

## **Gardening Group Report for March**

In 1996 Peter Roberts bought a 20 acre woodland garden infected with Japanese Knot weed and with parts of the site dark woodland. Very old Rhododendrons lining the drive inspired Peter to visit other Rhododendron gardens, when it was quickly realised the potential for a Himalayan style of garden. The site has expanded to 45 acres and now boasts a collection of 20,000 plants, including 1,400 rhododendrons, 250 azalea and 150 different magnolias, and a 20 acre arboretum, which although the trees are only small now will grow into mature woodland.

The Hutts, a name from the Norse means head of the valley, and this steep sided valley has many climatic variations, strong winds and can have snow at the top and mild sunshine at lower levels, a band of clay runs through the valley enabling water to drain into the lakes in the valley floor.

The garden hosts a great many artworks, some with a wow factor using the Victorian idea of vista, drawing you in, trying to be a plateau of the Himalayas, others tucked away, hiding in the undergrowth. A Dutch artist has recently created a sculpture of logs planted with tulips, when the logs decompose the tulips will remain to create the form.

The Forrester Commission regularly fly over checking for disease, this was found in some 200 larch which were quickly treated and, although the larch were killed, only 5 rhododendrons were lost. As the disease can stay in the soil for many years, to stop infection shrubs have been "lifted" by removing the lower branches. These have now been underplanted with other plants in keeping with a Himalayan theme.

2020, a difficult year for everyone, nothing was done in the gardens from April to July, leaving the whole place rather overgrown, but a two week blitz of clearing paths and cutting back revealed a much more natural and wildlife friendly garden. Butterflies species not seen before can now be found in abundance and with help from butterfly conservation planting has been made with wildlife in mind.

Meconopsis, the emblem of The Himalayan Garden, is to feature in a new sculpture for 2022, created by local sculptor Anna Whitehouse. 1280 Himalayan Blue Poppies cascading down the hillside. Each ceramic poppy handmade by local people and school children with a personal message or dedication.

Sue Holmes

### **Next Meeting - Stainton Village Hall 1.45pm**

**1st April.** Martin Fish – Behind the Scenes as an RHS Judge Martin will also have copies of his book "Gardening on the Menu" for sale.

Any help with the refreshments and setting out of chairs, would be greatly appreciated as Sue will be absent. (I will be bringing biscuits, tea, coffe etc.).

### **Garden Visits**

**6th May.** Himalayan Gardens

The 36 seater coach is now over-subscribed and there is a waiting list. If more members wish to come on this visit I will look into booking a 53 seater coach. Please contact Pauline on 01833 638020 or [paulinefawcett59@gmail.com](mailto:paulinefawcett59@gmail.com) (but don't send money).

**3rd June.** No Meeting – Queens Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday

**1st July.** Kirkleatham Walled Garden and Mount Grace Priory. Details to follow

**5th August** Coldcotes Moor Farm and the Beacon. Details to follow.

**2nd September** To be arranged.

