

Issue No. 25

September 2009

Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at Cottingham Methodist Church, Hallgate, on Tuesday 6th October beginning at 7.30pm. The meeting should last no longer than 30 minutes.

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Following the AGM, there will be a talk given by Dr Lindsey Atkinson entitled "Gardens in a Changing Climate". This will be of approximately one hour's duration.

After the talk, tea, coffee and biscuits will be served. As always, admission to the talk, and the refreshments are free to members. Guests are welcome at a cost of £2.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

Annual subscriptions are due on 1st November. They remain at £7 per person or £10 for two people living at the same address.

Cheques should be made payable to "The Friends of Thwaite Gardens" and sent to the treasurer, whose contact details are on the renewal form enclosed with this Newsletter.

Please note: new members who have joined on, or after, the Open Day in May do not have to renew their subscriptions until November 2010.

SECRETARY'S REPORT 2008 / 2009

Events this year at Thwaite gardens have shown a greater emphasis on community involvement. The programme has included several school visits, guided tours and a forest school. The Cottingham Wildlife Watch Group for children is also enjoying regular visits to Thwaite for investigation of habitats and pond dipping analysis.

Emphasis on the educational value of the gardens is very much at the forefront of the Friends agenda and together with the University a joint project will take place to develop an Evolution greenhouse which will be a great addition to the gardens.

Open Day

Even though the competition was tough (Hull City v Manchester United on the same day - how dare they!) Open Day went very well with only a slight drop on last year's figures. Naming no names but even the Chairman was seen disappearing towards the stadium early afternoon. Thank you again to all our volunteers and their donations - we could not do it without you.

A special thank you this year goes to Julia Goodall who has kindly taken on the Presentation events and has been very successful in obtaining a varied and interesting mix of speakers. The forthcoming events are to be detailed in Dates for your Diary. Friends members are free and guests are welcome with an admission charge of £2, which will be deducted from the Friends membership should they join on the same evening. Refreshments are free on the evening. All presentations will be held in the Methodist Church hall in Hallgate, Cottingham.

Many of you have commented on how much you prefer the new format for the newsletter. Many thanks go to Vic and Sue Swetez who have given their time and expertise in putting this together.

The Friends group cannot operate without our volunteers and committee members. They are all of great value to the organisation but we still need

more help. There are many tasks that can be done to help, watering for example has been time consuming this year and could have been shared even further with more volunteers. Please contact me on the Tel. No. below if you wish to become a volunteer or would like to become a committee member. Your views/comments on the gardens are also very welcome as are any articles for the newsletter.

Enjoy the gardens!

Pam Bailey Secretary Tel. No. 01482 843304

24.08.09

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***Advance notice!***  
***Diary dates for next year***

***Open Day 2010 – 23<sup>rd</sup> May***  
***AGM 2010 – 5<sup>th</sup> October***

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31.7.09

| <u>INCOME</u>            |                 | <u>EXPENDITURE</u>                |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Membership Fees          | 1,801.50        | Hall Hire                         | 134.10          |
| Donations                | 769.00          | Officers expenses                 | 239.27          |
| Open Day and Plant Sales | 879.53          | Speakers                          | 50.00           |
| Bank Interest            | 24.12           | Plants                            | 1,040.66        |
| Sundries                 | 16.15           | Labour/materials                  | 411.08          |
|                          |                 | Printing                          | 464.20          |
| <b>Total income</b>      | <b>3,490.30</b> | <b>Total expenditure</b>          | <b>2,339.31</b> |
|                          |                 |                                   |                 |
| Cash in hand 31.7.08     | 0.00            | Cash in hand                      | 0.00            |
| Bank as at 31.7.2008     | 5,454.40        | Bank (interest<br>account)31.7.09 | 3,451.71        |
|                          |                 | Bank (current account)<br>31.7.09 | 3,153.68        |
|                          | <b>8,944.70</b> |                                   | <b>8,944.70</b> |

Audited:-

J.D.Warburton FCIB,DMS

Date :-

## TREES OF THWAITE No. 5

### BLACK AND BLUE BIRCHES (*Betula nigra* and *Betula caerulea-grandis*)

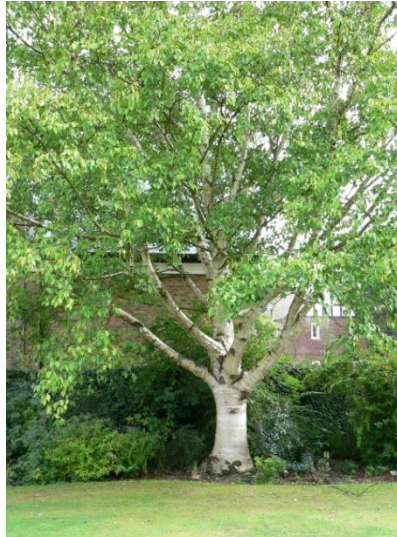
These two species of trees are among the most conspicuous trees in the Thwaite collection, particularly in the winter half of the year. They are among the most successful trees planted in the grounds.



The black birch (*Betula nigra*) grows close to the lake and was probably planted (as were so many of the rarer trees in the University estate) by the late Fred Fletcher, one time grounds manager of the estate and a keen plantsman to whom we owe much. Our black birch has grown vigorously in spite of the flooding which has harmed so many trees nearby. This is probably because it is naturally adapted to wet conditions and in its native North America is also known as the “river birch”. Another interesting point concerning this tree is that it is thought to be the world’s most southerly occurring birch species. Birches on the whole tend to be a rather boreal, cold climate group of trees, yet the black birch grows as far south as the hot

steamy bottomlands of Georgia. Like most birches *B. nigra* has interesting bark, though this is brown rather than the more traditional birch white.

*B.nigra* was a fairly rare tree at one time, but like many unusual birches, is becoming increasingly common and can even be seen on one or two Hull housing estates today. Nevertheless, the Thwaite specimen is probably the best in this region.



A much rarer tree is blue birch (*B.caerulea-grandis*), perhaps the finest specimen we have at Thwaite, which dominates the entrance garden near the main gate. Best seen in autumn, when illuminated by its butter- yellow fall foliage, this tree also has lovely pinkish-white bark which peels gently in strips. I must confess to having had some doubt as to the correct identification of this tree, considering its rarity (and the difficulty of birch i.d generally). However, having once compared it to a named specimen at Thorpe Perrow Arboretum, I am reasonably (though not entirely) sure that it's naming is correct.

A factor which enhances the probability that our tree is the true *B. caerulea-grandis* is the fact that it is grafted. Birch species hybridise rather freely when brought together in collections, such that specimens grown from home -

collected seed are very unlikely to be “true to type”. This can pose quite a problem in some tree collections where specimens may bear vague intermediate characters. There are a number of Birches at Thwaite, some of which may well be of this confused type.

**John Killingbeck August 2009**

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### ***OPENING TIMES REMINDER***

*The Gardens are open to Friends on **Mondays to Thursdays from 12.30 to 3.30 and Fridays from 12.30 to 3.00** (except Bank Holidays and other times when the University is closed)*

### **PROGRAMME 2009 – 2010**

October 6<sup>th</sup> 2009 – AGM followed by talk entitled “Gardens in a Changing Climate” by Dr Lindsey Atkinson

26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 – talk by Ms Ronni Hewer entitled “Woodlands of East Yorkshire”

30<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – talk by Mr Doug Stewart – subject tbc

**NB This programme is also on a separate sheet enclosed with the Newsletter to take out and keep for reference.**

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### *Abelia x grandiflora*



*Abelia x grandiflora* must rank as one of the best value plants available in the garden, in terms of its prolonged floral display. The flowers, it must be admitted, are individually quite modest, of a delicate shade of pink and resemble small foxgloves. However, the blooms are borne in profuse clusters from mid summer onwards and are produced continuously until the autumn weather finally becomes too cold for them. This means that in mild years, or in warm sheltered localities, the shrub may be seen in full bloom well into November.


Each flower is surrounded by a pretty reddish calyx which persists after the flower has fallen, adding to the plant's charm. A delicate sweet scent is also evident.

The shrub itself is reasonably strong once established, with thin dense wiry twigs and small glossy evergreen leaves. Some people may find the plant a bit untidy, in which case, it responds well to clipping. In fact occasionally it can be seen as a flowering hedge, although more often in southern Europe than in Britain, where, in such countries, flowering may be virtually continuous through out the year.

*Abelia* is a good nectar source for bees – given its prolonged season. It is unfussy as to soil type - though needing good drainage - and is potentially very drought resistant – hence its popularity in southern Europe. Hardiness rating is reasonably good and, although *Abelia* undoubtedly performs best in warm sunny localities, it can be successful in cooler shadier places.

The plant is, of course, normally green. There is however, a popular golden variegated variety call “Frances Mason”. This, somewhat less robust, plant creates a brighter yellow-pink effect which, to my mind, seems a little sickly-looking, but this is only a personal view!

***John Killingbeck***



***Many thanks to all our Newsletter distributors and particularly to the Cliftons who deliver to all the distributors. – without all your hard work, delivery would be much more time-consuming and costly.***

## HIMALAYAN BALSAM PULLING 2009



This was the third year of Balsam pulling beside the lake. Although the amount of Balsam was small compared with previous years, there was still work to be done and a little more pulling will no doubt be necessary in 2010. On the island this was only the second year of pulling and, as was to be expected, there was plenty of Balsam to deal with.

Unfortunately the situation has worsened with the discovery of Balsam growing in the ditch alongside the boundary wall in the north-west corner of the woodland. If it were to continue to spread along the ditch it would soon reach the lake. It would be difficult at present to reach and pull it by hand and it will probably need to be sprayed.

I have come to the conclusion that working single-handed is not satisfactory. I would not like to see three years' work wasted and I am prepared to continue to help. A few younger and more hearty volunteers are needed (younger means only something less than 79!).

***Keith Allison***

## A WILD CORNER OF THE GARDENS



A visit to the extreme north-west corner of the Gardens is not for the faint-hearted or those prone to gardeners' nightmares. There they would see a dense stand of Japanese Knotweed, flanked by towering Giant Hogweed on one side and rampant Himalayan Balsam on the other, all growing in a veritable 'sea' of Bindweed and Nettles.

Under The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 it is an offence to plant Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed or to allow them to grow 'in a wild place'. Presumably Thwaite Gardens, and the University Botanic Garden, is not to be regarded as 'a wild place' and Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed are perhaps thought of as part of the plant collection. It might therefore be hasty to suggest that action should be taken against these aliens. But if you go to see them, make sure not to touch the Giant Hogweed. The sap "sensitizes the skin to ultraviolet radiation which can result in burns causing severe blistering" (to quote one authority). And please be careful, too, not to carry seeds from any of these plants into another part of the Gardens, or out of the Gardens.

**Keith Allison**

**Editor's note:-** *The University was aware of the problem regarding the hogweed and knotweed and much work has been done in recent weeks to rectify the problem. See following report from Joe Garner.*

## Gardens and Grounds Report

I met Andrew Wimpole from English Heritage on site last month to discuss the reasons for the downgrade in the gardens status. The two reasons that were given for the downgrade were the flood damage/high water levels and the loss of views across the lake which he felt was the sites most important feature.

Hopefully the flooding, that was, in the main, due to the Council -owned drains along Endyke Lane being blocked (and of course the high amount of rain fall!) will not become a major issue to the grounds for at least the foreseeable future.

The next phase of work has been to dredge parts of the lake to reduce the amount of silt build up & increase its water holding capacity. This will continue along the southern bank to open up the aforementioned views. Now that the water levels are low this will also allow the grounds staff the opportunity to remove some of the dead trees on the northern bank and cut back others that have become overgrown.

The works at the top end have also reduced a large amount of the knotweed and opened up access to a stand of giant hogweed. Those seed heads of the hogweed that could be burnt have been, and any regrowth of either plant next spring will be treated with an appropriate herbicide.



Other areas of work will include reduction of the summer flowering meadows, pollarding of the large willow on the central lawn, continuation of the thinning/planting works to the conifer beds and installation of timber edging on some of the pathways including topping up the gravel levels.

Some of the regular visitors may also have noticed the new dog signs which have gone up. These are in place so that we can all enjoy the gardens and not as a deterrent to its legitimate users.

*Joe Garner, Gardens and Grounds Manager*

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## **More Helpers needed!**

*The Friends was formed with the intention of ensuring Thwaite Gardens is maintained and improved to retain it as a quiet and beautiful oasis for people to enjoy. This can only continue if we have the volunteer resources to do the necessary work to back up what the University is able to do.*

*We always need further help with the maintenance of established projects and for new project work, so if you can spare an hour or 2 each week, please come and volunteer your services. Your help will be much appreciated, and you will get a lot of satisfaction from your efforts!*

# Contact Details

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*We welcome contributions to the newsletters from all members, so if you have any articles, ideas, photographs, letters etc which you think would be of interest or would provoke discussion, please send them to the Newsletter Editor at the address above.*

