



guilhelmus Turner

WELLS OLD DEANERY GARDEN PROJECT

The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset BA5 2UG

newsletter

10th Anniversary of the ODG Project 2003-2013

ISSUE TWENTY FOUR AUTUMN/WINTER 2013

New Plants for the Old Deanery Garden

Marie Addyman has sent us some more plants of her own cultivation, which while not specifically described by Turner, are documented as being known in the mid-16th century. They are: *Bellis perennis* 'Flore pleno', the Elizabethan double daisy, which we have tried before not very successfully; better luck this time. *Plantago rosularis*, the spectacular double green rose plantain, reputed in the 16th century to keep away the poisonous serpent; and two forms of *Silene dioica*, the campion, selected and bred from Northumbrian colonies which Turner would probably have seen although he did not write about them: one is *Silene dioica* 'Innocence', a brilliant magenta red; the other is *Silene dioica* 'Stella', pale salmon pink with black anthers. They have proved floriferous, long-lasting and tough, and we look forward to seeing how they perform here in the garden. All these plants have been firmly 'mariefied' – a term

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ODG Friends Winter Event

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Did Turner Celebrate Christmas?

**Saturday 23rd November,
10.30am-12pm, Old Deanery**



devised by Marie's friends in Northumberland: given a very short, professional back-and-sides by Marie, to encourage root development. More about them in the spring.

In addition, during the Turner Weekend, Marie was passing Glenholme Herbs stall in Wells Market on her way to the Old Deanery on Saturday, and spotted a very healthy *Galega officinalis*, Goat's Rue, for sale. Being Marie, she knew it was a Turner plant without having to look up the book or the database first, to check on it! And she generously bought it for us

on the spot. Angela is pondering the correct place to put it, as although small and enthusiastic-looking now, it can apparently grow to a considerable size. More about this, too, and Turner's observations on it, in due course.

Thank you, Marie, for your plantswoman's skill and your generosity. *FN.*

Thank You

to everyone for the most generous and totally unexpected gift of garden tokens which our patron Janet Fookes presented to me at the end of our successful and highly enjoyable William Turner Weekend. It could not have happened without the magnificent support and teamwork of the ODG team of helpers, up-front and behind the scenes. The fact that we are volunteers and obviously enjoy doing what we do, was one of the things that clearly impressed our outside visitors. I certainly found it enormously enjoyable, albeit hard work; I hope all of you did too. I did not have time, in the run-up to the Turner Weekend, to look at the plant and bulb catalogues that, tantalisingly, chose just those weeks to arrive; now I am making up for lost time and having a delightful session browsing and choosing, thanks to your present.

Frances

A card from Dr Marie Addyman after the Turner Weekend addressed to The Friends of the ODG:

Dear friends –

Many, many congratulations on your professional, stimulating & joyous weekend event.

And thank you for your kindness & hospitality to myself – especially for my apron!

With best wishes & affection,

Marie

William Turner in Wells

A balmy, gentle, English early autumnal Sunday: warmth still in the sun; leaves still on the trees; summer's colours not yet gone. A perfect day for visiting a garden. Peering at woad, even kneeling to peruse lady's bedstraw, inhaling perfume from fennel and sage. Strolling to every corner of the garden, from lion's-head fountain to cathedral view. Although a group, more than forty people spreading out, perambulating, quietly filling all the garden. Photographing, of course. And, sotto voce but not over-reverently, chatting, chatting, chatting...

We are, of course, in the Old Deanery Garden and, almost rather sadly, a memorable weekend is drawing to its conclusion. Frances Neale explains how not so long ago – a mere ten years – this had been no more than an early twentieth century shrubbery that had been lacking in TLC, and how it was the site of Dr William Turner's garden; moreover, how it may well have been his personal and private garden (the present entry from the street is a modern addition).



It was only slowly that these good folk from Durham to Devon and from Cardiff to Kent left the garden, all commenting that it looked in good heart, and returned to the Bradfield Room to hear, briefly, from Sylvia Hanks and Marianne Adams, with some telling photos, how this transformed garden had come into being: how, as part of a Wells in Bloom Festival, the garden had been briefly open to the public and how, up to a point, it had disappointed. Although very interested to pass through, probably for the first time, that doorway and see what was behind that impressive wall, people had not then found much to interest them. But a select few saw the fascination this spot could hold, and with the unlocking of that door came the unlocking of an energy to revive a significant and influential garden.

That new impetus had been generated in 2003, and it was this tenth anniversary of the project that had attracted so many to the Old Deanery for the weekend of 28–29 September by way of celebration; this, and the opportunity to hear top-ranking speakers, and to experience some rather special visits to the Wells and the Cathedral that, around 1550–1560, Turner would have known.

It had all kicked-off on the Saturday morning with a keynote illustrated talk by distinguished landscape historian and archaeologist, and author of *Somerset Parks and Gardens*, James Bond. The religious turmoil of Turner's time was James' starting point, before he pointed out that it was also a time of change in gardens. The medieval tradition was still influential, but the shifts emanating from the Renaissance and the Reformation were being witnessed. The celebration of art over nature was a growing concept, and James ranged far from Somerset gardens by way of illustration. We saw, for instance, Villa d'Este, Villa Lante and Villa Medici, with their elaborate use of water and water features, even organs played by water pressure. But Turner was not a garden designer. He was more nearly a naturalist, and a man interested in natural habitats, and in discovering and describing new plants. At least one other fundamental thing James highlighted: the fortuitous advances in printing that made the *New Herball* so much more possible.

Frances then focussed for a while on Turner as Dean. Those troubled religious times meant he had two terms as dean, interrupted by a Protestant sense of discretion being the better part of valour. Troubled times, yes – but what interesting times, a period of change with the most far-reaching of effects. Turner saw the publishing of the Book of Common Prayer, and the Psalter and the Bible also being produced in English, not Latin. Services suddenly had to be in English. This was a big change, not least on the practical front, where the music no longer fitted the English words. The Vicars Choral (the men of the choir) wrote a good deal of the new music that was required in the cathedral. Turner himself determined to write in English – which greatly reduced his opportunities to sell the *New Herball* abroad. And he was a collector of books and cared about books and the transfer of information, and some of his books are in the cathedral library, as the audience was later to see for themselves.

Close upon Frances' heels came the noted Dr Marie Addyman, down from Turner's original home territory, Northumberland, to complement Frances' sketch by contemplating another possible side of the Turner persona, that of *Puritan folk-hero?* (Note the question mark.) Marie is an authority upon all things Turner, and is the author

of *William Turner: Father of English Botany*. She brought a particular politico-religious angle to the times and to the man. Turner was a radical who did not follow the party line i.e. he was not necessarily in agreement with the Church, and the Church was an arm of the State. In short, he was a dissenter, one who wrote against the Papists, but one who was also involved in clashes within the new Church of England. Such clashes, in the reign of the anglo-catholic Elizabeth, were not about doctrine, but about how the institution of the Church should be organised, and portrayed to the laity. Those returning from exile were liable to be bursting with enthusiasm and energy, and quite possibly anger. And Turner had the new pulpit (1547) in the nave of the Cathedral, of which he probably took full advantage. He was a renowned preacher, and had paid leave while dean to travel and preach, and perhaps acquire a reputation which would be sustained after his death.

That a time warp was being woven became deliciously apparent when lunch was taken in the medieval Vicars Hall. When Frances appeared in the lectern, no-one was surprised, but all were fascinated by her expert descriptions of the architecture of this atmospheric place, as well as its historic role and purpose as the dining hall of the Vicars Choral. Unlike the Vicars Choral, though, this meal was definitely not taken in silence. But the sensation of sensing another time was continued as we were allowed to go straight from Vicars Hall to the Cathedral Chapter House across the Chain Bridge, as the Vicars Choral had done for centuries before us.



In the remarkable Chapter House, we saw where Turner would have sat, and where deans still sit. We were on the first floor, and below us was the undercroft which served as a strong room for valuables. Wells could not have an underground crypt for this purpose, because of the high water table. The Chapter House was a prelude to a taste of the cathedral that Turner would have known, where Diana Wheeler, who has the dual qualification of being a Cathedral Guide and a member of the Old Deanery Garden project, and Frances gently walked us in Turner's footsteps, while Anne Crawford, Cathedral Archivist, and Kevin Spears, Cathedral Librarian, shared some of the treasures they care for which relate very directly to Turner.



The sense of the passage of time diminishing is heightened by the realisation that Turner (Dean 1551-1554 and 1560-1568) knew the same font as we do, sat in the same stall as the present dean, told the time by the same famous clock, and, very importantly, preached those sermons from the same – then new – pulpit.

In the Cathedral Library, we could actually handle an original *New Herball* and see the set of Aristotle's *Works* which had belonged to Erasmus and was given to Turner, who in turn gave it to the library, with a signed record of his donation. A whole array of books and texts specific to Turner had been set out by Anne and Kevin, who were unstinting on a Saturday afternoon in enlightening us upon their history and significance. In more general terms, time spent in a chained library, envisaging books being read on a medieval book rest or slope while standing up, helped place everything in a physical context. And the importance of Turner as someone who had a personal part in replenishing the library after the attentions of Thomas Cromwell, and who bequeathed books to the library, told us more about the man.

Time for tea, and then something of a change of tack, but not, of course, diverting us from the redoubtable William Turner. Dr Roger Rolls, GP and medical historian, and author of *Diseased, Douched and Doctored: Thermal Springs, Spa Doctors and Rheumatic Diseases* (2012), revealed another side of this multi-faceted character. Dr Turner was indeed a doctor, who had been physician to the mighty Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset. He had seen the hot baths in Italy (e.g. Abano) and witnessed how the waters might be taken by mouth, bathed in, splashed up the nose, or by allowing the steaming vapour to *provoke sweat mightily*. He had heard of the baths in Bath (not

then a big city) so he paid a visit. He found them in poor condition compared with those on the continent, and notes the presence of slime, stones and bones in the baths. He advocated improvements to the drainage and to the routine of changing the water. One wonders if he had any first inkling about the transmission of infectious diseases. Anyway, he was ahead of his time. Dr Rolls showed a picture of the new Spa in Bath: having heard what we just had, it is likely that we each wondered what Dr Turner would have made of it.

This brought to a conclusion the first day, but some twenty of the group took advantage of the proximity of the cathedral to attend Choral Evensong.

A bright Sunday morning saw the party assemble outside the Old Deanery, meeting with Frances to garner something of a feel for the Wells which Turner would have known. His first-hand knowledge of the actual city would have been small: people of his station did not go around the city to shop. Those he did meet would have shown him great respect.

When going to the cathedral for a service, he would have left the (Old) Deanery and been verged (i.e. led in a small procession) along to and through the north door. The statues of the north side of the cathedral are in better condition than the majority of the others because that side is less prone to extremes of weather and so there is less erosion. That said, the west front, with its statues dating from the 1250s, is the most complete example of medieval statuary in Europe, if not the world. This brought us to one of the most arresting moments of the weekend: the knight with the shining blue eyes. All the statues would have been brightly, not to say to our eyes gaudily, painted. The paint would not have lasted long, certainly not in good condition. There is, however, one knight in armour whose eyes have been protected by the depth of the eye-slit in his massive helm. Peer closely at him from short range, and bright blue eyes will still meet yours.



We made our own procession past the ancient outside clock, which works off the same mechanism as the inside clock, and which now has a Victorian face but still the original two rotating knights. We passed through the Chain Gate, over which we had walked the previous day, and which is so called simply because it could be barred with a chain, to view the east end of the cathedral. This has always been thought precarious because of the nearness of the springs, and there is belt-and-braces buttressing. We nodded in the direction of The Rib and the Tower House, sometime canonical houses, before viewing Vicars' Close with, originally, its forty-two bachelor houses for the Vicars Choral. Surveying the cathedral green from street level, we were told how it once had quite a slope, and how, in very dry spells, outlines of some of the graves from when it was the lay burial ground, from the 1200s until the early 1800s, are visible. On through Brown's Gate, built by Bishop Bekynton (1443-1465), into territory that Turner may not have trod, passing (but not entering, one hastens to add) the White Hart, which was there in Turner's day. On round into the Market Place to see the Conduit. This is a replacement of Bishop Bekynton's water tower, which had a head of water drawn from the springs in the grounds of the Bishop's Palace, and which provided water for the city. And so through Penniless Porch and to that crowning west front, which tells the history and story of the world through its statues and carvings, and from where, through its acoustic singing gallery and trumpet holes, the presence of the cathedral was mightily proclaimed across the city.



What a tour: so much history, secular and spiritual, packed into a few hundred yards, and all effortlessly delivered by the indomitable Frances. As one local in the group remarked, "I've seen things I've never seen before." But we had not ventured into the Bishop's Palace: this was not Turner-land, or indeed any Dean's-land.

It was time to get back to the Old Deanery and Turner, the...the what? Marie Addyman queried whether he could be described as a botanist, which is to place him in an inappropriate modern context, using nomenclature which did not exist. For the same reasons, he cannot really be called a scientist. Let us grant he was a physician. And, of even more interest to us, let us view him as a natural historian. He was an observer of plants, and one who used

the language available to him to describe them fully. Further, he really wanted very much to disseminate his knowledge; this may even have been one of his ways of doing God's work. As a physician using plants (herbs) in his cures, he is professional and pragmatic. There is no sympathy in the *Herball*; it is strictly functional.

Before that pleasant sojourn in the garden itself with which we opened, Frances and Marie had done a double act exemplifying a few examples of Turner's work on naming and describing plants (in the absence of any knowledge of genus), particularly in Somerset. Samphire was one of these. The name derives from the French, Saint Pierre. St Peter was the rock. Rocks are like stones. Samphire is (therefore) good for kidney stones. The Glastonbury Thorn is described, and it is fairly safe to assume that Turner spoke to local people about it, as well as observing it himself, in order the better to describe its habit. He does not refer to it as the 'holy' thorn – that idea did not appear until after Turner's time. Thus, we heard more of Turner's way of working – and thinking.

This rather remarkable weekend concluded by Frances thanking all those who had come, the many who had contributed, and the visiting speakers who had offered so much. But, entirely properly, the last word fell to the patron of the project, Baroness Fookes of Plymouth DBE, DL, who had opened proceedings first thing on Saturday, and been enthusiastically present throughout. Lady Fookes highlighted the way in which this weekend had been the brainchild of Frances, and how she had been the major driving force throughout its meticulous planning, and the main contributor over the two days. Lady Fookes had great pleasure in presenting to Frances garden gift tokens – for use in her garden at Wookey.

Richard Hanks

THE ORCHARD, 2013

What a contrast to 2012, with its washout summer and negligible harvest of fruit.

'White Joaneting', an apple known before 1600, produced its first respectable crop of small, green apples. We assumed, being such an early apple, they would be cookers – but Sarah Hare bravely took a bite of one, pronounced it a sharp but perfectly agreeable eating apple, and finished it off. These were being blown off the tree in gusty winds, so were distributed among the gardeners.

'London or Five Crowned Pippin', still a small and slender tree, is our oldest apple, known to have been grown in Somerset since before 1580. It too produced its first proper crop this year, and they again looked small and green but proved to be perfectly acceptable as a crisp eating apple, although Turner might not have approved. He wrote that apples "are harde of digestion" and should always be cooked.

The redoubtable 'Catshead' produced a dozen enormous apples on its short and rather spindly branches. This was known before 1629, and is the one 'popular for apple dumplings'; its 'cat's head' shape, flat topped and pointed base, means that upended in its pastry wrap – or when simply baked plain – it sits safely in the oven and does not roll around. Previous experiments have proved it has a remarkable and delicate flavour when cooked. Two of the apples were lost to insects and rot, but ten were decoratively wrapped and labelled, and two each were presented to Baroness Janet Fookes and Dr Marie Addyman as small thank yous for their contribution to our Turner Weekend, while the rest were distributed among the stalwart Old Deanery Garden team who worked to make the weekend happen.

Sylvia Hanks' light-hearted report on the apples, from the cook's viewpoint:

Scenario I: Sunday: pork roasting, vegetables steaming; help! No apple sauce. Look in fruit bowl, four eating apples and 2 London Pippins. Quickly peel, quarter and core; place in dish with lemon zest and a little water; microwave (yes, I know, hardly a Tudor method!) for 2 minutes. Result: the two London Pippins were soft and fluffy, but the modern eaters needed 2 more minutes. Mixed together: delicious apple sauce.

Scenario II: Frances gave me 2 White Joaneting; they were lovely to handle: soft, velevety skins, so very tactile. Peeled, quartered and cored; used the method already described and after 2 minutes a bowl of delicious, fluffy cooked apple.

Turner would definitely have approved!

The Mulberry (like most other people's) set a good quantity of fruit, and dropped most of them in June; the rest suffered in the erratic contrasts of weather in July and August, especially the periods of humidity. A very few managed to ripen – only to fall off just as Angela was tackling the grass in the Little Orchard. Such is the cursedness of mulberry trees in southwest England. We do not know if Turner had more success with the mulberry trees he knew, in Protector Somerset's garden at Syon in London. No wonder he concentrated on the uses of the leaves rather than the fruit!

The medlars are still hanging on the tree in quantity. Any suggestions what we do with a big crop of Turner's 'Red Pear', a perry pear and probably hard forever? Any offers to brew perry? Only the quince still sulks, small and fruitless. *FN.*

Spring Talk 2013

Our Spring Talk took place on Tuesday, 19th February, when Miranda Young gave us a fascinating talk about 'Dean John Gunthorpe, his Friends and His Books'. Her talk was based on research work that Miranda had carried out for her M.A, degree from Bristol University. As gardeners we are all well aware of the 'Gunthorpe' wing but Miranda was able to give us a much more detailed picture of the man behind this particular piece of Old Deanery history.

John Gunthorpe was Dean of Wells Cathedral between 1472 and 1498, when he died. The focus of the talk was specifically on Dean Gunthorpe's books and friends, but there are also other signs of his residence in the Old Deanery. The most obvious evidence being the Gunthorpe tower but Miranda pointed out that his symbols like his coat of arms, with St. Andrew's saltire, black guns or cannons, leopards, aquilegia flowers and his French motto (*mez pour le myeux*) could be found throughout the building. We were all aware of the stone emblems on the outside of the Gunthorpe wing, but Miranda showed us the carvings on the ceilings of the bay windows in the Bradfield Room, as well as the stained glass above the front door and in the entrance porch.

However it was through his library and collection of books that Miranda was able to trace Gunthorpe's friends. He was very well connected, having been chaplain to Edward IV, Elizabeth Woodville and Dean of the Royal Chapel for Richard III, was pardoned by Henry VII and therefore able to remain Dean of Wells Cathedral after the death of Richard III.

Miranda's extensive research revealed his vast collection of books, covering numerous topics from Moral philosophy and political commentary to geography, history Greek antiquity, Roman classics and various religious works. She connected them with his close group of friends who studied with him in Ferrara and the many influential people he befriended like the Bishop of Ely and Earl of Worcester. The only book of his collection that remains in Wells Cathedral Library is the third edition of Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, edited by Johannes Andreas. Thoughtfully, Miranda provided us with booklist and details of his friends.

It was a most enjoyable talk and kept us all engrossed throughout, whilst opening our eyes to features in the building which most of us had not noticed before! *S.A.H.*

Seed and Plant Sales

Thanks to Jean Fairburn's efforts with seeds and plants we were able to offer seeds for sale at the Spring Open Day on 6th April, making a profit of £51.50.

As far as the plant sales were concerned, once again Jean came up trumps and we made £157.65 at the 8th June Open Day, plus subsequent sales on Wednesday afternoons throughout the summer of £75, making a grand total of £232.65. Many thanks to Jean – our plant table would be empty without your efforts! *S.A.R.*

English Heritage Open Day, 2013

This took place on Saturday 14th September, efficiently organised, of course, by Marianne – with help from Norman. With the house open at the same time, it is always difficult to be accurate with the visitor count, but it seems 172 people came to the garden and we made a total of £61.29 from donations and sales. Thanks to all those who helped steward and clear up. *S.A.R.*

Stop Press...Stop Press...Stop Press...Stop Press...Stop Press

For the time being weekly gardening will be on a Wednesday morning if anyone would like to join in. This will also affect next years opening times.

And Finally...

Spotted in the summer catalogue for Hayloft Plants of Worcestershire, under the entry for anemones 'The name Windflower is accounted for in several ways, one of which is William Turner's statement "*the flower never openeth itselfe, but when the wynde bloweth.*" Thank you to Pamela for noticing this modern reference to Turner's plant knowledge. (Please let me know if you come across anymore out there - Ed.)

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- Events &
Diary Dates 2013-14**
- Saturday, 23rd November, 10.30am-12pm
 - **Friends Winter Event**
 - Did Turner celebrate Christmas?
 - Carey Room
 - Wednesday, 4th December, 9.30am-3.30pm
 - **St Margaret's Hospice Christmas Fair**
 - Wells Town Hall
 - Monday, 20th January, 9.45am-11am
 - **General Meeting**
 - Old Deanery
 - Tuesday, 18th February, 7pm for 7.30pm
 - **Spring Talk; 900 years at the
Old Deanery by Jerry Sampson**
 - £5 per ticket, Bradfield Room
 - Saturday, 5th April, 10am-4pm
 - **Spring Garden Open Day**
 - **Thank you** to all the dedi-
cated volunteers who kept the
garden watered through the
lovely warm summer. *D.W.*
 - Deadline for the next newsletter
is **Monday, 10th March**
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