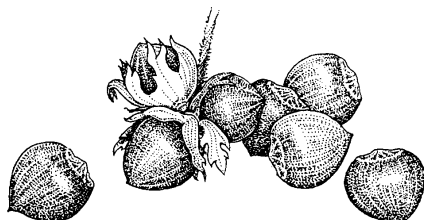


In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 26 May 2015

In this edition of In a Nutshell:

ABERGLASNEY TALK

STANDEN'S FIRST TULIP FESTIVAL

FoSE PRIZE DRAW RESULT

WINNING BLOOMS

GREENHOUSE GO-AHEAD

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

PLANT OF THE WEEK

ASK NOT WHAT FoSE HAS DONE FOR YOU...

BLUEBELL BBQ

AND FINALLY...

Hear all about it!

Don't forget that Harry Green, our Restoration Gardener, is giving a talk on Aberglasney Gardens at the **FoSE AGM**, which takes place in the **Barn Café** on **Thursday 21st May** at **7.30**. For those of you who have forgotten, or didn't know, Aberglasney is one of the finest gardens in Wales, and hearing about it from someone who worked there promises to be a real treat.

Please do make the effort to come along. The business part of the meeting is very short, but it can be dispiriting for the committee if only a few attend. **Your committee needs you!**



Tulips Galore

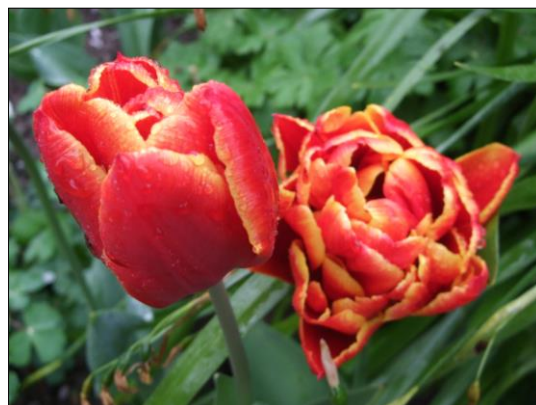
When Nick Delves began planting tulips at Standen he probably didn't guess that what was clearly a personal obsession would turn into a **Tulip Festival** which would



boost visitor numbers and excite so much positive comment. There are about 8,000 tulips around the gardens now, with layouts thoughtfully designed so that they and their surroundings create the perfect foil for each other. For example, the slightly dusky pink *Menton* at the far end of the Lower Terrace is perfectly complemented by the bronze foliage of the Acer behind; and the purple foliage of the

Thaylictrum Elin and *Mrs Oakley Fisher* rose, and the fresh green of new growth on the perennials also work well with the looser planting of *Westpoint* and *Recreado* in the bed near the Indian Bean tree. The top terrace has been intensively planted, as it was

last year, with careful consideration of height, shape, colour and form. The pinks and whites of *Mount Tacoma* and *Angelique* and purples and reds of *Queen of the Night* and *Margarita* all with varying flower shapes have made a stunning combination once again. Another intensively planted area is the courtyard, where oranges and yellows of *Apeldoorn Elite* and *Golden Apeldoorn* reflect the sandstone behind and pots full of colour invite much comment as to which is whose favourite tulip.



Several new areas have received the tulip treatment this year, most notably the beds around the Little Orchard. A mix of *Abu Hassan*, *Allegretto* and *Ballerina*, all in rich earth colours, somehow highlights the splashes of white from the Spring Snowflake and cherry blossom, and tone well with the brick wall behind, while the



yellow primroses and pink *Dicentra* and *Ribes*, already planted, heighten the interest. On the other side are the beautiful *Spring Green* and *Yellow Spring Green* - viridiflora varieties which have a line of green on their tepals (what look like petals to non-horticulturalists). This makes them look elegant and clean-cut - delightful against the grass beyond.

Grandfather's Walk is another new tulip area. Close up, there is the deep purple of *Negrita* - but this is planted alongside the bright yellow *Westpoint* which also appears in splashes from the Gong House along the Lower Terrace, drawing the eye onward towards the Walk. These are tempered on the terrace by the lighter yellow, *Mrs. John T. Scheepers*, although there are other colours - and shapes - in the mix as well, including *Queen of the Night*, *Red Shine* and *White Triumphator*.



Mrs Beale's diaries don't specify the tulips she favoured. However, Nick has been careful to include older varieties which she might have known; the oldest, the gorgeous deep red *Couleur Cardinal*, dates from 1845, while *Mrs John T Sheepers* was first propagated in 1930. Nick - and everyone who had a hand in the planting - should be justly proud of Standen's tulips, but an April visitor sums it up far better than I can:



On such a beautiful sunny afternoon as today, I arrived at Standen armed with a camera and a search for inspiration for my own garden. It wasn't long before I had found my dream shots. As I walked onto the terrace I was uplifted by the bold and riotous tulip beds, which were so cleverly planted. Colours were perfectly fused together, with contrasting shape and structure. Soft petals intermingled with the more architectural tulip shapes. Everything looked so natural. These beautiful gardens are always a delightthank you to the gardeners who plant ambitiously and tend them so lovingly.

FoSE's first prize draw

There are some perks to being a member of FoSE. The first lucky winner of our newly introduced prize draw was Mark Phillips, from the Woods Group. His prize entitled him to a free burger, cuppa, cake and tombola tickets at the Bluebell BBQ. It looks like Mark enjoyed his free burger!

The next draw will take place in July.



Standen storms the show

Once again, Standen impressed the judges of the RHS. On the 11th April, Elaine Boot, Nick Delves, Jackie Doherty and Ray Monk attended the *Main Camellia Competition* and the *Spring Ornamental Plant Competition*. They made their selection of what was looking best in the morning and then drove hopefully to Wisley.



They didn't get a cup this time, but walked away with a haul of 12 certificates: 5 seconds, 4 thirds, 2 fourths and a Highly Commended, an excellent result by anyone's criteria. One of the second places was for the Flowering Currant - *Ribes sanguineum* - another for one of Mrs Beale's original camellias - *C. rubescens major* - a third for a dainty bunch of *Primula vulgaris* and the last for one of the Acers. Standen picked up a third place in the class for 3 semi-double camellias. It's good to see the gardeners' hard work recognised by such a prestigious body as the RHS.



It's a green light for the greenhouses!

After what seems like an eternity of blood, sweat and tears; rejections, redrafts, red tape and possible bureaucratic incompetence (not this end, I hasten to add), Standen has finally received planning permission for the new greenhouses.

Neither of the two key organisations - English Heritage and the Historic Gardens Society - raised any objections to the planned buildings. James, Elaine and Nick did most of the work to get the planning application completed, but other garden staff and several members of the committee also played a part, so everyone involved can be satisfied with a job well done.

We are currently waiting for a quotation regarding the cost of the concrete base for the site - a technically challenging area which needs greater expertise than is available on site if the area is to be completely safe - but clearance work has already started in preparation for this. In the summer, once the base is complete, James will set aside a week for construction, and invite everyone to take part in this monumental and important task. If you come along, you will be able to tell your admiring grandchildren, 'I was there!' So please watch this space for details.

Obviously, we would not be considering this without the generosity of FoSE members. In the last couple of years your membership fees and support of fund-raising activities have raised a fair proportion of the £5,000 FoSE has so far contributed towards the completion of this project.

More volunteers needed!

Standen is fortunate in having so many willing volunteers, both indoors and out, but there is always room for more, especially with the current burst of interest from the public. Kate Dickinson is in charge of recruitment and has sent the following message:

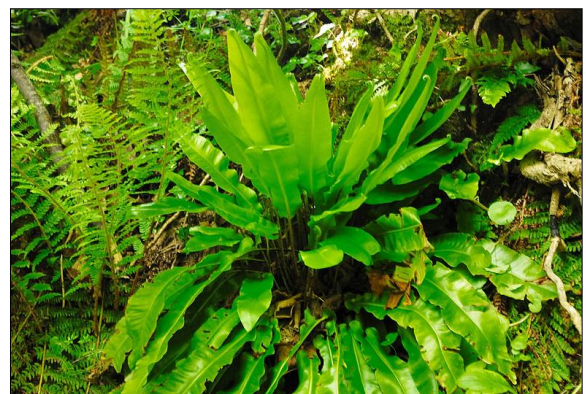
Hello FoSE! I'm sure you've heard that we're embarking on a Volunteer Recruitment Campaign at the moment. We're recruiting into 14 (of our 51) volunteer roles and there are three that are particularly a priority for us: Garden Stewards, Room Guides and Visitor Reception Assistants. We already have a large and if our survey scores are to be believed, very happy volunteer team at Standen and I think (as do the other heads of department) that we could be doing better conservation of the house and garden as well as creating even better visitor experiences if we involve volunteers in the every aspect of the work we do.

We're looking into a few different ways of reaching people to let them know about our brilliant opportunities, we will be doing some talks for community groups about volunteering at Standen, putting more information about volunteering around the property in a way that complements our existing interpretation, going to more events in the local area where we can shout about what we have on offer and getting a few more pieces in local papers and on our social media. One of the other really crucial recruitment methods will be to get our existing volunteers and staff on board with spreading the word. So, if you know of some places you could advertise volunteering with Standen please grab some recruitment leaflets and a poster from Bleau.

Any questions you can always email me on kate.dickinson@nationaltrust.org.uk or leave a message for me in the main office.

Cool greens

Maybe because the garden is such a riot of colour at the moment, the gardeners seem to have chosen less showy specimens for their plant of the week. First is Trudie's choice, the **Hart's Tongue Fern, *Asplenium scolopendrium***, named apparently for the fact that the undivided tongue-like fronds



look like a deer's tongue, though I trust none of those are the same dark, glossy green. The sori or spore-bearing vessels on the back of the fronds are said to be reminiscent of centipedes' legs, hence its name scolopendrium - Latin for centipede. These ripen to disperse sporangia from mid-summer to late winter.

This fern is widespread across Europe, with a variant in North America recorded as rare. It is common in Britain apart from in the far north and can be seen at Standen in Hollybush Wood where it grows wild in shaded areas under trees, especially amongst rocks and streams. It will grow into large clumps if conditions are right, but turns yellow if in too much sun. Fresh leaves start growing from January and it can be seen all year. There are several cultivated varieties for decorative use in gardens but medicinally it was said to be used in making a 'spleen tonic'.



Ben picked the **Hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*** from the family **Betulaceae** which grows up to 30 metres, and so is classed as a medium-large tree. The European Hornbeam is a deciduous tree native to south and central Europe with its range stretching into the south of England. Its name is thought to relate to the hardness of its wood. It has fairly 'basic' leaves, very similar in shape, size and colour to beech, although less shiny and with more defined veins. The bark of the Hornbeam is very characteristic and makes it relatively easy to indentify even in winter. The bark is fairly grey much like beech; however unlike beech it tends to

have clear streaks down the length of the tree, which give it the appearance of water running down the trunk. Mature trees tend to develop deep fissures and ruts which can develop into a very knobbly and uneven trunk.

Hornbeam grows catkins in the spring which by autumn have turned into large vertical clusters of seed pods. These seed pods look like three-pronged leaves and each contain a large seed or small nut. The hornbeam tends to like shady environments and is often found as an understory to oak woodland, sometimes replacing the traditional hazel. This is often down to one of its key uses. Hornbeam wood makes very good charcoal which will burn particularly



hot and was once favoured for the firing of pottery kilns.

Other uses include as simple firewood, which will burn hot and slow, and as material for some tool handles. Hornbeam is also often used as a domestic/horticultural hedging plant, particularly as it partially holds onto its leaves through the winter; however older hedges can become quite patchy. At Standen, hornbeam is found in a few hedges in the garden and as often solitary specimens or small clumps in both woods.



Carolyn picked **Rheum x hybridum**, the humble **Rhubarb**, of which there are many varieties at Standen: Timperley Early, Canada Red, Victoria, Livingstone, Glaskin's Perpetual and of course Champagne. Rhubarb is an attractive hardy rhizomatous perennial with large leaves and pink, red or greenish leaf stalks that are grown as vegetable but used as a dessert, often in

pies and crumbles.

It will grow on any fertile garden soil as long as it is well drained and in full sun. Crowns can be cropped for ten or more years, though division may be necessary after about five years. Although the large foliage can help smother weeds, the ground should be free from perennial weeds before planting. Ideally plant crowns in November or December digging in one to two bucketfuls of well-rotted organic matter such as manure beforehand. Plant the crown with the growing point at, or just below, the soil surface. On wetter soils planting with the buds just raised out of the soil may help prevent rotting. If planting more than one crown, space plants 1m apart, with 1-2m between rows. A spring mulch will help conserve moisture and prevent growth slowing in hot summers, but do not bury the crowns. Plants will also respond to watering during prolonged dry periods in summer. Apply a general fertiliser in spring or summer. Allow foliage to die back naturally in autumn then cut away the old leaves to expose the growing points to winter cold. There is no harm in adding these leaves to the compost heap as the poisonous oxalic acid contained in them breaks down during decomposition.

Stems can be picked from the early cultivars from March to April. Do not harvest in the first season after planting and harvest only lightly in the second season to avoid weakening the crowns. From seedling plants, harvest in the second season after planting or in the first season after division. Stems should be pulled rather than cut to prevent rotting of the remaining stump. Pull stems when they are between 23-30cm long, holding them at the base and pulling gently outwards. Take

no more than half the total stems at any one time. The last harvest is usually in late summer, around July or August, though growth may have stopped before this if the weather is very hot. For an early harvest of tender and pink rhubarb cover the crowns in December or January with a layer of straw or bracken and cover over with an upturned bucket or a traditional clay rhubarb pot to exclude light. Stems will be ready to pull two to three weeks earlier than uncovered crowns.

Some cultivars can be more prone to flower than others. Remove flower stalks as soon as they appear to prevent them weakening the crowns. Flowering is usually worse after wet summers or where high nitrogen feed has been overused. Lots of thin stems indicate the crown is losing vigour and needs to be divided. Increased feeding may also help. Split stems are sometimes caused by late frosts but are often an indication of erratic growth due to seasonal conditions. Cool or dry periods followed by moist or mild weather means the hard outer growth splits when the new, rapid growth occurs. Mulching and feeding may help to avoid the worst damage.

...Ask what you have done for FoSE

With your support, over the last eighteen months, FoSE has been involved in a number of 'good things' happening at Standen. None of this would be possible without the dedication of the members, so, thank you for the following:

- Stalls such as at the Garden of Lights and Kitchen Garden Open Day raised over £600
- Our two Quiz Evenings - in November 2013 and August 2014 - raised £600
- In January 2014 we collected Waitrose tokens to the tune of £250
- In April 2014 we raised £614 at the Bluebell BBQ
- In June 2014 FoSE's contribution to the community was recognised by an invitation to a celebration held in honour of WSCC's 125th Anniversary.
- In November 2014 we were successful in our bid to the East Grinstead Common Good Trust for £1,500 towards the restoration of Hilltop Shaw
- In March 2015 our local councillor, John O'Brien, was invited to visit Standen, and is now supporting our bid to the WSCC Big Society Fund for further funding for Hilltop Shaw. On the back of this, the council is liaising with Metrobus in a bid to move the bus stop on West Hoathly Road to a safer access point.
- In April 2015 the barbecue brought in over £530.



Money raised, if not earmarked for the greenhouses, has recently been spent on a variety of items, including plantation seats and stage lighting, lockers for the stable-yard tea-room, a gazebo for events, and of course a variety of tools needed to maintain both garden and workers.

Bluebells and blue skies



Well, maybe not blue, but at least it stayed dry despite the forecast. Numbers were slightly down this year but we were very pleased to have a number of visitors to the property drop in to watch the demonstrations and have some refreshment.

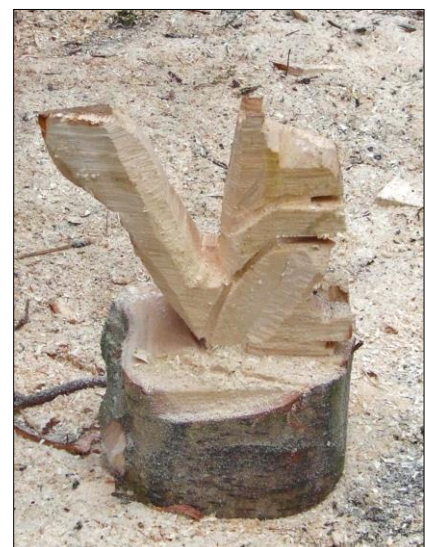
The highlight of

the day was probably the bronze-casting, and a fascinated crowd watched as the hand-pumped bellows heated the little furnace to around 1,200° before the crucible was withdrawn and liquid metal poured into a sand mould. It cooled really quickly, and the artefact made could be passed round for inspection after a couple of minutes.



Carolyn and Trudie showed off their skills in crocheting and dyeing. Several people were noticed taking tuition on making a rainbow-coloured blanket or throw from Carolyn, while others were found asking Trudie about the source of the colour of a variety of wools on show. Two batches were dyed in situ; one from nettles and one from madder, making a pleasing

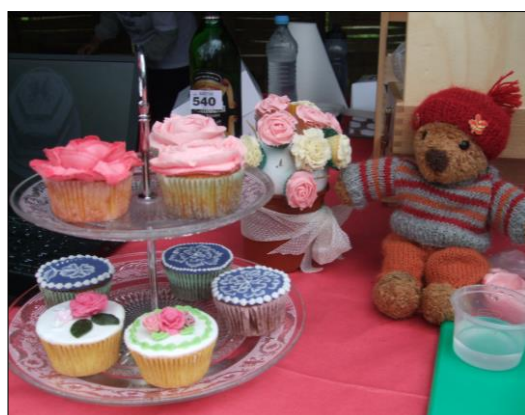
green and pinky-purple shade respectively. Ben's noisy demonstration with the chain saw also drew a lot of attention, along with admiration that he could turn a block of wood into a squirrel with an as apparently unwieldy tool as a chain saw.



Thanks are due to all who helped set up and clear, and of course also to our excellent chefs, who, chained to their barbecues, had little time to savour the other delights on offer. Thanks go also to everyone who attended on such a chilly day and helped us to swell FoSE's coffers by £534.80.



And finally...



If you've been wondering where Bodger the Bear has been hiding recently, he made a surprise appearance at the BBQ, where he was seen appreciatively eyeing up a selection of cakes, all iced with a rose theme.

A variety of icing techniques - buttercream, brush embroidery and sugar-craft flowers (which fooled several people into thinking they were real) were demonstrated by *Alix's*

Cakes and some small people were allowed to try their hand - and then eat the results! Maybe Bodger was hoping he'd get a turn.