

Abbey Gardens Friends

Newsletter, Spring 2024



The Abbey Gardens are looking fresh, lovely, and very Spring-y now, thanks in large part to the flowering of some 3,000 bulbs planted near the Abbey Gate by our volunteer gardeners and children from Sybil Andrews Academy and Tollgate Primary School last November. Such a lovely sight to welcome visitors to the Gardens. Our fundraising efforts allowed the Abbey Gardens Friends to donate the bulbs, selected to encourage local wildlife such as bees and butterflies.

Thank you to everyone who attended our AGM in February, where we enjoyed a talk about Bury Water Meadows Group by Jillian Macready, and thanked two outgoing committee members Jilly Burlingham and Doug Beardon for their sterling work on our behalf over the years. We welcome Debbie Bateson to the committee to take over from Doug as Treasurer, and hope to announce Jilly's replacement as Secretary shortly. Margaret Steavenson, Paul Marsh and Rob Cunningham-Snell continue on the committee. **Libby Ranzetta, Chairman**

Visit to East Town Park, Haverhill

10am on Monday 10th June

Made up of approximately 50 acres, East Town Park lies at the heart of a network of footpaths that extend around Haverhill and features some unique wildlife habitats and beautiful natural woodland that is being expanded through a tree planting programme. Join us for a guided tour with the Senior Ranger.



We aim to car-share where possible, or arrange a coach/minibus - depending on numbers. Please **book your place by 1st June** so we can organise the transport. Email abbeygardens.bse@outlook.com

A new look for the central beds' outer rings

"THANK YOU ABBEY GARDENS FRIENDS, YOU HAVE PAID FOR 100s OF NEW PLANTS."

This February the volunteer gardening crew have been busy working alongside Simon Hobson's professional team planting hundreds of new plants in the outer rings of the central beds. The theme is white, and the planting is sustainable.



Roses x 360 – *Rosa rugosa alba*, a white rose with scent (left) A vigorous grower, with pure white single flowers, prickly stems and large scarlet hips. Sometimes known as the "White Japanese rose "



Hydrangeas x 360 – Annabelle, a white flowered variety (left) Has a large white drumstick flower head, 20cm flower head is not uncommon. Able to withstand very cold weather.



Roses x 88 - white iceberg. The ever-popular variety of repeat flowering white flowers with contrasting deep green foliage.

Alliums x 360 – Mount Everest, a large frosty white flowered variety, adored by pollinators such as bees, about 80-90cm in height (left) .

Palms x 12 - Structural plants which will lend height and form to the beds.

The beds look a bit empty at the moment but in a few months, we predict the outer beds will be a blaze of white flowers through which the public will be able to view the more seasonal bedding.

Paul Marsh

Abbey Gardens Friends membership

Margaret Steavenson, Membership Secretary, would like to check her records of subs paid for the current membership year. Some people paid at the AGM, others have sent cheques (12 Eastgate Street, BSE, IP33 1XX). Yet others pay by bank transfer (sort code 20 16 12, account no. 43155757, using your full name as reference). However, some haven't paid at all! If you know you are in the latter category, please can you send your £5 asap.

THE BOTANIC GARDEN CHALLENGE

In the 1820/30s Britain was wealthy and our burgeoning botanic and scientific institutions were obsessed with “exotics”, (non-native plants). These were being introduced by plant collectors from across the known and unknown world. The race was on to get them first or as soon possible after their introduction to Britain. Sadly, it was not uncommon for collectors to die while engaged on their assignments: disease, accidents, wild animals and local inhabitants usually accounting for their premature demise. At least four of Kew's collectors met their deaths this way in the 1820s. Thankfully collectors were a hardy bunch including Mr Thomas Bridges who worked in the Bury Botanic Garden before going on to greater things in Chile then California. But more of this in a later article.

Your challenge today is to match the places (1-10) with the plants (A -K). The 1835 map of the world might help. All the plants were grown in the Bury Botanic Garden and their names/places of origin are as described in magazines, documents & letters of the time. Good Luck. (answers below)



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- | | |
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| 1. Van Diemen's Land | A. Honeysuckle banksia |
| 2. Canary Islands | B. Penstemon |
| 3. The Gorenki Garden | C. Cineraria |
| 4. North America | D. Sweet scented diosma |
| 5. The Cape of Good Hope | E. Flesh coloured Phlox |
| 6. China (via Canton) | F. Soft lung wort Pulmonaria |
| 7. The Pyrenees | G. Chrysanthemum |
| 8. Nova Zembla Island | H. Great shrubby goldy-locks |
| 9. Central America and Southern Mexico | J. Blue amethyst |
| 10. South Russia | K. Sweet scented pink |

HISTORICAL NOTE No 3. The Drinking Fountain and Sundial in the Abbey Gardens: A short History.

In 1870, Frederick Hervey, 3rd Marquis of Bristol, donated the money for a large stone obelisk to be constructed which would incorporate a three bayed fountain cum drinking trough topped with a sundial for the benefit of the town. When completed it was installed on The Traverse in Bury town centre and there it resided until 1939 when it was removed to the Abbey Gardens where it remains to this day.

Early in its life the Drinking Fountain served to provide water for horses and other livestock



and of course on sunny days the sundial on the top allowed those, with the wherewithal, to tell the time. It also sported a carved Latin inscription from Horace, Ode IV.7 which is now suffering from the effect of age and pollution. It reads....

“MONET ANNUS ALMUM QUAE RAPIT HORA DIEM” literally translated... “The hours devour the livening day to warn you: you like all this shall pass.” Perhaps we could translate this again to mean make use of the time you have, it goes fast!

The block atop the obelisk has one face with no inscription upon it and the Bury and Norwich Post suggested in 1870 that this could be filled “in the vulgar tongue” (English, not Latin or French which were considered much more cultured) from St Johns Gospel 4.14...”...but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in a well of water springing up into everlasting life”. Pity the poor stone mason charged with carving all that so the words fitted and could be read 20ft up a column.



As time went by it seems the amenity provided by the fountain/sundial lessened in importance probably due, at some point, to it not being kept supplied with running water. The most likely cause being the rising popularity of the internal combustion engine over horses. In its final days on The Traverse, the fountain and its dolphin troughs became a traffic hazard and a breeding ground for mosquitos (in the stagnant water) and a convenient repository for litter. As regards the sundial, the installation of public clocks, more affordable pocket watches and then the ubiquitous wristwatch surely made it redundant.

The Historic England website lists all the sites of interest across England, and Bury St Edmunds is bristling with dozens of them - including the Drinking

Fountain/Sundial in the garden (Ref: 1487785). Until recently its entry was illustrated by a solitary photo taken in 2012, but as part of the MISSING PIECES project run by Historic England I have had the entry expanded with four more photos, a brief history of the fountain, and the newspaper cutting from February 7th 1871 which describes the razzamatazz surrounding the inauguration of the fountain. It makes for good reading, evoking as it does the appreciation felt by the town for this new and purposeful public facility. The article also describes how the bad behaviour of some youths of the town punctured the pomposity that seems to have accompanied of the proceedings. Just click on the link below to view it.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1245038?section=comments-and-photos>

Paul Marsh

Talk on Nathaniel Hodson: 22nd November 2023, Unitarian Meeting House

Paul Marsh writes: I would like to let you all and those the Abbey Garden Friends know that not only did I have fun giving the talk but enjoyed meeting and conversing with some very interesting people afterwards. I have enough leads on the history of the gardens to keep me going for a little while yet. Particular thanks to Lucy, the current incumbent of Alwyne House for offering to show me the remnants of Hodsons occupation, Bryan who put me onto a photo from the 1890s from the Spanton Jarmon photographic collection and led me to discover the incredible Mrs Graham and her gas balloon ascent in the 1850s and not forgetting John who is taking the time to weave an idea from the talk into his latest tree sculpture coming soon in the Garden. Thanks are also due to the AGF committee and other helpers for making sure everything went smoothly.



BOTANIC GARDEN CHALLENGE ANSWERS

1 A, 2 C, 3 K, 4 E, 5 H, 6 G, 7 F, 8 J, 9 B, 10 D.

Score

10 /10 – Cripes, amazing, you should be working at Kew.

6/9 – You know your stuff. Are you related to a Titchmarsh?

3/5- Hmm, you need to spend more time in the garden with a trowel and plant book.

0/2 Oh dear! This confirms you don't have green fingers. Why not volunteer in the Abbey Gardens to find out a bit more.



We welcomed some Friends of Jubilee Gardens Ely to the Abbey Gardens in March

And finally

Thanks for all you do to support our fabulous Abbey Gardens. Do let us know if you wish to join us for the visit to East Town Gardens on June 10th; we hope to see you then.

The Abbey Gardens Friends committee