



CHESHIRE
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Newsletter

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- ✦ Zoos ancient and modern
- ✦ Cheshire Local History Day Report
- ✦ Meet Arley's new head gardener
- ✦ Awayday Report

Some future events:

- ✦ Talk by Gary Rainsford, Head Gardener at Lyme Park – February 28
- ✦ AGM and Spring Lecture – March 25, Trafford Hall, Chester
- ✦ Tulips in bloom! at Stamford Park, Stalybridge – April 25



In the 19th Century every self-respecting gardener had his or her orchard. Today we are lucky to have just one or two fruit trees. For those planning to add to their gardens, this was a fascinating initiation into the world of the orchard owner and some clues as to which apples to choose.

We had an extremely enjoyable and informative guided tour from Colin Haworth, the proprietor of Eddisbury Fruit Farm.

Eddisbury is the mostly northerly commercial fruit farm in England and has been dedicated to fruit since Colin's father started out in 1936. The farm employs one full time tractor driver and 6-7 casual pickers.

The farm's produce went first to the Wholesale markets in Liverpool and Manchester as well as local shops.

For the past eleven years the farm has sold at Farmers' Markets and they make their own apple juice and cider. The juice is sold as Cheshire Apple Juice; production of cider is limited as, apart from what is

required for domestic consumption, only 1,500 gallons (7,000 litres) can be sold without attracting duty.

Colin's partner, Mike, runs the juicing side of the business and his wife, Monica, runs the tearoom. There has been a long connection with Poland starting with workers coming from the wartime refugee camp at Delamere. There is also a thriving Pick-your-own-business.



Above, Colin prepares to lead us to the orchard

We started the tour with the pear orchard. The questions about pruning came thick and fast.

They prune the pears and apples when the leaves are off, pears before Christmas and apples afterwards.

Pears crop on vertical branches while apples on the horizontal. So pears should have the horizontal shoots removed.

A shoot takes three years to fruit. A scaffold of major branches should be left and those shoots should be replaced on a 3 - 4 year cycle.

Early varieties crop well, but the later varieties tend to use up energy in making the fruit and there is less to make vigorous shoots for the next crop.

We then viewed the soft fruit which is available for Pick Your Own, and is also used for mixing with the apple juice.

The farm's future policy however is to reduce the soft fruit and plant more apple orchards, as the demand is for the apple juice.



The Autumn raspberries were still fruiting: they have Himbertop and Polka varieties although the latter is susceptible to phytophthora; a new variety Autumn Treasure is well worth a try.

Blackberries include Loch Ness and Himalayan Giant.

There are white currant Blanca and blackcurrant Jet, with long strings which are easy to pick; there is also Redcurrant Rovada.

Other soft fruit include tayberries and loganberries. The gooseberry variety planted is Invicta which is mildew free; Greenfinch is another one recommended for mildew resistance. All the fruit is picked by hand.

The soft fruit fields are on a north west facing slope which means they mature a week behind other fruit in the area. Poplars are planted on the boundaries for shelter and windbreaks.

While we were looking at all this Autumnal bounty a skein of geese flew over from high out the north western sky, and a kestrel hovered as it searched for food.

We moved on to the apple orchard. There are currently 26 different varieties of apples grown, supplied by Frank Mathews in Tenbury Wells.

The main apple orchards are in the marl fields. It was originally planted in the 1930s, so some of the new trees— Ashmeads Kernel, a russet, Chivers Delight and Crispin were planted in 1992 – suffer from S. A. R. D (specific apple replant disease).

The trees are grafted onto to M9 dwarfing rootstock. This needs staking throughout its life, but reduces vigour and produces regular cropping. MM106/111 rootstocks are stronger and do not need staking, (which reduces the labour of staking and tying), but means they will grow taller.



Trees will not bear fruit unless the blossom is pollinated and honeybees are vital to a successful crop. Eddisbury normally relies on a local bee keeper who kept hives close to the site but who lost 80% of them when they were struck down with veroa mite.

So in 2007 Colin brought in bee hives from Yorkshire at blossom time. Fortunately the local bees have now recovered.

How necessary are the honey bees? Colin replied that in 1987 they relied on wild bees only and had much reduced cropping, although this varied with different varieties.

They no longer thin the fruit in June as this is too labour intensive, but you should do this with your own trees. Just leave one or two per shoot and you will get bigger fruit.

It is difficult to get all the apples picked at the right time. The Egremont Russet had already been picked, but others were still on the trees.

Ashmeads Kernel is the last russet and the best Christmas apple; it will keep well in a fridge at 4°C.

Gala is slightly different from Royal Gala and is a good juicer.



Above: Keen fruit-growers found Colin a mine of information

Saturn is a disease resistant breed as is Laxton Fortune, which has a sweet taste. Morrens Jonagored and ordinary Jonagoreds are grown for their improved flavour compared with Jonagold.

Kidd's Orange is ready for picking at the end of September/beginning October; it is best kept for a month to mature before eating, but will keep all winter.

James Grieve has a lovely flavour but is quite soft and bruises easily.

Red Windsor or Early Windsor blooms early, crops late September. Ingrid Marie had already been picked, this has a dappled appearance and is a cross with Cox and Golden Delicious.

George Cave crops well – doesn't keep; Sunset is another apple with a lovely flavour.

When asked about problems with pests Colin replied that they did not get too much bird damage but bull finches can remove buds in the winter and Jays help themselves to fallen fruit. Wasps are only a problem

for the pickers; they don't damage the fruit as they go only for fruit that has already split.

Pruning was discussed again, this time the subject was apple trees. The more vigorous upright shoots should be removed otherwise they will keep going upwards and will not crop. Very young trees can have the framework tied down with string.

Plums have not done well this year due to a spring frost. Prune plums when growing in May and June. As with apples – take out the upright. Eddisbury Farm also grows crabs in amongst the apples to help with pollination of the Bramleys.

We rounded off our tour with a visit to the Juicing room where the farm processes not only its own fruit, but also that of other growers. In fact, as long as there is more than 100kg of fruit, they will process it for anyone.

We watched the juicer in action. First the apples go whole into a water bath, from which they get sucked up into an oscillating grater. This turns them into a wet 'sludge', which drops down to be wrapped in cloth and pressed between boards.

We watched the juice bubble out. L-ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is added to stop the browning and the juice is then pasteurised.

The residue pulp is sent to a local farmer for cattle feed.

After this fascinating tour, we were served the most delicious lunch of proper Lancashire hot pot with beetroot and pickled cabbage, followed by apple crumble and accompanied by wonderful warmed Cheshire apple juice spiced with ginger or cinnamon.

A feast for a brisk autumn day.

Jacquetta Menzies

From apples ... to juice ... to cattle feed



1. Apples into the water bath



2. Cloth laid out between boards



3. The grated apple pours out



4. The cloth covers the layer of apple



5. More layers are added until....



6. ... the apple side and the juiced side swap places



7. The pressing begins...



8. ...the juice runs out...



9. ... and the residue is tipped into a cart ready to go to the farm

A playground for design ideas: an award-winner's garden in Sale

I first visited Graham's garden in Sale three years ago with the Japanese Garden Society of which Graham is the current chairman.

I was excited by his design ideas and attention to detail even in the garden's then unfinished state.

The garden is not open to the public but Graham kindly agreed to show it to 18 members of CGT on the morning of 6th August, after which most people headed for an enjoyable lunch at The Fat Loaf Restaurant nearby.

I asked various members for their impressions which are included in this account. Different people noticed different things, which makes you want to go back for a second look for those you missed!

Graham was involved in Project Management in the IT industry but changed careers and obtained an HND in Garden Design from Reaseheath College in 1999.

He designed the winning garden in the BBC Gardeners' World Live Student Design Competition in 1999 at the NEC, won a Silver medal at the RHS Tatton Park Flower Show in 2001 with 'The Tea Garden' for the Japanese Garden Society and a Silver medal at the RHS Tatton Park Flower Show in 2005 with the 'Choose Life' garden for NACRO and Cheshire Police.

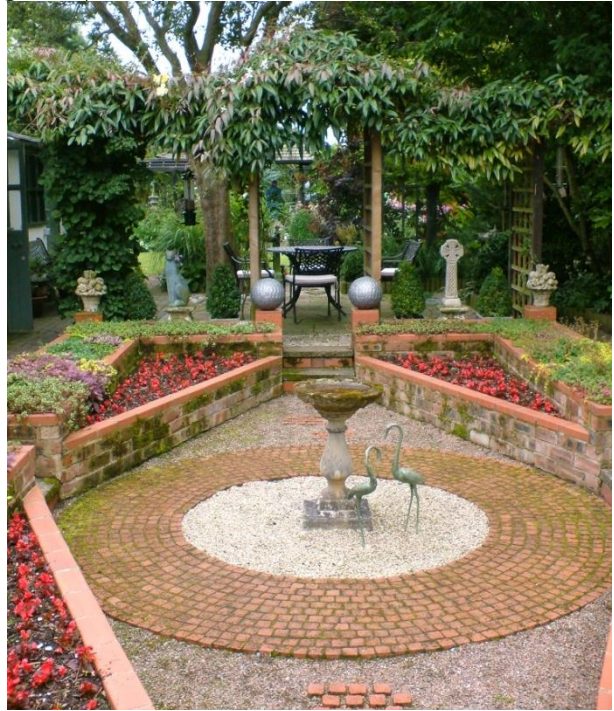
Graham's long narrow garden is divided into several 'rooms' in different styles. There are strong structural elements including plant forms either natural or deliberately shaped.

There is much attention to detail and interpretations of Japanese ideas can be seen throughout the garden. Every bit of space is used. Even odd corners have interesting features such as ribbons of different coloured stones set on their edge with a central rock and planted with succulents to represent a small pond (below).



There is a hard landscaped area around the house, off which is a whitewashed alcove with a delightful lead wall fountain where a large fish spouts water with ceramic carp on the wall behind.

From this, a path leads past a sunken area with raised beds and a central bird bath around which is a circle of small terracotta setts, repeated in the surrounding gravel (below).



The beds were filled with red begonias and other creeping plants and the walling constructed of rustic brick topped with a contrasting smooth terracotta coping.

The archway beyond, covered with a leafy evergreen *Clematis arandii*, led the eye to a sitting area, a vantage point for the garden.

Looking out from this sitting area was a shaped lawn in the form of a circle, with the corner beds colour themed, a distinctly Japanese area with pool and a pavilion with weathervane and simple, minimalist benches for meditation.



A timber Japanese screen of geometric squares and a large circle divided this area from the final area, the vegetable plot. At the edge of the border a *Pittosporum* had been pruned into a column and there was a small Ginkgo nearby in the yellow border.

The vegetable plot was divided into a series of raised beds in which were tall beautifully proportioned obelisks which one member (Gaye Smith) said were some of the best designed she had ever come across.

The beds were finished with a rounded timber coping which reflected the profile of the Victorian wall dividing the next door garden. The wall had been cleverly heightened by a pattern of contrasting yellow bricks to provide a sensitive Victorian style adaptation.

Graham's garden shows how Japanese ideas can be incorporated into an English garden and members came away from the visit with lots of ideas for their own plot however small.

Everyone would like to thank Graham for making us so welcome and for such a fascinating morning.

Heather Turner

Photos courtesy of Jenny Wood and Neil Collie

In last July's edition of the Newsletter, we published a letter from overseas member Kristin Reichenfeld. Here she tells us about the Zoo where she is working.

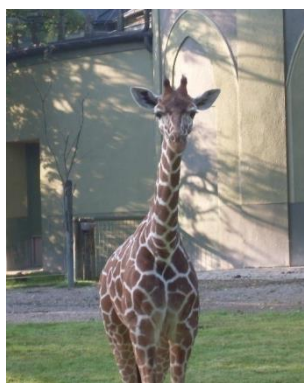
Munich Zoo Hellabrunn

"A landscape park with animals" – this is how the zoo in Munich is described. It is the oldest Geo-Zoo in the world, covering an area of 36 hectares.

I have been working there since May 2008 and I spoke to the head gardener, Andreas Bloch (below, in front of a *salix*

alba), who very kindly went round the zoo with me, explained his work there and here are the photos to prove it!

The zoo is situated a meadow landscape in a protected area of the Isarauen. The Isar is the river that runs through Munich and 'Auen' means meadow.



Andreas Bloch told me that his main work at the zoo is to try and protect the park, to keep it as nature intended and to restore areas.

The photos (below left and right) show new areas of the river bank that have been restored. He said, "We don't have any bedding plants like in



other zoos, it wouldn't fit in to the character of our landscape park. One of our latest projects was to renovate the outside area of the elephant enclosure. We put in a new pool, deep enough for them to be able to swim in. The stones used are from a local quarry."



Side arms of the river run through the park, so there is plenty of scope for birds and otters for wading and swimming and plenty of drinking water for other animals.



Above: *Acer platanoides* and *Cornus alba*



Above: *Acorus calamus* with *Typha Latifolia*

Andreas lamented the fact that he couldn't grow any rhododendrons in the park! But the soil here is a chalky/limestone one and the winters are harsh with hot summers. As you can see, though, the landscape is still very attractive and it is a pleasure to walk round different parts of it after lunch .

Perhaps, after having been to Belgium, members have found a taste for visiting European gardens and parks, and it would be a pleasure to greet you in Munich!

Kristin Reichenfeld

Want to know more? There are some English language websites.
Try: www.goodzoos.com/Germany/Munich.htm

The other Manchester Zoo

Today Manchester has no Zoo, but once upon a time it had two. Many readers will have known of and probably visited the Belle Vue Zoo. But the one at Broughton was short-lived: a badly-timed and over-optimistic business venture ...

It was 10th August 1833 and the Manchester Times and Gazette published a letter from someone signing themselves 'Civis'. Liverpool had a Zoological Garden. Why not Manchester? True Manchester had the Botanical Gardens, but a Zoological Garden would be *'far superior'*. Apart from the educational aspect, it would provide a suitable place for *'a fashionable promenade'* – something Manchester lacked – and would be safe for ladies to walk alone: *'persons of improper character'* being excluded from the Liverpool Zoo.

Two weeks later another letter, this time from 'A Mancunian' took up the call, but suggested it should go further. What was needed as well was a *'Medico-botanic garden'*. There were a number of medical schools in Manchester, and the study of botany was an essential part of the curriculum. But the students were prevented from using the Botanic Gardens at Old Trafford, both by the terms of admission and the distance from town.

Four weeks later, and another letter appeared, this time from 'Common Sense'. Why would Manchester wish to *'follow the example of the people of Liverpool, who, as is well known, are some centuries behind us in civilization!'* And what pleasure could be gained from seeing *'pining in close and irritating confinement, those beings once as free as the breeze which fanned or the light which gladdened them?'*

And so the correspondence ended. But the seed had been sown.

The early 1830s were a time of prosperity. New companies were being formed; wealth was being created.

Like many a time of economic boom, both before and since, the bust was just around the corner. But without the benefit of a crystal ball, there were plenty of people with ideas and plans for new commercial enterprises.

On 23 April 1836 a prospectus was published for *'Establishing a Manchester Zoological, Botanical, and Public Gardens Company, combined with a Coliseum and Baths'*.

This was thinking **BIG!** This would put Manchester on the Map!

The plans included *'A Coliseum upon a plan more extensive than that in London; a splendid and extensive Menagerie; Reading Rooms amply provided with the means of instruction; Public and Private Baths, with a Promenade through a beautiful and extensive Botanic Garden'*.

This was to be a *'safe and profitable investment'*. There would be capital of £200,000 raised in 10,000 shares at £20 each. Once 5,000 shares had been sold, the company would be considered formed.

Was there really a rush for shares? Or did those behind the idea get carried away? The closing date for shares was 7th May.

On 14th May it was announced that a site had been found in Broughton, and the closing date for shares had been extended to 21st May. But on 23rd July it was announced that shares would now be available for only £10.

This was *'in order to place this most desirable undertaking within the reach of a greater number of individuals, and in this way give every respectable head of a family an opportunity of providing a rich and rational treat for himself and his children'*.

But a more cynical voice suggests that it was because the shares had not sold....

On 6th August, the company published the budget for the gardens.

Outlay would be just £13,800. [*Why was a capital of £200,000 needed?*]

Annual expenditure of only £3,846 and income of £6,072 would leave a very respectable annual profit out of which to pay dividends.

There was someone who called himself 'Amicus' who had been deluging the newspaper with letters suggesting bribery and corruption on the part of those who had been negotiating for the proposed site.

He now, not surprisingly, took issue with the budget.

But the committee steamed ahead. Richard Forrest *'the eminent landscape gardener from London'* was appointed to report on the site.

On 26th November, the committee presented his report, still anticipating that *'the Manchester Zoological Gardens will be inferior to none in the kingdom in point of beauty and convenience'*.

This is surprising, since the report makes clear that the committee had already *'wisely given up all idea of a Botanical Garden'*.

Throughout 1837 work on the new gardens continued. By October, the lake was nearly ready and the bear pit almost completed.

Animals already purchased included a pair each of brown bears, wolves, lions, Bengal leopards, porcupines, spotted hyenas and pelicans. There were also a young male zebra, three monkeys and some birds.

The company's first AGM in the same month makes it clear that the promises of the prospectus had not been kept.

The Gardens should only have gone ahead if 5,000 shares had been sold. In fact only 1,300 had been purchased with a £1 deposit. And although the next

£1 10s. had been called for, only 655 had so far paid up.

Yet there was clearly a desire to see the gardens succeed, because many people had donated livestock and plants, including mature trees. The list of donors included five Dukes and two Earls.

Indeed, without these donations, the company would have been in even more trouble than it found itself.

By January 1838, excitement was growing and it was necessary (or desirable – ticket sales would bring in much needed income) to allow people into the gardens even though they were not yet complete.

By the official opening in May 1838, further animals had been acquired – including an elephant, Bengal tigers, a dromedary, an ostrich, a pair of kangaroos with a joey, more monkeys and a pair of racoons.

In June, a Mrs Bakewell placed an ad in the newspaper announcing that she had the contract for running the refreshment house.

On the same day, there was a report of the official opening. Absalom Watkin gave the address. Expectations were high:

“The young will come here..... full of the ardent hopes and the unbroken confidence of early life... The old will come here; they who have acquired that wealth and that estimation amongst their fellow citizens which are the objects of aspiration with the young...”

And he added: *“...I should consider the Institution as having failed in one of its most important objects if it were not to become a source of pleasure and improvement to [the working classes].”*

And yet this was exactly where the institution would fail.

In 1838 the working week was still six days. Sunday was the only day workers had free.

But the feeling in favour of Sunday Observance was overwhelming. The suggestion that the zoo be open on Sundays was quickly quashed.

And the admission price of 1s. would have been out of the reach of workers earning no more than 10s. a week.

This would have been a reason for reducing the admission to just 6d. during the first week of January 1839.

From April 1839, half-price admission was available every Saturday from 4 p.m. to dusk.

Throughout 1839, the newspapers were full of adverts for the Zoo: a desperate attempt to drum up support and increase admissions.

The *Manchester Times* did its best to talk up the gardens. The zoo hosted flower shows and offered to set up archery clubs.

But come November, the third AGM reported that capital expenditure (£20,000) was greater than capital income (£17,705) [so much for the £200,000 in the prospectus].

Although there was a revenue profit of £1,402, there was no hope of a dividend being paid.

By February 1840, there were nearly 400 animals in the gardens; and the grounds, under the management of Mr. Mearns, had been much improved over the winter *‘and now abound with beautiful shrubs and flowers’*.

In April, a visitor who was the worse for drink, attempted to stroke the lion. He lost his arm.

On a more encouraging note, there were several firework displays during the year. But by November and the fourth AGM, the writing was definitely on the wall.

The owner of the land, the Rev. J. Clowes had not been paid his rent. He offered to forego it (it was a very substantial £2,400), provided there was no more talk of Sunday opening. In the parlous state of the finances (takings were down on the previous year) his offer was accepted.

More was needed. The directors’ suggestions were:

- ◆ to sell off some land for building,
- ◆ to let the curator’s house,
- ◆ to engage a band one afternoon a week,
- ◆ to cut the price of annual subscriptions to encourage more subscribers,
- ◆ to hold flower shows (provided the Floral and Horticultural Society was revived – it wasn’t!),
- ◆ to continue with the firework displays as they were profitable, and
- ◆ to avoid spending any money on capital projects unless it was to acquire further animals which would be an attraction.

The most worrying point made was surely that many Directors’ meetings had been inquorate!

If the Directors failed to support the Zoo by attending Board meetings, then how could they expect the population to continue to support it.

During 1841, as planned, firework displays continued to take place. But, in addition, there was a new attraction. The battle of St. Jean D’Acre, was re-created twice-weekly, beginning in June.

There was no report of the 1841 AGM, and the gardens limped on into 1842.

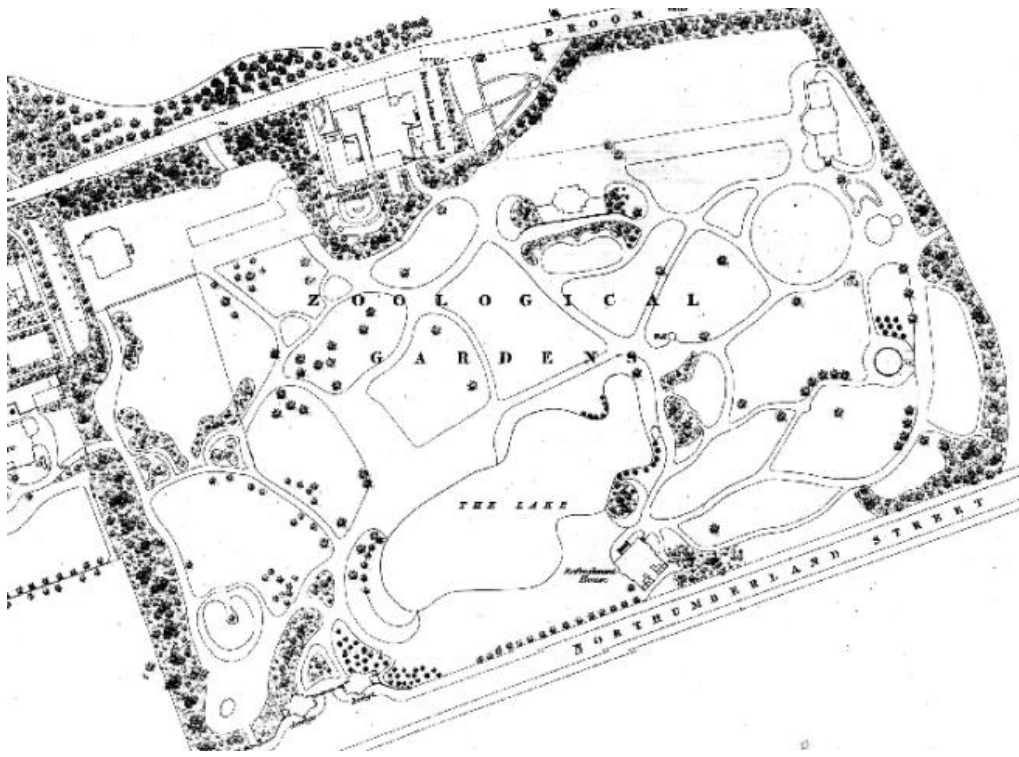
The new attraction was a re-creation of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and for three days in September Madame Rossini, tight-rope walker, entertained visitors.

There was a flurry of added attractions, but it was too late. In November 1842 the Auction of all the animals was announced.

It was the end for the Zoo.

Could it have survived? Probably not. It was under-capitalised from the start.

At the time it opened the city was experiencing a recession and by 1842 Manchester was deep into a depression.



Left, the Zoological Gardens as they appear on the Ordnance Survey maps drawn after the closure of the Gardens.

Like most of Manchester's public gardens, they were lost to housing development.

And was a zoo such an exceptional attraction? It was not as if the population had never come across exotic animals.

George Wombwell owned a travelling menagerie which had been at the Knot-Mill Fair in April 1836.

He was at the auction and purchased the boa constrictor, two emus and a pelican, a Bengal tiger and a leopard, a lioness and a rhinoceros.

They returned to the town in March 1845, when the Menagerie again visited the Knot-Mill Fair.

Would it have helped if the zoo had opened to the working-classes on Sundays?

Certainly there would have been some workers who would have been able to afford the entrance fee.

But in Leeds, where a zoo was established two years' later than in Manchester, the decision to open on Sundays was taken in September 1841.

Two years' later the zoo was losing money. It was decided not to sell, because of the depressed state of trade.

But the decision to open on Sundays was reversed, mainly because so many people had withdrawn their support for the gardens and this was the only way to regain it.

But it was not to be the answer.

In May 1846 it was announced that the gardens were to be closed 'as soon as an offer can be obtained'. Not that offers were forthcoming. In May 1847 'the persevering and talented curator, Mr. Mearns' (who had gone to Leeds from Manchester Zoo) was discharged.

And yet....

In the same year that the prospectus for the *Manchester Zoological, Botanical, and Public Gardens Company* was published, a middle-aged gardener named John Jennison moved his growing menagerie

from Stockport to Belle Vue and opened a zoological garden.

He had no shareholders to worry about; he expanded his gardens gradually and he didn't try to patronise his customers. He survived the downturn and by 1842 was in clear competition.

In April that year, the Broughton Zoo had a small advert making no reference to the gardens or the animals but offering fireworks and a singing act called the Cambrian Brothers (youngest just 11 years old).

In the same edition, the Belle Vue Zoo not only trumpeted the fact that it had secured the show of the Battle of St. Jean d'Acre, but announced that the gardens 'since last season have undergone a COMPLETE ALTERATION, and the proprietor can now boast of their being the most extensive in England out of the metropolis.'

In May the paper reported that the show had gone well, but makes it clear that **this** Zoo offered a great many attractions: '... the place presents an extensive garden with bowling-green, aviaries of foreign birds, animals and water-fowl, also a wide range of pleasure-ground, adapted for all kinds of games, such as quoiting, shooting, archery, cricket, golf, or any game requiring a great extent of space. There are also ponds for fishing, as well as other diversions.'

And so, as the Broughton Zoo faded, even from memory, the Belle Vue Zoo became an important leisure venue for the expanding Manchester. John Jennison died in 1869, but his Zoo lived on for another 108 years.

Joy Uings

Information taken from the *Manchester Times and Gazette*, 1833-1842 and the *Leeds Mercury* 1838-1847.

For more information on Belle Vue zoo, see <http://manchesterhistory.net/bellevue/zoo.html>

Cheshire Gardens, Parks and Gardeners: Cheshire Local History Day

Cheshire History Day is a popular and keenly-anticipated feature on the Cheshire local history scene. Organised by the Cheshire Local History Association, it is an annual event; and last year, to coincide with Cheshire's Year of Gardens, the focus was on Cheshire's parks, gardens and gardeners.

There must have been 500 people packed into the Northwich Memorial Hall at 9.30 am on Saturday 25 October, drinking coffee, chatting and milling around the various bookstalls and society displays while waiting to hear from four speakers who would cover subjects as diverse as cultural influences on Tatton Park; the work of Edward Kemp; historic gardens in Cheshire and finding information using garden archives.

The day kicked off with Sam Youd, Head Gardener at Tatton Park, who talked entertainingly and informatively about cultural influences on the gardens at Tatton Park.

Japan was all the rage in the early 20th Century as a result of the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition at the White City in 1910, which brought many people into contact with Japanese culture and gardens for the first time.

Rather like Chelsea today, the exhibition was hugely popular and influenced the garden-designers of the day.

Lord Egerton was no exception and ordered a Japanese garden featuring a Shinto shrine and many artefacts such as snow lanterns – designed to trap as much snow as possible to enhance the winter landscape.

The garden was restored to its original state in 2000/2001 and remains one of the best examples of a Japanese-style garden in Europe.



Above: The Japanese-style garden at Tatton

Sam went on to talk about another important cultural and social influence – the need for food – and how this translated into the highly-productive walled kitchen gardens at Tatton.

It was not only run-of-the-mill fruit and vegetables that were grown, but exotics too, such as pineapples, peaches and nectarines. Grapes, for instance, were expected on the table 365 days a year!

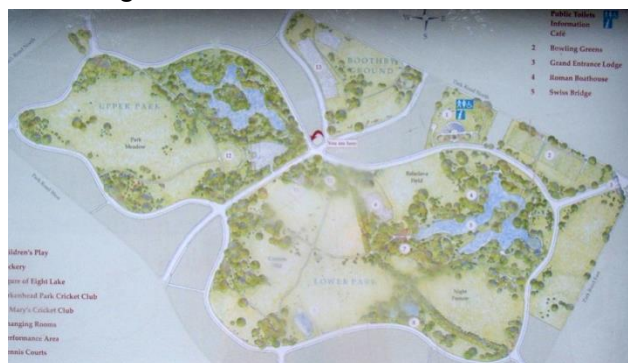
The restoration of the kitchen gardens at Tatton has been less about a return to these former levels of productivity and more about preserving old skills and conserving heritage varieties of local fruit and vegetables.

The second speaker, Elizabeth Davey, a lecturer in local history, gave us a fascinating account of the life and works of Edward Kemp and his important role in designing public parks in Cheshire, most particularly his close involvement with Birkenhead Park – the very first public park in Britain.

From a modest background, Kemp trained at the Horticultural Society Gardens at Chiswick as a landscape gardener rather than a landscape architect. From there he is said to have worked with Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth, although in quite what capacity is not clear.

What is clear is that in 1843, Paxton was invited to Birkenhead to design the new public park and that Kemp worked closely with him on the design and later became superintendant of the park.

Characteristics of the design were serpentine paths, sinuous lakes, undulating hillocks and naturalistic woodland belts – elements that would feature in future designs.



Above: the layout of Birkenhead Park

Kemp went on to design gardens, parks and cemeteries in and around Cheshire and wrote a number of books, including *How to lay out a Small Garden* (1850) which became a best-seller.

His influence and ideas spread even further afield – it is said that Kemp's vision of greensward underpins the design of New York's Central Park. It is widely accepted that, after visiting the Birkenhead Park in 1850, the landscape architect Frederick Olmsted, incorporated many of the features he observed into his design for Central Park.

After lunch, Marion Mako, joint author with Professor Tim Mowl of the recently published *Historic Gardens of England: Cheshire*, talked about some of the gardens that feature in their book.

Marion likened the project, which aims to identify and record the most significant gardens and designed landscapes in England, to the work of Pevsner. But

unlike the analytical and, some might say, dry nature of Pevsner's gazetteer, the *Historic Gardens of England* series is more people-focused, less impersonal and the authors' likes and dislikes more clearly stated.

What came across strongly in this talk is the enormous variety of historic gardens in Cheshire – from the well-known Tatton and Lyme Parks to lesser-known private gardens in Sale and Wilmslow.

There are 100 gardens featured in the book and Marion could only highlight a fraction of them – Elizabethan gardens, moated gardens, rococo follies, landscapes by Eames, Paxton, Mawson and Repton and much, much more.

Even the two dozen or so that she described in enthusiastic detail with wonderful illustrations, are too many to list here.

Jonathan Pepler, Cheshire County Archivist, concluded the afternoon with a lively and absorbing trawl through the Cheshire and Chester Archives illustrating the wealth of information about gardens and gardening that can be found in a variety of sources.

There is written evidence dating back to the 13th Century that the castle ditch in Chester was used to grow winter cabbages and leeks – sounds so much more romantic than using the municipal allotments. Although allotment records themselves can be illuminating.

Following the Allotment Act in 1908, parish, urban district and borough councils began keeping records – minutes of meetings, registers of members, details of rents and plot holders – all providing a fascinating insight into the social and cultural changes taking place at the time.

Other useful sources of information include title deeds, sale particulars, tithe maps and large scale OS maps. Some of these are available online, many from local libraries and most from the Cheshire and Chester Archives at the Cheshire Record Office.

The Caldwell Archive is another important source – a major nursery was founded about 1780 in Knutsford by the Caldwell family.

A family business, it continued for many generations and ledgers, day books, cash books and detailed seed and plant catalogues survive up to the 1920s – providing a remarkable record of garden-related activity.

The speakers were all first-rate and the added bonus of the many society displays and bookstalls meant there was something for everyone. Next year's theme has not yet been decided – but whether it is garden-related or not, it's bound to be another excellent day.

Tina Theis

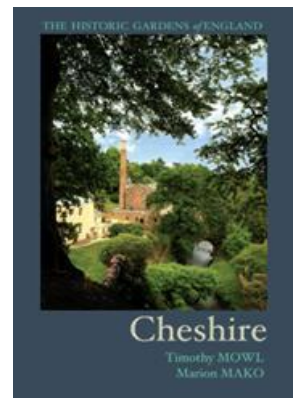
For more information, contact: CLHA c/o Cheshire and Chester Archives & Local Studies, Duke St, Chester CH1 1RL tel 01244 602559 or www.cheshirehistory.org.uk.

More information about Birkenhead Park can be found in the July 2008 Newsletter.

Edward Kemp's book "How to Lay Out a Garden" was re-issued in 2007 by both The Grimsay Press (£25) and Kessinger Publishing (£32.95): available at Waterstones or try Amazon for a second-hand copy.

CGT has some copies of *Cheshire* by Tim Mowl and Marion Mako in The Historic Gardens of England series – see right. We can let you have them at £17, which is below the recommended retail price. Contact a member of the committee if you are interested. We will have copies available at events.

CGT continues the work on the Caldwell Nursery Archives, but it is slow work. If you would like to help out, contact Joy Uings (see end of newsletter for contact details).



How does your Garden Smell?

I spotted this story recently.

Two pensioners, 77 and 79 years old, bought some *Phlox subulata* and planted it in their garden.

It's a pretty flower and over four years it had followed its natural inclination and spread around the garden.

Then Mr and Mrs Wiltshire went on holiday.

They returned to discover their front door had been smashed in. They were amazed to find that this had not been done by vandals, but by the Police.

Catching a whiff of what they thought was cannabis,

the Police had obtained a warrant to search the premises.

Having broken into the house and searched around, the source of the 'smell' was traced to the humble Phlox.

Red faces and apologies all round. So, if you didn't know what cannabis smells like, now you can find out. But keep an eye open for the rozzers if you decide to treat yourself to this invaluable evergreen.

Information taken from www.bbc.co.uk

When you pot up your seedlings or divide your plants this spring, do a few extra and put on one side. Chris Talbot is organising a plant sale in September, in aid of CGT funds. More details in later newsletters.

A new face at Arley Hall and Gardens

Arley has a new Head Gardener. Gordon Baillie took over from Patrick Swan at the beginning of January.



Gordon is a Glaswegian, who trained at Strathclyde. His working life has taken him from commercial nurseries, south to Friston Place near Eastbourne, where he worked for Lord

Shawcross, across to Knole Park, near Sevenoaks in Kent, then west to Lake House, Salisbury, where his employer was Sting. Now moving back north, he has arrived in Cheshire.

Meanwhile, Patrick is moving back south to Worcestershire, where he grew up. After seven happy years at Arley, he will be working on his in-law's farm. He is excited by the challenge of building on the green credentials of a farm that has always been organic.

We wish him well and look forward to hearing from him.

There's just a couple of months for Gordon to get settled in before the gardens open for the summer on March 22nd. The Arley Spring Plant Fair will be on April 5th and there will be Bluebell Walks 24th / 25th April and 3rd / 4th May, with the NCCPG Rare Plant Fair on May 10th. Check the web-site www.arleyhallandgardens.com for details of these and other events.

Coping with the Credit Crunch

Are you feeling the pinch? Have you been thinking of uprooting the dahlias and planting asparagus?

Without going so far as the couple in *The Good Life*, it is still comforting to know that, as long as we have gardens, we can, if necessary, grow some of our own food.

But you may already have something that could be turned to good account.

Nettles!

And not only for food. Nettles can be used for clothing, too.

Don't believe me? Well, read this from an 1838 newspaper:

In Scotland I have eaten nettles, I have slept in nettle sheets, and I have dined off a nettle table cloth. The young and tender nettle is an excellent potherb, and the stalks of the old nettle are as good as flax for making cloth. I have heard my mother say that she thought nettle-cloth more durable than any other species of linen.

And it's not just a thing of the past.

Last year the BBC website carried the following headline:

Nettle fabrics set for catwalk

Apparently De Montfort University has set up a

project team called STING (Sustainable Technology in Nettle Growing) and in 2008 they won an award for Sustainable Design having developed an upholstery product called STINGplus.

A local farmer is growing a field of nettles, and the project team extract the fibre from the nettles.

According to the University's website, the team is led by Dr. Matthew Horne, a Research Fellow in the Faculty of Art and Design.

Dr. Horne has said that nettles "have a key technical feature that enables them to be blended with other fibres and gives the fabrics that a produced a very special property.... The crop requires very low inputs. It does not require any pesticides, it does not require the high levels of fertilisers that things like cotton may".

In 2004 a student, Alex Dear, developed lingerie she had designed, using nettle-based fabrics.

It could be the catwalk next.

For more information see www.dmu.ac.uk and type 'nettles' in the search box, or add /faculties/art_and_design/research/team/sting to go to the main piece.

Do you know of any unusual uses for plants? Why not share with us. Write to the editor.

"The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." So said Mark Twain, and it is a phrase often used in like circumstances. On 1st August 1846 London was visited by a tremendous storm, with hailstones weighing up to one and half ounces doing enormous damage to glasshouses and conservatories. In the Wandsworth Road, nurseryman Mr. Chandler grew and exhibited *Camellia japonica*. It was reported that he had died from the effects of grief – and his son had gone raving mad – by the damage sustained by his nursery. The following week, the papers had to print a retraction: "on the authority of Mr. Chandler himself"; the only truth in the report was with regard to the damage to the hothouses.

Cheshire Gardens Trust's Awayday

There was a good turnout for Cheshire Gardens Trust first ever Away-day.

Twenty-five members gathered in the Education Room at Tatton Park on Saturday 17th January to review where the Trust has been and to consider where we should go from here.

Thoughts and ideas tumbled from everyone – whether it was to do with the planning of events, the organising of research, the extension of education, uses for the newsletter or the development of the web-site.

After an introduction, the day began with members writing their thoughts on post-it notes and sticking them up on sheets headed: Research and Recording; Conservation and Planning; Education; Events; Membership; Newsletter; Website and 'Other'.



Then we split into five groups to consider the comments in more detail and to come up with some thoughts and ideas.

There were some strands that could be picked out easily.

One is that messages about what is happening in terms of research and recording, conservation and planning are not reaching the wider membership. Communication needs to be improved.

Some ideas can be implemented easily and at no or little cost. Others require a great deal of thought and funding.

It was agreed that the group would re-convene to take some of these ideas forward (date to be announced).

One idea was that there should be member-wide groups for those interested in particular aspects.

For example, regular meetings about Events, or about Research, or about Education. Members would be able to come along, find out more about what is happening, learn more about what is involved and make suggestions for moving that area forward.

If you would like to be attend such a meeting, why not let us know which bit of work you would like to know more about.

The ones with the biggest demand will get programmed in earliest. So contact Joy Uings on 0161 969 3300 or e-mail joy.uings@btconnect.com and let's start the ball rolling.

A big welcome to Frank!

Rachel Devine, CGT's Treasurer until last November, left the Council of Management due to the imminent arrival of her first-born.

But Frank had other ideas and kept her waiting. Two weeks overdue, the medical team stepped in and persuaded him to come out into the cold on 23 December.

A whopping 10 lb 9 oz at birth, Frank is now settling into the world. Rachel is looking forward to bringing him to meet us at a Spring event.



Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

All events are from 1 pm to 4 pm

Sunday 8th March – Detective Trail

Sunday 15th March – Making Bird Nesting Boxes

Sunday 12th April – Easter Egg Hunt/Quiz

Sunday 26th April – Scarecrow Making

10th or 17th May – Music in the Park by 'Casual Brass'

More information from Parish Council Office (01925 264918) or Elizabeth Fountain (01925 604990)

Renishaw Hall Nr. Sheffield

Sunday 22nd February – 'Fanfare for Spring'. Five specialist nurseries will be selling spring flowering plants at the 'fabulous garden and woodlands' at Renishaw Hall, nr. Sheffield.

There will be a display of spring flowering plants and bulbs. Hot and cold refreshments.

Admission is £3, but parking is free. For more information ring 01246 432 310 or go to www.renishaw-hall.co.uk

Didsbury Open Gardens Sunday 7th June, 2009

For a second year, a Didsbury Open Gardens afternoon is being planned to raise funds for St. Ann's Hospice. More than fifteen private gardens are expected to open as well as there being a woodland to view.

Fletcher Moss Gardens will also put on guided tours, local allotments are expected to open their gates and there will be chainsaw wood carving and 'sculpture in the garden', all as part of the afternoon's programme.

Further details can be obtained from Maria Stripling Tel 0161 445 7498 e-mail maria.stripling@zen.co.uk Programmes will go on sale mid-April from local Didsbury shops, and cost £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.