

HENLEAZE GARDEN CLUB

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No 80

NEWSLETTER

August 2026

Hello Members

Welcome to your Chairman's Newsletter! It's been such a busy year for the Club this may be the longest edition yet! But first, how have you managed this summer? Many have mentioned to me what a waste of time it is on days when it's too hot to garden- or do anything much else for that matter. We went from the ridiculous situation of needing to use the central heating on the evening of 12 June when we hosted the Open Gardens' owners to 30 degrees or more at the RHS Badminton Show and a decision that future residential tours need air-conditioned hotels. After two summers of heatwaves/drought, we are going to have to change our planting to adapt to the weather conditions – whatever they may be! It simply isn't sustainable environmentally or economically to water everything so there will be casualties. Hydrangeas and Cornus kousa are in my priority watering queue.



Garden visiting is always a source of inspiration for our own gardens. The Delos garden at Sissinghurst (left) is such an example. I liked it not because of its back story but because it is a garden for today's climate.

Likewise, the Tom Stuart-Smith Julia Rausing garden at Badminton. I understand £24000 was raised from the sale of the plants for the benefit of Horatio's Garden. Well done to those club members who went along as volunteers to help with the sale. Hope you bought a few drought tolerant plants!

New Members' Coffee Morning

Thinking back fondly to the cooler days of late winter, the class of 2026 enjoyed their coffee morning on 7 February. All agreed that this is a great way of welcoming our new members.



Pruning Class

On 21 February, my friend and experienced horticulturalist, designer, RHS tutor and garden club speaker, Neil Ross, came to give a masterclass in pruning. We held morning and afternoon sessions with 7 or 8 friends and some of the organising team attending each session. We shared the cost between us. Neil demonstrated tools and tool sharpening and how to prune various different types of roses. Everyone then got "hands on" with my roses. We then went on to look at Hydrangea and fruit tree pruning. The event received very positive feedback and I hope to repeat next year – this time offering 20 places (which should allow for 2 or 3 roses each) to club members. Those of you who are Facebook members will know that the roses performed very well! **Is this of interest?**

Members' May Social

The feedback after our first Members' May Social was very, very positive. Most of all, you liked the opportunity to socialise – this seemed to be more important than the availability of the gardens, although the weather wasn't great that day. The photo competition brought everybody together in the hall so seemed to act as a "hub" for the event. The plant sale was, probably, the most successful we have ever held. We were delighted with members' plant donations which were of really good quality and plenty of them. Almost everything sold. The raffle was also a great success. The club's finances are healthy and, in offering an event of this nature for the benefit of all members who wanted to join in, we had expected to have to subsidise it, but in fact such was its success, we can say it more or less paid for itself!

Ian Sturland had suggested a photo competition in the past and this event provided the perfect opportunity to try out our first one. We were delighted that so many of you entered such excellent photos. I hope that you're all busy taking entries for next year. Our Judge made a total of 38 awards! For the benefit of those who were unable to attend on the 16th May, I will show some of the entries on the next page. Congratulations to Roger Evely for his overall winning image "Mmm what are you looking at?".



RHS BADMINTON SHOW

We pushed the boundaries this year by putting on a fourth day visit to enable us to take you to the new RHS Badminton Show. (Thanks Sarah – and great parasol – you were easy to find!). Notwithstanding this additional visit, the four day trips were "sold out". However, everyone who applied was initially allocated at least one visit. There are always cancellations along the way, including at the last minute, so it is always worth remaining on the waiting list. Some members ended up with two or three visits by having last minute availability.



Congratulations to all members who came to Badminton. It was a **VERY, VERY HOT DAY** and, although we didn't manage to see everything, everyone coped admirably! I've never seen so many summer dresses and fans. We were lucky to be travelling by coach. I heard that those who travelled by car had horrendous traffic delays. It was nice to have a local show. The RHS did a good job of involving the local community. It was great to see the entries by local schools. Amazing job by the children of the Young at Heart Charity who had propagated all the plants

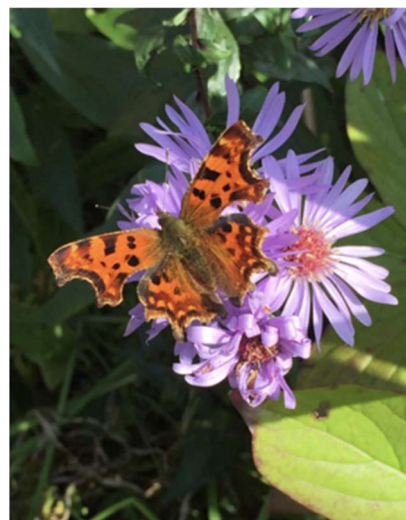
for the Cricket Pavillion Garden themselves. A wonderful experience for them and it was awarded "Best in Show".

Unrelated to Garden Club, I was invited to an RHS reception at Badminton House after the Show. As John did not wish to come, Sarah joined me. We had drinks, mini fish and chips, short talks about the RHS's charitable work and apprentice scheme and an after hours tour of the Show with the Director of the five RHS gardens. A thoroughly enjoyable evening! The Duchess of Beaufort told us she had prayed for sun. I hope she is praying for rain now!

(These are all the butterfly/moth entries – well done everyone!)



Janet Gibson



Sarah Davies



Cecilia Smith



Sarah Powell



Lee Griffin



Sue Callanan



Karina Hall



Cecilia Smith

We are planning to run the competition again!

GARDENS OF KENT AND SUSSEX 2026

As you know this year's residential trip, organised through Brightwater Holidays, was record breaking. In total 60 people applied for an original 38 places! So, we asked Brightwater to arrange a second tour. Why was it so popular? Probably the particular selection of gardens. The feedback was that the gardens were excellent notwithstanding the weather conditions. The included lunches at Gravetye Manor and Perch Hill were equally popular. The lack of air conditioning in the first hotel posed a problem especially as this tour took place at the height of the second heatwave. Those on the second tour fared better in this respect. At the end of this Newsletter, you can read Sophie Bindloss' report on the first tour which took place at the end of June.



I joined the second tour, my first club residential. Having already visited all of the gardens except Denmans I expected them to be popular. I wanted to experience a club tour – as well as go to Sarah Raven's garden again! Perch Hill did not disappoint. But best of all was the opportunity to join other members. We were a great group – here we are on the steps of Gravetye Manor. On the last night at dinner there was a definite buzz!

Sophie and I have taken on board the feedback that you have given to us informally and also the feedback given to Brightwater. For 2027 we have requested a hotel with air conditioning and a good standard of food whilst being mindful of the price.

RESIDENTIAL TOUR 2027

Dates for the Diary

12 - 15 July 2027



This is a "heads-up" on the dates, but as usual secrecy will remain whilst we clarify the hotel details with Brightwater, although here is a little spoiler alert photo! (Watch out for another clue a bit later!) It is our intention to send out the brochure by e-mail to all members on **24 August**. Booking will open on **7 September** giving you a couple of

weeks to peruse and consider. As always, booking will be direct with Brightwater, not through the club. This year they will only be taking bookings by telephone with payment by card. Don't worry, full details of what to do will be set out in the brochure and email.

Please note that Sophie Bindloss is the Club's representative who liaises with Brightwater, but I will be your point of contact and will pass relevant queries to Sophie.

SPEAKERS 2027

Here are brief details of our speaker programme for next year. It will be posted up onto the website in due course and we will print some copies for you to pin up on your kitchen wall.

6 January	Nick Wray 'The Evolution of Flowers'
3 February	Jason Ingram ** 'Garden Photography'
3 March	Christina Shand 'Between a Bog and a Hard Place'
7 April	Harriet Rycroft 'Container Planting'
5 May	Liz Knight 'Food from the Wild'
2 June	Penny Dommett 'Growing Flowers for Cutting'
1 September	Rosy Hardy 'Resilient Perennials'
6 October	Ed Drewett 'The Birds in your Garden'
3 November	Nicola Hope 'No Dig and Polyculture in your Garden'
8 Dec	Mike Nelhams ** 'Gardens of the French and Italian Riviera' ** members only

This year we have moved away from speakers nationally known in the media, although many of them have appeared on BBC Gardeners' World at some point.

The Curator of the Botanic Garden will start our year.

In February, award winning professional garden photographer, Jason Ingram, will show us some of his work and give tips for better garden photography.

Christina Shand is one of the owners of Dyffryn Fernant gardens which I am hoping some of you will have the opportunity to visit later next year.

Following on from Andy McIndoe's popular talk on bullet proof shrubs this year, as recommended by Andy we have managed to book Rosy Hardy on the much requested subject of resilient perennials.

In December, as we enjoy our glass(es) of wine, we can dream of exotic garden visits whilst admiring Mike Nelhams' fabulous slides and enjoying some of his anecdotes.

We hope you like the programme.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2027

Membership renewal often sparks some confusion. The Club calendar runs from January to December, but we embark on membership renewal towards the end of September as it takes a while to complete. We have a waiting list of those hoping to join the club and we like to invite them to attend the festive meeting in December, but of course we want to give existing members every opportunity to renew first so we need membership renewal to be completed by mid-November. You will hear from Kate when renewal opens around the end of September. If you decide not to renew, your membership will still run to 31 December. **The annual subscription will remain at £30.** Any membership queries please contact Kate at Henleazegardenclub.members@gmail.com

Club Bulb Sale

Sue Knight and Chris Purvis have placed their spring bulb order with the wholesaler. Delivery of the bulbs normally takes place during September, but the exact date is never known. As usual bulbs will be offered on a Click & Collect basis initially. Sue Knight will issue a list which will be circulated by Kate from the membership address. There will then be a further opportunity to purchase in person at the **October** meeting. Any queries contact: sue.knight.1@googlemail.com

Some local events coming up

YEO VALLEY ORGANIC GARDEN FESTIVAL 2026

17-19 SEPTEMBER

Yeo Valley has a great line up of speakers and activities at its second annual festival.

<https://yvogardenfestival.co.uk/whats-on>

Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden Autumn 2026 Talks

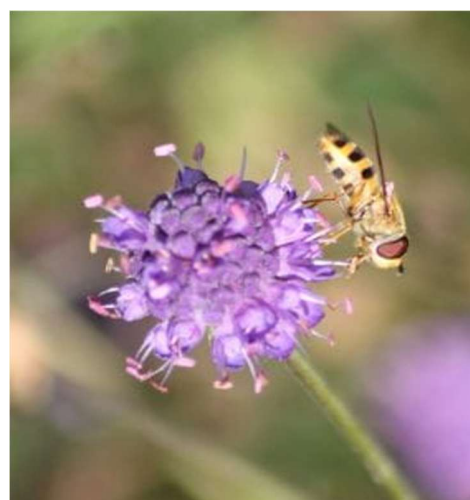
An inspiring seasonal series of talks exploring plants, gardens, crops, pollinators and the hidden stories of the natural world.

17 Sept	Hidden Signals from the Flower Surface Dr Heather Whitney Scientific Director University of Bristol Botanic Garden
15 Oct	The New American Garden in Bath Annie Talbot Head Gardener American Museum and Gardens, Bath
19 November	No Dig Growing Together Charles Dowding No dig expert, Vegetable grower, Youtuber and Teacher.

**Talks followed by questions, conversation and a chance to meet fellow plant lovers
Thursdays at 7.30 at the Frank Theatre, Wills Physics Lab, Tyndalls Avenue Bristol BS8 1TL
No need to book**

FREE for Friends of the Botanic Garden. Other guests: a donation is requested (£5 suggested)
<https://botanic-garden/ac/uk/events>

Bee and Pollination Festival A Botanic Garden Fundraiser



5 and 6 September 10 am to 5 pm

The Bee and Pollination Festival at the University of Bristol Botanic Gardens returns for its 15th anniversary. See live hive demonstrations, talk to experts about encouraging wild bees to your garden, buy plants and hear lectures from the experts.

<https://botanic-garden/ac/uk/event>

Looking forward to seeing many of you for the resumption of our talks on 2 September when Tim Walker, former Director of Oxford Botanic Garden, will be talking about the Healing Power of Plants.

The Heat was On - Garden 'Influencers' & Exuberance in Kent & Sussex

This year's tour was to Kent & Sussex, where we visited some of England's most iconic gardens. Our Tour Manager, Linda Robinson, explained the historical background to the development of the gardens and how the work of the garden makers have influenced what we see today. (Linda graduated with an MA in Garden & Landscape Design.) We discovered many connections between the gardens we visited both in style and with the people who created the gardens.

We endured some very high temperatures as our visit included two 'Red Heat Alert' days. The coach, thankfully, had air conditioning.

High Summer equates to floral exuberance and we certainly saw this in spades (excuse the pun). We were treated to long herbaceous borders with exhilarating colour schemes -

Everyone probably has their favourite long border and there were certainly some front runners at Sissinghurst, Great Dixter & Gravetye.

Perch Hill

We started our trip with a visit to Perch Hill, the home of Sarah Raven.

Sarah Raven is known for her hugely successful brand. But it is in the evolution of the gardens at Perch Hill, her farmhouse in East Sussex, that her passion for horticulture is clearly expressed. She and her writer husband, Adam Nicolson, bought the house 30 years ago, renovated the farmhouse and developed the garden to burst with colour from first tulips to the last dahlias.



In the Perch Hill Garden

I recognised much of the garden from her website pictures and watching her videos. I now have a better sense of how it all fits together.

We visited on an Open Day and also enjoyed a home made seasonal lunch taken in the garden, which included produce from the garden. For many of the group it was our first experience of eating Nasturtium flowers!



Flower Wall

Sarah's initial step at Perch Hill was to create a cutting garden, which became the subject of her first book. At the time, in 1990's, almost no-one was growing annual cut flowers. Her seed catalogue included some of her most enduringly popular flowers like Cosmos Purity and Verbena bonariensis. It became a trial ground for a new kind of gardening she pioneered - full of colour and vibrant with bold combinations.

Borde Hill (Grade 2 Historic Garden)

Over 130 years and five generations of the Stephenson Clarke family have been committed to protecting and enhancing Borde Hill's significant collection of plants, shrubs and trees.

Borde Hill is owned by 5th generation, Jay Goddard. The house is a Grade2 listed Elizabethan mansion (private).

Stephenson Robert Clarke bought Borde Hill in 1893 with the sole intention of creating a great garden. He sponsored plant hunting trips all over the world, including four of Ernest Henry-Wilson's trips to China.

Set within 383 acres of heritage listed parkland combined with outstanding vistas, we concentrated our visit to the formal garden which has a number of garden rooms, several of which have been designed in more recent times by RHS Gold Medal winners.

-The Rose Garden was planted in 1996 by Robin Williams with over 100 varieties of David Austin roses. At the heart is a fountain statue of Aphrodite installed in 2020 - the life size copper figure is studded with roses and holds a bouquet from which the water bursts.



The Aphrodite Statue in the Rose Garden

- The Italian Garden was inspired by the family's travels to Italy and has evolved over the last forty years, most recently in 2020 by Chris Beardshaw who redesigned the planting. The planting here is very different from the looser style found in the rest of the garden....the water, the terracing, pines, eucalyptus, and geometrical beds.



The Italian Garden

- The Round Dell planted in 2017 provides ideal conditions for sub tropical plants like palm trees and Gunnera; on the hot and steamy day we visited it couldn't have been more appropriate as it felt we were in a tropical jungle

- The Allah Garden is home to some magnificent champion trees such as Liriodendron chinense (Chinese tulip tree) and Magnolia fraseri.

We also saw Victorian greenhouses and the ruins of Old Potting Sheds. We didn't have time to explore the grade 2 listed parkland with woodland walks and lakes - it has one of the largest collections of champion trees in the UK.

Gravetye (Grade 2 listed Historic Garden)

William Robinson lived in Gravetye Manor 1885-1935 developing his groundbreaking ideas around 'wild' gardening - and created his world renowned wildflower meadow, borders, orchard and elliptical walled vegetable garden. He believed in gardening with, rather than against, nature. He praised the wild garden and the hardy flower garden, places in which he considered the true beauty and natural grace of individual plants could be displayed and appreciated. The garden is set in 1000 acre estate with woodland managed by Forestry Commission.

In 1883 he published his book 'The English Flower Garden' in which he advocated attracting wildlife, not having bare soil and using grasses for winter interest. Sounds familiar?

A friend of Gertrude Jekyll - who he first met in 1875 at the offices of ' The Garden ' magazine (William Robinson was the editor). Gertrude Jekyll wrote a chapter for his book on colour in the garden.

He introduced the idea of the modern mixed border. During his time the flower garden was constantly changing as he played with his idea of the mixed border. Today, the gardeners use successional planting and aim to manage the historic garden in a way that William Robinson would have enjoyed - we admired annuals, perennials and shrubs

The site is on a slope and it is a gentle climb from the hotel to the croquet lawn and kitchen garden. The kitchen garden is very impressive, created in 1898 it is oval in shape and cleverly makes use of the topography of the site, so is south facing and follows the contours of the slope. It produces some 7 tonnes of fruit and vegetables each year to supply the hotel dining room.



Gravetye Manor is now an hotel. And, the highlight of the tour for many people was our fine dining experience with freshly grown garden produce. I shall describe it as Michelin star gastronomical exuberance. And if you would like to know more, I am sure one of the club members on this tour would be delighted to indulge you. As a taster, I offer the photo of one of our courses.

L: Mixed border by the house

R: Chalk Stream Trout



Sissinghurst (Grade1 Historic Garden)

This is one of UK's most famous gardens - a series of stylised outdoor rooms created among the ruins of a moated Tudor manor house in the 1930's by poet and novelist Vita Sackville-West and her husband diplomat Harold Nicolson. (And of course, a close connection to Sarah Raven who is married to Adam Nicolson, the grandson of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson.)

For many this is the definitive English garden - evoking the poetic sensibility of its creators, their deep feeling for history and rural tradition and the influence of their travels. There are 14 'rooms' each very different in their planting scheme , colours and scent. And, as we saw, in high summer, the 'White Garden' and exuberant planting schemes in the cottage garden were in a class of their own.



The White Garden

Many of us climbed the 78 steps of the Tower, built in the 1560's and includes Vita's Writing Room where she created her novels, poetry and gardening articles.

I am going to focus on the most recent development - The Delos Garden. In 1935 the couple visited Delos, considered sacred in Ancient Greek culture, and Delos was built in response to their visit. It must have felt very forward thinking when built in 1937. Despite their best efforts it was never a success and in 2018 Troy Scott Smith, the then Head Gardener, approached Dan Pearson to reinstate the original design. Work started in 2019 with improved drainage and the final stage was completed in April 2026. Key trees were positioned to allow interrupted light into the garden, open areas have been left for annuals and short lived perennials which have colonised in crevices to give the feeling of ruins having been occupied by nature. Our wetter winters and drier summers with no irrigation drive the plant selection. (See photo of the Delos Garden on front page of Newsletter)

Great Dixter (Grade 1 Historic Garden)

Great Dixter was the family home of the gardener and garden writer Christopher Lloyd who lived here until his death in 2006. It was the focus of his enthusiasm and fuelled his many books and articles. The house is 15th century, restored by Edwards Lutyens. We were able to go into the original medieval side of the house.

Now under the stewardship of Fergus Garrett who has worked at Great Dixter since 1993, firstly as Christopher Lloyd's Head Gardener and friend, and since Christopher's death as Head Gardener and CEO.

It is more than a garden of world renown as it leads on horticulture, ecology and artistic practices and is known as an education centre. Biodiversity is also a key element.

The famous garden meadows have been a feature of the garden for ninety years or so. Christopher Lloyd's parents were influenced by William Robinson's *The Wild Garden* published in 1870, in which he advocated growing perennials and bulbs in grass, and they incorporated his ideas. In today's garden, I must admit that I found it difficult in adjusting to see formal topiary placed in a meadow.



The Long Border

The Long Border is a spectacular mixture of shrubs, climbers, perennials and annuals, reflecting Lloyd's determination to combine colours unconventionally. The High Garden is approached through superb topiary plants and here vegetables grow together.



Topiary Meadow

My personal favourite part of the garden was the Sunk Garden - built by Christopher Lloyd's parents in the 1920's when sunken gardens were hugely popular. In a sheltered south facing corner it is enclosed by two barns, a yew hedge and a wall, so creating its own micro climate. At its centre is a formal water lily pond surrounded by arts and crafts borders - a lush collection of trees, shrubs, grasses, bulbs and perennials.

Denmans

At Denmans the informal garden is remarkable for the gravel which flows like a river through it, with plants spilling onto it. The garden was initially laid out by Joyce Robinson from 1946. Her 'gravel' inspiration came from island of Delos, Greece where she saw plants in dry river beds. And, as we had already seen, at Sissinghurst, Vita Sackville-West & Harold Nicolson built the Delos garden in response to their visit.

Her description of the garden was 'Glorious Disarray'.



The Cottage Garden by the House

The garden was developed still further by another influential garden designer John Brookes, who ran his Garden design practice there from Clock House . John was the first independent garden designer to show at Chelsea Flower Show in 1969. He discovered the garden as part of the NGS (National Garden Scheme). John Brookes moved there in 1980 and turned the whole of the existing four acre garden into a stage set for foliage plants. He acquired it in 1996, when Joyce died. He made use of her approach and added his own planting, their grouping and form. He was a fan of woody plants and the possibilities of leaf shape and texture.

Note: Joyce Robinson was using gravel as a medium for protection of drought resistant plants long before Beth Chatto who became a pioneer of naturalistic planting in the 1970s and 1980s.

Until next time

This year we had our largest group of travellers and it was lovely to have the opportunity to meet and spend time with other club members - both in the gardens and enjoying leisurely lunches and dinners. Until next time.....

Sophie