

Member Newsletter #2: Winter 2016



A very Happy Christmas
and New Year

From all of us at The Dartington Hall Trust

Image: Dartington Hall Gardens Office in snow. Taken by Leonard Elmhirst, 16 Dec 1967

Welcome

Thank you for being a Member in 2016 and for your support of The Dartington Hall Trust as we seek to develop a long-term vision around a 'many-sided life' here.

In this winter issue, you'll find lots of warmth in the interviews with Members Wendy and Dawn and more than a touch of humour in the events we've lined up for 2017. Biodynamics, bookbinding, gardening, the world of wool and unicorns, anyone? And let's not forget the archive film showcase coming up in January.

At this time of year, our Gardens need lots of TLC and we hope you will consider responding to our seasonal Appeal to keep them looking special for all to enjoy all year round.

As always, we love hearing from you and welcome your feedback. This way we can continue to improve our communication

and tailor content and events to your interests. Please email your thoughts to membership@dartington.org

With every good wish to you for Christmas and the New Year.

In this newsletter:

Support our Gardens this festive season. With winter well and truly having taken up residence on our estate, you might be forgiven for thinking not much happens in the Gardens this time of year – but there's always something enchanting to discover.



New Member Events for 2017. Take a look at our new programme of Member Conversations. Plus, Members have not one but **two archive film showcases** to look forward to in 2017, thanks to some seriously hard work behind the scenes.



Member interviews. And we are also doubling up on our interviews, with both biodynamics devotee Wendy E Cook and wool merchant Dawn Riggs sharing their stories – and some surprises en route. Don't miss the chance to meet them in person at our events!



Utopia revisited. Members and guests turned out in force to see the **Dartington Playgoers'** production of *Inventing Utopia*, which paid homage to the visionary Elmhirsts.



Support our Gardens this festive season

With winter well and truly having taken up residence on our estate, you might be forgiven for thinking not much happens in the Gardens this time of year...

But take a look around you and you'll see that even in this coldest of seasons, everywhere remains open and there is always something enchanting to discover.

Our gardens team are a hardy bunch and you'll see them out and about braving the elements to sweep away the many

thousands of fallen leaves – keeping lawns clear and preventing grass from dying. They'll also be planting up trees and preparing the gardens for spring and summer flowering. Paths will be gritted after rain to stop them becoming slippery. And those benches that we all enjoy sitting on in warmer weather? They'll receive a scrub and a spruce.



Frost near St Mary's Tower

As a charity, Dartington relies on support from grants and donations from people like you to help us to protect and restore our Grade 2* listed Gardens all year round – so that they remain open and free for you to enjoy.

To keep our Gardens looking special, please will you **make a donation** this winter?

- Amazing! Did you know the team collect and clear over 400 trailer loads of leaves each year?
- **Read how a spot of weeding to a backdrop of Handel's Messiah makes Dartington a very pleasant place to be for our head gardener Ian Gilbert**

New Member events for 2017

Members have not one but two archive film showcases to look forward to in 2017 thanks to some seriously hard work behind the scenes.

Following the unqualified success of our **first showcase** and a taster of films to come shown at the Annual Members Meeting in September, The Barn Cinema has announced details of two further screenings. The next is below, and a third showcase is also waiting in the wings. We'll let you know when it's ready to fly. Both events are eligible for your **Members discount**.

How to book

Select an event to book online, or contact our Box Office (open daily 12.30 – 7pm).

Phone: **01803 847070**

boxoffice@dartington.org

Did you know?

The Barn Cinema team recently scooped the national **Screen Awards' Première of the Year** (relevant to 99 sites or under) held in London in October for their work on the Dartmoor Killing film, which had a wonderfully atmospheric launch on Dartmoor itself back in September 2015.

Plus...

Members Lunch at the new Café

We'll be putting together a special lunch offer for Members to help us celebrate the opening NEXT SPRING of our new café at the top of the estate.

This was the place occupied by our Visitor Centre for the last few years. The building is now undergoing major repairs and a refit. It's a truly exciting development and we'll be releasing further information as plans take shape.

We'll let you know in good time this special lunch date and hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Members Meeting in 2017 – ideas welcome!

Thank you to all who attended the annual get-together in September and for contributing such positive feedback. We are now looking at dates and considering a programme for next year. This is your opportunity to tell us what you might like to see and do! While we can't make specific promises, we'll do our best to incorporate popular ideas into our planning. Email membership@dartington.org by 9 January. Thank you.

Member interview: Wendy E Cook

Three interesting things about yourself

My life with Peter Cook. My life studying Rudolf Steiner. My love of the planet and her peoples. I was also the first person to give John Lennon garlic. [OK, we can't blame you for extending this to four...]

Dartington in three words

Truth. Beauty. Innovation.

Favourite place on the Dartington estate

The ancient yews and the Japanese Meditation Garden.

Favourite event on the Dartington calendar

Community Choir events and films.

How long a Member and what made you decide to join?

Can't remember... but I recently rejoined when Rhodri became CEO.

A memory of Dartington worth sharing

Simon Rattle having black hair and conducting a new Benjamin Britten opera in the late 1950s.

Dartington is keen to develop a 'many-sided life'. What does that mean to you personally?

That it is an example of truth, beauty and inclusiveness.

If Dartington were a cake you could bake or a dish you could cook, what would it be (and why)?

Bouillabaisse - because it has everything (nearly) in it.

Ways in which you'd like to get more involved with Dartington

I hope I'll be involved in the developing Huxhams Cross Biodynamic Farm and the new café opening in 2017 at the top of the estate.

Ideas for future Member events

Walks in the Gardens and learning names of plants and trees. Themed meals and themed topics of discussion.



Wendy E Cook: one of her favourite portraits of self

Could this be you?

We are always on the lookout for Members with interesting stories to tell, memories to share about Dartington past or thoughts about Dartington present and future. If this sounds like you, please email membership@dartington.org and make us an offer we can't refuse.

Member interview: Dawn Riggs

Three interesting things about yourself

For some years I lived in a 12th century priory and managed the restoration with authentic materials made by craftsmen eg lime render to replace modern, blacksmith-made candle sconces, beeswax candles, replica medieval tiles. I then researched the history of plant introductions to this country, in order to design and plant an acre of garden, ultimately opening to the public for tours of the 28 different historical areas. I then opened The Priory as a guest house with tea rooms and Shakespeare on the lawn events. I ran textile courses and opened a textile garden all within The Priory.



I have given talks/lectures and demonstrations/workshops in primary schools, National Trust properties and at The Eden Project, on subjects ranging from the history of natural fibres and their uses, edible flowers, the history of the spice routes, and the history of embroidery samplers.

Before living in The Priory I lived in a 14th century manor house where I organised celebrations of the seasons, the main one being wassails where I would prepare authentic medieval food for a banquet. My involvement in Morris dancing and folk music meant we had many wonderful entertainments, Mummers Plays and fire juggling, blazing torches and maidens in the orchards.

Dartington in three words

Past. Present. Future.

Favourite place on the Dartington estate

The wild parts of the gardens in autumn, for the colours in the leaves.

Favourite event on the Dartington calendar

Ceilidh in The Great Hall. The music, the fun and all ages enjoying dancing together.

How long a Member and what made you decide to join?

I only joined last month as I've just moved my wool business into The Shops at Dartington. I very much want to get involved and know what is happening.

A memory of Dartington worth sharing

When I was a child, I remember my father (who was a photographer) having the job of photographing a stunning cake of Dartington Hall and the surrounding buildings. I was very young so it must have been in the 1960s. The cake was so detailed I was awestruck, as was he.

Dartington is keen to develop a 'many-sided life'. What does that mean to you personally?

To me it means a combination of all my passions: gardening and walking in the woods, both of which connect me to the land; cooking which nourishes the body; creative crafts which nourish the soul; dancing and music for fun and social interaction. All of these diverse activities connect through from their historic beginnings to help understand the world as it is today, and are all linked to the land.

If Dartington were an item you could knit, what would it be (and why)?

The garment I would choose would be a hat. My reasons ... a hat is the earliest extant item of knitting found so far. The

style of the basic knitted hat has hardly changed over thousands of years from the earliest times to the modern beanie. Originally fashioned from wool, it has been used as protection from the cold and, in other forms, to protect from the sun's heat. The type of hat a person chooses to wear can indicate their standing in society and can be changed to suit a job or pastime. To wear a different hat in modern parlance is to take on a different role or show different aspects of oneself. A hat can save the life of a homeless person on the street, be the height of fashion at Ascot or indicate official rank. If the hat fits, wear it. (If it doesn't, your tension was wrong.)



The Wool Merchant

Ways in which you'd like to get more involved with Dartington

I have felt a connection with Dartington all my life, and at difficult times it has come to my rescue more than once. I have watched from a distance knowing I felt a connection but not knowing what that connection meant. Now having gone through traumatic times in my personal life I feel that the time has come to put the lessons I have learned at the disposal of the Trust in their times of change. Ultimately I would like to live and work within Dartington. My business has now opened at The Shops and I shall be running workshops and classes and cooperating with the multi-faceted evolving estate that is Dartington.

For a long time I have had a desire to show people how plants through the ages have been used for food medicine, clothing, art, craft, design and travel. To create a garden which shows a walk through time, with every century's introduction beginning with our native plants, and ending with the way we can get back to an understanding of natural materials to a world with no need or desire for using man made materials.

Ideas for future Member events

A series of seasonal celebrations throughout the year, choosing the traditions of different folk cultures to connect with the natural way we have always marked the changing seasons.

Our Living Community

A host of brilliant and diverse businesses and individuals make the Dartington estate special. And we're taking a look at them through short features that will soon become part of an online feature on the website in early 2017. But Members can take a sneak peek before we go live.

Head Gardener Ian Gilbert: 'A very pleasant place to be'

Our head gardener Ian Gilbert has been at Dartington since 2004 when he joined on a year's contract. He arrived just at the start of Summer School, at that time under Artistic Director Gavin Henderson.

He says: 'I was working in the private garden and the Dartington Community Choir was practising. From my point of view, weeding the border in a private garden when someone is singing Handel's Messiah is a very pleasant place to be.'



Head Gardener, Ian Gilbert

'I hadn't been there very long when Kate Caddy (former Trustee and granddaughter of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst) came out and asked me how I was. People here seemed to go out of their way to ask how you were - quite unusual. I was sitting in the little gardeners' mess on the great lawn with my Tottenham Hotspurs mug when I first bumped into Vaughan [Lindsay] who said he too was a Spurs supporter.'

How did Ian start out in gardening? When he left school he describes his options as: being car mechanic, working for a glass company in Plymouth or taking an apprenticeship in a nursery. After opting for the latter, he gained a National Certificate in Horticulture at Pershore College in Worcester. He then returned to his family in Devon following a family bereavement and spent the next 17 years at Endsleigh Garden Centre, Ivybridge. Ian helped to build up the small family business to what it is today. After a stint in a garden centre in Cornwall, he returned to Endsleigh but 'it had kind of lost its appeal by then: it had got too big'. He was just thinking of becoming self-employed when he saw the job ad for The Dartington Hall Trust.

While the Elmhirsts had unlimited resources to create a large garden and team to maintain and develop it, the picture is very different today. Ian says: 'In the time I've been here, the gardens team has always been trimmed to the bone. I'm trying to make people aware that we're only a small team and there's an awful lot to do to maintain the garden to the standard that everyone expects. There are things people do that just add to our workload. The lawn area in particular takes a battering over the year. Poor drainage and waterlogging are now a real problem, so asking people not to use the area in winter is not being dictatorial but helping to give the lawn areas time to recover.'

'The other obvious areas are the terraces: everyone is tempted to climb up and down them, but the more this happens the more holes appear and this makes maintaining and cutting them with a Flymo more dangerous. The machines tip over which is not a pleasant experience for the staff member using it.'

'Community Day can be very challenging... You want the visitors to have a good time, but you've also got one eye on looking after the garden. The garden plays a large part in all that happens here and it's important that we can all enjoy the space. Hopefully with the help of the existing and potentially new interpretation boards that give a better understanding of the garden's heritage, then staff and visitors alike will value and respect all the garden has to offer.'

'The job I do is quite stressful and I think as a manager you're only as good as the people you work with. I am fortunate to have a very hard-working team of people around me who are intelligent, knowledgeable, committed and happy to make their own decisions. So it's important I give them every opportunity to use their initiative. They are a really important part of how I do my job, and that goes for the volunteers, too.'

Ian's hopes for the future are that The Trust will develop areas for events and facilities on the wider estate, such as the land around Aller Park, which he believes lends itself to recreation, a café area, shops and can help encourage outdoor activities offered by Dynamic Adventures. He says: 'My wider hope for Dartington is that we can find and settle on an identity that can last well beyond the next five years.'

- The Trust is looking to establish a new future direction for the Gardens. Watch this space.

Obituary

Marianne de Trey (1913-2016)

Many of our Members shared our sadness in learning of the passing of renowned potter Marianne de Trey on 18 October at the age of 102.

Marianne's association with Dartington started way back in 1947 when she and her husband - potter and surrealist painter Sam Haile - established a pottery at Shinnars Bridge in the same studio originally designed for Bernard Leach. (Today this is the home of The **Re-Store**). Despite tragically losing her husband in 1948 in a car accident, Marianne ran the studio until her retirement in 1985 and actually continued her pottery to the ripe old age of 90 after moving to smaller premises nearby.

Long-time members of staff reflected on her astonishing modesty. 'Unless you knew what Marianne did, you wouldn't know she was this incredibly skilled potter - she didn't mention it. You'd just see loads of the tiny pottery items she made in later years on her shelves... In losing Marianne, we've lost part of Dartington's history.'



Marianne De Trey on her 100th birthday

Read what was posted by:

- [The Guardian](#)
- [The Daily Telegraph](#)

Inventing Utopia revisited

Members and guests turned out in force to see the **Dartington Playgoers'** production of Inventing Utopia, which paid homage to the visionary work of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst.

Some 120 of you bought tickets for the play which premièred to full houses over five days in November. By attending, you directly supported one of Devon's leading amateur theatre groups at their new 'home' in Studio 31 on the Dartington Hall estate. Thank you for your support.



Altogether now: scene from the Elmhirsts-inspired play

'With a cast ranging from 14 to very mature and of varying musical and performance abilities, this was an ambitious undertaking,' said Rachel Williams, the Community Outreach Officer at Dartington. 'As a member of the cast, I found it to be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences of the last 12 months. Watching the energy of the **KEVICC** students, experiencing the friendliness of the Playgoers and the making of new and lifelong friends was a true gift.'

External reviews have also been positive. 'This was an uplifting production, marking 70 years since the foundation of Dartington Playgoers, and showing what can be achieved with a tight script, an enthusiastic cast and a knowledgeable director,' ran the review in Totnes Times. 'Utopia? Yes, it was!'

- Have you attended a film/concert/other event on the estate? We'd love to share your verdict with other Members - send your reviews to membership@dartington.org

New Visitor Centre



Have you checked out the 'new' Visitor Centre yet? We are now in a stunning new setting at Lower Gatehouse (opposite the Barn Cinema under the archway near Dartington Hall.)

The place is looking pretty festive at the moment with Christmas hampers, gifts and stocking fillers galore. That last-minute present could have your name on it. The usual 10% discount applies to Members so do pop in!

- In 2017 we will be looking at how to improve accessibility into the centre, provide a richer interpretation of the Dartington story and take care of essential repairs on this incredible listed building. We will build a case for support to shape a proposed bid for major funding.

Open from 9.00am – 5.00pm, 7 days a week, excluding Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Tel 01803 847514; email info@dartington.org

The Coroner comes to Dartington

The BBC's daytime crime drama The Coroner reappeared on TV screens in November.

The show soon found an appreciative audience, but well before then Dartington Hall had welcomed the production team who had their offices here on the estate.



Eagle-eyed viewers might have glimpsed parts of the estate in the first series but this season Dartington Hall takes a lead role on screen in the episode **Perfectly Formed** (22 November) where it masquerades as the Gower Estate, the stately home of one of the characters. If you missed it, you can still catch it on [BBC iplayer](#) until late December, or [read the script \(pdf\)](#).

Related links:

- [On the trail of BBC1 crime drama The Coroner in South Devon – Radio Times](#)
- [Series two of BBC drama The Coroner begins filming in South Devon – Herald Express](#)

Dartington round and about

Some of the intriguing, nostalgic and interesting articles published online – old or new. This time we've pulled out ones on Dartington Hall, the School and the Summer School of Music. Happy reading!

- [Tales of a Ricardian Traveler – Debunking a Myth at Dartington Hall](#)
- [Power of Place: Showcasing work by ex-staff and pupils of Dartington Hall School.](#)
- Sanctuary: [A pictorial history of Dartington Summer School of Music by Harriet Cunningham](#) published by [unbound.com](#)

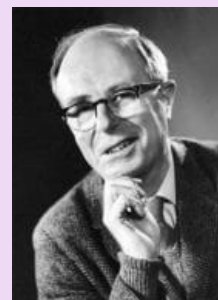
Disclaimer: Interesting and provocative though they may be, these are third party posts and Dartington is not responsible for views and opinions expressed therein nor for associated content on the webpages they sit on.

A trip down memory lane

In every newsletter, we plunge into our rich history section of the site and emerge with a hidden gem.

And since we'll be travelling to the Galapagos with David Lack in our **next Archive Film Showcase**, let's take a closer look at the great man himself.

Lack is best known for 'The Life of the Robin' – a tome which was, and 60 years later still is, the most influential and comprehensive book written on the bird that has become one of Britain's emblems.



[Read David Lack's biography here](#)

Dartington

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with a **new story**

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**“Dartington is not one thing,
but a complex unity of activities.”**

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