

# Newsletter

July 2020

## Stuart House must remain closed



Our five trustees: chairman Bob, secretary Sue, treasurer Tony, maintenance specialist John and heritage link Dave, met, socially distanced, in the garden on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June.

(Unfortunately, they did not make a photographic record of this so far unique meeting!)

This is the formal statement which they have made.

*In keeping with similar establishments in this area and due to the fact we are unable to comply with the Government's current requirements to prevent the spread of Covid 19, the House will remain closed until further notice. We will, however, continue to monitor the situation.*

Along with many other Arts & Heritage Centres and museums, especially those in old buildings, ensuring the safety of visitors, volunteers and staff by following current government guidelines simply makes re-opening impossible. Our lovely building does not lend itself to social distancing, many of our volunteers would not wish to return yet, and although we are proud of the way the House is usually maintained, the cleaning programme necessary for being open to visitors in the current situation could not be managed.

We are so sorry that our 'hidden garden' is now more secret than ever, although Malcolm's articles and photographs in these Newsletters help to keep us aware. More garden photographs are now on Facebook, and the Newsletters are now all on our website, and we thank volunteer Tim for doing this.

We shall miss some eagerly anticipated exhibitions (including Tim and Iris' 'Mayflower' one), concerts and other events – remember the exciting 'booked so far' list in our March Newsletter - and so hope that these can all be rescheduled. We miss the café too of course.

House Manager Sioux is furloughed now until the end of August. She writes on p.3.

However, plans for the House continue to be developed (see Sue's News on p.2), the House is regularly checked by trustee Dave, and the garden is lovingly tended by Malcolm and Jeff (see p.4&5).

## Sue's News

The pandemic has thrown us all into utmost turmoil and upset in our lives, and Stuart House has not been excluded from that turmoil and upset. Although we are still a distance away from re-opening the House, I can at least be the bearer of some good news which can be summarised as follows:

### 1. Automatic sliding doors

Our application for Listed Building Consent for the installation of automatic sliding doors to the entrance porch has finally been approved by Cornwall Council. There was a lot of correspondence on the subject and the Council took some convincing! Approval was granted on the basis that before installation we provide details of the fixing and electrical connection. The door providers have made a suggestion as to installation and we have been sent plans which have been submitted to the Local Authority. So far as electrics are concerned John tells me that he had a meeting with the electrician and the electric supply can be fed from the Lookout down through the ceiling. We hope therefore that Cornwall Council will be satisfied on the point. In case Friends are wondering how the Trustees can justify expenditure of this nature given the current economic climate, I can reveal that there is private funding in place for this. There will therefore be no cost to the Trust. I have been requested to give no further information – so please do not ask me! I am given to understand that the fitting of the doors should effect a 20% reduction in heating costs – but the comfort of anyone sitting or standing in reception should be greatly improved and the need for a hot water bottle (in addition to a portable electric fire AND the gas central heating) should no longer apply.

### 2. The new garden shed

You will recollect that we had received a grant of £750 from Cornwall Council towards the purchase of a replacement shed. I am delighted to announce that a generous donation of £250 has been received. Unfortunately the cost (to include dismantling and taking away the old shed, and installing the new one) has risen to £1406 since we were given a quotation. We are now left with a shortfall of £406 which is being met from the Trusts own funds. The deposit has been paid and the order placed. We now have a delivery date in August. At least with this work being done during close-down Malcolm will have plenty of room in the House to store the shed's contents in between demolition and the arrival of the new shed.

### 3. Our finances!

Last but not least I can report that Tony has obtained a grant of £10,000 from Cornwall Council as an accretion towards our funds. The bills still have to be paid, despite the House being closed. The grant will be an enormous help. I must pay tribute to Tony who just went ahead and made the application and the first we knew about it was when he emailed to say he had been successful! Another example of how the wheels have continued to turn, with each trustee doing their own bit independently of the others. Our 2019 accounts have been audited and submitted to the Charity Commission and our Annual Return has been made. This year it was made earlier than usual and well within time. It is always a day of happiness for me when that formality has been dealt with!

*Sue Glencross, Hon. Sec.*



In the last Newsletter it was red poppies escaping through the front railings. This time it's the beautiful Duchess of Cornwall roses.

*All photographs are by Malcolm.*

## A message from our House-Manager, Sioux.

We are now coming into our fourth month of closure, due to Covid-19, and things seem very surreal. Having gone from being in Stuart House from, often, 8.30 (baking and soup making) through to anything up to 5.30-6.00/6.30, Monday to Friday and a lot of Saturdays 9.00-2.30ish with occasional Sundays, being “confined to barracks” 24/7, and not being allowed into the House, is strange to say the least.



Having cleaned the home, top to bottom and changed uses of various rooms, I finally discovered that I could, sit and sew, or knit, without feeling guilty. As the last two months' newsletters show, I managed to finish two cross stitch pictures, along with several Celtic designs, and a decent stock of knitwear. I now face a further two months of not working for the



Trust - what will I do?! Bring on that huge box of projects and let the sewing continue!

The photographs are of a couple of projects finished this month.

I look forward to seeing you all when we are allowed to reopen our doors. Please keep safe and well.

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## A garden memory from Tony Wood

The work of re-cabling the fountains, mentioned in the June Newsletter has reminded me of discoveries I made when putting in the original cables in the 1990s.



*The central fountain in 2017 – now re-cabled and working again.*

The Trust bought the house in 1988 and I took on responsibility for developing the gardens. Nigel Matthews, of the Cornwall Gardens Trust, drew up a plan and I set to work to it. It included a central fountain and a wall fountain. I was lucky enough to find the central one in an antique shop in Padstow together with its cherub but the wall pond was a challenge. Luckily I was still Headmaster of LSCC and a mature student teacher joined us in the Technology department. He had run a small business making rubber moulds and willingly agreed to make a mould of a rim piece (copied from an original in a Nat. Trust garden I think) and so we got the 20(?) blocks to make the rim.

When both fountains were in place, I had the job of laying the cable to provide the power. This meant digging a trench across the back of the house and the side of the library, with a spur to the middle pond. I discovered the footings of the two walls of the previous Garden Room (shown on the 1896 ground plan of the house) and had to chisel my way through them. The spur to the middle was

easier as there was one of the skilfully made slate floored, granite capped drains running in the right direction and I was able to run the cable along it. Two pieces of archaeology! I think the drains date from late 19th century but may be much earlier.

*(apologies, as at this time the ed. cannot go into the House to search for archive photographs and plans etc.)*

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

*Places of the Soul, Architecture and Environmental Design as a Healing Art* (Christopher Day, 1990) is an inspirational book. We are told that our surroundings, the relationships between buildings and their settings, and the nature and qualities of materials used, generate a level of aesthetic response that can affect us physically and spiritually. It is interesting, for example, how the new wall built of weathered textured brick in the Stuart House garden seems so well-suited and in tune not only with the garden but with our responses. So too with garden design. There is indeed something canny about our garden – the layout, the combination of plants, shrubs and trees, the warm stone of the tall library walls, that together generate a feeling of peace and creativity. Even the rather untidy shed with its rotting planks, hidden away under the magnolia tree and behind the formal conifers, somehow feels so very inviting!

During the unseasonably hot, dry days of April and May, and when the world suddenly became so quiet, the garden was an absolute haven of peace, Spring colour, and birdsong. However, eventually the ground became very parched and the many plants began to struggle. The Acanthus, (Bear's Breeches) collapsed and lay flat on the ground for many days, as if afflicted by a dreadful malaise. The lawn suffered too, but seed has been scattered and raked in, so hopefully will recover. Thankfully, warm welcome rains descended in June. The gardens, back and front, were painted again in luxurious colour and verdant



growth. The Acanthus thankfully sprang to life, with leaves as large and as glossy as ever, and even suddenly sent up several flower spikes, obviously to guard against such future eventualities!

The lawn borders are currently full of flowering cranesbill geraniums, and huge clusters of Chilean Potato Vine (*Solanum crispum*) are hanging from the trees in the far border, intertwined with purple clematis - which never gets pruned and seems to prefer it that way, as it faithfully returns each year.



*Ammi majus* (Queen Anne's Lace) is also in stately bloom – this is treated as a hardy biennial, so the seeds are best sown as soon as they become ripe. At Stuart House, the seedlings are removed from the gravel path and paving cracks and grown on. Indeed, it's surprising how many



seedlings do appear in these places – useful sorts such as feverfew, verbena, primrose, aquilegia, foxgloves and toadflax, as well as the ever-determined pioneer plants of course: sow thistles, willow herbs, grasses, dandelions, and bittercress. It's always worthwhile keeping an eye on those self-sown seedlings because sometimes one will spot something unusual and wonder how it got there and how can it be growing so well *without any soil*. Interesting mosses and ferns spring up too – more about these another time.



Convolvulus is growing through the wall shrubs again. Once in the garden, it is almost impossible to get rid of it, so in the limited time that the volunteers have it is only possible to trace the offending stems to soil level and cut them there. Theoretically this should tire the plants out by depleting their root stores and at least keep them in check.

Wisteria can quickly grow out of control and needs attention twice a year to keep it in bounds and flowering well. The plant over the arch in the far corner finished flowering by mid-May, and by mid-June had shot strong new twirling shoots twisting and twining into the trees overhead - and indeed all over the place. Gardening books say wait until July or August before carefully pruning back each new shoot to seven buds, and then prune back again in the winter to three buds. But in a very confined corner more drastic measures must be taken, and so a good shears haircut leaving all shoots about a foot long must suffice, together with another trim in the winter. Such treatment seems to suit it quite well.



An interesting plant is Lemna minor, the common duckweed. This enjoys living in our ponds, and of course grows astoundingly and exponentially quickly. It's a floating freshwater plant found all over the world apart from the polar extremes. Each little leaf group divides daily, producing separate individuals, each with a



single root hanging in the water. Tiny flowers and seeds are very occasionally produced, though I've never seen any, no matter how long and hard I've stared. The leaves contain air spaces to enable them to float, and which in autumn fill with starch causing the plants to become dormant and sink to the bottom to over-winter. Come Spring, up they come again. Duckweed can cause problems for wildlife because it blocks out light to submerged aquatic plants and animals, preventing exchange of gases with the air so that the underlying water can become de-oxygenated. However, ducks enjoy eating the stuff because it is so very nutritious, having a high protein and low fibre content. In many countries, duckweed is harvested, dried, and fed to livestock, especially poultry, and is also used for purifying wastewater, a task it is extremely good at. If you have a

pond, it's bound to appear after a while, either on a plant bought in, or via a bird who has visited another pond where it was flourishing – the roots readily stick to birds' feet. At Stuart House, we use a grass rake to fish it from the larger pond, whilst in the small circular pond a little hand brush with stiff bristles is found to be ideal. Duckweed: another of those things in life that can't be eradicated and must just be lived with!



*Malcolm Mort*

*All photographs by Malcolm.*

*Previous page top: the library (north) border, below left Solanum crispum and right clematis and below Ammi Magus. On this page, duckweed in the wall pond, and a single leaf with its root. Below, left to right, are an arum lily under the wisteria, deutzia by the old shed and a water lily in the central pond.*



## ARE YOU MISSING MARMALADE? 'A Special Letter To All' via Bob, our Chairman.

Not so long ago my friends and I were able to enjoy our favourite food – some jars of Stuart House marmalade. Some of us ate it at our picnic in the woods, one of us had a jar when waiting at Paddington Station in London and we have also been able to share it with some of our animal friends.

However, talking to Bob the Marmalade Maker we realise that there is a difficulty caused by this awful virus which has afflicted so many of the human race. You see, because of the lockdown we haven't been able to buy any of our special jars because they are all shut up in Stuart House. Of course this means that no-one else has been able to have any either. Bob is very worried because he prides himself on making marmalade of the highest quality and then selling it at a very fair price, all money going to Stuart House. So we have come up with an idea which we want to share with you.



### STUART HOUSE MARMALADE

*The Connoisseur's Choice!*

*Seville Orange  
..... and Cinnamon  
..... and Whisky  
..... and Ginger  
..... and Dry Cider  
..... and Brandy  
..... and Whisky and Ginger  
..... and Amaretto  
..... and Rhubarb & Raspberry Gin  
..... and Cointreau, Cinnamon and  
Clove*

*All jars are priced at £2.50*

In order to make Bob smile again we are prepared to get into Stuart House (we can't say how) and smuggle out all the jars of marmalade that have stood untouched for four months. Then we can have some jars and you can have some jars. To make it even easier for you to buy we are prepared to deliver in the local area free of charge. Bob also tells us that there will be discounts for bulk buying. So please consider this once in a lifetime opportunity in the knowledge that you will be supporting such a worthy cause.

A list of all the varieties is printed alongside this letter. My favourite is the Rhubarb and Raspberry Gin variety but really my friends and I love them all. There's

nothing quite like sitting down with a wooden spoon and digging deep into the jar!

Just ring 01579 – 347347 or 07760781087 to place your order. Payment will be by cash or BACS only. Sorry, no cheques.

Thank you for reading this and remember that next time you go down to the woods you may be in for a big surprise for it may be the day of our picnic.

Stay safe everyone,

Ted Dybear (and friends) *(it took the ed. a while to work this out, despite the clues in para.1!)*



*Accessible marmalade memories  
- in September 2017 – Bob sold  
jars (and splendid pickled onions  
too) on St Matthew's Fair Day.*

# Diary of Events

## July 2020



As the House must remain closed (see p.1) none of the events which were planned for July or August are listed.

*This from Brian Oldham, President of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society which is not at present, of course, open every Wednesday in the Rowse Room on the top floor of Stuart House. There is already quite a lot of overlap between the Friends of Stuart House and the members of the Old Cornwall Society, but more is very welcome!*

With the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society archive on the top floor of Stuart House, Liskeard & District Museum and the Public Library all closed, what can those of us with an interest in Local History do to fill the hours? As the Cornwall Archaeological Society Area Representative for Liskeard I have been photographing and reporting on Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and other sites of historic interest for several years to the Historic Environment Record. During the Lockdown period when I could only walk from home for exercise, the number of reports on Liskeard town centre Grade II listed buildings increased drastically.

In addition, I also started to "Enrich the List" on the Historic England website and post the photos, with a bit of local history added, on to the Liskeard OCS Facebook page. Our page currently has 639 followers, please give it a try. After being shared 20 times, the following post reached 7,207 people and 2,343 engaged in some way.....



"This week's submissions to Historic England and the Historic Environment Record include Castle House where, in the 1840s, John Triggs opened the Boot Inn, so named as he was also a Cordwainer. In 1851 he shared the Inn



with his wife, 4 daughters, 5 sons, 1 servant and 5 lodgers (4 were Hawkers and 1 a Landscape Artist). In the 1940s Edwin Rowe had a Grocery shop in Castle House."



*It is interesting to think what Stuart House was like at these time. John Trigg's family would have know it as 'Carthews House', where Susan Carthew lived from before 1840 until her death in 1876, when her obituary spoke of Liskeard losing 'one from the ranks of its most charitable'. Edwin Rowe would have known the House as linked to Truscotts Garage (ed.).*

Articles, information, notices and photographs for the Stuart House Newsletter to the editor, please (who must reserve the right to edit as necessary), before 25<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter. Please email to the editor, not to the House [rachelpbennett59@gmail.com](mailto:rachelpbennett59@gmail.com)

Any short memories of times of events in the House or linked to it, photographs or other contributions are very welcome, especially at this time when 'news' will be limited.