

The Lockdown Lighthouse

THE INTERIM NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN
and missing it loads



No 25 - 7th January 2021

In this edition of The Lockdown Lighthouse:

OLD WORDS FOR NEW TIMES
BIRD LIFE AT STANDEN
THAT'S LIFE
COMMENTS ON 2020
MORE SIGNS OF SPRING
A TALL TALE
A COUPLE OF CARTOONS
FIRST GARDEN RAMBLINGS OF THE NEW YEAR
KEEPING SANE IN LOCKDOWN
AND FINALLY...

It pays to increase your word power

Some of you may recognise this phrase from a long-running article of the same name in the *Readers' Digest* magazine. We have all had our vocabulary rudely increased this year with words like furlough and lockdown, social distancing and R number, but Tim found an article in *The Sunday Times* which suggests we could look further back in time for words to describe our current circumstances. Among others, it suggests:

- Muddle fubbles - a term to describe despondency and a sense of doom
- Ugsomeness - to describe something horrid or loathsome
- Quafftide - time for a little drinkies

Apparently, in the 19th century, anyone who used a poor excuse to excuse bad behaviour might be greeted with, 'Come, come, that's Barnard Castle.' Who says the future can't be predicted? Could Dominic Cummings be accused of being a

'mumsimus' - someone who insists they are right even when the evidence shows that they are wrong?

Still on the topic of words, I found myself cringing earlier in the year as yet another commentator or politician described the pandemic as 'unprecedented'. Why occasionally couldn't they have used a synonym? There are plenty of them: unparalleled, unequalled, extraordinary, singular, freakish... and several more. The pandemic seems also to have sparked an 'unprecedented' lack of originality in our choice of vocabulary.

News from the Kitchen Garden

Carolyn has noted an increase in bird life at Standen recently.

I don't know if it's a result of lockdown and furlough but since I came back to work in June I've become much more aware of the wildlife, and the birds in particular, in the Kitchen Garden. My favourite time is first thing in the morning, before the visitors arrive, when I am alone in the Kitchen Garden and the birds are singing. I watch them feed on the insects and bugs on the plants and the seed heads such as Fennel and Sunflowers. On the morning of 29th December I saw Robins, Blackbirds, Blue Tits, Great Tits, Goldfinches and, for the first time in the Kitchen Garden, a Great Spotted Woodpecker which was feeding at the base of the old Apple Espalier "Queen".



Since I've been back I have also seen (just within the Kitchen Garden) a Wren, Willow Tits feeding on the Sunflowers, a Hobby, a Nuthatch on our bean poles, and what I believe to be a leucistic Goldfinch (not a full albino but one lacking some pigmentation, i.e. white but with the black and yellow wing markings). In November a volunteer also saw a pair of Parakeets fly over!

Carolyn would like to point out that this is not her picture, but the closest she could find to what she saw. Apparently, leucistic birds are more prone to being caught by predators, as they show up clearly and differently. Let's hope this one finds a safe haven at Standen.

On the subject of birds, have a look at https://wallythekat.tripod.com/A_Pages/AA-Videos-YOU-Tube/Crow-Einstein.html It seems it's not just humans who have taken the time to learn a new skill during lockdown.

A bit of philosophy

The previous item neatly brings me to a very short story by Pat, entitled *That's Life*.

The mother sat, feeling dejected and sad.

She had worked hard bringing up the kids, She had put up with the squabbling, fed them and tried to teach everything they needed for a successful life. Then, suddenly - they were gone, with never a look back or a thank you and she was alone again.

The worse thing was that it was not the first time. The same thing had happened every year.

The mother blackbird looked back from the branch on which she was sitting. She looked at the empty nest.

It made her wonder.

*What **was** life all about?*

Points to Ponder

This may have reached you by other means, as I believe it's gone viral. However, it is very apt.

10 points to ponder as 2020 draws to a close...

1. The dumbest thing I've ever bought was a 2020 planner.
2. 2019: Stay away from negative people. 2020: Stay away from positive people.
3. The world has turned upside down. Old folks are sneaking out of the house and their kids are yelling at them to stay indoors!
4. This morning I saw a neighbour talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came to my house and told my dog... We had a good laugh.
5. Every few days try your jeans on just to make sure they fit. Pyjamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.
6. Does anyone know if we can take showers yet or should we just keep washing our hands?
7. I never thought the comment, 'I wouldn't touch him/her with a six-foot pole,' would become a national policy, but here we are!

8. I need to practice social distancing from the refrigerator.
9. I hope the weather is good tomorrow for my trip to the backyard. I'm getting tired of the living room.
10. Never in 1 million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller with a mask on and ask for money.

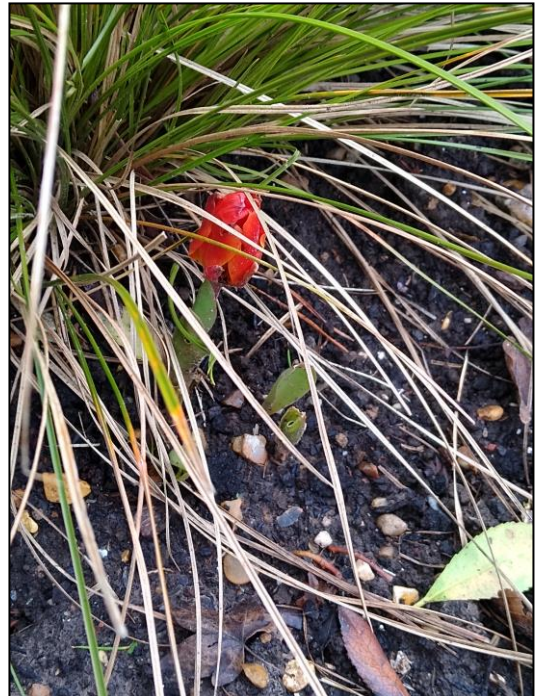
Thanks for this, Martin.



Is this the earliest tulip of the year?

On 29th December, Carolyn was working with a couple of volunteers tidying the House Terrace and the Exotic Bed. Suddenly, in great excitement, she called the volunteers

over to show them what she had found. Nestling under a protective cover of



ornamental grass was a Tulip in flower. I know a lot of plants have been confused by this year's strange weather, but it's the first time we have experienced tulips flowering twice in the same year.

Life on a desert island - maybe

One day a man decided to retire.

He put himself on a Caribbean cruise and proceeded to have the time of his life, that is, until the ship sank.

He soon found himself on an island with no other people, no supplies, nothing: only bananas and coconuts. After about four months, he's lying on the beach one day when the most gorgeous woman he's ever seen rows up to the shore.

In disbelief, he asked, 'Where did you come from? How did you get here?'

She replies, 'I rowed over from the other side of the island where I landed when my cruise ship sank.'

'Amazing,' he notes. 'You were really lucky to have a rowboat wash up with you.'

'Oh, this thing?' explains the woman. 'I made the boat out of some raw material I found on the island. The oars were whittled from gum tree branches. I wove the bottom from palm tree branches, and the sides and stern came from a Eucalyptus tree.'

'But where did you get the tools?'

'Oh, that was no problem,' replied the woman. 'On the south side of the island, a very unusual stratum of alluvial rock is exposed. I found that if I fired it to a certain temperature in my kiln, it melted into ductile iron and I use that to make tools and use the tools to make the hardware.'

The guy is stunned.

'Let's row over to my place,' she says, 'and I'll give you a tour.' So after a short time of rowing, she soon docks the boat at a small wharf. As the man looks to shore, he nearly falls off the boat.

Before him is a long stone walk leading to a cabin and treehouse.

While the woman ties up the rowboat with an expertly woven hemp rope, the man can only stare ahead, dumbstruck.

As they walk into the house, she says casually, 'It's not much, but I call it home. Please sit down. 'Would you like a drink?'

'No! No thank you,' the man blurts out, still dazed. 'I can't take another drop of coconut juice.'

'Oh, it's not coconut juice,' winks the woman. 'I have a still. How would you like a Tropical Spritz?'

Trying to hide his continued amazement, the man accepts, and they sit down on her couch to talk. After they exchanged the individual survival stories, the woman announces, 'I'm going to slip into something more comfortable. Would you like to take a shower and shave? There's a razor in the bathroom cabinet upstairs.'

No longer questioning anything, the man goes upstairs into the bathroom. There, in the cabinet is a razor made from a piece of toroise bone. Two shells honed to a hollow ground age fastened on to its end inside a swivel mechanism.

'This woman is amazing,' he muses. 'What's next?'

When he returns, she greets him wearing nothing but some small flowers on tiny vines, each strategically positioned, she smells faintly of gardenias. She then beckons for him to sit down next to her.

'Tell me,' she begins suggestively, slithering closer to him. 'We've both been out here for many months. You must have been lonely. When was the last time you played around? She stares into his eyes.

He can't believe what is hearing. . You mean...' He swallows excitedly as tears start to form in his eyes.

'...You've build a Golf Course, too?'

My thanks to Martin for this shaggy dog story.

And now for some visual and verbal comedy...

You might enjoy viewing the following you-tube clips:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS1SK5NG80g> which is another take on the vaccine video I sent out before; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PfGIO2oTLM> if you like elephants, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArKburwXWY> to remind you that things could be worse!

Thanks once again to the indefatigable pair, Anne and Martin, for sharing these two cartoon gems and the video links.





News from Nancy's garden



Happy New Year to everyone!

The garden is swamped, as no doubt, all of yours are too. Nevertheless, it is amazing what is in flower. So not being able to do



much actual gardening, I took a few photos of resilient plants.



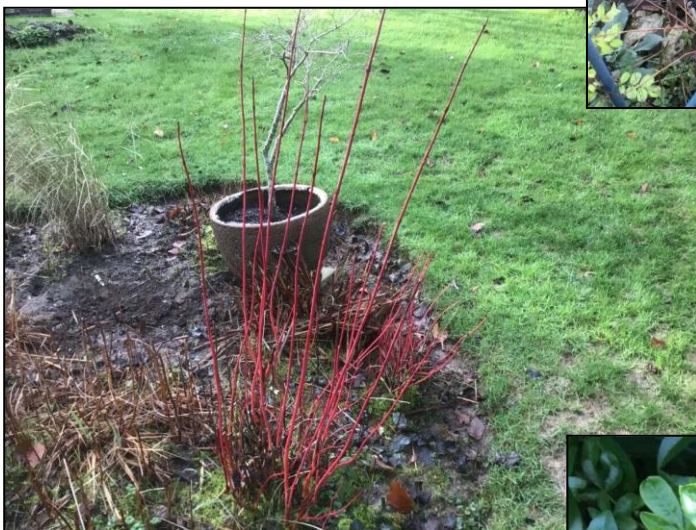
*To start, the first thing I see when I open the lounge curtains in the morning, is an **Antirrhinum**, which has been flowering in a pot on the patio since April and is still going strong.*

Then there is **Red Campion**, more pink than red, a bit straggly but I don't like to cut it back when it persists with its flowers.



The little daisy **Erigeron** always makes me smile. Then, there is some people's pet hate - **Bergenia**, which I in fact, really like. I find the plants invaluable in some parts of the garden, where nothing else seems to thrive. One of the first and last flowering plants, I love to see the pink flowers peeping out

of the foliage. We have a beautiful red-flowered variety with dark green leaves edged red, which isn't in bloom at the moment.



There are three **Witch Hazels**, red and yellow, the yellow is lovely at the moment. Any **Cornus** is fabulous. Finally this lovely **Hellebore** (the variety escapes me at the moment, the label has gone

walk-about) my favourite of the several that are in the garden, always beautiful.

There are also numerous roses still budding, although a bit 'frosty' now! The hardy primroses pop up everywhere, cyclamen in



pots and the ever colourful crab apples, make for a cheery, if soggy, walk around the garden.



On a different note - you may recall that I was crocheting slippers for myself, as I do every year with skeins of wool that I have left in my stash of oddments. I never know how they are going to look. These are this year's effort and are definitely odd but colourful and very warm!

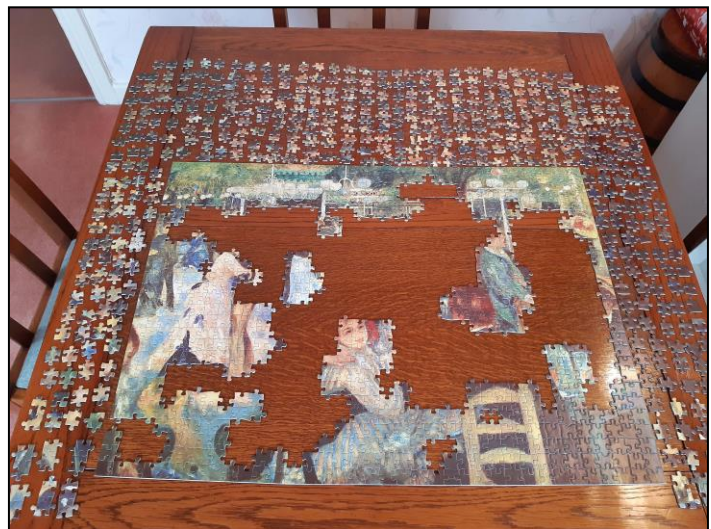
Keep gardening!

Nancy

Thanks, Nancy. Not sure Anne will still be talking to you now you've admitted to liking *Bergenia*, but I'm with you. In an awkward spot, it provides a reliable and regular show. Mine was in situ when we moved to this house in 1976, and is still going strong.

A winter hobby

I would like to say I've finished the jigsaw I started at Christmas, but no such luck. The best I can say is that I've finally found a couple of the missing pieces which have been bugging me for days. When finished, it should be a picture of Monet's *Moulin de la Galette*, but being an Impressionist painting, things aren't always what you expect them to be when matching pieces. At least I can get all the pieces out on the table now, instead of having to rummage round in the box!



Do let us know how you are whiling away the hours in a winter lockdown.

And finally....

A late entry from Nancy, who has just received this in her inbox.

'Now that we have another lockdown, we should train all Amazon delivery drivers to give the vaccine. Nation vaccinated by Saturday. Wednesday if you have Prime!'