

# CSGGA Newsletter

## February 2022



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

### Inside this Issue

- February Meeting Report
- M's Monthly Action Diary
- Green Gardening Tip of the Month
- Community Orchard Update
- Next Month's Talk – Clematis
- Queen's Platinum Jubilee Plans

### Stoke Poges Memorial Garden – Franz Cheesman

Franzi is Head Gardener at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, a Grade 1 Registered Garden, just some 7 miles from Chalfont St Giles yet a show of hands revealed a surprising number of us had never visited them. The Gardens are a peaceful resting place for the interment of cremated remains where there are no stone memorials or buildings – just beautiful gardens.

We learnt some history of Stoke Park which existed as the Deer Park for Windsor Castle at least since 1066 and the original Manor House was visited by Elizabeth I and by Charles I when on his way to execution! Thomas Gray was so enchanted by his surroundings that he was inspired to write his famous *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. The estate was purchased by members of the Penn family on their return from Pennsylvania and John Penn demolished three quarters of the original Manor House and built the Mansion across the Lake in 1790 creating the lovely Repton Bridge. In 1917 the land was used as a repair depot for the repair of army vehicles brought back from France but with the ending of the war this became a financial disaster. The site was purchased by Sir Noel Mobbs and became the original Slough Trading Estate. In the 1930s Mobbs purchased the land now occupied by the Gardens and decided to create the peaceful area we see today.

The Gardens were laid out by Edward White in 1933 over 22 acres with a central avenue and a number of varied gardens on either side. Renovations in 2001-2004 were partly paid for by the Lottery Fund and the Gardens are now maintained by Buckinghamshire Council. The staff of five gardeners are assisted by the Friends of Stoke Poges volunteer group.

The virtual walk around the Gardens showed us the lovely Rose Garden, the Oak Dell with its 700 year old oak tree, the rock and water gardens and the clematis area leading up to the Colonnade which is a peaceful area with its Italian water garden. In spring there are wonderful pink-blossoming cherry trees followed by striking displays of magnolia and wisteria. There are Japanese Maples nearly 90 years old and the heather garden now planted with azaleas and five areas of parterres which unfortunately have been subject to box blight. There is a Ghurka Garden and a stumpery which is a favourite playground for the



squirrels. A feature of the Gardens is the provision of a large area of gated gardens – small plots resembling a front garden where a family can remember their loved ones.



Near the church is a newly planted area with an arched pathway and featuring a lovely herbaceous border in blue, white and yellow flowers. Recently a Tree Trail and a Bereavement Trail have been created.

The gardens are open to visitors every day without charge and car parking is available. There is always interest whatever the season but for a special visit go there in May to see the display of wisteria.

### Jan Bradley

For more information about opening times and how to get there click [here](#)

**Ed's note:** Michael Portillo visited the Memorial Gardens, last April, on one of his Great British Railway Journeys and planted one of the Yew Trees which can be seen behind Franzi in the photo above. The recording is not currently available on iPlayer but according to the Memorial Gardens Facebook page it is due to be run again. Series 12:3 Ruislip to Windsor.

*We understand that some members were unable to hear Franzi, it appears there was an issue with the microphone but she was very quietly spoken, too. If you are unable to hear any of our speakers, please let us know during the talk. We are going to investigate how we can improve the sound quality of the talks at our next Committee meeting.*

## M's Action Diary for February

- Prune mahonias after flowering, removing old stems to make room for new growth.
- Lift and divide clumps of snowdrops and replant to the same depth as before.
- Dogwood, salix and continus that have been kept for their colourful stems need cutting back to their woody base.
- Cut all tatty, brown fronds of ferns back to the base of their stalks to make way for the fresh new foliage that will unfurl.
- Remove hydrangea flower heads once hard frosts have passed. Hydrangea Paniculata varieties should be cut down to within 3 buds at soil level.
- Lift and divide clumps of herbaceous perennials if weather is mild enough to allow soil to be workable. Replant immediately.
- Prune summer flowering shrubs such as buddleia
- Prune late flowering clematis by cutting back to the lowest pair of buds. Give all clematis a feed of manure or Growmore.
- Pot up dahlia tubers. Put in a cool light frost free place.





## Green Gardening Tip – Nesting time

Did you know that Valentine's Day marks the start of National Nest Box Week (14th-21st February). The week



aims to encourage people to contribute to the conservation effort of breeding birds in the UK, by putting up nest boxes in their garden. Putting a nest box in your garden is a fantastic thing to do for breeding birds, and you may have the privilege of seeing breeding birds move in and raise their young. Make sure that it's at the right height and that birds have a clear flight path to the nest without any clutter directly in front of the entrance.

If hedges need trimming, do so after the birds have eaten the berries (but before the nesting season which generally begins in March but is getting earlier with climate change). Please remember, it is against the law to deliberately kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take or destroy their eggs or nest, or damage a nest, while that nest is in use or being built. A bird begins building its nest as soon as the first nesting material (a twig or bit of moss perhaps) is laid in place. A nest is being built when a swallow or a martin puts the first bit of mud in place. There is no 'They've only just started' excuse in law – when they've started to build, then the nest is being built. It's perhaps not always obvious when a nest is in its earliest stages, but it's illegal to damage a nest so just don't take the risk.

For more information about buying and siting nest boxes, go to [www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/rspb-news-stories/your-guide-to-buying-a-nest-box/](http://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/rspb-news/rspb-news-stories/your-guide-to-buying-a-nest-box/)

## Community Orchard Update

Discussions are continuing with Milton's Cottage Trustees and the Parish Council, but the Gardens Association Committee and Parish Council feel that it is now time to involve the wider community and establish a separate working group to start to progress the idea. It was always the Committee's intention to do this, so that everyone in the village can feel that they have a stake in what is to be a community initiative. We have been offered funding that would go towards paying for consultancy advice to help us get this initiative off the ground (pun intended), so we need to know that there is definite buy-in from the wider community. If you would be interested in joining the Working Group, please let me know.

**Briony Wickenden**

## The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations



In addition to the community orchard, which is a response to the national call to "plant a tree for the Jubilee", we are exploring other options to help the village celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June. Apparently, the Palace advised the Parish Council that, the official colours of the Jubilee are purple and platinum and the bunting around the Village Green will be purple. So, we are planning to offer purple plants, pansies, lobelia, cosmos, etc. to children visiting the Plant Sale – we usually give away a sunflower

[www.csnga.org](http://www.csnga.org)

seedling. Children will be encouraged to bring them for display around the Green, or the church during the Jubilee weekend. If you are planning your seed planting for this year, please think about planting some extra purple or white plants for the Jubilee.

## Next Month's Talk 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Memorial Hall

### Peter Skeggs-Gooch - A Complete Guide to Clematis

Peter has lived or worked with clematis almost all his life, growing up surrounded by them in his family's nursery and its gardens and progressing through the nursery from production assistant to production manager then finally to owner.

We are checking to see if Peter will be bringing any clematis with him for sale. They have an excellent selection and I have bought from them in the past.

[www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk](http://www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk)



## Looking Ahead – Plant Sale - May 14<sup>th</sup> tbc

We will be holding our annual plant sale on the Village Green this year, so please remember to plant some extra seeds, make additional divisions and take extra cuttings in preparation! Seeds to sow or that can be divided now which always sell well at the plant sale include:

- |              |              |           |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| • Tomatoes   | • Pansies    | • Basil   |
| • Aubergines | • Sweet peas | • Chives  |
| • Chillies   | • Cosmos     | • Parsley |
| • Peppers    | • Marigolds  | • Sage    |

## Your CSGGA Committee

### Chairman and Membership Secretary:

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### Committee Members:

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New Committee members are always welcome. We are a friendly bunch! Please contact a committee member to find out more if you're interested in joining us.