

# NORTHERN Leaves

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November 2023



**The Newsletter of the Hardy Plant Society  
Scottish and Northern Borders Group**

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## **The Hardy Plant Society**

**The Hardy Plant Society** was formed to foster interest in hardy herbaceous plants. It aims to give its members information about the wealth of both familiar and less well known plants and to ensure that all garden-worthy perennial plants remain in cultivation and have the widest possible distribution.

**HPS website: [www.hardy-plant.org.uk](http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk)**

**The Scottish and Northern Borders Group** has members all over Scotland and several in the north of England. The group organises garden visits in spring, summer and autumn, with lecture days in the winter, arranged at a variety of locations throughout Scotland. The group produces a magazine *Northern Leaves* in spring and autumn.

For further information contact the Secretary: **[sec.scot.hps@gmail.com](mailto:sec.scot.hps@gmail.com)**  
**website: [www.scothps.co.uk](http://www.scothps.co.uk)**

The next issue of *Northern Leaves* will be published in May 2024, please send any articles to be included in this issue to Chris Sanders, 3 Queen Street, Helensburgh, G84 9QH  
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### **Photographs on the covers**

Front Cover: Campanula at Teasses

*Chris Sanders*

Back Cover: Clematis and roses at Helensburgh

*Chris Sanders*



## From the Convenor

I write this looking at a bare patch in the herbaceous border where a routine weeding discovered the dreaded Bishop Weed (ground elder) had insinuated itself under thick clumps of marguerite and phlox. Catherine has blitzed it; all the invaded plants have gone into the garden waste bin and the bulbs are being cleaned and replanted. When we moved into this garden 15 years ago it was rife, but we managed to get rid of 99% over the next year. Unfortunately, the 1% rapidly fights back, aided by the overgrown garden next door where it cheerfully flowers and seeds about. We have discovered that plantings of *Euphorbia griffithii* and wild garlic produce impenetrable and presumably noxious barriers at boundaries but that simply replaces a big pest with a little one. Bishop Weed along with rabbits were introduced as a food source by the Romans (they really knew how to do the invasive species thing!) and one of the lesser control measures is to cut and eat it young, less a form of nutrition than an act of revenge. Even here it fights back, it's a mild sedative, laxative and diuretic so over-indulgence could be catastrophic! It's also known as goutweed but thankfully I do not need that herbal use. All this simply to illustrate that we Hardy Planters must continuously be on guard and there is no such thing as an off season.

Meeting attendances remain steady but regrettably we had to cancel the Autumn Tints visit because of the severe weather warning. Had we gone ahead some members may not have got back home that evening, certainly the roads around Drummond Castle were badly affected. I visited the following week, and the colours were stunning, one for next year perhaps. The rest of the 2024 programme is shaping up with the AGM in Auchterarder again in March and a good programme of visits. Lastly, we will all be receiving the HPS call for seeds for the seed exchange. I would recommend donating to this scheme, the range is amazing, and it needs a core of willing donors to allow Hardy Planters the opportunity to try rarities and garden at the boundaries of climate or topography.

Happy planting!

*Andrew Holmes*

## **Albert Heasman**

I am pleased to write a short appreciation of Albert and to say that I knew of him for some time before I first met him as he worked for many years abroad as an architect, his parent firm being based in Glasgow. His wife, Iris, and mine, Janette, worked together in a flower shop in Blantyre and became very good friends whereupon we both got to know the Heasman family of three boys and their many friends. Albert spent a little time at home in Whitemoss House and soon the gardens were transformed into a truly Plantsman's garden complete with an upper pond connected to a lower one by a beautifully constructed and briskly flowing stream. At one stage, after major surgery, Iris found him sitting up in bed pricking out seedlings surrounded by all the paraphernalia required so to do. The garden was opened under Scotland's Gardens Scheme for many years. Much fun was had and much money was raised for charity as a result.

Albert was very active in the Hardy Plant Society and together with others instigated the formation of the Scottish and Northern Borders Group. He became a long-standing member of the Executive Committee and was at various times Treasurer, Convenor and started organising the Summer Week's Holiday each year from the initial one to Dublin in 2006. Since he retired this has been undertaken faithfully by a sub-committee and we are all very grateful to them for continuing the tradition.

As well as a very good organiser, Albert had a very keen sense of humour and was known to be quite the entertainer as members attending the Northern Ireland trip some years ago will remember.

Albert and Iris we miss greatly.

*Alistair MacCormick*



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## Keeping the garden interesting through winter

Some may say that one of the secrets to a successful garden is to keep interest going all year round. This can often be challenging depending on your garden's aspect and susceptibility to frost and so on, but not impossible. Don't just think flowers for colour, think wider and look at what else can provide interest and colour through those cold dark months.



There are various aspects of plants that can bring interest to the garden through winter: flowers, interesting bark, evergreen leaves and seed heads left on perennials. As always, I have suggested tough plants that will cope with our Scottish garden conditions and which are available in the nursery.

There are many trees and shrubs that have interesting and colourful bark all year round, these are particularly noticeable in winter once the leaves have dropped and the framework and beauty of the tree is revealed. *Prunus serrula* and *Betula* are two of my favourites. The peeling pinky red bark of the prunus and the white papery bark of the betulas have a certain tactile appeal: you just have to touch them. Depending on variety some betulas are much whiter, *B. jaquemontii* and *B. 'Snow Queen'* are two of the best. Some acers are also grown for their bark colour and texture, be it the brown flaky bark of *A. griseum* or the white lined bark of the snake bark acers including *A. capillipes* whose leaves also turns a vibrant red in autumn.





The bark of *Acer griseum*



*Betula jaquemontii* peeling in Dawyck Gardens



Variations in bark colour of betulas



The bark of a snake bark acer

Other shrubs to consider are ones that flower in winter such as several varieties of viburnum and *Cornus mas*. Look out for *Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn'; a strong plant with pink scented flowers throughout winter, it can reach eight to 10 feet over time and is well worth the space as a backdrop to a border. A viburnum that ticks two boxes is *V. tinus*, which is evergreen and flowers in winter with its pink buds opening into white scented flowers. Again, this is good as an evergreen screen or backdrop to a border, giving form and interest all year round. *Cornus mas* produces gloriously yellow flowers in later winter, creating a bright spot in the garden: well worth growing for something different.



Many cornus are grown for their red bark, pollarding every few years will keep the young colourful shoots fresh and the shrub a neat shape and size. A wreath of *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' stems and the range of leaf colours from one plant!



The flowers of *Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn'



*Viburnum tinus*

Evergreens are essential to form a framework in the garden when perennials are dormant and deciduous trees and shrubs are bare of leaves. They add height, shape and colour to what could otherwise be a flat landscape. Conifers are the obvious choice here, hardy, easy to grow and come in many colours and shapes to suit every taste. I prefer evergreen shrubs such as *Viburnum davidii* with its glossy leaves, *Viburnum tinus* and its winter flowers, holly, especially *Ilex ferox* and *Ilex* 'Blue Princess' for something quite different. For a zing of colour try *Euonymus* 'Emerald Gaiety' or *Euonymus* 'Emerald n Gold', both are evergreen with bright variegation.



*Cornus mas*



Display table full of winter interest trees and shrubs here in the nursery





*Chionochloa rubra*

Moving down the scale a bit there are also grasses, ferns and perennials that keep going through winter. Grasses such as carex, miscanthus, chionochloa, luzula, stipa and festuca are evergreen, providing great shape and colour in the winter garden. Don't cut the flower heads off until late winter when you start the garden tidy up and

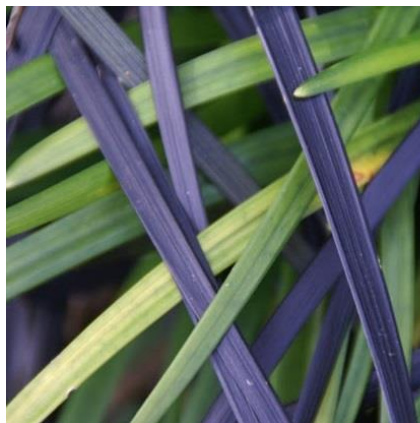
you have great arching and spiky seed heads that will hold the frost on cold days, adding height and interest as they sparkle in the winter sun.

Evergreen perennials are more limited and tend to be smaller but can be used for good ground cover and front of border interest. As with the grasses you can also leave seed-heads on the plants through winter. Ajuga, bergenias, hellebores, epimediums, some geraniums and geums, heucheras, *Iris foetidissima*, liriopes and ophiopogon (grass-like but not a grass), all have leaves through winter. Some perennials do keep a certain amount of leaves, depending on the weather conditions and severity of the winter.



*Stipa gigantea*





*Ophiopogon nigrescens*



Bergenias looking good with frost

Below is a list of suitable plants I recommend for winter interest.

*Rona Dodds*

### **Trees and Shrubs**

*Acer griseum*

*Acer capillipes*

*Berberis stenophylla*

*Betula pendula*

*Betula* 'Snow Queen'

*Betula* 'Edinburgh'

*Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'

*Cornus mas*

Cotoneaster

*Euonymus* 'Emerald n Gold'

*Euonymus* 'Emerald Gaiety'

Hamamelis

*Ilex ferox*

*Ilex* 'Blue Princess'

*Lonicera* 'Winter Beauty'

*Mahonia x media* 'Charity'

*Prunus serrula*

*Sarrococca confusa*

Skimmia

*Taxus baccata* 'Standishii'

*Viburnum davidii*

*Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn'

*Viburnum tinus*

### **Grasses**

*Corus gramineus*

Carex

*Chionochloa*

Festuca

*Luzula nivea*

*Luzula sylvatica*

Miscanthus

Stipa

*Uncina rubra*

## **Perennials**

Ajuga

Bergenia

*Cyclamen hederifolium*

Epimedium

Euphorbias

Geraniums

Geums

Hellebores

Heuchera

Heucerella

*Iris foetidissima*

*Iris unguicularis*

Liriope

Ophiopogon

Vinca

## **Ferns**

Asplenium

*Dryopteris felix-mas*

Polypodium

## **Climbers**

Hedera cultivars

## **Bulbs**

*Eranthus hymalis*

*Iris reticulata*

Snowdrops

## **Herbs**

*Laurus noblis*

*Rosmarinus officinalis*

*Salvia officinalis*

*Thymus vulgaris*

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## THE SEASONS IN COLOUR

Nature is a tireless artist,  
work in progress, never done  
painting Earth's revolving canvas  
as seasons come.

Spring begins with nodding yellow  
bonnets of the daffodils  
purple crocus, pink viola  
and fresh green hills.

Summer brings the golden sunflowers,  
azure skies and sapphire seas,  
honeysuckle, lavender  
and lilac trees.

Russet apples, ripe in autumn,  
amber gorse, deep purple plums,  
falling leaves of brown and copper  
then winter comes.

Sparkling frost on holly berries,  
dark green fir trees, soft white snow;  
winter paints the shades of Christmas  
we all know.

*May Howie*

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## VISIT TO RHU 26th April 2023

### Hillcroft

We were very lucky with the weather on the day and unusually for Helensburgh, it was dry and sunny!

Hillcroft, the first garden of the day, is set on a hillside overlooking Rhu, and has been the home of Fiona Baker since 2000. It was previously the home, for over 50 years, of a couple who developed it as a flower arranger's garden; when Fiona took it on it had become rather overgrown and neglected and she describes it as abundant and a little on the wild side!



The garden paths wind their way through exuberant borders of mature shrubs and trees, including a couple of lovely acers, underplanted with herbaceous perennials and bulbs. The winding paths lead visitors up the hillside, under arches covered with climbers, past ponds and a fountain and rill to an alpine bed and a kitchen garden beside the house.

Spring flowers including hellebores, erythronium, Solomon's seal and euphorbias are all allowed to spread in a naturalistic way to create a

colourful understory below the shrubs. A wide variety of emerging perennials and flowering shrubs will also provide colour and interest later in the season and clever use has been made of mirrors in a dark corner to reflect light and make the space seem larger.

An enjoyable visit to a garden that Fiona describes as a work in progress, and it would be interesting to come back in a few years to see how the garden develops.

*Lesley Reid*

## **Stonecroft**

The second garden of the morning visit has lovely views over Gareloch from its hillside location and has been the home of Adrienne and Jim Kerr since 2014. The house had been empty for a considerable time when they bought it, and the garden was very overgrown and filled with brambles, but they have created a lovely garden full of interest and colour.



A *Magnolia stellata* leads you into the front garden, set to lawn with borders and island beds, filled with mature shrubs and herbaceous perennials. There are several large pieris, a camelia and an acer beside the wildlife pond providing great spring colour. The path leads up to the summerhouse positioned to take advantage of the views over the garden and the wider landscape.

The back garden features a superb colourful display from the various azaleas and pieris as well as a backdrop of mature trees. The garden also has plenty of other shrubs and perennials to provide a succession of interest throughout the season.



The Kerrs have used flotsam and jetsam to create quirky features, but their main interest is in creating a wildlife friendly garden with plants carefully chosen to provide interest throughout the season.

*Lesley Reid*

## **Glenarn**

We visited Glenarn Garden in the afternoon. We were fortunate enough to enjoy beautiful spring weather – and the garden was looking wonderful, bursting with colour.

The garden has an interesting history, which divides into three very distinct phases.

Up to the early 1800s, the land above the tiny village of Rhu, on the north coast of the Firth of Clyde, was simply a peaceful dreaming hillside. By now Glasgow had become an extremely busy industrial centre, where astute businessmen were making vast amounts of money. At first they set up house on the west side of Glasgow, to try to get away from the noise and smoke that was so profitable for them.



### Rhododendrons at Glenarn

But by the 1840s, there was a reliable and regular steamboat service, pioneered originally by Scottish engineer and entrepreneur Henry Bell, up and down the Firth of Clyde. Wealthy businessmen from Glasgow realised that it would be possible to live, at least for the summer, in a peaceful part of Scotland yet still have easy access to their businesses in Glasgow. So, plots of land were purchased all around the coast of the Firth of Clyde and large mansion houses started to be built.

In 1847, Andrew Macgeorge, a lawyer from Glasgow, purchased a twelve-acre plot above Rhu village, to build a summer retreat for himself and his family. He chose his plot well – it had wonderful sweeping views of the Clyde and the hills beyond. It also included access on his own land to stone that could be quarried to build his mansion.

In the following few years the layout was planned and executed. When the 1863 O.S. map was drawn, an intricate network of paths was shown on the map. These gave access to the sloping grounds to the rear of the house. So the basic bones of the garden, still evident today, were already in place in 1860.

Old photographs show an open front lawn, with a garden enclosure and paddock to the back of the house. Further up the hill, indigenous trees



such as oak, Scots pine, alder and yew were planted – but there were also, intriguingly, a few exotic plants.



Andrew Macgeorge's father was a near neighbour in Glasgow of and lawyer to William Hooker, who from 1820 to 1843 was the immensely popular Professor of Botany at Glasgow University. Hooker's second son, Joseph, while still a child, attended his father's lectures – as did the young David Douglas, recently employed at the Glasgow Botanic Gardens. Inspired by David Douglas' later tales of his expeditions to America, Joseph became a famous plant-hunter himself. It is reputed that the veteran *Rhododendron falconeri* growing at the side of the house was grown from seed collected by the young Joseph Hooker on an early plant-hunting expedition to India and Sikkim in 1849.

The Macgeorge family remained at Glenarn for over seventy years. In 1921, Glenarn was put up for sale. It was purchased by a Glasgow engineer but went back on the market in 1927. This time it was sold to Mr Gibson from Ayrshire, but he died before the transaction was complete and the property passed to his eldest son.

Archie and his younger brother Sandy were both training as accountants. Fortunately for us, the two young men set themselves off on a lifetime of learning more about plants, especially rhododendrons – and became completely captivated by them.

An acquaintance of their father introduced them to Scottish landowners who had been smitten by the plant-collecting bug. The young men were introduced to people like the Balfour family at Dawyck and Lord Stair at Lochinch. The resourceful George Forrest was at this time setting off on plant-hunting expeditions to China, financed by these wealthy landowners. The reward for each contributor was a share of the plants and seeds that Forrest discovered and managed to bring back.

And like most gardeners, these people were generous with sharing their knowledge and some of their seeds – especially with two young men who were showing such infectious enthusiasm.



So Archie and Sandy would set off at weekends with their trailer and return triumphantly with a trailer-load of plants including rhododendron cuttings or seeds. Remarkably, some of the letters exchanged between the brothers and the landowners still survive.

However, the most valuable document of the period is the Gibsons' accession book, nicknamed "The Bible", which records the dates, size and source of all rhododendrons planted at Glenarn, with occasional accompanying notes regarding locations and survival. The original of this document is now safely stored in the archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens.

In 1930 Archie married. Fortunately for them all, Betty shared their deep love of plants and the three of them set about the Herculean task of clearing a very large and very overgrown garden.

Frank Kingdon Ward, Frank Ludlow and George Sherriff were all undertaking plant-hunting expeditions at this time and a huge range of plants were added to Glenarn from the plants they brought back. The brothers and Betty learned to take cuttings and the best ways to grow them and then collect the seed.

Previously, owning a large garden or financing plant-hunting expeditions had been the preserve of the landed gentry. Now however the professional classes, who actually worked for a living, taught themselves about plants and created their own gardens on land that they purchased. The brothers were typical of this social change.

As the garden grew and evolved, the brothers welcomed members of the public to come and visit. It became, in 1939, one of the first gardens in

Scotland to open to anyone who wished to come. Initially this was for only one day – but latterly it was open over an extended period.



By the 1950s the brothers had owned and been developing the garden for well over twenty years. Many of the plants were by now flowering for the first time. Daffodil bulbs were planted by the thousand, and many primulas were added, as well as a range of beautiful and stately magnolias.

In 1975 Archie and Betty died. Sandy, the younger brother lingered on till 1982. By the time of his death the house had become badly neglected. The garden, once so beautiful, had reverted once more to an overgrown jungle. Commentators sadly concluded that the garden was “probably doomed”. The house was in very poor repair and the garden, littered with fallen trees and unchecked growth, had turned once again into a jungle.

However, fortunately for us all, in 1983, a couple of intrepid young architects, Mike and Sue Thornley, took on the enormous challenge of restoring this historic but completely overgrown garden.

First, they demolished a third of the house, which was by then in very poor repair. Many of the other buildings such as the carriage house and greenhouses were also in desperate need of repair.

They then set about their long-term project to restore the garden. They re-cut all the paths, dug out the silted-up pond to re-form the water feature created by the first owner of the garden and fenced and brought the abandoned vegetable patch back into full production. Over the years the drystone boundary walls were rebuilt – and the Rock Garden, situated in the original quarry, was replanted to give longer seasonal interest. Fortunately they had access to the Gibsons’ detailed accessions list – and now have a facsimile copy. They have continued the brothers’

tradition of taking meticulous notes of any new acquisitions of rhododendrons.



The Gibsons' legacy was approximately 450 different species and hybrid rhododendrons in the collection. Since taking over the garden, the Thornleys have added 300 new species and hybrids not previously represented at Glenarn, as well as replacing or adding to at least 25% of the original collection. The collections of magnolias and acers have been extended, and more sorbus have been planted, along with many other new trees and shrubs. All

of these plants have been re-labelled, recorded and mapped.

Garden-lovers are the richer for the Thornleys' constant hard work, enthusiasm, imagination and dedication.

*Fran Scott*

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## GARDENS IN DUMFRIES AREA

### 25th – 26th May 2023

#### Drumpark

The trip to Dumfries organised by Pam, Gwen, Vivienne and Clare was anticipated with lots of excitement. This was the first trip to this area since the “big lockdown”. A lovely part of the world and the best month for garden visits. After coffee and scones at Woodland House Hotel we travelled five miles in convoy to Drumpark for the first garden of the day.



Drumpark is the home of Iain and Liz Mitchell. The couple inherited the house and garden. They have lived and worked in the area for 14 years. The original house had been demolished and a new home built in 1977 at the top of the three-acre plot. The new house has an amazing outlook over the

contoured garden. The large mature trees were planted in 1860 when the original garden was designed. These include four magnificent Champion Trees: *Abies procera*, *Abies cephalonica*, *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*.

The woodland part of the garden was ablaze with colour. The azaleas and rhododendrons were magnificent. At the bottom of the slope there was a stream and pond surrounded by a shady area. There were *Primula japonica* in colourful profusion and blue meconopsis growing in perfect conditions. A *Magnolia laevifolia* was in full bloom.



We were introduced to the “lockdown” border. This was created when a hedge of conifers was removed. The border was about four foot wide and a mixture of herbaceous planting and shrubs. The geraniums and peonies were in bloom. The border is now very mature and will provide months of colour. What a treat after living with a conifer hedge.

The walled garden was in full vegetable and fruit production and guarded by a cockerel and his hens. We were warned that the cockerel was not too friendly, so we did not get too close; we just looked through the gate. We enjoyed this beautiful garden on a sunny May morning.

*Marjorie Anderson*

## **Arbigland – The Nearly Lost Garden**

Twenty-four acres of mainly woodland. There are lots and lots of huge mature trees that enjoy the wet and relatively mild climate in the southwest. Some lovely mature specimens of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Photinia davidiana*, eucryphia, monkey puzzle, red cedars etc, etc. Then there are the magnolias, rhododendrons, azaleas and primulas. Lots of



*Acer palmatum*

familiar deciduous trees such as massive oaks and beech and the inevitable scrub that moves in with neglect.



Beside the pond

Wayne and Alistair, the current owners, have very ambitious plans to clean up the gardens and restore the original features like the Japanese garden and the more formal areas. There is a big lake surrounded by paths that lead to some unexpected statues, a sundial, a small

cottage and more. The sunken garden has a small pavilion built by Italian prisoners of war, an obelisk placed over an old well and four huge urns that are now too fragile to move.

In front of the house is a parterre with clipped hedges and a canal pool. Gates lead out to a meadow that will have a maze and wild flowers are establishing themselves.

From the side of the house is a long straight walk all the way to the Solway Firth. This is being opened up and some new planting to recreate the carriage drive to the beach gate guarded by two large white lion statues.



The Solway

*Rhododendron ponticum* and bamboo are two very invasive plants that have to be cleared. Burning was not an option so the mounds of cut branches have been piled up and covered in soil to create new features. One cleared area near the house is now

home to hundreds of bright cerise candelabra primulas, quite stunning in the sunshine and backed by a rhododendron in full flower that exactly matched the colour.

Several of the group had visited before and could already see progress being made. The mature trees give a feeling of timeless peace, although I doubt if the owners ever stop long enough to enjoy it. I think everyone felt calmed and restored by their time in the garden. This is a garden that should be revisited regularly to see the work these two brave men of vision are achieving.

*Judy Jones*

## Gardens in Gatelawbridge

Friday 26th May dawned another sunny, blue-sky day. After a day spent in two large gardens, and an evening of jolly indoor dining, we were to have a morning of complete contrast: in a charming small village called Gatelawbridge, to the north-east of Dumfries, where we would visit four individual and very different village gardens. This area of Dumfriesshire lies on the remains of extensive sandstone quarries some of which are still visible, including in the gardens we visited – and the products of which are evident in many fine buildings in the area. But it is also an area of charming hedgerows and lanes, blooming profusely with brilliant yellow broom and many other wildflowers, along which we wended our way to the gardens so generously made open to us.



The wildflower meadow

The industrial heritage of the area is perhaps most obvious in one of the village properties called **Four Sisters**. Owned, and cultivated, by Mark and Sally, its name denotes their four young daughters! They live in a fine new barn conversion that looks over their two-acre wildflower meadow to a glorious view of Nithsdale. The meadow was



originally grazed by sheep and cattle, but is now a managed expanse of grasses and wildflowers accessed by well-managed paths and punctuated by various islands of exposed rock.

Mark is a real enthusiast for their meadow, and is intensely interested in what species can, and should, be grown. This is no careless scattering of random seeds culled from last year's plants; everything is carefully considered and selected and placed. His current preoccupation is to increase his crop of yellow rattle, already showing its bright flowers in some areas. Mark has been working on the wildflower meadow project for three years and reckons there is still a long way to go! And of course, four daughters to help!



Rocky outcrop

More or less next door, lies **One Newton Cottage**, where Rod and Carol have lived for 15 years. During this time, they have replanned their half-acre of farmland into a varied and intriguing garden to complement their stone cottage and a variety of wood buildings, including Carol's "African Hut" full of trophies of her time in Africa.



Hostas and Solomon's seal



The pond

At the top of the site, close by the cottage, are features including an azalea border, and an impressive display of pristine hostas and Solomon's seal. Further down the sloping site, there are a patio and summerhouse, a pond, and a vegetable plot – while a path runs down to the River Camble whose wooded banks close the view. Some colourful specimens of local sandstone contribute to the attraction of the site.



Stable House



Irises

At the other end of the village lies **Stable House**, owned by Kirsten, who has lived here since 1986. The half-acre garden is on a sloping site with mature trees all around. Since moving in, Karen has extended the borders outward, installed a pond and planted trees and rhododendrons to protect her from view. The result is a now-established garden of pleasing design, with curved borders, good planting such as aquilegias, irises, and lupins, and a lovely bed of speedwell in the lawn.

The fourth destination in this delightful quartet (which of course could be visited in any order) most closely represents what (to me, at least) is a traditional cottage garden. This is **Highland Cottage**, owned and gardened by HPS member Clare Melinsky. The cottage itself is built of the local sandstone, with blue-painted window and door surrounds, and the surrounding walls are also of sandstone. The ground (unlike the other three gardens) is relatively level and is laid out in a fairly symmetrical pattern with flower beds, wooden benches here and there, an apple orchard (with low-pruned trees whose apples must be easy to

reach!) and a vegetable plot. There are numerous attractive small shrubs and colourful hardy perennials.



Highland Cottage

Two plants will be of particular interest to Scottish Hardy Planters because of their personal associations. One is *Molopospermum peloponnesiacum* the seeds of which were propagated by Liz Faulkner, once a member of Scottish Group, who gifted them to Clare. The other is *Iris* 'Blackthorn' propagated from seed by Michael Wickenden, one-time owner of Cally Gardens near Gatehouse, who died in 2016 (also well-known to Scottish Hardy Planters) who was a friend of Clare and who gifted the seed to her. [I am grateful to Clare for the botanical details.]



*Molopospermum peloponnesiacum*



*Iris* 'Blackthorn'

This was a delightful morning spent in four gardens of great variety, with much to interest our members. The owners were welcoming, friendly, well-informed, and generous of their time. I was impressed by the obvious work, thought, care and love that the owners we met had put, and clearly will continue to put, into their gardens. The over-arching visual impressions that I brought away with me are of large clumps of immaculate hostas and wide areas of immaculate lawn, all enveloped in sun and shielded by fine trees and shrubs.

*Brenda White*

## **PLANT SALE 3rd June 2023**

**The plant sale was so successful that there are two reports!**

### **Part one**

Our plant sale at Luncarty on June 3rd was a splendid day out with wonderful weather, excellent organisation, very good food, lots of sociable people having a great time and a vast array of plants at bargain prices. What is not to like?

The car came back stuffed with plants, some I had never heard of and some different varieties of plants I already grow but I am pleased to report that all of them have a home. They may not be planted yet, but I do know where they are going to go!

*Sheena MacGregor*

### **Part two**

This was the brainchild of Colin Cutler, and a first class one it was too, involving as it did not only HPS members but the local Horticultural Group and also the local Church community. It was carefully organised to coincide with all that wonderful sunny weather I think we had in June, if you can cast your mind back to those halcyon days.

We were met on arrival by the welcome sight of a whole range of gazebos, much needed for shade that day, with tables and chairs showing promise of good things to come. We were certainly not disappointed in that department either, with hot and cold drinks, plus soup and sandwiches on what seemed a most efficient conveyor belt, organised and provided by Joanne and her helpers. In other words, a constant supply of tasty things, including really good cakes, the whole afternoon.

Once we dragged ourselves away from food and chat, with HPS friends, horticultural group and church friends, there were some really excellent plants for sale, provided by HPS members, all co-ordinated by Colin himself, Judy Jones, Sheena MacGregor and Susan Miller.



I came away with a great haul of *Penstemon* 'Purple Passion', *Aquilegia chrysantha*, two very nice *Primula alpicola*, *Geum* 'Totally Tangerine' and *Hosta* 'June' to replace the one the slugs ate last year, now planted in a container well above ground level, and so far un-munched. There were probably one or two more, long since absorbed into the garden and labels mislaid. I also visited the Horticultural Group stand and bought a lovely selection of little herb plants and a ready planted pot of annuals for a friend's front step. Of course, there was the added bonus of having a look round Colin's garden and all the good company.

A lovely day out, and such good value for all those great plants! Thank you everyone who contributed to the day, but especially to Colin for organising it. Could you just manage to have another word with the Weather Gods, Colin, and try to get us some more sunshine before 'summer' draws to a close?

*Joan Gilchrist*

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">SMEATON</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Nursery and Gardens</p>	<h2 style="text-align: center;">SMEATON TEAROOMS</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">at Smeaton Nursery and Gardens, East Linton</p>
<p>This traditional walled garden nursery, set in the rural heart of East Lothian, offers an extensive range of plants throughout the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trees &amp; Shrubs</li> <li>● Seasonal Bedding Plants</li> <li>● Seeds &amp; Bulbs</li> <li>● Pots &amp; Ornaments</li> <li>● Compost &amp; Garden Sundries</li> <li>● HTA Gift Vouchers</li> </ul>	<p>Our popular Tearoom offers an appetising selection of home made soups, paninis and baguettes, salads and platters. Plus our ever popular mouth-watering home baking and our delicious Smeaton Scones.</p> 
 <p>Open 7 days a week Monday to Saturday 9:30 - 4:30 Sunday 10:30 - 4:30</p> <p>Tel: 01620 860501</p> <p>Smeaton Estate, Preston Road, East Linton EH40 3DT</p>	<p>Open every day, 10:30 - 4 pm, all year round</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tel: 01620 861366</b></p>

## **GARDEN TOUR TO OXFORDSHIRE**

### **12th – 16th June 2023**

#### **Biddulph Grange – Around the world ... in 80 minutes**

Ambitious as ever, the group took a slight detour en route to Oxfordshire to go round the world in 80 minutes. Or, more prosaically, to visit the extraordinary garden at Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire, which is divided into “countries”, with a Chinese Garden, Italian Terraces, an Egyptian Court, and more.

Created by James Bateman, who moved to what is now Biddulph Grange Garden on his marriage in 1842, Bateman spent the next 27 years creating the house and garden with the help of his friend, the famous marine artist Edward Cooke.

Bateman employed plant collectors who sent the specimens back from all over the world, resulting in the richly varied Victorian masterpiece we see today. The house and garden went through various changes in fortune over the years, and was bought by the National Trust in 1991. The restoration of the garden was the largest project of its kind undertaken by the National Trust at that time, and the work continues to this day.

Bateman’s vision for the garden was ambitious and creative. We visited on a very hot day, which suited the mini-countries we walked through.

*Hamish McPherson*

#### **Upton House**

We walked up a long drive bordered by Scots pines to the north of this grand house. The south facade had a formal terrace then steps leading down to a huge lawn which ended with a ha-ha. There was a swimming pool but unfortunately it was empty, a swim would have been most welcome as it was really hot.

Apparently, the garden had been revamped in the 1930s by one of the first female garden designers, Kitty Lloyd Jones. There were good examples of stonework of that era including crazy paving, balustrades and flights of steps. A steep slope led down to the large mirror pool complete with moorhen/coot families. Thankfully there were many venerable trees, including a group of Cedars of Lebanon, with welcome shade. Kitty had created a bog garden around a natural spring.

Again the trees here were outstanding, *Cercidiphyllum* and the Swamp Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, a deciduous conifer which turns russet in autumn. This area had a cool relaxing feel to it.

The house was left to the National Trust by the Samuel family with a noteworthy Art Collection which is displayed throughout the house. We had an amusing guide who gave us the low down on where the family's wealth came from. They apparently imported shells from the Far East into Victorian Britain; all fashionable homes had shell collections. This led to an import-export company, Shell Transport and Trading. Eventually they built the first oil tankers and it was renamed Shell Oil, using the scallop shell symbol we see on garage forecourts today.

*Oliver Miller*

## **Broughton Grange**

Broughton Grange was my favourite garden of our 2023 trip to Oxfordshire. Lavish quantities of well grown perennials, largely familiar, but arranged with brilliant colour combinations in perfect harmony.

The show piece is the walled garden. Tom Stuart-Smith was commissioned to design this initially, and subsequently advise on the rest of the 25 acres. A formal rectangular pool forms the calm centre, to contrast with the massive herbaceous display. Small pillars of fastigiata yew, topiary, pleached lime and elegant stonework hold it all together. One



planting scheme leads into another in great profusion. Tall thalictrum plants in the mauve/primrose/purple area didn't lean at all, they were so well supported by close packed neighbours.

Enthusiastic spreaders like *Lysimachia* 'Firecracker' and *Artemisia* 'Valerie Finnis' were growing with phlomis, salvias and geraniums: they were clearly rigorously controlled. "Ok if you have the staff" as a passing Hardy Planter pointedly remarked. And they do have the staff: Andrew Woodall is the head gardener, who gave us an interesting introduction.



With a star-studded career, he is one of four full-time gardeners, and they have four or five part-timers in addition. They work nine-hour days in the summer, seven-hour days in the winter.

As you stroll further away from the centre, there are outlying areas each with a different character: a collection of acers in the shade of huge ancient trees; a long double herbaceous border. Stumpery, bamboo, orchard, rose garden, heather garden. An area of grassy meadow dotted with pink species geranium. Another meadow white with umbellifers, ox-eye daisies and white clover under elegant branches of white cornus. None of it is really wild, it is all immaculately designed and controlled.

Wafts of philadelphus are borne on the breeze; antique blacksmith-made estate railings and gates guide you along, ending with a rustic cool pool, the open water very restrained after all the visual stimulation of the gradually sloping descent.

The 400-acre estate belongs to a businessman who lives in London and is well set up for visitors with ample parking and regular opening hours. A small tearoom was much appreciated by all the Hardy Planters on this very hot day after so much to see. The website is very informative: as well as excellent photos, it has an actual plant list. This saves having to



have plant labels on site which get hidden or no longer apply. And saves me from attempting to list all the lovely plants.

Go and see Broughton Grange now, while the garden is in its prime and being well maintained. Gardens don't stay immaculate indefinitely. Times change, and so do gardens.

*Clare Melinsky*

## **Oxford Botanic Gardens**

It was just before 10 o'clock when our redoubtable driver, Stewart, dropped us off in the middle of Oxford, just short of the Magdalen Bridge, with exhortations to assemble at the Sainsbury store across the road at a very specific time some two hours later and to board the coach with all speed to avoid trouble with parking wardens!

It was a five-minute walk across the bridge to gain access to the Botanic Gardens, to the left of the imposing portico, just as it was opening for the day.

The Gardens were of a reasonably compact size and there were many thankfully shaded areas which were very welcome on a very warm, sunny day. As in all Botanic Gardens there were displays of an academic nature with taxonomy to the fore along with beds with literary and medicinal connections. I have to confess that I was more interested to see plants which I had not encountered previously but also glad to reacquaint with more familiar ones of which there were plenty.

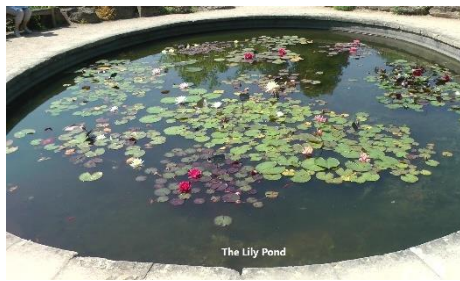




First port of call was to the coffee shop in a sheltered nook beside the river Cherwell where there were also punts to be hired if desired. This was very close to the glasshouses, but it was so hot that we decided to stay out of them and, as much as possible, seek shade of the many lovely trees which filled the Walled Garden. Amongst these were *Prunus lusitanica* in glorious flower, a Chinese shrubby tree – *Dipelta floribunda* also in flower and a large *Liriodendron tulipifera* complete with ‘Tulips’.

Further down was a large flowering *Aesculus indica*, the Himalayan equivalent of our own horse chestnut but flowering a month or so later in the year.





Leaving the Walled Garden and passing by a beautifully stocked Lily Pond, we entered the Lower Garden with very pretty herbaceous borders containing many old favourites, *Amsonia tabernaemontana* being one such, and some less common ones such as *Linum grandiflorum* or crimson flax. On our way back towards the exit we came across a flowering *Sophora davidii* which was new to me and one of the few surviving *Tetrapanax papyrifer* plants – we had seen quite a few skeletal remains of several which had succumbed to the previous winter.

Last but not least and close to the exit was a large *Magnolia grandiflora* which happened to have a low slung flowering branch which allowed many of us to sample the delicious lemony scent. It was unusual to have such an opportunity as mostly these trees are very large and blooms are usually far above sniffing height.

We left in a tight group, feeling uplifted at the delights we had experienced, and in plenty of time to gather at the appointed pickup and were all perfectly behaved in boarding our coach quickly, to the voiced approval of Stewart.

*Alistair MacCormick*



## Waterperry Gardens

Waterperry garden was established by Beatrix Havergal as a school of horticulture for ladies in 1923 until 1971. It is now a beautiful garden for all to enjoy. The design and specimen trees bear witness to a great gardener and garden designer.

We arrived on a very hot day but walking from the bus to the entrance we saw a huge tree in the lawn near the tearoom with lots of tables and chairs in its shade. We milled about as usual until we had our sticky labels and then had to run the gauntlet of the plant sales area! A shady path outside the walled garden led past newly cleared and planted shade borders.

Round the corner the wall became the backdrop for a very long and deep herbaceous border. I think it is the best I have seen; nothing was taking over or struggling for space. The back wall has some gorgeous roses and other climbers well tied in. The beds have all the usual herbaceous perennials well grown and supported by woven hazel. The plant layout was not too formal or repetitive but nicely mixed. Dots of plants stood out like pure white lupine and a big bush rose with amazing single flowers called 'Scarlet Fire'. A few shrubs break up the levels like golden and purple leaved elder and philadelphus. Some rambling roses are trained on metal hoops so that the flowering shoots all stand up, very effective and easy to prune.

There must be hundreds of espalier apples and pears forming hedges, some lead to a fritillary meadow with a model of Stonehenge made of trimmed box and yew.

I went to the silent space looking for shade. This area is enclosed by tall hedges and contains topiary, box hedges and pergolas at either end giving a feeling of peace and safety. One pergola has a grapevine and the other a wisteria. A shady seat has a scented philadelphus beside it and in the sun, herbs and *Rosa* 'Versicolor'. We should all have a silent space even if it is just a place to perch and to listen to the birds and bees and not see the next job that needs doing.

On past the stock beds I came to the Alpine Garden. Again, enclosed by a stone wall with lots of small 18 inch high raised beds all colourful and well cared for. The Canal, a long rectangular pool has a statue of a girl gracing it and lots of damselflies and dragonflies buzzing about, as well as water lilies.

The extensive lawns are surrounded by mature shrubs and trees with some spectacular specimen trees. A tulip tree was in full flower and a majestic *Ailanthus altissima* which luckily was labelled.

Into the Walled Garden, here lots of soft fruit and a dahlia bed, dwarf conifers and box hedging. Some long thin alpine beds had wooden slatted shading. The water feature is a lovely marble ball and nearby is a big wrought iron gate featuring big sun flowers and foxgloves.

There is an old Saxon church, but I am afraid the tea room and shade were calling!

This is a lovely garden still maintained in tip top condition. The sales areas are well stocked and much agonising was heard over “to buy or not to buy”. One of our number came on the bus cradling a fern in his arms. We were assured it was very special!

On my way to see my sister after the trip I stopped at Spetchly Garden in Worcester which we visited some years ago. They have stopped cutting some of the grass areas and planted *Lilium martagon* and *Lilium szovitsianum* and blue campanulas, very effective. Does anyone remember the large statue of a stag in the walled garden? Sadly, it was stolen last year but they failed to remove the stone statues. CCTV everywhere now.

Thank you for organising another lovely holiday for us. Can we stay a bit farther north next year please?

*Judy Jones*



## Rousham House and Gardens

Following a lengthy and detailed tour of the house from which we could see beautiful views of the garden it was good to reach the garden and sunshine. The first thing to catch my eye was a smoke bush in flower, something I had never seen before. Then came a vast herbaceous border with large enough groups of each plant to please my husband. There was a dovecot enhanced with peach fading to cream roses and a fig with ripening fruit. The peonies had so many huge flowers that they were dangling towards the ground. Another feature was the apple tree avenue which included some very old trees as well as cordoned ones. Poppies and foxgloves throughout the garden, in shades ranging from pink to purple, were my favourite feature.

*Liz Johnston*

## South Newington House

We were welcomed to South Newington House near Banbury by its owner Claire Swan. She and her husband David have been in the house for ten years, having taken over the relatively undeveloped two-acre garden. Since then, they have gradually changed it into its current burgeoning state.



Large herbaceous beds were very colourful and were backed by a huge eucalyptus and other contrasting trees and shrubs. A *Catalpa* had been cut back quite severely in one of the beds as it had been dwarfing the adjacent plants but evidently hadn't minded as it was sprouting again from bare wood.

There was also a pond with wildlife, an orchard, a beehive, box hedge parterres and an extensive companion-planted vegetable/flower area with sweetcorn already two-foot high, the beds all linked by gravel paths. Everything is grown on organic

principles by the family, supplemented by a few hours' work each week by female volunteers.

Our visit was rounded off by a most welcome tea in the nearby village hall.

*Sheila Phillips*

## **Bush House**

Our tour of Oxfordshire gardens ended on a high note, with a visit to Bush House in the Village of South Newington.

Close to the home of his daughter Claire at South Newington House, this is the 12 year old two-acre garden of John Ainley, and both gardens were planned by his wife Roberta.



At Bush House, her design was very artistic, taking advantage of the sloping terrain. The main feature was a winding water course, complete with footbridges, and bordered with hostas, irises and candelabra primulas. The stream descended to a couple of small lily ponds thronged with brilliant blue damselflies.

Below the ponds was a large gravel and sandstone-paved terrace, studded with hostas. This area led round to a walled parterre and knot garden to the side of the house.

Elsewhere, curving borders were packed with herbaceous plants, including *Lychnis coronaria*, *Alchemilla mollis*, astrantias, thalictrums and foxgloves, to name a few. A stand-out shrub was a large *Cotinus* (smoke bush) with its richly coloured foliage. A vine-covered trellis, an orchard and a group of small acers completed the scene.



The garden was an absolute delight, and a huge credit to its amateur designer.

*Vivienne Marshall*



## VISIT TO FIFE 13th July 2023

### Gilston House

Our group was welcomed by Edward Baxter, great grandson of the original Edward Baxter who acquired the house in 1862. The original Edward Baxter bought the estate for his second son. A third son was given the estate at Teasses – the next stop for the Hardy Plant Group.

Cath Baxter is the driving force behind restoring the formal gardens. She is self-taught but extremely knowledgeable about horticulture with an eye for creating colour and texture in the borders. In setting out on this major restoration project, she had advice from Michael Innes – also known for his work on the Japanese Garden at Cowden, Attadale Gardens and Dumfries House.



Edward took us on a tour of the walled garden, introducing us to the lawnmowers – otherwise known as Hebridean sheep. Beyond the walled garden, through a gate designed by his brother-in-law was a pond that is planned for a Charles Jenks style makeover. After a short stroll through open parkland, we came to a boating pond, complete with boathouse – restored courtesy of Edward’s mother as a birthday present. The pond was fringed with bullrushes, meadowsweet and a few late orchids. Evidence of Cath’s hard work continued as we returned to the house through the woodland that had been planted with gunnera, hostas and honeysuckle.

*Helen Ostrycharz*



## Teasses

It took a while for me to realise that I had been to Teasses Estate once before, with the HPS for a spring visit in April 2018 (had to dig out the photos to remind me when it was). On that occasion we parked in front of the main house and were given a tour by the Head Gardener. This time we parked in the visitor area which leads into the Walled Garden. Must be an age thing, because I recognised nothing at all for some considerable time!

The estate was purchased by the Morrison family (owners of a large construction firm) in the 1990s. All the gardens were in poor condition, and the magnificent Victorian greenhouses in the walled garden had to be demolished. Teasses is now primarily a sporting estate and wedding venue, though the Morrison family come over from their home in France for a holiday every August.



The Walled Garden is a little unusual in having an incomplete curved brick perimeter, with the rest open to the surrounding countryside. Though this is densely planted with trees, up to the garden edge, and so the effect is that the space appears completely enclosed.

What I did find even more strange is that the area slopes downwards from the wall to a central pathway and then slightly up again on the other side towards the far boundary. There is a good mix of lawned areas, (one with a nice example of *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata'), vegetables, fruit trees and herbaceous borders.

The carpet of pink geraniums beneath the apple trees was particularly striking. An unusual feature was the twin lines of one metre high hedges, planted about two metres apart and





filled in between with a wonderful herbaceous display. These paired hedges snaked along the central path and made curved shapes in several directions. It is here that the visitor first realises that Teasses has a passion for *Campanula lactiflora*, but nothing can prepare you for the display which awaits in other parts of the gardens.

In front of the main house is an area of clipped hedges and shrubs of various heights and shapes, with a good showing of *Tropaeolum speciosum* running amongst them, which was in full flower. Some considerable distance away is an impressive doocot (occupied), which forms a focal point from the house through the centreline of this garden.



For me the highlight of the visit was the Ravine Garden. The terraced and sloping sides of which shimmered in a waving sea of white and blue *Campanula lactiflora*. I have never seen so much of any one flowering plant in a garden before. It did make me wonder what the ravine looks like when this has gone over

(probably about the time the Morrisons arrive, so it seemed an odd choice). There were other plants to continue the display, such as salvia, nepeta and *Stipa gigantea*, but on nothing like the same scale.

Scattered amongst the surrounding woodland are a number of small gardens inspired by, and dedicated to, various members of the family. The best of these was Sir Fraser's Garden, hidden in a sheltered natural dell. When I entered in the late afternoon it was a real sun trap. A pond and small seating areas are surrounded by *Gunnera manicata*, *Iris sibirica*, *Rodgersia aesculifolia* and an interesting variety of trees are planted around the upper rim of the dell so you can't see it, even from as little as 10m away.



The tea room in the Walled Garden (inside the rebuilt greenhouses) does a splendid choice of cakes and soup or quiche, but the sole member of staff was rather overwhelmed when the Hardy Planters descended on her en- masse. She kept her cool though, and was charm personified. All in all, a great visit.

*Julie Young*

## **VISIT TO AYRSHIRE**

### **16th August 2023**

#### **Burnside**

This garden, started in 2006, is a fascinating mixture of the two owners' different interests – and with a 6.5 acre site, there is plenty of room – well, at present! – for them both to indulge their interests. Though George did seem to be gradually being edged out of the house by Sue's beautiful streptocarpus!

Sue is into alpine plants and has three alpine greenhouses, as well as growing streptocarpus in the house. And George is fascinated by trees. With the large site that they have, he can plant them out with ample space to really appreciate their beauty.



The rockery is absolutely astounding, and not at all what you would think of as a garden rockery. We came round the back of it first and were amazed by the enormous size of some of the boulders. Some real earth-moving equipment must have been employed to get them into position. On top is a scree bed,

which slopes very gently down to a large pond – a little waterfall tumbles gently between the rocks and down into the pond. It must be a real vision in late spring when the alpine plants are all in flower – but we had the pleasure of admiring the beautiful deep pink water lilies which grace the pond in late summer.

The hydrangeas were all looking wonderful – not many of us can plant three *Hydrangea* ‘Vanilla Fraise’ in one clump. A new one for us was the attractive *Hydrangea* ‘Brussels Lace’. The *Lonicera* ‘Dropmore Scarlet’ was looking so beautiful that we forgave it for not having any perfume. The autumn gentians were a picture – and it was the first time that we had seen pink salsify flowering in Scotland. It looks like a very pretty pink dandelion but with the great advantage of not seeding everywhere.

The extensive arboretums were full of many beautiful and really unusual trees. *Quercus ellipsoidalis* ‘Hemelrijk’ specially caught our eye – but there were so many trees that you were really spoilt for choice. We also really liked *Pinus wallichianum* ‘Zoll’. I think we actually needed an extra two or three (or four) hours just going round the arboretums with George to tell us all about his many treasures.



Then we headed into the house and first encountered some of Sue’s streptocarpus in the kitchen, where they took up half the dining table as well. Then we found some more completely filling another room, in all shapes and colours. Sue keeps the house at the temperature that the plants like best and does the watering with great care. The plants obviously all

respond by being incredibly healthy. And she is very good at taking cuttings!

But the *pièce de résistance* was the sun-parlour, where three sofas are neatly arranged round three sides of the room, all facing a television – and every sofa is absolutely covered in streptocarpus! In total, at the last count, Sue had a hundred and fifty plants.

This garden is designed to have interest at many different times of year – and would well repay another visit in late spring.

*Fran Scott*

## Dumfries House

The Gardens at Dumfries House are an ongoing project of refurbishment and development. The staff had organised entry to the Walled Garden. We were met at the entrance gate and given a welcome introductory talk by one of the senior gardeners, Julie Dougal.

Some recent improvements and plantings were highlighted. She was particularly enthusiastic about the vegetable area where they concentrate on welcoming schools and raising awareness about gardening amongst the children.

After the welcome, we were able to wander at will around the vast area of the Walled Garden. Those of us who had been previously, noted a huge increase in planting. We were fortunate that the weather was good and we could stroll and pause to admire. The long borders were very colourful with rudbeckia, echinacea and many more late summer flowers. The gardens have numerous seats, situated at great vantage points, where one can rest weary limbs.

Many noticed the topiary, beautifully sculptured, but with ragged unclipped tops. The staff purported ignorance of the reason for this. The perceived wisdom of the HPS members was that there may soon be topiary crowns atop to mark the transition of Charles from Prince of Wales to King. This has, so far, not been confirmed!

Other delightful features are the numbers of small buildings scattered around. These are built in various styles and are mainly shelters open to the public. In the past, the King has famously described some modern architecture as “carbuncles”! He has meticulously supervised all these small structures. They have been built using local apprentices being trained in traditional skills and materials. I, for one, think that they are delightful and fascinating.

All in all, a most interesting visit.

*John Thomson*



Pictures of Dumfries House Gardens taken in July 2021.

*Chris Sanders*



## VISIT TO BIGGAR 14th September 2023

### The Walled Garden, Shieldhill

When Jim and Nicola Gordon decided to retire to Scotland, they eventually settled in a house at Shieldhill in the village of Quothquan near Biggar. A very pleasant house, built in 1997, but with a 200-year-old walled garden suffering from years of decay and neglect, attached to it.



They moved in in 2012, consulted various landscape designers in 2013, had the garden completely redesigned (involving major civil engineering works) and started planting in 2014/15. The result, some nine or so years later, is a delightfully contemporary take on the traditional walled garden.

When our group visited in mid-September, despite being assured that “you should have seen it a bit earlier in the year” – the frequent lament of all garden owners – we found much to delight us. The hard landscaping, featuring among other joys, rills in the sunken seating area, a lily pond, and raised fruit and vegetable beds, provided the bare bones which supported so much of interest, and beyond the walled garden there is a woodland garden underplanted with bulbs.

The initial planting consisted of a load of 4,000 plants and 60 trees, supplied by Beeches Nursery at Lesmahagow, presenting a significant challenge to the stamina of the owners, and over the years more plants have been added.

When we visited, the ancient apple trees retained from the original garden, were heavy with fruit and the stands of actaea, rudbeckia and

grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Morning Light’ looked magnificent in the September sunshine while the butterflies were enjoying the many sedums just beginning to look their best. *Physocarpus*, possibly ‘Lady in Red’, echoed the autumnal reds beginning to develop on the various prunus and sorbus (in variety) and some of the astrantias and geraniums in the ‘meadow land’ plantings, which had been cut back after their summer flowering, were enjoying a second late season’s flowering. There were traditional beds also planted with roses and lavender, preserving the illusion that summer wasn’t quite over.

In the formal water garden with its rills and lily pond there was an extremely attractive row of what appeared to be pleached hornbeams. This, it turned out, had been a happy mistake: the trees had been planted as separate topiarised specimens but had decided to grow into one another producing a most pleasing effect.



Among the non-horticultural delights were the very handsome modern wrought-iron gates and the most attractive seven feet high metal dandelion clocks. The tea, coffee and home-made scones and fruit cake provided by Nicola and Jim went down a treat, and we were offered as many runner beans as we could take away with us from the abundance of their well-tended vegetable garden. A most enjoyable visit to a garden that will repay further inspection when the bulbs are in flower in the woodland and the cherry trees are blooming.

*Jean Swinbank*

## The Potting Shed

After 30 years of living in the big house Jane and Graham Buchanan-Dunlop moved into their potting shed leaving their walled garden behind. While repurposing and extending their new home they have been able to create a nearly sheltered courtyard and terraced beds up the hill behind. Lots of stone walls and steps.

The courtyard has a square pond in the middle and round the walls are beds with more tender plants and lots of pots that over winter under cover. There is a big clump of a really dark agapanthus, geraniums, actinidia and more.



There are hedges to baffle the wind but allow a view over the hills and valley. Yew with *Tropaeolum speciosum*, beech that keeps its leaves in winter and is so fresh in spring and even amelanchier kept well-trimmed.

Round the house are small shrubs and perennials. These have to contend with thin stoney soil, 45 inches of rain and the wind and cold at 900 feet. Nothing is staked but all is well pruned. Potentilla and spires do well. There was a much admired geranium, low growing and a clear pale blue with darker veins called *G. wallichianum* 'Crystal Lake'.

Above the more formal garden is a shrubbery with lots of nice things. Cyclamen, colchicum, eucryphia, patrinia, heptacodium, etc, and a very happy clump of kirengeshoma in full flower enjoying the damp shelter.

Through a gate in the deer fence is the arboretum, started in the 1990s and growing up and round the hill. Many varieties of tree have been tried, some more than once, their hardiness tested to the limit. Wet, wind and a shorter growing season which stops the new wood ripening easily

before winter frosts. A lot of the trees have been grown from seed especially rowan and birch, some with peeling bark, all with slight variations in flower and growth. I saw nothofagus, sweet chestnut, a lovely old *Betula pendula* , some evergreens, several oaks, one called *Quercus libani* with a trunk just like an elephant's leg. July is the only month of the year that frost is not expected, that really is a challenge



The happy couple have planted over 2000 different species and cultivars in their garden testing what will grow where. Those that survive look quite comfortable and at home. I feel sure that more plants will arrive to be fussed over and given every chance to enjoy their new home.

Thanks for organising such a nice day.

*Judy Jones*

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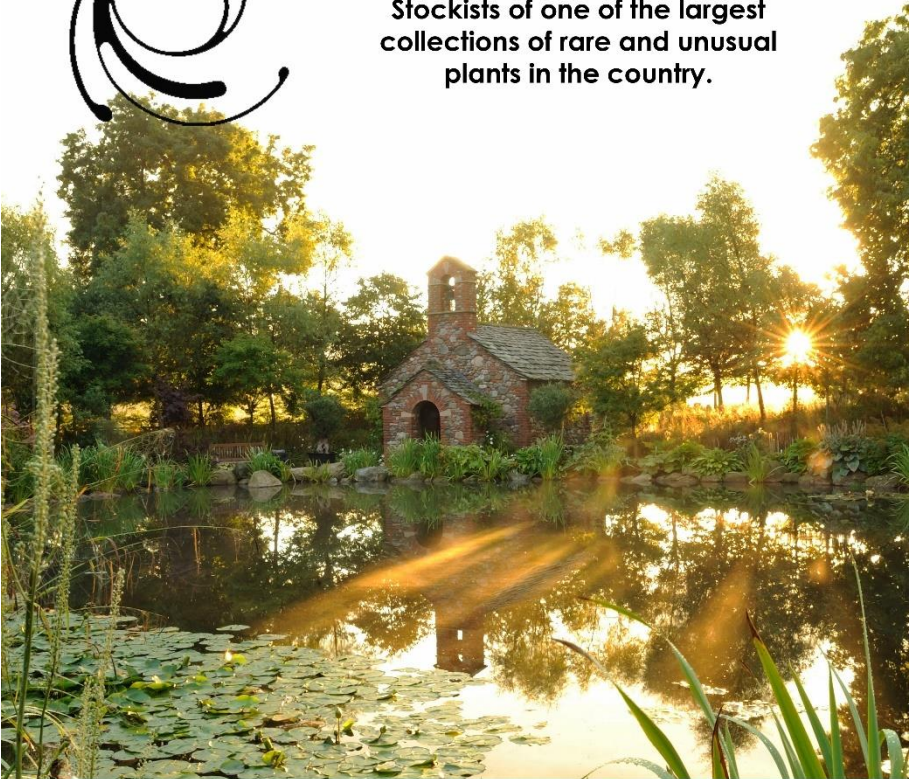
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