

Newsletter

May 2020



CLOSED, BUT STILL HERE

The House is, of course, shut down at the moment (see *p.2*), and overlooks a very quiet Barras Street. It is another remarkable time that the House has witnessed in its 500 or so year life, along with international and civil war, cholera epidemics, miners' riots, public celebrations and so much more.

The garden continues to be beautiful - an even quieter oasis than usual (see *pp.4&5*).



It is not possible to do a hard copy of this Newsletter for those Friends of Stuart House who usually receive it by post. Do please pass it on electronically if you can.

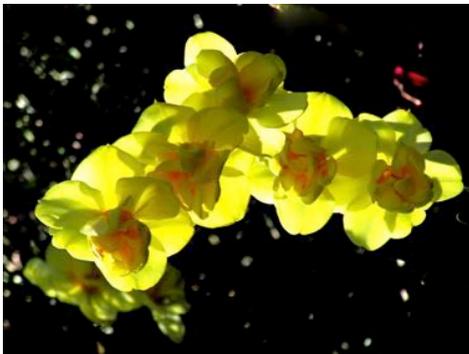
A statement from the trustees:

'The Trustees were grateful to be able to take advantage of the Government's furlough scheme and can report that Sioux has been furloughed. That will make a great difference to the Trust's finances during this extremely difficult time. In accordance with the provisions of the scheme, Sioux is not permitted to undertake work for the Trust. Prior to the inception of the scheme, but after the Trustees had taken the step of closing the House to the public, she was able to do as much as she could to put the House to sleep. Dave is currently undertaking regular security visits so that the Trust's insurer's requirements are complied with. Currently there is no means of communication, electronic or otherwise, with the House. This is a very frustrating time for all of us and at the moment it is not known when the House will re-open or on what basis'.

Sue's News

In my April newsletter article I mentioned the grant funding from Cornwall Council towards the new shed. That money is now in the Bank. Thank you Cornwall Council.

As you know, we were part of the Waitrose 'green token' scheme in March. Waitrose sent me an email part way through the month to say that due to the coronavirus situation the scheme had been discontinued.....but we would receive a contribution from them of £250 in any event! That money is now available and will be more than sufficient to purchase a new fully adjustable chair for reception, which was the purpose notified to Waitrose.



*Daffodil 'Cheerfulness' in our garden
(photograph by Malcolm)*

We will need to fund-raise urgently in future. I am sure that all you keen gardeners (like myself) will have been beavering away and almost watching the weeds grow on a daily basis! I have a suggestion: we are all nose-y by nature and how many of you are willing to open your garden to Friends of Stuart House and their guests to view? There is a catch of course – a donation towards the Trust's funds would be expected. For security reasons, this would not be open to the public – anyone who is not a Friend of the Trust would have to be accompanied by someone who is a Friend. Any volunteers?

I daresay, too, that many of you have been baking and cooking away and eating all the fruits of your labours. The pounds may have piled on. If they have – how about a sponsored diet to raise money for Stuart

House? This is something I (bravely) undertook some years ago and raised £700 for the Trust. It proved to be quite amusing as every time I ventured out to the local supermarket I would find friends and colleagues peering into my shopping basket to make sure I had not bought anything 'naughty'. I almost felt it necessary to shop at dead of night wearing a disguise! Anyone participating in a sponsored diet could meet once a week for a weigh-in and to swap stories and challenges. Any takers?

Finally – if you are unable to assist financially or in any meaningful manner at this point in time – and understandably so – then would you consider a legacy in your Will? At no time have we ever felt more about our mortality and many people will now or in the near future be making amendments to their existing Wills or even making Wills for the first time. A legacy can make all the difference and would assist the Trust appreciably in future. We have been fortunate in the past to have benefitted quite considerably from legacies. Remember, too, that any gift to a Registered Charity is exempt for Inheritance Tax purposes. I would ask that you notify your solicitor of our Registered Charity Number – which is 1175842 and that any gift is expressed to be 'for the general purposes of the Trust'. It is always difficult if a specific purpose is mentioned for two reasons: (i) that specific purpose may not exist when the gift takes effect and (ii) there may well be a need for something more important – and I have in mind that the ongoing maintenance and repair of the House takes precedence over anything else.

Take care everyone. Be safe.

Sue Glencross 17.04.2020.

In the April edition of this Newsletter, it was suggested by Hon. Sec. Sue G. that Friends contributed some memories of particular times or occasions at the House.

The piece below, from Eileen Crouch, is the only 'memories' piece so far received – more are very welcome, however short. Please send to the editor's email address on the back page.

CELTIC ART 2000

The town's theme for celebrating the Millennium was Celtic Art; the Council and Churches marked the occasion by having granite crosses made for the five entrances to the town plus one on The Parade. These were officially celebrated on New Year's Eve.

Stuart House's contribution was :

- (1) A CHRISTIAN ART EXHIBITION throughout the house. Organised by Tony Wood, this included exhibits from local schools and from our members and took place at Easter-time, occupying several rooms. There were two stunning professional exhibits loaned to us by Timothy Guy Designs. One was of St. Paul's Cathedral (where Tim had just completed work in their visitor centre); the other was a depiction of "Christ in Glory" (from the dome in the cathedral). These were large copies of the ones created for St. Paul's - made up from photo mosaics. They were eventually destined for Tim's Cornwall offices.
- (2) CELTIC ART 2000. This included an exhibition in August filling all rooms in Stuart House, with exhibits from over 40 people, plus banners on the outside and hanging from the Christmas tree holders in the town, plus a town map detailing businesses, cafes and those displaying Celtic themes. This became my project and, with two years to plan it, Leader II funding enabled us to create a significant project. Imaginative exhibits included QUILTS, WALL HANGINGS, GLASSWORK, ETCHINGS ON SLATE, TEXTILES, PYROGRAPHY, PARCHMENTCRAFT, PHOTOS, ETC.

There are photographic memories in the photo albums in Stuart House archives, to be viewed once the house re-opens.

Her Celtic Art 2000 exhibition was the inspiration behind Eileen's idea of mounting another exhibition at the House twenty years on. This was scheduled for 17th – 29th August, so we don't know when it will be happening, but, as House Manager (*but not able to act as such now – see p.2 ed.*) Sioux said in April's Newsletter, this time might be an opportunity for crafters to be creative. Sioux herself is, and writes :

"As a Friend of Stuart House I have thoroughly enjoyed working on some of my craft projects, without feeling guilty that I should be 'doing' something during this first stage of Lockdown.

When the House is able to reopen there are lots of craft oriented events so I am enjoying building up a 'stock'. The Celtic event will go ahead, even if it is not on the dates planned, so that is where my focus will be over the next couple of weeks."

It really has been a strange time for us all, I hope you are all keeping safe. Our home does not know what has hit it, and just about everything that can be washed has been, to make use of these gorgeous sunny, windy days."

(photos show three Celtic-inspired shrugs and a knot-design piece by Sioux)



May's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer

I recently called into Stuart House Garden to catch up on a few tasks. What struck me immediately, in these very unusual times, was how magically quiet and peaceful the garden was, vividly colourful in the Spring sunshine, with shadows gently weaving patterns across the grass and paths. The magnolia tree's early flowering burst had come to end, replaced by a canopy of light green - almost golden - young leaves. The twisted willow (which we're told has a mature height of around 30 feet but appears to have grown much higher than this)



also had leaves gently unfurling in beautiful fluttering airy lightness. Such heavenly delight!

The gravel paths were weeded, the ponds were topped up, and the bird bowl cleaned out and filled - the pigeons and sparrows were watching and waiting. In the April newsletter I suggested that the lawn might be left uncut to see what wildflowers grew up

and flowered, but on second thoughts this mightn't be such a good idea because the mower would not cope with the tasks of cutting it all down in the autumn. Also, the garden does look and feel far more calming with the grass mown short, edged by flowers in the border beds.

At the moment it's the turn of the bluebells, soon to be followed by the hardy cranesbill geraniums. These two plants, aided by the late-summer flowering Schizostylis, no longer leave space for daffodils and tulips in the border beds. Instead, these are now grown in pots near the rear door and either side of the three wooden benches. In an earlier article I mentioned the daffodil Early Sensation which flowers from late December. One of the best of the latest flowering varieties is Cheerfulness which has several semi-double blooms on each stem.

Also in full bloom in the dark border by the shed were a host of purple Honesty plants. By the time the garden is open again, the flowers will have been replaced by silvery circular seed pods. Seeds from these will be available again in June for immediate sowing - by post if necessary. A white flowered sort is also available and which would look even better in this shadowy site: I have obtained some seed and plan to grow them next year.



I'm usually not a fan of dark-petalled flowers as they can easily get lost in shade and shadows. However, my eye was caught by a dark crimson, almost black, tulip bloom growing in the rose bed. I can't remember seeing it before, but I have to say it was magnificent, almost sensual. There are some gaudy red tulips too, in the left-hand front garden bed, emerging from a carpet of greater periwinkle, Vinca major, in full flower. A rather invasive plant this, but it does suit that location.

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Tulips have an interesting connection with these trying times. The Dutch Tulip Mania of 1636 and the resulting speculative bubble crash the following year was caused by a plant virus. Viruses, those tiniest of biological entities, attack both animal and plant cells, hijacking their internal workings in order to replicate. Plant viruses usually cause stunting, lack of vigour and mottled leaves. Occasionally, unusual flowers markings and patterns can be produced by altered distribution of petal pigments: this is just what happened to those Dutch tulips.

Bulbs infected in this way are not stable, becoming smaller and weaker and eventually stop flowering. Several of the tulip “colour-breaking” viruses still circulate globally, but today modern fancy tulips are produced by breeding and selection, not by viral infection. Incidentally, I have seen it reported that plant viruses are responsible for variegation in plants. However, this is usually not the case – most variegated effects are the result of a plant’s genetic makeup. Viruses usually get into plants via nibbling insects, especially aphids, though sometimes they can hide away in pollen grains and seeds. Virus infection of staple crops results in huge financial costs: the pests cannot be controlled by spraying because they are inside the host’s cells and so plant breeders are forever on the lookout for viral-resistant cultivars. And on top of viral attack, plants can suffer from fungi (mildews and rusts), bacteria, nematodes, insects of all sorts, and deficiency diseases. No wonder gardening is often such hard work – but forever highly interesting. Plants, by the way, do employ immune capabilities and can use fascinating methods to help them fight off pathogens – maybe more on this another time!

Malcolm Mort

(all garden and plant photos. are, as usual, by Malcolm and were taken this April)

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A cross-stitch panel of St Basil's Cathedral, which Sioux is also working on at the moment (*see p.3*)

We hope that all those missing our Thursday Craft Club, our monthly Garden Club and all the other interaction in the House are managing at this time.

From Sue Glencross

And 'What a difference a day makes'

I am sure that most of you will be familiar with this song originally written in 1934 in Spanish and recorded by Dinah Washington in English some years afterwards. Never have those words been more prophetic than a family friend's visit to Liskeard in March.

Margaret, our friend from Kuala Lumpur was taking a retirement trip of a lifetime – which later proved to be a trip of a lifetime for all the wrong reasons. Margaret started her trip to the UK at the beginning of March and visited Wales and Wiltshire, then Iceland. Having returned from Iceland, the plan was for her to visit Cornwall for six days. (It was felt she had to experience the climate in Iceland so that she would appreciate the Cornish climate!) We had so many visits planned for her – from Tintagel to St Ives to the Moors; and crossing the bridge to Plymouth. Myself and my family and friends had previously been entertained royally by Margaret and her family on the occasions we had visited KL and were desperate to repay her hospitality. She arrived by train on Friday 13th and the evening was spent chatting, dining and wining – five of us in all. Lots of fun and laughter.

The following morning we were due to visit the Eden Project, which hosts one of the national park runs. My daughter and son-in-law are great park run fans. The park run had been cancelled. So a walk around Liskeard was called for which naturally included a visit to Stuart



House. I had previously told Margaret about Stuart House and she was particularly interested because she had studied English history in her youth. That morning the coronavirus situation was becoming more and more serious by the moment and the decision was made to get Margaret back to KL as quickly as possible. A quick visit to the pasty shop to buy pasties for lunch, and then my daughter spent many hours on line and later that afternoon Margaret was driven to Exeter to take a train to Bristol; then train to Reading; taxi to Heathrow terminal 4 hotel; and finally plane journey back home to Malaysia. Not long after that Malaysia had closed its airports. So Margaret was in Liskeard for less than 24 hours – What a difference a day made.

Shame that the tour of Cornwall and Devon did not happen; neither did the trip to London where we were all going to meet up for a Mother's Day visit to the theatre.

Margaret did, however, manage to have a whistle-stop tour of the House. I had previously purchased for her Tony Wood's books both on the House and on Liskeard and she had been able to take many many photographs, so she then read all about the House and Liskeard once she returned home. Thank you Tony!

The importance of having a record of the restoration of the House and development of the Trust is so necessary – the other day John and I met with a surveyor who had been instructed by us to prepare a 'Heritage Statement' for the purposes of our listed building application for sliding doors inside the front porch. Dan was asking many historical questions the answers to all of which could be found in Tony's book so he gratefully received a complimentary copy.

I am wondering how far Tony's book has travelled. Good to note that it is of suitable size and weight to be packed into luggage without any problem.

Talking of luggage – Margaret had a problem: she had previously purchased so many M & S jumpers that she had no room in her suitcases, rucksack and handbag.....thanks to a very helpful gentleman at Liskeard Post Office and his advice – she purchased four large packing boxes and posted her wares back to herself in Malaysia! A lesson for all of us who travel!

and an offering from Chairman Bob

The Real Me!

“So, what are you doing with all this time on your hands?” came the question from a young member of the family – from a decent social distance (Portugal actually!).



Multi-headed daffodil - another of Malcolm's photographs. There is a link of sorts, see Bob's last sentence – and we don't grow leeks in Stuart House garden (ed.)

Not an easy one to answer. You think you're going to be bored, fed-up, frustrated, miss Stuart House, etc., etc. Not a bit of it (except Stuart House of course!). In reality though you do get a bit tired with the same somewhat limited routines; gardening, dog-walking, television watching if you can bear it, reading, jigsaw puzzles and so forth. In my case there has also been the opportunity to give more attention to a sizeable stamp collection and a model railway in the loft in addition to, horror of horrors, paint pots and brushes in the garage. All this is fine, but what about something different? I decided to turn to music.

Now I am not a musician but I do know what I like and what I don't like; I consider myself to be eclectic without an especially particular genre. So what follows is my version of Desert Island Discs (wow, does that date me!!) – a selection of some of my favourite songs and pieces and the reasons why I have earmarked them for your attention.

Religious or sacred music has always been with me – from a family background, as a choirboy (yes I did once sing as a boy treble for the Lord Mayor of London!); my first teaching post was at the Salisbury

Cathedral School educating the little angels – but, oh boy, how they could sing. My choice from this “genre” would be the Nunc Dimittis (Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace) and the hymn “I Vow To Thee My Country All Earthly Things” . Obviously I have to include a Welsh one – “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah ...” and I do really enjoy listening to Lloyd Webber's “Pie Jesu” but for me the pick has to be the stunning Benedictus from Karl Jenkins ‘ “The Armed Man” – seven and a half minutes of such power and emotion.

The late fifties and the sixties was my era of “pop”. The first record I ever bought was Presley's “Jailhouse Rock” on a '78 pre-vinyl! Mind you the second was the “Ying Tong Song” by the Goons (Sellars, Milligan et al)! Here's a selection of my favourites from that time – “ A Whiter Shade of Pale” (Procol Harum), “I Get Around” (The Beach Boys), “Israelites” (Desmond Decker and The Aces), “Do You Want To Know A Secret” (Billy J Kramer and The Dakotas), “Where Do You Go To My Lovely” (Peter Sarstedt) – I could go on for ever! More recent favourites include “Annie's Song” (John Denver), “The Power of Love” (Celine Dion not Jennifer Rush), “Bridge Over Troubled Water” (Simon and Garfunkel) plus anything from Abba.

What else is there? Well, here's another selection (varied) – “The Pearl Fishers' Duet” (Bryn Terfel and Andrea Bocelli) – saw them perform this live at The Royal Albert Hall; absolutely wonderful. Then there's “A Morning In Cornwall” (James Last), “Bohemian Rhapsody” (Queen), “I Will Always Love You” (written and first performed by Dolly Parton, made famous by Whitney Houston but I like the Katherine Jenkins' version), “The Best” (Tina Turner), “Calon Lan” (Only Boys Aloud). A couple of fun numbers include Max Boyce's “Hymns and Arias – the full nine minutes plus, not just the chorus you hear at the rugby! And what about “There Was An Old Farmer Who Had An Old Sow”(Suffolk folk song)– but I prefer not to tell you why!!

continued

Diary of Events

May 2020



In the current situation, none of the events planned for May are listed.

...The Real Me (continued from previous page)

Numbers which are so uplifting would include “Carry On” (Ben’s Brother) and “You Raise Me Up” (Josh Groban) and in the present crisis “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from “Carousel”. Then there are the musicals; simply too many wonderful songs but I’m picking out “Sabbath Prayer” (Fiddler On The Roof), “I Don’t Know How To Love Him” (Jesus Christ Superstar), and “Anthem” (Chess). Of course there are the real anthems “Trelawney” and “Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau”. Sung in the right surroundings in the right company, unbeatable!

Add to this lengthy list just three more: “Finlandia” (Karelia Suite, Sibelius) which we used to sing when I was at school a long, long time ago as a hymn “Be still my soul” but was absolutely amazing when sung by a Finnish Youth choir for whom I once acted as a courier; “Bring Him Home” (Les Miserables), sung by Colm Wilkinson, the original Jean Valjean, with incredible emotion and feeling. Finally “Your Dreams Were My Dreams” (Ymlaen) to which I must confess total bias as I wrote the lyrics for it. It’s really good though!!

From all of these which is my Number One and what do they all prove? Well my final three are “Benedictus” (The Armed Man), “Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau” and “Your Dreams Were My Dreams”. For me it has to be “Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau”, the Welsh national anthem, sung by me (and seventy-two thousand other Welsh people) in the Principality Stadium in Cardiff. It proves that I’m not the quiet, retiring character you think I am but a real romantic Welsh sentimentalist!

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Our Garden this April - awaiting the return of our visitors, Friends and all our wonderful volunteers who must be missing it greatly.

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. As the House is not staffed at present, , please email to rachelpbennett59@gmail.com