



HOME COUNTIES ON-LINE

AREA NEWS

Autumn 2020

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN, AUDREY BALDERSTONE

Well, this is a first! I am indebted to our Area News Editor, Suzanne, for putting together our first **On-line Area News**. I hope you will enjoy it and that it will encourage those who have not subscribed before to do so once we are back to normal, which we will be one of these days!

This is not the only 'first.' I am delighted to tell you that we have a brand new, colourful and exciting website - and on it you can read our **Area News**. The son of our Media Officer, Rekha, introduced us to his friend Dan and together we have been working to get the new website up and running. We have not actually met Dan. Everything has been done through emails - such is life today - but I hope you will agree that Dan has done an excellent job for us. The new address is similar to the old one: flowershomecounties.com Do check it out and let us have some feedback.

Dan is willing to set up very basic websites at a reasonable cost for any Club. We would encourage those Clubs who do not have one to think about a simple website which will showcase your club and attract new members. Please contact Rekha for Dan's details.

Another 'first' is that Stoneycroft have held the first Club meeting in the Area. You can read all about it and see a photo in this Area News. We congratulate Anne and her committee on giving her club such a positive experience.

I am aware that it is not possible for many clubs to do the same. Some venues are not open; most clubs meet in the evening; and we are aware that the conditions for gatherings are different in different Council areas. Most clubs have decided not to open until the New Year and as each club is autonomous it is up to you to make that decision with your committee. The guidelines must be strictly adhered to and you need to take into consideration the demographic of your particular club if you do think of opening. As you will read later in the **News** Anne is willing to share with clubs her Risk Assessment and other documents which might assist you.

The good news continues with 'Congratulations' to Lesley on becoming an official Assessor for Judges' tests. Lesley is also looking into the possibility of having some on-line competitions, so look out for some challenging titles and the opportunity to do some flower arranging after so long!

Fiona Harrison has been holding some successful Workshops at her home, so there should be some people longing to put into practice what they have learned. Competitive work is challenging and rewarding and exciting, so do plan to 'have a go' when Lesley's Schedule comes out. You don't even have to move from home - everything will be on-line.

South Stevenage Club have been challenging members to put designs on their Facebook page so they should be ready for competitions! They have also had socially distanced gatherings in members' gardens which have been enjoyed by those who have attended.

The Flower Arranger magazine is always a source of inspiration and Carolyn is looking forward to receiving your subscriptions in November as usual. It would make a great Christmas gift for a friend!

I don't want to introduce a sad note, but unfortunately Leighton Linslade Flower Club has had to close. LLFC members have always been very supportive of the Area. One of their number, Chris Mitchell, was our Area Treasurer for many years and did sterling work for us. I do hope the members will be able to find new floral 'homes' in other clubs. We send very best wishes to Joan Murray and her committee and thank them for their support over the years.

As you know, our AGM is scheduled for November 18 and this will have to take place by Zoom this year. That will be quite an experience - and another 'first'. We will send details of how to join the event nearer the time.

I can feel a sense of energy being generated by all these 'firsts' and I hope you feel it too. We are going to emerge stronger and even more united because of what we have experienced this year. I look forward with confidence to celebrating our Diamond +1 Anniversary in 2021 and look forward even more to seeing all your smiling faces when we do eventually get together. In the meantime, enjoy reading about events in your Area in your **Area News**.

Continue to stay safe and well - and thankful for our friendship which continues to bind us together through our love of flowers.

Audrey

Memories of Mac or "One of Our Own"



2020, learned new aspects of the life of the Very Reverend William McMillan, MBE. MA.

A beautiful Scottish-barn-style church on the outskirts of Belfast, adorned with stunning floral displays, was packed to over-capacity when mourners from all over Ireland, and beyond, gathered to pay their last respects to the dearly beloved floral designer 'Rev. Mac'. The congregation overflowed into the adjoining church hall to hear the funeral service, before gathering together outside for Mac's burial in the graveyard of the church he pastored for 41 years, First Dunmurry Presbyterian. All who attended the funeral, on the 23rd January

The historic box pews of the church shook with laughter as tributes included tales from Mac's often-chaotic roles as husband, father, and grandfather; as minister, ecclesiastical historian, mentor and peacemaker; as lecturer, horticulturalist, international floral designer and demonstrator. Amid tears we heard how he made himself the butt of the joke and fall-guy in his anecdotes.

Mac was born in the small Cathedral town of Dromore, County Down, in 1931; and it was his grandmother who instilled in him his love of gardening. There was a glimpse of his future religious career in the tale of when, at just six years old, he solemnly buried the family cat in the local graveyard, using his grandmother's best satin dress as the shroud.

We learned that Rev. Mac, as he became affectionately known all over the world, entered the Ministry in 1952 and was ordained in Newry, his first church, in 1959. He married Sheila in 1964 and they were blessed with four children. Mac moved to be Minister of Dunmurry in 1970 and remained there throughout the whole of the Northern Ireland Troubles until his retirement in 2011 at the age of eighty.

An enthusiastic gardener in the 70s and 80s, Mac happened to encounter the legendary Julia Clements demonstrating flower arranging at a garden show. He was enthralled and eventually attended flower classes – at first, in secret. Always the only male, he practiced in the church kitchen while the ladies were taught in the church hall.

Members of the Northern Ireland Group of Flower Arranging Societies enthused, "We are proud to have had such a wonderful person as one of our own". After joining NIGFAS, Mac soon became a demonstrator. The success of his first National Demonstration - 'Celtic Twilight' in Bournemouth in 1987 - led to invitations from all over the world. His boundless energy, coupled with the support and encouragement of wife Sheila and his congregation, allowed him to care for his parish while he travelled the globe, designed Flower Festivals, and competed in shows. At the World Show in Canada (1993) he won 'Best in Show' and at the World Show in Dublin (2014) he won the Pedestal Class and award for the 'Most Innovative Design'.

Indeed, we learned that Rev. Mac was no stranger to awards: The Albert Schweitzer Award for promoting Religious Freedom; the NAFAS Special Associate of Honour; a "Member at Large" of the Garden Clubs of America; and the MBE for his charity work. NIGFAS named the 'Rev. Mac Hosta' for his eightieth birthday and he proudly planted it at the Ulster Folk Museum.

Despite these, however, we could all testify that Rev. Mac's greatest achievement was the way in which he connected with people from all walks of life. He was kindness and generosity personified. His self-deprecating wit, his story-telling, his talents and his poetry, endeared him to everyone.

Rev. Mac, friend to all, rest in peace.

Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends.

W.B. Yeats.

Audrey Balderstone, MA

MRS CHRISTINE ELLIS

Radlett Flower Club is very sad to report the death of Mrs Christine Ellis at the age of 92. She was the Club's Secretary for 22 years and was well known to many with her regular attendances at Area events.

GOOD TO BE BACK

Anne McPherson from Stoneycroft Flower Club has reported a smooth and enjoyable meeting in the first week of September. Only 50% of their members could be accommodated but the rest are scheduled for a guaranteed place at the October meeting. Only those with a confirmed place on the list could be admitted so that National Guidance could be met.

All their arrangements to have a Covid-19 secure environment were underpinned by working closely with the centre management. Their risk assessment was requested before the final decision was taken on how the reopening could be managed. The club have a written Covid-19 Procedure and a Covid-19 risk assessment document aimed at making the environment and activities at meetings as safe as possible.



Masks were provided for anyone who had forgotten to bring one and welcome back tokens sealed 72 hours previously in small plastic bags for members when they arrived. The centre has non-touch gel dispensers that operate when hands are placed under them and extra gel and disposable gloves were provided in the hall for anyone who wanted them. Members who won flower raffle prizes used them to collect their arrangement. All the seats had a 2-metre space between.

The feedback from those attending was very positive with comments such as 'I felt safe' and 'what a difference to be able to come out for an afternoon'. There are some members who live alone so the club meeting made a great difference to how they feel.

The demonstrator from Surrey, Claire Bryant, was particularly enthusiastic about how the afternoon had been organised and the support she had received both prior to and at the meeting. She is a personal friend of Christina Curtis, the National Chairman, who has asked to see a copy of their risk assessment.

Anne is happy to share with other clubs all their findings from holding this very successful meeting.

GOOD NEWS!

We are pleased to hear that Joyce FursseDonn has decided to continue as an Area Demonstrator. Her details are not included in the current 2019-2021 JDS&E List so here is a reminder:

Mrs Joyce FursseDonn, The 7th Hole, Gun Meadow Avenue, Knebworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6BS
Tel. No. 01438 815599 email joycefurssedonn7@virginmedia.com

HAVE YOU SEEN 'SPOTTY DOTTY'?

The lock-down hasn't been all bad. I am sure I heard the garden breathe a sigh of relief when it realised that I wouldn't be picking armfuls of foliage for demonstrations.

On a more serious note I have been able to do a lot more gardening than I usually have time for. One of the first jobs was to re-pot the Hostas, all 40+ pots. Each pot was finished with a top dressing of coffee grounds, the slugs and snails are not keen but the Hostas seem to enjoy a shot of caffeine as they have grown really well this year. It is just a pity that I have been unable to use them for demonstrating. I have also added more sharp stones to the area the pots stand on. I don't know if they help but I will try anything to prevent leaves with holes.

Summer bulbs had to be planted. I had gone a bit mad ordering lilies and once they started growing it was a constant battle with the Lily beetles, easy to spot as they are bright red.

Lots of shrubs have had a proper prune rather than picking a bit here and there. Others needed a more drastic prune and I found plants which I had forgotten in need of some TLC. Garden centres may have been closed but catalogues still arrive offering lots of spring bulbs but also a few new plants, 2 Epimediums with large leaves, one called 'Sandy Claws' - how could I resist a name like that. It is a new friend for a variety called 'Spine Tinger' which has long leaves with serrated edges. Definitely a 'what's that' plant. Then there was a collection of Daphne's. Once established they are a real delight in Spring with an intense perfume. A slightly later flowering variety is 'Gold King' which was still going strong in June.

What a joy when the Garden Centres re-opened, even if it meant queueing for 30 minutes. It proved worth the effort when I found a plant I had been looking for for ages. Have you seen a POPOPHYLLUM called 'Spotty Dotty'? It looks a bit like a Bergenia but with an almost circular leaf spotted green and white, flowering in the Spring. I hope it grows quickly so that I can use it for demonstrating.

There is still a lot to do with cuttings which are filling the greenhouse. Penstemons seem to take very easily and are good for bees in the garden. There are some interesting colours and if you look at the plants carefully before you buy make sure you buy the ones that will give you cuttings. I also subscribe to the RHS seed scheme so there have been lots of seedlings needing attention.

I like trying to grow unusual plants and garden visits are a good source of inspiration although sadly there aren't always specimens for sale so I have to hope that a plant fair might have it. Sadly with no plant fairs this year I will have to wait but it gives me time to save up. I can never resist the temptation of just one more plant.

Happy gardening

Daphne Grant

WAFA India!

Wow! What an experience - in the country of my birth and in one of my favourite cities in the world, Jaipur, the city of palaces.

As I packed my bags for this trip to the World Show, I was so excited but nervous. This was to be my first World Show, so I had no idea what to expect. I packed my tool kit, but still packed “extras” just in case I needed them!



I had entered the Imposed class. For me it was a brave choice, competing with candidates from all around the world was daunting but exciting, even though I hadn't had much experience doing imposed competitions.

After a short stay in Delhi with family, my husband and I arrived in Jaipur airport. There were posters advertising the WAFA India show at the airport, they had chosen a warm candy floss pink colour for their theme, so the posters were very dominant. I was so excited to see them in the arrivals hall of the airport, I nudged my husband in excitement.

After unloading our luggage, we took a taxi to the venue. As we arrived, we could see the posters of the Show. They were huge and an archway was made with the show colours at the top of the approach road. There were rickshaws and taxis bustling around, people were only allowed to be dropped at the entrance to the approach road and then “the show transport” was provided to The Diggi Palace. It was a short walk away, but in the heat of the afternoon sun it seemed much longer.



I was feeling so excited at this stage, I couldn't believe this was being held in India, it was an opportunity of a life time. I kept thinking of my parents, they would have been so proud.

As we walked through to the registration desk, it was nice to see some familiar faces from the National Show at Islington. Kamla Poddar, the show Chairperson, was greeting people and overseeing the flowers at the entrance, which were absolutely beautiful. India has some of the most intricate artefacts and some had been used in such clever design work. One of the items used were Indian handmade beds, called a charpai, which is a string bed. I remember my grandmother using it in the courtyard of her house, and we, as children would sleep on them outside as it was cooler in the summer months. But at the entrance of the Palace they had been especially made using gold thread and flowers.

On entering the walkway to the palace, you could see Indian artefacts used in so many imaginative ways, the craftsmanship is amazing to see. It made me feel very proud to see the talent India's artisans have, and to see so much variety in one place was truly wonderful.

As we walked around the show grounds of Diggi Palace, people were bustling around getting last minute arrangements for the show's opening the next day. The competitions for the show were set up in a number of tents in the grounds as well as the rooms in the palace. In the grounds, they also had beautiful stalls selling stunning clothing, jute products in many forms, and artefacts from all over India. I needed an extra bag for all my shopping purchases!

That evening the opening ceremony was one of colour and music, with traditional dancing from Rajasthan, which I was familiar with as my niece is an expert at this type of dance as my sister lives in Jaipur, so that was wonderful to watch. At the main garden fountain area where most of the celebration was taking place with the local dignitaries attending, beautiful large Marigold flowers were used along with amazing leaf manipulation work. It was so interesting to see how many different forms of material they had used to create the displays.

Early the next day the show was buzzing with everyone staging their show pieces. There were helpers from the local college that were assisting with everyone's needs - they were recognised by their pink tee shirts. There must have been about 100 boys and girls helping each day running to and fro.

The competition pieces had been created, and displayed ready for judging, which was such an exciting time, but very nerve racking too, I am sure, for all that participated in it.



The next day the show events had started, workshops, lectures, displays and of course food stalls.

I had booked every workshop there was to do, as I didn't want to miss out on anything! They were all held in a venue close by, a beautiful building called the Birla Auditorium. Each workshop was so well organised, so informative and interesting. I enjoyed them all immensely, as did all the others. I wish I could have had two days for each subject, as it was so interesting to learn how to make the beautiful designs and watch all the techniques. As I had attended the workshops I could not attend all the lectures that were being held in the grounds of the palace. But I heard they had been very well attended and enjoyed by others.

WAFA India had achieved an amazing task by getting so many masters of their crafts in one location from all over India. It was really a once in a life time experience which I am so thankful and grateful to have been able to participate in. Plus to win a 3rd prize in the Imposed Class was absolutely a treat, which I am very grateful for.

I was lucky to attend the awards ceremony, which was overwhelming, it was also held at the Birla Auditorium, with beautiful entertainment afterwards. Of course, after every event, food was always served in abundance, hospitality is part of Indian culture.

I still can't believe it has all happened and the time has gone by so fast. Now we have the next one in New Zealand to look forward to! I am hoping I will be able to attend that, as I must say I am hooked!

Rekha Naidoo



WAFA INDIA – An Arbitrator's Viewpoint



After 5 years since my first visit to India to help train judges for this occasion - at last the World Show in Jaipur is about to begin!

First to Val and Martyn Best's before Heathrow and an overnight flight, with wonderful views of the Himalayas, to Delhi arriving at midday on the 22nd. February. Then an 8 hour wait before our short hop to Jaipur. We arrived at 8pm to a very warm welcome and were whisked off to the Diggi Palace Hotel where we were met by the Prince and Princess owners of the hotel and once their family home. The palace grounds had been beautifully decorated by show chairman Kamla Poddar's students and our rooms contained baskets of fresh fruit and gifts.

The next morning (23rd), refreshed, we started work; checking papers and then viewing the various marquees and rooms where the staging was being assembled and air conditioning installed. It all looks well thought out with many seats around the site. I had hoped to be able to have a swim each morning but no such luck – the pool had been emptied to accommodate more seating! Food areas, bazaar shops, a beauty salon (I did have a relaxing massage at one point) and exhibition pieces showing local crafts.

The following day we checked that our papers were up to date, received our entry badges and the show book. This is a magnificent publication, with fantastic pictures and gives so much information. I then had the pleasure of meeting friends from all over the world as they started to arrive. Martyn Best and David Ryland decided to go and buy jackets to get, as Martyn put it, 'in the zone' and about 'us artistes' (they are doing a joint exhibit) It turned out the journey back was quite hair raising in their tuk tuk!

Tues. 25th. First an early morning taxi to the Taj Jai Mahal Hotel with all our papers for our session to lead the judges briefing. A beautiful room well laid out with tables for each judging team of 3 (10 teams). Lunch was outside overlooking the extensive grounds where the preparations for a wedding were in progress. A large outdoor chess set included elaborate pieces 2 ft high with knights represented by elephants and all pieces on wheels.

In the afternoon a talk by an horticulturalist – I now know much about Indian plants use for diseases and medical conditions! Val and I then separated the stewards from their judges and I spent a lively and friendly session with the stewards so that they were prepared for their role at the show the following day.

Later we changed for the Hyderabad seminar reunion held in the grounds with music, dancing and food. This was lovely in the evening light before we returned to the Diggi Palace.

Wed 26th. Up at 5.30am – THIS IS THE DAY – competitors staging starts at 6.30am. All prepared in our competitions office ready for any queries; then lunch for the judges and stewards and a final briefing including information re pre done work. All received scarves and Val and I received our honorary badges as members of Pushpan Bitan Society as well as our Arbitrator's badges. My stewards were quite nervous but they coped very well.

During the afternoon judging (from 1pm) there were a number of queries which meant I walked quite a lot between halls giving advice, as Val had sprained her ankle the previous evening. It was exciting when the result forms started to arrive and to see who had won which prizes. Classes were judged by 4.15 pm and then the Best in Show. Each judge had to individually decide and return their selection (this takes some time as they have to look at every 1st prize) fortunately there was a clear winner. After this the Runner Up to Best in Show is chosen. We then had to sign certificates for each of them.

The show opened that evening with honoured officials arriving amidst much music and dancing. Drinks and canapes were available but by this time we needed a meal and went for a quiet dinner and bed after a 16-hour day!

Thurs 27th. Up refreshed at 7am and a walk around the grounds and show. It's lovely at this time, pleasantly warm and quiet with hardly any one else around to admire all the exhibits, hear the birds, see the chipmunk like animals and the peacocks strutting around.

After breakfast the judges' debriefing and recording their comments as a basis for our arbitrators' report. Later I wandered around meeting several of our members and hearing about their journey before arriving at the show – how I would have loved seeing tigers in Rathhambore Reserve. David Ryland returned from the prize giving and we admired his 2nd Prize which was beautifully framed.

Fri 28th. The Indian group had put up a display of designs showing aspects of Indian craft – they were splendid. Later we watched a display of Indian saris – I had no idea there were so many variations from different parts of the country, some worth hundreds of pounds. Later we saw a demonstration showing the versatility of jute in flower arranging with innovative constructions having moving parts.

Sat 29th. Off to the Taj Jai Mahal again for the general assembly of WAFA. Here delegates from each country discuss various issues including judging. The question of a points system against weighing criteria was raised, no vote this time but I am sure it will be raised again. At the end WAFA gave NAFAS £5000 for kindly accommodating the coordination panel at Osbourne House for their meeting in August. Last, but not least the handover to New Zealand for the next 3 years and Flora Aoteroa, the World Show in March 2023.



Another delicious lunch then back for a presentation about Kashmir shawls and to change for the Gala Dinner. A wonderful occasion with everyone in their glad rags. Again music and dance in the grounds followed by a traditional Indian dinner in a very splendid room.

1st March - Our last day, sorting out cases and packing presents, lunch with Heather Hammond from N.Z. and then to the airport for our flight to Delhi. A few hours there and then the flight to Heathrow. Phoned Graham on the way to Val's as the ride from the airport takes about as long as his journey to her house. I found he thought I was due at 6.30pm – not 6.30am – however, he was only a few minutes late! Home and recounting to him all the delights of an incredible trip.

Well done India, a fabulous show!

Lesley Sturdy

LOCKDOWN CAPERS

Well who would have thought that we would have to abandon our club AGM mid-March and not meet as a club since and it doesn't look as if we will for several months yet.

We had recently moved to a new venue being a junior and infant school and we all know how difficult it has been for the teaching profession during lockdown. Some schools joined together to school children whose parents had to work throughout lockdown. Only near the end of July were tentative moves made to allow pupils and staff back with social distancing in mind and maintaining school premises to certain standards following guidelines. We were told it would be unlikely that we, the older generation, would be able to access the building before the end of the year. That was not a good prospect, therefore other avenues for premises were sought. After being settled at the WI Hall since the club's inception we have moved several times to other venues in the last few years, but we finally think we have found the solution which will mean our meetings will move to another evening in the near future.

Lockdown has been very difficult for many, especially if living alone and like most clubs we missed our workshops and club meetings fix with exciting demonstrations. As the first few months of lockdown did not look like easing up, to keep in touch it was suggested we set up a WhatsApp group for members. This has proved to be a life line to share photos, flower arrangements, garden tips, cooking and recipes, anything we would like to share to brighten someone's day. We have had glimpses of people's garden improvements, two ladies have been making umpteen masks and generously donating to many club members as well as to others, also other items and their sewing machines have been red hot. After the initial problems of not being able to buy flour, a lot of baking was also done and several recipes exchanged to try out other members' culinary creations.

Two of our members have allotments and have been growing the most wonderful flowers throughout the summer. Sue Hampson decided to set up a raffle and has been drawing out club member's names to be presented with a lovely bouquet of freshly picked blooms on a weekly basis. I for one have been the lucky recipient of one of these lovely bunches of flowers delivered by her husband Martin. Mine was a lovely mixture of shades of lilacs, magentas, purples with fountain grass, Amaranthus, Cosmos and Dahlias to name a few species. Thank you for your generosity Sue.

We have enjoyed the many programmes on social media, the wonderful Francine Thomas from New Zealand, inspiring us with lots of new creative ideas and her alter ego "Fred" her trusty mechanic. The videos of great gardens of different Demonstrators throughout NAFAS, David Ryland's lovely garden in County Durham springs to mind having watched videos in two different seasons. Mini Demonstrations in Garages and Greenhouses by other Areas have helped to while away many an hour in between enjoying the beautiful weather that we have experienced during lockdown.

Since lockdown is easing several members have made appointments to visit garden centres and RHS Hyde Hall. We have had one committee meeting in our Chairman's garden and we hope to attend another, social distancing of course. We have also planned to have our annual garden visit to John Rice's lovely garden with all proceeds going to "Trust Links" a local gardening charity that John supports. We hope that many members will support this and we will provide afternoon tea.

I am sure many clubs have done similar things during lockdown and what I am telling you about sounds familiar. We have sorely missed being together especially having to cancel all the lovely events that were planned for our Area Diamond Anniversary and our own Flower Festival this October. Let's hope that we don't have a spike throughout the winter and that we will be able to resume our club meetings and attend all the events that were postponed in the coming year.

Stay safe everyone and hope to meet up with you all before too long.

Janneke Jones

DAPHNE'S ONE-BOWL CAKE

4oz soft margarine
6oz caster sugar
6oz SR flour with 1 tsp baking powder
2 large eggs
1 small tin of fruit IN JUICE
2oz chocolate chips

Begin by draining the fruit, I do this overnight to make sure the fruit is almost dry. Syrup makes it difficult to get the fruit dry enough. I have tried with peach slices cut in half, apricot halves cut into quarters, mandarin oranges and pineapple, rings are easier to drain, 2/3 are sufficient.

Method: this is a one bowl cake. Mix everything but the fruit and chocolate chips and beat thoroughly until smooth. Carefully fold in the fruit and chocolate. The mixture is quite soft. Pour into a lined 2lb loaf tin. Bake for 45 minutes at 180 or until a skewer comes out clean. This does not keep for more than 4 or 5 days due to the remaining moisture from the fruit.

Daphne Grant

South Stevenage Flower Club Members Get Together

Many of the members of South Stevenage Flower Club have not been out hardly at all during the lockdown so two of our members kindly offered their gardens so we could have a get together outside.

We arranged the first visit for 19th August but had to change it to the 21st because of bad weather, we went ahead even though it was a bit windy!



Deirdre Hatt has a beautiful garden in Tewin which is still a work in progress, they moved in six years ago and both the house and the garden needed a lot of work but they are nearly there, lots of interesting new plants to look at. Deirdre's neighbour Pauline made cakes for the 'Afternoon Tea' which were fabulous and we also had a plant stall, a raffle, a quiz and a short demonstration of a Hand tied bouquet which was given to Deirdre as a thank you.

We were very mindful of the 'rules' at the moment, all the money taken went straight into a collection bucket for Herts and Essex Air Ambulance (our chosen charity for this year) no change was given and we had a list of contact details for everyone prepared in advance for 'Track and Trace' purposes. In order to keep the numbers below 30 it was only members who come to our weekly classes that were invited this time but of course we had not forgotten all the other members – we have nearly 80 in total!

So, on 1st September our President, Miriam Hill hosted a get together in her garden in Walkern – all members were invited and we had 45 who wanted to come so we decided to split them into two groups and have ‘Morning Coffee’ and ‘Afternoon Tea’. The weather was perfect, this time we had a quiz again and plants. Miriam and her husband John have lived there for 50 years so the garden is very well established with lots of lovely mature trees and we even had a large deer run across the lawn on its way to the wood.



Deirdre and Miriam were such lovely hosts and everyone really enjoyed themselves – so lovely to see people you have not seen since March.

Our hall where we meet is not open yet and we are not sure when it will be – maybe we can visit another garden or two before the winter comes along.

Sue Papa

Leighton Linslade Flower Club - THE END OF AN ERA ...

It is with great sadness that we announce the closure of Leighton Linslade Flower Club.

The club was one of the oldest established social clubs in Leighton Buzzard, having been founded in 1978 by a small group of enthusiastic friends who wanted to share their love of floral art. Initially meeting in the theatre at Vandyke School, the club attracted members from across Leighton Buzzard, Linslade and surrounding villages. The club was affiliated to NAFAS (National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies) and many members enjoyed events staged by the Home Counties Area as well as National events in addition to our monthly meetings.

Members have participated in many local Flower Festivals over the years, in addition to joining the team to decorate Westminster Abbey on a few occasions. The last few years have seen us gathering at Billington Village Hall where we found it more affordable, and the Club had continued to retain some 60 members enjoying regular demonstrations, social evenings and day trips out. Regrettably, we have been unable to form a new committee to take us forward.

Finally, a huge ‘Thank You’ to Joan Murray, our retiring Chairman, and her committee, and to all who have participated in the spirit of Fun, Friendship and Flowers for over 40 years.

Chris Mitchell (Club President)

SOUTH STEVENAGE FLOWER CLUB - HOW WE COPEd

As we couldn't attend our usual flower arranging classes due to Covid restrictions, the committee decided to organise classes online for regular members.

This was co-ordinated by our tutor Sue Papa for anyone wishing to join in from home. It was to be our 'new normal' instead of attending our usual Wednesday classes. A brilliant idea to keep us all connected and motivated.



Sue came up with suggestions and themes each week, using various mechanics - egg boxes, corks, wooden pegs, recycled items, plastic milk cartons to name a few. We could choose fresh flowers and foliage from our gardens or use silk flowers to create our floral



arrangements.

Once completed, we posted our finished designs to share with our colleagues. It was a fun way of keeping in touch with club members. So lovely to see all the different styles and creations that were submitted. Well done ladies.

We don't know when we will be able to get back to classes and demonstrations again. Hopefully our love of flowers and having fun together will continue to inspire, motivate and keep us going with positive outcomes for the future.

Lynda Nadauld

WANTED: AREA FLOWER ARRANGER OFFICER to take over from Carolyn Cranswick

As Carolyn Cranswick is now Vice Chairman she wishes to give up the role of Flower Arranger Officer. A job description was sent out with the Minutes of the March Council meeting and she would be very glad to hear from anyone interested in taking over the role.

For more details contact: carolyncranswick@hotmail.co.uk