

**Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Minutes, 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 19 January 2013**  
Cherry Hinton Village Church Centre, Colville Road, Cherry Hinton

*Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall is a group that is concerned about the usage, environment, welfare and future of the Cherry Hinton Hall grounds for the benefit of those who use it*

Nine people were in attendance at the Village Centre, Cherry Hinton – although it was a bitterly cold evening. There were apologies from Mark Ashton, Bob Daines, Robert Dryden, Paul Holmes, Liz Lindsey and Catherine Mills.

1. Welcome

David Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. The Minutes of the 21 November were agreed; there were no matters arising.

3. Guest Speaker: Peter Jackson from Scotsdales Garden Centre

Peter thanked the Friends for inviting him and said it was a pleasure to be able to speak to a ‘small but select group’! As the only plants that are currently looking good, Peter decided to say a few words about houseplants. Houseplants are coming back with a vengeance. They are also cheaper than buying flowers – and a houseplant for £2 - £4 will generally last at least 2-3 months.

Orchids

The biggest-selling houseplant in the world is the orchid. Back in 1964 at horticultural college, a single orchid flower for a buttonhole would cost as much as £5.00. Now orchids can be very cost-effective and provide 16-20 weeks of colour at a time.

And if you listen to Gardeners Question Time, you will see that the biggest issue with orchids is the type of pot. Clear pots are clear for a reason (and are more expensive) – these are epiphytic orchids (like mistletoe) which grow in trees and need light on their roots! The pots have an insert at the bottom similar to wine bottles, to provide a water reservoir for the roots. Do not cut the roots out! Place these in the pot so they can get both air and moisture to the plant. And do not give orchids ‘baby bio’ – feed them genuine orchid food. They also need tepid rain water, not tap water. Feed them at least twice a month. They need lots of energy to produce these magnificent flowers. Position in good light, but in partial shade during the summer (they don’t like bright sunlight). Sometimes the flower will suddenly close – you / a fly etc. have inadvertently pollinated the flower. Cut this flower off – and enjoy the other flowers.

After flowering for 16 weeks, cut back to the next node – and it will start flowering again. You should get two or three sets of flowers a year (if you look after a good orchid you should be able to get flowers 252 weeks/year).

The other variety is the terrestrial orchid (not in a clear pot). But these only flower once in a season. There are lots of colours – but note the deep blue and black flowers are produced via an injected dye.

### Little roses

These have 6 or 7 cuttings per pot. They make great houseplants and are reasonably dwarf. The only thing missing is a lack of scent. They are sprayed with a growth retardant – so if you cut them back they will get higher with each growth spurt. If you plant these out in the garden you will get an excellent, full-size rose!

### Chrysanthemums

You can get beautiful chrysanthemum houseplants. But again they have been treated with a growth retardant. As amateur gardeners, we are not allowed to buy the growth retardant. Again, plant out in the garden and once hardened-off they will keep going through a full winter.

### Azaleas

The best way to water an azalea is to place into tepid rainwater until there are no bubbles. Then use a spray bottle to mist-over the plant.

Please don't use tap water for any of the above plants – the calcium carbonate (lime) will damage the plant – you will get a white coating that looks like mildew. If you can't get rain water, boil the kettle two times and use this.

### Amaryllis/Hippeastrum

These love heat; and the bigger the bulb, the more the flowers. At Schiphol airport you will be able to buy one the size of a football for 40Euros, but it will flower for ever! Take flower heads off when they have finished flowering to stop them making seeds. Then it will start to make a new set of flowers.

### Forced Hyacinths

These have an in-built antifreeze system. They love the cool. Put in a cold rooms and they will last for weeks and weeks and weeks. Plant them out in the garden when they are done, planting 4" underground.

### Cyclamens

There are many colours and forms of cyclamen. The biggest mistake is watering – apply tepid rainwater to the roots. Pull out dead leaves and stems. But you must feed well – they use lots of energy.

### African Violets

There is lots of work being done to improve these. Again – water underneath. Break leaves off and use as compost for the plant.

### Peace Lily/Spathiphyllum

The traditional varieties are quite big so there is lots of work on making dwarf varieties (houses are getting smaller!).

### Foliage plants/Begonias etc.

The dapple shade ones love the sun. Plant out against a south-facing wall. If you buy someone as a present – think about where they will put it!

### Questions

Hydrangeas – why might the leaves be dropping off?

Peter: You'll probably know if all's well in the spring. You can water from the top or bottom. Keep cool this time of year, and water and feed only small amounts but often.

Peter was thanked for his excellent contribution.

#### 4. Maintenance, safety and use

Gate closure and speeding vehicles: There is an automatic system being used on Midsummer Common. Anthony thinks we may be able to fit something similar. Please contact Harriet Sturdy, International School Head, about parents and teachers leaving the gate open.

Pond dipping platform: Two nearby fence panels have been damaged – David Taylor has reported to Anthony French and these have been replaced.

#### 5. Folk Festival

David Taylor reported that the Folk Festival discussion with Elaine Midgley, scheduled for the 'early new year' was to take place on 27 February. David, Sandra and Ian will attend. No contract or agreement in principle has been signed or made in respect to Sky Arts as yet. The Committee will report back at the March meeting.

#### 6. Media Communications

It was agreed that Stuart Newbold take on this role. A set of 'terms of reference' was read out and agreed –

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Press Officer Terms of Reference:

Be cognisant of issues which may be of interest to the Radio and News media, and

- Liaise with the Committee as to what issues FCHH should give publicity to

Identify issues which may be controversial and which FCHH members may hold differing views, and

- Liaise with at least two members of the Committee as to an agreed response/position if contacted by the press

If contacted unexpectedly by the Radio or News media on an issue may be controversial and requires an agreed position

- Make no immediate comment, but instead
- Liaise with at least two members of the Committee to obtain an agreed position prior to responding by email or telephone

#### 7. FCHH Community Action Day

Sandra reported that a date for work clearing up and litter picking would be circulated, probably for March. We will also record where the bulb planting has taken place to enable additional planting and edge-softening in the future. For new planting, we would like to get the schools involved.

David Taylor reported that he had undertaken some clearance and habitat work with Guy Belcher. The wildlife area hasn't really been touched in 20 years and really needs ongoing management. A few self-set saplings were removed; trees overlooking Malvern Road and the brook were checked, and some wildlife habitats were erected from dead branches etc.

#### 8. Car Park Survey

The City Council is happy for us to undertake a survey of car park use. It may be that some use is being made by people taking the bus to e.g. Addenbrookes. We will be able to borrow high visibility jackets from the Cherry Hinton Festival organisers. We will put out an appeal for volunteers once the weather has sufficiently improved.

Sandra reported that a date for work clearing up and litter picking would be

#### 9. Next Meeting

The next meeting is will take place at 7.30 p.m., on Wednesday 20 March at Cherry Hinton Village Centre. *The guest speaker will be Tony Kirby, who will be talking about "The Railways of Cambridge".*