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Some future events:

- ✧ The Winter Garden: lecture by Mike Buffin – Thursday 20 November (*with booksale, see page 10*)
- ✧ AGM and Spring Lecture – March, see page 15 for information about the speaker
- ✧ Tulips in bloom! at Stamford Park – April



Massey Hall, Thelwall

An Edward Kemp Design

What do we associate with Thelwall? Yes, one of those Cheshire sections of the M6 where we are likely to be stuck in a traffic jam! Next time you are, reduce your stress levels by thinking of the historic landscape within half a mile to the west

Massey Hall was built for Peter Rylands around 1874. The Rylands family owned the wire drawing works in

central Warrington, which was one of the principal employers in the town, and Peter was the MP. His substantial house with outbuildings sits in the centre of a self-contained park; sweeping areas of meadow and drives are surrounded by mature woodland.

The location is very secluded, and its tranquillity in spite of the background motorway noise, is a tribute

to the success of the design.

The site was brought to the notice of the CGT Conservation and Planning Group last year by Mike Taylor, local resident and historian, who was aware of the Trust's interest in historic parks and gardens.

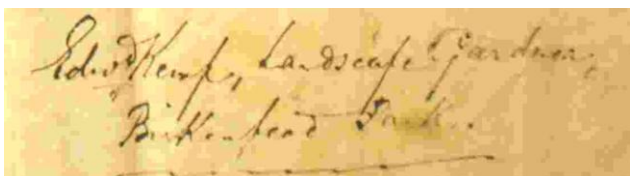
While researching the history of Thelwall, (and preparing an excellent lecture of the same title), Mike found a roll of plans for Massey Hall at Warrington Library.

The plans are drawn in coloured inks on oiled linen, and are in very good condition. They show the outline design of the park, denoting tree groups, and the garden/farm buildings.

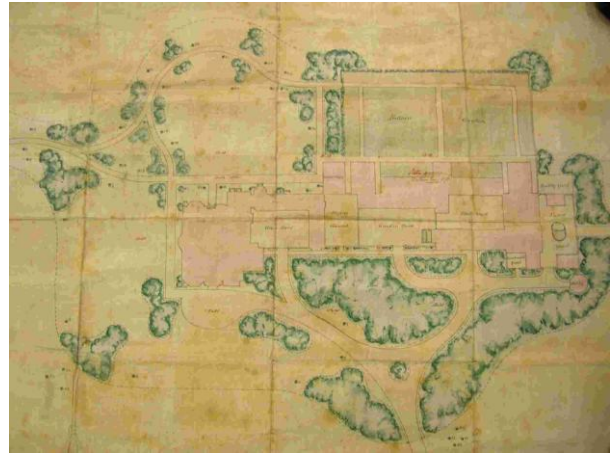
Initial research on Massey Hall reveals the following notable points of interest:

- It is a 19th century villa built for Peter Rylands, one of a group of villas built by the Rylands brothers, whose wire drawing company bearing their name was based in Warrington and is part of the town's industrial heritage. Thelwall had become accessible through the coming of the railway and provided an attractive location for the residences of successful businessmen.
- Peter Rylands employed Edward Kemp, the foremost landscape designer of his day, to design Massey Park. Kemp trained with Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth, was recommended by Paxton to supervise the construction of Birkenhead Park and subsequently became Superintendent there; he designed parks and gardens for public and private clients predominantly in the north west and used his experience to write "How to Lay Out a Garden", the most influential 19th century book on garden design.
- Kemp's coloured, signed drawings for Massey Hall show his designs for the lodge (which survives), extensive and fine glasshouses, stables and farm buildings as well as the layout of drives and planting.
- Comparison of these plans with the site reveals that although some historic garden buildings have been lost, (the glasshouses and farm buildings), the layout remains. The majority of the parkland planting and drives are intact, complete with railings and gates. This is a remarkable survival of a Kemp design for a private park, since Kemp undertook more commissions for public landscapes than private ones.

Given these facts, the Trust considers the grounds of Massey Hall to be a designed historic landscape of local, regional and possibly of national importance.



The plans bear Kemp's signature



The site is worthy of consideration for inclusion on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, because it meets three of the criteria set down by English Heritage for inclusion on the Register, namely:

- Sites with a main phase of development between 1820 and 1880 which is of importance and survives intact or relatively intact.
- Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout, or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance.
- Sites having an association with significant persons or historical events.

In addition the site appears to be well recorded, adding to understanding and interest in the site.

Latterly, the house and park have been in the ownership of Lancashire County Council (LCC) and used as a special school. LCC have recently sold the site; the new owners and their intentions for development are currently unknown.

As some of you will know, one of the activities of the Trust is the research and recording of historic designed landscapes, parks and gardens. The work will in time be compiled into a gazetteer. The information gathered is already proving helpful to local planning authorities in the historic county of Cheshire, in understanding their heritage assets and informing planning policy.

Warrington has a limited number of historic parks and gardens making it all the more important that those that remain are conserved and protected. The Trust would like the significance of Massey Hall as a historic designed landscape to be recognized and to inform change as the property is re-used.

Barbara Moth and Maria Bull



The entrance today

We are very grateful to Warrington Borough Council; Libraries, Heritage and Learning for their permission to reproduce images of the Kemp plans shown on the previous pages.

A facsimile re-print of Kemp's book 'How to Lay out a Garden' (second edition 1858) has been published this year.

Peter Rylands (1820-1887) was a businessman, a magistrate and an MP. He was interested in politics from an early age, although he spent most of his early years in a study of natural history and phrenology. At the age of 21, discovering that his father's fortune had shrunk alarmingly, with his brothers he took over his father's non-paying iron and steel works in Warrington, becoming a successful and wealthy businessman.

He entered Parliament in 1868 when he became MP for Warrington, losing his seat in 1874. He then became MP for Burnley, and was the sitting MP when he died, aged 66, at Massey Hall, on February 7th 1887.

His death was widely reported. The Pall Mall Gazette said he was "...one of the best known members of the House of Commons ... familiarly known as 'Peter'."

The Aberdeen Weekly Journal said: "... Although Mr. Rylands did not occupy a foremost place in the ranks of statesmen, the reputation for consistency, independence, and firmness which he had deservedly acquired, secured for him the esteem and confidence of his countrymen."

The Daily News: "... Our Burnley Correspondent telegraphs: "The news of the death of Mr. Rylands was startling in its suddenness to the inhabitants of Burnley, and was received with universal feelings of regret."

Several months later, The Leeds Mercury reported on the granting of Probate. Massey Hall was left to the use and occupation of his widow, Caroline. The "... service of plate given to him by his constituents of Warrington in recognition of services in Parliament is to devolve as an heirloom...."

One of the things Peter Rylands left was his Natural History collection. As early as March 1840 he had donated specimens to the Warrington Natural History Society. In 1841 he was vice-president of the Warrington Phrenological Society.

Massey Hall became the home of Peter Rylands' third son, William Peter (who was always known as 'Peter'). This second Peter became, in turn, a successful businessman and was eventually knighted (1921) and made a baronet (1939). Like his father, he died at Massey Hall, the day before his 80th birthday, which he had spent in his office in Warrington.

BRUSSELS Daily

Escape from Gaasbeek

20 Sept 2008: Word has just reached our news desk of a group of 17 British tourists, initially thought to be vegans, who were locked into the Gaasbeek Museum Gardens near Brussels.

It appears that the intrepid garden voyeurs had difficulty in getting into the gardens to see the magnificent display of fruit and vegetables.

However, their exit posed even greater problems when they came to leave for lunch, the gates were locked.

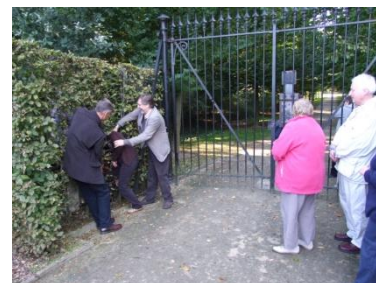
Few were initially bothered as they had secretly feasted on some of the finest apples, blackberries and yellow raspberries to be found anywhere in the kingdom.

Those who ate the blackberries were stained with the evidence; thankfully the other fruits left no tell-tale sign on the hands so they appeared innocent.

But as hunger and time took over, one prisoner scaled the other entrance gate unbeknown to the rest.

They managed to find a slight gap in the hedges with only one wire – thankfully not electric – which they spread open and passed their Belgian host, Herman van den Bossche, through for help.

Sadly, Herman could not find anyone with the keys so taking matters in their own hands, the great escape began by helping one CGT member through at a time.



The hedge was pushed together again, and the forbidden fruit eaters gloried in their escape and then went for a delightful lunch at the nearby de graff van Egmond restaurant-with a substantial amount of beer and wine to celebrate and to settle the nerves.

Most appeared to have escaped directly back to England, although two attempted to avoid the fruit police and were last heard of as they crossed the Swiss border.

Our thanks to Ed Bennis for the above 'news report'.

Adlington Hall and gardens

Adlington Hall is built on the site of a former hunting lodge in the Forest of Macclesfield. It was originally a traditional Cheshire black and white timber-framed manor house, complete with moat. In the late 17th century the Great Hall, apart from the porch, was encased in brick and tall mullioned windows installed. In the 18th century, the classical south front was added.



Above left, the rear is still timber-framed. Above right, the portico bears the names of the owners and the date of building.

To the front of the Hall is an extensive area of grass. In the centre of an oval lawn encircled by a gravel drive stands a sundial. Beyond this the grass sweeps down towards a pair of iron gates which lead to an ancient avenue of Dutch limes, planted in 1688 to mark the accession of William and Mary (a political statement indicating that the owners were Whigs).



At the end of the avenue a path leads eastwards to the Shell House, a small brick building dating from 1794, with walls which were decorated with shells (*left*) and coloured mirrors in the

19th century. The façade is triangular in form and overlooks the Yew Walk.

To the back and side of the Shell house is the Rock Garden, thought to date from the early 19th century when such features became popular, largely due to the increasing exploration of mountain regions abroad. It is constructed of very large boulders which must have been difficult to manoeuvre into position.

Adjacent to the Shell House is the Kitchen Garden (not open to the public) which now contains polytunnels and glasshouses for propagation purposes because Adlington produces much of its own plant material for the garden.

The back of the Shell House looks out on to a pleasure ground in the 'Wilderness' style, which became popular in the 18th Century. Winding paths follow a planned route through a woodland area with viewpoints, follies and footbridges over the River Dene situated amongst the trees. Adlington is an early example in Cheshire of this change from the strictly formal. In the late 19th century the pleasure gardens and wilderness were described as being the most magnificent in the county.

Unfortunately, over time, encroaching vegetation (in particular rhododendrons, self-seeded trees, ivies and brambles) has damaged or hidden some of these features. However, with trees felled and scrub removed, pathways, buildings, glades and vistas are now being restored.

Old specimen trees, such as monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*), Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), Cork Oak (*Quercus ruber*) and copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) remain. In some instances fallen trees have produced new growth and, in the case of the 'Spider Tree', have taken on a weird arachnid form.

The dappled light under the trees has allowed an under-storey of native and planted shrubs, ferns and other woodland species (such as wild garlic, wood anemones and carpets of bluebells) to evolve, providing a haven for wildlife.

From the edge of the Wilderness, a sham castle, designed to draw the eye into the distance, could be seen in the past. This has disappeared, as has the deer park which extended on to what is now farmland.

Hidden amongst the trees at the far end of the Wilderness is the Temple of Diana, a circular domed temple with Doric columns, carvings of leaves and surmounted by a crescent moon. This is one of the finest neo-classical garden buildings to be found in Cheshire.



Above left the Temple of Diana, from which one can view the cascade where the river god used to sit – above right

Also amongst the trees was a statue of the river god, Father Tiber, who reclined on some rocks over a cascade and stone-lined pool. The statue has been re-located to a safer position adjacent to the Hall, but his rock promontory remains and can be seen clearly from the Temple of Diana along a recently cleared glade.

Recently cleared of ivy and brambles and with restoration work in progress, another of the Wilderness' interesting little buildings, the Rathouse is once again visible. No neo-classicism this time – but gothic windows and irregular walls.

Further along the serpentine pathway is the 18th century Hermitage. Although now reduced to a pile of stones and rubble by the river, at one time it would

have added yet another dimension to the attractions of the Wilderness. Such places had no religious significance, but were designed to entertain.

The Hermitage would have had its own resident hermit who, according to convention, would have been expected to remain silent and refrain from socializing.

Generally the hermit was unshaven and hirsute in appearance. According to tradition there is a black gravestone close to the Hermitage at Adlington: if the hermit stayed and prayed for Charles Legh and then died in office, his family would inherit the estate.

Further towards the Hall is the Tig House, a small, square, decorated, black and white shelter, oriental in appearance, which overlooks the River Dene to one side and a grassy glade once used as a tennis court to the other. Continuing the oriental theme is the Chinese Bridge across the river, sadly now lacking its pagoda and railings.

Much work has been undertaken at Adlington but obtaining external funding for private houses and gardens is difficult.

On the plus side, however, there are not the constraints and strict management regimes which apply to National Trust and English Heritage properties.

Instead, new garden projects can be undertaken which reflect the interests of the owner.

At Adlington the former mill pond which was silted-up and overgrown has been cleared and converted into a rose garden, reached by crossing the drained moat and walking beneath a pergola along a cobbled path that was possibly once a cascade.

The large circular garden is framed by a range of climbing roses supported by ropes.



Beyond is the Maze. At its centre stands a stone statue of a unicorn (the family crest) surrounded by a bed of annuals.

There is also a Laburnum Walk and further developments, including a new garden along the edge, are being planned.

Also of more recent construction is the water garden across the cobbled courtyard at the rear of the Hall. Here the relocated statue of Father Tiber lies at the back of a formal rectangular pool, water pouring from a pitcher on which he leans and water plants reflected on the surface.



Adlington is a Grade II* Historic Landscape

Ruth Brown

Does gardening float your boat?



The gardens of the Villa Lante, north of Rome, are famous for having four boats in the midst of a renaissance garden. For a week this summer Middlewich, north of London, was famous for having four gardens in boats.

The buzz created by 'Cheshire Year of Gardens' had inspired a team drawn from local authority and third sector organisations to dream up a 'Floating Garden Festival' – bringing horse-powered horticulture to 20,000 folk music and canal enthusiasts.

In the true spirit of British eccentricity, the concept behind the 'Floating Garden Festival' was to 'plant' gardens on canal narrow boats which would travel Cheshire's waterways from four starting points. The gardens would then meet together to form part of the Middlewich 'Folk and Boat Festival' an annual event now in its 18th year.

This was a novel way to bring the attention of a new audience to the County's rich horticultural heritage.

I was commissioned by the National Waterways Trust to design the 'floating garden' to be on a 70 foot by 7 foot heritage narrow boat which is part of the collection at the Ellesmere Port Museum.

The Museum has an excellent track record of finding novel ways to promote their work to new groups of stakeholders and their enthusiasm would prove to be a vital part in making the floating garden idea a reality.

The overall aim was to celebrate Cheshire and 'Made in Cheshire' is an exciting organisation of plant and garden centres, product makers, food producers and other suppliers. Having 'borrowed' their name they were clearly at least our starting point.

My concept was, rather than create a garden that simply showed their products, against a backdrop of ornamental plants, we should use the actual food plants as the garden.



Central to the garden idea would be to invite our audience to think not just about the product on the supermarket shelf but the harvest, the whole plants and their growing cycles.

One of my main aims was to source everything from within the county and to keep 'plant-miles' at least by road to a minimum.

Generous contributors came first from the 'Made in Cheshire' group. Some dozen or so individual producers, garden centres, larger commercial organisations and research centres all contributed material.

As designer, it was an exciting challenge to create a garden from a synthesis of my original concept and 'planting list', modified to accommodate the material the sponsors could provide.

My palette included food plants, plants to attract specific wildlife, decorative plants as 'companions', a

beehive, a forest of pine saplings, a milk churn, two blocks of cheese, potato plants and many other items representative of Cheshire.



For practical reasons I decided to have everything in pots as large as possible, rather than trying to plant into soil on the boat. Many items were grown especially for us by Warrington's Walton Lea Project – set up to help adults with learning difficulties – who supplied everything from lettuce and tomatoes to broad beans and trailing pumpkins.

'Shad', built in 1936, has seen many different cargoes in her years plying the canals of England. She has been loaded with all kinds of goods, from sugar and flour to coal and metal ingots, but even she must have wondered what a group of Boat Museum volunteers and an artist garden designer intended to do with 50 assorted pallets and what looked like a delivery from a garden centre.

Five days later, like an exhibit at the RHS show, the pallets and pots were obscured by planting and with a blessing from the Canon of Chester Shad set sail.



The project did meet its objective. The Garden was extremely well received by staff, volunteers, general public and organised groups.



The plants survived well – even the odd storm and high winds – and the crew managed to keep it watered and deadheaded. They were able to eat some of the produce – strawberries, peas, lettuce, watercress and herbs – during the journey and even gave tasters to visitors.

A new audience to gardening did engage with it and it inspired visitors to think about growing their own produce. The reach of the project was extended with coverage by local Press and radio stations; a live item on prime time BBC North West being a highlight.

For me it really was a ‘voyage of discovery’. I met a passionate watercress grower, on the Wirral, corresponded with the world champion gooseberry grower – Kelvin Archer, head gardener at Rode Hall, and discovered ‘Timperley Early’ rhubarb – a variety particular to Cheshire, borrowed plants from Liverpool University’s Botanical Gardens at Ness and more and more.

It is in the very nature of gardening that there are always new things to learn. That learning is a joy that gardeners share so willingly it has been a privilege to work amongst them.

Christine Wilcox-Baker



Our thanks to John Moore of the Boat Museum for photo page 5 and top photo on this page. Others courtesy of Christine.



Textile Exhibition – Bringing George to Bramall

George Forrest – the plant hunter who brought us so many plants from China and elsewhere – is remembered in an exhibition being held at Bramall Hall until 9 November. It is open daily (except Mondays) from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The exhibition is a presentation by three local textile artists – Pauline Coddington, Jenny Head and Hilary Clarke.

“Textiles blended into photography, silver fir foliage made into a jacket... A rare opportunity to view the creative works through the use of textiles.”

The exhibition is free, though normal admission price to the Hall. See www.bramallhall.org.uk.

The Hidden Gardens of Nantwich

Members who braved a lunchtime deluge were rewarded with the privilege of visiting an amazingly varied collection of private gardens open for the “Hidden Gardens of Nantwich”, an annual event from which half of the proceeds were donated to the Cheshire Gardens Trust in this, Cheshire’s Year of Gardens.

For those of us unfamiliar with Nantwich it was also a delight to explore, taking in the fantastic heritage of buildings and spaces around the town centre. In fact as the sunshine came out we dallied so long looking at plants, talking to owners and taking tea that we didn’t quite make it to every garden – a good reason to return next year.

From the diversity of gardens enjoyed that afternoon, the two things that stood out were the creative use of space and the contribution that private gardens can make to public space.

Three of the small gardens that impressed for their use of space were:

- 80 North Crofts – a terraced property where an attractive conservatory provides the link in a sequence of attractive indoor and outdoor living spaces, the walled garden full of detail and attractive planting.
- 9 Nixon’s Row – a new house with a garden created this summer using reclaimed timber and artefacts, interspersed with specimen plants and ornamental grasses.
- 1 Rectory Close – a pocket sized garden, perhaps the size of a parking space, was an object lesson in how much interest can be created and enjoyment provided in a tiny area. It included a water feature, superb quality plants and manicured specimens in pots on paving, plinths and pergolas.



Two larger gardens on Barker Street, walled town gardens that had formerly extended to the River Weaver and are now truncated by a recent road, provided beautifully planted tranquil private spaces in the heart of the town, oases of greenery and lush planting.



Above: sheltering from the wet weather and preparing to dive into a water feature. Gardens can be fun!

Though most of the gardens were largely or completely hidden to the passerby, part of Malcolm Smith’s garden at 84 Hospital Street, was the exception.

The property forms the last in a row of cottages that formerly extended towards the Boot and Shoe. When acquired it had a small walled garden terminated by a tumbledown outhouse beyond which lay space left over from development – in this case a neglected piece of shrubbery encompassing one tree belonging to the adjacent supermarket.

From Hospital Street a public footpath passes between No. 84 and the Boot and Shoe to the supermarket car park, a formerly unattractive and uninviting route and the site of a mugging, an event that became somewhat of a catalyst for change.

Renovation was not limited to the cottage but extended to the garden and in consultation with the supermarket, to appropriation of the unwanted shrubbery.

The tumbledown outhouse was rebuilt with a gateway into the space beyond allowing views from the kitchen sink through the private delightfully planted courtyard garden to the supermarket space beyond.

Here the tree has been retained, the shrubbery cleared and replaced with flowery borders enclosed by a picket fence.

The space has become a delightful surprise for those using the footpath, a viewing garden, well maintained and changing with the seasons.

Work has continued beyond the walls, a narrow bed between the walled garden and path being enclosed by a fine iron fence and planted with scented roses, shrubs and bulbs.

Malcolm tends shrubs on the other side of the path too so that the whole path from Hospital Street to the supermarket car park is a sensory delight. People now choose to use this route rather than avoid it so that they can enjoy the garden, delight in the planting and see what has changed since their last trip.

A new meaning to public/private partnership? Perhaps not, but it does show how the imagination and enthusiasm of an individual can contribute to public well being and community happiness.

Barbara Moth

See before and after photos on next page



Above: cleared of tangled weeds and awaiting transformation.
Right the same path (seen from the other end) is now a pleasure to walk down.



Above: a digger works on the piece of ground owned by the supermarket. Right – now a delightful courtyard garden for passers by to enjoy.



£££££ Treasurer's Farewell £££££

My involvement with the CGT began after a chance meeting with one of the founding members, Barbara Wright, at a Yorkshire Gardens Trust event in the Cockpit Garden at Richmond Castle: a project in which I had been professionally involved for English Heritage.

The Trust was in its formative stage and at the first meeting I attended I offered to fulfil the role of Treasurer such was the enthusiasm of the group and a need for this position to be filled.

From experience with the Landscape Institute, I knew I would be able to contribute either the minimum of necessary actions to ensure the finances ran smoothly or devote as much time as I wished to this new project.

After five years with the Trust I now wish to turn my attention to a new venture – my partner and I are expecting our first child this December, so I am stepping down from my role at the CGT and the Trust is looking for an enthusiastic new member to join the Committee of Management.

My role over the past five years has been to keep a record of all financial transactions the Trust undertakes, by being the primary account holder for the bank and control outgoings by handling all cheques and expenses payments. In addition I have reported the state of the accounts regularly to the Committee and prepared a short report for the AGM each year.

With the support of other Committee members I have prepared the end of year accounts and prepared yearly budgets.

You do not need to be an accountant to be a successful Treasurer! It is a role well suited to someone with time, motivation and organisational skills and who is confident with numbers with an ability to keep good records.

If you are interested in offering to fulfil this role within the Committee but are unsure of the commitment required, please do not hesitate to contact me; I won't be disappearing just yet!

Rachel Devine, Treasurer CGT
devinerachel@blueyonder.co.uk

Were you at RHS Tatton this year? Did you visit the 'Tales from a Chinese Garden' exhibit created by staff from Manchester Metropolitan University. Below one of the team gives us the insider's lowdown on preparing for the show. Then we have a personal experience of helping out. To round off the Chinese motif, we re-print an article from the Manchester Times of 28 January 1843.

Building a Show Garden



While the ideas for *Tales from a Chinese Garden* were months in the making, it was only about five weeks before we got on site that we had confirmation of the sponsor's money.

It was a mad rush to get everything sorted including the design, contractors and materials. I knew that no matter how good a concept or design is, it would be let down by poor workmanship and materials.

There was also an enormous amount of paperwork to process from arranging for simple things such as water and electricity, dealing with risk assessments, and arranging site passes.

Planning is the key as the show gardens have just two weeks to be built, ready for judging and opened to the public.

Sites are released on a Sunday for 'pegging out', which means plotting the form of the garden on the ground; physical work starts the next day and includes weekends.

From here the start seems gentle enough, supplies arrive when you expect them and the problems are small, such as the water connection hasn't been paid.



Then the large trees and stones arrive; hard to imagine a tree weighing as much as a small car. These are craned in, but we also have to work out how we will get them out of the holes after the show.

Within three days, the site looks like a Bruegel painting with people, tools and machines packed into a tiny area. People digging, shifting soil, measuring, laying paving, cutting stone, planting and measuring again to decide if everything is in the right place.

The rains come and we erect shelters, not for our tea breaks – that was done on Day 2, but so we can continue to work.

Changes happen constantly but they are not too far from what we intended; the plan is used as a guideline. The final positions for the oven, dragon mosaic and the steel rill are sorted.

The pond is one of the biggest problems: you have to get the edges right, which means they cannot be seen. The liner edge is tucked in, to be covered later with plants and stone.



Fixing the steel deck and pavilion went without incident, but the pipe from the pump to the rill was simply too short. The hand pump caused no end of debate as to where it should be and how it should be mounted.

Our work schedule meant that all of the hard landscape works were to be finished in the first week. The best laid plans ... means working on the weekend.

Plants arrived on Monday giving us a week to get them in, tidy and mulch the areas. Work needed to be finished by Sunday.

We had planned on the tensile structure arriving in the first week, not the second week. We had to manipulate the heavy steel structure between the plants and onto its mounting block, hoping the block was in the right place.

Plants are a funny thing, no matter how many plans you draw, they really need to be sorted on site. This means your workforce standing around while you scratch your head wondering if you have them in the right place.

We have to trim out some leaves on the handkerchief tree, which must be about £5 per leaf. We seem to have too many of some plants, and not enough of

others which is always the case. The 'mountain' seemed far too hard and that meant chasing across Cheshire to find more Chinese plants.

This was the last stage, where panic and adrenaline became the driving force.

At last the plants are in the ground, the stone sculptures positioned, the mulch laid, and the sail flying and ready for judging.



Monday and Tuesday were spent preening and cleaning – not a dead leaf in sight, nor a pebble out of place.

Two minutes in front of the judges to explain the design and it's over. But then the real show begins with our real judges, the public, and none of this would have been possible without an amazing team of professionals.

We received a Silver Medal for our efforts, of course we wanted better but it was our first attempt ... will there be another attempt next year? That remains to be seen.

If nothing else, the public loved it (although there were a few exceptions) and if you saw the September issue of Cheshire Life, we received high praise from Sam Youd.

He said 'I decided that the garden *Tales from a Chinese Garden* was one of my favourites ... It was interactive and the use of the various Chinese plants was extremely educational'. Honestly we didn't pay him a penny, although he did get some cuttings!

Ed Bennis



I WAS A TATTON TART (Tried And Really Tested)

Chris Talbot and I have handed out leaflets from small stalls in quiet marquees at RHS Tatton in previous years and enjoyed the experience, so when we received the appeal for help with the Manchester Metropolitan University garden this year we responded readily. (Free parking and admission was a minor inducement, of course.)

We vaguely expected to be helping out with a small back-to-back garden – no problem – but then we learnt that it would be a large show garden, "Tales from a Chinese Garden", and began to panic.

Fortunately when we found the garden Ed Bennis was there and had already watered and tidied everything, and as he had helped design the garden he could give us plenty of information about it. We were fitted out with black t-shirts with an attractive floral panel on the front. From the back we looked like bikers or gang members.

Ed mentioned that the garden had featured prominently on the BBC television programme about RHS Tatton the previous night, and we soon learnt the power of publicity when promptly at ten o'clock the gates were opened and hordes of visitors bore down on us, all eager to see more of our garden after the television coverage. At times people were three deep around the perimeter, waiting patiently for a chance to get a good look at it.

The media had also been attracted and Ed spent a lot of the morning being interviewed by radio and

television reporters. Dr Erica Wright, whose sculptures in the garden stimulated much praise and comment, helped lighten the media load.

Chris and I were kept busy distributing explanatory leaflets and answering queries. Fortunately as Ed was there we were able to divert to him really testing questions, such as, "What is the name of that plant?"

Some people did not believe that the capsicums hanging from bamboo poles were real and insisted on pinching them to check, and I had to speak sharply to a couple of people who gave the garden a casual glance and then announced loudly that it was Japanese.

Most of the visitors praised the garden highly and appreciated the classical music played on a Chinese zither. Even those who disliked the waterfall/dragon's body made from genuine Chinese oil tins were prepared to listen to our arguments. Some wanted to know from which Chinese restaurant's back door we had acquired them!



Chris and I were people-watching. Costumes were mostly practical or garden party, though some ladies looked as if they had come straight from a wild all-night party, and I really don't think black leather and brass studs are suitable wear for the RHS.

However, we awarded Sam Youd, Tatton's head gardener, a Gold for his floral tie with added Mickey Mice.

It was the hottest day of the year so far and there was a lot of body-heat being given off. The sweet smell of jasmine mixed with the whiff of bacon butties as the sun burned down. Chris and I each had a very short break for lunch, but that was our only rest. The afternoon volunteers arrived for their shift and we were ready to go.

Chris and I spent an hour looking at plants and buying some of them, but by then our feet were at least size ten so we decided to go home.

Unfortunately ...!

All the traffic leaving Tatton had to turn right at the gate, and there were no instructions on how to get back to where you actually wanted to go.

Chris and I have to report that large areas of Cheshire are pitifully short of signposts.

We explored various towns and villages, the M56 (North and South), and the outskirts of Manchester before we eventually found our way home.

I decided that if we found ourselves in Hale for a third time, it would be a sign that we should stop there for the rest of our lives. Chris wasn't sure about this.

I finally tottered into my house, weakly crying, "Gin and tonic!" My husband took one look at me and sprang to obey my order.

It was a grand day out.

Sheila Holroyd

CHINESE FLOWER GARDENS

The Chinese gardens are of a peculiar character, and differ altogether from ours in their arrangements; while the care bestowed on them by their possessors exceeds anything of which we could have formed an idea. To each branch, often even to each leaf of a tree or a shrub, the utmost pains are taken to give the appropriate turn, and the gardeners may be seen sitting constantly beside the plants, and employed in binding and pruning them, in order to accomplish the desired form. The production of the greatest variety and contrast of colours is the chief object of the Chinese flower-gardeners. Strangers to refinement and the tender emotions, the Chinese have no taste for the pure and tranquil enjoyment which the perfumes of sweet-scented flowers yield. It is only in gaudy colours, and by a marvellous skill in developing singular growths, that the Chinese gardener excels. Long and straight alleys run directly through their gardens, and are bordered by low trees of one and the same species. We visited these gardens (in the vicinity of Canton) in the month of November, and remarked the following objects: - Close to the entrance were large masses of Chrysanthemums, the blossoms of which had attained an extraordinary size. Then followed whole plots of Citrons and Shaddocks, which were raised in pots, and loaded with fruit; and it was remarkable that all these fruits were divided into segments, and thus formed permanent monstrosities, which were further propagated by grafts. It is by such mis-growth that they acquire a finger-shaped appearance, which occurs also occasionally in our conservatories. In China these fruits are cultivated assiduously, not only for the adornment of the gardens, but also for the sake of the well-known Chinese preserved Citron, of which large quantities come to us by commerce. For this purpose they use chiefly the smaller fruits, three or four inches long, which are boiled in refined sugar. The larger fruits of monstrous shape are of the Shaddock kind, and often from ten to eleven inches long, while the several segments extend singly in all directions. In the gardens these odd-shaped fruits, as well as the sweet Oranges, with which whole plots are planted, have a neat appearance, as they do not allow any trunk to form, but force them at once to spread into branches. Large borders are to be seen planted with *Camellia japonica*, and others with Cockscombs, some with white, others with yellow or red flowers; the yellow-flowered plants had shot particularly high, and they were so arranged that all the plants in a bed were of one and the same colour. We also saw in the gardens a species of *Scilla*, very like *Sc. Maritime*, which showed the same sort of monstrosity as the Cockscomb. We observed Bamboos in pots, the stems of which were two or three feet high, and were wound into a spiral form from below upwards. Among the trees were the *Leechee*, *Banana*, *Averhoa carambola*, and various Palms, on the stems of which *Epidendrums* were trained. The ponds of these gardens, some of which were very large, contain beautiful fish, which are fed by a disgusting but common method among the Chinese, which is said to render them very plump. The stools in the pleasure-houses are, for the most part, of a coarse sort of porcelain, or they are formed of large flat stones supported by wooden frames; which, by their coolness in summer, must be very agreeable to sit upon, when one is accustomed to them. Single borders are frequently edged with a small leaved *Box-tree*; and the long walks are bounded by hedges of *Averrhoa*, *Olea fragrans*, and other plants which were new to us. On the whole, we must allow that the planting in regular masses of the large-flowered Chrysanthemums, with Oranges, Camellias, Kalmias, and tall Cockscombs, is not altogether devoid of beauty; but a stranger can hardly reconcile himself to an arrangement which must appear to him so contrary to the rules of good taste. Hydrangeas and Asters seemed at this time to be out of fashion, for we saw very few of them. – **Dr. Meyens's Reise um die Erde.** [originally published c. 1834]

Family fun at Grappenhall Heys

In order to encourage more members of the local community to enjoy the pleasures of visiting Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden, the Friends of the Walled Garden recently arranged two special events aimed at children (and their parents – or in some cases grandparents, aunts and uncles).

The Slugs and Bugs Day in early July saw families searching the gardens for hidden pictures of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians as well as the ubiquitous invertebrates which were then identified as garden friends or foes.



Other activities involved making masks and giant butterflies and dragonflies and producing coloured drawings of a range of garden wildlife to be made into a giant collage.

Parents, too, soon began to take part in the activities in addition to enjoying the refreshments provided by the volunteers.

The Scarecrow Days in September drew even bigger crowds, with over sixty children and adults on one day alone showing their skill and versatility in making scarecrows of all shapes and sizes.

Fathers in particular seemed to rise to the occasion.



At the end of the day families were seen loading their scarecrows into their cars; one group came from Wigan having seen the event advertised on the walled garden web site.

Another family was spotted walking down Witherwin Avenue with a staid looking gentleman and a very gaudily dressed lady.

Other scarecrows ventured less far, finding a resting place in the vegetable plot.

Ruth Brown

The Friends were busy again on 5th October. Elizabeth Fountain sent us the following message:

“Apple Day was superb!! The sun shone, we had what seemed like thousands of people and we sold out of everything - apples, produce from the garden, apple drinks, refreshments, dipping apple into chocolate etc.

Thelwall Morris Men added to the atmosphere and they were great. I think you can gather from this that we had a good day.

We abandoned the search for an apple press because we thought we would not have enough apples, but we could be looking for one again next year. If you hear of anyone wanting to donate one please bear us in mind.”

Why not send us a report of an event near you?

Booksale

For the second year running, a second-hand book sale will take place after the evening lecture at the Friends Meeting House, Manchester on November 20, 2008.

A range of books on gardens and gardening, and of local topographic interest, will be available.

We would also be pleased to accept donations of books on horticulture, garden plants, Cheshire parks and gardens, garden design and garden history (hardbacks only please, in good or better condition).

All proceeds from the sale of these books will go to support Cheshire Gardens Trust.

John Edmondson

Palladio's 500th Birthday!

You may be forgiven if this one slipped you by, but actually, there is still time to celebrate as the actual date is variously given as the 8th or 30th November.

Why celebrate? Lots of reasons but perhaps primarily because of Palladio's unwitting influence on 18th century English architecture, beginning with country houses, of which we have a special legacy in Cheshire, and spreading to many other building types.

Palladio started life as Andrea di Piero, son of a Paduan miller, who trained as a stonemason and, aged about 30, met a certain Count Trissano in Vicenza.

Trissano's patronage enabled Andrea to travel widely studying contemporary and Roman architecture. He was awarded the title of architect in 1540, named Palladio by Count Trissano, and went on to design a series of villas in the vicinity of Vicenza.

Palladio's fame spread and he became the most important architect in northern Italy, designing villas for the Venetian aristocracy and receiving important public commissions in both Venice and Vicenza.

"Palladio believed that a building and its decoration should be considered as a whole. He particularly admired the monuments left by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and often used the orders of classical columns in his buildings. The four most usual ones are the Roman Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite.

Palladio also believed that the measurements carefully worked out by the Greeks gave their buildings a feeling of harmony and dignity. These measurements had been used in the 15th century in Renaissance palaces and churches by artist architects such as Alberti, Brunelleschi and Bramante. Palladio himself designed many churches and country houses based on these classical ideas."¹

His "Quattro Libri" remains an architectural classic.

Each villa has a site specific design informed by the setting and context, which has changed little in succeeding centuries.

Seeing these amazing places based on classical architecture one can sense the excitement of the 18th century English visitor on the Grand Tour, with resources at their disposal, wanting to come home and

create their own versions, the classical idyll in the English countryside.

Though Inigo Jones first brought back Palladio's ideas in the 17th century, it was Lord Burlington's villa at Chiswick, based upon the Villa Rotunda near Vicenza, that sparked the passion for Palladianism. It is also from Chiswick that we have the birthplace of the English Landscape Garden – from William Kent's lawn.

Notable examples of Palladian influence in Cheshire are Tabley House built for Sir Peter Byrne Leicester, Bt., by John Carr and completed in 1769, and said to have the finest drawing room in Cheshire (open Thursday to Sunday 2 -5pm until the end of October).



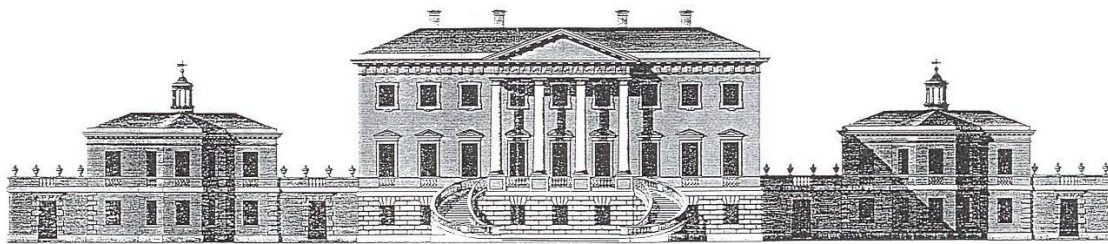
Tabley Hall today, below drawing from Vitruvius Britannicus

Also Henbury Hall built for Sebastian de Ferranti to the designs of Julian Bicknell and ideas of the painter Felix Kelly, also based on the Villa Rotunda, and completed in the 1980's (the grounds are open annually under the National Gardens Scheme).

A number of excellent books have been brought out to coincide with this special anniversary², not to mention special tours, exhibitions, symposia and Evensong in the Queen's Chapel by Inigo Jones on 30th November 2008 (see www.georgiangroup.org.uk).

Palladio was so called "after Palladius, the ancient author of an agricultural treatise, or after Pallas Athena and the Roman talisman in her image, the Palladium."³

Barbara Moth



¹ www.nmm.ac.uk

² Palladio: the Complete Buildings, Wundram, Pope and Marton, Taschen 2008 ISBN 978-3-8365-0547-5

³ Hart, V and Hicks, P, Palladio's Rome, Yale University Press, 2006, pp.xx. Pallas Athena is a Greek goddess.

Barbara adds: This is Palladio's Villa Cornaro, one of a collection of his villas in the Veneto which, with Vicenza, form a World Heritage Site.



Villa Cornaro is said to be one of the 10 most influential buildings in the world – the inspiration for many homes in America – “It represents one of the most remarkable examples of a Renaissance villa.

The north façade (*illustrated*) has a central portico-loggia that is a flexible living space out of the sun and open to cooling breezes.

The interior space is a harmonious arrangement of the strictly symmetrical floor plans on which Palladio insisted without exception.

Rooms of inter-related proportions composed of squares and golden rectangles flank a central axial vista that extends clear through the house” *Wikipedia*. The spaces are beautiful.

Preliminary announcement: Spring Lecture 2009



In March 2009 Cristina Castel-Branco will give the Spring Lecture following the AGM.

I have known and worked with Cristina for many years and can guarantee it will be a good session.

She is Professor of Landscape History in Lisbon, but she is also a practicing designer dealing with both historic and modern parks and gardens.

Cristina was responsible for the restoration of the Botanic Gardens of Ajuda in Lisbon and was the director of the gardens for many years.

She was also responsible for the Gardens of the Discoveries at Expo '98. She has a long list of credits to her name including published books – far too many to go into!

Portugal has a fascinating history of gardens from the Roman period and right up to today. The excavated Roman gardens at Conimbriga (*below*) are without parallel. Sintra has the fascinating Montserrat by William Beckford who also built Fonthill Abbey.



There are of course the famous gardens of the Palacio Fronterio with its water gardens, parterres and amazing dining terrace with blue and white tiles. (*Below*)



Plan to come, you won't be disappointed.

Ed Bennis



Above: Expo '98 The Gardens of the Discoveries represents the plants and landscapes of the Portuguese Age of Discoveries.

Below: Botanic Garden of Ajuda, Lisbon



How can Cheshire Gardens Trust most effectively achieve its aims?

It's hard to believe it, but it is almost six years since the initial meeting was held that resulted in the setting up of the Cheshire Garden Trust.

We've come a long way in six years. Some of the things we have achieved have been:

- a full and well-attended programme of events;
- a quarterly newsletter with an increasing number of contributors;
- a sound basis, and increasing numbers of volunteers, for the research and recording of Cheshire's historic parks and gardens;
- a busy Conservation and Planning Committee that is consulted by, and whose advice is listened to, by local Cheshire Councils;
- a hugely successful Gardens and Tourism conference.
- And, most importantly, a supportive membership.

We are not short of ideas.

BUT....

We have more ideas than we know what to do with. We have reached where we are today with little planning, but a strong CAN-DO attitude. Except that we can only do so much.

Which is why the Council of Management has decided to set aside a day to consider where we want the Trust to go. And because YOU, the members, are part of the Trust, the Council would like as many as possible to join in that debate.

The day set aside is Saturday 17th January 2009. The venue is to be confirmed. On the agenda:

- How can we improve what we do;
- Should we be doing what we currently do;
- What should we do that we are not doing already;
- What do we want to achieve over the next five years;
- How we are going to achieve it.

Come along and tell us what we are doing right, what we can improve, what we should be doing that we are not doing now, where we are going wrong and how we can become more effective.

Contact Joy Uings (0161 969 3300; joy.uings@btconnect.com) and book your place. In order to keep costs to a minimum, we must ask members to pay for their lunch, but tea and coffee during breaks will be free.

Seductive Ceramics

Did you visit Gordon Cooke's Garden in June last year? Were you impressed with the range of stoneware and ceramics on view? Or maybe you read the report in the newsletter and wished you'd been there.

There is to be an exhibition of Gordon's work – a range of stoneware and porcelain for sale at prices starting at just £20. The preview is Friday 31st October from 7 p.m. till 9 p.m. Then the exhibition continues (from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m) every day until 9th November.

Why not go along and find that special Christmas present for a loved one – or better still, treat yourself!

And if you think "I wonder if I could do something like that", Gordon will be starting a new season of pottery courses.

See www.gordoncooke.co.uk. Gordon can be contacted at gordoncooke.ceramics@virgin.net or on 0161 969 9816.

The address is 17 Poplar Grove, Sale, M33 3AX.