for the Future'. This day gave the public a chance to explore four different, interdisciplinary stalls with activities on: Plants in Space, Sustainable Fashion, Green Cities and Plants in Engineering. The event was sponsored by the New Phytologist Foundation and saw just under 1000 people visit the Garden.

The following weekend, on October 15th, we ran the largest and most successful Autumn Fair to date, with over 2750 visitors attending. The Friends' Tombola and Cake stalls were very



The NLHF team are using seed handling on-site and in outreach

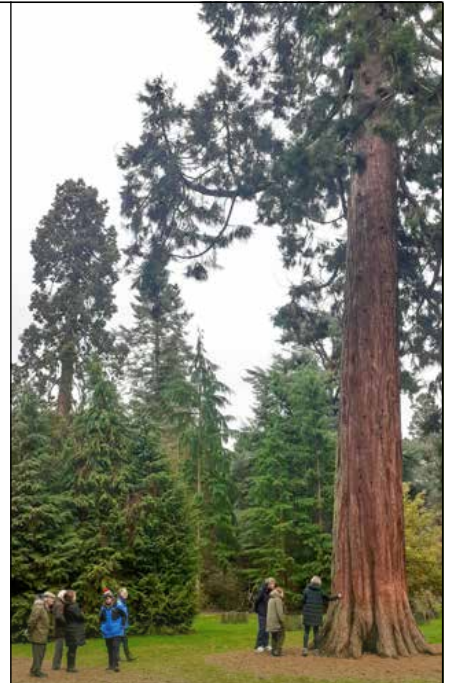


The Venus Fly Trap waste station and live music returned for the Autumn Fair

popular: thank you to all those who donated prizes and time to help.

Through October half term, we relaunched Family Friendly activities at the Arboretum. A falconry show, theatre performance of 'Arbor the Tree' with a 5m tall tree puppet, and an insect-themed performance from WhatNot Theatre comprised the main attractions; geocaching also made a reappearance.

Our 2022 Autumn Science Lecture series has also been the most successful ever. Following the pandemic, the Autumn Science series remained online and free for attendees, thanks to sponsorship from *Plants, People, Planet* of the New Phytologist Foundation. This year we explored the theme of plant-microbe interactions with five expert speakers. The talks were very popular and speakers discussed the beneficial and detrimental relationships brought about by microbe-plant interactions. In total, 1,883 visitors attended the five talks and the recordings have been watched on our YouTube channel over 1,000 times.



A Gateway to Nature at the Arboretum

By Lesley Best

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) 'Gateway to Nature' project is continuing to progress through its Development Phase.

We are working closely with architects to develop plans for future all-weather education facilities, café and shop to transform visitor experience and engagement with communities.

Our newly-appointed team has been busy engaging new audiences to build local partnerships. In December, Age UK Oxfordshire Late Spring Group visited for a walk, refreshments and a Christmas craft session. One of the group said:

"Thank you so much for all your hard work showing us around yesterday. I know that the group I brought from Oxford really enjoyed themselves and found the Arboretum a real pleasure to wander around. Good for the soul, as they say, being with trees. I know they enjoyed the craft session too."

We were delighted to hold our first event for NHS Link Workers in the region, who coordinate Social Prescribing activities in the community. Twenty-one Link Workers attended a guided walk in which we showed how unique and special the Arboretum is.



Falconry display from HawkWalk at Harcourt Arboretum



An Expedition to Indonesia

By Chris Thorogood



Main image:
A rare glimpse of the
interior of *Rafflesia*
arnoldii. Above l to r:
Rafflesia arnoldii;
Rafflesia bengkuensis;
Rafflesia kemumu

A wild titan arum
in the Sumatran
rainforest



In November I joined an expedition to Indonesia with botanists Pastor Malabrigo Jr. and Adriane Tobias from the University of the Philippines, Joko Witono from the Research Organization for Life Sciences and Environment, National Research and Innovation Agency of Indonesia (BRIN), and Septian Andriki (known as Deki) - a Sumatran forester. Our aims were to (1) discuss possibilities for future collaborative research inter-regionally on *Rafflesia*, (2) extend best practice in propagation and conservation to the Philippines where species are under threat, and (3) examine the ecology of natural populations of *Rafflesia* in Indonesia.

The trip began with a workshop on *Rafflesia* propagation with the world-leading expert Sofi Mursidiwanti and her technician Mr Nhagatari. We were shown how to graft infected vines (*Tetrastigma*) onto new rootstocks using a cleft grafting technique. We discussed how to extend this technique to populations in the Philippines where urgent conservation action is needed. At BRIN's offices, we held meetings with Dr Andes Hamuraby Rozak (Head of Research Centre for Plant Conservation) and Dr Bayu Adjie (Head of Research Centre for Biosystematics and Evolution) to discuss the potential for future collaborative research on the biology and evolution of *Rafflesia*. After delivering a webinar on 'Saving the world's flora', we travelled east to Pangandaran on the border of West Java to observe *Rafflesia patma* in its natural habitat. We were lucky to observe a specimen in bloom despite the peak flowering season being over.

A week into the expedition, we travelled from Java to West Sumatra. Upon arrival,



Chris Thorogood with *Rafflesia arnoldii*,
the largest flower in the world

we met Dr Agus Susatya - the local expert on *Rafflesia* taxonomy, and a delegation of academic leads from the Forestry Department including Dr Mulyoto Pangestu and Vice Dean Yansen. Then we headed north to the natural habitat of *R. kemumu* with Deki. After trekking up a steep rainforest scarp, we were fortunate to find a specimen in full bloom measuring over 70 cm across.

Later that week we found *Rafflesia arnoldii* in the forests of central Bengkulu. This species produces the largest flowers in the world, spanning over a metre across. In southern Bengkulu we were lucky enough to observe two populations of the rare species, *R. bengkuluensis*, also in full bloom. Village Leader Zul took us to see the first; the second we were shown by a local community conservation group led by a secondary school teacher called Yogi.

We visited Hutan Lindung Bouvenlais and Hutun Lindung Bukit Daun in search of *Rafflesia* in a remote forest inhabited by wild Sumatran elephants and tigers. To our dismay, *Rafflesia* had been deliberately destroyed there for unknown reasons; twice

we encountered this situation during the expedition, emphasising the urgent need for greater conservation efforts. We also visited a forest reserve managed by Mr Holidin who conserves rare local flora including the titan arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*). He explained that he relies on donations and receives no official funding for his endeavour.

At the end of the expedition we held a conference in which recommendations were identified to take forward in a combined approach to conserving *Rafflesia* across Southeast Asia. This could comprise: establishing a dedicated global community of purpose to coordinate research effort; extending knowledge across areas of regional diversity; research to strengthen taxonomy and inform conservation; and opportunities for sustainable tourism and an extension to protected areas of land.

We look forward to taking this exciting work forward with our partners in Southeast Asia.

This expedition was generously funded by the Helen Roll Charity.

Friends' Section

News

From the Friends' Chairman,
Sarah Taylor

Harriet Bretherton

Inexplicably, I have not so far in my series of articles about Friends' volunteers written about Harriet Bretherton. I hasten now to remedy this omission, Harriet having contributed such a very great deal to the Friends.

Harriet was brought up on the South Circular Road in London, which she thought had some limitations, such as not being able to keep a pony. Her parents weren't interested in gardening although they had a 'garden'. Harriet was given a small plot of land and sowed some seeds. They didn't come up: not an auspicious start for what was later to be a passion.

Harriet grew up to become a Probation Officer, surely one of the more demanding careers to pursue. At one point, after she had her second child and wanted to work part time, she took on the thankless task of writing custody and access reports. This laid the groundwork for joining the Family Court Service when she moved to Oxford, which was then operated by the Probation Service. She did a two-year research project on the Family Court Service with Barnett House, then the Social Work Department of Oxford University, and helped to produce the report 'Family in Conflict'. In 2001, CAF/CASS, (The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) was formed by a merger of the Family Court Welfare Service (Private Law), the Guardians ad Litem, (Public Law) and the Children's divisions of the Official Solicitor's Office. Harriet became a Research Officer for CAF/CASS in 2003. She retired in 2007 when she had her first grandchild who was living in Lyon: difficult to be a hands-on grandparent when the grandchild is living in another country.

Harriet, as we have learned, was not originally a gardener. Her husband James, on the other hand, had always been interested in gardening, having been a gardener at the house Harriet's parents inherited in Devon - where Harriet was his 'mate'. It was not until they

moved to Oxford, nearly thirty years ago, that Harriet really became interested in gardening.

The Brethertons have a garden of half an acre on Cumnor Hill, where Harriet is responsible for the beds and flowers (I can bear witness to the fact that the garden is magnificent), and James is responsible for everything else. They have no



Harriet Bretherton

vegetables: Harriet tried them but being on the very free draining soil on Cumnor Hill, they didn't work and she pragmatically decided it was preferable to use Riverford, a vegetable box delivery system.

Harriet had joined the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum when she moved to Oxford, but after she retired, an advertisement in the Friends' Newsletter in 2010 caught her attention. Jane Annett was seeking someone to help her with the garden visits. Pauline Coombes also responded to the ad. So Jane, Pauline and Harriet became the Garden Visits Team, later joined by Diana Naumann and later still by Jane Thrift.

I cannot overstate just how much careful work, leavened by inspiration, goes into organising the extensive programme of garden visits that the Friends are lucky enough to be able to take part in. First, an encyclopaedic knowledge of the gardens of England is required (supplemented by further research). Secondly, the owners of the gardens have to be contacted, possible dates arranged and an advance visit made to ensure that the garden is 'up to scratch' and to establish what is on offer in terms of refreshment, time of visit and price charged. Finally, the entire programme has to be definitively settled, written up, priced up and published. Ticket sales then have to be administered (and Harriet was instrumental in the inspired appointment of our ticket administrator Freya Jones) and finally at least one member of the team accompanies the group of Friends on the visit to ensure that things go smoothly. It is a labour of love and Harriet has been a star member of the team for 12 years now.

In addition to that, Harriet joined the board of the FOBGA from October 2017 to September 2021, both giving feedback on the garden visits and as the organiser of the wider Forum meetings in which all the many volunteers of the Friends are kept in touch with developments at OBG and FOBGA, something they value greatly: an important task which she carries out with her customary diligence and efficiency.

When the national Friends of Botanic Garden Friends was being set up, led by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Friends, Harriet (being a glutton for punishment) enthusiastically threw her hat into the ring as our representative. She has helped to give this fledgling and valuable institution a really good start in life.

Harriet's career and life is another example of the extraordinary range of talents at the disposal of the Friends for which we must all be profoundly grateful and which must inspire others to come forward and help. Thanks to her and all the other volunteers over the last 30 years, the Friends have contributed over £3m as well as much moral support and encouragement to OBG. Long may that continue.

Friends' Gardens for Friends

By Rebecca Mather

This is a popular event when Friends open their gardens for other Friends to look around and meet and enjoy tea together. We charge a small amount for tea and cake but no entry fee. Profits go to the Garden. Volunteers help with cakes and making and serving tea.

We already have one garden open on 14th May at 2.30 near Thame. The owners say that it is a very small, town garden, which was a blank canvas when they moved there two years ago. They designed it and started the work from scratch. They have incorporated many small areas and features; it has a south facing patio, with pot plants, a gravel garden, lawn, raised planting areas, herbaceous beds, a vegetable garden, and shrub area, as well as a greenhouse.

If you would like to visit, please let me know (Rebecca Mather: rebecca.mather28@gmail.com) and I will send directions.

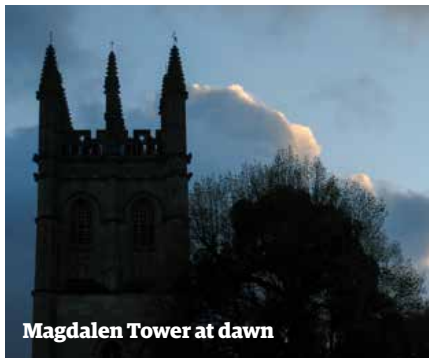
I should be delighted if other Friends would like to open their garden later in the year. Please get in touch with me if you would like to do so.



Friends' Events

The Friends' Events Team

All the activities that contribute to the pleasure of being a Friend (FOBGA), the coffee mornings, the garden visits, the e-bulletin, the newsletter, Friends' Gardens for Friends and so on, are provided by committed Friends with plenty of energy, and a can-do attitude. The Events Team is just such a group. A dozen or so of us plan and organise the big events such as May Morning, the Friends' annual party, other fundraising events such as the special parties and cake stalls and the tombola at the seasonal fairs at the Arboretum. We always need more help, as you can imagine. If you would like to be involved with any of these events, [do please get in touch with me](mailto:seonaidscd@gmail.com). If, in addition, you might like to contribute to the discussions and planning of these events, new ideas are always most welcome, do get in touch with me to talk about it (seonaidscd@gmail.com).



Magdalen Tower at dawn

Monday 1st May

May Morning

May Morning is one of the special benefits of being a Friend of the Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum. This is a unique opportunity to invite your own friends and family to witness this ancient Oxford celebration of spring. After the bells have rung at 6.00 am, silence falls, and the Magdalen College choristers sing the *Hymnus Eucharisticus* followed by prayers and further singing, from the top of Magdalen College Tower. You will have the privilege of a perfect view from the peace and beauty of the Botanic Garden, with a hot drink in your hand. While waiting for the choristers you will be entertained by traditional Morris dancers, Cry Havoc, and be able to appreciate the beauty of the early

morning light in the garden. As the sun rises, freshly baked croissants, with homemade jam will be served.

SCHEDULE

The event will run from 5.00 to 7.00am

Entry is only via the Rose Lane gate of the Botanic Garden between 5.00-5.30am

Morris dancers, Cry Havoc, perform 5.15-5.45am

- Friends £20 Guests £25, children 2-15, £5
- Ticket includes complimentary coffee, hot chocolate or tea and a freshly baked croissant with homemade jam

- Bacon butties £4 - card payments only
- Booking is open to all Friends, who may buy tickets for their guests. Please note that the closing date for booking is Tuesday 25th April.

All booking is online at <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/friends-visits>.

If you have any difficulties with this, please contact the [Friends' Administrator](#).

EXTRA HELPERS

If you would like to join the team presenting this very special event, I would love to hear from you. You would be most welcome. It is a busy morning, but always fun. Contact [Seonaid Danziger](#) for more information.

New Chamber Opera 2023 on Wednesday 5th July

La Frascatana (The Girl from Frascati)

By Giovanni Paisiello to a libretto by Filippo Livigni

A *dramma giocoso* (which translates as a drama with jokes).

This genre of opera was extremely popular in the mid-18th Century. *La Frascatana* was premiered in Venice in 1774.

Set in three acts, the story tells of Violante, who is upset by the amorous advances of her tutor, Fabrizio. When she meets a handsome young Roman, Nardone, they fall in love. Unfortunately, Giocondo also falls in love with her, making Donna Stella, to whom he is betrothed furious, and she seeks revenge. The plot thickens when Nardone and Giocondo confess their love for Violante to her tutor. And he in turn decides to thwart them both. But happily all ends well!

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. The dress code is smart casual, although as it is such a magical occasion some people prefer black tie.

5.00pm Pre-Performance talk by Professor Michael Burden, Director of New Chamber Opera

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

Tickets £44 to include a welcoming glass of sparkling wine in the Cloisters' Garden.

£3 for the pre-performance talk.

Please email Freya Jones at fobgaticketing@gmail.com or write registering interest to Friends Opera: Freya Jones, 35 Cuddesdon Road, Horspath, OX33 1JD

Tickets are also available online, please visit the Friends of the Botanic Garden and Arboretum website: <https://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/friends>



The Teatro delle Acque in the Garden of the Villa Aldobrandini by Hubert Robert

The Friends' Annual Party

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Arboretum joining the Oxford Botanic Garden. In celebration of this, we have decided to hold the Friends' Summer Party on



Woodland Barn built in 2013, before the shingles were added

Thursday 7th September at the Arboretum, where there is plenty of free parking and a regular bus service. We will serve drinks and canapés (made by the team) from the Woodland Barn. We hope to have live music as well. We will take this opportunity to show you what is being done to improve the Paths and access to the Arboretum as a result of the Paths Appeal. It promises to be a lovely late summer party.

Events Team contributes to the fun of the Fair

Traditionally, the events group has contributed to the seasonal fairs held at the Arboretum. It is an opportunity to raise the profile of the Friends and, of course, contribute to our fundraising enterprises.

This year, 2023, we will be running a cakes ++ stall at the Spring Fair on 22nd April. This is always very popular with hungry families, particularly as lunch time draws near! We are planning to include more savoury items. If you enjoy baking, your contributions would be most welcome. Please contact **Anne James** (riverbank26@yahoo.co.uk) or **Cathy Stewart** (cathystewart1@gmail.com) to discuss it with them.

The Autumn Fair will be on 14th October, when we again plan to have a cakes ++ stall. We will then also hope to be running a tombola, so do save any unwanted/ungiven gifts - we will be giving more information nearer the time, in either the next Newsletter or in an e-bulletin. If by any chance you are not receiving e-bulletins by email from us, do please contact the **Friends' Administrator**. These emails are the best way for you to keep tabs on all the events and activities.

First Friday of the Month

Coffee mornings

Coffee mornings are held on the first Friday of each month, except August, from 10.30- midday. No booking is needed but do remember to bring your membership card. The dates for this year are:

14th April / 5th May / 2nd June / 7th July
1st September / 6th October
3rd November / 8th December

Most of these coffee mornings will be held at the Botanic Garden, but a few will be at the Arboretum. Please check the website for up to date information. <https://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/>

Friends' Garden Visits

By Harriet Bretherton, Pauline Coombes, Jane Annett, Diana Naumann and Jane Thrift

The Garden Visits Team hope you'll find that the following pages describe a wonderfully varied choice of gardens for your summertime enjoyment.

Before booking a visit: Please be aware that a number of the gardens we visit can be a bit challenging should anyone have mobility or health issues.

Booking tickets online: We had hoped to offer online booking for these visits. However, for a number of reasons, this has not been possible though hopefully will be available for the autumn visits.

To book visits: see enclosed Booking Form.

Dogs and Garden Visits: Following the Botanic Garden's policy, dogs are only permitted if they are registered assistance dogs.

We very much look forward to seeing you during the coming months.



West Green House

Wednesday 3rd May, 2.00pm

A New Garden: West Green House

West Green House Gardens, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire RG27 8JB

By kind permission of Marylyn Abbott

West Green House Gardens combines neo-classical style with contemporary design. A grand water staircase provides a focal point to the Nymphaeum Fountain designed by architect Quinlan Terry.

The magnificent Walled Garden, faithfully restored to its original lines, is entered through an arbour of wisteria. The garden has long been famed for its tulip displays, remarkable for their colour and long lasting during their flowering season. We will have a tour of the garden and a cream tea.

- **Friends: National Trust member £21, non NT member £30, guests: NT member £26, non NT member £35**
- **Maximum 40**



© Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery

Bluebell Arboretum

Wednesday 17th May

A coach visit to Melbourne Hall Gardens and Bluebell Arboretum Nursery

8.30am: Prompt coach depart from Oxford Parkway Park & Ride (formerly Water Eaton P & R) 6.00pm: approx arrival back at Park & Ride. Washroom on board.

Melbourne Hall Gardens

By kind permission of Lord and Lady Ralph Kerr

Melbourne Hall Gardens will be specially opened for us at 12.00pm, before the public enter at 1.00pm. We shall have an introductory talk from the Head Gardener and then enjoy private access to the gardens. Melbourne Hall Gardens with its broad sweeps of lawn, avenues and unexpected vistas is one of the most treasured historical gardens in the country and is the best surviving early 18th century English garden in the manner of Le Nôtre. Noted for its long tunnel of yew, its wrought iron arbour created by Robert Bakewell and its statuary by Jan van Nost, Lord Ralph Kerr took over running the Melbourne estate in 1987, and his wife, Lady Ralph Kerr's passion for gardening has developed the garden in many ways. Her eye for colour and detail means it is a haven of delightful and unusual specimen trees, shrubs and herbaceous borders. On arrival coffee and biscuits included. Lunch can be purchased or enjoy a picnic by the lake.



© Andrea Jones Photography

Melbourne Hall: primula, rhododendron and *Viburnum plicatum*

Bluebell Arboretum Nursery

By kind permission of Bluebell Arboretum

On our return journey we will visit the Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery, the award-winning, family run nursery, specialising in trees, shrubs, climbers and woody herbaceous plants with some very rare and unusual varieties! Founded in 1979, it is now one of the leading suppliers of rare, woody plants in the UK. A perfect opportunity to maybe purchase one or two new additions for your garden.

- Friends £50, guests £55
- Maximum 40

Monday 22nd May, 2.00pm

Private visit to Englefield House and the Gardens

Englefield, Theale, Reading RG7 5EN

By kind permission of Lord and Lady Benyon

A wonderful opportunity to re-visit Englefield House, the Grade II* listed residence, originating from the Elizabethan period set in 12 acre gardens. Lady Benyon will lead a guided tour of the house followed by a tour with the Head Gardener, Sue Broughton, exploring the garden terraces



© Englefield House

Englefield House

and woodlands where mature trees mix with rhododendrons and rare azaleas, whose flowering will hopefully coincide with our visit. Refreshments included at the end of the visit.

- Friends £30, guests £35
- Maximum 40

Friday 9th June

A coach visit to Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Winterbourne House and Garden

8.30am: Coach depart from Oxford Parkway Park & Ride (formerly Water Eaton P & R) 7.00pm: approx arrival back at Park & Ride. Washroom on board.



© Whiteford photography

Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Birmingham Botanical Gardens

By kind permission of Birmingham University

Birmingham Botanical Gardens' rich, uniquely biodiverse natural environment is one of the UK's most significant historic Grade II* Botanic Gardens. JC Loudon's inspirational botanic garden and glasshouses design, in a landscape setting, has survived intact. Since 1829, it has been devoted to conservation, increasing plant diversity and public understanding. Embedded in Birmingham's scientific and people's history, social and emotional life, this green sanctuary has protected and brought the value of plants to a vast urban population. We will have refreshments on arrival followed by a guided tour round the gardens. Friends can either bring a picnic or have lunch in the café.



© Greg Milner

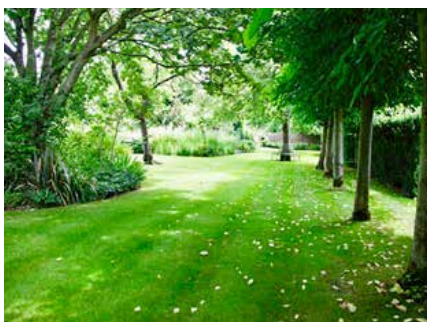
Winterbourne Gardens

Winterbourne House and Garden

By kind permission of Birmingham University

Winterbourne is a rare surviving example of an early 20th century suburban villa and garden. The house was built in 1903 for John and Margaret Nettlefold of Guest, Keen & Nettlefold. Margaret Nettlefold designed the garden, inspired by the books and garden designs of Gertrude Jekyll. John MacDonald Nicolson was the last private owner of the house and a keen gardener. He developed many new areas, including a scree garden and small alpine features around the garden. He died in 1944 and left it to Birmingham University. After a period of restoration, the garden was Grade II listed by English Heritage in 2008. After an introduction by a member of staff, Friends will be able to visit the house and garden on their own, and tea will be available in the café.

- Friends £50, guests £55
- Maximum 48



Mill Barn Garden

Saturday 17th June, 3.00pm

Mill Barn, a private visit to this rarely open garden

Mill Barn, Mill Lane, Weston Turville, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5RG

By kind permission of Sir Richard and Lady Valerie Lapthorne

Seldom open to visitors, this thirty-year old family garden is a hidden treasure, evolving

from a derelict farmyard into the beautiful place that it is now. Lots of different areas planted in varying styles with an interesting collection of rare plants and trees. The owners, Sir Richard and Lady Valerie, will take us round explaining how their garden has developed over the years. A homemade tea brings the visit to a close. A hidden gem!

- Friends £15, guests £20
- Maximum 40

Tuesday 27th June 10.30am or 2.30pm

Private visit to St Timothee garden

St Timothee, Darlings Lane, Pinkneys Green, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 6PA

By kind permission of Sarah and Sal Pajwani

We visited this garden two years ago in the autumn. The private garden of two acres was created from scratch over the last 14 years by its owner, Sarah Pajwani. Designed to look good at all times of the year, this visit includes a fully illustrated talk given by the owner on successional planting - easy ways to keep borders looking good from Spring through to Autumn. The talk will be followed by a visit around the garden. Refreshments are included.

- Friends £25, guests £30
- Maximum 23



© Sarah Pajwani

St Timothee

Tuesday 4th July, 3.30pm

A private visit to Bridewell Gardens

Bridewell Gardens, The Walled Garden, Wilcote, North Leigh, Nr Chipping Norton OX7 3DT

By kind permission of Bridewell Gardens

Bridewell Gardens provides a mental health recovery service for West Oxfordshire, supporting people who have experienced severe and enduring mental illness. Bridewell is a creative and inspiring walled garden and vineyard where people can find hope in recovery, gardening and working with nature. In the words of people who have attended the recovery service: "Bridewell has enabled me to look towards the future and dream of the things I want to do and who I want to become." At the end of our tour of the gardens, there will be an opportunity to sample some of Bridewell's own sparkling organic wine with a complimentary aperitif and nibbles.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 40



© Bridewell Gardens

Bridewell Gardens

Friday 7th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Lords Wood

Frieth Road, Marlow Common, Bucks SL7 2QS

By kind permission of David and Millie Messum

This five-acre garden has been in the Messum family since 1976. Lords Wood boasts fantastic views of the Chilterns and has a large orchard, woodland and meadows. It has been planned in various styles with extensive borders, a large water garden, sculptures and rockery, vegetable and herb garden. There is always something new to enjoy on each visit. There are gravel paths and steep slopes. Tea included.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 40



Lords Wood Garden

Tuesday 11th July, 1.30pm

A private guided tour of Roche Court Sculpture Park and Gardens

Roche Court, East Winterslow, Wiltshire SP5 1BG

By kind permission of New Art Centre, Roche Court

A wonderful new visit for our Friends. The New Art Centre at Roche Court is a sculpture park and gallery set in over 60 acres of parkland and beautiful gardens in the Wiltshire countryside, specialising in 20th and 21st-century works of art that are on view both in the park, the gardens and in their prize-winning contemporary indoor spaces. After a guided tour of the outdoor sculpture and indoor gallery spaces, and an introduction to the gardens by the Head Gardener, you are welcome to explore on your own before the visit ends with tea in the Design House located in Roche Court's walled garden.

- Friends £25, guests £30
- Maximum 40



Roche Court. Anthony Caro, Palanquin, 1987/91 in the grounds of Roche Court

Tuesday 18th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Worcester College

Worcester College, Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HB

By kind permission of the Garden Master

Worcester College is set within 26 acres of award-winning gardens and wooded

grounds, including a lake, on-site sports fields, and an orchard. The gardens are unique among all the Oxford colleges in being landscaped in the naturalistic manner, formed at a time when the late 'picturesque' strand of the landscape garden was giving way to the more decorative approach of the Regency period. The gardens are distinctive in having the lake, which forms the centrepiece of the design. There will be a guided tour by Simon Bagnall, Head Gardener followed by tea and biscuits.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 40



© Worcester College

Worcester College

The Danby Patrons' Group

The Danby Group is unique in that it exists to support two departments of Oxford University: the Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum (OBGA) and the Oxford Herbaria in the Department of Biology. After a brief hiatus (following the departure for Tasmania of the much-missed Maura Allen), a programme of activities is planned for 2023 which reflects that mix of interest and purpose. The first event will be more of Professor Stephen Harris', Druce Curator of the Herbaria, riveting and always entertaining insights into the collections in the Herbaria.

Being a member of the Danby group gives access to some of the fascinating science behind Oxford's work on the plant kingdom and its interaction with nature in general and mankind in particular. This access is by way of private exclusive tours of the Garden, Arboretum, Herbaria and occasional forays into other departments of the

University, led by the Director and Deputy Director and other senior members of OBGA's team. 2023 promises a hugely interesting and enjoyable number of occasions for the Danby group to meet in congenial environments.



Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden or 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 you have not signed up to receive them. If you wish to sign up, please send an email with your name, to the Friends' Administrator at friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk.

Dates for the Newsletter

The newsletter is published three times a year. The dates this is usually sent out are as follows: Mid-March / Early July / Early November

The Bobarts Patrons' Group

By Helen Potts

As we look forward to Spring once more, the Bobarts Patrons will be joined on our programme of visits by several new members. All will be welcomed by this sociable and enthusiastic group. Our Patrons gladly share their friendship, knowledge and love of all things horticultural.

This year our season began in early February with a visit to the 150-year-old snowdrop collection at Colesbourne Park, home of *Galanthus elwesii*, along with some 300 other cultivars. Just before Easter we will enjoy the more recently created garden of Lower Bowden Manor, near Pangbourne, where structure and form are key to success in every season. In May we are delighted to have been invited to spend the day in Langford, near Lechlade, visiting not only

the garden but also the former home of royal couturier Hardy Amies. Our host will serve lunch before we visit the village's Saxon church and go on to another beautiful garden to round off the afternoon.

Early June takes a group of Patrons on a four-day trip to some very special gardens in Dorset, before we return to the important Gertrude Jekyll garden of Upton Grey, rediscovered in 1984 by the unsuspecting buyers who have since dedicated themselves to recreating the entire garden. Our final visit before the summer is to St Hilda's College where we will see how the new buildings have been integrated into the site with skilful planting. We will also learn about the challenges of rooftop planting as we admire the view over our own Botanic Garden!

As ever, we are extremely grateful to the owners and head gardeners who so generously welcome this Oxford Botanic Garden Patrons' group to their gardens.

Calendar

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

2023

April

Friday 14th April

Coffee morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

Wednesday 19th April
Coach trip to Berkeley Castle and Jekka's Herb Garden & Herbetum

May

Monday 1st May, 5.00am

May Morning

Wednesday 3rd May, 2.00pm

Visit to West Green House Gardens

Friday 5th May

Coffee morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

Wednesday 17th May

Coach visit to Melbourne Hall and Bluebell Arboretum Nursery

Monday 22nd May, 2.00pm

Visit to Englefield House and gardens

June

Friday 2nd June

Coffee morning, Harcourt Arboretum

Friday 9th June

Coach visit to Birmingham

Botanical Gardens and

Winterbourne House and Garden

Saturday 17th June, 3.00pm

Visit to Mill Barn Garden

Tuesday 27th June, 10.30am or 2.30pm

Private visit to St Timothee garden

July

Tuesday 4th July, 3.30pm

A private visit to Bridewell Gardens

Wednesday 5th July, 6.30pm

'La Frascatana' - New Chamber Opera

Friday 7th July

Coffee morning, Oxford Botanic Garden

Friday 7th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Lords Wood garden

Tuesday 11th July, 1.30pm

A private guided tour of Roche Court Sculpture Park and Gardens

Tuesday 18th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Worcester College



Courtesy of Colesbourne Park

Snowdrops *Galanthus plicatus* 'Colossus' at Colesbourne Park

Do consider joining us. Our loyal Patrons provide extra financial backing to support the valuable work of the Botanic Garden and Arboretum. Our members, and 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.

**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. The Friends' Office is staffed Monday-Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Tel: **01865 610303**

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

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

This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.

