

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

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- Sun. 25 September: Grappenhall Heys
- Thurs. 6 October: Combermere Abbey
- Tues. 22 Nov: The History of the Walled Garden

## Whatever happened to the medlar?

Occasionally in late autumn the vegetable stall in our local street market displays a fruit that looks rather like an apricot that has been left to rot. I buy a boxful and spend the rest of the day making medlar jelly.

The medlar (*Mespilus Germanica*) is a tree of the tribe Forneae of the order Rosaceae. The tree grows to between 3 and 6 metres high, and is covered with white or pink scentless flowers in the second half of May. The fruit has been described as a 'crabby-looking, brownish-green, truncated little spheroid of unsympathetic appearance.' It is picked in late autumn, often after the first frost, and then has to be 'bled' by being stored in a cool place until it becomes soft and brown.



Many of my friends have not tasted a ripe medlar until I offer them one to try, and then several of them have said they have no desire to repeat the experience, put off by the acid taste. In spite of these adverse reactions, the medlar has a long history and was once very popular. It reached Rome, probably from Turkey, about 200 B.C., and can be seen in the mosaics at Pompeii. Charlemagne ordered it to be planted in the Imperial Gardens.

Culpeper's 'Complete Herbal' speaks highly of its medicinal benefits.

"The fruit is old Saturn's, and sure a better medicine he hardly hath to strengthen the retentive faculty; therefore it stays women's longings. The good old man cannot endure women's minds should run a gadding." Poor Mrs Culpeper!



It is featured in poetry from classical to modern times. Chaucer's Reeve uses it as a simile for his own decay, while D.H. Lawrence gives it as an example of goodness coming from decay. Shakespeare used it more crudely. Because the fruit has its calyx end flared open, it was popularly known as 'open arse' because it was supposed to resemble women's genitalia. There was also a poperin pear which resembled a penis, so that when Mercutio in 'Romeo and Juliet', talking to Romeo, says, 'Wish his mistress were that kind of fruit as maids call medlars ... O that she were an open-arse, thou a pop'rin pear!' the groundlings would have been sniggering coarsely. So why is the medlar now so little known, so fallen from favour, that Microsoft Word did not even recognise the name and offered me 'meddler' or 'modular' instead?

My own amateur, untested theory puts the blame on the rise of the ubiquitous apple. One of the medlar's main appeals was that it was one of the few fruits available late in the year and could be stored for weeks or months to be used in the winter. Once the wide range of apples from cooking to dessert varieties had been developed - fruit which stored easily and could be used for many dishes as well as providing cider - the medlar was no longer required.

My only evidence so far to support this idea is the fact that a Turkish daughter-in-law told me that there was only one kind of apple in Turkey. This may be an exaggeration, but there are still large quantities of medlars for sale in Turkish markets.

I think the medlar is due for a revival and have planted one in my own garden. It is an attractive tree, and its fruit is said to have the only flavour that goes with vintage port. My family loves medlar jelly, and I have also found a recipe for medlar vodka made in the same way as sloe gin.

So follow my example. Bring back the medlar. And do tell your children what Shakespeare used to call it.

*Sheila Holroyd*

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If you are intrigued by Sheila's descriptions of the medlar, more information can be found on the internet. I found the following at [www.historicfood.com/medlar](http://www.historicfood.com/medlar).

### Medlar Cheese

Put some Medlars into an earthenware jar, stand it in a saucepan with boiling water nearly to the top and keep it boiling gently over a slow fire. When the Medlars are quite soft, pass them through a fine hair sieve, and weigh the pulp, and for every pound allow one and a half breakfast cups of coarsely crushed loaf sugar and half a teaspoonful of allspice. Put all the ingredients together in the preserving pan, and stir them over the fire with a wooden spoon until thickly reduced, skimming occasionally. Turn the cheese into moulds, and keep them in a cold place. When ready to serve, turn the cheeses out of the moulds on to a dish.

From **Theodore Garrett** *The Encyclopaedia of Practical Cookery* (London 188 )

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## W A Nesfield 1793-1881

Following Ann Brooks' review of a lecture by Professor Tooley on W A Nesfield in the January edition of the Newsletter, members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust may like to be reminded of Nesfield's known work in Cheshire.

Not all the gardens still exist and many of Nesfield's designs have disappeared, so it would be interesting to hear if members know of other works by him in Cheshire.

- **ARLEY HALL, Gt. Budworth** (R Egerton-Warburton) 1833-44
- **CREWE HALL, Crewe** (Lord Crewe) 1866
- **DORFOLD HALL, Nantwich** (Rev James Tomkinson) 1849-50  
(Mr & Mrs W S Tollemache) 1862
- **EATON HALL, Chester** (Marquess of Westminster) 1845-54
- **HOOTON HALL, Eastham** (R C Naylor) 1854
- **RODE HALL, Congleton** (Randle Wilbraham) 1861

Sources:

The Buildings of England: Cheshire. N Pevsner & J Nairn. Penguin, 1971

Cheshire Country Houses. Peter de Figueiredo & Julian Treuherz. Phillimore. 1988.

Hortus, No. 39. 1996

*John Davies*

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**Don't forget:** There is an opportunity to visit Eaton Hall Landscape Park and gardens on Sunday 28 August. Many designers have been involved with this site over the centuries, from Capability Brown in the eighteenth, through William Nesfield in the nineteenth to Arabella Lennox-Boyd in the twenty-first, taking in along the way John Webb, Edwin Lutyens, Detmar Blow and C E Mallows. To book, contact the Event Organiser, Gaye Smith, tel: 0161 247 6116 (day) or 0161 796 7708 (evenings).

## The Tale of a Trail .... 2

In the last edition, Chris Talbot told how the Kingsley Garden Trail came into being and invited us to attend this year's event. Below, she takes up the tale.....



From miles around they came to see.  
Fourteen gardens on show in Kingsley.  
Adults were four pounds, children free,  
A fantastic bargain, I'm sure you'll agree!



The day was grey, it began to rain  
It flowed in torrents down the lane,  
Would all our efforts be in vain?  
Or would the sun come out again?



Just in time the weather cleared,  
The rain dried up, the sun appeared,  
The crowds of visitors into gardens peered,  
At plants, some common, some rare, some weird!



Our guests saw gardens large and small,  
Some had refreshments, some a plant stall,  
There were scones and bargain plants for all,  
With a glass of wine – we had a ball!



All too soon the day was done,  
The gardens were closed, the visitors gone,  
Time to reflect on a job well done,  
And a garden trail that was second to none!

Kingsley Garden Trail 2005 was a great success! Everyone who came was delighted with the variety of gardens open and the huge range of plants on show. The committee and garden owners ended the day with a celebratory buffet supper – the perfect end to a most enjoyable day. And the best bit – we raised over £3,600 for our three main charities, plus another £1,500 for various other charities chosen by individual garden owners.

Will we do it again? Watch this space!!

*Chris Talbot*

### Joseph Spence Day

Northumbria Gardens Trust will be holding a Joseph Spence Day on 10 September 2005.

Joseph Spence was Professor of Poetry and, later, of Modern History at Oxford. His book *Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men* was published in 1820.

Spence, a friend of Alexander Pope, was an innovative garden designer in the early phase of the English Landscape tradition. He translated from French an influential book on Chinese gardens.

In 1754 Spence was installed as a Canon of Durham Cathedral where he stayed until his death in 1768. He was influential in the landscaping of Auckland and Raby Castles.

The Joseph Spence day starts and ends in Sedgfield and will include visits to Ceddesfield Hall, Sherburn Hospital, Finchale Priory, The College, Durham and Rowlands Masonic Hall in Ferryhill. For more information phone the Secretary of Northumbria Gardens Trust on 01207 521887.

## Edward Leeds 1802-1877

Edward Leeds was a Manchester business man, with offices in St Ann's Square and a 1.25 acre garden at Longford Bridge, Stretford where he indulged his life-long passion for plants. In the previous edition of the Newsletter I wrote about the daffodils for which he is remembered.

Edward was a keen gardener from his childhood, with a real knack for raising plants from seed and maintaining plants in good health. We would probably know more about him if it were not for the fact that he seems to have been a rather shy and retiring individual.

He was born on 9 September 1802 in Salford, the eldest of four children. Their father, Thomas, was from Norwich. He manufactured cotton goods. Their mother, Ann Rigby, was from Swinton Park in Manchester. One brother, George, followed his father into Cotton and was eventually a partner in Leeds, Morley & Booth, smallware and fringe manufacturers. William became a Glazier. Edward went into business with his father and by 1836 they had left cotton and become Sharebrokers.

Edward Leeds' wife, Ann Segar, was from Liverpool. In 1837 the first of his four sons was born. One, Francis, died in infancy. The others, Edward and Thomas (certainly) and Henry (probably), went on to become doctors. All left Manchester.



*Edward Leeds, c. 1862*

Edward's skill with plants was clear early on. In 1830 he published an item on *Primula farinosa* in *The British Flower Garden*. In 1833 he described, in *The Floricultural Cabinet*, his successful techniques for raising *Cypripediums*.

There were two friends who were particularly influential in Edward's horticultural life – Thomas Glover and William Higson.

Thomas Glover was another Manchester businessman.

He and Edward Leeds were friends for many years, going off on fishing and botanising trips together. More importantly, Thomas Glover was a friend of William and Joseph Hooker. Correspondence from both Leeds and Glover can be found in the Kew archives.

Little is known about William Higson, beyond the fact that he provided seeds for Edward Leeds from Mexico. He knew nothing about plants; the seeds he sent home had no name, no description. Despite the lack of information Edward Leeds was able to raise many plants from these seeds. He always hoped that one would be completely unknown in this country, but when he published his findings, he invariably gave the credit for the introduction to Higson.

In the same year that he wrote about his *Cypripediums*, Edward raised several plants from seed sent by Higson. Only one flowered and he passed it on to Thomas Glover to figure. The plant died, but Glover sent his painting and the remains to William Hooker. The following year, the plant – *Helianthus speciosus* (now known as *Tithonia rotundifolia*) – together with Glover's artwork, was featured in Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, which was edited by Hooker.



*Helianthus speciosus*: Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, 1834  
It was not to be the only one. In 1840 it was *Tagetes corymbosa* and the following year *Stevia*

*trachelioides*. In 1848 it was *Lithospermum canescens* and in 1861, *Echinacea angustifolia*, though the plant Leeds sent had been raised by a 'Mr. Ross, of Smedley, ..., from seeds collected by Mr. Bourne in Iowa.' Edward was not prepared to part with his own specimen. As late as 1870 he wrote: 'I have never yet parted with any of the Echinacea'.



*Echinacea angustifolia*

It took some time before Edward Leeds began to correspond directly with Sir William Hooker. Before that he would write to Thomas Glover who would send his letter on to Hooker. Plants were exchanged. In 1841 Glover wrote

*'Mr Leeds desires me to add, from him, a plant of Cypripedium humile, gathered in the woods in America about 3 weeks ago. It grows in the decayed pine leaves the substratum is shale with shining particles like mica and is quite in the shade'*

But who had sent the plant from America was not stated.

In 1842, Hooker was developing a British Garden and Edward Leeds was able to supply many of the plants he needed. Over the next three decades plants were exchanged in both directions, Leeds often asking for specimens to be identified.

By 1876, Leeds' health was failing. The final consignment went from him to Kew. It included his herbarium. He died the following year at his home in Stretford and was buried with baby Francis, and next to his parents, at St Mary's Church in Bowdon.

If we had to rely upon his own writing, very little would be known about Edward Leeds. The articles that appeared were plant related. The letters he sent to

Sir William and Sir Joseph Hooker were also purely about plants. The most he gave away about himself was in a letter to Sir Joseph Hooker in May 1876, when he wrote

*'My health failing obliges me to make an end of my labours in the garden which I can now only enjoy in my Bath Chair.'*

Fortunately, Thomas Glover was more forthcoming. His letters included information about his family and enquiries after Hooker's. In 1842 he wrote of Edward

*'Mr Leeds is quite an enthusiast in plants, and would give you a share of anything he had whatever it had cost him'*

And in 1851:

*'I can however, from my own experience and knowledge of Mr Leeds, affirm that you will be no loser by anything you may send him. I never met with an individual so feelingly alive to any little favour conferred, or more anxious to make a return...'*

If it had not been for the daffodils, Leeds would probably not be remembered at all. Following the Daffodil Conference in 1884 another Manchester businessman, William Brockbank, decided to do some research. It was a decade before his article appeared in *The Gardener's Chronicle* in 1894. It is difficult to know how reliable it is – it was, after all, several years since Leeds' death – and it has not been possible to confirm some of the statements. Many of his correspondents would have been fairly elderly – Thomas Glover was in his nineties.

Mr Findlay, who worked at the Manchester Botanic Gardens, said of Leeds that he

*'had a deep, glowing childlike enthusiasm for nature as set forth in the vegetable world. He always thought him destitute of malice or guile...'*

Leeds was well connected horticulturally. Apart from the Hookers, he was in contact with John Windsor (who published *Flora Cravoniensis*), Canon Ellacombe, and the plant collectors Thomas Nuttall and John Goldie. Nuttall had botanised in the US, but he came back to the UK and Leeds refers to visits from him and to him in two of his letters to Sir William Hooker in 1858.

Brockbank provides us with a description of Leeds' garden. How long after his death is not clear, but the garden was suffering from neglect. It was 'quite hidden from view from the road by huge over-

grown Rhododendrons, Box and Laurels, 15 to 20 feet high'.

It was spring, and 'the garden was ablaze with Daffodils – growing by thousands, almost wild... There were huge Paeonies, many lovely varieties of Scillas nutans and S. campanulata, of every shade of blue, lilac, pink, and white, the results of Mr. Leeds' careful crossing'

There were greenhouses and

*'...four rockeries each 100 foot long, about 10 feet broad, and 4 feet high, the spaces between the bricks were filled with Alpines and hardy plants, and now covered with rank overgrowth. At one place the Veronicas had prevailed, at another the Saxifrages had gained the ascendancy. There were large clumps of the most beautiful Orobus vernus I had ever seen.*

*Hardy Geraniums had grown into huge masses, and Fumaries formed lovely purple bosses. Of the smaller Irises, there were large clumps. Creeping plants had trailed over the walks, and in the borders were thickets of huge growers, Telekias, Asters, Campanulas, Delphiniums, Veratrums, Heracleums, and other giants, in rank profusion, the fittest only having survived. On closer inspection the rockeries were found to contain choice treasures, hidden away amongst the overgrowth, and these were carefully marked down when in bloom, and removed when the proper time came.'*

The garden did not survive much longer. It was sold and developed for housing.

*Joy Uings*

## WALLED KITCHEN GARDENS network

### Walled Kitchen Garden Forum 2005

Research, recording and renovation

This year the Walled Kitchen Garden Forum will be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October at Tatton Park in Cheshire, where the National Trust, in partnership with the Cheshire County Council, have recently completed a major restoration of the walled kitchen gardens.

As usual the main focus will be on reclamation and sustainability, but this year there will also be a supporting theme of research and recording, for both individual gardens and whole counties.

Speakers will include:

- Sam Youd (Head Gardener, Tatton Park)
- Susan Campbell (Chairman WKGN, walled kitchen garden historian & author)
- Deborah Evans (Head Gardener, Tyntesfield)
- Dr Stephen Briggs (Project Manager Historic Parklands & Gardens, the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical monuments of Wales)
- Dr David Jacques (Garden historian and author, Programme Director of Landscape Conservation & Change at the Architectural Association)

After lunch there will be an opportunity for a guided tour of the gardens (recently featured in a Gardener's World special on BBC2) in groups with Sam Youd (Head Gardener) & Simon Tetlow (Garden Team Leader) Jeremy Milln (National Trust Archaeologist) & Susan Campbell (WKGN)

The final session will be a series of brief case studies from individuals describing their own particular experiences of research, recording and renovation.

**This will be an all day event, tickets cost £50 per person, and will include lunch, tea & coffee and admission and tour of the gardens. There will be limited number of places available to students at £35 without lunch – either bring a picnic or eat at 'The Stables Restaurant'**

**Suggestions for accommodation and the finalised programme will be sent to all delegates nearer the event.**

**For further information and booking form please contact:**

**Anne Richards, 5 The Knoll, Hereford, HR1 1RU. Tel: 01432 354 479**

**Or email: [f.grant@walledgardens.net](mailto:f.grant@walledgardens.net)**

**[www.walledgardens.net](http://www.walledgardens.net)**

Thanks to all those who have sent in details of walled gardens that they know of. However, we know there are more out there, so don't be shy ... let us know. If you want more copies of the recording form, contact The Newsletter Editor, Joy Uings – tel: 0161 969 1099; e-mail [JoyUings@aol.com](mailto:JoyUings@aol.com).

## AGT Annual Conference

2-4 September 2005, The Imperial Hotel, Hove

*Where Every Prospect Pleases.....* The Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Downs and Weald

This year it is the turn of Sussex Gardens Trust to host the Association of Gardens Trusts Annual Conference.

This is a good opportunity to meet with members of the other County Trusts and to get to see gardens in another area of the country.

The weekend kicks off on Friday 2 September with an optional afternoon visit to the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, followed by the official AGM and Business Meeting.

On the Saturday there will be lectures and visits to Sheffield Park, Ashburnham Place and Plumpton Place in East Sussex. In the evening is the Conference Dinner.

Sunday brings more lectures and visits to Denmans Gardens and Parham Park in West Sussex.

The full weekend, including hotel accommodation for Friday and Saturday nights, the Friday reception & dinner, Saturday Conference Dinner, lunches, teas and garden admissions is £250.

But if you have friends you can stay with, the non-residential charges are

Saturday & Sunday (including lunches, teas and garden admissions)	£65
Saturday only (including lunch, tea and garden admissions)	£35
Conference dinner, Saturday evening	£23
Sunday only (including lunch, tea and garden admissions)	£35

Hotel parking is extra.

If you are interested, contact Sharyn Hedge ([sharyn.hedge@btinternet.com](mailto:sharyn.hedge@btinternet.com)) or Hilary May (tel: 01444 414674).

Also in Sussex there will be a Conference on **Great Houses of Sussex** on Saturday 10 September at the University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton. This will be run by the Sussex Archaeological Society, in association with the University of Sussex Centre for Continuing Education. Cost is only £25, but does not include lunch.

For more information, contact Lorna Gartside, tel 01273 405737, e-mail [members@sussexpast.co.uk](mailto:members@sussexpast.co.uk). Or you can book online at [www.sussexpastshop.co.uk](http://www.sussexpastshop.co.uk).

### Schools in historic parks and gardens

The AGT is organising a conference with the Garden History Society on *Conflict and Resolution - Education Establishments in Historic Parks & Gardens*. This will take place on 6 April 2006 and they want to invite heads, bursars and governors of such places, as well as planners and landscape advisors.

They need our help. They have a long list of such establishments in the southern half of the country, but nothing further north than Telford.

They would be very grateful if we could let them have a list of as many schools/ FE/HE as you are aware of so that we can target our invitations.

However, it is you, our members, who will have this information. Please let the Newsletter Editor know or contact the AGT direct at Tel and Fax: 020 7251 2610 Email: [agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk](mailto:agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk)

### ‘A CELEBRATION OF JOHN EVELYN - the Renaissance Man & His Gardens’

Surrey Gardens Trust in association with the Garden History Society is hosting a major Conference to celebrate the tercentenary in 2006 of the death of John Evelyn, the eminent garden designer, writer and diarist. It will take place at The Hayley Conference Centre, Wotton House, Dorking, Surrey, on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April and Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2006. Speakers include: Douglas Chambers, Gillian Darley, Frances Harris, Sally Jeffery and Mark Laird. There will be guided tours of Wotton House gardens and of Albury Park, at both of which key features designed by John Evelyn have survived.

Further details will be available in September 2005. For fliers contact Jill Leggatt, with s.a.e. to The Old Vicarage, Old Woking, Surrey GU22 9JF; tel: 01483 763734; [jill.leggatt@ntlworld.com](mailto:jill.leggatt@ntlworld.com).



John Evelyn, National Portrait Gallery

Kate Harwood, AGT says:

*Having just been to both Albury & Wotton, I felt that they really brought home the early Italianisation of English gardens in a way that mere book-learning could not, and they strongly evoked some of the Italian renaissance gardens which still survive. The speakers are excellent. Should be a great weekend.*

### Inland Waterways projects invited for Diamond Jubilee funding

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) is looking for one or more high-profile inland waterway restoration projects, ideally with capacity for a sizeable level of Waterway Recovery Group, or similar, volunteer involvement, in which it could invest up to £100,000 if the project could be completed within the next 15 to 18 months. This would be part of the Association's 2006 Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Restoration promoters are invited to submit brief details (no longer than a single sheet of A4 paper for any one project) of potential suitable projects to the Operations Manager at IWA Head Office (preferably in electronic format to [matt.duncan@waterways.org.uk](mailto:matt.duncan@waterways.org.uk)), by 24th August.

### Cheshire Gardens Trust events

<p>Sunday 25 September. Visit to Grappenhall Heys walled garden near Warrington. 2 p.m. Cost – to include guided tour – members £4, non-members £6. Event organiser: Barbara Moth. Tel: 01606 46228</p>	<p>Tuesday 22 November. The History of the Walled Kitchen Garden – a lecture by Susan Campbell at Bishop Lloyd's Palace, Chester. Cost: members £6; non-members £8. Event organiser: Barbara Moth. Tel: 01606 46228</p>
<p>Thursday 6 October. Visit to Combermere including tour of Abbey, Whitchurch. 2 p.m. Cost – to include entrance to Combermere, guided tours of the Abbey and garden, a talk about the planting of the fruit-maze and handouts – members £10, non-members £12. Event organiser: John Edmonson. Tel: 0151 478 4370</p>	<p>Wednesday 14 December. Christmas Party at Toft Cricket Club, Knutsford. 7.30 for 8 p.m. Sam Youd, Head of Gardens at Tatton Park, will be chairing a special Gardeners' Question Time, so come armed with all those tricky horticultural problems... Cost; members £15; non-members £18 Event organiser: Tina Theis. Tel: 0161 442 0657</p>

### A message from the Editor

Well, what can I say? We should all learn from one another's mistakes. So let me tell you that it is not a good idea to buy a new computer in the same month you are supposed to be bringing out a newsletter. And it is not a good idea to believe software that promises to transfer all your files from your old computer to your new one at the click of a button. So sorry for the delay, but it has been a stressful few weeks.....

You may have noticed, I have a new e-mail address: [JoyUings@aol.com](mailto:JoyUings@aol.com). But the address and phone number remain the same: 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS. Tel: 0161 969 1099. So there's no excuse – send me your letters and articles for inclusion in the October edition.