



HOME COUNTIES AREA NEWS SPRING 2021



Message from our Chairman, Audrey Balderstone

On Monday, 1st March and St. David's Day, we had our first Area Council meeting of 2021. It was good to see so many of you on Zoom. We sent greetings to all those with Welsh connections and I hope everyone enjoyed seeing the daffodils in the bright sunshine. They are a wonderful harbinger of spring and hope for the future.

I realise that not everyone has access to technology but if at all possible I would encourage you to designate one member, who can use Zoom, to attend our meetings. We had a lively, and I think profitable, discussion at Council. It was good to be able to answer questions, exchange ideas and hear how clubs are keeping in touch with members.

For those who were not able to join our meeting I will give a brief rundown of some events which have had to be cancelled or rescheduled.

- a **Club/Members day** scheduled for 23rd March - **cancelled**
- b **Chairmans' lunch** scheduled for 12th May - **re-arranged**
- c **Members' Day** at Runnymede 8th July - **cancelled**
- d **Chairmans' lunch** - **re-scheduled to 8th July** at my home
- e **Diamond Anniversary Tea** 18th August - **cancelled**
- f **AGM** will take place by **Zoom** in early November (tbc)
- g **60+1 Anniversary Day** with lunch **16th November**

As our **Diamond Anniversary Tea** has had to be cancelled we are proposing that we make 16th November at **The Spotlight Theatre** a very special day. Alan Beatty from Northern Ireland will be our demonstrator in the afternoon. Further details about the day will be sent to you later in the year. We would love you to join us for this special occasion.

The **National Chairman** has issued a '**Challenge**' to each Area to submit one entry of a floral arrangement or craft item each month to be judged. We received five entries this month and one was sent to the National Chairman. The Challenge for March is 'A Spring Bonnet'. This Challenge is open to all members. All you have to do is to send a photograph of your entry to Rekha, our Media Officer on the Area email address homecountiesflowers@gmail.com by 22nd March. The entries will be judged by Area Judges and one entry sent to the National Chairman. It is envisaged that photographs of the twelve winners will be made into a calendar at the end of the year. The winning entries so far are on the NAFAS website.

National Flower Arranger Day, Friday 7th May. Everyone is encouraged to make an arrangement, wreath or hanging and display it prominently on the outside of your home, (gate, fence, door) along with a label giving details of your Club. Wording for the labels can be found on the National website, or you can write your own. I hope you will feel able to join in and spread a little cheer to those who pass by.

The **National Show** will take place virtually this year and will be spread over the four weeks of April. The Show committee are delighted that all the classes are full, but of course that means a tremendous amount of work in getting all the photographs in each category to all the judges. During April we will be treated to an on-line 'How To' demonstration from a teacher one week; a floral demonstration another week and a talk from a speaker on yet another week. On the fourth week the competition entries will be uploaded and the results published. So, a lot to look forward to during the next couple of months.

Osborne House. Consultations have been on-going about the future of NAFAS and the possible sale of Osborne House. As an Area we have voted for the sale of the House, but the final decision will be down to the Trustees. *(See next page)* As a Charity NAFAS has the responsibility under Charity Law to obtain the very best result for the Charity.

Sadly the **World Show in New Zealand** has been **postponed** until 2024.

On the bright side, the days are getting longer, trees are budding and bulbs are coming up all over the garden. Many members have had their vaccinations and if everyone follows the guidance there is the possibility that restrictions will be lifted at the end of June.

I am full of HOPE for the future and I hope you are too. I read these words just recently:

They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for." – Tom Bodett

We all have someone, or something, to love; we have flowers to arrange and we have the hope that we will meet again soon in friendship.

As we look forward to spring and better days, I wish you happiness, safety and health.

With warmest regards

Audrey

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4th March 2021

Ref: Osborne House

Dear fellow NAFAS member,

Over the last couple of weeks, the Trustees have read, made notes and thought through all the members feedback on the future of Osborne House. Yesterday, March 3rd 2021, the Board of Trustees met at a specially convened virtual meeting to vote on whether to sell or retain Osborne House.

All Trustees were in attendance, the vote was unanimous to sell, there were no votes against, and no one abstained.

As you would imagine it was a difficult and emotional moment and I think we all realised the brevity and weight of the moment. We talked before the vote, revisited again the situation and only when we were all sure in our own minds that we were ready, the vote was taken. Interestingly all areas had suggested a sell option as well.

We have consulted with three London based commercial property agents and are now seeking to consult with one more agent and obtaining three quotes for legal representation.

We will keep you up to date, stage by stage.

Yours sincerely

Katherine Kear
National Chairman

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NEW BEGINNINGS

*This announcement means the end of an era and it is a sad day for NAFAS. It also marks the **beginning** of what we hope will be a bigger and brighter future as NAFAS is modernised and made relevant to society today.*

We all have our part to play in supporting new initiatives and being positive about change. That does not mean following blindly. As members, each of us has a part to play in ensuring that NAFAS is run professionally and in accordance with Charity law, so I encourage you to keep asking constructive questions.

For now, let us look forward with confidence to enjoying our flowers (and our Association) with lots of fun and good friends.

I wish you all brighter days ahead.

Audrey



*CELEBRATING OUR DIAMOND +1
ANNIVERSARY YEAR*

**A (BRIEF) HISTORY OF OUR AREA BY
DAPHNE GRANT, FORMER AREA CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT**

Sadly all the original paperwork relating to the early days has been lost [I believe mice were involved] so this a brief look at what we have achieved as far as I can remember.

NAFAS was born in the 1950's as part of the RHS who administered our affairs until 1959 when NAFAS became a separate body. In 1960 the London and Home Counties Area was divided into Home Counties and London and Overseas. The boundaries have always been rather fluid and clubs have often changed area. The division of Essex between Home Counties and East of England has been the subject of much discussion over the years and I remember a lot of talk in the 1980's about a merger but nothing came of it; I believe that finance was a sticking point.

Many of our clubs were originally a section of their local horticultural society, tolerated by the old gardeners because they brought a lot of visitors to the shows who wanted to see what this new-fangled flower arranging was all about. Gradually clubs went their own way, my own included, but sadly without staging many shows these days. In those early days horticultural societies supported one another and with 4 shows a year each there were very few free Saturdays.

Clubs are at the heart of all we do with monthly meetings for a demonstration and also arranging workshops because there are no leisure classes. I can remember queuing for ages at our local Further Education College hoping to get a place in a class.

Areas work on a much larger scale and over the years have raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities through flower festivals in stately homes and churches. Sadly we don't have many stately homes but we have decorated Hatfield House twice as well as Knebworth and Luton Hoo before it became a hotel. We also decorated Haileybury College when Peggy Cunningham was Chairman. Our other stately home, Woburn Abbey, was decorated by NAFAS in 1968 and thanks to an ancient copy of the Flower Arranger [cover price 1/6] I have discovered that 15 members of Home Counties decorated the long corridor in green and white. I have no names but Leigh-on-Sea were involved. I have also found a note from the organisers sending my club 15 books of raffle tickets, we sent back £1/17/6 but didn't win anything according to the list of winners.

There have been numerous local Church festivals raising vital funds for church maintenance as well as charity. The Area has held larger festivals at St. Mary's, Woburn and Bentwood to name just two. St Albans Abbey although not an Area project relies heavily on the talents of our members either as a club or a member of a flower guild. Members have also taken part in NAFAS organised festivals at Canterbury Cathedral, St Paul's where they produced a number of hangings in the style of Grinling Gibbons and Westminster Abbey. We have been fortunate to arrange flowers for special services there. I have had the privilege of doing the Whitsun flowers and answering the questions "Are they real?" and "Do you do them every day?"

The National competitions "Time and Tide" came to Rochford Leisure Centre in 1986 and members also helped to organise the last show held in Bournemouth. We mustn't forget two large exhibits at Chelsea, one staged at quite short notice and the success members have had individually at Chelsea, winning a number of 'Best in Show'.

The Area has organised many shows over the years, moving around to give everyone a chance to compete although the number of entries has decreased from a novice class at Harpenden which had 43 entries. Happily the exhibits are always of a very high standard.

Finally we hosted one of the last Assemblies at the University of Hatfield when the Gala Dinner was in Elizabethan costume in honour of Queen Elizabeth who lived there as a child.

Please forgive me if I have missed out a pet project but without a paper trail I have to rely on my memory.

Daphne

INTRODUCING OUR NEW FLOWER ARRANGER OFFICER: JOYCE FURSSEDONN



I was born in Fulham (London) and moved out to Borehamwood when I was 6 years of age with my parents. All my childhood was spent in Borehamwood and I gained awards for Typing, Shorthand, English, Maths and my love of Geography. Then I decided to do some travelling - went to Germany to gain the language - which I did gain but do not use now unfortunately. Thereafter I spent 2 years in Jersey as a secretary. What a lovely island and the people then were so lovely. After returning to the UK I was a secretary and worked in a London office of solicitors.

My mother and I belonged to Elstree/Borehamwood Floral Group where we looked after the raffle and was my first foot into what flower arranging was about. As the years went by I was approached to become vice chairman of the Floral Group in Borehamwood, but unfortunately the club folded up 2 years later because of lack of committee members and we did have an older generation on the committee at that time!! I then became a member of the local horticultural club where we did have a class for flower arranging. That is where it became apparent to me I had my flair, as I took part with exhibits for a few years and did get very good awards.

In the meantime I had four lovely children 3 boys, Nicholas, Christopher and John and 1 girl Frances. Obviously my time was taken up with bringing these siblings up and flower arranging became just a hobby. As time went by I got involved with competitions at Hatfield House, where I became a friend of Gwen Hancock. She was the one who suggested that I became a demonstrator. I was nervous at first with the suggestion but took it on board.

In those days I always had the Flower Arranger and this gave me lots of ideas for designs and carried on to be a demonstrator. For anyone who wants inspiration then the Flower Arranging Magazine is a must to have. Even though not to be a demonstrator but to play with flowers!!!!

I decided to go to Oaklands College to learn the techniques and the rights and wrongs of creating designs. Obtaining Diploma I and II this was my way to demonstrate. I took my Area test in 2002 where I passed with flying colours as they say, started demonstrating at various clubs and it became a passion for me. My husband Micky always joined me and as he would say he was my 'goffer' by getting all my mechanics and flowers into the venue but he did enjoy his cup of tea and piece of cake in the breaks at the clubs. It was and still is a delight to be driven home after an evening of demonstrating, the only thing is Micky wants to chat on the way home but I am happy just to relax. It is quite rewarding to know when you leave a venue the ladies are all so happy and walk away with their arrangements that they have won

in the raffle. It seems to be all worthwhile!!!!

The children moved on with ventures, so my husband and I moved to Knebworth. Borehamwood used to be a village years ago, but now is a big town, not the same place anymore. Our garden in Knebworth was a 'blank canvas' but not anymore. Not just an interesting garden but a flower arranger's garden with a stream running into a natural pond which frogs and newts love. We also grow a lot of fruit which is frozen. A greenhouse is my haven where I set my seeds and cuttings too. We do have to be careful when we go away on holidays about the strawberry picking time. We usually go in February/March, then when we get home it is sowing seed and potting up season, busy times.

Moving on to my love of flower arranging - in Knebworth we do not have a club so I discovered Welwyn Floral Group where I became a member and before long I was asked to become programme secretary. This has been my role for 12 years, plus after a few years I was approached to become Vice chairman too. Unfortunately my lovely mum had Alzheimers for years and sadly passed away so to become chairman I could not put my heart and energy into that role at that time.

I had a wonderful opportunity to put an arrangement together at Westminster Abbey and also took part in St Albans Cathedral Flower Festival. Nearby Bennington has a flower festival every year in the local church where I was asked to take part and still do every year. Then again I was approached to do a design at Westminster Abbey which was a pedestal where I took Margaret Brett along (chairman of Stevenage club) to assist with a 2nd pedestal. A lovely memory to have.

It was a great pleasure to work alongside Carolyn Cranswick's team for Hatfield House Shows. It was a lot of work but we all enjoyed the fun and experience. Fingers crossed for a show again this year!!!!

My passion is flower arranging and together with Micky's expertise as a carpenter and joiner, coming up with some unusual and interesting mechanics, we make a great team.

Now being Chairman of Welywn (for 4 years) I do enjoy the role plus still being Programme Secretary too. I will continue to travel and demonstrate and now as Flower Arranger Officer. You could say I like to keep busy!!!!!! But to be totally honest I would never change this as I have met some really lovely people on this journey. All have been so kind and friendly towards myself and Micky.

Flowers, Fun and Friendships.

Joyce

LIVING IN HOPE

The National Tests and Pre-National Assessments are planned to be held on the 7-8th September in Gloucester to a reduced audience – tickets may be on sale in April

The NAFAS Demonstrators' Symposium is planned to take place at the Telford Hotel and Golf Resort on the 21st to 24th April 2022. Spaces will be limited. Applications will be strictly by date order email jacquiarnold53hotmail.com

Home Counties Area Virtual Competition for May

It was so good to see so many entries for our Christmas competition. Here is the next one.

*Title 'The Joy of Springtime' An exhibit.
Space allowed 60cm x 60cm x 90cm*

*A picture of the exhibit to be sent to
homecountiesflowers@gmail.com
by 14th May 2021*

All you need to do is to set the design on a table against a plain wall or fabric. Think about the words joy and springtime and what they mean to you. Make sure the photo includes all the design and is clear.

It is good to see that people are working hard to make designs from across the country (on social media) and that some members of Home Counties have entered the National Virtual Competition.

Having a go this way for a first try is good as you are in your own home but I hope it will give you confidence to go on and enter at an Area or National show when either we have to have it virtually or, hopefully, actually. In the latter case it is good to get together with others.

I know that I learned a lot from watching other people enter shows when I first started, I also made friends from across the Area and nationally which has brought me much pleasure. I wish you all the best.

Lesley Sturdy

TIPS FOR TAKING SUCCESSFUL PHOTOS OF FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

Printed with the kind permission of Chrissie Harten

- Try to photograph the arrangement against a plain or un-fussy background. (You could use a drape behind the arrangement to help cut out any unwanted objects, but be sure to iron it first to remove any creases).
- Try to photograph in natural light, which produces the best colour balance. Different light sources will produce different colour effects. If you can, change your camera settings to a setting which matches your light source (eg tungsten, fluorescent, etc).
- Use a tripod if possible for the sharpest image, but if you don't have one, the back of a chair or something similar will help to support and keep your camera steady.
- Observe closely what is behind or next to the arrangement and be sure to remove any objects which detract from it.
- Remove any debris from the base of the arrangement such as fallen leaves or petals, or other bits which can fall off flowers and foliage.
- Don't photograph against a strong light source (such as a window) as this will make your photo too dark unless you have the ability to change your camera settings to compensate.
- Try not to use a flash. This creates strong shadows and a colour change which will detract from the arrangement. If your camera is set on auto flash and you don't have a choice, hold a white card just below the flash to deflect it upwards and soften the light, or tape some tissue paper over it temporarily.
- Stand directly in front of the arrangement and bend slightly so that your lens is level with the centre of the arrangement and you can clearly see most of the container. Don't take the photo from above (unless it is obviously meant to be viewed from above).
- Zoom in to the arrangement to cut out as much of the background as possible, whilst still leaving a reasonable amount of space around it. (Make sure you don't zoom in too much and cut off any part of the arrangement).
- Be sure that your camera is focussing on the arrangement, and not on the background.

- View the photograph when you have taken it and crop out any unwanted parts. Most modern computers, tablets and phones have a photo app already installed with a crop feature.
- If you are taking your photograph for an online competition, make sure you are emailing it at full size. Many email applications will automatically send at a small size and lower resolution to make it quicker and use less data, but this will affect the quality of your photo so select “full size” or “original size”.

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NAFAS NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2020

Congratulations

To Linda O’Toole of Clophill & District Flower Club for her very atmospheric photograph which won a 1st and the Surrey Trophy in Class 4 - "Any Old Iron"



**The Schedule for the 2021 NAFAS Photography Competition is now available and can be downloaded from the NAFAS website and the NAFAS Photography Facebook page.
The closing date is 31st August 2021**

FLORAL WORKSHOPS CONTINUING DURING THE PANDEMIC with Fiona Harrison



Who would have thought that a spot under the weeping willow, by the garden pond, would have been the chosen location for a workshop group to make a basket of flowers, a rustic window box or a Gregor Lersch inspired interwoven structure? That's precisely what we did each month last year, as soon as lockdown was over and we were allowed to meet in groups of six. Many of my regular workshop participants were only too keen to have something creative and social to do at last.

Social distancing was easy as there is plenty of space and we had the benefit of being outside, in the fresh air, surrounded by nature. Breaking for coffee and homemade cake or a glass of prosecco in the evening, added to the enjoyment and many people came every month to construct a different design, traditional or contemporary, with and without floral foam. Numbers grew as people realised that this was something they could do safely as we were strictly following public health rules. People also quickly got used to our inquisitive horses taking a brief interest in our activities, from over the garden fence!

It was very satisfying to see not just regular flower arrangers, but many people new to floral design, often working at home and for the first time being able to join an early evening activity (or sneak out for a few hours during the day!). Several mothers came with their daughters (of all ages) and I've held private workshops for entire families, including a husband and dad, new to floral design. His approach was pragmatic "if I want to spend

time with my wife and daughters I have to take an interest in what interests them". Clever chap. I made sure instructions were step-by-step to accommodate those with less experience but also made sure I explained design principles carefully so more experienced arrangers were benefiting too. I also offered to provide materials to encourage new people or those simply too busy or who would find it too challenging to source everything themselves.

What about the chance of rain, you are bound to ask? I must admit, that on one occasion, sitting by the pond, when I was demonstrating the design we were about to make, it started to drizzle. (One of my friends teases me that as a Scot, I have 32 words for rain, in the same way that Inuit have for snow). Looking heavenwards, I asked "I wonder if this is the sort of rain we can sit out under?". There was a long pause before someone cautiously answered "What sort of rain is that, Fiona?". I took the hint and we moved across the bridge, over the pond into our open fronted hay barn.

The haybarn was a godsend when the weather turned colder and we met there from autumn until early December. The yeoman farmer who sited the original haybarn all those centuries ago obviously took account of prevailing wind and rain, as we can be relatively warm inside the barn, even when it is raining or cold outside. Warm outdoor clothing is obviously necessary and I should add, it is a working haybarn i.e. it has giant haybales in it. We set up our tables behind and between the bales and were quite snug!

I asked everyone to bring their own folding chairs and small table, where possible, to minimise the need to disinfect outdoor furniture and their own coffee cup and hand towel. As I live in a sixteenth century listed farmhouse and we have all the old farm buildings and horses on our premises, we have outdoor facilities for hand washing etc.

So far this year, it has been too cold to be work outside so I have provided different options. I've provided materials when people cannot get out to source their own, made videos demonstrating designs and sent them to participants via an e-mail link and also taught via zoom workshops, including with the Harpenden Evening Floral group. I've also supplied written instructions for people who are not keen on using technology. I plan to continue offering these options until we can meet physically.

I send details each month to those who are interested in attending my workshops, either in person or remotely. If anyone would like similar information, please let me know. And finally, when the pandemic is over, I have a brand new floral design workshop INDOORS, where I will be able to host groups of up to 10 people for floral workshops, including home-made refreshments. I've already had interest from some flower clubs further afield as an activity for smaller groups of members. There is plenty of parking and outdoor space to stroll around. That day may seem far off just now, but we will all meet again. Eventually!

Fiona Harrison is a NAFAS Demonstrator and Teacher living in Harpenden. She can be contacted at fionamharrison@hotmail.com or on 01582 761602 or 07944 928575



WATFORD FLORAL SOCIETY AT 70

In 1951 the Watford and District Floral Art Society was formed as an offshoot of the Watford Horticultural Society. After I joined the club in 1969, the chairman, Margaret Rance, suggested that as flower clubs had been formed in the district, we could rename the club “Watford Floral Society”, not quite such a mouthful!

We have always been a thriving club with a hard-working committee who have provided good programmes of demonstrators, workshops and outings for the members. Many hundreds of pounds have been donated to various charities by holding flower festivals, demonstrations and raffles.

We were meeting upstairs in the Watford library when I joined, but when we found that the large number of members was contravening the library’s insurance rule of numbers, we looked around for another venue, ending up eventually at St. Thomas Church Hall where we stayed for several years. Here we had a large hall and stage, although the car park was small. When St. Thomas informed us that the hall was to be closed for rebuilding, we moved to the Stanborough Centre, albeit in Garston, where there is a large car park and all the facilities for members and visitors to use. Here we hold our monthly meetings and sometimes Area functions.

Here’s to the next Seventy!

Gladys Mallard

Resilience and Spring Back

a Demonstration by Gill McGregor

in the comfort of your own home

Gill’s latest filmed, full staged, Floral Art Demonstration, showcased through Zoom.
The demonstration is 1 hr 40 mins with a 10 min intermission

**For Dates and times in March and May, ticket prices and to book go to
www.gillmcgregor.com/tickets**

To book a private showing in April

for your Flower Club

so you can chat and see your friends

before and after the performance

Please contact Gill

01707 873944

or

Email: enquiries@gillmcgregor.com

The Virtual National Show

Back in November last year the National Judges' Committee was asked to compile a Show Schedule for a National Virtual Show. Chris Picton and I were chosen as the other members would be involved in other ways. We had to select 10 classes and present them to the whole committee within a fortnight. These were discussed and slight changes made with 2 more classes added and the Junior classes divided into 2 sections. One class was different where there was only 1 rule – all plant material had to be in water retaining material (remember a Show's Schedule statement can override the Competitions Manual).

The schedule was sent out in December and one member of the committee, Debbie Wadge, then received the applications, all 356 of them! After allocation competitors then had to send in their entry pictures by February 19th. This all meant a great deal of work by Debbie.

Judges had their briefing before judging on March 2nd via Zoom having already been appointed, paired together and informed of which classes they were judging. After this the appropriate classes were sent to the respective judges.

The results will be needed by the end of March so that the pictures can be assembled with the prizes for digital publication. The judges have also to complete feedback for those competitors who have requested it. This feedback is just for each individual competitor.

Publication of results will then go out on the NAFAS and NAFAS Judges web sites and on Facebook at the end of April. During April each week there will be a Demonstration and a Speaker's Talk.

We are all learning how to communicate this way and there will be debriefs afterwards to assist any further shows.

Some people have requested further virtual shows even when we may be 'normal' as some members can enter shows this way because they would find it difficult to travel easily. It is hoped that eventually there will be an actual show where we can all meet together but not yet.

It has been a steep learning curve but I feel that it has kept communication going and I look forward to seeing all the lovely work. Good luck to those who have entered from Home Counties.

Lesley Sturdy

REMEMBER WHEN



Jeanette, one of our flower class members, was not that experienced at the time when she was asked to do the wedding flowers for her hairdresser. A bit daunted she came to me for help! So we set up a mini workshop in my conservatory and with 3 others from our club, we did all the flowers for the big day. We were very chuffed when we even got paid for services, not expecting anything it was great. Needless to say this was well before the pandemic.

Edna Holt
Chairman
South Stevenage Flower Club

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE FOR WATFORD FLORAL SOCIETY

What a lovely surprise to find, among the Christmas cards, an envelope containing a DVD provided by Geoff, Audrey and Vera, of the demonstration that they were planning to design for the clubs Christmas meeting before Covid.

They were allowed to use the church platform as our usual meeting room was being used to deliver food to the needy. The filming was done by Stanborough student missionaries using three cameras in different positions in the church. When they had finished filming, they edited it and added the chosen music.

Audrey welcomed everyone to the demonstration and Geoff explained how they had arrived at the ideas to entertain us.

The first design by Vera was a door ring using a foam ring and a collection of various foliage from the garden and hedgerows with cones and baubles. This could be used as a table decoration with a candle in the centre, or an Advent ring with four candles.

Geoff then did a beautiful design using mixed foliage with red carnations and roses and three Anastasia chrysanthemums as a focal point. He then moved it into place using two carol singer figurines.

Audrey followed that with a design depicting the three kings using figurines given to her by the Revd. Mac. Her arrangement gave us gold, frankincense and myrrh using gold Calla lilies, roses and lizianthus and a wonderful stem of orchid.

Geoff's next design depicted a cold snowy scene using white twigs, white roses, carnations and Calla lilies and sparkly sisal for the snow. Very lovely.



Next Audrey used two sparkly circles to represent the world, and produced two horizontal arrangements using lilac coloured Mitsumata sticks with Liatris, Lizianthus, carnations and Gerberas.

Audrey then closed the demonstration with a low arrangement of mixed silver foliage, white roses and Lizzies. This lovely design was placed in a manger to represent the Baby Jesus, overlooked by life sized cloth sculptures of Mary and Joseph. The main lights were then switched off to leave candles and fairy lights lighting the stage – magical.

It was lovely to see the three of them after all this time and their beautiful flowers.

Geoff then thanked the Stanborough staff for helping to produce the DVD to cheer us all up at this bleak time.

Gladys Mallard

A Thankful Harvest



In Stewkley, Harvest has been celebrated for many years: in the past occurring at the same time as **Stewkley Feast** usually celebrated at Michaelmas - September 29th - Our church's Saints day. The "**feast**" took place over a number of days and ended on October 10th usually with a village fair.

Last year our normal harvest celebrations were different. It became obvious, because of the covid pandemic, that we would not be able to hold our normal celebrations in our places of

worship or at the school, so the idea of taking harvest outside was formed.

All the village were asked if they would like to take part and use their many skills to show our thankfulness. We were delighted that villagers joined in by decorating the front of their homes, gardens and windows. Displays were big and small, some with floral art, produce, scarecrows, or simply jam jars with flowers.



The plough which Eileen Humphreys incorporated into her design belonged to the previous owner of her house who farmed there many years ago. When he died it was left to the village and it was agreed it should stay in Eileen's garden.



Folk were able to enjoy a walk through our long village (*one of the longest in England*) on a beautiful sunny weekend or they could drive through and see what everyone had made.



NAFAS members Chris Mitchell and Ann Draycot, contributed to the display at St Michael's Church with other members of the church family.

From the children at the school, to the individual and communal displays it was a very colourful weekend with a fun and uplifting feeling. With fruit and flowers, pictures and poems Harvest was celebrated in this rural farming community by bringing hope to us all with the "Spirit of Stewkley" holding fast to that which is good.

Lynda Hart

EMERGENCY MEASURES – INSPIRATION FROM IRENE BOWKETT



What do you do with a bunch of Roses when you have caught them in the car door?

The little containers are dessert containers stacked on top of one another with a small amount of water in each one stacked on a glass candle holder.

(Thanks also to Irene for the pretty Tete-a-Tete design on page 1)

TITLES FOR THE CHAIRMAN'S CHALLENGE

April – no competition as there is the Virtual National Show
May – May Day Celebrations
June – Wedding Time
July – Happy Holidays
August – A Picnic on the Beach
September – Back to School
October – Here Comes Autumn
November – Remember, Remember the 5th of November

(For information on how your club can enter the Chairman's Challenge see Audrey's letter at the beginning of this issue.)

Restarting Flower Club meetings in 2021

Flower Clubs will be able to begin meeting when Step 2 of the governments' Road Map is achieved. Halls and Community Centres can open after the 12th April 2021. However, everyone will still have to abide by social contact rules. This means having arrangements in place to manage the risk of transmission of the virus and to ensure social distancing rules are kept.

Covid secure guidance will remain in place during May and until 21st of June and possibly beyond that time, depending on 4 tests being met. After that, will they look at the possibility of less social distancing in places where transmission is more likely, such as indoor meetings. Rules on 1+metre distancing, face masks and other measures depending on the outcome of a review, may be lifted possibly in July.

From a practical point of view in the early summer months of 2021, it will mean limiting numbers who can come to Flower Club meetings to be able to maintain social distancing. It is important to speak to the management of the venue where you normally meet to find out what they intend to allow to happen on their premises.

Stoneycroft Flower Club was able hold club meetings in early September and December 2020 using a Covid-Safety Protocol to organise the afternoon in a way that kept everyone safe. The main elements are listed below and may help other clubs to consider what they might need to do if opening in April, May, or June.

Covid-Safety Protocol

- ❖ Numbers attending limited to current government guidance or any restriction on numbers allowed by your hall management. Ensure social distancing while seated is possible.
- ❖ Temperature check at the door. Members advised not to attend if they have symptoms suggestive of Covid-19 such as a fever, a new persistent cough, loss of taste or smell.
- ❖ Everyone greeted on arrival by a committee member, checking their name is on the list of confirmed attendees. Avoid the need to sign in.
- ❖ Wall mounted hand gel available from non-touch dispensers for hand sanitisation at the entrance and various points for hand sanitisation.

- ❖ While in the centre masks or other face covering to be worn, exceptions being for those who cannot wear one for medical reasons. Extra masks and disposable gloves available should anyone need them.
- ❖ The passageway in the main hall to be divided in two with signage to keep people apart entering and leaving.
- ❖ A committee member will be available to offer guidance on what to do and to answer any queries.
- ❖ The demonstrator will be assisted into and out of the hall at the end of the meeting by committee members wearing masks and disposable gloves.
- ❖ The demonstrators head set for the sound system will have been cleaned with anti-virus wipes and sealed into a plastic bag for at least 3 days prior to the meeting. Usually done at the end of the meeting and placed in a new clean bag.
- ❖ The handheld microphone to be wiped with anti-viral and only used by the one individual for any announcements and the vote of thanks at the end of the meeting.
- ❖ The hall can seat 120, so 30 seats can be well spaced out for everyone to be at a safe distance from each other.
- ❖ Tables to be used including the one for the demonstrator on the stage will be wiped using an anti-viral spray by committee members wearing disposable gloves prior to and at the end of the meeting. Similarly seating used.
- ❖ The treasurer and the raffle ticket sales will be based at the back of the hall, so there is a clear space should a queue develop to ensure social distancing.
- ❖ Disposable gloves to be used by committee members when handling cash or dealing with raffle tickets.
- ❖ Tea and coffee not provided as it is too problematic to ensure social distancing and the kitchen currently has limited access. Members can bring refreshments with them. You can remove your mask to eat or drink while seated.
- ❖ There will be a short break halfway through and members can move around and speak to others but must wear a mask and keep a social distance.
- ❖ The raffle will be drawn by the same individual who sold the tickets.
- ❖ Disposable gloves will be available for those who win a raffle prize, so these can be handled safely when collected to take home.
- ❖ At the end of the meeting, departure from the hall will be organised in small groups to avoid a queue developing on the way out.
- ❖ A member of the committee will be at the exit to see everyone can leave safely.
- ❖ The hall management will be provided with a list of names and telephone numbers of everyone at the meeting for Track and Trace as required by the rules. This paper copy will be destroyed after 21days.



This Covid-Protocol can be used and adapted to suit the circumstances of individual clubs. As a club chairman with a background in healthcare and working in the NHS during the pandemic, it has been easier for our club to implement these measures. This past year is not one that any of us are likely to forget. Everyone in my NHS organisation was given a badge as a small token to remember the experience of the NHS in 2020.

Any flower club planning to re-open in April, May or before 21st June will need to start thinking about how what they need to do to observe government guidance and to meet safely.

Another factor to consider is finance. Holding meetings with limited numbers is not cost effective and doing a cash flow projection becomes a necessity.

Following on from holding a successful meeting using the Covid-Protocol in September 2020, and having checked our finances, we felt able to hold a Christmas meeting early in December before the next lockdown. Both meetings made such a difference to the morale and well-being of our members. As the pandemic wore on, it became even more apparent just how important Flower Clubs are as a social support, especially to those who live on their own. The good that NAFAS can deliver is well beyond its stated charitable purpose and often taken for granted.

At this second meeting using the Covid-Protocol, it became quickly apparent that members had become old hands at doing this, and the confidence level was high.



Our Christmas demonstrator was Fiona Harrison who provided a wonderful seasonal display “Count Down to Christmas”. Fiona’s beaming smile was being echoed by everyone in the hall that afternoon.

We were not able to hold our usual Christmas activities but tried to make it a little bit special. Slices of Christmas cake had been wrapped and sealed in cellophane decorated with red and gold ribbon several days before and put in a sealed container and similarly Christmas cards and programmes for 2021. These were given out on departure with gloves and masks in situ. The watchword is ‘THINK COVID’

It may sound a bit daunting having to think of all this if you plan to hold a Flower Club meeting in the coming months. All I can say from the experience we had as a committee running a meeting under these circumstances, is that we found it relatively straight forward and it went smoothly both times. The feedback from members made it so worthwhile.

If any club would like further information or help and advice, then do get in touch at 01442 39123, 07564 914308 anne_mcperson@ntlworld.com

EXHIBITION

CONSTANCE SPRY AND THE FASHION FOR FLOWERS

31st March to 20th June

at the

GARDEN MUSEUM, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB

and

A LIFE IN FLOWERS: THE CONSTANCE SPRY ARCHIVE

An online exhibition from the RHS from 31st March

rhs.org.uk/digital-collections

A MOMENT OF FREEDOM

Hauser and Wirth is described as a swiss contemporary and modern art gallery. There are, in fact, a number of galleries around the world and the one which aroused my interest is based near Bruton in Somerset.

We managed to have a few days holiday in an eco cabin in that part of the world between lockdowns last Autumn so we thought we would go and have a look. What had actually aroused my interest was the picture on the front cover and article inside the July 2018 edition of the RHS magazine “The Garden”: – art combined with a garden, what could be better.

The gallery occupies the renovated buildings of Durslade Farm and stands amongst some very pretty countryside. The exhibitions are constantly changing and I must admit that some of the artwork on display that day made your eyes water a bit being somewhat obsessed with parts of the male form but fortunately there were other artists exhibiting as well. Outside on the grass there were some massive sculptures but it was a bit frustrating as the particular ones that I had seen online had unfortunately been removed. Nevertheless the replacements were equally interesting.



The garden is described as a “perennial meadow” and was designed by Piet Oudolf, the Dutch landscape designer. Low hedges surround the garden so that the countryside beyond can be seen and, although the season was coming to an end, the Autumn sunshine gave everything a warm glow. There are 17 beds of perennials with curving walkways between and occasional water features. Most of the plants were turning to seed but the different textures and forms with occasional patches of colour were still pleasing.

Durslade is a working farm and has a restaurant and farm shop. It makes a very pleasant afternoon. When we went we had to book in advance as is the practice with most places at the moment but perhaps this will be relaxed in the future. Entrance is free but donations are appreciated.

Suzanne Boet



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