

# Newsletter

*December 2020  
January 2021*



We wish all our Friends and supporters the Happiest Christmas, New Year and 2021 possible. *More from our chairman on p.2*



## Tis' the season to get creative!

To celebrate Christmas, Stuart House is planning an online 'Advent Calendar' featuring a range of daily Facebook posts during the countdown to Christmas.

We aim for the project to include your photos and memories of Stuart House, pertinent stories about the venue or photographs of your arts and crafts.

If you are interested in submitting a piece of artwork, photography or story about your memories of the house, please send them to:

[timnormansh@gmail.com](mailto:timnormansh@gmail.com).

The sky's the limit in terms of artwork, although it must be in a format suited to Facebook posts, i.e. a photograph, short video or text.

🌟 Looking forward to seeing your work! ✨



Our web-site and Facebook page volunteer, Tim, has liaised with House Manger Sioux about a Facebook Advent Calendar. Trustees and others think it's a great idea!

Anyone can contribute by emailing Tim directly.



and ....

introducing Stuart Mouse .. you'll hear more on the Facebook page, and when the House re-opens again!

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**Planning Application** for the refurbishment of the Library building (our northern neighbour) to become a 'hub of reading, exploration, discovery and learning' is now in. (see p.5) This photograph is from the 1920s.



*Leaflet Sponsored by Coodes  
Honorary Solicitors to Stuart House Trust*

## **A Message from our Chairman, Bob : The Most Difficult of Years**

Another year gone! It started well enough in January although we all knew there were dark clouds on the horizon, but by February what we all feared was with us. So began a most difficult time: the challenges I wrote about twelve months ago were forced into the background as we sought to deal with the pandemic which has so dominated our very existence throughout 2020. All of us will have been touched in one way or another. We must all be so thankful that as the year nears its end there is hopefully light at the end of the tunnel in the form of the vaccine.

What about Stuart House? The festive season usually provides the opportunity to reflect on the quality of the art, craft and music events which the House stages throughout the year. Of course that cannot be done this year but we can still reflect on the contribution made by many - be it Trustee, House Manager, Volunteer or Supporter. In some of the recent newsletters we have done just that but I make no apology for once again saying thank you to those who have ensured the well-being and thus the future of Stuart House. I always find it slightly invidious to mention names, mainly for fear of leaving someone out, but you know who you are! During the year we have regrettably had to say farewell to long-standing friends who have moved away from Liskeard and we wish them well in their new homes. Sadly we have also had to say a final goodbye to a number of dear friends of Stuart House; we shall be the poorer for their passing.

In conclusion I wish all of you, on behalf of my fellow trustees and myself, the very best for Christmas and 2021. Following this most difficult of years may that light at the end of the tunnel get brighter and brighter so we may all celebrate together and rejoice in the notice on the door which reads "Open for Business as Usual"!



### **Greetings from House-Manager Sioux, currently on furlough**

My, how this strange year finishes! At this time of year we are usually up to our knees, and arms in all things Christmas, as some of these photos show. The holly and ivy would be on their way to Deck the Hall....and the stairs and landings.

The garland, created by Liz, Judith, and Gill, would be making its appearance in the cafe, along with fresh linen cloths and floral candle centre pieces on the tables. The Surgery would have Christmas crafts for sale and the Gallery would be hosting the Christmas Fayre which always has an eclectic mix of goodies, edible, decorative and useful.

Whilst in the House in September and October I was able to speak to a lot of you, and have loved catching up. Quite a few were not in at the time I rang, and there are others too that I have not spoken with. I look forward to doing so once I have clearance to return to the building.

In the meantime I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year. Enjoy the Festive season as best you can and raise a glass to 2021.

*The photos from Christmas 2019 are from Sioux*

## John Rapson 1923 – 11.11.2020

### **Tony Wood writes:**

John was a long term friend of Stuart House and a quiet but active supporter in many projects. His excellent memory and his remarkable collection of photographs of Liskeard over many decades made him an unrivalled resource for most heritage projects. He was, of course, a professional photographer of great expertise and so kept a record of Stuart House events and of the process of restoration over the last 35 years. When the Old Cornwall Society was looking for somewhere to store their records, I felt that Stuart House was ideally suited to provide that centre and negotiated with John the terms on which they could have exclusive use of the Trecarrel Room. This arrangement has endured and he was the Archivist for the OCS and arranged the room and kept their records carefully and meticulously up-to-date on their computer. Despite his age, he climbed the stairs regularly well into his 90s.

John enthusiastically supported George Vaughan-Ellis and Eileen Crouch in the Henry Rice project. He photographed all Rice's existing buildings (over 100) in the town and it was from his archive that the Henry Rice book was compiled. His quiet enthusiasm and sincere interest in that project helped enormously in bringing it to fruition.

Jane and I felt a great personal friendship for John and were sad to leave the town and so lost close contact over his last years. Although, as far as I can remember, he only joined the committee of Trustees for a short time, he was always a presence in the house and eagerly responded to any historic queries and brought his camera to all the major events. He has been much missed whilst incapacitated and that sense of absence will continue for many years.

John had built up a loyal and well-informed group to take on the OCS archives and consequently there is a positive link to the Town Museum. Dave Howard links the Trust to the Town Museum and so John's legacy is also a working relationship between the three centres for maintaining the sense of heritage in Liskeard.

Stuart House Trust and the town owe this quiet, unassuming but ever active recorder and archivist a great debt of thanks. He will be well remembered by all those with an interest in the town's heritage.



*A photograph of John Rapson hangs in the Trecarrel Room, where the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society has its base.*

### **Eileen Crouch writes:**

It has been a pleasure and privilege to know John Rapson over the past twenty years, being one of the early Members of the Trust. He leaves quite a legacy to Liskeard through Stuart House Trust, the Old Cornwall Society, Liskeard Museum and the Methodist Church, inheritors of his many photographs recording the history of our town and its people. His work was widely appreciated and acknowledged when he was created a Bard of Kernow Gorsedh; he proudly wore his blue robes.

As a professional photographer, he was called upon by families, businesses, societies and associations, etc. to record their special events.

Whatever the local topic of our heritage exhibitions, John's interesting memories and photos, many of which were loaned to us by the O.C.S., added authenticity and interest to the displays enjoyed by our visitors and ourselves. His contributions to our Heritage Group meetings were considerable and he worked with George Vaughan-Ellis to provide pictures to illustrate his heritage talks, some of which (although not individually accredited) are included in our Henry Rice album, launched in 2010 and now forming part of the permanent Henry Rice display in our Rowse Room.

Fond memories of John will live on with his Stuart House friends.

## December's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer



A major task in the Stuart House garden has been sorting out the confused growth along the far wall opposite the café door. There is a vigorous Clematis montana trained on this wall, together with a Viburnum plicatum (early summer flowering and wonderfully coloured autumn leaves, see photo), and a climbing rose. However, a summer flowering jasmine was once planted there too. This hardly ever flowers, and is an incredibly aggressive grower, constantly throwing out dozens of some twenty-foot-long twining rope-like stems that wind over everything, trailing and rooting into the bed in front, and strangling everything in their path.

The ground is also partly colonised by Lamium deadnettle and Alkanet, both almost impossible to control. And then there's Convolvulus bindweed that enjoys scrambling over the tangled mess. The photo of the nibbled bindweed leaf shows that some insect at least welcomes it, possibly the larvae of the convolvulus hawk moth. The ground in front was originally planted as a herb bed, but the ground invaders together with the heavy shade cast by the twisted willow put an end to this. So instead this area is now used for splashes of white and yellow flowered perennial plants that draw the eye through the café windows or when sitting outside on a much sought-after sunny summer day.



The woodland area in the far corner will be tackled next. Here, the wisteria and apple tree have become interwoven with a holly, spotted laurel, Guelder rose (Viburnum opulus: the Snowball tree) and a couple of bird-sown climbing cotoneasters. Then, the wall bordering the post office yard will need similar radical treatment. Enough there to keep Jeff and me busy well into the New Year.



The two large planters along the new brick wall are currently home to the herb collection, planted two years ago for the herb celebration project. This year during lockdown they've just been trimmed and tidied, but hopefully the Friends or Gardening Group will be able to lavish care on these in the year to come.

An intriguing find during the 2020 Lockdown has been the delightful BBC4 series "The Joy of Painting" with the late Bob Ross. In each half-hour episode he paints a complete soothing landscape scene, accompanied by a gentle commentary on how painting should be fun, with no mistakes, just

happy accidents. It struck me that gardening should be like that: as effortless as possible to give quick results and lasting pleasure. Of course, there'll always be lots of hard graft and boring stuff (see above), but there are many short cuts too, and so here are some new ones I've found this past year that I gladly share.

1. Bedding semperflorens begonias will often last the winter in a sheltered place (in Cornwall anyway), such as against the new wall at Stuart House where in late Springtime they'll quickly come back into flower. A farmer friend of mine recently found this out: last November he threw a heap of these begonias into a ditch near his garden, then when he next glanced at them the following May they were all in flower, ready to replant. As I've mentioned recently, they seed themselves prolifically in summer in gravel paths, coming true to type.

2. Fresh seeds of Primrose and Verbena bonariensis also welcome being thrown into a garden gravel area – just tweak out the seedlings when they appear from time to time and pot up.

3. For an instant cloche to protect tender seedlings, use a large clear plastic storage box, drill in few holes here and there, and put a brick on the top to keep it down.

4. When making a raised bed on a grassy area, join four lengths of tandalised timber together and fill with a compost mix. There's no need to dig up the grass.

5. Because of the first lockdown, bedding plant nurseries destroyed their early crops and sowed again in May. The resulting plants available from mid-summer lasted much longer into the autumn. Therefore when sowing seeds at home, there's no need to be in a hurry.

6. Fallen leaves don't need to be thrown away or composted – just spread them around shrubs, even roses, as they'll soon rot down and enrich the soil. And on the subject of roses, we're always told to shapefully prune in late winter to outward facing buds. A local gardener in my part of Liskeard goes at his T-roses with an electric hedge cutter, and wonderful is the result!



Warm winter wishes from Jeff and me who have looked after the garden one morning a week all through the year. When Stuart House is eventually able to re-open its doors, the garden will be as neat, colourful and inviting as ever, and we look forward to seeing you all again.

*Malcolm Mort took all the garden photos, including the Birthday Girl rose (the first and last to flower) below, and the beautiful bird-bath reflections. ed.*



### Garden Club

Val Moore looks forward to being able to start up the Garden Club again, and reminds everyone to be taking cuttings as appropriate and tending potted-up plants which can be included in sales to raise money for the House when this becomes possible.

## PLANNING APPLICATION BY OUR NORTHERN NEIGHBOUR

As stated on the front page. RIO (the Real Ideas Organisation) has now put in an application for Planning Permission for the refurbishment of the Library building.. You can see it on the Council's online Planning Register, number PA20/09199. The Trustees, and others, made comments at earlier stages of the consultation, which seem to have been heeded.

No drawing of the South elevation, which forms the boundary with the Stuart House garden, is included, but the Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment, which makes very interesting reading, states on p.39 (with a photo from our garden) that there are no planned changes to the rear of the building, and a table on p.62 says that there will be medium significance to Stuart House within the setting but no change to the impact.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY EILEEN

Eileen Crouch celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at the start of November. In ordinary circumstances, there would have been a 'do' in the House, but this year flowers were sent and delivered by chairman Bob.

Eileen is herself a past Chair of the House and has played an extraordinarily active role since 1997.

The Spotlight on Celtic Art exhibition which she had begun to organize for this year (marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her major 'Celtic Art 2000' event) is now postponed until Summer 2021 and the herb troughs planted for her 'Spotlight on Herbs' event last year are remarked upon on page 4.

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The South East Cornwall Museums' Forum of which Stuart House is an active member, has been continuing to meet by Zoom every couple of months this year, although the annual Grand Family History and Heritage Day which it organises in Liskeard's Public Hall could not be held this year and we are still considering the possibilities for 2021. The meetings are a great opportunity for different museums and heritage centres to share ideas, knowledge,

experiences and training. Dave Howard with Rachel Bennett (as secretary) represent Stuart House.

A couple of members have been able to open during the pandemic with a system of pre-booked and timed tickets. But most members share the difficulties of Stuart House and have so far been unable to open because of the configuration of the buildings and a shortage of volunteers available to supervise and ensure compliance with necessary distancing etc. – it has been sad to hear some reports of very awkward interactions with a few less-than-co-operative visitors at some places.

We have all said how important our volunteers are, and that they must not feel that they have been forgotten. In museums where online cataloguing of collections can be done, there are still some opportunities, but this does not apply in Stuart House, although the Old Cornwall Society is managing some work on its archives and has access to the Trecarrel Room (see p.3)

### so - GREETINGS AND THANKS TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS

Even though very few of our Volunteers can 'work' at the moment, they are not forgotten, we wish them well and look forward to seeing them again.

The ed. apologises should anyone have been omitted. We send all good wishes to

- **Our café regulars** – Barbara, Bryony, Dan, Doris, Iris, Jane, Mary, Nicky, Norma, Peter and Susan
- **Those who regularly serve in the shop and/or steward** – David & Doris, David & Wendy, Eileen, Jane, Jackie, Linda, Mary, Patricia, Val, and Lyn Callender - a long-term crafter and supporter, who we wish well as she returns to Bude, her home-town
- **Those who cover reception** – David B., Dave H., Rachel and Tony Be.
- **Those who run clubs and classes** – Eileen, Jackie (craft), Val (garden) and Angela (concert organisation)
- **Those who do far more than their 'job'** – Gaby and of course Sioux
- **Those who are still keeping going** – trustees Bob, Dave, John, Sue and Tony, website and Facebook co-ordinator Tim, gardeners Malcolm and Jeff and newsletter ed. Rachel!

## Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross' Memories from the Minutes continued .....

By the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> February 1996, a grant application for a total of £85,000 had been lodged with the National Lottery Heritage Fund: £50,000 for Phases 5 and 6 and £35,000 for other purposes. The Trust's own labour was included in the calculations so the actual sum requested was £70,000. Chair Dr Wigham was congratulated on such a comprehensive and gargantuan task - the reply could take 5 months. Phyllis was on form and said that Caradon Arts Festival would take place from 9<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May, and she hoped that space for relevant activities would be taken in the House and would be in touch with Mrs Peggy Stewart, Caradon Art Group, Liskeard Drama Group, a wildlife painter, and lace, calligraphy, spinning and flower arranging groups. Again something for all!



*November 2020 – we may take the railings and pavement for granted now, but it took some effort to get there!*

Seemingly, the pavement outside the House was the 'issue of the month' revealed at the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1996. Cornwall Council were then carrying out general road works in Barras Street and it was felt that new pavement widening outside the porch was advantageous. However, levels, falls and the drainage channels installed might cause water to run back into the House and be slightly hazardous for pedestrians. The pavement at the south end of the front had not been extended as was previously anticipated and the Council's attention would be brought to these issues.

Approximately 500 visitors had viewed the recent exhibition about the Town

Regeneration Study which had been held by the District Council in the House over 2 days. It was also minuted in March that the painting of Queen Henrietta Maria, recently hung over the fireplace in the surgery, should stay there permanently.

At the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> April the visit by the representative of Cornwall County Council in relation to the new pavement at the front of the House was minuted - a Mr Bayfield would be putting in hand remedial measures (later reported as undertaken). Tony Wood was contacting the architect about distemper sources for the 'dining room' walls.

The AGM Minutes (mysteriously dated 17<sup>th</sup> May but referred to in the minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> May as 'recent', so presumably 17<sup>th</sup> April!) reported on remedial and other works undertaken to the House during that year, with my précis of other matters of concern to the committee over the previous 12 months. It was good to see that the House was becoming 'significant in local history and art circles' and Phyllis Head mentioned that Caradon Arts Festival was taking place between May 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

The smoke alarm had gone off (May 1996) but I was relieved to read further on that the Police had attended but no problems had been discovered. Tony Wood had obtained 2.5 litres of 'oil bound distemper in 'Chord' colour from Farrow & Ball' and hoped to decorate the dining room walls 'soon'.

On 12<sup>th</sup> June the committee were told that the National Lottery Grant body had requested a detailed breakdown of costs within the successful tender for phases 5 and 6 of the restoration. The contractor had agreed to provide those details to the architect by 13<sup>th</sup> June. Meantime, Tony Wood had been liaising with Mr Martin Searle of Caradon DC in the preparation of a grant application to 'Cornwall Developing Partnership – Single Regeneration Budget' for £5,000 to be used towards the cost of restoration of the railings. Tony had also made application to the Council's Capital Fund, also part of the Regeneration Budget, for £2,500 which would be used to complete the garden.

**to be continued .....**

# Diary of Events

## December 2020/January 2021



In the current situation, none of the events planned for December or January are listed.

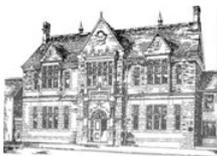
### Some Renovation memories from Tony Wood - we are encouraged to look for clues to the history of the House

- Where there is now a window to the left of the granite fireplace in the Reception Room, there was a door into the garden. I think it led into the old conservatory. The alteration was made in Phase 4, and part of the restoration of the ground floor
- The fine Edwardian fireplace now in the Trecarrel Room used to be in the Hall hiding the granite fireplace
- Above the stairwell ceiling and in the wall which it shares with the Tudor (?) Room, there is a curved niche, which we think must have held a religious image. It can now only be seen by torchlight after a scramble up through the high door over the door out of the Tudor Room. (Don't try it!!)
- If you look at the ceiling of the Henry Rice Room, you can trace the outline of two walls as this room contained another bedroom. There was a narrow corridor to the Trecarrel Room and another to the Lookout.
- The walls to front and back of the Henry Rice and Trecarrel Rooms are both replacements as the original walls (dating we think to the 1790s) were made of timber studding which had totally rotted. English Heritage insisted, and after a lot of arm twisting, paid for the full and proper restoration of the walls with oak studding.
- Not everyone notices the dividing line between the original house and the east wing added on, we think, in c.1627. Also note the granite piece in the wall there where another window must have been.



### From Brian Oldham, President, Liskeard Old Cornwall Society – a snippet (and photos.) on the Library, in the light of current proposals (see pp.1 & 5)

John Passmore Edwards opened the Library, which he funded, on 28th October 1896 with a silver key. The Cornish Times reported that during its construction a lead/silver lode 2' wide and 7' below the surface was uncovered, but nothing further was reported. After the opening ceremony a free tea was provided for the poor, infirm, children and Workhouse inmates; followed by entertainment in the evening which included renditions of the Gay Tomtit and the Amorous Policeman. The National Provincial Bank shared the ground floor until moving to Windsor Place in 1954.



*ed's. note – the land for the Library was sold to the borough in 1895 by Dr. Hammond, owner of Stuart House for £330. The indenture of sale says that windows constructed along the boundary with the Stuart House garden were “provided that the lowest point of each window is not less than six feet above the floor of the room or passage which it serves” (presumably to maintain privacy!)*

Articles for the Stuart House Newsletter (including memories of events or times at Stuart House), information, notices and photographs to the editor, please (who must reserve the right to edit as necessary), before 25<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. In the current circumstances, email to [rachelpbennett59@gmail.com](mailto:rachelpbennett59@gmail.com)