

Issue No. 34

January 2013

# **Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter**



# **FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS**

## **Minutes of A G M October 2012**

**Apologies:** Mr & Mrs Gatenby, Mr I. Nicholson.

### **Chairman's Welcome and Report:**

D. James welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the AGM and hoped they had enjoyed the presentation. Details of the Treasurers and Chairman's report were given and these reports are printed in the newsletter. It was stated that the funds were in good order and encouraged any new volunteers to come forward.

### **Election of Chairman & Officers:**

The current Chairman Mr D. James was agreeable to continue and was re-elected.

D. James (Chairman / Treasurer) P.Bailey (Secretary) N. Buck, J. Goodall, P. Foreman Events Secretary, J. Killingbeck, J. Major, V. Swetez & J. Warbuton (Accountant) were all re-elected.

### **Members Questions and Comments:**

The seepage of oil/diesel into the lake was mentioned. The leak was said to be coming from the nearby school. A sump has been installed in the beck. V. Swetez was unaware of this problem and will look into the current situation.

Chairman D.James gave thanks to all of the volunteers who turn up in all weathers, in particular J. Killingbeck and V. Swetez for their knowledge and help within the gardens. Also thanked were P. Bailey Secretary, P.Foreman Events Secretary who also work in the gardens and Vic and Sue Swetez for the excellent newsletter.

A special mention was made of Charles Levitt who due to ill health is now unable to help but over many years has contributed to the development of the gardens. In particular, Charles successfully applied for a grant and was instrumental in the planning and construction of the Herb garden.

The Chairman also mentioned the success of the year beginning with Open Day ,TV mention and the splendid article in the Journal magazine.

V. Swetez reminded the Friends that all projects /events need to be agreed by the university.

The meeting was then closed by the Chairman.

***P.Bailey***  
***Secretary***



***Articles, poems, announcements , comments,  
photographs, letters or any contributions to the  
Newsletter of general interest, are welcome.***

***Please send any contributions to the Editor, whose  
contact details are on the back page of this  
Newsletter.***

***Thank you!***

## Letter from a member

The following letter has come from Jo Lindley who, with her husband Andy, the former Methodist Minister for Cottingham, was a member of the Friends until Andy's job has taken him out of the area. We thought it was a lovely letter which would be of interest to everyone.

*"Dear Pam,*

*It is with mixed emotions that I write to tell you that we will not be renewing our membership of the Friends of Thwaite Gardens. Sadness that we are not going to be visiting as before, but happy that we have fond memories of our time in the Gardens.*

*We have enjoyed being part of the "Thwaite Family" and being able to wander through an oasis of peace in a busy place, being able to bring the children to feed the ducks and enjoy the plants (I particularly remember flying sycamore keys with them!)*

*We are now moving away but will keep our fond memories and wish the Gardens and the Friends all the very best for the future,*

*Kind regards,*

*Jo Lindley "*

## *Pause for Thought*

This poem, by C.S.Lewis, was sent in by Pam Bailey, the Friends' secretary, in relation to the proposed use of green belt land for future housing development.

*How will the legend of the ages of trees  
Feel, when the last tree falls in England?  
When the concrete spreads and the town conquers  
The country's heart; when contraceptive  
Tarmac's laid where farm has faded  
Tramline flows where slept a hamlet  
And shop fronts, blazing without a stop from  
Dover to Wrath, have glazed us over?  
Simplest tales will then bewilder  
The questioning children, "What was a chestnut?  
Say what it means to climb a beanstalk,  
Tell me, grandfather, what an elm is  
What was Autumn? They never taught us"  
Then, told by teachers how once from mould  
Came growing creatures of lower nature  
Able to live and die, though neither  
Beast nor man, and around them wreathing  
Excellent clothing, breathing sunlight -  
Half-understanding, their ill-acquainted  
Fancy will tint their wonder-paintings  
Trees as men walking, wood romances  
Of goblins stalking in silky green  
Of mil-sheen froth upon the lace of hawthorn's  
Collar, pallor in the face of birchgirl.  
So shall a homeless time, though dimly  
Catch from afar (for soul is watchful)  
A sight of tree-delighted Eden*

## ***Diary Dates***

### **Next Meeting - 26<sup>th</sup> March**

Cottingham Methodist Hall, 7.30

The speaker for 26 March is Dr Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries and Gardens and the title is 'A Year of Garden Colour'. He's going to bring plants for sale. If anyone's interested, they could look at his website

[www.norwellnurseries.co.uk](http://www.norwellnurseries.co.uk)

**Open Day - Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May**

**AGM - Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October**

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## **New Opening Hours**

**Monday to Thursday from 10am – 3.30pm and  
Friday from 10am to 3.00pm. (except on Bank  
Holidays and at other times when the  
University is closed.)**

# **Guidance to Help You Enjoy the Gardens** **Safely**

## **DO**

- **Keep to the paths in the main woodland.**
- **Look out for trip hazards, i.e. tree roots, stumps, ivy, low branches.**
- **Wear appropriate footwear.**
- **Take care in wet conditions when certain areas could be slippery.**
- **Be aware that there may be moving vehicles and grounds maintenance equipment being operated around the site.**
- **Provide us with feedback on your experience and any problems you might have encountered.**
- **We would welcome suggestions for any improvements which might enhance visits to the Gardens.**

## **DO NOT**

- Pick flowers, foliage or cut branches unless you have had permission (some plants may be poisonous or act as irritants)
- Go too near or enter the lake .
- Do not run in the woodlands where there may be trip hazards.
- Leave any litter.

## **Please report to a member of** **University staff**

- Any accidents and near misses, and ensure an accident form is completed.
- Any emergencies, suspicious activity or hazards you may find.
- University of Hull Report Centre (Security) 01482 466868



## PLANT OF THE MONTH - WITCH HAZEL (*Hamamelis mollis* and hybrids)



Our Winter Garden border at Thwaite that the Friends have developed gradually over the last few years contains a number of winter flowering species. Among the favourites and arguably finest are witch hazel bushes.

Following recent severe weather many winter flowering plants have faded but the witch hazels continue unabated; all the more surprising given the delicate spidery nature of the flowers.

There are a number of witch hazel species which originate from either eastern Asia or eastern North America. The American species are less widely grown as ornamentals in Britain, although *H. virginiana* was the first species to be introduced and is also the commercial source of “Witch Hazel” oil. However, its flowers are rather small and produced in autumn whilst the plant is still in leaf and are thus rather inconspicuous. *H. virginiana* is encountered from time to time though, because it is used as a stock for grafting the more desirable species and varieties. If the grafted scion dies off or if suckers are allowed to grow from the stock it may form a shrub on its own. This very thing has in fact happened at Thwaite on an

old plant by the wall, beneath the evergreen Magnolia near the wooden gate.

The Chinese witch hazel (*Hamamelis mollis*) is far more sought after because the flowers are much larger than the American species as well as being produced on naked branches in mid winter. This plant is a real “star turn” at its most picturesque when the flowers are crested with tufts of fluffy snow; something that has occurred several times this winter.

Flowers on the type species are bright yellow and also sweetly scented and there are a number of named forms.

People being what they are, have proved to be less than fully satisfied even with this miraculous display and have attempted to “improve” the Chinese witch hazel. Mostly this has been achieved by hybridising it with the Japanese species (*H.japonica*), which again is rarely grown in its own right, to produce *H. x intermedia*. This has resulted in an array of named varieties including many with red or coppery coloured flowers as well as the original yellow. It is, as always, a matter of opinion whether such varieties are really an “improvement” or are simply novelties, particularly given that with *Hamamelis*, the basic format has not greatly altered, though in excess of 40 varieties are listed in “Plantfinder”. Most of these varieties are not widely available.

Of the original yellow colour, I personally think the old variety ‘Pallida’ remains one of the best, being a large bright sulphur yellow bloom. Variety ‘Arnold Promise’ (smaller, later, golden yellow) is also commonly offered. Overall, the yellows are arguably the best colour because they stand out clearly even from a distance. The red varieties are undeniably lovely, yet are best appreciated at close range, particularly with the sun behind them, which lights them up. ‘Diane’ is the most widely available red. Copper varieties are more subtle but rather special, again best if well lit. ‘Jelena’ is the best known copper. Witch hazels are also notable for their rich autumn leaf colour. The hazel-like foliage turns rich yellow or red, seemingly according to flower colour. *H.vernalis* ‘Sandra’ is so outstanding in this respect it is grown mainly for this quality.

John Killingbeck

## TREES OF THWAITE – No 15

### A TALE OF TWO REDWOODS *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and *Sequoia sempervirens*



*Sequoiadendron giganteum*



*Sequoia sempervirens*

There is enough to talk about with each of these two trees separately but because they are so often confused it might be as well to discuss them together. The confusion arises I think because of the naming. The scientific generic names are similar certainly; but it is probably the English names which have really muddled the waters. Both trees are widely known as “Californian Redwood” and also “Giant Redwood”. In each case these names are justified in that both species hail from California and both species are gigantic in size. Unfortunately too, perhaps the most well known identification feature of the “Redwood” – that of its thick, red, spongy bark- is also common to both trees! At this point I think we must quickly move on to the differences.

Of the two species, the most widespread and overall more successfully grown in Britain is *Sequoiadendron*. This tree is totally hardy and seems adaptable to a wide range of conditions and soils. Impressively big examples can be seen in most parts of Britain including East Yorkshire. The

largest I know of locally is in the woods at Bishop Burton College where it has reached a height in excess of 30m (about 100'). Even so, the best British trees are tiny compared with mature examples in the wild. On the other hand, surprisingly given their girth, our oldest specimens are little over 150 years of age (having been first introduced in 1853). So given that many in the wild are 1000 – 2000 years old, one can only speculate as to how large they might eventually become here. The very thick bark is thought to be a fire proofing, which, in the event of such a disaster, simply scorches harmlessly on the outside insulating the living bark beneath. The foliage is heavy, consisting of small prickly needles in dense “shocks”. The cones are about the size of a small hen’s egg.

In the wild *Sequoiadendron* is found only locally in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of inland California, where the climate is quite harsh with cold snowy winters and fairly hot dry summers. It is not the tallest tree in the world but it is the most massive; indeed it is thought to be the most massive living thing on Earth. A well known specimen has a tunnel drilled through it which is sufficient for a small car to pass through

*Sequoiadendron* thus deservedly bears the name “Giant Redwood” though for clarity’s sake is often called the “Wellingtonia” (after the Duke of Wellington)- at least in Britain; the Americans in opposition apparently having tried “Washingtonia” which never caught on!

So where does this leave the other species – *Sequoia sempervirens*? Not to be outdone, *Sequoia* is in fact the tallest tree in the world at well over 100m (one degree Fahrenheit colder at the top than at the bottom!). It inhabits the more gentle, mild and humid climate of coastal northern California and Oregon, where even in summer it is often bathed in cool sea mists. For this reason it seems a little more fussy in Britain than *Sequoiadendron* and generally, really good examples are only encountered in mild moist regions of the country, mostly in sheltered valleys. The valley bottom in Bodnant garden in North Wales has one of the best British specimens and although planted fairly widely in East Yorks., most of ours look rather gaunt and wind burned by comparison. One of the best in Yorkshire is perhaps that in the valley at Studley Royal garden near Ripon.

Although the bark of *Sequoia* is similar to *Sequoiadendron*, the overall appearance is of a more lightly furnished tree, the foliage of which is quite feathery and more like a typical fir or yew in design. The cones are surprisingly tiny, not much bigger than a large pea. The English name “Coast Redwood” is widely used as an official title for *Sequoia*, though it has to be said, this somehow lacks the panache of “Californian” Redwood and is used, I think, purely out of a need for clarity. We have several specimens of both species at Thwaite, though none are very large. The two *Sequoiadendron* are almost identical; one of which is immediately east of Thwaite Hall. Our best *Sequoia* is perhaps the one in the wood at the far western end of the lake.

As an interesting footnote, yet terribly sad and telling indictment of mankind, there is plenty of evidence of cut stumps of redwoods, in some cases considerably larger and older than those alive today, which were felled by white settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The oldest known *Sequoia* was, unbelievably, actually felled in 1934 and it was a race against time by early conservationists to save the remainder from being turned into lumber! Furthermore, the *Sequoia* may not even have been the tallest of world trees – that distinction is suspected to have belonged originally to certain Australian Eucalypts (now also felled).

Words fail me to write anything further.

John Killingbeck

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### ***Membership reminder***

Annual subscriptions were due on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012. They remain at £7 per person or £10 for two people living at the same address. Anyone who has not paid by the Open Day will be removed from the database.

## INSPIRED BY CAEN

Returning from a holiday last year to central France, my wife and I had time to kill whilst waiting for the evening ferry sailing from the port of Caen in Normandy. We knew there was a small botanic garden there and had hoped one day to visit it. Those who are familiar with Caen will know that it is not an especially pretty part of France and is mostly a fairly workaday sort of place, so we were not expecting the botanic garden to be particularly good. We also assumed that by 6pm, it would be closed to visitors. However, we decided to find out where it was and were pleased to discover that not only would it be open (except for the glasshouses) for another couple of hours but also that it was within walking distance.

Before we had even entered the gate we could see that far from being a disappointment, this garden would be well worth coming to see because all manner of exotic specimens could be seen towering over the garden walls. And it turned out to be crammed with interesting features, unusual plants and an attractive layout all within an area that was rather less than Thwaite gardens in extent.

Notable features included a section of local Normandy flora; old style "order beds" and medicinal plants; rock gardens - the whole site held together with a general collection of notable exotic, rare and botanically significant specimen trees and shrubs. The locked glasshouses were also impressive even from the outside and seemed crammed with tropical and temperate species, including economic plants. The orangery was open, surprisingly, and contained an exhibition on tropical food crops (the exhibition theme being changed every few weeks). Maintenance of the garden was far from immaculate but it was obviously well cared for and valued by knowledgeable custodians and there were no signs of neglect, indeed the whole atmosphere was one of being focused and purposeful.

I could not help but make comparisons with Thwaite, where if anything we have an estate that has even more potential and certainly space by comparison. Even some of the rare trees were the same as the ones we have let alone the fact that Caen is also a University run botanic garden. All I can say is that anyone involved in whatever capacity with Thwaite gardens should take a look at Caen.

John Killingbeck

## New Outdoor Classroom Completed!



The outdoor classroom is now up and running and hopefully will be used by a large number of local schools and the University Education and Biology departments.

Our thanks for making it possible go to Janet Gibbs, Lindsay Atkinson and members of the University Facilities Directorate.



## **OPEN DAY 2013 - 19<sup>th</sup> MAY**

Following another very successful open day last year, we are now busy preparing for this year's event and hope that as many Friends as possible will be willing to lend a hand.

There will again be a plant stall with a wide variety of plants for sale. Donations of plants from Friends would be welcome.

There will be the usual refreshments served from 11 am in the corridor, and we would very much welcome contributions of home baking to this stall, as it usually goes down very well!

Other ways in which you can help to make the day a success are:-

**Welcoming visitors**

**Handing out brochures**

**Manning the plant stall**

**Assisting with refreshments**

**Signing up new members**

**Taking admission fees**

Please indicate your preference and the time which would suit you best on the accompanying loose leaf form and return it to the Secretary, Pam Bailey – contact details at the end of this newsletter – or drop it in to the greenhouse block at the Botanic Gardens.

Admission to the Open Day is free to members on production of their membership cards and for non-members is the very reasonable price of £2.00 with accompanied under 16s free, so please tell all your family and friends about the event and let's try and make this year's Open Day even more of a success than last year



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***All photographs by Vic Swetez, unless otherwise stated.***

*Friends Website: [www.hull.ac.uk/thwaite-gardens](http://www.hull.ac.uk/thwaite-gardens)*

