



## Spring Newsletter 2025

### News From The New Chair

Barbara Williams, Chair, [b\\_williams15@hotmail.com](mailto:b_williams15@hotmail.com)

As I write my first editorial as Chair, I thought it would be helpful to introduce myself very briefly, particularly to those members who were unable to attend the AGM or perhaps cannot get to meetings regularly.

I am a Londoner and my working background was in state comprehensive schools across London as a teacher of French and Latin, with the last 13 years of my career being spent as a headteacher of two very different girls' schools in Lambeth and then in Lewisham, retiring in 2011. My husband Jon and I took the decision to move to Norwich in 2019 – it is a city we have always loved and we had some friends already here, therefore it seemed a good decision. And so it has proved to be. We have been garden and plant enthusiasts for many years, but not experts. This was one of the main reasons for joining NPH – to improve our knowledge and understanding. It has been a highly enjoyable and continuing connection!

It seemed like a good idea at the time – to buy a modernised 1920s house in Norwich, with a large, sloping garden that had been untended for about ten years. We could make a new garden – how marvellous. There have been many days when that particular decision has seemed somewhat questionable! And of course, the pandemic delayed absolutely every plan we had made. So here is the start of a garden (the sunset photo makes it look a lot better than it actually was) very overgrown and with too many weed trees.



Photo Barbara Williams

But it is the nature of plant lovers and gardeners to make things work and somehow it has begun to come together over time. Clearing as much as possible and removing dead stumps and weed trees took priority. And buying plants, any plants and as many as possible, initially just to give us the feel of a garden. One of the early delights we bought was at an NPH talk – *Galanthus nivalis* 'Norfolk Blonde'.



The Editor, photo Jon Pickering



*Galanthus nivalis*  
'Norfolk Blonde'  
photo ©Brian Ellis

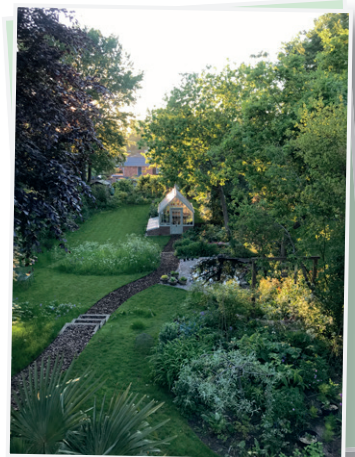
The base of a greenhouse went up just before the first lockdown.



February 2020 photo Barbara Williams.

After three years, we felt we were partially there.

But the story of a garden never really ends, does it?



May 2023 photo Jon Pickering

### Membership Matters

Linda Hall, Membership Secretary  
01379 641519, [mjlchall@btinternet.com](mailto:mjlchall@btinternet.com)

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Mrs Sonia Reeves (Norwich) who joined through the Plant Heritage website shop; Mrs Philippa Giles (Old Catton) who joined through the Plant Heritage website and had heard about Plant Heritage through a friend; Mrs Rayne and Mr David Stoner (Watton) who joined having visited our August Plant Fair; Miss Florence Wilson (Fakenham Magna) rejoined with a Young Person membership; Mrs Deborah Flowerdew (New Costessey) rejoined; Mrs Ruth Warden (Little Melton) a Plant Heritage member who has moved to Norfolk; Dr Ahsan Ali (Carleton Forehoe) has rejoined with a joint membership to include Peter Macann; Jack Lindfield (Sandringham).

Our membership totals 200.

## Tony Gray 11th May 1946 – 19th October 2024

On November 14th 2024, a large group of friends and colleagues met at Greenacres, Colney, to celebrate the life of Tony Gray, who died 19th October 2024. And although a sad occasion, it was indeed a celebration too. Tony was a committed environmentalist and serious birdwatcher, and had travelled far and wide, with Kathy by his side, studying and taking photos of a wide range of birds and animals. He did a huge amount of work to protect birds, animals and the environment, including with major organisations such as the RSPB, and his friends who spoke at the funeral left us in no doubt about his level of commitment.

Tony joined NPH in March 2005 and he and Kathy soon became very involved in our activities. Tony was very backstage – he would always be there setting up the technology, directing visitors into gardens, helping to set up for our talks or Plant Fairs, and marshalling in the car parks on plant fair days, all jobs that are totally essential to the smooth-running of our events, but not always high-profile. His contribution to the newsletters in terms of the photos he took was invaluable – there are few newsletters where Tony did not provide a photo to enhance the text.



Tony Gray, photo provided by Kathy Gray

In her eulogy for Tony, the celebrant said: "Very few people have, by their presence alone, the ability to calm, reassure and generate good will. Tony was such a person." Tony will be greatly missed by his many friends at Norfolk Plant Heritage.

## A Job for the Spring -

### Saving Water, Protecting Plants

In these times of climate change and increasing uncertainty about what the weather will bring, we all have to think of ways in which we as plant lovers and gardeners can help. Here, our Membership Secretary, Linda Hall, discusses how she and her husband constructed new water tanks for their garden. We may not all be able to do something on this scale, but this is an excellent example of how we can collect water and use up-cycled materials:

During the lockdowns, we demolished three very old farm outbuildings and replaced them. With all the surface roof space available, this meant we had the beginnings of effective ways of collecting rainwater. Although we have a couple of large metal water tanks (about 1,500 litres and 1,800 litres) and four 270 litre water butts we still needed something more robust, productive and accessible. We pump water from the metal water tanks to fill water butts that are placed in the garden, but which are not attached to gutters/down pipes.

Personally, I much prefer to scoop water into a watering can rather than waiting for the can to fill from a water butt tap – I am too impatient! We invested in a couple of Intermediate Bulk Containers (IBCs, below left) which each hold 1,000 litres; we then made a couple of raised bases from salvaged wood from the demolition exercise to raise them up. A local pub was replacing their water tanks in the loft and the old plastic header tanks (below right,) each holding about 200 litres, were destined for waste. We patched up the holes and we then had four 'scooping tanks'. Two are placed beneath the IBCs and two positioned by a flower bed and we top these up with a pump. Bargain!



Water conservation in action, photos Linda Hall



We have a large pond at the bottom of the garden, topped up by a system from the water table, so I am able to scoop watering cans in there, as well as being able to divert the water to a seep hose on an adjacent flower bed when required. And we have certainly been able to collect plenty of water with the rain we seem to get now.

## Read all about it

### Norfolk Plant Heritage AGM, 24:11:2024

Our AGM at the end of November was well-attended. Treasurer Jonathan Pickering presented the financial results for the year ending 31st October 2024. In his report, Jon said that the year had generated a surplus of just over £2,200, with cash reserves at the year's end of £16,000, giving us stable finances. Jon reported that this money is used to fund our programme of activities, speakers, newsletters, printing costs, the increasingly expensive hire of venues and local running costs. Bursaries are also awarded to collection holders upon application. This year, the Jan Paulger Young Gardeners' Award was awarded to Brundall Primary School. A green plaque, similar to those received by the collection holders, was also given to the school. Jon thanked the previous treasurer, Donald Munro, for the support he had given throughout the year.

Reports were also received from Nicola Cooke (Secretary), Anne Ashington (Collections Co-ordinator) and Janet Sleep (Chair). As members will recall, Janet announced at last year's AGM that she would be stepping down as Chair this year. A new Chair was proposed and seconded and Barbara Williams, currently Newsletter Editor, was elected as NPH Chair for the coming year.





Elections to the committee were as follows:

Ian Roofe (Vice-Chair) Jon Pickering (Treasurer) Nicola Cooke (Secretary) Anne Ashington (Collections Co-ordinator) Kathy Gray (Programme Secretary) Linda Hall (Membership Secretary) Committee Members – Anne Gilbert, Carl Harder, Matthew Ayling, Jon Kelly

Daniel Myhill stepped down as a committee member – he took up a new role at David Austin Roses as their Head of Rose Breeding. For the time being, Daniel will remain living in Norfolk and retain his national collection here. He will write more about his new role for our summer newsletter.

A presentation was made to Janet Sleep. Members had donated most generously and thank you to everyone who was able to contribute. We were able to buy Janet some beautiful pots and a bouquet, and then give her the surplus as a cheque of £800. Daniel Myhill had asked Head Office to grant Janet life membership of Plant Heritage, in recognition of all that she has done to further the work of the organisation. Daniel presented the certificate to a delighted Janet!

### Jan Paulger Young Gardeners' Award

Kathy Gray, Programme Secretary

The Jan Paulger Young Gardeners' Award has been running since 2015, with a pause only during the pandemic. This year, we had sixteen applications from Norfolk primary schools. The winner was Brundall Primary School, whose gardening club is run by their premises officer. Kathy Gray presented the school with one of our trademark green plaques, seen in the photo.



Premises Officer Justin Elliot with pupils from Brundall Primary School, photo Kathy Gray

The pupils will use the £500 prize to purchase new tools, gardening gloves, compost, seeds and seed trays. They will also buy a wormery composter to make their own plant food and, in addition to new guttering and water butts for their shed.

### Plant Exchange, does anybody have.....?

Kristopher Harper-Allison, one of our collection holders, is looking for *Sisyrinchium* 'Sisland Blue' and *Sisyrinchium* 'Emmeline'. If any member has either of these plants,

or knows where they may be obtained, please contact Kristopher via his website [growninengland.co.uk](http://growninengland.co.uk).

### Photographers needed please – a request from Linda Hall

You might have noticed that our Plant Fair flyers have a floral strip across the middle; you will see what I mean from the enclosed May flyer. In the past Janet, Kathy and I have contributed appropriate flower photos i.e. showing spring or summer flowers, to Nick Broughton. He in turn circulates three of the submissions for us to select the most appropriate for the layout. I usually try and take border photos, as opposed to individual plants, in May and August with future flyers in mind. The job entails supplying a few seasonal flower photos to Nick twice a year. It is not a competition, but a library of photos which we can use when we need to.

Please contact Linda Hall if you would like to help.

## Programme round-up

Kathy Gray, Programme Secretary, [kathygrayc@aol.com](mailto:kathygrayc@aol.com)

Hello and welcome to another Programme Round Up. I am writing this in mid-January when, despite the rain and freezing weather, some snowdrops and beautiful winter shrubs are flowering. It really gives one hope and by the time you read this Newsletter in March, spring will be well on its way with the promise of another great gardening year. Enjoy and I hope you also enjoy the events listed below.

**Sunday 13th April, 11am:** our next day-long Gala at East Tuddenham Jubilee Hall, NR20 3LR.

At the time of writing, there are still plenty of tickets for our day-long Gala, entitled *Out with the Old or In with the New; Two Creative Gardens*. As our speakers, we will



Steve and Lou Edney, No Name Nursery

welcome Nick Bailey, TV presenter, author, garden designer and horticulturalist along with Steve Edney of No Name Nursery. Steve and his partner Lou will be selling plants and so will Richard Hobbs which will give us a range of quite diverse plants to buy. You can find more details and the booking form on the website – [www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk](http://www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk) If you have not got access to the internet and are interested in coming along, please contact me by telephone – 01328 701839

### Sunday, 4th May, 10am to 1pm

Plant Fair at Hethersett Village Hall and field, NR9 3JJ. In the Hall we have Simon and Anne Harrap of Natural Surroundings, showcasing and selling Wildlife Friendly Flowers, along with Peter Blake from the Exotic Fern Society, displaying a wonderful selection of ferns. Once again, the Plant Doctor will be in attendance and refreshments will be

served. Any donations of cakes will be gratefully received. As usual, there will be 20 plus nurseries on the field, including our own stand.

There are so many good things about the Plant Fair but, as I say every time, it all has to be organized and set up. I am, therefore, once again including a plea in this newsletter for help in setting up early (from 8am) on the day and for help with parking during the event. Much is done on the field between 8am and 10am so it's a case of many hands and help with parking is crucial to the safety of the event, especially as we now attract more people. Please let me know if you are able to help in any capacity.

- Any donations of cakes, sausage rolls etc. will be gratefully received
- Please remember to bring cash for plant sales
- Flyers are enclosed for you to display on your cars, on your gateposts and in local shops. High attendance at the fairs means more income generation for our talks and events. Your help is greatly appreciated.
- Parking is now restricted on the field and we hire the school car park to enable visitors access to parking. Marshalls will be available to advise you when you arrive.

#### Thursday, 29th May, 2pm

Visit to the house and garden at Benton End House, Benton Street, Hadleigh, Suffolk, IP7 5JR.

Benton End is, of course, the house and garden of the celebrated artist and gardener, Sir Cedric Morris. The visit will comprise an hour-long tour of the house and one of the garden, with tea and biscuits served in between. It is hoped that some of the irises will be in flower when we visit although please be aware that much restoration work is being undertaken in the garden.

We can have up to 30 people on the visit and the charge is £20 per person. There is limited parking at the site, but there is some alternative parking at Benton End Farm at a cost of £8 per car. I understand there will be plants for sale along with other items. I will be e-mailing you nearer the time to ascertain numbers. However, if you do not have e-mail and wish to come along, please let me know.



Irises at Benton End, photo Kathy Gray

#### Thursday, 26th June, 5pm

Visit to the garden at Besthorpe Hall, Attleborough, NR17 2LJ.



Besthorpe Hall photo Kathy Gray

Besthorpe Hall is a Grade II listed building with the Hall being a remaining fragment of a much larger house that was built between 1560-1593. The garden enclosures are also grade II listed and have not changed much since 1748! The gardens themselves are full of plants, magnificent trees, architectural features and a rare example of a medieval tilting ground.

There will be a tour of this interesting place led by Guy Barker – known to many of you from our visits to Shropham Vicarage. Refreshments will be served and the charge per person is £8. Once again, I will e-mail nearer the time to determine numbers.

#### Thursday, 24th July, 6.00pm to 8.30pm

This year we are holding our Summer Social at the Walled Garden, Little Plumstead, NR13 5FA. Please see enclosed letter for further details and a booking form.

As ever, I look forward to seeing you over the coming months.



Little Plumstead Walled Garden, photo Linda Hall

**Plants are our passion  
but people make us successful -  
our thanks to all who help and support us.**

Norfolk Plant Heritage

[www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk](http://www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk)

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