

## Moravian Women's Association

### Home and Overseas Paper – May 2015

#### Have you heard of the Sky Garden?

In keeping with our MWA theme of the garden this year, here are some impressions of my recent visit to the newly opened Sky Garden, which is at 20 Fenchurch Street in London (popularly known as the “walkie talkie building”). It is the highest (525 ft) public park in London, spanning three storeys, with 360 degree uninterrupted views across the London. Visitors can wander around the landscaped gardens, observation decks and an open air terrace, *and its all free!*

The Sky Garden has been designed to create an open place of leisure, offering visitors a rare chance to experience London from a different viewpoint. Its open 7 days a week.

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#### HORTICULTURE

The Sky Garden was designed by an award-winning landscape architect as a series of richly planted terraces and the planting is mainly drought resistant Mediterranean and South African species. It features a series of richly planted terraces each with a different theme. Tree ferns and fig trees recreate a lush prehistoric forest, whilst Mediterranean and South African flowers suggest a sinuous mountain ravine.

Individual plants have been chosen to work in harmony with the particular quality of light found under the roof canopy.

Colour and flowers will flourish all year round in the Sky Garden. Amongst the flowering plants are African Lily, Red Hot Poker and Bird of Paradise interspersed with sweet smelling herbs including French Lavender and Rosemary.

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#### CONTROVERSY

There has been some controversy about the Sky Garden – the plans showed an amazing garden with lots of full sized trees which was one of the reasons the developer received planning permission for the whole building. Surprisingly, the actual Sky Garden turns out to be less

“Hanging gardens of Babylon” (as promised), and more airport lounge. Although it promises to be open all day, the free visitors don’t get access in the evening, and the airport style security is irksome. Visitors must book tickets online in advance to access the Sky Garden. Tickets are only valid for the date and time stated on the ticket and have a time limit of 1.5 hrs from time of entry. Photo ID has to be shown before you can enter, and the names of all visitors are required when booking – unlike visiting any other public park! Once you are in the garden, a security guard even limits access to the viewing platform, although that means that you are not crowded when you get out there. Visitors are discouraged from bringing their own picnic, but there is a very nice café (and an expensive restaurant).

But if you want a clean, sanitised (no pets!) park experience, which is easy to get to by public transport, warm and dry all year round, not too crowded, and has the best free views in London, then I really recommend the Sky Garden.

Naomi Hancock

