

Over The Fence

The West Malvern Garden & Nature Club News Letter



Autumn 2024

Hello and welcome to the Autumn edition of Over the Fence for 2024.

This year has not been kind to gardeners has it?. Too much rain, flooding and a slow start to the growing season. This looks like being the trend in the future. Our Annual Show in 2023 was affected by poor growing conditions so numbers were down. This year's show (comments later) showed little improvement. Will we adapt what we grow and manage the challenges that climate changes throw at us? (Come to the September meeting for advice.) Knowing the skill and enthusiasm of our members we will.

It has been another year of hard work by members of the committee to not only keep the club running but to make sure that an interesting programme will be available for 24/25. The AGM saw the present committee re-elected and I am pleased to say I am doing my bit for posters and the magazine, after having a year's break. We are always looking for people to come and help us run the club. If you have some spare time, please consider offering it to the club. The meetings are usually accompanied by refreshments and are quite short! It's good to support local activities. Contact David for further information.

Malvern RHS Spring Festival

As usual we were busy over the two days that we ran the creche, so it was tiring with many more people using our service this year, and it was also hot, however, we meet many friendly and generous people while working. As you know we raise money for Acorns Hospice from voluntary contributions and this year raised £1000! The Three Counties Show Ground also donate to club funds and that helps to pay for our speakers. Please offer your services next year as it is a good way to help others while enjoying a day out. Thank you to the people who gave up their time to support this event and thanks to Chris Hall for organising us!



Chris presenting the cheque.

Treasure Trail

Again, we also have Chris to thank for organising the Treasure Trail, it is great fun. Chris gets us looking closely at places we may not have come across before, answering questions about them, and when we do eventually get to our final destination, this time Hellens, we enjoy a shared picnic. Try and come next year, non-members are welcome so bring your friends.



Photos, Chris Hall and Jenny Nisbet

Our Annual Show was on the 17th August.

Although there were not as many entries as in previous years there was still enough to make it an interesting afternoon. David Butt judged the Fruit and Vegetable entries, Deirdre Drake the Ornamental, Chris Hall the Photography and Cookery and Jenny Hall the Arts and Crafts. Thank you for their kind and constructive comments as well as their scrutiny!



Checking the entries



Enjoying the refreshments

Thanks to Margaret for organising, it this year, and thanks to everyone who volunteered to help.

Club Trophy Winners

The Anniversary Trophy (for most successful entrant) - Lynn Clearwater

The John Deem Cup (overall vegetable grower) – Lynn Clearwater

The John Deem Prize (best fruit entry) – Lynn Clearwater

The Members Plate (best craft entry) – David Cross

The Members Shield (best home-grown entry) – Hilary Ward

The Members Tankard (best photographic entry) – David Cross

The Members Spoon (best home cookery entry) – Carole Houghton

The Roslington Shield (best ornamental entry) - Hilary Ward

Some of our winners





A variety of exhibits.

Trip to Birtsmorton

Thanks to Margaret who organised this trip. Birtsmorton Court is really worth a visit if you have never been. It was a first time for me, and I appreciated the information, including the history of the house and its place in the environment, that the owner gave us on the tour. We had a good turnout of people supporting the trip. The gardens were a mass of colour and interest set off by the wonderful backdrop of the hills and the beautiful house. The afternoon tea was delicious.



Johnny Birks

Johnny Birks was our speaker at the March AGM club meeting. His knowledge and passion for the survival of the Pine Marten was the subject of his engaging and entertaining talk. ‘Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire?’ You can find his nature notes in the Hills Echo.

His talk referred to the persecution of the pine marten throughout history to the reintroduction of them in selected places. 200 years ago, The Malvern Hills area had pine martens and Johnny hoped that they might return in the future now that there is a small colony reintroduced to the Forest of Dean. To find out more he has written a book ‘ Pine Martens’, or at the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

David Butt

David is well known to the club as he is one of the judges at our Annual Show. He is head Gardener at Madresfield house and spoke about growing bulbs all the year round. Madresfield has wonderful avenues of bulbs, many planted in Victorian times. We learnt that he and his team planted 60,000 snowdrops and 30,000 fritillaria this year. (I complain if I have a 100 to plant!) His talk was an inspiration to add colour and interest to our gardens all the year round.

John Medlock local naturalist and conservationist.

The last meeting of the club year was John Medlock talking about the 'Land beneath the Wind'. This is a quote from the book by Agnes Reid about her experiences living in Borneo. It means living beneath the typhoon area but experiencing tropical storms. John is passionate about the conservation of wild habitats and wildlife, and the destruction of this varied and unique environment was close to his heart. We saw photos of some wonderful animals and flora, Borneo is home to many rare species – pygmy elephants, wild cats, orangutans - it is an area under threat from commercial interests. Palm oil production removes primary forest, a mixed environment, to a mono culture. For example, there is a 180 mile stretch of palm oil trees in Sumatra alone. Only 19% of palm oil is sustainably produced and it is found in a wide range of products. Perhaps we could try to use products without palm oil?

Our 35th Anniversary (formed in 1989) of the club in its present form will be celebrated with a Christmas Dinner at Elim College.

It was Mary Read who advertised in the Malvern Gazette for people, interested in gardening, to come to a meeting, and 13 people attended the meeting.

There is a collection of folders in the village hall documenting the history of the club and is comprehensive up until 2010. I am hoping we can fill the gap with any paperwork, Over the Fence, photos etc. that can form a 2010 – 2024 record. So, if you have anything please contact me or David Matthews.

Some 'History Facts'

The first Open Garden was in 1990, in fact there were two. Grace and Jim Lloyd and Eric and Rita Hollands, both opened their gardens.

The first Newsletter was in 1990 and that year the club was affiliated to the RHS.

Maud Biggin (Village Hall benefactor) set the quizzes at the Christmas Social that were renowned for their deviousness. (No change there Chris!)

The first invited speaker, who wasn't a club member, was Brian Homeward of Rushford Nursery. He came in September 1989 when there were 21 members.

Popular returning speakers were Reg Moule 1989, he was one of the first and spoke about Ballerina Fruit Trees. He was at the Mythe (Tewkesbury) Garden Centre at that time.

Duncan Combes, first came to the club in 1993 and still manages to entertain us with his talks which challenge the membership, asking questions, testing us, and creating a lively atmosphere.

Practical sessions with people like Nigel Hands and his live reptiles and amphibians, and Gillian Hale with her owls, it was a fantastic and fascinating evening whenever she visited.

Local people like Peter Garner who has always been supportive of the club and put up with our lengthy buffets after the AGM before giving his talk. Such a lot of interesting information about plants and wildlife which we could see for ourselves in the local environment (even our gardens).

Percy Picton came to the club and recently his granddaughter did him proud with her talk about Clematis.

Club members like Tony Tintern, who also wrote informative articles in *The Over the Fence*, (see the Lockdown issues for reissued texts) about his great love of Bee Keeping. Rita and Eric Hollands took club members for walks on the hills. This tradition of club members sharing their interests has been brought back by Chris Hall, sharing his love of wildlife and his adventures with Jenny, through wonderful photographs and talks.

From 1998 the club took part in the Malvern Well Dressing event subsequently winning many gold awards for dressing the tap in the village.



Well Dressing

So many interesting and entertaining meetings at the club. Long may they continue!

Keeping to the memories here are some tips from Chan, Mary and Eric published in the 1990 and 1997 *Over the Fence*.

- In Autumn line containers with bubble wrap to protect from frost
- Put banana skins around the base of your roses to encourage flowering. (Chan recommended banana fertilizer to me which I now make.)

In 1997 Eric praises the use of a lavatory brush to clean pots encouraging club members to look for common objects to use for a different function. (For those of you who did not meet Eric his sense of humour was legendary.) His on-going saga of Eric v pigeons and his brassicas featured in several *Over the Fences*. Eric suggests using two wheel barrows to mix compost and suggests doing the transfer six times for the right mix. I wonder how many people still do this.

List of forthcoming events

Tuesday 10th September Nyrees Titchner ‘Permaculture, Gardening for the Present Climate.’

Tuesday 8th October Rosemary Winnall - ‘A garden for wildlife’

Tuesday 12th November Chris Hall - ‘Birds of Southern Africa’

Tuesday 10th - Christmas Dinner and celebration of the Club’s 35th Anniversary

Carole Houghton