

WHALEY BRIDGE ALLOTMENT & GARDENERS' SOCIETY

Newsletter- May/June 2009

Dear Member,

I'm sure that many of you will be saddened at the recent death of **John Howes**, one of our founder members and the linchpin of the Society for many years. He was a charming man with a delightful sense of humour and always very tactful. Indeed I might have terminated the membership of some of our late payers prematurely had it not been for John's insistence that they would eventually get round to renewing their subs, perhaps after a little coaxing. The Society and his allotment plot were major parts of John's life over the past 25 years or so, and his legacy will be enjoyed by us for many years to come. As a mark of respect the Society has donated £100 to Ashgate Hospice where John spent his last few weeks and condolences were sent to Mary with a small gift. We hope she will soon feel able to resume her role as usual on the Committee.

Welcome to **new members**, Jean Philbin & Sue Christie of Buxworth, Alison Giles of New Mills, Lee Pickford, Paul & Moira Hunt, Nick Latham and Judy Longden all from Whaley, and Dave Powell from Fernilee. Yes, the membership is slowly increasing despite the loss of 10 members who failed to renew from last year.

Our coach trips got off to an excellent start this year with the visit to **Renishaw Hall** and Garden on a really fine sunny Saturday at the beginning of May. Never have I seen bluebells looking so marvellous. They were at their peak and covered large swathes of the woodland and cascaded down steep banks to the lakes. Very photogenic. Apart from that there was the formal Italianate garden with its beautifully clipped topiary hedges and a ha-ha. (not a joke ha ha). The herbaceous borders will of course look better in summer/autumn. Most of the party opted for the guided tour of the house which was enjoyed especially by our Sitwell enthusiasts, Mavis Knowles in particular. There was also a good restaurant, the Piper Gallery and museum for those who tired of gardens.

Next we have a trip to **Bridgemere Garden Centre** and the beautiful **Dorothy Clive Garden** on **Saturday 6th June**. Details were given on the Diary Notes for this years events, and you can still book by contacting Rosemary (tel 01663 733393) . Don't leave it too late and risk being disappointed. Likewise bookings can now be made for the subsequent trip **1st August** to **Barnsdale Gardens, Rutland**, Geoff Hamilton's garden .

Our annual **Plant Sale/swap** on 10th May was well attended and Roger Wood, Irene & David Osborn were all kept pretty busy running it throughout the morning. Dave Parker helped with the store sales and offered free gardening tips. Thankfully it was another fine morning and one of the local residents had taken the initiative to fill most of the potholes with some rubble/hardcore, so although the ground surface is a bit rough, it's no longer muddy and full of puddles. We shall be making further improvements soon. Those members who didn't manage to get there will have another opportunity to buy plants at the Coffee Morning, 13th June. The Store is now in full swing on Sunday mornings but I'm told by David that we have sadly run out of growbags and currently our suppliers don't have any either. So if you still need some you'll have to try elsewhere I'm afraid.

Coffee Morning Saturday 13th June at the Mechanics Institute. Our usual team of expert helpers will be running the show and anyone else who'd care to lend a hand. If any member has surplus plants to offer please ring Roger Wood (01663 732112) or David Osborn (01663 733659) so they can get them together prior to the event. We also need some suitable items for raffle prizes and the Tombola, plus a few of those exceptionally delicious home baked cakes. Please phone Rosemary (01663 733393) who is co-ordinating these things. Even if you have nothing to donate or can't spare the time to help out, please try to support the event by just dropping in for a few minutes.

PTO

If anyone finds they have any **surplus plants** or plant to split/divide, be it now or later in the year, please let me have brief details including your name and phone number so that they can be passed on to members via the 'newsletter'. This was a suggestion from Roger Wood who has Iris and Astilbe to split, together with various grasses which he is happy to share. Call him on 01663 732112 if interested. Roger also has 5 spare 2008/9 seed catalogues from Shelley Seeds (recommended by David Hampsey), vegetables only, so let him know if you are interested. The new catalogue is out this summer and as a Society we would qualify for 30% discount (seeds only) on orders over £200. However many members will want to continue using Kings seeds who offer special discounts for NSALG affiliated societies, so it may not be possible to get a big enough order for Shelley seeds to qualify for their discount. Should this be the case, members can deal direct with Shelleys.

Please note the following dates for Open Gardens

(1) - Sunday 14th June Mr & Mrs Sharp are opening their garden, Otterbrook, Alders Lane, Chinley from 1 – 5 pm, entry £2.50. This will be via the NGS scheme and all monies collected will go to various cancer charities. Please park on the main Buxton Rd and then walk up Alders Lane approx 200 yards following the yellow signs. It's quite remarkable how this garden has developed over the years due solely to the dedication, talent and effort of both Mary and Dennis. A must see if you haven't been before.

(2) – Saturday 18th July Brian & Alison Allerton have kindly agreed to open their garden at 'Legh Bank' The Paddock, Off Eccles Road, WB, to members & friends from 1.30- 4.30pm. entry £1. As usual there will be light refreshments and wine at 50p per glass, and a raffle. All takings will be donated to charity, so please come along and join the crowd. Note that cars should not be parked on The Paddock which is a narrow and unsurfaced cul-de-sac. Please try and park before on the railway bridge or on Chapel Road, and walk/stroll up to the end of The Paddock. It's not very far!

Allotment matters. It's the start of the new growing season and some plots have changed hands which has led to a sudden burst of activity as the new tenants get cracking. This is a most welcome sight and will hopefully lead to much improved cultivation of the plots and better usage of the site generally. It's true there's still a long waiting list for plots but the Town Council is apparently anxious to identify suitable land locally to provide more plots. We applaud the Council for encouraging new plotholders to join the Society, and hope this sign of goodwill continues for the benefit of all plotholder members.

On a lighter note, there's a black female kitten who regularly visits my plot. She seems fascinated whenever I get working and comes over to help (or hinder) wanting to play with whatever I'm planting and then ends up going to sleep on a sunny shelf in the greenhouse. Just recently I nearly forgot and almost locked her in but she wasn't at all concerned. That's kittens for you, delightfully mischievous.

Nature notes Roger & Joan Wood report they have House Martins at their home, and keep a record of their arrival and departure each year. They've 7 nests of which only 2 are currently occupied, which is a concern as they had 5 occupied last year, but there just don't seem to be the same numbers about at the moment. This is a trend confirmed by the RSPB statistics and these birds are now seen as an endangered species needing protection. So let's hope something can be done to identify the reasons for this and hopefully find a remedy.

You may recall that we have reciprocal arrangements with Disley & Lyme Horticultural Society (also Stockport Horticultural Soc) and Chapel Gardening Club. I'll be happy to supply details of their events on request, but would urge you to support our own events as far as possible.

Finally, don't forget Shallcross Nursery, up Elnor Lane, for your hangings baskets etc. Michael Healey is happy to give members 10% discount. Also any member interested in High Peak CVS courses please contact me for details.

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