ventnorensis

Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society Journal

'The congratulations I have received since earning a place to study at Kew have been so warming. Countless people have inspired me along the way'

Indi Wyatt, former VBG Apprentice, Page 27

VOLUME 30 NO. 1 SPRING/SUMMER 2023

Spring/summer opening times

9am till 5pm daily. Free parking, but non-pass holders must enter car registration on touch-screens if staying longer than 15 minutes. Plantation Room Café is open daily from 9am, serving breakfast, light bites and cake until 5pm. *edulis* Restaurant is open for special events. For opening times, and for information about special events for adults or children in the Visitor Centre, details of the café, and for Plant Sales and Greenhouse, please call the Garden on 855387 or check website, www.botanic.co.uk.

Exhibitions/Events

Almost daily the Garden hosts classes such as Yoga, Dance, Tai Chi and Qigong. See the website for details: www.botanic.co.uk/what's on

SUMMER SPECIAL EVENTS

June 8th, 9.00am **Botany Club Bird Walk,** Newtown.
June 10th & 11th, NGS Open Garden at Ashcliff, The Pitts, Bonchurch.
June 29th, Friends' trip to Abbotsbury
July 1st, 12.00-6.00pm **Ventnor Day**
July 7th-9th, 10.00am-4.00pm **Robin McInnes Art Exhibition,** Echium Room.
July 8th & 9th, 10.00am-5.00pm **Bonchurch Open Gardens.** 15 gardens. ***Cash only.***
July 10th & 11th, Wellbeing Weekend.
July 21st-30th, 10.00am-8.00pm **Ventnor Fringe Festival.**
July 26th, 1.00pm-3.00pm **The Wind in the Willows** open air theatre. Tickets via VBG website.
July 29th, 6.00pm-8.00pm **A Midsummer Night's Dream** Tickets via VBG website.
July 30th, 2.00pm-4.00pm **Peter Rabbit.** Quantum Theatre.
Sept 30th-8th Oct, 10.00am -4.00pm **Robin McInnes' Landscape Paintings Exhibition,** Echium Room
October 8th, 10.00am-3.00pm **Ventnor Botanic Garden Car Rally**.
Usual entrance fee suspended.
October 19th, Friends' trip to **Thenford Arboretum*.**

REGULAR EVENTS THROUGHOUT SUMMER

Art in Nature with Lucia Para. Guided outdoor sketching class. Every first Sunday, 10am-12.00
Sunday Soiree BBQ. Live music every Sunday. 11am-3pm
Inspired by Wight Art, Canna Room. 10am-5pm, dates through summer
Isle of Dogs Art, by animal artist Helen Eaton. 10am-5pm, dates through summer

WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Classes in Echium Room unless stated otherwise

MONDAYS
10am-11am: Tai Chi, intermediate with Tony
11am-12.15pm: Scaravelli Yoga for all, with Louisa, Canna Room
11am-12.30pm: Pilates for all, with Penny
1.30pm-3pm: Creative Dance, all levels, with Michelle

TUESDAYS
9.30am-11am: Hatha Yoga, for all, with Trish, Echium Room
12-1pm: Qigong, for all, with Garry, Echium Room
2.30pm-3.30pm: Back Bliss Pilates, for all, with Catherine

WEDNESDAYS
9.30am-10.30am: Tai Chi beginners with Tony
10.30am-11.30am: Tai Chi intermediates with Tony
10.30am-11.30am: Release, for all, with Firebird in Canna Room
12-1pm: Sunshine Sessions, for all, with Firebird
1.45am-2.45pm: Ballet Body Fitness, for all, with Chantal

THURSDAYS
10.30am-11.30am: Chair Burlesque, for all, with Coco,
12-1pm Qigong, all levels, with Garry

FRIDAYS
9.30am-11am: British Yoga Wheel, all levels, with Mark
11.15am-12.15pm: Tai Chi, advanced, with Tony

For further information on Wellbeing Classes visit the Website: www.botanic.co.uk/wellbeing

**Check your email inbox or ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk for updates on the visit to Thenford Arboretum.*

Front Cover: Echium Pininana and Bee. Photograph by Patricia Smith

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Accession

Chris Kidd explains the policy by which plants enter the Garden

Champion: One of 200 Eucalyptus cypellocarpa that were planted

How and why plants arrive at VBG is a managed operation. Plants here have many roles and come through various routes. There is an accessions policy (this being the rules by which new plants come into the collection) to guide us away from the stamp collection, park, retirement home or you-name-it-other plant collection that we are not.

A principal guiding the accessions policy at VBG is that we grow plants on the cusp of hardiness, the better to show off our remarkable microclimate. The success of these experiments can be spectacular. Plants that have never flowered before out of doors in Britain may flower here first. Plants that couldn't grow here 100, 50 or 10 years ago may now succeed, and so indicate a changing climate. Such experiments will, by their very nature, result in failure, often at very high rates. In establishing a single species at VBG, over 200 individuals of *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa* were planted out. These dwindled to the handful we have now, one of which is the Champion (biggest) in Britain 21 years later. Had they all succeeded, that would have been a failure; we'd have chosen the wrong plant and had no garden left for anything else at all.

Sometimes we choose a whole genus for the experiment, and collect as many species as possible, commercially or as cultivated plants, and plant them out. In 2005 over 30 species of *Aloe* were acquired: 12 got as far as being accessioned, five remain at VBG, which makes about 15 per cent success rate.

Another more complicated example is *Lampranthus*. In the case of this group, much of what is available is fiendishly misnamed. Many are not even *Lampranthus*. Many cultivars result from the fevered fantasies of nursery owners, putting out new cultivar names at every opportunity; synonymy has become a cottage industry. One nursery lists four Lampranthus cultivars, which when grown to maturity are all the same and not *Lampranthus* at all, but *Delosperma*. Sadly there is nobody that hasn't been dead

for a century brave enough to tackle the taxonomy of their family, the *Aizoaceae*. Should anyone be fool enough to try making sense of it all there is a world of pain, confusion and misery to be had based on counting loculicidal capsules. Regardless of the taxonomic maelstrom, in 2010/11 we amassed nigh on 70 accessions that realised half a dozen interesting, different, hardy-at-VBG plants.

In 2023 we are running a new experiment with *Delosperma*. These arrive as small plants in 9cm pots, each will receive a unique accession number on arrival that will remain with the plant throughout its life and beyond its death. The data concerning their origin is recorded, and the naming as supplied (they might not all be *Delosperma*, but will be recorded as received as such). Their planting date will be recorded, as will their adventures at VBG, including whether they are attractive – not necessarily a given. Their populations will be noted, propagation too, and their relocation and dispersal. Photographs may be taken. Cultivation notes made. Perhaps verifications of names. Almost certainly death certificates issued – unless we have chosen the wrong genus to experiment with. Maybe two of the 20. Two more than 20 years ago?

RHS Perks

VBGFS has long been an Affiliated Society of the RHS and especially for those who are not RHS members individually, there are good perks. Among these are a free group visit to one of their main gardens every year; cheaper individual entrance tickets; and this year they are offering some exclusive private garden trips. Ask Jenny Parker for details.

RHS Wisley

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Teaching and learning

First of all, a huge thank you to all our loyal members who continue to support us year after year; I am sure you will enjoy this latest edition of *Ventnorensis,* which I know so many of you look forward to dropping through your letterbox. We were heartened by the warm support for your Trustees and Committee shown at our recent AGM, and we were delighted to celebrate the achievements of two remarkable women, Jennie Fradgley and Sally Peake, which you can read about in these pages. [Pages 17 to 20]

We continue to support VBG CIC financially with a large donation to cover the fees of Trish Brenchley, because of her support and encouragement of the Volunteers and her many other contributions to the Garden. This year, too, we were delighted to provide a travel grant for our former apprentice, Indi, to facilitate her work experience trip to Tresco. [See Page 9]. We continue to look for other ways to support horticultural education and, in the current absence of an apprenticeship scheme, we are awaiting information from the CIC about the objectives and structure of a possible informal in-house training scheme which we could support.

Blooming success: Roses grown the Sissinghurst way. In February showing the framework Michelle created and now at the end of May, coming to the end of flowering

Of course, education in its broader form is covered by our programmes of walks and talks, and our recent Café Botanique series, in the luxurious surroundings of the Art Deco-inspired Ventnor Arts Club, was particularly varied and instructive. I wonder how many of you who attended the talk or read Michelle Cain's article in the last edition tried bending roses 'The Sissinghurst way'? I did, and am very happy with the result of my initial experiments – the rose shown has never bloomed so low down before. Which proves that no matter how long you have been gardening, you can always learn something new. For something to aspire to, though, here is the magnificent result of the technique applied by Michelle herself to one of Caroline Peel's roses.

Dear members …

This issue of *Ventnorensis* is full of celebration and surprise. We have reports that celebrate the Island's wonderful countryside, the camaraderie of the Friends, and the recognition of people who have worked hard for horticulture and for the Garden.

There's nothing like a surprise or two to boost morale, and from Page 17 you will read that we were able to show our huge appreciation to Sally Peake for everything she has done, and continues to do, for the Friends and for the Garden. Then there is Indi Wyatt, our apprentice who as well as getting the chance of working on the Scilly garden Isle, Tresco, almost missed because of pandemic restrictions, won a much coveted place on the Diploma Course at Kew Gardens. You, the Friends, supported her while she completed her apprenticeship so can bask in her reflected glory. See Pages 9 and 27.

Being surprised is surely an occupational hazard of being a gardener, but Chris Kidd talks us through the historic and future aims of the Palm Garden, Page 6, and on Page 2 about the accessions policy, the rules by which new plants come into the Garden's botanic collection and which, surprise, has landed VBG with a Champion tree. (Thank you Chris for the chance to use an almost topical headline, too.)

Alternative Venue: Chairman Val Pitts with Vice Chair Peter Coleman and Hon Sec Jenny Parker, at St Catherine's Church, Ventnor

It's always a lovely part of our AGM when the Harold Hillier Award for outstanding contribution to horticulture is presented, and Jennie Fradgely was this year's worthy recipient. Surprised? She was gobsmacked, she said (see Page 20). Our Chairman, Val, is also celebrating: she followed the Sissinghurst Rose technique described by Michelle Cain in the last issue of *Ventnorensis* and is finding her roses are blooming where they never have before (see Page 4).

At *Ventnorensis* HQ we also love a surprise, and in our Memories of the Garden series it was a delight to receive, well, a love story (see Page 22). It is indeed always lovely, too, when we get 'another in the series of . . .' – see Madeira Botanic Garden, Page 24.

As for the countryside, sharing and enjoying one another's company, Stephen Oakes-Monger takes us looking for orchids, Page 13, Café Botanique has provided a wealth of entertainment, Page 29, and I can personally recommend we all have a slice of the Sultana Cake in the Great Friends' Recipe Swap, Page 31. It has a surprise ingredient.

Roz Whistance, Editor

My particular thanks to Rosemary Stewart for providing answers from her Friends' archive, and for proof reading, and to Patricia Smith among others for photographs.

Please submit articles for the Autumn edition by 15th September 2023

PLANTING PROFILE

Palm Garden

By **Chris Kidd, Curator**

The next of a series of articles showing the Friends the guiding documentation for the future of this Garden's plant collection, area by area. The actual document behind this is fairly bleak and minimal, taking function over form, so I've tried to lubricate it rather: I'm sure you'll get the gist. As with all plans, these may be aspirational and subject to change. It's worth bearing in mind that I've not seen a single planning document from the Hillier era or the Council era for that matter, both were concerned with the melody, intrigue and beauty of populating these remarkable acres with rare and exotic plants. In some areas we shoehorned some of Hillier's collection into the semblance of a modern botanic garden layout. In doing so we lost integrity – but with the Palm Garden the clock has deliberately been allowed to stop ticking. This is a historic snapshot containing historic plants, albeit at increased risk due to the impacts of climate change.

Palm Garden

SETTING

The Garden, an area which Hillier referred to with characteristic doctrine as Area L, was a series of island beds within level lawn surrounded on four sides by shrub borders. A Victorian stone wall makes the western boundary.

19th Century Origin: Original palms from Prince Albert's pots

DEVELOPMENT

The Arecaceae collection on site began in the late 19th century, exact date unknown. The locale of this site was considered one of a handful safe for the growth of *Trachycarpus fortunei* outside in the UK. The original plants, still extant, are the sole remaining specimens from Trachycarpus seed sent by Robert Fortune to the UK. These early palms were considered highly risky in terms of hardiness and so were grown under glass where they soon perished. Plants were donated to Prince Albert, who planted a sole specimen at Osborne House. Albert's remainder languished in pots, which ultimately were sent to the fledgling Royal National Hospital, on the site which is now VBG. These palms form the original 19th century Palm Garden.

In the following century the changing UK climate has proved suitable for *Trachycarpus fortunei* in all but the most exposed and traditionally cold areas. Recognising potential within the family, there was an expansion of the Arecaceae collection. The Goodenoughs added *Phoenix canariensis* and *P. theophrastus* to the south facing bank of the garden.

Good enough: Sub-tropical feel created by the Goodenoughs

The sub-tropical "feel" of the garden was created by the Goodenoughs. On their arrival, Simon noted, "seven *Trachycarpus fortunei* stood in beds clustered to one end of the space. The beds were shaped like the Isle of Wight within a lawn that extended to the wall. To the north were two giant *Cupressus macrocarpa* making further cultivation impossible. There was a perpetual night within the garden. To the south several colossal climbers strangled unidentifiable green Hillier blobs. The wall hosted some nasty roses. It was ghastly."

Following the storm of 1987 which removed the Cypresses, Goodenough balanced the palms with new stock, and added exotics such as Citrus, Cordyline, Dracaena and Cycas to the borders. He added the now familiar Agapanthus within a new tarmac path circle, creating the geometry seen today. The development of the Canna Bank added a rich palette of colour, but viral infection destroyed the collection and drove further exotic experiments with Hedychium and Solanum. "The brickwork archway to the south was added by Peter Froud who supervised delinquent teenagers in their work."

As a collection of palms, there has not been augmentation since the addition of *Brahea edulis* in 2007. *Rhopalostylis sapida* was added 2012, but is a reintroduction of a historic taxon that had failed previously.

BOTANIC DIRECTION

The Palm Garden, albeit in a contemporary design, has proved to be the earliest UK example of a Palm Garden *planted* in the 19th century; it can be viewed as a Palm Garden *for* the 20th Century. Conceptually therefore it is historic, and should be preserved as such.*

We are committed to maintaining the historic palms as part of our National Collection. In the long term their eventual replacement after senescence is to be with their own progeny. This is a process already underway. (Commercial Trachycarpus have been added periodically, but this is not now condoned.) The surrounding exotic plants should reflect the abilities of the microclimate to host plants exotic to the UK, particularly as new taxa become possible. Progression of taxa into less protected areas of VBG should be encouraged to maintain the exotic "edge" of the Palm Garden. *Rhopalostylis* will quite likely be possible within the Hydrangea Dell

already. The Dell has potential, beneath the dominant trees therein, to transform into a reflection of understorey New Zealand flora in compliment to the adjacent New Zealand Garden.

Maintaining these heritage Palms is a priority. Concerns over salt wind damage as the heads grow higher has, so far, proven unfounded as the windbreaks are comprehensive. Conflict for light between the palms and nearby *Magnolia delavayi* is increasing; we favour the palm over the Magnolia and prune the latter.

Ironically, the route to celebrity of these palms via climate change could prove to be their undoing. Our most threatening native fungal disease is Honey Fungus (*Armillaria spp.*) When infected, *Trachycarpus fortunei* have a 50 per cent mortality after presence of fruiting bodies and rhizomorphs found within five years. Control methods are unsubstantiated or aggressive, hence inappropriate in our setting. Fortunately so far the Palm Garden is outside of known areas of infection.

Of greater concern is the Red Palm Weevil *(Rhynchophorus ferrugineus)*, a threat host specific to palm trees, which was identified in the UK for the first time in October 2016. It was found inside a round-leaf fountain palm imported from Italy, which had been purchased in Essex. The infested plant was destroyed. The pest is native to Asia but was accidentally introduced to Spain in 1994 and since then it has spread widely in the Mediterranean region where it has devastated ornamental palms, particularly the Canary Island date palm.

Weevils do not survive the UK winter. However, the larvae can. Larvae are legless, about 50mm long, with a creamy-white body and reddish-brown head. Adult weevils are not expected to emerge until June. They are about 35mm long, with a characteristic long curved extension to the front of the head called a rostrum.

Larvae complete their lifecycle inside the palm, forming galleries as they tunnel their way through the trunk and bases of palm fronds. Adult beetles are most likely to be seen in the UK from June-September when summer temperatures are highest. Larvae, pupae, pupal cases, and adults, can be found in the dead or dying crown of the palm or infested fronds. In heavily infested palms fallen empty pupal cases and dead adults may be found around the base of the palm. Early infestations or low numbers of the weevil in plants are very difficult to detect. The older leaves of a palm begin to droop during the early stages of infestation but quickly collapse. Later stages or large infestations cause a decreased size and yellowing of the frond, particularly the new fronds as the larvae destroy the growing point of the palm. Eventually the frond canopy becomes very small and distorted relative to the trunk and the crown dies.

As climate change advances it is increasingly likely that this pest will become established in the UK, probably arriving first on the south coast. At VBG we are already monitoring our Palm health in expectation. Palms may now only be exported from the EU with plant passports certifying they have been grown in a controlled and monitored environment for two years prior to commerce. The growth of new taxa from seed obviate this problem, but is a very slow process.

**In the 1800s perhaps just two taxa could be considered safe out of doors in the UK. The intervening century has shown perhaps a 20-fold increase in this number due to climate change. In 2005 a new Palm Garden for the 21st century was begun, to be seen as eventual successor to the Arid Bank.*

Working at Tresco Abbey Gardens By Indi Wyatt

When the opportunity to travel to the mild and exotic island of Tresco amid the cold and wet of February here on the Isle of Wight, I couldn't have been more thrilled!

I have known about Tresco and its magical Abbey Gardens for a little while; some of my former fellow apprentices previously had the chance to work in the garden under the sponsorship of the Friends' Society. Unfortunately, during my time as an apprentice, the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented travel, and I was unable to visit. Upon returning to Ventnor Botanic Gardens last October after two years of working for two outstanding Island nurseries, I asked Chris Kidd about the possibility of travelling to Tresco. February was the most practical time – just before the holiday season was beginning on Tresco. He put me into contact with Tresco Abbey Garden's curator, Mike Nelhams, and it was a yes! I swiftly began planning the journey and preparing my belongings for my first ever working holiday.

View from the helicopter

Perhaps the most thrilling part of the pilgrimage was right at the beginning – I had decided to travel from Penzance to Tresco by helicopter! Not just because it was *way* more fun than travelling by ferry, but during the winter, the ferry sailings are very limited, so the helicopter (and Skybus plane) are the most practical methods of transport to and from the Scilly Isles. I left my Airbnb early in the morning and made my way to Penzance Heliport. Once the initial travel nerves had eased after the helicopter shakily left the ground, I was treated to some breathtaking views of the very tip of the UK's west coast. Shortly after Land's End had disappeared from sight, the scattered and beautiful Isles of Scilly appeared below, resembling a pocket of miniature paradises. The helicopter had swiftly approached its destination and we began descending amongst the exotic tree canopy of Tresco Island.

Andrew Lawson, the head gardener at Tresco Abbey Gardens, had kindly been waiting to greet me upon my arrival at the heliport, and after meeting we got into his mini pick-up truck for a brief tour of the island. Immediately after setting off around the tiny, winding roads, I was amazed at just how *white* the sands of the beach were, and I was even more captivated by the stunning azure, crystal-clear seawater. Even in February, I felt as if I had been transported to a tiny tropical oasis. Andrew then

showed me to my cottage accommodation and took me to the Abbey Gardens to meet the rest of the team.

Tresco's team of gardeners consisted of full-time staff, students on the Scholarship, and volunteers like me staying within the Island's accommodation cottages. After introducing me to the others, Andrew walked me around the gardens, sharing his wealth of knowledge and pointing out countless species of plants – some familiar, but plenty I had never seen or heard of before! A few plants in particular – such as *Sparmannia africana* (African hemp) and *Leucadendron argenteum* (Silver tree) which I had been so used to seeing at a certain stunted size, now towered above me in this incredibly mild climate. This was an entirely new feeling, in which my predisposition and expectation of what plants *should* look like outside had been completely thrown out the window. It was awe-inspiring to see these species truly thriving.

As for the Abbey Garden itself, it is hard to describe the awe and amazement you feel as you pick your way through its winding paths and climb your way along the sunny terraces. In its lower canopy, beneath the shelter and protection of tree cover and fringing hedges, you discover a feast of fern species. From the swarms of *Zealandia pustulata* (Kangaroo fern) that sweep across the ground and scramble up tree trunks with its creeping rhizomes – to the outstanding *Sphaeropteris medullaris* (black tree ferns) standing tall, unveiling their giant 'fiddlehead' fronds from the crowns atop their jet-black trunks.

Wobbly trunk! Butia odorata

Halfway through your ascent of the garden, you find a wide range of plants inhabiting the middle terraces. One of my favourites was *Rhopalostylis sapida* (Nikau palm); it is the only palm species native to mainland New Zealand, but it seems to love Tresco Island as hundreds of its seedlings appear throughout the garden. It is very slow growing, taking decades to even begin to produce a trunk, but the wait is worth it for its bright red fruits, beautifully ringed trunk and huge arching fronds. Unfortunately, it won't tolerate frost and hence is unable to grow well elsewhere in the UK without winter protection.

Amid the middle terraces is also where you'll find two other spectacular palm specimens. The enormous *Jubaea chilensis* (Chilean wine palm), is so large it dwarfs its fellow palms beneath its impressive canopy. Not far from this beast stands a distinctive *Butia odorata* (jelly palm) with a rather amusing wiggly trunk!

Despite the many wonders of the lower and middle regions of Tresco Abbey Garden, it seems everyone's favourite always manages to be the very top terraces – but once you make your way to the top, you quickly realise why. The top terraces are populated with numerous show-stopping specimens, such as huge-flowering *Proteas,* bristly *Banksias* and *Aloe arborescens* that light up the rocky cliff face with their fiery blooms. But the view from the top path is truly remarkable, with the faint outline of

neighbouring islands in the near distance framed by the surrounding exotic canopy. In particular, the mighty, architectural and endlessly fascinating backdrop of *Araucaria heterophylla* (Norfok Island pine) distorts the reality that Tresco is, in fact, an island in the UK where it is somehow possible to support such an amazing collection of plants.

So, what is Tresco's secret to growing these plants outside? Even though it is situated less than 30 miles from Land's End, it boasts a collection that we typically only see growing within the protection of glasshouses. The main reason is that Tresco, and the neighbouring Scilly islands, remain frost free all year round, and rarely see temperatures drop below 3°C. Surrounding salty winds also help to keep frost at bay if temperatures drop to freezing and below. It also doesn't exceed 25°C on average during the summer months; this narrow, mild temperature range is what allows so many species to thrive!

I had an amazing time helping the immensely knowledgeable and passionate team in the garden. Everyday jobs ranged from feeding the resident kitchen-garden chickens, propagating cuttings, planting display containers, weeding paths and clearing borders. A special job I was thrilled to help with was sowing fern spores – something I had never done before! Most challenging were Andrew's grilling plant identification tests … a very humbling experience indeed!

Exotic: Beautiful golden pheasant

As if to add to the magic of Tresco, it is populated with an abundance of happy red squirrels (which fondly reminded me of home) and exotic pheasant species boasting beautiful plumage. Golden pheasants and the elusive Lady Amherst's pheasants roam and forage in the garden – and some are bold enough to eat out of your hand.

There is no denying the magic of Tresco Abbey Garden and how it has endlessly inspired me, but my whole experience living on this beautiful and humble island is what truly made my trip so special and unforgettable. I met some amazing like-minded people, spent hours roaming beaches that teemed with marine life, and found peace in cycling around the island each day, adoring the scenery around me wherever I went. I also managed to squeeze in a day trip to St Mary's (the largest island) at the weekend. I feel so fortunate for the short time I was able to spend among some incredible horticultural minds, and having the privilege to work in the gardens is an experience I will never forget. I cannot recommend visiting Tresco enough – yes, it's a little pricey to reach the island, but if you ever get the chance … it's worth every penny!

Working in the garden

Weather in the Garden

(October 2022 to March 2023) **by Chris Watts**

This autumn was warm and wet, with the three months – September, October and November – seeing temperatures and rainfall well above average. This was the second successive November with record rain totals, but from opposite ends of the spectrum! Last year was extremely dry, this year excessively wet. It took only the first two hours of meteorological November ie until 11am on the 1st, to overtake last year's small amount of 10.9mm; the 100mm mark was reached on the 5th, and 200mm by the 21st. Although historical records are incomplete, the final total of 245mm was greater than the previous November record of 1940 (229.1mm), and greater than the all-time high of December 1914 (239.3mm). Remarkably, sunshine levels remained close to normal, just three days being completely sunless.

December was the coldest month of the year, and the only month of 2022 to register temperatures which were not above average. A frosty spell of weather between the 8th and 17th brought seven air frosts – a total duration of 71 hours. Unsettled weather then dominated the first fortnight of the New Year; however, 50 days from the 16th January until the 6th March were essentially dry, leading to the driest February for 30 years (since 1993).

March came in like a lamb but went out like a lion, with a wild stormy day on the 31st. It was a miserable month, rainfall nearly double the average, sunshine just over half the average. If there are any pluses, and if nil returns are as valuable as positive ones then there was no air frost and not a single flake of snow, unlike many sites in the UK. But it suited the magnolias which gave a magnificent welcome to the Garden on entry.

	Temp °C	mm	Days (1+ mm)	Temp °C 1ft depth	[1]	[2]	[3]
October	15.0++	116.6++	16	14.8	8.3	0	25.4
November	11.4++	245.4++	20	12.0	5.0	0	40.5
December	6.2	111.6++	12	7.0	-2.5	7	33.6
Year 2022	12.9++	882.9++	116	13.8	-2.5	8	40.5
January	6.6+	102.1++	15	6.8	-1.9	3	25.2
February	7.3++	8.3---	4	6.6	0.7	0	3.1
March	8.1++	105.4++	18	8.4	0.6	0	17.9

[1] Lowest temperature °C [2] No of air frosts [3] Wettest day rain total in mm

Springtime Orchids on the Island

Start looking for them and you can't stop, says **Stephen Oakes-Monger**

The Isle of Wight boasts some eighteen species of wild orchid, almost a third of the 56 species that occur in Britain, while a further eight have also been found here in the past, though have now unfortunately been lost. Of these eight, the Scarce Tongue Orchid *(Serapias neglecta)*, a non-native species, is thought to have arrived with imported seed, and was found in a cornfield near Binstead in 1918 where it survived for several years before being moved to a garden. In 1933 and 1934, a single plant of the Lizard Orchid *(Himantoglossum hircinum)* was found near Havenstreet, but has not been seen since. The remaining six species were considered as endangered or on the brink of being lost, and as the number of plants and sites for them gradually declined, possibly due to changes in or loss of habitat, these species also eventually died out.

In the Springtime as the Bluebells, Wood Anemones and Celandines come into flower, the Early Purple Orchid *(Orchis mascula)* is one of three spring orchids found on the Island. Their tall purple flower spikes measure from three to 16 inches (8-40cm) in height, with 10 to 50 purple flowers. Their leaves are bright green and shiny, with deep purple spots and blotches and they bloom from the beginning of April through to the middle or end of May. On the Isle of Wight they used to be known by the local name 'kettle cases'.

Early Purple Orchid (Orchis mascula): one of three spring orchids found on the Island

Occurring mainly on chalk and limestone soils, on the Island they are found in graveyards and cemeteries, on roadside verges and on the ridge of open chalk downland right across the centre of the Island. They are also found in Bluebell woods, thickets and ancient coppiced woodlands of mixed Oak *(Quercus)*, Ash *(Fraxinus)* and Hazel *(Corylus)* across the northern part of the Island. In some sites they may be found in good numbers.

The next species and the one most likely to be confused with the Early Purple Orchid, as it flowers at the same time and is similar in appearance is the Green Winged or Green Veined Orchid *(Anacamptis morio)*. It is slightly shorter in height, being between three and 10 inches (8-25cm) tall, with five to 15 purple flowers arranged in a loose spike.

The two broad upper sepals, located on either side of the entrance to the spur, are purple and marked with five to eight dark green veins running down their length,

which give rise to the orchid's alternative name. In the Early Purple Orchid these upper sepals rise up like wings above the hood, curving outwards and almost touching back to back. The veins and the wings are the best way of telling the two species apart. In the Green Winged Orchid the third upper sepal and two smaller strap-shaped petals form a tight hood. The third petal or the lip, which is also purple, hangs down below and is divided into three lobes, a narrow central lobe and two broader more rounded outer lobes with crinkled edges. The centre of the lip fades from purple into pale pink or white at the entrance to the spur and is marked with deep purple blotches or spots, while the Early Purple Orchid's markings are smaller and not as bold. In both species pale pink or pure white plants may sometimes be found.

Up close: Green Winged Orchid

On the Island the Green Winged Orchid occurs on open downland and in graveyards and cemeteries, where it often grows alongside the Early Purple Orchid, but also in damp meadows across the north and centre of the Island where there are still some really good populations. Some village greens, golf courses and playing fields also have populations and I have also seen it on a number of lawns.

The last of what we could term the spring orchids, the Early Spider Orchid *(Ophrys sphegodes)*, has always been very rare on the Island and is also a bit of an enigma. Apparently plants were gathered in the 1830s on the Ventnor and Shanklin Downs, in the area around Cowleaze, Bonchurch and Luccombe Landslip. The next record was of a single plant gathered on Brading Down in 1945. Then after a gap of almost 50 years, in 1992 another single plant was found and photographed close to the edge of the cliff on Tennyson Down. In 2003 a further single plant turned up on a lawn near Saltern Wood, Norton. It was then another 10 years before a West Wight Ranger leading a walk on Monday 13th May 2013 on Tennyson Down discovered yet another single plant.

In 2015, having heard about the 2013 plant, my partner Sharon and I decided to visit the Isle of Wight to see what we could find. To our delight, on May 13th we found a single plant close to the cliff edge not far from the Tennyson Monument. We could not find it the following year but did find it again on May 6th 2017. In 2019 Sharon and I moved to the island. In 2020, again a single plant appeared, this time close to the Needles, which also flowered in 2021 and 2022. But that is not the end of the story because in 2022 a second plant was found between the Needles and the Tennyson Monument and three more to the east of the monument, making five in all. This is probably the first time in more than 150 years that more than one plant has been found in any one year and could mean that the species may be re-establishing itself on the Island.

On the mainland the Early Spider Orchid is more or less restricted to the south coast, with 25 to 30 sites in Kent, a few in Sussex, at Cuckmere Haven and along the Seven Sisters; while in Dorset, thousands of plants grow on the Purbeck Limestone between

St Albans Head and Swanage. On the Island they have only been found on the chalk. It is possible that the Island plants originate from wind-borne seed from the Dorset population or there may be an as yet undiscovered colony either on Tennyson Down or lower down on the cliff face.

The Early Spider Orchid is a shortish plant measuring 4-8 inches (10-20cm) in height with two to seven flowers in the spike. The three sepals are broad oval or oblong with rounded tips and are yellowy-green in colour and radiate outwards at 9 and 3 o'clock with the upper sepal, which curves forwards, at 12 o'clock. Between them the two upper petals are shorter and narrower with flat tips and are angled at 45°. They are a darker yellowish-green or even brownish in colour. The lip is a dark chocolate brown, oval or roundish in shape and velvety in texture, with two furry shoulder-like humps, the whole resembling the fat body of a spider. In the centre of the lip there is a shiny bluish-grey mark either resembling the letter H or two parallel lines.

The Early Purple and Green Winged Orchids are relatively easy to find from mid-April onwards, but it is always worth keeping an eye out for the much rarer Early Spider Orchid, as it has clearly been found across quite a large area of the Island's chalk in the past, and there are still many suitable habitats where it might persist undetected. Good hunting! [See Botany Club, Page 30]

Green Winged or Green Veined Orchid: flowers in downland or graveyards

Dates for your Diary

National Garden Scheme Open Garden Sat/Sun 10th and 11th June at the home of Judi Lines, Ashcliff, The Pitts, Bonchurch. The Friends are providing the refreshments so we are looking for volunteers, as well as plenty of visitors!

Bonchurch Open Gardens

Come to beautiful Bonchurch and visit around 15 fabulous gardens Sat/Sun 8th & 9th July. Tickets with map are £5.00, valid for both days and purchased at the Village Pond Gate or from the Cream Tea Garden on the Village Road displaying the Large Yellow Banner.

Entry can also be made by purchasing a ticket and map at any of the participating gardens that you see with a number outside and Open Garden Notice. A shuttle bus will be running through the village. Car parking is available on the Shore Road car park.

Please be aware that it is a CASH ONLY event.

Annual General Meeting of Ventnor Botanic Garden Friends' Society 20th April 2023

AGM, St Catherine's Church, Ventnor

We were especially pleased to welcome members to our alternative venue of St Catherine's Church, Ventnor, for an informal pre-meeting drink. Thirty-eight members attended and we had also received 22 formal apologies from our loyal members.

Opening the meeting, Chairman Val Pitts reflected on the year since she was elected, when she had been so positive about the future, looking forward to restoring some of the fun that is the constant theme of accounts of activities organised by the Friends. Starting in Oct 2021, highlights included the Emma Tennant art exhibition and film, the arrival in January 2022 of Michelle Cain as Head Gardener, the planting of the 50th Anniversary palm with the High Sheriff in attendance, and a trip to Wisley, alongside regular walks and talks returning after Covid. Val reminded the membership of Phil Le May's advice to the AGM in 2021 – to keep members fully informed to enable them to help and support to the Committee, and so giving it a mandate to move forward in a positive way. She therefore invited members to ask questions and speak freely at the meeting's end.

In her report for October '21 to September '22 Val gave her 'warts and all' chronological account of events. All members will receive a fuller account of this in due course. Simon Goodenough's letter to the County Press about the state of the Botanic Garden generated headlines around the world. The attribution of this by the CIC to a Friends' 'campaign' has made the ongoing relationship with the CIC very difficult. Val concluded by saying she "hoped her report had given the members some insight into the work of the Trustees and Committee," which, representing an Independent Charity, "must at all times act in good faith and in accordance with Charity Law to further the objects of the Charity, and we will continue to work as best we can in the circumstances."

Vice Chairman Peter Coleman presented the Treasurer's Report, in Tim Woodcock's absence. Our major charitable expense is the cost of all Trish Brenchley's work, supporting volunteers. The annual return will be uploaded to the Charity Commission website in due course.

Our President Mike Fitt took over the Chair to oversee the elections. He thanked the current Committee, Trustees and particularly Val for the amazing job they do, stressing how they have maintained the friendliness and positivity of the Society, of which he has been a very long-term member. He also congratulated the Friends for their pivotal contribution to the training of the former apprentices who are achieving great success. [See Indi, Page 27]. Caroline Peel had recently stepped down and Peter Coleman had joined the Trustees. He and Val Pitts, co-opted as a Trustee after the last AGM, were formally elected. Other Committee members were all duly re-elected.

Under 'any other business', there followed an informal discussion where members present gave their thoughts about ways forward, asked questions and shared their interactions with the CIC. Peter Coleman thanked the members, saying this could help us to find a way forward as, he said, "we are keen to work constructively as best we can in the circumstances and to ensure that money is spent appropriately". He asked those present if they could confirm their support with a show of hands, which was unanimous.

The AGM concluded and was followed by the presentations of the Harold Hillier Award for 2023 and a new Certificate of Recognition from the RHS for Affiliated Societies. [See Pages 17 to 20]

The *extra* Extra Mile

The AGM took a surprising turn, not least for **Sally Peake,** when she was given an RHS Recognition Award. **Jenny Parker** held the secret, **Rob Mew** of the IoW College added his accolade, and our President **Mike Fitt** presented the award.

Surprise! Mike Fitt presents Sally Peake with the RHS Recognition Award

Jenny Parker writes: During the pandemic when horticultural shows were cancelled, I asked the RHS if we could award a Banksian medal to Trish Brenchley for her outstanding support for the Garden during lockdown, and they agreed. Since then, they have (following my lead!) gone on to introduce an annual Recognition Certificate for the Affiliated Societies to award to one of their members for 'going the extra mile'.

So, this is the first time we will make this award and Sally Peake has been chosen. But of course, this is not in recognition of going the extra mile in the last year but for going the extra mile *every* year – it is a tiny acknowledgement of the huge amount she has done for VBGFS.

Cakes at the Hopfest

Good ideas seem to ooze from her very pores. Sally joined the Committee in 2006 to help Jonyth with events, and got stuck in straightaway, coming up with imaginative ways to raise money from exhibitions, soirees, parties, garden visits as well as finding interesting speakers, who she would host overnight at her own home. In the background she simply slogged away at filling in yet another grant application form, and it was Sally who on hearing Tesco were awarding grants to local organisations with their scheme to reduce the use of plastic bags, secured £10,000 for VBG's hop yard.

In 2015 a young Portuguese couple ran the research Mimulus trials at VBG, and of course they stayed with Sally – who naturally got stuck in with some physical help with the project.

Sally became VBGFS Chairman in 2016, and by 2018 had organised the building and decoration of the Aboriginal Rock, and a grand opening.

She thought the Royal Academy of Arts' fundraising idea, 'Secret Art' was pretty nifty and managed to persuade

Sally with Brian Kidd

Secret Art Event in 2017

Sally with Noel Kingsbury

Alistair Cook, Head Gardener at Lambeth Palace Gardens 2011

Cutting VBG's 45th Birthday Cake with Keith Brewer

many artists to donate a postcard-sized painting or artwork. The twist was you didn't know, until it was yours, whether you had a Firmstone or an Alan Titchmarsh, or a piece by a gifted amateur. It didn't matter. They were all sold for £50 and the preview made for a great evening at VBG. This was when I first joined the Friends and I have happily worked as Sally's sidekick at events since.

Sally made friends with the botanical artist Emma Tennant, who so loved her experience at Ventnor, and being looked after by Sally and the Friends, that she held an exhibition in which all sales proceeds went to the Friends. [See Emma Tennant, Inside Back page]

To celebrate the Garden's 45th anniversary Sally organised a whole week of activities in the Garden. It was a huge success.

By far her most outstanding contribution to the long term support of our Garden, however, has been the Apprentice Scheme. Sally took what is one of the fundamental tenets of the VBG Friends' Society – education – and used our Charitable Status to be able to claim Gift Aid from every willing visitor to the Garden. Most visitors were of course very happy to gift an extra pound towards an excellent cause. Not only did that raise enough money to support a young apprentice, but it also paid for their onsite mentor, Trish Brenchley. Sally went on to liaise with the College to ensure a proper rounded horticultural education, sat on the interview committee, and was always available to mentor the successful candidates throughout their time at VBG. Each of our apprentices had a trip to work at Tresco, the Garden Isle of the Isles of Scilly [see Indi, Page 9]. Sadly the apprenticeship scheme ended, but every apprentice who has been trained at VBG has cited Sally Peake for special thanks and praise.

And the Garden would not be where it is today without Trish, who we still fund – another of Sally's initiatives – and who looks after the Volunteers, who are essential workers in the Garden.

This is merely a snapshot of Sally's portfolio of achievements for the Garden – and this award is one way of saying a very big thank you.

Rob Mew, of the Isle of Wight College, attending for the Harold Hillier award, took the opportunity to formerly thank Sally for her collaboration on the Apprenticeship Scheme:

"In the time I have been at the College I worked with young people and older people, and for nine years I had the privilege of working with Sally. Together we resurrected the apprenticeship programme. If you look at the history of the VBG apprentices, they have gone on to do amazing things. Indi Wyatt has just been accepted onto the Kew Diploma Course – only 12 of the applicants, which are international, are accepted each year. That's quite a thing. All the team involved should be very proud. Another apprentice went to RHS Wisley, and has gone on to work at Highgrove. There is a real track record of success in the VBG Apprenticeship programme, and I'd like to thank Sally. She has been amazing as the Education Officer for the Friends."

He added: "Its success is down to the ethos of the Friends. The enrichment the students have had from the programme with Ventnor and the Friends has been absolutely stunning. They get so much more than anybody else on the training programme, and that's because of the enrichment you've supported as an organisation."

Rosemary Stewart, former Hon Sec and Friends' archivist, recalls some of the events in which Sally played a key part:

2006	Joined committee to help Jonyth with events.
2007	Organised visit to a member for a big Pimms Party.
	Talk by David Howard who was then Head Gardener at Highgrove.
	Auction.
2008	Got a grant and organised two-day Hopfest.
	Compiled 21st anniversary Exhibition about the Friends.
2009	Jonyth retired – Sally organised party.
	Visit to Highgrove (2nd visit).
2010	Talk by Jekka McVicar.
2011	Organised opening of display of Mosaics.
	Visit to Lambeth Palace Gardens.
2013	Talk and walk with Noel Kingsbury (had him to stay).
2015	Mimulus trials - had Portuguese couple to stay.
2016	Became Chairman.
2017	Instigated Secret Art.
	Organised VBG's 45th Birthday Party.
2018	Talk by Simon Goodenough.
	Aborigine rock building and opening.
2019	Hop field paths and information boards.
	Organised weather recorder event.

She organised RHS lectures at Riverside and at VBG.
She looked after French students as paying guests.
She took the Apprentices under her wing.

THE HAROLD HILLIER AWARD 2023

Jennie Fradgley

The Harold Hillier Award is given annually to somebody for their outstanding contribution to horticulture on the Isle of Wight. This year's recipient was **Jennie Fradgley,** who taught horticulture at the Isle of Wight College, and has organised the National Garden Scheme (NGS) garden openings on the Island for 15 years.

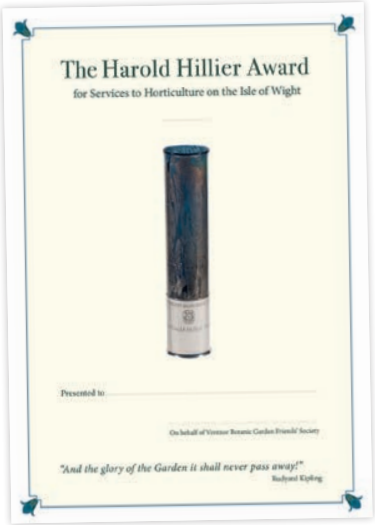
Congratulating Jennie Fradgley on the Harold Hillier Award, **Rob Mew** described the variety of situations she had embraced in working at the college.

"I've worked with Jennie for 15 of my 30 years at the College. You find yourself teaching all manner of young people, older people, in all sorts of environments. We taught full time on campus while working with young people on the YTS training scheme – and went to prison four times a week, at Parkhurst and Albany, with IRA terrorists and mass murderers! The raft of people you find yourself working with may have physical disabilities or mental health problems. The range of skills Jennie offered was always positive. She's also a magnificent cook – so our team barbecues were fantastic (none of that shop-bought coleslaw for us.")

"Jennie's had a stunning impact on young people's lives."

Outstanding: Jennie Fradgley receiving Harold Hillier Vase from Mike Fitt, VBG Friends' Society President

Sally Peake described Jennie's impact on Island horticulture after she left the College and became organiser of the National Garden Scheme (NGS). "I have known Jennie from 2003, when she retired from the College. It was her inspirational productive garden, the range, quality and quantity of production that inspired me. Her garden was open through the NGS open garden scheme and for 15 years as County Organiser (until 2022) she chose the gardens to open. The Island's horticultural community should be truly grateful. What I didn't know, when John Harrison nominated Jennie, was that his own wife had been C O for the previous 15 years, so when he nominated Jennie, your Executive Committee was delighted to add her name to the distinguished alumni of recipients of this award."



New: The Certificate

Sally announced that a new certificate would be presented, to Jennie and past and future recipients, featuring a photograph of the Harold Hillier Award vase.

Jennie Fradgley, receiving the Harold Hillier vase from VBGFS President Mike Fitt, said she was "absolutely gobsmacked" to have been chosen, adding: "But I'm over the moon, particularly as its Ventnor. It's been my town since 1967." She recalled how she had watched the Botanic Garden develop from being the slowly demolished Hospital. "I remember Sir Harold Hillier coming over and doing lots of work. It then became part of my life with my children."

She responded to a request for produce in 2006 at a show in Ventnor Park, and found she'd won lots of prizes. "It went on for years, but I gave up because I kept winning the Banksian Medal (from the Royal Horticultural Society). That was my push to start growing in a big way. Then there was Covid, and I produced more. And now there is a financial crisis, and I'm growing even more."

She finished saying: "I love growing things, I love trees, I keep growing them and propagating them, and half my garden is a forest. That's me."

Lights, camera: HH Vase being photographed

Inspirational: Jennie's garden

No 'Fratting'!

Young men and women patients weren't supposed to mingle at the Old Hospital. Yet **Kathleen** and **Anthony** met, married in 1957 and are together still after 66 years

In love: Kathleen Green née Edwards (age 89) Anthony Graham Green (age 94): Patients, October 1952 - April 1953

I was just 19 when I went to Ventnor. I had been treated for TB for some time, involving bed rest, injections and drugs. I travelled to the Royal National Hospital for Diseases of the Chest on the Isle of Wight to get back to a normal life, after six months of rest.

We arrived feeling very apprehensive after these strange teenage days. George, who was the formidable head porter and resided in the lodge on the left of the entrance, was there to welcome us and to see we didn't escape! To our eyes the hospital was enormous but rather grim. We were in a 'two bedder' room, with one wall open onto a balcony – and what a view! The now-Botanic Garden was all ours, and Steephill Cove completed our spectacular view.

On our arrival a full medical was in order because the patients came from all over the UK. Then 'bed rest' again for a while. Fraternising was a no-no. Girls were at one end of the hospital and boys the other. By Christmas I was up and dressed and starting 'the grading'! Every patient was given a timetable and once they were out of bed rest and initial check, they were expected to do 'graded' exercise and some chores. The initial exercise was taking short walks in the grounds with rest periods, which would gradually increase as they improved.

The hospital looked after mostly young teens to 20s, with just a few older patients. In the huge dining room girls and boys were, once again, separated. There was, however, lots of eye contact!

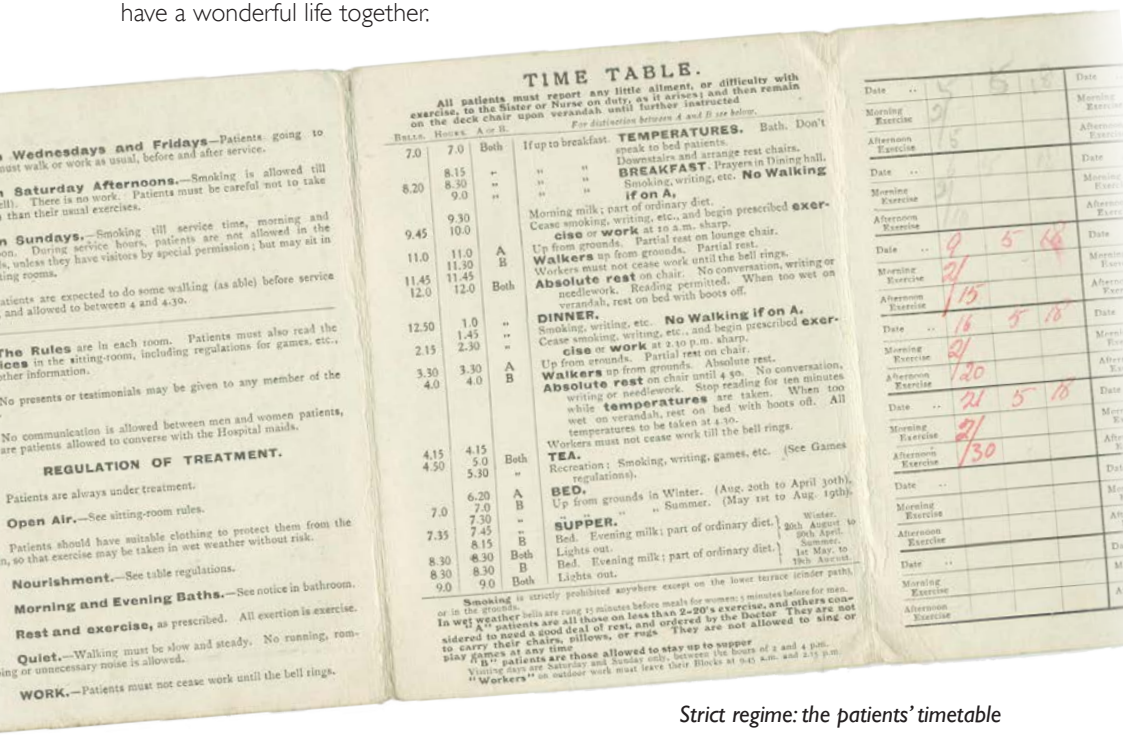
Gradually, as we grew stronger, we were allowed to be up and dressed all day and eating all meals in the dining room. Then walks were gradually introduced in the lovely grounds, for just a short time. We were also able to choose from the activities which were available. I played the grand piano in the lounge, made a very wonky basket with woven willow, did a bit of planting, made a pastry and knitted a teapot cover, with Mrs Pilling. This was known as Occupational Therapy. This time the boys and girls

were allowed to mix for these activities, so we began to feel human again! We also had Whist Drives, Beetle Drives, and I became a DJ for a while on Radio Ventnor. We were allowed a movie once in a while - there was no TV then. I had never been so lucky because I really enjoyed the experience. Then, after months of this enjoyable time, my future changed . . .

We were allowed outside for long walks or for a coffee in one of the little nearby cafés. My life changed forever on one of these little jaunts. I met my lovely Tony, who lived in Wimbledon, like me! 'Fratting' was still banned but keeping young patients apart was almost impossible. We were only a couple of months away from the end of our six-month stay. It was a real romance, true love that continued back home in Wimbledon.

We married in March 1957 and went on to have three beautiful children. We have also been blessed with four wonderful grandchildren. We have been back to Ventnor many times. We celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary at Steephill Cove with my daughter and all the family, and our Diamond Wedding Anniversary six years ago. We even managed the steps down to Steephill Cove, where Tony and I had met all those years ago.

We are a little more disabled now so as my son is taking us back for a couple of days I felt I had to say thank you to the place that was not only a hospital, making us better, but for also being the place where we met each other, fell in love, and went on to have a wonderful life together.



Wednesdays and Fridays—Patients going to must walk or work as usual, before and after service.

Saturday Afternoons.—Smoking is allowed till ell. There is no work. Patients must be careful not to take than their usual exercises.

Sundays.—Smoking till service time, morning and on. During service hours, patients are not allowed in the s, unless they have visitors by special permission; but may sit in ing rooms.

atients are expected to do some walking (as able) before service and allowed to between 4 and 4.30.

The Rules are in each room. Patients must also read the **ices** in the sitting-room, including regulations for games, etc., ther information.

No presents or testimonials may be given to any member of the

No communication is allowed between men and women patients, are patients allowed to converse with the Hospital maids.

REGULATION OF TREATMENT.

Patients are always under treatment.

Open Air.—See sitting-room rules.

Patients should have suitable clothing to protect them from the n, so that exercise may be taken in wet weather without risk.

Nourishment.—See table regulations.

Morning and Evening Baths.—See notice in bathroom.

Rest and exercise, as prescribed. All exertion is exercise.

Quiet.—Walking must be slow and steady. No running, romping or unnecessary noise is allowed.

WORK.—Patients must not cease work until the bell rings.

TIME TABLE.

All patients must report any little ailment, or difficulty with exercise, to the Sister or Nurse on duty, as it arises; and then remain on the deck chair upon verandah until further instructed

For distinction between A and B see below.

Bells.	Hours.	A or B.	
7.0	7.0	Both	If up to breakfast. **TEMPERATURES.** Bath. Don't speak to bed patients.
	8.15	"	" " Downstairs and arrange rest chairs.
8.20	8.30	"	" " **BREAKFAST.** Prayers in Dining hall.
	9.0	"	" " Smoking, writing, etc. **No Walking if on A,**
	9.30		Morning milk; part of ordinary diet.
9.45	10.0		Cease smoking, writing, etc., and begin prescribed **exercise** or **work** at 10 a.m. sharp.
11.0	11.0	A	Up from grounds. Partial rest.
	11.30	B	**Walkers** up from grounds. Partial rest.
11.45	11.45		Workers must not cease work until the bell rings.
12.0	12.0	Both	**Absolute rest** on chair. No conversation, writing or needlework. Reading permitted. When too wet on verandah, rest on bed with boots off.
12.50	1.0	"	**DINNER.** **No Walking if on A.**
	1.45	"	Smoking, writing, etc., and begin prescribed **exercise** or **work** at 2.30 p.m. sharp.
2.15	2.30	"	Up from grounds. Partial rest on chair.
3.30	3.30	A	**Walkers** up from grounds. Absolute rest.
4.0	4.0	B	**Absolute rest** on chair until 4.30. No conversation, writing or needlework. Stop reading for ten minutes while **temperatures** are taken. When too wet on verandah, rest on bed with boots off. All temperatures to be taken at 4.30.
			Workers must not cease work till the bell rings.
4.15	4.15		**TEA.**
4.50	5.0	Both	Recreation; Smoking, writing, games, etc. (See Games regulations).
	5.30	"	
	6.20	A	**BED.**
	7.0	B	Up from grounds in Winter. (Aug. 20th to April 30th). " " Summer. (May 1st to Aug. 19th).
7.0	7.30	"	
7.35	7.45	"	**SUPPER.** Winter. 20th August to 30th April. Summer. 1st May. to 19th August.
	8.15	B	Bed. Evening milk; part of ordinary diet.
8.30	8.30	Both	Lights out.
8.30	8.30	B	Bed. Evening milk; part of ordinary diet.
9.0	9.0	Both	Lights out.

Smoking is strictly prohibited anywhere except on the lower terrace (cinder path) or in the grounds.

In wet weather bells are rung 15 minutes before meals for women; 5 minutes before for men.

"A" **patients are all those on less than 2-20's exercise, and others considered to need a good deal of rest, and ordered by the Doctor. They are not to carry their chairs, pillows, or rugs. They are not allowed to sing or play games at any time.**

"B" **patients are those allowed to stay up to supper.**

Visiting days are Saturdays and Sunday only, between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.

"**Workers**" on outdoor work must leave their Blocks at 8.45 a.m. and 2.15 p.m.

Date ..			Date ..		
Morning Exercise			Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise			Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..			Date ..		
Morning Exercise			Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise			Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..	9	5 14	Date ..		
Morning Exercise	21		Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise	15		Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..	16	5 18	Date ..		
Morning Exercise	21		Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise	20		Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..	21	5 18	Date ..		
Morning Exercise	21		Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise	30		Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..			Date ..		
Morning Exercise			Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise			Afternoon Exercise		
Date ..			Date ..		
Morning Exercise			Morning Exercise		
Afternoon Exercise			Afternoon Exercise		

Strict regime: the patients' timetable

Madeira Botanic Garden

Maggie Aldred on a beautiful day, well spent

When a friend and I spent last Christmas in Madeira, the Botanic Garden was the first item on the list to visit. On a beautifully warm sunny day with a gentle breeze blowing, the cable car is a fun experience but not if you have no head for heights! Floor to ceiling windows afford a panoramic view of the valley as it winds its perilous way up 300 metres to where the garden is situated.

Opened in 1960, the area was originally part of an estate belonging to the family of William Reid, founder of the famous Reids Hotel in Funchal. The garden is now owned by the Regional Government of Madeira and apart from being a beautiful place of leisure it is also a centre for science and culture. The garden houses more than 2000 exotic plants from all continents, some of which are endangered in their places of origin. Due to the increasing loss of biodiversity and habitats all over the world, this space also has a research and conservation area for preserving endangered species and, because of its balmy sub-tropical climate, can successfully house species from both hot and cold areas of the world.

Walkways edged with Strelitzia regina (Bird of Paradise)

There was no map available when we visited but most of the plants were well labelled and we found it easy to navigate our way around while gazing at the spectacular views across Funchal and out to the ocean beyond . . . no wonder the island is called the Pearl of the Atlantic. Covering around 20 acres, five of which are landscaped, most of the garden is terraced and divided into specific areas: Madeiran indigenous and endemic species, trees and shrubs, including topiary, succulents, agro-industrial plants, medicinal and aromatic plants and a large palm garden. There is also a seed bank that was set up in the 1990s. Walkways were edged with spectacular displays of *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise) blooms, and even in December the garden hosts a rich display of colour in abundance.

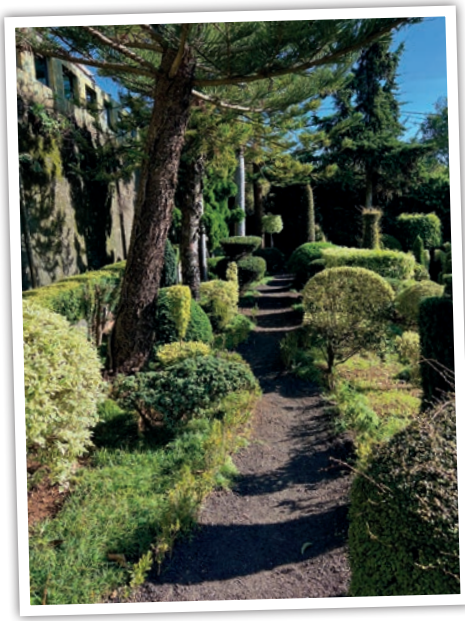
A Natural History Museum, housed in what was the old manor house, displays an interesting collection of birds, fossils, rocks, minerals and animals endemic to the island and collected over many years.

As the day got increasingly warm we headed for the small terrace café for refreshments and then the shelter of the palm garden, a cool and shady quiet area to sit and contemplate the beauty around us. In 1997, in the southern section of the garden a collection was created with around 44 species of palm trees and cycads. It's a little slice of paradise.

Among the palm trees, examples of *Bismackia nobilis* (silver palm), *Chambeyronia macrocarpa* (Governor's palm), and several species of the genus Washingtonia stand out. Banana palms here grow bunches of the small sweet Madeiran bananas, sadly now only available to buy and eat on the island.

Returning to the hotel, we opted to take the 31 bus, an unforgettable ride as it grinds its way back down the narrow winding streets of Funchal, with memories of a beautiful day well spent.

Small sweet Madeiran bananas



Terraced and landscaped Topiary

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I'm going to Kew!

Former VBGFS Apprentice **Indi Wyatt** on how she secured one of just 12 places on the Kew Diploma Course

I began thinking about applying for the Kew Diploma last year in the early Autumn; it was during a period of change in my life: I was in the process of resigning from the nursery industry. As much as I enjoyed working under some fantastic nurserymen and women, I felt I had learnt as much as I could within a retail environment, and that it was time to move on. One of my plans was to continue studying horticulture. I looked into a few botanic gardens that offer study programmes – Wisely, Edinburgh, Wales – but of course Kew, being as impressive and prestigious as everyone knows it to be, stood out from the rest.

When I read about the Kew Diploma, it seemed an ambitious and intimidating choice; only a few people are accepted, and the three years of studying were bound to be challenging. However, to have the privilege of working at Kew, within its outstanding collection of plants and under accomplished horticulturalists, was a very inspiring thought. After coming back to Ventnor Botanic Garden in October of 2022, I was reminded of my love of botanic gardens, and decided to begin my application!

After evenings writing and tweaking the application I sent it off and anxiously awaited a response. When I read the email inviting me for an interview, I couldn't believe my luck. Suddenly, I had just under a month to prepare for what was probably one of the most important interviews of my life!

My trip to the island of Tresco happened to be sandwiched in between my receiving the invitation and the interview itself; I was feeling inspired and refreshed after working there. Once I arrived home, I had just over a week to prepare for Kew. The curator Chris Kidd – a previous Kew Diploma student himself – kindly shared with me some of his knowledge and helped me feel more prepared. Still very anxious, I drove myself into London, staying the night at my sister's, and began preparing for my commute the following morning.

It was an early start on the cold and rainy morning of the interview. I walked to Kew from the tube station and headed to the School of Horticulture building. The interview itself was two hours long. I spent the first hour with horticultural technician Kate Dixon. She asked

Prestigious: Kew Gardens. Photograph by Matthew Jeffery

me questions about gardening practises, pest management and many other principles of horticulture. My favourite part of the interview was the plant identification test: I was asked to take apart a daffodil and name each organ of the flower, which felt very brutal! It was an enjoyable interview; I finished my time with Kate feeling fairly relaxed.

New dawn for Indi. Photograph by Matthew Jeffery

The second hour of the interview was spent with Tim Hughes, the Head of School of Horticulture, and Martin Staniforth, Practical Training Manager. This time, I was asked about my career in horticulture so far, and my experience of being a team leader here at VBG. The two took turns firing questions, many about the science of plants, and by the end of the interview I was feeling mentally drained. There were many questions I couldn't answer, and I felt as if I had messed it up. Nonetheless, I was so relieved that it was over, and I spent the afternoon walking around Kew, admiring the gardens and daydreaming about how wonderful it would be to work there myself.

The waiting game had begun as soon as I arrived home. After a little while of hearing nothing I began to think that perhaps I had blown it. However, after three weeks, I received an email from Tim Hughes confirming my place on the Kew Diploma. I really couldn't believe that it was real!

I cannot wait to start studying at Kew this September – to be living in London and working with one of the world's most impressive collection of plants is truly a privilege. In particular I am very excited to be studying plant ecology and conservation, something very important to me after working in a botanic garden.

Looking forward to studying here. Photograph by Matthew Jeffery

The congratulations I have received since earning a place to study at Kew has been so warming. Countless people have inspired me along the way and I certainly wouldn't be where I am now without their help. To everybody who has supported me, you all know who you are and you have my love and gratitude.

CAFÉ BOTANIQUE

Flora & Fauna from the past on Dinosaur Island

We were treated to a talk by Simon Penn and Martyn Hornett, palaeontologists from Dinosaur Isle Museum in Sandown, on Monday 13th February this year. The talk was illustrated with artwork by local paleo artist John Sibbick, and John also brought along quite a lot of his original artwork for us to look at which was displayed around the room.

Dinosaurs rule: Simon Penn focussed on the early Cretaceous period

Through most of Earth's history, the area now forming the Isle of Wight has been below sea level. However, there were two periods when the land was above sea level with plants and animals flourishing. During the talk Simon Penn focused on the flora, fauna and environment of the early Cretaceous (about 125 million years ago) when dinosaurs ruled our planet. Simon described a fauna and environment quite different from that of today: he also shared some of the work on plant microfossils he is doing for his PhD. In the second half of the talk Martyn Hornett looked at the late Eocene period (about 35 million years ago) when groups of now extinct mammals were living here but with much more modern plants.

After the talk there were examples of fossils from the Island for attendees to view and hold. As a small gift there was some fossil turtle from the Isle of Wight for attendees to take home with them as a memento.

Anne Hornett

Dahlias and Sweet Peas – My Busy Year

We had a lovely festive evening on the 12th December. Darren Everest's talk was both informative and fun. (Darren even showed us pictures of him with his wife in their Egyptian dancing outfits).

It was interesting to hear about his methods for the sowing and the planting out of his Sweet Peas, Daffodils, Dahlias and his late flowering chrysanthemums. Especially as he has won so many awards for his displays at various garden shows across the country.

Darren is going to exhibit for the first time at the RHS Chelsea Flower show this year, so we wish him good luck.

We were all treated to a small gift and festive nibbles provided by The Friends of Ventnor Botanic Garden. Also, Ventnor Arts Club had mulled wine as well as their usual drinks for sale. A very enjoyable evening was had by all.

Botany Club Orchid Walk

Wednesday 17th May 2023

We had a lovely afternoon, the sun shone and no rain – always a bonus!

The walk was led by local orchid enthusiast Stephen Oakes-Monger who took us to two locations in the Ashey area, which are his favourite sites to find early orchids.

Following Stephen: Walk of discovery

We met and parked at a local farm as arranged by Stephen. There was a short off-path walk to see the main orchid display at Kemphill Moor Copse.

This part of the walk took about one hour at a gentle pace, with Stephen pointing out interesting plants. We saw Early Purple Orchids with distinctive spotted leaves and Green-winged orchids.

The second visit was to Ashey Cemetery, a short drive away. Luckily the grass hadn't been mowed in all areas so were able to find more Early Purples and Adder's-tongue ferns dotted around the graveyard.

Hopefully we all learnt something from Stephen – I know I did.

Botany for The Friends and their friends

Café Botanique, the name appropriately inspired by the French love of combining discussion and learning with a bit of refreshment, has attracted good audiences, of both Friends and interested others. A rather pleasant venue has been the icing on the cake, as since we have been unable to use the facilities at VBG we have decamped to Ventnor Arts Club in the centre of town. Here, Jonyth's talk about the Old Hospital was totally oversubscribed and we were able to run a second showing that was also fully booked.

The talk about Dinosaurs was another treat, and even attracted a Young Person! Debs Goodenough and Keith Brewer joined us as guests which made these events most pleasurable. The autumn Café Botanique series will start with Rob Mew's talk about Nunwell on 9th October.

Botany Club Walks began with the lovely Orchids at Ashey, and one which focuses on birds will take place at Newtown Creek.

While we love exploring parts of the Island it is always a thrill to go further afield, and we are very much looking forward to our trip to Abbotsbury on June 29th, and to Thenford on 19th October.

Sally Peake

Great Friends' Recipe Swap

The addition of white pepper to a treacly fruit cake has the lovely effect, when you eat a slice, of tasting like a mystery spice. **Bridgette Sibbick** shares this unusual favourite

White Pepper and Sultana Cake

120g golden syrup
120g soft brown sugar
120g butter
1 apple, grated
120g sultanas
2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp ground white pepper
2 eggs
200g ground almonds
175g self-raising flour
apricot jam, heated and sieved, to glaze

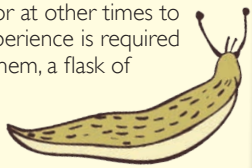
Line a 1kg loaf tin with making parchment. Preheat the oven to 150°/Gas mark 2.

Put the syrup, sugar, butter and apple in a pan and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for three minutes – the mixture will amalgamate – then remove from the heat. Cool for 10 minutes then add the sultanas, cinnamon, pepper and eggs. Beat well then fold in the ground almonds and flour. Turn the batter in the prepared tin and bake for 1-1 1/4 hours, until the cake feels springy to the touch. Cool on a rack, then glaze with jam. This cake keeps for at least two weeks in a tin.

Gardening Volunteers

Help is always required in the Garden and we warmly welcome new recruits to work with the Garden staff and existing volunteers, either in our friendly group on a Wednesday morning or at other times to be arranged. No qualifications or previous experience is required – just bring your own hand tools if you have them, a flask of refreshment and wear sensible clothing.

For further information on Garden volunteering, please phone Bridgette Sibbick - 867739



Membership News

A very warm welcome to the following Members who have joined us recently:

Tom and Eileen Hamley
Rob Mew
Ian Welby
Mark and Helen Williams

We are still gaining new members and now have nine new members since the start of 2023. We are sad, however, to report the death of one of our members, Virginia Fortescue. Our thoughts are with her family.

If your friends and family would like to join us please see below or look at our website for details.

Patrons

Gilly Drummond OBE
Penelope Hobhouse MBE
Mike Fitt OBE
Simon Goodenough
Alan Titchmarsh MBE
Phil Le May

Membership

WAYS TO PAY

Details and an application form can be found on the Membership section of our website **http://ventnorbotanicfriends.org.uk.** There you will see rates, payment options and our bank details if you want to pay by BACS or set up a regular payment. If you are already paying by Standing Order, you don't need to do anything unless any of your contact details or Gift Aid instructions have changed, in which case please let me know by post or email:

• **BACs payment:** If you usually pay by BACS, **please do add your postcode to the payment reference** so we can be sure where the money has come from when Members share surnames.

• **Cheques:** As you will see, we still accept cheques.

We are very grateful to all our Friends and hope you will continue to support us and the work we do for our unique Garden

If you have any payment queries, please get in touch with Anne Hornett, our Membership Secretary. Anne can be contacted by **e-mail at:** annehornett.gardens@gmail.com or **by post:** 63 West Hill Road, Ryde. PO33 1LG

The **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** mean that we cannot pass your details to the Garden marketing staff so, to hear ALL the Garden news and events taking place at VBG please go to the website and scroll down to the bottom of any page to find the SIGN ME UP box. You can also read their Privacy Policy. **www.botanic.co.uk**

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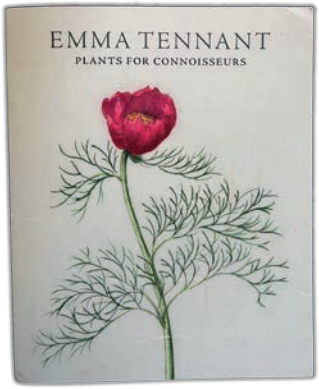
Plants for Connoisseurs

Emma Tennant, artist, gardener (or gardener, artist) has brought out a wonderful book of her work, to coincide with her 80th birthday. It also celebrates her 75 years of gardening and painting – and if that sounds unlikely, take a look back at the feature on Emma in ***Ventnorensis*** Autumn/Winter 2021, describing her childhood in which she was encouraged to garden and draw from a very young age.

The book is part lovely art book and part catalogue, to accompany a recent exhibition in London - though 'catalogue' is very far from doing this beautiful work justice.



Alongside her painting of gloriously squishable apricots *Prunus armeniaca* for example, we are told that Confucius taught his disciples in an apricot orchard, and that the Chinese love shrubs which flower on bare twigs before the leaves appear. Flicking on, with the cheerful and delicate blue *Phacelia campanularia* painting comes the extraordinary story of David Douglas (1799-1834) who introduced so many conifers to these shores including the Sitka spruce, *Picea sitchensis*, "responsible for ruining hundreds of thousands of acres of our most beautiful landscape". Emma says: "I prefer to think of the 'late lamented Douglas', as Paxton referred to him, as the brave man who gave us so many bright and cheerful annuals, including my favourite, the ultramarine Phacelia." Then there is the exuberant painting of Rose 'Fantin Latour' its still-green buds celebrating the perfection of the already mature pink bloom – while the stem and leaves are left as a sketch, Emma Tennant's signature way of describing the impossible beauty of a plant. The redcurrants caught by the sun, the honeysuckle you can almost smell …

You think you are going to dip into this book, but find the pages keep turning. The exhibition was for just three short days but the e-version of the catabook – yes, that is the official term – is available through the website of Katie Pertwee www.katiepertwee.com.
It is a brilliant read as well as a gorgeous thing to own. It is a delightful celebration of Emma Tennant, good friend of VBG Friends.

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