



**CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST**

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Newsletter

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Some future events:

- ✿ Mrs Delany and her Circle – Sat. 17th November
- ✿ 19th century Villa Gardens – Sat. 22nd January
- ✿ Gresgarth Hall – February (date t.b.c.)
- ✿ Roswitha Arnold on German gardens: Spring Lecture at end of March (date t.b.c.)



Poulton Hall

Without doubt this is the quirkiest garden that we have visited.

Full of humour and literary associations, it is a memorial to Roger Lancelyn-Green, the biographer and writer of children's fiction, and has been designed by his wife, June Lancelyn-Green, to reflect his interests and his books.

Poulton Hall has been in the family for many generations. In the eleventh century Scirard de

Launcelyn built his castle on a defensive mound above the river Dibbin.

A later house was probably destroyed by fire; the second house, built in the seventeenth century, was brick built with stone coigns and is just recognizable. It was later stuccoed but when this deteriorated it was pebble-dashed.

From the car park the Hall is approached through the Upper Field, past a monument erected by Scirard de Launcelyn, and over a Ha-ha.

The lawns at the front of the house have always been a major feature and were much admired by Nathaniel Hawthorne who visited Poulton Hall when he was American Consul in Liverpool in the early 1850s.



The Walled Garden is approached across the lawns and through Caroline's Garden which is planted with herbs and roses.

The Walled Garden itself was designed as a traditional north-facing garden divided into six compartments and conforming to Loudon's original plan.

Vegetable beds in the centre were surrounded by espaliered fruit trees and flower beds, each enclosed by box hedges. The sundial in the centre has always stood there and is as old as the building. The gardens became derelict after the second World War but, with help and advice from Ken Hulme from Ness Gardens, a transformation was begun.

To enter the Walled Garden through the Wardrobe, with its rows of fur coats, is to enter a garden of myth and fantasy.



It is, in fact, a series of gardens, each with a literary theme. It is full of surprises and it does not matter which route you take.

The 'Alice in Wonderland Walk' is bordered by standard red and white roses, a tribute to Roger Lancelyn-Green's life-long interest in Lewis Carroll.

In the Woodland Garden sits the Jabberwocky (carved by Jim Heath) who comes 'whiffing thro' the tulgey wood' and sometimes breathes out smoke.



Suspended in the trees in the shrub border is the 'Cheshire Cat's Grin' (by the textile artist Judith Railton).

Further down the garden are two horses' heads, the Knights from the Poulton Hall Centenary Production of 'Alice Through the Looking Glass'. They peer over the wall from the newly constructed compost bins.

Other literary associations abound. The Classical Garden, in addition to stone columns, a stone eagle and pots planted with acanthus, contains two sculptures reflecting Roger Lancelyn-Green's 'Tales of Greece and Troy': 'The Golden Apples of Hesperides' (a fibre art creation by Judith Railton) and a 'Fighting Greek and Trojan' (a silhouette made by John and Carol White).

Elsewhere in the garden an Egyptian obelisk serves as a reminder of 'Tales of Ancient Egypt' and a carved oak statue of Robin Hood (by Jim Heath) commemorates 'The Adventures of Robin Hood'.

At the far end of the garden a Pirate Ship, Wendy House and Crocodile recall Roger Lancelyn-Green's involvement with J. M. Barrie's 'Peter Pan' both as an actor and as author of a definitive stage history of the play.

The theme for the recently planted Sundial Garden has been taken from 'The Land of the Lord High Tiger'. A life size wizard guards the sundial his staff acting as the gnomon.

Another recent addition has been the Nursery Rhyme Garden, including 'Baa-baa Black Sheep', 'Hey Diddle-diddle' 'I had a Little Nut Tree' and 'The Owl and the Pussy-cat'.

The beautifully carved Story-teller's Chair (by Jim Heath) is based on a bookplate designed for Roger

Lancelyn-Green by Pauline Baynes who also illustrated the Narnia stories. It depicts Alice, King Arthur, a Greek, a Trojan, Sherlock Holmes, Mowgli and others. Near the tea-room, in a small area of trees, shrubs, ferns and shade-loving plants stands the Sword in the Stone, King Arthur's sword Excalibur.



In the rose garden is 'The Singing Rose', designed and made by Roger Lancelyn-Green's daughter Cilla West and inspired by her father's book of poems with the same title.

The Oriental Garden is planted with Cherries, azaleas, camellias and bamboos plus Nandina domestica and Fatsia japonica. Rocks and gravel have been used to symbolize mountains, rivers, islands and seas.

Although based upon the traditional element of a Japanese garden, this area owes much to personal interpretation and inspiration. There is a Chinese bridge, a stone lantern, three stone basins (two of which are planted with miniature landscapes), small chinamen, red lanterns, waving solar-powered cats on posts and a stained glass pictogram representing happiness. A Haiku add to the flavour of the garden:

'Tadpoles in the pond
nesting birds, cherry blossom
Spring is here at last'

The adjacent Queen of the Night Garden has a black and purple planting theme: black pansies, dark-leaved Rheum and black Ophiopogon with its strap-like leaves. On the wall a black cut-out figure of a witch and her cat flying on a magic broomstick presides over the area. She is accompanied in the garden by a bat, a twiggy besom and a cauldron for her herbal brews.

The Central Beds, surrounded by paths of Westmorland slate and edged with box hedging, contain roses, lilies and lavender. In some parts the shrub roses have been removed and are being replaced with plantings of white with diagonals of muted lavender to provide splashes of colour.

The mixed borders containing shrubs and herbaceous perennials flank a domed gazebo. On one side is a hot border planted with reds, oranges and yellows; on the other side is a cool border planted with blues and purples.

Dave's Garden is a tribute to the life and friendship of David Gregory.

Items within the garden reflect this - his bicycle, his cobbler's last, the statue of Buddha sitting in the shade of a tree and carved wooden animals.

His connections with India and Sri Lanka are epitomized in the vibrant planting scheme of red penstemons, Crocosmia 'Lucifer', Lobelia cardinalis and callistemons; purple and blue salvias, Verbena bonariensis, heliotropes and tradescantia, yellow Fremontodendron and phlomis; red and black annual poppies and cosmos; trilliums and an Indian Bean tree.



On the wall is a plaque with the words:

'The first flower that blossomed on this earth
was an unborn song.'

Tagore

At the far end of the Fountain Garden are three contemporary stainless steel sculptures, memorials to Richard Lancelyn-Green (son of Roger and June) who was a renowned expert on the author Arthur Conan Doyle and his famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

The first, 'Breeze of Life' (designed by Sue Meyerhof Sharples) was inspired by the structure of yucca and cordyline plants. It is situated so that it can be viewed through the second piece 'Vision, which is in the form of a magnifying glass symbolic of Sherlock Holmes.

'Compassion' the third sculpture is constructed as a chair which creates a place for rest and contemplation.



The Conservatory contains a display of photographs of the gardens taken before and during the restoration plus the Millenium Lancelyn-Green Textile Hanging.

This original work in three panels (designed by Sue Jones) depicts some of the history of Poulton Hall and the interests of its owners.

In addition to Roger Lancelyn-Green there are accountants, lawyers and many of those who help or have helped in the gardens.

The Gardens are maintained by friends of June

If you missed the visit, you can see more photos on the website: poultonhall.co.uk.

But why not make a point of visiting it next year.

Lancelyn-Green who have volunteered to weed, plant and prune, plus extra help one day a week with the heavy work, mowing and hedge trimming.

Throughout the gardens there is an intriguing use of scale - huge statues and tiny figures abound. High 'Art' and plastic toys find themselves in juxtaposition.

It is very much a personal and family garden, eccentric, charming and idiosyncratic.

**Ruth Brown
Jacquetta Menzies**

Gardening for the homesick

Englishmen guarding far-flung corners of the globe, whether the local inhabitants liked it or not, often missed the green gardens of England and tried to recreate them, no matter how alien the surroundings.

In 1922 Lieutenant Colonel E. Dwyer published the first edition of "Hints on Gardening in Iraq", and it was revised many times, partly because Dwyer had based the first version on his experience of gardening in India and had not made allowances for the different climate.

My edition is dated 1957 and may be the last, as shortly afterwards a revolution swept away the royal family and meant the departure of most Europeans from the country.

The booklet was aimed at the absolute beginner and starts by listing the tools required: spade, trowel, shears, secateurs, lawn mower, watering can, length of gardening hose, a small but good saw, a hoe, and – if you had a lawn – a good strong rake.

The list of recommended flowers – from antirrhinum to wallflowers – is strongly reminiscent of English cottage gardens, though the vegetable list includes eggplant, melons and ladies finger and Dwyer does note sadly that potatoes

"do not take kindly to local conditions of soil and climate and are not worth growing".

The general advice on such gardening matters as preparing the ground, sowing the seeds, etc., are basic and useful anywhere, though the author admits that in Iraq

"it may well seem that there are only two seasons, the one when it is far too hot and the other when it is far too cold."

At least the hot weather helped in the fight against pests.

"Aphides, Green and Black Fly, are common in the early Summer, but nature itself takes a hand against them and the hot sun literally melts them."

The climate could endanger the gardener as well.

"When pottering or grubbing about in the garden wear gardening gloves. If you cut or prick a finger suck it immediately – clean thoroughly and apply iodine – sores are apt to turn septic in this climate and one cannot be too careful."

The gardening calendar sounds a little odd to us. Roses were at their best in early December, when chrysanthemums were also in full bloom.

May was a riot of colour and a wealth of bloom. August tasks in Iraq sound like winter in England and included cleaning and tidying up, though the gardener was protecting plants against the heat, not the cold.

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were long gone, and Dwyer remarked sadly that there were very few flower gardens apart from Government gardens, but encouraged the amateur gardener to persevere.

"Provided always you have the desire and the will to succeed, you may go ahead with confidence that you will obtain good results."

I am not sure this is always true – I haven't found it to be so in England!

Sheila Holroyd

From the Liverpool Mercury, July 27, 1832

Horticultural Curiosity. – There is now in flower at Mr. Caldwell's nursery, Knutsford, that magnificent plant the *yucca gloriosa*, which so seldom flowers; it is upwards of eight feet high; the flower stem alone measuring five feet, with more than eight hundred flowers upon it. – *Chester Courant.*

Harvington Hall



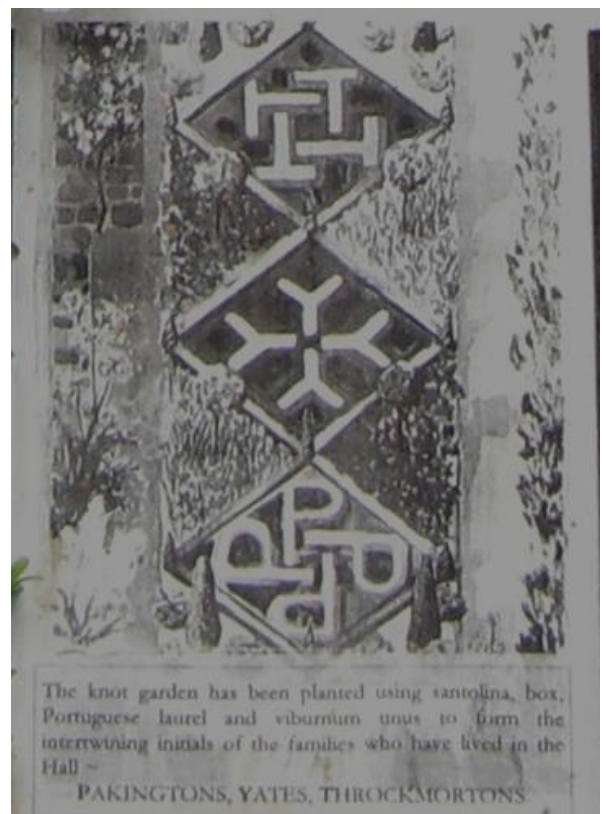
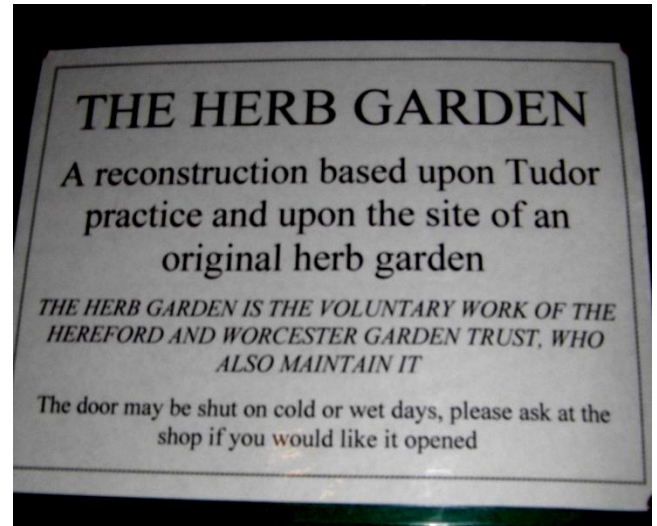
In September we visited the Wyre Forest with Chester Society for Landscape History. One of the places on the itinerary was Harvington Hall (above), now in the ownership of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.

It is famous for the number of priest's holes constructed in the fabric of the building.

While walking around with the guide, I noticed a sign about the Herb Garden.

I had never heard of the house and thought the link to a Gardens Trust interesting.

Jan Hore



The inscription reads:

“The knot garden has been planted using santolina, box, Portuguese laurel and viburnum tinus to form the intertwining initials of the families who have lived in the Hall –

PAKINGTONS, YATES, THROCKMORTONS”

Trentham Gardens – a re-invention of the past

On a blustery, rather cold 15th of September, a group of about 30 CGT members and friends met at the entrance for a special tour of Trentham Gardens guided by Michael Walker, the Gardens and Estate Manager.

Once over the elegant stainless steel bridge we headed for the wonderful new cafe under the trees where we were warmed by a huge cup of hot coffee and an enormous chocolate chip cookie.

The cafe, a circular glass-walled building, opened in 2009, sits unobtrusively in the trees and merges well with the surrounding parkland.

From the inside you feel as though you are sitting in the garden but you are protected from the weather by the glass walls. It was expensive to build but is aesthetically pleasing and probably worth every penny.

The History of Trentham

Once out in the fresh air again, Michael began to tell us something of the history of the gardens which have been well-researched and well-documented.

Trentham was first recorded in the Domesday Book as a Royal Manor and was later created a Royal Deer Park by Henry II. In the 16th century it passed from the Crown through several owners, one of whom was Richard Trentham, then, in the



Michael Walker

17th century, a new mansion was built and walled gardens created. These remained intact over the Civil War years.

In 1759, Lancelot “Capability” Brown was commissioned to transform the landscape with the enlargement of the lake and the creation of parkland. Later, in 1803 when the estate was owned by the 2nd Marquess of Stafford and his wife, the wealthy Countess of Sutherland, a programme of new works and improvements was begun.

Then, between 1833 and 1850, the 2nd Duke of Sutherland began an extensive rebuilding scheme with the commissioning of Sir Charles Barry to redesign the Hall and gardens. The Orangery, Sculpture Gallery and Clock Tower were added and the Church was rebuilt. In 1840 the Italian Gardens were laid out and the statue of the 2nd Duke of Sutherland placed on Monument Hill at the south end of the lake.

By the end of the 19th century, the ceramics industry in the Potteries was flourishing and as a consequence the River Trent and Trentham lake were becoming more and more polluted.

In 1911 the hall was sold for demolition. The first day's sale of the contents made only £500, as did the sale of



The orangery and clock tower

the Belvedere tower which now adorns the park at Sandon. (For a view of this, go to www.thornber.net/staffs/html/sandon.html)

In 1931 Trentham Gardens Ltd was founded and the Gardens opened to the public; a new ballroom was built on the site of the original kitchen garden and an Art Deco outdoor swimming pool was built by the lake – a Lido and ballroom for the Potteries.

During the war, Trentham temporarily housed the London Clearing Banks; it was also used as a transit station for allied troops and for military training. After the war, it became famous as a dance hall but by the 1980s it had run down and was bought by John Broome for redevelopment as a leisure park. Several of the remaining buildings were listed at this time; of special interest were the remains of The Hall, the Grand Entrance and the Orangery.



The remains of the hall showing the conservatory with the good Porte cochere on the left side

However development did not proceed and the estate fell further into decay. A fault in an National Coal Board coal seam together with subsidence caused the lake to disappear overnight into river Trent and into the mine! The estate was then purchased by the NCB and the damage to the lake made good. But the estate had entered a period of severe decline.

Restoration of Trentham Gardens

14 years ago, this historic estate was bought by St Modwen Properties Plc and German investor Willi Reitz for restoration and regeneration of the area. Planning consent was finally given in 2003 after a full public enquiry and the £100million programme of rejuvenation was started.

Restoration started in the Italian Gardens where much

of the original layout remained intact. Michael told us that the soil was appalling when they started and much work had to be done to reinvigorate it. All borders and beds were restored and edged in steel; water for irrigation was piped throughout the garden.

One of the structures remaining on the site is a loggia, one of four originally in the garden. Ideally, Trentham would like to have all four back in position in the garden.



The last remaining loggia

One is at Dunrobin Castle, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Sutherland and where the gardens were also laid out by Sir Charles Barry in 1850. The location of the other two is known but the present owners do not wish to part with them. At one time it was proposed that three replicas should be made in yew or hornbeam.



The balustrade with urns

The balustrade with its urns was restored and parts replaced where necessary. The large vases which can be seen on the photograph of the orangery were also recreated.

The Planting

Below the balustrade, the Italian Garden has been replanted to a new scheme designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. It is on two levels and introduces some really contemporary ideas. Formality is given by the Portugese laurel in Versailles tubs lining the long avenue to the lake. Great drifts of colour come from herbaceous perennials like rudbeckia, eupatorium, kniphofia, while movement is provided by miscanthus and fennel. "Tom is simply a genius" said Michael.



The Italian Garden

Apparently the plants in the lower beds where the soil is well mulched and enriched rarely require watering. The upper beds are drier so are more prone to drought but by using deep rooted plants lush growth is ensured. It is difficult to imagine what the order for 60,000-80,000 plants in 9cm pots must look like and how long it takes to plant them! Chemicals are avoided wherever possible but weeding is intense throughout the year. Maintenance is increased in winter when plants are divided and replaced.



Planting above the balustrade

The area above the balustrade follows the historical planting of Sir Charles Barry more closely but it has a modern interpretation with *Stipa gigantea* near the fountain following the movement of the water.

The two long borders on each side of the Italian Garden were designed by Piet Oudolf to compliment Tom Stuart-Smith's planting. Michael explained that the two designers work well together, each with his own ideas and style of naturalistic planting.

Piet Oudolf's designs can also be seen on the eastern side of the garden near to the River Trent where the flood plain can be expected to flood once in every ten years.

Here grasses giving structure and movement intermingle with perennials for wonderful colour during the whole year.

The list of perennials is long and includes persicaria, sedum, echinacea ('Fatal Attraction' perhaps), *Eupatorium purpurea*, *Selinum wallichianum*, actaea (maybe Pink Spire or Brunette), helenium, astilbe and possibly the large leaves are inula. Eremurus bulbs are planted too.



An example of some of Piet Oudolf's planting

September is certainly the best time to see Piet Oudolf's design. Be sure to view it from above from one of the mounds near the rose border. And remember, the entire area is cut back in January.



The mound provides a great viewing point

Michael told us that Trentham uses local staff and services wherever possible. To keep the gardens in order there are 4 supervising gardeners, 1 craft gardener, 3 gardeners, 1 student and 2 seasonal summer staff and there is a group of around 30 regular volunteers.

Further staff are employed on the woodland and lakeside. Many of the garden trainees have been trained using the RHS courses in horticulture at Reaseheath College.

The Rose Border was still blooming when we visited. Here David Austin roses are displayed; all looked well, free of black spot and mildew despite the garden policy of not using pesticides or insecticides. The original trellis with its historic ironwork provides a background for the roses and is a magnificent example of a restored garden relic from the past.



The Rose Border with original trellis in the background

The future for Trentham

In the plans for the future of the estate, it is hoped one day to build a replica of the original Trentham Hall as a 5-star hotel. £30-40m will be required for that. It will be a hotel with a wonderful ready-made garden.

Indeed, Trentham is a garden for all seasons and for all people. There are many annual ticket holders from the local area who use the park regularly for general exercise and dog walking around the lake.

There are areas of adventure play for children, a Monkey Forest to visit and other small show gardens by local school children to examine.

Personally, I would like a closer look at the area near the river where there are some of the oldest trees on the estate. However that will have to wait for another day.

But I am sure I am not the only one to promise myself another visit to Trentham Gardens. And as we rushed off to warm ourselves with a bowl of hot soup in the Garden Centre cafe, I was minded to enter a few dates in my diary:

- Winter – visit Trentham to see the structure of the planting and the seed heads
- Spring – visit Trentham to see the snowdrops planted in river bank and the 300 groups of tall bearded iris at the end of May or early June
- Summer – visit Trentham – there will always be something new to see

For more information, see the Trentham Gardens website, www.trentham.co.uk, where there is a very adequate description of the garden and the events there.

I would like to thank Michael Walker for guiding us around the garden and for his patience in answering our questions. Also I would like to acknowledge his helpful discussions during the preparation of this report.

Thanks also to Chris Driver, Jacquetta Menzies, Sheryl Leonardo and Carol Brammer for the use of their photographs.

Freyda Taylor



Trentham is very family friendly. This grassy area is lovely for children to run through.

STOP PRESS

European award for restoration for Trentham

It has just been announced that Trentham Gardens has won the 2010 European Garden Award for Best Historic Garden Restoration from the European Garden Heritage Network.

To win this award, Trentham had to beat two other recently restored major European gardens, Sofiero in Sweden and Schloss Hof in Austria. Congratulations Trentham!

You can read more about it at www.rhs.org.uk/Gardens/News/Euro-honours-for-Trentham.

Oh we do like to be beside the seaside! —

The Association of Gardens Trust Conference on the Isle of Wight, 1-4th October 2010

Yes we do like to be beside the seaside, especially when visiting gardens and despite the rain!

AGT conferences are a great opportunity for gaining an insight into the character and diversity of local gardens and for the opportunity to talk with other gardens trust members about their challenges and successes.

A dip into the recent Isle of Wight Pevsner and Vicky Basford's excellent talk provided good context for our visits which encompassed gardens from the 17th century to present day.

In many ways the development of the gardens encapsulates the history of the island, from an early manor house tucked beneath the shelter of the chalk downs with its private and productive gardens to the exploitation of the picturesque along the undercliff, a dramatic and irregular section of coast caused by ancient landslides, bands of greensand fracturing and with the chalk above slipping over the Gault clay towards the sea.

George III popularised sea bathing and thereby the development of seaside resorts known for their health giving qualities of sea air and bathing. The attractions of the Isle of Wight were given a further boost by Victoria and Albert's selection of Osborne as a private retreat, views of the sea from Osborne reminding Albert of the Bay of Naples. Tennyson also purchased a property there after falling in love with the view, Farringford near Freshwater.

We will have to return to appreciate these views fully but that will be no hardship as we would really like to revisit Northcourt, Ventnor Botanic Gardens, Osborne and Haddon Lake House which together with Shanklin Chine and Woodlands Vale were for us the highlights of the weekend.

Northcourt - a manor house begun in 1615 and extended in 1700.



A survey of 1791 records extensive terracing, ornamental woodland and parkland, and between 1795 and 1809 the gardens were extended and

developed by Elizabeth Bull who lived there.

Following a period of neglect the house and grounds were purchased by John Harrison's uncle in 1962. John and Christine Harrison continue to restore and care for the property doing virtually all the work themselves and welcoming visitors to bed and breakfast in the manor.

Below the east front of the house are terraced lawns leading to a woodland garden along the banks of a stream which is fed by a number of springs and includes the remains of a late 18th century bath house.



Below the south front is a small knot garden on the footprint of a former orangery overlooked by a grass covered mount (possibly 17th century). Near the north wing is a small sunken garden and a walled kitchen garden.

John has indulged his passion for plants by planting rare and unusual trees and shrubs, and by creating luxuriant borders of exotic and tender species beside the house and kitchen garden walls full of scent and colour.

Ventnor Botanic Gardens has been developed on the site of a cottage hospital for consumption and diseases of the chest, the garden layout influenced by the former ward terraces, its rare and tender species benefitting from the site's microclimate.



The site came into council ownership in 1972 and for the first ten years was supplied with a collection of plants by Sir Harold Hillier. Since then the botanic

garden has been developed by the Curator Simon Goodenough, who with staff and volunteers has transformed the devastation caused by hurricane damage to a series of exotic gardens displaying his favourite New Zealand plants, and a Mediterranean garden and scree garden, sheltered from the prevailing winds by topography and shelterbelts.



The unusual plants, their forms, textures and colours create a memorable experience, but the botanic garden is under threat as the council may no longer be able to provide funding.

Osborne was developed to Prince Albert's designs with principal rooms and terraced gardens enjoying superb views to the Solent.



We were shown round by the Head Gardener – the terraces with their impressive bedding, pools, pergola and statuary, coal bench, historic myrtle used in Royal bouquets and fountains; the fabulous cork oak and cedars, walled garden and bothy, but it would take at least a day to explore properly and do justice to what is an amazing place.



Following our visit to Osborne, we went to **Woodlands Vale**, a site designated of local importance in the local plan and fascinating because it shares a comparable view with axial walk to that at Osborne.



Woodlands Vale was enlarged by Samuel Teulon in 1870-71 for Colonel Calthorpe with terracing, walks and pool. The current owners graciously welcomed us for tea and displayed an extensive archive of historic plans and photographs on the billiard table so that we were able to understand the sequence of changes that had taken place to the house and grounds.

It was the shared opinion of many in the party that the garden was worthy of inclusion on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens.



Perhaps the most interesting garden was **Haddon Lake House** where a new house and garden have been permitted within and adjacent to the walled garden of Old Park, a site previously occupied by a tropical bird park and then left derelict.

Planning permission was gained on the basis of restoration of the walled gardens and lake.

The contemporary new house sits on the basis of a former orchid house overlooking the restored lake with a courtyard garden and walled garden to the rear, all superbly planted with fabulous colours and textures.

This is a 'must' for another time as the weather and timescale did not do justice to the beauty of the garden and the care which it has been created.

All in all an excellent series of visits; AGT conferences are to be recommended if only for the opportunity to visit gardens in different localities guided by curators, owners and gardeners with a passion for history and plants.

Barbara Moth

A Surfeit of Goodies

It may seem ungrateful to fret when your lovingly-tended garden rewards you with a glut of fruit, but I have found a weapon to help with the piles of apples.

Get a large juicer – one big enough for you to drop large pieces of roughly-chopped apple down the funnel.

You don't have to peel or core the apples, and personally I feel that any maggots accidentally included are full of apple juice anyway.

Remember to put a jug under the spout! I use a large gravy jug to separate the juice from the scum. Freeze the apple juice in plastic bottles and give the residue to your chickens or put it on the compost heap.

The process of making apple wine is also helped by a juicer.

Juice four or five pounds of apples, make up to a gallon with water, dissolve two to three pounds of sugar (depending on your taste in wine) in some of the liquid, add the juice of two lemons and half an ounce of yeast.

Put in a jar with an airlock, and when it has finished bubbling put it away in a cupboard and forget about it for a year.

The whole process, from gazing resentfully at the apples to inserting the airlock, takes about an hour.

We are now drinking last year's wine and it is very pleasant.

Cheshire is rich in damsons – a souvenir of the time when their fruit was used to make a brown dye for Manchester cotton – so you have all probably tucked



away a bottle of damson gin for Christmas.

But what about damson port?

No, you don't add damsons to port. You pour a gallon of boiling water over four pounds of damsons, stir and squeeze occasionally for about ten days, strain through a jelly bag, add four pounds of sugar and stir to dissolve.

Put in a jar with an airlock and stand back!

The natural yeast from the damsons means it ferments without any added yeast.

After about a fortnight you can skim and bottle it, though we prefer to leave it in the jar as some fermentation continues.

After leaving it for a few months in a cool, dark cupboard, you will have an enjoyable dessert wine that can be up to 14 % proof.

Now, do you feel you can tackle all that fruit?

Sheila Holroyd

“First catch your hare”

It's one of those apocryphal phrases.

Like 'elementary my dear Watson' and 'play it again Sam', which we all **know** were said by Sherlock Holmes and Humphrey Bogart respectively.

Of course, they weren't. And neither did Mrs. Beeton write 'first catch your hare'.

Nor did Elizabeth Raffald; nor Hannah Glasse.

Each of these 18th century cookery writers had been credited with the phrase long before Mrs. Beeton was born.

There is something fascinating about old cook-books. Firstly, they were written for families with servants, so the quantities can be surprisingly high.

Then there is the language. Words change their meaning over time, so you have to watch out.

And, of course, the ingredients. They would use things we would never think of using today.

Elizabeth Raffald included a recipe for sparrow dumpling:

“...put a Lump of Butter rolled in Pepper and Salt in every Sparrow, mix them in the Batter...” and then boil for 90 minutes.

What they did use a lot of was milk, butter and eggs. Makes sense, of course. Unless you lived in a town, you could keep cows and hens to provide an endless supply. But they also seem to have used an awful lot of sugar.

Not the healthiest of diets.

I was looking for an interesting recipe I could offer those of you – like Sheila – over-run by apples this year (the only unusual one was Green Caps – see below) and I came across the heading “to make a Solomon-gundy”.

So I set out to find out its origins

At the beginning of the 18th century, a dictionary defined the word 'salmagundi' as “(in Cookery) an Italian Dish made of cold Turkey, Anchovies, Lemmons, Oil, and other Ingredients: Also a kind of Hotch-Potch, or Ragoo of several sorts of cold Meats,

cut into Pieces and stew'd on a Chafing-Dish, with Wine, Verjuice, Vinegar, &c." [Verjuice = The Juice of sour and unripe Grapes, proper for Sauces, &c.] Salmagundi became 'solomon-gundy'.

Today you can buy Jamaican Solomon Gundy. It's a smoked herring paste.

Elizabeth Raffald used it in the hotch-potch sense,

f although, interestingly, she also had separate recipes or a "hodge-podge of mutton" and a "hodge-podge of hare".

With Christmas round the corner I thought readers might appreciate some unusual 18th century recipes as a change from the usual turkey and sprouts. Do let us know how they turn out.

Joy Uings

To make a Solomon-gundy.

TAKE the white Part of a roasted Chicken, the Yolks of four boiled Eggs, and the Whites of the same, two Pickled Herrings, and a Handful of Parsley, chop them separately exceeding small, take the same Quantity of lean boiled Ham scraped fine, turn a China Bason Upside down in the Middle of a Dish, make a quarter of a Pound of Butter in the Shape of a Pine Apple, and set it on the Bason Bottom, lay round your Bason a Ring of shread Parsley, then a Ring of Yolks of Eggs, then Whites, then Ham, then Chicken, then Herring, 'till you have covered your Bason and used all the Ingredients, lay the Bones of the pickled Herrings upon it with the Tails up to the Butter, and the Heads lie on the Edge of the Dish; lay a few Capers, and three or four pickled Oysters round your Dish, and send it up.

This sounds fun, though you might prefer a nice fruit jelly, rather than calves-foot!

To make a Fish Pond

Fill four large Fish Moulds with Flummery, and six small ones, take a China Bowl, and put in half a Pint of stiff clear Calve's-Foot Jelly, let it stand 'till cold, then lay two of the small Fishes on the Jelly, the right Side down, put in half a pint more Jelly, let it stand 'till cold, then lay in the four small Fishes across one another, that when you turn the Bowl upside down, the Heads and Tails may be seen, then almost fill your Bowl with Jelly, and let it stand 'till cold, then lay in the Jelly four large Fishes, and fill the bason quite full with Jelly, and let it stand 'till the next Day; when you want to use it, set your Bowl to the brim in hot water for one Minute, take care that you don't let the Water go into the bason, lay your Plate on the Top of the bason and turn it upside down, if you want it for the Middle, turn it out upon a Salver; be sure you make your Jelly very stiff and clear.

And just in case you, like me, have no idea what flummery is:

To make Flummery

Put one Ounce of bitter, and one of sweet Almonds into a Bason, pour over them some boiling Water, to make the skins come off, which is called Blanching, strip off the skins, and throw the Kernels into cold water, then take them out and beat them in a marble mortar, with a little Rose Water to keep them from Oiling, when they are beat, put them into a Pint of Calves Foot stock, set it over the Fire, and sweeten it to your Taste with Loaf Sugar, as soon as it boils strain it thro' a Piece of Muslin or Gawze, when a little cold put it into a Pint of Cream, and keep stirring it often, 'till it grows thick and cold, wet your Moulds in cold Water, and pour in the Flummery, let it stand five or six hours at least before you turn them out: if you make the Flummery stiff, and wet the Moulds, it will turn out without putting it into warm Water, for Water takes off the Figures of the Mould, and makes the Flummery look dull.

N.B. Be careful you keep stirring it 'till cold, or it will run in Lumps when you turn it out of the Mould.

And, as promised, that unusual apple recipe. The flowers are a nice touch: which would you choose?

To make Green Caps.

TAKE Codlings just before they are ripe, green them as you would for Preserving, then rub them over with a little oiled Butter, grate double refined Sugar over them, and set them in the Oven 'till they look bright, and sparkle like Frost, then take them out and put them into a deep China Dish, make a very fine Custard, and pour it round them; stick single Flowers in every Apple, and serve them up.

It is a pretty Corner Dish for either Dinner or Supper.

Elizabeth Raffald

What a woman she was. Born in Doncaster in 1733, she began her career at the age of 15. She was well educated, but her early work was in service – she finished as housekeeper at Arley Hall, going there in 1760 and leaving in 1763, at the age of 30, when she married the head gardener John Raffald.

The newly married couple set up home in Manchester and went into business.

There are some people, who, when you read about all they achieved, make you feel tired. Elizabeth Raffald was just like that.

First of all, she opened a confectioner's shop; then she added to that the taking on of apprentices; and an employment agency for servants. She sold ready-made centrepieces for tables and wedding-cakes. By 1769 her book The Experienced English Housekeeper was ready for publication. [She sold the copyright in 1773 for £1,400 – not bad, considering the £16 per year she earned at Arley.]

She took on the Bull's Head inn in Manchester and later the King's Head in Salford where she ran a post office and rented out carriages.

She compiled the very first Manchester Directory in 1772. Another edition was published in 1781. It was the year she died. She had been in Manchester just 18 years. She left behind an unpublished manuscript on midwifery.

What is even more amazing is that she must have spent virtually all her married life pregnant. She

definitely had 9 and, according to one of her three surviving children, 16 babies – all girls. Her sister in Yorkshire had 12 children –all boys!

She seems to have been the driving force in her marriage, which may have explained the problems she had with her husband. He turned to drink and kept threatening suicide until she suggested he stop talking about it and get on with it.

After her death he left Manchester. All the wealth his wife had created had dissipated and he was bankrupt. He went off to London and lived it up for a bit before coming back with a new wife “a poor, illiterate creature”. But despite his problems, he seems to have been well thought of.

John Raffald came from a Stockport family – “florists for two centuries”. His brothers James and George both worked as nurserymen/market gardeners in Manchester and in his wife's 1772 Directory he is described as a “seedsman and confectioner” – although he didn't appear in the 1781 directory, which may have been published posthumously, after John had disappeared to London.

On his return to Manchester he joined the Wesleyan Methodists and seems to have sobered up. He is described as a “very handsome, gentlemanly, intelligent man, about six feet in height” and “He was a fine, aristocratic looking man, well-informed, even learned it is said, and his knowledge of botany and floriculture was in that day considered marvellous”.

You can read more about Elizabeth Raffald in John Harland's Collectanea relating to Manchester and its neighbourhood. Go to <http://books.google.com> and type Elizabeth Raffald in the search box. Her cookery book is also there.

Uncovering the past

Garden history is a fascinating subject – whether your particular interest is design, plants or people

During September and October, CGT member Jane Roberts, garden historian and field botanist, gave a series of eight talks: an Introduction to Garden History, with particular reference to 'outlandish' flowers & 'exoticks'.

Centuries of history – of how the landscape has changed; how plants have been introduced (and when); the sometimes rather high-flown ideas of garden-makers – condensed into sixteen hours in the wonderful setting of Arley – yes we even got to go down the Furlong Walk looking for native trees (there aren't many).

Each two hour session was broken by a break for refreshments, a chance to look at the books and photos that Jane brought with her, and the opportunity to talk more about the gardens she introduced us to.

We have all gone away with a folder impeccably prepared by Jane which gives us a quick aide memoire for when we go garden visiting. Is it a formal or an informal garden? Is it classical Arcadia or Rococo? Do we detect the influence of Capability Brown? Would that plant have been there when the garden was first created?

We have so much enjoyed Jane's delivery, her little asides and sheer pleasure in sharing her knowledge. So we are pleased that she is planning on more courses in the future. Watch this space...



Caldwell Project - Disappointing news –

We have just heard that our first applications for funding have not been successful. This is partly due to the intense competition for funding at the present time.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, from which we requested most of the finance, considered it a strong project and recognised the opportunities it provided for volunteers. However it failed to meet their expectations in some areas, notably by demonstrating the community's need for the project and in providing wider learning opportunities. We are still of the opinion that this is an important and worthwhile project. We will be meeting shortly with the project steering group to consider options but in the meantime if anyone has any bright ideas, a bequest or a lottery win to share, we would be pleased to hear from you!

Pat, Joy and Barbara

Researching Historic Gardens for Cheshire Gardens Trust

A small group of enthusiastic researchers from around the Tarporley area have been delving into the archives to research historic landscapes in the old Vale Royal borough council area for nearly 3 years now.

We began under the auspices of TADDFAS (Tarporley & District Decorative & Fine Arts Society) and we do our researches in pairs.

Then every two months we all meet up as a group for coffee to discuss our successes and failures in the search for details of the local designed landscapes.

Most members of the group have some local knowledge of places or people which makes the discussions very interesting indeed.

Our latest investigations have been at Arderne Hall, now a golf course and at Willington Hall, now a popular hotel and restaurant. Both are interesting places to visit and to investigate the features remaining from the past gardens.

And they serve good coffee.

Freyda Taylor



The photo is from the Arderne Hall site. The fake ruin and cross with steps which previously led down into a grotto was built for General Richard Egerton between 1835 and 1845.

It now forms the background cascade to the 18th hole of the golf course.

East Cheshire Research and Recording group

Our new research and recording group in East Cheshire has met twice and members have already made interesting discoveries and become passionate about their chosen sites!

We are working in liaison with East Cheshire Council whose officers are keen that we focus on what they consider to be priority sites – sites facing change. They are also encouraging the research group to compile a list of local historic designed landscapes that merit inclusion in the Local Development Framework, which is to replace the local plans.

It is good to have an impetus and focus to our work, and very useful that Barbara Wright and earlier researchers have already acquired considerable information for sites in the Congleton area.

In addition to informing the Local Development Framework, it is intended that research work for East and West Cheshire will be added to Cheshire's Historic Environment Record (CHER), and to the UK Parks and Gardens database. In these ways we will be informing planning policy, sharing information and raising awareness of Cheshire's heritage of parks and gardens. We have only just started this work, so if you are interested in joining any of our research groups or would like to know more please contact Freyda, Barbara or Ed: –



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or talk to us at a garden trust event.

Meanwhile, in Chester, Lynne and Phil Pearn are off to Australia for six weeks. So if you would like to join their group, e-mail Lynne at lynnepearn@hotmail.com and she will be in touch in the new year.

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

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