

Newsletter

July 2021

NEWS FROM OUR CHAIRMAN, Bob Hollingdale



Although tempted to title this short update “the good, the bad and the ugly” it is best rather to consider it as “the good and the not so good”!

So to the good - the new porch door has been installed and with a few minor adjustments to be made will be in full use. We all look forward to seeing the House Manager relaxing in reception having discarded thick coat, scarf and gloves! The door is a tremendous asset and we are so grateful for the generous donation which has paid for it.

Now the not so good! The Trustees met on 21st June and in view of the government’s decision to delay any “freedom day” decided unanimously, after due discussion, to continue with the House closure. This was again a decision not taken lightly but is in keeping with

other similar bodies in the area. The Trustees know that this might not meet with universal approval but ask for understanding of the situation as it is. The difficulties faced have been highlighted in previous newsletters.

Whilst Sioux and Gaby have been undertaking a massive house clean it has become evident that there is a considerable woodworm infestation in the House. This has necessitated an urgent and extensive treatment which has required floorboards to be lifted and joists to be treated, particularly in the King’s Room. Our Treasurer had a rueful smile on his face when hearing the news but again we are so indebted to a generous donation which will largely cover the cost. Thank goodness and how lucky we are to have such support.

The Trustees are meeting again on 15th July when at last we may be able to offer encouraging news regarding reopening. Let’s all keep our fingers crossed!



Memories from the Minutes from Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross

Last month's article ended with Tony Wood's revolutionary suggestion of a telephone in the House! (Sorry Tony but that amused me so much when I read it. In context of course 1998 telecommunications were very different from now!). We now come to the 14th AGM held on 29th April 1998. The Chair brought the meeting up to date with the state of the building and renovation works which had been the main subject of the Minutes throughout the previous 12 month period. The fact that more Members (now 'Friends') were needed was stressed (a remark we cannot echo enough nowadays). It was recorded that Eileen Crouch had achieved a great deal on the Celtic Art Exhibition to be staged in 2000. Tula Brown and Jenny Martin had been instrumental in forging strong links with local working artists.

The 13th May Minutes recorded that the long-awaited gas meter would be fitted in the front garden and the pipe would be brought around the side of the House, with the road needing to be dug up. The fountain was now working. Tony had made an interesting find whilst digging the trench by the back door into the garden: what seems to be a clay-lined pit with clinker in it which he believed might have indicated that smelting took place there in the distant past. Granite chippings would be ordered for the seating area in the garden and Tony was congratulated on how lovely the garden was looking. A discussion took place on flooring, the ceiling in the 'top room' and tables and chairs. The railings should be completed about 20th May and the granite windows should take another 4 weeks. The Government's New Deal programme would be reconsidered and may be a medium for decorating. Now this made me laugh too and I quote verbatim. 'Gallery. Some dirty footprints were found on the walls of the Gallery'. I wonder if anyone who was around at that time can throw some light on this? How bizarre. Caradon District Council had advised the House was non-domestic for the purposes of rating and 'nil was owing'. Eileen would contact the Library who had requested information concerning the Trust for their Information and Data Section. The House was to be open during the August Bank holiday. Despite Eileen and Tula contacting a large number of organisations in relation to Celtic 2000 it was a disappointment that at the time of the meeting there had been no response from the Town Council or the Chamber of Commerce. The Banner project would proceed and the possibility of funding would be investigated. John Rapson would be approached for the loan of some of his photographic archive of the House for an exhibition. Names for the rooms would be considered and a price sheet should be available with the cost of each room

The next meeting was on 10th June 1998. I do not know whether that was a Monday – but if so forgive me for breaking into song..... 'twas on a Monday morning when the gas man came to call.....'. Finally the gas meter had been installed. Tony had been preparing the hardcore area for a seating area where the conservatory had been (see *photo*). Another amusing extract 'After a short discussion it was resolved that SECA and the Trust would share the old bathroom as an office'. I wonder which organisation had the tap end? Listed as an event was a talk 'possibly on the subject of sewers and associated matters'.



To be continued – more to come on June 1998's discussions, especially relating to the big Celtic Art exhibition, the 20 year anniversary of which we hoped to mark in 2020 – postponed, of course, but still (at the time of going to press) pencilled in for August 2021 (ed.)

Heather Medlen 1931 - 2021



We were sorry to hear of the death of Heather on 31st May. She was a loyal Friend of Stuart House, supporting all exhibitions and other events, as well as the Café. As curator of Liskeard and District Museum she liaised and co-operated with the setting up and running of Stuart House as an Arts & Heritage Centre generally, and on specific projects including the Dehwelans (Cornish Homecoming) in 2008. Heather was a Life Member and very active in the Old Cornwall Society. Her enthusiasm and commitment to different aspects of our town's Heritage provision well illustrated the co-operation and happy interaction of different groups in Liskeard. Heather will be much missed.

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Greetings from our House Manager, Sioux.

As we continue to hurtle through the year, with no definitive re-opening date, I have been thinking about plans. August has two events booked, The first is The Celtic Celebration that Eileen set in motion back in 2019. Having led workshops on designing Celtic Knots, she is looking forward to seeing the results. It will be great to compare the various mediums that those designs morphed into. Any more material is welcome - there are entry forms available in Reception. I will need to put a stewards' rota together in a way that takes into account the measures required in these so strange times. Volunteers are very welcome - please contact me at the House on Tuesdays and Thursdays - in person by letter or phone - or email info@stuarthouse.org.uk or siouxdunster@yahoo.co.uk

The second event is the multi-talented Kingwell Family exhibition which is always a not-to-be-missed event. I love listening to the various musical instruments being played throughout the day.

Having had 18 months of not being allowed to visit museums, galleries and the like, it is going to be a huge blessing even to sit in the garden with a cuppa and cake looking at Malcolm and Jeff's hard work. (*see a couple of Malcolm's photos below*)

As mentioned in Bob's piece, the new doors are now fitted. The existing front door is looking a little sorry for itself, so is having a freshen up. The Café has had its walls repainted, having done its regular trick of paint flaking off in several areas. Other cracks have been filled and painted. By the time we re-open, I hope that you will come in and agree that the House looks lovely after its 'spring clean'. As mentioned in last month's Newsletter, the Coved Room is undergoing a make-over, and Gaby will be in situ to help with needlework projects.

We are looking to hold a (socially distanced) 'Friends Social' to celebrate re-opening. I'll be ringing Friends over the coming weeks - please let me know your thoughts on this.

Do remember the possibility of a 'My Wedding' exhibition, as suggested in pervious Newsletters, and contact me with any questions or suggestions.

I am really looking forward to welcoming you all back to the House. Keep safe, and (I hope), see you soon.



July's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer

All through June, the garden has resounded with the chirruping of sparrows, more than I can ever recall. They breed under the gutter fascia boards at the top of the library wall, and this year there are fledglings everywhere, finding their wings – and voices. The pigeons have returned too, this time choosing to make their nest in the large bay bush along the path leading from the café door. This has meant that for a few weeks it was not possible to mow the lawn nor trim the box hedges for fear of making too much noise and causing them disturbance. (At the time of writing, the hen pigeon is still sitting on the nest.) No doubt the birds have been attracted to the garden for the peace and safety afforded, especially as for the last fifteen months there have been no visitors. The water bowl on top of the fountain attracts them, too. In hot summer weather the water dries out quickly: when Jeff and I come in on Tuesday mornings, the pigeons and sparrows are lined on the roof and window ledges, watching and waiting for the bowl and the pond to be filled, before swooping down.

The self-sown begonia seedlings pricked from the gravel under the tables last autumn and overwintered in my sitting room are now mature flowering plants and have been planted in the new troughs on the café windowsill. This is an ideal place for begonias – sheltered and shady.



The Duchess of Cornwall roses in the front garden suddenly sprang into flower at the start of June. We've watered them well and this year given them a mulched treat of rotted farmyard manure. The roses in the back garden too are looking superb at the moment. For the last two years, the autumn leaves from the magnolia and twisted willow have been spread under the bushes as a winter mulch, and it's surprising how quickly these rot down and enhance the humus content of the soil. The rambling lutea Banksia rose over the rear porch has also been in flower for over a month. It's very tough and

determined, and very thankfully is completely thornless. I was reminded about this rose on hearing a recent radio programme about life before antibiotics. Severe infection by rose thorn stabs can result in sepsis and death, as the thorns are so easily able to inject through skin ghastly bacteria such as streptococcus and staphylococcus which roses seem somehow to attract as an additional defence mechanism. On a recent trip to Duchy Nurseries to look for a possible new rose or two for the garden, I was surprised that despite all the plant breeding that goes on these days and the huge range of roses on offer, there were no thornless sorts to be seen: in fact, many looked horribly lethal! Later, an internet search showed that although thorn-free roses can be had, there are very few, and most are quite old cultivars. There's the wonderful Zéphirine Drouhin rambler of course (I have two in my garden at home) but this seems frowned upon by rose connoisseurs as it attracts fungal blackspot. However, kept watered and mulched they are usually fine and will repeat flower in the autumn. If any reader would like a copy of my thornless rose research, I'd be glad to share. Modern hybrid roses that lack thorns are those in the "Smooth Touch" series, developed in the 1980's: there are a dozen or so distinct colours and all are said to be fragrant.



The wonderful blue solanum climber that for so many seasons has towered over one of the arches on the far wall suddenly died. It has been trimmed back to its main stem and a white flowering cultivar planted nearby. This was a small plant, one of those in a £2 supermarket packet, so fingers crossed. Interestingly, I have planted quite a few plants of this size - clematis, roses and jasmine – in various places, and although they might take a bit longer to get going than a bigger more expensive plant, I've never yet had a failure.

I was reminded about these packet plants when I recently read garden advice on the “proper” way to grow clematis. It was in one of those newspaper articles with the headline: “Every garden has room to squeeze in one more of” whatever plant is being discussed. The author advised that for clematis to succeed, you should prepare a hole 60 cm (that’s 2ft) square and the same distance deep(!) and certainly not closer than 60cm from a wall, work in rich garden compost and bonemeal, then plant and arrange the roots in certain ways, fix in a plastic pipe or bottomless plastic bottle nearby for watering, before mulching over with a whole bucket of compost.. Well, be reassured, with the £2 packet types I’ve planted, I’ve just forked over the soil, dug a little hole and put them in, maybe spread some old leaf mould around, and they’ve been just fine.



One point on which I will agree with the author relates to the benefits of modern plant breeding. Clematis cultivars, we learn, are now available that bloom continuously from Spring to Autumn which means that the distinction between early, mid and late season sorts has become very blurred. It would be very interesting if through some magic of time-travel, gardeners and farmers of old (especially those from Tudor and Stuart times who began in earnest the process of crossing and selecting plants) could come and see our present-day ranges of flowers and vegetable. I’m sure they’d be amazed. Whatever purists say about “heritage” cutivars, evidence shows that nearly all the plants we have now are far more productive in terms of yield, disease resistance and floriferousness.

And yet, I am very thankful for the renewed awareness in wildflowers and wildlife, including insects which are vitally important to ecosystems, but which have been reported these last few years to be in steep decline. The advice not to cut lawns so frequently, road verges being left to flower, plants growing in pavement cracks everywhere left unsprayed, and the establishment of wildflower areas is very welcome. At St Martin’s Church, Liskeard, under Making Space for Nature (a project involving Cornwall Council, Exeter University and with EU funding), wonderful Garden of Eden wildflower areas have been created. Just walk up the path and see!

Malcolm Mort

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Another snippet from Brian Oldham, president of Liskeard’s Old Cornwall Society, who have their research room on the top floor of Stuart House.



Recently I was able to help the owner of the Grade II Listed Newton Farmhouse to identify the initials IL with the date 1665 above the arched entrance to his front garden. They belong to John Lyne (J having been written as I at that time).

John Lyne of Newton is on a list of men in St Cleer parish required to sign allegiance to Charles I and the Protestant religion in 1641.

Lyne’s will of 1681 is held at Kresen Kernow and contains a complete inventory of his assets with everything from his estate in St Cleer worth £120

down to 14 pewter dishes, 1 flagon, 2 pairs of tin candlesticks and 1 tin chamber pot, altogether worth £2. Specific gifts in the will include “unto my grandson Samuel Lyne one grey mare colt”, “unto Jane Hendy my servant one of my best ewes and one lamb” and “unto John Short my apprentice one ewe lamb”. His 6 pigs were valued at £1 14s and his 6 stacks of bees £1.

(ed.’s note: In 1681, Stuart House belonged to Thomasine Baron, the grand-daughter of of Joseph Jane who had added the east wing and tower to the House, and hosted Charles I there. She did not live there, and it was probably let out.)

Diary of Events

July 2021



In the current uncertainty, no events for July or August 2021 are listed, but see Sioux's piece on p.3 for some hopes.

Eileen writes "despite the continued restriction on our movements, I thought this sounded optimistic – and I, for one, have found the odd foray off the beaten track refreshing".

NATURAL HEALTH © Eileen Crouch

Improving our health in the lovely outdoors
taking nature's prescriptions high up on the moors
fresh air and beauty in endless supply
breathtaking scenes underneath a blue sky

The overworked doctors really won't mind
if we improve our health in new ways that we find
and another nice thing about taking a walk
is to join a companion with whom we can talk

If reaction to hiking on moors brings a frown
there are interesting places to walk within town
taking a camera can double our pleasure
with photos we've taken to enjoy at our leisure

There is helpful advice so come on have a look
in the visitor centre or a heritage book
we will also discover what else we can do
and our pills will then dwindle to only a few

There is no magic potion just air warm or cold
which is why lots of residents are ninety years old
and the regular doses of Natural Health
won't be instrumental in depleting our wealth

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Ilow Splann

are still scheduled to perform again at Stuart House, this time during the Celtic Celebration still planned for 17th – 29th August. Meanwhile, they have been playing live again. Carlton Crouch writes:

"there has been some return to live music with two performances from Ilow Splann in June. The first performance of 2021 was for a Cornwall Museums' award ceremony at Mary Newman's Cottage (Saltash) – they had won an award for a 'Tudor Afternoon' featuring their Tudor cottage, garden, Tudor delicacies and early music.

We were also pleased to play at the socially distanced Lostfest. There was plenty of space in the churchyard and church for a limited number of audience (see photo above), and the performance was also streamed live".

(Mary Newman's Cottage has several similarities to Stuart House, and as we are both members of the South East Cornwall Museums' Forum we have sometimes been able to share ideas and experiences helpfully. ed.)



The Garden: an 'interesting place to walk within town', but, sadly, not at the moment.



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