

Newsletter

March 2021

House News from the Trustees

Just after the last Newsletter was produced, so after he had prepared his financial report for it, our Treasurer Tony brought us the excellent news that he had secured further funding totalling £6,239 from the Government scheme. This involved Tony in a great deal of work and thanks must be extended to him for persevering with the laborious procedure and achieving such an excellent result.

We have also been notified of a generous £5,000 legacy from the estate of the late John Rapson. It was typical of John to have remembered Stuart House in this way and all Friends can rest assured that his legacy will be well utilized in his memory. Will gifts and lifetime gifts are always deeply appreciated and essential in providing much needed funds.

At the moment John Gliddon has been investigating the source of some damp in the House. Really we are fortunate that the House has survived its closure



We hope that before too long our sign will invite visitors into the House again.

since March of last year without any disaster but it is now suffering for having been closed for so long. Thank goodness we have John to oversee all repairs and maintenance and his valuable knowledge and advice is always 'on tap' so to speak. Sue G. Hon. Sec.



Our garden is ready for when people can once again visit it.

Chairman Bob adds

Following the Government's lockdown exit roadmap the Trustees will now urgently consider when Stuart House can re-open, partially or fully. As soon as we have definite news we will publicise it through all available channels. We will do our utmost to re-open at the earliest possible opportunity.



*Leaflet Sponsored by Coodes
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A message from House Manager Sloux

Well hello Mr. Blue Sky! What a gorgeous end to February, let's hope the sunshine is here for a while. I don't know about you, but to me it feels like spring really is on its way. I love seeing our hedgerows blooming with their snowdrops, leading in to daffodils, primroses and crocuses and I have found myself sorting through my craft project pile/cupboard/room, and finding that there is a definite theme showing, with both Seasons and Celts featuring. With the 'road map' presentation from Downing Street last week, I am feeling very positive about being able to open our doors again, and have been looking through diary dates and events. I am hopeful that we will be open by the projected June date (and sooner, if at all possible).



So, what do we have to look forward to?! Well, I am pleased to say several of the events that had to be cancelled last year should, we hope, be going ahead this year. All being well, it will start with a textiles exhibition, and with art from a couple of different producers including the Kingwell family. Fingers crossed for a railway event in August. The House's Celtic Craft event will take place, so get those projects together - there is so much scope for interpretation on this. The Concert program will go ahead, watch this space for more details. Not to mention the obvious Christmas events in December! We will be joining in with the annual Liskeard Unlocked in September and there is the 2022 Calendar competition to look forward to. Full details will be released next month.

During the enforced closedown, the House has, understandably, suffered with window mould, huge amounts of dust and debris etc. Over the last few weeks Gaby has been able to come back in and work her magic, and the House already looks and feels loved again.

I hope you are all keeping safe, and look forward to seeing you all soon.

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Another snippet from Brian Oldham, President of Liskeard's Old Cornwall Society, who are based in the Trecarrel Room on the top floor of Stuart House

The Well of St. Keyne was purchased on Nov. 29th 1934 from John Cosmo Stuart Rashleigh for £2.00 by the first President of Liskeard OCS, Albert de Castro Glubb (1865-1947).



A de C raised by subscription the money needed to rebuild the Well from its "ruinous state". On completion, ownership was conveyed by a document dated July 4th 1936 to Rev. Canon Frank Rupert Mills, Rector of St. Keyne Parish. The Well is still owned by the Church. In 1945 A de C established a Trust Fund with £100 for the Diocese of Truro to invest and use £3.00 of its annual income for the

benefit of the Parish, on condition that the Well was kept in a tidy state.

On Nov. 19th 1948 the Cornish Times reported that the then Vicar, former Warwickshire cricketer Jack Parsons, refused to become custodian of the Well and said "as to what has happened to the £3.00 per year in question, I have not the foggiest idea". In fact the Well had been



cleaned voluntarily by members of Liskeard OCS since its rebuild in 1936 and still is today. The matter of the Trust Fund was resolved in 1997 when Liskeard OCS agreed to continue with the cleaning every year. This meant that the Trust could be closed; the balance of money going towards the installation of a new organ in St. Keyne Church.

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

1997 continued..... The contract with the National Heritage Memorial Fund must have been in place by the meeting held on 12th February as by then the Cornish Times, Radio Cornwall, BBC Spotlight, The Western Morning News and The Western Evening Herald had all reported news of the award. Mr Stewart of English Heritage was, however, unaware of the grant. David Hambly had taken photographic evidence of the House which had been required as a condition of the grant and only charged for materials. Works to the garden had been excluded from the grant.

It was suggested that a list of individuals and organisations who had supported the Trust financially in the past be displayed in the House. A planning application had been received in respect of 4 and 5 Bay Tree Hill and Tony Wood and Mr Pearce would view the plans.

Interesting to see from the Minutes of 12th March 1997 that English Heritage had yet to receive confirmation of the award of the grant from NHMF. The architect would be asked to obtain written consent from the freeholder of the adjacent filling station to excavate adjacent to the south wall following a visit by Peter Greig, the structural engineer, who had identified the cause of movement. The District Council had provided £2,500 which could be spent on the garden. Peter Andrew would be instructed to complete the wall fountain and install the central fountain. A notice board for the 'dining room' had been made by pupils at Liskeard School at a cost of only £25 to cover materials and this had been delivered to the House.



The first mention of the internet!!!! Cornwall County Council had contacted the Trust 'to include it on the annual information database which was now on the internet'. Incredible how matters have escalated between 1997 and 2021 and hard to recall a time without internet.....

Eileen took on the task of co-ordinator of the Celtic Art Exhibition at the 9th April meeting and the Minutes recorded that the committee were to investigate sources of funding.

By 9th April Tony said he had (after repeated efforts) managed to make contact with English Heritage who had written to say they required the approved specification for the work and three tenders. The architect would be contacted and Richard Church would liaise with David Stewart to hold a site meeting w/b 21st April for English Heritage's approval to enable work to commence. It was hoped that during the work the House could remain open for Saturday coffee mornings although many bookings would have to be cancelled. Once building works had been completed, room hire charges would be reviewed.

Phyllis Head confirmed dates for a plant sale, OCS coffee morning, bird watching at Seaton with Bob Stockhausen, visit to Mary Newman's Cottage and Ince Barton, visit to Cartuther Barton and trip to Tregantle Fort. What a programme of events! Well done Phyllis!

Caradon Council had confirmed the Trust would not have to pay Council Tax. There had been a use of the House for photographing a Sealed Knot wedding group and it was suggested that future consideration may be given to applying for a wedding licence. (this was seriously investigated some years after but due to the size of rooms it was not to be considered viable. The trustees at the time had a meeting with one of the Registrars).

The 13th AGM of the Trust was held on 23rd April 1997 when the Chair reported on 1996 being a successful year and asked that any ideas in relation to the Celtic Exhibition be forwarded to Eileen. The planning application in relation to 4 and 5 Bay Tree Hill had been considered and no action felt necessary because there was no access proposed at the rear. After election of all officers the comment was raised that 'younger members should be considered'. (the latter comment still very much applies today). **to be continued.....**

March News from our Garden's Overseer



Work to tidy the tangled growths in the shrub borders of the Stuart House garden has continued. Attached to the far brick wall there are four tall metal arches that still play host to a wild rose, clematis, a climbing solanum and jasmine. However, that bed has become heavily infested with *Convolvulus*: digging down three or four inches reveals a nightmarish network of snaking roots. So maybe this year, after clearing and simplifying that area, the climbing bindweed shoots will be sprayed with systemic weed

killer. Trimming back the established plants neatly to the arch tops has resulted in a pleasing view over the wall to the ornate Guildhall tower and clock, which, from the rear porch, almost appear an extension of the garden.

Since the start of the New Year we've had two periods of intense cold with bitter winds, interspersed with milder weather. The fresh, lush *Acanthus* leaves have survived; Hellebores, snowdrops and early daffodils are flowering, and bluebells and montbretia leaves are pushing through quickly.



Some photographic notes from Malcolm

The photo of the snowdrops looks like a studio shot, but was taken simply with my camera resting on the soil below the flowers whilst I reached over and pressed the shutter. It's necessary to set the camera to overexpose for a shot like this because otherwise it would try to expose for the sky and so the flowers would be underexposed and too dark. I've found that +2 stops works well.

One sees weeds emerging everywhere of course, miraculously germinating in deep winter in cracks and crevices all over the place: the garden gravel paths and sheltered spots under the picnic tables provide hugely attractive places for them. I've mentioned before how keen hairy bittercress is to get going – it germinates and grows incredibly eagerly throughout the winter without fail and is said to be very nutritious and to have a hot peppery flavour, ideal for salads and soups. A friend of mine actually sows it around her garden – personally, I think that's taking things a bit too far as it happily flings itself far and wide without any help whatsoever. This is one of the plants that people throughout history have relied on during late winter "hungry gap" times, along with those usual pests (to us) such as dandelion, nettles, chickweed, garlic mustard, sow thistle, goose grass (with those snaking Velcro-like stems) and fat hen (used for fattening chickens!) to name but a very few. Ground elder with its truly woeful mesh of roots, worse even than bindweed, was brought here by the Romans and then cultivated in Anglo Saxon and Mediaeval times: the edible leaves are a good gout remedy apparently. And a plant that is edible, tasty, nutritious and highly illegal to grow is the dreaded Japanese knotweed. Introduced into this country in the 1800's, it would have been unknown to Tudor and Stuart gardeners. The botanist James Wong tells us that its tender, succulent young shoots can be picked in Spring when 10 – 15 cms. high and treated in exactly the same way as rhubarb, to which it is related. Rhubarb is also a crop native to the far east and brought to Britain in the late 18th century, so is another crop that would not have been found in the early Stuart House garden.



I recently came across Thomas Hill (c. 1528-1576), author of the first popular book in English about gardening, published in 1563 and entitled *The profitable arte of gardening: A most briefe and pleasaunte treatyse, teachynge how to dresse, sowe, and set a garden*. I was intrigued and amused by the following paragraph on how to grow cucumbers.

“The Gardiner which would possesse Cucumbers timely in the beginning of the spring, to fill up old worne baskets and earthen pans with fine sifted earth tempered afore with fat dung; after the seeds bestowed in theses, which done when warme and sunnie daies succede, or a gentle raine falling, the baskets or pans are then to be set abroad, to be strengthened and cherished by the sun and small showres; but the evening approching, these in all the cold season ought to be set under some warm cover or house in the ground, to be defended, untill all the Frosts, Tempests, and cold aire be past, till about the middest of May. This matter may be made easier for the avoiding of the daily labour and paines, in the setting abroad and carrying into the house if the Gardener bestwo the vessells with the plants in Wheel-barrowes, or such like with Wheeles; for these causeth marvellous easiness.”

What I found particularly interesting was (i) cucumbers were known and grown outside, (ii) the use of glass protection is not expected, (iii) gardening has always been very hard work!

There is a passing mention of the use of glass protection later, but I think we can assume that it was only in the gardens of the very rich one would find this. I had the intention of writing more fully in this article about the use and history of glass in gardens, but this very interesting subject will wait for another time.

In the meantime, a few further ideas on winter colour possibilities for the garden in addition to the shrubs I mentioned last month. As well as winter jasmine with its early yellow flowers, there are several wonderful winter flowering clematis now available: *Clematis cirrhosa*, *Clematis armandii*, and *Clematis alpine* (several cultivars). The last mentioned, as its name suggests, lives happily in the Alps and can tolerate temperatures down to minus 40C, so our climate is a doddle for them. These would do well growing up those metal arches. Also, at the turn of the year, I came across some delightfully delicate flowers growing in pavement cracks by a garden wall, oblivious to the cold, wet and wind. These are *Chionodoxa* “Glory of the Snow” (*photograph right, taken in West Looe*) which grow naturally in eastern Mediterranean countries: in Cornwall they will bloom from January to March. The little bulbs can be bought in summer and need only poor soil, so I hope to have pots of their bright blue and pink blooms brightening the Stuart House garden at this time next year.



Malcolm Mort

LISKEARD UNLOCKED 2021



Planning has just begun for this: Liskeard’s annual contribution to the national Heritage Open Days. It will take place in mid September, as usual (exact date t.b.c.), and may have a combination of on-line and in-person events. The theme this year will be food, which gives lots of scope for Stuart House’s involvement which could include Tudor and Stuart food plants and recipes, hearths, and dining rooms and their furnishings.

Diary of Events

March 2021



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

Stuart House will have a virtual stall at the Council's Online Community Fair in March

CREATING THE 21st CENTURY'S NATURAL HERITAGE

Simon Reeve's programme on national TV showed hardships in Cornwall - heart breaking to see natural beauty remains, there's no doubt but it wont pay the bills so folks have to move out

When fishermen, farmers and miners have left the old and the young ones will all feel bereft while wresting a mean living out of the land that is barren and gradually turning to sand

Wild flowers are native so leave them alone they'll scatter their seeds where right now there are none all of the creatures will come back again and thrive in our climate of sunshine and rain

To the wild birds the shrubs trees and hedges are home where the parents will nurture them `til they have flown just keeping them natural will bring your reward as you leave Mother Nature to have the last word

The sea also needs us to clean up the trash that's been tipped there by those who have dumped it for cash washed up on the beaches by many it's picked but the source is the place where it has to be licked

Once, shopping was easy, done daily by most carried home in a basket, not in plastic by post wrapped only in paper that burnt in the fire just residue ashes were left to expire

A re-wilding project is needed – and soon! reversing wrong habits could be a great boon it's been proven elsewhere so could happen here too *** with like-minded people ... that`s me and you



*Reflections of twisted willow in the pond.
Photograph by Malcolm.*

EILEEN CROUCH © 2020

*** Inspired by the successful 20 year project at Knepp in West Sussex, described in Isabella Tree's book WILDING, including a quote from the acknowledgments: "One does not live alone in a world of wounds (Aldo Leopold said of an ecological education) if one can share experiences like these with like-minded people who are such positive forces for change."

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