

Newsletter

February 2021

Friends of Stuart House will see that this Newsletter includes a renewal form for those who renew their subscription donation annually – or for any new Friends! As our Treasurer explains below, and our Chairman says on page 2, we are deeply grateful for, and reliant upon, the support of our Friends.

2020 year-end report from our Treasurer, Tony Britton

I expect that there are very few Stuart House friends who were not pleased to say good - bye to 2020. Certainly, from a financial viewpoint I count myself amongst them.

But how did the finances shape up? We started 2020 with a bank balance of £16,140 and I forecast that during the year expenditure would exceed income by around £4,600 leaving £11,540 in hand at the year end.

During the first couple of months we seemed to be on course to achieving the forecast, with a net outflow of £757, but then came Coronavirus and lockdown 1 resulting in the closure of the House and consequently all income from House activities dried up.

Thankfully the Government came to the rescue with its job retention scheme which helped the wages bill by over £5,000 during the year.

In addition we were able to claim small business support grants which helped offset the loss of income by £11,334.

Subscriptions and Donations from friends added a huge £15,633, of which £10,000 was towards the installation of glass doors in the entrance to help keep the building warmer.



We are enormously grateful to those kind friends who gave so generously.

Even though the house is closed there are still some overheads which have to be met – insurance, phone, gas, electric, maintenance etc. – which cost almost £7,000 in 2020.

After allowing for the cost of the glass doors, which

have still to be installed, we are left with a bank balance of around £19,850 at the close of the year. However, were it not for the special (coronavirus related) items of income the balance would have been nearer £3,400, only just over 2 months expenditure at the 2020 average monthly rate.

Clearly we cannot expect the Government to bail out small businesses indefinitely and the Trustees will be keeping a close check on finances during the coming months.

It hardly bears saying but, like most small businesses, without regular income it is impossible to survive for very long. Let us hope that we will soon start to overcome this terrible pandemic and that life will start to return to something like normal. Meanwhile stay safe and we hope to see you all again very soon.



Leaflet Sponsored by Coodes
Honorary Solicitors to Stuart House Trust

From our Chairman, Bob Hollingdale

Support!

Our Treasurer's end-of-year report for 2020 (see p.1) is one of the most pertinent statements to be brought to our attention for some years, and our thanks must go to him for such hard work and clarity in overseeing the accounts. Tony has outlined clearly just what a financial predicament we would be in were it not for Government help and the generosity of you, our Friends. The Trustees have considered anxiously the implications of a continued lockdown, as Tony reports, and must now take on board all possible contingencies. If we are denied the opportunity to have a steady, or better, income then we must seek financial support from other sources in order to maintain the well-being of the House through such a difficult period as we are presently experiencing. I would not want to plead with you, the Friends, to donate more than you have already given; that would be erroneous and unfair. (I wouldn't stop you though!). What I would like you to do however is to think of ideas which might enable us to raise money without you "dipping into your own pockets". If you have any suggestions please pass them on to Sioux at the House or email me, bobhollingdale@hotmail.co.uk. It would seem to me, and this is something I have said before, that as the current mentors of

the House we owe it to those who were responsible for the restoration and renovation and the establishing of the arts and heritage centre to ensure a secure future. I do hope you can help.

By way of finishing this piece, two short tales to tell, not connected at all to the above!

First, I was driving along Plymouth Road in Liskeard one morning a few days ago when I noticed a little old lady struggling to carry her bags of shopping. Then I noticed a young man, with hoodie and mask, coming up behind her. I pulled up at the side of the road not sure of what was to happen. The young man stopped the lady and I could see he was speaking to her. He took both her bags, proceeded to carry on, continually checking to see she was alright. I watched until they went out of sight. What a kind and generous act I thought.

The second tale relates to my eight-year old grandson, recently returned from living in Portugal. Watching his mother working on a funeral tribute with the letters G R A N D A D (we have a florist business) he enquired of her "Is that going to be a surprise for Grandad?" You have to smile!!

Remember Stuart Mouse? See p.6.

..... and from House Manager Sioux

Hello everyone and welcome to Stuart House 2021. Thank goodness 2020 has left the building. I hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year, even if it was not what you had planned. I am back in Stuart House on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's great to be back, but it still feels odd not having anyone else in the building - roll on the day we can open the front door again.



I would love to hear any ideas you may have for events/exhibitions etc., either by phone on the usual 347347, email:- info@stuarthouse.org.uk, or by good old fashioned pen and paper, either via Royal Mail, or drop it through the letterbox in the door of the Surgery (*facing Wetherspoons – see p.6.*) Any subscriptions/donations can be sent in the same way.

As usual I am filling my time away from work with various projects, and it gave me an idea:- although we are at the start of a New Year, I thought it would be fun to produce a Stuart House 2022 calendar. It will be a page a month version and I would like you all to help me put it together and I am organising a competition. So, all you photographers, artists, woodworkers, potters, needleworkers, knitters... you get the picture, put your thinking caps on! I will have more details for next month's newsletter.

Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross' Memories from the Minutes 1996 continued.....



No meetings were held in July and August, the next being 11th September by which time £5,000 had been allocated for the restoration of the railings, and tenders were being obtained. Work would commence during October and Mr Pearce would obtain estimates. Tony Wood would obtain an estimate for repair of the porch gates. It had been suggested that the passage entry gave a poor impression to visitors to the House due to its decoration and Tony hoped to be able to resolve that soon. An attempt would be made to sell the Edwardian fireplace which had lain in the House since its removal from a ground floor room. There was continuing efflorescence to some ground floor walls. (which still persists in 2020 and is not expected to go away). The annual insurance premium of £525 was due (the premium is now slightly in excess of £4,000!)

By 9th October the National Lottery Fund had requested further information and the deadline for it had been extended in view of holidays. (no pandemic in October 1996 so holidays were permitted...) The Trust would be informed of the outcome of the application by 13th November.

The repair and galvanising of the porch would cost £250. Mr Pearce had received several estimates for the railings ranging from £5,645 to £7,475 and the lowest would be accepted. If the grant application was successful, Mr Piper would be asked to undertake the work.

November's meeting confirmed Tony's success in obtaining a grant of £2500 towards the railings from Caradon DC's Capital Fund. Tony was considering the problem of rubbish disposal now that dumping fees were levied on commercial users.

No news had been received on the outcome of the NLF grant application by the time the committee met again on 11th December, due to illness. A structural engineer had been asked to report on the condition of the South wall of the House and the report indicated it was impossible at that time to be certain of the cause of minor cracks without further investigation. Mr Church (the Trust's architect) would be asked to make arrangements for a further investigation to be undertaken.

It is now 1997 and the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th January recorded good news. The day after the December meeting the Trust had been informed that the National Heritage Memorial Fund had awarded a grant of £68,000, conditional upon the Trust making a contribution of £3,000 from its own funds, £5,000 of voluntary labour being provided, and 'Partnership Funding' in the form of grant aid from other bodies. Prior to a formal contract being entered into, the NHMF would formally announce the award, which had to remain confidential in the meantime. The Trust had to produce a photographic record of the building and the works would be monitored by English Heritage for the NHMF and funded not less than monthly in arrears, following certification.

The Trust's funds at the end of 1996 stood at £442 in the current account and £5,612 in the deposit account. There had been a deficit of income over expenditure amounting to £80. (It was subsequently recorded that the deficit was actually £101.)

A Celtic Art exhibition was suggested by Tony Wood, to be a part of the town's Millennium celebrations. The idea would be reported to the Town Council at their next meeting. (This subsequently happened).

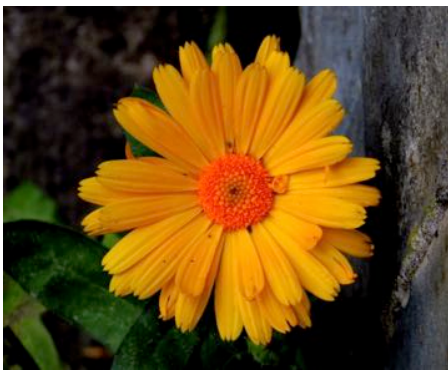
A formal opening of the House would be held on completion of the restoration.

.....to be continued.

February's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer

In my February article a year ago, I wrote about having winter-flowering shrubs in the Stuart House garden adding colour and brightness to welcome Spring. Alas, what an unexpected year followed. However, this is still an aspiration. Mahonia, Daphne mezereum, Witch Hazel, Winter Sweet, Winter Box and Viburnum bodnantense would all look good growing in containers along the new wall. If anyone has these (or other shrubs that flower at this time of year) in their gardens and can provide cuttings, do let me know. At least the garden has been well-kept this past year and should be very colourful by the time it opens again. A recent welcome gift was provided by the Liskeard Spar shop: unsold packets of bulbs, including tulips, daffodils, alliums, iris, ranunculus and ixia (what will they be like I wonder?) that had passed their sell-by dates were donated to Liskeard in Bloom who then passed dozens on for use at Stuart House. Thank you! The tulips will be planted in large pots to grace the front borders.

The beginning of January was very cold, with a fortnight of frosts. When I called into the garden in the middle of the month, a few primroses were in flower - the natural sort, not the modern hybrids with those huge, gaudy, tissue-paper petals that turn into a sad soggy mess at the first touch of rain. Also flowering was Eileen Crouch's Viburnum tinus bush in the front garden, naturally and pleasantly dwarfed by having spent twenty years in the same pot; as



well as a few Calendula plants which had self-sown. These can provide welcome colour throughout the winter, especially if in a sheltered spot. Mid-July is the best time to sow I have found, to produce strong determined plants that start blooming in October, often carrying on for six months. Although Calendula flourish in gardens, their long thin roots can find their way deep into cracks so that the plants will often grow well without any soil present.

Also in the front garden in a large container are some

Senecio cineraria "Silver Leaf" plants – see photograph. (Confusingly, these are also listed in catalogues as Cineraria maritima and Jacobaea maritima.) This is described as a frost-tender shrub that should be grown as a half-hardy annual. Well, those plants in the same container have been there for two years now with no winter protection and are doing just fine! This shows how imprecise "hardiness" can be. We've heard a great deal in recent times how viruses constantly mutate by making gene copying mistakes to produce offspring with different



attributes. This is a property of all living things, and I think the term "mistake" is not quite descriptive, as the process of gene replication is designed to create genetic diversity so that some offspring can benefit from environmental changes. For example, I have often noticed that in a sample of seed saved from the same plant there can be a huge range of diversity in the progeny in terms of leaf and flower shape and form, height, hardiness, etc. Next to the pond at Stuart House are two pots which last summer contained yellow straw-petalled Xerochrysums (Helichrysum). I grow lots of these in my own garden to dry for winter – excellent for decorating Christmas trees and for making into little bunches for presents. Some plants are dwarf and sturdy, some tall and get blown over; some flowers are large and double, some are small and single, some are early to flower, some not; and some shudder and curl up their toes at the first hint of frost, whilst others brazen it out, even producing winter flowers and then in Spring sprouting many new shoots, excellent for providing cuttings. Luckily, the plants by the pond are the plucky sort and continue to thrive. Xerochrysums grow naturally in Mediterranean areas and in Australia, and so those we cultivate have adapted to surviving in colder climes. Science tells us that plants which tolerate frost have developed narrower, tougher water-conducting (xylem) cells tubes, together with an accumulation of "anti-freeze" chemicals. Clever, eh?

I have a good seed supply of these straw-flower seeds, so just let me know if you would like to grow your own and I'll package some up, with full instructions. They should all come yellow, the colour I constantly select.

Two updates. Firstly, the fibrous begonia seedlings I dug from the gravel beneath the Stuart House picnic tables in the autumn are surviving wonderfully: I'll have at least a hundred to plant out in late Spring. Another example of a very tender species getting tougher.

Secondly, the question about whether apples and pears can pollinate each other to produce fertile offspring. After all, plums and apricots can cross, as can the various types of citrus fruit. Despite looking and behaving very alike, apples and pears are genetically far enough apart to prevent this, otherwise such crossed hybrids would abound. Yet we don't see any - cross pollination might occur but will nearly always result in sterile fruit. However, I recently came across a research paper in the journal 'Molecular Breeding', October 2014, describing how after much effort a cultivated apple and European pear had been crossed to form a fruit with fertile offspring. Experiments continue. If by any chance you come across a fruit called a "papple" when visiting China or Japan, this is really a true pear that just happens to look like an apple.

It's nearly time to start seed sowing again. If you have primula seed (any species), now is the ideal time to surface sow on a little compost and keep on a north windowsill in an unheated room - they'll be up in no time. And how did Mediaeval gardeners start off tender plants (we know they grew melons and cucumbers in castle and monastery gardens) without the widespread use of glass? A very interesting subject for next time.

Malcolm Mort

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Another snippet from Brian Oldham, president of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society

Sadly, if course, the O.C.S. room in Stuart House is not currently open to visitors, but work continues on the collections, as far as is possible.

The Case of the Stolen Bones

In May 1909 William and Emily Lee appeared before Magistrates Huddy, Nettle and Snell. They pleaded guilty to stealing 25 lbs of bones, value 9d, from William Crago of Trevecca Farm, Liskeard. Both were jailed for 1 week.



The now demolished common Lodging House on Cannon Hill

Crago scattered bones around his fields for manure, which he had obtained from the town refuse, and they were frequently stolen. The Lees were found by Crago gathering the bones; they had 1 full sack and several heaps. They absconded, but were apprehended at Tremar Coombe by Sergeant Johns and identified by Crago. Superintendent Gard gave evidence that the Lees had been in Liskeard for about a week staying at the Common Lodging House and selling post-cards - Emily had a licence for so doing.



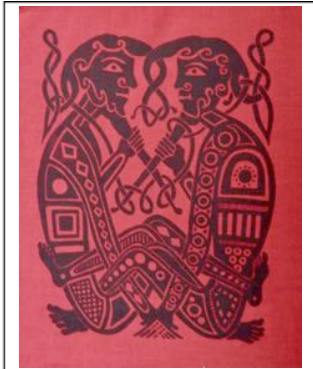
Supt. William Gard leaving Greenbank Lane Police Station

Diary of Events

February 2021



In the current situation, none of the events planned for February are listed.



Eileen Crouch's 'Spotlight on Celtic Art' event was originally planned for summer 2020 to mark twenty years since her first Celtic Art exhibition as part of Liskeard's Millennium celebrations (see p.3). It is currently penciled in for Summer 2021. Eileen is currently considering holding some sort of online event - more news of this in the March Newsletter. Ideas welcome!

The front page of the December/January edition of this Newsletter had news about the planned

Stuart House Advent Calendar

the idea of our Social Media and Website volunteer, Tim.

It was a great success – on Facebook and on the Website, and we thank Tim for all his work. Congratulations to Graeme, who won the draw for a cream tea for two in our café – once it re-opens!

There were lots of 'likes' against the great variety of images behind the windows, and some lovely comments, happy memories and interest too – from across the world!

Stuart Mouse (see p.2) was introduced too – ideas about how he might 'help' in the House when it re-opens are welcome!



An unusual view of the South Wall of the House. The door on the ground floor is the one with the letterbox to use at the moment (see p. 2).

Articles (including memories of events or times at Stuart House), information, notices and photographs for the Stuart House Newsletter to the editor, please (who must reserve the right to edit as necessary), before 25th of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter. Send to Sioux in the Office or preferably, at present, email to rachelpbennett59@gmail.com