

## **Shapcott Barton syn Chenutdestana (Canut's stone)**

This ancient small estate gave Knowstone its name and is part of all our heritage. Algar, who was the Norwegian equivalent of a baron colonised this part of North Devon pre 1066 and it is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It says "Algar has a manor called Chenutdestana ". (The definition of a true manor is where court was held).

This farmstead has been here since ancient times before any but a few of the present Knowstone houses ever existed, and my mission is to preserve it as accurately as I can and research its long and interesting history. We are fortunate that much of it can be traced back to early times.

David Hill kindly sent me cuttings from newspapers between 1833 – 1944 relating to Shapcott (the name given to it when the French gave people surnames in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century. However the deed and original name is Chenutdestana). Some of these cuttings are most interesting telling of times when rabid dogs in the area infected sheep at Shapcott in 1878 and Parson Froude caused trouble here.

David as a boy lived at Eastacott Farm and our lane (Shapcott lane) to East Knowstone passes the farm where he grew up. This was the route the Shapcotts, who lived here for more than seven hundred years, took to go to church.

The Shapcotts were descendants of Algar and were lawyers and landowners with sheep.

They held local court here at Chenutdestana. The plaster frieze of Pegasus the winged horse in the old court room depicts the triumph of good over evil. Many locals would have been tried here and accused, rightly or wrongly, of some misdemeanour.

One such troubled soul still protests his innocence by slamming doors in anger.

The ghosts and spirits of Shapcott I rigorously record in a separate booklet. Living here has compounded my belief in the afterlife!

An archaeological group who came here to record said it was a treasure house because of its features and long history.

We all have a mission in life and I think part of mine is to preserve Shapcott and the farmstead as best I can. This last year restoration works slowly progress using lime mortars and traditional techniques.

I have repaired the areas of missing cobbles in one of the old barns and uncovered an ancient drainage system.

The old leat has been cleared at the South East side of Shapcott's lane and is now full of water again. The slated part of the roof of the long old coach/groom's barn has been repaired to stop the water ingress which otherwise would have destroyed it.

The early maps showing where the old orchards were have been recreated, and old varieties of fruit trees (mainly West Country varieties) are continually being added to – over 200 at present.

The gardens here improve all the time and as some of you may know, we are open under the NGS charity schemes and Plant Heritage. I have two National Plant Collections here – *Leucanthemum x superbum* and *Buddleia x davidii* and these collections are the main reason why the gardens are open.

My plant breeding has seen 3 new varieties of *Leucanthemum* appear on the market 'Shapcott Summer Clouds', 'Shapcott Gossomer' and 'Shapcott Ruffles'. I don't think I will ever make any money from them but at least 3 good plants have been made available to the public via Bob Brown the horticulturalist in Worcestershire.

On the 8th July last year I had a visit of dignitaries from the Japanese Association of Botanic Gardens. They came to Knowstone to see the two National Plant Collections and spent most of the day here before travelling on to Rosemoor (photo and visitor list enclosed).

This last year we have created, in a rough patch, in a field near the house to the South of Shapcott lane a mini arboretum. Here we have planted at least one example of most of Britain's native trees. They seem to have survived the winter, although there is some roe deer damage to some.

It surprises me how little children seem to know about our native trees – so I wanted to create an area where they can see them in a relatively small space.

My collection of historical *Narcissi* is increasing and were much admired by the NGS visitors in April. The historical *Narcissus* 'White Lady' pre 1898 has flowered wonderfully again this year and the lawns were covered with the scented breath-taking beauty of millions of their graceful long lived flowers. It, like *Narcissus* 'Emperor' is sterile – so it doesn't interbreed.

We have divided up some ancient clumps and planted more – in the lawns to the East of the garden, a project that is on-going.

A double long stemmed dusky old rose pink primrose appeared here many years ago and it seems to appear on old tree stumps in shady banks and even on damp stone walls. The National Collection holder of Double Primroses in Cornwall has called it 'Anita Allen'. My old friend Dr Margaret Webster is a specialist in the genetics of aberrant primroses and she visited me to examine this unusual plant. It is sterile so it must be the result of an unknown cross between some of my other unusual primroses.

There is only so much one can do in a lifetime but my sons look after the gardens and deal with general maintenance and my husband the orchards. Our contractors and land agent, under my supervision, grow arable crops on some of the land. The rough areas of culm grassland and the woodlands are havens for wildlife and many rare and unusual species of flora and fauna have been recorded here.

They thrive because of the undisturbed nature of these areas, so we do not want or allow these remote areas to be disturbed in any way.

Anita Allen at Chenutdestana (Shapcott Barton)

## Japanese Association of Botanical Garden Study Tour 2015

### Delegate List

- 1 Ms Noriko Ohki, Horticulturalist, Osaka Expo Greenhouse
- 2 Dr.Mr Takaaki Oohara, Associate Curator, Botanic Gardens of Toyama
- 3 Mr Akira Obata, Director, Zoo and Aquarium Section, Tokyo Government
- 4 Mr Shouichi Kato, Former editor in chief, NHK Horticulture Publications
- 5 Dr.Mr Yuichi Kurashige, Curator, Botanic Garden of Niigata
- 6 Dr. Mr Yohei Sasaki, Associate Professor, Medicinal Garden of Kanazawa University
- 7 Mr Yutaka Shiroyama, Assistant Professor, University of Hyogo
- 8 Ms Motoko Suzuki, Horticulturalist, Uji City Botanical Park
- 9 Mr Yasuo Takahashi, Honorary member of ABG
- 10 Mr Takeo Tashiro, Secretary of Bamboo Society Chiba Group
- 11 Prof.Mr Toshihiro Tanaka, Honorary member of JABG
- 12 Ms Asuka Tomita, Horticulturalist
- 13 Mr Tsuneo Torii, Honorary member of JABG
- 14 Ms Akiko Nagasawa, Horticulturalist, Den-park
- 15 Mr Mitsumasa Hashimoto, Former lecture at University of Hyogo, Natural Science Museum Hyogo
- 16 Ms Sakiko Mitsuyama Horticulturalist, Rokko Alpine Botanical Garden
- 17 Ms Chikako Miyauchi Horticulturalist, Shibuya Botanical Park
- 18 Dr. Ms Junko Oikawa-Radscheit

