



BSBA Newsletter, August 2023

A message from our chair, Jan Robertson:

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. What a relief it is to get back to something like normality after the recent pandemic and I hope you are making the most of the longer days and opportunities to enjoy warmer weather.

Do make the most of your free entry ticket to the American Museum Gardens as it only lasts until the end of this year. The Gardens are changing all the time and it's a treat on a sunny day just to sit on the terrace with a cup of coffee admiring the view over the valley.

If you have any ideas for lunchtime mini workshops or suggestions for day workshops, do let someone on the committee know. At the moment, Theresa is investigating possible day workshops for next year.

I know some of you have health and other problems so we are thinking of you and send our love and best wishes.

Some of the plants from 'America's Wild' Show Garden featured at Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival in July are to be relocated to the American Museum. The garden was awarded a Gold medal, Best Show Garden and Best Construction more information at: www.americanmuseum.org (Janet)

Some recent photographs of the American Museum garden:



Did you know the Bramley Apple is over 200 years old?

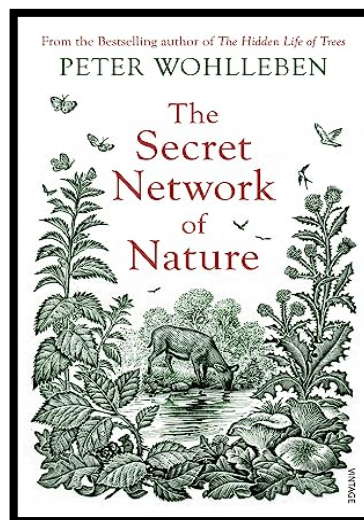
The first Bramley tree grew in 1809 from pips planted by a young girl, Mary Ann Brailsford, in her garden in Southwell, Nottinghamshire. A local butcher, Matthew Bramley, bought the cottage and garden in 1846.

A local nurseryman, Henry Merryweather, took some cuttings from the tree and started to sell the apple in 1856. Mr Bramley insisted the apple should bear his name, hence 'Bramley's Seedling'.

The Bramley gained in popularity as a cooking apple and during the early 1900s trees were planted extensively. Today it is a £50 million plus industry with commercial growers across Kent, East Anglia and the West Midlands. Over 100,000 tonnes of Bramley apples are produced annually. About 25% of the crop is sold as fresh fruit, 45% for processing as pies and other food products with the remainder going to make cider.

The original Bramley apple tree blew down during violent storms, however it survived and is still bearing fruit over 200 years later. Sadly, the tree is suffering from honey fungus but it is now owned by Nottingham Trent University and they hope to keep the tree alive. (Jan)

A book of possible interest to you all:



This book is about the invisible connections sustaining the entire natural world. Drawing on the latest scientific discoveries and decades of experience as a forester, Peter Wohlleben shows how different animals, plants, rivers, rocks and weather systems cooperate, and what's at stake when these delicate systems are unbalanced. (Jan)

Leading on from Jan's introduction, Theresa has organised a workshop with Jackie Isard to be held on Friday 23 February 2024. The subject has yet to be decided on but you may be interested to know that Jackie has recently produced a book: *Watercolour mixing techniques*

for botanical artists Published by The Crowood Press Ltd. This book gives a very in-depth guide to understanding and using watercolours and could form the basis of a workshop.

Do you know about **Bathscape**? It is a local organisation dedicated to the landscape around our beautiful city of Bath. To find out more visit: www.bathscape.co.uk

Thank you Jan for alerting the group to Bathscape.

Bath Botanic Gardens are raising money through sponsorship:

People wishing to honour the life of a loved one, celebrate a special occasion or simply support their local park can now sponsor a heart-shaped leaf adorning a new fence at the Botanical Garden. The fence is designed to look like rambling sweetheart ivy. Each sponsored ivy leaf can be engraved with a short message and a second leaf is given to the sponsor to keep at home as a memento. Each leaf costs £250 and money raised will be used to improve BANES parks and open spaces. More information is available from www.parks@bathnes.gov.uk (Janet)

From Barbara:

THE QUEST FOR THE POCKET HANDKERCHIEF TREE

The search for the elusive *Davidia involucrata* involved a Frenchman, an Irishman and an Englishman. The Irishman was my great-uncle, Augustine Henry.

The tree was first discovered by Pere Davide, a French missionary working in China in 1877. But as he collected no fruit the authorities at the Jardin de Paris showed no interest. Some ten years later my great-uncle found a solitary tree near Ichang. He said it was the most beautiful tree he'd seen, but in all his travels he never saw another. However, the specimen he sent back to Kew sparked the interest of a commercial seedsman, named Harry Veitch, who commissioned a young botanist called Earnest Wilson to go to China, find Henry and learn from him where the village was, where he'd seen the solitary tree. When he found it, he was to collect seed and return straight home.

The journey through French Indochina was long and arduous, with constant danger from bandits, made all the more difficult by his speaking no French or Chinese. After many weeks he eventually found Henry, who was by then stationed some thousand miles from the village where he'd seen the tree. There were no official maps so Henry drew a rough sketch on a piece of paper torn from a book.

After many more weeks of travel, Wilson arrived at the village only to find the villagers had cut the solitary tree down for building. Bitterly disappointed he decided to disobey Veitch's instructions to return straight home and instead to do some plant hunting on his own accord. Searching further up the Yangtze gorges, he rounded a corner to be faced with a group of *Davidia* in full bloom. Overjoyed, he collected seed and made his way home.

The trees we see today are mostly descendants grown from this seed, Veitch being correct in thinking the original tree would be a commercial success.

Foot notes: in his years in China Augustine Henry sent some 130,000 specimens to Kew including many new species and genus.

In 2009 the BSBA mounted a full summer season's exhibition of plants associated with Henry at the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland in Dublin.

Miss Ellen Willmott:

Eryngium giganteum is a plant we all know as Miss Willmott's Ghost, but who was Miss Willmott?

Ellen Willmott was born in 1858 into a privileged family. She inherited a love of plants from her mother and later a large fortune from her aunt, Countess Helen Tasker, which allowed her to indulge her passion for gardening. Mother and daughter were great fans of the Irish horticulturalist William Robinson who favoured the style of 'wild gardening' where plants were presented as if they were growing naturally.

When Ellen was 17 the family moved to Warley Place in Essex with its extensive grounds. Working with leading landscape architects of the day, Ellen created a 3 acre Swiss style garden complete with a stream flowing through a ravine, a small lake, meadows and an alpine garden. She funded plant-hunting trips across the world led by eminent explorers such as Ernest Wilson. She was often the only person who could germinate the seed sent back from these expeditions in her huge complex of hothouses. Ellen also began working with plant breeders and on her own cross-breeds, she sat on RHS committees and won gold medals for her daffodils including the Gold Medal of Honour, she was a contemporary and friend of Gertrude Jekyll.

However, Ellen's enthusiasm and ambition were to be her downfall. After buying land and creating gardens in both France and Italy without understanding the need for investment her dwindling capital meant that she was constantly teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Despite her unstable financial situation Ellen battled on, she took in Belgian refugees during the first world war and helped to found the Women's Land Army. After the war she was on a committee to save the gardens of Hampton Court, she co-designed the gardens at Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and at Anne Hathaway's cottage. She was determined to continue to garden, judge flower shows (including Chelsea), lecture and attend openings – even if she had to sleep on a park bench to do so! She carried a revolver in her handbag for security, planted booby traps to prevent the theft of her prize daffodil bulbs and gradually by the time she died in 1934 was known as an eccentric. She was childless but left a large legacy of plants named after her.

Essex Wildlife Trust now manage the remains of the Warley Garden where in spring each year the daffodils still bloom: www.essexwt.org.uk

Some of the plants which bear her name:

Iris Willmottiana 'Alba', *Rosa* 'Ellen Willmott', *Syringa vulgaris* 'Miss Ellen Willmott', *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Miss Willmott', *Paeonia willmottiae*, *Scabiosa caucasica* 'Miss Willmott', *Potentilla napalensis* 'Miss Willmott', *Ceratostigma willmottianum*.

(Based on an article in a recent copy of *Landscape*, Janet)

Congratulations go out to Josie White and Julia Trickey who both had paintings in The SBA Plantae 2023 exhibition recently held in London. Julia has also had work accepted by the American SBA for their upcoming exhibition to be held in California from 17 September – 26 November 2023. The American SBA has a large membership worldwide (with only 48 artists being selected from 150 entries) so well-done Julia! The American Society also has a very interesting website through which you will be able to view the paintings in the exhibition whilst it is running: www.asba-art.org

It was disappointing that it was not possible to see Plantae 2023 online this year for those of us who could not make it to London for the exhibition.

You will all know that Angie was awarded a Silver Gilt Medal at this year's RHS Botanical Art and Photography Show held at the Saatchi Gallery in July but may not have seen the paintings, below:



Well done Angie, your exhibit looked beautiful! Indeed, it was a very interesting exhibition. The advantages of the exhibition being held at the Saatchi Gallery being its spaciousness and light along with the extended duration of the exhibition, a disadvantage was that there was no opportunity for the public to meet the artists involved.

Asuka Hishiki, an artist originally from Japan, was awarded a Gold Medal for her work depicting fruits which have been described as 'looking more real than the real thing'. She has just produced a lovely book: *Botaniphoria* (2023, Two Rivers Press) about her work, illustrated with her beautiful paintings.

Those of us who remember former member Rosalind Robinson will be interested to know that she had work accepted for The Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition this year. Although she has diversified from botanical subjects you may be interested to see her latest paintings: www.rosalindrobinson.com

From Brenda:

JULIA TRICKEY WORKSHOP 'Attention to Detail'

On Friday 9th June eleven members attended this Workshop. It was held in the Community Centre, which proved a very good venue – both spacious and cool.

As always, Julia had spent a lot of time preparing the Workshop beforehand, producing reference materials and outlines for demonstrations. It is very easy to watch her demonstrations on the large screen (much better than standing around the artist!). We started by looking at the leaf margins on three different leaves. Julia then demonstrated painting the margins on one of these – she made it look so easy. We then chose a leaf to see what we could do.

After this Julia discussed hairy/furry stems, leaves and petals. We observed two – a Heuchera leaf and a poppy stem. Julia demonstrated two methods of depicting hairs, the first with paint applied with a dip pen and the second using masking fluid applied with the same pen. Once again it was our turn.

After a great lunch we looked at thorns and spines. Julia showed us how to draw a conker case accurately, with foreshortening, and then the thorns around a rose stem. Finally, Julia discussed and demonstrated how to draw a mass of roots using her own source material and a spring onion. It was very surprising how dark one has to paint some of the gaps/background parts of the root system. Most members managed to try this exercise.

It was a very full day which everyone enjoyed immensely. As ever, Julia was very generous with her tips and ideas. Thank you, Julia!

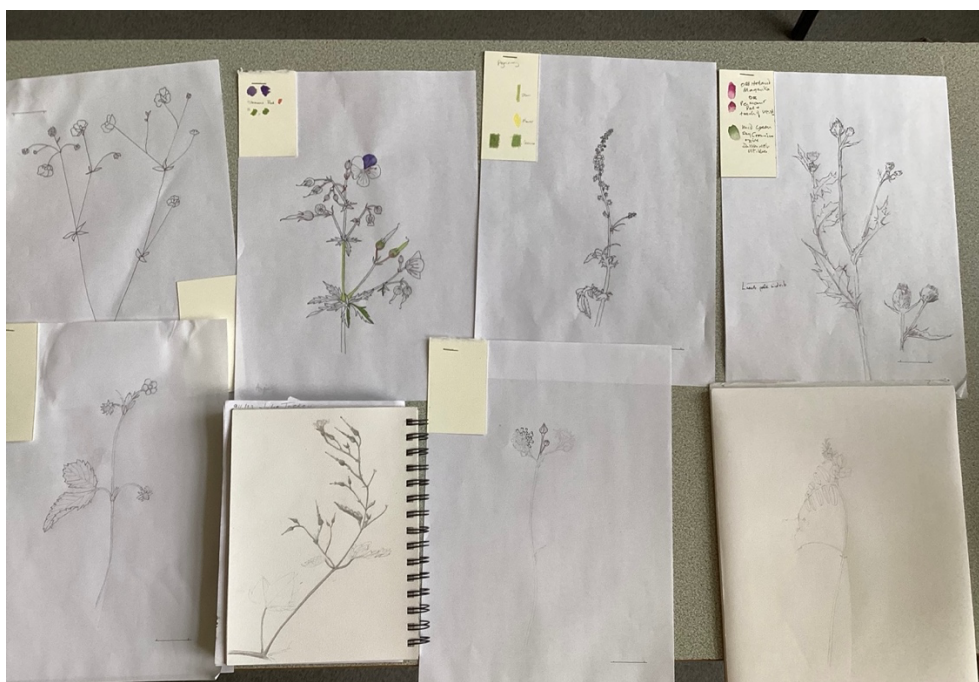
Julia's excellent and illuminating Botanical Talks are continuing throughout the year with a variety of speakers and topics ranging from polychromatic tonal study, a look at plant families, fungi, the use of a limited palette through to historical botanical painting influences and more from eminent botanical artists. Visit www.juliatrickey.co.uk for more information. (Janet)

Mini-workshops:

The lunchtime workshops held each month have proved popular and the money raised from lunches also help to boost the Society's funds. Angie's wildflower workshop proved very productive. Below is the final picture compiled by Angie from members' wildflower contributions:



Some of the members' drawings from the workshop used by Angie to compile the painting:



Sally Garner led a workshop on colour matching flowers using a nine square grid which proved an interesting way to identify all the shades in a subject, Lyn has sent some examples of the work, below:



The Royal West of England Academy (RWA) runs a variety of day courses at their Drawing School. Botanical print making with artist Rosanna Morris, 12 September 10.00 – 16.00, £65
Indian miniature techniques: painting flowers, 30 September, and 1 October with Samantha Buckley. For further details: www.rwa.org.uk

SWSBA (Southwest Society of Botanical Artists) hold regular workshops with visiting artists, non-members welcome. For further details visit: www.swsba.org.uk

ABA, The Association of Botanical Artists, have an excellent website with on-line exhibitions which change twice a year. Their current exhibition, **TEN**, runs from May to October and can be viewed at: www.assocbotanicalartists.com

Exhibitions around the country to see this Summer:

Bloom, at York Art Gallery, now running until 8 October.

Flowers, plant life and gardens have fascinated and inspired generations of artists. *Bloom* brings together more than 100 botanical art works from its collection and loans from other sources. For more information: www.yorkartgallery.org.uk

Garden Museum, London, Jean Cooke: *Ungardening*, now running until 10 September. The garden paintings of Jean Esme Oregon Cooke (1927 – 2008).
www.gardenmuseum.org

Kew Gardens: running until 17 September: '*The wonderful world of water plants*' also '*Plants of The Qur'an*' and '*Summer Exhibition at Kew*', all at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery.
www.kew.org

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, throughout August: Exhibition: 'Connecting Histories', Indian botanical illustrations from the RBGE's collection. More information: www.rbge.org.uk This is part of Edinburgh Art Festival which also has an exhibition of the late Elizabeth Blackadder's work at the Scottish Gallery until 26 August which can be viewed online at www.scottish-gallery.co.uk to coincide with a new book: The art of Elizabeth Blackadder by Duncan Macmillan

I know that many of us cannot get to these exhibitions but much of interest is often available on the relevant websites.

The next newsletter will be out towards the end of the year, please send me any articles that you would like included.

Janet

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