



**CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST**

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Newsletter

www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Inside:

- Birkenhead Park
- The 'Secret Garden' at Styal
- Grappenhall Heys update
- CGT goes continental
- Food with a difference And more

Some future events:

- Graham Hardman's garden in Sale – Wed 6 August
- Adlington Hall Gardens, guided tour – Tues 9 September
- Eddisbury Fruit Farm – pick apples and make your own juice to take home – Wed 15 Oct

The Old Hough, Warmingham



It was a delightful day – bright sun, really warm and we were made very welcome. Here Mary Varey gives us the story of her enchanting garden – the destination for our June visit.

The Old Hough dates back to the fifteenth century. We know who lived here in 1476 and we are only the fourth family to have lived here since then!

Over the centuries more and more was added to the house: cheese-making rooms, offices, carriage house, stables, staff accommodation, milking parlour and corn lofts. It was a busy farm.

When we bought it in 1988, between the house and noisy traffic on the lane was a field in which were huge sheds, pigsties, chicken coops, diesel tanks and electricity poles. Beyond the field was a stand of oak trees.

On the other side of the house the courtyard buildings surrounded a huge concrete yard.

Daily, the milk lorry entered the property from the lane at one gate, drove along straight in front of the house into the yard, then out down the farm drive back onto the road through the second gate.

Such garden as there was consisted of two small lawns in front of the house with a low hawthorn hedge and a gate onto the milk lorry track – a simple garden with a few shrubs and one flower border. A low beech hedge separated the lawn from the concrete yard.

This was a work-oriented, utilitarian place. However, when Doug and I drove into that same first gate along the track and the house came into view, I knew immediately that we would buy it. It was serenely beautiful with the settled 'presence' which comes with age.

We had a big clearout. Away went the sheds etc. The milk lorry track was halted before it came to the house and turned into a gravelled drive with parking area.

Where the track had passed in front of the house we now have a long raised border of trees, shrubs and flowers.

The sloping concrete yard was torn up and carted off, and the area filled with soil held in by low walls, to make a level lawn surrounded by roses, a fern corner and a Spring flower corner, both under Paulownias.

The new 'courtyard' garden was now higher than the rest of the garden; the difference in levels facilitated a central rill flowing down stone steps into a formal pond below. The existing beech hedge was

encouraged to grow and an archway was cut into it over the steps of the rill.

Whilst in front of the house, paths and shaped yew hedges are used to make rather formal divisions, at the back of the house there is only one formal area - a rose garden close to the house walls. Otherwise the lawn sweeps irregularly down to the far boundary where stood a number of oak trees. We planted shrubs under these trees and all along the lane edge as an effective barrier from traffic noise. You hardly know there is a lane there now.

A main feature of these 'back' lawns is a large lily-pond (see *front page*) which we dug out to ten feet deep - being heavy clay no pond lining was needed. There is also a big raised border against the farm drive wall. We also made a wide border for unusual trees and shrubs to link the oak wood to the house.

Having made the 'bones' of the garden, I had the enviable task of planting it all out, which I absolutely relished.

Everything we have done has been to enhance the house, give it the setting it deserved, give us views from every window and create an oasis away from the hustle of road and farm.

Fortunately the previous owner, who now enjoys his own house and garden in retirement, approves of what we've done at The Old Hough!

Mary Varey

Note: *The house opens for the NGS. See next year's Yellow Book for times. This year's all over now!*



The Rill. Above: from the courtyard garden looking down; right, from the lower level looking up to the courtyard garden

What Doug and Mary have achieved is quite remarkable. Before we entered the garden, Doug explained the history and showed us some 'before' photos.



It helped us appreciate the extent of the transformation – for example, *from this:*



to this:



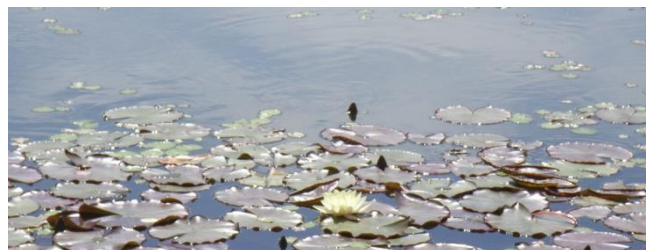
Flowers are everywhere. Here even the house is decorated:



and here, members wander among the borders.



Colour was everywhere: peonies were gorgeous in the borders; brilliant blue dragonflies darted above the lily-pond



Water plays an important part in the garden. In addition to the lily-pond – large enough for boating, the rill runs from this stone trough in the courtyard,



and falls into this pond below:



To complete the day, and round of our enjoyment, Doug and Mary provided us with a splendid tea:



Joy Uings

Birkenhead Park



On a blustery and chilly mid-April morning that felt more like mid-February, a group of about 40 hardy souls gathered in the café in the new Park Pavilion at Birkenhead Park.

This was some achievement in itself – despite its immense size and central location, the park is not easy to find.

We were welcomed by members of the park staff and also representatives of the Friends of Birkenhead Park who were to keep us well entertained and thoroughly informed as the day unfolded.



A talk in the comfortable meeting room filled us in on the background of the park which is the only public park to be a Grade I listed landscape and was the first to be developed at public expense.

The park was created to allow access to open space for the working population from the Birkenhead docks, shipyards and surrounding areas.

The land was procured in 1843 and Joseph Paxton, (who had learnt his trade at Chatsworth and was now working as a 'freelance'), was commissioned to design the park.

The intention was to surround the large park with housing plots which would be sold to finance the development. Progress was rapid and the park opened in 1847.

The site was not promising. It was very damp and boggy and Paxton utilised this characteristic by incorporating three lakes as well as streams into his design.

One thousand Welsh labourers were employed digging the lakes and the extensive drainage system for the payment of 1d a day.

The design of the park has an area of 125 acres enclosed by a carriage drive exactly 2 miles long. This enclosed area is itself divided into two parts – the Upper and Lower Parks.

The area beyond the carriage drive was designated for housing, some of which was built at the time but much was developed later and so there is a fine mix of grand and not-so grand residences around the perimeter of the park.

The park itself was opened with great ceremony in 1847 and has been well used by the local population ever since although falling into a rather sorry state in the recent past with the grounds just barely maintained and becoming a rather disreputable place.

This was turned around with the successful application for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and we were to see much of the spectacular restoration that has taken place.

This was not always achieved without controversy. One relatively recent feature of the park is an avenue of lime trees planted by local school children to celebrate the Coronation in 1953 and this was felt by the HLF to be out of keeping with Paxton's original plans. Taking the idea of a restoration project very literally, a condition was imposed that the limes should be removed in order to reinstate the original open vista.

This unsurprisingly caused feelings to run high and after prolonged 'discussions', it was agreed that the limes should be left in their glory. I think the audience all felt that this was the right decision – a park is after all a living and evolving thing and cannot be frozen in time at a certain point of its development.

Paxton's design principles included 'conceal and reveal' devices such as curved paths; trees and shrubs planted on mounds, (created from the spoil removed from the lakes), sometimes placed at an angle so that trunks grew out almost horizontally; heavy planting and then by contrast open vistas and panoramic views.



Trees are planted singly or in small groups on open spaces to catch the eye. Even the lakes twist and wind and can only be partially seen from any viewpoint. The serpentine carriage drive running around the park is heavily planted so that only enticing glimpses of the park within are seen, encouraging further exploration.

There are many interesting structures in the park, some designed by Lewis Hornblower. Perhaps the most recognisable nowadays is the Swiss bridge which has been beautifully restored. It now links two islands and is itself inaccessible to the public to protect it from vandalism.



The colour palette used on the bridge is carried throughout the park so that all the signage, benches, litter bins etc use the nine chosen colours.



Also impressive are the enormous arched Grand Entrance of classical proportions which incorporates living accommodation and the Boathouse, and some extraordinary flights-of-fancy entrance lodges designed variously in Gothic, Italian, Norman and Castellated styles.

Not visible but equally important is the Victorian hydraulic system that allows water to be pumped from the Upper to Lower Lake. It includes a Grade II listed culvert!

Some of the most memorable features of the park must be the magnificent mature trees. It is almost a case of 'you name it, we've got it' as amongst all the usual deciduous and coniferous planting there are also a black mulberry tree and unexpectedly, a cucumber tree!

Current planting focuses on native species to attract wildlife, and we saw plenty of birds, including some nesting herons. The park also has several families of woodpeckers, 3 species of bats and a resident fox.

At the end of the first lake is a rockery on a massive scale. Great slabs of sandstone make a spectacular



feature scrambled over and loved by many generations of children.

It was very interesting to see old photographs of the park showing it being used for entertainment, sport and recreation and as we walked around it became clear that this is still the case. There were several cricket matches in progress, football games and children's football training, anglers, walkers with and without dogs, joggers, people feeding birds and ducks, all enjoying their park.

It is worth mentioning that there are two cricket clubs in the park, one of which claims to have the oldest surviving brick-built clubhouse in the country which has now been extended with what appears to be several exotic tents.



The Birkenhead Park Rugby Club hosted the All-Blacks playing against Cheshire – in 1924.

Although the bandstand no longer exists, the lawn is still used for concerts and plays in the summer.

Paxton's third lake was always problematical, losing water despite being fed with two springs. Various uses were tried – a skating or curling rink in winter, a sunken, sensory garden for blind visitors. It has now been relined, using a double butyl liner with gel in the middle which it is hoped will automatically seal any leaks. This small, shallow lake is now a wildlife corner and is used as an outdoor classroom.

The highest point of the park is Cannon Hill, so called because for some time two Crimean cannon were displayed here. They were taken for use as scrap metal during WW2. From here it is possible to see some of Liverpool's landmarks – the cathedrals and the tower.

Another significant figure in the history of the park is Edward Kemp. He was Paxton's assistant at Chatsworth and joined him at Birkenhead where he was responsible for the original planting in the park. He became the first park superintendent and remained at Birkenhead for the rest of his life.

Finally – the New York connection. Frederick Olmstead visited Birkenhead in 1850 and wrote in glowing terms of it. He later incorporated many of the ideas and features of Birkenhead Park into his designs for Central Park in New York. If you have seen Central Park but not Birkenhead, do visit and you can do a 'compare and contrast'. If you have seen Birkenhead and not Central Park, it could be argued that you have actually seen it all already.

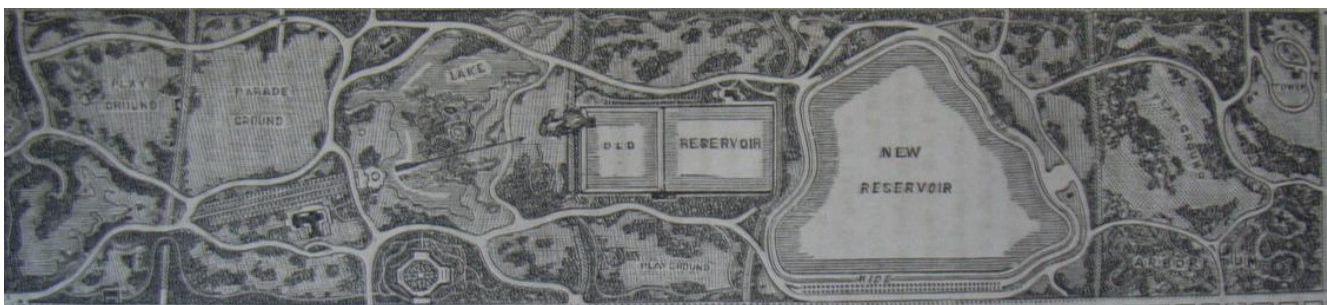
Jacqui Jaffé

Below we reproduce articles about Birkenhead Park (from *The Manchester Times*, November 4 1843, which lifted its article from the *Liverpool Times*) and Central Park, New York, (from the very first edition of *The Gardener's Monthly*, January 1, 1859, published in Philadelphia). The variation in the tone might be said to reflect the variation in the British and American characters.



“NEW PARK AT BIRKENHEAD. – The public park at Birkenhead, the formation of which has already commenced, is to be designed by and under the superintendence of Mr. Paxton, of Chatsworth. The plot of ground comprises about 180 statute acres, and is nearly a mile long and half a mile wide, in its longest and broadest parts. It is of an irregular oblong figure, with an undulated variety of slope towards Liverpool. The plan provides eight entrances; and immediately within the inclosure there will be a belt, of varied width, for terraces and villas. The central and principal portion will be laid out as a park, with a serpentine drive all round it

and across the middle; and there will be two spacious lakes in this, surrounded by a sort of ornamental park garden. We learn that it is intended to admit the public to all this part during the day, closing it only at night. When the line of roads, &c. are all marked out, the whole of the works are to be conducted with the greatest possible celerity. At present the ground is mostly of a sterile and nearly useless character, destitute of drainage, with scarcely a tree upon it; but by the aid of science and skill we have no doubt it will be rendered a really delightful place of recreation. Too much commendation can hardly be bestowed on the public body which have so nobly originated the scheme, since the day is now past when it is necessary to prove by argumentation that such things have a highly beneficial effect on the physical and moral health of the country. With this and the park at Toxteth, also from the plans of Mr. Paxton, and rapidly-approaching completion, Liverpool will, in proportion to its population, be quite as well supplied with agreeable places of free resort as the metropolis. – *Liverpool Times*.”



“The great work of the age is the Central Park of New York. In another year it will be thrown open to the people. It will stand for ages a memorial of the sagacity, taste, and energy of the men who have built up that city and made it the metropolis of our country. The men who have spent years of toil in their devotion to this public pleasure ground, have their reward in the consciousness of having conferred great and lasting benefits on the toiling millions of the city. Thousands will visit this beautiful creation of nature and art; and while enjoying the beautiful scenes spread out before them, will feel the pride of ownership in it, though no other foot of God's earth be theirs. Little children in their gambols, and age, resting under the well-shaded walks, will bless the memory of the men to whom they are indebted for so much rational enjoyment.....”

“From two to three thousand men are employed on the work, blasting rocks, making roads and walks, and constructing the new reservoir, which is to be made to present the appearance of a beautiful lake of irregular shape, and encircled by a drive of more than a mile in length. A Parade Ground of fifty acres has been set apart for the use of the military, and provision made for play grounds, also a flower garden, skating ponds, &c. In the upper portion an Arboretum will be formed. Immense numbers of trees are under cultivation in beds, ready to set out in their appropriate places. A substantial stone wall encloses the whole Park. Messrs. Park and Olmsted have the heads to understand and the hearts to appreciate, the great work upon which they are engaged, and they are rapidly pushing forward the improvement of the ground. When completed, it will be the chief point of attraction in the city, and thousands of strangers will be attracted to that great mart of commerce to enjoy the pleasure of a drive or stroll through this splendid public pleasure ground.....”

The article included a piece from the *New York Tribune*....

“The Central Park is destined to be one of the chief ornaments of our city and sources of rational, refining, healthful enjoyment for its inhabitants. Ultimately, it will be surrounded by the mansions of the wealthy,

including some who will be drawn hither from the West Indies and from different portions of the continent in part by its attractions. When it shall have been completed, according to the plan adopted by the commissioners and its trees and shrubbery shall have had time to acquire strength and foliage, not to say maturity, there will be nothing in America to compare with it; and we doubt that even Europe can show a Park so adapted to every legitimate need and so perfect in all its appointments as this one.

“We urge our citizens, who have time and means, to visit the Park occasionally and watch its progress. The current impression that, as yet, it is a mere chaos, is far from the truth. A great deal of work has been perfected, though no quarter of the Park is absolutely finished. Still, there is a great deal on which the eye of uncultivated taste and enlightened philanthropy may rest with genuine satisfaction. The walks, shrubbery, &c., on the considerable area of elevated ground near the centre of the Park, are nearly completed, and are admirable. These will be fully ready for public use and enjoyment next season. The Skating Pond of twenty acres, just south of them, is to be filled and in order so soon as the weather will permit – it is hoped by Christmas, at furthest. It is now practicable to drive for considerable distances through the south part, while the Grand Promenade, fully made under foot, is being rapidly lined with thrifty elms, thirty to forty foot high, brought from the heart of Westchester, with their roots and branches nearly perfect, by Mr. Jesse Ryder, the contractor. We are to have wild birds singing in the branches of these trees next June. Some of the Bridges across ravines and hollows are finished, and others nearly so; they are mainly of a fine red brick, and make a very handsome appearance. In short, we believe every one who now visits the Park for the first time will be astonished to find so much work so well done, considering the time employed and the money expended, and will concur in our judgment that the city never before paid out money of which so large a proportion went directly into the pockets of day-labourers, who had given full value for it.

Parks were seen as places for ‘rational pleasures’ and spaces where city dwellers could re-connect with the countryside.

Yet, though the public were admitted to both Birkenhead and Central Park, each was seen as attracting the well to do to live in its immediate environs.

On June 6 1845, The Liverpool Mercury carried an advert for building land around Birkenhead Park (right).



The sale got off to a slow start; only twelve of the thirty-two lots were sold on the day of the auction, though the Liverpool Mercury of July 4 1845 was able to report that some lots had been sold since.

“The price obtained for the lots sold will of course establish the price of the remaining land, and we understand that the sum to be thus realized will reimburse the township for all the expense incurred by the making of the new park and cemetery. The lots sold produced prices varying from 7s. 6d to 15s. per square yard. The total amount sold was about 60,000. We understand several lots have since been disposed of, making in the whole nearly £100,000.”

“The Valuable LAND surrounding the beautiful and extensive Park, of 125 Acres, recently laid out by Joseph Paxton, Esq., and now being planted and completed under his immediate superintendence.

The BUILDING LAND to be offered for Sale will consist of about 300,000 Square yards, which will be divided into thirty Lots, varying from 2,000 to 26,000 Yards, shown on a Lithographic Plan attached to the particulars; the sites and form of which Lots have been judiciously chosen and determined, with a view to their beauty of situation and picturesque effect; and the conditions imposed on purchasers are only such as are essential to insure the respectability of the neighbourhood.

The Commissioners have, at an immense outlay, effectually drained the whole extent of the Park and Building land now offered for Sale, and have also ornamentally planted and surrounded it with a handsome Iron Railing, Stone Lodges, and Entrance Gates, and intersected it with good Roads; in fact, they have spared no expense to render it one of the most delightful and healthy situations in the kingdom. The Land will be sold on a term of 999 years, at a Pepper Corn Rent.”

The 'secret' garden at Styal

The CGT visit to Styal took place on 8th May, the week following the official opening, by HRH Princess Royal, of the newly restored 'secret' garden, when CGT was represented by Barbara Moth.



It is more than 200 years since the gardens at Quarry Bank Mill, Styal were created by the owner of the mill, Samuel Greg, and his wife, Hannah Lightbody. Until recently, the house and gardens were in private ownership, but are now in the possession of the National Trust – although parts of the original garden, including the greenhouses are still owned by others.

We were taken round by Head Gardener, Alan Knapper, who has only volunteers to help continue the restoration work so far achieved.

Cutting back large numbers of overgrown trees and shrubs has brought the original pathways to light.

This is a garden created to take advantage of its natural surroundings – the cliffs of red sandstone on one side and the fast-running river Bollin on the other.

There is a great variety of rhododendrons, and identifying these is just one of the tricky tasks faced by Alan. It is known that Samuel Greg's son Robert commissioned local nurseries to hybridise rhododendrons, and it is estimated that around twenty of these still survive. This garden might be the only place where they still exist.

The house is right next to Quarry Bank Mill itself. It would have been a busy and noisy place. The garden wanders away from the mill and the sound of machinery would have faded into the background as its owners followed the paths they had created along the gorge.

Joy Uings



The view from the top of the hill



Two bridges link the house with the garden, crossing the River Bollin, which in places is very fast flowing



*Clearing away the growth of two centuries has revealed some gems. Above left is a hermit's cave cut into the sandstone; above middle a figure of pan sits at the side of a tiny pool. Above right: we were delighted to see the 'handkerchiefs' on a *Davidia involucretrata**

Grappenhall Heys walled garden – An update

CGT visited Grappenhall Heys in September 2005. The garden was part of the Grappenhall Heys estate created by Thomas Parr, the Warrington banker.

Parr's Bank is now one of the National Westminster banks in the centre of town and retains its fine banking hall.

The Parrs were one of a number of prominent business families who lived on the south side of Warrington; these included the Crosfields, Greenalls and Rylands. The house is believed to have dated from 1830, and Ordnance Survey maps show development of the Garden between 1875 and 1900.

The WRNS used the house during World War II, after which it was never lived in again as a private home, and the Parrs sold the estate. The house was sold to the British Transport Council, who sold it again, and it became a furniture store.

In 1975 Warrington New Town Development Corporation bought the estate; the house was so dilapidated that it was demolished. However the Parrs left the Garden to the care of their gamekeeper Mr. Power, whose children kept waterfowl and chickens in it.

It became very overgrown and derelict, but English Partnerships decided that it should be kept as the central landscape feature for the new housing area planned in that part of south Warrington.



English Partnerships carried out extensive refurbishment of the Garden, and opening had therefore been limited. When CGT visited, the Garden had recently changed ownership from English Partnerships to Grappenhall and Thelwall Parish Council. Since 2005 the Council's achievements have been –

- * The appointment of a full-time gardener/manager and a part-time visitor warden.
- * Opening the Garden every week; opening hours are now 1 to 4pm Wednesday through to Sunday.
- * Fitting-out a meeting/classroom, office, kitchen and toilets in the service buildings at the back of the glasshouses.
- * The re-launch of the Conservation Group (which campaigned for the Garden to become a local park) into a Friends Group; this is supporting the Council in promoting the use of the Garden.
- * Production of a web-site and leaflet, see www.ghwalledgarden.org.uk for details
- * The development of volunteering through the Friends, as either gardeners or visitor wardens.

The Friends have organised a programme of events for the year, aimed at different ages and interests. Forthcoming events include a brass band concert, a slugs and bugs afternoon, scarecrow making and Christmas fair. More details are on the website.

The Council is now turning its attention to the derelict glasshouses, and is preparing a bid to the Lottery to fund their re-building. Based on the consultation so far, there is a need for community and educational use, not a pure restoration of the original design and uses. The local area is short of community space, and the Garden provides a great opportunity for education about food and habitats, as well as history. Ideas such as flexible space for meetings, interpretation and teaching are being considered as well as horticultural display and working areas.

The Council would be pleased to hear your views via the website and to see you again at the Garden.

Maria Bull



Do you have an apple press? Do you know where one can be found? The Grappenhall Heys Friends Group is planning an Apple Day for Sunday 5th October (1-4 p.m.). This is earlier than most, as Grappenhall has mainly early cropping varieties of apples. They would dearly love to borrow an apple press so that freshly squeezed juice of apples from the garden's trees can be sold. You can e-mail via the web-site – www.ghwalledgarden.org.uk.

Living, visiting, working... CGT's continental presence



Living

Our first overseas member is Kristin Reichenfeld who moved to Germany to be nearer her family. For those who remember faces and not names, here is a snap of Kristin concentrating on Ed Bennis' talk in Grosvenor Park, Chester:

An e-mail arrived from Kristin in May –

Hi Joy,

Thanks for the Newsletters and keeping me up to date. I shall be able to listen for Gardeners' Question Time via the web - what a great invention! It's great to be able to listen to Radio 4 when I want to. I am now working again - guess what, I'm at the Zoo!! They call it a landscape with animals and the surroundings are really lovely. I have attached a photo of the entrance to the offices, my office overlooks the courtyard. People are really nice, lots of organisation to do and am on a steep learning curve! I have to be on the phone a lot to people asking for guided tours or wanting to adopt an animal, most of whom I've never heard of!

Also photos from the flat: my clematis Henryi - I hope you can see its first flower in full bloom!, then the balcony and the view out to my balcony from my sitting room. My rose has three flower buds, it's called Comtessa and is supposed to have a strong scent. I only have a few plants as yet, but they are doing well, however, I still need to get a lot more!

Please give my best to all at CGT!

Kristin



If you have not yet booked for the CGT visit to Belgium in September, here is a taster of what you might be missing.....



Visiting – Glorious Gaasbeek

I know a number of you will be visiting this amazing garden in September, along with other locations, and so here is just a little taster for what awaits you.

As an Artist currently studying for my MA in 'Art as Environment' at Manchester Metropolitan University (you will all no doubt know Ed Bennis' & Joy Uings' connections) I have always had an absolute passion for nature and through my research have identified the roots of that passion. My inspiration comes from a desire to have a two way relationship with our wonderful planet and just as it sustains us so should we respect and value it. I have currently focused my research on food plants and so a visit to Gaasbeek's Museum Kitchen Garden was a must!

Following an overnight crossing from Hull to Zeebrugge my husband, Rupert, and I arrived on a drizzly morning in May to meet Herman van den Bossche (*top left*), whom many of you will have met at the AGM last year at Ness Botanic Gardens. After a restorative cup of coffee we started our visit and although I had seen lots of photos nothing could have prepared me for the sheer joy of seeing all the different varieties, planting layouts, garden buildings and the immaculate tidiness of it all. It is truly a tribute to the staff there and although Herman found a few shoots that hadn't yet been removed all in all it was just fantastic. Happily the rain kept off for our visit but even if had poured it wouldn't have dampened my spirits!

Every possible permutation of pruning style is covered and if I am studying 'Art as Environment' then this must surely be 'Environment as Art'.

Every corner is a growing work of creation. Being early in the year of course lots of plants were in their early stages, as you will see from my photos, and it will be interesting to see how they have developed since then. If anyone spots the exact locations where I took mine and can take 'in progress' photos I'd love to see them.

I wish you all as happy and interesting a visit as we had and will think of you on your trip while I'm doing my finals!

Christine Wilcox-Baker





Above: more photos from Christine's visit to Gaasbeek.

Wish you were going? There is still time to book for September. The tour runs from the 18th to the 22nd and takes in: Day one - the castle and gardens at Freyr, Hex Castle gardens, Van Buuren Museum and gardens; Day two – Gaasbeek Museum and Park in the morning, Gaasbeek garden at the Bailiff House and a modernist garden by Jean Canneel Claes in Liederkeke in the afternoon. Day three sees the tour move from Brussels to Antwerp with visits to the Rubens house and garden and the Rockox House museum and garden in the morning and the Plantin-Moretus museum and garden in the afternoon.

Full details and estimated cost available from Heather Turner (0161 980 4561; ericanw@yahoo.co.uk) or Tina Theis (0161 442 0657; tina@tinatheis.com).

Working

Ed Bennis (Chair of CGT) has been appointed as Visiting Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi Sad in Serbia.

Ed has been running undergraduate workshops there for four years (see picture below) and has also been involved in an EU programme advising the University of Novi Sad and the University of Belgrade on the development of post-graduate courses in landscape architecture.

The EU programme ends in December 2008 and the appointment will allow him to continue with developing and teaching on the post-graduate programme at Novi Sad.

“When I first went to Novi Sad” says Ed, “there was a pontoon bridge crossing the Danube as a result of the 1998 NATO bombings.

“There is still evidence of the bombings, but there is a new bridge and a great desire to re-build the country. Landscape architecture is seen as having a major role in this reconstruction, but there is a desperate shortage of qualified people.”



Radmilla Lazović, a teaching assistant at the University of Novi Sad. What you see is their complete library!

Normally we ask for books to sell to benefit CGT, but now we are asking for these students. Ed says: “to say the least, resources are basic, or non-existent. Students have to rely on the internet for most of their information, but my experience is that there is very little depth and the old fashioned practice of reading is still the most valuable.

“There are always surprises such as some of John Brooks work on garden design is published in Serbian, as is the classic *Townscape* by Gordon Cullen.

But good quality publications in Serbian are rare; thankfully almost all of the students have good reading skills in English, and most can speak it to a reasonable level.

“So here is the plea, if you have any spare or duplicate books, particularly on design, planning and theory, I would be happy to take some on my next trip. Or, I can give you a mailing address for you to post them.

This is a developing profession and unbelievably popular with usually 70+ students entering the course each year. Wish that happened here!”

If you have books to spare, why not contact Ed at Manchester Metropolitan University – 0161 247 1118 or e-mail him at E.M.Bennis@mmu.ac.uk. Or why not bring your contributions along to the next event. If Ed's not there, you can leave them with any member of the Council of Management.

Free and unusual food



Like foxes, squirrels tend to divide the population. Many city folk see them as cuddly and cute reminders of the countryside from which they are cut off. Others see them as rats with bushy tails. So when I read on the BBC web-site about a Cornish butcher who is making grey squirrel pasties, I remembered a comment made on our visit to Castle Park in Frodsham.

It would be putting it mildly to say that Sheila Holroyd is not a grey squirrel enthusiast. On page 7 we reproduce an article that she wrote for the Frodsham Post. But it was her comment, last September, that she had recipes for squirrels that had come to mind.

So thanks to Sheila for this fascinating history of squirrel cuisine

You are plagued by squirrels and don't know what to do with them? Why not eat them?

Red squirrel meat was regarded as superior to that of rabbit in mediaeval times, according to C.Anne Wilson in "Food and Drink in Britain". A fifteenth-century recipe for a pottage, a thick soup, included partridges and rabbits, but advised, "For a great lord, take squirrels instead of coney (rabbits)." But squirrel meat later fell out of favour, perhaps for the reasons given by Doctor Mufet, in the eighteenth century. "Squirrels are much troubled with two diseases, choler (biliousness) and the falling-sickness (epilepsy); yet their hinder-parts are indifferent good whilst they are young, fried with parsley and butter."

In America, however, settlers encountering the grey squirrel ate them happily and went on doing so. In 1909, Hugo Ziemann and Mrs F.L.Gillette, in "The White House Cook Book," informed the reader that squirrels were "cooked similar to rabbits, are excellent when broiled or made into a stew, and, in fact, are very good in all the different styles of cooking similar to rabbit." Well, if it was good enough for Teddy Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, it must have been good enough for everybody else. Incidentally, if you couldn't get squirrels, you could use gophers or chipmunks.

Eating squirrel is still being promoted in the 1964 edition of "The Joy of Cooking", by Irma S.Rombauer

and Marion Rombauer Becker, who claim that grey squirrels are preferable, as red squirrels are smaller and quite gamey. They give detailed instructions on how to skin a squirrel, and then suggest you stuff and roast them, use them in a stew, or prepare in the same way as braised chicken. Then you can make yourself some nice warm gloves with the skins.

There are over 700 web sites which deal with cooking squirrel, according to Google, though, admittedly, some of the sites are against it. However, Tom McMahon gives a recipe for cooking squirrels in a pressure cooker which he describes as "very handy for the Busy Working Mother who wants to fix something quick and nutritious for her children."

Another writer comments, "I make sure mine are nice and tender by running them over with a tractor."

Incidentally, you are advised not to eat the brains or feed them to animals as they may contain a virus.

Don't feel too sorry for the squirrels – it may be a case of them or us. A Guardian headline for November 2002 proclaims "Flesh-eating squirrel stalks streets of Knutsford," and goes on to describe how householders were being plagued by a vicious grey squirrel with a penchant for human flesh. At least six residents were attacked in a week. The squirrel actually chased one resident round her garden!

So get them before they get you!

Sheila Holroyd

And to go with your roasted or stewed squirrel, why not try this recipe I found reproduced in The Manchester Times of 24 August 1839:

KIDNEY-BEANS AND SCARLET-RUNNERS. – The seeds of the white kidney-bean and scarlet-runner are much used abroad, and a trial of them is much recommended to the British cottager. They should be soaked in water for several hours – some persons put them in overnight. Put them into cold water for boiling, with some salt in it. They require much boiling when old, but are then best. Check the boiling with a cupful of cold water when they begin to swell; they will then burst like a mealy potato – drain them immediately, and put them by till required to prepare for dinner. The best mode of dressing them is this: - Put a lump of clarified fat or butter into the saucepan; when melted, dredge in about a third part of a table spoonful of flour; when mixed, add a wine-glassful of water or broth, stir it till it boils, then add the beans (prepared as above), with some chopped parsley, some pepper and salt, and with or without a chopped chalog; cover the vessel and shake it now and then over the fire till the beans are quite hot enough, and have had a couple of boils. They may be tossed up with any remains of cold gravy. – *Labourer's Friend Magazine.*

Have you tried an old recipe? Why not let us know.



And while we're on the subject of food.....

In the January newsletter, we saw how William Cobbett railed against the humble potato, so when I saw it mentioned on the BBC website, I had to follow the link.

The sheer variety of potatoes is mind-blowing – round, oval, banana-shaped, knobby; white, red, purple – why is it that the ones in the supermarket all look the same?

Potatoes are now one of the most important staple foods and increasingly are being grown throughout the far east – China is now the world's largest potato producer. In fact, it is such an important food that the UN has declared 2008

the international year of the potato.

The British Potato Council (www.britishpotatoes.co.uk) has some suggestions for jazzing up this all-too familiar food. Don't simply serve up mashed potatoes, add one of the following for a change: a grated red skinned eating apple, tossed in a little lemon juice; caramelised onions (goes well with beef stew); 1-2 teaspoons of pesto or mustard per person; chopped fresh herbs - oregano or dill are delicious with chicken or fish: basil or thyme with a tomato-based dish.

Or go to www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/mostof_potatoes for more recipe ideas and some information on the history of the potato. Did you know that the Incas used to freeze-dry potatoes???

[go to www.bbc.co.uk and type 'potato' into the search box. You will be amazed at the information to be found.]

If food is in short supply, you could raid your herbaceous borders....

Growing food plants in among the herbaceous border, rather than keeping them in the vegetable garden, is a suggestion that has been adopted in recent years and some food plants are sufficiently colourful or architectural to make this an attractive option.

But what about the usual occupiers of the border? Might they be edible?

Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus was introduced into this country as long ago as 1570. It comes from China, where the flowers are cultivated to eat and the foliage is supposed to be excellent fodder for cows, especially when in milk. (*The Origin of Plants*, Maggie Campbell-Culver, p.184)

And if you like adding edible flowers to your recipes, have you checked out the full range – including fuchsias and peonies. See the list at <http://whatscookingamerica.net/EdibleFlowers/EdibleFlowersMain.htm>

Alien invaders attack Cheshire

Grey squirrels are not cuddly bundles of fluffy fur. They are aliens from North America imported into the British Isles at the end of the nineteenth century, and since then they have ruthlessly replaced and almost exterminated our far more attractive native red squirrel. Not only are they bigger and more aggressive, grey squirrels often carry the parapox virus which does not affect them but can be fatal to red squirrels.

They ravage flowerbeds and garden allotments, strip the bark from trees and eventually kill them, but they are not even strict vegetarians as they also eat birds' eggs and chicks.

They cost you, the taxpayer, money. Last year Knutsford Town Council had to pay a tree surgeon £4,500 because overhanging branches in one street had become dangerous and had to be removed after grey squirrels had chewed off the bark at the base of the branches.

Grey squirrels can also cost you money personally. Vale Royal pest controllers do not deal with squirrels but direct you to private controllers who may charge £15 a visit or more. I recently heard about one house where grey squirrels had nested in the loft where they had eaten through the plastic casing of electrical cables, leaving the wires bare and dangerous, and had also gnawed away at the wooden roof beams. It took several visits to rid the house of these pests.

So wake up to the truth. While you are spending money to buy peanuts to feed to these aliens whose aim is total domination of Great Britain, their relatives could be at your home sabotaging your garden and your loft.

Harden your heart and fight back.

Sheila Holroyd

This article originally appeared in The Frodsham Post.

Green Flag Awards

I was privileged to be present at the judging for a Green Flag Award. For those who are not sure, the Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. Now in its thirteenth year, it is a way to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country. And in doing so, it encourages others to work to achieve the same standard.

There are more Green Flag Award winners in the North-West than in any other part of the country.

These awards are not given lightly. To begin with, there is a written submission of a management plan to enable judges to make a desk-top assessment of the park or garden they are visiting. This is the basis for the first part of the marking.

Then the park or garden is visited – always by two judges.

I was present at the judging of Walkden Gardens – a fascinating place hidden away in Sale and visited by CGT in the past – so I knew what to expect visually.

The work on the gardens continues. Near the entrance and alongside the dovecote is the new dry-stone-walling incorporating two benches – the work of Cumbrian prize-winner, Andrew Loudon.



Around the dovecote area the Friends of Walkden Gardens have used old stones piled up in a corner of the garden to create smart, but unusual edging to the gravel walks. The effect is to make the whole area crisper.



Along the long border, stone slabs are being laid to create a firm border to the grass path.

As those who have visited know, these gardens are beautifully kept and full of fascination. But to get a Green Flag Award, much more needs to be demonstrated than an absence of litter and graffiti and the presence of well-tended and variable planting.

Accessibility is obviously important, but is it possible to demonstrate that the gardens are visited and used by all sections of the community? What about signs? And marketing materials?

Is there a work-plan so the gardener knows what he needs to do this week? What about plans for the future? And is the record of health and safety inspections up to date?

The tour of the garden, in the company of several members of the Friends of Walkden Gardens, the gardener and a representative of Trafford Council, took about an hour. The subsequent marking took twice as long. Each point was carefully discussed and points awarded – was it fair (5 or 6), good (7), very good (8), excellent (9) or exceptional (10)?

The marking varied, with some sections much higher than others. Judges record their comments and make recommendations so that when the Green Flag is awarded (or not), those who are responsible for the park or garden know where their strengths are and where they need to improve for future years.

In July, Walkden Gardens will find out whether or not they have kept their Green Flag, awarded last year.

For more information about the Green Flag Award and to find out how you could become a judge, visit www.greenflagaward.org.uk. And stay up to date with what is happening at Walkden Gardens by visiting www.walkdengardens.co.uk. For information on Andrew Loudon, go to www.drystone-walling.co.uk.

Joy Uings



Letter to the Editor

The latest newsletter was a joy to read, (sorry about the pun!) It was so interesting I read it from cover to cover without putting it down I liked the piece on historic weather conditions. One small amendment to Barbara Moth's comment on the Schmoller collection: To brighten things up: the Schmoller Collection of Decorated Papers.

I helped with the acquisition of the collection (not

purchase) as Mrs Tanya Schmoller kindly donated the collection to the University. The exhibition continues until 1 August 2008 (Open weekdays) and covers papers used for endpapers and wrappers for books and pamphlets, decorating boxes, trunks, cupboards, shelves, desks and screens.

A book is published to accompany the exhibition. It has 200 colour images covering gold embossed papers, marbling, block printing, paste papers, batik etc.

The cost is £60 for hardback, £30 paperback order e-mail: lib-spe-col@mmu.ac.uk or phone 0161 247 6107.

Gaye Smith

The Garden History Society's Liverpool conference, 3-6 July.

Over 100 delegates from the Garden History Society, a charity devoted to the study and appreciation of the history of designed landscapes, met in the delightful Greenbank setting of Derby & Rathbone Hall for their annual general meeting and conference.

It began with a 'magical mystery tour' of inner city sites and parks, including Newsham, Stanley and Calderstones Parks, views of the Liverpool One landscaping, the Garden Festival site, and other points of interest.

The Friday excursion took in Ince Blundell and Knowsley parks before visiting Croxteth's walled garden and Wavertree's Victorian scroll beds. We attracted some high-powered delegates and speakers including Gilly Drummond, an English Heritage commissioner with a special interest in promoting historic parks and gardens, and Jyll Bradley, artist in residence for the Capital of Culture's project on the Liverpool Botanic Garden's living collections.



Friday's programme concluded, at a reception in Sefton Park Palm House (*above*), with the launch of the new English Heritage book on Liverpool's parks. Its co-author, Professor Robert Lee, gave a scintillating introduction to the book and the GHS Chairman, Dr Colin Treen, had some warm words for the Historic Environment of Liverpool Project.

After Saturday's AGM a half-day excursion was made to Birkenhead Park, with tea in the Pavilion, followed by a short walk around Flaybrick Cemetery and finally a viewing of Burton's early post-war biscuit factory at Moreton. Here, there was great excitement at seeing the cascade of ponds designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe. An informative talk was delivered there by our chairman Ed Bennis.

After returning to Liverpool and following a brief visit to the newly refurbished garden behind the Bluecoat arts centre, delegates enjoyed a conference dinner at Liverpool's historic Athenaeum Club.

Charles Birnbaum, President of the U.S. Historic Landscapes Foundation, gave the keynote address, where he warned against the inappropriate juxtaposition of old and new while taking us on a whirlwind tour of some of America's Modern parks and gardens.

Another full-day excursion on Sunday took members first to Port Sunlight, where our coaches were driven around the avenues laid out by Thomas Mawson. Next stop was the Lady Lever Art Gallery, where tea was available downstairs and a new exhibition, "Lever the Collector", in the main galleries.



We then went on via Thornton Hough to Burton Manor, where the beautifully presented gardens designed by Thomas Mawson (*above*) were a great credit to the small garden staff. An Atelier has been created there, with rural development grants, providing artists' studios in converted outbuildings.

After lunch at Ness Botanic Garden, with a talk by Hugh McAllister outlining the history of Arthur Bulley's estate and his support for plant collectors in China, we drove to Tirley Garth near Utkinton. The highlight of our weekend, for many people, was to see the handsome Arts & Crafts mansion by C.E. Mallows partnered with one of Mawson's most ambitious private garden schemes.

John Edmondson



Congratulations !!

It is with enormous pleasure that we are able to announce that CGT member Ann Brooks has been awarded her doctorate for her PhD thesis on Manchester Botanic Gardens.

Ann shared with us the story of the long-since vanished gardens at a lecture in November 2006 (see *Newsletter No. 13, January 2007*). The gardens were on the site now occupied by the White City Retail Park where the imposing gates can still be seen.

Ann now lives near Bath, but travelled up to Manchester for the degree ceremony on 14th July. You can watch Ann receiving her degree on www.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/graduation/jul08/20080714/1215.ram

The Arley Schools Challenge



Above, the prize-winning garden from Appleton Thorn Primary School in Warrington.

The Arley Garden Festival at the end of June saw the culmination of several months work by nine schools.

Head gardener at Arley, Patrick Swan, together with TV's Chris Beardshaw, began the process, visiting each school, talking to pupils and working with staff, helping them design their gardens and grow their own plants.

But even they were astounded at the results – nine totally different gardens each measuring just 8' by 4'.

Chris Beardshaw judged Appleton Thorn Primary School the winners – prize was a greenhouse for their playground.

And the runners up were:

Great Budworth



Antrobus St. Marks



Alderley Edge School for Girls



Barnton Community School



Russet School, Weaverham



Willows Primary School



Whitley Village School



Mobberley Primary School

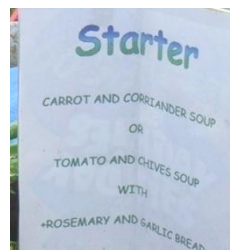


And it wasn't only the gardens. Inside the marquee each school displayed the work associated with the project



Next year....

Sponsors, Manchester Airport, and judge, Chris Beardshaw, want to see this competition take place again next year. Perhaps your children's/grandchildren's school might like to take part.



Garden Gnomes – love them or loathe them.....

In Newsletter No. 13 (January 2007), Dr Twigs Way made a plea for information for a book (now published as *A Crocodile in the Fernery**). She is now asking for help with a new volume.

"I have been asked by Osprey Publications to contribute a short book on Garden Gnomes to the 'Shire Handbook' range. The book will concentrate on the garden gnome, and will cover their inception in central and Eastern Europe, their introduction into England in the mid 19th century, and their brief period of popularity in the stately and country house garden of the 1870s-1900 period. It will also chart the subsequent popularity in middle and working class suburban gardens, and the decline in interest in larger gardens, as well as the RHS Chelsea ban, and later developments such as the Garden Gnome Liberation front.

"It is specifically with the story of the stately and country house garden gnome that I am asking for assistance. I have located about 5 instances of stately homes with gnomes, but am sure that there were more, it is just that history has dealt unkindly with the gnome, and people are often genuinely anxious to hide any outbreak of gnomes in the history of a well regarded garden!

"If your members have any old photographs from articles or guide books, or private archives, or have come across any references to gnomes in gardens during the course of their research I would be extremely grateful for information on these. I am particularly interested in the 1860s-1920s period, but later references to gnomes would also be welcome."

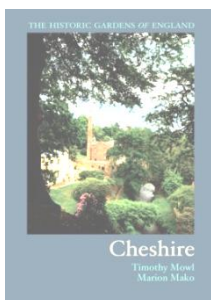
Twigs Way, 25 Elfleda Road, Cambridge, CB5 8LZ. Tel: 01223 710536; e-mail twigs@twigsway.com.

* *'A Crocodile in the Fernery, an A-Z of animals in the garden'* by Twigs Way was published in March and costs £12.99



Above: At least one garden owner in Nantwich is not ashamed to be seen displaying garden gnomes.

Historic Gardens of Cheshire



In our last edition we reported on the sometimes controversial views of Tim Mowl, speaker at our AGM. So it may be with excitement or trepidation (or both), that we anticipate the publication of Tim's book on Cheshire Gardens, which is due in October.

Tim "will give two generously illustrated lectures about some of the stories behind the county's better-known and some less well-known gardens. From the recently discovered Arcadian delights of a Rococo garden at Adlington to a modern potter's garden with Victorian parks and Lord Leverhulme's vision at Port Sunlight in between, Tim will uncover some of the delights of this county's rich garden heritage. Accompanying him will be the co-author Marion Mako. Both talks will be followed by the opportunity to purchase the book and meet the author."

So, if you missed Tim at the AGM or just want to hear something new, why not book for one of the following: Wednesday 15 October, 7.30 pm at The Grosvenor Museum, Chester. Tickets £3 on the door. Hosted by Chester Civic Trust.

Thursday 16 October, 2.30 at Knutsford Methodist Church, Princess Street, Knutsford. As part of the Knutsford Literature Festival. Tickets are £4 and may be booked from the Knutsford Tourist Information Centre from early September.

There will be book signings after each talk.

Have you remembered to renew your membership?

If not, this will be your last newsletter.

If you are in any doubt, please contact Jacqui Jaffé to confirm your status.

Tel: 01270 620100

e-mail: jacqui_jaffe@excite.com

Cheshire Gardens, Parks and Gardeners

...is the title for this year's Cheshire History Day on Saturday 25 October at Northwich Memorial Hall.

Themed to tie in with Cheshire's Year of Gardens '08, the day starts with Sam Youd on the cultural influences on the gardens at Tatton.

Following Sam, Elizabeth Davey will talk on The Public Parks of Cheshire and the Work of Edward Kemp.

In the afternoon Jonathan Pepler of the Cheshire Records Office will be Digging in the Archives to examine eight centuries of Cheshire Gardens and Wendy Morgan will end the day with a look at Victorian Villa Gardens: Examples from Alderley Edge.

Booking forms are obtainable from Jean Fortune at Cheshire Record Office, tel: 01244 603017 e-mail Jean.Fortune@cheshire.gov.uk.

The AGT Annual Conference: 29-31 August

... this year is being hosted by Dorset Gardens Trust and (with apologies to Thomas Hardy) is entitled "Far From the Madding Crowd".

You can find full details of the weekend on their web-site: www.dorsetgardenstrust.co.uk, but here is a taster:

"Dorset is relatively far from the rush and hubbub of modern life and we look forward to showing you our hidden treasures. We have long been a forgotten county with few large estates and only two gardens by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, two gardens with Repton connections and for one garden where Gertrude Jekyll supplied plans on which she worked with Thomas Mawson.

However, Dorset's once grand houses have always kept their footprints in the landscape and mellowed over the

years to leave us with tempting glimpses of our rich and diverse past. Many Elizabethan and Jacobean houses dropped down the social scale and became working farms until the early C20 when discerning awareness led to their revival, and some of our best gardens date from this period.

The exciting creation of new gardens promises well for the future and the continuation of our garden heritage in Dorset."

There are eight sites to be visited – none of them well-known – from the old to the new.

The full residential cost is £220 and a booking form is on the web-site.

If you don't have access to a computer, contact Judy Tuke on 01935 872269.

Plant Hunters' Fair at the Dorothy Clive Garden

What to do for August Bank Holiday weekend? Here is the perfect event for all plant lovers.

For just £2.50 you can get admission to the Dorothy Clive Garden and the Plant Fair on Sunday and Monday 24-25 August, 10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

The Dorothy Clive Garden is 12 acres and includes summer borders, a woodland garden, spectacular waterfall, alpine scree, damp garden and gravel garden.

The plant fair features 12 specially selected nurseries and will include many rare and unusual varieties of plants.

There will be free guided tours of the garden and talks on its history by curator Paul Macauley.

The Garden is in Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, on the A51, midway between Nantwich and Stone, and 2.5 miles from the village of Woore.

Fireworks at Combermere

Don't forget the fireworks on Saturday 9 August.

There will be three teams competing for your text-votes, starting at 9.30 p.m and a closing display by organisers MLE Pyrotechnics Ltd.

But arrive when the gates open at 5 p.m. and enjoy the gardens, let the kids play on the bouncy castles, learn

how music shows are produced and listen to interviews with the teams.

Take a picnic or buy food on-site. You can pre-book with MLE on 0845 833 4428. Adults £13; Children £5.00 (booking fee £1.50); or pay on the night – adults £15; children £5.

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, tel: 0161 969 3300 or e-mail joy.uings@btconnect.com.