

Issue No. 50

September 2018

# **Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter**



## ***Diary DATES***

### **AGM and Evening Meeting**

7.45 pm, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October at Cottingham Methodist Hall

followed by a talk

Speakers:-

Gail and John Summerfield

Westshores Nurseries, Winterton

“Summat for Nowt”

( a demonstration of low-tech propagation techniques)

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### **Gardens Opening Times Reminder**

Monday to Thursday 10am to 3.30 pm

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

# **Friends of Thwaite Gardens**

**AGM Tuesday 9th October 2018 7.45pm**

**( Methodist Hall, Hallgate ,Cottingham )**

## **AGENDA**

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 To approve the minutes of the AGM 2016
- 4 Matters Arising
- 5 Treasurer's Annual Report
- 6 Election of Chairman
- 7 Election of Committee Members
- 8 Any Other Business

**N.B.** If anyone wishes to nominate anyone, or stand themselves, for any position on the Committee, please let me know. Vic [v.swetez@hull.ac.uk](mailto:v.swetez@hull.ac.uk)

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# **FRIEND OF THWAITE GARDENS**

## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017**

Held in the Methodist Hall, Hallgate,

Cottingham, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at 7.30pm

### Welcome and apologies for absence

The chairman, John Killingbeck, welcomed the members and guests present. Apologies were received from Judith Moore, Olive Bone, Lyn Jones and Jean Major.

### Minutes of 2016 AGM

Approved

### Matters arising

None were raised.

### Chairman's annual report

*Public events* have again been well attended, assisted by good weather for the Open Days and Garden Walks. apart from the traditional May event, five additional Open Days were held:

- on 25<sup>th</sup> June members and staff from the Yorkshire Arboretum at Castle Howard visited at the invitation of the university.
- 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> August the gardens were open to the public as part of the Hull City of Culture program.
- The gardens were open again in September for Heritage Day.

Many of those attending these events were previously unaware of the gardens' existence.

*Projects* ongoing include the creation of a greenhouse display of South African plants, and upgrading the heating in the Tropical Economic house, after a heating failure last winter led to the loss of some plants.

*Damage* to both plants and the greenhouses, caused by youths entering the premises after dark, continues to be an intermittent but serious problem. The police have now been given keys to the main gates, so that they can patrol the area if necessary.

We await with interest the outcome of the *Sale of Thwaite Hall*, which is now surplus to University requirements. There is no reason as yet to suppose this will affect the maintenance of, or access to, the gardens themselves.

### Secretary's annual report

We are still looking for a secretary. If you are interested in helping out, please contact the Chairman or Treasurer, whose contact details are inside the back cover of all the newsletters.

### Treasurer's annual report

The finances are stable, with no significant change in the bank balance over the year. In practice, the balance falls in the early part of the year as money is spent on plants and materials during the planting season, followed by a recovery as money from subscriptions is received.

For the full report, together with Income and Expenditure accounts for 2016-7, please see newsletter no. 47, September 2017.

### Election of Officers

The following were elected unopposed:

John Killingbeck (Chairman), Annie Bourton Card (Treasurer), Victor Swetez, Steve Howe, Jean Major, Rohan Lewis, Sharon Western.

### Any Other Business

A suggestion was made that Friends of Thwaite Gardens should become a registered charity, to take advantage of Gift Aid on subscriptions paid. It was agreed to discuss this at the next committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Rohan Lewis

13<sup>th</sup> October 2017



## **Treasurer's Report: 1 August 2017 – 31 July 2018**

This is the only “officer’s report” as we have been without a secretary since January 2016 and our chairman, John Killingbeck, resigned at the beginning of May 2018. Thankfully one of our Friday volunteers (Anne Connell) has offered her services as secretary and another Friday volunteer (Jane Scorer) has offered to manage our publicity. During the course of the year various people have helped with various things, but my particular thanks go to Lyn Jones for managing the publicity and to Steve Howe for a whole range of things, not least “holding the fort” in the absence of a chairperson. We remain hopeful that someone may be willing to stand as chairperson.

I would like to thank each and every one of the Friday volunteers for their sterling gardening services, good cheer and jolliness. It is a great team of very interesting and quite knowledgeable individuals (some of the team being particularly knowledgeable). Other botanic /country house

gardens personnel have expressed surprise that we function without employed horticulturists to guide us.

There has, of course, been anxiety about the future of Thwaite Gardens. At present we are assured that the botanic gardens part will continue. It remains to be seen what access the Friends will have to the lake and woodland part. We have the support of the Parish Council, which is good. Our large membership is also very important. Please keep up your membership.

You will find more information about our future elsewhere in this newsletter.

This year's income and expenditure can be seen in the annual balance sheet. I think it is largely because our Open Day was such a great success that this year our income exceeds our outgoings.

Open Day was quite wonderful this year: great weather, loads of people, masses of plants, heaps of cake and the marvellous choir. The choir was such a success that we have already booked them for next year!

As Sharon Western has written in her article, we have been devastated by vandalism. There have been many broken windows needing urgent repair, particularly in winter. The university maintains the structural part of the botanic gardens so it has been the university which paid for new glass.

Following the repeated damage to our "office base" in one of the greenhouses, and given that the university had moved the gardeners plus their tools off site, Vic Swetez has arranged for us to use a secure room inside the brick building to store our tools. When we moved everything, Anne Connell and I did an inventory, comparing it with one Rohan Lewis had done a while ago. Fortunately most of the tools were still there, although to our dismay a couple of heavy hammers were missing. The vandals did, however, take all our gardening gloves, including the 200 silicon ones – many of which could be seen scattered around the gardens like dead blue jellyfish.

Theft in a more planned way was demonstrated when two medium sized fruit trees, a peach and an apricot, both in large and heavy pots, disappeared. Whoever took those would have needed transport so the theft must have happened in broad daylight when the gates were open.

So we need our dog-walkers, you keep an eye on things for us and are a continued public presence.

Particular thanks are due to Vic Swetez and Sue Swetez. Vic remains our link with the university, is a member of our committee, is usually the person to open the gates in a morning and shut them again in the late afternoon, and it has been he who has found much of the vandalism damage and has had to clear it up and do urgent repairs on quite a number of occasions. Sue is the person who collates designs and Edits the newsletter and Vic arranges for it to be printed: Without them you would not be reading this!

Finally, my thanks to all of you who pay your membership and therefore contribute so much to our budget. May you continue to enjoy these lovely gardens for many years to come.

Annie Bourton Card -Treasurer



**PS Ancient Chinese proverb:-**

If you want to be happy for an hour: drink wine.

If you want to be happy for three days: get married.

If you want to be happy for 8 days: kill your pig and eat it.

If you want to be happy forever: become a gardener. Annie



FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS  
Income and Expenditure  
**YEAR: 1st Aug 2017 to 31st July 2018**

| <b><u>INCOME</u></b>            | <b>£</b>        |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Membership Fees                 | 2,289.00        |
| Donations                       | 170.61          |
| Open Day                        | 2,451.90        |
| Sundries/Miscellaneous          | 33.50           |
| Entrance Fees (except Open Day) | 59.50           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>             | <b>5,004.51</b> |

| <b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>                               |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Hall / Room Hire                                        | 60.00    |
| Speakers                                                | 24.00    |
| Plants & Gardening Materials                            | 3,875.97 |
| <u>Sundries</u>                                         | 84.65    |
| Refreshments<br>(evening meetings & meals for speakers) | 58.72    |
| Printing                                                | 157.40   |
| Donations & Gifts for Services                          | -----    |

## TOTAL OUTGOINGS

£

**EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE**                      **743.77**

**Bank (no cash) at 31st July 2017**                      **4,914.48**

**Bank (no cash) at 31st July 2018**                      **5,658.25**

Signed:    Annie Bourton Card

Examined by Mr Martyn Bishop, BA (Business Studies)

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

***Annual subscriptions are due on 1st November 2018.  
They are £8 per person or £12 for two people living at the  
same address***

***Anyone who has not paid by the Open Day 2019 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 2018 do not have to renew  
their subscriptions until November 2019.***

## Cactus Society Success on Open Day



We had a wonderful and successful time at the open day. We are privileged to be allowed to take part and the friends are such a lovely helpful bunch of people it makes all the efforts worthwhile

BOB Hall secretary

*Note from Annie Bourton Card -Bob now comes on a Friday morning and looks after the cactus house.*

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## **VANDALISM AT THWAITE GARDENS**

One Friday morning in March we (the Friday volunteers) turned up as usual at around 9.30 am to get on with our jobs, be it weeding, greenhouse work (including potting on and dividing plants), watering, planting out, cleaning and tidying, etc. We were devastated to find that vandals had broken into the Alpine House (Pat's domain and a source of much delight and pleasure). We found that they had pulled many of the plants out of their submerged terracotta pots (they are kept in damp sand/gravel), stood or stamped on them and then excreted on top of the pile.

Lynda and I (Sharon) set to, before Pat turned up, and cleared all the sad and disgusting mess.

The following week they broke in to the repaired Alpine House again, this time smashing many more of the terracotta pots. Pat was away so Jackie, Lynda and I set to again, clearing away the mess. We were so upset we asked ourselves: "are we fighting a losing battle?" Not only had they wrecked so much of the Alpine House, but the vandals had also broken three panes of glass in the main greenhouse, they had broken into our tool boxes and poured washing up liquid and salt all over the shelves. (We use the washing up liquid to clean blackfly from the plants in the greenhouse corridor and we use salt as a weedkiller.) Fortunately for us three, Steve had cleared most of the mess before we arrived.

Meanwhile Olive, working in the front part of the gardens, was distressed to find many plants trampled on as oaks had climbed in over the front wall.

This was all shortly before our fantastic Open Day, which we thought was the best ever, what with the glorious weather, the beautiful cakes, buns and scones (so generously donated) and of course the choir. Some visitors commented that with the choir the day turned out to be like a Garden Party (one person said it was as good as Buckingham Palace), so this made us feel our efforts were all worthwhile. It was an

amazing day, thank you all of you who attended and contributed in one way or another.

The next bout of vandalism was the Night after Open Day when both glass doors of the new classroom were smashed. With this increase in vandalism the university decided to employ extra security around the premises. At the time of writing the vandalism seems to have reduced (thank goodness) although not ended.

You have all made us feel it is worthwhile. We are back planning for next year, already sowing seeds, etc. So, once again, thank you to all who attended and see you next year.

Sharon Western.

5.7.18

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### **TREES OF THWAITE – PAGODA TREE (*Stryphnolobium japonicum*)**



This tree has long been known by the more pronounceable and easily memorised name of *Sophora japonica*. For no obvious reason Thwaite has several examples of this species, which is otherwise rather uncommon both regionally and in Britain overall, though is much more frequent in the south than in the north of the UK.

Thwaite's best example is at the entrance of Thwaite Hall and can be seen easily from the roadside. Two others are found in the copse north of the

glasshouses, another in the wood and a couple of young ones were planted a few years ago on the sloping land west of the hall. There are even one or two others in Cottingham – off Priory road - and a much rarer example of the pendulous form once grew in a private garden in Hallgate. Pickering Park in Hull has several including what is perhaps the area's best specimen, though this is eclipsed by one growing between flats near the centre of York.

So it is a tree that might be encountered anywhere and is probably under observed. Part of the reason for this is perhaps because it is easily mistaken for the much commoner *Robinia* or Acacia tree. The two are in fact closely related (both in the pea family – *Fabaceae*). They both have similar compound rounded ash-like foliage and both have white 'pea' flowers. *Robinia* however, flowers in late spring with pendulous blooms that resemble white Laburnum. Pagoda Tree, if it flowers at all, does so in very late summer, mainly September. The flowers are also white but in stouter clusters near the branch tips and in a good year, give the entire tree a foamy white look.

But Pagoda is a tree that only gives of its best in warm conditions. Following a cool summer here, it may not flower at all and in a cold early autumn, any display may be terminated causing the buds to drop prematurely. We do get a decent display from time to time though and at a period of the year when few other trees are in bloom. Then the Pagoda tree becomes quite striking. This need for warm summers is perhaps the main reason the tree is mainly grown in the south.

Pagoda Trees are more successful in climates with hotter more 'continental' summers both in Europe and America as well as in its native East Asian home. Here it not only flowers well but also produces its strange seed pods. Although contained within single pods, each seed is separated in its own little chamber so the pod resembles a short string of beads, unlike the typical flat 'pea pods' of *Robinia* or *Laburnum*. In winter Pagoda tree can be distinguished from *Robinia* by its less rugged bark and thicker deep green twigs.

The Pagoda tree does have another relative that is occasionally encountered – the New Zealand Kowhai tree (*Sophora tetraptera*). This tree, unlike *S.*

*japonicum*, is evergreen and has very striking yellow flowers in spring. Whereas the Pagoda Tree is very winter frost hardy but needs hot summers to flourish, the Kowhai is the exact opposite – needing mild winters and is content with cool summers. It is hard to please both in East Yorkshire! The latter is usually grown on a sheltered wall here, where a specimen in Willerby once reached the eaves of a sheltering two storey house – very spectacular. Unfortunately it was killed by a single exceptional frost in the mid 1990's.

John Killingbeck August 2018

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### PLANT OF THE MONTH – ITEA (*Itea ilicifolia*)



This is a little known but rather ‘classy’ evergreen shrub that deserves to be more widely grown. Our Thwaite specimen is particularly fine and grows about half way along the long border on the east side of the entrance garden as one comes in through the gate.

Thwaite’s *Itea* is probably quite old as it was well established when Friends started renovating this border about 15 or so years ago when it was one of the first projects tackled. *Itea* had to be rescued from general overgrowth of commoner species and has since revived and grown strongly to become a superb specimen of its type. It was no doubt planted by the old Botany department along with a number of other relict curiosities that still inhabit that border from the era when botany was studied at the university.

*Itea* is not a plant for gardeners who demand colour. Its beauty lies in its subtle shades of green, texture, habit and scent. The evergreen foliage resembles holly at first glance but more delicate and not actually prickly. It is a dark shiny green and handsome in its own right. The flowers appear in the latter half of summer and are the chief enchantment of the plant. Hundreds of tiny blooms appear along slender catkins of around a foot in length. When produced abundantly the effect on masse is of a shrub cascading or dripping with a sort of lime green mossy growth or stalactites. When in full bloom they emit a sweet honey-like scent.

*Itea* can be grown as a free standing shrub and in the case of Thwaite's plant has reached a height of well over 2m. More usually it is grown as a wall shrub. This is for two reasons. The first is that it actually looks particularly fine draped along a wall. The second reason is it is not completely hardy in many colder situations and may suffer from winter damage. Having said that, Thwaite's plant has flourished for decades and although fairly sheltered is not particularly so.

A warm west or south facing wall is thus the ideal site for *Itea*, though it is worth trying anywhere in a sheltered garden. Full sun is likely to encourage the most profuse blooming, though as Thwaite's specimen proves, it can grow successfully in moderate shade. It seems tolerant of most reasonable soils and does not seem particularly prone to pests or diseases.

To obtain a specimen of *Itea* it may be necessary to search in a specialist nursery. It does however pop up in the general trade from time to time and might be encountered at an ordinary garden centre. A related species sometimes available is *I. virginica*. This is a rather different shrub, being deciduous and said to prefer acid soils. I have little experience in growing it nor yet seen a decent example of it in this area. However it is likely to be hardier than *I. ilicifolia*.

John Killingbeck August 2018



## THWAITE TREE SURVEY – EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Recently, in conjunction with a colleague from Woodland Trust (Alan Hunton), I undertook a tree survey of Thwaite gardens. This was for the benefit of TROBI (Tree Register of Britain and Ireland). TROBI is a national organisation that holds a huge database on trees all around the country. It has probably recorded not only virtually every species grown here but also has detailed records of the largest specimens known of each type. These largest are known as “Champions”. There are national and also regional champions – our own region being Yorkshire.

TROBI already had some data on Thwaite, gathered in 2004 by Owen Johnson, their chief recorder. Owen is one of the most knowledgeable tree authorities in the UK and has written several books including the popular Collins Tree Guide. It was the job of Alan and myself to update this data and add any other we thought appropriate.

At the end of the survey we had recorded some 80 trees – none of which included even moderately common species – only those regarded as unusual or special in some way. This figure of 80 is perhaps remarkable and surprising in its own right.

The data were submitted to TROBI for analysis and they came up with the following results:

Of the total submitted no fewer than 37 were considered “remarkable” in some way.

31 of these are “Yorkshire Champions” in terms of either girth or height or both.

6 of these are also “National Champions” (English) in terms of girth or height or both.

Owen Johnson said of the Thwaite results: “After Thorpe Perrow, it’s perhaps the best collection of mature rare trees in N.E England”. High praise indeed! I

have to admit, that the results have surprised even me – a long term advocate of the value of the Thwaite collection.

Rather worryingly 28 of these “remarkable” trees are on the part of Thwaite up for sale in the autumn, so their future at this stage is precarious, particularly if sold to a private bidder. This part of the estate also includes some of the best loved trees in the collection – yet not even on the TROBI ‘remarkable’ list – like the Foxglove Tree, the Redwoods, Tulip Trees and Swamp Cypresses. Their loss would be a major one. There is a serious danger, now, of losing a unique asset to the Hull and East Yorkshire area.

John Killingbeck, August 2018

## **Contact Details**

### **Chairman**

vacancy

### **Secretary**

vacancy

### **Treasurer**

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