

Newsletter

Oxenhope Gardening Club

NOVEMBER 2010

GARDENERS QUESTION TIME

Tonight Our Own Expert Gardeners Invite Your Questions

Thoughts from the Chair!

Most of my thoughts this month are on a practical level.

At our last committee meeting four members of the committee indicated that they would either be standing down this year or next. These members have worked very hard over a number of years for the Club and their input will be greatly missed.

We need at least two people to put themselves forward to be elected onto the committee this year and a further two for next year.

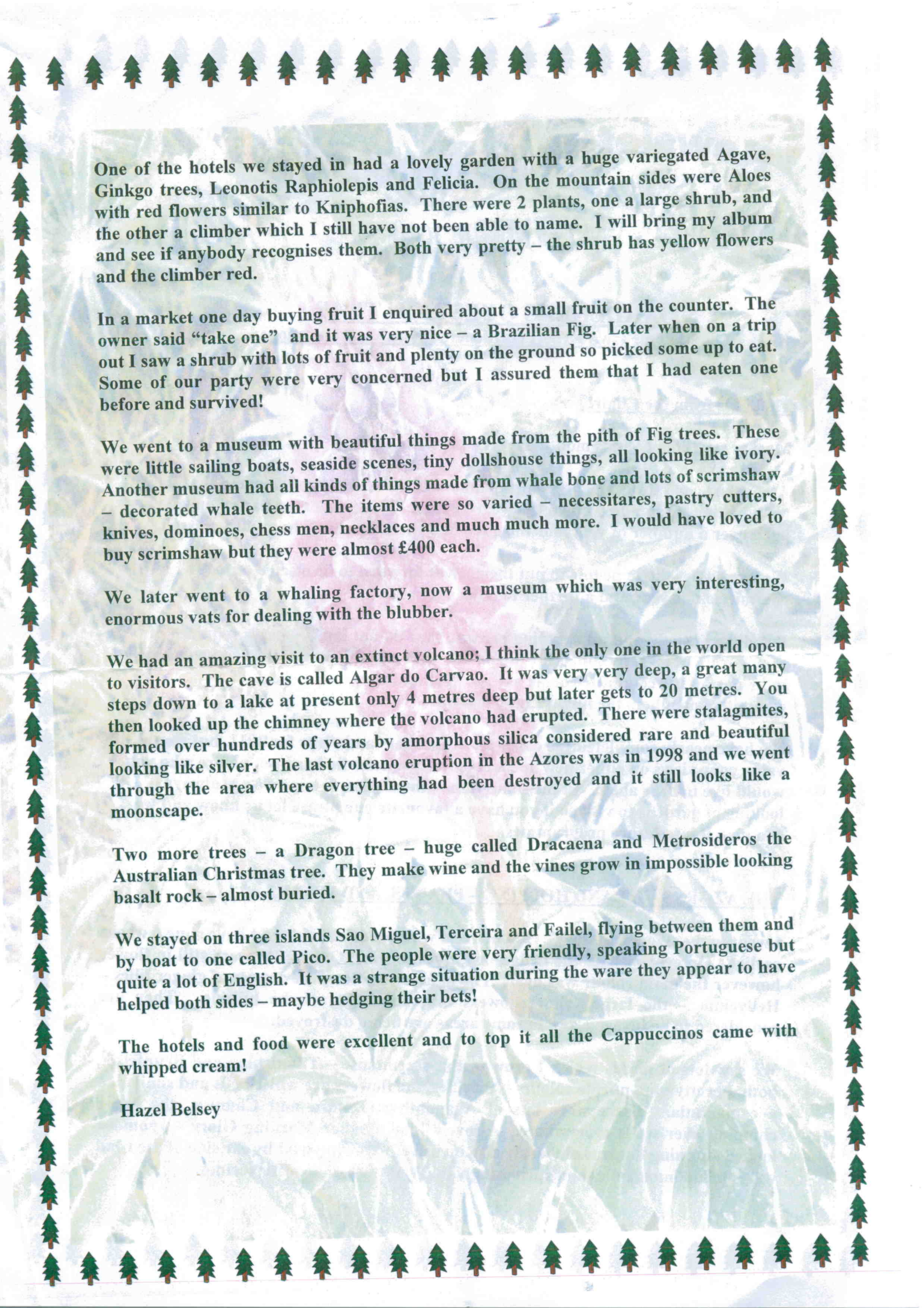
People are usually put off standing because they do not know what is required of them, or do not feel qualified for the position. Please, if you feel that you would like to be part of the committee or would like further information speak to one of the committee members for further information.

We have nearly completed the calendar of speakers and visits for 2011, but would still value your views on either new speakers or a speaker who has been before who you would like to hear again. In the same vein with relation to trips we are always looking at gardens to visit so if you have a favourite one please let us know and we can plan it into future programmes.

THE AZORES – ISLAND HOPPING – PLANTS, AND MORE.

I went to the Azores on the 9th October and with hindsight I should have gone 6 weeks earlier. On every island the hedges are Hydrangeas. Quite a lot were still in flower however the main colour was over. The mountain sides were a mass of ginger lilies – Hedycium – the large yellow flowers must have lit up the hillside. They are considered to be invasive and in some areas are being destroyed.

We saw lots of plants which I grow in the greenhouse – Tibouchina and Brunfelsia, both a pretty blue-purple colour - Azorines, the flowers are white bells and similar to a campanula. There were lots of Agapanthus, Datura and Campsis, the latter climbing over walls everywhere. A lovely blue climber Morning Glory – Ipomoea looked stunning but was obviously also invasive. Growing wild by the side of the road were Belladonna Lillies and surprisingly in a very dry stone wall Nerines.



One of the hotels we stayed in had a lovely garden with a huge variegated Agave, Ginkgo trees, Leonotis Raphiolepis and Felicia. On the mountain sides were Aloes with red flowers similar to Kniphofias. There were 2 plants, one a large shrub, and the other a climber which I still have not been able to name. I will bring my album and see if anybody recognises them. Both very pretty – the shrub has yellow flowers and the climber red.

In a market one day buying fruit I enquired about a small fruit on the counter. The owner said “take one” and it was very nice – a Brazilian Fig. Later when on a trip out I saw a shrub with lots of fruit and plenty on the ground so picked some up to eat. Some of our party were very concerned but I assured them that I had eaten one before and survived!

We went to a museum with beautiful things made from the pith of Fig trees. These were little sailing boats, seaside scenes, tiny dollhouse things, all looking like ivory. Another museum had all kinds of things made from whale bone and lots of scrimshaw – decorated whale teeth. The items were so varied – necessitaires, pastry cutters, knives, dominoes, chess men, necklaces and much much more. I would have loved to buy scrimshaw but they were almost £400 each.

We later went to a whaling factory, now a museum which was very interesting, enormous vats for dealing with the blubber.

We had an amazing visit to an extinct volcano; I think the only one in the world open to visitors. The cave is called Algar do Carvao. It was very very deep, a great many steps down to a lake at present only 4 metres deep but later gets to 20 metres. You then looked up the chimney where the volcano had erupted. There were stalagmites, formed over hundreds of years by amorphous silica considered rare and beautiful looking like silver. The last volcano eruption in the Azores was in 1998 and we went through the area where everything had been destroyed and it still looks like a moonscape.

Two more trees – a Dragon tree – huge called Dracaena and Metrosideros the Australian Christmas tree. They make wine and the vines grow in impossible looking basalt rock – almost buried.

We stayed on three islands Sao Miguel, Terceira and Failel, flying between them and by boat to one called Pico. The people were very friendly, speaking Portuguese but quite a lot of English. It was a strange situation during the ware they appear to have helped both sides – maybe hedging their bets!

The hotels and food were excellent and to top it all the Cappuccinos came with whipped cream!

Hazel Belsey