

BPS East Anglia Group

Edition 1— November 2021



As spring passed and we moved into summer, with the easing of lockdown, the East Anglia Group prepared for a reunion in Norwich on 7th August. Sadly, this fell foul of the ‘pingdemic’ and had to be cancelled while Peter Blake went into self-isolation. However, a meeting at the home of Paul Spracklin in South Benfleet, Essex, was able to take place on 4th September. Paul has a very impressive, varied garden, largely dry with many huge cacti and succulents. A surprising number of xeric ferns thrived there amongst the lava boulders. Some xerics had been given to Paul by Tim Pyner who had lived nearby in Southend-on-Sea. The visit was welcomed as an opportunity to catch up on news, rekindle friendships and swap plants. It also has enthused Paul to try to expand his xeric collection, which hadn’t been added to since Tim’s death.



***Astrolepis sinuata* growing in the lava bed at Paul Spracklin’s garden**

On 25th September a small but select group revisited the Danesbury Fernery near Welwyn in Hertfordshire. This restoration project has been reported in both the *Pteridologist* and the *Bulletin* over the past three years. The progress in restoring this Victorian outdoor fernery has been remarkable and the replanting has settled in well. The Society is well represented there by Colin Adlam who is in both the BPS and the Friends of Danesbury Fernery. Whilst there, we heard of other important ‘lost gardens’ in the Welwyn area. These may well contain remnants of the fern collection created by Anthony Parsons at Danesbury in the 1850’s and 1860’s. The collection was dispersed locally soon after the First World War. The BPS will be called upon to help explore these gardens and catalogue any ferns found there.



The BPS team visiting Danesbury Fernery (Nick Lodge, Peter Blake, Matthew Reeve, Colin Adlam and John Roper from the Friends of Danesbury Fernery)

An indoor Autumn Meeting took place at the home of Peter Blake and Nick Lodge on 23rd October. There was a visit to the nearby 'Plantation Garden', another Victorian restoration project now in its five decade. The ferns there have all been planted since clearing and restoration started in the early 1980's, but some have achieved impressive size on the protected, shady, north-facing bank. After lunch, there were talks on the ferns of Horton Plain in Sri Lanka (Peter Blake), and on water ferns (Matthew Reeve) something which most of the audience knew very little about. Next year, dates have not yet been finalised, but the group hopes to visit an *Ophioglossum* site in



A panoramic view of the Plantation Garden, Norwich, with the fern bank on the right

the Ted Ellis Trust, Wheatfen Broad, Norfolk, In early June, and a ferny drain in the Cambridge Science Park at the end of that month. There will also be visits to members gardens at Gill and Brian Smith's in Oulton Broad, and another Autumn Meeting in Norwich. Members of the group will also display ferns at the RHS Wisley Specialist Plant Societies show on 18th and 19th June 2022, and the 'Fern and Carnivorous Plant Show' on 23rd and 24th July 2022. It is hoped that they will also be involved in the 'Gardeners' World Live' show in the NEC Birmingham, when the dates have been confirmed by the organisers.

Peter Blake 12.11.21