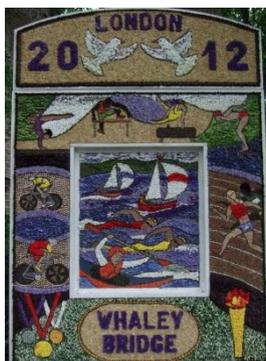




WHALEY BRIDGE Allotment & Gardeners' Society



SEPTEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER THE END OF A VERY WET SUMMER!



Some 15 members of WBAGS were involved in the design and production of this year's Whaley Bridge well-dressing. Congratulations to all involved.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to new members Anne Swain, Valerie Howard and Thelma Fraser, all of Buxton. Welcome back to Rob Huggins and Kay Winter.

AGM AND SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL: REMINDER

The AGM will take place on Friday, 9th November at Trinity Church Hall, starting at 7.30 pm. Annual membership subscriptions (£5 per head) are due on 1st November.

SEED ORDERS

The society can get a discount on a seed order from Kings Seeds. If you are interested, please contact David Osborn for a catalogue. Those who have ordered before through WBAGS will receive one automatically, when David receives them. Completed orders need to be received by David before or at the AGM.

STORE NEWS

The society's Store has now closed for regular business. However, there is stock left in most categories, so phone Dave Parker or David Osborn to agree a time when you could meet at the Store if you have needs.

There is an abundant supply of pebbles available, should you be interested.

David Osborn and his team Gordon Belfield, Alec Clough, Dave Parker and Roger Wood have spent dismal hours in cold, dank surroundings at the store awaiting low numbers of buyers. We all know you have to take the rough with the smooth with UK weather but the rough is not usually such an endurance test! Very many thanks, chaps.

REPORTS OF RECENT EVENTS

HODNET HALL GARDENS AND PLANTHUNTERS' FAIR 3rd June

Rosemary Kellock reports "Despite clashing with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations and an abysmal weather forecast, we managed to fill a small coach. It was certainly an umbrella day but tolerable because we could get shelter in the large tearoom and marquee. Both were serving light refreshments and the marquee provided entertainment from young flute players and a very good choir. The extensive and well-kept gardens included many points of interest, in particular the rhodos and azaleas. Whilst the poor weather did mar the enjoyment, most of us felt it was a worthwhile and interesting visit."

COFFEE MORNING AND PLANT SALE 9 June

"Water, water everywhere....." It was the Whaley Water Weekend and (once again) the weather joined in too. The benefit for the Society's Coffee Morning was that many visitors to the W3 weekend came in to dry out, warm up and enjoy company and cheer. The homemade cakes were absolutely excellent and special thanks go to Roma Coley, Alison Berry and Janet Shaw. You may remember that we asked for some additional helpers for this event in the June Newsletter and we are especially grateful to Marion Oaks (making coffee) and Joyce Eyre for rallying to the cause.

Roger Wood and David Osborn put together a small plant sale in the entrance hall of the Mechanics Institute and managed to get a commendable number of sales. £226.16 was raised. This was less than last year but in 2011 the Coffee Morning took place in lovely weather and the plant stall did a roaring trade. Better luck next year.

VISIT TO NESS BOTANICAL GARDENS AND BURTON VILLAGE GARDENS 1 July

Despite a mixed weather forecast, it did stay fine! In the morning, the party of 16 members enjoyed the huge diversity of Ness Gardens. The background to these remarkable gardens was given in the last Newsletter. After a light lunch, the party moved on to Burton Open Gardens. The first garden visited was a "Wow!" garden managed by a lady called Pauline, who was elderly and very fit! This was followed by a visit to Burton Manor's walled garden. The group heard plans for its future, since it had originally belonged to a college, which had now closed. The final garden visited belonged to Liz Carter, who had organised the visit to all the Burton Gardens. This garden reflected hard work and very good planting over a long period of time and was much admired. Coffee, cakes and a plant sale topped off the experience.



A rare, rain-free trip!

LATE SUMMER VISITS

Two visits to Highgrove took place in July and August, following on the success of trips last year. As this Newsletter was being written, the final visit of the year

was taking place to Parcevall Hall Gardens in Wharfedale. Descriptions of these visits will be presented in the late October Newsletter. See also our website www.wbags.co.uk



Splash of colour at Parcevall Hall Gardens!

FUTURE EVENTS

SOCIAL EVENING AND TOMATO

TASTING 14th September Trinity Church Hall 7.30pm

Full details were given in the June Newsletter. Come and judge the tastiest tomatoes, swap slug stories and celebrate gardening successes against the odds in this soggy summer!

“VEGETABLES FOR EVERY TASTE” Talk by Margaret Robinson of Robinson Seeds. 19th October Trinity Church Hall. 7.30pm

This is a light-hearted look at growing vegetables, covering ideas for new varieties to try and ideas for those who grow vegetables in containers. Members who don't grow vegetables will enjoy the talk, too! There will be light refreshments afterwards. £1 for members and £2 for non-members. Roger Wood, our Talks Organiser is always pleased to have ideas for talks and contact details for good speakers.

COFFEE MORNING 16TH NOVEMBER Mechanics Institute 9.30am – 12 noon

This is another chance to advertise our presence in the community and to provide an opportunity for Whaley Bridge residents to enjoy coffee and chat with friends.

Please contact Rosemary Kellock if you are able to provide home-baked cakes or items for the bric-a-brac stall. As always, help with serving refreshments, manning the stall and washing up is much appreciated. This is a chance to offer the Society much valued help without on-going or regular commitment.

WHALEY BRIDGE GARDEN SHOW

Remember – this takes place at the Bowling Club pavilion on Saturday, 8th September between 1.30pm and 5.30pm.

WHALEY BRIDGE MEMORIAL PARK

Members may be aware of the £478,000 project underway to refurbish the Memorial Park. This will include work on the War Memorial, the creation and improvement of recreation areas, the improvement of access and route-ways through the Park (including a new bridge) and planting to improve the stock of trees in the Park and associated wildlife environment. Work has already taken place to rid the Park of Japanese Knotweed (by spraying it) and Himalayan Balsam (pulled out under the supervision of Ranger Paul Evans by adults from the Alderbrook Day Centre, Chinley).

The masonry work on the War Memorial itself is now complete. Next year will see further hard landscaping and the recreation of planting around the War Memorial in keeping with the original 1920 concept. Rhododendrons will be cleared, an ornamental tree planted and the vista looking up to the War Memorial from the River Goyt will be enhanced. A 2013 WBAGS newsletter will give details of this work.

THE BLUE MINT BEETLE

The RHS reports that a new pest has hit the UK – the blue mint beetle or *Chrysolina coerulans*. It is commonly found on mint in mainland Europe but has now been spotted in the UK too. It is about 7mm long and its blue colour is strikingly different from the emerald green of our native mint beetle. The RHS recommends picking off the beetles or larvae by hand or spraying with the organic pesticide pyrethrum, if there are too many. If you see a blue mint beetle, send digital photographs to advisory_entomology@rhs.org.uk

MUSINGS FROM PODICEPS CRISTATUS.....

“You've got “todes” in your veg. patch!!!”

I was sunning myself near the dam, watching our two new chicks practising their fishing dives, and overheard two walkers on the path chatting about their recent visit to the Olympics in London. “Those volunteers were so helpful to visitors like us, brilliant!..even down in the Underground, and all free you know....” As they moved away, my attention was drawn to a flat centipede

which scampered between the pebbles by my feet, heading for a worm-cast nearby...how careless!...Munching the tasty morsel, I reflected on the abundance of free “little helpers” which are underground all around us, rather like the volunteers in London.

The invertebrates which exist in the soil of our allotments and gardens, are the descendants of invertebrates which emerged from the sea to colonise the land and forest over 400 million years ago. Their complex ecosystems are vital to the fertilisation of plants and to the survival of many reptiles, mammals and birds. They digest decaying vegetation and enrich the soil. When we dig compost or peat or manure into our garden soil, we are increasing the fibre content of the soil and improving structure, but more important, we are improving the subterranean environment for the millions of unseen “volunteers” who are restoring nitrogen and oxygen balance, and introducing nutrients.

Here are the underground medal winners:

Earthworms = nature's rotivator.

Common ground beetle= nocturnal alpine troops, climbing stems to feed on aphids and caterpillar larva.

Centipedes, garden spiders and harvestmen= rapid response troops to attack slugs, mites and flies!

But what about the “todes”??? Those naturally occurring – **nematodes**, now available commercially are relatives of the microscopic eel-worm and are gaining in popularity as effective pest control.

So **hesitate** before you drench with trichlorophen or dimethoate!

Think on before you reach for permethrin (no relation to the organic pyrethrum) or malathion!

Go native! Give *encarsia formosa* a chance, say hello to *phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita*?

