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NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2019

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Editorial

What a busy summer we have had with our garden visits – five outings to six beautiful gardens and beautiful weather to accompany them. What more could we ask for! The trip to Highgrove House was a particular highlight and hugely popular with our members. Read all about it below.

The excitement isn't over yet – we still have some very good things to come. Friday 1st November is our next Study Day at Reaseheath where you can meet your former colleagues and attend the talks. The speakers and the programme for the day are announced overleaf.

We are sad to announce the resignation of our Chairperson, Jo Worth, who has decided to step down from this role in order to spend more time in her new home in France. Her enthusiasm and affable nature have been an inspiration and we shall miss her.

Best wishes to you all

Debbie Holden, Membership Secretary

STUDY DAY PROGRAMME
Friday 1st November 2019 - Main Lecture Theatre, Reaseheath College

From 10.00	Sign in Members leave items for Plant Sale
10.15	Coffee available in Restaurant
10.45	Lecture: <i>"Some Talented Women and their Association with Historic Gardens"</i> by Maureen Thomas
11.45	THEA Plant Sale
12.00	Lunch available in Restaurant Plant Sale - continued
13.15	Raffle Prize Draw
13.30	41 st Annual General Meeting
13.45	Lecture: <i>"A Wildgoose Chase"</i> by Jack Willgoss from Wildgoose Nursery, Shropshire

Maureen Thomas

As a former Domestic Science Teacher with no Horticultural Experience and moving to a large Agricultural Holding in Marchwiell near Wrexham she was encouraged by Tom Deans at Reaseheath to undertake a Leisure Gardener's Course. Maureen subsequently obtained a Certificate in Garden History at Birmingham University followed by an MA in Garden History at Bristol University. She now lectures monthly to a U3A group in Wrexham on Garden History.

Jack Willgoss

After leaving school Jack undertook the National Diploma in Horticulture before taking up the position of gardener at the Dorothy Clive Garden. From here he continued his formal training at RHS Garden Wisley where he met his now wife Laura. After a short spell of travelling they returned to the UK and took on two jobs as sole gardeners in North Shropshire before starting their own nursery.

'A Wildgoose Chase' is the story of how two young horticulturalists gave up secure employment in pursuit of their dream of starting their own nursery and in turn restoring a Georgian walled garden and glasshouses of national significance'.

Arrangements on the day

This event will take place in the **Main Lecture Theatre** adjacent to the Restaurant (see Campus map). Please assemble there from 10:00 a.m. onwards to sign in and drop off your plants on our Sales Table.

Coffee can be purchased in the Restaurant before the start of the meeting. **Lunch** will be available in the Restaurant from 12.00. Please use the area of the restaurant adjacent to the lecture theatre where tables are roped off.

Members are asked to park in the **Main Students Car Park** near the Worleston Road entrance (see Campus map). For members who are unable to walk far, the college reserves **six parking spaces** for us in front of the

Old Hall which are accessed from the college entrance on the A51, almost opposite the Reaseheath Equestrian Centre. If the security bar is closed, simply drive up to it and it will open automatically.

Guests are very welcome. There is a charge of £5 each to be paid on the day. There is no charge for members or associate members.

Plant Sale

We will again be holding a Bring and Buy sale of plants and other small gardening items. The income from this sale contributes significantly to our funds. As usual, please label your plants clearly. Use a clean pot and bring them in a plastic bag so that we leave as little debris as possible. If any of your items remain unsold at the end of the day please take them home again. The plant sale will start at 11:45 and plants cannot be reserved beforehand.

Raffle

We will be selling raffle tickets again in aid of THEA funds.

41st Annual General Meeting Nominations to THEA Committee

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in the Main Lecture Hall after lunch at the Study Day. We try to keep it as short as possible by sending out information for your scrutiny prior to the meeting. However, we are aware that it is important that we leave enough time for you to question the committee and for you to get your ideas and opinions across. If you are unable to attend please contact any committee member and leave your apologies.

We would like to invite you to join THEA committee either now at the AGM or at any other time. To find out more, either speak to one of the committee members (below) or read the **Nominations to THEA Committee** information sheet which has been emailed or posted to you together with the AGM Papers.

General Information Email: horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com

THEA Committee meets three or four times a year for a 3-hour meeting to plan Study Days and Summer Outings and to decide topics for the Newsletter etc. Just call or email any one of us to discuss it informally; our contact details are above. There is no fixed term for a Committee Member and you don't need to have any special skills, although to be able to communicate by email makes life easier.

Annual Subscriptions for 2019/20 Now Due

Annual Subscriptions for 2019/20 became due on 1st September; it remains at £10.00 for both members and associate members. New members who joined over the summer months (June–August) do not need to renew until 01/09/20. A renewal notice has already been sent via email, but as a reminder please see the information sheet emailed with this Newsletter for details of how to pay.

Other Dates for your 2019/20 Diary

- Next Study Day - Friday 21st February 2020

Reports on Summer Visits

With five outings this year, we have been spoiled for choice of gardens to visit. Some of us have been lucky and managed to get to all five. Here are short reports on the outings written by THEA members. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

Suggestions for gardens to visit in 2020 are always welcome – please let any of the committee know if you are aware of any gardens that would be of interest to members for future visits.

Tatton Park – Thursday 25th April

This was a fascinating trip and an interesting follow up for those of us who had enjoyed Graham Hardman's talk on Japanese gardens at the study day last November. The garden at Tatton Park was built in the early 1900s by a team of Japanese workmen and was inspired by the Japanese-British Exhibition in London in 1910.

The owners of Tatton were keen plant collectors and developed the Japanese garden to display the newly introduced Japanese plants in an appropriate setting. Some of the structures are thought to have been brought from Japan especially for the construction of the garden. Stunning acers and moss-covered rocks, which are all carefully placed to harmonise with nature, provided a very cool, contemplative atmosphere.

Simon Tetlow, the head gardener at Tatton Park, showed us around the various elements of the garden, including the Shinto shrine, arched bridge and teahouse. Simon also pointed out certain "un-Japanese" features in the garden, for example seats around the garden from which to appreciate the views; a true Japanese garden would have been no resting points until you had completed your journey through the garden at the Tea House.



Entry bridge into the Japanese Garden



Simon introducing us to the history of the Japanese Garden at Tatton.



Looking across the garden towards the Tea House



Simon explaining the relevance of the Tea House in Japanese culture



The Tea House



Looking across the garden to the shrine and bridge

Tirley Garth Gardens, Tarporley – Sunday 12th May

On a lovely sunny Sunday morning in May, THEA members visited Tirley Garth. It was on a day that Tirley Garth was open under the NGS, but Michael Russell (Tirley Garth Gardener and THEA member) very kindly arranged for us to visit before the gardens were open to the general public. Mike met us in the car park and gave us a brief talk about the garden and then we were encouraged to wander at will!

The gardens were designed by Thomas Mawson (1861-1933), with the help of Charles E Mallows and started in 1907. They were originally created for Bryan Leesmith, a director of the chemical firm Brunner Mond, but subsequently leased to Richard Harry Prestwich, a director of Burberrys, although it was his daughter, Irene, who played a major role in preserving Tirley Garth. The gardens were designed in the belief that to create unity, they should be designed by the architect to create a whole within the house, therefore there are formal areas around the house leading to informality as they stretch into neighbouring countryside.

Mawson was greatly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement and evidence of this could be seen in the elaborate stonework, gently rising steps, terracing and ornate balustrading. Tirley Garth is the only Grade II Arts and Craft garden in Cheshire that remains complete.



Stunning Arts and Crafts house



Wonderful views over the Cheshire countryside

The acidic soil at Tirley Garth makes an ideal environment for Rhododendrons, some of which are over 100 years old and looked stunning on the day of our visit. Trees of note included the rare Wolllemi pine (planted 2007) and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn redwood - planted 1965).



Rhododendrons in full bloom



The Azalea Walk – a riot of colour



The Lily Pond Garden



Water powered clock in the Octagon Garden

Abbeywood and Wood End Cottage, Northwich – Thursday 27th June

It was a glorious day when we visited Abbeywood and the gardens looked fabulous. Head gardener Simon Goodfellow showed us around the different areas, including the rose garden planted with a variety of David Austen roses as well as a massive rambling rose that had colonised the tennis court fence behind. Also included on the tour were the tropical garden, an impressive vegetable garden complete with hens, the chapel garden, the pool garden on either side of a long rill, herbaceous borders and prairie planting furthest away from the hall. All this was remarkable as there is only one other full-time gardener at Abbeywood apart from Simon.



Head gardener Simon Goodfellow in front of the rambling rose



Dandelion tree in the Tropical Garden

Of special interest was the planting in the tropical garden, with *Trachycarpus* palms, *Cordyline australis*, *Tetrapanax papyrifer*, *Dendroseris pruinata* (Dandelion tree), as well as cannas and dahlias – although some of these are not hardy they have grown too large to bring in for the winter, but survive outside and in fact are thriving. They are interplanted with large-leaved hardy plants such as *Ligularia* and *Rodgersia*.



The pool garden looking cool on a hot summer's day



Members enjoying the tour



Borders packed with 'must-have' plants



Brightly coloured drifts of the perennial borders

After the tour we had the opportunity to wander around the garden – each part of the garden had its own distinct style and the planting was stunning throughout.

At Wood End Cottage, Christine and Maurice Everett welcomed us into their gorgeous garden – the couple have opened their garden for many years under the National Garden Scheme but on this occasion we had a special THEA-only viewing.



Maurice giving an introduction to the garden



Members enjoying the garden from the shade

Part of the garden is on a slope, and Christine and Maurice have designed the garden with paths that meander through the planting and make good use of the topography. Cottage garden staples such as roses, delphiniums and geraniums filled the borders and of particular note was a massive *Cornus kousa*, which cast some welcome shade. At the end of our exploration, we were treated to marvellous tea and cake.



Well established borders at their peak



Geranium sanguineum, a typical cottage garden plant

Ness Gardens, Neston – Tuesday 9th July

Yet again, we were fortunate with the weather for our visit to Ness but thankfully it was a little bit cooler than our earlier visits. Our guide for the tour was Andy Lambie who is responsible for Education and Botany at the gardens.

Andy started off by explaining the history of how Ness Gardens was created. Arthur Bulley, son of a Liverpool cotton broker, had a passion for plants and was a sponsor of many of the 20th century's plant collectors. He bought farmland in Ness in 1898 to build a home and garden, the garden being an ideal place to grow the plants collected on his behalf. He also set up Bees Ltd, a commercial seed and plant nursery established in the potting sheds at Ness so that he could share the seeds of these discoveries with the public. After many happy years at Ness, Bulley died in 1942 and in 1948 his daughter presented the gardens to the University of Liverpool to maintain Ness as a public park and flower garden.



Andy Lambie talking to THEA members



Show Garden designed by Chris Beardshaw

Andy then went on to describe how the gardens had developed over the years, including the expansion of the gardens to 64 acres, redesign of both the Rock Garden and Pine Wood and the planting of many rare and important trees including a comprehensive collection of Sorbus and Betula. The current garden contains a number of medal-winning show gardens which were developed and displayed for the Tatton Park flower show. From there we wandered down the herbaceous border and into an area known as the “specimen lawn” which contains many plants from the golden age of plant collecting including some very old Magnolia, Sorbus and the largest Pieris formosa ‘Forrestii’ any of us had ever seen! From there we went on to explore the potager and alpine house.



Stately magnolia tree



Waterside planting near the rock garden

Andy explained how Ness is an active centre of horticultural research, conservation, and education, with the University of Liverpool conducting a number of projects there including a large-scale version of Stonehenge built in wood. We heard about the wild flower meadow and how the gardens seek to attract a huge diversity of wildlife, sadly they had attracted a large number of biting insects while we were there so we didn't linger near the meadow area for long! From there we walked into the rock garden which is dominated by a huge sandstone cliff, with terraces and many rare plants after which we returned to the Visitor Centre for lunch.

As the tour only covered part of the garden, members were encouraged to go back into the garden after lunch to continue exploring as there was still much to see.

Highgrove Gardens – Monday 12th August

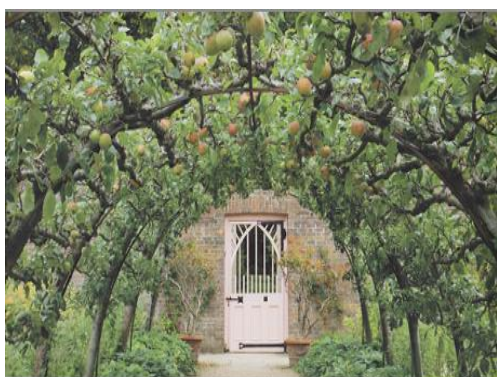
Well, we were blessed with a lovely morning as we set off, perfectly on time, from Reaseheath College for our much-anticipated visit to Highgrove. We had an excellent journey in the very comfortable coach and the competent and calm hands of our coach driver, Jose. He negotiated some of the smaller roads around Tetbury with ease and timed our arrival at Highgrove to perfection. We were greeted and organised with supreme efficiency - you would think the team at Highgrove were used to visitors!

Following an excellent soup and sandwich lunch our visit to the garden commenced. The heavy downpour of rain which started during lunch finished right on cue and the sun came out for us.

The gardens at Highgrove are beautiful and there are many different areas to visit, from the varied collection of landscapes and garden rooms to the unstructured beauty of the Wildflower Meadow. We even saw the tree house that Prince George recently played in. A very grand affair. Our guides were extremely knowledgeable and helpful.

The only place we were able to take photographs was in and around the Orchard Room where we had lunch; photographs were not permitted in the garden so unfortunately we have no evidence of our fabulous visit. We have included some photographs from the guide book so you can get a feel for some of what we saw (*photos copyright of Highgrove House*).

Many of us did however, take advantage of the shop at Highgrove and brought home some splendid souvenirs and gifts.



Apple arch in the Walled Garden



Highgrove House and the Thyme Walk



William & Harry's Tree House now used by Prince George



The Paradise Garden

All in all, a great day out and feedback from those that were able to make the trip were excellent, thanks to everyone for being so co-operative with timings and paperwork, much appreciated.

The Horticultural Enthusiasts' Association Award 2019

Each year THEA makes an award (in the form of book tokens) to two outstanding students from the RHS courses at Reaseheath.

The winners for the Horticultural Enthusiasts Association Award for Endeavour is Kyle Lane, and the winner of Horticultural Enthusiasts Association Award for Best Practical Student is Aaron Turner