Report of the November Storrington Horticultural meeting held on 18th December 2022.

A large number of members attended the meeting for the AGM which when finished enjoyed a talk by Lizzie and Tony Gilks on ‘A Victorian Christmas’ and how this introduced new and additional ideas to our Christmas festivities as well as some of the older Christmas celebrations which are continued today

Possibly the best known of these is the introduction of the Christmas Tree which is generally accredited to Prince Albert but infact it was the work of his wife’s grandmother Queen Charlotte. Like Albert she was born and raised in Germany where there was a tradition of bringing a tree or single Yew tree branch inside which was then decorated with sweets and lights for Christmas, presents for each other were then laid underneath.

The Queen continued to set up trees in the royal residences during her life time which was continued by the Royal Family after her death.

The then Princess Victoria enjoyed the concept of a Christmas tree and continued this at her then home

Kensington Palace. But it was not until the 1840’s with the then media reporting every detail of Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert life including how they celebrated Christmas including pictures of a decorated Christmas tree that the Christmas tree became popular and of course remains popular today.

One other was the introduction was the Christmas Card. The first is thought to of given by King James 1st of England in 1611 with a Christmas and New Year greeting it was more like a manuscript than the card we send today.

The custom of sending Christmas cards that we know today was started in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole.

Sir Henry Cole and the artist John Callcott Horsley designed the first card which sold for

 1 shilling, 5p in today’s money.

The concept behind the Christmas card was originally to encourage the use of the newly introduced delivery system we know call the Post Office at a cost of a 1penny black stamp per delivery.

The sayings and customs surrounding Christmas were also explained as well as older sayings one of which was I’ll take you down a peg or two. There are a number of explanations for this saying, from a Naval one where pegs were used to hold the flags to the lanyard, or possibly used in a game such as cribbage where a board with pegs was used to record the score. But possibly one of the most amusing is the theory that it derives from the communal drinking of alcohol where pegs were positioned in tankards to denote limits to which drinkers had to adhere. If someone drank past their allotted peg or two then the next person to drink had been put down a peg or two and thus humiliated.

The evening gave a fascinating insight into Christmas past and ended with a raffle and light refreshments’

 Our next meeting on 20th January 2023 is at the village hall Storrington commencing 7.30pm

When Les Allen will be talking to us about ‘Insects under threat’.

Michael Webber

Web site:- storringtonhorti.org.uk