

HPS Rutland Group's 7th Celebrity Lecture

On Saturday 22nd February 2014 in the Wilson Auditorium of Oakham School, the audience, invited by the Rutland HPS Group, were entertained by Tom Hart Dyke from Lullington Castle in Kent. He provided an enthralling lecture entitled "The Captivating World of Plants" of great interest to both plant lovers and travellers alike.

His love of horticulture was stimulated by his grandmother and this developed to the extent that he was travelling to obscure parts of the world in his search for unusual plants. This led to a horrific experience in Columbia which made international news because he and a friend were held prisoners for nine months. The hoped for ransom did not materialise and guns were pointed at them before they were released the next day. During this frightening time Tom planned a design of a 'World Garden' which focussed his mind when times became extremely worrying. He reckoned that because he talked so much they were pleased to get rid of him!!

Having been released they had to return to their captors for help with directions because they had taken the wrong turning!!!! The evening was interjected with much humour and the time passed very quickly.

Having achieved planning permission he went ahead with the one acre development of the proposed garden at his parents' home of Lullington Castle. This provided the background to a television series and subsequent travels abroad in search of rare plants and seeds. He returned to South America, visiting the safer countries of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. He showed us digital images of the rare plants and orchids that he had found in some extreme landscapes. He has since developed glasshouses for his cacti and Mediterranean plants. So the garden is still evolving.

Tom has recently returned from another trip to Columbia but to a different and more secure area. This has now allowed him to overcome the nightmares and disturbed sleep patterns that he had experienced since his return to the U.K. . He is now raring to go on his next trip, probably to Ethiopia, this October.

Tom's delivery was energetic, passionate and zealous and provided everyone with inspiration and a very memorable evening, at the same time promoting an excellent reputation for the Hardy Plant Society in Rutland.