

THE SPADE

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL:
A MESSAGE FROM
THE MASTER

GREEN THOUGHTS AT
THE MANSION HOUSE

A WORLD OF
OPPORTUNITY
IN HORTICULTURE

SNAKES AND LADDERS
IN GUILDHALL YARD



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
A GLOOMY VIEW FROM THE CITY



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THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF GARDENERS



Welcome to the Spring Spade. Written contributions, ideas for articles and help in gathering material and preparing it for publication are all very welcome.

Most of the items in this issue are available at greater length and with more photographs on the Company website. Using your password, go to the Members' Area and click on the Noticeboard. From there you can also access the archive of photographs from dinners, trips and other events.

The public or first page of the website also features a steady stream of news stories about events in the City and other items of interest in the horticulture and gardening worlds. Click on the News button.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

We are lucky to be Gardeners; it's such a benefit in these times for many of us to be able to devote a bit more time to our gardens. I have to say that for us we also look at the weeds and hope that isolation will result in us doing a bit better than usual.

We have bags of mulch just waiting to be spread, and seed compost already used to sow a whole batch of seeds in the greenhouse.

At this time we must also remember our industry. This is a peak time of year for the sale of plants and yet so many outlets are closed. Desperate times for those with so much invested in this production. We are sending a letter of representation from the Company to Government.

It's a shame to have the last of my events gradually hitting the dust. I have talked to the Spadebearer about the possibility of picking up the Florence visit for his year and we are hoping the tree planting at Kew will take place this autumn.

The work of the Company continues, perhaps not as quickly, but the Spring Court meeting has been held as a video conference call. So much work has been undertaken on many initiatives such as Future Gardeners and a new membership category for younger Gardeners. We need to ensure that progress continues to be made with these initiatives.

We will go ahead with the usual committee meetings in May by using video conferencing. Do remember that we can all stay in

touch via members' contact details on the website and our Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Just before the lockdown I went to visit HighGround at Stanford Hall near Leicester. Approximately 14,000 members of the Armed Forces leave the services every year. One of the principal challenges to face service leavers and veterans, whether able-bodied or not, is to be able to identify their transferable skills and then market themselves effectively to employers.

This is where HighGround helps, where the vision is to be the leading organisation for the provision of land-based opportunities for all ex-military personnel and Reservists. Previously this work was undertaken at Headley Court in Epsom. They have some very good horticultural therapy there and I was able to share some of their analysis of horticulture skills with other horticultural therapy organisations.

The next day we had the woodland archaeology day in Buckinghamshire. Not only a fascinating day but it didn't rain! We went to an area of ancient

woodland in the morning to learn how to identify ancient earthworks, then had a pub lunch, followed by a visit to Burnham Beeches to look at wood pasture and see how the team there are continuing the practice of pollarding - even on some quite mature trees.

Finally one of the livery recently sent me a video in which someone was rotavating the ground - closely followed by another person planting toilet rolls! No end to the power of horticulture. Take care and see you all soon.

Heather Barrett-Mold



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Events for the remainder of the current Master's year and the first half of the new Master's term are listed here but may be cancelled or postponed owing to the Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings. Members will be kept up to date by the Clerk.

2nd June

Fairchild Lecture St Giles' Cripplegate Church, Fore Street, London EC2Y 8DA. Lecture to be given by Sir Roy Strong.

8-12th June

York and Yorkshire. Tour of gardens and more. Staying in York.

15th June

Visit to Royal College of Physicians to be shown round their Physic Garden by Dr. Henry Oakeley, FRCP, FLS, Garden Fellow, Royal College of Physicians, London.

18th June

Visit to Hatfield House. An opportunity to be shown round the gardens by Lady Salisbury and her Head Gardener followed by a drinks reception.

2nd July

Installation Court Dinner, Draper's Hall, Throgmorton Avenue, London EC2N 2DQ. Tour of the Drapers' Hall garden beforehand. Principal speaker Dame Fiona Reynolds former Director General of the National Trust and Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

11th August

Oxford, visiting the famed Botanical Gardens and the gardens of Worcester College, rated one of the best college gardens. Tea in college.

1-6th September

A Taste of Welsh Heritage: a tour

of Welsh gardens organised by the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust.

8th September

Lecture by Mitchell Silver, Commissioner for Parks and Open Spaces, New York City.

6th October

Harvest Festival with speaker Dr. Shahina on plants in the great religions of the world and in particular Christianity.

5th November

Autumn Court Dinner, Painter Stainers' Hall, 9 Little Trinity Lane, London EC4V 2AD. With principal guest Stanley Johnson.

18th November

Linnean Society lecture and dinner with speaker Dr Mark Spencer on incredible facts about plants.

MANSSION HOUSE BANQUET

The Mansion House Banquet was different this year in two particular respects. First of all the Clerk, before delivering the Grace at the start of dinner, said Tom Gough, the Almoner, had asked us all to pray for Beryl, his wife, and for him as he underwent chemotherapy. We greatly missed his flamboyant piano playing throughout the evening.

The second matter was an announcement by the Master that there would be no ceremony of the Loving Cup, as advised by Mansion House to limit the spread of Covid-19.

However, the dinner, as ever, was a most enjoyable affair, coronavirus temporarily forgotten. Indeed there was a present for the ladies from the Master of a very attractive glass dish which she had made - how does she find time in this busy year?

Among the many guests mentioned by Upper Warden Peter Waine were the Master of the Gardeners of Basel and the Deacon of the Incorporation of the Gardeners of Glasgow. With both we were reciprocating hospitality and recognising affection

for such august and honourable institutions.

Masters of the following companies were also welcomed: the Framework Knitters, the Plaisterers, the Wax Chandlers, the Fruiterers, the Needlemakers and the Distillers.

The Upper Warden concluded his speech with the traditional toast to the guests and a quotation from Shakespeare: "Sweet flowers are slow, but weeds make haste".

Our host at the Mansion House, the Representative Lord Mayor, was David Wootton who talked about the importance of gardens as cultural spaces, capturing the City's creativity. He mentioned the importance of our Flowers in the City campaign which encourages businesses to be creative and express their originality.

He talked about the Prince of Wales Trophy of which sustainability is an important aspect and the Green Finance Corporation with its emphasis on Green Cities. He mentioned the Tools Shed, a garden tool recycling project that collects

old unwanted and broken garden hand tools and repairs them in prison workshops. The beautifully refurbished tools are then donated free of charge to local schools and community gardening groups. He finished by wishing the Clerk a Happy Birthday.

The Master had gifts for the Lady Mayoress, decorated with bees, a special concern of hers. She said bee hives had been reintroduced to the roof of Mansion House and talked of the need to support pollinators and the development of recent research into them.

She discussed the increasing emphasis on Green Cities and their potential to improve all aspects of life and cited the recently announced plans to build a huge living wall in High Holborn.

Music during the evening was provided by a young harpist, one of three young musicians the Company supports, and she played with whimsy and elegance. The flowers on the tables were bowls of magnificent white orchids (*Phalaenopsis*).

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Broadcaster and writer Peter Seabrook looks on the bright side...

While the mild winter and bright sunny days in early spring set the gardening world alight, the Coronavirus lock down immediately plunged us into the unknown. At the time of writing all garden centres have closed and the logjam of plants on nurseries, at what should be the busiest time of year, is heart-breaking.

The sun is still shining and the sky clear blue as I write; spring flowers are a real joy. While most folk are in isolation at home, the garden and growing plants are the silver lining we should all keep in mind.

When we are through this unique

experience, people will be short of money and food prices look set to rise. All members of the Worshipful Company are urged to rally round to encourage and help those people, many coming to gardening for the first time, to grow some food of their own.

Meanwhile we have modern day means of communication and I am working hard to put in place a Virtual Rose Show to coincide with *The Sun* sponsored Rose Festival Week 20-28th June 2020.

Please share your gardening successes on line. If you have an attractive plant or container in flower, or a pretty border, or a lovely garden please share a picture and the joy it brings. Surplus garden

produce can also be shared. My poor rhubarb plants have had a pasting and supplied several families up the street.

Keep smiling, keep gardening and don't let the beggars get you down.



REPORT BY DIANA UFF | PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL WARREN



The Master hands over the Company's traditional donation to the Lord Mayor's Fund to Representative Lord Mayor David Wootton.



The three Stewards show off their wands during the reception. From the left are Master's Steward Dr Claire Barrett-Mold, Miss Debbie Latimer (Renter) and Lady Melissa Ashcombe (Upper).

THE POWER OF WORDS

On Thursday 19th December the Master Dr. Heather Barrett-Mold, together with over 80 members, family and friends, attended the Company's annual Carol Service at St. Stephen Wallbrook.

Located just behind the Mansion House, the first stones of the 'new St. Stephen's' were laid on 17th December 1672. Designed by Christopher Wren, a Parishioner, the church has been much acclaimed. Nikolaus Pevsner lists it as one of the 10 most important buildings in England and the Italian sculptor-architect Canova expressed to Lord Burlington, on his visit to Rome in the 18th Century, that there was "nothing to touch it in Rome".

Entering the church there is a sense of space and light. The circular travertine marble altar created by Henry Moore and its central position beneath Wren's cupola (controversial in its day) and the arrangement of low pews circular in design, all present a wonderful simplicity of style.

The church provided the perfect setting for beautiful flower arrangements, in red, white and green, created by Ron Froud and Stephen Crisp. Jonathan Dods performed 'Variations on In Dulcie Jubilo' on the organ.

We were welcomed to the church by Rector Stephen Baxter before his predecessor, the Hon Chaplain to the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, the Venerable Peter Delaney, began the Service. 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' was the first of six carols which included 'The First Noel' (where Peter gave permission for any version to be sung) and 'We Three Kings', which became a competition between the three sections of the congregation. No winner was announced!

Lessons were read by Dr. Claire Barrett-Mold, Dr. Steve Dowbiggin, Major Jeremy Herrtage, Peter Waine and the Master.

We were captivated by the Organ Meditation chosen and played by Jonathan: 'Marche du Veilleur' J.S. Bach (arr C.M. Widor).

A Christmas Welcome by Archdeacon Peter Delaney spoke of the importance of Faith to bring balance into our lives. We should listen to each other, speak the same language but keep the discipline of thinking before speaking and wait to hear answers to our questions. Sometimes the replies are not what we want to hear. Communication is so important but words have power and we must use them carefully.

After the Blessing the service ended and the congregation rose to the music of 'Carrillon-Sortie' by Henri Mulet.

Mulled wine and mince pies, kindly made by Assistant Clerk Nicky Herrtage, provided an opportunity for friends to mingle before departing.

HUGHIE

Two-year-old Hughie, here seen preparing a seed bed at his nursery, has got off to an early start in his gardening career. Son of Liveryman Tara Holland Prior and grandson of IPM Margie Holland Prior, he tells the Spade that he intends to be bound as an Apprentice when he reaches his 14th birthday in 2031.

A veteran of several Company events, he went on tours to Basel, Jersey and Galicia during his grandmother's year of office.



ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

We declared ourselves open for business at 5.30pm on Monday 25th November at Guildhall with our 14 adorned tables but not before a workshop the previous Saturday at the Rochfords' Nursery and a setting-up day on the day before the opening.

At the workshop wreaths of various designs were made along with reindeer of all sizes and snowmen.

Princess Alexandra visited our stand, our Master presented her with a posy and our team of volunteers, suitably attired in livery aprons, went into action.

By the close of the fair at 8.30pm on the Tuesday, tired but elated, we had contributed around £5,000 to a worthy cause. It is possibly our biggest Red Cross Fair total ever and certainly one of the biggest contributions of all the stalls and stands this year.

Plants were donated generously by Jon and Chris Adams, Martin Panter, Paul Burnage, Miles Watson Smyth and Paul Rochford - extremely generous gestures all. Over 50 volunteers, too numerous to mention by name, did a worthy cause proud and our livery likewise.



Liveryman Jonathan Matheson and Assistant Helen Potts exercise their reindeer in Guildhall Yard.

KEW'S CHRISTMAS MAGIC

On a frosty evening the Master, accompanied by 35 well muffled-up members, entered the magic world of twinkling and glistening tree lights. For 90 minutes we followed the mile and a half trail, which occupies only a small part of Kew's 320 acres.

We walked through a Winter Wonderland of ever-changing colours, with trees lit to show their magnificent architecture. Walking through a tunnel of white lights, we were greeted by the newly restored Temperate House. Here, laser projections outlined its beautiful shape and its 15,000 glimmering panes of glass.

One of the highlights this year was a waterfall of lights cascading from the 18 metre high Tree Top Walkway and falling on to wave-like, rippling lights on the ground.

Then on through Will-of-the-Wisp, with flickering lights over the ground, to arrive at the climax of the show, the Palm House. Here, a continuous

show of laser beams brought the Paxton building and lake to life in many colours.

A cavalcade of snowflakes, Father Christmas and passing trains. Even the fountains rose and fell in time to the music. As a fellow member said, "This is a modern firework display without the bangs!".

At this point we turned our backs on the Palm House and entered the Botanical Restaurant, for a delicious three-course meal.

The Master introduced us to Tony Kirkham, Head of Kew Arboretum. Tony reviewed the seven-year history of Christmas at Kew, starting modestly with a £7,000 profit to the £2.4 million expected in 2019. Apart from contributing to the £40 million annual running costs of Kew, he said the real point was to bring a new audience to Kew Gardens, who hopefully would come back in the day time.

Tony announced to the delight of the members that the Gardeners' Company was invited to plant a disease-resistant Elm, the *Ulmus* 'New Horizon', in Kew Gardens to mark their visit. It is hoped to do this in the autumn of this year.



HEALTH, WELLBEING AND THE MPGA

New Chairman Rex Thornborough describes the work of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association

Having taken over the Chair of this wonderful charity from SPM Bill Fraser in January of this year I thought it was time that the Company learned a little more about one of England's oldest horticultural charities and its association with the Gardeners' Company.

The MPGA was established in 1882 by Lord Brabazon, Earl of Meath, and was devoted to stopping development of green and open spaces in Metropolitan London.



SPM Rex Thornborough.

The MPGA was involved with the formation of the National Trust and the National Playing Fields Association and campaigned for private garden squares to be opened to the public. The health and wellbeing of Londoners has always been at the heart of what it does.

Our valuable work is regularly supported by the Gardeners' Company Charity Board and Past Masters Cleary, Paton and Fraser have all served as MPGA Chairman. Many Liverymen have also served as Vice Presidents or on the Executive Committee.

It is an extremely efficient grant-giving organisation with no paid employees, so all the money goes out in grants. Members of our expert volunteer committee visit all applicants to ensure the validity of applications and give their advice to ensure the success of projects.

With sponsorship from Taylors Bulbs of Holbeach, who celebrated their centenary in 2019, we have run 'Bulbs for London' for six years with some 750 sites receiving bulbs in that time. Last year 100 parks, gardens and green sites in London received bulbs to brighten up

their communities. The 'London Spade Award', supported by Bulldog Tools, has been presented to the Gardeners' Flowers in the City Campaign (2016) and Past Master Paul Rochford of Joseph Rochford Gardens (2019).

The threat by developers to London's open spaces and concerns over air quality when park's budgets are being cut, means that our work today is as important as ever. The replacement of lost trees is also of critical importance and we are about to embark on a project to bring back Elms to London, by encouraging all boroughs to plant disease-resistant varieties.

Our extensive records are missing one or two vital pieces which members of the Company may have in their own archives. If anyone has a copy of MPGA Annual Reports for the years 1889, 1903 or 1943 we would be most grateful to have access to them. Also missing are copies of the Reports from 1975 to 1986, a time when Fred Cleary was Chairman. Again, if anyone has copies, we would love to hear from you.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

During the first week of the Covid-19 lockdown the number of people contacting Perennial for advice and support increased by nearly 400%.

Perennial is the safety net for people in the horticulture industry and helps anyone working in, or retired from any job involving trees, plants, flowers or grass. The charity's clear

message is "we're in this together" and it wants everyone in the industry to know it is here to support them.

Perennial's helpline is operating as usual on 0800 093 8543 or visit www.perennial.org.uk for the latest updates.

Perennial is giving individual advice and helping people access the government support which is being put in place, helping people make arrangements to reduce or delay bill payments including credit debts where necessary and providing financial assistance to cover essential items, particularly food and heating.

DISCOVERING THE WORLD OF HORTICULTURE

The Royal Parks Guild, chaired by Assistant Mike Fitt, and Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, staged a highly successful Discovery Day for those starting out in horticulture at Kew Gardens in November.

Supported by the Gardeners' Company and entitled 'The World of Horticulture and its Opportunities', it was held in and around the Lady Lisa Sainsbury Lecture Theatre and attracted 226 delegates of whom 190 were apprentices and trainees.

The programme took the form of talks, discussions, tours and presentations. Participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds and some had travelled considerable distances to attend.

Mike Fitt and his support team assembled a varied agenda of speakers to lead the audience through short, engaging and

sometimes revealing presentations which helpfully demonstrated a range of skills and learning areas as well as routes towards careers. These presentations were a reminder of how Horticulture is an ever-widening subject which links sciences, arts, commerce, well-being, environment, sustainability and living.

Liveryman Richard Barley, Kew's Director of Horticulture, said that the event had been a great success. He reinforced the message of opportunities and the broad horizons of the horticultural world. He added that our field is one in which, as individuals and as teams, we really can make a difference, both here in London, in the regions and around the world.

He finished by encouraging everyone to continue to share the common goals, ideas, interests and practical applications found in

horticulture. "We are a family. We can make the difference", was his rallying cry.

Closing the event, Mike Fitt added his thanks to the Discovery Day steering group and the Royal Parks Guild volunteers who had helped to organise and guide the event. He particularly thanked RBG Kew for providing the venue and their staff who had contributed to make it all work so well.

He thanked the Kew Guild, London Gardens Network and Chelsea Physic Garden for their generous sponsorship, and expressed his appreciation of the support readily given by a range of organisations. As delegates departed, they were presented with a 'goody bag' kindly arranged by the Landscape Show and London School of Garden Design.

A QUILT FOR THE FUTURE

Liveryman Barbara Jeremiah has created another gorgeous quilt and offered it for silent auction in order to raise money for our Future Gardeners project.

The quilt is reversible, professionally quilted in variegated yellow coloured thread with bumble bees, and made using cotton materials, incorporating five different bee design squares with borders and sashes of flowers, leaves and small animals.

If you wish to place a bid please contact the Clerk in writing or email.



The Master and Barbara show off the quilt at the Mansion House Banquet

BEWARE, GLOBAL RECESSION AHEAD

Over the last two months the mood in the market has shifted from complacency to denial, then to despair followed by hope. January's high equity valuations – alongside bullish growth forecasts and optimistic earnings estimates – made the stock market potentially vulnerable to an exogenous shock.

This complacency was replaced by denial when the Covid-19 virus began to spread across the globe, with market participants initially seeming to shrug off the news. The authorities' response was to suppress the virus's spread by dramatically curtailing the free movement of people.

As a result, large numbers of companies are losing a significant amount of business. Many have had to shut down altogether, causing many jobs to be lost. It took the market arguably too long to work out the extent to which revenues and profits would be hit and how far consumer spending could fall.

When the penny finally dropped in early March, we saw markets gripped by despair, with the most rapid and deep equity market correction seen since the Great Depression. Left unchecked, the economic and financial market developments of the previous two weeks would have rapidly pushed the global economy towards the precipice.

However, the response from the world's key fiscal and monetary authorities has been swifter and larger than that seen in the 2008 global financial crisis – and it has

had to be, given that economic activity was in danger of coming to an abrupt halt. Financial markets, more broadly, were ceasing to function properly.

Over the last two weeks, hope returned as equity markets recovered some of the heavy losses sustained during the first half of the month. The US administration has successfully passed an impressive \$2.2trn fiscal stimulus package and the US central bank, the Federal Reserve (Fed), increased its commitment to support the market by stating that it would purchase as many US government bonds as would be necessary to support the US economy and restore the proper functioning of financial markets.

Elsewhere, the Fed has also taken steps to increase the supply of US dollars to overseas central banks in order to ease funding pressures experienced by borrowers in the world's reserve currency and has intervened in the US corporate bond market for the first time.

Outside of the US, we have seen a substantial easing of fiscal policy in most major economies (including the UK) augmented by easier policy rates and quantitative easing (purchases of bonds). However, we are about to enter the most rapid and deep global recession seen since the Second World War.

As a result of governments' actions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 large swathes of the global economy are in shut-down mode and corporate revenues in many sectors have



collapsed. We are only beginning to see data on economic activity, corporate profits and dividends and the worst is likely to be several weeks, if not months, ahead of us.

Against this background it is too early to call an end to the financial market stress and volatility which we have witnessed since late February. Aside from the need for positive news flow on Covid-19, more of the impact on the corporate sector needs to be understood before the equity markets can begin to build a firm base from which they can stage a meaningful recovery. As a result, it is now appropriate to be somewhat cautious in the near term.

As we look further ahead, optimists would highlight that financial markets are adept at discounting the future. As a rule, equity markets tend to find a firm footing roughly one quarter before the end of a recession and we need to work hard to gauge the length as well as the depth of this current economic downturn to give us the signal to buy, which will inevitably come.

More immediately, many companies are preserving cash by reducing or scrapping dividend payments. Unfortunately, this trend looks set

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THE SNAKES AND LADDERS GARDEN

The Gardeners' Company once again created a 'pop-up' garden in Guildhall Yard to promote the annual Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch.

The garden's theme for this year was Snakes and Ladders. Designer Gianna Utilini explained:

"The garden represents the ups and downs faced by some veterans returning from the military and transitioning back into civilian life.

"It would be gratifying to say that a veteran's progress was just one upward step after another, but the truth is very different: one move forward can often be followed by two moves back.

"A challenging and unpredictable journey needs to be negotiated in order to reach that optimum point where a veteran can feel in control of the physical and emotional pain."

The first Big Curry Lunch was held in April 2008. Since then it has raised a grand total in excess of £2million. The Lunch demonstrates the City's support for members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and veterans through the three National Service Charities: ABF The Soldiers' Charity, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.

The garden was officially opened on 3rd March by the Lord Mayor William Russell, Big Curry founder and co-Chairman Michael Hockney, Renter Warden John Gilbert and special guest Kim Wilde, musician and gardener.

Sadly, although the garden remained in place for a month as planned, the lunch itself, scheduled for 2nd April, had to be cancelled owing to the Covid-19 crisis.



The official opening party, from the left: Michael Hockney, John Gilbert, the Lady Mayoress, the Lord Mayor, Kim Wilde and Gianna Utilini.



Gianna and the team of volunteers who built the Snakes and Ladders Garden pose in front of their creation.

to continue. The UK regulator for banks, the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) has advised UK banks to scrap all outstanding dividends from 2019 and suspend all further payments in 2020. It did this to guarantee that UK banks have sufficiently high levels of cash to lend to businesses struggling in the current climate.

Other types of company are making similarly prudent decisions to preserve cash in the event that the crisis is prolonged, including ITV, Halfords, Marks & Spencer, Stagecoach, Kingfisher and InterContinental Hotels. Many others have followed suit, or are expected to in coming weeks and months.

All of this means that the income

generated from portfolios will fall this year. Whether these payments will be fully restored next year remains uncertain, as any industry bailouts are likely to come with caveats, which may include restrictions on dividend payments to shareholders. The scale of the damage will be determined by the duration of the crisis and the measures introduced by the Government in response.



A FASCINATING EVENING IN BURLINGTON HOUSE

Katarina Heldring-Morris and Susie Joy Evans report on the Master's visit to the Linnean Society in November

We assembled in the grand reading room of the Linnean Society library with its classical pillars soaring to the beautiful glass roof and two galleries of elegant cast iron balconies. The Master Heather Barrett-Mold and the Past President and Executive Secretary of the Linnean Society welcomed us. The Master gave the WCOG plaque as a thank you token to the Linnean Society for our visit.

A tour of the impressive Burlington House, Piccadilly premises followed.

Librarian Will Beharrell displayed a selection of books. Highlights included Thomas Hill's 1563 work *The Profitable Arte of Gardening* (the first book about gardening published in English); *A Gardener's Calendar* (written by the celebrated gardener and diarist John Evelyn); an 18th Century botanist's notebook, severely damaged during the Blitz and lovingly restored by the in-house conservator Janet Ashdown, and Thomas Moore's monumental *Ferns of Great Britain and Ireland* from 1855, perhaps the pre-eminent

example of the 'nature printing' technique.

Isabelle Charmantier, Head of Collections, showed the Linnean specimen collections of plants, fish, shells and insects which are held in a small temperature-controlled room in the basement with an impressive eight-inch thick safe door. Also, Linnaeus' personal herbarium that has been kept in its original state - not remounted or relabelled.

Janet Ashdown, Senior Conservator, showed and explained the problems of, and approach to, conserving documents and books with a remarkable exhibition of the many historic ways that documents were bound into books.

We then assembled in the lecture theatre where the Master introduced the speaker Dr Michael Gunton FLS, Executive Producer of *Planet Earth II*, BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol. His film took four years to make, involved 117 filming expeditions across 40 countries by a UK team of 22 and, of course, included narration by Sir David Attenborough.

Mike explained that the prevalence of social media and the ease with which images are shared today makes it increasingly difficult to make 'wow' films with educational messages for television. His production team needed to find new animals, new behaviour and new locations.

We saw film of a hot air balloon with a pilot and camera operator careering unintentionally through the canopy of a baobab tree. Highlights from various programmes in the series were shown: rhinos flirting and mating; snow leopards in the Himalayas; a baby Galapagos iguana being chased to the sea by an army of Racer snakes (the audience gasped as it was caught and cheered at its escape) and baby turtles trying to follow the full moon to the sea, but getting tragically confused by car and city lights.

We concluded with *Planet Earth II*'s opening sequence with the hot air balloon apparently carrying just Attenborough alone with the pilot gliding serenely through the Himalayas when a medical doctor, cameraman, and Mike appeared from the bottom of the basket!