

The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 2 - 9th April 2020

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

THANK YOU ALL

GOOD ADVICE

MEMORIES OF THE CONSERVATORY

WHAT THE WET WAS GOOD FOR

HEAVENLY HELLEBORES

MEET FREDDIE THE FROG

MEMORIES OF A DIFFERENT WORLD

CRYPIC CLUE TIME

THE DANGERS OF A MOBILE PHONE

SIMNEL CAKE

DORMOUSE RESCUE

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

AND FINALLY...

Take off

Thank you all for your kind responses to the first interim newsletter. Sending it out created a flurry of contributions, and requests that I thank all the contributors to the first edition. I am so glad my idea is taking off. Do please keep your pictures and news coming in. The first edition was sent out to all Standen personnel by Bleau, following my email out to FoSE members. However, she will not be able to do this in the future as she has now been furloughed.

It may be possible to send it out via the weekly update, but it would be preferable, given the workload that the remaining staff are under, if I could create another distribution group. So, if you know anyone who would like to receive this newsletter, but who isn't a FoSE member, please ask them to email newsletter@fose.org.uk and I will add their address to my new list.

Keep the routines going

During lockdown it's easy to lose a sense of purpose, to feel that the days are drifting by aimlessly. Keeping your normal routines going as much as possible is a good antidote to that feeling that the days are merging into one another, and that you can't quite remember if this is Tuesday or Sunday. Some people, it seems though, can take it just a bit too far.

Experts recommend keeping your daily rituals even while working from home



Standen in the 1980s and 90s



Room stewards Anthony and Janet Mottram sent this picture of their 'very small Streptocarpus in the conservatory at home'. They recall visiting Standen in the 1980s and 90s as National Trust members, and think that this was the time when the conservatory was full of these lovely plants. They comment:

It was always a great delight to walk into the conservatory from the billiard room and have the sight of lots of these pot-plants lovingly cared for by a volunteer we assume. What a delight that Standen is still beautiful.

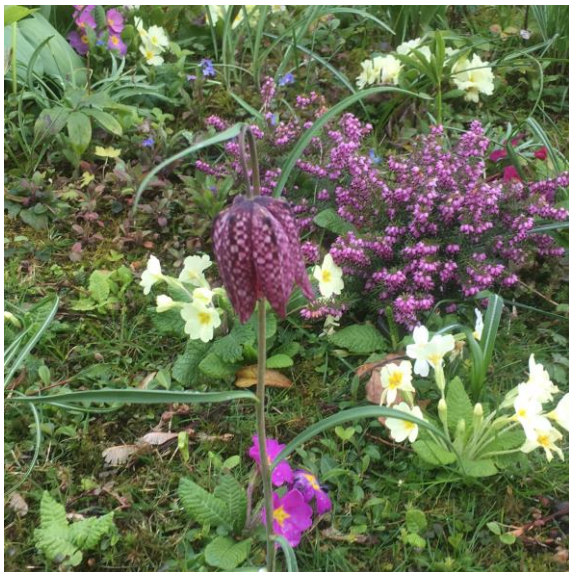
They bring back memories for me, too, though not of Standen. My mum grew a wide range of these and displayed them all on the long, wide windowsill in the living room,

Streptocarpus are native to South Africa, which explains their common name of Cape Primrose, a slightly odd choice of name, given that they flower mainly in shades of mauve and pink. They live happily as houseplants in this country and are easy to propagate.

A bumper crop

One bonus of the very wet winter has been a good showing of Snake's Head Fritillaries. Sue Greig sent in a delightful photo of one of the many in her garden, along with an article about them which she has written. Many thanks, Sue.

Many of you will recognise the Snake's Head Fritillary in the accompanying photograph. I'm delighted to have about 60 in the front garden and they are now migrating into the lawn along with crocus and primrose. It's taken a very long time and this year is particularly good. There are even a few white ones. It likes to be waterlogged in winter, so maybe that accounts for the numbers I have this year. The corms live for about 10 years, so setting seed is important for longevity. I don't disturb the front garden and scatter the seed by hand when it is set.



One famous site for this quite exotic looking plant is Magdalen College meadow at the back of the college, as is the Upper Thames at Cricklade. At Cricklade, the meadows have an unbroken history of hay growing and common grazing for the past 800 years. (Lammas land). Intensive agriculture destroys their habitat.

Fritillaria meleagris is sometimes known as the chequered daffodil due to the patterning on the solitary nodding flowers. The name Fritillaria was derived in the sixteenth century from fritillus

meaning 'dice box' but closer inspection of the flower shows the pattern is not as neat as a geometric chequer board. When the flower is in bud, the end of the curved stem may resemble a snake's head thus accounting for its common name. In Shropshire they used to be known as 'dead men's bells', in the West Country as 'leper lilies' perhaps as a consequence of the resemblance of the blotches on the petals to the disease and that lepers carried bells. Vita Sackville West described them as, 'sullen and foreign looking, the snaky flower/scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls'.

So is this a native plant? This has been long debated. Were they introduced to this country and have then escaped, naturalising in the wild? There are no records of wild fritillaries in England before the mid-17th century. We know they reached England at least by the 1590s. Wild fritillaries were recorded near Ruislip in 1736 and near Kew in 1762.

Recent research looking at the DNA of populations across Europe shows that our fritillaries are very similar to Western Europe populations, the implication being the corms were introduced to gardens and parks and then escaped to the wild.

Whatever their origin, they have given me a lot of pleasure in my small front garden.

Sources: Kew magazine, Spring 2020

The Flowering of Britain, Mabey and Evans. 1980

Flourishing - despite the deer

Hellebores are another favourite at this time of year. One of my favourite sights at Standen is the hellebores in the Quarry Garden. However, Alison Smith's photo is helping allay my withdrawal symptoms, showing, as it does, one of the prettiest varieties of the species. Fortunately, the deer don't seem to like the taste and have left them to flower in peace in her garden. She has also had a good show of daffodils, but is waiting to see whether the tulips from pots which she took home from Standen last year will flower. As she says, 'They don't owe



me anything,' but hopefully they will come good and be a reminder of happy days in the nursery, emptying hundreds of pots.



She has a deer fence, but doesn't think it will pass muster. However, a friend told her that deer are inherently lazy so that if there is something in the way they will go

and eat somewhere else. As she says:

'Eat the moss on the lawn, pleeease.'

A change from wall-building

It seems that there is no end to Graham Parkes' talents. Deprived of the opportunity to build walls at Standen, he has turned his hand to sculpture. The attached picture is of Freddie the frog - so named by Graham's three-year-old grandson. It is a piece Graham has been working on for some time, but he now feels he will have ample opportunity to complete it. It is being worked from a solid block of Purbeck Limestone and, although it is already instantly recognisable, we look forward to seeing a picture of the completed work. Graham has several other pieces on the go, and is also finding time for gardening and decorating, so no lockdown ennui there.



Beautiful Sussex

Phil Marsden sent in some photos to remind us of some of the beautiful places we have nearby. The two below were taken at Leonardslee last Autumn.



This one is of the Edgeworthia at Nymans, and was taken in February. This is



another shrub which originated in the Himalayas, but likes a sheltered spot to grow in. It normally flowers in January and February, and has an attractive scent, not surprising perhaps, as this plant is a relative of the Daphne.

Phil has also turned his not inconsiderable photographic skills on his own garden during the lockdown. He also sent me this superb close-up of one of his wallflowers, and a selection of his tulips.



Not content with sending balm for the soul, he also sent me the link to the following BBC article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-australia-52147740/coronavirus-dressing-up-for-bin-night-brings-a-smile-in-australia> It would seem that, with typical Aussie panache, citizens there are thumbing their nose at the virus by dressing outlandishly to take the bins out.

Answers on a postcard, please

In the first edition, I mentioned the fact that Bob Felden had suggested the idea of exercising our brains with some cryptic clues based on Standen. Here is a selection for you to try. Answers in the next edition.

"I'm just going out, I maybe some time"

This is not made from mash potato and breadcrumbs

Mick Jagger's favourite stroll

Sounds like you need to say your prayers here

Did the Marriot hotel chain create this space?
No men in this garden - they metamorphosed into Beetles

If you have any suggestions along these lines, do send them in.

Check your settings first

All sorts of things are going on-line in these troubled times, and all credit to those grabbing technology by the horns, often for the first time. However, it does pay to be careful, as one Italian priest discovered when he accidentally activated filters on his phone when filming himself conducting mass. I particularly like the idea of a priest in mafia guise: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGdlZ1C1hVg>

Easter Treat



Having been born on a Good Friday - yes, surprising, isn't it - I often celebrate my birthday around Easter. Some time ago, I appropriated the traditional Easter speciality of Simnel Cake as my birthday cake. This year, normal celebrations are on hold, so I thought I'd make myself a Simnel cake. Having shopped ahead, I was confident I was well prepared - until I realised I had no icing sugar to make the marzipan. Fortunately, I had some sugar cubes at the back of the cupboard, and these blitzed down nicely in the food processor. So my baking went ahead. Looks like I might have to eat it all myself, though. What a shame. For those who don't know, the eleven marzipan balls represent the 11 apostles.

Alive and well at the Wildlife Centre

Trudie Jacobs emailed me to say that one of her volunteers, John Allen, found a Dormouse nest in his garden recently, just after volunteers were told not to attend at Standen. He was clearing leaves under a hedge in his own garden when he made the discovery, and emailed Trudie for advice. She told him to replace it and cover it up. However, when he saw the local ginger tom cat sniffing around he was worried. He chased it away a couple of times, but then, in his words:

I felt it was becoming too risky to leave it there and after some searching found that the "British Wildlife Centre" on A22 had Dormice. I telephoned

them and whilst they don't normally accept "rescue" animals, under the circumstances they accepted this one.



A short drive up there and he/she was taken away to be quarantined before eventually being released in their outside dormouse sanctuary when the weather gets warmer.

So the story had a happy ending. Trudie added a message of her own:

I'm always available for wildlife help and hope people will share their finds through this spring to keep us all engaged with the outdoors. My personal email is trudie.a.jacobs@gmail.com mobile 07721068893.

With apologies to Julie Andrews

The indefatigable Anne Scutt has come up with more goodies to make us laugh. Have a look at <https://www.youtube.com/embed/MMBh-eo3tvE?start=> to see what some wit has done with the lyrics of a couple of well-known songs.

...Am I guilty of treason?

The Queen made a moving speech on Sunday night, but was I the only one to have the naughty thought that someone had scheduled her speech to the nation in the slot usually reserved for *The Antiques Road Show*?