

Newsletter

February 2022



News on Opening Hours and the Café from House-Manager Sioux

From February our opening hours will be changing to

- 9.30am to 3.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
- closed on Wednesday
- open on Saturday only if there is an event or exhibition in the House.

These hours will be reviewed regularly, and may change as we get warmer weather and more people are out and about and we hope to get some more volunteers too.

It is so good to be back in the House with things gradually returning to an even keel. Where we have been providing drinks and cake in the café, we are now able slowly to reintroduce some of our other menu items. With the onset of these frosty mornings, what better way to warm up than a bowl of homemade soup with bread/roll for £3.50? (see photo. p.3.)

Thank you, Tim

Tim Norman has been involved with the House for many years, starting by helping his grandparents set up and steward exhibitions. He later became a Friend of Stuart House and has run his own Exhibitions.

A couple of years ago he volunteered to take on the management of our website and Facebook pages, bringing us into the 21st Century, for which we are truly grateful.

Throughout this horrible 2 years he has kept our profile in the public domain, with a very successful Advent Calendar 2019 which we still get complimented on.

Life moves on, and Tim has a positive, exciting time ahead with many projects planned for this New Year. This means he will no longer be able to maintain his commitment to the Social Media role, and will be stepping down from 1st February.

We wish Tim every happiness and success with his new ventures and will miss him tremendously. We may be able to tempt him back for an exhibition or two at some point in the future!



Leaflet Sponsored by Coodes
Honorary Solicitors to Stuart House Trust

Memories from the Minutes by Sue Glencross, Hon. Sec.

I can hardly believe that my journey into the historical Minute Book now takes me to July 1999. Sat at home with the weather outside being dismal and typical for January, I am drawn to thinking about summer – but that seems so far away. Anyway, back to the point of my journey! It was reported that 'numerous works' had been completed inside and out and apart from that, works were being undertaken to the Trussed Room floor following the discovery of dry rot. Dominic Hayes had painted the ground floor windows externally. A store cupboard had been installed at the north end of the first-floor passage (see photo left).



John Thorpe was restoring the oak panelling in the Hall. It was agreed to commence work on the restoration of the King's Room without delay especially as C.E.T. and H.L.F. grant expiry dates were 30.11.99 and 31.12.99 respectively. Supporters of the Trust were to be invited to a garden party to be held on 25th July. Tickets were also being issued at a cost of £5 and Mrs Mayor was to be responsible for the buffet lunch. The



The Hall panelling today, on the right as found and on the left as restored.

Garden Party was successful as was revealed at the meeting of 8th September. (See picture below of Tony Wood, then Chair of the Trust, at this first Members' party. ed.) Work on the Trussed Room Floor and panelling had been completed.

A granite fireplace had been exposed in the King's Room and removing the wallpaper had revealed that the plaster was made of mud and bovine hair. It was suggested that lime putty, suitably coloured, would be adequate for any repairs to the plaster. Furniture for the room was on order and members were invited to view the latest stage in its manufacture around 20/21 September. The walls of the King's Room were due to be sealed whilst some work would be needed on the floor. (Works were undertaken to the King's Room Floor during lockdown.)

The lavatory floor would soon be tiled, and work would be carried out to the roof and chimney at the end of the month. Provision of a glass door screen across to the Porch - double doors folding inwards - was under discussion and Richard Church (the Trust's Architect) had advised that Listed Building consent would be necessary. (Our splendid automatic electric doors were installed during lockdown – with of course Listed Building consent.)



The Jane Room in January 2022 with the chairs and Alan Kingwell's art. (see p.3)

Tony Wood had learned of some soft seated stackable chairs at £25 each. It was agreed that 50 be purchased and the old green plastic ones be sold. (I am assuming these are the chairs which are still in use – a great investment!)

The cost of a licence for the holding of weddings would be £1,200 for 3 years. There would be car parking problems and VAT to be considered. The whole question of commercial use of the House would have to be gone into thoroughly before making any decisions. It was suggested that 'proper' coffee be served in the coffee room – the cost of appropriate equipment to be explored.

The next meeting was held on 13th October 1999

at which point an application for £3,000 had been lodged with C.E.T. for various building issues. Christian Art Exhibition notices had been sent to interested parties for Easter 2000. I was intrigued to read that "£50 sponsorship had been raised by Mr Wood following his completion of a 'marathon'". Surely that was not a marathon in the true sense of the word? Perhaps Tony could tell us all what he actually did for £50 – his reply can be published in the next newsletter. Interesting too to note that reference to the £50 sponsorship immediately followed reference to £400 having been paid for tiles in the toilet. Is the 'marathon' linked, I ask myself!



to be continued

Events in December & January

The House was decorated for Christmas– thanks to Sioux and Gaby – including a Nativity scene made and donated by the Thursday craft group.

The House re-opened on Monday 10th January and has not yet had events in the Gallery or Jane Room, although the Jane Room has displayed some of Alan Kingwell's wonderful paintings for sale (*see photo. p.2*), which (together with other craft work from the Kingwell family and many other craftspeople), had been part of December's Christmas Fair.



The Christmas Fair

(left) ran throughout December, with a changing selection of items being taken down to the Surgery for even more accessible sales. There was an excellent range of goods, and many interested visitors. Thanks to all crafters and stewards, and to Sioux and Gaby for the organisation.



Tillie and Maisie Vintage Emporium Pop-up Shop (right) ran in the Surgery from 6th to 11th December with a fascinating range of vintage goods.

Events coming in February (see p.6)

THE WAVE ACADEMY

Monday 7th
to
Friday 11th (morning)

Another exhibition of students' work (postponed from January) which has always been exciting and innovational.



The Coved Room Stitchery is now established. Gaby's classes and drop-in sessions will start quite soon.



As ever, Sioux and the café volunteers will offer a warm welcome (see p.1).

February's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer

Even in the middle of winter, especially on a sunny day, the sparrows emerge from under the fascia boards at the top of the library wall. They flit between the old apple tree, the towering twisted willow (*its shadows on the wall in the photo. below*) and the magnolia, constantly chattering away. No doubt they'll soon be looking out for flowering primroses, nibbling petals and also playfully tearing them up and tossing them around. (Primrose: Prima Rosa, first rose.) This year I've grown lots of primroses and polyanthus in a nursery bed at home, which are being planted into the café window boxes (*see below*) and pots in the Stuart House garden, along with dwarf daffodils, forget-me-nots, wallflowers and Sweet Williams. Plant historians tell us that the origin of the name Sweet William is shrouded in mystery. The name first appears in 1596 when botanist John Gerard



mentions it in his garden catalogue: he stated they were named after William Shakespeare, though this is now thought very unlikely. Some say that their name derives from William the Conqueror because these flowers grew "aplenty on the hills of Normandy". Others maintain that the characteristic floral eye, which in French is "oeillet" was pronounced "Willy" in English. This sounds more credible.

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I recently came upon an excellent newly published book in Liskeard library: *Where the Wild Things Grow, a Forager's Guide to the Landscape*, by David Hamilton. He says that humans, too, can safely eat primrose flowers (but better not, wild flowers are protected), and also magnolia flowers. There'll be lots of these in the garden during March, so if anyone is brave enough to try, well, it's at your own risk! Hamilton tells us of the wide range of tasty and nutritious plants found growing in the wild. Personally, I'm not tempted because it's very easy to confuse supposedly edible plants with look-alike nasties. Although the human diet contains far fewer plants than in mediaeval times, there's probably a good reason for this. Those that line our supermarket shelves have been chosen for safety and digestibility, because they're relatively easy to grow and to genetically improve. A warning here from personal experience: don't ever eat rhubarb leaves at *any* time, nor their stems after July, as the concentration of oxalic acid and toxins can be very dangerous. Ignorant of this fact, I did so once, long ago, and can vouch that the resulting pain was astonishing, making it impossible to stand up!



Ivy berries and rose hips on the pergola in January. All photos by Malcolm.



In December in the Stuart House garden, despite the fashion these days to leave gardens unkempt for the benefit of overwintering creatures, I usually cut the lawn border beds down to the ground with an electric trimmer. (The larger shrub beds are left mostly alone, the soil covered in leaves.) However, bending down for any length of time trying to manipulate this device is rather back-aching, so instead this year I ran over the beds with the lawn

mower: so much quicker and easier! They looked quite scalped, but on returning to the garden in the second week of January I was reassured to see the bluebells, hardy geraniums, montbretia and schizostylis lilies shooting up with great determination. Daffodils and tulips don't survive the intense competition from these determined plants, so spaces will be dug in the borders in February to plant out some I have growing in pots in cold frames at home.

David Attenborough's wonderful new series *The Green World* reveals the fierce struggles between plant species. One that has become particularly unruly at Stuart House is Vinca Major which several years ago someone (not me!) planted in the left-hand front garden. It's since taken over the whole bed, except where a small area of montbretia and a variegated Hebe hold their own. In December I sheared it right down to ground level but already it's creeping and crawling around again. The tough weaving vines get everywhere, even into little cracks in the surrounding paving and house wall, rooting in with super-glue strength. Strong weed killer will be needed in these places. But what to do about the rest? Trimming all the time is such a tedious and futile battle. and careful spraying may be needed here too. Just to add that I have checked to see if Vinca's tough leaves and delicate blue flowers (that mischievously play with our affections) are edible. No, they are not!



Common feather-moss growing on the wooden divisions between the dustbins.

So once again we are brought back to question our relationship with our gardens. The designs of Tudor and Stuart gardens emphasised control over nature: neat paths, complex knot designs, tidy cropped hedges and trained roses and bushes. An illusion if ever there was: leave manicured plants and lawns to their own devices for a few weeks and they soon become unkempt. Surely, it's *they* who are controlling, even enslaving, *us*! As I've said previously, I prefer to keep things as simple and easy as possible. In the recent Covid

lockdown times, much was told and written about the joys of growing one's own vegetables. Well, apart from salad crops, greenhouse tomatoes and runner beans (assuming the sparrows don't indulge in flower shredding), most vegetable growing is hard work. There's all that forever having to watch out for pests and weeds, and watering. On the other hand, fruit trees and bushes are a very much better use of space and effort, and the cost-saving over bought fruit is quite considerable.

Happy New experimental gardening Year!

Malcolm Mort

Space issues have meant that the tip Malcolm passed on about growing potatoes in wet straw-bales had been omitted. There has been some dialogue about feelings on vegetable growing! – all discussion welcomed! (ed.)



Another short piece from Brian Oldham, President of Liskeard's Old Cornwall Society (based on the top floor of Stuart House)

On March 20th 1876 the West Briton reported the case of Sarah Grace Dunn, a Domestic Servant in the employ of Brewery owner Councillor Daniel Venning of Bay Tree Hill, Liskeard. Venning had accused Sarah of stealing from him bread and meat with a value of 3d, but the case was dismissed in court by the Magistrates. Due to the apparent wealth of Venning and the trivial

amount involved, public interest was aroused and the verdict was met with cheers and applause from the gallery. After the trial Venning was followed home by 'a motley assembly of men, women and children, who did all in their power to vent their spleen by shouting after him'. The unfortunate Sarah was sacked by Venning, but why did she put her liberty and job at risk for such a small reward?

Sarah grew up in Criff Cottages near Pengover Green with her eight siblings. Her father, Seth Dunn, worked in the nearby Menheniot lead mines, as did two of her sisters and three of her brothers, the youngest being James aged only 13. The next census after the court case revealed that Sarah had found employment as a General Servant, but from her meagre wage she had to support the only other resident in the family home, her now widowed 63 year mother Mary, who gave her occupation as a Pauper. Not to condone theft, but I think we can appreciate the circumstances that led to Sarah's crime.

Sarah's story had a happy ending, with marriage to a Menheniot farmer. The theft had been just a few months before Susan Carthew of Stuart House (only a hundred yards or so from Venning's Brewery) died. She was known for her charitable disposition and might also have had sympathy for Sarah. (ed.)

Diary of Events

February 2022



Tuesdays 1 st & 15 th	Liskeard Writers' Group meet 2 – 4.30pm.
every Thursday	Craft Club: all welcome 12 noon to 3pm.
Monday 7 th to Friday 11 th (am.)	Wave Academy Art Exhibition
Monday 14 th	Liskeard Poetry Group meet 4 to 6.30pm.
Thursday 17 th	Fake or Fortune – antiques valuation with Richard Hamm of Bearnas, Hampton & Littlewood. 10am. to 12 noon
Coming in March	All our regular events, including 'Fake or Fortune' on Tuesday 22 nd . Why not drop in with something you'd like to find out more about?

*The House, Garden, Old Kitchen Café and (check first) Computer Research Facility are currently open
9.30am – 3.30pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday
(closed Wednesday and Saturday unless there is a special exhibition or event on)*

Articles, 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. Leave with Sioux in the Office or email to rachelpbennett59@gmail.com



More of Malcolm's photos. - Stuart House pond reflections and climbing rose-hips in January. Best in colour, but mysterious anyway! (ed.)