



April 23rd, 2016 - A very special anniversary

It is 400 years since Shakespeare, arguably the world's greatest dramatist, died. The exact date of death is a mystery, but is commonly thought to be April 23rd, the same date attributed to his birth.

He retired to Stratford a wealthy man, and no doubt took a great deal of interest in his own garden at Stratford.

Earley can't make any direct claims to Shakespeare but many of us share his love of plants, and some mentioned in his plays can be found right here, perhaps in your garden (see pages 2/3). You might be inspired to make your own Shakespeare garden.

Changes since Shakespeare's time

In the 16th century the rural landscape would have been one which he knew well. Then, there would also have been more incurable diseases, and possibility of starvation. The world population in the 1600s was estimated under 600 million and in the UK 6 million (now estimated 65 million). While people worried about the immediate weather and its effect on their crops, they did not have anxiety about permanent changes to the climate. You might think, "*What's to come is still unsure*" (*Twelfth Night*).

Earley Wildflowers: Spot the areas of wildflowers sown round Earley again this year. Shakespeare would be proud! Please send your photos of these to www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk

Items of special interest:

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Here's flowers for you;
 Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram;
 The marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun
 And with him rises weeping: these are
 flowers
 Of middle summer, and I think they are
 given
 To men of middle age.
 The Winter's Tale, Act IV, Scene 3



Flowers as symbols

Shakespeare uses flowers for symbolic purposes. One of the saddest soliloquys is in *Hamlet*, spoken by poor, demented Ophelia:-

'Enter Ophelia fantastically dressed with straws and flowers:-
 (To her brother Laertes) There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;
 pray you, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for
 thoughts.

(To Claudius) There's fennel for you, and columbines: -

(To the Queen) There's rue for you; and here's some for me; we may
 call it herb of grace o'Sundays: you may wear your rue with a
 difference - There's a daisy: I would give you some violets; but
 They all withered when my father died.

Hamlet, Act IV, Scene 5

Rosemary is particularly associated with remembrance of the dead, and pansies get their name from pensées, the French for thoughts. Fennel represents marital infidelity and columbine flattery or insincerity. Rue, also known as herb of grace, is very bitter and stands for regret, repentance and sorrow. Daisies are a symbol of innocence and the violets, now withered, mean faithfulness.

Plant a Shakespeare Garden

Do you have these flowers in your garden?

Pansies, daffodils, peonies, columbine,
 lavender, daisies, marigolds, poppies,
 rosemary, lavender, violets, primroses

You're on your way to having a Shakespeare Garden.

The plants might be accompanied with relevant quotes.

There are many Shakespeare-themed gardens all over the world, with many in the USA.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespeare_garden

Over the weekend of 23 – 24 April, specially-created short films of each of Shakespeare's plays, featuring some of Britain's best-known actors, will be shown on screens along the banks of the Thames. Dubbed The Complete Walk, the project will extend from Westminster Bridge to Tower Bridge.

*I know a bank where the **wild thyme**
blows,
Where **oxlips** and the nodding **violet** grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious **woodbine**,
With sweet **musk-roses** and with **eglantine**:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and
delight:*

A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act II, Scene 1, l.249



These are all wild flowers – musk roses are *Rosa arvensis*, and eglantine is *R. rubiginosa*. Woodbine is an old name for honeysuckle, and oxlips are similar to cowslips, but larger. Eglantine (Sweet Briar), above right, would not smell sweet in Australia and New Zealand, where it is classified as an 'environmental weed' and is very invasive.

Shakespeare had an extensive knowledge of plants, animals, places,
and people and their activities.

*How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers **samphire**, dreadful
trade!*

King Lear, Act IV, Scene 6

So says Edgar, looking over
Shakespeare's Cliff, Dover, watching a
poor person gathering samphire*.
London criers sold it as 'Crest Marine'.
*Rock samphire





The Community Orchard is planted

Update from Jean Hackett

As mentioned in my previous report, a meeting was held in mid-November to adopt the draft constitution, appoint committee members and apply for a bank account.

The committee chose a preferred supplier, and Jonathan and Patricia Brown sent in the order, with the aim of planting in February. The group settled on the date of 13th February, in the hope of reasonable weather and, once the Christmas festivities were over, the detailed planning began.



Some sponsorship and support had already been received from MERA and EEG members, and MERA itself, and a notice on *Streetlife* brought forward more; eventually, all 18 trees had a sponsor, with still money in the bank to cover the cost of any equipment which may prove necessary, or replacement trees if any fail.

On Saturday 6th February (before the rain started), a group of committee members, supporters and UoR students removed the turf from the plots which had been marked out earlier, and forked them over. On Wednesday 10th February in fair weather, the EEG volunteers, under Grahame's guidance, carried on the work by digging over the plots to ensure that it would be reasonably easy to plant the trees on Saturday: just as well, as it was extremely cold and wet that day!
(Photo: Mayor Melanie de Jong, Jean Hackett (left) and Anne Booth (right)).

Despite the weather over 50 people turned up to help plant, including sponsors and supporters, the committee, some of the Erleigh Elphins (an outdoor pre-school group), and UoR students (including some from the previous week) with their Community Development Officer. The mayor duly planted a Worcester Pearmain, whose sponsor was unable to attend, and everyone else planted their tree: this involved putting a tree guard on and attaching it to a supporting stake, putting down a weed-suppressing membrane and adding wood chippings to retain the moisture in the soil. Most people then repaired to the Interpretation centre, where hot drinks, cake and biscuits were on offer; it felt like a real community effort, with everyone talking among themselves.



Thanks are due to Earley Town Council for negotiating the use of the site; to Grahame and Ashley for advice and practical support; to the sponsors and supporters, who made the idea come to life; and to the committee, for their enthusiasm and support. Now we need to monitor the progress, look after the trees - and look forward to our crops in a few years' time!

22nd February 2016

Jean thanks others, but we owe **her** thanks for being the creative force behind the project.

King Henry IV, Part II Shallow: Nay, you shall see mine orchard: where in an arbor we shall eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of caraway and so forth.



Smart M4 Examination

The examination into £800-million proposals for a 'Smart M4' – conversion to a 'managed motorway' with 'all-lane running' and no hard shoulder - is over, and its report will go to the government by 3rd June.

Friends of the Earth, Reading FoE, and Campaign for Better Transport called for 'all-lane running' to be abandoned because it would allow unsustainably high levels of traffic with implications for congestion, carbon emissions, air quality, noise and safety.

Highways England's simulations for the wider area including the M4 suggest that traffic growth will:

- Increase journey times ... unless there are substantial changes to the off-M4 road system
- Increase CO2 emissions ... unless vehicle types and fuel efficiency are very much better than assumed values.

While the effect on average journey times is modest in 2022 (extra capacity almost copes with 16% increased traffic volume) by 2037 average trip time is 4 to 5 minutes (12% to 14%) longer than in 2009. Average journey time in 2009 was 36 minutes – in 2037 with high traffic growth it is simulated to be 41.1 minutes.

Highways England retort: To suggest that the case for the Scheme is invalidated because it does not alone address the results of growth up to 2037 which will affect the other 42,000 links and over 5,000 junctions across the model's study area is, at best, misconceived.

However experts cast doubt on the simulations - retired traffic engineer David Green wrote: *My fundamental concerns remain about the apparent underestimation of future traffic and particularly the inability of existing feeder roads and junctions to handle even this low forecast of traffic growth.*

On CO2 the simulations show 518,361 tonnes in 2013 and 559,424 tonnes in 2037 – an almost 8% increase when we should be reducing emissions so we can meet our carbon targets.

Local Lib-Dem and Conservative politicians called for action on noise in Earley and gained some ground – an 'Enhanced Noise Mitigation Strategy' has been proposed – but this will still leave many properties suffering high noise levels. Highways England say, "The further away the receptor is from the noise barrier, the smaller is the noise reduction provided by the noise barrier."

The effect on air quality was debated – with Highways England claiming that they were compliant with legal requirements, and objectors arguing that they were not, and that the VW scandal invalidated the simulations.

Evidence on safety showed that a 4-lane 'Smart motorway' will be much worse than a 3-lane managed motorway, but it should be safer than the present set-up, allowing Highways England to claim some improvement.

John Booth

Redhatch Copse update

Earley Town Council will take over the care and maintenance of the Copse when the work currently being undertaken by the housing developers' contractors is completed to the Council's satisfaction.

So far hardwearing footpaths have been built to protect the woodland floor from the huge increase in public pressure expected from the adjacent housing development.



A fence is being erected with only two access points to try and protect the delicate woodland ecosystem by restricting access. Later a hedge will be planted as a screen for the fence. Sycamore, an invasive and non-native species, has been removed. This will let in light and allow regeneration of woodland flora and tree species. Native shrubs have been planted around the periphery of the wood.

Work is still going on so for safety reasons there is no public access at present.

Apart from the travesty of the siting of the mobile phone mast within the wood, the shape and size of

this fragile piece of ancient woodland has remained the same for hundreds of years. Its distinctive outline can be seen on Josiah Ballard's map of 1756. **Anne Booth**

HELP - Huge Earley Litter Pick, Sunday March 20th

We had over 40 people turn out for the litter pick yesterday, of all ages from very young to you-don't-ask. We collected over 40 bags of rubbish, and around 13 bags of recycleable stuff. Apart from the regular finds - traffic cone, car tyre, bicycle wheel - we also found several footballs, 2 golf clubs, a set of car keys, 3 beer glasses (returned to the pub), a cup (trophy) - and a 5p coin. **Brian Hackett**



NEWS FROM BEYOND EARLEY

Help butterflies: Cow parsley is a familiar sight on the roadside in rural areas.

It may not be the most attractive plant in the umbellifer family, but it is very popular with pollinating insects.

The large, flat, flower heads, which give umbellifers their name (think umbrella), sit atop tall stems, providing excellent perches for butterflies and moths in need of nectar. They also provide food for some caterpillars. If cow parsley is too wild for your garden, try adding other plants from the umbellifer family, such as **fennel**.

Take part in the new Garden Butterfly Survey, to discover how garden butterflies are faring and how important gardens are as a wildlife habitat. <http://www.gardenbutterflysurvey.org>

Bees need help too:

The Soil Association is calling for a permanent ban on neonicotinoids because of the harm they cause to pollinators including bees. Recent research by Sussex University, part-funded by the Soil Assoc., has found that wildflowers in field margins next to treated crops are contaminated by a cocktail of chemicals including fungicides which increase the toxicity of neonics by up to 1000 times.

The Government's Pollinator Strategy has supported the creation of safe areas for bees in flowery field margins, yet the research shows these flowers could be laden with hazardous chemicals. <http://www.soilassociation.org/news/newsstory/articleid/8703/-new-research-exposes-secret-cocktail-of-toxic-pesticides-in-hedgerows-and-wildflowers>. On March 17th 2016, the French National Assembly voted to ban Neonicotinoids from 2018.

Death of a courageous environmentalist: Being a campaigning environmentalist can be very dangerous. 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize winner Berta Cáceres (1973 – 2016), an indigenous, environmental and human rights activist, was murdered in her home on March 2nd. She rallied her fellow indigenous Lenca people of Honduras, and waged a campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. Assassins unknown. See <https://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/international-womens-day-9-amazing-women-who-defended-environment>

EARLEY WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS AND GARDEN SURVEYS

Gillian: In our garden surveys, Gillian noted 15 different species of bird in January including nuthatch (1) see below, and green woodpecker (1), and 12 in February including greenfinch (1) greater spotted woodpecker (1) and green woodpecker (1). January, robins singing to each other.

Margaret: Noted 15 different species in January, including nuthatch (2), jay (1) and sparrowhawk (1). and 17 in February including jay (3), sparrowhawk m. (1). Troupes of long-tailed tits - January (15+) and Feb (10). In Feb a pair of robins. Neither had house sparrows visiting.



LOCAL FORTHCOMING EVENTS May 2016 – September 2016

Thursday May 5th 7.30pm to 9pm Barn Owls. A talk by John Dellow on the state of barn owls in west Berkshire followed by a practical session during which there will be a chance to dissect some owl pellets. Joint meeting with Berkshire Mammal Group. Interpretation Centre, Instow Road. Booking essential, contact Edwin at e.trout@concrete.org.uk or phone 0118 9663759.

June & July walks. Dates and locations to be arranged. Please consult posters on Council notice boards and EEG website nearer the time. E-mails to members.

Saturday August 6th 10am - 3pm Earley Green Fair. Join us at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve. All the usual stalls and fun of the fair.

Bits and Pieces

Don't forget - we're on Facebook. Now over a hundred members and climbing! The Earley Environmental Group has a **Facebook** presence. We will be using this in addition to the main website, the Yahoo Group and the Newsletter as a way of keeping everyone up to date with our activities and to let you know about upcoming events. Members are also welcome to post news stories or any photographs relevant to the group. If you are a Facebook user, please do join up - just search for 'Earley Environmental Group' and we should pop up. Look forward to seeing you on there. Mel Orros

EASI (Earley Adopt-a-Street Initiative) would like more volunteers. Help keep your street clear of litter. Everything provided. Contact Brian Hackett by phone (986 1115)

or by e-mail: brianh@talk21.co, or Peter Soul (926 4997), petersoul@peterjo.plus.com. Can you offer active **help to EEG**? If so, phone 0118 962 0004 or go to the website <http://www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk>. We would welcome more member involvement. If you have no expertise and would like to get involved, you may be able to give practical help or maybe you have graphic design skills (for occasional posters, leaflets), computer skills, any other skills to offer.

Join the **EEG Yahoo Group** and post your sightings and messages. You'll find a link to Yahoo on our website.

EEG committee members can be found on www.earleyenvironmentalgroup.co.uk under Contacts, or phone 0118 962 0004

For **Wildlife Survey Forms**, go to the website, or phone Earley Town Council on 0118 986 8995.

Comments or contributions to the newsletter to: sheila.crowson@ntlworld.com, or 2 Reeds Avenue, Earley, RG6 5SR. We would welcome short contributions from members to the newsletter.

If you know someone who would like to **join EEG**, **membership forms** are available from Earley Town Council, 0118 986 8995, on the website under Downloads , or send an e-mail to the Membership Secretary, Liz Wild at liz@helva.plus.com. **Please inform Liz if you intend to change e-mail or address** at 50 Kenton Rd, Earley RG6 7LG, or e-mail her.

Erleigh Elfins: A pre-school playgroup on Thursdays at the Interpretation Centre in Maiden Erleigh Nature Reserve will run from 10am to 11:30 am, with a focus on outdoor play and exploration of the natural environment. The children have opportunities to explore the nature reserve, and Head Ranger Grahame Hawker or members of his team are on hand to share their extensive knowledge of the habitats, creatures and work that occur within the reserve.

For more information, please contact erleghelfins@gmail.com or Charlotte on 07771 605825. There is a limit on numbers to ensure safe play, so please make contact to give your name and details of your child. Child-minders are welcome. Adults are responsible for the children they bring with them, so a ratio of 2:1 is recommended. A charge of £1.50 per child applies.

Support your local shops & Post Office

Pet Fayre, Maiden Lane Centre, Lower Earley: A small independent shop, now also home to the **post office**. It has bird feeders of all kinds, a variety of bird feed, large bags of which the shop is willing to deliver locally, or pick it up in your car from the back of the shop, tel 0118 926 6512, e-mail sales@petfayre-reading.co.uk or go on the comprehensive website www.petfayre-reading.co.uk.

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