

# AUGUST

**Battisford & District**

**Gardening Club**

**Newsletter**

Issue 47

# 2018



This standard wisteria was just one of the beautiful and unusual features in Fullers Mill Garden, visited by members on the 14th May

In Jackie Colling's enthusiastic report she tells members of the Gardening Club who were unable to visit Fullers Mill Gardens that they had missed a real treat, although some of them may have seen them on Gardener's World on Friday 1st June. The 7 acres of gardens are nestled in Kings Forest on the outskirts of West Stow and consist of many winding paths bordered by hosts of plants, some of them very unusual.

Monday 14th May

Visit to Fullers Mill Gardens

West Stow.

Bernard Tickner purchased Fullers Mill in 1957, a lock keepers cottage with very few amenities, and started to create the garden. To begin with it was just a hobby as he was a brewer at Green King's in Bury St. Edmunds, rising to Head Brewer and creating Abbot Ale, still a very popular brew to this day.

I wish I had visited Fullers Mill whilst Bernard Tickner was still alive, (he died last year aged 93) as I understand he used to sit in the garden or café and chat to visitors. I purchased his autobiography, which I am reading at the moment, and he sounded to be such an interesting character. Over the years he acquired more land from the Forestry Commission, resulting in the current 7 acres. He was also involved in creating Lackford Lakes & Country Park from the adjacent disused quarry.

On our arrival, Head Gardener, Annie Dellbridge, gave a brief informative talk about the gardens and late owner, before leaving us to wander, although she walked around the gardens answering numerous questions. At the time of our visit there were many tree peonies in bloom in a variety of stunning colours, and the trees and shrubs were laden with blossom.

In 2004 Bernard Tickner and his wife Bess donated the gardens to the Fullers Mill Trust and then in 2013 gifted the gardens to "Perennial" The Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society. Fullers Mill Gardens are open from April to September, Wednesday and Friday 2p.m. - 5p.m. and Sundays 11a.m. - 5p.m.

I can thoroughly recommend a visit. I am definitely returning.

Jackie Collings

Monday 4th June

Visit to Woolpit Nurseries

Wonderful Woolpit (Nurseries that is)

If you thought that Woolpit Nurseries was just another garden centre, or that you knew all there was to know about planting hanging baskets, then you would be wrong on both counts. The impressive turnout for our trip to Woolpit Nurseries was under no such illusions, and we were rewarded with an entertaining and instructive evening presented by Andrew Brain who currently runs this family business.

Andrew started by giving us a brief history of the Nurseries. Started in the 1950's as a tomato growing enterprise, they were eventually squeezed out of the market by cheap Dutch imports and switched to growing bedding plants. Andrew told us that all of his bedding plants, and over 90% of all of his plants, are still grown on site. This involves a massive annual operation, starting during the winter months with the pre-filling of over 60,000 pots.

The key to success, as Andrew kept emphasising, was good compost. 'A poor plant can thrive in good compost. But even the best plant will struggle in a poor compost'. Andrew uses only Levington Professional, which he also sells to the public. His plants are of the highest quality, and he wants his customers to have the means to get the best out of them as they grow them on.

A measure of Andrew's success is the fact that he and his staff at Woolpit provide all of the hanging baskets for Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket. Plus the floral displays for the ARC shopping centre and various other commercial enterprises including local hostelrys. They helped Bury St Edmunds win the 'Anglia in Bloom' title last year and will be supporting their efforts as the region's entry in this year's RHS 'Britain in Bloom' competition.

The hanging baskets for the town displays are just part of the 1,500 hanging baskets prepared by the Nurseries each year. Some of these baskets have special built in reservoirs, which means that they can weigh as much as 35 kilos. So loading up the trailer for a delivery is not a job for the faint-hearted. As Andrew confirmed, having spent most of the day before we arrived loading up for a delivery the next day to Stowmarket.

Apart from the hanging baskets for the town displays and those on general sale, customers can take in their own baskets to have them made up to order and then have them carefully looked after until the time is right to collect them and hang them outdoors. The work of preparing the hanging baskets is principally carried out by Andrew's wife and his sister-in-law, who between them can turn out 200 hanging baskets a day. This is still very much a family business. Although now retired from the front line, Andrew's father-in-law is still a keen horticulturist, and in an area not normally open to the public we were shown examples of his giant carrots and parsnips being grown for the Harrogate show, where he is hoping to repeat his 2017 winning results.

After a tour of the greenhouses, with a presentation full of interesting facts and insights, we moved on to a demonstration by Andrew. He started first with two pot displays followed by a hanging basket. Andrew made it all look very easy. Which was actually part of his message. It doesn't need to be complicated. You can fill a large basket with just one plant, as evidenced by the Petunia on display at the entrance. Or you can produce an elaborate display, with a combination of colours offset by trailing greenery. Again, the key was to start off with good compost, which meant that there was then no need for additives such as gels and wetting agents. As Andrew pointed out, the hanging baskets in the town displays thrive throughout the season with just regular watering and feeding.



Some tips from his demonstration.

- Tip the compost into the container but don't compact it. Keep the compost light and fluffy.
- Gather your basket chains before planting and tie them temporarily to a centre stake. This avoids damaging the plants when you retrieve the chains to hang the basket.
- Don't bother to tease the roots of the plants you are putting in. With good compost they will spread their roots without any difficulty.
- The exception is the trailing greenery, where Andrew gently knocked off most of the compost from the roots before planting. This was to set these plants back a bit and give the main plants a chance to get well established first.
- Some of the trailing greenery can be very vigorous, in which case simply cut it back occasionally with a pair of scissors.
- There is no need for additives when using a good compost, apart from three or four plugs of Osmocote slow release fertiliser. After that, as with all flowering plants, feed regularly with Tomorite or an equivalent.

All too soon the evening was over, but not before we all had a chance to buy some of the excellent plants and accessories on display. And it was no surprise to see so many people loading up their cars with bags of the Levington Professional compost.

If you haven't been to Woolpit Nurseries before, it is worth a visit just for the compost. I can guarantee that you will be impressed by the quality of the plants on sale. The combination of the two will guarantee you excellent results throughout the season.

And don't forget to look out for examples of their work when you visit Stowmarket, Newmarket or Bury St Edmunds over the summer months.

Ian Clark



Hanging baskets, Bury St Edmunds, provided by Woolpit Nurseries



At the Old Cannon Brewery



The family at Woolpit Nurseries

As well as bedding and patio plants Woolpit Nurseries has an excellent hardy plant centre with perennials and shrubs

Saturday 16th June

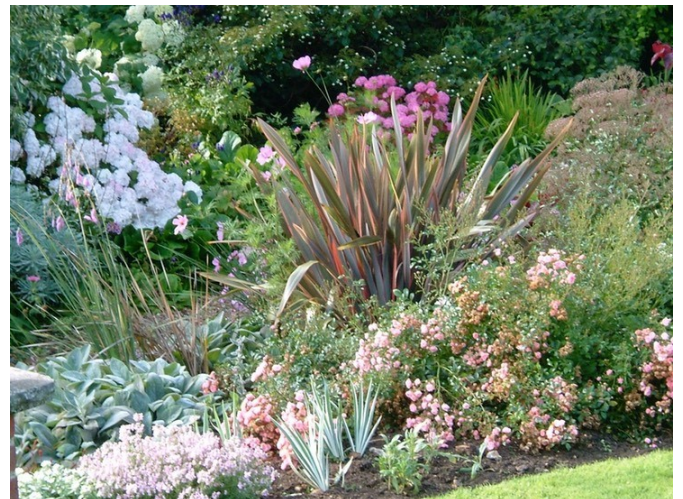
Trip to Peter Beales Roses, Attleborough  
& Sea Mere, near Hingham, both in Norfolk

Peter Beales was set up in 1968, so are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

During our visit we were entertained by a very knowledgeable guide who has worked at Peter Beales for over 20 years and was able to explain the history of the rose garden, as well as providing some growing and planting tips. I was impressed by his knowledge, he truly was a rose expert.



You can see the mere in the distance



The pink and silver border

June 16<sup>th</sup> was the day of the Gardening Club trip to view the incredible roses at Peter Beales at Attleborough, Norfolk. The visit was timed to coincide with their annual Rose Festival. The purpose of the first stop was to appreciate the beautiful roses on display and possibly purchase some with the hope of producing the same effect! It was a sunny day and the coach was comfortable. Travel to Attleborough took just over an hour and after some fun and games trying to park the coach in a small, awkward space, we were dispatched to enjoy the displays, grab lunch and soak up some rays while surrounded by beautiful roses. I personally have never seen so many beautiful roses in one place and despite previously telling myself I should not plant any more roses, found myself keen to buy some!

The trip to Sea Mere, near Hingham was to admire the beautiful gardens and for some of us, to provide inspiration regarding the art of possible. It is situated in 200 acres of farmland and boasts gardens of more than five acres. The terrace at the house affords a spectacular view of the gardens and a rolling expanse of lawn, which leads to the mere, a large round lake of approximately 20 acres. The mere is a post-glacial formation and is 10 – 12,000 years old! It is not surprising that the mere and surrounding woods are a site of special scientific interest.

The gardens comprise herbaceous borders, a bog garden, vegetable garden and a series of themed gardens, for instance rose, oval, winter and woodland gardens. The gardens were laid out 120 years ago, and the current owners have created and maintained today's layout. If you haven't had a chance to visit either of these locations, I really recommend you take the opportunity to go. They were really inspiring and made me want to be a better gardener.

Gabrielle Pirzad

Saturday 7th July

# 11th Annual Gardening Club Show

There were concerns that the snow earlier in the year and the more recent heatwave may have a major impact on Show entries this year. However although they were down on recent years there was plenty to enjoy and the standard was as good as ever. As usual we are very grateful to our judges, particularly Ken Abel who stepped in to judge the plants and Kate Hansord who judged the craft and children's and for the second year running David Ryan who judged the cookery. Molly Whitehead who has been our vegetable & fruit judge since the early years agreed to present the trophies.

The marquee was smaller than in previous years but we fitted in well, just us, the bar and the big television that showed the world cup with a large audience of cheering people! (England won 2-0).

Many thanks to all our helpers and stewards and to all the entrants and well done to the Fete Committee for an excellent Fete

## Judges hard at work



## Prize giving



Paul won the T&M potato prize! (insider knowledge?)



Mike won the highest points tray (again!)



Bill won the best pelargonium (below) here presented by Ken Abel



Other trophy winners Page 7

Some of the winning entries



A small painting - Caroline Burgoyne



A soft toy - Caroline Crosthwaite



Photograph of fungi - Jackie Collings



Foliage arrangement - Helen Read



Handprint pattern - Toby Baldry , aged 3



Decorated cup cakes

Oliver Baldry - aged 7

Monday 2nd July

The Orchard Barn project - 5 years on

Sarah Partridge

The speaker on 2nd July was Sarah Partridge who is the inspiration behind and a project leader for the Orchard Barn Project, which began in 2007. Sarah gave a detailed history of the Barn development and she is clearly dedicated to the ethos which drives their objectives. It is a social enterprise project, which specialises in natural and traditional building projects. The original aim was to save the C17 Barn and develop the site and this has grown over time into a way of bringing people together to learn traditional crafts and trades through practical participation. When Sarah started she expected to receive grants and other financial support, but when this did not materialise, she thought of other ways to make it work. Volunteers have given their time and expertise and professionals and amateurs alike have learned various building skills, such as making 20,000 shingles for the roof, or using lime mortar, using two handled saws or making cobs. Sarah talked about the accessible and eco friendly toilet, which is an achievement in itself. She explained how they have made pragmatic decisions over time to get around economic and practical restraints, such as using stainless steel nails instead of the original wooden pegs for the roofing, but over all they have tried to stick to their aim of using traditional materials. Sarah's passion for her project and the ethos underlying it, came through strongly in her talk. Looking to the future, they are now planning to restore/rebuild the cottage which stood on the site, again using traditional materials and methods. Sarah likes to have visitors to the site and volunteers are even more welcome!

Jane Pope

Gardening Club Trophy Winners - also see page 5

Webb Cup for Vegetables - Steve Thompson; Win & Bob Rolfe Cup for Fruit - Mike Warren; BDGC 10th Anniversary Trophy - Kathy Middleton; Portway Cup for Flowers - Nigel Johstone; Paul Hansord Trophy - Stephanie Samuels; BDGC Silver Salver - Helen Read; BDHS Craft Cup - Caroline Crosthwaite; Edna Green Challenge Trophy for Cookery - Jeanne nLynch-Aird; BDGC Treasurer's Cup for Photography - Bill Baldry; BDGC Children's Cup - Toby Baldry; BDGC Junior Cup - Oliver Baldry; BDHS Miscellaneous Cup - Helen Seymour.



Restoration project



Planning permission has been passed to reinstate this 1580 Suffolk Long House. Originally framed in Tudor times, these ancient timbers have spend too many decades hiding in the bramble patch adjacent to Orchard Barn.



Eco friendly toilet

## Future Events 2018

Monday 3rd September  
Henstead Exotic Garden  
Andrew Brogan

Monday 1st October  
AGM & informal Gardeners Question Time

Monday 5th November  
Growing Giant Pumpkins  
Matthew Oliver

Monday 3rd December (7pm start)  
Annual Quiz with free buffet  
George Bethell

## 2019

Friday 18th January  
Annual dinner - NEW VENUE!  
Stowmarket Golf Club  
Details to follow

Monday 4th February  
Auriculas - history, classification & care  
Luci Skinner



Henstead Exotic Garden

### Answers to May picture quiz

1. Wisteria
2. Hebe
3. Spirea
4. Bugle
5. Campanula
6. Tulip
7. Marsh Marigold
8. Cornflower
9. Poppy
10. Cosmos
11. Crocus
12. Larkspur
13. Bleeding heart
14. Cranesbill
15. Dog tooth violet
16. Snowdrop
17. Rock rose/ Stone crop
18. Iris
19. Red hot poker
20. Sweet pea
21. Lupin
22. Stocks
23. Livingstone Daisy
24. Monkey Flower
25. Petunia
26. Knotweed
27. Thyme
28. Forsythia
29. Cotoneaster

If you would like information about Battsford & District Gardening Club please contact Bill Baldry  
12 Tannery Road, Combs, IP14 2EL. 01449 672168  
Or go to our website:  
[www.battsfordgardeningclub.org.uk](http://www.battsfordgardeningclub.org.uk)



### John Davey, RIP

It is with sadness that I have to report the death of John Davey from Great Finborough Gardening Club. John was a good friend to BDGC providing cut price bird seeds to a number of us and giving us a donation from the profits which enabled us to plant daffodils all round Battsford & Combs and bluebell bulbs on Battsford village green. The latter should bloom next spring to remind us of him. All our sympathy to his family.