



NEWSLETTER

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We have had a very successful year on all fronts albeit with an ongoing concern that this may be the lull before the storm as the cost of living crisis brought about by surging energy costs begins to bite. Bookings for the House and cottages were excellent and we had a full complement of weddings as covid restrictions lifted at the beginning of the year. Covid is still very much around but those in good health have been able to get on with their lives. We may also have benefitted from the disarray amongst airlines and airports finding it difficult to attract staff which may have persuaded many to take holidays nearer home.

A quite unexpected benefit of our decision to continue opening the gardens and Tearoom whenever covid restrictions allowed is that Cadhay gardens are now firmly established in their own right. We actually had more people just visit the gardens this year than had a tour of the House.

We have taken on four cleaners, Leanne, Emily, Jenny and Sarah to add to the team and replace Alison, Laura and Tracy. They have all fitted in brilliantly and having an extra pair of hands does mean that we have been able to cope with absences without poor Jayne wondering whether we will be ready in time.

House

A couple approached us in the Tearoom asking for more details about Isaac Cohen who painted the portraits in the Living Room. Dissatisfied with what little we had to tell them, they went away to research and came back a fortnight later with their report. We had thought that he had gone to Australia but could not have been more wrong. He was actually born there in Ballarat, Victoria in 1884 to Michael Cohen and Leah Hart who died when he was three. He studied at Melbourne at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1905 and won a travelling scholarship which took him to further studies in Paris. He exhibited



Isaac Cohen's portrait of Austen Chamberlain

in the Royal Academy and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters and his portraits include Sir Stafford Cripps and Austen Chamberlain whose uncle Arthur, rented Cadhay in 1912/13.

Isaac Cohen died in Kensington, London in 1951 leaving £29,000 which was quite a significant sum in those days. The portraits in the Living Room were painted after the second world war and therefore towards the end of his life.

We had the painting of a hunt in full cry from the Barton Bedroom cleaned and conserved as it was so dark and damaged it was difficult to see what was being depicted. The provenance is unknown but it was probably bought by Barton William-Powlett after moving to Cadhay in 1924. It is thought to be nineteenth century and of little value but it is very charming.



Hunt in full cry

During the winter lockdown we put picture lights in Barton, Sugar Plum and the Nursery replacing the rather miserable pendant lights in the centre of the ceiling. This has given those rooms quite a lift particularly in the Nursery where there are now three engravings of exotic birds by a very talented local artist Bea Foreshall



Nursery

With a slightly heavy heart we removed the bees who were living in the chimney above the Living Room. The bees had been in residence for over thirty years but they were causing a problem in that they would arrive in the Living Room in a somewhat dazed state however hard we tried to seal the chimney. Scaffolding was erected and initially the swarm catcher had difficulty in finding them as they were in part of the chimney which was sealed off. They were eventually found and hopefully have been found a new residence to their liking.

Anyone visiting the House this Summer should have noticed the new coping stones on the parapet at the front. Bits of the old ones were flaking off during the frosts leaving a rather irregular and unsightly edge quite apart from the safety issues. Up went the scaffolding again and almost all the stones were replaced. It is remarkable what a lift the new stone has given to the front of the house. Dave and Mike also took the slate roof off the laundry room, put on new battens and felt and then replaced the slates. This has eliminated the complaints from Andrea about leaks but the heat with the driers during the very hot summer made me think we should have put in insulation. The laundry room had been used as a boot room with space for polishing shoes and a rather ineffective wine cellar (as it was hardly below ground level). This together with the outside loos, mower shed, workshop and linhay were all constructed in the

1930's when the William-Powletts bought the house back. The section with mowers and loos was used for storing coke which fueled the aga in the kitchen until it was converted to oil (and has since been replaced with an electric version).

We also continued installing secondary glazing on the east side of the House to improve insulation. The glazing has been done in such a way that it can be removed which we tend to do during the summer. We also took steps to strengthen the mullions and heads on the outside of the library window. This involved putting stainless steel rods where cracks have appeared. The inside of the window will be done when the House is shut in January.

Heydon Bedroom

The main project was the downstairs Heydon bedroom which had been a kitchen until 1909 and then the Servant's Hall from 1911 until 2003 when we decided that it would be useful to have a downstairs bedroom for any guests struggling with stairs. The outside wall by the fireplace was constantly discolouring because of damp and Dave and Mike repointed the chimney which was quite a major project requiring scaffolding right to the top.



Old Fireplace pre 1911

The above photograph shows what the fireplace would have looked like in 1909 before the Whethams restored the house. We had a visit from an expert on the history of early houses and he said the fireplace almost certainly housed two fires. The heat generated (and probably smoke) would have been terrific and the kitchen ceilings

would have been very high, probably going up the full height of the house. It is probable that Peere Williams inserted a new floor to create the Sugar Plum bedroom and nursery above with their magnificent Georgian panelling at the same time as he put the ceiling in the Dining Room. In 1911 the Whethams then built the wall so as to create the back corridor and reduce the size of what had been the kitchen to create a comfortable Servants' Hall with a small coal fire. They also installed the dormer windows in the roof so as to create attic bedrooms for servants.



West range without dormers

There used to be another chimney on the corner of the house as Whetham's daughter, Catherine Linehan, writing in 1975, said 'there was a shock of dismay when a dangerous chimney stack was replaced by one of red brick; in spite of assurances that it would tone in well in a hundred years, it was ordered down'. The old stack, which must have provided a flue for a fireplace and bread oven in a back kitchen in another outbuilding outside the back door (built by the Hares during their ownership in the 19th century according to Catherine Linehan), can be seen in the photograph in second column.

The Whethams removed all the outbuildings attached to the west side of the House and probably rebuilt the 'dangerous stack' to provide a flue for a new central heating boiler. In the end they were able to dispense with it and use the Heydon bedroom chimney as a flue but this required that the boiler was below ground in the small building opposite the back door which is now used by the gardeners. We were always told that the central heating was removed in the 1930's as it was too expensive to run but we suspect the real problem was that the water table is near ground level and the boiler would have flooded in the winter.



Dangerous chimney stack



Photo of old fireplace post 1911

Gardens

The heat during July and August combined with very little rainfall made for very challenging conditions in the gardens. Having just established ourselves as being gardens of note and well worth a visit we could not afford to let people go away disappointed. Luckily our water supply held out and many hours were spent each morning watering flower beds. Although the lawns looked parched and the level in the ponds fell a small amount, the gardens held up well. The decision to have a lot of dahlias certainly helped the cause as they stayed looking magnificent throughout.



Farm

The new tenant on the farm is building up her herd of sheep and it is just as well she has not rushed into getting up to full strength given the lack of grass during the drought. We have dug all the ditches in the fields on the Cadhay side of Cadhay Lane and hopefully blocked culverts will be a thing of the past for a while.

A lot of the ash trees suffering from ash die back are in the hedges and we took the opportunity to take down most of the worst effected trees during the summer. It is a messy job as the upper branches are so brittle that they break into tiny pieces making the clear up difficult quite apart from the danger in getting them down.

Woods

We clear felled a couple of small coupes in Cadhay Wood where there were either a lot of diseased ash or wind damage. We replanted one with chestnut and plan to do the other with Italian Alder, which likes damp conditions, this winter. While we had a digger on site, we improved the track to the place where we dispose of garden waste which we are doing more and more to reduce the need for bonfires.

Water

Following the comments in last year's newsletter regarding the threat posed to our water supply by a proposed quarry, the Determination Meeting did go ahead in December. Much to our delight, and surprise, we were successful in persuading the Devon County Council planning committee that the proposal was misguided. Moreover, the Committee adopted the reasons we had put forward as the reasons for rejection. It was therefore disappointing that the applicant, Aggregate Industries, decided to appeal the decision. An Inquiry was held in October with all sides being represented by barristers. Devon County Council were defending their decision to reject the application but their position was complicated by the fact that the executives within the Council had actually recommended acceptance. The local action group, which we have supported throughout, instructed its own barrister and expert witnesses to ensure our concerns were properly represented. There is considerable bias towards acceptance of mineral developments which means there is a very high bar that you have to reach to get them rejected. We will not know the outcome of the Inquiry for some time and, having sat through the proceedings, I can testify that both the Council and our own team made an excellent case for rejection.