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Some future events:

- The 'Secret Garden' at Styal – Sunday 8 May
- Old Hough Garden, Warmingham – Sunday 8 June
- Nantwich Hidden Gardens – Sunday 6 July
- Graham Hardman's garden in Sale – Wed 6 August



Images on textiles and wallpapers at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

On the 23rd January 2008, members of the CGT assembled in the foyer of Whitworth Art Gallery for a front-of-house and behind-the-scenes viewing of botanical decorations on textiles and wallpapers.

The Gallery was founded in 1889 as the Whitworth Institute and Park, a voluntary, cultural and educational technical institute in memory of Sir Joseph Whitworth – one of the Northwest's greatest industrialists.

Initially, it housed internationally renowned collections of British watercolours and drawings, and world

textiles. In 1958 the Gallery became part of Manchester University.

The University invested heavily in the Whitworth and worked with staff to modernise the building and expand its collections. The bulk of the wallpaper collection was acquired in 1967 from The Wallpaper Manufacturers Ltd, who had controlled most of the UK wallpaper industry since 1899.

The Whitworth's collection of historic and modern flat textiles is the largest outside London. Its

importance is second only to that at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Frances Pritchard, Curator of Textiles, met us in the Gallery's foyer. She whetted our appetites by pointing out a pair of gloves exquisitely embroidered with *Fritillaria* – fritillary – as we walked through the public Textile Hall.

We were taken to a well-lit private room upstairs to see examples of floral textiles that Frances had laid out for us. Now we could view at close quarters and properly appreciate the amazingly fine quality of the craftsmanship.

The bodice of an Elizabethan dress in finely woven linen embroidered with silk, from the Stanley family, was so daintily executed and beautiful.



Flowers of *Dianthus* – the pink – were represented on the bodice; they were also identified in one of the small posies of realistic flowers seen on an embroidered linen panel, probably from a bed curtain of the Stuart Period.

We pored over an unfinished 18th century sampler from Spitalfields, London, designed by Anne Marie Garfield, and speculated on what might have befallen the young embroiderer...

We studied two ecclesiastical vestments – chasubles – by John Charles Robinson: one embroidered and the other printed on silk.



We moved on to a display of printed textiles including examples of 19th and early 20th century Arts and Crafts, Liberty, Thomas Walden etc. We learnt that Laura Ashley had visited the collection and had drawn inspiration from some of the textiles, e.g. the sweet pea design.

A third and final display was of a Suzani – a counterpane. It had been acquired by the Egyptologist, Percy Newberry, in Cairo and bequeathed to the Gallery by his family in 1958.



The Suzani had been hand-embroidered probably by various members of a Central Asian family before reaching Cairo. It was predominantly in shades of red which were attributed to the use of both insect and plant dyes. Overlying one corner of the Suzani was an exquisite piece of Japanese silk printed with a design featuring *Wisteria*.

After a welcome refreshment break in a room that included drapes of William Morris's 'Strawberry Thief' we moved on to view images on wallpapers.

The Whitworth's website informs us that the influence of Modernism in the early 20th century encouraged a move away from highly patterned walls. This change in fashion affected wallpaper production as a whole and manufacturers, keen to retain their customers, produced numerous fancy paper decorations to add visual interest to plain or textured backgrounds.

By the 1920s and 30s an enormous variety was available. They ranged widely in price but it was the expensive hand-printed products that gave designers most opportunity to produce really extraordinary flights of fancy...

Christine Wood, Curator of the Wallpaper Collection, showed us round her public exhibition: **Flights of Fancy** * – a selection of decorative schemes – predominantly floral – from the 1920s & 1930s.



The exhibition presents and interprets wallpapers by the local manufacturer, John Line and Sons Ltd, who was described as *one of the foremost producers of exclusive, innovative products* and is credited with

displaying the first wallpaper decoration featuring a cut-out 'growth'.

In the early 1920s William Waring Clarke Pitts was the talented Head Designer at Line's and was probably responsible for many of the striking exhibits we saw. Initially, the expensive products were aimed at well-heeled urban dwellers – especially those living in town houses without gardens: they could choose to have their hardy perennials and favourite blossoms 'growing' on the internal walls of their homes!

The Hollyhock Decoration c.1925 was *one of the earliest 'growths'*. It was made up of 'two floral features and a base border in several colourways.

An artist's illustration showed how it could be used. The Hollyhock motif from the larger and later 'Garden Decoration' c.1930 was displayed 'cut-out' to show how individual features were supplied to the customer.

In contrast, 'The Japanese Cherry Blossom' c.1926 was designed to 'drop' down from cornice or picture rail. The Japanese Cherry Blossom was an elaborate decoration of three blossom clusters and also included a frieze and a ceiling paper.

In the 1930s decorations began to reflect the wider attributes of popular culture. The exhibition displayed a decoration that became available in 1934, called 'The Hunters', and explained that it was influenced by the increasingly popular Hollywood cinema culture in its use of quasi-geometric forms, non-European traditions of representation and sleek heroic figures... It exemplifies the influence of celebration – and

commercialisation – and aspects of modern art through Art Deco, which became an important source of popular design.

Finally, in the behind-the-scenes wallpaper store we were able to appreciate the breadth and size of the wallpaper collection.



We were shown the Whitworth's oldest fragment of British wallpaper, c.1680: an all-over pattern of flowers enclosed in scrolling stems block-printed in black, with stencilling. We were also allowed to leaf through some of the many 20th century wallpaper pattern books.

Overall we enjoyed a thoroughly engrossing afternoon thanks to the knowledge and dedication of staff at the Whitworth Art Gallery.

Shirley Byrd and Kath Gee

** The Flights of Fancy Exhibition continues until 12 October, 2008, and is well worth a visit.*

New at Norton Priory in 2008

The Green House at Norton Priory is not a greenhouse in the usual sense, but an eco friendly building made from straw, reclaimed wood and old car tyres!

It came about as a result of Norton Priory's need for increased education space in the walled garden.

There were no funds for a purpose designed building and the installation of a pre-fabricated building was ruled out due to difficulties of access and installation.

Construction of a straw bale building seemed the answer and with funding from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd) and Ineos Chlor the project began in 2005.

The building is 12 x 6.5m, is timber framed and has south facing windows and solar panels. Even with advice from various experts construction has proved a steep learning curve but with the enthusiasm and hard work of staff, volunteers, members of the public and community groups involved in different

stages of the project - helping with the foundations, building the walls or applying the lime render - the building will be completed soon for use in 2008.



The building in late September: its irregularities are caused by uneven compression of the straw bales.

Rare but Obtainable Plants

A talk by Kevin Pratt at Bridgemere Garden Centre

On a cold day in the middle of February what better than to look ahead and visualise the bright, unusual, fascinating, colourful and spectacular plants that might adorn our gardens in the months to come.

Mostly we do this by thumbing through the catalogues that fall out of magazines or drop onto our doormats.

So much more exciting to be with Kevin Pratt and his slide show.



Above: members gather expectantly

Kevin and his wife Suzanne have a garden in Hazel Grove, Stockport. They have combated their sticky clay by making raised beds filled with leaf mould. Although it is just 30ft square, the garden contains 10,000 plants, many of them bulbs. Kevin has National Collections of *Eucomis* and *Fritillarias*, *Alliums* and *Arisaemas*.

Kevin loves his plants and his enthusiasm is infectious. He is a true plantaholic. As he said “if seeds are known to be impossible to germinate” then he wants them.

He began his talk with *Fritillarias* – *F. thunbergii* is a “gorgeous plant, superbly easy; just needs well-drained soil”; *F. acmopetala* is “the best”, extremely variable in colours and heights so growing from seed is exciting; *F. persicaria* is very easy outside – it just needs a warm spot in full sun. Kevin paid £150 (!) for one plant of *F. persicaria alba* – he took a deep breath and cut it into 15 pieces; each one grew into a new plant. *F. pallidiflora* is “fantastic” – a knee-high, bone hardy, primrose yellow with chequered inside, from middle to end of May.



Left, *Fritillaria acmopetala*,
above *F. pallidiflora*

In response to a question, Kevin admitted that fritillarias get eaten by slugs – not a problem for him as he simply does not allow slugs into his garden!

Disporum smithii is not showy and the flowers don't last long. But the Taiwanese forms – *D. nantouense* – come from high mountains, tolerate cold and have bamboo-like stems. *Disporum* need to be treated like hostas, as slugs do like them.

We then moved on to poppies. Apparently, the Flanders Field poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) is completely different to the English poppy, so Kevin ensures he gets seed sent to him. There were photos of others – the apricot coloured *P. rhoeas* “Suzanne”; *P. Flemish Antique*, which is snapped up on sight (try at Tatton or Southport if you would like one).

Then there were forms of the opium poppy – White Cloud and Pink Peony are double flowering; Venus is a shaggy form; Chedglow (150 years young) comes true from seed. There was a dwarf-growing (knee-high) one named after his daughter – Poppy Jo.



Right *Papaver* ‘Suzanne’;
above, ‘Poppy Jo’



The Queen's poppy is pink with a white cross and grows within a few weeks if seed is strewn on the ground. It was thought to be lost to cultivation. Kevin was excited one day to find it on e-bay in America.

The seeds arrived and were sown. Disappointment followed as the plants flowered – they were all purple! (Apparently half of all the plants we buy are wrongly named.)

Kevin was distraught, but he carried on looking and found it advertised in Afghanistan. Once he had managed to explain that he only wanted a small amount (the seller normally sells by the sackful), the seed arrived. The plant has now been re-introduced into this country by Kevin as he distributed seeds via the Cottage Garden Society and the Hardy Plant Society and it is now on sale around the country.

And so it continued. *Eucomis* – needs to grow where it stays dry in winter; *E. comosa* is better than Sparkling Burgundy. *Euphorbia Humpty Dumpty*. *Paeonia blottii*; *P. mascula* and *P. clusii* which has a honeysuckle scent but must be grown from seed to ensure hardiness.

Trilliums: *T. kibashianum* is very easy, very hardy; *T. rivali* and *T. rivali roseum* are just 2” in height.

Arums: *A. maculatum* is seen everywhere in Chehsire; *A. ciliata* needs perlite above and below the bulb to

ensure hardiness; *A. tortuosa* (sometimes confused with *A. griffithii* which is not hardy; *A. nepenthoides* – the cobra lily.

Arum amorphophallus is enormous. It is great in a show garden – until it flowers. Kevin and Suzanne argued about taking it to a show as it was coming into flower. On the morning of the show, Kevin went into the garden and – *oh!* the smell. He thought a fox had died. It was repulsive. He quickly took photos, then cut down the flower head and incinerated it.

Then there were snowdrops and polygonatum; corydalis and tropaeums; alliums and irises; *Tricyrtis maculata* (try growing it in a tub or basket) and *Meconopsis poncea* – an annual with prostrate foliage “absolutely gorgeous”.

It had been an exciting and mouth-watering journey. For those of us who couldn’t resist, seeds were on sale.



Left: *Eucomis bicolor*; above *Papaver 'Flemish Antique'*.

So the summer may bring us that touch of the unusual, a bright splash of colour that would not otherwise have been there.

Joy Uings

Flower photos by kind permission of Kevin Pratt. You can find out more about Kevin and see photos of more plants at his nursery website: www.popyheadsLtd.co.uk.

The Winter Garden at Dunham in Progress

Those who went on the visit to Dunham last year will remember the area cleared ready for the new Winter Garden.

Barbara Moth re-visited Dunham at the end of March and has sent this picture. It illustrates progress on the winter garden.

Barbara says “The paths have been laid out, benches placed and planting is underway”.

The winter garden area is accessible to visitors as a



work in progress but will be fully open November 2009.

On 27th and 28th September 2008 everyone is invited to go along and help with the bulb planting.

Barbara added “It was great to see lots of kids in the garden enthusiastically going round looking with their clipboard questionnaires and rediscovering places in the garden that they were obviously familiar with.”



You're never too young to enjoy Dunham!

Dunham has been open to the public for a lot longer than we might think. I came across this from the Manchester Times of 28th May 1836:

DUNHAM PARK. – The attendance of visitors to this magnificent old park during the past week has been much greater than in former years, the schools considerably augmenting the lists. The Earl of Stamford and Warrington deserves the cordial thanks of all the inhabitants of Manchester, for the liberality he shows in throwing open his grounds, especially in the race week, to the public at large.

AGM and Spring Lecture

There was a good turnout for the AGM on 27th March. A tour of Walton Hall Gardens meant there was a good appetite for the refreshments, which were good, varied, well-served and much appreciated (*see right*).

As is often the way with official meetings, we managed to forget some of the important items – like thanking all those members who have contributed so much during the past year.

So thanks to members who have or will be opening their gardens for the CGT or helped with research or reviewed and commented on planning applications.



And thanks to all the contributors to the newsletter over the past year – especially those for whom it was a first time.

Tim Mowl (pictured below) was entertaining but controversial.

Here, Patrick expresses his personal response in support of what Tim had to say, while, overleaf, we highlight some of the more controversial issues.



We all like to hear opinions – as long as they are the same as our own. The comfortable familiarity of a view that does not challenge us is something many of us are all too keen to listen to. How many of us are guilty of buying a book

that, before we have read it, we already know that the author will be on ‘my side’. Never is this truer than when people make proclamations about gardens.

There must be more written about gardens than almost any other subject, with a seemingly new angle on the subject published every week. The truth is that very few of these publications live up to being anything more than the same old same old, re packaged and rebranded for a new audience.

Garden writers, in this country particularly, are very guilty of the worst kind of what I call ‘Haughtyculture’. A self indulgent and saccharined gush about painterly English landscapes and gardens; the aristocratic ‘gardeners’ that ‘created’ them (many of whom would not have known a day’s work in a garden if their lives depended on it) with anything challenging or new either dismissed as tasteless and trivial or else ignored completely.

There may be a fresh breeze blowing through the garden however. Those of us (and there was a goodly crowd) who attended the AGM at Walton Hall last month had the pleasure of listening to a lecture by Tim Mowl, professor of History of Architecture and Designed Landscapes at the University of Bristol.

Tim is in the process of writing a history of the landscapes and gardens of every county in England, with six counties completed so far. The volume on Cheshire is due for publication by the end of this year so we were entertained by some of his findings and

opinions of what he found during research.

Never one to pull his punches, Tim is a champion of the unknown and unloved and has rediscovered many fascinating and historically important landscapes throughout the country whilst working on this project.

Cheshire is no exception it would seem. Who, for example, even within the Cheshire Gardens Trust, would enthuse about and recognise the importance of the gardens at Addlington as Tim did? How many garden writers recognise that golf courses are often built on historic landscapes and exhaustively examine these places (often to the chagrin of the players) to the extent that he did at Carden Park, and other similar sites throughout the county?

He has the approach that these places must be visually inspected, not solely relying on maps and plans. In doing so many hitherto important but unseen features have been found. The well known sites such as Arley and Tatton will no doubt get a mention, although how polite this will be we will have to wait and see, but this book will definitely bring a fresh look to the gardens and landscapes of Cheshire.

It must be recognised however that professor Mowl is primarily an architectural historian and not a horticulturalist. His writings must be looked upon as being a comment on overall style and aestheticisms rather than an informed comment on plantings and botany.

I have spent nearly twenty years working at the sharp and muddy end of historic gardens in England and have experienced much of what this ‘industry’ can throw up in that time. I am heartily weary of much of the garden media I see today, but this volume on Cheshire promises to be something different.

Magnify this effect throughout every county in England and professor Mowl’s books will be a fresh and significant leap forward in the study of our historic gardens and landscapes.

Patrick Swan

Tim Mowl's research for a series of county gardens books has provided him with a wealth of material for entertaining and informative talks. The historic and contemporary images, particularly those of less well known gardens, were fascinating and enabled a glimpse of the rich diversity of gardens that are Cheshire's heritage.

Although most would agree that it is people that make gardens interesting – their intentions, designs and eccentricities endowing gardens with distinctive character and sense of place – and Tim makes it clear that the views expressed are his own – there are aspects of his approach to research and site survey that can be considered reprehensible.

The first relates to his attitude to the gardens, garden owners and their privacy. If an owner has generously allowed him access, it seems churlish to be so summarily dismissive, critical or patronising of a garden on so little acquaintance. The worst example of Tim's disregard for the owner as custodian or creator was his complete indiscretion in relation to one property (not in Cheshire) where the owner had specifically requested privacy.

Tim also appeared to advocate trespass as a means of obtaining information, justifying it in the pursuit of knowledge.

Perhaps this was part of his presentation bravado or he has found he can get away with it, but such activity flies in the face of accepted Gardens Trust wisdom that unless a researcher knows a garden owner or head gardener, then they should stick to site survey using public access or public garden openings and use documentary material that is in the public domain.

Real understanding of a place takes time and repays both careful investigation and analysis. Books produced to a publisher's time frame can lead to conclusions being drawn too rapidly. Readers tend to accept as fact that which is printed, particularly if the author has academic standing and a public profile. Any inaccuracies then get repeated and perpetuated.

It is to be hoped that Tim's book will be received simply as one man's view of a selection of Cheshire gardens, though one wonders if, as word gets round, Tim will find so many gardens open to him.

What did you think? Why not write and let us know. Contact details are on the back page

With grateful thanks

The AGM is the time when we elect members to serve on the Council of Management. The success of the Trust is dependent upon the work they do. Everyone has a different area for which they are responsible. For Barbara Wright, that has been Research and Recording. Over the past five years, she has put many hours into organising the information we have about parks and gardens in Cheshire, identifying where more work is needed, organising and supporting volunteers in this work.

It was with great sadness – both on her part and on ours – that she felt it necessary to step down from her position on Council and from her Research remit in order to cope with the sale of one house and the purchase of a new one.

As a recognition of Barbara's hard work she was presented with a bouquet of flowers and some garden tokens so that – once she has that new home – she will be able to set about filling the garden with the plants she loves.



"We have heard, with the utmost indignation, that some rude and vulgar fellows in a gig, on driving recently through the park, nearly ran down our noble neighbour the Marquess of Westminster. Instead of apologising for their abrupt, and we should hope unintentional conduct, they made use of language to his lordship which we shall not repeat. His lordship has, in consequence, ordered the gates of his park to be locked; and thus are the good citizens of Chester deprived of a most delightful promenade through the conduct of two ill-behaved and worthless men." 7 May 1836

Letters From Paris: The Chateau Des Fleurs, 1847

Over an elegant gate, there flickered in the twilight ... a line of fire letters which showed us that our long journey up the Champs Elysées was finished, and that we had reached the *Chateau des Fleurs*. ... The gate once passed, you might believe yourself in the depths of the country, in the most retired green and flowery nook of fairy land, so complete is the separation from town and street, from the bustle and the hum of a million feet and voices. The interlacing branches and rustling leaves of overbending trees take you under their shade; and, in a few steps, the garden opens out before the eye in all its greenness and gaiety. Right in the way is a clump of thickly clustering flowers, some bending meekly with an ever humble salaam, some twining with leafy caress, each round its neighbour, some tossing proudly their tufted heads above all the rest, some holding out with many arms their graceful laughing cups to drink the evening dew – all nestling in their leaves of many-tinted green, and exhibiting all the forms which the botanist knows – hand, and heart, and lance, and sword, and star, and banner. On all sides are patches of bright petals, broadly cased in a frame of velvety verdure, with their thousand dyes blending into ever-changing groups, like glances into a kaleidoscope. Here is a border, where corollas of the richest crimson rise over clusters of bright blue stars, where the darkest purple dahlias *pose* loftily over bunches of bright yellow ranunculus, shining out like little suns upon the spheres of green beneath. In another place, as if descending their sloping bank, an army of gay red geraniums sparkle in crowds upon the verdant background of their leaves. It is well I have forgot all the flower-lore of my gardening days, or I might be tempted to weary you with a hundred names of floral beauties, clustered in constellations everywhere in this pleasant garden. Suffice it that one feels possessed with an enthusiasm of admiration for those beautiful forms and tints of nature's own painting, of a beauty so rich, and yet so humble.

However, evening falls in, and then the resources of art are invoked to join to the harmony of flowers the kindred harmonies of light and music. What a pleasant

trio! From the three remotest corners of the garden, sounds out a march of a *danse-air* by one of these military bands, hid away in a secluded corner among the trees. Meantime, a thousand lamps have been lighted, hung from tree to tree and branch to branch; here swinging in groups and garlands, there solitarily throwing their red or yellow light upon the green boughs where they hang. Then all on the ground, amid the flowers are scattered glow-worm lights, like the "little stars" of Romeo's Juliet, "making the face" of the earth "so fine, that all the world would be in love with it, and pay no worship to the garish sun". One wanders about the grounds, now driving into some dim alley, where the silent overhanging trees seem to conjure down the voice into a whisper; their into a grotto, where night herself seems to be concentrated into darkness, and where lips might be tempted into dangerous proximity, did not the gay laugh of a coming group warn the bold trespassers that these are doings for deeper solitude. Again, crossing a little bridge over-hung with lights and flowers, one descends upon a wide and sloping lawn, where in front rises a covered stage gaily illuminated; on one side, the view is closed by a large scenic representation of a Moorish mosque, with its crowds of broken pillarets, its galleries and minaret, lighted up by garlands of lamps. In front of it fly long tri-colour streamers, attached to lofty standards, round about which, part way up, are clustered coronets of mosses and leaves and flowers; while between them wave rich constellations of coloured lights. It is all round here that we find planted rows of chairs; for on the stage nearly two hundred performers from the *Conservatoire* are to crown the delights of the evening with choice bits from *Weber*, *Gluck*, and *Meyerbeer*. Imagine *Morceaux* from *Der Freischütz*, *Armida*, *Euryanthe*, *The Huguenots*, *Iphigenia in Aulide*, played by one of the best orchestras possible, amid a fairy scene of lights and flowers; and judge if one would not rather spend half-a-crown for such a really delightful recreation than in the debasing atmosphere of the taverns, or in grovelling and degrading draughts of whiskey and water at home.

I must admit that I have a thing for silly things in the garden; often we take ourselves and our plants too seriously.

I found these plant labels in Philadelphia-good quality frost proof ceramic.

It is interesting how many people read them and seem to think it really is the name of the plant!

Ed Bennis





We'll weather the weather – whether we like it or not



The weather is a very British topic of conversation – so you will forgive me for returning to a subject last covered in the October newsletter.

This year on 6 April we had snow; last year on the same day, we basked on the beaches in 20° sunshine.

Experience tells us otherwise, but we still expect Christmas to be cold and the summer to be hot.

Sometimes it works out that way and sometimes not.

It is not just global warming that is giving rise to strange weather patterns. We've had them before.

Mild winters

December 1828 was "mild and genial as if April had arrived". It confused the birds –in Devon, a blackbird happily sat on four eggs. By 24th January "*Winter has come at last.... the thermometer fell below freezing This is not a very intense degree of cold, but we have had winds which have rendered it exceedingly piercing*".

Ponds froze over, but the ice was not thick enough to hold the weight of those who tried to skate. Several drowned.

Three years later, a mild Christmas continued throughout January. A butterfly was caught at Chadderton near Oldham on Christmas Day. In Bradford, primroses started to bloom in October and were still flowering at the end of January. Even in Scotland, there was mild weather and butterflies out of season.

Then came May – the weather turned very cold; there were showers of snow and hail.

February 1832, and it was mild again; this time it was a thrush found with five nestlings. Twelve months later The Derbyshire Courier reported that they had in their possession two mushrooms: "*We have never before heard of mushrooms produced, without forcing, at this season. Is it a proof of the mildness of the season? or are we to set down their appearance as a sort of lusus naturae?*"

Stormy summers

But it was the summer storms between 1829 and 1833 that were really spectacular – and damaging.

On 7th July 1829 Manchester had an hour's downpour of rain. The sewers couldn't cope, the streets flooded and filled the cellars which were home to poor families.

24th August and it was east Cheshire's turn. The rain was intense. The river Bollin began to rise alarmingly, a reservoir at Langley burst its banks emptying its contents into the already swollen river.

At Macclesfield people ran for their lives, fathers carrying their children above their heads as they battled to keep their own above water.

The factories alongside the river were swamped – employees swam for their lives. Two houses were completely destroyed and other buildings damaged so badly they had to be demolished.

At Bollington the factory workers ran into the hills and watched their homes filling with water. Rushing down

towards Bowden and Altrincham, the water covered the fields, destroyed the crops. Trees carried away by the force of the water caused more damage. Amazingly only one death was reported.

Two years later – more flooding. The report from Stockport was typical: "*... the rain came down in ... torrents ... the cellar dwellings ... inundated almost instantaneously. ... many of ... the children were with difficulty saved from actual drowning*".

1833 was particularly bad for storms. In June there was in Manchester and surrounding area a "*violent storm of thunder and lightning, accompanied with rain and hail*".

Lightning was a real danger. Near the Bolton canal a house was struck - "*The lightning ..., tore a quantity of plaster from the wall, and melted part of the iron wiring of an empty bird-cage ... The chimney fell into the pig-stye [killing] two fine pigs which were there feeding.*" Fortunately the occupants of the house were out on an errand.

After this it became "*intensely cold*", the "*hurricane increased*"; fruit was destroyed and trees uprooted. Days later another storm, with thunder, lightning and hailstones which "*exceeded four inches*". At Lichfield Hall over 700 panes of glass were broken in the hot-house.

In September 1833 a storm affected almost the whole country. In Manchester, the river Medlock overflowed, causing immense damage to the nearby businesses.

The Mersey also burst its banks around Flixton and Urmston. Here were orchards alongside the river. Thomas Whalley and Thomas Cookson trying to strengthen the embankment, soon found themselves stranded. They sheltered for the night in a hut.

Next day a man named Darbyshire set out to rescue them; not having a boat he tried using a tub. It capsized.

Already cold and exhausted it was with great difficulty they grabbed and held on to the branches of a tree and hedge. Finally they were rescued, but the people of Urmston vowed to buy a boat for future emergencies.

In Essex trees were uprooted and fruit destroyed – "*A plantation of between eighty and ninety walnut trees ... has been stripped of more than half the fruit, and innumerable branches torn off, some of them nearly thirty feet in length.*"

In Kent the hop and fruit harvest suffered. "*One farmer ... who had calculated on about 6,000 bushels of beautiful apples, has at least 3,000 bushels scattered over his orchards.*"

And so, as we look forward to long lazy days of sunshine, let's remember: there is no such thing as a typical English summer!

Joy Uings

Information from The Manchester Times 1828-1833



Letters to the Editor

Thanks for the latest Newsletter which I am writing to congratulate you on. I have read it from front to back and particularly enjoyed your exploration of William Cobbett and the potatoes. It reminded me of a conversation I once had with the Italian Vice-Consul here in Manchester. He asked me if I "ACTUALLY ATE TURNIPS?" in tones of amazed incredulity. "We only feed them to the pigs" he said in disgust.

Joan Colclough (by e-mail)

Ed: *I came across another story about William Cobbett. Apparently when living in Kensington he once threatened to sue his neighbour on account of the trespasses committed by the slugs and snails, which "finding nothing to their taste on Mr. Douce's side of the wall, climbed over it to feast on Cobbett's choicest American locusts".*

There is an exhibition at MMU you just must see! It is 'To brighten things up: an exhibition from the Schmoller Collection of Decorated Papers' – 3rd Floor Sir Kenneth Graham Library, All Saints 10-4 weekdays.

It is absolutely gorgeous, a rare treat and on till 1st August. Gaye* helped negotiate the purchase of the collection.

Do go

Barbara Moth

[*CGT Member Gaye Smith]

Would you please let everyone know that our garden is open on May 31st and June 1st, for the NGS - entry is £2.50 other details are in the "Yellow book". It is also open on 28 June, and 19 other gardens in Wilmslow on behalf of Wilmslow wells for Africa, 11-5

David Melliar-Smith

Ed: *Caroline and David's garden is at 68 South Oak Lane, Wilmslow, SK9 6AT. "With all year round colour, scent and interest, this attractive, small, hedged cottage garden has evolved over the years into 5 natural 'rooms'. As keen members of the Hardy Plant Society, the owners' passion for plant is reflected in shrubs, trees, flower borders and pond, creating havens for birds, bees and wildlife. Enjoy tranquillity and peace on this plant-packed garden 'journey'. Featured in 'Cheshire Life'"*

Members Gardens Open for Charity, 2008

Wilmslow Wells for Africa

Tickets for Wilmslow Wells for Africa (see letter, previous column) are available from May 2008 and cover entry to all gardens (£7 adults, 50p children). They are obtainable from St. John's Church Rooms on the day or in advance from Joanna Southgate tel 01625 525748 / Shirley Baulkwill tel.01625 522552.

Denise Field is opening her garden on Wednesday 23rd April 2008 from 2-5pm (or by appointment) in aid of the NCCPG – 42 Park Lane, Hartford, Northwich CW8 1PZ Tel. 01606 75642. The garden is crammed with many unusual plants such as Trillium, Erythronium and a National Collection of Daphne. Bring a notebook to jot down the treasures that have caught your eye!

Yellow Book Gardens (National Gardens Scheme 2008)

The following Hardy Plant Society members are opening their gardens this year, either on a particular day or by appointment.

The details are listed in 'The Yellow Book', Gardens of England and Wales Open for Charity available from most bookshops. There is also a website www.ngs.org.uk which enables you to search by the name of the garden, county, dates plus further information on particular subjects e.g. roses and whether the garden is wheelchair accessible, has plants for sale and if dogs are allowed.

Sue and Dave Beesley, Bluebell Cottage Gardens, Lodge Lane, Dutton WA4 4HP Tel. 01928 713718

Liz Carter, The Rake, Burton, Neston, Wirral CH64 5TL Tel. 0151 336 2304

Chris Everett, Wood End Cottage, Grange Lane, Whitegate, Northwich CW8 2BQ Tel. 01606 888236

Barbara Fray, Millpool, Smithy Lane, Bosley, Macclesfield SK11 0NZ Tel. 01260 226581

Elaine Land, 73 Hill Top Avenue, Cheadle Hulme SK8 7HZ Tel. 0161 486 0055

David and Caroline Melliar-Smith, 68 South Oak Lane Wilmslow SK9 6AT

Janet and Tony Overland, Stonyford Cottage, Stonyford Lane, Oakmere CW8 2TF Tel. 01606 888128

Ruth and Clive Plant, Yew Tree Cottage, Podmores Corner, Long Lane, Whitecross, Haughton ST18 9JR (under Staffordshire) Tel. 01785 282516

John and Christine Trinder, Orchard House, 72 Audley Road, Alsager ST1 2QN Tel. 01270 874833

Mike and Penny Voisey, Bank House, Goldford Lane, Bickerton SY14 8LL

Heather Turner

Plant Fair Season

Arley Hall kicked off the plant fair season on 6 April. Despite the overnight snow, there was a good turnout. If you missed that one, here are some more dates for your diary:

Sue Gillon, a Lancashire HPS member who owns Wheelwright's Cottage Garden Plants, is organising a plant fair at Samlesbury Hall Lancashire on **Sunday June 22nd** from 11am-4.30pm. Admission is free and approximately 10 specialist nurseries will be selling a variety of good quality, unusual plants. Samlesbury Hall is 2.5 miles from junction 31 of the M6 on the A677. Just follow the brown tourist signs for the hall. Any queries please contact Sue Gillon 01704 823104 email sue.gillon@yahoo.co.uk

The NCCPG (National Council for Conservation of Plants and Gardens) will be holding a Plant Fair at Arley Hall on **11th May**. This is, to quote the website "A wonderful plant fair featuring genuine growers and nurserymen in support of the NCCPG". Entry to the plant fair is £2 (children under 16 free), and if you want to go round the gardens as well, there is a £2 reduction on the garden entry fee.

The **Arley Garden Festival 28th and 29th June** will include plant stalls, but much more besides. Head Gardener and CGT member Patrick Swan and Chris Beardshaw are working with ten local schools – pupils from each will create a garden for display at the Garden Festival. Why not book on-line now to make sure you don't miss it – www.arleyhallandgardens.com.

Norton Priory Museum and Garden is hosting a plant fair on **1st June**. Entry is free.

Just over the border in Shropshire, **The Dorothy Clive Garden** will be holding a plant fair on bank holiday weekend **24th and 25th August**.

By September we are planning what will look good next year, so why not go along to the plant fair at St Peter's Assembly Rooms in **Hale** on **6th September**; 9.30 – 13.30. Entrance is free.

More details on all of the above from www.planthuntersfair.co.uk.

Other Garden Openings

Didsbury Open Gardens Sunday 8th June

A Didsbury Open Gardens afternoon is being planned to raise funds for St. Ann's Hospice. As well as more than ten private gardens and a woodland to view, Fletcher Moss Gardens will put on guided tours, local allotments will open their gates and there will be chain wood carving. Further details can be obtained from Maria Stripling Tel 0161 445 7498 e-mail maria.stripling@zen.co.uk Programmes will be on sale mid-April from local Didsbury shops, cost £5

Kelsall Gardens

Kelsall Garden Crawl, to raise money for Tarporley Hospital and the Kelsall Common Fund, is on Sunday 15th June from 2-6pm. Ten gardens are open and there will be refreshments and plants for sale. Admission is £3, children free. Tickets are obtainable from the gardens and from the Community Centre Car Park on the day. Contact Jane tel. 01829 751032 for further information or see posters in the village for gardens open.

Kingsley Garden Trail

This year the Kingsley Garden Trail will be held on Saturday 7th June from 12 noon to 5.30 p.m. There will be twelve village gardens plus a school horticultural project open to the public. Programmes, price £5.00 can be bought on the day from the gardens, or previously from the Holland Pharmacy of Elegance Health & Beauty in Kingsley or from branches of Devonshire Bakery in Frodsham, Runcorn and Weaverham. Free admittance for accompanied children.

Other events

In this Year of Gardens 2008, look out for other events. **Grosvenor Museum** has a packed programme throughout the year. Why not try:

Fashioning Flowers & Foliage: Clothes Inspired by Gardens. This runs until Sunday 3rd August.

Art in Gardens, Gardens in Art, a lecture by Adrian Sumner on **23rd April**, 1.30 in the Lecture Theatre. £3 on the door. **Why Gardens are Special Places**, a lecture by Jo Dyer, Head Gardener at Trafford Hall at 2.30 p.m. on Thursday 5th June.

On Saturday 17th May there will be the **Creative Plant Photography Workshop** for those who want to capture the best of their gardens. Run by award-winning Cheshire photographer Andrew Williams, this starts at 11 a.m. and runs to 4 p.m. "Basic familiarity with your SLR or Bridge type camera is essential; a tripod would be useful. Please bring your own camera and a packed lunch."

On Wednesday 28th May, in Gallery One – **Flowers with Meaning**. Create a flower that has a special meaning. The Victorians used them to show their emotions. And on Thursday 29th May, same venue: **Miniature Kitchen Gardens** – 11 a.m. to noon or 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Combermere Abbey will be hosting Bluebell Walks on Sundays 20th and 27th April; 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. (last walk begins at 4 p.m.) Cost is £3 for adults and £2 for children.

On Saturday 9th August there will be a thrilling Fireworks competition at Combermere, with displays from four different companies. Gates open at 5.00 p.m. and the displays start at 9.30 p.m. Pre-book, or pay on the gate £15 adults and £5 children. More info from www.combermerefireworks.co.uk

If that's not your cup of tea, why not visit on 17th August for an afternoon of dance and music in the Combermere Maze, featuring the national premiere of 'KINKINI – Anklets in a Maze', a site specific piece choreographed by Bharatannatyam dancer Swati Raut.

Thanks to Heather Turner, Chris Talbot, Kath Gee and Sarah Callender-Beckett for the above information. For events from the end of July onwards, please send details to the editor (see back page) by 1st July.

Visit www.yearofgardens08.com for information about more events throughout the year. In addition to Combermere's there will be Bluebell Festivals at Arley, Rode Hall, Town Wood Congleton, Cholmondeley Castle and Barrowmore Estate.

Jodrell Bank will be hosting a programme of events based on the concept of the 'Garden Planet'. There will be a display of textile art works in the Mansion exhibition room at **Tatton**, depicting the Gardens running until 2nd June. The Tatton Park Biennial is for contemporary art lovers. Over 30 artists, performers and writers have been invited to develop new work, taking Tatton Park's gardens as their inspiration. From 3rd May to 28th September.

Bothies, Bell Jars And Brussels Sprouts – an evening with Sam Youd.

As part of the celebrations for this years Cheshire Year of Gardens, Sam Youd Gardens Manager at Tatton Park has decided to share with both gardeners and non-gardeners an evening of gardening 'know how'.

The evening of Friday 30 May will begin with a special opening of the garden to enjoy the fine display of Rhododendrons and Azaleas.

After partaking in a glass of Pimms the audience will take their seats in the Tenants hall to enjoy an evening of relaxation whilst Sam entertains with a variety of humorous events from his own career as well as a little poetry and prose from various garden writings

Drawn from over half a century of Sam's own gardening life the evening has been designed to be lighthearted enough to both inform and entertain. Further information 01625 374400

'**Cheshire Gardens, Parks and Gardeners**' is the title of Cheshire Local History Society's annual History Day to be held on Saturday 25th October, 9.15 to 4.30 at Northwich Memorial Hall. The subject has been chosen to fit with the theme of Year of Gardens '08 and promises to be a day of considerable interest to CGT members.

Sam Youd will begin the day with a talk on 'Shrines to Savoys' ... Cultural influence on the gardens at Tatton. The public parks of Cheshire and the work of Edward Kemp will be covered by Elizabeth Davey in a talk entitled 'Gardens for the People'. The talk of the Cheshire County Archivist, Jonathan Pepler, is appropriately entitled 'Digging in the Archives' when he looks at eight centuries of gardens in Cheshire. And Wendy Morgan, Liverpool Council's Principal Conservation Officer, will round off the day with a talk on 'Victorian villa gardens' with examples from Alderley Edge.

Tickets will be £8.00 per head. Application forms will be available from May from the Cheshire Local History Association, c/o Cheshire Record Office, Duke Street, Chester, CH1 1RL, tel: 01244 602559; e-mail recordoffice@cheshire.gov.uk. and further information can be had from David Hayns, tel: 01948 860486; e-mail david@hayns.com.

The annual History Day is very popular and early application is essential.

Correction: Many apologies for sending out the Events Programme with an error! Please note that Doug and Mary Varey's Garden (CGT visit 8th June) is near **Middlewich** and not near Whitchurch! A new booking form is included with this newsletter.

Just to whet your appetite here are a couple of glimpses of their 2 acre garden



The Association of Gardens Trusts with the Yorkshire Gardens Trust will be hosting a Regional Research and Recording Day on Thursday 15th May at Wentworth Castle.

This is one of the most important historic gardens in the North of England and, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, is currently being restored. Rare formal gardens have been rediscovered, the National Collections of Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias has been enhanced and over 100,000 bulbs have been planted. There are 26 listed buildings and monuments within the parkland and garden and many are being repaired. The tour of the garden which completes the day will be well worth the visit, but is preceded by a programme which covers the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

The cost is £40, but this includes coffee, lunch and tea. There are a few places remaining, so if you are interested contact e-mail Kate Harwood at: kateharwood@fsmail.net or telephone her on 01582 762432 for an application form. Or download the application form direct from www.gardenstrusts.org.uk/new/EVENTS/events.

Garden History Society comes to Cheshire

This year's annual meeting and conference of the Garden History Society is to be held in Liverpool, as part of the Capital of Culture activities, and it will include *two* separate excursions to historic Cheshire. The first, on Saturday 5 July, will include trips to Birkenhead Park and Flaybrick Cemetery (to see the work of Joseph Paxton and Edward Kemp) and the Moreton Biscuit Factory (whose grounds were laid out by Geoffrey Jellicoe).

A full-day excursion on Sunday 6 July will take in Port Sunlight, whose central avenue was designed for Lord Leverhulme by Thomas Mawson; Burton Manor, another Mawson garden created for the Gladstone family; Ness Botanic Gardens, notable for its rare Himalayan and Chinese plant collections from the era of Arthur Kilpin Bulley; and finally Tirley Garth, a private Mawson commission created in conjunction with the architect C.E. Mallows.

For further information, please contact John Edmondson (a.books@mac.com) or visit the G.H.S. web site: www.gardenhistorysociety.org.



Caldwell Nursery Archives

Volunteer Pat Alexander is continuing to work through the archives. It is slow work and we are still looking for extra help.

If you are reasonably competent with computers and have some time to spare, why not give her a hand?

While in Knutsford for a christening, Pat came across this gravestone to one of the later Caldwell nurserymen.

Representations of China at the Tatton Flower Show

Perhaps there have been too many trips to Chinese gardens (see last issue of the newsletter), or wondering how we fail to understand them – but I have ended up creating a design for this year's RHS Tatton Show.

The first point is that it is *not* a Chinese Garden. I have learned too much about them to know that I don't know enough – if you follow my drift!

But, the garden is clearly influenced by the thinking behind Chinese gardens and it is a celebration of Chinese plants. Apparently 60% of plants in British gardens are of Chinese origin – a truly rich heritage.

The plan is based around the form of the inner-ear, this is where we gain our physical balance, and balance is an intrinsic part of the Chinese garden – visual, physical and philosophical. The intention is to present a range of plants from the colder and mountainous areas to the southern coastal and tropical landscapes.

It is surprising how many plants are readily available, but less so in terms of their original species form. There is also great confusion over names particularly where plants have the species *japonica* attached. This is often where the plant was discovered rather than its

natural origin. And of course, many plants have been cultivated across national borders for centuries so the names can be very misleading; *Eriobotrya japonica* (Loquat) is in fact from central China. And to add to the confusion, how do you deal with *Juniperus chinensis* '*Japonica*'?

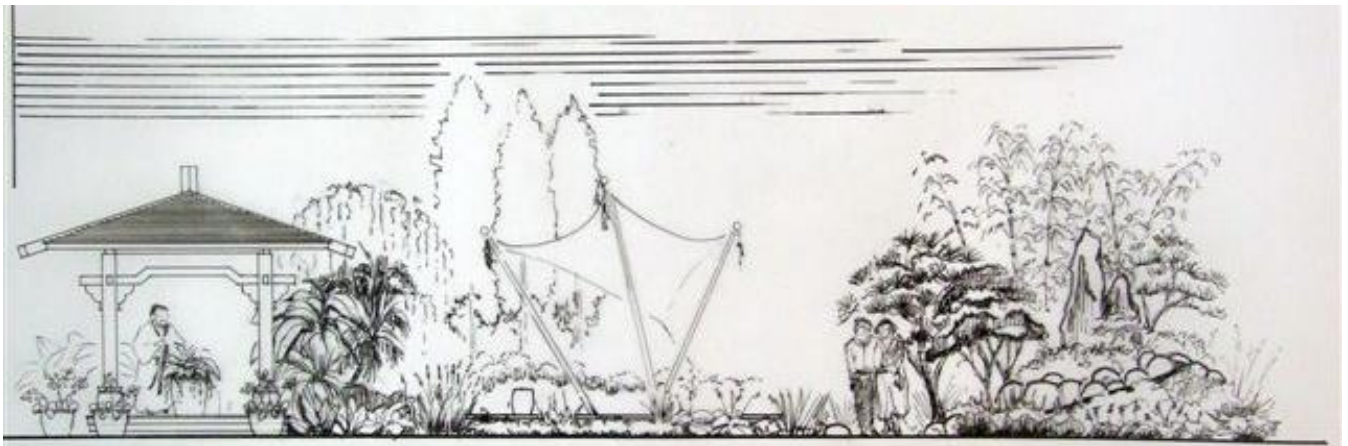
To complement the plants, a pavilion has been designed by the young architect Zailong Zhu, from Guangzhou. There are several commissioned art pieces from UK northwest artists and Chinese musicians will provide a further 'taste' of China.

Support has been received from Visit Chester and Cheshire and the North West Regional Development Agency; both are keen to show the connections between the UK and China in this Olympic year and Cheshire Year of Gardens '08.

The garden is part of a MIRIAD project at Manchester Metropolitan University and there will also be a series of installation pieces by Prof John Hyatt in Tatton Park after the RHS show as part of the Tatton Biennial.

Ed Bennis

Ed: visit Tatton to see the vision (below) turned into reality



Visit Belgium in September with Cheshire Gardens Trust

The arrangements for the visit to Belgium have been finalised and details and a booking form are included with the mailing of this issue of the newsletter.



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 joy.uings@btconnect.com.