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Anne Harrison, Kew Dip. Hort

## NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2020

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### **Editorial**

Welcome and a very Happy New Year to you.

We are happy to announce the programme for our February study day. Our speakers will be Nick Hamilton, the son of the late Geoff Hamilton, who will be talking about Barnsdale gardens and Sue Clarke, holder of a National Collection of hardy geraniums, who will be talking about hardy geraniums, something no garden is complete without! It should be an interesting and varied day and we hope to see you there.

Since the resignation of our Chair, Jo Worth, at our November AGM we have been trying to find a willing "volunteer" to replace her; Debbie Holden has agreed to take on the Chairman role in addition to being Membership Secretary. Also at the AGM we made a request for members to join the committee and Paul Brickwood answered our call and has agreed to join us; we would like to welcome him to the THEA committee and are very pleased to have his support.

In this newsletter we have included a summary of our recent study day survey which has made interesting reading and given us some good ideas. We hope to do a similar survey on our outings later in the year.

Best Wishes to you all

Debbie Holden (Chairman)

**STUDY DAY PROGRAMME**  
**Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 - Main Lecture Theatre, Reaseheath College**

From 10:00	<b>Sign in</b> Members leave items for Plant/Book Sale
10:15	Coffee available in Restaurant
10:45	Lecture: "Barnsdale after Geoff" by Nick Hamilton
11:45	THEA Plant Sale
12:00	Lunch available in Restaurant Plant Sale - continued
13:00	Raffle Draw Prizes
13:15	Lecture: "Hardy Geraniums – the Good, the Bad and the Ugly" by Sue Clarke

***Nick Hamilton***

Nick Hamilton is the son of the late Geoff Hamilton; a gardening hero and inspiration to many of us! Nick has had a passion for gardening from childhood and subsequently trained at Writtle College and took a



National Diploma course in commercial horticulture. Nick took over the running of Barnsdale Gardens when Geoff died and has developed it into the inspirational garden that it is today, which is not only a credit to Geoff but also to Nick's passion, foresight and hard work. The gardens are still run using organic and peat-free principles and are visited annually by about 30,000 people.

Over the years Nick has also managed to fit in appearances on Gardeners' World, writing books, being a regular contributor to gardening magazines, talking to gardening groups, contributing to the various Talks Stages at major flower shows, tutoring most of the courses being run at Barnsdale and still getting out and about, displaying in the Great Pavilion at The Chelsea Flower Show and in the floral marquee at the Gardeners' World Live Show. Nick is also the President of The Cottage Garden Society, a position he took up in 2007.

***Sue Clarke***

Sue Clarke developed an interest in gardening from a very early age. She attended Didsbury College of Rural Studies and obtained an RHS Level 1 in 1994 and then in 1999 enrolled in a Garden Design Edexcel Course at



Reaseheath under the tuition of Lecturer Alison Evans.

She is a keen member of the Hardy Plant Society and The Cottage Garden Society. She joined the committee of the CGS in 2009 and became involved in creating gardens at BBC Gardeners' World Live at the NEC Birmingham and at Tatton Park Flower Shows.

Sue is passionate about plants and started to collect hardy geraniums around 20 years ago, being awarded the Plant Heritage National Collection Status in 2014. Sue and her husband, Dave, open their garden for the National Garden Scheme and have done so for the last 6 years.

## Arrangements on the day

This event will take place in the **Main Lecture Theatre** adjacent to the Restaurant. Please assemble there from 10:00 a.m. onwards to sign in and drop off your plants at the 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 and laid out with cutlery ready for our use.

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 and 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.

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### November Study Day and AGM Reports

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#### *"Some Talented Women and their Association with Historic Gardens"* by Maureen Thomas

Maureen's interest in talented women associated with gardening began when she bought some botanical note cards from the British Museum – these were images of Mary Delany's stunning botanical paper collages.

This encouraged Maureen to investigate further and inspired her to research other woman who have contributed to horticulture but whose influence and achievements aren't widely appreciated.



Mary's images made from 100's of pieces of paper layered to give the image shading and depth

The talk ranged widely over 20 talented women who were gifted in many areas. Maureen gave many interesting insights into their lives within the horticultural world. Many wrote, painted or designed, others were botanists, head gardeners, travellers and plant collectors. They spanned history, levels of society, Great Britain and the world, changing the face of horticulture as we know it today.

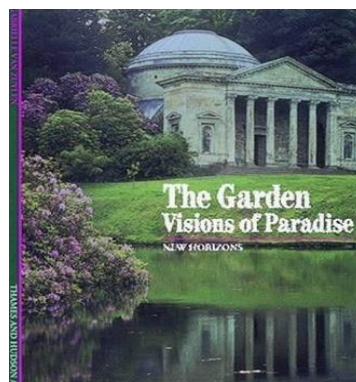
There were many fascinating stories of clever women with testimonies of courage and fortitude. Here is a selection of a few:

- Celia Fiennes (1662–1741) who in the 18th Century rode side saddle around the country to all the best houses as a diarist of the beautiful gardens she visited. The photo shows a sculpture of her as a way marker near Malpas.
- Marianne North (1830–1890) was a Victorian biologist and botanical artist, notable for her plant and landscape paintings, extensive foreign travels, plant discoveries and the creation of her gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.
- Brenda Colvin (1897–1981) was an important British landscape architect, author of standard works in the field and a co-founder of the Institute of Landscape Architects in 1929, eventually becoming its president. She designed many gardens and also worked on industrial landscaping, e.g. around power stations and Universities.
- Gabrielle van Zuylen (1933–2010) was a landscape architect, garden designer, garden writer and specialist on the construction of gardens. She published several works and Maureen particularly recommended Gabrielle's book on garden history: "The Garden: Visions of Paradise" which examines evolution of the garden over more than 2000 years.

Maureen also mentioned more recent lady gardeners such as the garden designer Arabella Lennox Boyd and Jan Lomas, the head gardener of Eaton Hall gardens near Chester.



The Celia Fiennes Waymark in Back Lane, No Mans Heath near Malpas



"The Garden: Visions of Paradise" by Gabrielle van Zuylen



Marianne North Gallery at Kew filled with her exquisite botanical paintings



Marianne painting with oils in the jungle in full Victorian dress.

***Report by Marion Barker Committee Member***

### **"A Wild Goose Chase" by Jack Willgoss**

An ex-student of Reaseheath College, Jack Willgoss has established the Wildegoose Nursery in a Victorian walled garden near Munslow in Shropshire, with his wife Laura. At our study day in November, Jack described in detail the creation of the nursery and its subsequent development into the successful venture it is today.

After Reaseheath, Jack studied at RHS Garden Wisley where he met Laura, and they dreamt of restoring a walled garden. Having established Wildegoose Nursery in 2011, when they acquired the Bouts collection of violas, they came across an abandoned walled garden at Millichope Park in 2013 and approached the owners with a view to taking on the lease. The couple were successful and set about restoring the two acres of wilderness, which hadn't been cultivated since the 1960s. The walled garden is also home to a large range of rare, iron-framed curvilinear glasshouses, which date from the 1830s but which had become dilapidated. After a major restoration project from autumn 2015 to summer 2016, the glasshouses are now fully restored.



At the beginning - the walled garden and dilapidated glasshouse



After restoration – a complete transformation

Rather than the traditional restoration of a kitchen garden, the Willgosses have created a modern garden with a series of interlocking rooms divided by hedges: visitors are surrounded by tall plants, with glimpses into the next area to entice them in. Jack described some of the plants that contribute to the personality of the garden, such as *Serratia Bulgaria*, a tall plant with white thistle heads; *Ansonia* 'Ernst Pagels', which has yellow foliage in autumn; *Hemerocallis* 'Brownie Points'; *Silphium perfoliate*, with yellow daisy-like flowers; and *Patrina monandry*, with flat heads of acid-green flowers.

The couple have added a tea room in a purpose-built timber-frame building with views of the garden and the surrounding Shropshire countryside. Jack credited his parents in helping set up the nursery – his mother even makes some of the cakes that are served in the tea room. Jack and Laura have turned a rundown walled garden into a destination, with courses and events throughout the year, and Jack's fascinating talk prompted many THEA members to plan a trip to Wildegoose Nursery in the near future.



Jack & Laura and some of their viola collection



A stunning garden filled with late-flowering perennials

***Report by Helen Gardiner - Committee Member***

### **THEA 41st AGM**

This year's AGM opened with the chairman's report (read by Debbie Holden), which welcomed everyone to meeting. The report described another successful year for the association and gave a summary of the lectures and garden visits we had in 2019, the highlight being the trip to Highgrove Gardens in August.

As mentioned in the Editorial, our Chairperson, Jo Worth, stepped down from this role at the AGM. Her enthusiasm and affable nature have been an inspiration and we shall miss her, but we're sure that Jo's new life in France will keep her very busy, not least the (26-acre) garden that she's bringing to life, and we'll look forward to progress reports on this project.

The AGM finished with another plea to members to assist on the committee to help organise the study days and outings.

Minutes of the AGM are available – please email [horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com](mailto:horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com) if you would like a copy now. Otherwise, they will be emailed out to all members a month before our 42nd AGM which will be held at the end of October 2020.

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### **Study Day Survey Results**

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At the November Study Day, we asked attendees to complete a short survey to help us understand whether we were delivering an interesting programme and seeking ways in which we can improve things for our members. For those members who were unable to attend the Study Day, we sent out an email version of the survey so that everyone had a chance to respond. In total, 50 members completed surveys.

A summary of results follows:

- The majority of responses indicated that two study days per year were sufficient, however 25% of members would like more study days and a number of comments suggested that a Summer study day would be of most interest, especially from a Plant Sales perspective.
- Almost all people agreed that the location and facilities at Reaseheath were good or very good and the majority found the timing convenient; 75% of respondents would not be interested in attending evening events.

- Again, almost all responses indicated that the Speakers were considered to be very interesting or interesting and that the talk duration of one hour was about right.
- We canvassed opinion as to whether members would be willing to pay an additional charge for a “celebrity” speaker. Again, the majority of people would be willing to do this. Most people were happy to pay up to £10, however general consensus was that the extra amount would depend on the speaker.

We had a large number of suggestions for future speakers and topics of interest, which we will be working through in some detail. The comments and suggestions which came up most often were

- More educational topics, for example:
  - Plant pathology
  - Plant physiology/Botany
  - Plant science and climate change
  - Plant breeding, especially micropropagation
  - Biosecurity
- Wildlife gardening
- Garden design, especially current planting trends and styles
- More on garden history (though we also had some responses asking for less on garden history!)

Other interesting comments included:

- Some practical demonstrations would be nice
- Shorten the lunch break
- Name badges for members so we know who everyone is

The committee has been discussing the results and will continue to do so at our next few meetings to see how we can incorporate feedback into our future programmes.

We have found the feedback really helpful and it’s also nice to know that people are generally pretty happy with the way things are being done. A big thank you to all of the members who responded to the survey – we really appreciate it.

### Other Dates for your 2020 Diary

We are currently planning the schedule of garden visits for 2020. Plans include a coach trip to Harlow Carr RHS Garden in Harrogate and (by popular request) a trip to Wildegoose Nursey in Shropshire. Full details of the trips and the booking forms will be published in our Spring Newsletter in April.

**\*\* Our Autumn study day at Reaseheath will be Friday, 30th October 2020 \*\***

Some other things which might be of interest to you:

**23 February 2020, 10:00am – 1:00pm**

**Norton Priory Museum (Runcorn) - Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop**

Learn the theory behind grafting fruit trees with Heathfield Orchards and then have a go yourself! No prior knowledge of grafting is needed. Cost £25. See <http://nortonpriory.org/event/fruit-tree-grafting-workshop/> for more details.

**23 February 2020, 2:30pm – 4:00pm**

**Ness Gardens Lecture – "What makes Ness Gardens such an important plant collection?"**

Resident botanist and authority on all things Ness, Tim Baxter, will be extolling the virtues of our unique plant collection which makes Ness such a valuable botanical asset. Cost FREE!

See <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/ness-gardens/whats-on/lectures/whatmakesnessgardenssuchanimportantplantcollection.html> for more details and to book a place.

**29 February 2020, 10:00am – 4:00pm**

**Ness Gardens - Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop**

Learn the theory behind growing new fruit trees, a technique that is over 2000 years old, then have a go yourself. By the end of the day, take home an apple tree to grow at home. Cost £40. See

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/ness-gardens/learn-at-ness/gardeningcourses/fruittreegraftingworkshop.html> for more details.

If you are aware of any gardening events that you think would be of interest to our members, please let us know. Contact one of the committee or email [horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com](mailto:horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com) with details. Thank you.

**Gardening Courses at Reaseheath for 2020**

Fancy learning something new? Here are some of the courses that will be running at Reaseheath College in the next few months.

COURSE	DESCRIPTION	COST	DURATION	START DATE / COURSE TIME
Plants and Planting Design	Learn the principles of planting design in this introductory course which you can use when planning your garden at home.	£525	14 weeks (during term time)	Friday 28th February 2020 10am – 3:30pm
Grow Your Own Veg	A short course on how to grow your own veg at home or on an allotment using various growing methods.	£120	6 weeks	Friday 24th April 2020 10am – 12:30pm
Practical Skills in the Garden – Spring and Summer	Introducing and developing the practical skills needed for the spring and summer seasons gardening tasks.	£120	3 weeks	Friday 15th May 2020 10am – 12:30pm

Go to <https://www.reaseheath.ac.uk/adult-learners/horticulture-courses-adult-learners/> or email Nicola Murrell ([Nicola.Murrell@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:Nicola.Murrell@reaseheath.ac.uk)) for more information and to book a place.

## Horticultural Enthusiasts on the Internet

Just a reminder about The Horticultural Enthusiasts' Association web site - please take a look at <https://horticulturalenthusiasts.org.uk/>.

The website contains a blog with the latest news from THEA. In addition, there are a series of other pages:



- ABOUT which gives you the history of THEA with details of how to join
- EVENTS which gives the details of study dates and other events
- GARDEN VISITS where all details of planned garden trips will be published
- NEWSLETTERS where all the newsletters and other publications will be stored for easy access
- Finally, there is a page PRIVACY where we have published our information privacy statements

Please take a look; we are always keen to hear your views. Any suggestions for improvements? Any articles of horticultural interest which you might like us to share with people?

Also, if you have an interest in web design or social media and you would like to give us a hand updating and improving the site, please get in touch. Just email us at [horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com](mailto:horticultural.enthusiasts@gmail.com)



And don't forget, for those of you who use Facebook, we have a Facebook group where we can share horticultural information, ideas, events and questions. This is a closed group so only THEA members will be able to see what we discuss. Search groups for "[the horticultural enthusiasts' association](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1929657067361737/)" or click on <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1929657067361737/>