

## THE HISTORY OF E.H.S.

*Starting in this Bulletin we are deeply indebted to Ron Edwards for producing a splendidly detailed in depth account of how the Society progressed through the post war years.*

### EASTCOTE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY GENERAL HISTORICAL OUTLINE PART 1

#### ORIGINS, WAR-TIME AND IMMEDIATE POSTWAR YEARS

September 1939 saw the beginning of a fundamental change to the life style of Eastcote residents following the outbreak of the Second World War. Nobody knew exactly what to expect but faced the future with foreboding having seen such films at the cinema as 'The Shape of the Things to Come', based on the story by H.G. Wells, and newsreels of the wars taking place in Spain, Abyssinia and China. Eastcote was still growing up having undergone a considerable population explosion with a large number of new houses. It was one of the 'Metroland' suburbs which had arisen between the wars which was to house families from a variety of parts of London and surrounding counties.

Those who had moved into the area were, in many cases, buying a house for the first time and also coming into possession of garden space which was often meadowland amply spread with builders rubble. For some it was their first experience of having a garden of their own and they were beginning to develop their plots according to individual preferences but in a very amateur way. They did not yet form an homogeneous community, the majority having only been in the district from between ten years to ten days. Additionally, there were a grouping who had moved to the outer rural districts of London immediately after the First World War who had built individual houses or converted older properties who did not really welcome the 1930s influx as they were clearly reducing the size of the rural landscape that had attracted them.

Those residents who were not called away for service with the Forces or war industry were faced with living with a multiplying number of restrictions to govern their lives. Shortages of supplies were soon apparent in the retail shops and following the experiences of the First World War the Government looked at a very early stage to the position of food stuffs and other supplies, particularly those which had to be imported. Rationing of foodstuffs commenced from January 1940 and this added to the problems of the housewife although most agreed that this was a reasonable way of dealing with the unknown future.

As has been mentioned some of the new residents were not very conversant with horticultural skills. The 'Aerial' published by the Eastcote Association - later the Eastcote Residents Association - regularly printed gardening tips for those who were developing their gardens. Included among these was an article in September 1937 by Howard H Crane FLS of Cheney Street. An article printed in June 1939 looks rather odd when viewed in retrospect. It commenced "In these days of crowded roads, people are taking more interest in their gardens. Consequently the summer is the time when the greatest enjoyment and benefits are obtained from the garden". These are sentiments we can share but knowing now what was to happen later that year and for nearly another six years, one questions some of the later part of the article which pointed out the enjoyment to be obtained from adapting one's lawn to games such as clock golf, badminton and deck tennis with sand pits for children.

One of the earlier Government exhortations was "Dig For Victory" and many of the new gardeners saw their gardens and personal skills in a new light. Many were already using some part of their gardens for vegetable and fruit growing and expanded this to supplement rations. Flower beds and lawns were converted in some cases to kitchen garden areas and others looked outside their own gardens for additional land to cultivate. Traditionally, local authorities had set aside land for vegetable growing and applications were made to rent allotments from the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council who were the local authority for Eastcote. Initially, there were only a limited number of permanent allotments but these were supplemented by temporary allotments developed on recreation grounds and requisitioned private land.

On 27th August, 1940 V E Coxon, Jack Hardy, E.S. Hammond, M.B. Baker and A King met to discuss the formation of an Allotment Association and on 10th September the 'Eastcote Allotment Association' was founded with 36 members and a subscription of 1/- (5p). They aimed to assist and encourage those who were growing food to make the best use of their plots & gardens, and, by means of literature, lectures, personal advice and the provision of lime and fertilisers at advantageous rates, to foster horticultural pursuits in the district. At a special meeting in April 1942 the name of the group was altered to 'Eastcote and District Horticultural and Allotment Association'.

The venture was successful owing to the enthusiasm and knowledge of its early members. To quote from an article by Mr A.T. Hurford in the 'Aerial' of March 1949: - "The Society was fortunate in having as one of its founders the well-known horticultural technical adviser, Jack Hardy, ND Hort., who very readily gave his time and energy to helping to overcome difficulties and problems they encountered. A goodly number joined the society, and as a result of the officers and committee of management, a keen interest quickly developed. A Bulletin was issued periodically containing valuable hints and information which was of great benefits to members". It was also fortunate in having early

support from Mr and Mrs Howard Crane, Mr Tingay of Cheney and Mr and Mrs Cross of St Catherine's Farm. By the end of the War the membership exceeded 1000.

The society was not content with just growing at home they wanted to show off their results. In May 1945 there was a 'Dig for Victory' exhibition at Eastcote House when the Society mounted a display of fruit, eggs etc and a scale model of an allotment. The opening lecture of the week was given by CH Middleton, the radio broadcaster on garden matters, which was attended by 500. The week had a series of lectures and events which attracted over 2000. The Society had a Summer Show on the August Bank Holiday Saturday of 1945 at the Ministry of Show on the August Bank Holiday Saturday of 1945 at the Ministry of Health ground just south of Eastcote station which had 550 entries and non- competitive exhibits. It was originally decided that the show should be opened by the local MP, Col J J Llewellyn, who was Minister of Food, but in view of his defeat at the July election this was cancelled. The local authority had staged Food Production exhibitions since 1943 and at that which was held in September 1945 on the Pinn Fields, Kings College Road, Ruislip when there were over 800 entries, seven cups were won by members of the Society.

Although useage of allotments fell away after the end of the War there was still enthusiasm for an expansion of the Horticultural Society. Rationing did not finish until 1953 and there was still an emphasis on growing vegetables and fruit for consumption. Other facets of gardening were not neglected and Fruit, Chrysanthemum and Dahlia, Sweet Pea and Rose Groups were formed within the Society each with its own committee and running its own shows. During 1947 there was a Gardens Competition, Summer Show, Autumn Show and late flowering Chrysanthemum Show. The season that year was concluded with a dance and social held in November attended by over 100 members and friends. Mr Hurford's article of March 1949 also included these paragraphs:- "The Society has for some years annually staged a Summer Show of flowers, fruit and vegetables, which has proved to be one of the outstanding social events available to the Red Cross and local hospitals."

"The Eastcote Horticultural Society enjoys considerable prestige in Horticultural circles in the county and its functions have been attended by many influential people".

At the 1949 General Meeting there was an attendance of 200 including Cllr F S Gibson, Chairman of the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council and the five representatives of the of the Eastcote Ward. Reports given to the meeting commented upon the success of the Shows during that season and the gaining of the the Affiliated Societies Shows. The President, Howard H Crane had also won the Blue Ribbon and Gold Medal of the Fruiterer's Company with his collection of deserts apples and brothers Moore had been successful with their exhibit of pears. Well attended lectures had been given during the year by leading specialists including Raymond Bush on fruit and Bertram Park on roses.

Both of these were national experts in their own specialisation and the Society was most fortunate to have Bertram Park as one of its Vice- Presidents. He was also Vice-President of the National Rose Society and Editor of their Rose Annual and was now residing at the old shooting Box in the High Road.

*To be continued in the next issue.*

Ron Edwards  
August 1992

## THE HISTORY OF EHS

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### EASTCOTE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY A SHORT HISTORY

#### PART 2

#### INTO THE 1950'S

By 1950 the population was almost settled down after six years of war - but there were some major differences to the prewar peacetime conditions. Firstly, some had not returned; all were six years older; rationing was still in force for some goods and there was a housing shortage. Those who had remained in civilian jobs during the war and in their own homes had acquired many horticultural skills which assisted them to supplement rations. Those who returned from the Forces or industrial service had not this experience. Some were now married with new responsibilities. Additionally, people wanted enjoyment and change from wartime restrictions. The Society was admirably placed to assist these circumstances. As I have shown in the first instalment, there were over 1000 members with varying experiences of growing - mainly vegetables and fruits. Here was a body of expertise who had adopted a new way of enjoying gardening by learning together and spreading knowledge. It also offered a form of social activity which was greatly needed in those somewhat grey days.

Membership continued at over 1000 throughout the fifties reaching 1300 plus in 1950. Organisation was important with a strong committee and a large number of road stewards who were to operate in a variety of ways. Bulletins were published bi-monthly with a variety of specialised articles on plants and society news. Throughout the Fifties the annual subscription remained below 2/6 (12.5p). The Society was well served by the members who were on the main Committee, the various Chairmen and Presidents. Among these were specialists in various fields who were prepared to share their knowledge and resources with all members either by giving talks, writing articles, or with demonstrations in their gardens and non-competitive exhibits at shows. Howard Crane and Bertram Park have been mentioned previously but others included A T Hurford, T G Cross, P J Beere - who was the Parks Superintendent with Ruislip Northwood Urban District Council, and of course J Hardy - a founder member and the Society's Technical Adviser - who served as President; W R Fleming, F H D Mead and A W Cranefield all worked hard and ably as Chairmen.

As well as having its main Committee the Society continued with special interest sections each with their own committee. There were Sweet pea, Rose, Fruit, Chrysanthemum and Dahlia sections who contributed regular articles to the Bulletin. A strong Ladies group was running to look after their own special interests and to assist with the advise on catering but they also arranged outings to horticultural centres and often invited other members to join with them. The early Fifties saw an ambitious programme of lectures and special events. Talks were given during 1950/2 by Raymond Bush on fruit production; by A Blackburn on chrysanthemums, by Mrs Russell of Constance Spry Ltd on floral art; by A E Blake on cultivation of gladioli and by Robert Allwood on carnations. These names are still known as being experts in their own fields and in some cases holding high office in national organisations.

A special event held in September 1952 at Field End School was an "Any Questions Forum" under the chairmanship of Fred Streeter, gardening expert of BBC fame. The panel consisted of local and national gardening experts and included Bertram Park, Vice President of the National Rose Society and as well as being Eastcote's President; J C P M Davis, President of the National Pea Society; Howard Crane, nationally known amateur fruit grower and past President of the Society; A E Blake, President of the National Gladioli Society and E T Thistlewaite, Secretary of the National Chrysanthemum Society. All of these with the exception of the chairman regularly judged at the Society's shows. Another event of interest was a fruit quiz between Eastcote and the Ruislip and District Society.

Another strong section of the Society was that of trading. This had enabled the Society to bulk purchase items such as lime and fertilizers for resale to members at advantageous prices and had been of great benefit during the war when shortages were liable to arise. This service was extended to cover seed potatoes, tomato plants, chrysanthemums and other bedding plants as the years progressed. In the earlier years there were trading liaison officers in all roads where there were more than five members living. It was also normal custom for order forms for specific items to be distributed with the Bulletin. In the early Fifties there were two trading centres - the Control Tip, Field End Road and The Cottages, Joel Street. In 1954 the local authority served notice that use of these centres would have to terminate but they offered the Society the present plot of land adjoining the Community Centre in Southbourne Gardens. Plans for a new building were prepared and an appeal made for £500 to meet the overall cost. By December the building had been erected but there was still a severe shortfall in funds - £240 still to be raised. The new hut was opened in May 1955 but the remainder of the money had to be met with draws, raffles and sales as well as from members.

Before departing from trading, readers may be interested to note some of the prices of plants being offered by the Trading Secretary in 1954:-

Chrysanthemums 7d (3.5p) each  
Bedding Plants 5/6d (27.5p) a box of 60 plants  
Coltness Dahlias and Salvias 6/6d (32.5p) a box of 24 plants  
Zinnias 6/6d (32.5p) a box of 30 plants  
Tomato Plants 6/-d (30p) a dozen plants - all ex 3.5" pots  
Charge for boxes 6d (2.5p) extra. Returnable at centres.

Remember, however, that average weekly earnings at that time ranged from £7 to £14 weekly (£350 to £700 pa) with the larger proportion of the population towards the lower figure.

One of the continuing functions of the Society was to stage shows whereby members could exhibit the results of their increasing expertise and provide the opportunity to demonstrate to others what could be achieved by the ordinary member of the Society who made use of the knowledge which was becoming available to all. In his articles in the Eastcote Residents Association publication 'Aerial', Mr Cranefield, the current Chairman pointed out that the Society mounted five shows a year - Spring, Summer, Autumn, Fruit, Late Chrysanthemum. The Summer Show was normally held in Eastcote House grounds in marquees and the other shows at Newnham and Field End Schools. The schools had only been completed in 1952 so the Society was fortunate to have new venues in the developing area of south Eastcote.

The Summer Show was a major event, not only in the Society's calendar, but also for the community at large. Admission was by programme purchaseable in advance or at the gate as the Society endeavoured to make the Show pay for itself or crate a profit. One cannot do better than quote from an article in the Bulletin of September 1951 written by J H Mitchell a vice president, local councillor and great supporter of all things associated with Eastcote:-

"Whilst the Society regards this annual show as its greatest advertisement, a large section of the public regards it also as Eastcote's best outdoor social event. The many sideshows and children's entertainment added to the family character of an event which was described by a newcomer among the judges as being in every way delightful and in keeping with all the traditions of English countryside life".

It is very pleasing to read this tribute especially as the same Bulletin reports that the Show could have been a disaster as the marquees were not delivered until the Friday rather than the Thursday and this was only overcome by members taking time off work to set up the Show. They were rewarded by a record attendance.

The 1956 show attracted 692 entries with a wide range of exhibits including 10 entries for the new 'Peace' rose class. There were 18 entries in the Pansy class and 53 entries in the Fruit classes including 22 in the Novice classes. There were supporting trade and honorary exhibits from Farmer & Sons of Ashford and Wilders of Rayners Lane showing cacti, from Regal Florists of Ruislip, Athletic and Social Section of Lancashire Dynamo and Crypto, Woodmans of Pinner, Eastcote Nurseries, L W Peacock of Ruislip, Eastcote Women's Institute, the Parks Department of Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council and A R Holness (Fruit

Group Secretary). A point of interest from that show was that Mr Philip Stagg won rose bushes entries in three Novice classes and at the 1959 show a Master Gerald Edwards gained an award in the Childrens classes.

Members of the Society also distinguished themselves either individually or as group members. The Rose Group won the Franklin Dennison Challenge Bowl at the National Rose Society Summer Show in 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958; in 1954 it was reported that the Society had entered an exhibit since 1946 at the RHS Fruit Show for the Affiliated Societies Challenge Cup and had been first on three occasions and second six times; it was won again in 1955, 1957 and 1959; the Sweet Pea Group staged an exhibit at the RHS show in Brussels in 1953. Individuals included Howard Crane who published a book in 1952 on 'Violas, Pansies and Violettas'. The Veitch Memorial Medal for "those who have helped in the advancement and improvement of the science and practice of horticulture" was awarded annually by the RHS and that came to him in 1955 for his work on "The Fruit Garden Displayed". In 1959 Bertram Park was noted as being unique as an amateur hybridist who had two of his own introduced varieties of rose awarded Gold Medals at the same National Show - 'June Park' and 'Lady Zia'. He was also awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour by the RHS in the same year.

The Society also organised a variety of social events for members. In 1950 and 1951 New Year's Parties and Supper Dance were held at Kerswell's Palm Court Ballroom (now the site of Budgens). Dinner Dances Were held in 1953 and 1954 the venue having been changed to the Clay Pigeon in Field End Road. A social was held at the Community Centre in 1956 and a Garden Party was held at St Catherine's Farm in 1957. An Xmas social was held in 1958. By the end of the 1950s there was less support for these events which may illustrate that Eastcote society was now settled down after the war years and did not need to have entertainment made for it. Alternatively, the decreasing demand may show the competition coming into people's lives through the medium of television.

To be continued in the next issue.

*Ron Edwards*  
*November 1993*



# THE HISTORY OF EHS

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## EASTCOTE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY A SHORT HISTORY

### PART 3

#### The 1960's

People have varying memories of the 1960s — for some they were 'swinging', for others a period of change in economic patterns and social life. Wartime conditions were 15 years in the past; to many, houses were becoming a base rather than a target to be achieved; the 'Do It Yourself' movement was really taking off in home improvement. Use of leisure time was becoming of greater importance with car ownership and holidays abroad being more readily available. Many young people were looking for extended education opportunities or occupational training. These changing social patterns had their effect on voluntary organisations — not least the Eastcote Horticultural Society. As we shall see, it was to become the common plea that the majority of members were not prepared to take on offices and jobs when there was need.

The Horticultural Society was fortunate in having strong personalities as officers and backbone during this period of change. Bertram Park OBE, VHM, an eminent nationally known rosarian, sometime President and Vice-President of the National Rose Society, was the Eastcote President through the 60s. Living at the Old Shooting Box in Eastcote High Road he had large grounds in which to develop his chosen interest not only in its planting out but also in propagation of new species. I have mentioned in the previous instalment of the creation of 'Lady Zia' and 'June Park'. He was generous with his opening of his gardens to Society members and to others. Under his tutelage budding demonstrations were given and Rose Evenings were initiated with entries for judging and informative talks. The decade opened with J W G Clarke as Chairman and ended with P H Stag in that office. Donald Hall was General Secretary, L J Morrell Rose Group Secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Ward Sweet Pea Group, R B Stickler Chrysanthemum and A R Holness Fruit.

1960 saw the unfortunate loss of T G Morris, who died whilst inspecting fruit trees at the Store. He had been a founder member of the Society, had been on the Executive Committee and Chairman of the Fruit Group for many years. He had also been a regular contributor to the Bulletin. His library of books on fruit were presented to the Society by Mrs. Morris. The 1960s were to witness other losses of long time valued members either through death, retirement or

removal from the district but membership, which in 1960 was nearly 1200, continued around this level throughout the decade reaching just over 1300 by April 1969.

Society Shows had varied success. The 1959 Summer Show at Eastcote House had been a financial catastrophe due to high cost of hiring marquees and tents. This factor together with the amount of volunteer labour required led to the decision to abandon this as a future Show setting. The new Field End and Newnham schools in the south of the district became available as venues and could be hired for 'educational purposes' at reduced rent. This meant that there would be no shows held in the north of the district but the majority of members did live in the south. Normally there were five Shows each year — Spring in April, Summer in July, Autumn in September, Fruit in October and Chrysanthemum in November. Additionally, together with the Ruislip Central Society a Joint Rose Show had been introduced in 1959 in the Great Barn at Ruislip in June. Specialist groups within the Society also endeavoured to have competitive exhibits, on behalf of the Society, at the National Rose Society Show and the RHS Fruit and Vegetable Show.

The number of entries at the Society's Shows was occasionally disappointing as were the attendances. Support for the specialist group entries was also sparse at times bringing remonstrations to the wider membership from Society officers and Group Chairmen. This led to accusations by some that people were only joining the Society to take advantage of the cheap trading facilities offered to members and counter accusations by others that the Society was not set up to satisfy the exhibition egos of other members. In spite of this ongoing discussion, the Society and members did, on average, achieve good results at the Society and National Shows. It is also noticeable that comments were often made that whilst regretting the non attainment of high level prizes the quality of flowers, fruit and vegetables was constantly improving.

Occasionally, there were contributions to the Bulletin from members giving their own view of the Society's purpose and functions. In November of 1960 a lengthy letter from E Houseman came as reply to an article by the Editor in September complaining about general lack of support from members for Society activities. The letter reproves the editor for being unfair to members, committees for not giving leadership to the total membership. The Editor — at that time F C H Witchell, later to become a member of the NRS national committee, replied in like vein but, alas, this written duel was not taken up by other members. That is until July of 1967 when W F Kennedy wrote in suggesting that if the main bulk of Society members joined for trading facilities rather than horticulture then the Society was failing those who joined for reasons of horticulture as it was acting as a gardening club rather than a horticultural society. He claimed that Gardening took precedence over Greenhouse Culture in show schedules.

The Kennedy letter produced some replies in the following September Bulletin. C M Older agreed with widening the range of classes within the Show schedules so as to include sections which would cater for those living in flats who grew pot plants and had bottle gardens and suggested that the content of children's classes could be widened. P F S Cartwright agreed that trading was an important activity and that membership would fall away if this activity were curtailed. He also

contended that Horticulture was supported by trading activities. He disputed the interpretation of Horticulture which he stated was 'the art of cultivating gardens'. E A McInnes expressed the same feelings regarding trading and horticulture but suggested the possibility of using trading profits to reintroduce the Eastcote House Summer Show. T P Hanson welcomed the idea of extending show schedules to include greenhouse plants and also suggested that members did not necessarily grow to show. "W M C W" took issue with some points raised. He contended that trading was good for the overall membership. He felt that the Society was correct in catering mainly for out-door gardeners and suggested that pot plant type classes were not well supported and that large commercial sales of pot plants did not necessarily produce a continuing interest by purchasers or recipients.

There were many comment during the 1960s about the extremes of weather experienced. An article reviewing the development of the Sweet Pea Group in October 1960 mentions the very wet summer — rain on 35 of 55 days after 1st July. In February 1961 it was recorded that 1960 had experienced the wettest Autumn for 100 years. The 1961 May/April issue spoke of the wettest autumn being followed by the wettest winter. The Combined Rose Show in 1962 was cancelled because the season was running 3/4 weeks late and members of the Societies concerned "were confident that they would not have a bloom of any kind to show". *(It might be suggested that gardeners are never satisfied as it was recorded that the 1961 Summer Show was held on the hottest day of the year causing some exhibits not to be at their best. RE)*. In 1962, also, the Autumn Show was well supported in spite of poor weather in preceding weeks. The 1963 Spring Show was deferred until the end of April because of earlier severe weather which might also affect trading. The Summer Show of the same year was the second wettest in the Society's history. Comments in the September Bulletin mentioned the Summer as having had weeks of cool cloudy weather without much rain but being very windy. 1963 also had a wet afternoon for the Fruit Show.

The 1964 February Bulletin records the weather variations over the previous two winters. The severity of the 1962/3 season was contrasted with the mildness of 1963/4 when roses were picked in December and on New Year's Day with marigolds, violets and pansies being in bloom. In January greenhouse fuschias were showing growth. 1964 experienced a very dry summer but 1965 had thick snow and bitter cold in early months. The Spring Show of 1965 was cancelled because of the weather and the late season. There were bad seasons also in Summer and Autumn of that year. However, the Rose season had been the longest for years with mixed vegetable crops but poor fruit yield. April 1966 was recorded as the wettest since 1945 and in 1967 the Combined Rose Show was cancelled due to lack of entries probably arising from a very severe late frost. Continuing weather problems in that year spoilt the visit to the Rose Trial Grounds and entries for the Autumn Show. Early winter of 1968 saw heavy snow on the ground with a very wet summer to follow.

In May 1966 it was recorded that Mr. J King was giving up the job of Trading Secretary after being involved in trading for 9 years. Throughout the rest of the year there were constant appeals for a replacement and the job was not filled until early 1967. The whole position became worrying to the Committee and they warned in September that further supplies for trading could not be ordered and

if the situation continued this could mean the end of the Society. Similarly in 1968 the last three shows of the year had to be cancelled due to the lack of a Show Secretary. In June 1969 Dave White volunteered to act as Show Secretary for that year's Summer Show. The unusual aspect of this was that David was only 15 years of age and was still attending Bourne School. He had been featured in an Editorial in the March 1969 Bulletin which spoke of his work looking after the greenhouse at the school and also of his regular help at the Trading Centre on Sundays. The query was raised as to whether he was the youngest Show Secretary in the British Isles.

A Grand Garden Competition was launched in 1969. 26 gardens were entered and a panel of judges viewed the entries at the appropriate times. The first prize for a back garden was won by Mrs. J E Joyce and that for a front garden by Mrs. Kathleen Dowsett.

So the not always smooth running 1960s came to an end with a surviving Society with an increased membership. Without doubt, the Officers and Committee had many problems to overcome and volunteer labour from a small minority was the saviour. Looking at the problems of weather, lack of volunteers for trading or showing and decrease in the number of Bulletin issues because of lack of contributions causes one to wonder whether anything really changes over the years!

Ron Edwards  
December 1994

# THE HISTORY OF EHS

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## EASTCOTE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY A SHORT HISTORY

### PART 4

#### The 1970's

Following the rather 'hit-and-miss' 1960s with their very variable weather conditions, the Society might have thought that the new decade would bring a promising return to the enthusiasms of the opening years. A quick reading through of the Bulletins reveals disappointment continuing especially in the opening half. Membership in April 1969 had been reported as 1300 plus but the Executive Report for 1970 showed a drop to 813. By the end of 1972 it had further decreased to 662 with a further drop in 1973 to 606. By the end of 1974 it recovered slightly to 621 with a good increase in 1975 to 748. This increase continued in 1976 to 800 but 1978 showed a slight decrease to 774 dropping again to 768 at the end of 1979 a 40% decrease over the ten-year period.

It was reported in the early 1970s that much congestion and inconvenience was caused by up to 50 members at a time truning up to the Trading Hut to renew their subscriptions and a new system whereby members were invited to send their subscription to one of eight delegated officials was introduced, renewal at the Hut only being available to "any member who is unable to help us by posting his subscription". This more efficient but slightly bureaucratic new method might not have appealed to all members. The new system operated through to 1976 when the number of recipient addresses had decreased to three and subscriptions were welcomed again at the Hut.

During the opening years of the decade Bertram Park was President of the Society, Philip Stagg Chairman, Donald Hall Secretary, A. J. Stevens Treasurer, F. R. Gardner Membership Secretary and David White Show Secretary. As the years passed by these officers changed with D. A. Webb taking over Chairmanship in 1972, Colin Spires succeeding as Treasurer in 1971 and then becoming Chairman in 1979. Other offices changed hands as years passed but Donald Hall remained as Secretary as did C. Dodds as Trading Secretary and L. J. Morrell as Bulletin Editor.

Regrettably, the Society lost valued past and present members through death, some of whom were of longstanding. Mrs. E. Morrell, wife of Vice-President John Morrell; Albert Jackson previously Show Secretary and Committee member; A. R. Holness, past exhibitor and committee member; F. H. J. Mead earlier a

valued General Secretary; W. C. Whiting; W. Clarke; A. Austin; A. W. Cranefield, Vice-President and organiser of the fund to erect the Trading Hut in Southbourne Gardens and C. Noel Dore of the Grange, Eastcote High Road a Vice-President since 1945 and stager of exhibitions of fruit at local and national Shows, all passed away in 1970. Mrs. Bertram Park, wife of the Society President; Howard Crane, previously President in 1948, fruit grower, writer and eminent and valued member of the Royal Horticultural Society died in 1971. Mr. Cadenhead who had been a great supporter of the Eastcote House Shows later retiring to Kent and Bertram Park, President and eminent rosarian died in 1972 the latter on Christmas morning. Bertram Park was a Vice-President of the Royal National Rose Society and was holder of the Dean Hole Medal and the Victoria Medal of Honour.

The death was reported in the November/December 1974 Bulletin of Miss Kingston who had just taken over the job of Membership Secretary. The death of H. F. Bouquet was announced in 1976. An early member of the Society he had served on the Show and Executive Committees and had done much at the Eastcote House Shows. 1977 saw the passing of R. Lore a valued helper and 1978 of Vincnet Croxson, one of the founder members in 1940. The same year witnessed the death of John Marshall, Chairman of the Fruit Group and in 1979 A. Stratton editor of the Bulletin between 1962 and 1967 passed on. Although a Society regularly replaces its members who are lost through moving or death with new talent it is particularly poignant to read of some of the aforementioned names as they gave so much to the Society in its early years both in inspiration and education.

As was pointed out in the last instalment, social behaviour patterns were changing with more emphasis on leisure pursuits away from home. There was also greater availability of vegetables and fruit of good quality and at reasonable prices in the growing number of supermarkets and less demand for allotments. In May 1970 J. Robson wrote into the Bulletin advising of vacant plots at the allotments in Lime Grove. He mentioned the neat drives and paths, the nice quiet houses on two sides. They bordered Warrender Park with the tall trees of the field with cows of Warrender House (*This would be High Grove and the cows were from one of the few private farmers still left in the district RE*). It was suggested that the quiet and tranquillity would appeal to keen gardeners. There was also a hut to keep tools with wheelbarrows and lawnmowers for the use of all.

Specialisation in the Society Shows became confined to a relatively small number of members. This was the period when Eastcote had joined with the Ruislip Central Horticultural Society to run a Combined Rose Show at the Great Barn in Ruislip each June. This had the support of members from the Society who were able to compete successfully against their neighbours. By the end of the Seventies Eastcote had withdrawn from being a sponsor although individual members continued to show there with reasonable rates of success. The Society was able to continue with four Shows annually — Spring, Summer, Autumn and Fruit. There were varying degrees of success in terms of quantity and quality at these but special comments were made from time to time when Shows were reviewed. The 1971 Summer Show was considered one of the best for many years with 98 extra entries over 1970. The weather clearly affected the number of entries in Shows and the Fruit Show of 1971 saw the Crane Cup being awarded for a



single dish of Ellison's Orange apples where normally it would have been awarded to a class for three cultivars. In July 1972 the Fruit Group report included the comment "Unfortunately the loss of some of our specialists, the gradual disappearance of the larger gardens and the pressure of other interests during recent years compels us to consider that the 'Group' as such is not fulfilling its purpose. . .".

In August 1972 it was noted that the support for Sweet Pea classes was below the level of earlier years. Individual members of the Society did well at the RHS Fruit and Vegetable Show in October 1972 but 'Pomologist' writing in the October/November Bulletin asked whether the time would come when "someone, somewhere in Eastcote Horticultural Society will arise from the ashes and initiate the rebirth of the EHS at the RHS?" Awakening interest in chrysanthemums and dahlias saw the rebirth of the Group in the Society specialising in those plants with strong Show entries from F. Perry and E. Mills. Higher fees to be paid for the use of School Halls prompted new ideas for improving the economics of Shows and 1975 saw the innovation of a plant stall being set up at each Show. Donations of plants from members were welcomed. In 1975 John Attwood, lecturer and judge was elected to the Council of the Royal National Rose Society. He also made great efforts to publicise the Society's Shows locally which it was suggested produced more entries and visitors at the Shows. The 1976 Summer Show was disappointing because of the weather with rose entries down which was regrettable as the year had been nominated 'Year of the Rose' by the RNRS to commemorate its centenary. The Sweet Pea entries were also down in the same Show only Colin Spires finding enough blooms to enter the ordinary classes.

Trading continued to satisfy members' requirements due to much voluntary effort on the part of Mr. Dodds and his helpers. They also continued to contribute strongly to the Society funds. The lease for the Trading Centre site expired in September 1975 and was renegotiated for a further 21 years but at a much higher rental. New fencing was fitted to the entrance side and improved interior lighting. A break-in saw the loss of about £40 of stock and necessitated new precautionary measures. A new venture arose from the Fruit Group whose secretary J. Beale arranged for bulk purchases of one year old 'maidens' from three leading nurseries enabling members to purchase these at £1.50 each for quince, apples and pears with plum stock at about £1.80. These prices were about 50% of normal retail prices and the hope was that members would be enabled to develop their own fruit collections at reasonable prices. In September 1977 a list of 32 varieties of apples, pears, cherry, plums, peaches, apricots and quince were notified as being available from November at prices ranging from £1.70 to £3.20 for peaches and apricots. During 1978 180 dwarf fruit trees were provided through this scheme raising contributions to Society funds and to various national and international charities.

The Bulletin had continued to be produced under the eye of L. J. Morrell, but in February 1974 the Editor announced that "the Executive Committee thought that owing to rising costs in all directions we should reduce regular issues of the Bulletin. . . It is now felt that we should produce issues when circumstances demand it". This was an unfortunate move as successive issues had contained much information of horticultural interest and expertise as well as being an information broadsheet for all members. That February issue was numbered 313

which represented an exceptional record over the 30 odd years of the Society's existence. However, the contemporary circumstances of financial curtailment, lack of contributions from members and volunteers for distribution left little choice for the Committee.

Finances are always a problem for a voluntary society and can cause much heated discussion. This was certainly the case in November 1969 at a Special General Meeting called to consider the proposal to raise the annual subscription from 3/6 (17.5p) to 5/- (25p). There was much opposition reflected in many amendments put to the Meeting. However, after much heated discussion the increase was carried almost unanimously. By 1978 further increase had raised the annual subscription to 50p or 75p if members wished for Bulletins to be sent by post.

The final year of the decade showed a mixed level of success and advance for the Society. The Chairman's message for the year reflected on a good past year with marked improvement in the standard of shows and number of members coming forward to help when necessary. More talks of a general nature were planned; membership stood at 768 and the Trading Section continued to flourish to the benefit of all members. Volunteers were still needed in various areas. A new Show Secretary was required and the Ladies Section urgently needed more helpers. Among the years prize winners there were names of those who regrettably have passed from us but also names which are immediately recognisable among present members. In the Autumn and Fruit Shows the names of K. Moore, C. E. England and E. C. Mills appear with S. Arlott, C. F. Spires and G. H. Edwards. There were many other worthy members too numerous to mention by name who also in many ways assisted the growth and continuance of the Society through a period of radical social change and who enabled it to go forward into its fortieth year.

Ron Edwards  
January 1996

## THE HISTORY OF EHS

*In this the concluding part I would like to express my sincere thanks to Ron Edwards for his informative and interesting series of articles on the Eastcote Horticultural Society. Ed.*

### EASTCOTE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY A SHORT HISTORY PART 5 THE 1980'S AND 90'S

The 1980's were to encompass the so-called 'Thatcher' years that saw major swings in economic conditions, variations in the life and existence of individuals and institutions. Many more families had holidays abroad, often more than once a year. This affected their life style and intensive horticultural became confined to a smaller section of the population. There were major changes to old established industry, the birth came of the electronics revolution, there were wild swings in values of properties and, additionally, extremes of weather culminating in the hurricanes of Autumn of 1987 and January of 1990.

Membership of the Society continued to fall although there were some years when it showed an increase. The decade had commenced with the Society's membership at 758. By the end of 1982 it had fallen to 674 but with an increase to 707 by 1983. At the end of 1985 it had dropped to below 600 steadying off to the 500/ 600 level through to the present.

Finances remained in a satisfactory state with a good level of balances. The Trading Hut was the main contributor to the revenue of the Society that was able to look the world squarely in the face. However, some less attractive factors arose which caused concern to the Executive Committee and general membership. Costs of hiring accommodation for shows saw a considerable increase. Initially, this was heralded by an intimation in 1981 that rental charges for the use of School premises were to be drastically increased and this brought about a change of venue for the Autumn Show in that year to the British Legion Hall. This change of site was not very satisfactory but fortunately the Local Authority revised the charges they had announced and the Fruit Show returned to Newnham School. This worry, however, has remained with the Society ever since as there has been a continual increase in fees payable. Bulletin issues had been reduced, for economic reasons, the beginning of our period to a quarterly rather than a monthly distribution and this further decreased to an annual issue by 1992. This later decrease was not altogether due to economic factors but also arose from lack of contributions by members. In 1996 the membership fee was increased to £2 yearly, the first increase in many years.

The Trading Hut had been run by Cliff Dodds since the mid 1960's but he intimated his intention to retire in 1982. This was not an easy post to fill but Stan Arlott came to the Society's rescue and took over this rather demanding job. He continued until the end of 1992 in spite of holding the office of Chairman from 1985. From January 1993 Alan Thomas undertook the position of Trading Secretary. Normally the level of trading has been at a very satisfactory level but there have been ups and downs; this in spite of the considerable amount of voluntary work given by the Trading Secretaries and their helpers. From time to time warnings have been given about rising prices from suppliers. These have had an effect on sales but usually turnover has recovered, possibly from new lines introduced. In 1990 there was a comment that 'Tomoarite' was being sold at 10p dearer than Woolworth's price which, as the Secretary stated, was probably due to their large bulk purchases. At the same time, it was announced that shredded coconut husks were being stocked as a substitute for peat. This could be purchased with or without fertiliser added.

1990 was the Society's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the Executive Committee suggested some possible activities to note the occasion. The Bulletin of Summer 1989 invited members to approve, or otherwise, the ideas of a guided tour of Wisely Gardens with lunch in June and a separate Buffet Social Evening. By the next issue in the following Spring, it was announced that no real interest had been shown and these ideas were not proceeded with. It was agreed, however, that the President and Chairman would make a special award of a glass rose bowl at each of the Society's show to commemorate the jubilee. The Spring award went to Colin Spires for his impressive array of daffodil entries and the Summer award to Mrs Glynn in recognition of her cactus collection. At the Autumn show, the special award went to Stan Arlott for his display of spray chrysanthemums and the Fruit Show award to Gerald Edwards for his collection of fruit entries. Additionally, a Golden Sycamore was planted by Mrs Cross in November in the grounds of Eastcote House close to the tree planted for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Chairman and office bearers also entertained the Society's helpers to dinner at The Plough, Ruislip.

There was a varying level of success with the Society's shows throughout this period. The aim was to continue to hold four shows each year - Spring, Summer, Autumn and the Fruit Show. These depended, of course, on somebody dedicated enough to undertake the job of Show Secretary and all of the responsibility which that office required. In 1980 there were joint Secretaries, these being Miss L. Thomas and K. Moyle, but they were unable to continue and a Show Secretary was urgently sought. In 1981 it was agreed that the Spring and Summer Show would be organised by individuals on a "one-off" basis but the Autumn and Fruit Shows would be under threat. In this year the Society was fortunate in that they were able to get sponsorship for the shows from three commercial concerns which helped to

Offset increased costs. The Summer Show was arranged by the two brothers Gerald and Martin Edwards and from the Autumn Show Glen Andrews took over as Show Secretary. AI was well for the time being with additional outside publicity during 1982, which included a mention on Capital Radio. Although the number of entries in the shows varied according to the season there was good upward trend in quality of exhibits. In 1983 Glen Andrews retired as Secretary and Stan Arlott and Gerald Edwards took over the job until 1985 when Chris took over for seven years being succeeded in 1993 by Audrey Wright. Several of the shows over this period were visited by the Mayor and Mayoress of Hillingdon who usually also officiated at prize-giving.

The Society did well outside of its own shows. In 1986 an entry was made at the Royal Horticultural Society's Fruit Show for the Affiliated Societies' Challenge Cup which Eastcote won, beating Horsenden, Surbiton and Pinner. Philip Stagg supplemented this feat by contributing an article to the "Bulletin" outlining the history of the ward. Eastcote had first entered the competition in 1949 and won the cup on 9 occasions up to 1967. The Society have continued to enter for the ward with great success. Additionally, individual members of the Society have entered their own exhibits at the Show and have gained a variety of high level awards. The Society have also been strong supporters of the Middlesex County Show often winning the Jubilee Award which is given to the Society achieving the most first prizes in the horticultural sections. In 1990, after some encouragement by Stan Arlott, a small body of members entered an exhibit in the National Dahlia Society's Annual Show. A good entry was submitted gathered from around 600 plants but was unable to achieve superiority over the specialist societies who were also showing.

Regrettably, the Society suffered from a number of deaths over the period of consideration. As well as valuable ordinary members who have departed in this way there has been a disappearance of many long service members who included founder or very early members. These have included H. Gilbert, a founder member, T. G. Cross, President; K.E. Moore Fruit specialist; L. J. Morrell, Vice President, Rose specialist, Bulletin Editor; M. Michaels, road steward and helper at the Hut; HC. Tingay, Vice President and early exhibitor; E. J. White, Vice President, Fruit grower and specialist; J. Page, one time Treasurer and Auditor; Mrs M. Thompson, Membership Secretary; Mrs. M. Dodds, assisted her husband Cliff at the Trading Hut; W. S. Kesteven, A.L. Bridge and C. A. Crouch, road stewards; C. E. (Pop) England, Fruit specialist and exhibitor, in his 99<sup>th</sup> year; G. Burnell, Vice President and Trading Hut; J. Hardy, founder member and County Advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture; Mrs E. England, widow of 'Pop' and exhibitor; C. Dodds, Vice President, Trading Hut Secretary for 16 years and exhibitor; E. C. Mills, Vice President and Chrysanthemum specialist; Mrs D. Ward, Vice President and Sweet Pea specialist.

This short series of snapshot views of the Society's history has sought to illustrate how a body of citizens with a common interest can bring pleasure, instruction and achievement, not only to themselves, but also to the community at large. Individuals have been able to develop an expertise in their personal interest area, not only through their own efforts, but also because of the unstinting support that is given by a variety of their fellow members who have given up a considerable part of their own leisure time in voluntary support as Officers, committee members, organisers, secretaries, Bulletin editors and contributors, donors, makers of refreshments and helpers in a variety of tasks - all unpaid. We have seen how necessity brought together the 'founding fathers' and how their 'offspring' have tried to emulate and excel within the same discipline and we can see that the future is bright for continuation in the same fields which can only be of value to themselves, their successors and the Community at large. If I may be permitted a personal observation I would point to the brothers, Gerald and Martin Edwards, who have each excelled in growing and exhibiting; who have each achieved the level of County Judges and in the case of Gerald, Vice Chairmanship of the Royal Horticultural Society's Fruit Group and Judge at their Fruit Shows. Whilst descended from past President Howard H. Crane, who was also an amateur national champion fruit grower and exhibitor, writer and RHS judge, they have developed through the Society with the encouragement and technical assistance of fellow members, and in the case of Gerald, with the support of his wife Chris. To me, this validation of the purpose and work of the Society.

*Ron Edwards*  
*January, 1997*