

FRIENDS OF WINTERBOURNE GARDEN



NEWSLETTER

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'ADOPT A ROSE' SCHEME

A significant number of the roses in the National Collection of the History of the European Rose in the walled garden are in fairly urgent need of replacement. To facilitate a replacement programme, the Committee felt that it would be appropriate to offer Friends the opportunity to 'sponsor' a rose through an 'Adopt a Rose' scheme at £10 per rose. Each £10 donation to the scheme will purchase a rose of the Curator's choice and a label giving the name of the 'adopter' will be displayed alongside it when planted.

To adopt a rose/s, please complete the enclosed 'Rose Sponsorship' form and send it together with a cheque for the appropriate amount to Mrs R S Hornby to reach her not later than **Friday 31st October 2003.** ■

FOND MEMORIES OF WINTERBOURNE - Diane M. Wilson

In 1971, aged 23, I applied for a secretarial job at the University of Birmingham and was interviewed by the redoubtable Anne Caunce. There were three secretarial posts vacant, one in each of the Virology, Genetics and Botany departments. I chose Botany and what a great decision that turned out to be. The department, which had Professor Jack Hawkes as its Head, already had a departmental secretary and my work was primarily involved in organising Prof's diary and work. He travelled extensively in his capacity as a world expert on potatoes and the outline for *Solanum tuberosum* made as regular an appearance in my shorthand book as 'Dear Sir' had done previously.

The Botany department, I soon discovered, included the wonderful world of Winterbourne, where the grounds and glasshouses were used for growing and experimentation. In 1970, Professor Hawkes had established the still popular MSc course 'Conservation and Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources'. The majority of the students on this course came from overseas particularly, in the light of Prof's potato interests, from South America and in the 1970's this gave a fascinating insight into very different cultures. I particularly remember three charming mature students, Luis, Zosimo and Moises from Columbia, Peru and Bolivia respectively. The MSc

students, although having a room on campus, did their practical research at Winterbourne as also did those postgraduates working towards a PhD.

The grounds then encompassed the fenced-off playing field (leased from King Edwards School) next to the large glasshouses opposite what is now the Botanical Centre which was then the BAS (British Antarctic Survey) Hut. They were extensively planted and very well managed. The huge, now sadly empty, glasshouses were full of plants growing in carefully controlled and closely monitored conditions. There were many gardeners, probably ten or so, among them Dave Jeacock, plus several technicians. Winterbourne certainly buzzed with international activity and academic purpose.

The same gardeners and technicians who worked with the researchers also tended the Garden. David Radley was the Curator for most of the time I spent in the Botany Department. Bill Rutter, who had become something of an institution, had died a year or so earlier. It is probably true to say that, without the continuous attention of the garden staff of the Botany Department from 1944 until the mid-1980's, the Garden would not now be in a condition where it can be restored to the original designs planned and implemented by the Nettlefold and Nicholson families.

The Botany Department was an extremely happy place to work; Professor Hawkes had high standards but was a very fair boss who (with hindsight) was extremely patient about my regular disappearances to Winterbourne, which were not always strictly work-related and often meant that I was late back from lunch - it was a longish walk from the main department to the Garden! Sprawled on the lawns of a beautiful private garden eating sandwiches, traipsing through bluebell woods or searching for orchids in the conservation area was not how Birmingham office girls in the 1970's normally spent their lunch hours, but I did know how lucky I was.

Of the people I worked with, Dave Astley, who was Prof's Research Fellow, now runs the Genetic Resources Unit for Horticulture Research International at Wellesbourne, Phil Cribb, Dave's predecessor as Research Fellow, is in charge of orchids at Kew, Brian Ford-Lloyd, who has very kindly provided lots of old pictures

and slides for the Winterbourne Archive, is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Biosciences and I understand that Mike Jackson is a Professor in the Philippines. I have unfortunately lost track of many of the other postgraduate students. Of the lecturers in the Department, I am afraid that at least two have a memorial tree or bench in the Garden. Dr Richard Lester has recently retired. Dr Barry Leadbeater is Reader in Protistology in the School of Biosciences and Dr Trevor Williams, a taxonomist who worked for the FAO for many years is, I believe, in the States.

After leaving the University, I dropped into Winterbourne regularly up until the early 80's. Revisiting the Garden again, now that I have retired, is wonderful. In the 70's and 80's, of course, it felt like our own personal bit of heaven in the middle of a somewhat uninspiring city (I can say this as a Birmingham-born girl!). During that period, Winterbourne was open to the public one day a year and even that was regarded as innovative. The Garden today is as charismatic as ever and in becoming a volunteer and a member of the Friends, I hope to be part of a team which will ensure that others can enjoy Winterbourne as much as I did - and indeed still do!

Diane was recently co-opted to the Friends' Committee ■



MSc Students and Lecturers outside the Grace Building 1979/1980. From the left, fifth to ninth front row: Dr. Dave Astley, Dr. Pauline Mumford, Professor Jack Hawkes, Dr. Brian Ford-Lloyd and Dr. Richard Lester