

**February**  
**2019**



**Battisford & District**  
**Gardening Club**  
**Newsletter**

Issue 48



Thanks to Linda Clark for the picture

Most people love a dragonfly don't they? Which is perhaps a little surprising when you consider their size and their large bulging eyes! - incidentally the largest eyes in the insect world that can see up to 15m away. There are 6,500 species of dragonflies in the world and 30 in the UK. They eat insects such as flies, midges and mosquitoes. They can fly at 30mph and can use all of their four wings independently which means they can fly forwards, backwards and sideways as well as hovering. Their ancestors appeared on earth about 300 million years ago, before the dinosaurs. Their smaller cousins are damsel flies though both belong to the order Odonata which means toothed jaws. Dragon flies are sometimes called horse stingers although there is no evidence that they bite or sting horses. It is likely that their prey, other flies attracted by horses are the culprits.

Dragonflies have a 'clasper' and are sometimes known as the devil's darning needle and from this there is a myth that they seek out naughty children and sew their mouths up with the clasper while they sleep. Actually the clasper is used by the male to hang on to the female during mating

Monday 3rd September 2018

Henstead Exotic Garden

Andrew Brogan



Andrew Brogan, who created the Exotic Garden at Henstead was our speaker at the September meeting. He has a quirky sense of humour so his talk was hilarious as well as informative. He previously visited the garden club in 2012 after which a trip to his garden was arranged for members. On a personal note I had already visited the garden prior to his talk under the 'Invitation to View' scheme.

Andrew started the Exotic Garden 14 years ago having bought 1/2 acre of nettle strewn land from the adjacent Henstead Hall. Over the years Andrew has purchased more land and his garden now covers 2 acres and features hundreds of exotic plants, 100 tons of rock, which he wheelbarrowed from his front drive, beautiful natural looking waterfalls and ponds, where ferns have grown in the crevices adding to the natural appearance. Dotted around he has built beautiful wooden buildings,, including a Thai pavilion, which blends so well with the exotic planting.

Despite being thought of as tender plants, mainly from the Far East, all are hardy and remain outside throughout the year, an amazing achievement, as the climate near Southwold is totally unsuitable. The gardens are at their peak in August & September, although, as most of the plants are evergreen, there is interest all year round. Andrew manages the gardens single handed, apart from help from Tor who lives in Burma, but when in this Country assists. Tor is extremely strong and when told to "Kill" by Andrew removes enormous weeds, recently digging up a bamboo runner 26' long and 4" thick. He also dug a 20' pit in a day ready for the compost toilet.

When a group of young school children visited recently they all wrote letters about their day, one lad commenting the compost toilet was 'Epic'. Whilst creating a fernery, Tor & Andrew discovered glacial rocks from the ice age, 20' underground. There are also trees that haven't been touched for over 100 years that soar 80' - 100' forming a protective canopy.

The Gardens are open Wednesday & Sunday afternoon during the summer months. For these days Andrew enlists the help of an 80 year old lady to serve tea & cakes. He also sells plants from the vast stock in his nursery. His garden is also featured in 'Invitation to View' catalogue and he welcomes group visits.

He is justly proud of the fact that his garden has been featured in numerous publications, television programmes photo shoots film sets, etc and that Alan Titchmarsh has written about his garden in glowing terms from time to time.

A delightful evening, thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

Jackie Collings

Monday 1st October 2018

Annual General Meeting

Bill presided over the AGM and reported a good year for the Club with a variety of speakers and visits. The current Committee stood down and Bill was re-elected as Chairman. All the current Committee also agreed to stand and two additional members were voted on, Jane Pope and Denise Crozier.

The accounts were presented by Bill and showed a deficit of £510.72 which was largely due to increased cost of speakers and Show expenses. The balance is £5,458.18.

There were fewer entries for the Show due to the weather but still a full, colourful marquee for the many visitors.

A full programme has been organised for 2019.

The AGM was followed by refreshments and an informal Gardeners' Question Time.

Monday 1st October 2018

## Gardeners' Question Time



Peter Freeman Paul Hansord Mike Warren

A lively and interesting session of Gardener's Question Time entertained members after the AGM. Two of the panellists were well known to members and the third, Peter Freeman is a Horticulturalist from Thompson & Morgan. Here are a few of the questions & answers

Question: Anna: Her dwarf dahlias that normally flower every year have flowered less in the last two years. They are planted in well drained soil.

Ans: Peter: As they get older they weaken and are more likely to be attacked by pests

Advice: When the stem dies down you can divide them. Feed during the summer. In autumn cut down to 1" and leave in frost free area. In Spring take cuttings from the tubers—new tubers have renewed strength.

Question: Ian: His lawn has not recovered from the summer. He has scarified and removed the thatch but it is not showing signs of improvements.

Ans: The Panel generally agreed that everyone's lawns were still not looking their best. It was suggested that there is very good artificial grass available these days— I think this was tongue in cheek!



Signs of summer lawn stress

Question: Denise asked what the caterpillars on her roses could be.

Ans: Probably sawfly larvae

Advice —pick them off and spray roses with insecticide.

Question: Frances (Jean's friend) asked about planting dog toothed violets.

Ans: They like humus soil in partial shade.

Advice: Start them off in pots and plant out in spring. They tend to flower before most other plants

Question: 6 pink hydrangeas in pots that did not flower this year ?Why

Ans: Could be due to stress in the heat.—black pots get hotter.

Advice: Keep them well watered and fed with high potash feed. They usually flower on 2nd year wood so be careful when you prune. This problem does not occur with Thompson & Morgan's Runaway Bride which won Plant of the Year of 2018 at Chelsea as this flowers off new wood .

### Hydrangea, Runaway Bride



This prize winning hydrangea produces 6 times the number of flowers all along the stem. Its height and spread is 48cm. It is an ideal plant for a patio container a lightly shaded border, and even a

hanging basket.

It flowers from May to September and the beautiful white blooms are dusted with a hint of pink .If pruned after initial flowering it will encourage a secondary growth.

The hydrangea is fully hardy, surviving down to -15C

Monday 5th November 2018

## Growing Giant Pumpkins

Matthew Oliver

Question: Daphne had a 'miniature' buddleia in a patio pot. It should grow to 4' but has grown to 6' despite vigorous pruning.

Ans: Sometimes despite being described as miniature plants will revert to their original size.

Advice: Buy a replacement!

Question: Sheila asked for advice about pruning a purple ever-green magnolia that is 6-8' tall with a spread of 15'

Advice: Reduce some branches immediately after flowering and assess the impact on the tree before further pruning.

Question: Nigel has an acer whose leaves have gone brown and shrivelled.

Advice: Needs a sheltered east facing spot in the shade

Question: Linda has some curly conifers with white dusting on the stem

Ans: Probably woolly aphids— use appropriate spray

In the spring of 2016 Matthew Oliver was a pumpkin novice. By October he was a UK record holder. So an overnight success? Well hardly. Matt was about to astound us with his tale of what was involved in the months between.

So where do you start? The answer is, with a patch of land about the size of the floor area of the village hall where we were sat. Which first has to be dug over by hand. Then, after adding copious amounts of well rotted compost, and grit to improve drainage, dug again and then rotovated to achieve a workable soil. By which stage, we were already beginning to realise that growing giant pumpkins was not as easy as we might have thought.

To grow a UK record giant pumpkin you need a special seed. Enter Paul Hansord of Thompson and Morgan, who had bought a single seed at auction for a world record price of £1,250. He entrusted this to Matt, despite his limited experience in growing giant pumpkins. So, no pressure then!

Under Matt's tender care the seed quickly germinated, and was planted out at one end of the plot. At this stage (mid April) it was covered by a giant cloche the size of a small shed that Matt had cobbled together from scrap wood and plastic sheeting. This enabled him to maintain a consistent growing temperature, using a fan heater at night.

Matt's pumpkin quickly outgrew its makeshift cloche, which was then removed exposing it to the elements. Apart, that is, from netting to protect it from the wind, because by then it was starting to put on considerable leaf growth. If you imagine starting at the far end of the hall, by the end of June a space the size of the floor area was covered in leafy growth that Matt had carefully trained into an inverted Christmas tree shape.



Paul Hansord & Matthew Oliver

Proud Parents of the UK record breaking  
Giant Pumpkin

Then came the critical pollination stage. Select a female flower ready to open. Keep it closed with twine to keep the bees out until you are ready to pollinate by hand. Then after pollination tie it up again to keep out the pollen beetles. As luck would have it, Matt's chosen flower was ready on the day he was due at the Chelsea Flower Show, so he had to be up at 5.00 am to complete the job before his departure.

There then followed three months of daily attention to detail, carefully watering and feeding the plant, which remember by then was covering an area the size of the hall floor. But most of all looking after the rapidly growing pumpkin. Matt told us that this was grown on a bed of sand, so that it could slip over the ground as it rapidly expanded.

Finally, the moment of truth. Waiting as the pumpkin was lifted to see if there was any damage underneath that would disqualify it as an entry for the record. But all was well, and the pumpkin started its journey to Southampton for the annual autumn pumpkin festival.

The rest, as they say, is history. The pumpkin weighed in at a hefty 1,333.8lb (605kg) for a new UK record.

There was so much more to the story. Far more than can be told here. Matt's tale was fascinating and entertaining, even though few if any of us will ever attempt to grow a giant pumpkin. But if you are tempted, the fine detail can be found on the Giant Veg website here.

<http://www.giantveg.co.uk/index.php/en/grow-guides/11-growing-guides/148-how-matthew-oliver-achieved-the-uk-s-largest-outdoor-pumpkin-3>



Giant pumpkin seed ® next to a normal pumpkin seed



What do you do with a giant pumpkin after you have broken the record?  
Ian Clarke

Matthew and 3 others paddled the giant pumpkin boats across the lake at Hyde Hall!

#### Wreath making workshop



Jane Pope's lovely wreath

Saturday 1st December 2018

## Christmas Wreath Making

The first day of advent was an appropriate day for this year's wreath making, as we could all go home and hang our wreaths or give them to lucky recipients. Jackie Collings started with a demonstration of how to tie the bows and start the wreaths. Thanks very much again to Jackie. Twenty people quietly (yes, really!) got on with making twenty unique wreaths, each one reflecting the personal style of its creator. We had tea, coffee and mince pies served by Anthea and Denis, her beautiful assistant.

This is a great way to start the Christmas season, as it is creative and calming and really like balm to the soul. Every person who started with exclamations of doubt about their creativity, ended with the satisfaction of producing a beautiful wreath.

Thank you to Caroline for organising it and don't forget to book your place for this year in plenty of time.

Jane Pope

### Garden related anagrams

1. Wanting Care
2. Heed Groans
3. Frank Gored
4. Tattoos Weep
5. Posters Slur Sub
6. A Sugar Sap
7. New Corset
8. Occurs
9. Drainage
10. Tailor Curl Hut
11. Teapot Dose
12. Awe Steep
13. Gee Hose Run
14. Bra Where Owl
15. Warn Me Low

Answers next time

Monday 3rd December

## Annual Quiz

George Bethell

8 teams fought out this year's contest on a very enjoyable December evening. We are used to the imaginative questions from maestro quizmaster George but the teams entered into the spirit as well with some imaginative names, although some were not overly optimistic from the start, for example "Lead Balloons" and "Knackered from Newmarket".

The "Three Wise Monkeys" could have done with some help whilst the "Shrinking Violets" were trying to avoid "Digging for Answers". "Ian's Harem" were pushed into third place by the "Chelsea Pensioners" whilst "Cadburys" flowed smoothly to victory.

As well as testing our knowledge on a range of subjects from pasta to rambutan, and gooseberries to walnuts George had everyone singing (at least to themselves) songs by Burl Ives and Harry Belafonte (most of us are from that era!).

Halfway through, a wonderful free buffet was enjoyed with thanks to Sandra, Jim and Daphne for sorting that out, and special thanks once again to George for another brilliant evening's entertainment (and also for providing all the prizes).

George, your time and efforts really are appreciated and enjoyed by everyone – and the good news is that he has rashly promised to come back and do it all again next December.

Bill Baldry



# National Botanic Garden of Wales

Bill & Daphne Baldry

If you ever find yourself in the SW corner of Wales, up and over a bit from Swansea and the end of the M4, head for the National Botanic Garden of Wales. We were that way last October and spent several hours wandering through the themed formal gardens by the lakes and enjoying the exhibition on medicinal plants. Then there is the world's largest single-span tropical glass-house, designed by Norman Foster, to explore, with its tremendous display of Mediterranean climate-zone plants.

We could fill a page of the newsletter with pictures of a robin singing to us on a sweet pea wigwam as we had our picnic, fascinating wild flower pollinator plots or the walls made of different ages of local rock. What we could not show you would be pictures of the many beautiful butterflies in the hot house – this is because the camera steamed up! Unfortunately there is another of the many enjoyable features there that is very difficult to photograph – it is a small rill that meanders down the slope of the main path, sometimes drifting off into path side ponds and then out again, before ending in a large spiral pool back near the entrance - we loved it (see pic far R)

It was well worth a visit in October so I am sure that there would be plenty to see and enjoy at any time of the year.

Bill and Daphne

National Botanic Gardens

Middleton Hall, LLanarthne, Carmarthenshire,

SA32 8HN; 01558 667149

Open every day but Christmas Eve & Day.

See full details on their website

<https://botanicgarden.wales>



## Future Events 2019

Monday 4th February

Auriculas—history, classification and care

Luci Skinner (Wootens of Wenhaston)

Monday 4th March

Bulbs—spring planting for summer colour

Matthew Long (Riverside Bulbs)

Monday 1st April

'Butterfly Gardening'

Dr Ian Bedford (John Innes Institute)

Monday 13th May (SECOND MONDAY)

Visit to Otley Hall Gardens

Hall Lane, Otley, IP6 9PA

Meet there at 7pm (organise own car share)

BDGC 2019 Horticultural Show

at the Combs & Battisford Fete

Saturday July 6th

This year the Fete is being held in Battisford on the village green. The venue is slightly smaller but the organising Committee are confident that there is space for all the usual stalls and a small arena. The main marquee is also smaller for our Show but we are not sharing it with the bar so our usual schedule will be available. The good news is that Paul is once again organising some petunias, cosmos and sunflowers for members to grow and display outside the marquee— more details to follow. The Committee put in huge efforts to organise the Show so would be very pleased if more members would take part and enter at least one class. The Schedule will be available soon

### Auriculas

If you would like information about Battisford & District Gardening Club please contact Bill Baldry

12 Tannery Road, Combs, IP14 2EL. 01449 672168

Or go to our website:

[www.battisfordgardeningclub.org.uk](http://www.battisfordgardeningclub.org.uk)



Auriculas have a reputation for being hard to grow but I am sure Luci Skinner will give us some excellent advice at the next meeting on Monday 4th February