

The University of Oxford

106

Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'
newsletter

Autumn/Winter
2020/21



From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood

So much has happened since the last edition of the newsletter, both within these gates and outside them, that it is difficult to distil everything down into a few pages. I hope you agree that despite the very challenging circumstances, the Garden and Arboretum, and the collections they hold, have all prospered, and we continue to engage people with the scientific wonder of plants.

We have not been able to open all of our glasshouses this summer, so we have shared glimpses from behind closed doors with you on p.6. In particular, the curious blooms of *Ceropegia stapeliiformis* and snake-like *Streblus pendulinus* certainly entertained our online audiences. If you have been able to visit OBG then you may have noticed the reconfiguration of the Rock Garden that is well under way. These newly planted and interpreted beds will take our visitors in the footsteps of the botanist John Sibthorp, author of the magnificent *Flora Graeca*, across the Levant.

We are developing our conservation collection to support research at OBG. Curator Mark Brent, Education Officer Lauren Baker, and I collected seed of a rare plant called *Orobanche rapum-genistae* at Ashford Hill in Hampshire in June. We now hope to grow the plant, among others like it, at the Garden as you will find out on p.4. These parasitic plants certainly have the power to arouse curiosity: our research paper on a particularly unusual one, *Langsdorffia* (p.10) was picked up by



Orobanche rapum-genistae

Science News and the Daily Mirror, as well as some popular science platforms, with a collective audience of 30 million!

The Education Team has been developing and marketing a new programme of schools' resources. They have also run a campaign called 'celebrate summer' at the Arboretum that engaged people with socially distanced butterfly walks, falconry, and multifarious other activities (p.7). Meanwhile September saw the launch of an initiative to plant 400 trees around Oxfordshire to celebrate our anniversary next year (p.8). We would love your support in meeting our ambition to create a positive, lasting change by helping to reforest our local environment - do plant a tree seed or two with your families if you can.

Despite concerted efforts, we have been unable to advertise our series of autumn science and winter lectures just yet, or indeed our Public Education Programme in full. Planning for all these is under way so please do check the 'What's on' page of our

website for further updates. Please note that, inevitably (but expectedly), all the lectures will be digital.

I hope that you enjoy the snapshot of what has been going on at OBG in the last few months - it has been anything but quiet here!



Ashford Hill, the site of *Orobanche rapum-genistae*

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From the Director

By Simon Hiscock

June was a glorious month, not least because OBGAs was once again able to open its gates to the public after three months of lockdown. On 15th June I was there to open the gates to the Arboretum at 10am, and it was wonderful to see the first cars waiting to come in. Mondays are not usually busy days at the Arboretum, but we welcomed 134 visitors - nearly three times the number for the same day last year. And that trend continued, so that at the end of the first week, visitor numbers were c. 300% of the equivalent week in 2019. Visitors spoke of a sense of release and relief to engage once again with nature in a spacious and safe environment. The Arboretum looked magnificent - the wild flower meadows were a tapestry of flowers and alive with butterflies, and wild roses lined the paths of Palmer's Leys; there were even a few rhododendrons and azaleas still in flower. Visitor numbers remained up by 300% into July and were a steady 200% up through August - many were first-time visitors who had discovered the Arboretum through OBGAs enhanced digital offering during lockdown.

Then on 22nd June the Vice-Chancellor Professor Louise Richardson cut a ribbon across the Danby Gate to reopen the Botanic Garden. It was a glorious sunny morning and the moment was captured in a picture that remained on the University website homepage for weeks. Professor Richardson couldn't believe how beautiful the Garden looked (a sentiment shared by the Director of



Reopening the Botanic Garden with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Louise Richardson



Our pop-up shop at the Arboretum

Horticulture at Kew, who visited the week before), which was testament to the hard work of horticultural staff who tended the collections throughout lockdown. Sadly we were unable to reopen the glasshouses immediately, but with the fine weather and glorious blooms throughout the Garden this did not deter visitors. Numbers grew through June and July as tourists returned to Oxford - mostly from across the UK - and by the end of July we were ~40% of visitors compared to July 2019. However, in August numbers rose to ~70% of August 2019 and remained so well into September.

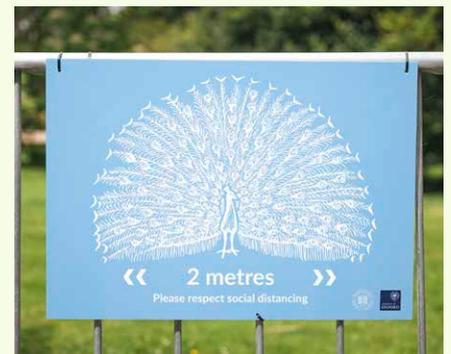
Despite these better than forecast visitor numbers, we cannot recoup the income lost during lockdown, especially because our shop (just reopened) was closed during the

summer. Most of our exclusive best sellers, including Physic Gin and Arboretum Honey, are now also available online, as well as at the Garden Boutique and Arboretum 'Pod'. So please do make use of these because every purchase helps OBGAs.

As autumn arrives many challenges lie ahead, the first being how to stage the Christmas Fair, our most popular event of the year. Whilst plans are uncertain still, we will be running a virtual Fair online in collaboration with the Friends - please continue to check our website for updates.

Our biggest challenge going into 2021 will be delivering the celebrations for the Garden's 400th anniversary. The uncertainties ahead and challenges in staging 'events' if social distancing and 'covid-19 compliancy' are still operational in July 2021, make this especially tricky; I will say more next time.

In the meantime, please do continue to support OBGAs through your membership, enjoying the Garden and Arboretum and using our 'shop'. Please also encourage your friends to become our Friends because being a Friend of OBGAs has never been more important.



Social distancing signage at the Arboretum

Charcoal for sale at the Arboretum



Ian Walkman

Ian Walkman

News from the Garden

By Mark Brent

With the first signs of autumn, cyclamens are flowering in all corners of the Garden and the *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* (Katsura tree) is turning a subtle shade of bronze. It seems as though summer passed by in the blink of an eye. The return of our visitors has been a blessing, as much as the closure brought a degree of liberty for those of us who were working within its walls during the lockdown; indeed, an audience to admire and critique the work we do was greatly missed. I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to all who have passed on their kind compliments to the team during the last few months.

I am loath to mention the pandemic and the difficulties it has presented the horticultural team since March, however there have been some positive outcomes.



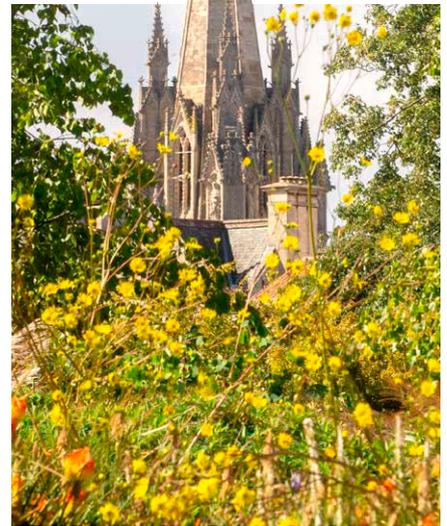
Cercidiphyllum japonicum (the Katsura tree)

The willingness of the team to overcome challenges and their ability to improvise and work around issues has led to great success. The colourful display in the planters along the riverbank by Magdalen Bridge is one such example. Designed and planted by our horticulturalist Russell Beeton, it is a scheme that we will repeat in the future and expand to other planters around the Garden.

The pandemic has strengthened our ties with other institutions as we have sought collective solutions to some of the problems it has caused. In August I was able to travel to Bonn University Botanic Gardens to revitalise an existing partnership we have with our colleagues in Germany. In previous years Bonn has hosted members of our staff, giving them the opportunity to enhance their experience and skills. My counterpart, Curator Markus Radschweit, was an extremely hospitable host and offered insight not only into the challenges his team faces, but also positive developments they are undertaking to improve their own plant collections. We hope that in 2021 our own apprentices will be able to take part in an exchange.

Closer to home we have been forging local partnerships with conservation groups involved with the restoration of river meadows along the Thames to Eynsham, surveying of Christ Church Meadow, and the distribution of scarce native species such as *Sium latifolium* (water parsnip) propagated by horticulturalist Jim Penney to suitable local habitats such as those in Cutteslowe.

Back in the Botanic Garden we have returned to 'business as usual' as a team and as we enter the autumn months several



View of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin on Oxford High Street from the Lower Garden

projects will be undertaken around the Garden. For example the final segment of the Literary Garden will be landscaped just above the Medicinal Beds, and planting on the Rock Garden will continue, including, for example, fig trees sourced from Greece, and new interpretation panels describing the travels of John Sibthorp. In addition to a busy schedule, a raised bed constructed with timber from the Arboretum is planned in the Lower Garden. It will exhibit a native collection of rare *Orobanch*e species, a display which will be completely unique, and complements the botanical research into these unusual parasitic plants undertaken by Chris Thorogood.

Plant Records at OBGA

By Sarah Edwards

I started my role as Plant Records Officer at OBGA in November 2019, with a core part of my work involving curation of the plant records database. Having a well-curated database is essential, as the data associated with the plants underpins the scientific integrity of the living collections and helps inform new plant acquisitions to better meet conservation requirements, including objectives of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). When I arrived, OBGA had been without a Plant Records Officer for more than 10 years, resulting in the database requiring a major 'clean-up'.

Since being in position I have improved all the existing taxonomic data: removing duplicates, updating the scientific names to current accepted names, and providing a link to the Royal Botanic Garden Kew's nomenclatural backbone and standardised plant distribution data. When I first arrived there were about 45,000 taxon records, with multiple duplicates and many typographic errors. Through a deduplication and correction process, this has been updated to only 4,637 taxa and just under 10,000 accessions.

The database currently sits in Brahms, a database management system developed in Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford. I have been working with the developers to ensure that the database best meets the needs of OBGA. In conjunction with OUI (Oxford University Innovations) there is the potential opportunity to make the database

cutting edge and a world leader with use of Apps to provide seasonal digital interpretation in the Garden, glasshouses and Arboretum - enhancing visitor engagement and education throughout the year.

There is still, however, a considerable amount of work to be completed on the plant records database (in addition to ongoing updates as plants die and new plants are received into the collections). This includes an audit of the plants that are growing at OBGA and adding all the new accessions for the past year, so that the database reflects what is currently held in the collections. Many of the plants require new engraved labels, and this audit process (which I have recently started) includes an assessment of these, so that they can be ordered from the engraver.

The database management system in which the data sits, Brahms, has also recently

News from the Arboretum

By Ben Jones



The magnificent river-side planters this summer



Colchicums in flower in late August

been updated to a new version, with significant updates to its functionality. A major task ahead is to export the cleaned-up data to the new system. The next step will be to enhance the data, with the addition of current national and international conservation ratings (IUCN and CITES), as well as coordinates for mapping the plants in the collections and ethnobotanical and other relevant information to facilitate improved interpretation for the public.

With the 400th anniversary next year of OBG being established as a physic garden, a revamp of the medicinal plants beds is desirable, with new interpretation. With my specific expertise in medicinal plants, I hope to work closely with the new Curator of the hardy collection to improve the medicinal beds in time for the 2021 anniversary.



Cattle at the Arboretum

As we head into autumn, it has been very heartening to see so many people enjoying the Arboretum since reopening in mid-June. Despite the difficult circumstances, we have been able to host our 'Celebrate Summer' events throughout August, welcome Celia's café, and for the first time in eight years, see cattle return to the meadows. With the approach of autumn, I hope that the Arboretum can continue to be a place in which people can escape to enjoy all that the seasons have to offer.

Our recent plantings have prospered this summer, which is always encouraging to see, and a particular highlight for me at this time of year has been to plan the coming season's planting list. We will continue to plant up the Serpentine Ride, starting at the far end towards the Arboretum boundary. Highlights on the planting list for other areas of the site include *Tetradium daniellii*, a late summer- to early autumn-flowering deciduous tree, and *Sorbus gracilis*, propagated from material collected by us in Japan, which gives a spectacular display of autumn colour.

Another particular highlight on this year's planting list is *Platycarya strobilacea*, which is rare in cultivation. A member of the walnut family (Juglandaceae), *Platycarya* is a genus comprising a single species native to East Asia. The closest relatives of *Platycarya* are the wingnuts (*Pterocarya*), walnuts (*Juglans*), hickories and pecans (*Carya*), as well as a single species in the genus *Cyclocarya*. Unlike its relatives, *P. strobilacea* produces upright cone-like clusters, at the end of the current year's growth in July or August. These persistent cones, and its autumn colour, make it a plant of year-round interest.

On a final note, this autumn is shaping up to be a good year for spotting fungi at the Arboretum; even a short walk around the site will reveal a range of different species. *Caloboletus radicans* or the rooting bolete mushroom has been abundant this year, as well as *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* or shaggy parasol. Others to look out for include *Fistulina hepatica* or the beefsteak fungus, and *Laetiporus sulphureus* or chicken-of-the-woods.



Caloboletus radicans



Fistulina hepatica



Phaeolus schweintzii

News from the Glasshouses

By Kate Pritchard



Ceropegia stapeliiformis



Dendrobium polyanthus



Streblus pendulinus

Although our doors were closed for a period this year, hopefully you have shared in our horticultural successes digitally, via the website and our social media channels. The collection was captured as it continued to flower and fruit behind the scenes, oblivious to the lockdown and possibly benefitting from the cleaner air.

We continued to cultivate and tend the collection with an eye to the future. Our main activities and projects have all been made possible by the generosity of the Friends.

A particular ambition is for *Amorphophallus titanum* to flower at the Botanic Garden for the first time. This 'stinking goliath' of the Sumatran rainforests

has attracted many tens of thousands at other botanic gardens, and is a tried and tested way to engage people with plants. A bed has been landscaped in the Rainforest House and one of the more mature corms from the collection now lies dormant beneath the surface, and we wait in great anticipation.

The first plantings of the Japanese sub-tropical collection in the Rainforest House have enjoyed a terrific growing season. These plants are representative of the Ryuku flora, the southern-most islands in the Japanese archipelago. OBGA has collaborated with partners in Japan to conserve rare and threatened plants from across these islands.

The steady replacement of the soil throughout the glasshouses continues. We are re-landscaping the beds and planting out the warm temperate corridor. Meanwhile 'behind the scenes', we observed curiously beautiful flowers on our *Ceropegia stapeliiformis* in the Arid House, our *Streblus pendulinus* in the Lower Corridor, and the spectacular orchid *Dendrobium polyanthus* in our propagation houses.

Indispensable to cultivation are reliable propagation facilities. Even more so if tending a collection as varied and vulnerable as the glasshouse collection. The Friends have funded the new propagation facilities for the Botanic Garden - not only for the tender collections, but for the hardy plants as well. The facilities were installed in the summer and the results have been excellent. With confidence, we have been able to propagate not only the rare and unusual, but also plants for research and ornamental displays.

All this has been possible because of the commitment of our staff and the generosity of the Friends in what has been an unusual growing season to say the least. Thank you.



The glasshouse corridor before planting



Propagation facilities



The glasshouse corridor after planting

Education at OBGAs

by Lauren Baker



Jan Vallman

A family enjoying the meadow at the Arboretum

Without doubt, this has been an unusual time to start a new job and I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt thanks to all of my new colleagues at OBGAs for their warm welcome. Thankfully, I was not desk-bound for too long and soon had the opportunity to familiarise myself with the collections at both sites as we prepared to reopen our doors to the public. It soon became clear that I had joined a proactive, flexible and resilient team and we have achieved a great deal already during these challenging times.

'Celebrate Summer at the Arboretum' is one such achievement, which saw over 1,500 visitors visit the Arboretum over four

Saturdays in August to enjoy our beautiful grounds. Our visitors enjoyed insect displays, butterfly walks, falconry and of course, seeing our piglets. The dedication and support I received from the team was invaluable and enabled the events to run safely and successfully, generating much-needed income for OBGAs.

In some respects, leading these events felt like returning to my roots, as I sat on several committees during my seven years at the University of Nottingham, including the largest student-led farmers' market in the country, Sutton Bonington Farmers' Market. Here I completed my



Lauren Baker, the new Secondary Education Officer

Undergraduate degree in Plant Science followed by my PhD in wheat genetics and global food security. It was also during this period that I developed my skills as an educator, running my own private tuition company for six years. I look forward to sharing my passion for plant science that I developed there at OBGAs.

Prior to starting at OBGAs in June this year, I taught for a year at Wychwood School on Banbury Road. This experience is invaluable in my current role, and has helped shape my view on where our efforts as an education department should focus. After the months in which pupils were unable to be in school, supporting the teachers by delivering curriculum-based sessions out of the classroom has never been more important. The collections at OBGAs are diverse and ideal for educating all age groups. To reflect this, I am creating a new, dynamic portfolio of secondary education resources that is both



Oxford University Museum of Natural History ran their Pollinator Story Time at the Arboretum during the Celebrate Summer events



Insects on display at Harcourt Arboretum



Jan Wahlman

Celebrate Summer at the Arboretum



Piglets at the Arboretum



Oxford University Museum of Natural History ran bug hunts in the Palmer's Leys during the Celebrate Summer at the Arboretum events

curriculum-linked, and also highlights the heritage, research and conservation work that is at the heart of OBG. One such resource that I have completed is an Ecology and Statistics practical, which is compulsory for both GCSE and A Level biology, meeting teachers'

needs perfectly, and making the most of the natural capital and biodiversity of our sites.

Looking ahead, I envisage a diverse teacher training programme that will tap into our research and collections even further, as I believe that the more comfortable the teachers are with using

plants in their lessons, the greater the impact we will have as an education facility.

I look forward to meeting many of you in due course at the Garden and Arboretum and I would like to finish by thanking you in advance for your ongoing support for the Education Team.

Primary Education

By Nienke Abbing

We have been working hard during lockdown, creating new education sessions, online resources, events and launching new projects such as 'plant 400 trees' in the run-up to our 400th Anniversary.

400 trees

As part of our 400th anniversary celebrations, we have launched a campaign to plant 400 trees in and around Oxford. We have developed a guide with the support of other organisations and initiatives, including the Tree Council and 'One Tree Per Child' to give people the knowledge and confidence to plant trees such as oaks, field maples, hazels and hornbeams. This project aligns with ambitions to plant more trees in Britain, and to create positive, lasting change at a national and local level.

Please do support our project and join in, by collecting the seeds of native trees and spreading the word. To record your collected trees, and the number of trees you plant, please visit our website: <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/400-trees>. With this information we can keep track of the number of trees planted.

If you are a landowner or if you know a landowner who is interested in planting a number of trees, please do contact us. Oxford Botanic Garden will, together with local schools and communities, help plant a number of trees at allocated spaces within Oxfordshire.

Renewed Education Sessions

During the lockdown, we took the opportunity to review and update our offer to schools.

In 2020 and 2021 we will continue to refresh and update

our primary school sessions termly, highlighting key plants from the collections at the Botanic Garden and Arboretum linked to the curriculum. Necessarily, some of our glasshouses are closed at the moment, so we are finding new ways to adapt and socially distance whilst sharing our knowledge and collections outdoors.

Do take a look at our renewed 'Education Visits' webpage: <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/education-visits>

Online resources

During the lockdown, schools have been closed and our education team has truly missed sharing the plant collections with the pupils. So to help teachers, parents and students, we developed online resources for Foundation Stage to Key Stage 3. These can be downloaded via our website in the link provided: <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/learning-resources>

Events and activities

As Chris stated on p.2, running events and activities this year is challenging. We have plans to run a range of activities, with precautions in place of course. These include autumn and winter wreath making, and various family friendly activities. Please continue to check the 'What's on' page of our website which we update regularly to reflect the changes in Government and University guidelines.



An autumn wreath - part of an activity we plan to hold at the Arboretum this season

Research and Engagement

By Chris Thorogood

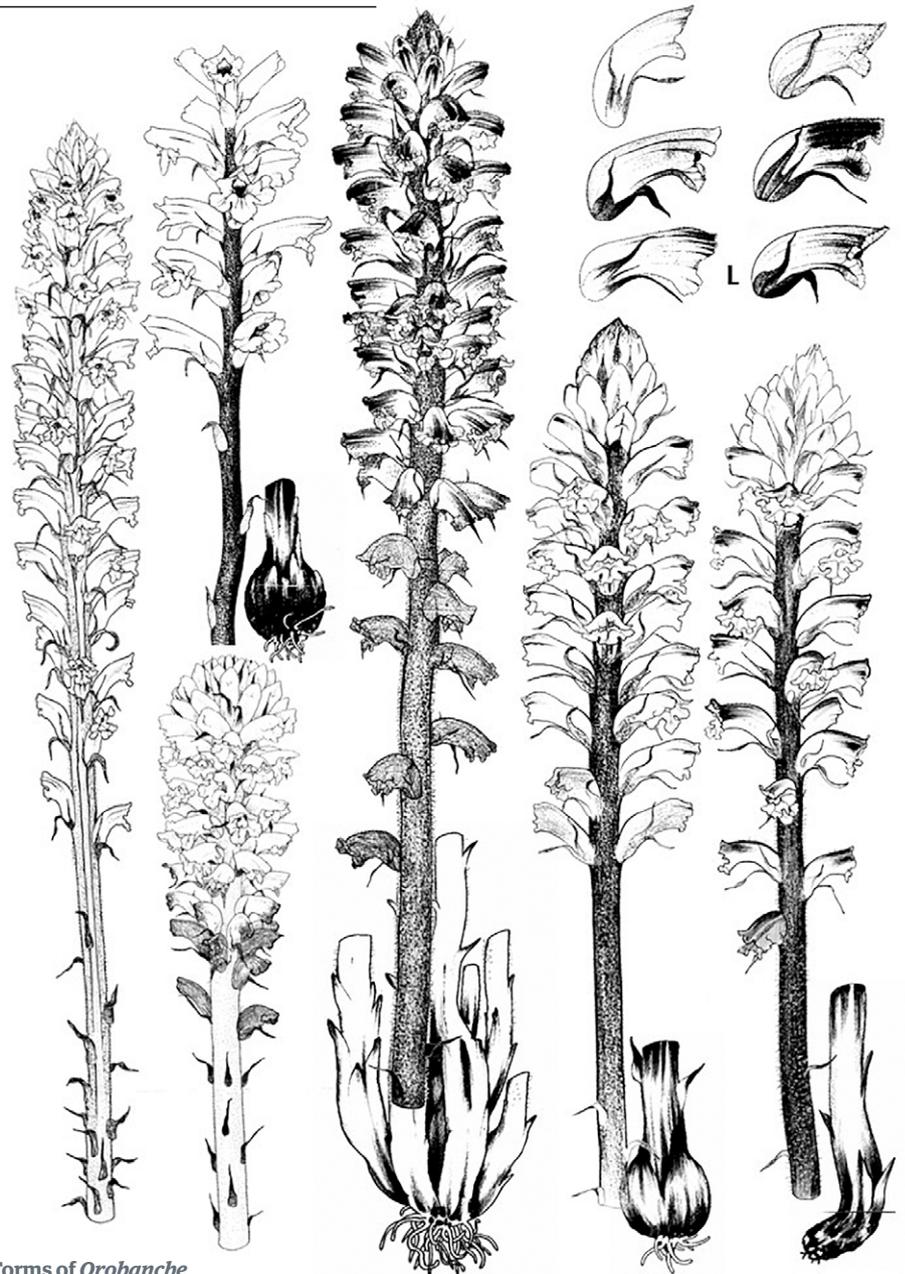
This year has seen the development of our 'in-house' portfolio of research projects that we are now linking to our conservation collection strategy. In June, Mark Brent, Lauren Baker and I made an excursion to Hampshire to collect seed (with permission) from a very rare and unusual plant, *Orobanche rapum-genistae*, that has suffered a great decline in recent decades. This plant steals its food from the roots of broom and gorse, so has no leaves or chlorophyll. We hope to grow this, and its relatives (see below), which will be a stepping stone towards cultivating and conserving other exciting parasitic plants from the tropics that have not been grown in western botanic gardens before.

As you will have read in previous issues, we have placed focus on digital engagement plant science. Recently, we published research to show how 'astonishing plants' can break the perception that plants are uninteresting compared with animals, and take us a step forward in addressing disengagement.

Despite the challenging circumstances this year, our plants and research are thriving, and we have exciting plans in place for the future. We look forward to keeping you informed on our progress.



The newly described *Orobanche minor* var. *heliophila*



Forms of *Orobanche minor* in the British Isles

A unique parasitic plant collection at OBGA

Dr Fred Rumsey, Senior Curator in Charge, Historical Collections at London's Natural History Museum, and I have been researching some of Britain's rarest and most curious plants, the broomrapes (*Orobanche*). These plants are parasitic, meaning they extract their nutrients from the roots of other plants (their so-called hosts). Based on careful examination of minute features, preferences for particular hosts, and genetic relatedness, we have described two new varieties this summer. One of them (*O. minor* var. *pseudoamethystea*) grows on sea holly on shingle beaches; the other (*O. minor* var. *heliophila*) grows on cultivated shrubs (*Brachyglottis*), often in carparks.

Understanding the diversity in these plants is important for informing conservation practice. Although they are rather difficult to grow, we are attempting to cultivate these plants here at OBGA in a bed that will be on public display next year, thanks to the efforts of Curator Mark Brent and horticulturalist Russell Beeton. This display will be a living amalgamation of research, conservation, and public engagement with science at OBGA.

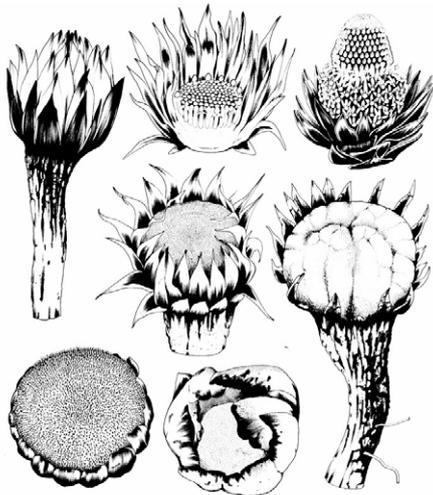
You can read our article, published in *British and Irish Botany*, here: <https://britishandirishbotany.org/index.php/bib/article/view/54>

Creatures from the deep

Parasitic plants (like those described on p.9) are an area of research focus at OBG. I published an article this year on the biology of an extraordinary group of plants called *Langsdorffia*, together with a botanist from the Universidade Federal de Sergipe in Brazil, Dr Jean Carlos Santos. This rare genus includes four species with disjunct distributions ranging from Central and South America, to Madagascar and Papua New Guinea. Their scaly, brightly-coloured flowering spikes erupt from the dingy forest floor and superficially resemble deep sea creatures, rather more than they do flowering plants. Little is known about



Langsdorffia hypogaea



The known species of *Langsdorffia*

the biology of three of the four species known to science. In our paper, we recommend that future work should focus on refining our understanding of how these plants grow and infect their hosts, with a view to

propagating them, and introducing them into botanic gardens' conservation collections. As discussed above, working with scientists from partner gardens internationally, this is exactly what we plan to do.

You can read our article, published in *Plants People Planet*, here: <https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ppp3.10102>

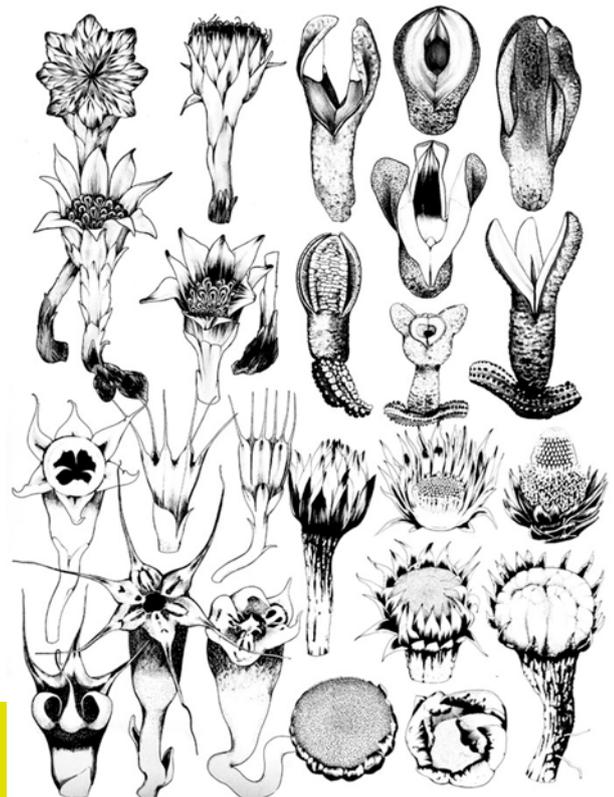
Astonishing plants

Decreasing environmental awareness and disconnection with nature are symptoms of a growing societal problem described as 'nature-deficit disorder'. Plants in particular are a blind spot and many people scarcely even notice them (compared with animals) - a phenomenon described metaphorically as 'plant blindness'. Addressing this is crucial of course, in the face of unprecedented plant extinction. Botanic gardens are visited

by 300 million people a year so the opportunities for engaging people with the importance of plant conservation are endless. In the diverse assemblages that botanical gardens hold, some plants are striking, unusual or dazzlingly beautiful, and many are unfamiliar to people. These have the power to astonish and challenge people's notion of how plants look and behave. Highlighting these via online channels is an ideal opportunity for promoting public engagement and dialogue about plants. This spring, we published an article in the prestigious journal *Trends in Plant Sciences* asserting that there is a shortfall in public engagement with plant sciences at a time when it is needed urgently, and recommending how botanic gardens may be part of the solution.



Nepenthes hemsleyana - an example of an 'astonishing plant'



An assortment of 'astonishing plants'

A short summary of the article in full is online here: [https://www.cell.com/trends/plant-science/fulltext/S1360-1385\(20\)30203-X?rss=yes](https://www.cell.com/trends/plant-science/fulltext/S1360-1385(20)30203-X?rss=yes)

Friends' Section

News

From the Friends' Chairman,
Sarah Taylor

As I write this, what had felt like a gradual return to normality, with visitors back in encouraging numbers in the Garden and Arboretum and new people once more joining the Friends, now feels under threat once again. The purpose for which the Friends were founded is more important than ever: to provide support for the Garden and Arboretum, to supplement the income from the University and visitor entry fees. You are enabling purchases of plants, purchases of educational materials, emergency funding of the salary of the outstanding digital content officer (i.e. disseminator of the news about the Garden to the world) of the Garden, Sam Ibbott. Some of you have already, and others I am sure will, contributed to the restoration of the paths network at the Arboretum. I cannot thank you all enough and I encourage you to continue with your invaluable support, both financial and as volunteers - the more the merrier.

Carol Maxwell



As I continue my series on the people who enable the organisation of the Friends, I have found myself on a voyage of discovery. All our volunteers have led extraordinary lives: perhaps it is a function of being in the university City of Oxford, perhaps it is a function of the appeal of the Garden. Carol Maxwell is a case in point.

Carol's first love was ballet, but her parents would not send her to ballet school, so her lessons were fitted around a grammar school education in London. On leaving school, she lived in Paris for two years as an au pair, but with a lot of free time which was devoted not only to carrying on with ballet but also to studying French and Russian.

On her return to England, having had a serious change of heart vis-a-vis ballet as a career, Carol's first job was as editor of educational language magazines, two French and one Russian, for a publisher which also produced magazines in Spanish and German. After six years, Carol and her family left London and moved to a small village outside Hemel Hempstead. There was a village hall and lots of little girls, so she started a ballet school which turned out to be a big success. After her divorce, she moved to Oxford, where amongst other things she taught adult beginners' ballet, a very different proposition!

After assorted short-term jobs, Carol began working as the college secretary of d'Overbroeck's - a shadow of its current self - which she did for six years. She was then able to take some time off work and go to Siena to study Italian for six most agreeable months.

She had always wanted to return to work in publishing and had applied to Oxford University Press, but with no success due to her lack of a degree. By the time she returned from Italy, however, her daughter was working there and knew the person who organised the temporary staff, which helped her to get 'a foot in the door'. She worked for 11 years in the Medical Books department as Assistant Commissioning Editor for Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience. After retirement, she continued in the sector with freelance copyediting for various publishers (OUP, Quercus, Footprint Books).

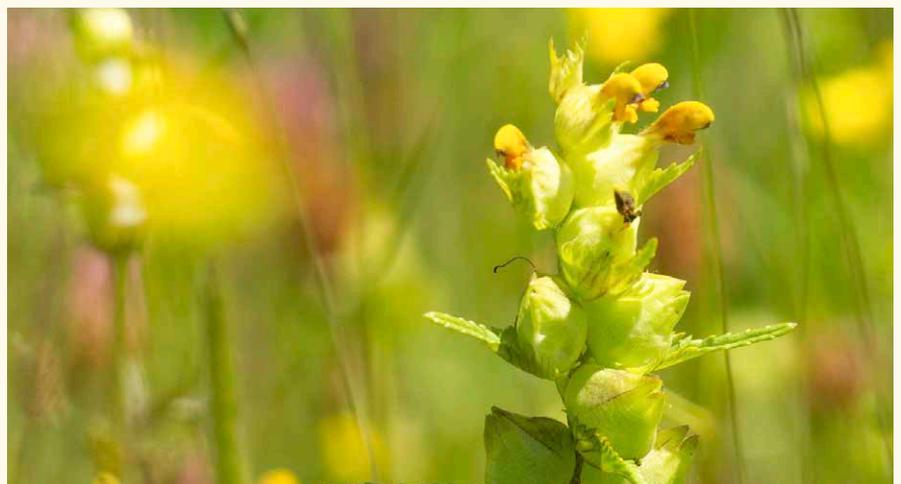
Carol volunteers at the local Oxfam shop four times a week and also at The Story Museum. For the Friends, Carol first got involved by organising the opera evening, taking over this surprisingly arduous role from me. She then swapped over with Mary

Isaac and took on the task of coordinating the Garden and Friends' volunteers. This is a job which involves all sorts of skills, from IT skills to managing the complex list of tasks and dates and marrying them up with volunteers and their wishes and availability, to persuasive skills in order to recruit more volunteers and then retain them, for example by organising an annual 'thank you' party for them. I suspect her experience of running ballet classes came in extremely useful at this point.

When my predecessor Richard Mayou retired, Carol, to my delight, took over from him putting together the Friends' section of the newsletter. She is ideally suited for this as she gently and efficiently persuades us all to submit our entries on time, juggles with fitting them on the page and ruthlessly finds every little proof-reading error and grammatical deviance. The amount of work involved in this is considerable but done with the minimum of fuss. She coordinates the input with Chris Thorogood, and it all works like clockwork.

Maura Allen

On a less happy note, for us at least, I have to report that Maura Allen has resigned as a Director of the Friends and indeed as Events Organiser and Plant Sale coordinator, as she has returned to her native Tasmania. Quite what we are going to do without her is not yet clear. Her energy, her vision, her inventiveness, her artistic skills, her involvement with the Garden as well as the Friends have been invaluable, and I suspect that her place will have to be taken by at least three people. All I can say is that I am proud of the fact that I recruited her in the first place, and it is the single best thing I have ever done for the Friends. She is sorely missed.



For New Friends

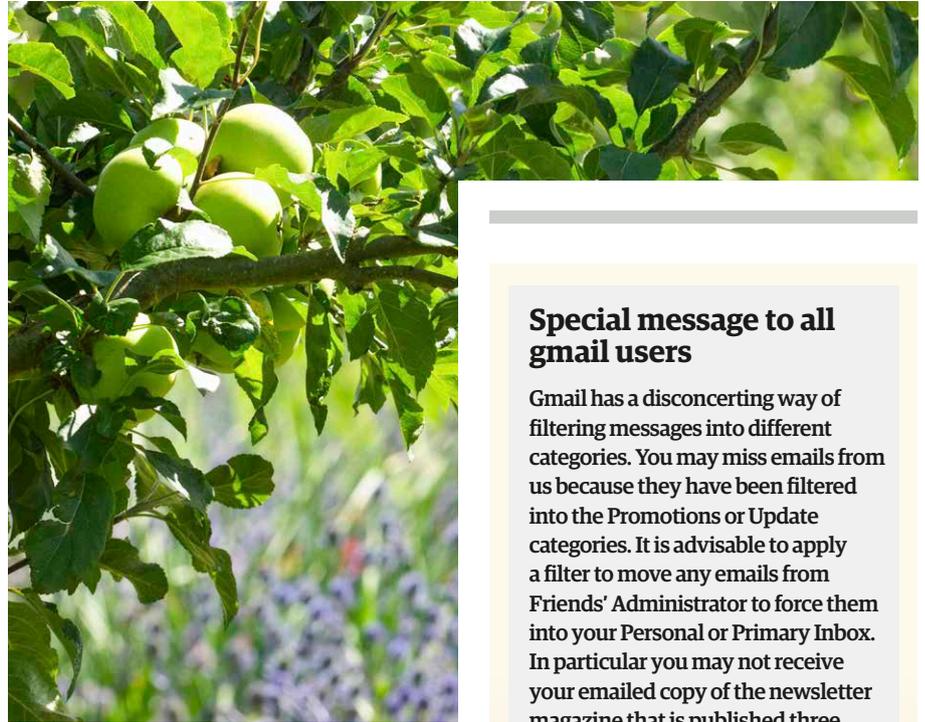
By Rebecca Mather

Thank you so much for all your interest in and support for the Garden and Arboretum during the course of this year. Please continue to visit with your friends and encourage them to become Friends to support the work of the Garden and Arboretum and enjoy all the benefits of being a Friend.

As you will know, 2021 is the 400th anniversary of the founding of Oxford Botanic Garden and is also the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Friends. In the hope that restrictions will be lifted in time, we are planning a number of celebratory events to mark these occasions and will need many volunteers.

If you would be interested in helping please contact me (rebecca.mather28@gmail.com) or Isabella Raeburn (friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk).

There are always opportunities for volunteering and becoming more involved with the activities and events of Friends as well as being directly involved with the work in the Garden and Arboretum.



Special message to all gmail users

Gmail has a disconcerting way of filtering messages into different categories. You may miss emails from us because they have been filtered into the Promotions or Update categories. It is advisable to apply a filter to move any emails from Friends' Administrator to force them into your Personal or Primary Inbox. In particular you may not receive your emailed copy of the newsletter magazine that is published three times a year. The dates this is usually sent out are as follows:

.....
Mid-March / Early July /
Early November
.....

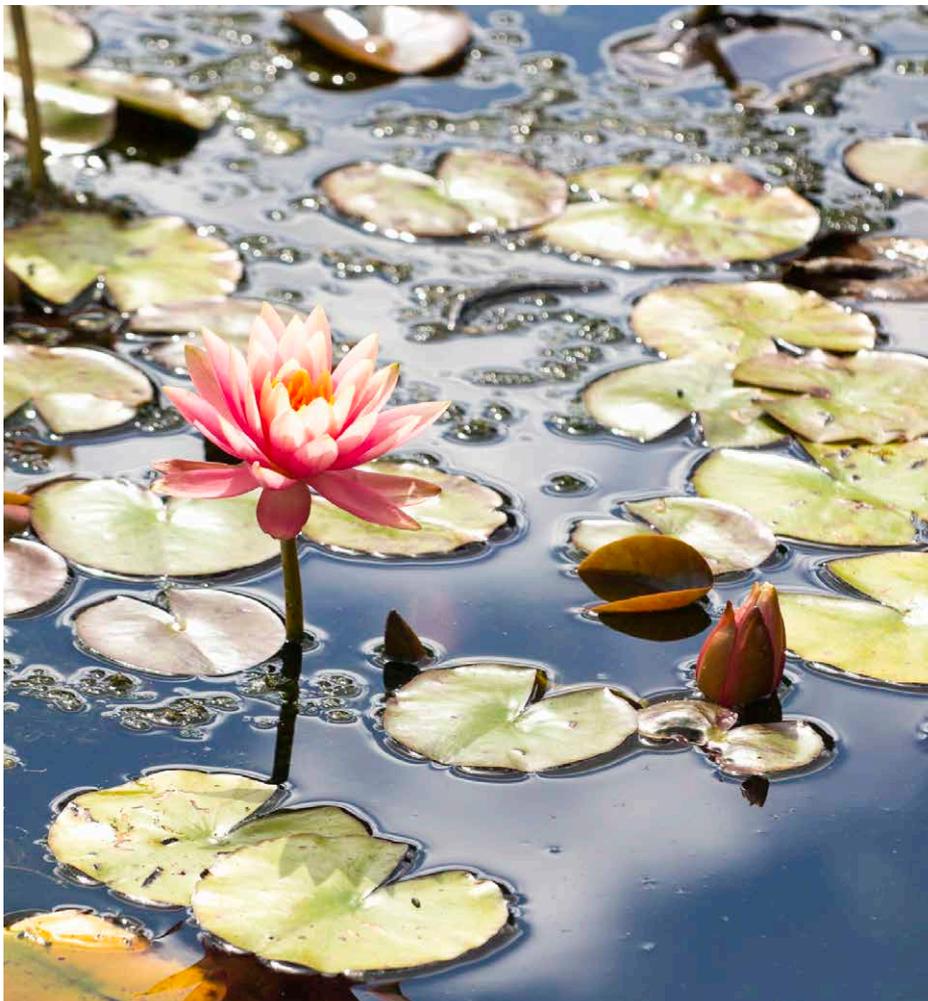
If you need any help with applying a filter to move our emails into your inbox then do contact Seonaid Danziger at seonaidscd@gmail.com

Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden and Arboretum. Our ticket office staff do not have access to the membership database (for data protection reasons) and can't let you in free of charge if you don't have your membership card!

Message to all email users

If you are not receiving regular e-bulletins with news of Friends' events by email, it will be because, for some reason, we do not have your current email address. Please send an email with your name to the Friends' Administrator at friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk.



Nymphaea 'Colorado'

15th Annual General Meeting

By Anna Nasmyth

The next Friends' Annual General Meeting will be held in the Jacqueline du Pré Music Room at St Hilda's College at 7.30pm on Monday 25th January 2021.

If it is not possible to hold the meeting in St Hilda's, we will hold the AGM via Zoom and an announcement will be placed on the Friends' website. To comply with company regulations, we also need to write to you individually, so please kindly ensure that you have given us your email address for correspondence. As you will appreciate, sending out letters is expensive for the charity and time-consuming for our Administrator.

This year, your Board proposes changes to the "Articles of Association" of the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden & Arboretum (the charity's constitution) to update the Articles in two ways: a) the current "Articles of Association" do not include the duration of terms of office for the Directors, which is no longer in line with best practice; and b) a new point covers participation in Director's meetings by electronic means.

Current wording in the "Articles of Association":

10. Retirement of Directors

- 10.1 At the first annual general meeting, all the Directors other than the Director appointed by the University of Oxford must retire from office unless by the close of the meeting the members have failed to elect sufficient Directors to hold a quorate meeting of the Directors. At each subsequent annual general meeting one-third of the Directors, or if their number is not three or a multiple thereof, the number nearest to one-third must retire from office. If there is only one Director, he or she must retire.

10.2 The Director appointed by the Visitors of the Oxford Botanic Garden, University of Oxford shall serve for three years and be eligible for reappointment.

10.3 The Directors to retire by rotation shall be those who have been longest in office since their last appointment. If any Directors became or were appointed Directors on the same day, those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree among themselves) be determined by lot.

10.4 If a Director is required to retire at an annual general meeting by a provision of these articles, the retirement shall take effect upon the conclusion of the meeting.

Proposed new wording:

10. Retirement of Directors

10.1 Directors are appointed for a term of three years with an option to renew for a further term of three years (or for a lesser period) by agreement with the Board and the Director, and subject to approval by the membership at the AGM. In exceptional cases, a term of office can be renewed for a final term of three years (or lesser period) by agreement with the Board and the Director, and subject to approval by the membership at the AGM. No Director may serve longer than 9 years.

10.2 For purposes of calculating the duration of a Director's term of office, the term will be deemed to commence at the close of the AGM at which such Director was elected and will be deemed

to expire at the close of the AGM held in the last year of the Director's term.

10.3 The Director appointed by the Visitors of the Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, University of Oxford, shall serve for three years and be eligible for reappointment.

New point to cover participation in Directors' meetings by electronic means:

19. Participation in meetings by electronic means

19.1 A meeting may be held by suitable electronic means agreed by the Directors in which each participant may communicate with all the other participants.

19.2 Any Director participating at a meeting by suitable electronic means agreed by the Directors in which a participant or participants may communicate with all the other participants shall qualify as being present at the meeting.

19.3 Meetings held by electronic means must comply with rules for meetings, including chairing and the taking of minutes.

A Special Resolution is required to make these changes, to be agreed by the membership of the Friends at the AGM (point 4 on the Agenda circulated with this copy of the Newsletter).

The Financial Accounts for the year ending 28th February 2020 will shortly be available to view on the Friends website.

Events

By Maura Allen

2020 should have been a year for wonderful events and the weather was perfect for so many outdoor treats. We missed May Morning, the Biennial Plant Sale, the Friends' summer party, Volunteers' Tea and more wonderful events that regularly dot the Friends' calendar.

Fingers crossed 2021 will bring many of the wonderful events back to the Garden and Arboretum and that the celebrations for the 400th anniversary will take place as planned by the extraordinary hard-working

staff of OBGA. I hope the Friends will be able to support all their efforts by responding to calls for volunteers and by attending as many events as possible.

This is my last report as Events Co-ordinator for the Friends as I have now moved to Tasmania to work as a Botanical Illustrator focusing on the endemic plants of this extraordinary island. It has been a great privilege to serve the Friends over many years and I hope to be able to come to the OBGA when returning to the UK to visit family and friends. Wishing you all good health in the current circumstances and many more hours of gardening opportunities.

First Friday of the Month

Coffee Mornings

In normal times, the Friends' coffee mornings take place in the Garden or at the Arboretum on the first Friday of every month (except January and August) and are an opportunity for Friends to get together. Coffee mornings begin at 10.30am; there is no fee and no booking is required, just turn up.

However, as the situation regarding getting together in groups and visiting public spaces is still unclear at the moment, we suggest that you check on the website <https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/upcoming-friends-events> for the latest news on coffee morning dates.

Friends' Garden Visits

By Jane Annett, Harriet Bretherton, Pauline Coombs, Diana Naumann and Esther Whiting

Two anniversaries will be celebrated during 2021 - the Oxford Botanic Garden's 400th anniversary on 27th July 2021 and the inception of the Friends' scheme 30 years ago and we are planning to celebrate these milestones with visits to old favourites, special requests and some new discoveries. Our programme opens in April, with visits to Magdalen College, Evenley Wood and our Friends' Chairman, Sarah Taylor, welcoming you to their glorious garden surrounding Rycote Park and Chapel - many thanks to Sarah and Bernard - thereby looking forward to a more hopeful year.

Continuing thanks also to our Ticketing Administrator, Freya Jones and Friends' Administrator, Isabella Raeburn, for their outstanding support throughout the past year. And we are pleased to announce that Esther Whiting has joined the Garden Visits team; she looks forward to meeting you during the coming months.



The Garden Visits team (from l to r): Pauline, Harriet, Jane, Diana and Esther

We look forward to celebrating the Garden & Friends' anniversaries and hope you will join us on some of the garden visits during 2021.

Visits: Because we have your and our health and safety at the forefront of our planning, we are guided by advice provided by the Botanic Garden, garden owners and the Government in terms of numbers, physical distancing, facilities, and refreshments. Therefore, if the gardens or the FOBGA feel it is unsafe, or it is contrary to Government regulations at the time, visits may not go ahead.

Sadly, coach trips are not possible for the foreseeable future.

Booking tickets online:

We had hoped to offer online booking for 2021, but due to unforeseen hiccups, this is not in place. It may be before next year's end. To book visits see the enclosed enclosed Booking Form.



Springtime at Evenley Wood Garden

Wednesday 21st April, 2.00pm

Springtime at Evenley Wood Garden

Evenley Wood Garden, Brackley, Northants NN13 5SH

By kind permission of the Whiteley Family

Set in Northamptonshire countryside, Evenley Wood Garden was created by Timothy Whiteley in 1980. An hour's guided walking tour will reveal an extensive woodland garden with an unusual band of acid soil, containing a notable collection of plants. Springtime finds a 'stream' of scillas winding through the garden for 800m, while fritillaries, late narcissus and carpets of blue, pink and white bells cover the woodland floor and, with warmer weather arriving, some 100 magnolias begin to come into flower. Sensible footwear advisable. If ground wet, problems may occur for wheelchair users. Accessible toilets. Refreshments available though not included.

- Friends £20, Guests £25
- Maximum 30

Thursday 29th April, 2.30pm

Private visit to Rycote Park and Chapel

Rycote Park, Nr Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2PE

By kind permission of Bernard Taylor and our Chairman, Sarah Taylor

This private visit to Rycote Park begins with coffee/tea and biscuits in the 18th-century barn next to the Chapel and an introductory talk from Sarah Taylor. She and her team then lead you on a 'History and Horticulture' tour of the Chapel, historic grounds and gardens of Rycote, taking in research done by Time Team,

Tuesday 13th April,
10.00am and 11.30am

Fritillaries at Magdalen College

High Street, Oxford OX1 4AU

By kind permission of the President of Magdalen College, Dinah Rose, QC

One of the wonders of Oxford is the Magdalen College Water Meadow in April alive with fritillaries. Claire Shepherd, Head Gardener, will take us along Addison's Walk and into the Fellows' Garden which at that time will be awash with spring flowers - anemones, species daffodils, scillas, crocuses. No refreshments.

- Friends £15, Guests £20
- Maximum 15 per visit



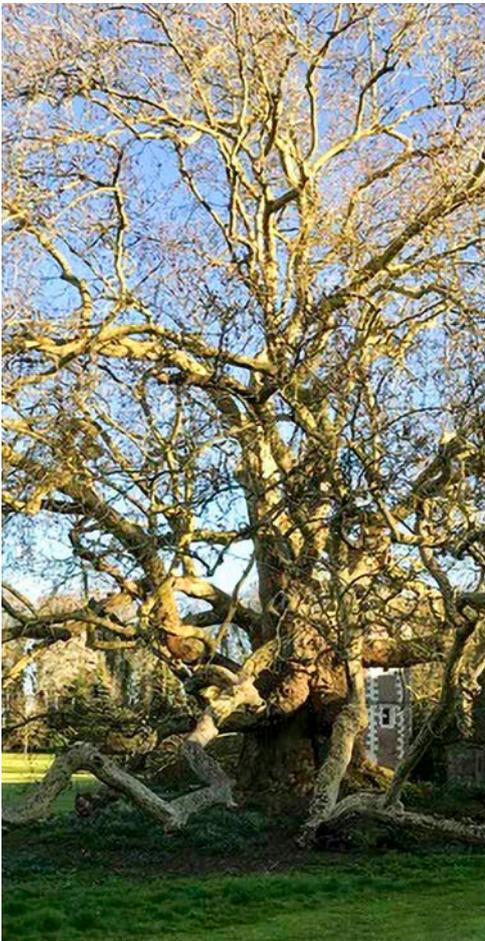
Fritillaries at Magdalen College

The Danby Patrons' Group

By Maura Allen

amongst others. Rycote Park was once a great Tudor Palace much visited by royalty, including Queen Elizabeth I as a princess in captivity and then no fewer than six times as queen. It was bought by Lord Williams of Thame in 1539, remaining in the hands of his descendants, ultimately the Earls of Abingdon, until 1911, when it was a shadow of its former self, having been largely demolished in 1807. During the 20th and 21st centuries, three owners added their stamp creating a mellow comfortable house in a beautiful park restored with the help of Elizabeth Banks, with echoes still of Capability Brown who designed it in the 1760s. The Chapel predates the house, having been consecrated in 1449. It has a plain but pleasing exterior but what makes it of outstanding interest are the fine internal 17th-century fittings of the western gallery, two large covered pews, pulpit and beautifully carved reredos. Quite a bit of walking. Wheelchairs welcome. If wet, harder to navigate some areas. Washrooms available; though not disabled.

- Friends £20, Guests £25
- Maximum 30



'History and Horticulture' - the champion tree at Rycote Park has the greatest girth of any oriental plane in Britain

Sadly, all our wonderful plans for 2020 have been postponed but we hope that 2021 will see treats such as the Mediterranean Wine Tasting, our Sicilian trip to see the work of Professor Simon Hiscock and his collaborators on Mt Etna and many small and carefully curated events will be possible. It seems there might have been a window in the late autumn to have a social get together with a wine tasting but sadly the worsening situation with Covid meant that all our plans are on hold again.

There are some opportunities for some online events and updates by email

for the Patrons' Group and we hope that these will coalesce before Christmas. The running of the Danby Group has changed a little: I will administer the group remotely as I am now living back in Tasmania (establishing myself as a Botanical Illustrator) and Gina Copp, Rebecca Mather and Sarah Taylor will be on the ground when events return and I will attend any when I am back visiting family and friends in the UK. I would like to wish everyone all the best in this very unusual time and hope that everyone keeps well and happy.



Richea drachophylla by Maura Allen. The Pineapple or Dragon richea is a Tasmanian endemic. Like most of Australia's members of the Ericaceae, *Richea* belongs to the subfamily Epacridoideae, which was formerly classified as a separate family, the Epacridaceae. *Richea* consists of 11 species, all but two of which are endemic to Tasmania.

The Bobarts Patrons' Group

By Helen Potts and Jennie Turner



Kiftsgate Court Gardens, visited August 2020

The Bobarts are an exceptionally friendly and enthusiastic group of garden visitors, always happy to share their horticultural knowledge and passion so it was a real pleasure to meet for the first time this year for a private visit to Kiftsgate Court Gardens in August, all the while observing social distancing measures. On this occasion we were pleased to welcome four new members. Third-generation gardener and owner Anne Chambers was on hand to talk about the gardens, which in their dramatic setting were a delightful treat for everyone. Even the weather was perfect.

Our second visit, to Radcot House in late September, where the outstanding planting in the gardens is enhanced by an interesting collection of sculpture, was threatened by new Covid-related restrictions but went ahead successfully. As ever, we are indebted to the generosity of the owners of these very special gardens for agreeing to open their gates to the Bobarts.

Looking ahead optimistically to 2021, we plan to reinstate many of the visits to gardens that were cancelled this year, taking in an Oxford college and a private visit to the Arboretum, and our three-day visit to Norfolk. We will have our first midsummer-evening party in a member's garden. Moving with the times we are also looking at a possible live video tour of parts of the collections of the University Herbaria.

We shall also be finding ways to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Botanic Garden in July - an exceptional event marking the historic importance of our extraordinary Garden and Herbaria here in Oxford and their important role in the University and far beyond. We would be delighted if you would consider joining us at this special time.

The Bobarts was launched in 2004, as an extra tier for the Friends of OBG. Our members, along with the Danby Patrons' group, enjoy all the benefits of the Friends

plus a programme of small group visits to the University collections and to some of the best gardens and estates in the area. We aim to visit the widest possible range of gardens in terms of style, size and location and we are helped in this by the generosity of the garden owners and those who work in the institutions whose gardens we visit. We are grateful to them for sharing their time and knowledge with us.



A garden for a midsummer party, 2021

By joining this group and by attending our events, Bobarts members provide extra support to the Garden and Arboretum, which is highly appreciated by all who work there, and which has been particularly appreciated during this very difficult year. Please consider joining this special group. You'll be very welcome.

Calendar

2020/21

Please check on the website:

<https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk/>

upcoming-friends-events for the latest news regarding forthcoming events and coffee mornings.

January

Monday 25th January, 7.30pm

Annual General Meeting, St Hilda's

April

Tuesday 13th April, 10.00am and 11.30am

Fritillaries at Magdalen College

Wednesday 21st April, 2.00pm

Springtime at Evenley Wood Garden

Thursday 29th April, 2.30pm

Private visit to Rycote Park and Chapel

The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum,

Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ.

All Friends' enquiries, including those about Friends' events, should be made to the Friends' Administrator.

Tel: 01865 610303

E-mail: friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk

Web: www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk

The Friends Office is staffed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell with help from Isabella Raeburn. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.

