

Somerset Group Newsletter



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<http://hps-somerset.btck.co.uk/>

Cover photograph – Hanbury Hall, John Peters

Chairman's Letter

As I write these notes a mild, fairly wet autumn has now turned colder and very wet! A first frost has touched some of the more tender plants but overall has done little harm. The first flower on *Dahlia imperialis* was just emerging and I was wondering if we'd have a repeat of the excellent flowering of 3 years ago. That was before the frost and I doubt that there will be much to crow about this time.

But once again the Asteraceae have shown how well they perform almost regardless of the weather. Our visit to Picton's nursery will have given plenty of opportunity to stock up with very useful late season plants. Apart from Michaelmas Daisies, the Chrysanthemums, though a bit late this year, have again done well. 'Innocence' is a newish variety which I notice several top nurseries are now offering and has been recommended in magazines. There are good strong heads of soft pink, single flowers that stand well and which have made an impressive display here at Herongates. More newer (or revived) varieties are now available and the range of both colour and flower form is amazing. It is good to have so much choice to end the year with a cheerful display – even as the first snowdrops are showing through!

Turning to plants indoors, we have a plant of *Stephanotis floribunda*, a native of Madagascar which blooms for me in spring and early summer with clusters of scented, white waxy flowers. I put it in the greenhouse whilst we were away on holiday to ensure it got some water in our absence (it drinks like a fish when in active growth!). During that time the flowers were visited by pollinating insects and set five mango-like fruits which gradually swelled to about 4" long and 2" in diameter. And they just sat there, green, hard and solid, showing no inclination to develop any further. It was more than 18 months before one of them developed a wrinkly skin and began to change colour and even longer before it split open to



reveal the seeds inside – see picture. A second fruit has just split open in the same way. The flaky brown seeds (80 of them) were tightly packed around a central core that can be lifted out in its entirety, each with a silky tail that suggested wind dispersal in its natural habitat. Even at this stage the seed capsule was thick and fleshy and I wondered why the contents required

such elaborate protection. What animals or birds are attracted to the fruit, and how does the seed dispersal actually work? Does the rotting capsule provide some form of nourishment for the emerging seedlings? The plant is of course a twining climber, rooted into the forest floor, and the fruit set would be a long way up.

Leaving aside that line of speculation (no help from Wikipedia), I planted about 30 of the seeds straight away and have been excited to see a good proportion of them germinate in about 2 weeks. Now for the challenge of over-wintering them and growing them on. The signs are that, having germinated they may be rather slow to develop further – but then it is November: not ideal growing conditions for a tropical plant.

Looking back on the year, our programme has been well supported (with the surprising exception of Trebah & Glendurgan) so we seem to be offering what you want. Please tell us if that is not the case. It has been good to see so many people coming to meetings and to welcome a good number of visitors and new members. Please continue to encourage your friends to come along: the stronger we are as a group, the better our longer term prospects will be.

HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY
Gardening with hardy perennials

HPS Somerset Group
Early Spring

PLANT FAIR

Saturday
28 March 2015

10:00 am – 4:00 pm
at East Lambrook Manor Gardens
Silver Street, East Lambrook, South Petherton,
Somerset, TA13 5HH

16 of the South West's top nurseries will be attending and the Margery Fish Plant Nursery will be open. Admission charge to the plant sale and the gardens will be £4. (£3.50 for RHS & HPS members.)

For a list of the nurseries attending visit <https://somerset.bctdc.co.uk>

EAST LAMBROOK MANOR
GARDENS

01460 240328 enquiries@eastlambrook.com www.eastlambrook.com

Garden, café, gallery,
courses and nursery

As Stuart explained at the AGM, our Early Spring Plant Fair at East Lambrook Manor is our principal fund raising event of the year and we need to ensure that it remains a 'must' attraction for our visitors. Last year there was a long queue almost back to the Rose & Crown pub, which put a lot of pressure on Mike and Gail taking money on the gate. For this year we plan to have a second table at the entrance, manned by us. So, in addition to volunteers to help on our plant sales table, I will be looking for others to help on the gate. Please let me know if you are willing to lend a hand on 28 March.

Finally, a word of appreciation for Carol who stood down from the Committee at the AGM after many years and who has for so long been responsible for our visiting speakers

programme. She has done an excellent job for which we are all very appreciative. I'm glad to say that she will still be around, and I'm sure will be as helpful as ever. We welcome Ruth Boundy who joins the committee to take over Carol's role and I know she is already casting around to set up fresh opportunities. We look forward to her contribution.

Roy Stickland

The Future of Gardening?

Gardening society membership numbers are falling steadily. Some societies are suffering more than others and the HPS has fared better than most in this respect. We might ask why this should be: we have an ageing population and it is true to say that older people are generally keener on gardening than younger folk. In recent years there are many more societies to choose from so maybe numbers are spread more thinly amongst the wide range of specialist and more general gardening clubs.

The effects of the recent financial crisis have also been felt as people review their spending habits and give up their less favoured hobbies and leisure activities, resigning their memberships of the associated clubs and societies.

But is the decline in garden club membership something more fundamental than that? We now have a “throw-away” culture which requires instant gratification and results. Are the simple, slow pleasures of working in a garden and watching it develop no longer appealing to many who want an instant garden? The phase of TV gardening makeover shows in the 80s and 90s, with programmes such as “Groundforce”, rather fuelled this trend.

However there is still hope: many schools, especially primary schools, maintain gardens and encourage students to participate in active gardening. The review of the national schools’ curriculum stated that gardening is to become a mandatory part of it. Some schools, such as Worle Community School in Weston super Mare, where I work, even offer Land Based Science amongst their subject options.

Unfortunately though, there is little practical gardening in the Land Based Science GCSE course, which is largely theory based, and the devaluing of the more hands-on Btec qualification in “points” terms for school standings has meant that this is no longer offered at Worle. This is a great shame as the Btec qualification at Level 1 or even Level 2 was attainable by many students of low academic ability for whom GCSEs are too difficult. It also appears that even the GCSE course is considered by some in government as too vocational for Key Stage 4 students.

Whether the resurgence of school gardening projects will result in a new wave of keen hobby gardeners remains to be seen – how many of us take up as hobbies things we are forced to do, however fun they may be? But maybe for some it will sow a seed that lies dormant; germinating, growing and blossoming in years to come. Maybe showing children that growing plants to eat or simply enjoy can be rewarding and isn’t as difficult as they might think, might bring about an army of new and enthusiastic gardeners that we can welcome into our Society sometime in the future?

Of course, many schools don't have members of staff with the gardening knowledge and skills to run garden clubs. This is where **YOU** come in. Why not approach your local infant or junior school and offer your services? This doesn't have to entail much volunteering commitment on your part: most schools have lunchtime clubs running once or twice a week. If you could offer them just one hour of your time think what a difference this could make? You would most likely be supported by a member of staff responsible for discipline and resources to make the club happen so don't worry about your lack of teaching skills. Think of the personal satisfaction and reward you will receive for your efforts too when you see how much the children get out of growing plants. I know I do.

Jane Hunt

Footnote: here's a plea to get someone started. Hugh Sexey Middle School in Blackford near Wedmore has a thriving gardening club. Unfortunately the teacher who ran it last year has now left the school and none of the remaining staff feel confident enough about their gardening knowledge to give the students the input they need. If you live in the area could you offer them your help one lunchtime a week? They would really appreciate it. Contact me or the school direct for further details.

Subscriptions for 2015

A reminder that subscriptions for 2015 fall due this month. The rates are £8 for joint and £5 for single membership. Thank you to those who paid at the AGM and to those who pay by standing order. For those who prefer to pay by cheque, the usual payment slip is included with this Newsletter. I shall be at the 17 January lecture if you would like to save the cost of an envelope and stamp.

Alternatively, for those of you who are adept at internet banking, you can set up a standing order or do a BACS transfer direct to our bank account:

Bank Branch:	NatWest, Bridgwater
Account name:	Hardy Plant Society (Somerset Group)
Sort Code:	60-03-27
Account number:	46429956

Please remember to quote your membership number.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 it is necessary that I advise you that, for the purposes of record only, details relating to your membership are stored electronically. If you object to your details being so recorded, please notify me without delay.

Stuart Senior

Group Plant Sale, 25 April

Members can contribute to the plant sale in two ways: (a) take a table in your own right, or (b) grow plants to donate to the Group table. If you want your own table, please contact me (details on back cover). The charge will be £5, payable on the day. This will be waived if you commit to donate all your takings to charity. There are only 16 tables available, and it's first come, first served. If you have plants to donate to the Group table, just bring them along on the day.

We will also need plants for our Group table at the East Lambrook Plant Fair on 28 March so please bear this in mind when you plan your propagating!

Roy Stickland

The HPS Somerset Group Specialist Nursery List

By the time you read this the 2015 Nursery List should have been printed.

This year we sadly see the departure of two of our longstanding nurseries due to health issues: Jenny St. John Webster of Taunton Trees and her mother Patricia Marrow of Kingsdon Nursery and Garden, who will always be remembered through *Papaver* 'Patty's Plum'.

However we welcome three 'new' nurseries:-

- **Somerset Plants**, owned by Phil and Carrie Johnson whose nursery is at Low Ham near Langport;
- **Dorset Perennials**, owned by Dawn and Martin Preston whose nursery is at Holnest near Sherborne; and
- **Wild Thyme Plants**, owned by mother and daughter Monica Ashman and Jess Pearce. They are not open to the public but have an online shop. They also attend many shows in the South West and will take pre-ordered plants for collection.

These nurseries have good websites with lots of pictures and information.

One of our regulars, Blooming Hill Plants, run by Dinah Lindon-Critchley, has moved. The nursery is now at Beer Hackett near Sherborne. The entries for some of the other nurseries have been updated so I hope you will have a good read and remind yourselves of what is available in the greater Somerset area.

As usual at the January meeting the bags of Nursery Lists will be waiting for you to collect and distribute to the various nurseries. The Committee and I are always very grateful for your help in the distribution. Not only does it save us a vast amount of time but also a considerable amount in postage costs.

John Peters

2015 Programme

Please refer to this and future Newsletters or the website <http://hps-somerset.btck.co.uk/> for further details and booking slips. Location maps or directions will be supplied following booking a place on an event.

All meetings at West Monkton Village Hall are free to members (except Saturday 25 April), but there is a modest levy of £2.00 for each visitor/guest. The Group will have a plant stall and a book stall at most of the lecture meetings listed, plus the 'Plant and Flower of the Month' competition.

All coach trips and garden visits must be pre-booked with Janet Murley:

Tel: 01884 820840 or email: janet.murley@btinternet.com.

SAT 17 JANUARY

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Joseph Atkin - "Aberglasney"

Joseph is Head Gardener at Aberglasney, one of the finest gardens in Wales, set in the Tywi valley of Carmarthenshire, which had been neglected but is now being restored. The picture below shows the Cloister garden which dates from the late Tudor and early Stuart era.



SAT 14 FEBRUARY

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Tom Mitchell – "Hellebores from the Picos to the Caucasus"

Tom is the founder of Evolution Plants. He's a passionate Plant Hunter whose nursery offers rare and endangered plants. He is an enthusiastic and entertaining speaker.

TUE 17 FEBRUARY

COACH TRIP

Mary Keen's Garden & Rodmarton Manor

Gloucestershire

Mary Keen's garden is one and a half acres and this visit is particularly timed to see her wonderful collection of snowdrops. Snowdrops also feature strongly at Rodmarton Manor where there are at least 150 taxa.

SAT 14 MARCH

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Peter Lindley – “Around the World in 80 Plants”

Peter Lindley runs Hidden Valley Nursery near Rosemoor in North Devon. He specialises in unusual plants that are hardy and grow well in this part of the world. He will show 80 plants that will thrive here and describe where they come from and how best to grow them in our own gardens.

SAT 28 MARCH

HPS SOMERSET EARLY SPRING PLANT FAIR

At East Lambrook Manor Gardens, 10:00am – 4:00pm.

(Admission £3.50)

The following nurseries will be attending: Avon Bulbs, Blooming Hill Plants, Desert to Jungle, Dorset Perennials, Elworthy Cottage Plants, Hill Top Nursery, Ian & Teresa Moss, In Clover, Long Acre Plants, Mill Cottage Plants, Millwood Plants, Moor Plants, Pennard Plants, Picket Lane Nursery, Roseland House Nursery, and Wild Thyme Plants.

SAT 11 APRIL

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Sally Gregson - “Epimediums”

As a member of our Somerset Group, Sally should need no introduction. She is the owner of Mill Cottage Plants at Wookey where she specialises in Hydrangeas and Epimediums. Her book on the latter will be available at the talk.

SAT 25 APRIL

GROUP PLANT SALE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield 10.00am to 12.30pm.

(Admission £1)

WED 27 MAY

COACH TRIP

Rousham House & Broughton Grange

Oxfordshire



SAT 20 JUNE

COACH TRIP

Seend Manor & The Mead Nursery

Wiltshire

TUE 7 JULY

SELF-DRIVE VISIT

High Garden & Nursery

Devon

SUN 9 AUGUST

PLANT SWAP & LUNCH

At Long Sutton, Langport

TUE 15 SEPTEMBER

SELF-DRIVE VISIT

Lady Farm & Bristol Botanic Gardens

SAT 19 SEPTEMBER

50/50 PLANT SALE & LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield

Plant sale commences at 10:00am, Lecture at 11.00am.

Hilary Little - "Along the Floral Highway of Patagonia"

Hilary has travelled widely in Patagonia and is co-author of the book "Flowers of the Patagonian Mountains".

SAT 17 OCTOBER

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Duncan Coombs – “Climbers & Wall Shrubs”

For the last 23 years Duncan has been a lecturer in Decorative Horticulture at Pershore College. See his horticultural blog at www.warwickshire.ac.uk/blogs/duncans_horticulture_blog.aspx. He will bring plants to sell.

SAT 21 NOVEMBER

AGM & LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield 10.00am for 10.30am AGM and 11.15am lecture.

Simon Goodenough – “The National Botanic Garden of Wales”

Simon is Curator of the Botanic Garden in Carmarthenshire. He will be talking about the changes being made to the garden and the new life they are giving it.

All events must be pre-booked

If you would like to book places on any of these events, complete and return the entire enclosed Booking Sheet. As you will see from the Booking Sheet, you can receive the Joining Instructions for each event either by email or by post. To receive these details by email, simply fill in your email address on the Booking Sheet **even if you believe I already have a note of it**. If you choose this option, not only will I email your Joining Instructions prior to each event, but I will also send you an email confirming your booking. If you prefer this option **PLEASE** print your name clearly and remember to advise me of any change to your email address. Should you wish to receive this information by post, **PLEASE** remember to send me **TWO** SAE for **EACH** event you wish to attend.

Janet Murley

Cancellation Policy

A reminder about our cancellation policy. There will be no refund of either coach or pre-paid entrance fees unless a replacement participant can be found. The only exception will be for "serious" illness if the organiser is notified before the visit. Amounts of less than £5 will not be refunded under any circumstances.

Plant Sales Table

I'd like to thank everyone who has brought plants to be sold on the Group's sales table last year. For any new members who may be unaware, the plant sales table at our monthly meetings is stocked entirely with plants donated by our members, which may be purchased at a reasonable price prior to and following the meeting. There are often some real gems and rarities available to buy.

I'd be very grateful if you would all consider potting up excess plants from your gardens and bringing a couple of plants each time you come to a Group lecture meeting. And remember that we can now offer "cash back" of 50p for each plant sold at over £1 if members include two labels with their plant. The monies raised from this table and the second-hand gardening books stall really do help us to continue to provide members with great value for money for their membership.

Jane Hunt

WANTED



Verbena bonariensis
plants for school garden.

Please bring to any
meeting this spring.

Thank you, Jane Hunt.



Springdale – see p16.

Erythrina crista-galli

Erythrina crista-galli hails from S. America and is the national flower of both Argentina and Uruguay, and the national tree of Argentina. It is also found in S. Brazil and Paraguay. It is a small tree up to 5-8 metres and is a member of the family *Fabaceae*. Its typical habitat is along forest watercourses, but it can be seen lining the streets in towns in California.

In the northern hemisphere its flowering time is April to October, and the pictures show the extraordinary structure of its flowers. These appear at the tips of the current year's growth which dies back after flowering is complete. The fruit is a legume - a dry pod with 8 - 10 chestnut brown, bean-shaped seeds. Whether they will ripen and be viable in this climate remains to be seen.



Derry Watkins grows it against the house in her gravel garden (the gravel is 8" deep!) and it seems to survive winters in that situation. This specimen is in a large pot, since my garden is more exposed than Derry's and I haven't had the courage to plant it out as yet - but if I can succeed with some seed, you never know.

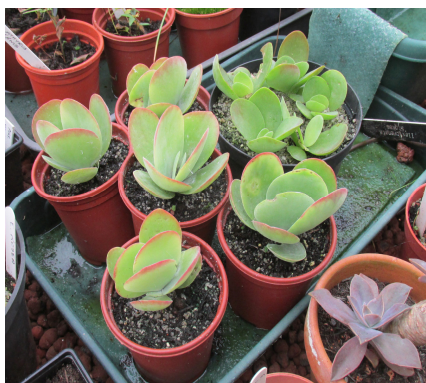
Roy Stickland

Kalanchoe thyrsiflora 'Bronze Sculpture'

I had a plant of this *Kalanchoe* which had grown rather tall and got top-heavy. I decided to cut it down and hoped that it would grow up from the base. Having cut off the stem, which was about 25 to 30mm in diameter and about 150mm long, I wondered whether I could get it to root. I therefore left it in the greenhouse to dry out and callus over (as you do with Aeoniums), and went away and forgot about it!



Several weeks later I found that it had developed a number of tiny plantlets along its length (see picture on the left). I cut these off in July and planted them in grit, then turned the old stem over so that the other side was exposed to the light, and was rewarded with five more plantlets. All these little plants are growing apace, and the first group are now 60-80mm across (below left), 6 months after they were planted. The original (see below) has developed into a nice compact plant.



One tends to think that succulents should be kept dry, but I have found that they benefit from being kept in a free-draining compost (I mix Cornish grit 50/50 with commercial cactus compost), and then regularly watered. They are, of course, tender.

While we were walking in Italy last year I noticed that many of the plant stalls had this *Kalanchoe* for sale.



Helen Senior

Eucomis

Snowdrops do it, Lilies do it, but Eucomis?? A medium sized pot containing *Eucomis bicolor* was left out on hard standing all winter and failed to re-appear in Spring. Emptying the pot, what was left of the bulb appeared to be rotten with a hole right through from bottom to top. It was left on the bench in the shed and got covered over by other things, and was only discovered some months later. Before



throwing it in the bin I noticed that some of the scales had residual portions that were still turgid and closer inspection revealed small bulblets beginning to form at their base. These scales were carefully detached from the rest of the rotten carcase and half a dozen have been individually potted. It will be a long term process to get them to flowering size, but it shows an interesting property that we might not associate with Eucomis - and if it comes off, it beats throwing the whole lot in the bin.

Roy Stickland

Visit to Mary Payne's Garden

Noticing that Mary Payne MBE, designer/teacher/lecturer was opening her garden for NGS, groups of 8-10 by appointment, I booked a slot, hoping I had enough friends! (Our chairman's wife does not miss a trick, does she? I rang and asked if they would like to come, "no" they were on holiday but would I write a piece for the newsletter - Roy would be ever so pleased.) The Yellow Book described it as "a quart of good plants in a quarter pint sized plot", which it truly is. There are 350 plants in a very small front and back garden.

The front is gravel with yellow, orange and red colours, 32 different ones out (25 June) including Californian poppy, red hot poker, verbascum, very good named varieties. (We were very efficiently supplied with a list.)

The back garden, in complete contrast, is all pink and blue shades, over 50 out today, campanula, phlox, salvia, clematis, penstemon, etc

There is a water feature, auricula theatre and a greenhouse, interestingly shaded by a piece of fleece over the outside.

Mary advises looking at every plant every day and you will never have pests and diseases: sound advice. If you cannot do that, your garden is too big! We admired the immaculate lawn at the back and discussed artificial grass. Within a moment, out comes Mary with about 8 small samples of Nam grass in different shades of green, some healthy some not: so, pick the one that is most like your lawn. It is so realistic.

An hour of Mary's tips and advice, a guided tour, a cup of tea included, well worth the hour's travel to get there.

Penny Berry

Self Drive visits - June 2014

There is nothing quite like driving round unknown Devon/Somerset narrow leafy lanes in the pouring rain meeting endless diversion signs (which Sat Nav can't quite 'reconfigure') and which I swear are breeding, or maybe propagating, whilst searching for two gardens.

For those of you who missed this splendid and exciting opportunity, I hate to say it, but you really did miss two real treats. Initially the first visit gave some of us a chance to practise their 5-point turning skills plus the chance to read signs held up vertically (always a teacher's challenge) and somewhat hidden. Approaching the Regency House garden up a long drive and over the ford led us to a garden full of varied interest, walled vegetable, flower and shrub areas and a tantalising sight of Candelabra Primulas showing off amongst all the other bog plants that bounded down the stream. Coffee and Cake warmed us up and then after a brief lunch break (picnic or pub) it was up the hill from Hemyock to Smeatharpe and Springdale.

The sun came out and what a vision appeared! Beautifully manicured lawns round beds full of interesting plants, many clearly but subtly labelled. *Meconopsis betonicifolia* singing out its stunning blue amongst the acers and rhododendrons with a *Crinodendron hookerianum*, the Chilean Lantern Tree, covered in scarlet lanterns. Plants which suited the ground and topography all made their presence noticed. There were many plants and trees which I could name, given time and space, but for me it was the overall picture from all angles that made me feel full of admiration for the obvious work, inspiration and love that this garden had generated against so many odds. To use a rather hackneyed word, "WOW"!

I would not have missed these two gardens, so close to where I live, which have been hidden from public view and deserve more recognition. Long may their owners love and enjoy them as a testament to their passion for plants

Janet Murley

The Picton Garden & Hanbury Hall

A glorious autumnal day out is probably the best way to describe this excursion to the Malvern Hills and then rural Droitwich Spa. Just over 40 hardy planters were aboard as the coach travelled up the M5, stopping briefly at the recently opened 'farm shop' services near Gloucester which turned out to be a revelation in itself. The building is airy and spacious with an excellent range of goodies on offer and yet, it so blends into the landscape that, if it weren't for the car park, you'd hardly know it was there (see page 18).

Our first destination was The Picton Garden at Colwall, near Great Malvern. This garden, part of Old Court Nurseries, holds the NCCPG Collection of asters/michaelmas daisies. The beds created a patchwork of colour against a background of trees, shrubs and bamboos, including many rare and unusual varieties, crammed into a very well-stocked garden.

The 'Diamond Border' of *Aster novi-belgii* varieties provided spectacular impact. These traditional michaelmas daisies are short to medium in habit; their only disadvantage being the need for judicious spraying to avoid mildew. The nearby 'New England Border' displayed the prairie style planting of the taller *Aster novae-angliae*. These varieties are mildew resistant and, despite their height, apparently often do not require staking when mature. Judging by the quantity of purchases loaded on to the coach when we departed, we were all aster converts, assuming that we were not already!

Our afternoon visit took us to Hanbury Hall and Gardens, near Droitwich, Worcs. The house itself dates from the early 18th century and was the home of the Vernon family until it passed to the National Trust in 1953. Visitors to the house noted in particular the superb Sir James Thornhill wall and ceiling paintings over the staircase.

Much work has been undertaken to re-create the original Formal Garden which consists of a fantastic Sunken Parterre, a 'manicured' Fruit Garden, a Wilderness, Grove, Bowling Green and an Orangery (behind which is a mushroom house). Avenues of trees radiate away from these areas to reveal walled kitchen gardens, orchards and a large ice house. Amongst these we came across the cutting garden, mostly now gone to seed for this season, where the NT invited visitors to collect seed to take away for their own use; a nice touch! Finally there is the parkland of the wider estate which is restrained by a very well maintained brick-buttressed ha ha. All very impressive!

Many thanks must go to Janet Murley for her organisation and planning and for providing such a contrast of interest for us to enjoy.

Martin Webb

A Motorway Surprise!

It's very rare, in fact unique in my life on the road, to know of a motorway services which is always a real treat, and since the 1970s this treat has only existed on the M6, at Tebay where the road crosses the Lune Valley just south of Shap Fell summit. Here John and Barbara Dunning, Westmorland hill farmers, had the vision to set up a business which could see beyond basic comfort stops to being an important benefit to its region and residents. As their website says, they do this by 'championing its locality through homemade food, its farmshops, and community involvement'. And do they ever! For years I've not only treasured stops to eat something delicious while bird watching on the pond set over a lovely view, but counted on serious 'real food' shopping for both my destination and for coming home (and as a key source for original gifts).

Now we have a 'Westmorland Family' wonder near home, just south of Gloucester on the M5, and I think everyone on the HPS coach to Picton Gardens (shown on the right) is a convert! The grass-roofed building will soon be part of the landscape, with top eco-credentials and none of the usual ugly intrusive appearance of service stops. The food is as exciting as at Tebay, though of course quite different, being cooked and sourced locally from Cotswold and West Country ingredients. The thrilled and surprised remarks going



round the bus after the stop ranged from praise for the Ladies (washing water vanishing magically down the back of a flat porcelain trough, below an arrangement of seasonal cut flowers) to votes for favourite foods tried (I'm told that 'Chocolate Tiffin' is VERY hard to beat!).

We are plant people, we grow, we have faith in natural resources and excellent produce, but it's all too rare to see retail trades really embodying our values. The Tebay ventures do that superbly, letting the visitor believe that right principles CAN be good business – and the good news is that the 'second half' at Gloucester, on the south-bound carriageway, will open in May next year!

Ro FitzGerald

STOP PRESS

Despite my pessimistic comment in my Chairman's Letter, *Dahlia imperialis* did manage some flowers on the four main stems. Not a great flowering, but it did make an effort and produced a result just before it was hit by frost.



This picture was taken the morning after the frost had caught much of the foliage, yet the flowers themselves seem unaffected for the moment. Another frost, probably tonight, and it will all be over!



Regency House – see p16.

Committee

Chairman:

Roy Stickland
01934 843280
herongates@hotmail.com

Herongates, Horseleaze Lane
Shipham
WINSCOMBE
BS25 1UQ

Secretary:

Jane Hunt
01934 732441
hunt.frogshole1@btinternet.com

Frogs Hole Farm
Brinscombe, Weare
AXBRIDGE
BS26 2LH

**Treasurer, Membership
Secretary & Newsletter Editor:**

Stuart Senior
01823 442344
stuart_senior@msn.com

Court Barton, Bull Street
Creech St Michael
TAUNTON
TA3 5PW

Speakers:

Ruth Boundy
01823 668678
rubyfield@btinternet.com

5 Greenway Road
Rockwell Green
WELLINGTON
TA21 9DE

Visits etc:

Sandra Macqueen
01934 843363
sandra@enamelsandra.co.uk

105 The Lynch
WINSCOMBE
BS25 1AR

Visits etc:

Janet Murley
01884 820840
janet.murley@btinternet.com

Marigold Cottage
Whitnage
TIVERTON
EX16 7DT