

Newsletter

November 2020



Walking along Barras Street on the last day of October, and looking at the familiar House, the editor noticed, in the window of the Jane Room, the 'We Will Remember Them' banner made by Jackie Jenkins of the Old Cornwall Society last year.

This time last year there was an exhibition in the Gallery 'What does the Old Cornwall Society do?', which included this banner. For the five previous years there was a series of exhibitions covering 1914 to 1918 on 'Liskeard and its People in the First World War', co-ordinated by Tony Ball.

There are people doing their work in the House, including members of the Old Cornwall Society, House Manager Sioux, trustee Dave, and Malcolm and Jeff in the garden. We thank them, and all those, including trustees Bob, Sue, Tony, John and Dave, who are working for the House in different ways.

No more news yet on the new sliding door – trustee John Gliddon reports that, as with so many things, Covid-19 has held up supply lines.

The garden is moving into Autumn. Malcolm took this photograph standing on the edge of the wall-fountain and holding his camera aloft!



Memories from the Minutes: Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross continues her series ...

We continue our journey on 12th July 1995. Tenders for Phases 5 and 6 of the restoration works had been received and ranged from a little over £25,000 to a little over £30,000. Hard to credit that there should be such a variance. It had been established that for the purposes of the building restoration for VAT purposes the House was a 'relevant charitable building'. If only the exemption thus afforded applied now! The question of furniture and 'blackout' blinds were under discussion. Phyllis Head had several fund-raising events in mind including a talk on the Civil War, a plant sale, a visit to Morval House and items on ornithology, Arthur Quiller-Couch, rock climbing and St Winnow. Something for everyone.

At the meeting on 13th September the sight of a rodent in the House was reported, with a resulting charge of £25 plus VAT to the Local Authority Pest Control Officer to hasten not only its demise but also that of its friends and relations. (We occasionally still have a problem with its descendants!) It was at this meeting that the Council's notification to place a Tree Preservation Order on the magnolia tree was reported. Phyllis reported on various events including 'a visit to Halbathick Farmhouse and the nearby Quaker burial ground where Cherry Wood would address the members present'. The proposal to establish an Information Bureau within the House was finally put to rest and the Council were offered exhibition space as a compromise.

The committee would have been pleased to note, as reported by the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th November, that the roof was in 'reasonable condition' and should last a little longer. It did! Once again Phyllis excelled in her plans for forthcoming events which included slides of the Holy Land, the annual mulled wine event, a talk on clocks by the curator of Looe Museum, an address by the curator of Lawrence House Museum, Launceston, a lecture by Dr Philip Pyton and a talk on Art History. We must applaud Phyllis for all her dedication and hard work in organising a full programme of fund-raising events.



Roofscape 2015 – still lasting after another 20 years.

In December it was reported that the Clerk of the Town Council had invited the Trust to submit the restoration of the House in the Cornish Buildings Group annual award scheme. Unfortunately the whole building would have had to be completed before submission.

The committee held their first meeting of 1996 on 10th January. Earlier on in my Minute articles, I had expressed amusement that John Harvey had volunteered his wife Barbara to undertake some decorating work.....this months report included '....Having successfully done the dining room Mr Harvey would enquire whether his wife could undertake this'. ('this' referred to decoration of the surgery). So in other words this time Barbara was asked beforehand! I refer to all this because I know that Barbara will be amused. Many Friends will have known John and we remember him with great affection. Barbara moved away from Liskeard but still remains in touch. The AGM would be held on 17th April. A local business wished to rent the House for a function where approximately 40 people might have attended. The problem was – insufficient seats in the House. The committee agreed that given that funds were healthy and that the question of acquiring seating was a priority, Tony Wood would circulate a catalogue containing suitable types. I assume – but correct me if I am wrong Tony – that would be the seating which we are still using.

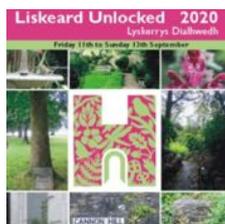
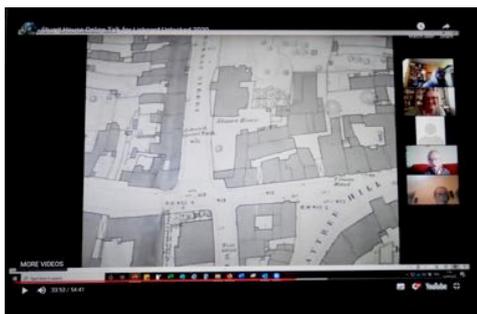
.....to be continued.

The October Challenge – the Chairman’s Answers

The 19 song/music titles, listed as they appeared, are:

Yesterday (The Beatles)
Abide With Me (Henry Francis Lyte)
Leaving On A Jet Plane (Peter, Paul and Mary)
The Sound Of Silence (Simon and Garfunkel)
Blowin’ In The Wind (Bob Dylan)
English Country Garden (Jimmie Rodgers)
Money, Money, Money (Abba)
Super Trouper (Abba)
Pomp and Circumstance (Edward Elgar)
Trelawney (Robert Stephen Hawker)
We’ll Meet Again (Vera Lynn)
Rule The World (Take That)
If I Were A Rich Man (Fiddler On The Roof – Joseph Stein)
Bridge Over Troubled Waters (Simon and Garfunkel)
Mars (The Planets Suite – Gustav Holst)
The Music Of The Night (The Phantom of the Opera
– Lloyd Webber)
Tell Me It’s Not True (Blood Brothers – Willy Russell)
The Lark Ascending (Vaughan Williams)
From A Distance (Bette Midler)

Well done if you spotted them all!



LISKEARD UNLOCKED - Online Talks and Tours.

Material from the Liskeard Unlocked days (11th – 13th September) mentioned in the last Newsletter is now on the Visit Liskeard site. Go to Visit Liskeard, then click on Liskeard Unlocked, and you’ll find online talks and tours, and more. The talk which the ed. gave on Stuart House is included. <https://www.visitliskeard.co.uk/>

OUT AND ABOUT (Prior to Lockdown)

Eileen Crouch sends us this interesting discovery, linking with Liskeard’s Mining Heritage. The exhibition on this, which she mounted in February from our collection from past exhibitions, is still up in the Jane Room, waiting to be seen by visitors again... (ed)



On a tour of Chichester Cathedral, viewing the vast collection of art works, the words CORNISH and BODMIN MOOR caught my eye. They were in the description of the Cathedral Font I had stopped to admire. A full reading informed me that this stonework was by sculptor John Skelton (1922-1999). In 1950 this was his first truly modern commission from Dean Robert Holtby. Created from dark green CORNISH POLYPHANT STONE, with a copper lining, it was really beautiful. Skelton was involved from the start – assisting in sawing out the block from BODMIN MOOR. He recorded the fact that the sculpture required over 1,000 hours of crafting.

This stunning piece of work, using material from Cornwall, can be seen on the Cathedral’s website.

Whilst on their website, you may like to scroll through to view many of its other artworks including pictures from their impressive fundraising themed Flower Festivals.

Eileen Crouch

November's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer



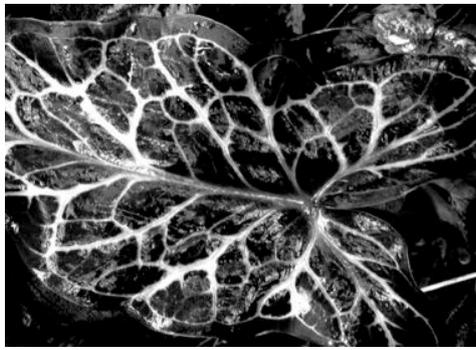
Malcolm and the new garden shed.

Exactly four years ago I wrote about the two Stuart House apple trees, growing in the far “woodland” corner. Both are old and gnarled, but quite different from each other. One is very tall, towering high above the wisteria arch, and hardly ever bears blossom and fruit, though this year it produced about a dozen large, light green, very sour apples. The other is much lower growing, teetering close to the pond and held up only by a rope attached to a hook in the wall. It produces rather small slightly darker green apples that drop into the pond when no-one is looking, and which (after washing) are just edible though having quite a sharp taste. My 2016 article contained a photograph of these fruits which that year were all very crinkled for some unknown reason. This year though there's not a sign of a wrinkle, though they are the usual small size. I have occasionally been asked for the names of these cultivars: the larger fruit is very Bramley-like, but the smaller tree has all the hallmarks of being grown from a pip.

Apple plants have two interesting peculiarities. Firstly, the flowers are usually self-sterile and so need to be pollinated by another cultivar that's not too closely related. There are a few modern cultivars that can self-pollinate to a limited degree (including Cox, Golden Delicious, Braeburn, Granny Smith, Gala and Scrumptious), but these always do much better in any case if pollinated by another tree. The consequence of this is that if one were to gather all the pips produced by a tree and grow them on, no two resulting trees would be the same, nor resemble the parent. Moreover, apples love to thoroughly mix up parental DNA when forming seeds, creating wide genetic variation and producing offspring that can differ markedly in height and habit; size, shape, colour, taste and maturity of the fruit; disease resistance, and in many other ways to ensure that some will survive whatever environmental challenges come their way. Although many trees grown from saved pips will be acceptable and interesting, a few might produce outstanding fruit. A good place to see self-sown apples is along railway lines where cores have been thrown from train windows or by passengers waiting at stations. One such tree grows on the bank along the Looe platform. It produces masses of medium size red fruit with a hint of pig-snout shape characteristic of many “heritage” sorts, including several classic Cornish cultivars.

The other interesting and very frustrating behaviour of apples is that they are almost impossible to propagate from twig or leaf cuttings as you would with most other trees and shrubs. This means either grafting a scion (a healthy pencil-sized shoot) from the chosen tree onto a rootstock or another tree; or air-layering. Medieval gardeners knew all about this. To air-layer, they would make cuts under a suitable young branch near a node, then tie a mixture of soil, dung and straw around the damaged site. Hopefully roots would later appear, and the section of branch cut off and planted. A modern way of doing this is to wrap the wounded area in potting compost held in place with a plastic bag.

Nowadays, agricultural scientists have completely decoded the DNA sequence of apples, using Golden Delicious (a chance seedling from West Virginia in 1912) as the reference for all other cultivars. How strange that this apple has 57,000 genes, but humans have only 22,000! New biochemical techniques allow sections of genes to be shifted around in controlled ways, and then using micro-propagation techniques new plants are grown – all in hope of producing the perfect (patented) apple. Golden Delicious trees, by the way, are excellent pollinators. Incidentally, pears behave very similarly to apples in their methods of propagation and pollination needs.



Also growing in the woodland corner there are a few plants with large, highly variegated leaves patterned with ridged white veins. This is *Arum italicum*, which thrives in the cool dense shade, and is related to the more common Lords and Ladies or Cuckoo plant. It produces spikes of very poisonous bright red berries in summer which are cut off as soon as they begin to appear.

This year in the pots near the pond, a few *Xerochrysum* (reclassified from *Helichrysum*)

strawflower plants were planted. Over the last few years I have saved seed from plants with yellow flowers (and banished other colours from the garden) which now breed almost true to colour. Grown well, each plant produces two to three dozen large papery flowers over the summer which can easily be dried to brighten up dark winter days indoors and given to friends at Christmas. If anyone would like seed of this yellow strain for next year, please e-mail me. I'll



also have seeds saved from the excellent perennial *Rudbekia triloba* which grows to about three feet and is covered in copious quantities of dainty yellow blooms that provide a sunny splash from September to November. These are ideally suited to the Stuart House garden, and more will be grown next year.

The central pond remains clear and unplanted. I'd be very glad of suggestions of water plants that readers might have found attractive and well-behaved, not seeking to quickly colonise the whole pond. Aquatic

baskets will be used this time in any case to keep everything under control.

Many thanks to those who responded to suggestions for a replacement climber over the café wall. *Zéphirine Drouhin*' was a clear favourite. This is a repeat flowering Bourbon rose climbing to about 10 feet, with thornless stems and highly fragrant, semi-double, cerise-pink flowers.

At the front of Stuart House, the right-hand garden has the formal arrangement of roses, but currently the left-hand bed has become a sprawling mix of hugely over-vigorous large periwinkle (*Vinca major*), self-sown valerian, and crocosmia that have taken to battling among themselves for space, and therefore needing a good sort out. Last year I planted an old-fashioned, non-gaudy, hydrangea in the corner near the library which has done well. The *Lavatera* tree mallow, *Barnsley*, also still flowers well and in the middle the variegated evergreen *Hebe* still thrives. A good clean-up will soon take place and maybe a few Old English Lavender bushes incorporated.

Malcolm Mort
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Honesty (above in the far corner) and *Schizostylis* (left)

Diary of Events

November 2020



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

🎵 Some Musical links from Carlton Crouch of Ilow Splann, 🎵 frequent performers in Stuart House.

I've been busy recording and making videos and am sending two links which may be of interest to Stuart House Newsletter readers.

The first video features an Ilow Splann recording of "Harvest Song" which combines still pictures and video clips. Brian Oldham (Liskeard Old Cornwall Society) provided some pictures of "Crying the Neck" which may be of additional interest to heritage enthusiasts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4zef2aJ0YU>



The second recording is a solo guitar recording of Liskeard's traditional tune "Liskeard Fair":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70cHVE8xrsW>

There are other Cornish tunes on "Carlton's Music" Youtube Channel at
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVOiZVnRUE201moOpPZYD_g

More Liskeard Heritage 'bits' from Brian Oldham, President, Liskeard Old Cornwall Society

An enquiry this week took me to Oak Park Terrace to see the single ornamental tile on each of the cottages' front walls, which originally looked South with the rear facing Old Road. The tiles were manufactured at the short lived "Terra Cotta & China Clay Co." in the Draynes Valley in the late 19th century. The tiles contain a mythical creature as does another of the Company's products at Hong Kong Cottages that bears the initials MAH. Both rows of cottages, I am told by a descendant, were built by George Harris (H), the (M) for his wife Mary and the (A) for both his father and a son, Ambrose. It is said that the possibly Chinese creatures were influenced by Harris' adventures in the Opium Wars, but this is not proven. The Company also produced the "Liskeard" brick in contrasting sizes.



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 rachelbennett59@gmail.com

The next newsletter will, as usual, be a combined December and January edition. Do please send in fairly short pieces – particularly memories and thoughts linked in some way with Stuart House.