

February 2021 Newsletter

AGM 2021

The 2021 Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 25th March, starting at 7:45. Note that this is earlier than our usual starting time; after the AGM there will be a talk by Franzi Cheeseman Head Gardener at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens on box blight, box caterpillar and other garden pests (see page 2).

This will be an on-line meeting by Zoom (log-in information will be circulated nearer the date). Members who cannot join the Zoom meeting are welcome to send comments and votes by post to David Bender, 8 Eagle Close, Amersham HP6 6TD. Minutes of the 2020 AGM and reports for the 2021 AGM are included in this newsletter (see pages 4 to 7).

Plant Sale Saturday 15th May

We plan to hold a plant sale in the forecourt of St Michael's Church on Saturday 15th May (subject, of course, to Covid restrictions). If you are dividing perennials or taking cuttings, please set a few aside for the sale. If you are sowing seeds, perhaps you could sow a few extra pots for sale. Fruit and vegetable plants are always popular.



Frances Billington sent this photo of her *Hamamelis pallida*, which suddenly came into full flower at the beginning of February – and a very welcome sight it was.

Visit to Chenies Monday April 26th

We are planning a morning visit to Chenies on April 26th; the booking form and details are included with this newsletter. The tulips should be at their best then, and it is a private visit just for AGA – see p 3.

We will not bank any cheques until after the visit – if it has to be cancelled then all cheques will be shredded.



See the photos in this issue full size



[Click here](#) to go to the Flickr site containing the photos from this newsletter.

Click the button on the top right of the screen for a slide show; you can scroll through the pictures using the > and < arrows on the right and left of the screen

Forthcoming meetings on the 4th Thursday of the month, by Zoom

February 25th “Gardens of Japan” by John Baker

In 2014, John, a retired Director of Engineering and his partner June, Head of Technology for a Perfume Company, came to talk to us about hostas. They hold the National Collection at their home in Hampshire (Hanging Hostas in Lindford) and when we visited in 2015 we saw over a thousand hostas packed in to their smallish garden.

In November he told us about the gardens of Moscow and St Petersburg, plus his experience of village flower shows. This time he is talking about gardens of Japan. The photo on the right was taken in the Japanese garden at Hasselt in Belgium.



March 25th AGM followed by “Box blight, box caterpillar and other garden pests” by Franzi Cheeseman Head Gardener at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens.



Stoke Poges Memorial Garden: a beautiful Grade 1 registered gardens, built in the 1930's and designed by Edward White. The gardens are an early and pioneering example of a garden of remembrance. It abandoned entirely and deliberately the established Victorian cemetery model. Sir Noel Mobbs conceived the idea of establishing the 20 acres of land as a non-denominational Memorial Garden south of St. Giles' church, which is famous for Thomas Gray's poem 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard' and where his tomb is sited. There were to be no buildings or monuments that would identify it as a cemetery. They were designed to be a garden, containing small gardens and plots that can be purchased as a memorial by the public.

Franzi is the owner of Franzi Cheeseman Garden Design and studied for HNC in Garden Design and Plantmanship at Berkshire College of Horticulture from 2003 – 2005. She has been making beautiful gardens in Switzerland and UK since 1988. Contemporary gardens, beautiful outside spaces to complement the interior.

April 22nd “Delightful, delovely, deranged” by Nancy Stevens

Nancy writes: “Having worked for such giants of industry and commerce as ICI, GEC and the Royal Bank of Scotland and seen them all go downhill when I left, I felt that it was safer for the British economy if I worked for myself and thus became a freelance journalist (now retired).

A keen member of Baldernock Gardening Club, and chairman of it for 7 very enjoyable years before stepping down in 2017, I, (and my long suffering husband Dan), spent 20 years hard labour trying to make a low maintenance garden. Heavy labouring now complete, I (and my back), now relish the fact that these days I garden with border spade and secateurs rather than pickaxe and sledgehammer.

A trip around the world, from the Superbloom of the Atacama Desert and the Flying Duck Orchid of Australia to the ‘Apple of Death’ of Central America, the Red Spider Lily of Japan and all points in between. Lovely images, amazing stories.”



The Australian flying duck orchid

May 27th “Beauty and diversity of plant foliage” by Brian Fisher



Brian has visited us several times over the years, most recently the year before last, when he talked about the gardens of Madeira. In this talk about foliage, he will include advice on pruning some of the plants being discussed.

June 24th “Fuchsias my way” by David Dexter

David has been a member of the British Fuchsia Society for over 17 years and has 22 years experience of growing award winning fuchsias. He has exhibited for 5 years at Hampton Court Flower Show - Silver Gilt Winner, and exhibited at British Fuchsia Society London Show - 12 First in Class Winners.



Outing by car to Chenies Manor Garden Monday April 26th at 10am

Cost £11 to include coffee / tea and cake – see the booking form with this newsletter

In 1594, Lucy, the third countess of Bedford, gained a reputation as a gardener, influencing the layout of the garden. In 1956, Elizabeth Macleod Matthews moved into the house and rescued the garden, after many years of neglect. In Tudor fashion, the garden forms a series of rooms flowing from a rose lawn to a sunken garden, a white garden, and a hot coloured south border. There is also a reorganised physic garden (worked on by one of our members, Marian Hoffmeister, as well as a parterre encompassing a maze, a kitchen garden, a well and a contemplative turf maze. Hopefully our visit will coincide with the annual tulip display for which Chenies is rightly famous.



The garden is being opened especially for our visit.

Address: Chenies Manor House, Chenies, Bucks WD3 6ER

Arrangements: Enter the garden through the village, up the main drive and through the main gates. Cars will be directed to the car park. After parking, please assemble on the lawn at the back of the house by 10am. We will have a brief introductory talk from one of the owners, either Charles or Boo Macleod Matthews. Then you are free to wander round the garden on your own or join a volunteer guide.

Teas/coffees and cake will be served in the tea room from 11am. We may have to stagger the times, depending on the take up for the trip.

We hope this trip will be able to go ahead but we will obviously follow the Government Guidelines. No cheques will be banked until after the trip, and if it has to be cancelled then cheques will be shredded

RHS shows in 2021 (as far as we know as at early February)

RHS Malvern Spring Festival: Cancelled

RHS Chelsea Flower Show: Postponed from May to 21–26 September 2021

RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: 6–11 July 2021 (Preview 5 July)

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park: 21–25 July 2021

RHS Flower Show Cardiff and RHS Chatsworth Flower Show will not be taking place in 2021.



The Garden Year by Sara Coleridge

January brings the snow, makes our feet and fingers glow.
February brings the rain, thaws the frozen lake again.
March brings breezes, loud and shrill, to stir the dancing daffodil.
April brings the primrose sweet, scatters daisies at our feet.
May brings flocks of pretty lambs, skipping by their fleecy dams.
June brings tulips, lilies, roses, fills the children's hands with posies.
Hot July brings cooling showers, apricots and gilly flowers.
August brings the sheaves of corn, then the harvest home is borne.
Warm September brings the fruits, sportsmen then begin to shoot.
Fresh October brings pheasants, then to gather nuts is pleasant.
Dull November brings the blast, then leaves are falling fast.
Chill December brings the sleet, blazing fire and Christmas treat.

Thanks to Helen Farndon for sending us this

Anne Webb sent this photograph of *Galanthus plicatus* 'Colossus', which she describes as a taller, robust snowdrop which usually flowers before Christmas.

She purchased it from Quentin Starke, Head Gardener at Hole Park when he came to give his talk in January 2015. Then it had one flower and cost £4.

Frances Billington writes in praise of *Galanthus plicatus* (pleated leaf). "It is a sturdy reliable plant which flowers just before *G. nivalis* in my garden and it can cope with more sunshine. There was one clump in the verge by our road for many years until my neighbour started dividing it each year. Now it grows all up the road on the south side."



Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

Because of the lockdown and cancellation of meetings, the AGM was conducted by email. Three motions needed to be accepted

1. Approval of the minutes of the 2019 AGM
2. Acceptance of the accounts and treasurer's report
3. Approval of the election of the officers and committee members

The minutes of the 2019 AGM had been published in the February Newsletter.

The accounts and treasurer's report had also been published in the February Newsletter.

The officers who had declared themselves willing to stand for re-election were

Hon Chairman	Colin Ross
Hon Secretary	Jean Bowling
Hon Treasurer	David Bender
Hon Membership Secretary	Clive Symes
Hon Social Secretary (visits)	Joan Clark
Hon Social Secretary (talks)	Sue Edwards and Julie Burton
Hon Archivist	Carol Barratt

Committee members: Frances Billington. Carol Daw, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton and Anne Webb.

Our constitution requires a quorum of 20 members for an AGM; 32 members responded, all of whom accepted the 3 motions.

Annual General Meeting March 26th, starting at 19:45, by Zoom

Agenda:

- 1) Welcome
- 2) Apologies for absence
- 3) Minutes of the previous AGM held on 28th March 2019 (see page 4)
- 4) Matters arising
- 5) Officers' reports (see below).
- 6) Treasurer's report and annual accounts
- 7) President's comments
- 8) Election of officers. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for election:

Hon Chairman:	Colin Ross
Hon Secretary:	Jean Bowling
Hon Treasurer:	David Bender
Hon Membership: Secretary:	Clive Symes
Hon Social Secretary (visits):	Joan Clark
Hon Social Secretary (talks):	Sue Edwards and Julie Burton
Hon Archivist:	Carol Barratt
- 9) Election of committee members. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for re-election:
Frances Billington, Carol Daw, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton, Anne Webb.
- 10) Election of independent examiner for the accounts: Mrs Sue Humble is willing to act for another year.

Speaker secretaries' report

First of all we would like to say a very big thank you to Anne Webb on behalf of the members for all the work, time and enthusiasm she has put in during her eight years as speaker secretary. She was extremely helpful to us when taking over her duties, with advice on speakers with lists to match indicating "excellent", "v. good", "good" and "don't bother" and she handed over all her correspondence so we had a solid base to start our searches. Many thanks Anne and we will do our best to follow in your footsteps.

2020 was a challenging year for the society's meetings as Zoom speakers had to be found. Not all speakers we had planned were able to use Zoom, so we had to research speakers who were not only technically capable, but had the necessary presentation skills to make the talk interesting.

Our September speaker, Jim Arbury, had worked for many years in Wisley's orchard and fruit gardens. His instructive presentation focussed on suitable fruit varieties for small gardens. He showed us how to grow a wide range of delicious produce.

In October, Anne Luder gave a fascinating insight into her approach to gardening. She showed how beneficial this can be, both mentally and physically - highly relevant in these difficult times.

In November, John Baker gave us an excellent presentation on Gardens of Russia - he and his wife were on a visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg and his

talk and slides were fascinating and an eye opener. The gardens were not unlike those in England and the village flower shows were full of enthusiastic gardeners. The gardeners of the two cities manage to have lovely gardens in spite of being under snow for many months of the year. John was an excellent speaker and gave us a lighthearted insight into a part of the world not generally known for colourful gardens. We look forward to his talk in February on Gardens of Japan.

Obviously the December social was cancelled, so we were very fortunate that one of our valued members, Keith Hoffmeister kindly agreed to present a Zoom meeting on "Chenies through the year, tulips and Blue Peter in the tunnels". Because of Covid we weren't able to visit Chenies Manor during tulip time last year, so to see Keith's beautiful slides of the garden and particularly the stunning tulips was a treat. He also showed us a video of ploughing in the nearby fields in times past and the very unusual tunnels which were fascinating. Thank you Keith for stepping in.

We have found, as we hope you have too, that 50 minutes with Q and A is just right. It is probable we will have to continue with Zoom until at least the summer. We hope you will continue to log-in every month as we try to find interesting, good presenters for the coming months.

Sue Edwards and Julie Burton

Membership Secretary's report

2020 has been an anomalous year for our membership. The year started with membership renewals rolling in as usual, but as we moved into February and March, the relentless Coronavirus close-down descended upon us. As a consequence, many of those who had still yet to renew did not do so. As 2020 was bordering upon a write off, with the exception of our crafty and ingenious Zoom meetings, it has been decided that membership for 2021 will be free. This will include all members paid up during 2019 and any new members who joined in 2020.

No programmes or membership cards will be issued for 2021, so please keep your old membership cards, and remember that several of the smaller local nurseries will give you a 10% discount on purchases upon production of your A.G.A. Membership Card. In place of the annual programme card, future events will be detailed in our Newsletter.

We started the 2020 year with 185 members.

Clive Symes

Visits Secretary

My report this year is very different from any other year as no outings were possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am hoping we will be able to go to some local gardens using our own transport but not sure when that will be.

The outings group are trying to arrange a programme starting with a visit to Chenies on 26th April. After this we are aiming to go to Craiglea in Chalfont St Peter and possibly one of our own members' garden in Princes Risborough. We are waiting to see when the NGS gardens can open in order to arrange further visits.

We are hoping the 4-day trip to Norfolk will still go ahead on 20-23rd June. It will depend on continued support and

each person having had both vaccinations. Please could you let Jeanne Harrison know if you are still interested (Jeanne @harrisonmail.co.uk) tel.723669. This will not be a firm commitment at this stage we just want to get an idea of numbers. Priority will be given to those who booked last year.

Details of the outings will be published when we have a clearer idea of what we are allowed to do and when. Many thanks to my group for their support.

Joan Clark

Chairman's report

Well, how things change – this time last year I reported what a successful year it had been for the Amersham Gardening Association with meetings being well attended, day trips and the holiday giving us the opportunity to visit beautiful gardens and a successful plant sale. Then along came Covid-19 and our whole world was turned upside down, with meetings in the Drake Hall, the holiday, the day trips and the plant sale all cancelled.

Fortunately, along came a knight in shining armour, in the form of the "Zoom" app and we managed to have our meetings brought to us in the comfort of our own homes. Special thanks to Sue and Julie, our Speakers Secretaries, for finding people prepared to give talks using Zoom, our own Keith Hoffmeister for his very

enjoyable video of Chenies Manor and David Bender for ensuring that Zoom worked as it should.

In spite of the fact that none of our traditional activities have taken place during the year, the Committee has been active trying to ensure that we can recommence our activities as soon as common sense and Government regulations permit and I would like to thank them all on your behalf for their efforts.

When we get back to normal, we will need some new blood in the Committee to ensure that it reflects the current membership of the Association so, if you think you would like to help in any way please let one of the Committee members know.

Colin Ross

Treasurer's report

2020 was, for obvious reasons, a very quiet year in terms of financial activity. The income and expenditure account and the balance sheet are printed overleaf. Overall we had a profit of £658.25, which includes £98.01 interest on our deposit account. Three items in the income and expenditure account need some explanation:

- "Room hire ACC" includes not only the money paid to Amersham Community Association for hire of

rooms in late 2019 and early 2020, but also the licence for Zoom to allow us to hold meetings lasting more than 40 minutes.

- "Social activities" – there were none in 2020, but the amount shown was the cost of the 2019 Xmas social.

David Bender

Amersham Gardening Association
Income and expenditure account
for the year ending 31st December 2020

	2020			2019		
	income	expenditure	balance	income	expenditure	balance
Subscriptions	1490.00		1490.00	1714.00		1714.00
Deposit account interest	98.01		98.01	116.35		116.35
Visitors and miscellaneous	6.00		6.00	66.00		66.00
Plant sales at meetings	0.00		0.00	140.00		140.00
Social activities (incl tea)	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00
Activities and fundraising						
Outings	2851.00	-2774.00	77.00	25221.40	-23625.75	1595.65
Raffle and Xmas tombola	293.25	-66.94	226.31	566.00	-338.54	227.46
Quiz night	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Plant sales outside	0.00	0.00	0.00	1163.73	-518.28	645.45
Other expenditure						
Speaker fees		-507.00	-507.00		-1957.10	-1957.10
Room hire ACC		-362.28	-362.28		-1058.10	-1058.10
Venue hire (other)		0.00	0.00		-40.00	-40.00
Gratuities and gifts		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00
Newsletter and postage		-36.48	-36.48		-98.71	-98.71
Administration and publicity		-208.37	-208.37		-432.00	-432.00
Social activities miscellaneous shows		-124.94	-124.94		-213.88	-213.88
total	4738.26	-4080.01	658.25	28987.48	-28282.36	705.12

Amersham Gardening Association
Balance sheet as at 31st December 2020

	2020	2019
Current assets		
Cash in hand	£8.61	£8.61
Cash at bank (current account)	£1,726.98	£1,166.74
Cash at bank (savings account)	£13,066.06	£12,965.05
Total	£14,801.65	£14,140.40
Balance brought forward	£14,140.40	£13,064.10
surplus for the year	£661.25	£1,076.30
Balance carried forward	£14,801.65	£14,140.40

Signed

Tim Hillier (President) dated

David Bender (Treasurer) dated

Independent Examiner's report

I have examined the above balance sheet and attached income and expenditure account with the books and vouchers, and, in my opinion, they present a fair view of the financial position of the Association as at 31st December 2020

Susan Humble
Susan Humble
Hon. Independent Examiner

dated 06 February 2021

A virtual walk down memory lane

While under lock-down, at times when I have not been in the garden, I have been playing around with Google Earth. I started with a virtual walk down memory lane by entering the Ealing address of my childhood home and tracing the route from there to my primary school. I remember that there was a large oak tree in the middle of the pavement about half way to school. It is still there, but is now much smaller than I remember – or am I now much bigger than I was age under 10?

In Cleveland Park, a few minutes' walk from home, there was always a splendid wide border behind the hedge. My love of visiting gardens probably stems from the early evening visits in summer with my parents and brother to admire this border, the contents of which changed every year. I must admit that I don't remember if it was planted in winter or not. Sad to say, Google Earth now shows the grass area extending right to the hedge, with no ornamental border at all.

On the other side of the road was, and still is, Pitshanger Park, where I spent many happy hours as a child. Some things have changed. For example, in the early 1950s I remember seeing rhubarb growing at the edges of the football pitch – a hangover from the wartime use of the space for allotments – no longer there, of course. I revisited the park some 30 years ago, with a group of junior members from the Perivale Wood Nature Reserve. An area had recently been dug up to lay sewers or something, then turfed. I remember stopping and saying to the youngsters something along the lines of "that's wrong, those wild flowers don't belong here". Obviously I had a clear memory of what had grown there in my childhood, and these flowers were wrong. On closer inspection, they were chalk downland plants – obviously the turf had been imported from the Downs; the soil in Ealing is unrepentantly London clay, with nary a chalk band nor any flint at all (how unlike our soil here in Amersham, where we have

a chalk band through part of the garden and flints everywhere we try to dig).

On the same afternoon with the youngsters, I took them through another part of the park where we had walked when I was a child to visit friends in Greenford. I must have learnt a great deal from my father's identification of wild flowers en route when I was 9 or 10, because as I led the walk (by now aged over 40) I was able to identify most plants we passed without having to think about it at all.

You can download Google Earth free of charge – just go to <https://earth.google.com/web/> and follow the instructions. Do try it; you will probably be surprised just how much green open space there is around. From the satellite view, you can go to street view and see the area from ground level. Be warned that the satellite images may be newer than the street view images. Checking our current address in Amersham, the satellite view shows our neighbour's red car, and our conservatory, but the street view shows our old car on our drive, which was exchanged before the conservatory was built, and before the current neighbours moved in. There is another problem – many of the satellite views are from summer time (presumably because there is less cloud cover), so that leafy trees block much of the ground, although the satellite view for our postcode now has a March 2020 date.

The satellite view also has click-on links photographs that people have uploaded. Some of these are very much in the wrong place. For example, there is a photo link in Sycamore Road in Amersham, but the photo is of the Memorial Gardens. The GPS information is obviously from where the photo was uploaded, not from where it was taken. Presumably the click-on link is either some-one's home or a coffee shop.

David Bender

Horticulture 101 or school science?

One of our weekly treats is to record BBC Radio 4's *Gardener's Question Time* on a Sunday afternoon, then listen to the recording over dinner in the evening. Sometimes something one of the experts says leads to a spontaneous exclamation of "nonsense, **we** do it this way and it works perfectly well". Other times we tell each other to "remember that, it sounds like a good idea". Just occasionally the advice from the expert really belongs in horticulture 101, or perhaps even in GCSE combined science. That was certainly our response to the garden designer who talked for several minutes on the importance of organic matter, etc in soil, recapping what is, as far as we know, part of a simple experiment for GCSE. Of course, the audience for this programme will include not only people like us who have been gardening for many years, but also neophytes who perhaps really do need to know that soil is complex. The

problem for the producers is to maintain a balance so that newcomers are not put off by complexity and at the same time experienced gardeners don't abandon the programme as trivial.

This experience led us to wonder what is taught in schools these days, and reminded us of some very obvious areas of ignorance among contestants for a TV quiz. For example "Which Tudor King was father to Elizabeth 1st?" led to the reply "George 5th". "Who declared himself Emperor of France in 1804?" led to the answer "Henry VIII". In fairness, neither of us knows much about pop music or TV soaps, questions which most contestants seem to be able to answer easily.

Ken Bodman and David Bender

What happened in my shed

Jean Bowling sent this photo showing the base of the handle of her telescopic pruner. She assumes it was a mouse unless anyone has a better idea.



We store bird food in the garage in heavy duty (about 5mm thick) black polythene canisters, and were surprised to find a large hole nibbled in one, with peanuts spilt out on the shelf. Like Jean, we assumed it was mouse damage, but wondered how it knew to chew through the base of the peanut container – surely it could not smell the nuts though the thick plastic. Now we know better – obviously mice (or perhaps field voles, we have both, and became quite expert at identifying the gifts brought indoors by our cat) just like to chew through plastic. Presumably it is fun, and helps to keep their teeth in trim. Certainly from my childhood I remember my pet hamsters gnawing on the bars of the cage to stop their teeth becoming too long.

Garden centre closed because it was over-crowded

There was a story on BBC TV one morning in January about a garden centre that closed its doors because there were too many people inside for safe social distancing – but no-one was buying anything. They had come for somewhere to go for a walk out of the cold weather, as an alternative to closed shopping malls.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. As a child one of my treats was a trip to the local pet shop to look at the aquarium fish – we never bought any of the exciting tropical fish, although I did have a goldfish. Aquarium shops are still a place to take children for an outing – whenever we go to Maidenhead Aquatics (either at World's End or Iver Flowerland), we find groups of children blocking the way. Hopefully they will remain

interested in tropical fish and, like us, grow up to keep a tropical aquarium for pleasure.

I am told that I was perhaps not unduly sentimental as a child. The family story is that on one occasion when I said I wanted sardines on toast for tea, and was told we didn't have any, I am reported to have said words to the effect of "OK, I'll have my goldfish on toast then".

Imagine my surprise when, many years later, I was on a plane in the US and with the drinks they brought round a small packet labelled "goldfish". In fact, they were small fish-shaped savoury biscuits.

David Bender

Frances Billington has sent these photos of the "naughty" black pheasant that pecks everything, and her favourite winter / spring shrub, *Daphne bholua*. She says it smells wonderful, has showy flowers and flowers for 3 months. The downside is that it can die suddenly.



Helen Farndon writes

"Gardening is an exercise in optimism. Sometimes it is a triumph of hope over experience. Gardening is the art that uses flowers and plants as paint, and the soil and sky as the canvas."

So, my New Year's Resolution is:

Gardening, gardening, and more gardening, grow plants I love, buy too many plants, find time to enjoy the garden, learn from the mistakes, enjoy when nature ignores my plans and visions and does its own thing.

Growing in unusual places

Over the years, many of us have complained about being treated like mushrooms – kept in the dark with a bucket of manure thrown in every now and again. No longer are all mushrooms treated like this. Although traditionally they were grown in dark sheds (or caves for some of the finest varieties), now many are grown in the light. You may have noticed that chestnut mushrooms in the supermarket are now labelled as being a source of vitamin D. This is the giveaway. Mushrooms (and other fungi and yeasts) contain the compound ergosterol. Exposure of ergosterol to uv light (as in sunlight) converts it to vitamin D. Indeed, it was from uv treatment of yeast that vitamin D was first identified, before the discovery that it is formed in our skin by the action of sunlight on dehydrocholesterol.

An article in the November issue of *The Garden* is about the use of tunnels and other unlikely places to grow salad and other vegetables. The key here is the development of LED lights that can be tuned to produce the wavelength of light required for optimum growth, and consume less than one tenth of the electricity of conventional lights. Gone are the days when I walked past the greenhouses of the botany department to see a large array of mercury vapour street lamps. Equally, gone are the days when the police could find an indoor cannabis farm by noticing an extraordinary consumption of electricity in a house to produce the light needed for indoor cultivation.

The other aspect of this novel cultivation is the lack of soil – plants are grown on an inert medium (eg rock wool) and watered with a nutrient solution – hydroponic culture, with careful recycling of the water. This is not new – it has been relatively common practice for many years. I can remember a demonstration of hydroponic culture of tomatoes at Floriade, the Dutch once-in-a-decade festival of flowers and horticulture some 28 years ago.

Make a note in your diaries, the next Floriade will be in 2022, in Almere. I missed the first Floriade, held in Rotterdam in 1960, but I have managed to visit most

since 1972 in Amsterdam. Almere is a relatively new city, part of the Flevoland Polder – land reclaimed from what was the Zuyder Zee. Apart from Floriade 2022, the magnificent gardens of Het Loo are nearby – well worth a visit – and if you are driving, one of the most fascinating roads is the one across the remnants of the Zuyder Zee from Lelystad (near Almere) to the old port town of Enkhuizen. A paradise for bird watchers, with salt water on one side of the road and fresh on the other, and (at least when I last drove it some years ago) plentiful parking areas to allow bird watching. It is not only here that the Dutch have been busy reclaiming land from the sea. The first time I drove through the Netherlands I was somewhat confused. My map showed that the bridge I was driving on was over a wide river mouth and inlet of the North Sea. I glanced down to see cows grazing, and only a small river visible.

You might not think of growing tomatoes at 64° North, only just outside the Arctic Circle. Nevertheless, farmers in Iceland are indeed growing tomatoes all year round in a country where there is negligible daylight during the winter. Here again LED lights are important – and more importantly, once the capital has been invested, there is a plentiful supply of free heat and electricity from geothermal sources. The greenhouses are heated with water from hot springs to maintain a constant 23 - 25°C. Pests and diseases are negligible, but the farmers have to import bees to pollinate the plants. So far it seems that the tomatoes are for domestic consumption, but there has been a suggestion that Dutch growers are interested in setting up an export market for Icelandic tomatoes, to replace the hothouse grown tomatoes that use North Sea gas for heating, so reducing one part of the carbon footprint (the CO₂ produced by burning gas), albeit with an increase in the carbon footprint associated with transporting the tomatoes. It is interesting to wonder how it was that the Dutch became pre-eminent in producing tomatoes with gas heating, while on the other side of the North Sea we did not.

David Bender

Wildlife in Debbie Clogg's garden



Debbie sent this photo of a buzzard catching a pigeon in her garden on January 21st – a quick grab shot through the bathroom window.

She also wrote “I had another exciting moment this week when a weasel came out of the front border, whizzed around a bit before disappearing - no chance of a photo. I have never seen one here in the 40 years I have lived here!”

Committee and Contact Details

President	Tim Hillier	president@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Vice-President	Susan Jeffery	
Chairman	Colin Ross	chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Secretary	Jean Bowling	secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Treasurer	David Bender	treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Visits Secretary	Joan Clark	
Show Secretary	vacant	
Membership Sec	Clive Symes	membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Talks Secretary	Julie Burton and Sue Edwards	speakersec@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Archivist	Carol Barratt	
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Committee Members	Frances Billington	
	Carol Daw	
	Irene Glyn-Jones	
	Liz Moulton	
	Anne Webb	
Newsletter Editor	David Bender	newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk

Discounts for members – remember to take your membership card to ask for a discount

[South Heath Garden Centre](#), Meadow Lane, South Heath, Great Missenden, HP16 9SH, offer a 10% discount on some items.

Gardening and outdoor ropes, buy online from <http://www.buyrope.co.uk>, and use the code Amersham10 at checkout for a 10% discount.

Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

Local events

If you know of local garden events, open gardens, etc, please email newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk to let us know as early as possible, so that information can go out in the newsletter and on the website

Photos from outings

You can see lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>



Isabel Wise sent this view of Old Amersham from the edge of Rectory Wood, taken in November, and this robin at Dobbie's Garden Centre in early February, and Gill Harris sent this photo of an early daffodil, flowering on January 6th.

