

Friends of the BARNHILL ROCK GARDEN

Spring Newsletter 2024

From the Editor

As I write this, I am delighted to see signs of Spring, with the aconites looking their best and snowdrops starting to flower. The October floods and wet weather, followed by more than one storm, have preoccupied many of our thoughts this winter. This newsletter looks back at these past few months, but also looks forward to Summer with the Friends' holiday and Summer outings.

Anne Hesketh



Unearthing History

Golf; rubbish; picnics; garden

At one of our award inspections, it was suggested that we have a history board in the Garden, outside the Geddes glasshouse. Inside the Geddes, there is information on both the site the Garden occupies and Broughty Ferry in the 1800s, but it is often not open to the public. We asked Lis Thoms to research the history and development of the area on which the Garden now sits. She found some intriguing and amusing new details which are summarised on the poster and further described below. **Editor**

It was already known that a golf course had existed on the site, so I began by finding references to it in books and online. I also realised that contemporary newspapers could be another source of information, so I accessed archive copies of the Dundee Courier and the Evening Telegraph. Accounts from June 1895 revealed the Broughty Ferry Ladies Golf Club was established at Barnhill Links *'there are 18 holes - nine going out along the side of the railway almost as far as the level crossing over the Dichty, and nine coming in by the bents (ie rough grassed sand dunes) which skirt the estuary.'*

Initially, the land was leased from the Earl of Dalhousie from whom it was purchased in 1902 by Broughty Town Council and, subsequently, Dundee Corporation became responsible for the links.

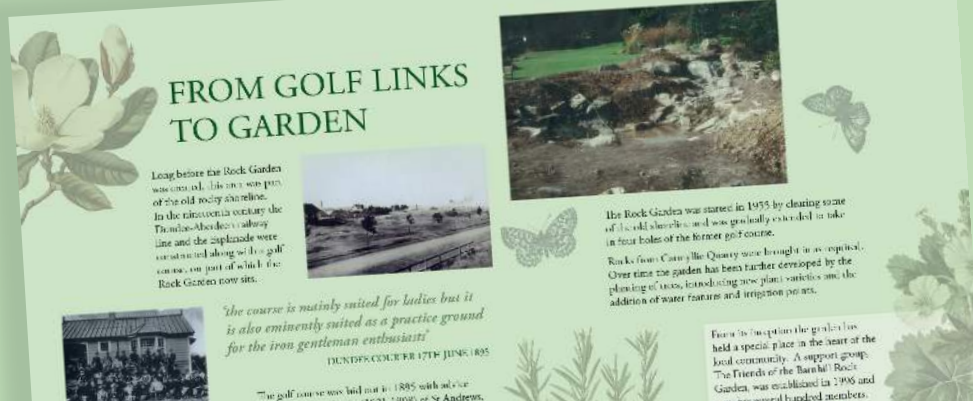
The minutes of their various committees reveal more. A meeting of Dundee Parks Department in 1940 discussed a proposal to reduce the price of a round of golf as part of the course was being used as a dumping ground by the Cleansing Department and people *'could not be charged to walk over a mass of potato peelings'*. The proposal was defeated!

Finally, in 1948, a meeting of the Broughty Ferry improvements subcommittee agreed the course

should be abandoned as *'there were often hundreds of picnickers there and very few golfers'*. Work began on the Rock Garden in 1955, on ground that had once formed the first four holes of the golf course.

Archive material for the Golf Club and the Garden itself may be held in local libraries or archives, thus providing plenty of avenues for future researchers to pursue. I have only scratched the surface.

Lis Thoms





From the Chairman

The autumn and winter so far will be remembered for the exceptional rain in October and November and a number of storms. In late December, the strong winds, some from an unusual direction, resulted in a number of large branches broken and, most dramatically, one of the conifers falling onto the railway. Luckily, although the train was damaged, the driver escaped serious injury and the line was quickly cleared, leaving a damaged section of railway fence, a damaged Link Bed in the garden and a large conifer needing to be cut up.

The Committee is in the process of liaising with the Council for the repair of the water pumps in the garden. As this requires a major new wiring system, estimated costs are more than we and the Council can afford, so together we are exploring possible sources of funding. Now that the cycling and pedestrian improvements works are completed, we are expecting a greater footfall in the garden. We wait to see if this happens in the coming months.

John Grocott



From the Gardening Team

The team that meets on Monday mornings, come rain or come shine, regularly numbers more than 14. They are always cheerful and set about their tasks with determination.

This autumn and winter, the main focus has been on replanting part of the scree bed, replanting the Alpine 'sleeper bed' in the Geddes area and bulking up the Heather Border with plants. A new initiative for us is to grow vegetables in three wooden planters made by the Broughty Ferry Men's Shed. They take the place of the small concrete alpine troughs, which had not been very successful and became frost damaged. These new planters are inside the fenced Geddes area. We have also been planting bulbs in various areas. Altogether these autumn and winter projects are estimated to have cost £2375.00.

It was a real shock to see the tree, which fell across the railway, causing damage to the train that hit it. We are still waiting for the tree to be cut up and removed. Unfortunately, the recently replanted link bed has been damaged, but we will do any replanting required later.

John Grocott

From the Gardener

The team and I are steadily working through the many winter jobs and projects required to be completed to ensure the garden is ready for the season ahead. In January, we started pruning all the different areas that required attention. This took a few weeks and included the storm damage jobs. We also have been applying mulch on several borders to encourage healthy soil and help to control weeds. Our mulch contains leaf mould, our own home made compost and manure to help feed the plants.

We are about to start tackling several other winter jobs. These include laying wood chip around the trees along the roadside and topping up our paths; kerb edging the pavements at the roadside to give a tidy appearance; removing unwanted Hedera and Vinca growing and competing against the plants; servicing and cleaning the Geddes Glasshouse along with notice boards, signs and bins. Then we should be ready for the season ahead!

I am pleased that our snowdrop wood was once again on the snowdrop festival, the first time since 2019. This is a great way to encourage visitors to the garden early in the year and show off our beautiful snowdrop wood. Our summer family events programme is currently being drawn up. It's great to see these events attracting so many people along to the garden.

Finally big congratulations to our long term volunteer Iain Hunter for winning three firsts in the RDA horse riding competition in dressage and show jumping.. WELL DONE!!

Your continued support is very much appreciated, I hope to see you in the season ahead. **Michael Laird**





Friends' Holiday 10 to 14 June 2024

Gardens of Cheshire

There are still double and twin rooms available on the Friends' Trip to the Gardens of Cheshire. Apart from the newly developed RHS Garden at Bridgewater, we are visiting Lowther Castle, Ness Botanic Gardens and the Japanese Garden at Tatton Park, among others. We are staying at the Forest Hills Hotel in Frodsham, where we will get Dinner, Bed and Breakfast. For a double or twin room, the cost is £559.00 per person or £569.00 if you take Glenton Insurance. Coach travel from Broughty Ferry and all garden entries, apart from Tatton Park, which is National Trust, are included. **For more details contact John or Kate Grocott on 779581.**

SUMMER OUTINGS 2024

All three of the summer outings leave **opposite Broughty Ferry library at 1.00pm**



Monday 13th May, 2024 - Japanese Garden at Cowden

Our first outing is to the Japanese garden at Cowden Castle, near Dollar. This garden was originally created in 1908, when the Scottish adventurer, Ella Christie, came home from a trip to Japan and wanted her own Japanese Garden. She chose a Japanese woman, Taki Handa, to oversee its creation. Despite being described as the most important Japanese garden

in the western world, it fell into neglect. The garden has now undergone many years of intensive restoration and is a tranquil and beautiful place to visit. **This trip is limited (by Cowden) to 30 people only** and tea/coffee and a scone will be served in two groups of 15 at different times. We shall leave Cowden at approximately 4.30pm.



Wednesday 26th June, 2024 - Teasses Garden, Fife

For our second trip we travel to this garden, which is part of an estate between Ceres and Leven. There is a large walled garden, wooded walks and further garden areas in front of a large house, which is private. If you are feeling energetic, there is a series of small gardens behind the house, each designed for different members of the family. Tea and cake can be

purchased from a small tearoom in a greenhouse in the walled garden. We anticipate being back in Broughty Ferry around 5.00pm. Garden entry for RHS members is free.



Thursday 25th July, 2024 - Langley Park Gardens, Montrose

For our last trip we visit Langley Park Gardens on the outskirts of Montrose. This garden looks towards the Montrose Basin and has lovely views. It contains 4 walled gardens with herbaceous borders, kitchen garden and ancient heritage trees, as well as wild flower meadows, standing stones and wildlife ponds. Included in our entry is tea/coffee and cake.

We shall leave at approximately 4.00pm.



Photograph © Langley Park Gardens

Michael's gardening tip

Every 1kg of home-made compost typically saves 0.1 kg fossil Co2 emissions; so keep composting!! **Michael Laird**



Tarhill in August

It was too late to report on our August outing in the last newsletter. Here is Marge's account of the visit.

This was a very popular and well subscribed trip to a place which most of us had never heard of. It is a fairly new venture for the owner, growing and distilling Lavender on the northern shore of Loch Leven. It is only open to the public for a number of weeks, whilst the Lavender is in full bloom.

The owner grows mainly English and French Lavender, with trial beds of other varieties. The fields were a glorious colour of blue and there was also a multicoloured one of wild flowers. We were treated to a talk and demonstration of the distillation process

to extract the Lavender oil, followed by a question and answer discussion. Tea, coffee and cakes were later enjoyed at the Loch Leven Larder. *Marge Auras*



The Weather!!

The torrential rain and gales experienced since last summer resulted in both damaging and interesting features in the Garden. The autumn rains resulted in a 'river' of path bark chippings being washed down. However, the rain also resulted in some interesting fungi. We have yet to see a plus side of the fallen tree, but there should be plenty of new chippings for the paths! *Anne Hesketh*

Award update

We were pleased to learn that once again we have been awarded a 'Green Flag' for the Garden and 'Outstanding' for our work towards the

'It's Your Neighbourhood' award. This requires a lot of hard work from the Friends in the many varied activities they carry out throughout the year.



Calendar of events

The Council is still in the process of finalising some details of their proposed events. When the full details are available, we will email members and display the information in the Geddes.

Band Concerts

Currently, the Council has yet to address this issue, but we are ever hopeful that at least one of these popular events will be held in the Rock Garden.

Activities for Children

Countryside Rangers: Two events in the school summer holidays have been agreed in principle. Dates and times have yet to be confirmed by the Council.

Storytelling for the 5s and under with Dundee Libraries:

Thursday 18th July 11am to 11.30 am
Thursday 25th July 11 am to 11.30 am
Thursday 1st August 11am to 11.30 am

Summer Outings (see previous page for details)

Monday 13th May: Japanese Garden at Cowden

Wednesday 26th June: Teasses Garden, Fife

Thursday 25th July: Langley Park Gardens, Montrose

Need to contact us?

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**Friends of the
Barnhill Rock Garden**