

# Newsletter *September 2020*

## Still shut, but not dormant

This poster was produced for display at the recent Ploughman's Festival.

Sue's News on p.2 details some of the progress that is being planned – the return, part-time, of our House Manager, the possibility of a BYO picnic Garden Party, a concert and a new shed. In addition, Stuart House will be involved in the 'Liskeard Unlocked' events on the weekend of September 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> (p.7).

**STOP PRESS:** with Coodes' support, you may be getting the Newsletter on hard-copy again.

## House Manager Sioux writes:

Well, where do I start? How strange has this year been?

I am pleased to have the all clear to return to my second home, all be it on a reduced hours basis. It will be a bit of a shock to the system to enter the building after such a long time, but I am more than ready to face the task of working through the trustees' list of 'things to do'.



*Sioux will be back in the House – but most of us won't be able to see her. (ed.)*



## STUART HOUSE

is

### STILL HERE

as it has been for over 500 years  
but has to remain shut for the time being



we look forward to welcoming you  
back to the House and Garden  
as soon as possible.

This last five or so months you may have noticed I have thoroughly enjoyed catching up on various craft projects. I was disappointed at having to postpone the Celtic event to 2021. As things stand, I think it highly unlikely that we will be able to hold our usual craft events as lead up to the Christmas Fayre. I do hope I am wrong, and will continue with my Christmas makes, and encourage all our artists and crafters to do the same.

I do hope you are all keeping safe and well, and look forward to speaking to you over the next week or so.



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

## Sue's News

The Trustees have now had their second socially distanced meeting in the garden. Once again I can report that none of us thought about a photograph for the Newsletter – but then again a 'selfie' would not have been possible!

Friends will not be surprised to hear that the House will still remain closed for an indefinite period. There are, however, glimmers of hope on the horizon and I can report four items of good news:

First of all, House Manager Sioux will be partially brought out of furlough and will start working on a half-time basis on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Sioux has been given a seemingly endless list of tasks to perform and will prioritize. She will work strictly behind locked doors and access to the House is prohibited with certain exceptions unless the trustees or Rachel have given specific authority. The exceptions are Linda to access her studio, Malcolm and any member of the garden team, and members of Liskeard Old Cornwall Society involved in working with the collections in the Trecarrel Room. A Covid-19 risk assessment has been prepared which will be available to those who are permitted entry and must be strictly adhered to. Anyone who does have entry to the House is expected to sign a Register and give their telephone number so that we have records should anything untoward happen.



*Garden view in August by Malcolm – might this be the setting for a Friends' party in September?*

the garden through the Wetherspoons passageway via the fire exit. Only one toilet would be available – the disabled cubicle. Access to that would be from the garden through the café door and straight through. So – I remain for ever hopeful that something can be arranged.

Thirdly, it is hoped that plans to mount an on-line concert from the Gallery will come to fruition.

Finally, our new shed is in situ! Well hidden from general view, but a structure to be admired!

Stay safe and well everyone.



*Recent Newsletters have shown poppies and roses behind the front railings, but August saw trustee Dave picking up litter.*

Secondly, the trustees have donned thinking caps and are hoping it will be possible (weather permitting) to hold a garden party (with a difference) in September. One of Sioux's many tasks will be to telephone Friends to ascertain whether they would be interested in attending. Social distancing would have to be a necessity. Friends would access the House via the Cross Passage and go straight through the back door into the garden where seating would be randomly arranged. They would have to bring their own picnic. They would leave

*Sue Glencross, Hon. Sec.*

## September's Thoughts from our Garden's Overseer

*(Apologies – contrary to what I said in the August Newsletter, Malcolm's work on the two 'Lover of Animals' troughs at the station and the church and his other work at the station and elsewhere is not linked with the Liskeard in Bloom organisation. ed.)*



Stuart House Garden has a magnificent new shed made from red cedar with a glorious aroma, so ideal for just sitting inside and peering out in reflective mood at the quiet woodland corner of the garden. When the old one was taken down, a hedgehog was found curled up underneath between the gaps of the levelling timbers, either fast asleep or trying to ignore the clamorous works going on all around. However, it didn't bat an eyelid, and now has a safe, solid roof over its head. How had it

got there, I wonder? Had it been there a long time? Hedgehogs live for up to five years, so maybe it found refuge in the garden when the old garage site next door was cleared two and a half years ago. Or maybe it managed to get into the garden by climbing up the magnolia tree the other side of the wall and clambering down on our side. Hedgehogs can climb trees remarkably well apparently, up to thirty feet, in search of insects and slugs. And on that note, there must have been several hundred snails stuck to the underneath and sides of the old shed, inside and out. Coincidentally, there'd been a fascinating science programme on BBC World Service only a few days previously, all about the composition and properties of slug and snail slime. A little more on this next time, because, trust me, it really is a most interesting topic!

At the time of writing (third week of August), the roses in the front garden appear to be preparing for a second flush - they've had regular watering and feeding to help them through the long hot dry times. In the rear garden, though, several of the rose bushes are not doing so well. The climbing rose that grows up near the water tap on the café wall has died. Suggestions welcomed for a replacement - ideally, one that doesn't mind growing in constant shade, has bright blooms (I'd prefer yellow!), which flowers over a long period, is disease resistant, and has few thorns (the deceased rose was a thorn nightmare, and right next to the tap). A few of the rose bushes in the main bed also look rather sad – two were taken up earlier this summer as they never flowered, having reverted to a dense mass of thorns. So two bushes are need there, too. Roses in this area also need to cope with a great deal of shade, have a good scent and few thorns for weeding safety. The rose bed is a constant battle ground against creeping deadnettle, lamium, crocosmia, alkanet, enchanter's nightshade, and bindweed, which given half the chance would have it all to themselves in less than a year. Some plants exude chemicals from their roots that poison competitors – maybe something is doing that to the roses?

The number of plant species that constantly germinate their seeds in the gravel paths is quite astounding. Just in the café table area, I recently noted *Leycesteria formosa*, (Himalayan honeysuckle), feverfews, buddleia, willow herbs, chickweed, sow thistles, oxalis, goat willow, toadflax, foxgloves, wild goosefoot (Fat-Hen), bittercress, herb-Robert geranium, and dandelion, as well as grasses, ferns and mosses. Irritating though they are in a formal garden, one must admire these opportunistic pioneer plants, a constant reminder of nature's huge determination to cover Earth's surface with a massively rich array of wildlife.



It was very interesting to discover amongst them many seedlings from the fibrous begonias that had graced the table tops last summer. I collected over a hundred and will see if I can keep them through the winter to plant out in pots in the garden next year. Native to Brazil,



*Begonia semperflorens* does withstand a couple of degree of frost, which is why two of last year's plants have returned magnificently in a pot sheltered against the new garden wall. The name begonia derives from Frenchman Michel Begon who was Administrator of the historic navel port of Rochefort on France's Atlantic coast from 1668 to 1710, and a good friend of the reigning King Louis XIV. This was a time of conflicts, conquest and colonisation – but also discovery. King Louis was a keen plantsman, creating intricate gardens and huge parks at the palace of Versailles. During this time, he instructed M. Begon and the King's botanist Charles Plumier to venture on a plant-collecting voyage to the Caribbean. They returned with many species of begonia which immediately became popular in Europe, and the genera *Begonia* was accepted by Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in his botanical classification of 1753. There are some 1500 different species recognised now found mostly in tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world, as well as many thousands of bred cultivars. In 1986 a "Conservatory of Begonias" which houses the largest begonia collection in Europe was set up in Rochefort in memory of Michel Begon to safeguard and promote study of lesser known begonia species.

Crossing and interbreeding of begonia species continues, giving us the highly reliable fibrous *sempreflorens* sorts as well as the tuberous types with their big gaudy flowers. Tudor gardeners would have loved them I'm sure, and it is easy to understand their popularity – they flower continuously from May to October, experience little disease or insect attack, no dead-heading is needed, and they are accepting of sun or shade. There are so few plant types that meet all these criteria. I can only think of *Erigeron karvinskianus* (Mexican fleabane daisy) that has taken to colonising cracks and crevices everywhere, some fuchsias, and one or two modern hardy geranium cultivars. Any others?

The central pond in the garden has this summer become totally choked with a solid mass of iris roots which threaten to topple over the central water feature. It is currently being cleared out – a very difficult and laborious task - and will be replanted in the autumn.



*Pickerel Weed in the wall pond (above)*  
*Hydranga paniculata (left)*

Feedback, and suggestions for new roses can be sent to me at [grandadbike63@gmail.com](mailto:grandadbike63@gmail.com). Thank you.

*Malcolm Mort*

## PAST TIMES RE-VISITED: memories from the minutes from Sue Glencross



This picture is actually from 1991 (ed.)

The year is 1994. The 10<sup>th</sup> AGM of the Trust was held on 20<sup>th</sup> April. The Trust had been in existence for 9 years. The previous year had seen the House clad in scaffolding with substantial works then completed. £60,000 had been spent on restoration up to then out of £125,000 to £130,000. The next stage of the work would comprise the restoration of the three main ground floor rooms. Dr Wigham was in the chair and was re-elected. Tony Wood was elected as vice-chair. Mr James was elected Hon Secretary and Wendy Lindesay as Hon Treasurer. Other Council members were re-elected – namely John Harvey, Phyllis Head, David Pearce, Henry Sneyd and Margaret Van Meurs. The treasurer reported that sources approached for funding were The European Regional Development Fund, The Foundation for Sports and Arts, and Dulux. The application to Dulux would be made for free paint under that company's 'Colour in the Community' scheme.

Buildings insurance cover formerly for £75,000 was increased to £150,000. Members' annual subscriptions were raised from £5 to £7.

At the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> May it was reported that £335 towards the garden had been received from the Mayor's nominated charity funds. Suggestions were requested as to ways in which the House could participate in Liskeard in Bloom. Mrs Nadin's Shakspearian Bower was placed in the garden, and Tony Wood was to investigate 'tennis sockets' for the front garden to accommodate signs and their boards and supports.

The Minutes of the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June record a contribution of some granite paving slabs by Cornwall County Highways. The pond rim was cast. Liskeard in Bloom had promised four garden troughs for placing at the front of the House. A scheme for the front garden had been discussed which would entail the placing of topsoil to a depth of 300mm and the planting of 'period' blooms such as lupins.

On 13<sup>th</sup> July mention was made of a discussion relating to the 'dining room cupboards and floor beneath'; the hearth of the newly-discovered fireplace and dado panelling in the ground floor south west room.

The next meeting was held on 14<sup>th</sup> September. There had been a problem with rodents! Mr Agar who had recently become a member of the Trust had offered to donate for permanent hanging in the House paintings of King Charles mounted on horseback and a portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria.

By 12<sup>th</sup> October alterations had been carried out to sub-floor vents on the west (front) wall to prevent rodents from entering the building. An application had been made for Listed Building Consent in respect of replacement of the top ceiling of the stairwell due to serious decay in the ceiling joists. Phyllis Head compiled a list of volunteers for decorating various rooms. A dehumidifier had been acquired at a cost of £100.



continued.....

*continued from p.5*

I am sure that Barbara Harvey will be amused at the following (and I quote from the Minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November) 'Mr Harvey felt that his wife might be able to decorate the exterior of the front door although not at present'. Had the matter even been raised with her I venture to ask?!

On 14<sup>th</sup> December Dr Wigham as chair made reference to Phase 5 of the restoration works incorporating preparatory work to the rear wall 'to accommodate a future conservatory as the existing one will be removed'. Interesting to note that the former conservatory has never in fact been replaced.

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



**From Brian Oldham, president, Liskeard Old Cornwall Society** (based on the top floor of Stuart House, and looking forward to renewed access – see p.,2)

**Liskeard Iron Works** As you walk up Church Street and step over the iron rainwater channels across the pavement and then pass the iron kerb ramps outside the Barley Sheaf yard, you may notice the wording on them; "Williams Liskeard". More words are on drain covers in Doctor's Lane; "Williams Liskeard Iron Works". Not forgetting the manufacturer's plates on Cornish ranges discovered in recent years in No.1 Barn Street, No.3 Fore Street and Lamellion Farmhouse; "Z T Williams Liskeard". So who was Zacharias Tregonowen Williams?



Zach' lived in Crow's Nest in the 1840s and 1850s working as a

Blacksmith, possibly at the nearby South Caradon Mine. By 1861 he was living in Church Street, married with 2 year old son Richard. His trade in the 1862 Directory is "Iron Founder of Church Street and Moorswater".

In the Cornish Times of 1<sup>st</sup> June 1861 it was reported that in "a destructive fire at Mr. Williams' foundry the whole building and its contents were destroyed", but in the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1861 issue "Mr. Z Williams respectfully" announced that he was back in business.

After Zach's death in 1877 his son Richard H Williams successfully expanded the business and in May 1890 he purchased for £40, from the Borough of Liskeard, a "piece of land with the old building thereon commonly known by the name of the Lady Well". Richard built an impressive showroom here at No.6 Church St.; it still exists, but much modernised.



# Diary of Events

## September 2020



In the current situation, none of the events planned for September or October are listed, however, there are things to note .....

The hopes for a Garden Party and on-line music from the Gallery (see p.2.)

The Liskeard Unlocked Events over the week-end of 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September involve Stuart House:

- The walks on Saturday begin in our garden
- The Exhibition in the Public Hall will include a small exhibition on the history of the Stuart House garden
- The ed. is giving an online talk about the history of the House on Sunday.

### Liskeard Unlocked - Friday 11th - Sunday 13th September 2020

ON-SITE EVENTS & WALKS	ONLINE EVENTS
<p><b>Saturday 12th September</b></p> <p><b>1 Town Centre Open Spaces Walk</b> Meet 9.45am and 1.45pm at Stuart House garden (entrance at the side - between Stuart House and The King Danielt) A guided walk with Brian Oldham through a mixture of parks, churchyards and private gardens. Booking essential (see above)</p> <p><b>2 Castle Park Activities</b> Noon - 4.30pm. <i>Making Space for Nature project</i> will be in Castle Park - find out more about wildlife improvements in the Park and have your say. There will be children's activities including a short nature trail; a quiz for families; an organised litter pick; free wildflower seeds to take away, as well as an ice-cream van puppet show. Take your camera and have a go at macro photography with the Museum's volunteers ready for their online exhibition.</p> <p><b>3 St Martin's Church</b> 10am - 2pm for church exhibition; any time or day for churchyard visits. <i>Making Space for Nature in an ancient Churchyard</i> - An indoor exhibition of plans for wilding of the churchyard; access to look around the area, and an exhibition consulting on plans for the project in Castle Park.</p> <p><b>4 Unlocking the Cattle Market - Past &amp; Future</b> - 10am - 2pm For over 100 years this site was a hub of activity for the surrounding farms. Now we are looking at using it in new ways, including markets for local food and new workspaces. • Come and see an <b>open air exhibition</b> about the history of the Cattle Market, find out the latest news on the proposed workspace, covered market area and the Cattle Market Makers project that resulted from previous consultations &amp; have your say about how the rest of the site develops. • All alongside an <b>outdoor market</b> where you can shop safely for local food. • While you're in town make sure to check out our many independent shops and cafes.</p>	<p><b>Friday 11th Sept. 7.30pm</b> <b>Old Cornwall Society Online Talk</b> Online Zoom talk by Brian Oldham on Liskeard's Wool Industry and its history. Register via Liskeard Tourist Information Centre.</p> <p><b>Sunday 13th Sept. 5pm</b> <b>Stuart House Online Talk</b> Online illustrated Zoom talk about Stuart House, the oldest house in the town. Find out about the building, grounds and its inhabitants before it became an Arts and Heritage Centre. Register via Liskeard Tourist Information Centre.</p>
<p><b>5 The Public Hall</b> - 10am - 2pm <b>Socially-distanced Exhibition</b> using a one-way system •1950s / 1960s Museum exhibition •Displays from properties unable to open now •Film shows of Looe Valley Line history</p> <p><b>Sunday 13th September</b></p> <p><b>6 Grade II Geology Walk</b> Meet 2pm at the Fountain on The Parade. Join geologist <b>Calum Beeson</b> for a look at the stones of some of the Grade II listed structures in Liskeard. Learn about the rock types used and where they are likely to have been sourced. Discover what that implies about the cost of the building and see how considerations like price, beauty, practicality and longevity determined which materials were selected. <b>Booking essential (see above)</b></p> <p><small>Please note that when booking for or attending on-site events, your details may be recorded for Track &amp; Trace purposes, following Government guidelines and in compliance with data protection rules.</small></p>	<p><b>Online Tours and Photo Shows</b> Available on the <a href="#">Visit Liskeard</a> website from 5pm on Friday 11th September. (No need to register in advance.)</p> <p><b>Pendean</b> - A photographic tour around this great historic house and garden. Home of two former Liskeard Mayors, with amazing stained glass windows, beautiful carved wood and interesting gardens too.</p> <p><b>Penmilder</b> - A photographic tour of this beautiful garden throughout the seasons.</p> <p><b>No. 3 Varley Terrace</b> - photographic tour. Sit back, relax and join us on a guided tour of this house designed by Henry Rice, with its many attractive features and interesting history.</p> <p><b>The Railway</b> - • virtual tour of Liskeard Station's Signal Box, courtesy of Network Rail • driver's eye view of the Looe Valley Line, courtesy of GWR</p>
<p><b>Where to find the Events</b></p>	
<p><b>Re-Starting the Guildhall Clock</b> - Watch the video of the 152 year old clock in the Guildhall being re-started recently after it was stopped due to the coronavirus and the requirements for safe social distancing. Apart from a period in 1954 when it was removed for refurbishment, this will be only the second time in its 152 year history that this wonderful clock has stopped working.</p>	

Again, Friends are reminded that in the absence of much news of current events, brief accounts of events or memories or other contributions linked with Stuart House are very welcome.

Do please send any contributions to the editor, who can use them in future Newsletters, or maybe even a supplement.

Articles, information, notices and photographs for the Stuart House Newsletter to the editor, please (who must reserve the right to edit as necessary), before 25<sup>th</sup> of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter. Although Sioux will be back in the office, please continue to email [rachelpbennett59@gmail.com](mailto:rachelpbennett59@gmail.com)