

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 78 January 2025

In this edition of In a Nutshell
WEATHER THE WEATHER
FINE DINING
DRESSING THE PART
THERE'S NO SMOKE...
NURSERY UPDATE
BATTY ADVENTURES
CLEARING THE DRIVE
EUCALYPTUS ON THE MOVE
AND FINALLY...

FoSE calendar

It's all in the numbers

When I was a child, I learnt a doggerel rhyme about the weather, which ran:

*Whether the weather be wet
Or whether the weather be hot
We'll weather the weather whatever the weather
Whether we like it or not.*

I'm guessing that many of us haven't liked the weather much recently, and we tend to recall the most recent offerings as the norm for the year.

Fortunately, James has been keeping weather statistics at Standen since 1984 and is able to give a more balanced resumé. It has, indeed been a wet year - 1,083.9 mm in total, making it the 7th wettest year since James began recording. Not as wet though as 2014, which clocked up 1,395 mm. 2024 was also close to a record year for the number of days it rained - 194, making it the 6th in ranking. Frost and extreme heat were less in evidence - 16 days of frost, the lowest number of any year, and only three days above 30°. As James says:

All pretty average, although it seemed to feel very dull and wet in my memory.

A few more statistics show that the average temperature over the year was the 4th highest at 11.16°C, the highest being in 2007 at 11.26°C. However, it took until 7th May for the temperature to go over 20° - the latest since 1998. No wonder last winter seemed to go on for so long. Finally, we clocked up 328 days with cloud, 264 with sun, 22 with fog, 7 with thunder and lightning, 4 with hail and 2 with snow, all of which confirms we have somewhat lacked for sunshine this year. Here's hoping we'll see a bit more of it in 2025.

Tearoom 2

It can get a bit crowded in the stable tea-room when there are lots of volunteers in, and it always seemed to be the staff who lost out. Thanks to the discovery of a table and chairs in the storage area, there is now ample seating space in the kitchen area, and, as a bonus, it's closer to the microwave and urn!



Within a short time of its arrival, Lauren had provided a fetching table decoration. There is even a heater keeping the space cosy.

Standen's very own Christmas elf

Never one to hold back when it comes to adding colour to the festivities, James took to heart the suggestion that staff dress up for the Standen Christmas party. Unfortunately, not too many others took the idea up.

However, he did make a very fetching and festive Christmas elf, and put his co-workers to shame for their lack of initiative.



...without fire

There is a contingent among the Standen volunteers whose faces light up at the mention of a bonfire. Despite the wet there have been a number of bonfire days recently, and the enormous ring of debris surrounding the fire space always seems an impossible task. However, on three occasions recently, and not without the help of James the demon tractor driver, volunteers have managed to pretty much clear the material waiting to be burnt. The only trouble is, James keeps finding more to burn.



Because it has been so wet, the fires have sometimes needed careful nursing to keep them alight, and have also provided an enormous amount of smoke. We haven't managed to incinerate any volunteers yet, though sometimes it has been a close-run thing.

Nursery progress

It's been a long time coming. The new quarantine area has had its greenhouse in situ for a while, and screening had been erected but the dreaded horsetail was coming up all around the space, and even in the greenhouse. For months,



the space was covered with metal sheets, and volunteers spent hours pulling as much of the pernicious weed as they could.



Hopefully, a more permanent solution has now been found. A strong and solid flooring has now been put down, which will hopefully keep the horsetail out. Not an easy task, but a challenge happily accepted by the three wise men in the picture.

The struts for the cage are also now up. They need fixing to the floor and then the netting which will keep birds and squirrels at bay can be added, and the area can soon be put to the use intended.



No doubt all this effort contributed to Standen's RHS Plant Health award.

Other news from the nursery - Carolyn has taken delivery of another propagator funded by FoSE and is already putting it to good use.

The way things are going, Standen is on track to create a new woodland!



Des Res for bats

It appears there maybe bats living in the roof of James' house. After a very long wait for repairs, scaffolding has now gone up so that the lovely Horsham stone tiles can be carefully removed (very carefully as these are no longer available) and then put back in good order after any repairs have been completed. Should any bats be discovered, they will need to be rehoused immediately.



To this end, three bat boxes have been bought. They needed to be grouped together, on three sides of a tree, on the west, south and east sides respectively, and at least 9 metres off the ground. James was loth to put any nails or wire into the healthy beech tree chosen as the temporary home (the beech opposite the entry to the volunteers' car park), so devised a plan which involved passing a rope round the tree and then attaching the bat boxes to the rope with wire.

The plan also involved a lot of

tramping around in fairly dense undergrowth to get the ladder in position. Intrepid James then climbed up - not happily, it's fair to say, and with the help of a couple of improvised props, held from below by volunteers, he was able to secure the rope and attach the boxes. I just hope the bats appreciate his efforts.

James was very glad to be back on terra firma afterwards!



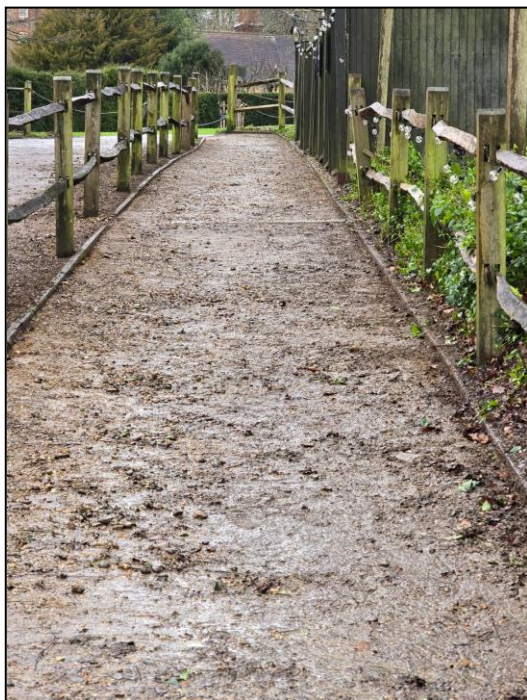
Blossom to come



Lauren has been getting creative. She has plans to create an archway of blossom trees from visitor reception up the drive, between the lower and upper car parks. As preparation for this, garden staff, the woods group and Wednesday garden volunteers all worked together to clear trees from the surrounding area.



Looks like a good day's work was done.



And it continued the following week when the Thursday group spruced up the path. Once the North Sussex Volunteers have removed the felled branches, it will have just about been a whole property initiative.

Pick up your tree and drive

James has never been one to turn down a freebee, though some are bigger than others. Recently, he was offered a Eucalyptus tree living in Crawley Down, which had outlived its pot - big time. James felt it would be a suitable addition at Standen, but realised that, while he could move the pot on the ground, there was no way he could get it on the truck single-handed.



The tree's erstwhile owners took pictures of the event, insisting once it was loaded that the team posed beside truck and tree. She also took a short video, which comes as an attachment with the newsletter and shows more clearly than the pictures the size of the task - and the tree.

The Eucalyptus is currently in quarantine in the stable yard until it is ready to be planted.

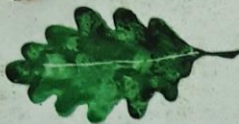


Enter a group of trusty if maybe foolhardy volunteers who met James early one morning and helped to manoeuvre the tree onto the truck.



And finally.....

Not necessarily Standen related, but I saw this poster recently on a walk and thought it was worth sharing.

Forest Stamp 	Age DOB 	Prescription for: A dose of nature
It is advised to read thoroughly for an enhanced dose of nature. Dose: Connect with nature daily. Formulation: Soil + trees + plants + animals + sky + water Quantity prescribed: Daily, regularly, as often as possible For optimum results: - Leave headphones in pockets. - Allow yourself time to be with nature. - Slow your pace. - Look at the base of an Oak and follow the trunk skywards. - Gaze at the leaves framing the clouds. - Look for the bird that owns the song. - See the beautiful, question the unusual. - Allow curiosity, wonder and fascination to take hold. - Actively connect to nature, it's good for you.		
Signature of prescriber 	Known side affects of being in nature: Lowers blood pressure, pulse rate and cortisol (the stress hormone) levels. Improves mental, physical and social wellbeing.	
Created by Michelle Brandon Landscape Design michellebrandon.co.uk		Supported by  Beckenham Place Park  HERITAGE FUND