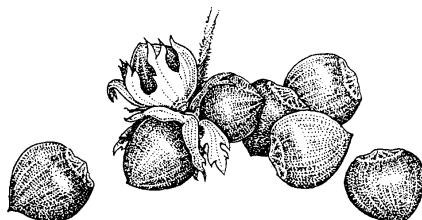


In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 47 November 2018

In this edition of In a Nutshell:

LEST WE FORGET
10 YEARS AT STANDEN
SHEDDING LIGHT
QUIZ MIGHT
AUTUMN COLOUR
EXPERTISE NEEDED
BULBS AND BEDDING
OTHER GARDEN NEWS
AND FINALLY...

FoSE calendar

FoSE Committee - 21st Jan '19
Murder Mystery - 13th July '19



Armistice Commemoration





Some of us may be feeling a bit World Warred out, after the plethora of programmes about the war and armistice that have been broadcast recently, but I think everyone agrees that memories of both WWI and the subsequent armistice on 11th November 1918 need to be kept alive. Standen 'did its bit' in three ways.

Firstly, the display of knitted and crocheted poppies which appeared in the Gong House and on Grandfather's Walk created a splash of vivid colour which vied with the autumn richness already on show on the property, excited much comment and created many photo opportunities for visitors.



Secondly, the Woods Group created an



enormous beacon bonfire in the field beyond the main lawn, ready to be set alight as Big Ben pealed at 11 o'clock heralding the two minutes' silence. Unfortunately, the weather the night before decided to remind us how bad life in the trenches must have been, as the rain hammered down, soaking the stacked wood to its core.

Trudie had contingency plans - including

candles and already burning logs - let alone crawling inside the fire while James looked the other way and tried not to think about the Health and Safety issues. Even so, it took all her skill to get the fire alight, and it didn't quite achieve the hoped-for blaze of flame at the appointed hour. It did burn, though, sending a dense plume of smoke up into the now blue sky, and reminding everyone



of the momentousness of the occasion. Although it was slow to get going initially, the whole structure did eventually burn out, making a fitting act of remembrance.

Finally, the twig tree in the summerhouse at the end of Grandfather's Walk invited visitors to write memorials to family members who had served, and often died, in WWI. There were many thought-provoking comments, with references to grandfathers, great-grandfathers and



great uncles. Some were poignant, such as the tribute to the man who saved eight of his colleagues from no-man's land, but was killed trying to rescue the ninth. Some were thankful, such as the commemoration of the grandfather who was badly injured in battle but ultimately survived the war. One had clearly been written by a parent, but recorded their offspring's reaction: 'I'm only three, but I promise to remember'.

Kitchen Gardener extraordinaire

Carolyn, our Kitchen Gardener, has now been at Standen for ten years, and has seen - and made - some considerable changes in that time. Here she records her memories of a decade of Standen service.

I'm sure that many of us have visited a National Trust garden and thought, "How beautiful, it must be wonderful to work here". Well that is exactly what I did one day while standing in the Rose garden at Standen long before I had even thought about gardening as a career. Then in the summer of 2005 and fed up with my job, I went part time and enrolled at Plumpton College to study the RHS course. As the course was theory only, I wrote to several garden centres and nurseries locally to try and get some practical work experience without success. Then I remembered the line at the



bottom of the Standen welcome leaflet: "Would you like to volunteer, call us...". So I did. Come in, said James. I got the full tour from Philippa (who was the only



gardener then other than James) and was told about all the work they wanted to do to restore the garden. I remember the Wisteria in the Little Orchard which covered the top of the courtyard wall; you couldn't see the fence underneath it.

We started clearing the rose garden and turning it into a Kitchen Garden which had been its original use. The roses were diseased and dying and there was a

problem with perennial weeds. It was only meant to be a temporary measure until we could replant the roses in a few years' time. We took out the Nepeta and Rugosa Roses leaving the Pear trees, Juniper trees and irises. The rose roots were particularly difficult to remove and required a lot of hard work and a mattock. Although there had been a weed membrane over the beds when we took it up the bindweed roots were there underneath like strands of spaghetti covering the ground. We double dug every bed and incorporated lots of manure. Standen wasn't open every day then and closed for the winter, so we often had our morning tea and lunch in the conservatory, and once or twice in the Little Room above. Mainly because the water pipes outside the garden tea room used to freeze in winter so it was a little warmer inside! In 2007 we took out the Juniper trees after the wind caused them to lean over and the visitors started asking about the topiary trees and what shape were trying to train them into.



In March 2008, after Philippa left to go to Ightham Mote and her replacement fell through twice, I started doing one day a week paid on top of my day volunteering. There were two groups working in the kitchen garden but on different days so we had been trying to run it between ourselves by leaving notes for each other about what work we had

done and what jobs still needed doing, not ideal at the start of the growing season. I finally got to meet Tim and Elaine who were volunteering on the other day. In July 2008 I finally gave up my old job and in November my seasonal job at Standen became permanent (if there is anything more nerve wracking than being interviewed for a job, it is being interviewed by your own volunteers!). Philippa's job was split between me doing the Kitchen Garden on three days a week and David Masters (another volunteer and no relation to James) doing two days cutting the grass and general gardening.



Ten years on and with a much larger group of volunteers now working on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and one Saturday a month, the Kitchen Garden goes from strength to strength and is a visitor favourite. We have built a fruit cage, created a herb bed (now the dye bed), started supplying the café with produce and the house with cut flowers, restored the Tenants' Garden, and gone no-dig.

We've done natural dyeing and spinning demos, apple pressing and food tastings and dress up for A Day in the Life. We tell the visitors what they can try in the café, give them advice on growing fruit, veg and flowers, and they like nothing more than to compare the progress of their own home grown veg with ours. Returning visitors chat to us like old friends and tell us what good progress we are making. If you had told me on the day I started as a volunteer at Standen that I would end up running, and restoring more of, the Kitchen Garden I wouldn't have believed you, but I wouldn't change a thing.

A nice little earner

Having harvested all the pumpkins, squashes and gourds from the Croquet Lawn beds, James put them on sale outside the café to raise funds for FoSE. He was pleasantly surprised at the amount garnered: £329.95. Although £100 of this has been set aside to buy similar seed for next year, with the rest as a bonus we were able to use money from our recent quiz fund-raiser to snap up a bargain. Elaine needed lights for the new potting shed, and found an offer which was on its last day. Tim and Bob installed the new system



and Elaine could see to propagate, even on the darkest winter days.



As she put it herself: *Let there be light!*

Following the successful dismantling and reconstruction of the pony shelter as a potting shed for the Nursery, it became apparent that although the structure provided the sheltered area for working that was needed.... it was a bit dark! Repotting should not be done by guesswork! What we needed was lighting and although there is electricity in the greenhouses it was decided that solar powered lighting was the way forward. This would mean that, apart from the initial cost of the system, it would be free to run. So, following a successful fundraising quiz last month, a solar powered lighting system was purchased from Sunshine Solar. Tim and Bob spent a happy day sorting out the siting of the panel for maximum sunlight and running the wires across to the potting shed. And, hey

presto! Light! A very illuminating experience!

So, thank you all who attended the quiz and bought raffle tickets and tea. The Nursery has now, probably, the only solar lit potting shed in the Trust.



Greetings from Middle Earth

There were many mighty teams at work on the evening of 30th November, as Keith and Caroline challenged the assembled company with rounds on such esoteric topics as the Natural World, *Dad's Army*, Women in History, World War I and Fathers. Some found the questions harder than last year; some easier, but it was a level playing field, and the final scores were quite close. In fact, there were two teams with the same top score, so the outcome had to be settled with a tie breaker. This gave final victory to the *Woolly Bears*, a team of house volunteers. Congratulations to them for their expertise in all matters quizzing. Congratulations should also go, however, to the Garden Staff team (and Bleau), who all came as characters from Middle Earth. While some seemed to settle naturally into their hobbit or elvish garb, the sight of James as Sam Gangee's

beloved Rosie Cotton is one which needed to be seen to be believed. I think he should wear a blond, curly wig more often!

Once the prizes had been paid for, FoSE netted £378.90 from the evening, and Roy signed up two new members, so thank you to Keith and Caroline once again, and to everyone who came along to take part.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness

After a long, hot summer, which while enjoyable for many humans, caused considerable stress for both plants and gardeners, the autumn colour has been particularly good this year, and nowhere more so than at Standen. The acers have put on an especially good show, but other



trees have played their part.

The leaves have been coming down



in a perpetual snowfall, making much work for the garden team and volunteers in terms of raking lawns and hand-picking leaves off the heathers, before they come into flower.

'James the rake' has been picking leaves up almost incessantly for the last few weeks, sometimes with other volunteers, but often doggedly continuing to rake on his own.



Despite this, there have still been plenty of leaves on the trees to



catch the low sun in a blaze of glory. Again, because many plants seemed to go on hold during the drought, flowers which would normally have finished blooming some time ago, have continued to delight, making 2018 an

autumn to remember, as much as the summer was. The low sun in the mornings has also added a new dimension to the Restoration sculpture, which James captured on camera recently with the sun glowing directly through the glass. Stunning!

For those of you puzzled by the picture of a piece of coloured glass, surrounded by wood and with an acer leaf in the middle, which you were invited to identify in the Christmas party quiz, the lowest roundel in this photo is the one which was reproduced to tantalise you all.

Can we pick your brains, please?

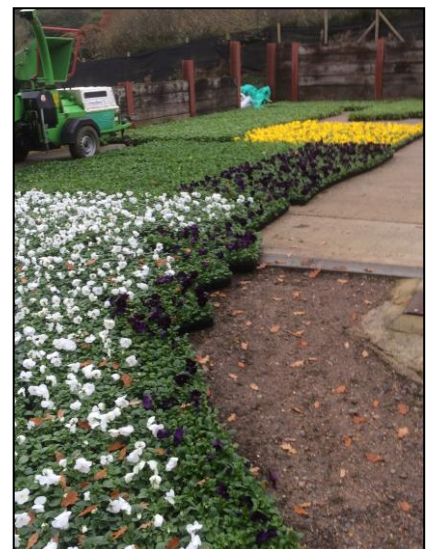
As you will no doubt have noticed, there is a Murder Mystery Evening in the offing. This was highly successful when we held one eighteen months ago, which is why we are planning another. Quizzes and BBQs are also regular events on the FoSE calendar. However, we are aware that there are probably some very good fund-raising ideas out there which we haven't thought of, so if you have an inspired idea - or even just one which is a bit different - please share it with a member of the committee, and we will see if we can follow up on it.

The committee has also discussed the possibility of turning FoSE into a fully-fledged 'Affiliated Charity', but we are aware that this may well need more expertise than the current committee members may have. If you have any experience in this kind of enterprise, we would really like to hear from you, with any guidance - large or small - that you can offer.

If you go down in the nursery today

You'll get more than a big surprise. To be fair, James did warn us that he had ordered 17,500 bedding plants, but when you see them in the nursery en masse waiting to be planted out, it is quite a daunting sight. Maybe it is a ploy to make us feel better about the 14,000 bulbs which will complement them to make the most colourful spring display Standen has ever seen.

Work is already underway with all the Garden Groups (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) engaged in



Operation Plant-out. Someone calculated that each of the Thursday volunteers in mid-November had planted around 190 bulbs during the course of the day, as well as a large number of grasses and wallflowers. It's not clear whether the volunteers in this picture were planting bulbs or on their knees praying for release. Their prayers do seem to have been answered though as by the third week in November all the bulbs were in on the lower terrace. That just left the bedding plants! I got the impression that maybe Andy and Rachel were losing the will to live by the end of the month.



Other garden news



The wall builders are still hard at work, both on the Farm Track and on the edge of the croquet lawn. The farm track retaining walls haven't looked this neat for ages, as years of earth washing down from the sloping beds had nearly

hidden them. It's good that the team have finally been able to go ahead with this piece of work even if what is going in is a temporary measure until there is enough funding available. Bill and Graham are clearly also pleased to have completed the stone edging on the Croquet Lawn steps. The border below is now ready for planting.



No, Bob and Tim haven't been put in prison. Last year, FoSE bought a cage to protect precious bulbs from the squirrels. Unfortunately, what was supplied was not fit for purpose. However, the company has now replaced the original with a cage made of much sterner stuff, which our two intrepid workers put up recently. They are convinced no pesky squirrel will be able to break into this one. Now we just need to sort out the badgers....



Work on the drive produced the usual banter about who was working harder. A camera produced a sudden flurry of activity from this group, who had been taking a no doubt well-earned break a few moments earlier.

In point of fact, everyone worked hard, and the drive looked a lot neater at the end of the day, as did the heather beds on the Top Terrace.

More homework

Congratulations to Pat Felgate, who, I think, was the only person to correctly identify *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, Chinese Dogwood, when Rachel brought us a sample to look at. The RHS website describes it as follows: '*Cornus* can be deciduous shrubs or trees, or creeping, woody-based perennials, some with brightly coloured young stems. Tiny flowers are borne in dense clusters, sometimes with showy bracts. Many have fine autumn colour'. The fruit is describes as 'deep pink, strawberry like', though I'm not sure that Lynda was convinced of its culinary merit when she was persuaded to try it.

