

# CHESHIRE GARDENS • TRUST •

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

Issue No. 1

January 2004

## Newsletter

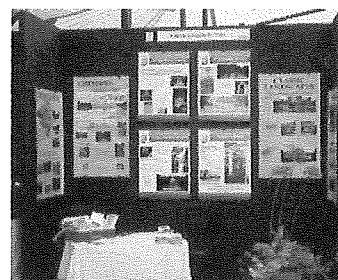
Welcome to our first Newsletter. We take a look back at our eventful first months and forward to an exciting year to come with more garden visits, talks and social gatherings planned. The Steering Committee would much welcome your active participation to make all Cheshire Gardens Trust's activities a success.

### Some key dates from 2003:

- ✱ February. We meet to discuss whether Cheshire will become the 34<sup>th</sup> county in England and Wales to have a Gardens Trust.
- ✱ March. The first meeting of the CGT Steering Committee is held in the library of Arley Hall, courtesy of Lord Ashbrook.
- ✱ July. Cheshire Gardens Trust has its first official outing at the RHS Tatton Flower Show.
- ✱ September. Setting up a Bank Account makes the CGT official.
- ✱ November. Our first event – a guided tour of Ness Botanic Gardens.
- ✱ December. Members enjoy a social evening with quizzes, raffle and good food

### Some plans for 2004:

- ✱ Saturday 7 February. Snowdrop Walk at Rode Hall.
- ✱ Thursday 29 April. The Cheshire Gardens Trust official launch at Arley Hall.
- ✱ A Gazetteer of Cheshire Gardens.
- ✱ We will be at the Tatton Flower Show again



### 16 November 2003 Ness Botanic Gardens

*Twenty-nine members and guests joined us for our very first event.*

A guided tour of Ness Botanic Gardens was followed by lunch and, in the afternoon, a lecture by the former director of Ness Gardens, Ken Hulme.

Mr Irons was our excellent morning guide. He took us through the plantings, achieving a good balance between botanical detail, history and anecdote and pointed out specimens of seasonal interest.

Mr Irons made us aware of issues facing the gardens, like creating and maintaining a complete and accurate record of the plants and meeting the requirements of new legislation and reduced manpower.

#### Grey skies, but colour all around

For an uncertain November day graced by fleeting glimpses of sun and the occasional short sharp shower, it was amazing how much colour still remained. Some of this was undoubtedly due to late warmth and moisture that had encouraged a last burst of flowers

among some creamy coloured foxgloves and extended the blooming of annuals, notably an abundance of purple salvia in the terrace plantings. Elsewhere the colours were simply the result of good plant choice and combinations, a contrast in background or our heightened awareness of colour after a few drab damp days. *Euonymus europaeus* never fails to surprise with its clusters of vivid pink fruits, as does the late flowering *Liriope muscari* with spikes of densely clustered lilac blooms rising from clumps of evergreen foliage.

Above the rock garden the soft tawny foliage of *Taxodium distichum* made a perfect foil for waxy red Cotoneaster berries and the jewel like leaves of *Cotinus coggygria atropurpurea*.

In addition to these species there were the plants that seem determined to steal a march on spring – *Hamamelis virginiana* with a haze of golden flowers, the furled semi double pink blooms of *Camellia sasanqua* in the woodland garden and *Mahonia lomarifolia*. This had stunning rich yellow spires held above glistening prickly foliage and was sought in the plant sales after our visit.

[Cont. overleaf

## Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is working towards registration as a Charity. Officers have been appointed:

**Chair:** Ed Bennis – 0161 247 1118  
e.m.bennis@mmu.ac.uk

**Vice-Chair:** Barbara Wright – 0161 434 7653 -  
ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk

**Secretary:** Joy Uings – 0161 969 1099  
Joy.Uings@care4free.net

**Treasurer:** Rachel Devine – 0161 839 8336  
rachel@landscapeprojects.co.uk

**Membership and Minutes Secretary:** Sheila Holroyd  
– 01928 732517 sheila.holroyd@ic24.net

## Sub-committees

We would welcome more help on the sub-committees. If you are interested, contact the person named.

**Events** - Hilary Newhall – 01606 872 820  
hillaryat@llchange.co.uk

**Research** – John Edmondson - 0151 342 8287 -  
john.edmondson@dial.pipex.com

**Education** – Ruth Brown – 01925 263337 c/o  
youds@cheshire.gov.uk

**Publicity** – Barbara Wright – 0161 434 7653 -  
ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk

**Fundraising** – Rachel Devine – 0161 839 8336 -  
rachel@landscapeprojects.co.uk

Ness visit continued:

### Unusual plants

The garden includes many unusual plants, like the Umbrella pine, *Pinus pinea* and a Monkey puzzle. *Araucaria araucana*, with branches borne in whorls to ground level. On the terrace the wire netting bush, *Corokia cotoneaster* attracted attention for its juvenile habit of steel grey branches that are so aptly described by its common name. In the heather garden we were shown the bright red fruits of *Podocarpus*, rather like a yew berry except for the seed. Mr Irons recommendations included *Eucryphia x intemedia* for flowering, *Parrotia persica* for reliable autumn colour and *Epimediums* for providing weed proof ground cover!

### History

Arthur Gilpin Bulley, a Liverpool cotton broker, built his house on the site in 1898 and developed the gardens. Early photographs show the property prominent on a sandstone outcrop with a clump of sycamore trees above a gorse-covered bank. Bulley sponsored plant hunting expeditions to seek new species capable of being grown in Britain. The gardens are particularly rich in species introduced by George Forrest. Bulley established the plants and seeds firm Bees Ltd at Ness and opened his garden to the public. Bulley's daughter bequeathed the Gardens to the University of Liverpool in 1948 and much of the development and planting seen today is the work of Mr Hulme. The gardens continue to be used for research, conservation and public education.

### The future

Our visit took place during a time of major works, a combination of management, alteration and rationalisation to address the needs of the garden,

legislation and reduced manpower. The boundary shelterbelt along the Neston Road, one of the earliest plantings on the site that provides the setting for many of the rhododendrons, is being thinned and partly replaced. Management work is also taking place on the lawn with island shrub beds to rejuvenate and rationalise the plantings. Around the house paths are being re-laid with easier gradients to enable improved access for people with disabilities. Mr Irons suggested that one area of the gardens that may have to be rethought are the terraces for tender plants because with climate change the plants there are no longer tender and can be more widely grown.



Our visit proved that no matter the time of year there is always something to be seen and learnt from a visit to a garden like Ness. It will be interesting to make a return visit, perhaps in the spring, to see the rhododendrons, the completed works and the visitor's response to changes in the gardens.

**Barbara Moth**

*This newsletter is being sent to all who have expressed an interest in Cheshire Gardens Trust. If you wish to continue to receive copies, please ensure you have sent your joining fee to the Membership Secretary (see above).*