

# Memories of a Childhood Show



**Our President remembers how her story with Stithians Show began...**

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Susan Knight

**My journey with Stithians Show has been long; it all began over 65 years ago, when I was 5 years old.**

Two things happened at that age, one more traumatic than the other. The traumatic event was that I began my education at Stithians Primary School. The other event was that my father, Tom Paget, became Assistant Secretary of the Horticulture Section at Stithians Show. He joined my uncle, Seymour Trevena, who had been the Secretary since 1951.

In the early days, the Horticulture Section shared a tent with the Domestic (now Arts, Crafts & Cookery); there were no screens



between the two, just double banked tables. One of the perks of Father being in the tent was that I was allowed in there to play. I liked nothing more than running between the two sections under the tables. Simple pleasures!

During my days at Stithians School, we were given a day off to attend the show, but once I was 11 and attended Falmouth

High School for Girls, to my surprise and annoyance, this did not happen! For a few years I could only attend at the end of the school day, but soon help was at hand in the form of St John's Ambulance Brigade, who had a presence at the show in case anyone needed their medical aid. I had recently become a member, so my Mother wrote to the formidable Headmistress, Miss Jacob, stating that, whilst I wasn't quite vital to the running to the show, I would be of some use. It worked, and for my remaining years at that school, I was able to attend the show, dressed in a very unflattering, grey St John's uniform— I didn't care , I was there!

Having got the floral art people interested, plain wooden table tops and trestles wouldn't do,— no trestle legs were to be on view! They were covered with black plastic, —that very same black plastic we still use each year. The table tops were also covered in white paper, more than likely scrounged from printers like The Falmouth Packet. For the floral art classes this paper was then covered in clear plastic, so that any water spilt would not spoil their exhibits. My father was very good at scrounging and the silver painted table dividers that we use today, were once 'bed irons' - no bed irons were safe if Father was in the vicinity!



In 1972, my uncle retired and consequently my father then became the Horticulture Secretary and my mother his assistant. I'm an only child, so I had no 'Get out of jail free' card and I was naturally roped in to help. In 1973, the Horticulture Section became 'divorced' from the Domestic Section, and each had their own tent. My father was in his element; he lived and breathed the show and he had aspirations! He wanted to attract the floral art community, so he and my mother organised floral art classes at Stithians School, and they also visited and befriended a whole heap of floral art clubs. Delivering schedules personally to these clubs was classed as an outing for Mother and myself.

At this time I started full time teaching in Truro, and short of pulling a 'sicky', I didn't know how I would be able to attend the show. Again, help was at hand - the children were entitled to one outing a year. Guess where I took them? Needless to say they loved it, especially the fair, and I got to see the show, albeit firmly attached to two or more children.



My father was honoured to hold the office of President in 1980, 41 years ago, and I know that he would have been beside himself with pride to know that his daughter is now the President.

Unfortunately, my father died just before the show moved to the new showground, but I was honoured to carry the Association flag in his place to the new grounds; the same flag that I will raise on show day. Since moving to the new showground, I became the Chairman and Secretary of the Horticulture Section, and in 2000 the first ever female Chairman of the Show; something else he would have been proud of, having held that office himself in 1971.

The Horticulture Section continues to grow—we now have 5 secretaries in total and many volunteers, in fact, we couldn't stage the section without these vital volunteers, so if you have a few hours to spare in the week preceding the show, you are most welcome to join our happy band. We continue to run the section mostly as Mother and Father did, because as they say 'if it ain't broke.....' except that we now use modern technology as back up.

I now also have aspirations, it seems the apple didn't fall far from the tree! The section has continued to grow; we have introduced novice classes for growers who don't want to compete with the established growers, an excellent section for children with their garden in a seed tray, and we have established a sponsorship deal with firms and individuals of £22.50 [the cost of

prize money for 10 classes ].

For many years I wondered what came before uncle Seymore, how did he become the secretary that eventually led me on my present path? I did not have the sense to ask my mother. Last year I was able to see old general meeting minutes and discovered that he had been a Horticulture Committee member after the war BUT he wasn't the only Trevena mentioned - my grandfather, Alfie Trevena, his father, was also on the committee. A revelation! Now it all made sense. In fact, in 1921, Grandfather was one of the founding members of the Horticulture Section. This year is the Centenary of the Horticulture Section and it would have been wonderful to have had a real show, but a virtual one is better than nothing. I bet that Grandad would never have imagined that the whippersnapper that he took for walks would one day be President of an Association that he was clearly very proud to be a part of. I am also immensely proud to be a member of that Association.

**Susan Knight**

*Chairman & Secretary of the Horticulture Section and Show President 2020 & 2021.*

