



**CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST**

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Newsletter

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Some future events:

- ✦ Biddulph Grange – Saturday 14th August
- ✦ Trentham Gardens – Wednesday 15th September
- ✦ Foxhill Arboretum – Sunday 17th October



Garden Visit 14 May 2010

The original Henbury Hall was built in 1742 and set in a typical 18th century landscape. A map of 1794 shows the Hall and stable but no gardens.

In 1872, after eight days of rain, floods caused a dam and bridge to be washed away and the great lake and middle lake were lost. The cost of restoration ruined the owner who sold to the Brocklehursts, Macclesfield silk merchants, who restored the dam and the lakes but not the great lake.

In the 20th century the Old Hall fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished and the present Henbury Hall was built on its site in 1984-86.

The design is a result of the collaboration between the patron, Sebastian de Ferranti (whose father had bought the estate), the architect, Julian Bicknell and the artist, Felix Kelly.

The inspiration comes from Palladio's Villa Rotonda in Vicenza, Italy.

The symmetry of the architecture calls for it to be viewed in the round; consequently the garden is positioned somewhat to the side and below.

The gardens were initially laid out by Mr. de Ferranti and his late wife. The Head Gardener Philip Cusick now works closely with his employer to renew the planting. He has two assistant gardeners. Pests are taken care of by twelve free range hens!



View from sunken garden

Sunken Garden

Also called the Little Garden, this sunken garden is formal in style with clipped yew and box, columns, obelisks and terracotta vases and has a strong Italian feel, being dominated by the Hall itself. A lovely *Cornus nuttallii* was in full flower (or bract) at the time of our visit, as were the fastigate prunus. The formal layout is overlaid with quite romantic planting such as scented white roses and white wisteria, with small details of prettiness such as *Smilacina racemosa* and the pockets of *Viola cornuta* 'Freckles'.

Lakes and Valley

A path through the stable yard winds down to the mature wooded valley garden. There is a series of lakes at its centre. Water runs down a swallow-hole pipe in the Upper Lake and runs under the dam and powers a ram pump, housed in a Gothic folly with traceried church windows. The ram pump powers fountains in the Sunken Garden and in the Lower Lake.



Dam with urn

Many naturalised narcissi were still in flower, azaleas scented the air, blossom from magnolia, cherry and rhododendron lit up the early spring foliage like candles. There are collections of hostas and cornus - (Eddie's White Wonder was not yet in flower), also lilies and peonies. Early *Rubus* 'Olympic' has a double flower with a good colour but can be a nuisance, being so vigorous. There is a lovely large almond pink rhododendron that was given to Mr. de Ferranti by Charlie Brocklehurst of Hare Hill.



Lake with azaleas

At its lower end where the lake spills over into a stream, it is crossed by a red Chinese Bridge designed by Sebastian de Ferranti and the artist Felix Kelly. It forms a focal point at this end of the valley. There are sculptures well positioned throughout the gardens; from an elegant pair of equestrian statues on brick piers in the stable yard to the handsome Florentine Boar on the upper slope of the opposite bank.



Horse and boy

Classical references include statues of Flora and Diana the Huntress, the Urn under the dam and, in relation to the Chinese bridge, a Temple Bell from Tokyo.

Garden Structures

There is a long range of original lean-to Peach Cases now growing figs, grapes, and tomatoes.

The Walled garden has brick built cold frames (whose hefty opening mechanism is apt to trap the unwary) growing little gems, early potatoes, parsley and carrots.



Peach Case

There are mature pears, apples, bullaces and cherries trained on the walls. A glasshouse is used for production of plants for the Hall. Support buildings include a tool store workshop with wood fire in an open grate.



Tools

The walled garden was down to grass until about eight years ago, so the soil is being improved with organic matter. Mr. De Ferranti had windows put in the walls to open up views.

Set into the opposite bank is an Ice House for use in the days before fridges. Ice was collected from the lake and packed into the dungeon-like cavity and insulated with straw. On one occasion the ice remained for a full seventeen months.

From utility to leisure

A tennis court has been built, with artificial turf for an all weather surface. Nets are hung from brick piers with urns at each corner. Overlooking the tennis court is a splendid Machin Conservatory housing a heated swimming pool and fern grotto.



Machin Conservatory

Future Plans

It is intended to move the stream and clear the banks to create a water meadow and a view from the house along the grand North Avenue.



Replanting will replace old trees in the parkland, though over-mature lime and sweet chestnut trees are being beheaded to preserve them. A Tree surgeon works two days a week on the estate and garden.

Ruth Brown and Jacquetta Menzies

Alpine Biodiversity



This being the international year of biodiversity I have been trying to do my bit to maintain and increase the biodiversity in my garden and add to my knowledge in general. I have added new varieties and created will

further wildlife habitats and also attended a 'Bioblitz' event in Whitworth Park, Manchester, which was organised by the Manchester Museum. This took the form of a day of collecting and recording species and I

will later be producing a piece of work to sum up my findings of the day.

Since then I have been on my annual holiday which I spent in France and Belgium with my husband.

Don't worry I'm not going to recount all the things we did or make you sit through a slide show but I just wanted to share with you the joy of the French Alps and their meadows.

We stayed between St Gervais Les Bains and Les Contamines on a mountainside overlooking a beautiful valley.



Nothing I'd read or heard about the wildflower meadows had prepared me for the sheer magnificence of them, there were great swathes of colour everywhere and I was stunned by the amazing variety of species including beautiful wild geraniums, aquilegia, orchids and many, many more.



As I'm certainly no plant expert this is not meant as a technical writing but just a few insights and photos which I hope you will find inspiring.

Those amongst you who have a greater knowledge than I do may of course be able to identify some of the species from my photos and I'd be happy to hear from you.

We made several forays into the mountains, climbing to 5,000 feet or more, crossed rope bridges over



glaciers and caught sight of several Ibex (Bouquetin in French we were reliably informed).

We even braved the Mont Blanc Tramway up to its top stage, from whence climbers start their full ascent, one of the scariest things I've ever done as I don't have a head for heights.



There were gentians and other plants growing up to the snow line but I was gripping so tightly to the handrail I didn't get any photos of them!

When we arrived, and I could brave looking, the views were absolutely magnificent with wooded slopes up to the rock line and lots of snow on the mountain tops.



So all in all a fantastic trip - my photos don't really do it justice at this size but I hope they'll give you a bit of a taster of a truly beautiful environment.

A couple of websites with more biodiversity information: www.biodiversityislife.net/
www.bnhc.org.uk/home/bioblitz/

Christine Wilcox-Baker

Garden Open Day

Saturday 7th August; 2-5 p.m. 26 Sandford Road, Sale M33 2PS. Admission £3.00.

Proceeds to Sale Moor Methodist Church and their Charity of the Year: The North West Air Ambulance.

Afternoon Tea (included in price) will be served at 24 Sandford Road.

Plants for sale: proceeds to Cheshire Gardens Trust.

Caldwell Archives Project – update

First, many thanks to all those members who have responded to letters or e-mails and expressed their support for this project. It is important that we can demonstrate to the Heritage Lottery Fund that you are all behind us on this. So if you've still not responded, please do so now.

At the time of writing, the funding application is almost ready to submit. On 19th July, we received four tenders for the transcription of eight ledgers onto a database. These were all so different, with prices varying accordingly, that we have had to go back to the tenderers with queries and asking for clarification. We hope this will soon be done and we will be in a position to have a preferred bidder by the time the funding is approved.

CGT member, John Edmondson (whose perseverance finally got the project started) provided us with his contacts in the Garden History Society. We e-mailed them with details of the Project and received back some heartening responses, like these:

- “I would like to add my enthusiastic support for your efforts to make the Caldwell Archives available on line. The documents will provide a unique insight into horticulture and society, and will be available to everyone, whatever their interest, such is the power of searchable databases. I wish you well in your search for support for this wonderful project. With all good wishes John Parker Director, Cambridge University Botanic Garden”
- “Thank you for your message; the Caldwell archives represent a unique cache of material that requires to be conserved. The proposed project would make this material easily available to researchers, which would be of great importance to any historic research relating to plants and planting material available in English gardens. It would be useful to both me and my students and I look forward to the possibility of accessing this archive. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. Jan Woudstra, Reader in Landscape History and Theory, Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield”

We continue to find snippets of information about Caldwell's and are still looking for artefacts from the nursery.

Knutsford Heritage Centre is currently hosting an exhibition entitled “Elizabeth Gaskell's Knutsford; Local Trade and Businesses, 1810-1865. Included are some of Caldwell's Seed Measures.



Wooden box containing a set of brass seed measures sizes 15-28, for quantifying measures of flower and vegetable seeds



A pair of seed scoops made from white animal horn and a turned wooden seed bowl with a brass rod across the top which allowed a level measure to be made



Set of brass measures sized 1 to 14 for quantifying flower and vegetable seeds. Also a small brass seed bowl for dispensing a precise number of seeds into a packet. Inside lid a list of flower seeds with the correct measure to use.

Why not go along and see the originals. The exhibition is open until August 31st; Tuesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Knutsford Heritage Centre, 90A King Street, Knutsford

Association of Gardens Trusts

This year's AGM and Weekend Conference will be held rather later than usual (to miss the holiday season) from October 1st to 4th at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. For more details and a booking form, go to

http://gardenstrusts.org.uk/new/Conf_IOW/AGTconf10.pdf

In July, the CGT visit was to Vernon Park in Stockport. A report will be included in the next issue, meanwhile we have:

Vernon Park – the historical perspective



It's difficult today, to believe the sheer magnitude of the event; or the razzamatazz attached to the inauguration of Vernon Park in September 1858.

It was a warm, bright and sunny Monday and all local businesses had declared a holiday for the occasion. This was an auspicious day – and not just for the citizens of Stockport.

More than a dozen special trains ran from Manchester; it was reckoned the local population was swollen by an additional 50,000 visitors. The streets were decorated with flowers, banners and triumphal arches. Church bells rang and cannon roared.

Ten thousand people gathered in the Market Place to watch the procession set off, with a band leading each section.

There were civic dignitaries, local gentry, Cheshire aristocracy, members of friendly societies (each member of the United Free Gardeners carried a geranium), corporation and West of England fire engines and even “a printing press, in a cart, in full operation”. Some were on foot and others in carriages.

It took an hour and a quarter before everyone had left the Market Place, and three and a half hours to travel the three miles, and more, to the park.

Once arrived, there was singing, and speeches, and cheering. This was a People's Park and the People had turned out to take possession of it.

The Mayor cited all the benefactors, from Lord

Vernon, who had given the land (but was too ill to be there), through the alderman who had given the statue of Venus at the Baths, the workpeople who had subscribed for the fountain on the terrace, the middle classes who had provided seats and “many a working man had brought his geranium, his holyhock (sic), or his carnation and planted it in the park as his grateful mite”.

The excitement and celebrations continued into the evening. For the few there was the Banquet; for the rest, the town was “a blaze of light”, firearms were discharged and fireworks lit the sky.

Reports were carried in the press throughout the country, from London to Edinburgh to Belfast, taking in (among many others) Bristol, Hull, Bury and Southampton. It even got into the magazines, with John Bull; The Lady's Newspaper and Bell's Life in London all carrying articles. The inauguration of the park was even included in the 1866 book The Great Events of Great Britain.

The Belfast News-letter used it as an excuse to berate the Harbour Commissioners who had agreed to provide a public park as a condition of getting an Act of Parliament passed, but had so far failed to do so.

The (London) Daily News noted that it was fifteen years [in fact 12 years] since Manchester's three Parks had opened and that in the intervening period Macclesfield, Blackburn, Bolton, Ashton and Halifax had all added to the list of “People's Parks” implying that it was ‘about time’ Stockport had one. This paper

also drew attention to the different economic circumstances between 1846 and 1858.

When Manchester had opened the subscription lists for Parks (1844), it was “during a period of comparative prosperity” and, said the Daily News “Manchester merchants and manufacturers were called upon ... to subscribe their money to provide places of recreation for the people. They gave it in lumps of 500*l.* and 1,000*l.* each, and three handsome estates were purchased with the proceeds”.

[This was, to say the least, somewhat misleading; only 5 people had given £1,000 and 9 had given £500 out of a total of 3,790 donors. Half the money raised for the Manchester Parks came from donations of £150 and under and more than half the donations were for 5s or less. If the ‘merchants and manufacturers’ had been rather more generous, Manchester would have had the four parks originally proposed.]

More than a decade later, Vernon Park existed because 1857 had been a time of “commercial panic”. Huge numbers had been thrown out of work and they were the people used as labour to create the park. It took them just ten months.

The reports had Vernon Park variously as 15, 18, 22 and 26 acres. (According to a current web-site it is 21 acres!) It was the Daily News that mentioned 26.

The piece of land that Lord Vernon (who gave his name to the park) had owned was in total 22 acres, but four of those were the river, so were generally omitted (perhaps the Daily News added instead of subtracting).

The original idea for the 18 acre site was that 15 acres would be given to the borough, but that Lord Vernon would keep a strip 30 yards wide around the perimeter for the building of houses. (Perhaps he was thinking of Birkenhead which dates from around the same time.)

Many reports stated the land had been given by Lord Vernon in 1842. But the Mayor, in his speech, gave 1844 as the date when the idea was first mooted. The Daily News implied the opening of the Derby Arboretum (in 1844) had been the impetus, but there was no mention of that in the report of the Mayor’s speech in the Manchester Times.

He went on to explain that the plan could not be prosecuted at that time as Lord Vernon (who was the Lord of the Manor) didn’t actually own the land, and his son was a minor (it must have belonged to his son, or was entailed in some way).

So it wasn’t until 1847 that an Act of Parliament made it possible for the title to the land to be passed to the borough.

The Mayor then seems to have skated over the intervening decade, moving swiftly on to the previous year when so many able-bodied men were out of work. For them, there was little choice in the matter – it was create the park or starve.

Two years later, the anniversary of the opening of the park was attended by almost as much excitement – though tempered by tragedy.

Mr. Petty, from the Pomona Gardens in Manchester, mounted a firework display in the Market Place and when it was over the crowd turned and rushed down the hill, towards latecomers who were still making their way up. Soon there was a pile of fallen people and when order was restored six bodies were recovered (one man, two women and three children) and others were injured.

Unlike the previous year, this time the Manchester Times carried a description of the park:

“Situating on one of the highest hills in the neighbourhood, and close adjacent to the town, with a very gentle ascent from the principal gate, and with views of a portion of the country beautifully diversified, few parks excel in point of situation the Vernon Park, Stockport. On the east side is a very precipitate slope, at the foot of which a branch of the Mersey, after winding round several gentle eminences, creeps in sight, and in one spot rushes in noisy haste over a stone breastwork, built across the bed of the stream. The slope has been wound with walks at various heights, and from each the view of the country is exceedingly fine. Pretty arborets, ornamental seats, tasteful flower beds, fountains, miniature lakes, stocked with gold and other fish, and a hothouse ornament the ground; while at the summit stands a fine brick and stone building, which has just been erected by the borough members for a museum.”

The proceedings of the day included the laying of a foundation stone for an observatory. Under the stone was a time capsule containing newspapers and an inscribed plate.

Alas! This was the year the American Civil War began. All building work was halted. Seventeen years later, it was proposed that the observatory be built in commemoration of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. A subscription of £1,000 was needed. The mayor promised £50. Was the money raised? Was the tower built? I’ve not been able to discover the answers.

Joy Uings



With thanks to Ed Bennis for the historic postcards

Everything you could ever want

Plants are all very well, but what about the hardware your garden needs? Pots, fences lawnmowers, summer houses – the list goes on and on. And so, fortunately, does the catalogue of William Cooper, Limited, of the Old Kent Road, London. Unfortunately, the hardback catalogue I cherish was published about 1910 for a mere half-crown (12 ½ new pence for younger members), but it does make modern stores seem a bit limited in their range. The Horticultural Sundries section alone includes garden vases, wire work, rollers, lawn mowers, garden tools, garden hose and fittings, syringes, garden engines, pumps, tents, seats and chairs, field gates, barrows, tents, bins, cisterns, bird cages, rainwater goods, oils, etc., etc.

A month-by-month guide for the amateur gardener is on right-hand pages with all types of greenhouses and vinerias available from Cooper facing them on the left. An attractive lean-to conservatory 20 feet by 9 feet, complete with brass fittings and projecting gable front would have cost you £40 if you were prepared to erect it yourself (sounds like Ikea!) but Cooper would put it up for you for an extra £12.

WILLIAM COOPER, Ltd., 761, Old Kent Road, London, S.E.

Sexangular Thatched-Roof Summer House.

No. 304.

This is a cheaper kind of thatched house, strongly made and sound in every part; all boards tongued and grooved, stained and varnished. This pattern has a large sale. For quality of workmanship the price is very low. It is unsurpassed by any in the trade.

Put on rail at our Works.

From Angle to Angle.	DIMENSIONS OUTSIDE.		Height under Eaves.	Cash Price.
	From Back to Front.	From Side to Side.		
6 0	5 0	6 0	6 0	10 10 0
6 6	5 6	6 6	6 6	13 10 0
7 0	6 0	7 0	7 0	15 10 0
7 6	6 6	7 6	7 6	17 10 0
8 0	7 0	8 0	8 0	19 10 0

Portable 3-Gabled Thatched-Roof Rustic Summer House.

No. 305.

This is after the style of No. 306, without steps and balcony. It is enclosed with door and windows of cathedral glass, handsomely fitted throughout, and is of imposing elevation.

Made in any size to order, with or without windows and door. All work of the best character and finish. Size 8ft. by 8ft. Carefully put on rail at our Works.

Cash Price: Thatched Roof, £32; if Boarded Roof, £32.

814

WILLIAM COOPER, Ltd., 761, Old Kent Road, London, S.E.

Portable 3-Gabled Thatched-Roof Rustic Summer House.

No. 306.

This is one of the most effective designs ever produced for a Summer House. It is a charming adornment to a garden wherever erected.

A flight of steps in the centre leads to a balcony platform, which surrounds the house. It is artistically finished both inside and out.

Size, 12ft. by 12ft. over all. House, 8ft. by 8ft., giving 2ft. Balcony all round. Raised 2ft. 6in. off the ground.

Price, complete on rail, at our Works, thatched, £42; if boarded roof, £32. This house can be made to any size required. Prices forwarded upon receipt of specification.

Portable Rustic Summer House.

No. 307.

This is a roomy house, fitted with door, and windows eachside. It makes a convenient Summer House in summer and a useful storeroom for a gardener in winter, at the same time a handsome ornament to any garden. Thoroughly well constructed, stained and varnished.

12ft. by 5ft.

Cash Price, £17 10s. Put on rail at our Works.

815

Horticultural Manures proudly prints a letter from Dr A.B.Griffiths, F.R.S.E., F.C.S., author of 'A Treatise on Manures' and 'Manures and their Uses', stating that Mr William Cooper's manures "are undoubtedly first-class plant foods for vegetables, flowers and fruit-trees." The catalogue then lists the extensive range of fertilizers available, starting with the all-purpose Excelsior Fertilizer. "Each element of its composition has been carefully experimented with for years, and its precise independent value determined." It is practically free from smell as well.

If you want to get rid of pests and disease, Cooper's has it own "the most effective, the safest, and the cheapest Insect Destroyer", as well as the Mealy Bug Destroyer, Nicotine Wash, Fumicide, Unrivalled Weed Destroyer, Wasp Destroyer, Fumigating Insecticide and Worm Destroyer.

The catalogue also recommends Tobacco Paper, prepared with the best tobacco juice. "By merely making a roll and suspending in house or frame, and then igniting both ends, it will cause a great smoke and destroy all insects."

Garden stores must have been dangerous places!

However, William Cooper's main concern was the manufacture of portable buildings, including several models of motor-car shelters, now generally known as garages. I tend to gaze longingly at the summer houses. I could have had a portable, 3-gabled thatched-roof rustic summer house of £32, with windows of cathedral glass and of imposing elevation. Nowadays I might get a garden chair for the same money.

Sheila Holroyd

Get snapping

I bet that most CGT members take photos of gardens, your own or other peoples. Hands up – yes, that's most of you!

And presumably with a variety of camera devices from mobile phones to more sophisticated cameras with interchangeable lenses, and the myriad of devices that lay between these two extremes.

And what do we do with all these images? Well, they sit on our computers (or worse, on the phone/camera's memory card), never to be looked at again.

Of course, many photos are taken for 'record' purposes, but I imagine most people have the capability to take something a bit more creative.

I take a lot of pictures of gardens, because of my involvement with the National Gardens Scheme: I also enter local competitions and sell the occasional print.

However in 2009, I decided to test my abilities (or lack of them!) by entering the garden photography competition that is probably at the apex of the pyramid, the competition for the International Garden Photographer of the Year. (I didn't win ... but I did 'alright', but more of that later). Regrettably it is shortened to the unfortunate acronym 'IGPOTY'!

It runs annually, it attracts 20,000 entries, including just about all the professionals, except Andrew Lawson and Clive Nichols, who don't enter – because they are the chief judges! They are joined by half a dozen other luminaries from Kew, the National Trust, the gardening world, the 'posh' gardening mags and specialists of the photographic world. So ... easy-peasy, really!

Entry is via the IGPOTY website (www.igpoty.com), it's straight-forward, there are lots of photographic tips and instructions on the mechanics of entering your picture on line. It costs around £2.50 per image and as many entries can be made as you wish.

The competition is divided into sections – garden views, plant portraits etc, but these do change from year to year. For aspiring photographers, one of the great benefits is that feedback can be requested on your failed entries from the judges: how good is that, having these stellar snappers tell you how to improve? Each of the sections has a 1st, 2nd and 3rd, together with 3 or 4 'finalists' who just missed out and a further half dozen 'Commended' entries.

So, if I can be awarded a 'Commended', I am sure there must be others of you that could enter.

The entry reproduced here, 'Commended' in the Garden Views' section, called 'Roald Dahl's Garden', shows his writing hut, set, as if reflected, in a large glass vessel, also in his garden. Unfortunately, not a Cheshire garden, but set in Buckinghamshire. As with any competition in the public domain, permission from the owner is needed, but a polite note will usually secure that.



Those of you with some knowledge of the black arts will suspect, quite rightly, that Photoshop software was used in creating the picture. That is allowed, although its probably true to say that the judges don't particularly like this type of 'special effect'. Nevertheless, they were aware of its use here and forgave me!

The pictures that make up the image were taken with a relatively old digital SLR Canon with the standard lenses that I bought with it. You probably couldn't give it away now on Ebay! I have a much more sophisticated camera, but this shows that expensive equipment is not a pre-requisite: what matters is a bit of imagination. Indeed, one finalist used a pinhole camera.

All the finalists and Commended entries are on the website, as well as published in a large glossy book of the same name. (What a thrill to see a picture you created in glossy print, alongside such luminaries as Marianne Majerus (the ultimate winner).

Will I try again, this year? I will ... but I really don't have high expectations – I think that I struck lucky last year – although I hope to learn yet more from the judges' feedback. I hope that some of CGT's membership will join me. Go to the website and take a look!

John Hinde

John Hinde is a CGT member and Deputy County Organiser of the NGS in Cheshire and Wirral. If CGT members have gardens that they would like photographing, he is happy to provide a set of images on disc gratis, based upon one visit. (T: 0151 342 8557, E: john.hinde@maylands.com)

Wells for Africa

In the past 25 years, Wells for Africa have raised over £665,000 to provide fresh water in African villages.

As part of their fundraising activities, 22 private gardens were open on 26 June where over 500 people visited them on a warm and dry Saturday and raised over £7,800.

These ranged from delightful family gardens to Dial House that Tim Mowl described as the 'best, and probably the only, modernist domestic garden in the county'. I managed six gardens, but the last time I went only three as the rain stopped play for me!

There is always something new and a surprise lurks around the corner. Last time it was Dial House, but this time it was the totally unexpected Ash Cottage.



Ash Cottage: The potager

Despite the owner's worry, it was delightful, well laid out and managed and it showed the range of garden types and ideas that can be found in our area.

Alan Parfitt, Chairman of Wells for Africa, told me that new gardens are added every year to keep visitors coming back. There is an informal cycle where gardens drop out and have a break so there is always something fresh.

The idea is to have a range of gardens centred around Wilmslow but it can also include gardens in Alderley Edge and Handforth.

Many gardens are close together so you can walk between them.

Thankfully, some offer refreshments for those hot summer days...which also means hot drinks for those cold summer days.

Wells for Africa have a number of fund raising activities including supper-days with soup and cakes, and an annual holiday cottage auction. The next event is the Mad Hatters Tea Party on 15 August.

Check their web site for details – www.wilmslowwells.org and note that 99% of all funds raised go directly to supplying fresh water for African villages. Next year's date for the garden visit has not been set, but it will be around the same time in late June.

Try to make it to see some interesting gardens as well as supporting a worthy cause.

Ed Bennis



Ash Cottage: The Wildflower meadow

It has a wild flower meadow behind the cottage with paths cut through it, and a charming and beautifully managed potager. This was certainly a serious gardener when I discovered he was grafting heritage apples onto dwarfing stock.

There were delightful and eclectic notes scattered around which explained the problems of the wood pigeons eating the peas, and an over-planted bed with apologies and that this would be taken care of next winter.

There was no need for apologies, it was an exceptional garden in many ways and not what was expected on the tour.

At another garden belonging to a CGT member, my wife and I walked up the drive to be greeted by the owner with 'Oh dear, here come the experts'!

Research and Recording group in East Cheshire

Do you live in south Manchester, Stockport, Congleton, Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Altrincham, Sale, Knutsford, Middlewich, Sandbach, Crewe, Nantwich or places in between? Have you ever wondered what Research and Recording entails? or been curious about a site near you?

You are not alone. Some Garden Trust members in the east of the county have already expressed their interest in becoming involved in Research and Recording. We propose to meet in mid September to discuss how we take this forward.

If you are interested in joining us or would like to find out more, please contact Barbara Moth 01606 46228 barbara.moth@btinternet.com

Pleasant Talk

In our April Newsletter, Ruth Brown shared with us some fascinating reading about manures. (Rita Ward reminds us that the best celery is grown on Rixton Moss, thanks to Manchester's night soil.)

But there was another book she had read which was rather more poetic, and the following extracts were chosen by her from Pleasant talk About Fruit, Flowers & Farming by Rev. H. W. Beecher, which was published by Alexander Strahan & Co. Edinburgh and Sampson Low, Son & Co. London, in 1859.

PLEASURES OF HORTICULTURE. – There is no writing so detestable as so-called *fine writing*. It is painted emptiness. We especially detest fine writing about rural affairs – all the senseless gabble about dew, and zephyrs, and stars, and sunrises – about flowers and green trees, golden grain and lowing herds, &c. We always suspect a design upon our admiration, and take care not to admire. In short, *geoponical cant, and pastoral cant, and rural cant*, in their length and breadth, are like the whole long catalogue of cants (not excepting the German Kant), intolerable. Now and then, however, somebody writes as though he knew something; and then a free and bold strain of commendation upon rural affairs is relishful. (p.106)

A love of flowers would beget early rising, industry, habits of close observation, and of reading. It would incline the mind to notice natural phenomena, and to reason upon them; it would occupy the mind with pure thoughts, and inspire a sweet and gentle enthusiasm; maintain simplicity of taste, and, in connexion with personal instruction, unfold in the heart an enlarged unstrained, ardent piety. (p.92)

OUR CREED

We believe in small farms and thorough cultivation.

We believe that soil loves to eat, as well as its owner, and ought, therefore, to be manured.

We believe in large crops which leave the land better than they found it – making both the farmer and the farm rich at once.

We believe in going to the bottom of things, and therefore in deep ploughing, and enough of it. All the better if with a sub-soil plough.

We believe that every farm should own a good farmer.

We believe that the best fertiliser of any soil is a spirit of industry, enterprise, and intelligence; without this, lime and gypsum, bones and green manure, marl and guano will be of little use.

We believe in good fences, good barns, good farm-houses, good stock, good orchards, and children enough to gather the fruit.

We believe in a clean kitchen, a neat wife in it, a spinning-piano, a clean cupboard, a clean dairy, and a clean conscience.

We firmly disbelieve in farmers that will not improve; in farms that grow poorer every year; in starveling cattle; in farmers' boys turning into clerks and merchants; in farmers' daughters unwilling to work; and in all farmers ashamed of their vocation, or who drink whisky till honest people are ashamed of them. (p.2)

I couldn't resist looking on the internet to see if I could find out more. The book was originally published in America as Plain and pleasant talk about fruits, flowers, and farming and if you too want to read more go to <http://books.google.co.uk/books> and you will find a copy of the original. (Please note, though, that the page numbering is different.)

The preface begins: "No one of our readers will be half so curious to know what this book contains as the author himself".

This is because the book is a reprint of articles written over a long period and some years previously by Henry Ward Beecher when, as a young man, he lived in Indianapolis. The town was going through a period of expansion and was lacking in local newspapers and magazines. Beecher was asked to

edit a new publication Indiana Farmer and Gardener, which later became the Western Farmer and Gardener.

Beecher was an itinerant preacher and the daily grind of producing and declaiming a sermon (once for eighteen months, daily, without a single break) meant that he needed a diversion. It came in the form of Loudon's horticultural, agricultural and architectural encyclopaedias.

"In our little one-story cottage, after the day's work was done, we pored over these monuments of an almost incredible industry, and read, we suppose, not only every line, but much of it, many times over; until, at length, we had a topographical knowledge of many of the fine English estates – quite as intimate, we dare say, as was possessed by

many of their truant owners. There was something exceedingly pleasant, and is yet, in the studying over mere catalogues of flowers, trees, fruits, etc.”

Then Lindley's Horticulture; Gray's Structural Botany and the Gardener's Chronicle were added to the reading list and Beecher was ready to pass on his (and their) knowledge.

The second of Ruth's chosen excerpts is the final paragraph of a long piece entitled “A Plea for Health and Floriculture”, which begins with the sentence

“Every one knows to what an extent women are afflicted with nervous disorders, *neuralgic* affections as they are more softly termed.”

This, apparently, was due to increased leisure and so-called accomplishments. When women experienced good healthy out-door work and barely heated rooms, they were healthy.

“With the progress of society, fevers increase first, because luxurious eating vitiates the blood; *dyspepsia* follows next, because the stomach, instead of being a laboratory, is turned into a mere warehouse, into which everything is packed, from the foundation to the roof, by gustatory *stevedores*. Last of all come *neuralgic* complaints, springing from the muscular enfeeblement and the nervous excitability of the system.”

To make matters worse, women had to be ‘accomplished’, which meant “embroidery, lace-work, painting rice paper, casting wax-flowers so ingeniously that no mortal can tell what is meant lilies looking like huge goblets, dahlias resembling a battered cabbage”, learning to play the piano, the harp and the guitar.

Girls were taught, from as young as eight, that their goal in life was to catch a husband, and had to act accordingly.

“Girls must not walk fast, that is not lady-like; nor run, that would be shockingly vulgar; nor scamper over fields, merry and free as the bees or the birds, laughing till the cheeks are rosy, and romping till the blood marches merrily in every vein...”

because such behaviour would disgust the would-be suitors.

How to counteract such societal pressures? The answer lay in the garden:

“When once a mind has been touched with zeal in floriculture it seldom forgets its love. If our children were early made little enthusiasts for the garden, when they were old they would not depart from it.”

Today the pressures are different, but the joy of gardening remains.

Joy Uings

On pages 3 and 4, Christine has given us a sense of wildflower meadows in the Alps in the twenty-first century. But what about Britain in the nineteenth? On 1 May 1820, Mary Russell Mitford wrote to B. R. Haydon:

“... Are you fond of field flowers? They are my passion – even more, I think, than greyhounds or books. This country is eminently flowery. Besides all the variously-tinted primroses and violets in singular profusion, we have all sorts of orchises and arums; the delicate wood anemone; the still more delicate wood sorrel, with its lovely purple veins meandering over the white drooping flower; the field tulip, with its rich chequer-work of lilac and crimson, and the sun shining through the leaves as through old painted glass; the ghostly field star of Bethlehem (did you ever see that rare and ghost-like flower? ...); wild lilies of the valley; and the other day I found a field completely surrounded by wild periwinkles. They ran along the hedge for nearly a quarter of a mile; to say nothing of the sculptural beauty of the white water lily and the golden clusters of the golden ranunculus. Yes, this is really a country of flowers, and so beautiful just now, that there is no make up one's mind to leave it...”

And, given that I am typing this in the midst of the RHS Tatton Flower Show, this excerpt from a letter to the Rev. William Harness dated 1 October 1837 seems apposite –

“... The journeyman of our neighbour the shoe-maker has caught my love of flowers, and having borrowed of his brother the blacksmith a little bit of waste ground by the forge, behind some poplars which draw all the nourishment from the earth, so that they could not riase cabbages there, planted it with seedling dahlias (about two hundred), which he used to water night and morning all the summer with a *can*, which he carried backward and forward from the pond at the top of the street. Well, he has got the best seedling of the year, the very best. It happened to be in bloom in time for the last Reading show; gained, of course, the cottagers' prize, and he will get something between 5/ and 10/ for the root, besides the honour. I never, I think, saw such a happy face in my life as his at the flower show. He never stirred from his flower. All the gardeners far and near (for it was a grand dahlia show open to all England, and we had twelve prizes for strangers, and they came from beyond London) clustered about him; and John Brown and his dahlia were the lions of the day. I think I enjoyed it as much as he did; his love of lowers was so genuine, and his success so entirely deserved.”

Excerpts from My Garden; Selected from the letters and recollections of Mary Russell Mitford by Robyn Marsack.

RHS Show, Tatton Park ~~2010~~ 2011

Members attending this year's Tatton Show will have been disappointed by CGT's absence. After so many of you had volunteered your time to take a stint in charge of the promised stand, we were let down at the last minute by the RHS who were unable to find us a vacant spot. So thank you for your help and we're sorry that it didn't work out.

It is now time to think about next year's presence. It has been suggested that, rather than rely on a stall, CGT should demonstrate its work by creating a garden. However, that requires time, effort and money, and volunteers during the build-up and knock-down as well as during the Show itself.

So, if this idea is to get beyond the "Why don't we..." stage, we need the support of members. If we go ahead there would be a number of roles, from the securing of sponsorship, to raising of plants, to fetching and carrying, to physical labour.... I'm sure you get the picture.

If you would like to be involved in this idea, please contact Ed Bennis, who, if we get your support, will be leading the project. Discuss with him what help you can give, and next year – who knows – CGT might win its very first flower show medal!

Ed Bennis – tel. 0161 247 1118; e-mail: E.M.Bennis@mmu.ac.uk.



Thursday 21 October 2010

Study Day at Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire

A study day at Westonbirt School near Tetbury organised by the Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust (GGLT), together with the Association of Gardens Trusts (AGT), to explore the nineteenth-century pleasure grounds created by Robert Stayner Holford (1808-1892) and embellished with numerous architectural features designed by Lewis Vulliamy.

The restoration and replanting of the gardens is part of a Heritage Lottery Funding phase 2 bid currently being prepared by the Westonbirt Partnership which comprises The Forestry Commission (which owns the arboretum), the Friends of Westonbirt Arboretum, Westonbirt

School (which owns the large parts of the parkland) and the Holfords of Westonbirt Trust (which leases the pleasure gardens).

The study day will provide an important opportunity to debate new research into the gardens against the background of the HLF application and explore what (hopefully) makes a successful HLF bid.

Costs in the region of £40 per head to include lunch and refreshments, study pack and guided tour of the pleasure grounds. For further information contact Jane Bradney at hvhac@aol.com or to book a place contact Ann (AGT Administrator) on Tel: 020 7251 2610 or e-mail gardenstrusts@agt.org.uk.

An Introduction to Garden History

with particular reference to
'outlandish' flowers
& *'exoticks'*
and how they influenced
garden design



A Series of 8 illustrated talks
on Thursdays: 10.00am - 12.00pm at

ARLEY HALL & GARDENS

Northwich Cheshire

Commencing - 9th September

Tutor - Jane Roberts MA

Field Botanist and Garden Historian

Have you ever wished you knew more about gardens through the centuries? More about the flowers that are, and have been, grown? Then why not book on this course run by CGT member Jane Roberts.

The course will give a general outline of the major garden styles in England from the end of the Dark Ages to the beginning of the Twentieth century. In addition to which particular reference will be made to **'outlandish'** flowers and **'exoticks'** (plant introductions) and how, over the centuries, they influenced garden design.

Less than 100 different species of plants were grown in medieval gardens – what they were and how with increased travel and trade introduced plants arrived on our shores in ever greater numbers will be discussed. In the 17th century tulips caused a financial crisis and the 18th century, during the 'English Landscape Movement', flowers fell out of favour – or did they? The cultural and political reasons behind both of these events will be investigated.

Complementing the indoor meetings will be excursions into the gorgeous and historic gardens of Arley Hall. How plants have influenced the many different styles within the garden, both in a historic and a present day context, will be examined. Arley's garden continues to evolve and your views will be sought as to whether or not you think historic gardens can be altered, or only preserved, conserved or restored.

All that is required of you to participate on this course is an interest and enthusiasm for historic gardens and the plants they contain – with no previous knowledge being necessary – a much easier task!

To enrol on this course send your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if you have one), plus a cheque for £58, by 20th August, to Botanical Surveys, Rainow Hill, Under Rainow Road, Timbersbrook, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 3PN. For more details, contact Jane on 01260 271186 / botanical.surveys123@btinternet.com

Devon Gardens Trust is holding its Autumn Conference on Saturday 30th October from 10 to 4.30, at University of Exeter, Queen's Building, St David's Campus, Exeter, EX4 4QJ.

Entitled "Women in the Garden", it will look at the influence of women in Devon gardens from women weeders of the 18th century to the women head gardeners of today.

The cost for Gardens Trust members is £27.50, which includes lunch, coffee on arrival and tea. More information from Clare Greener 01626 867700; claregreener@talktalk.net. Or download the flyer, complete with booking form, from www.devongardenstrust.org.uk/page13.html.

The fourth edition of The Art & Craft of Garden Making by Thomas Mawson, is now available at www.archive.org/details/artcraftofgarden00mawsrich. You can read it on-line or download as a pdf.

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.