

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 15 July 2013

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Landscape Delights

Those who braved the wet and windy conditions to attend the FoSE AGM were treated to an excellent talk by Matt Pitts, the High Weald's Cultural Landscape Adviser. He began by explaining the geology which created the Weald and pointing out that its ridged profile means that people often don't realise that the highest point exceeds the height of the Downs on either side. He then took us through the development of the landscape, with Silver Birch and Scots Pine being the first trees to appear and the Beech trees the last. Although we think of the Weald as



having been an isolated place, there is evidence of people living in the area from around 8,000 years B.C., and it is thought that even then although the area was much wooded, there were clearings grazed by herbivores.

By the Middle Ages, people living around the edges of the Weald were seasonally bringing their animals - particularly pigs - into the area,

which was a rich food source for them. This has left a network of roads radiating north-south, but rarely actually crossing the high ridge of the Weald. It was around this time, they think, that what we think of as a quintessentially English landscape - with a patchwork of small fields with hedgerows in between, areas of woodland, scattered habitation and then villages often built on hilltops - began in this part of the world.



The Romans had created large numbers of bloomeries in this iron-rich area, but it was in the 16th century that the iron industry really took off with the introduction of blast furnaces. Matt showed us pictures of pond bays and charcoal platforms, which despite tree growth in the intervening years can still be found if you know how to look for them.

He also showed us pictures of grasses and wildflower meadows, created by grazing animals and man's management of the landscape, and of waterways, which had been dredged, straightened or even moved to fit in with how people wanted to use the rivers. He showed us a slide which demonstrated the High Weald as the watershed for the area, and then superimposed the headwaters to demonstrate just how much water flows in the area, often through tiny ghyll streams in steep-sided valleys.

Having given this fascinating insight into the history of the locality, Matt then moved closer to home and explained the lidar images which had been taken of Hollybush Wood. With his help, we were able to identify field boundaries, quarries, streams and woodland, and see how the land usage had changed over the last 200 years by superimposing a series of maps over the images. I think we all came away feeling that we could look at our landscape through fresh and more knowledgeable eyes.

The business part of the meeting appointed two new committee members: Jackie Apps, who has been part of the North Sussex Volunteers group for a number of years, and Jackie Doherty, who has recently joined Elaine Boot to work in the greenhouse area. The Chair is now occupied by yours truly!

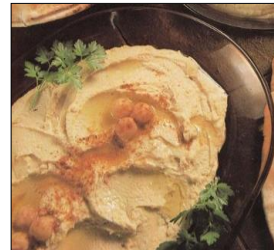
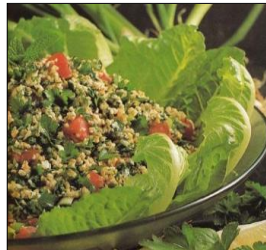
Culinary Delights

Many of you will be familiar with Dinu, from the Woods and Restoration Groups. His wife, Ruth, has volunteered to cook for a Lebanese Culinary Evening especially for FoSE members. This will take place on **Monday 9th September, at 7 for 7.30**. Ruth, and a team of willing helpers, will be preparing dishes, which will then be eaten by her audience, on Goose Green. Although the cooking must be done outside and away from buildings to comply with health and safety



regulations, the Barn Café will provide a cosy venue for eating and soaking up a Lebanese ambience provided by pictures and music. Gazebos will be set up on the Green in case of wet weather, and if you feel you won't want to stand for the demonstrations, please feel free to bring a folding chair. Much of the actual cooking will be done ahead, so what takes place on the evening will not be protracted, but will give an insight into the skills and techniques used.

Tickets will cost £15 and will cover the following*:



Baba Ganoush

- an aubergine dip, flavoured with garlic

Tabbouleh

- a burghal wheat salad with tomatoes, spring onions, parsley and mint

Hummus

- a chickpea and sesame dip, flavoured with lemon juice

Circassian Chicken - served in a broth garnished with walnuts and paprika

Lebanese Meatballs - made with lamb and a rich tomato sauce, flavoured with numerous herbs and spices - Ruth's signature dish

Pitta bread

A glass of Lebanese Musar wine (a soft drink option will be available)

Baclava and coffee

A leaflet with the recipes to take home



*Please note, the chef may need to make changes in line with availability.

Any guest who really wants to push the boat out may bring their own bottle of wine or favoured tipple to supplement the free glass offered.

Ruth has agreed to cater for 50 people, but in order to secure a ticket/tickets, please email me at newsletter@fose.org to make your reservation **after** you receive the official invitation email which will go out in about a couple of weeks' time. I will then put your name on the list, and, provided places are still available will invite you to send me a cheque for the required amount. No tickets will be issued until I have received payment, and it will be on a strictly first come first served basis. It promises to be a scrumptious event.

Meet Dinu Coltofeanu

As Ruth is preparing to wow us with Lebanese cuisine, it seemed like a good time to ask Dinu to introduce himself to those FoSE members who have not yet had the pleasure of working with him.

Dinu is a true cosmopolitan. He was born to Romanian parents in Romania, but towards the end of the Second World War, the Soviets invaded the country, and by 1947 it was clear they had no intention of leaving, so Dinu's father was invited by his brother-in-law, a Lebanese timber importer, to move his family - mother, wife, son, daughter, and his own childhood nanny - to Alexandria in Egypt where they lived. There Dinu attended the English School, but in 1956 he was sent to England to complete his schooling, and stayed on to go to university. Afterwards, he took out British citizenship, which was just as well as he soon met and married Ruth. They have two grown-up children, Paul and Alice, both of whom are UK based. Dinu retired two years ago after working in the Financial Services industry for 49 years.

When Dinu and Ruth married, the Lebanese cousins gave them a set of cookery books as a wedding present, and Ruth was hooked. She has enjoyed cooking Lebanese food ever since.

Dinu joined the volunteer team at Standen just over a year ago, and was originally based in the house. One day, he looked out of a window and saw one of the outdoor volunteers wheeling a wheel barrow, and decided it looked like fun. As a consequence, he joined the Woods and Restoration Groups, and though he still occasionally helps out in the house when they are short-staffed, he is never happier than when digging and back-filling trenches or carting earth away from the rocks on the drive.

Spring and Summer flowers to learn

At the beginning of May, despite the unseasonably cold weather, the **Amelanchier Canadensis** - one on the croquet lawn and one at the top of the sloping lawn - were full of creamy, white flowers. This Canadian Serviceberry has more common names than you can shake a stick at, including Chuckleberry, Currant-tree, Shadblow and Sugarplum. Apparently it likes wet sites, which may be why it did so well at Standen this year.





Exochorda racemosa - more simply remembered as 'The Bride' - was another white choice in May. This was picked out by Hannah, and graced the top of the Sloping Lawn.



Carolyn's chosen plant for May, also with white flowers, could be seen in great



profusion in front of the

barn. **Myrrhis Odorata** - also called Sweet Cicely, Myrrh, Anise, Sweet Bracken or Switch. It is also grown in the herb bed in the Kitchen Garden, though it is now used for salads rather than as a protection from plague.

Jo obviously got the message, as her plant choice, **Tellima grandiflora fringe cups**, a member of the saxifrage family, also has whitish flowers, albeit with a green tinge. This hardy

plant can be found all over the estate.

OK, now it's getting boring; the first 'plant of the week' in June was the **Davidia Involucrata** or Handkerchief, Dove or Ghost Tree, and guess what: it has white flowers. All right, strictly speaking the flowers are red and it is the bracts that are white, but they are what you notice on the tree at the junction between the bottom of the Kitchen Garden and the Croquet Lawn.



The **Judas Tree - Cercis siliquastrum** - was introduced into the UK in the 16th century. It is said to be the tree that Judas hanged himself from, which seems something of a calumny on such a beautiful plant. At Standen it can be found above the wall running along Grandfather's Walk - and - it has deep pink flowers! These grow on bare branches and even from the trunk, a phenomenon known as cauliflory.



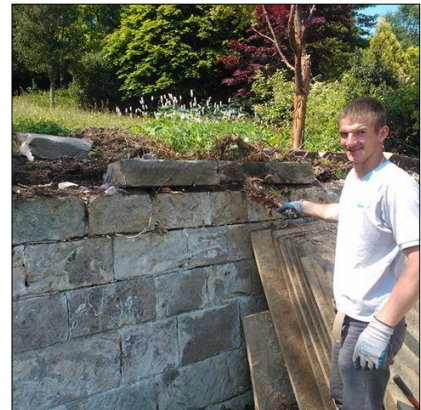
Nick continued the trend for colour by choosing **Crinodendron hookerianum**, from the Elaeocarpaceae family. A quick look at its picture shows how it got the name Chilean Lantern Tree. It is a hardy, evergreen shrub with dark, glossy leaves and dramatic crimson/red, waxy, lantern-shaped flowers in spring and summer. It is also architectural and can be trained to grow against a wall, where it can reach 8 metres in height.

Well done, Anne!

James Masters took the opportunity of the AGM to present the annual PRESIDENT'S AWARD, a handsome shield given to the volunteer who in his view has contributed the most to Standen over the previous year. This time it went to Anne Scutt, who gives generously of her time in both Woodland and Garden Groups as well as being treasurer for FoSE. With her customary modesty, she seemed surprised to receive it, but the rest of us felt that this was a very well-deserved acknowledgement of all her hard work. Anne will tackle any task given, regardless of weather, and always does it with cheerfulness and enthusiasm.

More updates from the Revival

Work continues apace. The grass seed sown round the limes on Grandfather's Walk is showing a swathe of green round the metal rings at the base of the trees, and now the excess tree growth at the bottom of the Sloping Lawn has been cleared, the contractors have been able to restore and repoint the wall on the other side of the walk. It is rapidly becoming an area that 'Grandfather' James Beale would recognise. So the Top Terrace doesn't feel left out, the stone coping there is being replaced as well.



The Drive is also still receiving much TLC. The Restoration Group has cleared many of the weeds which were springing up between the new planting; mulch has been put down to keep them in check and more of the glorious sandstone has been exposed by the removal of a large amount of earth and greenery at the house end. Even the newly set drainage channel has had a wash and brush up.

The dreaded electronic paperwork

As you will no doubt have noticed, Bleau has sent us all an electronic version of The Volunteers' Hours sheet. I know many people are uncomfortable with this, but I've

been asked to point out that it actually makes life a lot easier for the staff involved with collecting the data. So please stick with it if you can.

Cameras at the ready?

The committee is already thinking about pictures for next year's calendar. We had some super shots submitted last year, but mainly from the same few people. If you have been taking pictures at Standen, please don't be shy about showing off your skills, but send any you think might be useable to support@fose.org.uk so that we have plenty to choose from.

And finally...

Did you know that the top five tree names for houses in England are: Ivy, Laurel, Holly, Beech and Fir? Thank you James for adding to our pub quiz knowledge.