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# Oxenhope gardening club

Newsletter

October 2013

[www.oxenhopegardeningclub.co.uk](http://www.oxenhopegardeningclub.co.uk)

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## Growing Fritillaria—the surprising truth



**Fritillaria fanatic Kevin Pratt is our October speaker. He has grown all the Fritillaria species that have ever been in cultivation and held the National Collection for 17 years, so he's the perfect gardener to debunk the myths and tell us how to grow these enchanting bulbs.**

Kevin is keen to dispel received wisdom that Fritillaria are happiest in wet meadows or naturalising in grass. Apparently this is not their most successful growing situation.

His talk is called Fritillaries and the Private Gardens of Cheshire, so it seems we may also be let into some secrets about footballers' gardens as well as hearing some useful expert knowledge on how to get the best out of our fritillaries.

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## Sissinghurst and the Secret Gardens of Sandwich

**Steve and I spent four sunny days in Kent visiting two contrasting gardens.**

Sissinghurst needs no introduction, but The Secret Gardens of Sandwich (pictured) are perhaps less well known.



Sir Edwin Lutyens designed the gardens with the help of Gertrude Jekyll. Recently restored, the ornamental gardens are enclosed by old stone walls, and feature exotic planting made possible by the mild climate. Our walk through the gardens

revealed formal flower beds, lawns, secluded benches and exuberant vegetable plots. Hidden in the middle of tall, naturalistic planting is a pond with 'alligator'. Every inch of the gardens was bursting with vigour and interest.

With Sissinghurst I had prepared myself for disappointment reasoning that no garden could possibly live up to all that hype. I found it very interesting to walk around such hallowed ground, see Vita Sackville-West's library, climb the tower and hear a recording of her distinctive voice booming out across the decades, but somehow it all lacked soul. A few of the beds looked bedraggled and bare patches showed between the fading perennials.

To protect against the endless trampling feet the lawns were roped off – giving it all the feel of a museum to be revered rather than a living garden to feel part of.

But any sense of disappointment with Vita's garden was dispelled by our room that night in Sissinghurst Castle.

Our luxurious accommodation overlooked the famous tower and tiled roofs of the oast houses nearby. Coffee and cake on arrival was taken on the tranquil lawns in the company of the family Labrador and a scolding robin.

Though exquisitely appointed, the house felt lived in and reminded me that Sissinghurst was a much-loved home when Vita and Harold lived there.

By Jenny Hakney

## 2013 dates for your diary:

**October 17**

*Fritillaria* fanatic, Kevin Pratt: 'Fritillaries and private gardens of Cheshire'.

**November 21**

Fergus Garrett, head gardener at Great Dixter: 'An Evening with Fergus Garrett'. Please encourage friends to come along.

**December** No meeting.

## Seen our Tweets recently?

**Social media isn't (aren't) everyone's cup of tea, but it's a handy way of keeping up with the daily musings of the likes of Matthew Wilson, Toby Buckland and Sue Beesley.**

We had a direct tweet from Susie White, last week—she asked what was still flowering in our gardens down here.

And now Nigel the Dog is following us—that's Monty Don's dog (@Nigel\_Dog). He hates box hedges and sends very amusing, Monty-bashing quips!

Find us at @OxenhopeGardenC

## Tea and coffee rota

**Helpers are usually needed for the tea and coffee rota for our meetings.**



All you need to do is set up, serve refreshments and tidy up.

Please ring Ruth or Sue if you can help:

Ruth Shepley **643437**  
Sue Gibson **642684**

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## Need a lift to events?

**It emerged from our questionnaire that some of you would like help with transport to meetings and trips.**

These people have offered to help with lifts for others who need them:

- Jenny Hakney 610599
- Ruth Shepley 643437
- Richard Berry 647974

Don't hesitate to ask for a lift. We will help if at all possible.

## It's your newsletter

**Why not send in a contribution to the newsletter? Jenny would be grateful.**

Email Jenny via the club website or at [jenny.hakney@talktalk.net](mailto:jenny.hakney@talktalk.net)

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## Keeping our club printing costs down

We are cutting down the number of newsletters we print. If you could read it online email Richard Gibson who will add you to the email circulation list: [richard.gibson@oxenhopegardeningclub.co.uk](mailto:richard.gibson@oxenhopegardeningclub.co.uk)



All phone numbers are 01535 unless stated otherwise.