

Fragrance is the key

Oh, no man knows through what wild centuries roves back the rose... Yeats' words may be true, but Dr Paul Evans, addressing the inaugural meeting of the Horticultural Society in 2003, made a good stab at investigating the ancient history of this most beloved of all English shrubs. The packed audience in Fellowship House on Tuesday, 18 March, was entranced by his detailed expertise.

For centuries, collectors and breeders developed a uniquely European tradition through hybrids from Species, Gallicas, Damasks, Albas, Centifolias and Mosses which gave magnificent displays, had wonderful fragrances, were hardy, tough and easy to cultivate.

With the arrival of China roses in the 18th century, the Old Roses could be further developed into the repeat-flowering varieties: Chinas, Portlands, Tea Roses and Hybrid Perpetuals.

In the first half of the 20th century, the popularity of the newly developed Hybrid Tea and Floribunda roses threatened to make the Old Roses little more than anachronistic symbols of a bygone age, with a reputation for being difficult to grow and disease-prone.

Some rose enthusiasts, David Austin among them, considered the disappearance of the Old Roses as a tragedy and set about creating a new breed of roses that combines the character and personality of Old Roses with the repeat-flowering and vibrancy of Modern Roses. One of the challenges facing us is the dispelling of the myth that English Roses require special treatment and expert knowledge. The truth about English Rose cultivation is in fact very simple. If conditions are right for repeat-flowering shrub, then looking after them is easy.

Fragrance is perhaps the key to unlocking the mystery of the rose's allure. Generally speaking, English Roses have at least four categories of fragrance: Old Rose fragrance, which so intoxicated ancient Egyptian and Persian cultures and virtually bankrupted the Roman Empire; Tea Rose fragrance, refreshing and strong; Myrrh fragrance, with a note of anise; fruit fragrance, with crisp apple, citrus zest, raspberry and many other fruits. Other English Rose fragrances include delectable hints of musk, violets, honey, cloves, peony, lilac and fine wines.

The colours of the English Roses have been described as being similar to those traditional pigments created from vegetable dyes and not like the startling hues produced by synthetic chemicals. Foliage too is diverse and particularly attractive early in the year and later as a foil to the flowers. In the garden or in flower arrangements, these characteristics give them the enduring appeal of the roses used in paintings by the Dutch masters.

Because of the diverse nature of the English Roses their use in modern gardens is very versatile. Planted in groups of three, the sheer exuberance of these roses makes them ideal for the traditional rose border or bed. As climbers, the English Roses produce flowers evenly from the ground to the top. Paul's slides illustrated other uses of these versatile and beautiful roses: Mary Rose grown as a standard and Anne Boleyn in a pot.

The intensive breeding programme at David Austin Roses has produced a race of repeat-flowering, disease-resistant, fragrant roses of great beauty. By planting them in your gardens you will be helping to counter the



Tools of the trade - We have heard of burglars 'fishing' for car keys but just how this is done was brought home to users of Fellowship House when this ten foot 'fishing rod' with a powerful magnet on the end, here being inspected by Fellowship caretaker Hilda Williams, was found outside the front door.

amount of chemical pesticides and fungicides which find their way into the environment from garden applications.

Paul ended his talk with a question and answer session and an invitation to visit the David Austin gardens at Bowling Green Lane, Albrighton, Wolverhampton. For a catalogue, ring 01902 376377.

If you would like to join the Horticultural Society's coach outings to Benington Lordship and Great Munden (11 June) or Glen Chantry and Beth Chatto's garden (16 August) ring 8455 0455. To join the Horticultural Society and take part in the shows and talks, ring 8455 9944.

ANNE CRAWLEY

Unusual and rare plants at Kenwood House

The London Group of Plant Heritage (National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens) will be holding its annual Spring Plant Fair of unusual and rare plants at the English Heritage property of Kenwood House, Hampstead from 12 noon to 5pm on Saturday 10 May. Many specialist nurseries from all over the country will be setting up stalls alongside the London Group's own stall run by its enthusiastic and knowledgeable members. This is a wonderful

opportunity for plant lovers to acquire high class plants.

Entry to the plant sale is £2.50 with children under 16 admitted free. The entry fee is a vital contribution towards the work of Plant Heritage, which sets the standards and monitors almost 650 National Plant Collections throughout the British Isles.

Entry to Kenwood House is free and the plant sale, combined with a visit to the House with its lovely grounds and outstanding collection of paintings and furniture, will make a great day out. Bring a picnic or eat in the Brew House restaurant/cafe to make it perfect.

Writers in Prison

The appeal sent with Suburb News last November produced 38 responses for Writers in Prison. A cheque for more than £3000 was handed over in December - comprising not only of these donations but, from the donor who had offered to double all cheques over £25, a sum much in excess of this offer. Additionally, Gift Aid can be claimed on many of these donations.

Soon there will be a sale of hundreds of brand-new books donated by publishers - details below. Do come and bring others with you.

So far, all the work has been done by Elizabeth Cockburn (under the guidance of the group's chairman, author Moris Farhi). As she is disabled, one or two occasional helpers would be most welcome - for example, to lay out the books to be displayed at the sale. If you could, from time to time, give a hand, please phone her on 8731 7887 (am).

If you have any ideas or contacts for future fundraising events (eg. speakers, musicians, actors, etc), do please let her know.

A sale of brand-new books available at quarter-price will be held at the Free Church Hall, Northway on Saturday 17 May from 11.30 to 2.30. All proceeds in aid of Writers in prison.

WORDSEARCH

In the box below are concealed 20 names, of four or more letters, of items of clothing. The names may be read forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards or diagonally. Singular or plural are acceptable. JACKET has been ringed to start you off. Can you find 19 more?

Entries should be listed on a post card or sheet of paper and sent to 'Wordsearch', 117 Hampstead Way, London NW11 7JN and should give the name, address and phone number of the sender. The closing date for entries is 7 June 2003. The sender of the first correct (or nearest correct) entry drawn after the closing date will receive a voucher from Joseph's Bookstore for £20.

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ROSALEEN COX

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

The complete list of herbs in the last wordsearch were: Balm, Bay, Basil, Borage, Caraway, Chervil, Chives, Coriander, Dill, Fennel, Garlic, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Parsley, Rue, Sage, Sorrel, Tarragon, Thyme.

The wordsearch prize is sponsored by

JOSEPH'S BOOKSTORE

Monthly events: jewish studies, scientific and jazz evenings plus authors at Joseph's Bookstore and Cafe Also. E-mail to join mail list - info@josephsbookstore.com 1257 Finchley Road, Temple Fortune - 8731 7575

Wordsearch winner

The winner of the last wordsearch is Veronica Shaw who has run the HGS Theatre Club since 1989. She lived on the Suburb for 27 years in Ruskin Close and in Wildwood Road. She is a jeweller and will buy yet another book on jewellery.

Hampstead & Highgate Festival 2003

Artistic Director Barry Millington

10-24 MAY

BOX OFFICE OPENS 24 MARCH
020 7794 0022

To join the mailing list please

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