

Landscape Gardens and Health Network Newsletter September 2015

This is the first newsletter of the Network. Its format is fairly simple and straightforward but as we master the technology and gain some confidence in our editorial abilities we should progress to more sophisticated presentations. This is an opportunity to let us know something of what some of us have been doing since our meeting earlier this year at Penny Brohn. Our tentacles reach far and wide and what binds us together is a passion for sharing the work we do and our pleasure and joy in what nature can give us. Several of us work professionally, some of us work voluntarily, some of us work with our hands and some of us have a more cerebral involvement. Knowing this we openly recognise and celebrate our individual gifts and work to find better ways of sharing it with the people we live among.

Please contact us if you would like to say something in the next newsletter.

Volunteer Gardening at North Devon Hospice – We do it because... Anne Bennet

I have just completed my first year as part of the volunteer gardening team, or 'Garden Gang' as we are sometimes called, at North Devon Hospice. Our team works throughout the year and we often ask each other "Would we be out in our own garden in weather like this?" and often the answer is "NO!". So why do we turn up every Monday in shorts/tee shirts, full waterproofs or 3 layers of thermals?

We do it because we want the grounds to look tidy, colourful and welcoming. First impressions are important and we want people to know that this is a cared for environment and that they and their loved ones will be cared for in this place.

We do it because we want the grounds to be a place of beauty and sanctuary for all who use the hospice.

We do it because we want to create comfortable and private places for patients and their friends and family to sit in peace and quiet at difficult times.

We do it so that staff can walk past trees and flowers on their way to work, can look out from their offices at a lovely vista or sit and eat their lunch on a lawn surrounded by trees and flowers.

We do it so that patients and their visitors are able to stroll around the grounds, turn a corner and come across a colourful flower bed, a burgeoning vegetable garden, a beautiful tree or a tranquil lake with a moor hen swimming around on it

We do it so that children visiting the Hospice can have a place to run around or can play hide and seek in the orchard making as much noise as they want whilst they play.

We do it so that the kitchen has a supply of fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs to use in the Terrace Cafe and for day and bedded unit patients. So that a very poorly patient can have a few delicious strawberries or raspberries because that is what they really fancy.

We do it so there are always flowers and greenery to be picked to fill vases of flowers for reception, the day hospice lounge or for a small vase of flowers to go on the meal tray of a seriously ill patient on the bedded unit. Whilst I was working in the garden recently a gentleman spoke to me about his mother who was very poorly in the bedded unit. She was unaware of much that was going on around her but she still had a sense of smell and apparently had always loved roses. Together he and I went to pick some highly scented roses so that she could have them beside her bed.

We do it so that we can open the garden for others to see. On a glorious day in June this year hundreds of people visited the Hospice for an Open Garden Event. For many it was their first visit to the Hospice and they discovered what a beautiful and calm place it is and also that it is a place of much laughter. They learnt that it was not a place to be feared but a place of comfort and care.

We do it because we enjoy being part of a team that tries to use their wide range of skills to enhance the

environment of this beautiful place. So in the sun, rain, wind or frost we'll be there on Monday mornings because together we want to continue help and try to make a difference and to create a beautiful, calm place for all those that use the very special place that is North Devon Hospice.
Anne Bennett, volunteer gardener

News from Holt Wood

Anne Stobart is a medical herbalist and is developing Holt Wood, a 2 ½ acre site by the River Torridge in North Devon near RHS Rosemoor Gardens and the town of Great Torrington. The site was previously planted with Sitka Spruce and Douglas Fir, and is being replanted during 2005-6 with a variety of native and introduced species of medicinal value. At least 20 species of medicinal interest have been planted.

Wood products and events

Holt Wood Herbs: More background about the sustainable medicinal tree and shrub project at Holt Wood can be seen at www.holtwoodherbs.co.uk (bear with us as this website is still to be updated) and on our occasional blog, [Herbaid Blog](#). To purchase Holt Wood fresh herbal products, such as Distilled Witch Hazel, see Anne's online shop [Herbaid Online Shop](#). The Distilled Witch Hazel is also available at [Zamora Natural Health and Beauty Clinic](#) in Exeter.

Wood Working Days: Come to a Holt Wood Working Day and get involved in maintaining the Wood, through clearing, building a bonfire, walkabout and harvesting, whatever suits your abilities. We bring lunch and refreshments so long as you tell us you are coming at least a week beforehand! Boots and gardening gloves advised. Email us at info@holtwoodherbs.org.uk if you would like to come, or phone Kay or Anne on 01363 777531 or 0781 7762549 for forthcoming dates.

REVIEW OF 'HUMAN TOUCH: CONSTRUCTING A SPECIAL FORM OF ART': BY GRAHAM COOPER

A culmination of ten years of publishing, this fine volume by former chair of Art & Architecture looks back over the myriad but interlocking themes covered thus far and looks forward to where this 'special form of art' can take us – as observers, inhabitants and practitioners.

The introduction itself would be worthy of being published as another single volume – and indeed, with a few more illustrations, it would serve very well as a way into why we see architecture and design today as we do, for both the layperson and the professional, who perhaps in particular needs reminding of the disconnects and disappointments of the last century.

Cooper's overriding theme is that art and architecture must always show the human touch: that 'it is not so much form follows function, but rather making pleasing forms that operate effectively over an extended period'; that, quoting the Dutch De Stijl movement, 'painting, sculpture and architecture were supposed to join together in unison on equal terms', but that we have, instead, abandoned 'adornment' in the interests of 'efficiency'; and that the now-total marginalisation of 'design' in the creation of our built environments means that in the UK only three local authorities, the dominant patrons of our time, have an architectural design department.

Instead, as the 'Human Touch' unfolds, it is in the imaginative connect between different demands and perspectives which can create a truly human environment – with the interplay between the dominant forms of formal architecture, the assimilation of the landmark building and fine art into a 'natural' urban landscape, and the insistence that applied art goes beyond the niche and is integrated into the design of our spaces.

Following the impressive introduction, then, Cooper gives a very rich and personal overview of architectural history – all finely illustrated – with a chapter devoted to the ‘landmark building’, again with astute observations which are a pleasure to read because it is more than a rehash of the usual textbook histories or tedious Wikipedia entries. In the sections on fine art practice and applied art installations, Cooper really does come into his own, drawing on the breadth of experience of the last forty years and the writing of the past ten. In fact, he entitles this main part of his book as ‘the art and architectural design trail’, and the feeling is of a journey, but one accompanied by a knowledgeable and very personable observer who delights in both detail and comment but without any whiff of stuffiness. This is indeed a very approachable and readable volume for both interested lay reader and serious academic, providing a summary of past work and a stimulating guide through the interaction of design ideas and the urban environment. The impressive text would stand out even more with a professional publication enhancing layout and providing some editing, but for a desk-top piece of work it displays the experience of someone more than comfortable with good design.

The postscript gives the final, very personal word on the exploration of urban decorative art – which takes us from ‘an extraordinary outbreak of street art which was to kick-start a growing interest in environmental design’ in the 1970s/80s to the ‘transformative power of art’ demonstrated in the Seas of Red poppies at the Tower of London in October 2014 set in the Square Mile and its ‘bloated towers of fortune’ – all of which provided just the right finish to a lively and broad sweep of how we interact with the ‘power of art’ in our landscapes.

JEREMY WOODWARD: 25 AUGUST 2015

Wanderings in New England - Colin Porter

Christine and I had the opportunity to visit New Hampshire in August where we have a nephew who has married a local girl in Ashland which is in the lakes region of central New Hampshire.

As a peripatetic and curious gardener I am always interested to look at how things grow locally, what influence the climate has, and how the environment copes with what we throw at it.

When we got up into the White mountains in north New Hampshire we found a fresher climate, above the humidity and high 80's around the lakes. We stopped in a small town called Franconia, a place popular in the winter for skiing and popular in the summer for its gentler, rural pace of life. It is in a region of great natural beauty, high rolling granite mountains. This region has a continental climate, cold in the winter and warm and often hot in the summer.

The summer has a vigorous growing season, the heat makes things grow strongly so that by the time we were here the tough hardy herbaceous plants such as Echinacea, Hemerocallis, Hostas, Coneflowers were in their full glory

A small road from Franconia took us up to Sugar Hill where we found a small village with a visitors centre and shop.

Curious about the well tended garden at the side, which seemed to have a selection of medicinal plants growing among the leeks, kale, cabbage and carrots, I made a tentative enquiry.

I was directed across the road to a large barn where I was told I might meet the owner who does 'erbs ' It was here that one of those occasional random, life affirming meeting of like minds happened.

Holly Hayward has been a practising herbalist for over 20 years, and grows and prepares her own herbal products. She uses the 10 acres of pristine fields and woods as a workshop to teach and demonstrate the healing powers of nature. With stunning, open views across to Mount Lafayette the place has an inspiring quality that can only heal and inspire the soul. Although I was only able to stop briefly Holly has those genuine qualities that speak volumes without words. She showed me her extensive collection of dried herbs and the lotions, creams and ointments that are produced from them. What she produces is not a large commercial enterprise, the products are sold to friends and visitors. Holly gives talks and

workshops at the barn and travels further afield to meet and talk to interested people. Whether it was yet another curious turn on our road when we returned down to Franconia we found the old home of the poet Robert Frost. What was his wooden homestead is now a museum, set out as it would have been when Frost and his family lived there in the 1920's. I was able to sit on his wicker seat and look out to the view across to Lafayette. It was a singularly moving experience to learn more about the man and his plain speaking and moving work as poet in the early 1900's. In his poem 'The road not taken' he talks of the choice when we come to 2 roads going in different directions. Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference'.

A metaphor that seems to fit with me, according to my Christine, When I was with Holly Hayward and I told her we were heading west to Vermont, she recommended that we try to visit the Sage Mountain Retreat and Native Plant Preserve, the home and garden of Rosemary Gladstar. In the rain and up a muddy track we found a delightful sanctuary surrounded by 500 acres of trees and wilderness.

Rosemary has been a herbalist for over 35 years and was the founder of the California School of Herbal Studies, the oldest herbal school in the United States. Rosemary is selling Sage Mountain and was not in residence when I visited but 3 young interns shared their hopes and aspirations with me.

A road less travelled brought us here, and something of the pure light guided us onwards.

Extending beyond the brief of this newsletter, but worth a mention for those of you who do music, we visited 2 music festivals and I found several people and places to play with during our visit. The first festival was bluegrass in north New Hampshire and the second was the Peacham Acoustic Music festival in Vermont, which was delightful and is to be highly recommended

Planting for Health and Well Being - Shenagh Hume

Shenagh is a specialist allergy nurse and garden designer working in London.

The prevalence of allergic reactions and the increase in allergic diseases has led to the need for garden designers to have a better understanding of the factors that cause the allergies. Shenagh has written an introductory article that outlines the main features causing the problem and sets out a range of considerations that are available to designers to deal with the problem of pollen pollution.

Her article can be found at at Shenagh's web site where the full edit is available : gardendesignadviser.com

Update for the Network

Our first meeting back in 2014 at the North Devon Hospice was followed by a one day seminar 'Nature and Wellbeing' in February 2015 at the Penny Brohn Cancer Care Centre in Bristol where the 5 acre garden is central to the therapeutic and healing work they do there. The event was hosted by Michael Connors, Director of Services at Penny Brohn and Colin Porter and attended by 31 people including landscape architects, designers, gardeners, writers, researchers and health care professionals. Speakers included Kathryn Aalto, Jeremy Parker, Angie Butterfield, Juliet Sargeant, Stephen Pettet-Smith, Liz Williamson and Sara Miller

We are now at the point where we have a core of support that is willing to help with developing the Network. We have funding applications ready to process and are working to set up a committee and bank account . We do need more help to set up the committee and to have a working group to help develop the web site, please do help if you can. We welcome enquiries from people who want to hear more or be on our database. This is a small and new organisation but one with a big and generous heart, which is as it should be. With the breadth and depth of support and interest we already have we have a lot to offer and a lot to share.