

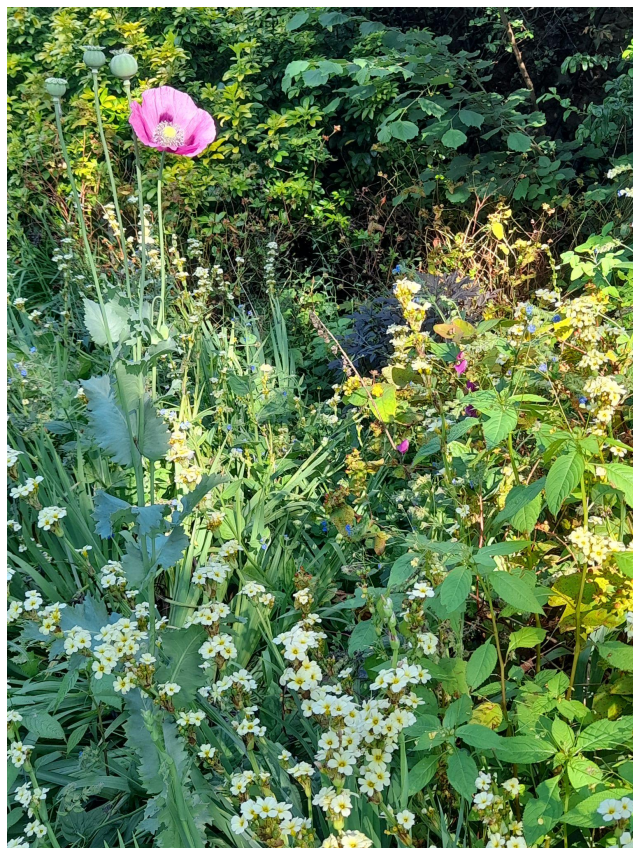
Abbey Gardens Friends

Newsletter, Summer 2024



As the Anglia in Bloom judges' visit is upon us, the Gardens are in peak condition, with plenty to enjoy as ever. I particularly like the wild beds by the coffee kiosk (pictured).

John Williams' carving of the cherry tree stump by the West gate is nearing completion. It is a celebration of oxlip (*Primula elatior*), the county flower of Suffolk. Oxlip is rarely found outside of Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex, where it grows in damp woods and meadows, and favours nutrient-poor and calcium-rich soil.



The committee is pleased to welcome Debbie Bateson as Treasurer, and thanks go as ever to Doug Beardon for holding the fort whilst we sought his replacement.

Please note the date of our Summer Reception this year, which is Friday 6th September. It will be held in the Water Garden, and Abbey Gardens Friends members will receive an invitation in due course.

Libby Ranzetta, Chairman

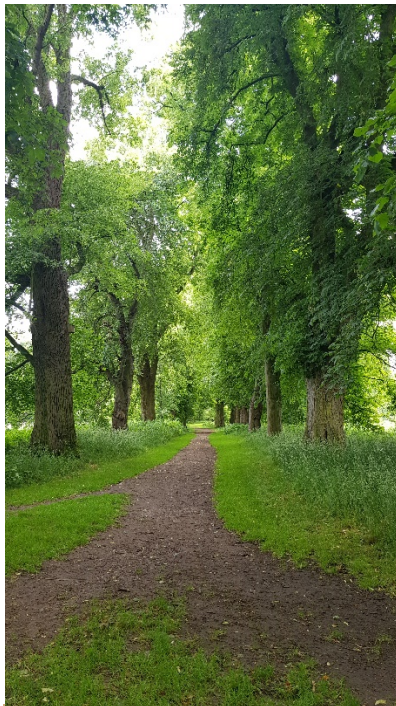
Visit to East Town Park, Haverhill

Report and photos by Dawn Butler

On a disappointingly cool and wet Monday morning in June, a group from the Abbey Gardens Friends made a visit to East Town Park in Haverhill, all a bit apprehensive of how enjoyable walking through soggy grass might be! However, the clouds were kind and we were treated to several hours of dryness and even the occasional bout of sunshine!

Christine, the park warden, greeted us warmly at the Visitor Centre with welcome coffee and chocolate biscuits and explained that she would guide us around the 32-acre park highlighting some of the particular areas of interest: wildlife, habitats, brooks, trails, species of trees, plants, flowers and developments in the park over the 17 years that she had worked there.

We learned that The Avenue of lime and horse-chestnut trees was originally the approach to a large 18th century mansion house (The Coupals) of the Gurteen family which was located in the estate up until its destruction by a fire in 1990.



Onward to The Orchard of apple, pear and fruit trees which contained a Bramley apple, grafted from the original Bramley tree, which was planted last year to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III. Christine pointed out the areas where slow worms, lizards and grass snakes were to be hiding and found! Most of the park is a natural area of grassland and wooded walks, one of which was along the former Stour Valley Railway line. We were all amazed how tranquil, unspoilt and vast the park was with lovely views and bridges crossing the River Stour – complete with Pooh Sticks Bridge. Christine knew the park so well she was able to locate a single Bee Orchid flower to show us and pointed out the wild purple Pyramidal Orchids too. Apparently the Osier [Willow] Beds are still cultivated and the willow sticks sold to local willow baskets weavers.



Christine explained how much she valued the work of her volunteers, Friends of East Town Park, as there is so much to do in the park and, as ever, has limited resources of labour, finances, equipment [particularly mowers!] to develop and maintain the estate. The Friends had recently funded the construction of a lovely,

secluded viewing bench where one could sit, watch and listen to the babblings of the River Stour snaking its way under a disused railway bridge.



All in all it was a really interesting, enjoyable and informative morning out and so many of the Friends of Abbey Gardens had never visited East Town Park before but vowed to return!

The Last Supper

Box-tree moth in the Abbey Gardens, by Paul Marsh

Every so often a garden comes under attack from some kind of invader that destroys a particular plant, but few are as destructive as *Cydalima perspectalis*, commonly known as Box-tree Moth. This particular invader has been moving across northern Europe and in about 2007 it crossed the English Channel and has been carving a destructive swathe across southern England. In April the blighters started to munch their way through the Box parterre in the Rose Garden here in the

Abbey Gardens. Park Manager Simon Hobson and his team tried to stem the destruction with the introduction of nematodes but to no avail. So, sadly on 1st May the volunteers started to grub up the dead Box. The *Cydalima perspectalis* really have had their last supper in the Abbey Gardens!



The Box-tree moth is grey and white and has a wingspan of about 4cm. It lays eggs, two or three times between April and October, on the leaves of the Box. The eggs are tiny and laid like a small sheet so are very hard to see. As the pupae develop, they are hidden in a fine white web, rather like tiny fluffy candyfloss. The caterpillars are green and yellow with black heads. As they

emerge from being pupae, the eating of the leaves commences, with the resulting dry yellowish droppings becoming evident everywhere. The infestation consists of hundreds if not thousands of caterpillars and this is why Box hedges can be stripped of their leaves and shoots within a few days. At this point the demise of the Box is inevitable.



Whilst there are treatments, none is guaranteed to eradicate the moth. The common methods are to remove the caterpillars by hand and/or rake the Box with a grass rake. You would probably need to camp out next to your Box for several weeks for this to work! A second method is to introduce nematodes to the Box. Nematodes are microscopic organisms which the caterpillars ingest and once in their stomach a biological reaction dehydrates the caterpillar, and it dies. Thirdly you can use pheromone traps which are hung in the Box shrub. The female

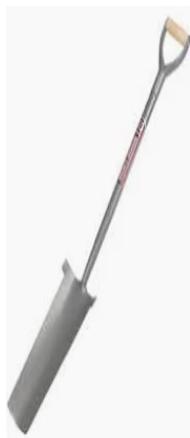
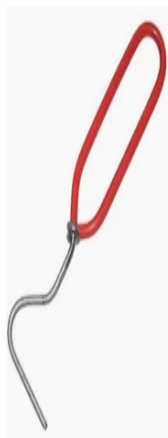
moth is attracted, trapped and dies, thus breaking the reproductive cycle. And finally, you can apply a biological spray which covers the leaves and when the caterpillar ingests the leaves the biochemical kills it. These bio sprays claim to kill only the caterpillars and no other insects/wildlife etc. Of course, if you have the time, you could employ a mixture of all the methods. Good luck!



Given that Box-tree moth is known to have devastated all Box at the Ickworth Estate and Audley End it's no surprise that the moth arrived in the Abbey Gardens. Simon Hobson decided that the effort involved in saving the Rose Garden Box could not be justified, hence the Box has been grubbed up to be replaced by Euonymus, which is an alternative edging plant. And not susceptible to the Box-tree moth. The Rose Garden restaurant is now definitely closed for lunch!

Stop Press.....

Tooled up gardeners coming soon!



Abbey Garden Friends are buying some new equipment for the volunteers and professional gardeners to useit should be in use in the next few weeks. Cordless Edging Strimmers (x 2) to speed up cutting overhanging grass on flower beds and

borders, weeding hooks to get those hard to get weeds in paving and stonework and trench /shrub spades which make digging up or planting in restricted spaces much, much easier .

NAME THOSE PESKY WEEDS!

Below are 9 common weeds that inhabit our landscape. Your task is to match the picture with the plant's common name. Answers are at the bottom of the newsletter. One of the main tasks of the volunteer gardeners is to keep these pesky plants from growing in the wrong place in the Abbey Gardens. Good luck!



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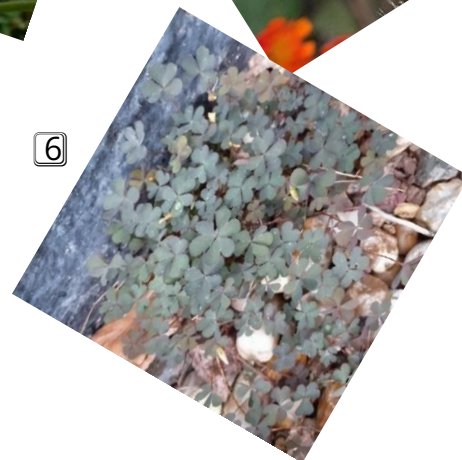
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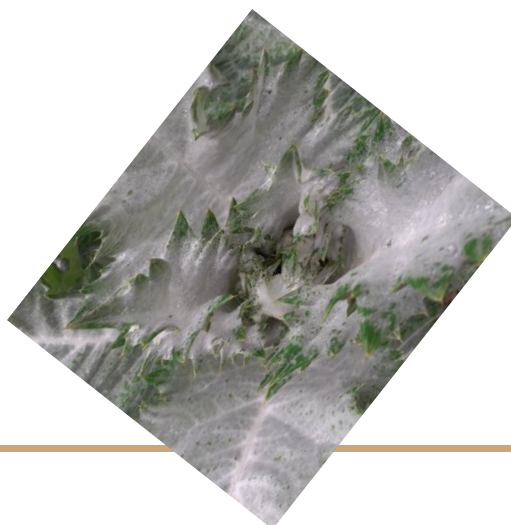


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HISTORICAL NOTE No 3.

In 1848 *The Gardeners Chronicle* magazine published a letter from Nathaniel Hodson in which he offers to send seeds of *Heracleum Giganteum* to anyone who would like them, generous you might think. But in the same letter he pleads for help from anyone who knows how to rid the pesky plant from the Botanic Garden. This is the story of this plant and why Hodson probably loved it when he first planted it and then grew to hate it with a passion.



LEFT: HERACLEUM GIGANTEUM. Nowadays we call this plant HERACLEUM MANTEGAZZIANUM or more familiarly Giant Hogweed and it's the villain of the piece (sic) everywhere it grows.

FACTS SUMMARY: The planting of Giant Hogweed in the wild in the UK is prohibited, though strangely it is still ok to cultivate it in your own garden) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the plants must be disposed of at a registered site. The plant is phototoxic and will cause severe burns and scarring to skin and destroy the skin's ability to absorb UV rays. The sap from the stem /stem hair can cause severe irritation to eyes and, in worst case scenario, blindness.

Giant Hogweed is not native to Britain. It is related to well-known plants such as coriander, carrots, cow parsley, angelica, cumin, celery and our native hogweed. Except for our native Hogweed these are all innocuous plants with little danger to humans. Native hogweed can cause irritation to the skin or eyes but its ability to upset humans is insignificant compared with its relative the Giant Hogweed.

Giant Hogweed was introduced to Britain sometime in the early 19th century and was grown as a novelty and as a decorative architectural plant. Its imposing height (up to about 4 metres) and imposing spread (between 1 and 2 metres) and its decorative white umbels (the stalks which hold the flowers and seeds - rather like

little umbrellas). It is a native of the Caucasus (including Southern Russia and Georgia). It is generally a biennial plant flowering in its second year. After sowing seed (around 10000 to 50000 seeds per plant) the plant dies back to be replaced by new plants. However it is not unusual for the plant to regrow from the roots of the previous year. The plant loves to inhabit areas near water and once established will soon become the dominant plant. Seeds can remain dormant for years – 5 years is not uncommon and I have read articles which claim seeds sprouted 15 years after the plants had been supposedly “eradicated”.

We know from the records of Kew Garden the plant was grown there from 1817 and that it was recorded as being wild (and an invasive plant) in the countryside as early as 1828. Maps of invasive and potentially harmful plants are produced by various organisations including West Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Councils. Both areas have hotspots where the plants are to be found. It is not beyond possibility that stray seeds from the Bury and Cambridge Botanic Gardens started the whole problem 200 years ago but unfortunately we can’t cross question Mr Hodson or Mr Biggs about that possibility.

1848. The Gardeners Chronicle.

HERACLEAN GIGANTEUM. - If allowed to perfect its seed it becomes a great pest. A plant self-sown has attained 11ft of height, umbel 2 ft 6 inches wide and 1ft at its base, its seeds abundantly, and I should be happy to supply plants or seeds gratuitously to anyone desirous of obtaining this noble umbellifer. It has insinuated itself in the Box edging and I am at a loss to know how it is to be extirpated as in digging the borders, I find plants perpetually spring up. I have therefore directed the umbels to be destroyed before the plant arrives at maturity.

N S Hodson, Botanic Garden, Bury St Edmunds

Paul Marsh

Jubilee Gardens Ely

As you know in March the Abbey Gardens hosted a group from the Friends of the Jubilee Gardens in Ely... We chatted to them about how the Abbey Gardens Friends and West Suffolk Council work together to help keep the gardens a great place to visit.



On 29th May Paul Marsh returned the favour and gave a talk to the Friends of Jubilee Garden Ely about the History of the Abbey Gardens, which was well received.

If you've never visited the Jubilee Gardens, it's worth the effort. A meandering path leads you from the River Great Ouse and marina through the lovely garden and then into the cathedral grounds and finally into the heart of Ely. It takes about 15 minutes at a gentle stroll, with plenty of seats to stop and enjoy the views. There's a free long stay car park off Broad Street and the railway station is just a short walk away.



The Ely trail, Jubilee Gardens

Diss and District Horticultural Society

On the 11th of June Simon Hobson and Paul Marsh hosted a tour of the gardens for a group of about 15 gardeners from Diss. Shame about the weather – cold and alternately sunny and showery! But we pressed on! We strolled around the garden talking about many aspects of the garden and its current planting. The visitors were very interested in the Abbey in medieval times and the lead-up to the dissolution of the monastery in the mid-16th century, one visitor being somewhat of an expert on the matter. We wandered through the Rose Garden, admired the cherry tree



carving and the Marquis of Bristol sundial. The walk took over an hour and we answered lots of questions, hopefully to our visitors' satisfaction. We have another visit on the 9th July from the Acton Horticultural Society - we hope for better weather.

Paul Marsh

Weedy quiz answers (see p7)

ANSWERS:

- 1 DEAD NETTLE
- 2 COW PARLSEY
- 3 HAWKWEED
- 4 VALERIAN
- 5 DANDY LION
- 6 OXALIS
- 7 PLANTAIN
- 8 THISTLE
- 9 FLEABANE

IF YOU SCORED:

- 1 -3: If left to you it would be a jungle out there!
- 4 – 6: Come on, are you really that weedy needy?
- 7 – 8: Nearly a Dandy Lion!
- 9: Perfecto, obviously you know a weed is just a flower.
in the wrong place!

Thanks for your support of the Abbey Gardens (reigning champion of the Anglia in Bloom Best Public Open Space category!). We look forward to seeing you at the Summer Reception on September 6th.

Abbey Gardens Friends committee