

# Newsletter

*April 2023*



## **FUN DAY Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup> from 10.30am, for Friends, family and friends!**

Chairman Bob and House Manager Sioux write:

Do come and join in the Fun Day, whatever the weather. Everyone wearing an Easter bonnet will get a prize! There will be an Easter-egg hunt, a Treasure Hunt with clues in each room of the House, a free cream tea for Friends of Stuart House and lots more!

At about 2.30pm there will be a presentation to Malcolm and Jeff, our wonderful gardeners, of the garden's 'Liskeard in Bloom' award, so richly deserved.

Not compulsory, but if you can let Sioux know numbers, it will help with planning.



Not expected at the Fun Day, but bringing a smile to March's Passmore Edwards exhibition with fascinating information about his gifts of a library and a hospital to Liskeard (see p.2).



## EVENTS LAST MONTH AND COMING IN APRIL

**The Passmore Edwards Exhibition**, organised by Jackie Jenkins, archivist of Liskeard's Old Cornwall Society (seen here) ran in the Max Lock Gallery from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March. House-manager Sioux remarks that it was very well attended with some generous donations and lovely comments in the Visitors' Book. The story of the Cornish philanthropist, born 200 years ago, and his gift of a library and a hospital to Liskeard were explained, with some fascinating photographs and documents, including the original indenture of the sale in 1895 of some of the Stuart House garden to Liskeard Borough for the building of a Library (provided that the windows were at least six feet about the floor of the room that they served!). *see also p.1*



House-manager Sioux writes: Wendy Lindesay's exquisite needlework is on display from Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April through to 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Wendy designed the bed hangings for the fourposter bed now in the Tudor Room. She and several members of the Trust then transferred the designs into actual panels - 33 in total, all stitched in red crewel wool on white fabric. The exhibition includes canvas work, crewel work, machine embroidery and cross stitch together with her working notes including for her City and Guilds courses.

If anyone has any memories of Wendy's time at Stuart House I would love to hear them and maybe add them into the exhibition. Wendy has been involved with Stuart House since the early days and was Treasurer for several years.

### Monday 17<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April **BOOK SALE**

MARK SIMMONS returns to the downstairs 'Surgery' for another sale of his own books together with a wide range of second-hand books, including collectors' editions.







Stuart House Presents

## From a Boy to a King



Photos and stories of King Charles III growing up

And

## Crowns and Coronets



The life and times of the Kings and Queens of England

From 24<sup>th</sup> April – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9.30 – 3.30

Also Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> April and Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 – 12.30

Try our Coronation Cream Tea Special in the café or Garden



## Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April to Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May DOUBLE CORONATION EXHIBITION

“**Charles - from a Boy to a King**” uses photos and stories of King Charles III growing up and his time in the Duchy.

“**Crowns and Coronets**” - the life and times of the kings and queens of England.

We would love to hear (or read) your encounters/memories of our new Monarch.

The exhibitions are organized by Jean and Jenny, our new trustees and the presenters of several previous exhibitions.

Another snippet by Brian Oldham, president of Liskeard's Old Cornwall Society who have their base in the Trecarrel Room on the top floor of Stuart House, open to the public on Tuesdays

### Droll Teller, Umbrella Repairer and Cutler : William Thomas Chubb (1891?-1973)

Wednesday March 21<sup>st</sup> was World Puppetry Day, so here is a piece about, probably, Liskeard's most famous puppet, based on the real life 'Bill' Chubb, who is still remembered by some of our town's more established residents.

Different sources give 'Bill's' year of birth as 1891, 1892, 1894 or 1895, but his birthday was always given as July 16<sup>th</sup>. The censuses, on different occasions, gave his occupation as 'Hawker', 'Assisting Father in Cutler Business' or 'Journeyman Cutler', but never as his most often remembered, 'Umbrella Repairer'. Customers in Liskeard, Dobwalls, St Cleer, Looe and Pensilva were visited on their allocated day every week by 'Bill'. Umbrellas that needed mending and knives and tools that needed sharpening were collected and returned the following week. 'Bill' used an oilstone for sharpening and pitch, kept hot in a Lyons Golden Syrup tin on a small black leaded stove, for sealing holes in umbrellas.

It was the children who looked forward most to Bill's visits, as he always had time for them and they would listen intently to one of his many stories - drolls being the Cornish word. In fact, he is thought to be one of the last Droll Tellers in East Cornwall. 'Bill's' favourite 'watering holes' were the Barley Sheaf and the

Webb's Hotel Tap Room where, I'm sure, he would have found another audience to hear his tales, perhaps of a raunchier nature? A droll was traditionally a tale of local events and people, some humorous and some not; a way of spreading news between Cornish towns and villages before the advent of newspapers, radio and television. Soon after Bill's death in 1973, Burness Bunn, writing in the Cornish Guardian, created an image of 'Bill' in words: 'a certain jaunty swagger', 'short and jaunty and as chirrupy as a cricket' and 'his tales were accompanied by saucy winks that flickered over his eyes like venetian blinds'. A puppet in the image of 'Bill' was created several years ago by Puppetcraft; it was operated by Sue Field as she related traditional Cornish folk tales to children in local schools. Performer Nina Hills

entertained another audience, accompanied by the puppet 'Bill', continuing the droll telling tradition in shows, parties and out on the streets across Cornwall. Sue and Nina's droll performances were part of an ongoing project called 'Mazed Tales'. The BBC plan to air a series of programmes which will tell the true stories behind some of Cornwall's ancient treasures. One of the episodes, to be shown on the CBeebies channel later in 2023, will feature Cornish Droll Tellers, including Liskeard's 'Bill' Chubb.



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



The white and yellow polyanthus in the planters and table pots have been exceptionally floriferous, standing up well to the vagaries of early Spring weather. These are the variety Crescendo, grown from seed sown a year ago. However, a few of those on the café windowsill boxes suddenly collapsed. On taking them out, vine weevil grubs were seen chomping the roots. So there's a good lesson here: when setting out bedding plants in

containers, it's best to use fresh compost. If there is an infestation of vine weevil in the old compost, spread it out on plastic (an old compost bag, for example) wait for the birds to pick out the grubs, then spread it on the garden as topdressing.

The only plant in the Stuart House garden that suffered from frost damage was the shrub I call the Magic bush because it produces an eye-catching continual display of daisy-like yellow flowers from March to late summer. This is *Euryops pectinatus* from South Africa which grows a metre or so high and wide, and is hardy down to about -5°C. Luckily, cuttings I took in September rooted readily on the kitchen windowsill, are growing well and already beginning to flower in a cold greenhouse.

The wisteria that decks the far corner arch has (just in time) been given its winter pruning. The long tendrils are cut to around four buds from the main stems to promote flowering spurs and to keep the whole plant in its allotted place. During summer, these tendrils venture forth with great determination, tightly twisting through surrounding trees and shrubs. I have often wondered why they only track towards other plants, not bothering to venture on the lawn side of the arch where there's nothing worth throttling. All was revealed in a recent BBC radio programme. Certain receptors in wisteria detect wavelengths of infra-red light reflected by taller plants which the wisteria tendrils find alluring. Biology can be cunningly clever. Wisteria tendrils also need trimming back to about a foot in mid-summer to keep everything in hand and to encourage flowering the following season.



My March article included a photograph of bergenia flowers in the front garden. These plants are very easy and reliable to grow, producing pink flowers in late winter/early Spring. They are evergreen, provide good groundcover, and are left alone by slugs and snails. A humus rich soil and semi-shaded position are usually recommended, but our plants are quite at home in rather poor soil, not even being watered in last summer's heat wave. They hold their own against the tangled mass of the Periwinkle that dominates that bed. Bergenias are native to Afghanistan and the Himalayan region and named after the German botanist Karl von Bergen (1704-1759).

It was recently widely reported that British native plant species are now outnumbered by "invaders". (A native species is defined as having made its own way to our shores



without human help.) I thought this rather misleading, because though the millennia, through cold and warm times, and when we were joined to Continental Europe, plants have come and gone. Neolithic people, the Romans and other travellers and invaders have all brought plants with them, knowingly or accidentally, many now naturalised in the landscape.

A good few of our common wild-flowers including poppies, field marigold, and cornflower are not really “native”. And nearly all of our garden flowers, flowering shrubs and crops originate in other parts of the world. Most are very well-behaved, there being only a handful of invasive villains. Other studies show that most insects don’t mind at all where their pollen comes from – they will happily visit whatever flowers they find.



Continuing last month’s theme “if I could only have one ...”, then my tree would be an apple (a self-pollinating, dessert sort). Indeed, in a small garden, the most productive crops are from fruit trees and bushes, for example raspberries against a fence, with an apple tree to sit under in summer or trained against a wall if space is at a premium. Salads (possibly grown in boxes), and herbs (in a sunny planter with well-drained poorish soil), are also very easy money-saving options.

**Topical tip.** It’s time to sow pinches of annual seeds into small pots in a cold-frame or unheated greenhouse to plant out in about a month or so. Alyssum, Limnanthes (poached egg flower), Nigella (love-in-a-mist) and Eschscholzia (Californian poppy) all work well. None of these is a British native, but Alyssum (from southern Europe) was grown in early Stuart House times, so that’s all right then!

*Malcolm Mort*

## More “Memories from the Minutes’ from Hon. Sec. Sue Glencross

*March 2002 continued...* Eileen reported that her grant application had given a general outline of how the balance of the Esmée Fairbairn grant should be spent but a detailed budget would now need to be prepared. Items to be costed included laptop computer; printer; scanner; filing cabinet; cash box; telephones. Advertising needed to be considered.

The AGM was scheduled to take place on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2002 but was preceded by a committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April. Following receipt of the gas and electric bills it was decided that maybe a better deal could be obtained if there were not separate suppliers. Eileen and Tony were meeting the stewards. A first draft of their contract had been prepared. Rosa and Sue would draw up a list of people to be included in the ‘Stuart House Catering Corps’ ! It would be necessary to draw on those members to provide drinks and biscuits for the cast before the G&S show and for cast and audience in the interval. The concert would be held in the Public Hall and afterwards there would be a buffet reception in Stuart House. The possible restoration of Henry Rice’s tomb was discussed, and an approach would be made to the Old Cornwall Society. OCS would be asked to provide an Exhibition in the Hall while Terry and Sarah Currell’s exhibitions would be displayed upstairs – this being for the visit by HRH.

*to be continued .....*

# Diary of Events

## April 2023



Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Wendy Lindsay Embroidery Exhibition (see p.2)
Tuesdays 4 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup>	Liskeard Writers' Group meet 2 – 4.30 pm.
every Thursday	Craft Club: all welcome 12 noon to 3pm.
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup>	HOUSE CLOSED on Good Friday
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Fun Day from 10.30am – all welcome! (see p.1)
Monday 10 <sup>th</sup>	HOUSE CLOSED on Easter Monday
Monday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Liskeard Poetry Group meet 4 to 6.30pm.
Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> to Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mark Simmons' Book Sale (see p.2)
Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Fake or Fortune – antiques valuation with Richard Hamm of Bearnes, Hampton & Littlewood. 10am. to 12 noon
Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> to Saturday 13 <sup>th</sup> May	'Charles – Boy to King' and 'Crowns and Coronets' - two exhibitions marking the coronation of King Charles III (see p.3)
<b>Coming in May</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt Thomas Art Exhibition (15<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• Realm of the Goddess: art and mythology of Debbie Jones (22<sup>nd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>)</li> <li>• Book launch and talk by Tom Barrie Simmons (Tue. 31st 7pm)</li> </ul>

*The House, Garden, Old Kitchen Café and (check first) Computer Research Facility are open*

*9.30am – 3.30pm on Monday Tuesday, Thursday and Friday*

*9.30am – 12.30pm on Saturday when possible*

*(occasional Wednesdays if there is a special exhibition on)*

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. Leave with Sioux in the Office or email to [rachelpbennett59@gmail.com](mailto:rachelpbennett59@gmail.com)

**Credit and thanks for photographs:** all garden photographs are by Malcolm, those of exhibitions p.1&2 by the ed., Bill Chubb by John Rapson and puppet Bill by Andy Bilewycz.