

Newsletter

October 2020

Visitors back in Stuart House Garden



On Saturday 12th September the annual 'Liskeard Unlocked' event saw visitors meeting in the Stuart House garden morning and afternoon for the start of walks led by Brian Oldham (President of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society) around some of Liskeard's open spaces and 'Hidden Nature' (the theme of the Heritage Open Days 2020),

including gardens, churchyards and parks. The walks were fully booked and, because they started from the Stuart House garden, several visitors arrived early and had more time for a good look-round and to talk to Malcolm about the plants and upkeep of the garden. He and Jeff had worked hard to get the garden looking its best, and had cleared out the central fountain especially. Sadly, the House had to remain closed and we could not keep the garden open for 'drop in' visitors.

For more on the 'Liskeard Unlocked' days, see pp. 5 & 8)

Look forward to a warmer House!

After receiving further details of fixing and electrical connections, the Council has now given the go-ahead for the automatic doors which Hon. Sec. Sue spoke about in July's Newsletter. Some 'hard copy' readers might not be aware of the plans: automatic sliding doors in the porch which should lead to a 20% reduction in heating costs, and make the reception Hall a much warmer and less draughty place to work in. Private funding has been given (which is to remain anonymous), and trustee John Gliddon is currently liaising over manufacture and installation.



News and a challenge from our Chairman, Bob Hollingdale

From A Distance!

Yesterday all my troubles seemed so far away and then your editor invited me to contribute to this edition. I didn't want readers to face another boring monologue from the chairman, so as a little challenge abide with me, read on in good humour and spot the song and music titles which are sort of hidden in my piece!

Lockdown and restrictions have given us all a new outlook on the way we go about our everyday lives. Holidays postponed, family visits put on hold, no leaving on a jet plane – frustrations and disappointments for all.



Stuart House has become used to the sound of silence with no voices blowin' in the wind outside. Indeed so quiet is our hidden gem you might think you were in an English country garden. Yet in reality, or virtual reality, things have been happening.

Sioux, our House Manager, is back in partial residence and I know she has been in contact with quite a number of our Friends. No doubt some were

expecting a hint about money, money, money – but that wasn't the case. It was more an opportunity to see how everyone is and to advise the cancellation of the picnic garden party due to the rule of six, etc.

Thanks to Rachel the House was fully involved in the Liskeard Unlocked weekend with the garden tour/talk, participation in the Public Hall exhibition and her own Zoom talk. Also our Facebook and website wizard, Tim, produced a very personal item about Mayflower 400. How often are we so grateful to our volunteers, each and everyone a real super trouper. The way in which people rally round and support without any pomp and circumstance would make even Trelawney happy!

Naturally my fellow trustees and myself do have concerns about the now extended closure period and consequent continued loss of income. We have already discussed the various options we can take and we'll meet again to make decisions. If I could rule the world or even if I were a (very) rich man all our problems would be solved! Thank you so much to those who have donated so generously in recent months – it all helps to build a bridge over troubled waters!

At home recently I was enjoying a Mars bar and listening to the music of the night when I was interrupted by the news. A second wave is inevitable the experts said – oh no, tell me it's not true I said to myself. As we now know it is true. I hope we can all from a distance keep in touch through Stuart House, enjoy the beauty of the world around us, watch the lark ascending into the autumn skies.

To conclude a few lines from the song From A Distance:

From a distance there is harmony
And it echoes through the land
It's the voice of hope
It's the voice of peace
It's the voice of every man.

Footnote: 19 to find, answers next month!



From House-Manger Sioux

What a strange month September has been.

It was good to be back in the House on Tuesday 1st. I spent time reading through the risk assessment and implementing the requirements, which included producing a registration form, placing sanitizers, paper towels, face masks, handgel, and wipes at the entrance and producing up to date notices for the front of the building. I am also checking through the diary, and contacting all those who have bookings for the rest of the year to update them

on our current position. I'm enjoying contacting Friends and Volunteers by phone - it is lovely to hear voices and share news, even if we cannot meet in the House yet. I will be in the building twice a week: Tuesday afternoon and all day Thursday during October. Although we are not open there is still a lot to do. If there are any queries please ring either day and I will help in any way I can.

I am constantly looking for ideas for future events. When we do get the all clear to reopen it would be good to have some events and some income stream in place, so anyone who has an exhibition or workshop or Illustrated talk etc. please contact me so we can discuss your ideas. It goes without saying that Arts and Craft events will feature regularly so please keep on with your favourite hobby(s).

Please keep yourselves safe and well, I look forward to seeing you once this madness ends.

SOME MEMORIES OF MUSIC IN STUART HOUSE

Music has been enjoyed in Stuart House since the restoration was completed. Accommodating musicians and an audience necessitated purchasing chairs. Of necessity, these were originally inexpensive 'garden' chairs, replaced in due course by the upholstered ones that have since served their purpose very well!

Our first Sunday afternoon concert in the Max Lock Gallery in June 1999 was performed by the Lowendahl Family Quartet. Their classical music was a joy to listen to and they delighted us by returning several times, often augmented by some of their talented friends.

In the ensuing years we have been privileged to have a number of talented musicians entertain us including (in no particular order) pianist Jonathan Delbridge, Gerry Hillman's "Java 5", Duo Tenstrings, students from Liskeard School and, most recently, the popular Valley Voices. Also the Ilow Splann duo who invited audience participation – singing some Cornish language songs. There were lots more – who do you especially recall?

As well as performing, Angela Wunnam has booked musicians for our concerts for a number of years – so, many thanks Angela ... look forward to once again hearing music in the House.

Here's to the next time. Eileen Crouch

Some reminders from the editor – below are the performers over the past six years, most recent first (I've been editing the Newsletter for six years and so have back-copies to consult). Several have performed more than once. Below that (but not in the same order!) are the instruments played. As a singer with Valley Voices, I remember that the last music heard in the Gallery, on 23rd Feb., was audience-participation in Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' – very thought-provoking, in retrospect.

♫ VALLEY VOICES ♫ ROSS MORRIS ♫ LISKEARD SCHOOL ♫ ILOW SPLANN ♫ DIABEL CISSO KHO ♫ JAZZ TAPAS ♫ ROSEMARY BALL ♫ JUDE & JANE ♫ OLIDONEY ♫ JAVA 5 ♫ PJ BENNETT ♫ STERTS SINGERS ♫ ALISON SMITH ♫ SAMANTHA ROWE ♫ CHARLOTTE JONES ♫ GREGO RYGRAVES ♫ JONATHAN DELBRIDGE ♫ JUDY WHITLOCK & NOELLE BOUCHERAT ♫ CARO LINEBERGUIS & REBEKA HARTMAN ♫ JONATHAN LIVSEY ♫ GARETH LEE & ANNIE BAYLIS ♫ KYOKOTADA OKA & ADRIAN FREEMAN ♫ MEINHARD HOLLER

♫ voice ♫ classical guitar ♫ spinet ♫ recorders ♫ bodhran ♫ border pipes ♫ saxophone ♫ euphonium ♫ piano ♫ harpsichord ♫ cello ♫ kora ♫ flute ♫ double bass ♫ violin ♫ acoustic guitar ♫ accordion ♫ cajo ♫ cornet ♫ sanshin ♫ clarinet ♫ electric guitar ♫ bazooka ♫ bombard ♫ shakuhachi ♫

October's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer



Malcolm and Jeff, keeping the garden looking beautiful for Liskeard Unlocked and everyday.

A visitor to Stuart House garden on “Liskeard Unlocked” day asked about the wisteria growing over the arch in the far corner of the garden. She said she’d planted one seven years ago and had given it a final warning that if it didn’t flower next season, she would dig it up. This is a common complaint about wisteria. Plants grown from seed can take ages to flower, maybe up to twenty years! Even then it’s a gamble on whether the flowers will have been worth the wait. A named cultivar from a more

mature plant bought from a nursery is a better bet. However even these can take several years to settle into an annual flowering routine, though when they do they can carry on for fifty years or more. Gardening books give lots of advice. Sunshine and good draining are needed they say, the soil shouldn’t be too rich, don’t over-prune so that you remove the flower buds, and make sure your plant does not suffer from drought in a hot dry summer because buds can shrivel and drop. Therefore, never feed with nitrogen – this will only encourage it to produce vigorous green growth. Besides, wisteria is a legume and therefore gathers its own nitrogen from the atmosphere via root nodules. Potash is what is needed. Pruning is tricky because wisteria is very determined and will need cutting back in the summer – always **after** flowering - and then again in the winter. The many scrambling shoots of the Stuart House wisteria have been trimmed back three times this summer to prevent them overwhelming the old tall apple tree overhead. There’s one more technique that our frustrated garden visitor could try: get even by threatening it with a sharp spade. Drive it into the ground about 2ft away from the trunk and slice through the roots. This will give the plant a shock. As well as being deprived of nitrogen, it will think that the end is nigh and therefore it had better start producing flowers and offspring before it’s too late.

Wisteria is a climbing twining woody vine, but what would happen, I wonder, if it had nothing to cling onto? Would it carry on spreading out, maybe rooting as it went and being a wonderful ground cover until it found a handy tree to quickly scramble up? The very knowledgeable Ethelind Fearon (1898 – 1974) pondered these sorts of questions, too, and in her excellent book *The Reluctant Gardener* (1952) tells how she grew climbing roses sprawling and wandering over a horizontal framework. “Come and see my climbing roses lying down,” she would say. “This would cause a great laugh, but I am willing to bet that anyone who saw them would go straight home, chop up his pergola for firewood and then let all his ramblers fall down too.” And talking of roses, I keep getting asked for the name of the roses in the front garden which began re-blooming profusely from the beginning of September: these are Duchess of Cornwall.

The Japanese anemones in the garden have also flowered gloriously throughout September. The shorter-than-usual sturdy sort with very attractive, dark pink, fluted petals is called Fantasy Pocahontas. As with wisteria, there are several things to be aware of before introducing these into your garden. Happily, they are very tough: they are drought resistant, they grow in *any* type of soil, and they are not attacked by slugs, snails, caterpillars, fungi, or anything else as far as I can make out.



They are often said to be invasive, and even tiny pieces left in the soil will regrow. However, these can easily be planted up, and given to others. (Garden saying: Beware of friend bearing garden gifts.) Japanese anemones also spread readily from seeds in those unusual cotton-woolly heads. When they appear (mid-October onwards), spread them on some gravel and see seedlings emerge in April.



Regarding gravel as a growing medium, maybe every garden should have a simple outdoor gravel area simply for watching and collecting emerging seedlings. As I mentioned in last month's garden article, so many appear. The self-sown fibrous begonia seedlings from last year's plants, transferred to seed trays, are now looking exceptionally healthy, and are even flowering (photograph). I collected about a hundred and fifty! So here is another very interesting subject: will these plants, grown from seeds that lay for months in last

winter's freezing wet gravel, be better adapted to withstand the winter to come than plants grown from seeds which have known only a nice dry hermetically-sealed packet? Evolution we're now told does not work simply along the paths provided by totally random gene re-combinations where nature just hopes for the best. Rather, there's a realisation that gene expression in offspring – plants and animals – can be influenced by the experiences and challenges faced by parents and grandparents, thus making it easier for emerging individuals to cope with environmental changes. (If you'd like to know more, search online for the science of Epigenetics.) The begonias will be monitored – future reports will be made in the Spring.

On the subject of seeds, the beginning of October is a good time to sow sweet peas and many hardy annuals: these should be potted up and kept in a cold frame or cold greenhouse throughout the winter and planted out in March. I've found it impossible to grow sweet peas at Stuart House as they are massacred by snails, though I was recently told that Vaseline or grease smeared around the tops of planters keeps them away. This will be tried next season. Also, if you've been growing tomatoes in a cold greenhouse, it's time to pull up the plants, throw them away in the green waste (best not to compost them as they often contain viruses), and scatter green salad crop seeds in their place – leaf beet, mustard, winter lettuce and all the different and unusual sorts one can get these days. Tudor gardeners would have loved to have had these, I'm sure. Regarding tomatoes, I've discovered this year that seeds from shop-bought sorts breed remarkably true, even though they're probably hybrids. So if you find a tasty one, then take out and wash some seeds – use a kitchen sieve, run cold water over the seeds whilst rubbing your fingers over them to get rid of the squishy stuff, transfer them to a small plate and leave on the kitchen windowsill to dry. Put in an envelope and sow next Spring. Save seeds from the best of these and continue. Gardening is a constantly fascinating experiment!

Malcolm Mort



The display about the Stuart House Garden as part of the exhibition in the Public Hall on 'Liskeard Unlocked' Saturday. Lots of Malcolm's beautiful photographs were used.

PAST TIMES RE-VISITED: more Memories from the Minutes by Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross

We ended last month's 'Past Times Re-visited' in December 1994 and will now take a look at the first part of the year 1995 when the first meeting took place on 11th January in the presence of (almost) a full contingent of elected officers.

Interesting to note that Henry Sneyd had obtained estimates for work to the porch gate – to renew, sandblast and dip would have cost £150 to £200 and to repair £80. It was agreed to postpone the work. Such were the financial restraints at the time as all available funds were being thrown into the restoration pot. We are fortunate in the year 2020, even in a global pandemic, that we are able (for the present at least) to continue to maintain the House.

Guests attended the meeting held on 8th February. Members of 'Caradon Watch' attended the first part. Caradon Watch was a 'Green amenity group' which had existed for two years but had not met for some time. The Group wanted to set up a bookshelf at the House which would comprise their own books, periodicals and notice board. They felt this might attract members of other groups, such as 'Friends of the Earth'. The Council agreed a suitable place would be found when Phases 5 and 6 of the restoration were complete – hopefully early summer. Did the bookshelf scheme materialize? That may or may not be recorded in the Minutes but will become apparent as I carry on through my travels in 1995.

At the meeting of 8th March the issue as to how the House would be maintained in future, following restoration, was under discussion. Members were asked to give the matter 'serious thought' and it is those 'serious thoughts' which have dominated the actions of all those who followed! Phyllis Head had arranged a visit to the Royal William Victualling Yard. I wonder how many of those who attended that visit in 1995 were then able to see the development as it stands today.

Jeanne Rees, a member of Liskeard Town Forum, suggested that the House would be a suitable venue for an 'Information Centre' which was recorded in the Minutes of 12th April.

So to the AGM held on 26th April when Dr Wigham reported that £10,000 had been spent on Phase 4 of the restoration project that year which included ground floor room floors, timber preservation, and injected chemical dpc. Interesting features had been exposed which were referred to in last month's article. Also ancient granite window mullions and components had been uncovered. We can imagine how exciting all this would have been at the time – discoveries which continue to excite Friends and visitors to the House. Dr Wigham confirmed the Trust was still solvent! An anonymous donation of £1,000 had been made to fund ceiling track lighting and Dulux had provided 112 litres of paint. The Trust's Insurers had suggested that an Accident Book be placed in the House! Inconceivable these days to think that it was only a 'suggestion' – it is a strict legal requirement nowadays. All Council members stood for re-election and were re-elected but Mr Sneyd stood down.

On 10th May it was announced that an owl display would be staged in the House. Intriguing!

Mr Pearce in his report to the meeting of 14th June said that he had made drawings of the proposed restoration of the railings to the front of the House and lodged a Listed Building application for the works. Tributes were paid to all those who had completed more work to the front garden and to Tony Wood who had presided over operations. With effect from January 1996 room hire charges were to be increased from £5 to £10 per room per day. Mrs Van Meurs offered to supply logs for placing in the fireplaces in the House 'to alleviate unsightly droppings'. Caradon Council had set out onerous conditions regarding the provision of an Information Bureau within the House and it was unanimously agreed that the Trust could not comply.

.....**to be continued next month**



Apologies – the picture of Charles I in last month's Newsletter was not the one donated by Mr Agar (this is), but one painted & donated by local artist Anthea Libby.

An Exhibition to mark the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower sailing was planned for the Max Lock Gallery from 14th to 26th September. Tim Norman writes about it, acknowledging the inspiration of his Grandad's work.

Giving a quiet nod in these troubling times to the Mayflower journey as the ship set sail to America from Plymouth 400 years ago.

My Grandad, George Williams, had a great passion for history and loved his hometown of Plymouth. His knowledge of the Mayflower subject was vast; he so wanted to be here today to remember this big milestone. I remember fondly his treasured exhibitions at Stuart House which focussed on his varied passions throughout the years. Both in the Jane Room and Max Lock Gallery, his exhibits were a wonderful showcase of his research and interests, from Impressionist painters to stamp collecting and Lawrence of Arabia.

My Nan, Mum and I were hoping to mount a small exhibition to honour my Grandad's research of the Mayflower story.

Amongst our own pandemic (the pilgrims, too, suffering a similar plague in the 1600's) and political unrest across the world, 2020 is far from a 'safe' or appropriate time to fully commemorate this fascinating yet troubling event.

The Mayflower 400 website states:

"Importantly, the Pilgrims were not the first to land in America, nor did they discover it. There were already established colonies at the time, not least Jamestown – founded in 1607.

But the Mayflower story is renowned for its themes of freedom and humanity – including the relationships first formed between the Native American Wampanoag tribe and the colonists and the first Thanksgiving." Freedom and humanity; themes very pertinent to life 400 years later.

History often distorts fact; it's the place for people such as my Grandad - with his keen, accurate research - to discuss and debate the realities of their historical interests. All that remains for me to do is to quietly remember his passion and continue to learn more about the Mayflower story from every angle and point of view.

The pilgrims sailed for peace and hope; let's pray we finally discover those things for ourselves following this turbulent year.



(The photo here is of my Grandad's stamp exhibition in the Max Lock gallery many years ago, with one theme incorporating the Mayflower story.)

The steward is a young Tim, who has since organised other exhibitions, including in recent years those on Jane Austen, Shakespeare and Theatrabilia. Tim currently manages our website and Facebook page. ed.

Diary of Events

October 2020



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

Talks and films from Liskeard Unlocked 2020, including the editor's illustrated talk on the **History of Stuart House (given 5pm. 13th September)**, should be on the Visit Liskeard website soon – at the time of writing some are still undergoing some technical adjustment.

Brian Oldham, President of the Liskeard Old Cornwall Society contributes this on Richard Hawke



From newspaper articles and censuses some details have been established regarding the remarkable "rags to riches" story of Richard Hawke of Westbourne House. In 1841 at the age of 15 Richard was an apprentice barber in Helston, his mother being "in service" with no mention of his father. By 1851 he had his own Barber Shop in Fore Street, Liskeard employing one man and an apprentice, and had married a Liskeard girl named Sarah and his mother lived with them over the shop. Hawke had also been appointed Mine Barber at the hugely successful South Caradon copper mine and before long the owners, Peter and James Clymo, made him their share dealer in London. Branching out on his own as a Miner Share Broker, he had enough money to buy the grandest house in Liskeard, Westbourne, in 1858 from the executors of Peter Glubb. In 1861 he had the only butler in Liskeard, 57 year old Thomas Munday, and his mother, formerly a Servant herself, was in the census as a Gentlewoman. Richard Hawke died in 1887, the wealthiest man in Liskeard, his estate in today's values being £16 million. On Sarah's death in 1904 the estate went to William Sargent, grandson of a Liskeard cordwainer, whom the Hawkes regarded as their adopted son. At this time cremation had only been legal for 4 years, and on Hawke's instruction Sargent transported his body by train to Woking Crematorium, the nearest licensed establishment to Cornwall. 100 invitations on gilt edged card were sent to the "great and good" of Liskeard to attend the

interment of the ashes, which are now beneath the fine Grade II Listed memorial in the gardens of Westbourne House. Dr. Andrew Hingston of Dean Street conducted the short ceremony, throughout which it poured with rain.



While Richard Hawke was rising in wealth and renown in Liskeard, Susan Carthew was living in Stuart House (from before 1841 to her death in 1876 aged 84). She was well respected for her charitable work and, like Hawke, lived through a period of tremendous change in Liskeard.

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