

Newsletter

June 2021

We have **NO FURTHER NEWS ABOUT RE-OPENING** yet. The trustees plan to meet before June 21st to review the situation. All decisions will be difficult.

We shall be in need of **VOLUNTEERS** to help steward the House and serve in the café. House-manager Sioux is contacting our 'old' volunteers again, but, understandably, not everyone will be ready or able to return. If you would like to enquire about volunteering, please contact Sioux at the House by email, or by phone on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

We thank those Friends who have renewed their **SUBSCRIPTIONS** for 2021. Any further subscriptions are very welcome – again, please contact Sioux at the House.



The garden in May, photographed by Malcolm – another of the 'stunning photographs' referred to in an email to the editor by a Friend now living far away from Liskeard, who said, in appreciation of the Newsletter, "Stuart House garden was a source of calm, an oasis in a storm for me when things were tough and I miss it, so the articles are a wonderful reminder - in fact far more than this because the gardens have developed so much since I first knew them. Quite inspiring!"



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

DAVID BONNICK

David, known to so many at Stuart House, died peacefully on 29th April aged 81.



Tony Wood writes:

I was very sad to learn of David's death recently.

Many years ago I asked him as my next door neighbour, whom I had got to know quite well, whether he would be willing to take on the role of Treasurer for Stuart House. He knew the house but had not shown any particular interest in it at that time. He thought about it for a couple of days and then said 'yes'. What a relief it was and what an outstanding acquisition he proved to be.

David put the accounts on computer for the first time and presented them clearly. But we didn't just get David's quiet efficiency, we also got Doris's enthusiasm and commitment. Between them they have given years of steady support to the Trust and have helped to keep it not only running but flourishing. David passed on the role of Treasurer and could have stepped back but, instead, he took over the Saturday morning duty of Reception whilst Doris provided coffees from the kitchen and they kept up this dual role even as his health began to fail.

The Trust owes both of them a great debt of gratitude for their loyal support and significant contribution over the years.

House Manager Sioux Dunster writes:

Not long after I took on the role of House Manager in 2004, a new Treasurer took office. (I think around February 2005). David entered into the spirit of the building with real verve. I was able to see David as Treasurer once a week. He, and Doris, would pop in whilst in town for shopping and errands. David helped me to set up a computer based Petty Cash system, instead of the "little book and cash tin" that I inherited. He also helped with the data base for Members which made record keeping so much quicker and data protection safe.

David was a huge support to me through out his term of office, not just as Treasurer but covering the office/reception when I had time off. He, along with Doris, was the first to volunteer services for stewarding exhibitions and craft events, and even in the shop when we got that up and running.

We shared many conversations on faith and I always I looked forward to receiving postcards from their many pilgrimages and walking holidays.

Both he and Doris, gave so much time and energy to Stuart House. The first Saturday of the month is not going to be the same without him on reception.

I am honoured and privileged to have called both him and Doris friends, and look forward to seeing Doris in the House when she is ready.

Farewell David, you are missed.



Hon. Sec. Sue's Memories from the Minutes

The details of the minutes remind us of the extraordinary amount of work needed in making Stuart House into the welcoming Arts & Heritage Centre which we can easily take for granted today. (ed.)

The first meeting of 1998 was held on 11th February. The reason for not meeting in January may well have been due to the weather which was referred to again in February!

There had been slow progress but the slate hanging on the eastern front would be completed the following week. The central heating was due to be installed. The railings at the front would be replaced. Hopefully all should be completed by March. A quote of between £1,600 and £1,800 had been received for the stairwell and work was expected to take six to eight weeks. Tony Wood was to obtain another quotation, and one for the floors to be renovated. One of the electrical plugs felt hot so an electrical test was deemed necessary. The insurers had been notified that the electricity would be disconnected for about six weeks. A letter had been received from The Environment Task Force, New Deal, which was a Government Scheme offering opportunities to young people which would benefit the community with the host employer

being paid £60 per week for training. Under 'any other business' it was reported that the bed given by Charles 1 and located at Penfound Manor had been sold. Mrs Head had been in touch with the new owners of the Manor who could not open the house to the public for insurance reasons. Tony Frith, the woodworker, would be sent drawings of a similar type of bed. Seasoned oak would cost £2,000 and the total bill would be in the region of £8,000. This cost had not been included in the overall budget for furniture. Arts 4 Everyone or sponsorship would be needed. The V&A might be able to give advice on obtaining a bed and the National Trust might have one they could lend. Wendy suggested that her group could get together and make curtains to go around it. The House needed a caretaker and someone to clean! (It still needs a caretaker!). Mr James and Dr Wigham would stand down at the AGM this year and replacements would be needed. Jenny Martin was welcomed onto the committee.

By the meeting of 11th March 1998 the rear slate hanging had been completed. The heating work

would start in 7-10 days with the gas meter in the kitchen. Damage to the ceiling track in the surgery had been caused by condensation. Mr Furseman's quotation for the staircase had been accepted. A date was required for the work to the railings. Quotations were being obtained for the floors. The work to the culvert was still outstanding. Unauthorised notices were appearing in the display frames and Phyllis Head would ensure that this practice was discontinued. The Trust could well qualify for the 'New Deal'. Mr Wood would be prepared to stand as Chair in place of Dr Wigham. Mrs Crouch would be prepared to take on the post of secretary in place of Mr James



It was hoped at 8th April's meeting that the work would be finished by 17th April with only the new granite windows outstanding. The central heating had been installed – but not the gas. Miss Lock needed the culvert clear by Easter and was awaiting her own contractors. Tony Wood had received one quotation (£6,000) for the floors but two further were awaited.

There was confusion as to whether this work had been included in the original building contract. The ponds would be wired up. A life membership would be awarded to Dr Wigham who was standing down after 13 years as Chair due to an increasingly demanding workload at Plymouth University. He had, amongst other things, negotiated and masterminded the whole Lottery application – no mean feat! A life membership would also be awarded to Mr James in appreciation of his sterling work over many years. John Harvey reported that bookings were slim and Phyllis would remind everyone that there are now more rooms to let. SECAF will be offered a room to use as an office with a telephone. Possibly the Liskeard Community Murals Project would be happy to share it. Tony Wood felt it necessary to have a telephone on the premises. (it is inconceivable some 23 years after to imagine not having a telephone – especially a mobile!)

to be continued.....

June's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer



During May, the old gnarled apple tree in the far corner of the Stuart House garden unusually became festooned in blossom, a response perhaps to its rather severe winter pruning when it may have thought its end was nigh. There's another smaller apple tree alongside for pollination, so let's hope for a good crop this year. A determined effort will be made this summer to prevent the wildly wandering wisteria shoots (*see photo. p.2*) on the arch below from tightly winding around the apple's branches.

The tree peony planted along the wall near the shed has flowered this year again – just one very large beautiful ragged bloom. Tree peonies are extremely hardy and thrive best in part or even full shade. The Montana clematis “Elizabeth” in the opposite corner is proving highly reliable, each Spring blooming profusely. As this has taken so well to the garden, two more clematis have been planted to scramble up the arches along the far wall, space being created by taming the incredibly invasive jasmine that for so long has dominated that area.



The metal containers along the new wall have needed a severe clear out. These were planted for the ‘Spotlight on Herbs’ event in 2019, but except for two angelica plants, invasive mint roots had completely filled both tubs. These have been removed (*see photo.*), and this summer flowers will be planted. Pots of herbs might be



used instead in the wooden troughs on the café windowsills.

Alas, the wood pigeons in their scruffy nest in the rear porch have disappeared, leaving two unhatched eggs. Something seems to have gone wrong, as only one of the pair was ever there. Were they frightened off by the two aggressive seagulls that for several weeks laid stubborn claim to the garden? The incubation period for pigeon eggs is 18 days, and one pigeon did sit there for most of the time. Maybe the eggs weren't viable? Maybe they will return and try again? To be continued.

I always look out for unexpected seedlings emerging in the gravel and cracks under and around the garden tables: foxgloves, aquilegia, Ammi major, willow herbs, buddleia and ferns love these places. The sight of several emerging young ferns reminded me of the remarkable Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward (1791 – 1868), inventor of the Wardian Case, an early type of terrarium. Dr Ward was a physician in Spitalfields, east London, and had a passionate interest in natural history. It is recorded that his house stood out in the neighbourhood because the front was covered with a vine, and the rear with a fig and Virginia creeper. (*cont. p.5.....*)



He also loved ferns. However, the coal smoke and sulphuric acid air pollution from heavy industry played havoc with the health of his plants – and patients. Dr Ward wondered therefore if plants and animals would do better in sealed containers. In a sealed glass bottle containing moth cocoons (he also collected these) he noticed that a fern spore and grass seed had germinated and were doing well. So he asked a local carpenter to built him a closely fitted glazed wooden case: his fern collection thrived.

From the 16th century, botanists and nurserymen had been exploring the world for new plants but bringing them home on board ship proved very difficult. Below deck it was too dark, on deck the salt spray killed them, and fresh water was scarce. Dr Ward arranged to ship two of the glass cases full of ferns and grasses to Sydney. They arrived in excellent condition, as did a number of Australian species on the “very stormy” return passage around Cape Horn. These successes unleashed a revolution in moving commercially important plants around the world - and expanding colonialism in the process. In 1849, an explorer Robert Fortune smuggled by ship 20,000 tea plants from Shanghai to begin tea plantations in Assam, so breaking China’s grip on the tea market. And in the 1870’s rubber tree seeds brought back from Brazil were germinated at Kew and the resulting plants sent in Wardian cases to the new British territories in Malaya to start plantations. In 1860, the cases were used to bring Cinchona plants from South America: from the bark of these quinine is obtained, and so plants were taken to Africa and used by colonisers to help protect them from malaria. The Wardian case therefore had a profound effect on world history and commerce.

Dr Ward was held in high esteem in the scientific and medical worlds, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society and Master of the Society of Apothecaries. He also maintained close contact with the Chelsea Physic Garden and with Kew, and on his retirement moved from Wellclose Square where he had continued to practice as a local doctor, to the open countryside of Clapham. There he gardened on a grander scale and built an enormous conservatory containing a miniature tropical forest with, of course, wonderful tree ferns!

Malcolm Mort

The main source of references for Dr Ward is the BBC Radio 4 programme *50 Things That Made The Modern Economy: the Wardian Case*. BBC radio podcasts (available to download from their podcast site) deserve the highest praise, as also does BBC Sounds where nearly everything on the BBC can be listened to again. *Crowd Science* and *People Fixing the World* on BBC World Service are wonderfully essential listening, and often accompany me (via mp3 player and headphones) when I am working in my own garden.

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Progress in the Coved Room

As reported in May’s Newsletter, artist-in-residence Linda Maynard has, sadly, had to decide to leave Stuart House.

Gaby Johns is setting up her ‘**Coved Room Stitchery**’ and she plans to offer tuition, guidance and support on Mondays and Fridays and on Wednesday afternoons. For enquiries, contact her on gabyjohns67@gmail.com, or leave a message via Sioux in the House. The pike-man in the Trussed Room is currently guarding lots of bits which will be re-housed again before opening because, as well as decoration, woodworm in the floor of the Coved Room is receiving attention.



Diary of Events

June 2021



In the current situation, non of the events once planned for June 2021 are listed.

- ❖ A reminder that House-Manager Sioux plans an exhibition of wedding memorabilia when we re-open – please contact her with offers or enquiries.
- ❖ The 'Celtic Celebration' is still planned for August, and there are other bookings for the Gallery too.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY Day 1, 19th May 2012

On the day the Olympic torch came through not only was Town dressed in red white and blue but Cornwall's sports colours of black and gold flew overhead pleasing young and old

Liskeard's Mayor opened events for the day the Silver Band got the parade underway all through the day music played sweet and loud a great party atmosphere enlivened the crowd

Stuart House Art Centre opened all day where refreshments were served so the people could stay to visit the house with its Craft Sale downstairs Art in the Gallery and Heritage upstairs

Our musician played all day long out in the sun entertaining the visitors who were all having fun they danced they took pictures of the famous Sealed Knot did Cornwall set a record for cream teas, or not?

Performances in the park and on the stage too at Museum and School there was plenty to do until the Torch Relay Team's time drew near then everyone lined the route ready to cheer

At last our reward as the escorts appeared policemen on motorbikes and sponsors were cheered support cars and buses then the Torch Bearer came to a rapturous welcome as we witnessed the FLAME

Thousands in Cornwall enjoyed that first day of the 8000 mile journey of the Torch Relay the torch cast a spell on the crowds gathered there as it spread joy and happiness to all everywhere

Eileen Crouch ©
(from her "Painting with Words in Cornwall" poetry book)



The little south window of the 'Lookout' on the top floor of the tower will have seen many sights since the new entrance tower was added to the House in the early 17th century, including the relay of the Olympic Flame in 2012, which Eileen's poem remembers

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