?Prestigious Churchill Fellowships awarded to UK citizens to investigate international excellence in horticultural development

Monday 24 April, 2017

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust has just awarded three Travelling Fellowships to UK citizens to investigate international excellence in horticultural development, in order to bring back new ideas and positive change to their profession, and the UK gardening community.

Increasing people's exposure to green spaces through activities such as gardening has been linked to long-term reductions in overall reported health problems, including heart disease, cancer and musculoskeletal conditions.[1]

This is the second year of a three year partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society, during which time five Fellowships have been awarded – an investment of over £30,000. Past projects have included research into worm composting and the flora of South Africa as discovered by historical plant hunters.

This year's award winners include:

- **Richard Eltringham**, an Occupational Therapy Assistant Practitioner from **Thurmaston, Leicestershire**, who will be travelling to the USA to investigate horticulture based community restitution programmes for offenders with mental health issues.
- **Amanda Dennis**, a gardener from **Nunhead**, who will be travelling to Germany, the Netherlands and the USA to study alternative, naturalistic styles of bedding planting.

Julia Weston, Chief Executive of The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, said:

"Horticulture makes a fantastic contribution to society, as well as to the health and wellbeing of individuals, and so we are delighted to be working with the Royal Horticultural Society to support this sector for a second year. We have supported Fellowship projects related to horticulture and gardening for many years, and we look forward to following the Fellowships of our 2017 cohort."

Tim Upson, Director of Horticulture at the Royal Horticultural Society, said:

"Through this partnership, we hope to encourage the exploration of both the historic aspects of landscapes, that help us understand and celebrate our horticultural heritage, but also increase our knowledge of the many important health, social and environmental benefits that horticulture can bring to our rapidly growing and hugely diverse urbanised communities."

Fellow's Case Study

Jose Spring travelled to Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 2014 on her Churchill Travelling Fellowship to investigate the development and implementation of gardening research for neuro-disability therapy.

While in Scandinavia, Jose was impressed by the consideration that was given to an evidence-base prior to the creation of gardens and garden activities, and the extent of the integration between horticultural therapy and the natural environment.

Since returning to the UK, Jose has presented her findings in a speech at the Association of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioners, and in articles in a number of publications. An Open Lecture, given in February 2015, attracted over sixty clinical and horticultural attendees from the South East. Jose's Fellowship findings also helped to inform the remodelling of a garden for Huntington's and neuro-behavioural residents in Putney.

1. The Kings Fund, Gardens and health: Implications for policy and practice (2016) https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/Gardens_and_health.pdf

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The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

In total 150 Fellowships have been awarded across the UK in 2017, an investment of over £1.4 million in UK citizens. The Fellows will be travelling to 49 countries between them, across six continents, where they will carry out a wide range of projects, designed to benefit their communities and professions in the UK. The average length of a Fellowship is six weeks.

Churchill Fellows come from all over the UK and from many different backgrounds. They must be UK citizens aged 18 or over, but no qualifications are required. What Fellows share is a passion to make a difference and a desire to share their passion to inspire others.

The categories for the 2018 Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowships will be announced on Tuesday 9th May 2017. See www.wcmt.org.uk for more details.

We have many examples of Fellows' stories of achievement from 1965 to the present day. If you would like one from a particular year or location, or would like to interview a Fellow, please contact The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Press Office on 020 7799 1660, or email press@wcmt.org.uk

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The Royal Horticultural Society

The Royal Horticultural Society was founded in 1804 by Sir Joseph Banks and John Wedgwood to inspire passion and excellence in the science, art and practice of horticulture. Our vision is to enrich everyone's life through plants, and make the UK a greener, healthier, happier and more beautiful place. We believe everyone in every village, town and city should benefit from growing plants to enhance lives, build stronger, healthier, happier communities and create better places to live.

We held our first flower shows in 1820, were granted a Royal Charter in 1861 and acquired RHS Garden Wisley, our flagship garden, in 1903. From our first meetings in a small room off London's Piccadilly, we have grown to become the world's largest gardening charity. At our gardens and shows and through our scientific research, publications, libraries and our education and community programmes we inspire a passion for gardening and growing plants, promote the value of gardens, demonstrate how gardening is good for us and explain the vital roles that plants undertake.

The RHS is committed to bringing the joy of gardening to millions more people, inspire the next generation of gardeners and invest in the future to safeguard a £10.4 billion industry employing over 300,000 people. We are entirely funded by our members, visitors and supporters.

RHS membership is for anyone with an interest in gardening. Support the RHS and help us secure a healthy future for gardening. For more information call: 0845 130 4646, or visit www.rhs.org.uk/join

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