

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



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In this edition of In a Nutshell
A SNIPPET FROM THE ARCHIVE
SIGNS OF SPRING
ROPED OFF
CHRISTMAS IN NOVEMBER
A GOOD TIDY-UP JOB
NEARLY DONE!
AND FINALLY...

FoSE calendar

Beatrice: Granny's Rolls-Royce

I am indebted to Anne Stutchbury for sharing this fascinating insight into the life of the Beale family. I am sure you will enjoy reading it as much as I did.

Nicknamed 'Beatrice', Standen's archives reveal that the family fondly remembered the Rolls-Royce in their notebooks, letters and later memoirs. Margaret Beale is recorded as purchasing a 1913 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost with registration number R 2912. It was fitted with a Barker Landaulette Body by Barker & Company.¹

An early record of the vehicle is noted in Margaret Beale's maintenance journal for July 1913: 'stables all painted by Brooker and coach house door altered to take new Rolls Royce car [...].' The new car had been fitted with the latest accessories, according to granddaughter Phyllis Wager, Granny's Rolls 'had a speaking tube to the chauffeur and tip-up seats'.²

¹ Richard Eastmead, [Past President of the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain], by email, May 23, 2017.

² P.M.W. Reminiscences p.10 (transcript version), chapter entitled - Childhood 1912- 1920

As luxury cars, most Silver Ghosts were usually driven by chauffeurs, rather than the owners themselves. Grandson, Barton Worthington, recalled riding in the car with Chapman, the Beale's coachman turned chauffeur who drove the Rolls Royce 'exactly as he did a pair of horses, which was pretty dangerous'.³ Fig. 1 John Chapman (c.1861-1934), Chapman Archives.



Family memoirs record that Chapman was promoted to chauffeur after he learned to drive and something of mechanics' at the Rolls-

Royce Chauffeur School. Fig. 2 - Certificate of Merit, John Chapman from Rolls-Royce Ltd. 'Gladman, his assistant, lived with his large family at Little Hollybush'.⁴



During the First World War, however, Margaret Beale did not always feel comfortable with the grandeur associated with Rolls-Royce ownership. There were occasions when she felt that travelling in the Rolls was an extravagance that needed to be justified. One occasion is documented in letters exchanged between Helen Beale and her sister Maggie in February 1916. Planning to travel up to the flat in Campden Hill, London, Maggie wrote Helen:

We are off tomorrow after an early lunch to town in the car - we have had some pricks of conscience about this, but it really is an economy, with Beatrice in front & will give Chapman so much pleasure;⁵

Helen mockingly replied a few days later:

I loved the way in which both you and Mag carefully explained about the way that it's really almost an economy because of taking Beatrice up with you - was it in case I might accuse you of extravagance or what I wonder!!⁶

Back in those days, like now, travelling by Rolls-Royce was perceived to symbolise notions of luxury and opulence, especially when the car was driven by an owner's personal chauffeur. Helen remarked in a letter to her mother written after the First World War had ended in 1919: 'Don't you enjoy driving in the Rolls again - I'm sure you must'.⁷ It did not take long for life to return to normal after the war, as Helen commented a couple of months later -

'You will have been feeling quite a real lady again driving up to London in the Rolls!'⁸

³ National Trust Southern Region Archive Tape Standen No. SO/ST/01 Recorded on the 15th June, 1999.

⁴ Worthington Family, *Standen Memories*, undated, p.5.

⁵ MSB to HMB, Letter 52, Wednesday, Feb 2nd 1916, Box 45.025

⁶ To Mumsey from Helen 1916, letter 114, Feb. 10 1916, Box 46.085

⁷ From Helen to Mumsey, Letter 92, May 2 1919, Box 49.139

⁸ To Mumsey from HMB, letter 98, 22 May 1919, Box 49.145

Hidden in plain sight

At the beginning of November, the volunteers were weeding and tidying the beds around Visitor Reception. Peering into the hydrangea bushes, one volunteer got a surprise - a snowdrop in flower.



The question remains: Was it flowering nine months too late or three months early? Either way, it was flowering bravely in its cosy hidey-hole.

Croquet lawn rescue

Over a number of weeks, the garden team, with help from Nymens staff and volunteers, spread sand across the croquet lawn to help level it and improve drainage. The surface was then harrowed to create a good growing medium for grass seed.

Once the work was complete, the lawn needed time to germinate and grow the freshly-sown seed without the interference of visitors' feet.





James then came up with an elegant solution to keeping the space safe, an attractive rope barrier around the lawn, supported by poles made from wood felled on the estate. The work had to be carried out meticulously, with distances between poles and the drop of the rope loops carefully measured - both by tape measure and eye. The end result, a protected lawn and a visual delight for anyone passing that way.

The rope had arrived in huge drum-shaped coils, which became more and more unwieldy and tangled as the day went on. Persuading it back into a tidy coil took almost as much work as putting the ropes up had.



Preparing for the festive season

It may still be November, but Standen is already making preparations for Christmas visitors, and several innovative ideas have appeared. You will be aware of the wreath frames made by the Woods Group, but these have now been decorated. Some are on the courtyard tree and some along the edge of the courtyard bed. Pride of place surely has to go to the magnificent specimen crafted by Tina, Emily and Caroline, which even features a mini-Richard on his tractor.

Elsewhere, Carolyn got creative. Her idea was to use a lot of shrubbery which had been recently pruned - spruce, holly, both

variegated and plain, and yellow pyracantha which contrasted well with the red holly berries. Sturdy birch poles were lashed together to form an arch over the path leading up from visitor reception, and Carolyn and some of her Kitchen Garden volunteers set to work.



It was a big arch, and after three days, it was still incomplete, so Thursday group volunteers were also commandeered, and after a day of cutting, tying, climbing ladders, and stepping back to view it from all directions, along with a little help from those with carpentry skills to ensure the arch stood vertically, the job was done.



Despite high winds and the worst the weather can throw at it, it still looks beautiful and is generating much appreciative comment from visitors, volunteers and staff alike. Make the most of it this year, though, as the shrubs which provided the wherewithal won't get a full prune again for another five years.



Lauren and Julia, with help from Carolyn, were also in creative mode, using a wide variety of dried flowers and grasses to beautify the conservatory. The end result is stunning. Particularly lovely is the long bed against the back wall, filled with teasels, grasses and fox-head lily seed heads.



Other decorations hang upside-down from frames suspended from the ceiling or give the impression of floating in the air. The one on the right is perhaps suggestive of a Christmas tree. All in all, the conservatory has been turned into a truly magical space.

No smoke without fire



A property such as Standen, not unsurprisingly, produces a huge amount of natural material to be disposed of. So, from time to time, a bonfire is needed. The minions (aka volunteers) are needed to feed the bigger branches and pieces of wood to the flames until it is possible for James to use the front-loader to gather the rest of the huge ring together onto the heart of the fire.

This autumn's event coincided with Julia's birthday, so everyone paused to pose so that James could send her a Happy Birthday picture. The photo also demonstrates just how much there was to be shifted onto the fire.

In fact, there were times when we almost seem to be in danger of losing the odd volunteer, and once inside the circle, the only way out was by feeding the fire to create an opening in the ring..



James obviously likes to live dangerously and posed close to the heart of the fire. No doubt that is why there are so many burn holes in his National Trust fleece. Wearing these for bonfire work creates some interesting lace effects as the material melts remarkably easily.

There was also an incredible amount of smoke generated, which on occasions created some interesting photographic effects.





By lunchtime, though, everything was piled neatly into the central fire, which James named Vesuvius.

All that was left to do afterwards, was clear the sticks which had buried themselves in the surrounding mud.

This photo did stir memories of 'how many ... does it take to change a lightbulb' jokes: one front loader and a group of volunteers to watch.



Yew tree work



The pictures above show how close to completion the boardwalk around the yew tree is, but they only tell part of the story. Roger Ohison has provided some background, along with a picture showing the dedication of the Woods Group in clearly adverse conditions.

The yew tree near the shop is one of the special trees of Standen, it is believed to be over 300 years old and it is said that the house had to be redesigned as Mrs. Beale said it was not to be cut down. It is also unusual as it is in fact two trees - male and female - that have grown together over time. James decided that the tree needed more protection as it is a popular place for people to sit and walk and the ground around it was getting more and more compacted as the years go by. To stop it getting any worse he asked if the woods group would construct a boardwalk around it to stop the compaction getting any worse.



After some discussion the current design was settled on. The oak support structure came from an oak tree that was milled on site a few years ago, and the oak planks were hoped to be generated from some oak trees from Nymans. Unfortunately, this proved too difficult and timber had to be bought in. FoSE have helped in the purchase. Now the planks have arrived the woods

group are cutting and fixing the planks so the area can be opened again to the visitors. It is hoped that a new bench will also be placed around the tree so visitors can again sit in the shade of the yew tree.

Impressive dedication from the woods volunteers, who evidently refused to be put off by the weather. Maybe they were dreaming of sitting in the shade of the tree next year.

And finally....

A group of volunteers was tasked with removing some of the lower branches from the tree at the top of the stable yard bed. This was approached with gusto, culminating in a much neater look. Clearly, Bob felt they had created a space to be used and insisted on trying it out.

He does look quite comfortable.

