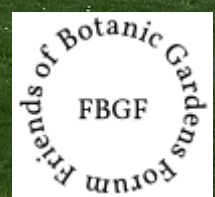


**FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS FORUM
NEWSLETTER
EDITION 16**



Dear Friends,

How time flies and here we are already half-way through 2025. I am currently juggling the editing of this newsletter with weeding and fruit-picking in what I describe, this year, as a very 'lush' garden. Growth seems to have been greater this year than in previous years, or maybe it can be ascribed to an increasingly 'mature' garden! Thankfully, we have escaped the very high temperatures being experienced south of the border though we have had a very dry four weeks in May.

Our on-line AGM took place in May. I was very pleased to introduce Lloyd Snellgrove from the Friends of Sheffield Botanical Garden who has agreed to take over from me in 2026. He was duly elected as Chair-elect. I will be happy to see the FBGF in such capable hands next year. Lloyd is going to shadow me through 2025 into 2026. I was also grateful to know that Patti Davie, Vice-Chair, Sarah Edgar, Treasurer, and Adrian Walsh, Secretary, have agreed to continue in their roles for another year. However, I am still looking for an Editor of this newsletter to replace myself. It would be good to hand over before the next issue – with the demise of Microsoft Publisher in October, we will have to look at a different platform for the publication of the newsletter. So please ask around your groups – maybe someone out there is looking for a new challenge!

Once again this newsletter is packed with interesting articles, sharing the events taking place in your gardens. 'Tipping Point' is a particularly exciting (even terrifying) installation at the Bristol Botanic Garden – and thank you Lucy for taking such incredible photos. There are a number of anniversary celebrations (NBGW and Thwaite) which are such happy occasions, and I look forward to hearing about Bristol's celebrations in due course – they are celebrating 20 years since they moved to their new site. Stephen Lyus has given us a brief review of the very successful conference he organised at Croxteth Hall in Liverpool. As one of the attendees, I can certainly confirm it was a very informative and enjoyable day. Stephen is thinking about another fund-raising conference next year, so hopefully he will be giving us dates soon to get in the diary!

I was in Aberdeen in June and took the opportunity to meet up with our representative at the Cruickshank Botanic Garden, Edna May Pyke. It was an extraordinarily hot day for Aberdeen – once we had had a quick stroll around the garden, we had to head to a local café for some cold drinks – how often does that happen in Aberdeen. Like all Botanic Gardens, whether university or local authority, it is facing challenging times through lack of staff. The Friends, however, continue to be supportive of the work going on at the garden.

I must draw your attention to the advertisement in the newsletter regarding the webinars we are hosting in collaboration with Plant Network later in the year. The topics have been chosen by our members and will be of interest not only to botanic garden Friends/Members organisations, but to other gardens where volunteers are involved.

And our book reviews – definitely a tree theme in this issue – hopefully you might be tempted to purchase one or more!

Have a relaxing summer and see you in September.

Best wishes

Shiona

**Front and Back Pages: University of Aberdeen
Cruickshank Botanic Garden. Shiona Mackie**

Page 2 Photos RBGE Herbaceous Border. July 2025

Shiona Mackie



Lloyd Snellgrove, Sheffield Botanical Garden

Lloyd retired in 2018 as Director of Research and Innovation at Sheffield Hallam University responsible for research and innovation funding, commercialisation of intellectual property, and strategic partnerships at the regional and national level. From 2004-10 he was Director of the Yorkshire Concept Fund, selectively supporting commercialisation prospects in all Yorkshire's universities. From 2010-14 he was a Council member of the Association for University and Industry Research Links.

He spent 15 years in horticulture including 5 years at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (3 as a student and 2 as an arborist) with periods at Merrist Wood Agricultural College, Winkworth Arboretum (National Trust), Pembroke Lodge (Royal Parks), the Chelsea Physic Garden and at the community based horticultural initiative North Kensington Amenity Trust.

In Sheffield he managed the Chapel Green Horticulture Project for 2 years, and was a Parks Manager for 5 years responsible for Parks and Countryside Strategy and special projects, including the Botanical Gardens, playground and allotments. This period culminated in production of the Sheffield Parks Regeneration Strategy.

He has remained a keen gardener throughout becoming a volunteer gardener in Sheffield Botanical Gardens in 2022 and joining the Friends of the Botanical Gardens Sheffield executive committee in 2023. He served as a member of the management committee of Sheffield Green and Open Spaces Forum 2024/5.

He holds the Kew Diploma in Horticulture and an MBA from Sheffield Business School. He is a member of the Kew Guild and the Chartered Institute of Horticulture.



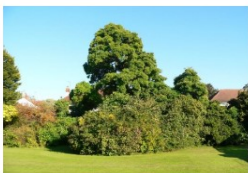
Friends of Thwaite Botanic Gardens

FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS

25 YEARS

2000 – 2025

Silver Anniversary



A history of Thwaite Gardens

The current gardens in 2025

&

Plans for the future

The Spring Meeting was held at the Botanic Gardens in the classroom with the gardens being open before and after for people to wander round. The talk was given by Dr Peter Williams on Wonderful Weeds.

The Open Day was held on Sunday 18th May and despite some unseasonally cold weather was well attended. There were guided tree walks, a variety of plants for sale, refreshments, a book stall and the 'All for One Choir'.

2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the Friends of Thwaite Gardens. In addition to our usual Open Day in May, we are planning a summer concert for members July or August as part of the celebrations. As part of the celebrations, we have written a history of the Friends set in the context of the history of the gardens. If you are interested, copies are available from: - Annie Bourton Card (card33690@hotmail.co.uk) for £2 plus p&p.

Friends of Sheffield Botanical Gardens

Opening of the volunteer centre

These are times of change at the Gardens with Carolyn Church the outgoing chair completing her three-year term and going out very much on a high, with the opening of the volunteer centre, for which she had long worked and campaigned for. The opening in May was made by the Lord Mayor of Sheffield, Safiya Saeed, who gave a speech along with Miles Stevenson, Chair of Sheffield Botanical Gardens Trust. The event was also used to coincide with the annual 'thank you volunteers' picnic.



The picnic is a celebration of all the incredible work carried out by volunteers in helping people and their communities access and engage with the Gardens, horticulture including propagation and plants sales; leading on the maintenance, management and development of specific geographical floras as well as guiding and tours, education, garden visits, lectures and talks.

In her speech, the Lord Mayor as well as emphasising the importance of volunteers, both to the individuals and those they

volunteer for and with, recalled that when she first came to Sheffield as a refugee how important the gardens were to her which she visited often. On reflection there is a resonance both with Sheffield being a City of Sanctuary, and botanic gardens with their ever-increasing role in conservation as plant sanctuaries.

Stakeholder Group

Last autumn the Sheffield Town Trust who own the Gardens established a Stakeholder Group to oversee a 2025-30 Development Plan. It is too soon to forecast how this plan will develop but the Gardens have been without a Curator for 2 years, and this does show in the lack of a cohesive collections or acquisition policy. In addition, there are long term hard landscape and infrastructure problems to resolve. Representing the Town Trust, the Sheffield Botanical Gardens Trust, the Friends of the Botanical Gardens (FOBS), and Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Services, this represents the opportunity to create a long term and overdue strategy and vision for the Gardens.

Gardening volunteer survey

Inspired by the Forum's own survey and the realisation that other Gardens regularly run such surveys, FOBS decided to initiate its own in May this year, amongst its gardening volunteers. Whilst there are some issues to pick up, overwhelmingly the results were positive and a reminder as in the Lord Mayor's comments above, how important volunteering is. A few illustrative comments are given below:

"Wonderful new friends and a sense of responsibility for our part of the gardens".

"Helping in a team to keep the gardens looking beautiful. Giving back to the wider public having enjoyed the gardens since moving to Sheffield 43 years ago! Working outside."

"Getting together with a group of like-minded gardeners, in a beautiful environment, doing a worthwhile task".

Lloyd Snellgrove
Sheffield Botanical Gardens

University of Bristol Botanic Garden

In common with many other small Botanic Gardens, the team at the University of Bristol Botanic Garden is constantly searching for ways to convey the conservation message in a memorable and immersive way. Last year, to augment their regular scientific and horticultural events, the University of Bristol Botanic Garden worked with the Friends of the Botanic Garden to commission a unique Art installation. It was intended to raise awareness of the dangers of wildfires as, sadly, they become more common around the world.



The University of Bristol Botanic Garden curator, Nick Wray and Senior Botanical Horticulturist Andrew Winfield worked with renowned local artist Luke Jerram and BAFTA award winning composer Dan Jones to explore the possibilities of using light and sound to transform the normally serene and verdant areas of the garden into **a hellish landscape** that would portray the realities of the fear and loss that such fire events bring.

Fire has become a terrifying normality for many people around the world. This installation, named "Tipping Point" plunged visitors into the reality communities such as California face by creating a simulation of such a forest fire in the University of Bristol Botanic Garden.



The use of such a large art installation by a well-known artist caught the interest of local and national media and filled Instagram feeds far and wide with images from visitors. Luke Jerram is well known for his travelling installation "Museum of the Moon" which has been exhibited more than 300 times in 30 countries around the world.

The soundscape used in the spectacle was delivered through speakers, creating the crackles of the fire and the flickering of the electric lights combined, while smoke drifted slowly across the paths, animal noises flitted though the garden and hidden voices recorded from those directly affected in Australia spoke out about their experiences of the devastation to their lives and described how they felt.

As visitors walked round **smoke hung in the evening air**; some visitors found it disorientating, with one visitor saying that despite knowing the garden well, it made them question their whereabouts. As the day turned to night, the installation became more dramatic, the oranges and yellows dancing off the silhouetted foliage and reflected in the water, with the smoke allowing everyone an enclosed space to hear the harrowing stories.



On site to discuss the work they are doing to mitigate the climatic changes were representatives from the University's Cabot Institute for the Environment, Met Office scientists, researchers from across the University, and MSc students who gained experience applying their skills in science communication with members of the public. They talked about visitors being moved by the installation, of it being 'beautiful but scary at the same time', of wanting to change this threatening situation but feeling helpless to effect change. This is a common feeling that we all have when thinking of global issues, but as the Cabot Institute's Josie Maskell explains, **"as individuals we have much more power than we think, making changes to our pensions and bank accounts, reducing our energy usage, and eat-**

ing less meat are a few ways we can all have a big impact." These may seem like small things, but they are not; that feeling of problems being remote is a natural one, but these threats impact all of us and, wonderfully, this is also true of positive action.

Lucy Davies. Friends of University of Bristol Botanic Garden.

Article originally published in Roots. Journal of BGCI.

Photographs: University of Bristol Botanic Garden (aerial photo) and Lucy Davies.

Book Review

Great British Elms -

A chance conversation with one of the authors in this book, Max Coleman, Science Communicator, RBGE in the RBGE canteen led me to this book. As a Garden Guide at the RBGE, I had already heard Max speak about Wych Elms in the past, and more recently in the context of the Scottish Plant Recovery Programme, a three- year project, focussed on conservation of 10 Scottish plants under threat – one of which is the Wych Elm. Max had just received his copy of the Great British Elms – and I, being a bit of a tree 'obsessive' offered to review it and at the same time up my knowledge on all things elm-related!

I suspect I am a member of the audience to whom this book is directed and by whom it will be appreciated. However, Great British Elms will appeal across the spectrum from those with little knowledge of trees to those with an academic interest – the latter are bound to find new nuggets of information.

Appearances are everything and the book is a feast of sumptuous photographs of multiple elms throughout the UK. Most photographs are taken by Sam Ford - with other contributions, largely historical by the Forestry Commission, Forest Research and various news items related to elm planting and other activities over the past four decades. Amazingly, Sam has succeeded in being in the right place at the right time, capturing photographs of the many elms and their component parts – across the UK surrounded by blue skies – quite a feat! Initially, there is a brief paragraph or two on the taxonomy of elms with accompanying leaf photographs but then the book moves through a logical progression. Mark Sneddon, one of the lead authors of this book charts the history of the introduction of Dutch Elm disease – named not after the source of infection, but after the Netherlands where much of the initial research into the source of infection took place in the 1960's. It is a fascinating and complex story dating back to the 1920's when there is evidence to suggest early disease carried by one form of beetle, but superseded by a larger and more deadly beetle in the 1960's and 70's – the latter introduced via 'unbarked' elm brought into the UK from North America. There then follows a series of essays on the uses of elms historically, its use in modern furniture making, and the elm in art, culture and folklore.

Subsequent sections focus on projects which have taken place or are on-going, covering the breeding of disease resistant cultivars, researching the underlying vector of the disease and mitigating the effects of the disease on trees in situ.

There are many positive examples of what has been done to address the devastating loss of the elm in the UK. The book will bring to a wider audience, the story of the establishment of the Conservation Foundation and the National Elm Collection in Brighton and Hove. I learnt that Edinburgh had a similar policy to Brighton and Hove of sanitation felling and pruning out disease and thus, Edinburgh still has a number of elms.

The book set out to change the view that elms were on the way out. So much research is being carried out on various fronts – which together should ensure that at somepoint in the future, tall, healthy elms will once again be seen in the fields and hedgerows of the UK landscape.

'The elms will stand tall again' Matthew Burt, Furniture Maker



GLASGOW BOTANIC GARDEN

We have had a busy time this year with the return of several of our annual events and one or two additions.

Monty Don fans will have been watching his new series British Gardens which was broadcast earlier in the year starting in Scotland (a good place to start you will all want to agree). After taking in Inverewe and Drummond Castle the camera spun to his car on the M8 in the inner city of Glasgow.

Monty turned to the camera saying how much he enjoys visiting Glasgow and always goes to the Kibble Palace because "it is the best glasshouse in the World offering one of the best glasshouse experiences in the World". I can only say I am sure Monty is correct with this one. We have since had several visitors on our tours on the strength of his filming in the Kibble. The Kibble is now sparking both inside and out following a clean that was programmed to last 2-3 weeks and eventually took 2-3 months.



Coelogyne Kibble Palace



Coelogyne Dalhousie

We have a programme of four public tours each week which are at present largely outside. Over the winter our tours took place in the Kibble and the even larger Main Range. In addition one of our local countryside rangers has led two tours for our members along the River Kelvin Walkway which is part of the GBG estate. Highlights have included seeing our nesting kingfishers and viewing nesting woodpeckers feeding their young.



Dendrobium Glasgow

Many reading this article will be aware that GBG has the national collection of Dendrobium orchids as well as an extensive collection of orchids. Friends supports these collections and the experienced staff that curate them. There new hybrids have in recent weeks been registered with RHS . Friends committee were privileged to be invited to name the hybrids- photos below. Kibble Palace requires no explanation. Glasgow850 marks this year's celebration of the 850th anniversary of the founding of our city. Countess Dalhousie draws attention to an understated Scottish Botanist whose work did not receive due credit in her lifetime. Please go and look her up!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Ramsay

So much for the good news. We have lost over 40 fine specimens of trees to the winter storms including a Toona sinensis which was a onetime champion and an Adam's laburnum graft-chimera. When garden staff leave for any reason, they are not replaced. Our last remaining wooden glasshouse, an alpine house, requires refurbishment in the next couple of years or it will be lost. We would require a benefactor or a major grant award to carry this out.

Robert Jamieson. Photographs: Hiro Shimai, Curator. GBG

University of Aberdeen Cruickshank Botanic Garden,

Recent visitors to the Cruickshank Botanic Garden will have noticed a striking new bench on the Beech Lawn. The bench is carved by Nigel Ross, the world-renowned sculptor who creates commissioned artistic pieces from lengths of fallen trees. The timber is from one piece of oak that was blown down along the shore of Loch of Clunie in an easterly storm of 2023. Curator Mark Paterson explains: 'I was approached by an individual who has a long association with Nigel and a keen interest in CBG and the outdoors. I was asked if I would like to have one of Nigel's pieces in the Garden and I immediately said yes please, what an absolute treat.' The bench has five words on it – 'memories', 'play', 'forever', 'learn' and 'outdoors' along with the letters JAR, the initials of the person to whom it is dedicated, tucked away in the corner, very low-key. The words on the bench and its setting in CBG make it a very special living memorial. Due to its shape, the artistic bench is affectionally referred to as the Viking Ship. Mark carefully dug and backfilled the foundations for the one-tonne bench following the measurements Nigel sent him and was very relieved when it slotted perfectly into position, its bow facing to the west. Made from green timber, the bench will gradually change in colour and tone over the years. It has been treated with Danish oil and the only maintenance required is a further layer of oil each summer. 'The bench looks superb against the long shadows of wintertime, and it will look equally impressive when the underplanting comes through and the trees are in full leaf. In addition to being a lovely piece of artistic work, the bench is practical and has become my favourite new meeting place. I just say to people, I'll see you by the Viking Ship,' adds Mark.



Edna May Pyke

Photograph: Shiona Mackie

Dates for your diary:

Plant Network and FBGF webinars:

Talks and Discussion

Volunteer Recruitment & Inductions

29/11/2025

12:30-14:00

Plant Health & Plant Sales

02/12/2025

12:30-14:00

Setting up a volunteer garden guide group

09/12/2025

12:30-14:00

These webinars will provide an opportunity for exchanging ideas and highlighting challenges in managing volunteers, holding plant sales, and consideration of the issues that have to be addressed when establishing a volunteer garden guide group.



PlantNetwork



RBGE UPDATE

Storm Eowyn Recovery:

The focus now is on replanting where trees and shrubs have been lost as a result of the January storm. In the RBGE, what was the tallest tree in Edinburgh— a cedar—what is left of the trunk and attached limbs remains—a reminder of the power of the storm on that day. Benmore Botanic Garden sustained the most damage and while 75% of the garden is now open to the public, the remaining 25% will remain inaccessible for the foreseeable future. A new curator, Luke Senior, has been appointed at Benmore and he will lead the restoration work in the areas which have been so badly impacted. The Storm appeal raised £180,000 – an impressive response indicating the depth of feeling from the general public towards the RBGE across its four sites. A members' event is being held at the end of July at Benmore when they will be able to meet Luke and hear some of his thoughts on future planning.

Glasshouse Restoration



Palm Houses – The contractors are on track to finish the building work in the two Victorian glasshouses at the end of summer. Then the internal hard landscaping can begin, followed by planting over winter and spring 2026. That will see the Palm Houses reopen to the public again in summer 2026.

The new insulated pipe work which will connect the new energy centre in the nursery to the glasshouses have been installed. Now work is beginning on the building of the new energy centre in the nursery with completion anticipated for 2027. The next phase of refurbishment of the long-range glasshouse will commence thereafter.

You can see some video updates on the RBGE webpages.



<https://www.rbge.org.uk/news/edinburgh-biomes/project-updates-edinburgh-biomes/restoring-the-palm-houses-part-iv/>

<https://www.rbge.org.uk/news/edinburgh-biomes/project-updates-edinburgh-biomes/preparing-the-palm-house-plants/>

Shiona Mackie

Photographs: RBGE

Julie James has shared two events which have taken place since the last newsletter.



Firstly, Jane Down, who, with Margot Greer, had been the FBGF links to the NBGW since 2019, retired. Both Jane and Margot had been responsible for enabling the FBGF to hold their AGM at the garden in 2024 – and what a splendid weekend that was. At the end of April, 200 staff and volunteers hosted a farewell party for Jane. Jane gave an overview of her 17 years at the NBGW. At times a challenging role, but she obviously derived so much enjoyment from working with colleagues on so many varied initiatives.

One of her outstanding achievements, amongst many, was recruiting volunteers to the garden. 1200 in total over her 17 years of service to the garden. The FBGF did send a card and best wishes to her for a long and happy retirement.

The next big event – over the Bank Holiday weekend 24th and 25th May – was a celebration marking 25 years since the opening of the NBGW to the public at the turn of the millennium. Since welcoming its first visitors in May 2000, the Garden has grown into a globally recognized centre for biodiversity, conservation, horticulture, education and wellbeing. The celebration took the form of a Garden Party with a packed programme of live entertainment, family-friendly activities including Welsh music, food and culture. Nostalgically, the admission prices on the Saturday were rolled back to 2000 rates - £6.50 for adults and £3.00 for children!



It is worth recalling that National Botanic Garden of Wales was a Millennium project – the first new national botanic garden to be created in the UK for over 200 years. The Norman Foster designed Great Glasshouse quickly achieved international recognition.

Among the Garden's most notable contributions to science has been the Welsh Flora DNA barcoding initiative. Wales became the first country in the world to DNA barcode all its native flowering plants and conifer species. The resulting open-access database covers 1,473 native plants.

Looking ahead, the garden is set to develop a living collection of Welsh flora – it will cover a range of habitats, from coastal cliffs to the peaks of Yr Wyddfa – addressing the threats of habitat loss and plant extinction. Beyond its conservation work, Dr Lucy Sutherland, Director of the NBGW, highlighted the garden's role in supporting community wellbeing through therapeutic gardening programmes, and in education. More than 11,000 schoolchildren engage with the garden, and the most recent initiative – utilising a new vehicle - will bring biodiversity workshops and lessons to harder to reach communities across Wales.

Photographs: Jane's farewell—Cliff Day

25 year celebration: Dr Lucy Sutherland, Director. NBGW and Gary Davies, Chair of Board of Trustees, NBGW—Tom Jones (copyright)

TREBORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

The Friends of Treborth are awarding three bursaries for Bangor University Masters Research students. This is a new initiative for us and arose because we wanted to encourage and support postgraduate research in the Garden. We have worked closely with the Director of Postgraduate Research in the College of Science and Engineering, who invited academics to put forward proposals for MSc research projects which would be suitable; then he arranged for students to apply. The three projects are: analysis of the long term (nearly 40 years) moth data recording that has been undertaken (largely by volunteers) at Treborth; investigation of generic diversity in *Cotoneaster cambricus*; and an exploration of the wellbeing benefits of soundscapes at Treborth. The successful students have been selected and will start their research in September.

The Head of the School of Environmental and Natural Sciences has said "It is so difficult to get funding to support research students that the generosity of the FTBG is much appreciated. The bursaries will not only support early career researchers, but it will help to launch interesting work at Treborth. I hope the successful applicants will be able to report back on their observations, once the work has been completed."

We have had three really successful public events. Our two spring plant sales were well attended and raised nearly £10,000. The annual Draig Beats family festival was held on 7th June. About 800 people came to enjoy music, poetry, talks, food, circus activities, yoga and stalls with local producers and craftspeople. Now in its sixth year, the event is run almost entirely by volunteers and raises money for The Sophie Williams Trust. Dr Williams is a Bangor University lecturer and was instrumental in creating the Chinese Garden at Treborth. She contracted Japanese en-

cephalitis when she was carrying out research in China and is now partially paralysed.



We are always striving to improve our labelling of plants. Whilst large botanic gardens like Cambridge and Oxford have dedicated equipment and teams to produce signage, Treborth has developed an innovative alternative through collaboration with Bangor University's School of Computer Science and Engineering's XLAB.

Volunteers have been using XLAB's laser-cutting facilities to make hundreds of high-quality plant labels. This simple shift has not only saved over £1,500 by bringing the process in house, but has also enhanced the Garden's own capability to maintain accurate plant records and interpret botanical conservation information to the public.

Sarah Edgar

Photographs: Festival goers enjoying Draig Beats (Julia Jones)

Garden label (Sarah Edgar)

Liverpool Botanical Trust

On 29th March 2025 we held a seminar: "Spice Stories: The Botanical and Cultural World of Gingers", which was held in the impressive Old Dining Room at Croxteth Hall.

This was the second collaborative event between Liverpool Botanical Trust and the Research Institute for Literature and Cultural History at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU).

Our first speaker was Axel Dalberg Poulsen, the Zingiberales Taxonomist at RBGE who gave an inspiring talk about 'The Diversity of Gingers of the World'. Axel is a tropical-forest botanist researching plants mainly in SE Asia, especially gingers and other ground herbs. His main geographical focus is New Guinea where he has completed 10 collaborative expeditions. Now he is writing up several taxonomic works on gingers, in a wide sense, of the order Zingiberales.

This was followed by Steve Lyus, Chair of the Liverpool Botanical Trust who talked about "'Roscoe's Baby', The first Monograph for the Gingers'. He has been researching the history of the Liverpool Botanic Gardens over the last 12 years. The lecture hall was decorated with botanic illustrations from the 15 genera described in this book.

Next was Donna Young, Curator of Herbarium, National Museums Liverpool, with over thirty years' experience of working with its Botany collection. She showed us examples from 'The Liverpool Herbarium and its Gingers within.' Some of these were the specimens used for the botanic illustrations in Roscoe's book.

During the lunch break an exhibition was available of contributions by our botanical artist Sue McHugh, LJMU graduate Anna John and Athena Plants, a local nursery that specialises in these plants.

After lunch Richard Baines, Curator at Logan Botanic Garden gave advice and guidance on 'Growing Gingers in Great Britain.' He has played an integral role in the development and understanding of conservation horticulture with cross-organisational, international partnerships resulting in collaboration with Longwood Gardens, University of British Columbia and IEHR in Vietnam, amongst others. Richard has been an expedition leader to China, Canary Islands & Vietnam (2014, 2016 & 2019) and recently published five plant species new to science. He was awarded The Scottish Horticulture Medal in 2022 and has published many Journal articles and a book.

This was followed by Rebecca Bailey, a Senior Lecturer in English Literature at LJMU on "What's ginger, I pray ye?": an exploration of ginger in early modern England'. She addressed how ginger was used during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in recipes of the time, both as a medicinal cure and an ingredient. She also discussed how these spices were portrayed in plays like Ben Jonson's 'Bartholomew Fair' (1614) and Thomas Middleton's 'Triumphs of Honour and Virtue' (1622), before considering the anxiety around the popularity of spice such as ginger in the early modern period.

The day was again very successful, with 64 attendees. We are now thinking about next year's event, which popular demand dictates should be on Bromeliads.

Stephen Lyus. Photographs: Stephen Lyus



A lifetimes' work

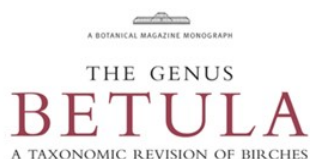
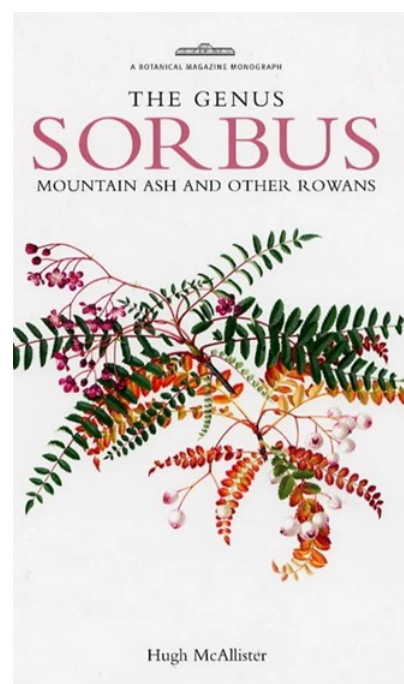
Over a period of fifty-plus years at Ness, Hugh McAllister not only developed the living collection into the internationally renowned scientific resource it is today, but also authored and co-authored several publications on the genera he studied. In this article, I will look at some of Hugh's key publications.

Along with the descriptions of many new species, numerous published scientific papers and articles, and a continuing contribution to the increasingly invaluable online resource Trees & Shrubs Online, Hugh has published several botanical monographs that are considered the last word on their subject genera.

Rowans, whitebeams and service trees were a key field of study for Hugh, who produced several papers on the topic, leading to his first published monograph in 2005, *The Genus Sorbus*, an account of over sixty species of rowans. Ness, of course, holds a National Collection of *Sorbus*, built up over the years by Hugh as he studied these berried treasures (to borrow a pun from another great plantsman, Frank Kingdon Ward!). The monograph is beautifully illustrated by renowned botanical artist Josephine Hague, whose drawings, along with the photographs, act as helpful tools for identifying key distinguishing features between species.

Hugh's discovery of apomixis (asexual reproduction by seed, whereby a plant can produce clonal offspring, genetically identical to the mother plant, without fertilization) within the genus is outlined in an accessible way and has made an impact on proliferation of certain species in horticulture. Always a gardener as well as an academic, Hugh also includes information on how best to cultivate these attractive small trees, making *The Genus Sorbus* useful for the taxonomist and the horticulturalist alike.

Further, Hugh also includes descriptions of popular cultivars, including *Sorbus* 'Joseph Rock', a fine specimen of which can be found in the Specimen Lawn. And, of course, *Sorbus* 'Pink Ness', the charming, conical tree that provides added garden interest by hanging onto its vibrant pink berries long after its leaves have dropped. Some particularly resplendent specimens of this Ness namesake can be viewed on the Herbaceous Lawn.



THE GENUS BETULA

A TAXONOMIC REVISION OF BIRCHES

The Genus Betula (2013) came next and was co-authored by Hugh and the late Kenneth Ashburner, founder of Stone Lane Gardens, the Devon arboretum specialising in birches and alders. The living plants at Stone Lane provided much of the material in this monograph, and like Mr Ashburner's garden, Ness also now boasts a National Collection of birch. The monograph compiles descriptions of all birches then known to science, with a key to help navigate the (sometimes difficult) identification of these magnificent trees. The book also features thorough information on the distribution of each species, history of cultivation, and cultivation techniques. *The Genus Betula* is a vital accompaniment to Ness's important birch collection.

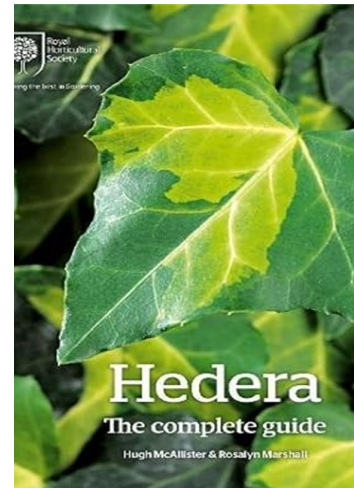


Kenneth Ashburner and Hugh A. McAllister

But it is not just trees that Hugh has researched over the course of his career. *Hedera: The complete guide* was co-authored by Rosalyn Marshall and published by the RHS (2017). Ivies are oft misunderstood plants with enormous horticultural value, and our garden team look after a strong collection of both cultivated and wild collected specimens. Hugh and Rosalyn's monograph includes accounts of all twelve species of ivy, as well as descriptions of almost two-hundred cultivars. Particularly fascinating in this publication is the history of the genus as it pertains to its human uses, both in folklore and traditional medicine.

Hugh's contribution to horticulture and botany, and to Ness itself, is truly incalculable. He continues to contribute his voice to debates both on taxonomy, lending his authority to the recent reclassification of the whitebeams. Or on broader issues surrounding the conservation of plants, such as in his recent article in the Plant Review concerning international agreements such as the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and Nagoya Protocol, that he argues may be doing more harm than good.

All of Hugh's botanical monographs are available online, sometimes via specialist retailers. They are essential works on their subjects and deserve a place on the shelves of all botanically-minded horticulture lovers



Mike Roberts, Plant Records Officer, Ness Botanic Gardens

Photographs: Ness Botanic Garden

Friends of Durham Botanic Garden

In my last contribution to the Newsletter I mentioned the fact that The Friends had agreed to fund new decorative entry gates to the Alpine Garden. I am pleased to say that the gates which have been widely appreciated by Friends and visitors to the Garden have now been fitted (see photo). We were also pleased to be able to have a plaque fitted to the gates in memory of one of our late Committee Members (Dennis Michison) who spent many hours working in the Alpine Garden before he sadly passed away. The gates were designed and manufactured by Graeme Hopper a local artist. One can find other examples of Graeme's work commissioned by the Friends elsewhere in the Garden. We have agreed to fund more work from Graeme which will replace bamboo railings down a series of steps in the bamboo garden. The current bamboo railings are rotting away and a Health and Safety risk.

On the 26th May a very successful 2nd Annual Family Fun Day was held in the garden. Entertainment was provided by The Pittington Brass Band, a Mandolin Orchestra, and Samurai Swordsmen (see photo). In addition there was Face Painting and Pond Dipping. We the Friends also held our annual plant sale alongside the Teesside Cactus Society. Unfortunately, over the



weekend there had been some high winds which destroyed several gazebos including one of ours. But following rescue work by Peter Thomson (garden manager) and his team everything was able to go ahead. The weather was kind for most of the day with the garden being full of adults and children clearly enjoying themselves which was really pleasing to see. We were also able to successfully use for the first time a sumup machine for taking card payments.



Finally thanks to the efforts of our volunteers we were able to make significant inroads into controlling Himalayan Balsam in the woodland area of the garden where a stream runs through.

David Spence. Photographs: David Spence

