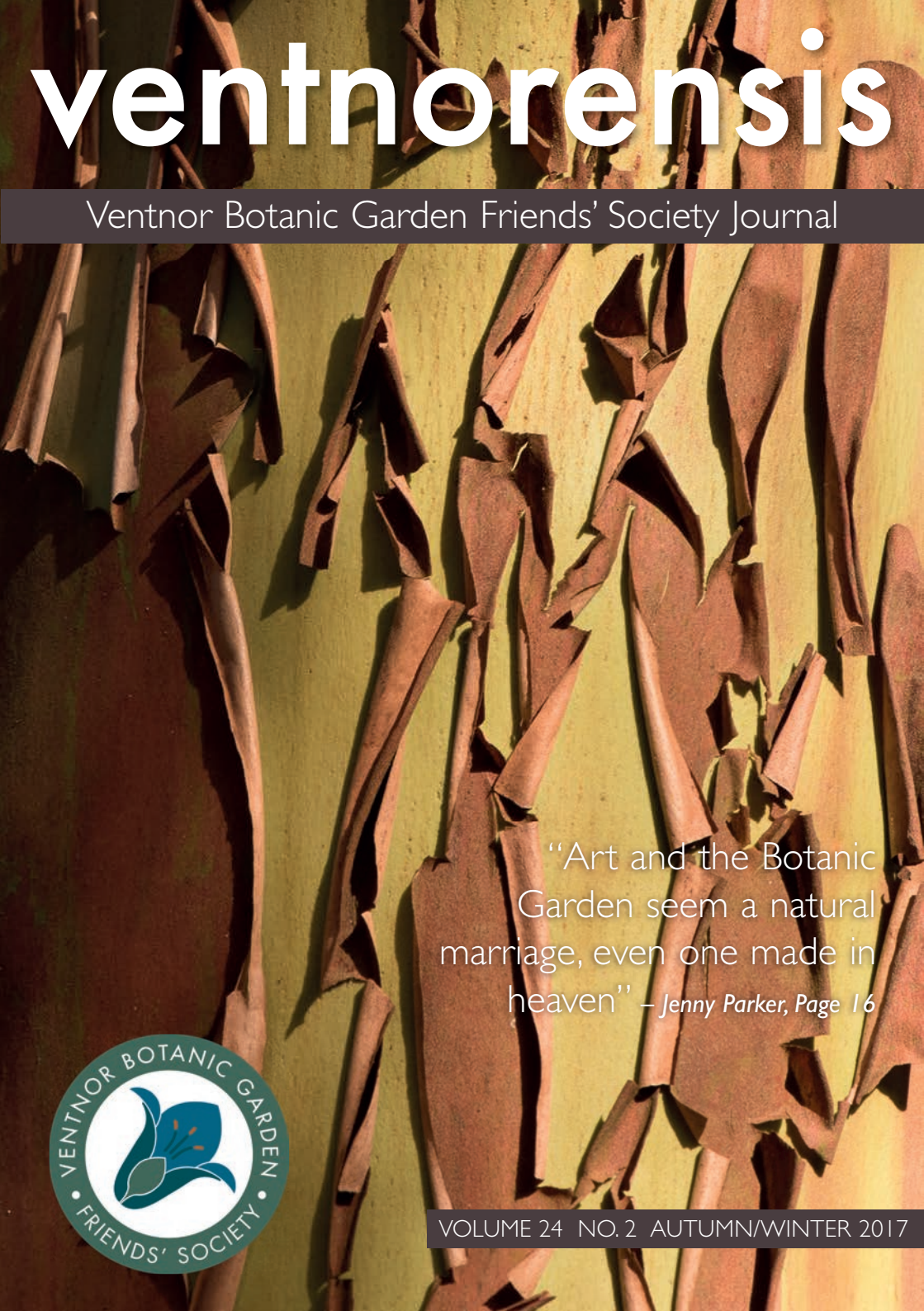
ventnorensis

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society Journal



"Art and the Botanic Garden seem a natural marriage, even one made in heaven" – *Jenny Parker, Page 16*

VOLUME 24 NO. 2 AUTUMN/WINTER 2017

Autumn/winter opening times

10am till dusk daily

For opening times, and for information about special events for adults or children in the Visitor Centre, *edulis* Restaurant and Plantation Room Café, and for Plant Sales and Greenhouse, please call the Garden on 855387 or check website, www.botanic.co.uk.

Exhibitions/Events November 2017 – May 2018

NOVEMBER

17th, 6pm. Gift Gathering for VBG Members and Friends. Details on Page 32

24th, 6pm. Gift Gathering for Local business networks. Details on Page 32

26th, 10am - 4pm. Northwood House Christmas Fayre

26th-27th, 10am - 4pm. Garlic Farm Christmas Fayre

DECEMBER

1st, 12pm. December Design Walk.

1st, 6pm. Gift Gathering for general public. Details on Page 32

1st - 3rd.

Friday 1st, 1pm - 5pm. Christmas wreath making workshops with Carol Ann Eades. *Edulis* Restaurant, £25 per person per day. Includes all materials with festive refreshments and Garden admission. Bring secateurs or sharp scissors and gloves.

Saturday 2nd, 11am - 3pm. Christmas wreath making workshops with Carol Ann Eades. See above.

Sunday 3rd, 11am - 3pm. Christmas wreath making workshops with Carol Ann Eades. See above.

1st and 2nd. Bembridge Christmas Fair, Bembridge Sailing Club

2nd. Christmas Fayre at Ventnor Winter Gardens 11am - 3pm.

6th, 12.30pm for 1.15pm, Friends' Christmas Lunch. See Page 30

8th, 4.30pm - 8.30pm. Ventnorville Christmas Fayre

9th, 10.30am to 4.30pm. Ventnorville Christmas Fayre

7th - 11th, from 7pm. Christmas parties in *edulis* – All that glitters & gold. Welcome prosecco, three course meal, music and dancing until late in *edulis* restaurant. Dress code – formal/anything glitter! £49 per person.

16th - 17th. Red Jet Christmas Fayre 11am - 6pm Sat. 10.30am - 4pm Sun

JANUARY

5th, 12pm. January Design Walk.

13th, 10am - 4pm Volunteer Fair

FEBRUARY

2nd, 12pm. February Design Walk.

14th. Valentine's Supper. Look out for details.

12th - 25th. February half term. Look out for events programme.

MARCH

2nd, 12pm. March Design Walk.

11th. Mother's Day. Look out for event details.

31st - 16th. Easter School Holiday. Look out for family fun activities.

APRIL

6th, 12pm. April Design Walk.

19th, 7pm. VBGFS AGM,

MAY

27th. Summer Friends' event - An Evening with the Grimshaws. Art, music and food - something for everyone! Details to follow.

All dates and booking correct at time of going to press

Front Cover: Eucalyptus study. Photograph by Roz Whistance

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society

President
Brian Kidd

Chairman
Sally Peake - 731403

Vice Chair
David Grist - 852100

Treasurer
Tim Woodcock - 872519

Secretary
Rosemary Stewart - 292107

Minute Secretary
Mrs Jenny Parker - 730668

Membership Secretary
Caroline Peel - 872375

Events
Caroline Peel - 872375

Editor Friends' Website
Colin Smith - 856578
Email: smith3c@hotmail.com
www.ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk

***Ventnorensis* Editor**
Roz Whistance - 753090
rosalind.whistance@btopenworld.com

Gardening Volunteers
Wednesday mornings 10.00 am
Bridgette Sibbick - 867739

Curator
Chris Kidd

Garden Address
Ventnor Botanic Garden
Undercliff Drive, Ventnor
Isle of Wight. PO38 1UL
Telephone: 01983 855397
Fax: 01983 856756

Contents

Regulars Page

Curator's Notes 2
Chairman's Message 4
Plant Profile 6
John Curtis on Botanic Gardens 8
Pope's Plants: Olive Grove 10
Weather in the Garden 12
Editor's Letter....14

Noticeboard

Dates for your Diary ....Inside Front
AGM....9
Join the Friends....26
Volunteering ....15, and Inside Back
Friends' Christmas Lunch 30
Christmas Wreath Workshops....30
New Members 32
Honorary Members/Patrons 32
Gift Gathering Evening....32

Friends' News

Opening Times....Inside Front
Committee Update 3
Sir Harold Hillier Award 5
Botany Club 2017....13
Secret Art Success 16
Dinner with Dillie Keane 20
Summer Party 21
Open Garden 21
Rare Plant Fare, Eddington 21
VBG's 45th Birthday Party 25
Photography Competition....27-29
Hop Festival 31

Special Features

Ventnor in Folkestone 15
Meet The Chairman....18
Australia with Artecology 22-24

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society Registered Charity No. 1080835

Printed on the Isle of Wight on 50% recycled paper using vegetable based inks

recycle

Curator's Notes

What botanic gardens do for us

The role botanic gardens have to play in conservation is a comparatively recent reality. As recently as the 1990s, one very well placed Curator was heard to refer to conservation as a passing fad, a glib remark that belonged to a botanical viewpoint of yesteryear. Recently it has been good to see the role of botanic gardens in conservation being promoted, and projected to a wide audience. The number one BBC News science story in September was the announcement that worldwide botanic gardens hold 100,000 species. With a conservative estimate of the world's flora having 250,000 species, that figure looks very positive. It is good to know we are contributing through membership of Botanic Gardens Conservation International, BGCI.

Kew's Chilean Wine Palm was once the largest indoor palm in the world. We have several of its offspring here – now orphans

Of course, botanic gardens are linked in many more informal ways too, sharing knowledge and plants through the informal networks of our industry. Whilst our Garden hasn't the resources of the large national botanic gardens, we do have a large number of their plants, and over the years quite a few of their staff have worked at this Garden too. In the other direction, plants from this collection have travelled also, from native Field Cow Wheat seed to the Millennium Seed Bank at Wakehurst Place to Spanish endemics en route for Cambridge.

Kew congratulations: VBG apprentice Luke Gunner receives diploma from Roy Lancaster

People too have made the voyage, most recently Luke Gunner to Kew, for his diploma. It was good to be invited to Luke's graduation, having conspired together three years ago over his complex application form. Roy Lancaster, plantsman, author and broadcaster handed out the diplomas and prizes, then gave a light hearted summary of his own life as a plant hunter; from an apprenticeship in Lancashire to National Service in the tropics, through Curatorship of the Hillier Arboretum to freelance broadcaster. Roy knows VBG well; we spoke at length of the collections here.

Whilst at Kew I also met former students and colleagues and caught up with favourite plants. The Giant Waterlilies, Eucalyptus and Wisterias that tormented my studentship are still in place, but sadly now the giant Chilean Wine Palm, *Jubaea chilensis,* has been felled during the restoration of the Temperate House. It was once the largest indoor palm in the world, so tall that serious consideration was given to enlarging the roof of its house. We have several of its offspring here at VBG – now orphans. The largest is the focal point of the path through our Arid Garden. In June I was contacted by Dr Alison Foster,

Focal point: Chilean Wine Palm, Jubaea chilensis

Interpretation Executive for the Temperate House Project at Kew. She sought the stories of the giant palm's offspring, having seen in Kew's records that we have them here. My reply below:

"Yes, we have several accessions of *Jubaea chilensis* growing in the garden here at Ventnor. Planting our oldest ones in 2000 was one of the first things I did here as Head Gardener back in 2000 having been gifted the seedlings by Dave Cook and Steve Ketley.

"These palms are important parts of the collection here at Ventnor. This garden has the oldest living palms in the UK, the last remainders of seed sent of *Trachycarpus fortunei* from China by Robert Fortune to Veitch & Sons Nurseries. Veitches' shared plants to many gardens and patrons, including Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria. Albert saw to keep one plant at Osborne on the Isle of Wight; the remainder were donated to the Royal National Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest which formerly sat on our site.

"At this time palms were unknown in the British landscape. The expectation amongst growers was that they would require hot, sunny conditions like the palms of the old world Mediterranean. At Kew, the young *Trachycarpus* were planted under glass where they succumbed, the growing conditions being quite unsuitable. In fact, Fortune had collected seed from cultivated palms outside of their own natural habitat. In cooler parts of China they grow as understory palms away from heat and direct sunlight. The plants on the Island survived for over a century, the Osborne plant dying eventually a few years ago.

"Our *Trachycarpus* formed what became, in time, our Palm Garden. They have an important story to tell from a botanical and historical perspective, but a more important story is emerging – that of climate change. For over a century these *Trachycarpus* showed what the UK climate could allow out of doors, a single taxon. Over this time other palms have been found that can cope with the UK climate, but importantly this climate is under change, and now new palms can live outside that would never have survived before.

"The *Jubaea chilensis* planted here in 2000 represent the beginning of a Palm Garden for the early 21st century. They take the role that Fortune's palms did, as being experimental and largely unknown out of doors. Since 2000 we have added another 14 species of palm, all growing out of doors. The *Jubaea* form part of a double banked avenue of alternating *Jubaea* and *Washingtonia* leading to the original accession from 2000 at its focal point. The trajectory shown by this planting is startling, from a single species to 14 in less than a century. Clearly plants are telling us that climate change is real and happening at an increasing rate. One wonders what a Palm Garden in another 100 years may grow – if anything at all." See Botany and Big Data, Page 8

Chris Kidd, Curator

Chairman's message

Well – what a summer! The Friends have been incredibly busy since I last wrote and there will be much in this issue for the reader to enjoy. I do hope many of you were able to join us for these Garden highlights and will enjoy the memories; if not, do take note of up-coming opportunities to join us as we celebrate what VBG has to offer its Friends. Colin Smith is doing a wonderful job keeping our website fresh and interesting (www.ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk) and Rosemary Stewart's friendly exhortations and reminders to us all are renowned.

Carol Ann Eades's birthday message ribbons

Summer Parties, Anniversary Celebrations and Secret Art apart, there has also been much activity less advertised and not so readily appreciated by the casual observer.

Friends' Society becomes CIO On 20th September, we received notification from the Charity Commission (CC) of their acceptance of VBGFS as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This is a major step forward in our ambitions to become a modern, effective charity supporting the Garden. The Exec Committee is indebted to Jane Clark who negotiated with advisors at the CC to ensure that both they and we were happy with the modifications to our proposed Constitution and its Objects. As I indicated in the last issue of *Ventnorensis,* it was the 'uncertain' nature of Object 'f' that proved a challenge. However, I am delighted to say that the CC proved most helpful, suggesting wording that was uncontentious and current, and perhaps more importantly, it pledged to help us navigate future uncharted territories. So, we have a modern, effective Constitution that recognises our current expanding role within the Garden and allows us to fully explore opportunities yet unrevealed.

Dreaming of Australia The Australian 'Dreamtime' project has taken shape this summer under the direction of Artecology, a business with long connections to VBG – remember the 'coaches' rockface? We are nearing completion with this and hope to be able to 'open' it with a suitable event before the end of the year. Watch out for opportunities to immortalise your handprint and experience aboriginal music under the eucalyptus canopy . . .

Double trouble We have a new apprentice working in the Garden. George joined David, now in his second and final year, in June and has quickly impressed us all with his eagerness to learn and his responsible attitude to his work. Funding for them both, and Trish who mentors them and diligently liaises with the College, comes largely from the Gift Aid receipts that we receive from VBG-CIC plus fundraising from our own events. It means that we can make regular monthly donations to the Garden, which is essential to maintaining job security for our budding horticulturalists. The results of three additional pairs of hands working in VBG have been clear for all to see – thank you Trish, David and George!

Next year's projects The Sun Recorder didn't quite make it to its plinth this summer so that is a must. Grant-aided projects need to be defined and applications made. New and innovative plans for fundraising are always welcome along with help (just a little help!) to make them happen: over the last twelve months I reckon that the Friends have enabled spending of over £60,000 in the Garden.

Parable of the Talents I await next year's AGM with interest to see the results of our President's Talent initiative: Brian Kidd gave all of us present at AGM 2017 a £1 coin to grow. Dean has been selling doughnuts at Nammet; Caroline has packets of lemon verbena tea to sell; many of you are selling excess seedlings on your doorsteps . . . All these innovative ideas are raising funds to support and enhance our wonderful Ventnor Botanic Garden.

Meet the Chairman: See interview, Page 18. David's Diploma: see Curator's Notes, Page 3

Worthy recipient: Val Gwynn receives the award from Brian Kidd

Sir Harold Hillier Award for 2017

Our President was delighted to present the award to ecologist **Val Gwynn** for the success of her wildlife farm called 'Wild Tracts' at Shalfleet. She bought the land in 1989 and converted the arable fields back to traditional hay meadows full of wild flowers and preserved the woodland glades. By 1996 it was made a local Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. In 2005 it was accepted into the Higher Level Stewardship as part of a scheme monitoring biodiversity across other British and European islands. The land also retains rare and endangered species, including birds, mammals and insects vital to pollination. She also works with the Hampshire & IW Wildlife Trust, Natural England and other organisations using her expertise for the benefit of the whole Island.

Val was delighted to accept the Award and took the chance to thank the team of people who have contributed to her success with their wise advice and help over the years. She emphasised to us all the importance of educating our very young children about nature and to encourage them to keep a lifelong enthusiasm for preserving our wildlife into the future. There is a pressing need for everyone to grow more pollinating plants in their gardens to safeguard the bees and insects which are so vital for our food crops. We need to encourage our garden centres to realise their importance. Five species of bumblebee have been lost in the last 20 years and we shall lose many more botanical species if their pollinating insects die out.

Rosemary Stewart

Hardy and Half-Hardy Figs

Previously in *Ventnorensis* I've noted how collections of plants here at the Garden have crept up without us noticing, notably with Puya, for which we now have the national collection. I'd like to bring attention to another of these for this issue, the figs.

Fico Rubado

Figs, the genus Ficus in the Moraceae family, have over 800 species of monoecious or dioecious trees, shrubs and often climbing vines whose only shared feature, other than the structure of their minute, singularly clandestine flowers, is their lactiferic nature – they all bleed white latex. The overwhelming majority of these plants from every non-polar continent are tropical, and thus beyond our ability, or interest, to grow in our sub-tropical Garden. We should, I feel, be the more grateful for this, as so many fig species are far from glamorous and hellishly difficult to determine. That said, the species and cultivars that can be grown in a garden 5°C warmer than the rest of Britain represent some fascinating edge of hardiness plants that fruit, climb and indicate futures in modern gardens.

Other than the terrible, mealy bug bejewelled and half naked fig of the 1970's office, perhaps the most well known fig to us all is the edible fig, *Ficus carica* and its cultivars. Originating in the Garden of Eden itself, it surely is one of the oldest plants around . . . Used by Adam and Eve to shield their embarrassment once they've gained knowledge from forbidden fruit, this scene is remembered with one of our new plants in the collection, Ficus "Adam" with leaves so large as to indicate the fall of man was no small affair in any respect.

Fig cultivation in Britain likely originated with Roman occupation, though no evidence remains. A warmer climate at that time would have allowed exotics: the later fall of empire and medieval cooling changed the face of both the natural and built environments. As the 20th century warmed, fig cultivation returned to the UK. We have several cultivars one would expect to find in a fruit garden; F. "White Marseilles", F. "Panachée" and F. "Brunswick" all being able to fruit in the UK given a hot summer following mild winter. We also have some exciting cultivars from much further south, courtesy of Sergio Carlini.

Sergio is an (his words) "Old Italian botanist" who is "quite expert in figs". He is author of three volumes of *Pomona Italiana* (unpublished), which we also received for free,

provided "con la condizione di possibile diffusione ma senza farne commercio" which I am glad to do. Sergio initially contacted us and offered us cuttings from his collection of figs kept in Genova, Italy, at no expense, along with several other species of fruiting plants. Sergio's accessions all came with delightful descriptions, for example:

"F. "Rubado" - Rubado, (Cuore: heart) green fruits, violet shaded, red pulp, peel quite raw, pulp firm red. Good only if withered and leaning, medium raw-hardiness to wet. Raw figs have to be collected NOT when are soft, but when are really withered."

We are promised several more enigmatic Italian cultivars from Sergio: "I propose two figs, both with small fruits, single fruiting, that are of best of quality for table use or jams, quite rare. They are Negretta (small black girl), and Gianchetta (Small white girl); both of Pissaluto group (described in *Pomona Italiana*). "The first the fruits are black, the second are green yellow. Are both single fruiting, with fruiting concentrate in a short period of time. Those varieties are quite risky, because their time of ripening (are both "only second" fruiting) is quite late, I suppose middle-end of september there." I can't wait.

Of course we cannot progress without mention of our Herculean Ficus "Brown Turkey" which commands respect as it arches over the division between our Medicinal Garden and South African Terrace. Recently when touring this Garden with my predecessor, Simon Goodenough, I discovered that this very old fig was actually planted by the Royal National Hospital's founder, Arthur Hill Hassall, on the day construction began on the second cottage hospital block. One of our plants is therefore not only one of the oldest of its variety but also commemorative of an event over a century before.

The truly exotic figs in the Ventnor collection include an Iranian culinary fig, *Ficus johannis* subsp. *afghanica* from the Far East. Requiring far more heat than even we can provide, it will remain a small curio, we won't enjoy its sugary sweet black fruit any time soon. For many years we have nurtured the very slow growing *Ficus pumila* tightly clothing some rocks on a south facing bank. Truly a tropical plant, it can be seen with its altogether different adult foliage and even fruits hanging from the Tropical House roof. A new accession from Nick Macer is the giant and so far monopodial unknown fig species, *Ficus* aff. *Oligodon.* This plant will go into competition for the prized places in our most protected location, along with the extraordinary *Ficus macrophylla* var *columnaris* from Norfolk Island which resembles the classic Rubber Plant – but nearly hardy.

At the furthest end of the scale in terms of risk sit the figs that truly have no place out of doors. These shed leaves in the merest draught. Some years ago a Cornish nurseryman offered me a plant he claimed was *Ficus pubigera,* a highly risky plant that might squeak through one winter in ten, more likely to sulk as a moribund lump. As it turned out the plant was almost certainly *Ficus villosa* from the Philippines, about as likely to live out of doors in Ventnor as an orangutan. There are some things that are just not meant to be.

Chris Kidd

A PERSPECTIVE FROM VENTNOR BOTANIC GARDEN

Botany Flirts with Big Data

After attending the Global Congress for Botanic Gardens in Geneva this summer **John Curtis** celebrates the work at Ventnor Botanic Garden and puts it in its international context

The international botanic community has grasped the nettle when it comes to the need for a global plant inventory. Projects and initiatives are wide ranging:

- World Flora Online (WFO)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN Red List
- BGCI - Threat Search, Plant Search, Tree Search
- Kew – International Plant Names Index, Plants of the World Online
- Convention on Biological Diversity – Global Strategy for Plant Conservation Targets 1-3
- Botalista – A French/Swiss software collaboration on open source software for botanic gardens
- University of Cambridge – Research project to determine the percentage of world's flora held in botanic gardens
- Herbarium Digitisation – Kew, Edinburgh, Natural History Museum, Herbaria@Home (UK)

And the list goes on . . . and on.

While botanists have been integrating disparate data sets, cleaning data, and drawing initial research conclusions, data science has advanced and begun to tackle data sets of more than four petabytes or four quadrillion bytes. Data visualisation tools are being developed that merge art and technology so that humans can "see" into and interrogate billions of data points. Botanists are busy building these unwieldy datasets which will contain taxonomic, genetic, image, distribution, conservation status, and hundreds of other data fields. WFO has done in-depth technical work on defining these data structures. Ultimately habitat, climate and other ecosystem data will have to be added.

The history of botany is all about lists – from Banks's discoveries in Botany Bay, to Index Seminum, to Kew's Herbarium. The future of botany is all about collectively managing what is in the lists. Clearly the first step is well understood – a global plant inventory. But what can a dalliance with Big Data bring to the exercise?

The forefront of data science is found in university data labs like the futuristic Allosphere Research Facility at the University of California Santa Barbara, the M.I.T. Big Data Living Lab or the EPFL DATA Lab in Lausanne. IBM's Watson initiative is also focused on applying massive computing power to previously intractable data sets. These research facilities are using machine learning or early Artificial Intelligence to automate the integration of disparate data sets. Global biodiversity is one of those data sets.

The history of botany is all about lists. The future of botany is all about collectively managing what is in the lists

Matched to our microclimate: Puya
Photograph: Rosemary Stewart

Conserving the world's flora is a noble mission and it deserves better IT. Better IT can accelerate the process of achieving the WFO/GSPC goals and take the botanic community up the S-curve toward seamless controlled movement of endangered plants and their seeds between seed banks, botanic gardens, and natural habitats.

At VBG we believe in conserving plants as part of their ecosystems, not as solitary individuals. We believe in matching the genetic makeup of the plant to the microclimate where they are to grow. Climate change is destroying or moving habitats rapidly. We therefore believe that future plant conservation will include a requirement to understand the natural environments globally where a given threatened plant is most likely to survive without gardeners. This vision transcends the current ex-situ/in-situ orientation paradigm. It redefines how botanic gardens will work together and who they will work with. It instructs the outputs required not from a list, but from an application or set of applications operating on a global plant inventory far more sophisticated than currently contemplated.

At VBG we think botany should do more than flirt with data science . . . and quickly.

AGM ADVANCED NOTICE

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends' Society will take place on

THURSDAY 19 APRIL 2018 at 7pm at VBG.

Parable of the Talents reworked:
At April's AGM Brian Kidd hands out £1 coins for Friends to 'grow'.
See Chairman's Message Page 4

POPE'S PLANTS

The Olive Grove

Colin Pope on developing a self-sustaining Mediterranean ground flora

For several years, the Olive Grove in the Mediterranean Garden has been developed to encourage a ground flora to resemble a traditional Mediterranean olive grove, where the arid conditions and thin, nutrient-poor soil mean only the toughest plants survive.

In the spring in such locations, olive groves can be a riot of colour with annuals, wild orchids and bulbs. Olive groves used to have a wealth of wild flowers during the cooler spring and autumn when rains fall, but the widespread use of chemical herbicides has transformed many into desert lands, destroying valuable pollinating insects.

At the Garden, our Olive Grove has been established over a substrate of rocky sandstone subsoil, which is poor in nutrients, favouring the more delicate plants over nutrient-greedy weeds. Structural plants, principally olive trees but also Sun Roses (*Cistus*) and lavender bushes, have been planted and are now well established. Recently, Citrus trees planted on south facing terraces create another aspect of Mediterranean horticulture.

One plant we introduced that has succeeded well is the Sticky Fleabane, *Dittrichia viscosa.* This is actively encouraged in Spanish olive groves to control the Olive Fly, an important economic pest. The flowers of *Dittrichia* can be parasitised by the larval stage of a gall-forming insect, which is itself the prey of another wasp parasite. These wasps hatch and become the predator of the Olive Fly: it is a fascinating food chain.

Dittrichia is a perennial, but while most seeds of a range of appropriate annual species have failed over the years, Field Marigolds, *Calendula arvensis* and Scented Mayweed, *Matricaria camomilla* have established well and this summer's fine show indicated they are thoroughly naturalised. This orange and white tapestry is typical of Mediterranean olive groves.

In an effort to diversify the flora, during autumn 2015 we experimented with growing orchids in the Olive Grove, and in the spring of 2017 stock of a whole range of herbaceous plants, many collected as seed by Chris on his visits to southern Spain, were planted out. Initially, both the orchids and the other planted stock did well. However, even though our climate might be warming, it is not Mediterranean and in most summers we do not have conditions to create the parched soil needed to suppress weed growth. This summer, after a promising early start, plentiful rain allowed the weeds to grow prolifically, despite the poor soil. The only course of action is to hand weed – labour intensive and skilled work, as 'weeds' are removed but the often 'look-alike' species are retained. If wet weather continues, as happened this summer, then regular weeding must take place. Clearly, this is not a sustainable form of management.

Corn Buttercup, Ranunculus arvensis

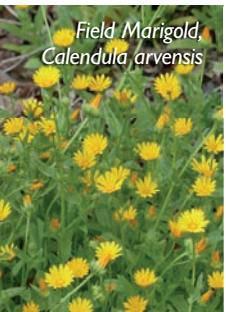
Sticky Fleabane, Dittrichia viscosa

The Ophrys group of orchids (Bee Orchids and their many related species) are very much a feature of the Mediterranean early in the season before the hot, dry weather kicks in. Ophrys species have undergone a remarkable divergence in species adapted to be pollinated by very specific insect pollinators, their flowers adapted to mimic specific bees and wasps. Mirror Orchids (Ophrys speculum), planted in the autumn of 2015, flowered in the first year as early as January. The plants are still surviving but they have not flowered again. Bee Orchids have settled in well and they flowered strongly in 2017. Some flowering stems produced 14 flowers which were followed by ripe, swelling seed pods. We are hoping that Bee Orchids will become established by seeding, but regrettably the ripening orchid stems were inadvertently removed during one of the weeding sessions this summer. If the plants flower again next year, we need to protect the developing fruits with netting. Greater Tongue Orchids, *Serapias lingua,* have increased vegetatively but are now competing with more vigorous vegetation and so may not survive.

Autumn Cyclamen are beginning to colonise. These are *Cyclamen hederifolia,* as seen elsewhere in the Garden and along the Undercliff. They are a native of rocky Mediterranean areas from southern France to western Turkey. However, recently the Garden has been presented with a gift of potted Cyclamen species from the Mediterranean including *Cyclamen maritimum, graecum* and *rohlfsianum.* These are generally grown in an alpine house in Britain, grown as much for their spectacular marbled leaves as for their flowers. They will be tried out in the Olive Grove in the hope their ideal conditions, a baking summer and not too much water in the winter, can be replicated.

Some plants introduced this year – many rarely seen in cultivation in Britain – have performed well. There is a spectacularly showy tall pink snapdragon, *Antirrhinum controversum,* and a strange Spanish relative of our Figworts, *Scrophularia tanacetifolia.* We are hoping these, and the Corn Buttercup, *Ranunculus arvensis,* will become established. The latter is one of a suite of cornfield weeds which have almost died out in this country but persist in open ground in the Mediterranean. Another one, the attractive Weasel's Snout, *Misopates orontium,* grows well from seed but where the plants have got growing, seedlings are quickly browsed by rabbits. However, where seeds germinate within the protection of other plants, they have escaped rabbit detection and have established. A nurse crop seems to be essential for their continued survival.

It is proving difficult to establish a flora which truly mimics that of a Mediterranean olive grove. Over the years naturally dominant species such as the Mulleins (*Verbascum*) are likely to take over certain spots while others may spread by seed or vegetative methods further across the plot. The performance of many of these plants will vary dramatically from one season to the next, dependent upon the weather, so the desired Olive Grove wild flora may be achieved sometimes, but at other times the site is likely to look like a haven for weeds. Trying to establish a self-perpetuating Mediterranean flora in an English climate will continue to present real challenges!


Field Marigold, Calendula arvensis

Marigolds and Mayweed in the Olive Grove

Antirrhinum controversum

Weather in the Garden

(March – August 2017) **by Chris Watts**

March set out to charm (anag!) us with a quiet month of higher than normal temperatures, lower but sufficient rainfall, and no hint of frost or snow. April was very dry though not as dry as April 2011, but quite a surprise was the overall night time temperature (6.9°C), which turned out to be lower than that for March (7.4°C). May then brought us another quiet month with above average temperatures and rainfall, but nothing too excessive.

Over the first week of June the weather became increasingly rough, with heavy rain on the 5th (27mm); a sorbus tree not far from the weather station in the nursery area met its demise due to the winds, but otherwise the Garden escaped lightly. Paradoxically June was a dry month, with rainfall 160% of the long term average. How come? Well just three days, 5th, 27th and 28th brought 90% of the total; six other days of light rain then left 21 dry days. This month also saw what is likely to be the three highest temperatures of the year, 25°C to 26°C, on the 18th, 19th and 20th.

The first half of July kept a summery feel to the weather (despite 28mm on the 11th) being mostly dry, warm and sunny, but things began to change with a thunderstorm on the 18th. Thereafter it seemed to become almost autumnal, and the rains returned – to the relief of some who had begun to be a bit fed up with constantly watering their gardens! August continued the unsettled theme: the 2nd brought heavy rain (28mm) which forced the Garden's two outdoor drama productions indoors, and a week later (9th) further heavy rain (17mm) coincided with Ventnor's annual carnival and firework display; this was postponed until better weather on the 12th. However August redeemed itself; the rainfall pattern mirrored that of June - there were 22 dry days, and over the last weekend (Bank Holiday) unbroken sunshine prevailed, culminating in what might be the fourth warmest day of the year on the 29th, 24.5°C. Shall we then conveniently forget that the following day saw a drop of about ten degrees to 14.2°C on the 30th?!

At the time of writing, mid-September, it is definitely autumnal. It is windy, cool and wet, 25mm of rain on the 3rd. The hop crop was good, but picked in drizzly conditions on the 5th. After came the first named storm of the winter, Aileen, which passed with not too much damage. Let's see what the winter has to throw our way!

	Mean Temp °C	Rain mm	Wet Days (1+ mm)	Soil Temp °C 1ft depth	[1]	[2]	[3]
March	*9.7++*	*42.5—*	*10*	*9.5*	*0*	*7.1*	*6*
April	*10.3+*	*6.3—*	*2*	*12.4*	*0*	*3.5*	*12*
May	*13.5++*	*54.3+*	*10*	*n/a*	*2*	*18.7*	*9*
June	*16.6++*	*59.3++*	*5*	*18.5*	*9*	*26.7*	*11*
July	*17.8+*	*78.0++*	*9*	*19.5*	*15*	*28.1*	*10*
August	*17.0*	*71.5++*	*7*	*18.8*	*11*	*28.2*	*9*

[1] No. of days over 20°C [2] Wettest day rain total in mm
[3] Longest spell (in days) without rain

Botany Club 2017

Looking for lichens: George Greiff leads bryophyte walk

Our first outing this year was something different. George Greiff, a young student with a passion for bryophytes offered to take us on a walk round the Garden to look for mosses, lichens and liverworts. They are the oldest land plants on earth and do not depend on roots for an uptake of nutrients from soil so they can be seen on trees, rocks and walls. We marvelled at the beauty of these tiny plants through the magnifying glass. Recently in October, George gave us a fascinating talk about them illustrated by his clever slides showing the delicate the structures. He has found new varieties to the Island on the downs and promised us an early spring outing up there next year!

May saw us in St Lawrence. Dave and Hazel Trevan led us through the beautiful Charles Wood, with its stands of harts tongue fern, down to the sea. We loved the wild, rocky landscape and negotiating the tricky path along the shore bedecked with the showy heads of sea pinks and bright yellow clumps of birdsfoot trefoil. The yellow umbels of tall Alexanders caught our eye and we learned to put names to bladder campion, delicate rock sea spurrey, rock samphire, plantains, tamarisk, yellow horned poppy and many others.

Wild walk: St Lawrence coastal path

Newtown Creek: Colin Pope's walk

In July we met up at Newtown with Colin Pope to look at the grasses and reeds in the great natural meadow sweeping down to the creek. It is carefully nurtured by the National Trust and grazed by sheep at certain times. The presence of knapweed indicates ancient meadow. He showed us plantain, rye, bent, poa and Timothy grass, meadow foxtail, crested dogstail and Yorkshire fog. We loved the corky fruited water dropwort too! By the creek we found perennial sedges, identified by their triangular stems, spartina grass and meadow rush which was used as a lamp wick when soaked in oil. Colin included a look at some of the many wild flowers as we passed, including the rare dyer's greenweed, fleabane, stitchwort and sea purslane. It was a beautiful day coloured also by the many butterflies and insects.

Rosemary Stewart

Dear members . . .

We're all arts and flowers in this issue of *Ventnorensis*. During the Garden's 45th year of existence (Page 25) we ran our first photography competition, which brought out some superb images captured in the Garden (Pages 27-28), while the inspired Secret Art exhibition drew in renowned artists of all styles (Page 16). While both were conceived as fundraisers for the Friends, the interest and intrigue they raised was just as valuable. In addition, artists in Residence Carol Ann and Guy Eades ran workshops using the materials the Garden gave, see below.

Then there is the wonderful story of Artecology and the Australia Garden, where Chris Kidd's vision – or was it madness? – has finally come to fruition (Page 22). Who knew that those buried buses could themselves be havens for wildlife.

Have a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year, and can I have contributions to the Spring Edition by **March 31st** to rosalind.whistance@btopenworld.com

Eucalyptus Eco-Prints by Carol Ann Eades

Resident artists Guy and Carol Ann Eades reflect

"Being Artists in Residence at Ventnor Botanic Garden from April to October 2017 was a challenging and rewarding experience. It gave us both the chance to really get to know the Garden, its plants, and its constantly changing character at different times weathers and seasons whilst meeting visitors in the Studio and explaining the work we were making, inspired by the Garden."

Carol Ann's practice changed during the Residency from using indigo and rust to responding immediately to the eucalyptus, and developing new ideas through Eco print which she is going to develop. Guy had the opportunity to make five large paintings, one of which remains at the Garden, inspired by the walks he made amongst the maze of paths and vistas in the Garden.

For further information about their work you can contact us on:
caeades@btinternet.com
guyeades@me.com
Visit also www.isleofwightarts.com to see work under our respective names.

'A Walk in Ventnor Botanic Garden: No 2'. Oil painting by Guy Eades in VBG

Inspired by Ventnor

Earlier this year I was staying with Dr Belinda Stewart-Moonlight at her house in Folkestone, Kent, *writes Roz Whistance*. Wishing to back my car out of her drive I noticed my way was blocked by two women who were staring upwards, mouths open. "What are those?" they asked. This was their first encounter with a garden full of *echium pininana*.

Belinda has bought seeds on her frequent visits to Ventnor Botanic Garden, and is passionate too about Tresco Abbey gardens on the Isles of Scilly. "I tried to mix the aesthetic of locally colonizing plants with favourites from the Botanic Garden. I can't create separate geographical areas but there is South Africa represented by the agapanthus and the Canaries by the *echium pininana.* My garden gives me pleasure as I recall holidays and walks in my favourite places," she says.

Flavour of Ventnor in Folkestone: Dr Belinda Stuart-Moonlight's garden

Gardening Volunteers

Help is always required in the Garden and we warmly welcome new recruits to work with the Garden staff and dedicated volunteers, either in a friendly group on a Wednesday morning or at other times to be arranged. No qualifications or previous experience is required and apart from sensible clothing and a flask of refreshments, bring your own hand tools.

For further information for Garden volunteers please ring Bridgette Sibbick - 867739

Secret Art – a success story!

Jenny Parker on not minding being thrown in at the deep end

Secret artists: David Firmstone, former President of the Watercolour Society, Alex Williams, former VBG Artist in Residence, with Sally Peake

As a newly retired resident who has known and loved the wonderful Botanic Garden over 15 years of IOW visits, Sally Peake's suggestion to help organise and run an art exhibition in aid of the Garden seemed a good start to my new life. I had also realised a long time ago what a unique place Ventnor is with its vibrant and colourful artistic population, so art and the Botanic Garden seem a natural marriage, even one made in heaven!

We soon realised it was causing a bit of a buzz in the artistic community

Typically, Sally was already well on the way with the organisation when I joined and she had wisely enlisted the help of Phil le May and Robin McInnes whose advice, support and help were vital to the success of the project.

A Secret Art exhibition was originally proposed by Alex Williams, artist in residence 2015-16, as a fundraiser. The idea is to exhibit and sell pieces of art of uniform size, donated by artists from the fashionable and famous to the unknown who often produce work simply for the love of the art. The work is displayed anonymously with the buyer only discovering the artist's name when collecting the purchase at the end of the exhibition. The price of £50 makes original work more affordable and there is the possibility of owning a very valuable piece.

Sally was generously offered sponsorship by Toby from Beardsalls in Shanklin. He photographed all the pieces for both The Friends and his The Arty Card Company websites and revealed the named pieces at the end of the exhibition. His artists donated pieces; he produced flyers, banners and printed our catalogue. His contribution made all the difference.

It was incredible how many potential contributors Sally, Phil and Robin knew across the Island and much further afield. The new girl was a bit more limited! Thank goodness for the computer age as many, many emails were sent and followed up, but letters and word of mouth worked too. The response was amazing and so very generous. We soon realised the exhibition was beginning to create a "bit of a buzz" in the artistic community with artists calling Sally to say they would like to contribute.

Quite by chance, I was with Sally when she met a charming lady at the Garden who had come to add to a series of botanic water colours painted on the islands around the UK. She loved the Garden and following lunch in the café donated an original painted there and then. Only later did we realise she was Emma Tennant, well known artist and daughter of the late Duchess of Devonshire. Her love of botanic art was nurtured at Chatsworth.

Stephanie Calman, the author, sent two original cartoons by her late father Mel, known for his "little man" cartoons in the national newspapers of the 1960s and 70s and a piece by her mother Pat McNeil with a note saying how they had always loved the Isle of Wight. We have lots more stories of generous donations "for the love of the Island".

We were thrilled to end up with 133 pieces of art donated by 104 individuals. Robin McInnes mounted the pieces and then gave Sally and me a masterclass in how to hang an exhibition. It took him only a couple of hours and the result was perfect. At the private view the exhibition was very well received and lots of the donating artists came along in support. Sally and I were delighted to find a queue of buyers lining up to purchase their favourite piece when we started the sale.

The exhibition was open for 10 days and we had scores of visitors. Everyone appreciated the huge variety of work and some visitors came back several times before deciding which piece to buy. Friends and volunteers manned the gallery and spent time talking to the visitors. Our favourite sale was to a young boy who came with his mother and spent ages looking at each piece before choosing the one as a special treat from his mum and the start of his art collection. It was a painting of a donkey.

After the exhibition we made sure each piece had reached its owner, including posting some to the mainland. We were thrilled to have raised a total of £4,000 net for the apprenticeship fund.

We are excited to have started something that our donating artists were pleased to be a part of, and have suggested we repeat the exercise in the future.

Secret Art will return.

MEET THE CHAIRMAN

Off her bike, into the Chair

Sally Peake talks to Roz Whistance

There are lots of things that Sally Peake never expected when she moved from the Wiltshire/Somerset boarder to the Isle of Wight. She didn't expect to be mountain-goating up and down Ventnor's hilly roads as a postman. She didn't expect to become the VBGFS's Social Secretary. She certainly didn't expect to be its Chair, or to be leading its move from a registered charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Tomboy: Sally, happiest outdoors

"When we moved to the Island I got involved with the Garden because I suddenly had a very small garden of my own and there was a very big one down the road," she smiles. "Most of the things flourishing in Ventnor wouldn't be seen in Somerset so I needed to learn about garden plants." Her grandfathers were both professional gardeners. "One of my grandfathers was apprenticed to a National Trust Garden, Great Chalfield in Wiltshire, from age 12. He was bottom gardener of about 12, and left in disgust in his early 20s because he'd really only been allowed to dry shallots and to weed." He went on to found the family motor business, based on a highly successful cycle-racing career.

For her part, Sally's interest had been led by her mother, with whom she pressed flowers and learnt the names of birds and trees. "I'd spent so much of my time with adults I didn't really relate to games other children played, but I was becoming a tomboy – I played football and went kayaking with the boys."

She went to Birmingham to read biological sciences, and on graduating landed a job as a bacteriologist for Unigate. She married Steve, a builder, moved within Unigate into dairy technology, and worked there until they had their first child, Owen, in 1981.

"Two years later we had Rosie, and set up a house building development business. Steve still had a fulltime job, so I'd stick a child under each arm and shoot off to each building plot to supervise until he came home. I always had things like spare plugs for cement mixers in my handbag. It was a source of amusement as at that time there were really no women on building sites at all." The sub-contractors took her more seriously on realising Sally was also in charge of paying their wages.

In 2003 when Rosie went to university Sally and Steve decided to come to the Island. Sally had armed herself with a post-grad teaching qualification, thinking she'd teach once she they'd settled here, but found it wasn't for her. "I prefer the outdoor life. A job came up in Ventnor with the Royal Mail, and I was a very happy postman for 10 years." Not 'postlady?' "I've always called myself a postman. It's the tomboy in me I suppose. I'm always happier in my shorts and trousers, up a ladder or down a hole!"

The job gave her the opportunity to get to know everyone, everything, everywhere. "It also gave me the flexibility to get involved with the Botanic Garden."

It was Jonyth Hill who, Sally says, 'scooped me up' to help her with Friends' Society events. "When we found we'd attended the same school in Bath, Jonyth said: 'I know you've been

well trained!'' She took over the role entirely when Jonyth stepped down from the committee, and was grateful that Rosemary took over the publicity side. ''I was slow to catch on to technology, never having used it. One's offspring are not always patient when one asks for help!''

When the IW Council began the process of selling off the Garden Sally watched with awe as the then-chairman, Phil le May, managed to keep the Friends in a prominent position. But Sally's job with Royal Mail changed and she could no longer rely on her afternoons, so she stepped back from the Executive Committee. ''Then pressure from Royal Mail to comply with speed meant that I reluctantly took early retirement. That opened up entire days.''

She was voted in as Chairman in 2016 and already some of the changes affected under her Chairmanship demonstrate the way the two organisations, the CIC and the Friends, can support one another. The Gift Aid initiative is a case in point, where the charitable status of the Friends means the CIC can ask visitors to request Gift Aid from the Government at no cost to them.

''It was John's idea but the technicalities of getting it operational hadn't been overcome when I took over as Chair.'' Sally likes a project, and this particular one has netted many thousands of pounds for the Garden since it began in May 2016.

John had asked the Committee to come up with a vision for the Friends' future input into the Garden, and Sally thought big. ''The vision we came up with was to be in a position of strength for the good of the Garden, and to set this in train we had to move from being a Registered Charity to becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.''

Sally believes by strengthening the organisation of the Friends it will be ready and able to support and sustain the Garden in the long term. ''Being able to see the progress we've made in the past 18 months and putting in place the stepping stones to make that long term ambition more likely is very rewarding.''

Looking round the Garden also makes her proud: ''To see young people in the Garden having expert tutelage for their futures, as well as for the future of the Garden; seeing the Gift Aid being put to use – that is hugely rewarding.''

The changes Sally has seen since her arrival in Ventnor have been huge. Under Simon Goodenough there was a much larger team, but as it became obvious the council intended to sell on the Garden she sensed definite deterioration in enthusiasm and in presentation: ''It had lost its focus and ambition. But, as the CIC has found its feet, and with support from the Friends, there is a new focus for the Garden which is being noticed and appreciated by visitors.''

She adds: ''The legacy of the Curtis family in taking grip of the Garden will go down in history as being one of its most important landmarks, in the way the 1987 storm cleared the Garden to enable Simon's vision of a 21st century Botanic Garden. I believe John Curtis's vision for a commercially sustainable botanic garden is a huge landmark too, and the Friends' Society's move to being a CIO is another.''

Sally is optimistic as she looks forward: ''We have a strong team of gardeners who know what they are trying to achieve and have the skill to do it, and we are a strong Friends' organisation pumping in tens of thousands of pounds each year. So the Garden's in a good place.''

Dinner with Dillie

Fifty or so Friends and Friends of Friends had the most marvellous 'Dinner with Dillie' on the 7th October. Dillie Keane, singer, comedienne and actress, and founding member of comic songstress trio Fascinating Aida had agreed to come and give us a taste of her one woman show, 'Hello Dillie'.

After drinks, canapés and dinner we were entertained for an hour with Dillie's wonderful tales and songs of unsuitable suitors and the like. She was accompanied by the very accomplished Michael Roulston, and they both had the entire audience in their hands.

They had both given very generously of their time to support the Horticultural Apprentice scheme and we hope that we can entice them back in the future.

Caroline Peel

Hello Dillie

Suitably suited: Michael Roulston

THE ROYAL

EXCELLENCE SINCE 1832

Enjoy two tantalising courses from our Special Winter Dinner Menu

2 course dinner for two at just £49.00

A potted geranium cutting is yours when you dine with us from November 2017 to March 2018

Please call us to book quoting 'CP2CDINNER' for this limited offer.
Offer valid from 01/11/2017 until 29/03/2017, excluding Christmas, New Year and special events

★ ★ ★ ★

01983 852186

www.royalhoteliow.co.uk | enquiries@royalhoteliow.co.uk

BELGRAVE ROAD, VENTNOR, ISLE OF WIGHT, PO38 1JJ

UNPARALLELED QUALITY · SUPERB SERVICE · AFFORDABLE PRICES

Chris Kidd: Story telling magic

Summer Party

A slightly scaled down format this year, which, in view of the fact that the heavens had decided to let the bathwater out was no bad thing.

The rain abated enough for Chris to take a group round the Garden, whilst others enjoyed drinks and excellent canapés in the Echium room. We then retired to *edulis* where Brad had prepared the most delicious dinner. After dinner, the wonderful Adrian Biddell got to his feet and set to work with his auctioning skills. A marvellous hand of lots again – a house in Italy, a magnum of *grand cru* wine, a day at the Tennis, a private art class, lunch at Robert Thompson's restaurant, VBG@Home and a marvellous selection of plants. Here Chris' story telling wove its magic and vast sums were parted with for some beautiful plants from the Garden.

Together with proceeds from the Note Draw, a very healthy amount was raised for our Horticultural Apprentice Scheme, and Sally was able to update our guests on the current state with apprentice David, and inform us that we were about to take on a second, George.

Caroline Peel

The Opening of East Cliff Garden, Bembridge

Sir Ian and Lady Cheshire very generously opened their garden, which had been redesigned by Arabella Lennox-Boyd, on the first Sunday in June, to benefit Holy Trinity Church, Bembridge and VBGFS. This is on a stunning site with beautiful views across to St Helens Fort and the North Island.

VBGFS Plant Stall

It was the first time the garden had been opened for some years, and curiosity certainly got the better of some people! Not to mention the stunning light lunches and teas. Not only were we receiving half the gate money but we also had a plant stall, where we also sold produce from VBG. A great day, and we are very grateful to the Cheshires.

Eddington Rare Plant Fair

Linda and Bridgette manned the stall this year at the Rare Plant Fair at Eddington Nursery in May. Although financially this was not a success, it was good to have a presence there.

Caroline Peel

Australia by Coach

Nigel George of Artecology created the original Australian Terraces and, 12 years later, has finished the job

Trip to Australia: Chris Kidd leads the tour

The first time I arrived at the work site of the Australian Terraces at Ventnor Botanic Garden early in 2005 I was utterly unprepared for what I would find. I remember it very well because I was greeted by a scene of utter devastation, a bombsite, complete with huge crater and more mud than you can possibly imagine. Tyre tracks from diggers and dumpers 18 inches deep crisscrossed the apocalyptic, plantless view laid out before me. It seemed clear to me that the people in charge here had lost their minds! It crossed my own mind that maybe they'd ingested some subtropical leaf extract in an attempt to 'get creative' and had instead gone completely bonkers!

My worries weren't allayed much when the men in the crater made their way up to greet me. "We want you to build a bloody huge rock face for us, there's no natural rock up this end of the garden and we need you to stabilise that bank so we can plant it." On its own the idea sounded okay, a big job for sure but I was used to that. It was the next bit that got me worried all over again. "We've heard you can use recycled materials to make the armatures for your sculptures and stuff," one of the men said to me. Later I came to know this chap as one Chris Kidd. "That's right, we can do that," I replied. "Good," came his blunt retort, "'cos we've got two big old coaches coming for you to work with." And so they did.

A few weeks later the coaches were craned into position on the bank beneath the cricket clubhouse and my own team started work to convert the lumbering metallic carcasses into an Australian red rock edifice complete with aboriginal art. We had hardly started turning coach to stone when the message came to us that we had to stop work. Behind the scenes, unbeknown to us, a battle had been blazing. Various individuals from outside the Garden had mobilised themselves with a resolve to put a halt to the apparent madness going on at VBG. We put down our tools and walked away, not sure if we would ever return.

Several weeks later a jubilant Simon Goodenough called me to say that he'd fought off the naysayers and with a few changes to the plan we could begin work again. The changes were that the rock colour must blend with the natural rock nearby and the height of the rock face must be lowered. At the time these changes seemed like a small

price to pay, so a JCB was brought in to pummel the coaches down to an agreeable height and shortly after that we resumed the sculptural work.

Arrival of the 'White Fella' by boat

That was then, and now the vision (that had always been in the minds of Chris Kidd, Julian Winslow and Simon Goodenough) is there for everyone to behold and, my word, what a work of total genius it is! Gone is the mud bath bombsite and in its place is the gloriously naturalistic landscape of an antipodean tree fern forest. It's a masterpiece of design, an amazing manmade fern gully that has no equal in the UK, I'm sure. Those spindly eucalyptus sticks that I watched being planted over a decade ago are today beautiful trees in a new eucalyptus copse that casts its playful shadows over two long lost coaches. Once upon a time a bank covered in sculpted concrete by me and my team is now adorned with an extraordinary array of mosses expertly applied by nature herself.

Apparently a renowned biologist has called this place a 'successful synthetic ecosystem'. I really like the sound of that!

Nigel George with indigenous paintings on Dream Time Boulder

So 12 years later . . . at the request of the same Chris Kidd I find myself in the rubbish yard at VBG looking for useful scrap metal to make another armature for another chunk of faux rock to be located in the Australian Terrace. This time Chris wants me to stick to the original plan, he wants it to look like red sandstone rock and he wants it to feature the artwork of the indigenous Australian people. We call the project 'The Dream Time Boulder' after the native Australian Dream Time belief system that still prevails today.

In the rubbish collection area at the Garden we find some pieces of old fence, a big old gate and some odd bits of scaffold. We take them back to our studio in Chale and reform them, reshape and weld them together until we are happy that we have an armature that will help us create the effect we are after – a wind sculpted boulder, like the ones in Kimberley Australia – the place where generations of Aboriginal people

have carved and painted their life stories on to the sandstone walls of caves and cliffs.

Hibernaculum: a perfect shelter for vertebrates and invertebrates

As well as the new rock colour and the artwork I was keen to give the new feature some purpose beyond the aesthetic. Through my own work, that we call *Artecology,* my team has in the past created sculptures that double as hibernacula. These are simply places for wildlife to retreat to, make homes in or overwinter in. Since the new structure was to be hollow, this new boulder in the Garden seemed to us like a perfect opportunity to create the largest purpose-built hibernaculum we've ever made. So then, with the armature in place in the Australian Terrace, we called on Garden staff to help us stuff its interior with all manner of garden waste. Branches, twigs and leaves were packed inside the framework, providing a complex network of organic material for vertebrates and invertebrates to find shelter or make homes.

Once the fake rock sculptural work (made from a mix of sand, cement and pulped newspaper) was complete, with some holes here and there for wildlife to get in and out, we set about completing the aboriginal-style artwork. With Chris Kidd as our guide we chose to create a hybrid rock art feature showing indigenous people's artwork through the ages.

So our Dream Time Boulder artwork begins with a depiction of a family group from a tradition known as Gwion Gwion. These people created their images on rock walls around 17,000 years ago. Some experts say their paintings could be significantly older than that; either way, by 10,000 years ago the Gwion Gwion people had all gone. Anthropologists think that climate change around this time made the Kimberley area inhospitable to humans. It was a further 3,000 years before humans returned and started to paint on the rock walls again. This new era of creativity is known as Wandjina and with it comes a new subject matter. Interestingly, gone are the elegant family portraits of every day life seen in the Gwion Gwion tradition and instead we find stylised imagery of spirit beings and creator gods. To me this shift in imagery is interesting: could it suggest something of the trauma of climate change on the human psyche maybe?

Stylised imagery of spirit beings and creator gods

As you wander around the rock you will see the final images – the arrival of the 'White Fella' by ship. Here the story ends, as the arrival of Europeans sparked the end times of the aboriginal rock art tradition . . . Quite simply, they painted no more!

And so ends my story . . . I think!

Celebrate! 45 Years of a remarkable Garden

A wonderful 45th birthday party heralded the start of Through the Garden Gate, a week of activities designed to bring new people into the Garden, and enabled through a grant from the Big Lottery.

The magnificent birthday cake was to have been cut by Lord Lieutenant Martin White, but he was unable to be there so Sally Peake had to think on her feet:

Show stopper: The cake

"There are so many people here, but who should I choose from the great and the good? There is one man here who was actually involved in planting the tree that Lord Louis Mountbatten planted 45 years ago to this day. All the photographs show Lord Louis in a hole with a spade . . . but the job was finished that day by Keith Brewer, long time gardener at VBG."

John Curtis then reflected lightheartedly on where the Garden is now: "We've finished our mid-life crisis, reached 45 and grown up a bit."

He went on say: "Thanks to Simon [Goodenough] who 'got' climate change early and planted plants that make incredible sense, we labelled it: we call it The Ventnor Method. With what we're doing, the way we're working and conserving plants, folk are going to find this little jewel, this little provincial garden, and we're going to be really proud of what we're doing here."

From spade to cake slice: Keith Brewer cuts the cake with Sally

Happy Birthday to Us: The Free School Brass Ensemble

Another year of Friendship

The membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Current rates for annual membership are:

- **Individual – £15**
- **Second member at same address – £7**
- **Junior** *(under 16)* **– £2**
- **Non-UK individual – £18**

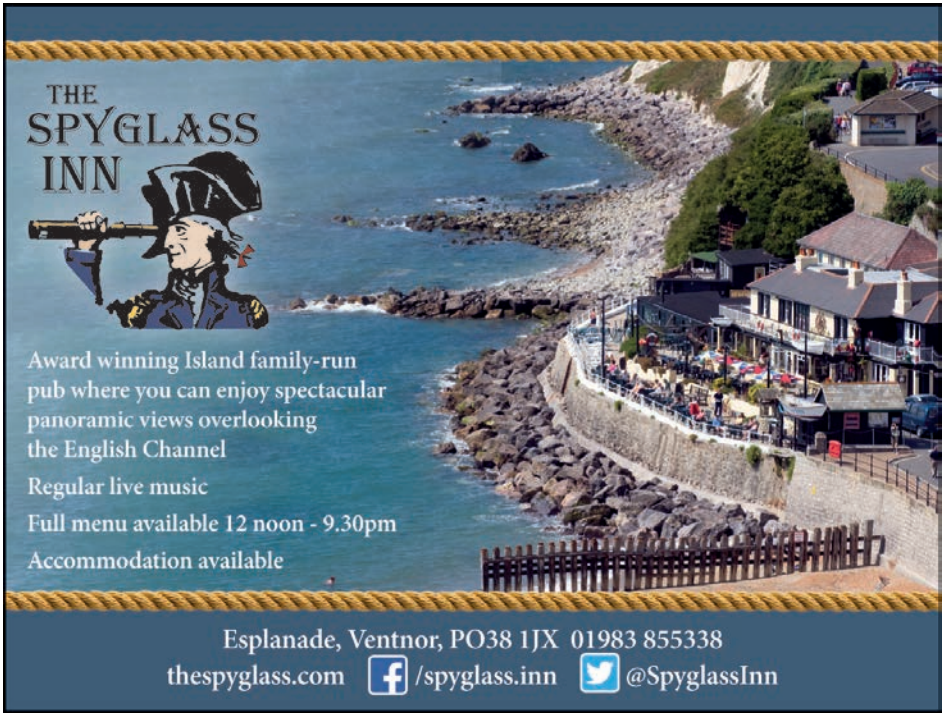
New members joining after 1 July pay reduced rates:

- **Individual – £8**
- **Second member at same address – £4**
- **Junior** *(under 16)* **– £1**
- **Non-UK individual – £10**

Download and print a **Membership Form** from our webpage http://ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MEMBERSHIP-APPLICATION-NEW-2015.pdf

Remember that Parking is always FREE.

Membership does not include entry to the Garden but we thoroughly recommend buying a VBG Annual Pass which gives you unlimited access all year round and all sorts of discounts. See the details on https://www.botanic.co.uk/about/memberships/.



Fun at the pictures: The winning photographs are revealed

The Friends' 2017 Photography Competition

The Friends' 2017 photography competition proved to be a great success. We asked for photographs taken within the previous year, and only to be taken within the Garden.

There were five categories: Plant Portrait; Landscape; Abstract; Wildlife; and Young Photographer. The young people could enter in any of the above categories, and people could enter as many times as they liked for a small fee each time.

We were privileged to have as our judges photographers Julian Winslow and Steve Blamire and curator at Dimbola Museum and Galleries, Rachel Tait. We are hugely grateful to our sponsors, the County Press, David Whistance who printed the winning photographs, Wisteria Framing and Fotospeed for providing the paper, and to Dimbola for lending the frames.

Winners: Roz Whistance, Ian Pratt, Lynda Richardson, Ariela Richardson, Bridgette Sibbick, Jonyth Hill

Ian Pratt receives award from Judge Julian

Overall winner and Plant Portrait winner: King Protea by Ian Pratt

Young Photographer winner by Olivia Williams

The winners

Overall winner
Ian Pratt for King Protea portrait

Plant portrait:
1st, Ian Pratt
2nd, Ian Pratt
3rd Lynda Richardson

Landscape:
1st Jonyth Hill
2nd Lynda Richardson
3rd Bridgette Sibbick

Abstract:
1st Bridgette Sibbick
2nd Bridgette Sibbick
3rd Ros Whistance

Wildlife:
1st Ian Pratt
2nd Ian Pratt
3rd Ian Pratt

Young Photographer
1st Olivia Williams,
2nd Olivia Williams,
3rd Ariela Richardson

Top to bottom
Wildlife winner by Ian Pratt
Landscape winner by Jonyth Hill
Abstract winner by Bridgett Sibbick

Friends' Special Christmas Lunch

Come and join us for our Friends' Christmas lunch at *edulis* restaurant, **6th December,** 11.30, come celebrate Rosemary's 80th birthday in the Canna, then to lunch at 1.15. £20 for three courses, wine and crackers.

Christmas wreath workshops

Create your own unique Christmas wreath in our unique Garden. Led by artist Carol Ann Eades you just need to turn up at *edulis* restaurant with some secateurs or sharp scissors and gloves – all other materials, and festive refreshments, are provided. £25 per day, book in advance to avoid disappointment.

- **Friday 1st December, 1pm - 5pm,**
- **Saturday 2nd, 11am - 3pm,**
- **Sunday 3rd, 11am - 3pm.**

GIFT FAIR

Bembridge Sailing Club

Friday 1 December
5pm to 8pm
Entrance £10 (purchased in advance)
includes wine and canapes

Saturday 2 December
10am to 3pm
Entrance £2 on the door

Enjoy exclusive festive shopping with 30 stalls from the mainland and the Isle of Wight, providing a variety of quality goods, in aid of Earl Mountbatten Hospice

Free parking
Light refreshments available

For more information email
emhgiftfair@iwhospice.org

with grateful thanks to our sponsors

WIGHTLINK

WEAVER BROTHERS LTD
Est. 1829
Independent Funeral Directors
01983 872598

spence willard

Anne Gingler

Style of Wight

G.W. Mattinson
CONSTRUCTION
T. (0)1983 840953
M. 07753614794

Happy hoppy day

We picked the hops and then celebrated the harvest at the annual Hop Festival. There was music and food throughout the day, as well as competitions and games. And plenty of Botanic Ale.

The Friends' plant stall was particularly successful and proved quite a draw for the public.

All in all it was a happy and successful day for the Friends. Chris Kershaw won the big raffle prize and generously auctioned off the two bottles of spirits to a captive audience!

Cheers! Chris Kidd and Liz Walker

Friends' Plant Stall

Calling the raffle: John Curtis

In the spirit: Chris Kershaw

Plants and prizes: Anne Orlik and Toni Rogers

New members

A very WARM WELCOME to these friends who have recently joined the Society.

Mr John & Mrs Karen Bagshawe, St Lawrence
Mr John & Mrs Karen Beattie, Ryde
The Hon Mr Clegg and Mr William Clegg, Bembridge
Dr Paddie and Mr John Collyer, Ventnor
Mrs Maureen and Dr Nigel Cooke, Cheam
Mr Andrew Eccott, Ventnor
Mr Peter Ewbank, Ventnor
Lady Kate Hunloke, Devizes
Mrs Clare Mumby and Mr Charles Alexander, Bembridge
Mrs Valerie and Mr Bob Pitts, Bonchurch
Mr Jeremy Seale and Mr Simon Chides, Cowes.

Honorary members

Alan Titchmarsh
Simon Goodenough
Brian Kidd

Patrons

Gilly Drummond OBE
Penelope Hobhouse

Gift Gathering at Ventnor Botanic Garden

Have some fun while you do your Christmas shopping this year and join us on Friday 17th November from 6pm for a Gift Gathering! Exclusive for Ventnor Botanic Garden Members & Friends, we will be offering:

- *Festive nibbles & refreshments such as mulled wine*
- *Welcome talk by VBG Curator, Chris Kidd*
- *Shopping time with a 10% discount*
- *Opportunities for product tastings including our Jams & Chutneys, Ale & Lager*
- *Comfy, cosy environment of The Plantation Room Café*

AND, it's free to come along! Simply book with us to secure your spot on 01983 855397 or info@botanic.co.uk

Design by Simone Dickens, Coco Design Co. Tel: 07530 867318 / 01983 551527 simone.dickens@gmail.com

HOPPING VOLUNTEERING – and other ways to get involved

Sally Peake, Chairman, says: "When I started out on my career I expected to pick up my state pension at 60. Now it is 66 and even now (thanks to my years as a bike-riding postman) I know my knees will no longer allow me to work comfortably on banks. That's frustrating. But it focuses the mind on the need for more opportunities for people to help without necessarily involving physical activities. So there is a huge growth in volunteering opportunities outside the gardening arena itself: to work with youth groups and schools, for example, to a greater extent than ever before.

Tour guides, those who man the info kiosks in the summer, those who help clear tables in the café and in the shop, there are all sorts of behind the scenes roles. We're beginning to get to grips with how useful that can be.

New volunteers are coming to help us out all the time, just as the jobs we need to fill are ever expanding. Gardening volunteers meet every Wednesday and we'd love to welcome new people who want to get their hands dirty."

See Meet the Chairman, Page 18

FREE ADMISSION

THE GARLIC FARM

ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

The complete garlic experience!

RESTAURANT, FARM SHOP, ALLIUM CAFÉ, FARM WALKS, TOURS & FREE TASTINGS

7 DAYS A WEEK 9AM-5PM

"Beautiful place, great food...the highlight of our trip" "Garlic Heaven"

The Garlic Farm, Mersley Lane, Newchurch,

www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk | PO36 0NR | 01983 865 378