

Issue No. 44

August 2016

Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter



FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS

MINUTES OF A.G.M 6.10.2015

WELCOME & APOLOGIES for ABSENCE:

The Chairman John Killingbeck, welcomed the members and guests present at the AGM.

Apologies had been received from the Warburtons, Pauline Smith, Lynn Jones and Olive Bone.

APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AGM2014 & MATTERS ARISING:

The 2014 AGM minutes were approved and there were no matters arising.

THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT:

John Killingbeck in his report gave details of the progress made within the gardens. Particular mention was made of two greenhouses, the economic, food plants where the coffee and passion fruit plants are doing well. The development of a tropical plant greenhouse is also taking place.

An insectivorous/carnivorous bed is also planned for future development.

The Chairman also gave thanks to all of the Friday volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm. It has been agreed that the number of volunteers will be limited to 20 people. However anyone wishing to assist in other tasks such as labelling would be of help. A reminder was given of the new addition to the Friends calendar, the Autumnal Walk, which will take place on 24.09.2015.

Sadly John Killingbeck had to inform the members present of the vandalism which has taken place this year. Plants in the secret garden have been seriously damaged by boulders being lifted and tossed anywhere. Dens have also been made using large amounts of branches from trees. Fences and hedging are planned to increase security.

The Chairman also wished to “Open the world of plants to everyone” by discussing the deep and interesting details of plant life, their ecosystem (interactions between a community and its environment) and the story of wild plants.

SECRETARY’S ANNUAL REPORT:

Details of the report have been issued in the September 2015 newsletter. Secretary Pam Bailey spoke about several events throughout the 2015 calendar and thanked profusely, everyone who had worked as a Friday volunteer and also others who assisted at Open Day.

TREASURER’S ANNUAL REPORT:

The full details of the report are shown in the September 2015 newsletter. Treasurer Annie Bourton Card spoke about the large amount of spend in the previous year into 2015. A “Garden Plan” has now been installed so that further purchases of plants fit within this overall framework and resources can be focused accordingly. Membership fees and Open events provide the finances to continue with future planning.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN & COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chairman, John Killingbeck was agreeable to continue in office and was re-elected.

The following Committee members were re-elected:

Pam Bailey, Secretary

Annie Bourton Card, Treasurer

Steve Howe

Jean Major

Vic Swetez

And also Rohan Lewis a recently co-opted member of the committee was elected to office.

AOB:

Professor Roland Ennos gave thanks on behalf of the University for all of the hard work by the volunteers, some of whom have worked for many years. The planting and projects are also very important for the students to become involved.

Further discussion took place regarding the depth of the lake this year. It was mentioned that due to many dry spells there had not been sufficient rain to remain at the normal level. Further planning for fish in the lake is taking place.

Lastly the good news of the agreement to build a School Room in the grounds of the gardens was well received. It will be used for academic purposes and also the Friends.

Minutes taken by Pam Bailey on 6/10/15 and amended at Committee meeting on 11/11/15

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## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016**

The Friends continues to flourish, particularly following another highly successful open day in May which was blessed for at least the third year running with good weather. This was followed by our open evening in June, which again because of the weather and better publicity (thank you Lynn) was better attended than in the past. In fact, following other well appreciated special seasonal walks, like last autumn, we are hoping to run one of these for each season in the future. Dates will be announced.

We continue, thanks to our loyal group of volunteers to develop interesting features in the gardens. Notable of late have been a new insectivorous plant collection and an acid bed, whilst the economic plant collection is finally starting to take shape in the end glasshouse. Further projects are planned. Although some of these are under glass, Friends who are able to visit on Friday mornings can have access to these, which otherwise is only possible on special open events. It has been suggested that we have a special open event

in conjunction with the Yorkshire Arboretum at Castle Howard – a move which seems to me highly positive and to have great potential in attracting wider interest in Thwaite.

On the negative side, vandalism seems to be on the increase. Much of the damage seems incidental to activities like football games, which are attracting a significant number of youths in summer evenings, including camping out in the shrubberies and woods, occasionally involving damaging fires. But other damage is clearly deliberate and mischievous, such as branch breakage on trees and breaking glasshouse windows. However, the installation of limited fencing and gates at the Thwaite Hall entrance does at least seem to have stemmed the worst of the free dog walking problem. Failing that, it does make it obvious to those who do enter that they are breaching boundaries of non- public land to do so, something that was seemingly unclear to many before. Engendering contempt beneath even vandalism is a continued low level of (clearly knowledgeable) plant theft.

The new classroom has been started and hopefully will lead to a new and enriched diversity of activities possible at the gardens.

It remains for me to thank all members for their support, particularly active volunteers and especially members of the committee for their hard work. Please note, following resignation of our secretary we are still looking for another. One or two other extra helpers would not go amiss for smaller roles currently covered by existing committee. We occasionally hear grumbles about our organisation of certain events. Personally, I think we do a good job. But to anyone who feels things could be improved – by all means volunteer yourself and help put your solutions into practice. Thanks must also go to university grounds staff who work in difficult circumstances to uphold standards of maintenance.

Let's look forward to another year and ever better future for Thwaite Gardens.

John Killingbeck, August 2016

## **Treasurer's Report, 1.8.15 – 31.7 16**

The year's income and expenditure can be seen in the annual balance sheet, dated 8.8.16. You will see that this year our income exceeded our outgoings. You may also notice that the starting amount (£3,383.05) differs from the end amount last year (£3,722.90). This is because of unrepresented cheques which went through the bank in August and probably also reflects the position we were in at the end of the previous financial year (2014-15) when we had more money in hand than the records had shown. This year's accounts have again been examined by Mr Martyn Bishop, B.Sc. in Business Studies, who advised me to correct the figure now, otherwise the discrepancy would simply be carried forward every year.

Our system of recording is now on a spreadsheet which makes my task as treasurer easier in general and much easier at this time of year.

Once more, our memberships and our open day takings provide most of our income so we remain grateful to you the members for enabling us to continue in our task of managing and developing these lovely gardens. It is a real community resource and a great source of pleasure for us all. We have around 450 members.

We continue to work to an over-all garden plan, guided by John Killingbeck, buying specialist plants accordingly. We have tried to limit other expenses such as on speakers (see below) and have recently altered the time of our committee meetings so our room is free of charge.

Our Friday volunteers continue to work for two to three hours each week. There are sixteen of us now and we usually have twelve to fourteen people each week, more than the equivalent of a fulltime gardener.

Next year, when Hull is City of Culture, there may be other events at the gardens, but for members entry remains free when the gates are open, see details of open times on page 11. Access is now being limited, by the University, via the Thwaite Street gates, in an attempt to stop unauthorized people coming in behind Thwaite Hall. We have been much troubled by dog walkers failing to remove their dog's faeces or throwing black bags of same into the bushes. We have also been troubled by vandalism, particularly the

smashing of greenhouse windows. The greenhouses are maintained and repaired by the university, but these are unnecessary costs and our plants are endangered in cold weather.

We have had two interesting presentations at our evening meetings and are grateful to local experts for providing their services for free. Our chairman, John Killingbeck provides both tree walks for the members at given times, and garden walks for us volunteers so we can admire and understand the plants and planting, and see how our efforts contribute to the whole gardens. So: our thanks to John, and my thanks to all the Friday volunteers for their hard work and cheerfulness, it is a pleasure to be part of the group.

Annie Bourton Card 8.8.16

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT 2015-2016**

Sadly, our secretary, Mrs Pam Bailey, resigned in January. Pam had been a long time member, almost but not quite, a founding member, and our secretary for 14 or 15 years.

Our many thanks to Pam, who remains a Friday volunteer. She made me very welcome when I first volunteered and supported me as I struggled to understand the role of treasurer, the keeping of the accounts, etc. Her warmth, friendliness and knowledge has been appreciated by all the volunteers.

The secretarial tasks have been assumed by John Killingbeck, Rohan Lewis and myself. Items for this report can be seen in John's and my respective reports. Committee meeting minutes are prepared by Rohan. Vic Swetez sends out the committee agenda and circulates other things. Vic has always done the mailshots and sent out the newsletters.

Is anyone interested in becoming our secretary?

Annie Bourton Card, Treasurer. 8.8.16

**FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS**  
**Income / Expenditure**  
**YEAR: 1st Aug 2015 to 31st July 2016**

| <b>INCOME</b>                                | <b>£</b>          |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Membership Fees                              | 2,667.00          |
| Donations                                    | 120.00            |
| Open Days & Open Evenings                    | 2,625.88          |
| Sundries/Miscellaneous                       | 263.59            |
| Entrance Fees (except Open Day)              | 96.00             |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>                          | <b>5,772.47</b>   |
| <br><b>EXPENDITURE</b>                       | <br><b>£</b>      |
| Hall / Room Hire                             | 137.20            |
| Speakers                                     | 79.18             |
| Plants & Gardening Materials                 | 3,664.05          |
| Sundries                                     | 746.88            |
| Refreshments                                 | 8.48              |
| Printing                                     | 335.28            |
| Donations & Gifts for Services               | --      -         |
| <b>TOTAL OUTGOINGS</b>                       | <b>4,971.07</b>   |
| <br><b>EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</b> | <br><b>801.40</b> |
| <br>BANK at 31st July 2015:                  | <br>3,383.05      |
| <br>BANK at 31st July 2016                   | <br>4,184.45      |

*Signed: Annie Bourton Card 8.8.2016*



## **Thwaite Hall Access**

We have had several enquiries regarding the locked gates at Thwaite Hall.

The staff at the hall have decided to keep the gates locked to exclude unauthorised access to the Gardens. Apparently this was the decision of the new Warden at Thwaite hall.

I appreciate that many members have for many years used Thwaite Hall as an access point to the Gardens but this has never been an officially authorised access route.

However, as a member of the Friends of Thwaite Gardens, you are allowed access to Thwaite Hall grounds via the Botanic Gardens entrance on Thwaite Street, which is the normal access point for the Friends during the week, on Monday to Thursday 10am to 3.30pm and on Friday 10am to 3pm.

Whether the locked gates will be a permanent situation or not, is unclear, but if anything changes we will let members of the Friends know. Vic Swetez

### ***MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER***

***Annual subscriptions are due on 1st November  
2016.***

***They are £8 per person or £12 for two people living  
at the same address***

***Anyone who has not paid by the Open Day 2017 will  
be***

***removed from the database.***

***Cheques should be made payable to "The Friends of  
Thwaite Gardens" and sent to the treasurer, whose  
contact details are on the last page of this  
Newsletter.***

***Please note: new members who have joined on, or  
after, the Open Day in May 2016 do not have to  
renew***

***their subscriptions until November 2017.***

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### OAK LEAVED HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)



In the past, we have featured *Hydrangea aspera* as plant of the month and to illustrate that there is more to Hydrangeas than the blobby pink lollipop ‘Hortensia’ types which feature in gardens everywhere, valuable though they are for late summer colour. *H. quercifolia* is another of the less known types which though more subtle in quality than the Hortensias, in the end, arguably add up to a more satisfying and dramatic garden shrub with a greater range of qualities to offer.

*Hydrangea quercifolia* is so named because its leaves have a rather oak (*Quercus*) like appearance – though perhaps more like many American oaks than English. It is the foliage that is really the pride of this plant and make it immediately eye catching. All the more so because the leaves as well as being boldly large, clean cut and interesting in outline, often assume quite good autumn colour before falling. They are matt green in summer with a felted under surface.

The white flowers appear mid to late summer and are of the typical ‘lacecap’ Hydrangea type with tiny fertile and bolder sterile florets, though are conical rather than flat like the common hydrangea and have a slight sweetish scent. And like common Hydrangea the head dries to brown and lingers through the winter. There are cultivars available with pure sterile or double sterile florets.

I have had long experience of growing *H. quercifolia* and despite warnings in some books that it prefers warm moist conditions and may not be absolutely hardy, I have personally found it to be very tough and once established, very drought resistant. I originally planted mine at home as an 'infiller', next to an evergreen magnolia. But I have found the two to have blended beautifully with the Hydrangea forming an understorey to the growing Magnolia, with the two contrasting sets of foliage setting each other off. This is a combination that may conceivably occur in the wild, since the two plants originate from the same south eastern corner of the USA.

My only criticism of *H. quercifolia* would be that the autumn effect is not usually as good as one is given to expect from descriptions. It has a tendency to hang on to many of its leaves until the weather becomes severe, by which time they are becoming a little tatty. But all is forgiven the following year! And (great quality), unlike most other Hydrangeas, its young growth does not seem to be damaged by spring frost.

Expect it to reach a height of about 2m. and more across. Our Thwaite specimen is still relatively young but can be seen about halfway along the long border in the entrance garden. The plant is fairly easy to obtain, sometimes even from ordinary garden centres.

John Killingbeck August 2016

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Gardens Opening Times Reminder

Monday to Thursday 10am to 3.30pm

*Fridays 10am to 3pm, except on Bank Holidays and at
other times when the University is closed.*

TREES OF THWAITE

PIN OAK (*Quercus palustris*)



This tree is one of the finest specimens in our tree collection and can be seen dominating the area at the edge of the woodland towards the lake inflow, where it benefits from good exposure to light and relatively little competition from other trees. It is almost certainly much the best specimen of its species in the East Riding, where there are only a few other examples of any size. Although nationally it is by no means a rare tree it is certainly one much scarcer in the north than in southern England, where most tree collections, many large gardens and even public spaces include it. So in this respect ours, both in regional rarity value and quality of growth, is something of a showpiece and should be a source of pride for Thwaite gardens.

One possible reason for this otherwise unaccountable north south divide in frequency is the usual one of summer warmth. Like most trees which hail from eastern North America, it is adapted to much hotter and more humid summer weather than is usual in Britain, more acutely so beyond south east England. Yet in America, Pin Oak is if anything a relatively northerly species, hardly native south of Tennessee and extending (just) into southern Canada.

Even so, the quality of our Thwaite tree is undeniably good – even surprising, particularly when one adds in the factor that it favours acidic soil conditions, the lack of which can cause a sickly chlorosis of the foliage, which is evident in at least some other Hull specimens. Ours by contrast is richly green, growing rapidly and although already quite large shows every potential of

reaching an eventual height perhaps close to its normal maximum of around 20m. or so.

However, there is one factor which probably counts very heavily in explaining the success of the Thwaite Pin Oak – that of wetness. The tree's Latin name "*palustris*" means "of swamps or marshes". As many people will know, Thwaite gardens are subject to flooding with areas close to the lake and stream being very wet for much of the year. This factor seems to have (perhaps by default since it has been fatal to many other trees) created, serendipitously, near ideal soil conditions for this tree very similar to those to which it is adapted in the wild.

Those who are familiar with English Oaks may be puzzled by the somewhat strange looking foliage of *Q. palustris*. Although still basically 'oak' in shape, the leaves are smooth and glossy with slender tapering lobes which end in fine points. This sort of foliage is characteristic of a number of American oaks (known broadly as 'red oak' types). And there are a great many more oak species native there than in Britain (we have only 2 that are very similar) and Europe, whilst there are over 20 species in the mid-eastern states alone. Yet in spite of these differences, they all produce what are recognisably acorns. Unfortunately, probably for climatic reasons referred to, Pin Oak acorns never seem to develop fully here at Thwaite. The foliage of *Q. palustris* is noted for its fall colour – brown with suffusion of red, though this is variable in quality.

The habit of Pin Oak also differs markedly from the famously broad and rugged character of British native oaks. *Q. palustris* by contrast is broadly pyramidal in outline particularly in youth, though widening with age, and consists of relatively fine, dense branching. Another characteristic, seen easily on the Thwaite tree is that the branches extend low and form a kind of 'skirt' around the base. The bark is smoother and greyer than native oaks.

Another American oak grows immediately next to *Q. palustris* – the much commoner Red Oak (*Q. rubra*). But this was originally the rootstock for a grafted tree rarer than either – another American Oak – *Q. velutina*. It had

huge spectacular glossy foliage and was the variety 'Rubrifolia'- otherwise known as the 'Champion Oak'. It blew down over 10 years ago, snapping at the graft point, when the rootstock re sprouted forming a tree on its own. The graft was a major loss to our collection particularly as it was growing vigorously.

Finally – what about the curious English name “Pin Oak”? Well, I gather from an American book that this is derived from the somewhat unlikely idea that as the lower branches die away, they tend to snap off but leave behind pointed stumps in the trunk thought to suggest it is stuck with pins. You heard it here first!

John Killingbeck August 2016

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## **Dogs at Thwaite – a reminder**

**We are getting more complaints about dogs. Please ensure that you keep your dog on a lead at all times in the gardens**

*We welcome any contributions from members, of articles, photographs, letters etc. to future copies of the Newsletter, so if you would like something including, please contact the Editor, whose details are at the end of this Newsletter*

## **AGM Details.**

**See attached sheet.**

**Followed by talk entitled “Love at First Bite”**

**By Peter and Hellenentje Walker of Wack’s Wicked Plants**

## **Contact Details**

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