



**President:** Michael Tuffin **Chairman:** Errol Scarr **Hon Treasurer:** Henry Diesveld **Secretary:** Glenda Thorpe  
**Honorary Members:** Laurie Powis, Marianne Alexander, Barbara Hey, Mary Smith,  
Anne Bean, Adam Harrower, Michael Tuffin

## **NEXT MEETING**

**Monday, 4 February 2018 at 20:15** at The Cape Town Athenaeum, Newlands

You received this notification last month from our Chairman:

"It was stated at the 2018 AGM that the possibility of increasing subscriptions next year would be revisited in November by the Committee. At its meeting held on 26 November 2018 it was noted that the Society has been making a loss for a number of years and the forecast loss for the 2018/19 year has increased from the R5 300 as stated at the 2018 AGM to about R10 000. This was mainly due to reduced income from meeting attendance fees and reduced sales at the Annual Plant Sale. The subscriptions were last increased three years ago in 2016. The Committee therefore had no other option but to increase various subscriptions and fees.

It was resolved to make the following changes for the 2019 / 2020 financial year:

1. Single member subscription will increase from R130 to R140.
2. Family member subscription will increase from R180 to R210.
3. The fee to attend the Society's monthly meetings for Visitors increases from R20 to R30.
4. The fee to attend the Society's monthly meetings for Members remains unchanged at R10
5. The postage surcharge fee, for those members who wish to receive their monthly newsletters as a hard copy by post instead of via email, will increase from R50 to R70. (The printing and postage cost of a single issue is R9.56.)
6. The banking surcharge fee, for depositing cash directly into the Society's account (instead of paying by EFT or by cash at a meeting), will remain unchanged at R40. (The bank's minimum charge is R40.35.)
7. The banking surcharge fee, for depositing a cheque directly into the Society's account (instead of paying by EFT or by cheque at a meeting), will increase from R40 to R55. (The bank's minimum charge is R57.50.)

The banking charges for depositing cash and cheques have increased substantially for next year. A cash deposit will cost R8.00, plus 2.94% of the deposit value, with a minimum charge of R40.35. A cheque deposit will cost R50, plus R7.50 per cheque.

Members are therefore actively discouraged from depositing cash or cheques directly into our account. They should preferably pay their fees via an EFT into our account or by cash (preferably not cheques) at a meeting."

As a reminder, notice is hereby given of a Special General Meeting of the CHS to be held on Monday, 4 February 2019 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Campground Road, Newlands where Members will be asked to confirm these new charges for the 2019/2020 financial year.

This will be followed by:

Rosalind Spiers, who will give us a talk on

### **ANTONY HOUSE – BEHEADINGS AND DEAD HEADING**

Antony House in Cornwall is the home of the National Collection of Hemerocallis. For 600 years the estate belonged to the Carew family.

Today it belongs to the National Trust but the family still live there. The grounds run down to the River Lynher and were landscaped by Humphrey Repton.

Rosalind will show us lots of photos of the gardens including the day lilies, take us round the house and explain the family history referred to in the title. Once again Rosalind has chosen an appropriate outfit for her talk!



## NEXT OUTING

And now for something completely different:

**Sat, 23 Feb at 14:30:** A surprise garden to visit in Pinelands, followed by tea and a fun quiz (don't be put off – it will be fun) at the Thorpes.

Limited to 20 members. Please let Glenda know, before 18 February, if you would like to attend.

## REPORTBACK

Our annual Christmas dinner was, once again, enjoyed by all who attended. Thanks to Melanie for the organization and to everyone who provided the delicious eats, as well as those who helped set up, serve, clean up and pack away. Unfortunately, there were more bottles of wine left over than food, so these will be sold at the February meeting for R30 a bottle – first come, first served. There are 7 bottles of red and 7 bottles of white of, I'm told, a very nice wine. Please bring extra cash if you're interested in purchasing a bottle or two.



*Left to right: Members queuing for the hot meal while Ninon, Niek and Rob tuck into the salad table; new member, Pat Ellis, won this yellow Clivia in the lucky draw; Melanie dispensing the Christmas cake while Ron sneaks a piece off the plate.*

## HORTICULTURAL HEARTACHE

2018 turned out to be a sad year for the horticultural and botanical world.

It began with the abduction and murder of **Rod and Rachel Saunders**, well-loved plantspeople and owners of Silverhill Seeds. [CHS News – April 2018]

Then we heard of the passing of **Colin Cook**, Honorary Member of the CHS, and avid plantsman who could grow anything. There are some of us who still have the plants he sold us on his return to the UK. [CHS News – June 2018]

October brought the news that **David Davidson**, aged 67, had passed away having lost the battle with cancer. We were asked to pay tribute to him and The Southern Suburbs Tatler printed these two:

"David Davidson was an "all too brief" President of the Cape Horticultural Society (2016 – 2018) after being a guest speaker for many years following the successful exhibits he master-minded for SANBI.

The use of our indigenous flora, sourced from around the world, plus the wonderful backdrops designed for the exhibits were an excellent advertisement for South Africa as a botanical destination of note.

His talks were always entertaining, informative and amusing as he showed behind the scenes ups and downs in transporting plants and props halfway round the world.

We at CHS will miss the valuable contribution this dynamic man made to the botanical and horticultural world in southern Africa." *Chairman, Errol Scarr*

"I first met David in 1988 when I started work at Kirstenbosch as the librarian for what was then known as the National Botanical Gardens. I think David was then working as graphic designer/marketing manager at the NBG and had just starting his very successful career as designer of the Kirstenbosch/South Africa Chelsea stand. He was also very instrumental in the design and management of the large flower shows at the Good Hope Centre – Flora '88 and then Flora '93. After David left Kirstenbosch to set up his company David Designs [I think this may be David's Design,], he continued designing the Kirstenbosch stand at Chelsea, winning a record number of golds. He also designed stands for shows in the Far East. I was in awe of his creative ability, his friendliness and generosity. I recall he designed our www.PlantzAfrica.com banner for us and I battled to get him to invoice for the work. In fact, I am not sure if he ever did. For many years he designed the Elgin Open Gardens posters and brochures and for the past 2 years his company has done the website too. This is just a fraction of what he did. Horticulture in the

Western Cape has lost someone who has contributed enormously to its public face/profile over the past 30 years and he will be sadly missed." *CHS member, Yvonne Reynolds*

Only a month later, well-known bulb fundi, **Cameron McMaster**, from Napier died on the 25th of November 2018 at the age of 81. He was a stalwart member of IBSA and an outstanding plantsman, Tour Guide and well-known throughout the horticultural world and also as a sheep breeder and judge.

The Pacific Bulb Society had this to say about him on their wiki page <https://www.pacificbulbsociety.org/pbwiki/index.php/CameronMcMaster>:

"Cameron grew up on a farm close to Cathcart, South Africa where he developed a passion for sheep, birds, butterflies, and flowers. For most of his adult life he was involved in introducing Dohne Merino sheep and consulted with farmers in many countries. With his wife Rhoda McMaster he started The Croft Wild Bulb Nursery in Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. In May 2003 they moved to the village of Napier (Western Cape, south of Caledon near Bredasdorp) where they had a new nursery called African Bulbs. After moving Cameron led many botanical tours of both the Eastern Cape in summer and the Western Cape in late winter, early spring. Participants on these trips remember the wonderful places he took them and his enthusiasm for all he showed them. Besides writing articles for farming journals, he also wrote articles about bulbs, discovered new species of bulbs, and gave talks. He spearheaded protection of a section of renosterveld near Napier. He and Rhoda were active members of the Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa (IBSA). Cameron was a generous contributor of his photos. At the time of his death his photos were on more than 300 pages of this wiki."

In 2007, a large group of CHS members spent a very interesting and informative weekend in Napier with Rhoda and Cameron who showed us all the wonderful and beautiful bulbs of the area. Here we are with Cameron, centre front in bright blue pants.



Tragically, the news of the Kirstenbosch Curator, **Philip le Roux's**, untimely death was announced in December.

He was involved in a cycling accident on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, remained in a coma, and passed away in the early hours of Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

The Tatler reported Christopher Willis's tribute to him: "His passion, leadership and many contributions towards promoting sustainable practices at Kirstenbosch and making it one of the world's top botanical gardens will serve as his legacy." He continued to say that initiatives like the Tree Canopy Walkway, the Kirstenbosch Summer Sunset Concerts and the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show were championed by him. He first served as the Kirstenbosch estate manager from 1987 to 1999 before becoming Curator – 31 years in total.

And, although not South African, **David Austin** was another great plantsman, known to all rose-growers, who also passed away in December, aged 92.

The following obituary is by his family (<https://www.davidaustinroses.com/eu/about-us/david-c-h-austin>):

## From school boy to rose breeder

Growing up in the Shropshire countryside, David Austin developed a passion for plants from a very young age. However, his interest in flowers was truly ignited when he first discovered a magazine called Gardens Illustrated, tucked away in the school library. After being encouraged by his teacher, he decided to pursue his new found passion.

James Baker, a friend of David's father, ran a nursery down the road from their family farm. David would visit with his father and was dazzled by the new varieties of lupins that James was breeding. It was at this time that the idea of developing new varieties of plants himself really started to take hold. Coming from a farming background, David had an innate knowledge of plants but taking this knowledge and applying it to the less practical world of flowers did not meet his father's approval. It wasn't until his sister gave him A.E. Bunyard's book, Old Garden Roses, for his 21st birthday, that he fell in love with roses.

## First shoots

With his new passion for roses, David decided to take up rose growing as a hobby, ordering his first few plants when he was in his early twenties. Beguiled by their beauty, his interest only really lay with the Old Roses, but with the fashion at the time being for modern Hybrid Teas, he decided to order a few varieties to compare the two groups.

Although he wasn't charmed by the Hybrid Teas he did recognise the attributes they possessed that the Old Roses lacked: a much wider colour range and the ability to repeat flower. This was his light bulb moment, the realisation that he had the opportunity to create something entirely new — a rose with the beauty and fragrance of his much-loved Old Roses but with the benefits of modern roses.

## Growing pains

Resolute in purpose, David began the slow process of breeding this new type of rose. Unfortunately, his inexperience revealed itself when he lost his first set of seedlings to a fungal disease, and he had to start all over again the following year. However, with time and extraordinary dedication, David created his first rose, 'Constance Spry' (Ausfirst), in 1961. Industry professionals said nobody would buy these 'old fashioned roses' and nurseries refused to stock them. Not one to be easily discouraged, David decided to ignore his detractors and sell his roses to the public himself, using his own kitchen table in Shropshire as his distribution centre. He also sold a wide range of other roses including Old Roses, climbers and ramblers.



## Coming into bloom

By 1969 David had refined the breeding process and launched his first range of repeat-flowering 'English Roses', the name he coined for his ground-breaking varieties that fused the old with the new. He reasoned that the French have the Gallica roses, the Scottish the Scots, so why shouldn't the English also have a group of roses to call their own—especially with the rose being so intertwined in England's culture and history.

The early years were quite a struggle, particularly because he was trying to compete with so many other rose nurseries. However, with the support of his wife Pat, combined with the unique combination of attributes his roses had to offer,

the English Roses grew in popularity and the Old Rose style began to enjoy a long overdue renaissance.

In 1983 David experienced his first real breakthrough when he introduced three very good English Roses at the Chelsea Flower Show, including the rose named after his good friend and mentor, the revered horticulturist, Graham Thomas. The response from the press, as well as the general public, to Rosa 'Graham Thomas' (Ausmas) was overwhelming and David credited it with being the rose most responsible for the recognition and success of the English Roses. The following year saw the first of many gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and the David Austin garden gradually became one of the highlights for visitors, which continues to this day.

With the increased popularity, the nursery business started to grow, the extra income meaning that the rusty, draughty old barns could be replaced by modern packing sheds and the falling down breeding greenhouses replaced by bigger and more spacious ones, although still second-hand. The fledgling rose garden, now considered one of the most beautiful rose gardens in the world, also increased in size.

## **The Art of Rose Breeding**

The increased income also gave him the opportunity to gradually expand the size of his enduring passion, the rose breeding programme, which today is one of the largest in the world. Each year David introduced three or so new varieties. From pollination to sale, the whole process of creating a new rose takes nine years. For each new rose released, roughly 120,000 unique roses will have been grown for research—a process which took all of David's patience, dedication and expertise.

His rose breeding endeavours have resulted in a number of awards, with one of his proudest achievements receiving his OBE in 2007 for his services to horticulture. On receiving the award, he said "Every day, I marvel at my good fortune to have been able to make a life out of breeding roses. My greatest satisfaction is to see the pleasure my roses give to gardeners and rose lovers around the world". He was also awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour from the RHS, an honorary degree from the University of East London and the Dean Hole medal from the Royal National Rose Society.

His roses too have won many awards around the world. 'Graham Thomas' (Ausmas) was voted the world's favourite by the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) in 2009 and 'Gertrude Jekyll' (Ausbord) twice voted the UK's favourite. 28 of them have also been honoured with the prestigious Award of Garden Merit from the RHS. The garden at Albrighton, both home to David Austin and the National Collection of his English Roses, received the Award of Garden Excellence from the WFRS in 2015.

## **Through the generations**

In 1990 he welcomed his eldest son, David J. C. Austin, into the business. Together they have developed David Austin Roses into a worldwide business, extending the UK operation to Europe and in more recent years to the USA and Japan, where they now have offices.

Not one to rest on his laurels, in 1992, with the driving force and support of David Junior, he decided to start up a completely new side to the breeding programme. The aim being to develop varieties that were specifically for the cut flower market, available all year round, whilst retaining the beauty, fragrance and charm that had become so recognisable in his garden roses. The first group of cut roses was released in 2004 and like his garden roses, it took some time for them to be accepted, being a very different proposition from the status quo. Today David Austin cut roses are considered to be some of the most prestigious and sought-after wedding and event roses in the world and have been used to celebrate the most intimate of private occasions through to the most prestigious Royal Weddings showcased on a global stage.

David Austin Roses has grown significantly over the decades but it still remains very much a family business at heart. The third generation, Richard Austin, David Senior's grandson, and son of David Junior, joined the company in 2010 continuing his father and grandfather's passion and their lives' work. They in turn are supported by a loyal team, with many having been with the business for more than 15 years including his Rose Breeding Manager, Carl Bennett, who has worked for him for almost 30 years. As the company has grown, so too has the wider David Austin family who affectionately refer to David Senior simply as 'Mr A'.

## **An Author and Poet**

Apart from his passion for roses he had a great love for literature and his sitting room is lined with bookcases filled with a great variety of books. The first book he wrote was *The Heritage of the Rose*, published in 1988. In 1993 he published the first edition of *The English Roses*, the definitive work on his own creation, which won great critical acclaim around the world. He especially loved poetry and published a collection of his own poems in 2014 entitled *The Breathing Earth*, which draws on his life experiences and his love of nature.

## **The Father of English Roses**

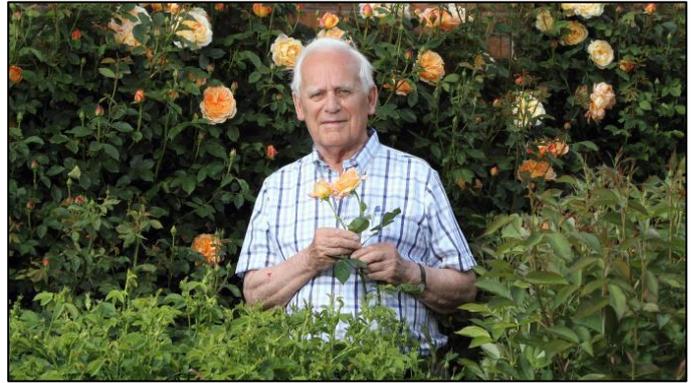
He will be remembered as one of the greatest rosarians and rose breeders of all time who is responsible for creating the world's first horticultural brand. With over 240 varieties to his name, he was still absolutely passionate about developing new varieties of English Roses until the very end. He died already knowing what the future may hold, having planned and undertaken the next crosses, which will hopefully create a new rose that will be introduced in nine years' time.

Despite continually discovering new found inspiration his dream, broadly speaking, remained the same as when he first started breeding roses as an amateur, all those years ago: to create the perfect garden worthy rose that combines beauty, fragrance, repeat-flowering ability and good disease resistance with great charm – the quality his English Roses are most renowned for. As he said in his book, *The English Roses*, he had one goal that was more important than any other, "... that we should strive to develop the rose's beauty in flower, growth and leaf." Of fragrance he wrote, "[It] may be said to be the other half of the beauty of a rose".

He leaves behind a great legacy that very many around the world will treasure as a result of his passion, unwavering vision and lifetime's work.

He is survived by his three children, David J. C. Austin, James Austin and Claire Austin, from his marriage to his late wife, Pat Austin. He also has a surviving sister, Barbara Stockitt, and eight grandchildren, as well as his much-loved dog and companion, Bertie.

David Charles Henshaw Austin, rose breeder, writer and founder of family business, David Austin Roses, born 16th February 1926; died Tuesday 18th December 2018.



<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/david-austin-0xp0g6l6t>

*"There is nothing more exciting than having 350,000 seedlings growing that no one has ever seen before"* - David C H Austin

The horticultural/botanical world has lost a number of good people this past year. They will be sorely missed.

## GROWING PLANTS FOR HEALING

Kay Montgomery's Weekend Argus article of 6 October 2018 tells us what to grow in our gardens in order to make these healing summer remedies:

"Many of us are familiar with herbal remedies for winter colds, but summer-flowering varieties can also be used medicinally. Plants can be used to soothe the sting of sunburn, relax tight muscles after sports matches, relieve the itching of insect bites or be added to a refreshing summer drink.

In her book, *100 Edible and Healing Flowers*, the late Margaret Roberts, one of the country's foremost experts on herbs and medicinal plants, wrote nothing could be more appealing than creating a garden of plants that would be used in festivities, celebrations and as medicines.

"No matter how large or small our gardens, it is vital for our health that we grow vegetables, fruits, healing herbs, shrubs and even a small lemon tree wherever we can," she wrote.

What plants in nature's apothecary should you consider using this summer?

- Boil up sprigs of English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) or Dutch lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*) for about 15 minutes, strain and add to your bath water.
- Break off a small section of the leaf of bitter Aloe (*Aloe ferox*) and apply the gel to the skin for skin irritations, insect bites and even as a nail-biting deterrent.
- Dahlia petals should be crushed and warmed and placed over rashes, grazes and infected scratches, making an effective skin treatment.
- To help soothe the stings of bluebottles and sandfly bites, the sap of the sour fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*) can be used. As the sap is also believed to have antiseptic properties, it can be mixed with water and used as a gargle for a sore throat or other mouth infection.
- The gel-like sap in the leaves of the bulbine (*Bulbine frutescens*) can soothe anything from burns and grazes to mosquito bites, stings and sunburn.
- To treat sunburn, crush and mash the stems, leaves and flowers (when available) of the waterblommetjie (*Aponogeton distachyos*) to create a pulp, leave it on for as long as possible and repeat frequently until the pain and redness subside.
- Also for sunburn, rashes and healing bruises, Margaret Robert's recipe is to mix one cup of crushed blue Plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*) flowers with one cup of aqueous cream; simmer in a double boiler with the lid on for 25 minutes; stir well; strain through a sieve, then add four teaspoons of vitamin E oil as the cream cools. Store in sterilised jar.
- Mint (*Mentha spp.*) is used to treat congestion, headaches, improve blood circulation, boost immunity and aid digestion. Add mint, lemon slices and ice to a pot of rooibos tea, and allow to cool, for a refreshing summer drink. If using fresh herbs to make the tea, use twice as much as the dried variety.

**Note from the Editor:** Articles, snippets of news and any items of interest would be welcomed to help fill the pages of your monthly newsletter during 2019.

Photos: R Spiers, Google and G Thorpe