



Wandering through a tunnel of glorious purple, fragrant, wisteria and relaxing in an Alpine meadow surrounded by towering blue spikes of cammasia were two of the highlights that could be enjoyed during a visit to the RHS Garden, Wisley organised by the SSRA Gardening Interest Group.

An immense variety of interesting and inspiring features could be seen within the 200 acres of the RHS's main flagship garden,



which is the oldest and most diverse of all the RHS gardens.

The garden is accessible to all, with routes suggested for both pushchairs and wheelchair users, while mobility scooters are available for hire, free of charge, if needed.

Even if you were unable to join us in May, you could still borrow the RHS Garden entry discount card for Affiliated Society members which offers two adults a 50% discount off entry to any RHS Garden (Bridgewater, Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Wisley) with unlimited use until December.

Please contact the SSRA e-mail account, ststephensra@gmail.com or Pauline if you are interested.

A Sparkling Tour of Chartham Vineyard

On a very hot day in early September 20 residents made their way upriver to the Chartham Vineyard (<http://charthamvineyard.co.uk/>) for a tour of the vines and a tasting of both still and sparkling wines.

It was interesting to see just how well vines are now growing in our area, with grapes that can be used for both white and red wines.

This was followed by a tasting led by owner Richard Goodenough in their beautiful old barn, that mercifully stays cool even in the hottest weather.

Interestingly there is also a free art gallery open to the public, next to the barn. We found the wines were of the highest



quality and had recently won an international award. The wines are only available in restaurants and a few local outlets, but the vineyard does have its own shop and you can also buy online - we found much to recommend!



Vineyard shop

Open Saturdays 10.30 to 5.00.

You can buy wine at their cellar door in the old courtyard. Free parking



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OCTOBER 2023

Dear Residents

It has been a good summer, with several events that allowed members to meet, socialise and make new friends. The Coronation Celebration was lovely, and Eleanor Clarke was the Best Princess, Lilly Marty Vidler won the Best Smile competition while Philippa Davis was undoubtedly the most glamorous attendee.

The reports and photos of the Gardening Interest Group's events and the arrival of the defibrillator in the church hall are in this edition. Soon, I hope that the Coronation Bench will be installed in St Stephen's Field, next to the churchyard. I must add here my thanks to David Wadmore for taking all the bits and pieces that I send to him and converting them into our newly formatted newsletter which many of you have admired. Certainly, it is a big improvement on the boring old pages of A4 that was the best I could manage.

The hustings were well attended in a packed Church Hall, and I am grateful to all the candidates who attended and answered some difficult questions. Mel Dawkins and Elizabeth Carr Ellis were elected as our councillors, and both have proven to be conscientious and hard working for the residents of St Stephen's.

I would like to thank all of you for your subscriptions and especially those who persist in sending much larger donations - you know who you are! We currently have 300 households in the Association, and I hope that you all find your membership useful and enjoyable.

I hope to see many of you at the AGM.

With best wishes

Pauline

Annual General Meeting

Monday, November 13th
7 for 7.30.

The half hour prior to the meeting is for mulled wine and mince pies to be served and our local Police Constable, Mick Larkin, will be giving a talk about scams - something that is always a concern for members. It is easy to say that you wouldn't be caught out but some of the scams are so sophisticated that they are very hard to detect so I hope that Mick will have some suggestions about how to protect ourselves.

We look forward to seeing you there.



PETER BROWN AND PAULINE

The Defibrillator has arrived in the Church Hall!

Thanks to a grant from Alister Brady, our Kent County Councillor, the Association has purchased a defibrillator from London Hearts and it has been installed in the Church Hall. Our thanks also go to Sue Langdown who, with Peter Brown, the Hall Committee Chairman, facilitated the purchase and fixing of the defibrillator.

Our First Pond Crawl - July 2023

Despite a rainy afternoon many people supported the inaugural SSRA 'Pond Crawl'. Ponds are vital habitats for wildlife and it was interesting to see the variety of ponds hidden in the St Stephen's gardens.

We were fortunate to visit the large pond and wildlife friendly garden created within the King's School International College campus; this was followed by visits to three ponds nurtured by residents. Our Pond Crawl was led by Emily and Laila from the Kent Stour Countryside Partnership.

At each pond they did pond dipping and identified a wide range of pond



KING'S SCHOOL MALTHOUSE POND

creatures. We ended the enjoyable afternoon at Ye Olde Beverlie.

Thank you to Emily and Laila for addressing our questions about the 'pondscape' in our area and sharing many tips for the maintenance of ponds. For more information about the work of the Kent Stour Countryside Partnership go to: The Partnership-Kentish Stour. *Alison*