

HGS Horticultural Society Group Open Gardens Day – A Lesson in Team Work

Opening your garden to the public is about people not gardens really. Yes, the fourteen gardens and one allotment were at their peak, all unique and inspiring in their own right. Indeed, our donation to the National Garden Scheme charities amounted to a record breaking nearly £9,000. But my lasting impression will be one of camaraderie and well-being emanating from the streets and twittens in and around the Artisan Quarter.

We gardeners don't need to be reminded by the government or the medical profession that gardening is good for your health. (Although the garden openers and volunteers who were involved in the NGS Group Open Gardens Day in the Suburb on Sunday July 7 might have disagreed, after their back breaking six-hour stint!)

Four new gardens, eager to join the party, lured our regulars, whilst the prospect of an afternoon of home-made tea and cakes accompanied by local pianist Alexandra Westcott, and a tippie here and there whilst admiring some of the prettiest gardens in London, attracted 500 visitors. Yes OK, to the uninitiated the Suburb might fall somewhere between Midsomer Murders and A Midsummer Night's Dream, but as an Outlander from the other side of the A1, it's the HGS Horticultural Society that that has given me that feeling of community and belonging that had evaded me as a city dweller.

Over the years I've been to numerous bucolic Village Garden Festivals and urbane Town Garden Group Openings, but I'm fairly sure that a combination of both, a stone's throw from one of the largest city centres in the world, is pretty unique. Gardens to suit all tastes: At 102 Willifield Way, the calm white and lilac colour palette brought the volume of chatter right

down to a whisper. 121 Erskine Hill has canine friendly artificial grass bordered by eye popping displays of small cluster roses, blowing preconceived ideas about fake grass right out of the water! The gardens in Addison Way show what horticultural gems can be created out of the smallest, most challenging spaces. Wheel out the Big Guns of Willifield and Wordsworth, Asmunds and Erskine. Although award winners everyone, none are content to rest on their laurels, constantly updating their planting schemes. Pity the poor performers in their borders, swiftly sacrificed for newer, more unusual specimens!

As NGS Assistant County Organiser I elected to coordinate this HGS Hort. Soc. Open Gardens Day: If visitors wondered who that strange woman was following them through the twittens and joining in their conversations, they were far too polite to comment. Strangers were comparing the merits of this garden and that, and, "Have you been to so and so yet, you must go." One Garden Opener felt a palpable buzz in the air, created by the anticipation and enjoyment of visitors strolling around the Suburb, map in hand. Talking of which, these Garden Openers are seriously driven, or proactive in politically correct terminology! Their efficiency is scary: They were to be seen placing traffic cones outside the Fellowship at 9pm Saturday evening, ensuring parking space for the visiting professional nurseries, and fixing up directional signage at 6am Sunday morning in the pouring rain. Each logged the number of visitors to their own gardens, some sold home-propagated plants and produce, held raffles, fed and watered their guests. They passed on garden

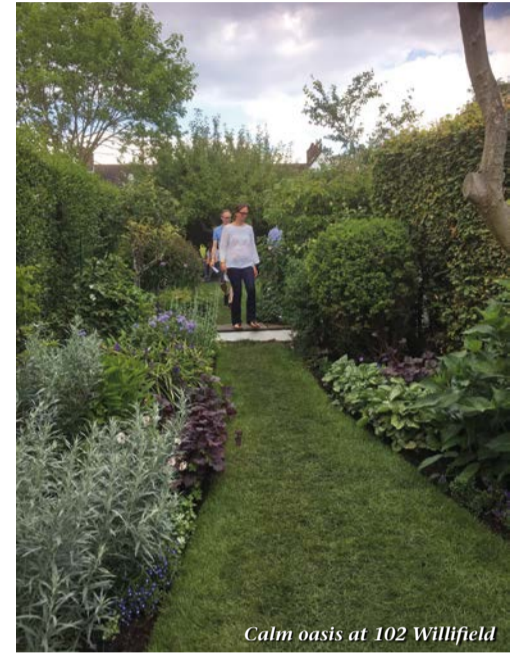
gossip from plot to plot and sent across extra help to each other. A well-oiled machine.

And then there's the small matter of Teas! The gardens, pah, piece of cake (if you'll pardon the pun) but the catering at Fellowship House was like a military operation. At the height of the afternoon a dozen volunteers were going full pelt manning the urns. It's a long time since I've had to prepare a staff rota but with fifteen locations covering about a square mile it came in very handy and raised a few laughs amongst friends! One team on savouries, one on cakes. Local residents arriving with home baked cakes and relatives of Garden Openers co-opted to help wherever needed. E-mails from volunteers thanking me for including them in the event, proud to be part of the community. Well, if that doesn't speak volumes for the goodness of gardening, then I don't know what does! Wanna be in my gang? Join our Horticultural Society at hgs.membership@virginmedia.com.

CAROLINE BROOME



Allotment abundance



Calm oasis at 102 Willifield



Before and after, North Way

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Summer Flower Show

The Summer Flower Show took place in June at the Free Church Hall. The morning began early with exhibitors preparing their produce and gradually over the course of the day the Hall was filled with the heady scent of sweet peas and roses.

Classes ranged from the traditional flowers and vegetables to the Smelliest Rose as well as birthday cakes to celebrate the Society's 110th birthday.

Christopher Matthews, a first time exhibitor, won first prizes in both the single and double delphinium spike classes.

Another of the competitions is for the best display in the 12 plus children's category. This is named after Anthony Arnold Holton, the son of Suburb residents Walter and Gertrude Holton and a trooper in the Royal Tank Regiment, who died in Normandy in June 1944. First Awarded in 1951, the present holder of the Holton Cup is Joe Coury-Reid.

There was an ever popular Punch and Judy Show. A major attraction is always the cake and tea provided by Barbara Perry and her team. Marjorie Harris curated a fascinating display of the history of the Society.

The number of visitors was higher than last year. The hard

work of Yvonne Oliver and the show committee resulted in the high attendance and hopefully many more Suburb residents

feeling inspired to cultivate their gardens and allotments to the high standard on display here.

AUGUSTA WOLFF



Summer Flower Show preparations



Double first-prize winner, Christopher Matthews



Holton Cup holder, Joe Coury-Reid

Horticultural Society 110th anniversary

It doesn't seem 10 years since the society celebrated its 100th birthday. But time stops for no man (or woman) and this year is in fact the 110th anniversary of our foundation in May 1909.

Just two years after the first families moved into Hampstead Garden Suburb, Henrietta Barnett called a meeting of interested Suburb residents together, they formed a committee and within months they had put on a flower show in a marquee on Central Square.

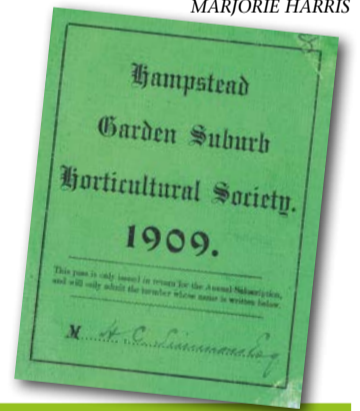
Since then shows have been held every year except during the Second World War. At first they took place in the Henrietta Barnett School Hall, but for many years now they have been held in the Free Church Hall, with smaller shows such as the centenary Spring Show being held in Fellowship House.

The Horticultural Society was the first society to come into existence in the fledgling

Hampstead Garden Suburb, and is the only one to have survived to the present day in more or less its original form. In addition to many other cups and prizes, it also awards its own medals to show winners. Until 2008 they were bronze, but they were changed to silver to celebrate our centenary. Please go to www.hortsoc.co.uk for a full history.

Here's to the next 110 years! We couldn't do it without your participation and support.

MARJORIE HARRIS



Hungry caterpillars are eating up our hedges!

Check out your box hedges and trees as box tree caterpillars (Cycladima) are very much in evidence on the Suburb.

They can strip mature hedges in a short time and the large caterpillars have overwintered and are very hungry. Our beautiful box hedges that run almost all the way down the north side of Temple Fortune Hill are looking very moth eaten.

To protect themselves the caterpillars cover the plant in a white cocoon. They grow slowly hidden within the foliage before becoming mature and voracious caterpillars. In good conditions the box tree moth can have three generations in a year. For more information on them see the RHS website.

You can save the plants in a number of ways, the simplest

by picking off the caterpillars and some people like to use pheromone traps. However I have successfully used an organic bacterial insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* which only affect caterpillars and protects bees and other wildlife. It needs to be sprayed every two weeks between April and October. It is possible to buy on line as 'Raupenfrei' made by Neudorf.

RUTH BEEDLE



Suburb rainfall

It will come as no surprise to readers of this column that yet again the first half of the year has seen well below average

precipitation. Indeed, since these records started in 1980, there have only been four similarly dry first halves of the year, and

two of those have been in the last five years. So it hardly seems like undue scaremongering to suggest that climate change is real, and a crisis, and is going to result in some very difficult problems for us. Those trying to care for their gardens will have found that the 1.5inches, which fell over the April to June period, meant watering cans or hoses were necessary for any things not fully established, and even for some that were.

It seems to be in the months of April and May that the driest times have been experienced. They are, with March, on average,

the driest part of the year and this year they were drier than usual. The four or five inches that used occasionally to make June an easier month for water supply seem to be rarer now.

Granted that, at 2.35 inches, precipitation in June has provided some relief, but not enough to make up for the shortage before. Unfortunately, there is only one example of over four inches from these records (in 2012) to suggest that July might result in anything to comfort our supposedly green and pleasant land.

DIANA IWI FROM MEADWAY

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