

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

### Inside:

- Stamford Park
- Top Tips to encourage Biodiversity
- The Gazetteer takes shape
- The AGT Conference comes to N. Wales

### Some future events:

- Walkden Gardens, Sale, Wed. 9 August (evening)
- Grosvenor Park, Saturday 9 September
- Chester Zoo, Wednesday 18 October
- Manchester's Botanic Garden, Tues 28 Nov (eve)

*With the right information, a walk in the country can turn into a walk through history. CGT member Chris Talbot was our guide on 23 April 2006 for*

## “A Ramble with Repton”



Today, Aston is a small rural parish 3 km SE of junction 12 (for Frodsham, Helsby and Runcorn) on the M56.

The parish occupies gently sloping land developed on Triassic mudstones and residual deposits of Glacial sand and gravel, on the north side of the lower Weaver Valley.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Aston was a self-sufficient agricultural estate of some 2000 acres and provided employment for the local community. The estate consisted of moderately sized farms, some smallholdings and a village strung out along Aston Lane – a turning off the A56 at Sutton Weaver.

The Demesne land is to the south of Aston Lane and was accessed via Lodge Gate. At the hub of the Demesne was 17<sup>th</sup> century Aston Hall situated half way between Aston Lane and the River Weaver and surrounded by fenced lawns and parkland.

Close by, to the east, was the former medieval hall and chapel, and functional buildings including a coach house and a dovecote dated 1691 on the door lintel.

*Below is part of the remains of the dovecote, an essential part of country life, doves (or pigeons) being part of the diet (see [www.berkshirehistory.com/kids/plan\\_ans13](http://www.berkshirehistory.com/kids/plan_ans13))*





To the south of Aston Hall's extensive lawns lay Dingley Dell clough [Clough is the local name for a ravine cut by glacial meltwater at the end of the Ice Age. Cloughs have steep sides and steep gradients; many still contain fast flowing streams and ancient woodland.]

Dingley Dell clough had been dammed to provide water power for two corn mills: a lower one established in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and an upper one dating from 1636.

A new estate chapel had been built close to Lodge Gate, and opposite, a walled kitchen garden. On the east side of the drive, between the walled kitchen garden and the medieval hall, was a series of fish pools and a Pleasure Garden of walking paths with a Camellia House. To the east of that was the Old Deer Park.

Humphry Repton the author and landscape designer, b.1752; d.1818, was known to the Aston family through a mutual friend.

Repton became a landscape gardener at the age of 36: he was employed at Aston in 1793, and again in 1802.

*Repton is credited with coining the term "landscape garden" to describe the natural style of gardening which he felt required "the united powers of the landscape painter and the practical gardener" ([www.britainexpress.com/History/bio/repton.htm](http://www.britainexpress.com/History/bio/repton.htm))*

Repton adopted what we would call today an holistic approach: i.e. his designs respected the existing house and its place in the landscape surrounding it.

In his commissions, Repton also emphasised his proposed changes by making ingenious use of "now" and "future" sketches to show the benefits of his ideas and recommendations. These he had bound in red leather and presented them to his clients.

Unfortunately, the Red Book for Aston was stolen in the 1930s, though its present whereabouts – in the USA – are known.

Our visit to Aston began with an informative introduction to the Aston estate and the Humphry Repton landscape by our host, Howard Talbot, on a warm and sunny afternoon in the Talbots' garden. It was followed by a fascinating guided tour, led by Howard's wife, Chris, who helped us appreciate the structure of the estate and the features that Humphry Repton had recommended.

**The Walled Kitchen Garden** – an impressive size with tall brick walls and the remains of a lean-to glasshouse against the entire length of the S-facing wall. Unfortunately the walled garden has not been used for c.15 years.

**The Pleasure Gardens and Camellia House** – in a woodland area "reverting back to nature", but, with mature exotic trees including Eucalyptus and Araucaria

understorey.

**St Peter's Church** – in a classical architectural style – formerly an ancient chapel in Runcorn Parish – but promoted to the Parish Church of Aston by Sutton in 1861.

**Chester Gate Drive** – Repton's sweeping drive to Aston Hall for the use of guests and family, which, with careful tree planting, allowed a first impressive view of the Hall from close quarters and at a similar elevation



*Repton's sweeping Drive to Aston Hall (sited in the wood, mid-photograph)*

The old drive from Lodge Gate then became the "working" entrance to the estate.

**Site of Aston Hall** – after falling into disrepair the Hall was razed to ground level in 1938. Building materials were sold or reused – some brick rubble had been used to repair the drive and the cellars were taken over by wildlife. Moss covered stone columns lie on the ground providing evidence of the Hall's portico or colonnade.



*Fluted columns on the site of Aston Hall – which was demolished 1938*

**The Haha** – was Repton's method of discreetly separating the Hall gardens from the grazed parkland without compromising the attractive view to the NE-facing fault-line scarp of Frodsham Hill beyond the River Weaver. An exposure of 3 sandstone courses was visible in a section of the haha ditch, providing good evidence of its former role



*The prospect of Frodsham Hill from Aston Hall garden – valued by Repton*



*The upper 3 courses of Repton's haha wall, fronted by its infilling ditch*

**The top dam at Dingley Dell** – was accessed through woodland carpeted with ramsons and bluebells (ancient woodland indicators). In 1802 Repton suggested modifications to the dam wall to create a waterfall at its north end and a Garden Room at its south end offering views down the Dell. Howard believed this room had been constructed, though the landscape evidence seemed inconclusive.

**The Medieval Hall/Chapel + Coach-house and Dovecote** – Repton proposed careful tree planting to improve the view from the Hall's north entrance by hiding the service buildings and the old drive, also to hide the "glittering corn" planted by the experimental farm, Parkside.

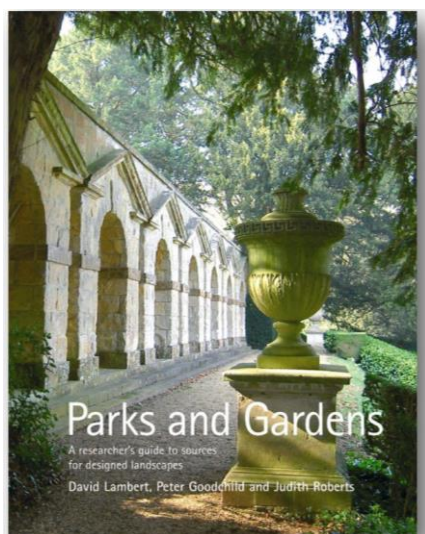
**Middleton Grange** – provided a sad site of an abandoned farmhouse which had once been a grange of Norton Priory in Runcorn

**Parkside** – a sprawling complex of farm buildings – was once the experimental farm on the estate. Our visit concluded with a much-appreciated afternoon tea prepared by Chris and daughter, Sophie. Over tea we had time to discuss what we had seen on our walk and to browse some of the archives of this fascinating estate landscape which Howard had kindly set out for us. On behalf of members of the CGT and their guests, I extend our gratitude to Howard and Chris, and their family backup team, for making this visit such an enjoyable occasion.

*Kath Gee*

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*If you would like to research the history of your local park or garden, but have no idea where to start, this modestly-priced book is for you.*



This third edition of *Parks and Gardens – a researcher's guide to sources for designed landscapes*, is now available.

The book used to be known as *Researching a Garden's History* and has been out of print for a long time. Now it has been fully updated and revised.

The press release says the book is: 'as useful for those seeking to restore a historic park or garden as for the creation of a management plan, or for personal interest, and is also relevant to cemeteries and other types of designed landscape.'

'*Parks and Gardens* provides an excellent starting point for a research programme, setting out a model methodology for research practice and describing the main types of sources and the principal repositories. New for this edition, completely revised and updated by historic parks and gardens expert David Lambert, are website references for the online researcher.'

More important, it is recommended by CGT members who know the previous editions.

The book is available to CGT members at a special discounted price of £8.99 including postage and packing. To order, phone Lesley Waterhouse on 01737 779257 or e-mail her at [sub@landscape.co.uk](mailto:sub@landscape.co.uk) with your credit or debit card details. Or send a cheque for £8.99 (made payable to Landscape Design Trust) to Lesley Waterhouse, Landscape Design Trust, Bank Chambers, 1 London Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1LY.



## June's CGT event was a tour of the National Wildflower Centre in Knowsley

It was a fascinating visit and we were fortunate to have Grant Luscombe, Chief Executive of Landlife (the organisation responsible for setting up the Centre) as our personal guide. He explained that Landlife has worked on wildflower-based projects to improve derelict land for many years. The culmination of all this effort was the opening of the National Wildflower centre in September 2000.

Our visit started with the obligatory coffee and biscuits and then Grant took us around the centre highlighting different habitats. Plants thrived on the most unlikely substrates - cockle shells, old fabric from Oxfam and crushed CDs - are just some of the more unusual.



*Living Wall occupied by wren, blackbird, weasel and vipers bugloss in crushed CDs*

One of my particular favourites was the outdoor living room where plants have been left to their own devices and have happily colonised a threadbare three-piece suite, and look quite at home sprouting out of an old TV set!

The flowers self-seed prolifically and the staff do little to interfere with the natural selection, apart from removing some of the more thuggish specimens that otherwise might threaten to overwhelm particular areas.

This means that the range of wildflowers varies significantly from year to year and even from month to month. Grant said that visitors could come every month and see something quite different.

We were all struck by the variety of form and colour, from the rich purple of vipers bugloss to the dancing orange flower heads of fox and cubs - all offset by ox-eye daisies and poppies.

As well as masses of wildflowers, the centre has ponds, children's play areas, interactive wildflower exhibitions and a living wall - home to a wren, blackbird and weasel.

The buildings too, are of interest and are an interesting mix of old and new.

The Centre's RIBA award-winning building has a rooftop walkway which has recently been planted up as a meadow - they obviously leave no potential growing habitat unturned.



From the rooftop (*above*) one can enjoy views across the adjoining Court Hey Park, providing an interesting contrast with a more traditionally planted landscape.

Court Hey Park used to belong to the Gladstone family but over the years, much of the estate became derelict. Landlife and the National Wildflower Centre have reversed that decline and now the future is blossoming!



*Flowers in limestone bank*

The centre also has an excellent café where we enjoyed a good lunch and a shop where many of us bought seeds and plants for our own gardens. A fascinating and educative visit - the Centre is open daily from 10am-5pm until the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. More details from [www.nwc.org.uk/](http://www.nwc.org.uk/).

*Tina Theis*

### **AGT Study Day at Grimsthorpe Castle**

There will be a joint AGT/Lincolnshire Gardens Trust Study Day on Wednesday 11 October 2006. Morning talks will be on The People Behind the Place and A Ducal Landscape (an analysis of the works of designers and engineers including 18<sup>th</sup> C. Stephen Switzer, 'Capability' Brown, John Grundy, 19<sup>th</sup> C. Lewis Kennedy, 20<sup>th</sup> C. John Fowler (of Colefax & Fowler) & Peter Coates).

After a lunch of local produce, there will be a guided tour of the gardens with Head Gardener, E. Peeling (to include the old kitchen gardens) and then a private coach tour of the historic deer park. Tickets are £35 to include tea, coffee and lunch. For further details and booking form contact Kate Harwood at the AGT - Tel and fax: 020 7251 2610 e-mail: [agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk](mailto:agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk)

*In the January newsletter, we carried a letter from Ian Trickett of Trafford Borough Council about three parks/gardens. Ian is looking for help in researching their background. In April we looked at Denzell Gardens. In this edition we feature Stamford Park and in October we will look at Halecroft Park.*



A couple of miles north of Denzell House is Stamford Park, opened in 1880. Unlike Denzell, this was the result of municipal planning – although it had taken 14 years from first suggestion to actual achievement.

The land – *‘low-lying waterlogged wasteland noted for producing abundant noxious gases and considered to be a health hazard’* – was purchased from Lord Stamford. A father and son team turned this unpromising 6.5 hectares into a park filled with interest. John Shaw, Snr. was responsible for the design and John Shaw, Jnr. was responsible for its execution.

*“Shaw uses ellipses and teardrops to make the maximum use of what is a relatively small space. He does not have a clear axial path leading through the park, there is no formal terrace with a carefully organised view into or out of the park and there is no path forming a circuit around the perimeter. Shaw does not tell the visitor where to go, he does not even encourage the visitor to go in any particular direction. The visitor does not just experience the park they have to interact with it.”*

The original design was shown in the January newsletter. It shows dense planting. The Ordnance Survey map of 1936 reveals much less planting and ornamental areas turned into Tennis Courts and a Bowling Green. Sport was very much part of the original design:

*“The two largest features were the ovals of the football field, to the east end of the park, and the cricket ground which was designed to be flooded in winter for skating. The oval bathing pond had separate changing sheds for men and boys only suggesting that women and girls were not expected to use this facility. Other areas provided for lawn tennis, croquet and quoits and there were flower gardens and separate playgrounds for girls and boys.”*

Those who were at Allan Ruff’s February lecture on public parks, will know how much their use has declined since their beginnings. Stamford Park is one that is still well used by the local population. I visited it on 20 July 2002 and spoke to members of the Bowls Club there. They recalled some of the events of its more recent history, which give an insight into the difficulties faced by local authorities in more recent times:

- during the war a bomb dropping close by had lifted the park gates from their position. The fire watch found them on the roof of a building some distance away, but they have never been replaced;
- the original railings to the park had been removed for the war effort and never replaced;
- the drinking fountain had been recently repainted by local school children though it is no longer in use. Older members of the club remembered scooping the water in their hands;
- the Statue of Eve had been vandalised and placed in Stretford Town Hall;
- vandalism had been a major cost for local authority – club members considered the cost of replacing railings and gates would have been a cost effective way of stopping the damage;

#### **Joy Uings**

The information in italics is from notes by Helen M. Thomas for a talk given in March 2006.

English Heritage is responsible for the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*. Between 1999 and 2002 English Heritage carried out a thematic study intended to track down the majority of public parks throughout England which should be classed as being ‘of special historic interest’.

Some 120 sites were short listed for detailed assessment. One of these was Stamford Park and the assessment was carried out by Helen Thomas working as a consultant to English Heritage. In total Helen has assessed seventy-three sites for the *Register* of which thirty eight were public parks



The drinking fountain in Stamford Park. Cups used to hang from the arms at the top.

Today health regulations make maintenance of this type of facility unrealistic.

However, renewing the paintwork makes it an attractive feature.



## Biodiversity

Years ago the gardener waged war on pests and diseases. Today Biodiversity is the key word.

On 23 May, Mandy North, the Conservation Officer with English Nature took members round three gardens in Frodsham, each of very different character but all created from the villa garden of Hemp Gill.

Informal, creative or spotlessly maintained, each offered a variety of opportunities for biodiversity including mown grass for feeding birds, composite flowers good for insects, hedges evergreen shrubs and outbuildings for nesting birds and a mulch of old carpet appreciated by two toads!



Our thanks to the garden owners Pat Eades, Rose and Harry Pyles, and Roger and Joan Young for allowing us to visit and to Sheila Holroyd for providing a wonderful tea.

### Top Ten Tips for Improving Biodiversity in Your Garden (from [www.wildaboutgardens.org](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org))

1. Mix native and non-native plants to provide a food source over an extended season.
2. Create a water feature.
3. Delay cutting back perennials and shrubs until early spring.
4. Make a compost heap
5. Grow climbing plants up vertical surfaces.
6. Include dead wood in the garden.
7. Provide additional features such as bird and bat boxes and bird feeders
8. Leave part of the lawn uncut for part of the year.
9. Use alternatives to herbicides and pesticides.
10. Make sure that anything you buy for your garden comes from a sustainable source.

## *But what exactly is biodiversity?*

I decided to have a browse round the internet and found a fascinating, interactive site *Exploring Biodiversity* from the Natural History Museum – [www.nhm.ac.uk/eb](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/eb).

The site is aimed at amateur enthusiasts as well as GCSE and A-level students. Go there to find out how many of the 1,770,000 known world species can be found in Britain. Be amazed at the number of different algae to be found in Britain.

And find out how your area compares in biodiversity with other parts of the country. I was shocked at the relative poverty of my area of South Manchester compared with Northwich, central London and Middlesborough.

Apparently there are many different definitions of biodiversity, but at its simplest –

*Biodiversity is the total variety of life on earth*

Gardeners exploit the variety of plant-life to create beautiful gardens. But we have found that there is a price to be paid for our desire for new introductions.

Our waterways are clogged with Himalayan Balsam and we fight rear-guard actions against Japanese Knotweed – just two of the desirable garden plants of the past.

The desire for new varieties has led to us filling our gardens with sterile plants – great for ensuring no

seedlings; bad news for the insects that need pollen to survive.

But now, the study of biodiversity has led to us understanding how we rely on the variety of insect life to maintain bird population; how ensuring the survival of endangered plants might lead to a pharmaceutical breakthrough tomorrow.

And the withdrawal of dangerous pesticides has not only meant that our gardens are safer for birds, insects and small mammals, but has led to us finding natural ways of maintaining the balance of nature. For every ladybird there is a colony of greenfly.

I've had my own personal experience of living with biodiversity this summer.

I have ponds, which bring frogs, which bring more frogs (I have a seemingly never ending supply of slugs and snails for them).

I have my compost heaps (well, heaps, anyway) and my pile of rotting wood. I have my nettles and my corner which is specifically for native species.

But this year my garden sprouted ragwort. Now I know a bit about ragwort, apart from the fact that it is a native plant, undesirable in the garden. And that is that it is poisonous to cows. That wasn't a problem, as I don't have any cows in my garden. Foxes and cats, yes; cows, no.

I thought I had better remove them before they set seed, but then I found that they were covered with stripy caterpillars (*see picture, below left*).

What could they be? Well the internet gave me the answer. I simply searched on 'stripy caterpillars' and discovered that they were the offspring of the cinnabar moth.

If you don't know this handsome black and red moth, then you will find some excellent photos on the internet.

The caterpillars absorb the poison of the ragwort, thus making themselves poisonous. So they don't get eaten by birds.

I left the ragwort, resigning myself to extra weeding next year. But today, the garden was bare of the weed. I found one solitary caterpillar on the remains of a stalk of ragwort (*see below*).

I just hope I will have as many cinnabar moths as I have had caterpillars. Now where exactly do they pupate.....?

*Joy Uings*



8 July 2006 – caterpillars aplenty



23 July 2006 – the plant has been stripped bare

But encouraging biodiversity can be a tricky business. Barbara Moth has provided the following important information on ragwort, which has not only appeared in my garden but on all the major road verges around here.

Ragwort is one of five injurious weeds covered by the provisions of The Weeds Act 1959. Ragwort is poisonous to horses, ponies, donkeys and other livestock, and causes liver damage, which can have potentially fatal consequences. Under the Weeds Act 1959, the Secretary of State may serve an enforcement notice on the occupier of land on which injurious weeds are growing, requiring the occupier to take action to prevent the spread of injurious weeds.

The adoption of the Ragwort Control Act on 20 November 2003 marks an important step forward in the protection of equine welfare. The new Act, which amends the Weeds Act, will give added protection to horses, as well as other animals from the serious and sometimes fatal consequences of Ragwort poisoning. The Act, which was sponsored by The British Horse Society, originated as a Private Member's Bill, and was presented to Parliament by John Greenway MP. The Government gave its backing to the Bill, and welcomes its successful passage through Parliament. The Act came into force on 20 February 2004.

**On a hot July day, Cheshire Gardens Trust members visited the restored / revived Victorian Italian Garden at Trentham (*see previous edition of newsletter*).**

**A write-up with before and after photos will appear in the October newsletter.**

## Some advice from a seasoned garden owner.....

According to some gardening programmes, you start a new garden with a completely bare brown expanse, draw up a carefully-thought out design, and turn it into reality with plants bought from specialist nurseries.

In fact, what usually happens is that you acquire a ready-made garden and leave it for a year to see what plants appear. When you decide it is time to take action, you find the garden has turned into a jungle dominated by forget-me-nots, hypericum and day lilies. If you care, you fight back these rampant three until you have some small bare patches and you thrill at the thought that you can now choose what to plant.

Be careful. First of all, tender-hearted friends who cannot bear to throw away a plant will shower you with gifts – of forget-me-nots, hypericum and day lilies. One friend will give you a rather dull plant which he assures you is very rare. It will also prove to be sensitive to heat, cold, under and over-watering and will soon die. Your friend will remind you of this for several years.

Make a list and head for a garden centre. Here you will be horrified to discover that if you buy all the plants you need you will have to take out a second mortgage.

You can buy one plant instead of a dozen and take cuttings but this means it will take a long time to fill your garden. Or you can abandon your list and head for the bargain corner. Be very careful here. Bargain plants are all so grateful that you have rescued them that they start growing like mad. A bare twig turns overnight into a thorny thicket. I once bought a tiny pot containing two drooping leaves. It was a tibouchina and grew six feet high.

Of course, if you are a kind person and put out birdseed you won't have a problem – just a garden full of sunflowers.

Incidentally, if you want to conceal something unsightly, do not buy a Russian vine. You will come home one day and be unable to find your house under the swags of predatory tendrils. Members of your family will disappear in the greenery and never be seen again. Be warned!

Personally, I leave the patches bare and wait for the wind or the birds to drop seeds on them. I enjoy the uncertainty of wondering what will come up and have acquired some really pleasant plants this way. It also saves a lot of effort.

*Sheila Holroyd*

*Good news about the M6 widening scheme – the Government has decided against the land-hungry extension of the toll-road in favour of the less damaging widening of the existing carriageway.*

*Bad news for motorists over the next few years as the work is undertaken.*

## Found and Lost: the gardens of Cranage Hall

*Found in old maps, but virtually lost today - just one of Cheshire's many historic parks and gardens, and just one of the experiences of a CGT volunteer recorder.*

We include overleaf a first sample page of the *Cheshire Gazetteer* which CGT is working towards. It may serve as a report on work currently undertaken in the borough of Congleton, where five CGT members are busy researching the history of some forty sites and recording their condition today.

We also hope to demonstrate that such research and recording need NOT be impossibly difficult and time-consuming - and thus encourage other CGT members to get involved in their local area.

For this basic level, the Cranage report gives just a brief summary of the site's **History**, easily found in the public library. Questions for more detailed research have been noted but not yet pursued.

*Would you be interested in spending a few hours in your library's Local History section?*

In the case of Cranage Hall, it was easy to get permission for a look-around in order to write a basic **Description**. On the site of your local area's historic

gardens there may be schools, nursing homes or hotels which will permit a visit. Of course, we'd never ask you to intrude into private property; but the very fact of continued private ownership is already useful.

A walk around the boundary walls may establish whether the site is still intact, and local friends may have some further information: finding out can be fun!

The parks and gardens of a further five Cheshire boroughs await discovery for the CGT Gazetteer.

*Would you be interested in doing some research and recording in your area?*

The *Cheshire Gazetteer* is an important contribution to the Trust's work - but we cannot possibly compile it without your local knowledge and involvement.

For further details, please get in touch: Barbara Wright: [ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk); or 12 Belfield Road, Manchester, M20 6BH

*Barbara Wright*



## CRANAGE HALL

**District:** Congleton B.C.

**Parish:** Cranage CP

**Location:** 2 kms NW of Holmes Chapel

**Grid Reference:** 753 683

**Ownership:** unknown / private / public / institutional / other

**Site Owner:** Hayley Conference Centres

**Site Address:** Cranage Hall Conference Centre  
Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 8EW

**Survival:** unknown / less than 20% / 20 - 80% / more than 80%

**Recorder's Name/Contact Address:**

B. Wright [ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk)

**Date of Report:** 10.1.2006

*Ordnance Survey maps are subject to copyright.*

*Permission will be required for reproduction in the final Gazetteer*

*Details from OS Sheet 42 1911 edition, surveyed 1873*

### Summary

Apart from the extant walls of the former kitchen garden, the gardens and park must be considered lost.

### History

Domesday refers to Croeneche. The manor of Cranage was held by the Nedham family until 1760, when it was purchased by Thomas Bayley Hall. In 1828 the estate was bought by Lawrence Armistead who replaced the old hall with an Elizabethan-style mansion designed by Lewis Wyatt (built 1828-29). Cotton manufacturer William Oswald Carver owned the estate 1920-27.

From 1929 to 1995, it became an extensive mental hospital managed by the Cheshire Joint Board for the Mentally Defective and later by the NHS Cranage Hall Hospital Committee.

In 1997 the Hall and remaining grounds were bought by Hayley Conference Centres who refurbished it as the residential conference centre in use today.

*Sources:*

• 'Brief History of Cranage Hall', 1999, Hayley Conference Centre; • Thorner, Craig, 2001, 'Cranage and the Armistead Family', [www.thornber.net](http://www.thornber.net); • Pevsner, N., 2003, 'The Buildings of England, Cheshire', Yale UP, p.185

### Description

Today, the site is considerably smaller than in 1873 (date of OS survey).

The former parkland to the S and SE has been lost to a modern housing estate. Additional conference buildings, a tennis court, car parks and a new approach occupy much of the former gardens.

Apart from an old cedar tree and a group of conifers and shrubs around what is now a wildlife pond, all landscaping is of recent date and design. However, the high brick walls of the former kitchen garden remain (situated to the N of the Hall). From a brief look, inside is level turf; there seem to be no remains of the former layout, any fruit trees or glasshouses.

### Questions / Further Research:

- Description, pictures of C19 heydays: Armistead papers?
- Date of parkland sale and modern housing estate?
- Hospital Management Committee records: use of gardens 1929-95?

*Some References for Further Research:*

- Massey, Cyril 1954, 'History of Sandbach & District', reprinted 1982 by Sandbach History Society
- *Cheshire Life* Oct. 1998
- Cranage Hall Hospital Development Brief, 1996, held at Congleton Library: Ref 403 185 Class CP/CRAN/C

## This year's annual conference of the Association of Gardens Trusts will be held right on our doorstep

1 - 3 September 2006 AGT Annual Weekend Conference

### *"Plant Hunters"*

hosted by The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust at Bangor

The Conference will be held at the University of Wales, Bangor. Accommodation will be in single, en suite student quarters at the University's campus at Ffriddoedd, close to Bangor railway station. The rooms are relatively new and well designed, built with the aim of providing good accommodation for tourists and society groups during University vacations. The lift is commodious and fast!

The outline programme is as follows:-

- Friday afternoon: AGM, Business Meeting and other AGT business  
or as an alternative, a trip to Penrhyn Castle (NT) will be arranged at a small extra charge
- Friday Evening: 'Plant Hunting' Talk by modern plant hunters Bleddyn and Sue Lloyd-Jones.
- Saturday – Keynote talk by Toby Musgrave, followed by visits to gardens.
- Saturday Evening – Conference Dinner
- Sunday – Talk on the Tradescants and other early Plant Hunters by Jennifer Potter, followed by visits to gardens.

The gardens to be visited will include Bodnant, Gwydir Castle, Portmeirion and Crug Farm Nursery. To avoid overloading the garden facilities, on Saturday Coach A will visit Bodnant and Gwydir Castle, Coach B will visit Portmeirion and Crug Farm Nursery. On Sunday the coach destinations will be reversed. Packed lunches will be carried on the coaches for all living-in members, and will be eaten on the coaches at the morning venues. Tea and biscuits will be available during the afternoon visits.

Guides will be provided by the Gwynedd Branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, your hosts for the weekend, who are also providing teas at Crug Farm Nursery.

The full cost is £250. Non-resident fee is £180 (including the Conference Dinner). Single day charges negotiable.

You can get more information and download an application form from the AGT website:  
[www.gardenstrusts.org.uk](http://www.gardenstrusts.org.uk).

## Plus .... AGT goes continental

Two trips to explore the gardens of Lazio in Italy are planned for 2007. Bookings will be taken from September onwards, but it is a good idea to register your interest now as there are already plenty of people interested and numbers will be limited to 25.

14th to 21st May, 2007. Hotel:- \*\*\*Antica Colonia, Frascati. 8 days for £500.00.

This exciting trip will include visits to the Villas Torlonia, Aldobrandini, Mondragone, Tuscolana, Grazioli, D'Este and Adriana.

24th to 28th May, 2007. Hotel:- \*\*\*\* Grand Hotel

Villa Tuscolana. 5 days for £400.00

### *Included in the price:*

*7/4 nights accommodation, breakfast and dinner, airport transfer, coach travel, entrances, guides, information pack and courier.*

### *Not included*

*Flights, insurance (essential) and lunches.*

*For further details see AGT website or contact*

*Polly Burns - 01787 370953*

*[surry.burns@keme.co.uk](mailto:surry.burns@keme.co.uk)*



## Frodsham's Park

Joseph Stubs was born in 1796, one of the eighteen children of Peter Stubs, who was an innkeeper, brewer and malt maker, as well as setting up a business manufacturing files.

When Peter died at the age of forty-nine, Joseph and two of his brothers, John and William, developed the tool manufacturing business into a flourishing firm that survived into the twentieth century.

In 1851 Joseph Stubs retired and bought the estate in Frodsham then known as Park Place.

With a fortune equalling several million pounds in today's money he was able to devote his formidable energy to the remodelling of the house and gardens.

The house was virtually rebuilt by the firm of Penson, the Chester family of architects who were responsible for many of Chester's notable Victorian buildings. To remodel the garden, Stubs turned to Edward Kemp.

Edward Kemp trained at Chatsworth under Sir Joseph Paxton and worked with him on the design of Birkenhead Park, where he became superintendent at the age of 22, a post he kept for 40 years.

Kemp designed many gardens throughout England and his designs and the means he used to attain his effects are described in his book, "How To Lay Out a Garden", first published in 1850 and frequently reprinted for the next half-century.

Some editions are entitled "How To Lay Out a Small Garden". As most of the gardens, like Park Place, covered at least ten acres, we might quibble with this title.

Kemp's design for Stubs included formal gardens, sweeping lawns, a vegetable garden and a fishpond. He was particularly proud of the way his planting screened the newly-constructed railway embankment and the nearby town of Frodsham.

He obviously suffered a little from Stubs' close interest, as he said that, "Mr Stubs is enthusiastically

attached to his garden, and being an energetic and successful collector and cultivator of rare plants, is constantly making little changes for the sake of accommodating new favourites."

You can read a lot into that statement!

When Stubs died in 1861 the estate was bought by Edward Abbott Wright, a cotton manufacturer who renamed it as 'Castle Park', the name it still bears.

An outstanding series of Victorian photographs show the park in all its glory, staffed by numerous gardeners. So that the horse which pulled the roller should not mark the lawns, he had his hooves covered with felt pads made from the housekeeper's old hats.

The Wright family gave the house and gardens to Runcorn Rural District Council in 1933, and after changes in local government it is now the responsibility of Vale Royal Borough Council.

There have obviously been changes in the usage of various parts of the garden.

The fish pond dried up and became a car park, the vegetable gardens became tennis courts, and a very popular children's playground was installed.

Fortunately the essential layout of Kemp's design has been preserved and many of the trees he planted still survive. In 2002 English Heritage added the grounds of Castle Park to the register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

Castle Park House has recently been renovated and restored to much of its Victorian splendour. The American Garden, with its pool and tree-shaded paths, has also been restored.

Now it is hoped that an application for a Heritage Lottery grant will be successful and that Frodsham's park will once again become the jewel in the crown of this historic market town.

*Sheila Holroyd*

*Do you know your local park as well as Sheila knows hers? Why not share that knowledge with the rest of us. Send your contribution to the Newsletter Editor (see address on page 12).*

The Home & Garden Exhibition will be held at Harewood House, Nr Leeds from 11 – 13 August 2006. Tickets £10.00 (or £8.00 in advance). For details see [www.thedesignweekend.co.uk](http://www.thedesignweekend.co.uk) or phone 01244 346 347

A European weekend for industrial heritage volunteers and associations will take place in Beringen, Flanders from 7- 8<sup>th</sup> October 2006. Run by E-FAITH, the European Federation of Associations of Industrial and Technical Heritage, details can be found on [www.e-faith.org](http://www.e-faith.org).

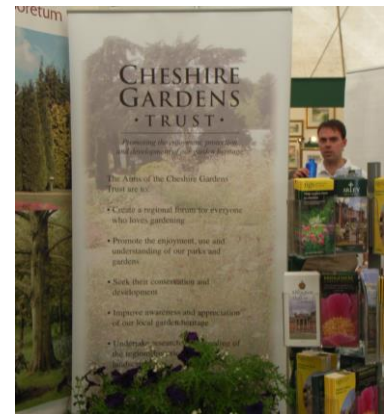
Walled Kitchen Gardens Network Forum 2006 : *The Lost Gardens of Heligan* on Saturday October 21<sup>st</sup> 2006. Tickets will cost £40 to include a buffet lunch, tea/coffee and admission and tour of the gardens. For further details and booking form visit the website [www.walledgardens.net](http://www.walledgardens.net) or email [fiona.grant@walledgardens.net](mailto:fiona.grant@walledgardens.net) or telephone Anne Richards 01432 354479

## Did you see our stand at the Tatton Park Flower Show?

At very short notice, the Cheshire Gardens Trust and the Cheshire Gardens Forum were asked to provide a stand at the Tatton Flower Show. We are sorry we weren't able to give you notice of it.

We were tucked away in the Art & Design tent and, despite the heat, had a fairly regular stream of visitors.

We now have our own banner, so if you would like to have a CGT presence at any of your events, why not get in touch.



## Our Autumn events programme

is an interesting mix of visits and lectures covering subjects as diverse as public parks, zoological and botanical gardens and a cemetery. Intrigued ...? read on...and do come along...!

On Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September, we have a walk and talk tour of Grosvenor Park and Overleigh Cemetery, Chester, led by Ed Bennis - a chance to appreciate one of Edward Kemp's finest landscapes - and it's not often we end up in a cemetery!

Back to Chester in October - on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> we've organised a behind-the scenes visit to Chester Zoo for a guided tour of the gardens and glasshouses.

And November finds us at Manchester's Botanic Garden - didn't know there was one? Well, come along to our Autumn lecture and find out more from Ann Brooks.

## Cemeteries as gardens?

In May Kate Harwood of the Association of Gardens Trusts attended a Memorial Awareness Board (MAB) Seminar and has written about it on the AGT website.

Apparently, graves are visited for the first 10 – 15 years then abandoned for the next 80 – 90. The memorials seldom last beyond that.

The MAB is a campaigning organization working for all memorial masons to promote the industry. One of its approaches is to give the Cemetery of the Year Award. There are six categories: small, medium and large cemeteries; cemeteries with crematoria; crematoria only and green burial sites only. In addition there are special awards for things like Best Feature or Best Children's Area.

Green burial sites are increasing in popularity. This is where people are buried in natural surroundings such as woodland – a recognition that death is part of a natural process.

Meanwhile, the traditional cemetery is increasingly seen as a place of life as well as death – in town the cemetery can be a haven for wildlife and help to create the 'green corridors' that enable wildlife to move safely through built-up areas.

MAB is aiming to raise our awareness of our cemeteries and to encourage wider use. If we think of cemeteries as 'parks where people are buried' then introducing features (as we would expect to see in other parks) such as cafes, heritage walks (including wildlife) and flower shops would add to our use and appreciation of them.

Cemeteries already contain nature and art. They are centres of learning, memory banks and cultural landscapes as well as spiritual places.

Find out more about MAB at [www.namm.org.uk/mab](http://www.namm.org.uk/mab) and for green burials try [www.nativewoodland.co.uk](http://www.nativewoodland.co.uk).

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Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS or e-mail [JoyUings@aol.com](mailto:JoyUings@aol.com).