**Report of the Storrington Horticultural Society May 2023 meeting**

At our May meeting Christine Iverson treated us to a fascinating insight into the Folklore and superstitions surrounding hedgerows

Christine works at Tuppenny Barn a charity that promotes organic food and she makes many of the products that they sell from plants that grow in our hedgerows and woodlands.

There have been many changes to both hedgerows and ancient woodlands in modern time’s part due to more intensive farming and also the need for building land and increased road and rail construction resulting in the loss of some 140,000 miles of hedgerows, 40% of our ancient Woodland and 96% of wild flower meadows.

If you see Bluebell’s in a wood it often indicates that it is ancient woodland. Interestingly the Bluebell also has its uses as the bulb although poisonous contains a sticky juice and was used as a glue for book binding ( the toxicity of the juice deterring bookworm) it was also very effective for setting feathers on arrows.

There are so many herbal treatments that the plants and flowers in these habitats use to be used for that it is impossible to mention them all but here are a couple.

The Foxglove although poisonous was used medicinally to treat heart conditions with the extraction of Digitalin as well as extracted juice from the leaves of the plant which was used for treating sprains and bruises.

A simple cough would be treated with Colt’s Foot, and for wounds the antiseptic leaves of Hedge Woundwort would be applied.

Superstition and folklore also played its part in the routine of the home especially in the dairy where all wooden pails and utensils were of Hazel or Ash which was thought to prevent witches curdling the milk.

The superstitions and folklore surrounding hedges and woodlands were an important part of people’s lives and governed many of their every day actions. For example May Day which dates back to pagan festivals was celebrated as the beginning of summer and on May Day Eve communities would go out and bring in’ May. Spending the night outdoors they would greet the first light with drums and blasts on cows horns to welcome in the summer and then return home laden with branches of May blossom (Hawthorn) to decorate their homes.

And of course in conclusion the Sloe can be used to flavour Gin making Sloe Gin.

The meeting ended with a raffle and light refreshments. Our next meeting is on July 21st in the village hall Storrington at 7.30pm when Paul Abbot will present a talk entitled Pteridimania, the Victorian Fern growing craze.

And please don’t forget the Summer Show on August 5th reference the Summer Show catalogue for full details of the entry schedule etc. Copies may be obtained from Janet Webber Tel 01903 740109

Michael Webber

Website: storringtonhorti.org.uk