



WHALEY BRIDGE Allotment & Gardeners' Society



June 2015

HERE COMES SUMMER ?

Don't blink you might miss it.

RECENT EVENTS

Talk: Norton Priory Walled Garden – 8th May

Kathy and Keith Williams, who have volunteered for many years at the walled garden at Norton Priory, gave an illustrated talk to 25 members. They have been deeply involved in the restoration and maintenance of this garden which we are visiting on 1st October. We were given an insight into the history of the priory from 900 years ago and its destruction in the dissolution of the monasteries. The site is being excavated thanks to a grant from the lottery and a museum of finds is due to reopen shortly. The walled garden was used to supply the Edwardian mansion which was built on the site but the priory house was later sold off by the wealthy owners who had property elsewhere and was demolished when it became derelict. The walled garden was also left to become overgrown but has been restored over the last decade using old plans and records. We were given a virtual tour of the four quadrants and the Head Gardener's house and plot. The head gardener's post was a prestigious one, he dressed in suit and bowler hat and, rather than getting his hands dirty, was responsible for managing the work force and liaising with the house. Keith told us about his "ladder training" which now allows him to harvest fruit from the national collection of quince trees – we should have the opportunity to taste this fruit on our visit.

Plant swap – Sunday 17th May



Due to this traditional event I think we may have homogenised our gardens! Despite the overcast weather we had good attendance but there seemed to be a lot of unwanted donations at the end. Luckily we were able to sell these on at the coffee morning.



The results of the compost trial were also put on show and provided an interesting talking point.

Compost trial

Members taking part in the trial compared Levington multi-purpose (Lev.mp) and New Horizon peat free (PF) composts. Thanks to all who took part:- Jean Clough, Jenny Dawson, Peter and Margaret Day, Roy Jennings and Roger Wood choose the seeds they would use and were given both types of compost with instructions to provide the same growing conditions for both sets of plants.

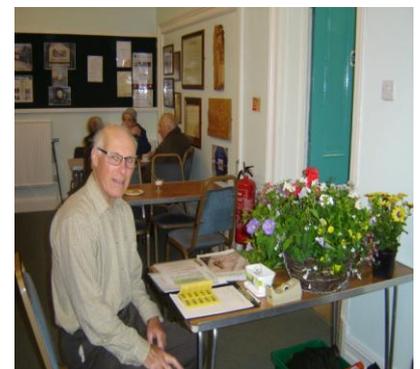


Cosmos, fennel, pot marigolds, dwarf beans, cauliflower, cucumber, squash, sunflower, courgette, pansy and zinnia seeds were compared for germination and growth. Some seeds, such as cosmos, showed a clear preference for LEV.mp

others such as sunflower did better in PF with no difference for others such as the Romanesco cauliflower during germination. After potting up and growing on the picture was similar, some seedlings looked healthier in PF (squash and cauliflower) some such as pot marigold preferred Lev.mp and some such as zinnia and fennel looked the same in both. With such inconclusive results those who use peat free should carry on and for those who are unsure – give it a try – it all depends!

Coffee morning – Saturday 30th May

We were blessed with a bright and sunny morning for this event. Many thanks to all who helped – sales of coffee, raffle tickets and bric a brac were brisk but it was the plant stall that really attracted the passers by – sales of plants alone raised a fantastic £297.70. Many thanks to Shallcross nursery who donated an amazing hanging basket as a raffle prize.



Also many thanks to the society and especially Roger Wood who donated surplus plants to be used to raise funds for Chapel-en-le-Frith mobile physiotherapy service. This small local charity employs a qualified and experienced physiotherapist and provides her with a car to visit housebound elderly patients at home. They are referred by their GP with the aim of maintaining their safety and independence at home.

Visit to Cobble Hey Farm Gardens and Clearbeck House – 4th June

By good fortune we were blessed with fine weather and plenty of sunshine, far better than the preceding weeks. All 21 members and friends enjoyed the trip despite the lengthy delay due to resurfacing work on the A6 north of Preston. The first venue, Cobble Hey was eventually reached along some narrow lanes towards the Forest of Bowland, a very quiet area with beautiful views of the countryside down towards the coast. The present owners, David and Edwina, have developed the farm and gardens over the last ten years making it into a haven of peace and tranquillity in a beautiful rural setting. In addition to the garden the various animal rare breeds provided extra interest. Lunch refreshments were excellent and good value and as an added treat some sampled the delicious, home-made ice cream.



Our second venue, Clearbeck House garden, was reached in the afternoon after a very scenic drive along quiet narrow roads. This garden is phenomenal; it has virtually everything; a small lake, stream, stone bridges, a rill, vista, temple and mount, focal points of sculpture etc. all delightfully arranged. The owners, Peter and Bronwen Osborne, are passionate gardeners, steeped in garden history and, from what was an old farm, have developed the garden over many decades adding new features year on year. Its design is exceptionally attractive, blending well into the landscape with distant views of Ingleborough. The planting is naturalistic and diverse with artistic and sculptural additions (Peter is a retired art lecturer) which enhance the garden and were explained in the introductory talk and garden booklet. Tea was served on the sun drenched terrace with lovely views over the garden and lake making an excellent end to a memorable day before an uneventful journey home.



COMING EVENTS

Burnby Hall and gardens – 23rd July

Our visit to this large private estate near York has hopefully been timed to coincide with the peak season for their national collection of water lilies. Following lunch, which can be taken at the Lillypad Cafe within the grounds we will go on to Breezy Knees garden and nursery – don't forget to wear your shorts. Phone Rosemary on 01663 733393 to book by 10th July.

Further dates for your diary

Details of further events will be in your September newsletter but dates are as follows:-

Friday 25th September – social meeting – 7.30 p.m at Holy Trinity church.

Thursday 1st October – visits to Daresbury and Norton Priory walled garden.

Thursday 29th October - 2 p.m. talk by Anthony Norman of Conquest Plants at the Uniting Church.

Friday 6th November 2 p.m. – AGM at the Uniting Church.

Saturday 19th December – Coffee morning at the Mechanics – please save any items for tombola, bric a brac, raffle prizes etc.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS.

With so many benefits to membership we are pleased to attract new members and welcome Bernard Robinson, Eva Norman, Marion Coakley, Andrea Brennan, Peter Steggles, Gill Wetters and Judith and Melvin Walton. We look forward to meeting them at future events.

ALLOTMENT NEWS

Despite a late and wet start on the allotments, the existing plots are showing healthy signs of growth. Occupants of the new plots are tackling the hard work of removing the perennial weeds. Digging Dina was extracting docks with roots the size of parsnips.



STORE NEWS

Last opening dates for the store are Wednesday 1st July and Sunday 5th July but any further orders can be referred direct to David Osborn (01663 733659)

or Dave Parker (01663 750172) who will do their best to oblige. Many thanks to the store team for all their hard work and also to the anonymous donor who left several pairs of edging shears which were refurbished and sharpened and sold on.

More bargains.

Don't forget the society's free loan scheme for the occasional use tools such as lawn aerators, long handled loppers and the 2 gazebos.

There are also discounts from Chapel tool hire, Halls Mica hardware, Shallcross Nursery and Fernmoss pet supplies on production of your membership card.

MUSINGS.....by Podiceps Cristatus

One of our grandchildren was telling me about a half term project which her year 7 form is preparing; "All about Bees and Pollination of Plants." Sheltering from the rain in the green house and anxious to resume planting "her" row of sweet corn, we chatted on about which flowers she knew that attracted pollinators for the vegetables. With the assurance of a nine year old: "of course everything that crawls into a flower is a pollinator you know Pop, not just insects, even flies!" True - but not the house fly. For over three hundred years scientists have studied the fly, trying to explain its almost unearthly powers - its acute awareness of the world around it, its unique flying skills which permit it to take off backwards, fly sideways and land upside down. As your fly swat descends...six thousand miniscule lenses, bunched together like grapes, provide an almost 360 degree field of vision detecting the slightest movement from any direction with a sensitivity ten times greater than the human eye. The central paradox discovered early last century is that the movement of air around its fragile wings should, by the laws of aerodynamics, make the fly incapable of flight Only recently has high speed photography reveal that each fly's wings can move freely – up and down, forwards and backwards, whilst also rotating on its axis. That's how it can change direction of flight in thirty milliseconds. A tiny gear box each side of the thorax integrates the visual and muscular messages so that to escape potential threat the fly can go into a tail spin, pitch forward then roll over before throttling back to full power, all within a fiftieth of a human blink. "Wow!" said my little helper – "you can't catch them, they could rule the world!" Thankfully the rain is stopping...I think I'll stay with Ogden Nash's opinion:

"God in his wisdom made the fly...and then forgot to tell us why."