

# West Yorkshire Group Newsletter



Photo: Pat Inman

*RHS Harlow Carr's famous streamside planting emerges in spring with yellow *Lysichiton americanus* AGM and the white skunk cabbage, *Lysichiton camtschatcensis* from Asia, complemented by the pink flowers and hairy stems of *Darmera peltata*.*

**Spring 2014**

# Welcome to the Spring 2014 Newsletter

Inside this issue of the West Yorkshire Group HPS newsletter you'll find a range of articles, reviews and information about forthcoming events. If you need further information please contact one of the Committee members – details on the back cover. Articles, photos or news items for the newsletter are always very welcome and may be submitted by email or post to the Editor – contact details also on the back cover. There are two loose inserts accompanying this newsletter: the first is a list of the monthly Summer Evening Garden Visits, starting Friday 30 May; the second is a booking form for the Summer Day Trip, this year to four (yes, four) venues in Cumbria; the advice is to book early and have your Weetabix before departure!

## Seeing Spots or Red Dots

If there is a red dot on the front of your newsletter this is a reminder to pay your annual subscription to the West Yorkshire Group. Please contact our Treasurer, Wendy Platt, who will advise how your payment can be made. Her contact details are on the back cover of this newsletter.

## An Apology

Apologies to Christine and Carole who wrote the evocative review of last summer's holiday visit to Bromley Hall (page 9, last newsletter). They were inadvertently assigned each other's surname – the editor's sincere apologies to you both.

# So What Happened, Generally Speaking?

## Chairman Sue Gray Reports



*Sue Gray*

It was good to see so many members at the AGM in January. For those who were not able to be there, just a few bits of information that you may be interested in.

We are in good heart financially – Chelsea having cost the group all of £10! This was due to a generous subsidy

from national HPS as well a lot of hard work and generosity from our members who gave of their time and talents in a variety of ways, and their plants.

With regard to the committee, Judith Ladley, having given many years of service to the group and committee for which we are very thankful, has decided it is time to retire from the committee. I am pleased to report that Maggie Sugden has agreed to join the committee and during the year Rena Gutteridge, our Conservation Scheme



*Judith Ladley has retired from the Group's managing committee and was thanked for her years of valuable support.*

Organiser, has also been added to the ranks of the committee. The meeting approved both these appointments and the officers and continuing committee members were re-elected.

Finally Gill Evans urged all the members to become involved, particularly with lending plants for the Harrogate Shows and donating to our seed exchange scheme, so that our love of plants remains at the centre of all that we do.

## April Speaker Changes

There's been a change of guest speaker for the April meeting. This will now be the 'new' Curator of RHS Harlow Carr, Paul Cook, who will tell us about the Ness Botanic Gardens, where he was Curator for 11 years. See you on Friday 11 April, Paxton Hall, 186 Kirkstall Lane, Leeds, LS5 2AB at 7.00pm.

## Shady Characters & Daisy Roots Nursery

There were more than a few 'Shady Characters' at the February meeting, which was well attended by members who heard Annie Godfrey of Daisy Roots Nursery describe the



characteristics of plants suitable for shady positions.

Annie's suggested list of plants was amply illustrated with photos and her own experience of growing the plants herself and for clients.

Annie had driven up from Hertfordshire, bringing a van-load of enticing potted plants with her.

Members did justice to the display and there were many fewer pots left to go back with Annie at the end of the evening.

# A Hardy Tale by Gill Evans

## with grateful thanks to Gerry Vernon

The Hardy Plant Society had members living in the area in the early 1980s but there was no group at all in Yorkshire. The first group, our group, was formed almost by chance, after an accidental encounter between **Gerry Vernon**, one of the group's founder members, and **Dr Dilys Davies**.

Dilys (who became a chairman of HPS) was then a member of the North East group. Gerry and his wife had made one of their usual visits to Southport flower show and visited the HPS stand. There he was seized upon by Dilys (and those of you who know Dilys will know what I mean) and asked to mind the stand. Although Gerry confessed that his knowledge of hardy plants was limited, off she went. But she had struck a spark and his interest in and passion for hardy plants began.

Again, almost by chance, Gerry met **Gordon Cooper**, then in charge of The Hollies, and they talked about the formation of a local group. This was the start. HPS had a list of local members and these were rung. **Bob Page** agreed to become secretary and, with Gordon as Chairman, the group was born. The inaugural meeting was held on Friday 12 March 1982, and to this day our meetings continue on Friday evenings, at Paxton Hall. The first lecture was given by a biologist from the University and his subject was 'Hardy Tulips and their Cultivation'.

Other early members were the **Dentons**, **Eleanor Fisher** (now a plant consultant for HPS) and **Sue Cupitt**. **Miss White**, the formidable HPS Secretary, was very helpful and **Tony Lord** came up to Leeds from Cirencester to give his help and advice and so the group was formed. Very sensibly, bearing in mind the size of Yorkshire, they called themselves the West Yorkshire Group. There are now three other HPS groups in Yorkshire.

The monthly programme of lectures and in-house events included a favourite selection of readings from popular gardening books. The group exhibited at Harrogate shows. Stands were a bit primitive with flowers in vases and I seem to remember flowers in jam jars. But there was a lot of interest and membership gradually grew. I think **Judith Ladley** became a member then and **Pat Clarke** and I joined in 1986.

But the group was an offshoot of the Paxton Horticultural Society and this was to present difficulties aligning the two constitutions to form one acceptable to both. There was a great deal of bitterness and membership fell away sharply. However commonsense gradually prevailed and membership slowly built up again.

We began to run a day trip and started the biennial conference - the first one with



*Gill Evans*



**Elizabeth Strangman** as principal speaker. This was very successful but it was the only conference when we had a lecturer cancel at very short notice due to illness. We ended up with two half hour slots and a rearranged schedule. **Brian Mathew** once remarked that we were a very lively bunch but I didn't feel very lively just then. This was in the days before computers and emails!

We started the holiday, first as a two day weekend trip, then three and now of course five days. We have held an HPS AGM and a Summer Day meeting, so we have certainly done our bit for HPS. But the star events have been exhibiting at Chelsea twice! This required an enormous amount of time, energy and knowledge and could not have taken place without our [current] secretary Pat Inman. After the first time she said she'd never do it again but some people never learn!

The group continues to thrive with many new members and I think we are a happy friendly group. I certainly have made several lasting friendships There is a considerable fount of knowledge in the group. I have learned more about hardy plants and gardening in general from the group than from all the many gardening books I possess.

**Editor's Note:** *Gill Evans was Group Secretary for 15 or 16 years until 2011. She has been a tireless and enthusiastic force within the group, freely sharing her plant passion and knowledge, as well as her managerial talent.*

## Makes My Heart Sing by Judi Barton

This photo shows one of my really favourite annual garden moments. The clematis is about to burst into a carpet of pink flowers. It's to such a size now that it really makes an impact on the view from the stairwell windows as we go up/down from bedrooms to living areas. I bought it from Morrison's about 10 or 12 years ago so I will have paid around £2 for it. I have lost and forgotten its name (a *Clematis montana*?) but it's one of the common ones so many of you will know it. As well as looking fabulous and being a bargain buy, it is - clever me - planted in the right spot for it to flourish and flower for weeks. It makes



my heart sing because it marks the start of another English summer.

**Share the happiness that is gardening.**

Send a photo of your heart-stirring garden moment to the editor (see back page).

## Member Profile: The Scholarly, Passionate Gardener



Ruth Baumberg kindly agreed to share her garden with us, and as you can see, it is a gorgeous spring bower. Ruth is interested in many genuses (or should I say genera) and as a ‘scholarly’ gardener she knows all the scientific names. But clearly she is a skilled practical gardener with a garden that’s packed to the gunnels with colourful, healthy plants.

Ruth moved into her home in the early 70s but didn’t garden for the first 20 years. Once she started though she clearly got the collecting bug and has dallied with many different plant families. She has a love of aquilegias, having innocently started with a packet of seeds ‘to fill an empty bed’ 25 or 30 years ago, she recalls. Ruth is fascinated by detail, and aquilegia flowers feed that fascination because they can be so different in form and colour from plant to plant and

season to season, if you allow them to self-seed freely – or even if you try to control them.

Ruth has had many plant phases over the years: geraniums – ‘I go hot and cold on them ... they are easy to grow’; euphorbias – ‘I had a long phase of euphorbias’; snowdrops – ‘getting over the snowdrop phase’ [*see the West Yorkshire HPS Group’s Facebook page where Ruth has posted some photos of her snowdrop collection*]; ‘still enjoying primulas, polemoniums, violas and especially Sibirica irises’; ‘geums and epimediums are some of my newish enjoyments’. ‘What you are interested in changes with the season ... it is also interesting to see what happens when you leave plants to fight it out together’.

Whatever Ruth’s latest plant passion



her sustaining desire is to see them growing in the wild and she has been on many botanical holidays. The local Group and the wider HPS membership benefit on her return because she often shares her photos and stories. She's a meticulous and stylish photographer and our local group has enjoyed many slide shows. Last year she wrote a 'Plant of the Month' column for HPS and this can still be viewed online – well worth it for the local West Yorkshire gen underlying the more overt plant information.



## Should Carry a Health Warning by Pat Inman

What is it about the attraction of a certain plant that can make me dismiss all the advice written about it? You would think I'd have learnt my lesson by now just from my own experiences.

It began many years ago when I fell in love with a patch of *Adenophora*, I ignored advice thinking it can't be that bad, and planted one, (I can't remember which species). It was so very beautiful but I soon found out that it does charge through a flower bed as if on roller skates.

On a trip to Gotland in the Baltic Sea with my Swedish friends I saw a magnificent *Symphytum* growing on scrubby ground, an intense blue, gorgeous! I enquired at a herb nursery – 'it's just a weed' I was told – but they kindly (?) dug up a



Pat Inman

Photo: Pat Inman



*Epilobium angustifolium upright 'Stahl Rose'*

piece from some waste ground nearby. It went into the same garden where the *Adenophora* was. I really should have known better. With the more sheltered conditions and richer soil it grew and grew at an alarming rate.

I did my best to dig out the above two but, as I have moved from that property I don't know if I was successful; these plants are probably still being a nuisance to the current owner.

I saw *Epilobium angustifolium* 'Stahl Rose' in a garden in Northumberland, yet another must have. Bob Brown says 'Lovely but

runs underground. Edit its spread by pulling up edges of the patch after flowering'. Still trying that Bob!

I planted *Helianthus* 'Miss Mellish' AGM, another beauty and really excellent as a cut-flower but the rhizomatous roots do have to be firmly controlled. Again it's in my allotment growing in very dry soil (OK not so dry last year) and is battling it out with Stahl Rose. Yes, I still grow them as they are lovely!!

Another plant with runaway tendencies is *Aster macrophyllus* 'Twilight'. It is recommended for poor dry shade and probably behaves itself better there whilst with me in the open in good soil it constantly makes takeover bids into adjoining beds.

We called in at Norwell Nursery on our way back home from one of our HPS trips and I came away with *Sanguisorba obtusa* 'Silver Leaf'. The leaves are a good substitute for *Melianthus major* and having quite a few sanguisorbas which, apart from a little self-seeding, are pretty much trouble free, I was tempted once again. After a couple of years I looked it up on his website where Andrew says 'Spreads well'. Sure does Andrew!

One thing my experiences have taught me is, having moved house a couple of years ago, in my present garden I am being much more selective! Definitely no thugs allowed ... although I admit I have planted two of my favourite shrubs/small trees, *Eleagnus* 'Quicksilver' and *Salix exigua* and yesterday I dug out nine suckers from the latter. As for self-seeders well that's another story ...

## Group Holiday 2013 – Great Dixter



Last year's holiday to Kent featured an afternoon at one of the most famous of English gardens: everyone was looking forward to Great Dixter. Some of us had never been before, some had visited previously when Christopher Lloyd was still alive, and some had been lucky enough to have a guided tour with the man himself. The garden received mixed reviews – understandable when expectations were high. It must be one hell of a job for the current man-in-charge

to follow in the footsteps of such a revered gardener and to keep the garden in sound financial health. It's bound to take time for the garden and its new team to get back into their stride. As you can see from the photos, it's still a very beautiful and inspiring garden.

Photo: Pat Inman





The 2014 Holiday will explore the gardens of Hampshire. There may still be some places left; enquire with Sally Robinson – contact details overleaf.

# Committee Members 2014

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## **More Online**

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