



The Newsletter

Worcestershire Group

Issue 60
Autumn 2024



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From the Editor



Welcome to issue 60 (the second digital version) of the Worcestershire HPS Group's newsletter. From the feedback I have received I think the first digital version worked fairly well, though we had difficulty sending it out to two members. This was probably due to the 12 megabyte restriction on file size that one or two Email providers impose. To overcome this I have made the current issue slightly smaller and hope that this will resolve the issue. I am also planning to increase the number of newsletters each year from two to three.

It's been a busy year in the garden for Kathryn and myself; following our moving house in December 2022 this has been our second year with our new garden. We have replaced an area of gravel in front of the house with a large border, mainly of perennials. Not a lot of planning went into this: we simply needed to get many of the plants we'd brought with us out of pots and into the ground, but despite this we've been really pleased to get a lot of positive comments from passers-by!

Our biggest problem this year had been vine weevil. We've had them occasionally in the past, usually affecting potted *Heuchera* and *Primulas*. This year they went for a *Hosta* (probably 'Francee') which we have had in a 3' pot for many years: see photo above, taken a couple of years ago. Over the course of two evenings in early summer we picked 98 adult beetles of this one plant! The *Hosta* has been wrecked, though I managed to split off some cuttings which have been potted up. This autumn a *Geranium* in our long raised bed keeled over and I found more larvae in the soil. All of our pots as well as the raised bed have now been treated with a nematode vine weevil control. On the plus side we've had great late displays from two *Chrysanthemums* brought home from HPS meetings ('Dulwich Pink' and 'Tapestry Rose').

Our small back garden is getting into shape; the bamboo hedge has gone, the paving areas redesigned to give much more room for planting, and a couple of crab apples ('John Downie' and 'Red Sentinel') planted to screen off the view from the neighbours. The 'Red Sentinel' has grown particularly well and has a good crop of bright red fruit which should be held on the tree until next spring. Hosting a coffee morning for the HPS group back in June was certainly an incentive to get on with it!

Please keep your articles coming in; I am aiming to produce the next edition around March/April.

Mike Bentley, Editor

Cover photo: Echinops at Garden Organic (Mike Bentley). Other photos by Mike Bentley, Ruth Jenkinson, Mick Dunstan, Claire Constantine. Speaker photos provided by them.

From the Chair

It was good to see so many of you at Spetchley Gardens in September, the weather was perfect. We had a guided tour; Peter, who led the group I joined, placed the design of the garden by Ellen Wilmott and her sister Rose, in the context of the Arts and Crafts movement. He also drew our attention to the link with Paradise gardens, in the number of garden rooms with a water feature. They have a magnificent collection of trees and it may be worth having the “tree tour” next time we visit.

I had hoped this year that we might enjoy an “Indian Summer” through September, but sadly the weather has turned showery and cool. The plants that are flowering well in my garden are the Asters and the Japanese Anemones plus *Cyclamen hederifolium*. If we get a dry, sunny day it is worth visiting Old Court Nursery at Colwall which holds the National Collection of Michaelmas Daisies.

Please note that we will hold our Christmas meeting on Saturday 7th December; we are going to show the film about Keith Wiley’s garden, Wildside, the meeting will be in the Upper Hall.

In this the following pages of this newsletter you will find the role descriptions for the committee plus a nomination from.

If you value what our local HPS group does for you, I encourage you to volunteer; the group cannot function without a committee, so now is the moment to step forward and make your contribution to our community of gardeners. You have until the 30th November to volunteer!

Lyn Maile

At Spetchley Park



Looking back over 2024, this has been a busy year for the Worcestershire Group. As well as our excellent speakers we had a very successful plant sale, several social visits to members' gardens, and trips to Spetchley Hall and to Duncan Westbury's own garden near Malvern.

Petra has been busy arranging next year's speakers. The garden writer Tamsin Westhorpe will be with us for our January meeting then speakers booked for later in the year include Helen Picton from Old Court Nurseries, container gardening expert Harriet Rycroft and Jimi Blake of Hunting Brook Garden.

Details can be found on our Ticketsource site <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/hpsworcestershire>



At the plant sale



Tamsin Westhorpe



Harriet Rycroft



Jimi Blake

Details of Committee Roles

Chairman

The main duties of the Chairman are to:

Lead the monthly meetings, giving the notices, introducing and thanking the speakers.

Chair the Annual General Meeting, Committee meetings and Extraordinary General Meetings.

Co-ordinate Committee members' work and to help and advise other Committee members if asked or if he or she thinks it appropriate.

Treasurer

The main duties of the Treasurer are to:

Maintain attendance register and collect visitors' fees and cash from all other activities.

Ensure that money coming in and going out is handled correctly and do the banking.

Prepare the group accounts for the external examiner.

Present the accounts and a financial summary at the Annual General Meeting and committee meetings.

Be a group signatory, with the Chairman and Secretary, for group cheques.

Collect group subscriptions.

Attend Plant Sale and all group functions and oversee and collect all funds received.

Secretary

The main duties Of the Secretary are to:

Compile the agendas for the Committee meetings and the AGM and any Extraordinary General Meetings and to write the minutes for these as well as being custodian of the Worcestershire Group archive.

Book venues for the monthly meetings, Committee meetings and Plant Sale.

Be the point of contact for the HPS National Administrator and the contact in the national newsletter and on the national website.

Keep an up-to-date membership email address list, liaising with the Membership Secretary, and send reminders about meetings and events to members.

Attend the Group Secretaries' annual meeting.

(Continued)

Membership Secretary

The main duties of the Membership Secretary are to:

Maintain an accurate up-to-date membership list with contact details (phone and e-mail addresses) and to copy these to the Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and any other committee members on request.

Liaise regarding national HPS membership, ensuring that all Worcestershire Group members are current national members and sending invitations to new national members to invite them to Worcestershire Group meetings.

Monitor the attendance sheets from meetings and try to identify reasons for low attendance,

Ensure the reception desk is staffed and that name badges are given out at meetings, welcome visitors and introduce them to other members.

Programme Secretary

The main duties of the Programme Secretary are to:

Produce a co-ordinated programme covering indoor meetings, coffee mornings, and garden tours, taking into account other national events such as national HPS days etc.- the emphasis should be on geographical and seasonal balance.

Liaise with the Speakers' Secretary and organisers of events such as garden tours.

Organise a coffee morning each year.

Issue details of the programme to the Newsletter Editor in time for inclusion in the Autumn Newsletter as well as to the Speakers' Secretary for inclusion in the programme card.

Running and acquiring the prizes for the prize draw at meetings.

Hardy Plant Society Worcestershire Group

I wish to nominate

To stand for election as a member of the above Group's Committee at the Annual General Meeting on 8th March 2025 and to serve in the position of

.....

Proposed by.....

Nominee's signature.....

Seconded by

Date.....

Please return to Ruth Jenkinson, Group Secretary by **30th November 2024**

A Gardener Abroad: Mick Dunstan visits some classic French gardens

Welcome to a long ride through France this summer with MICK DUNSTAN, with a few breath-taking gardens along the way...

I have a long-time friend, Ged, writes Mick. We're both out of the 'young category" but in the spring he told me he and a friend of his, Paul, were planning to cycle across France in July over a fortnight in July. I wished him well. I am definitely not a long-distance cyclist, although I will admit to riding a heavy, black, Sturmey Archer-geared bike in my teens, 50-odd years ago. I still remember the punctures. I did know Ged and Paul are both a bit fond of many-kilometred masochism, better known as long-distance cycling. Ged told me about this classic French route from St Malo to Nice – immortalised in the book *France En Velo* by John Walsh and Hannah Reynolds (Wild Things Publishing, £16.99)

They'd done Land's End to John O'Groats in 2022 and this was around the same distance. One thing holding them back for the French adventure - starting at the harbour in St Malo and finishing in Nice on the south coast - was finding someone to be their back-up driver, and you'll never guess whose driving skills were being targeted. Long story short, I said I'd love to do it. Essentially, they said, I'd be there to carry their puncture repair kits and bags from our starting point at Ged's place in Gloucestershire to the south coast of France and back – an epic round trip of 2,454-miles.

The idea was that they'd pay for accommodation – rooms for three were the order of the day - as well as ferry and fuel costs for Paul's eight-seater, automatic Ford Tourneo Custom. In my book, it's a posh Ford Transit. I'll confess to a few concerns about such a big vehicle – compared to the VW Polo I normally drive. It'll be fine, they said. I shared costs of food and drinks – which sounded fair. I'd have the days to myself. I'd be free to undertake my own, less strenuous version of this Channel to Mediterranean adventure. I'll be honest. It all sounded like a bit of an adventure. So, I said yes. Then I asked my wife if it was OK. She said yes too!

Ged and Paul went for the 10-day itinerary – that was over 100 miles a day with a day off after five days – 11 days in total. We'd end up in Nice for a two-night stay with members of Ged's family on the weekend of the last two days of the Tour de France. A lot happened – some of it can be told - but some of the highlights came from gardens I visited along the way.

First up was a place just south of Le Mans. My research had identified a magnificent garden - **Le Petit Bordeaux** – in the village of Saint-Biez-en-Belin, well off the beaten track! I last visited this four-acre paradise 10 years ago but this return visit took my breath away. Truly remarkable planting creates oases of calm amid healthy



At Le Petit
Bordeaux



Next day, I called in to see the manicured majesty of **Vilandry**. Not my first visit but every time I go I've never failed to be impressed by the scale of this horticultural haven.

There are eight separate gardens within the 17 acres of this Renaissance space, almost entirely formal, sometimes tumbling. The chateau was built in the 1530s. Truly magnificent. I spent four hours here and I loved every second. In a potting shed, there were trays of plants for visitors to take away free. Pleasant lunch too!

The gardens at Villandry



- July 13 now - day 5 of the ride - we're south east of Perigueux. This is their fifth day of riding and to mark the halfway point, another garden is on the horizon. It's **Eyringnac**, which bills itself as the most beautiful garden in Périgord. I'd never heard of it but it turned out to be a green garden, full of hand-clipped, mathematically accurate topiary, with the odd flower bed here and there. Not normally what would satisfy my preference for more natural styles - but it was terrific. They said an hour and a quarter was enough to take it all in, but I lasted a couple hours and a



Above and left: the gardens
at Eyringnac



Entraygues-sur-Truyere

Last but not least, I spotted "a botanical garden" in the small town of **Entraygues-sur-Truyere**.. well, I say botanic garden. I was really looking forward to this hidden jewel but I was disappointed to discover it was about the size of a tennis court and took about two minutes to take in. It meant an early arrival at our destination for that night - where the wine started flowing a little sooner than usual.

Lovely gardens en route - and such good memories to store away.

Ruth Jenkinson visits Helmingham Hall

Stephen Anderton's talk to our group in February about some of his favourite gardens included some references with a special meaning for me. He referred to Alain-Fournier's novel *Le Grand Meaulnes* – which took me straight back to A Level French in the early 1970's – and also to Helmingham Hall gardens, which I visited for the first time in July last year on a garden visiting group trip to Suffolk. These are described as "spectacular Grade 1 listed gardens with a 500 year history" and the Hall is near Stowmarket in Suffolk. The Tollemache family has owned the Hall and estate since 1510 and the 20th generation now has stewardship.

The Hall has had various structural forms since 1480 when it first came into existence, but still today has the form of a courtyard manor house with significant building work done in the 18th Century and restoration work in the mid-19th Century and again in the 20th Century. It is moated and has two drawbridges which are pulled up every night as they have been since 1510!



The gardens are set around the house, with the Parterre and Hybrid Musk garden to the west and which has box hedging (they are treating this regularly for box caterpillar), *Santolina incana* and hybrid musk roses edged with Hidcote lavender and London Pride. The Walled Kitchen Garden, also moated, has cruciform herbaceous borders with climbing roses trained on wires. Clematis, Deutzia and everlasting sweet pea extend the flowering season. Annuals also help prolong the flowering season. Two bridges lead out of the Walled Garden and connect with the Apple Walk and the Wild Flower Garden.

The Walled Garden was spectacular when I visited in July, and also had sculpture featured within the borders which I found enhanced the planting, though I know some would disagree. There is also topiary, a potager, a grass border – as in different forms of grasses-, a woodland garden, a knot garden, the Coach House Garden with a pond used originally for watering horse, and a park of 400 acres. The site is extensive, and well worth a visit if you're in the area.



At Helmington Hall



On the move! Five minutes with Rachael Nitz, co-owner of Wyekham Gardens Plant Centre

Wyekham Gardens Plant Centre has for the last eight years been selling plants at their garden centre on the Worcester-Hereford road, just west of Leigh Sinton. They have recently closed and will be re-opening in February at a new site at The Fold at Bransford.

Rachael, thank you for meeting with me. Please tell me a bit about Wyekham Gardens

My partner Andrew Mahy and I started off selling plants at markets, before opening the plant centre here about eight years ago. The formal opening was carried out by Harriet Baldwin. We've stayed open five days a week since then, including during the Covid outbreak when we were quite busy as people were stuck at home and wanted to work on their gardens! We are shortly moving to a new site at The Fold in Bransford, where we will have a growing area, polytunnel and a shop selling garden tools, seeds, etc. The new site will open in February.

While we sell a range of plants we specialise in plants for shade, for example *Astrantia*, ferns, Hostas and *Astilbe* among many others. Some of our stock is less easy to come by, for example *Adenophora* and *Commelina*. We also carry a range of Irises. We have a good customer base; people come here because we try to do something different. We also carry out garden maintenance and do design work, though these are now a smaller part of our business.

Right: Rachael in one of the polytunnels at the old site



Where do you source your plants, and are you an organic nursery? I see you sell Melcourt composts.

All our plants are from the UK, we don't import from abroad. We grow from seed, cuttings and plugs. When we move to the fold we will be going completely organic, in line with the ethos of the new place. We will be using Melcourt compost and seaweed fertiliser. (*Editors note: The Fold is on the A4103 near the Bank House at Bransford, about three miles West of Worcester, and hosts a range of businesses including a market garden, a café and artists' studios*)

Good luck with your move Rachael... I look forward to visiting your new site

Thanks. If any of your member would like to help us with the costs of the move we are raising funds through Crowdfunder at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/help-relocate-wykeham-gardens-plant-centre>. You can also follow our Facebook page for updates.



Rachael and Andrew at The Fold, where their new premises will be opening in February 2025