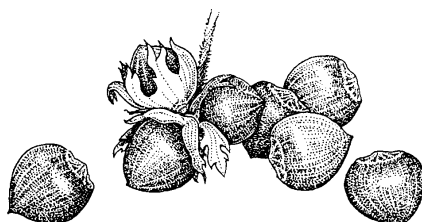


In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 58 September 2021

In this edition of In a Nutshell:
BIRTHDAY HONOURS
GLASSWORKER SOUGHT
NEW BENCH FOR GREENHOUSE
WEDDING BELLS
HOW TO RE-POT A CACTUS
NATURE'S BOUNTY
GLORIOUS GLORY FLOWER
AND FINALLY...

An adult at last!

James Masters celebrated his 50th birthday on 5th August this year. Although he had kept quiet about it, FoSE couldn't let the occasion go unremarked. Because of Covid we thought it best to celebrate outside, which, for an August birthday surely should have presented no problem.

Of course, on Thursday 5th August it rained all day, culminating in a downpour of monsoon proportions just as we were preparing for kick-off at 5 o'clock.





Being hardy souls, the 30-odd FoSE members who had gathered opted to stay outside rather than troop into the Barn Café, and in fact we all fitted under the archway into the courtyard quite well. A large number of people had contributed towards a present, so, at Kieran's suggestion, we were able to buy a Bonsai Japanese Maple to add to James' collection, and there was enough left over to pay for a £30 voucher redeemable at Heron's Bonsai in case he needed extra equipment to care for it.

In addition, Carolyn had provided balloons and bunting, talented artist Roy Page had painted and framed a picture of James with beloved dog Fern, and Nancy had baked a birthday cake.



So, we all were able to raise a toast to James on his birthday and enjoy cake and chat in spite of the grim weather.

Our thanks also to James' parents, who ensured he didn't go AWOL before we were ready to surprise him.



Can anybody help?

You may recall that our lovely glass sculpture, commissioned to commemorate the five years of garden restoration at Standen, was damaged during the first lockdown. The sculptor was unable to do the necessary repairs, as she was

suffering from ill health. We did manage to find someone locally who came and advised us on why some of the glass had cracked and how to get the glass out of its wooden frame. Initially, he was going to start work on restoration in September, but he also has had to pull out due to health issues.



Does anyone in the FoSE membership have the requisite stained glass skills, or know of anyone who might be able to restore our sculpture to its former glory? If so, we'd love to hear from you. At the moment, it's sitting rather sadly in the stable tearoom. Once it is mended and back in its frame, though, it will be sited somewhere safer and where everyone can enjoy it.

Didn't they do well?



For some time, there had been a number of heavy parcels stacked in the potting shed. A couple of weeks ago, at James' behest, the Tuesday volunteers moved plants on the right-hand side of the warm greenhouse to make space for the parcels' contents - new staging. James had plans to put the staging up himself, but the Tuesday group got carried away and decided to do it for him. As Nancy would say, 'What could possibly go wrong?'

In keeping with most flat packs the instructions were obtuse to say the least, and it took at least three attempts to work out which bits went where just to start it off.

The group started before lunch, but it took until 3.30 to complete the job, which involved placing and then tightening 192 screws with an Allen key once the structure was up. The volunteers had definitely reached the, 'I've started so I'll finish' stage. However, it is now in situ in the warm greenhouse, looking very smart and ready to be filled with plants.

Ben's big day



Those of you who remember the shy teenager who began volunteering all those years ago, and who watched him morph into a confident young man as Standen's Estate Assistant during the garden restoration, will have been delighted to hear of this recent wedding. Ben Wiles and Lizzie Hayes tied the knot at St Andrew's church in Earls Colne in Essex on 31st July this year.

Not surprisingly, there was a Standen contingent in attendance, seated for the reception at a table with an oak leaf centrepiece, carved, of course, by Ben himself. All the tables were identified by a different species of tree's leaf. According to Carolyn, Ben's sister was Best 'Man' and delivered a speech which spilled the beans on things previously unknown to the world at



large, apparently. Ben had to instruct the Standen table not to heckle.

We wish Ben and Lizzie all happiness in their life

together.

A dangerous game

One of the jobs on the nursery list last week was repotting the giant cactus. Many of you will be familiar with this outsized specimen which James bought in York



market when he was a boy. Normally it lives in the conservatory, but moving it out reminded James that it had not been re-potted for around 20 years, and that it had definitely outgrown its pot.

The cactus in question is a sneaky one. Its prickles look deceptively soft. In fact, if you use a downward motion, you can almost stroke it, but approach from any

other angle and you end up with a bunch of prickles in hand, arm, leg - or whatever part of your anatomy comes in contact.

There were vague mutterings among the Thursday group that they might have to leave early when James said it was all hands on deck in the cool greenhouse after lunch to manhandle the cactus into its new pot. However, a small band joined James and Amy to help wrap said cactus in several layers of thick bubble wrap and carry it from above the nursery into the greenhouse. Then it became a surgical operation, slicing up the bubble wrap to reveal the pot and then try to remove it. Unfortunately, the cactus wasn't willing to move, so in the end the old pot had to be smashed to get the plant out. Then it was a case of manoeuvring it into its new home and removing the bubble wrap so that it could be tied safely to a supporting beam. It is now in a much bigger pot, in the cool greenhouse, with a notice warning people to steer clear of its prickles. Hopefully it will be happy there until the conservatory is in use again.



Acer Harvest

James noticed a number of Acer seedlings growing in the bed beside the drive. Given the price of Acers to buy, he decided it would be worth potting these up. There seem to be several different styles of leaf, and he is hoping that maybe one of the seedlings will turn out to be a new Acer - maybe an Acer Standenii. So far, over 60 seedlings of all different shapes and sizes have been potted up. The target is 100



- at least. If they all grow, that could save James a considerable amount of money and fulfil his wish to have a lot more Acers growing at Standen.

What is that pink flower?

We are all probably familiar with the Glory Tree - *Clerodendrum trichotomum* - on the corner of the big bed by the Croquet Lawn. It's impossible to miss when in flower as the scent is gorgeous. It's also impossible to like the smell its suckers emit when you try and dig them up.

Less familiar, probably is its relative, the Glory Flower - *Clerodendrum bungei* - a suckering, deciduous shrub which is to be found at Standen amongst the camellias on the path to the summerhouse at the top of the garden.



Standen's specimen is looking particularly lovely at the moment, tall and stately with clusters of pink, sweetly-smelling flowers. However, make sure it is the flowers you smell; the leaves have a whiff of the unpleasant smell given out by its relative the Glory Tree.

And finally...

Why do you never have a camera to hand at the right moment? We are used to nearly tripping over one robin in the garden, but last week the nursery was visited by two - clearly a couple as both were red-breasted and not seeing each other off. They landed about a yard away and were evidently hoping I had something good to eat as they eyeballed me for some time, singing a sweet, plaintive song as they did so. They entertained me for quite a while, until eventually I had to get on with my work, and they flew off, one of them crashing inelegantly into one of the pots as it did so.