



Newsletter March 2021

www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk



April Zoom Meeting

'Rocky Mountain Railroads: the colours of Colorado', zoom talk given by Paul Whittle

53 members joined the meeting to hear Paul give us a very well-illustrated talk with maps and photos about his tour around an area of western Colorado. The interesting detail of his trip was that he travelled around using the old mine narrow gauge railway system, parts of which have been lovingly restored for tourists to enjoy, as they travel through some spectacular mountain scenery.

He started by filling us in with some information about the state of Colorado. It is the highest state in the US, with an average height of 7000 feet. It covers an area of 100,000 square miles and with a population of 5 million; it is not densely populated overall. There are eastern areas of plains with huge herds of cattle and nowadays, the cowboy ranching tradition has morphed into popular ranching holidays. The western parts are characterised by the mountains landscapes of the southern Rocky Mountains. The capital city, Denver, has a population of about 600,000 and is the 19th most populous US city.

The people of Colorado have a reputation for being slim and fit, thanks to a love of outdoor sports such as white-water rafting and skiing. Winter sports kicked off after the Second World War, during which American army recruits were sent to train in the snow before being deployed to the mountains of Europe. After the war, many returned to set up ski schools.

The discovery of gold and silver deposits during the 1850s led to a story of boom and bust. Towns would quickly sprout up and become very prosperous after a find, only to rapidly decline when the price of the precious metals plummeted, or the ore ran out. This could literally happen overnight and has led to a landscape in the mountainous western area of abandoned mines and ghost towns. There are estimated to be about 700 mining towns and some of them have reinvented themselves as tourist attractions, restoring their beautiful old pioneer buildings.

The need to get the ore out led to the building of a network railway tracks which were narrow gauge to enable them to follow the twists and turns of the mountains and the rivers. Their construction was a massive feat of engineering. The biggest of these networks was the Denver and Rio Grande system.

Again when the ore ran out, the railroads had to reinvent themselves as tourist attractions. They have become popular as they offer a unique view of the mountain scenery with great photo opportunities, thanks to the open top

Things to note

1. Our next meeting is on the 3rd May when **D. Dexter will talk about Fuchsias** This will be held over Zoom.
2. **Trading Hut** – Now open Sundays from 11-12 noon.
3. **Plant sales** at the hut. Sundays from 11-12 noon.
4. **Member's articles.** See in newsletter for more details.
5. See inside newsletter for the results of the Virtual Spring Show.
6. **We are going to need some help** on April 22nd at 12:30. We have a large delivery to the hut and we need help getting it into the hut.

or double-decker carriages. The enormous 100 year-old locomotives used are attraction in themselves. For people who suffer from a fear of heights, some parts of the railroads should come with a health warning, as you will sometimes be looking down on high and steep ravines!

Paul was able to travel along a variety of these old mine railroads visiting an array of different old towns and a disused mine along the way. Things we learnt as we followed his journey included:

- If a menu offers 'Rocky Mountain Oysters', they are in fact bulls' testicles!
- Glenwood Springs has a popular hot springs pool. Doc Holliday is buried in the town. He was with Wyatt Earp at the OK Corral.
- Ouray is a quaint and rural town and the area is nicknamed 'the Switzerland of Colorado'.
- The town of Silverton gets its name from 'Silver by the ton'.
- Leadville is the highest town in the US, at 10,150 ft. It was named from the massive deposits of lead carbonate found there in 1879. This contains a lot of silver and made the town quickly very prosperous. The owner of the 'Matchless Mine', Horace Tabor built an opera house in the town where over the years big names of their day such as Harry Houdini and Oscar Wilde have appeared. However, in 1893, silver prices collapsed and the town declined rapidly but, it too, has been nicely restored and nowadays there is a great focus on its heritage.
- Georgetown is a beautifully restored town with 6 fire houses, due to the former residents' desire to avoid another fire disaster raging through the mostly wooden municipal and residential buildings. The Georgetown loop is a spectacular ride.
- The Rio Grande railroad contains a tunnel 6 miles long, built in 1928.
- The Garden of the Gods is a unique landscape and tourist attraction near Georgetown.
- Paul's route took him to the Royal Gorge Bridge, the highest suspension bridge in the US, at 959 feet above the Arkansas River. It was built in 1929 for visitors to enjoy the spectacular view on foot. Again, a challenge for people who don't like heights!

There is an old prospectors' expression in the US 'Pike's Peak or bust'. In 1806 Zebulon Pike led a failed expedition to climb the 14,115 foot high mountain and it was later named after him. It is also called 'El Capitan'. This prominent mountain at the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains was a very visible feature in the landscape that guided many early prospectors to the region westwards from over the Great Plains and the slogan exemplified the Colorado Gold Rush. The mountain can be ascended via a cog railroad, the world's highest. The view from the top is spectacular and has inspired many people over the years, including Katherine Lee Bates who wrote the patriotic poem 'America the Beautiful' which later gained the status of a national hymn after it was set to music. This is an extract from the original poem of 1893 where the impact of what she saw from the mountain top is clearly expressed:

O great for halcyon skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the enameled plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
Till souls wax fair as earth and air
And music-hearted sea!

O great for pilgrim feet
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
Till paths be wrought through wilds of thought
By pilgrim foot and knee!

Paul's talk successfully transported us as well.....to another place and also time!

Julia Goodall Publicity Secretary



Thank you

On Sunday 21st March, we were finally able to present Peter Turner with a Gift Voucher in recognition of all his hard work over the years running the annual shows. Peter said that they were looking at some garden furniture at present and this would be a welcome contribution towards it. Peter said that "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Show Secretary. I have met many lovely people and learnt a lot along the way. Being a member of such a friendly gardening club made the job of Show Secretary easy. It is a shame I had to retire but I wish the new Show Secretary all the best and am here should she need any advice."

Thank you once again Peter from all our members.

Topical Tip – April 2021

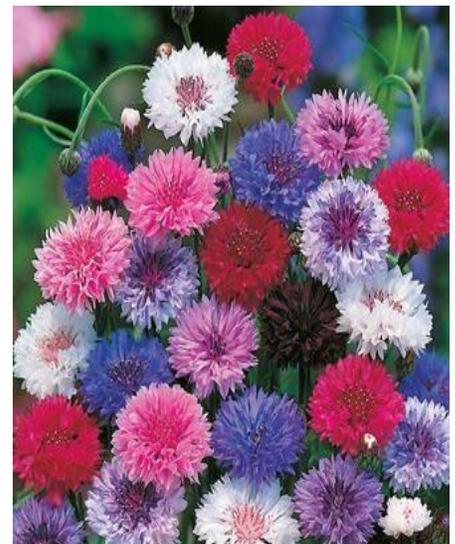
April is the time of year when the Garden Centres are well-stocked with a wide selection of bedding plants. However, it is worth reminding ourselves just how easy it is to grow a wide range of annual flowers from seed. It is also very cost effective.

In addition to providing colourful displays throughout the season, choosing a suitable variety will provide you with some lovely cut flowers. Particular favourites of mine are Cornflowers. Varieties such as Blue Ball and Polka Dot (illustrated) along with Calendula Indian Prince and Porcupine are all excellent choices.

April is a good time to sow annuals as the ground is warming up and germination is often aided by frequent showers. I make two sowings, three weeks apart. This will give continuity and provide colour well into September,

Among other useful annuals are Statice – good for winter flower arranging – Cosmos and that good old favourite, Candytuft.

Ian Gillott



Club Facebook Group

Don't forget our Facebook group! It is a private group which means that only club members can join and post. You can join it at: www.facebook.com/groups/207934410581605/ You will need to first read and agree to the group guidelines. We really would like more members in this group to make it a lively forum. We are looking for gardening related posts and club news.

Julia Goodall – (Publicity Secretary)

We Need a Committee Member

We are looking for someone to take over as membership secretary. If you can handle a basic spreadsheet then you qualify. Please contact Dick if you would like to try it out.

Trading Hut Delivery

Membership support has been very strong since the Hut re-opened last month and as a result sales have been going very well. In fact, so well that I've had to order a "lorry load" to re-stock! Our delivery will be at about **12.30 p.m. on Thursday 22 April** and we could do with another 2 or 3 volunteers to help with the unloading. If we can get a team of 6, 7 or 8 together then no one will have an unreasonable workload and we'll be able to operate in a "Covid-safe" way as well (which is important). If you feel you are able to assist please contact me as soon as you can: Tel: 0118 9734531 or by email: sraslocombe@yahoo.co.uk

Please only volunteer if you feel physically able to do so. The items to be lifted will vary from a few kilograms up to 25kg – the last thing we want is for anyone to injure themselves (especially me!!). Altogether there are about 140 items to be unloaded from the lorry (which should be able to park directly outside the Hut at the rear of the Ratepayers Hall) and carried into the Hut. With a team of 7 volunteers that would be about 20 items each over a period of up to about 45 minutes.

Thank you in anticipation

Stuart

RHS card

Our club has a RHS Card which we can make available to members from the beginning of March this year.

It enables two people to gain entry to all RHS gardens throughout the country (this includes RHS Bridgewater from Sept).

Presentation of this card will give you and your friend a 30% discount on the entry fee.

From March, as a member of our club, you will be able to borrow it by contacting Chris Spinks (number at the end of newsletter) and arranging to pick it up.

Free membership this year

Big thank you to all those members who decided to pay their £5 membership fee this year even though it is a free year. We, the committee, appreciate this demonstration of your support. I must also go further and say thank you to a few who have made voluntary donations on top of their subs. Very kind of you. If you would like to pay your voluntary subs at the Trading Hut then Stuart will be willing to take your details etc.

The clubs bank details are: Sort Code: 40-47-09, Account number: 71301608 (don't forget to give your name as the reference).

Members' email

The link to the seed supplier I use is: <https://www.premierseedsdirect.com/> and they do sell the Shirley F1 tomato seeds at £0.99 for 15 seeds.

Regarding the tip I found on an American website about aspirin and tomatoes, this is the claim made:

“When tomatoes are under attack from disease, they produce a hormone that is similar to the salicylic acid in aspirin, triggering the plant’s immune system to go into high gear. So, by spraying with a solution of 600mg of dispersible aspirin per gallon of water, you’re tricking the plant into thinking it’s under attack, which makes its immune system kick into high gear before there’s actually any disease present. This makes it much more difficult for disease to take hold in the first place.”

I’d be very interested to hear what Ian Gillot has to say about this claim. I tried it on my tomatoes last summer and had no disease problems at all, but that could be pure coincidence.

Francis Ryder

Member's email

This is a report from one of our members who caught Covid. It reminds us not to let our guard down even after our jabs.

Caught by Covid.

I thought all I had was a chest infection, so it was a bit of a shock when Drew, our surgery’s paramedic, announced that with a temperature of 39.7°C we had to suspect Covid AND that I needed to be in hospital AND by ambulance. Well at least it explained why I had been too hot to sleep the night before. I’d blamed the duvet.

I hesitate, thinking of all those over worked medics. ‘Of course, it’s up to you,’ says Drew in a voice that implies: ‘You are perfectly free to make a stupid decision if you insist’.

‘All right,’ say I, ‘I’ll go just to prove your pessimism wrong. ‘Unfortunately, it wasn’t. I had Covid pneumonia. It interferes with the ability of the lungs to pass oxygen into the blood. Untreated, it’s fatal.

The Royal Berks Covid A&E was busy but not nearly as frenetic as I’d been fearing. I had a large dose of the steroid anti-inflammatory, Dexamethasone, pumped into my arm, a treatment they didn’t know about last year, and an oxygen mask fitted over my mouth and nose. That combination is now the standard treatment. I have no recollection of Thursday or Friday until Drew woke me up having been called in by a worried wife and daughter.

How long I was in A&E I have no idea. Eventually two cheerful porters arrived to wheel me off to the Acute Medical Assessment Unit which sounds scary but it’s a sort of holding ward while they find you a bed. Don’t remember much about the night apart from my dozing being disturbed by some troubled fellow patient.

Some time on Saturday the porters are back to wheel me off to what is usually the renal ward where they had found me a bed and where, I think, I spent a couple of nights. Then my ‘sats’ fell alarmingly enough to have what felt like half the medics in the hospital round the bed. ‘Sats’ is hospital-speak for the oxygen saturation level of the blood. It should be 95% or more. Mine, I learned later, was 71%. Not good.

Back come the porters, late evening this time, to take me to Higher Monitoring Unit – one step down from intensive care – which does what it says over the door. I think I was one of three patients hooked up to the computers so the nurses could monitor my sats, blood pressure and pulse at a glance. They started treatment hardball, C-PAC, with a very tight fitting mask over my mouth and nose and pumping in enough oxygen and air to drive a Spanish galleon round the Horn.

Strangely it can feel asphyxiating. Some patients can't bear it. Sleep is impossible but if you are lucky you doze. My two memories of that first night are drifting out a doze and fighting the urge to tear off the mask and listening to a nurse pleading with a patient to keep his mask on. The trick is to relax and breathe normally; the oxygen gushes in.

Oxygen can have some strange effects. We have a washing machine that plays four irritating notes when it has finished its cycle. HMU is full of squeaks and pips, bells and gongs, the sounds of unsleeping vigilant machines. Half conscious, I was convinced the room was full of washing machines like ours – and I was in Bristol which we left 50 years ago.

A couple of nights later, back on an ordinary ward where I had been reading my phone about the inauguration of Joe Biden, I was a combination of the new president and Boris Johnson, wondering where to start sorting out Covid, climate change, a Trump-torn America, Brexit and the rest. And why were none of my minions bringing me a cup of coffee?

The following night I was in charge of a Day-Glo green Russian police submarine. As far as I know the Russian police don't have any submarines, green or otherwise but the image is still clear. Why, I raged in my head, isn't one of my crew bringing me a cup of coffee? When the nurse woke me at 6.30 to check my sats, I thought she was one of the crew. A friend of mine who has been involved with the treatment of heart patients told me later that weird dreams are quite common in patients on oxygen.

Whether it was the oxygen or not, I grew increasingly convinced that good would come of all this. So that is coming to pass. With the help of our very organised daughter who moved in to look after Julia who was unwell herself, we have had a great sort-out of our lifestyle of the last 20-odd years, future-proofing for the next 20 if we are lucky. This has included everything from ruthlessly clearing out a lot of my clothes I haven't worn for years to jettisoning our two Ikea easy chairs from the kitchen and replacing them with new fridge-freezer and tumble dryer to cut down on trips to the garage. We also changed the electric cooker while we were in the mood. Not just expenses; investments.

It has also brought us even closer as a family. We tend to close ranks with the snap of a crocodile's jaws when trouble looms but without the live-in support of our daughter, the back-up support of our son-in-law and the distant support of our son and his family, I don't know how we would have coped. The story isn't over yet. We can never repay that loving devotion nor would we try. But we can show lasting practical appreciation and we know exactly how to do it.

Back to the Royal Berks. After a week my sats settled down at 95% without oxygen. I was job done, an empty bed waiting to happen. I could go home. After seven weeks, apart from a bit of breathlessness, I feel fine .

And I've joined Royal Berks charity.

Ray Little

Spring Virtual Show

Class One
3 Daffodils



1st
Terry Miller



2nd
John Kerr



3rd
Dick



Highly Commended
Peter Allington



Highly Commended
Pauline MacBrayne

Class Two
1 Specimen Daffodil



1st
Terry Miller



2nd
John Kerr



3rd
Kris Turner



Highly Commended
Peter Allington



Highly Commended
Sylvia Hawes

Class Three
Three Tulips



1st

Stuart Slocombe



2nd

Hermione Lewis



3rd

John Kerr



Highly Commended
Sylvia Hawes



Highly Commended
Ros Slocombe

Class Four
One Camelia Bloom



1st
John Hall



2nd
Peter North



3rd
Dick



Highly Commended
Lynn Potts



Highly Commended
Julia Goodall

Class Five
1 Cut Spike of Hyacinth



1st
Hermione Lewis



2nd
Lynn Potts



3rd
Dick



Highly Commended
Sylvia Hawes



Highly Commended
Stuart Slocombe

Class Six
Vase of Spring Flowers



1st
Terry Miller



2nd
Sylvia Hawes



3rd
Chris Spinks



Highly Commended
Peter Radband



Highly Commended
Ohmar Spence

Crocheted Postbox Hat

I don't know if any members have seen the wonderful crocheted postbox hat at the Finchampstead post office? Barkham Hookers made a series of them to create a selfie trail around Wokingham in aid of a local children's charity. This one was made on a gardening theme in the Club's honour. It sported an amazing array of detail with plants, critters and even a shed! Am I the only club member who took a selfie with it?!



Julia Goodall



Monthly talks

This is a call to all members:

If you have any ideas/requests for the subjects of the monthly talks, please let us know. Either reply to this email or give Hermione a ring (number below).

Chairman: Dick Hawes 0118 979 3730	Hon. Treasurer: Peter Radband 07976 640989	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Committee Member: Jayne Male 07967639808
Deputy Chairman: Ian Gillott 0118 9892649	Trading Hut: Stuart Slocombe 0118 9734531	Membership: Kerry Eaton 07736 022361	Co-opted Member: Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Secretaries: Daryl & Katie Phillips 07980 160169	Publicity: Julia Goodall	