

# From a new member's garden

*Kevin Fletcher*

I had been meaning to join The Cottage Garden Society for a few years; I finally got around to it in July last year. When I received my first copy of *The Cottage Gardener* I was a bit disappointed - I think I was expecting something bigger with glossy pictures, but after I had read it from cover to cover I was pleasantly surprised - I enjoyed every single article and letter! I have now received four very interesting copies of *The Cottage Gardener* and several packets of seeds, all planted and most growing too.

I became interested in gardening at a young age, my dad had his own landscaping business and my mum was, and still is, a very keen gardener. My enthusiasm took off when I visited Chelsea flower show for the first time - it was in 1971 and I was just 11.

Ten years ago we (we being my wife two daughters and myself) moved into a cottage in mid Kent. We are just eight miles from Sissinghurst and a little further from Great Dixter. We didn't know anyone in our village when we moved in, so I joined the local garden society. Within two years I was on the committee which I really enjoy, entering the flower shows and attending talks and outings.

When we moved in we didn't have a garden as such, there was only a paddock of just under an acre where the previous owners kept two ponies. The first thing we did was to ask a friend to dig the pond out



that was silted up; the pond is now about fifty by forty feet in size! He also kindly removed the brambles and saplings that were about fifteen foot deep all around the boundary. I then had a locally made Victorian-style cedar greenhouse installed in the garden.

I decided to create the garden in the cottage style, and as cheaply as possible. Most of what we have growing is from seed, cuttings, and plants we have been given. On occasion when I have been driving past someone's house and seen a plant I like I have stopped and knocked on the door to ask for a small piece!

I registered with freecycle shortly after we moved in, and can thoroughly recommend it. From this website I have obtained water butts, bricks, compost bins, paving slabs, gravel, sand, a thirteen foot long church pew (which makes a very good garden bench) and a shop mannequin. The latter I have painted with stone-effect paint and dressed in a toga. I call him Harold as he came from Hastings. This make a very interesting feature in the 'mead'- the wild part of the garden.

I laid a path of bricks cut into the grass all the way round the garden (10,000 bricks so far!) I have managed to get about twenty percent of these free from different places (see above). This year the garden is looking very good but we still have a lot to do. I am an entertainer by trade and so my neighbours think I am a bit eccentric when I ride my unicycle round my garden wearing my pith helmet on a warm summers evening..

*Kevin gardens in Kent. He wins a garden gift voucher for this article - especially the image conjured up in the last sentence! Ed.*