

Slindon Allotment Society

The Allotment Society in Slindon was formed back in September 2009, when a small group of around 15 individuals met one evening in the football hut on the south side of the A29 in Slindon. Led by Mark Wardle, who became Chairman for Slindon Allotment society (SAS) and Head Warden for the National Trust, and Bonny Beere, the Clerk for Slindon Parish Council, it did not take long to establish that we had enough people in Slindon ready and willing to start an allotment society.

Initially we discussed having two allotment sites, one on the south side of the A29 and the other on the north side. For the time being we are pursuing only one allotment, on the north side, at the Nursery Ground in Slindon village. Mark has obtained support from the National Trust, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Slindon Parish Council for our project. Having established the need for allotments in Slindon we formed a committee, which has been working towards opening a site in March 2010.

The Nursery Ground in Slindon has been well kept by local residents, in particular Son Chamberlain and Mick Apps. However it has, in recent years, turned into elder, sycamore and buddleia scrub and the area needed attention with some clearing and cutting back to be done. The members enjoyed a productive couple of days clearing the site, stripping back rogue plants with bonfires ablaze and teas, coffees, hotdogs and soup on hand. The next steps are to remove any roots and to cultivate the site, and this will be done with the help of the National Trust. Unfortunately the recent cold snap is preventing these essential activities. While



the ground is frozen it is impossible to remove deep root clusters, as they would break under the ground to leave greater problems for the future. Therefore the country, and in particular the SAS, is waiting for



warmer weather before continuing with work on site.

During this time the committee have been establishing the constitution, aims and rules of the society. One of the aims is to promote environmentally sustainable gardening and to develop gardening skills and knowledge. We hope to provide rain water harvesting into troughs and not to need a mains water supply. We will be composting all discarded vegetable matter for the members to reuse in future seasons. Also a large number of current members are from the Slindon community, so we will be reducing food miles and car emissions. We have been discussing the natural environment, as currently there are stag beetles living in the dead wood on the site, something which we are very keen to maintain.

The site also has two lovely walnuts, a holly and an oak tree, several fruit bushes, including gooseberry and blackcurrant, all of which will attract garden birds and small mammals. We have also retained some elder for the benefits they bring to nature and the bottle! The committee has discussed the possibility of including a pond on the site to attract frogs and toads, which will help reduce the slug and snail population we gardeners love to hate. Once the allotment is up and running we are keen to offer open days including impromptu discussion regarding gardening tips and advice. We hope to invite the local community to see our hard work and enjoy a summer opening event. We will keep you posted!

If anyone would like to join the SAS please contact Sally Petch on 01243 814 598 or elfinhousebooks@btinternet.com.

Caron Penney

Fungi in the Garden

Almost since its inception in 1993, I have been a member of The Countryside Restoration Trust, the brainchild of Robin Page (One Man and his Dog presenter, writer and countryside campaigner who was appalled at the effect on wildlife the prairie farming of East Anglia was having.

Four years ago The CRT was gifted a farm near Frensham and I could at last get actively involved in a project. As part of the Wildlife Monitoring Group we needed specialists on various subjects and nobody knew anything about fungi. So Malcolm, a lovely guy who is a retired South London printer and I volunteered. People spend a lifetime on mycological studies and are constantly changing their minds on classification and neither of us knew our stipe from our umbo, so it is a very steep learning curve, frustrated by the limitations of a 60 something's memory which precludes any attempt to absorb the Latin names.

I also had no idea of the vital part fungi play in the ecosystem or that with a little observation they could

be found all over the garden, particularly in the autumn. We have well less than ½ acre of not very bio-diverse land but I have identified 24 different fungi in various habitats and have been stumped by some 7 more. They range from the horrendous smelling, phallic looking Stinkhorn in our wild drive border to very tasty Field Mushrooms, Parasols, Puffballs and Shaggy Inkcaps (if picked early) that emerge from the lawn. The tiny Oak Pin grew out of a dead log. A Collared Earthstar I almost missed amongst leaf litter under a Mahonia. Delicate Bonnet (*Mycena*) type emerge from the lawn, on the compost heap and on dead wood all over the place and are infuriatingly difficult to identify. Hairy Curtain Crust bracket fungus with its morphing coloured stripes invaded and overwhelmed a felled Eucalyptus log. To my shame, a year before I became 'enlightened' I eliminated by Jeyes fluid a long time springtime infestation of Cedar Cup, classified as uncommon, in the ground under our neighbour's eponymous tree.

Brian Senior

Flower Essences

I am passionate about flowers and never happier than when I am sitting in a cottage garden, in the summer, marvelling at the diversity of plants, their scent and their contribution to the well being of the human race.

One of the ways we can benefit from the healing properties of flowers is by taking flower essences. Essences are a type of vibrational medicine, in the form of diluted healing tinctures, containing the energy imprint of the plant. They work at a deep soul level and transmute our negative emotional states into positive ones, enabling us to heal and to move on. If you are aware of a negative emotion you are holding right now, such as fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy or a feeling of being stuck, then be assured that there is an essence which will help you overcome this. Essences can be taken safely by just about everyone, and will not interfere with conventional medication. Just be aware if there are issues with alcohol that they are brandy based, although some essence makers make a range using a vinegar base.

Equally if an animal seems locked into a negative pattern then a flower essence may be just the answer. I have treated many animals with an appropriate essence and the response is extraordinary. Plants can benefit too. Treating a distressed plant with Bach Rescue Remedy, for example can make a real difference in its recovery.

There are now essence makers worldwide, attuning to the healing properties of the flora in their locations, just as Dr Bach did, here, in England, over 70 years ago.

I thought we would look at feelings of Cheerlessness for and I have chosen the Light Heart essence, Celandine made by Rose Titchiner. This seemed doubly appropriate as the faces of Lesser Celandine are brightening our woodlands as I write.

I love this essence because it is used for when one is having an "Eeyore" day! Think of that wonderful character, from Winnie the Pooh, with his gloominess, negativity and pessimism. I know I get those days, even down to the body posture! Celandine is the essence I reach for to bring back a sense of joy, and of optimism. The problem which was vexing me may still be there, but it is much easier to deal with without the gloom! For a full profile of this essence visit www.lighthouseessences.co.uk. Alternatively one could try Chiming bells (*Mertensia Paniculata*) from the Alaskan range. This is also for those times when one is feeling sad, or despondent, worn out and joyless. Or Mustard from the Bach Flowers, which is for deep descending gloom for no known cause.

Next time I will look at how to make a flower essence and profile some of the essences which help with transition and change.

Sally Petch

Apologies to Josephine Carter, who wrote the article about the visit to Earnley Grange in the Autumn edition. The photos that accompanied her account were taken by her and not by Wiets Botes, as stated. It was entirely my mistake.

Ed.