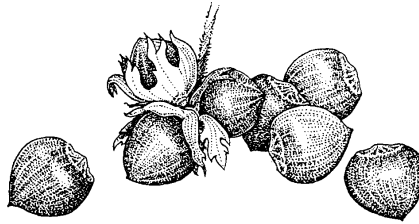


The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 23 - 29th November 2020

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

FOSE BUY

STORY TIME

A CAUTIONARY TALE

COMEDY TIME

SIGNS OF SPRING

THEN AND NOW

STANDEN SEED BANK

AND FINALLY...

New crab for old

According to the Woodland Trust, Crab Apples are:

A symbol of fertility and a forager's delight. Crab apple trees are associated with love and marriage and its small, hard fruits make an exquisite, jewel-coloured jelly.

The *Malus Sylvestris* is the ancestor of all our more modern cultivated apples, and can live for up to 100 years. The same website also offers an explanation for the name, although other sites suggest that crabbed in this sense just means small:



With greyish brown, flecked bark, trees can become quite gnarled and twisted, especially when exposed, and the twigs often develop spines. This 'crabbed' appearance may have influenced its common name, 'crab apple'.

Another website describes the Crab Apple as:

...one of those rare, catch-all trees that tick not one but all the boxes on the gardener's checklist. It all starts in spring with a riot of blousy white or pink blossom that draws in the pollinators as they stir from their winter slumber. The trees are invaluable as a pollinating partner for other apples.



It is for this reason that the demise of the Standen Crab Apple in the Kitchen Garden was such a disaster. FoSE has stepped in to allow Carolyn to buy a replacement which will shortly be planted as autumn is the ideal time for this.

Carolyn explains her thinking on this.

While working at home before being furloughed I spent some time researching all the apple and pear varieties at Standen. I discovered that two of the apple varieties in the orchard were late flowering varieties and only pollinated each other. They were however also pollinated by one of the four crab apple trees in the Orchard, a lovely yellow fruited variety called 'Golden Hornet'.

Unfortunately, this old large tree came down in January. Crab apples are commonly planted by commercial growers at the end of an orchard and are considered the best pollinators due to their long flowering times. Having only one pollinator for these apples makes me a little nervous so I felt it was important to plant a replacement crab apple to ensure the best crops for future years.

Apple 'Court Pendû Plat' is a dessert apple of European origin



which was first described in 1613 but may date back to Roman times. It was a very popular apple in Victorian times. It is still considered one of the best of the really late dessert varieties. It is very late flowering so good for regions prone to late frosts. It has a fruity flavour with a pineapple-like acidity. It becomes sweet with keeping but retains its strong flavour. The flavour carries over into the juice, which can be used to add a sweet component to cider blends. The apple can also be used for cooking. It is self-sterile and at Standen it is only pollinated by Apple 'Crawley Beauty' and Crab Apple 'Golden Hornet'. It was listed as one of the top ten apples to try last year in an article in the Guardian newspaper and is always popular at our apple-tasting days.



Apple 'Crawley Beauty' dates to around 1870 and was found in a cottage garden at Tilgate, near Crawley and introduced by Messrs. Cheal and Co, Nurserymen of Crawley, in 1906. It is used as a cooking apple early in the season, producing a light well-flavoured purée, but matures to make an excellent Christmas eating apple. It is very late-flowering so good for regions subject to late frosts. It can tolerate chalky and alkaline soils very well. It is also self-sterile and at Standen it is only pollinated by Apple 'Court Pendû Plat' and Crab Apple 'Golden Hornet'.

Mind the Gap

Here is another story from Pat Jilks. The moral, perhaps, is not to be unpleasant to those you consider to be beneath you.

Brian was late for work as was usually the case so ran down the underground staircase, pushing aside the people that were travelling at the speed the staircase had dictated for them. Already the ticket machine had refused to accept his ticket and he had been unnecessarily rude to the guy who was helping people through the barrier when they had difficulties. It was not the first time he had been rude to him for Brian had, what he considered anyway, a very important job in the Ministry and thought such menial jobs as a ticket collector belonged to the poorly educated or verging on stupid. He was, in his opinion, one of the elite and he travelled on the underground only rarely and reluctantly, when his car was out of action or being serviced. He would not get a taxi because, much to his disgust, he would not be allowed to put that cost on his expenses. The ticket guy looked after him and smiled. He had dealt with others of that type before on this job.

Brian ran, carrying his precious briefcase, in which were some very confidential papers. The train came in and he stationed himself in readiness for the battle ahead.

'Mind the Gap' came the usual announcement. Usually there was not much of a gap but this time, there was quite a wide one. To his horror, he dropped his briefcase and it almost disappeared down the gap. He reacted quickly and fell to his knees, grabbing the handle just in time before it disappeared. Then, the trains doors shut whilst he was still on his knees looking down into the darkness of the gap because he had seen something down there but yet, he had not. His brain was not sure what he had seen or if he had seen anything at all. At least, when the train had cleared the platform, there was nothing there except a shiny wrapping from a chocolate bar. That, he thought, was what he had seen - the reflection in some way from that.

Brian cursed himself at being so silly and missing the train which would make him even later. Oh well, he thought, he would let his boss know that he would work late to make it up. He had no reason to hurry home now because his wife of 15 suffering years (her suffering, not his) had, to his anger and amazement, walked out on him. He was still exceedingly angry about that. Not that he missed her as such but now, he had to look after himself and everything else too. It was the reason he had been late in the mornings. The difficulties of getting himself ready, his clothes not being already laid out and having to get his own breakfast was bad and he should not have to do it. He just did not understand why his wife had gone but everybody else did.

That evening, he worked late and decided to go out for a meal as nobody at home would have got it ready for him. He got through a fair amount of wine and felt much happier and even mellow as he walked, fairly straight, towards the underground station.

It was a Monday and not the favourite night for revellers so the train was almost empty and, when he got off at his station, he was the only one on the platform. Brian minded the gap, as instructed, more carefully than usual and, remembering the morning, could not help looking down into it. He peered intently as the train moved away but there was nothing there, not even a chocolate bar wrapping. As he walked up the platform, he encountered the man he usually met at the ticket barrier. The man smiled at him.

'I see you looking down the gap,' he said. 'Did you think you saw something?'

'No,' said Brian, glaring at the man as a matter of course. He was not going to waste a smile on an inferior but the wine made him more willing to speak.

'I thought I did this morning though but there wasn't anything there.'

'No, not now,' said the man, 'But it must have been one of the inhabitants. They are very interesting, sir. If you have time, I'll show them to you.'

Brian was in no hurry to get home and was curious.

'What are they?' he asked. 'If they're rats or mice, I'm not going to look. I hate those. They give me the creeps.'

'No,' said the man. 'Not those ugly things. These are beautiful. I've got to know them really well and I bring them food in the evening. I don't think you'll find them anywhere else in the UK, or maybe not anywhere. I don't know where they came from but they're my friends and I look after them.'

Brian was very curious by now and followed the man to the start of the

tunnel. They walked along the footway for a distance and into a gap at the side. Brian saw, with surprise, that it was the entrance into part of another tunnel that had obviously been bricked up and deserted but some bricks had fallen and there was room to squeeze through.

'Now then, sir,' said the man. 'They are a bit shy but will come to me soon.'

He made a sound that was strange, like a croaky hiss and it was answered from up ahead. There was the sound of something or rather, several things, approaching.

'Now sir,' said the man, 'Let me introduce you to my friends.'

He shone a torch ahead and Brian's blood froze. Looking at him with intense interest were five creatures. They were certainly not rats or mice and Brian had never seen anything like them before. They moved very quietly for their size which was about five feet in length although a large part of that length was tail. A forked tail. And forked tongues too. The nearest things he had seen were komodo lizards but these were much thinner and glowed with a fluorescent blue in the torchlight. They moved forward and their tongues licked around towards him. Brian tried to back away but came up against the wall.

'Aren't they beautiful?' said the man with a happy laugh.

'Look my darlings, I've brought you something special for dinner tonight!'

Always listen to your children!

Pat's story reminded me of an incident experienced on a trip to Italy many years ago. We had gone to stay in Como for a week when Ben, our youngest, was only around four years old. One day, we decided to take the train and go into Switzerland. Needless to say, by the time we had organised two young children, we were late for the train, and only just boarded it in time. As my husband tried to swing Ben up onto the train, he resisted and said,

'Daddy, there's something under the train.'

'Just get on the train,' was his father's reply. So he did.

When the train stopped at the border, an impressive and slightly scary-looking official got on and came towards us.

'Meester Greefits?' he inquired, and as we nodded, said one word: 'Venga' - come.

As he was sporting a rather large gun, we complied, and meekly followed him to the passport office, where a stony-faced official asked Iain to show his papers. It was at this point that he realised that what Ben had seen under the train was his passport, which had fallen from his pocket. Having had their joke, the officials explained that, fortunately for us, someone had picked it up and handed in to the station authorities, who had then contacted the border. It was waiting for us in

the station office. We thanked the border staff profusely, and returned, gratefully, to Como.

We never did get to Switzerland that holiday.

More comedy

If you enjoyed *The Two Ronnies* you'll like the chance to revisit the *Crossword* sketch, which Anne found. You can view it at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVWdbO6FFfw&list=PLmywv-awufZ2ITAvpV1Ihq62kwbbVM17&index=113>

Here too are a few more words of wisdom out of the mouths of children:

Henry VIII had an abbess on his knee which made walking difficult.

The sailors hung Albert Ross round the neck of the ancient mariner.

Solomon had 300 wives and 700 porcupines,

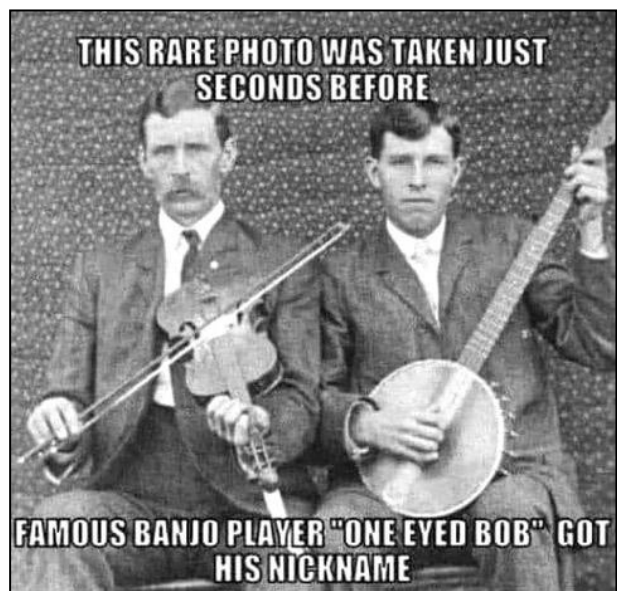
Martin Luther was nailed to the church door at Wittenberg for selling papal indulgences.

Nelson fought his battle in Trafalgar Square.

Wordsworth went to the Lake District as a young man and soon became intimate with the local beauties.

The Matterhorn was the horn blown by the Ancient Britons when there was something the matter.

And here is a selection of cartoons, also found by Anne.





Apologies for the sexism of this last one. Couldn't resist!

Bulbs sprouting already

Technically, it's still only autumn, but walking around Standen the other day, I noticed that next year's bulbs are already starting to come up. There are already signs of snowdrops on the drive, and on the bed outside the stable yard; and the hundreds of bulbs we planted on the Farm Track and Hydrangea walk are also starting



to show through.

Admittedly they are a bit hard to see in the photos, but hopefully, in the Spring, we'll all be back to weed them and see them in their full glory.

Ponder this

Martin sent in this thought-provoking item, reminding us yet again to count our blessings.

Just ponder this for a minute...

2020 - We just have to stay in for a couple of months.

WWII - You have to leave your loved ones and might never see them again.

2020 - But my kids need some fresh air so we're all going to the park.

WWII - Your kids have to be evacuated and live with random good Samaritans for their safety.

2020 - I can only Facetime my family and friends; I can't see them.

WWII - I have written letters; I'm hoping they're received and I get a response this year.

2020 - I am trying to order my food shop online; it's taking ages to get me what I need: alcohol and all the other foods I'm craving.

WWII - Are you coming to queue up in the line for our rations: potato soup every day of the week?

2020 - The government hasn't said we can't go out; they just said we can but only once to exercise, so I'm going to meet my friends and do what I want.

WWII - I'm not going out just in case a bomb drops so I will stay in listening to some music quietly because the air raid siren might go off.

2020 - Netflix needs to sort the streaming out; I can't even watch a series without it crashing.

WWII - We are sitting in the dark around a candle playing cards keeping as much light in as possible so the warplanes don't see us from above.

2020 - Every man for themselves, so I'm going to stock-pile as much as I can.

WWII - I'm so grateful for this community; everyone is helping each other when and where we can. We must stay strong.

This is the perspective that we should have. We don't know how LUCKY we are, and people need to stop moaning. Life's too short.

Stay in; it really is that simple.

In my experience, the majority of people have shown the 'Dunkirk spirit'.

Tales from the Greenhouse



The greenhouse prop house is now bubble-wrapped for winter, and more of the seeds sown for next year have begun to germinate.

One of the quickest to put in an appearance was **Centaurea scabiosa Greater Knapweed, Black Top**. It was sown on 7th October and quickly lived up to the promise on the packet that it 'grows readily from seed at any time of year'.



The **Rudbeckia triloba 'Prairie Glow' Brown-Eyed Susan** was sown on 14th October but will need to be checked this week as the rubric on the packet notes: 'Germination takes 10-15 days. If no germination in 3-4 weeks then return to warmth.' So it is clearly a bit more temperamental than the Centaurea.



Hopefully the hardy perennial **Potentilla nepalensis 'Miss Willmott'** or **Strawberry Cinquefoil** will live up to reputation. The packet promises: 'Just allow autumn warmth followed by natural winter cold to offer ideal conditions for germination to occur as the weather warms in spring.'



Another, potentially more difficult customer is **Helenium hoopesii Sneezeweed** or **Mountain Helenium**. Germination of this can be erratic, the packet warns, and if nothing has happened after 3 weeks, it needs to be placed in a temperature between + or - 4^o for 2 - 4 weeks. Let's hope it behaves.

And finally...

Just another, rather lovely, Standen view.

With the current lockdown ending next week, the *Lockdown Lighthouse* will revert to a monthly edition, so the next newsletter will be a Christmas edition, and come out on 24th December.

