



**CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST**

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook
Company Limited by Guarantee, no. 05673816
Charity Number 1119592

Issue No. 60
October 2018

Newsletter

www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

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Some future events:

- * Repton's legacy, Kate Harwood – 1st Nov
- * American Gardens, Ed Bennis – 5th January
- * Emma Hill on James Russell – 9th February
- * Planthunter E.H. Wilson – 23rd March



Mostyn Hall is a grade I listed building, set in early 19th century parkland in Flintshire, overlooking the Dee Estuary. The great hall is thought to have been built in 1470, but was substantially upgraded in the early 17th century by Roger and Mary Mostyn who enlarged the medieval house to create the core of the house we see today. It was remodelled again in the mid 19th Century in Jacobean style by the architect Ambrose Poynton, inspired by the pre-existing

buildings. It is a stunning building, which has been in the Mostyn family for over 500 years. The estate is open only occasionally to the public so we were privileged visitors in July. Mostyn Estates is now a private limited company which manages the interests of the Mostyn family across North Wales and elsewhere. The gardens surrounding Mostyn Hall are based on a medieval deer park with areas of mixed woodland, parkland and more formal gardens,

featuring an ancient lime avenue. There are beautiful gates (below) at the original entrance, designed by John Douglas and built by James Swindley in early 18th century Baroque.



We were shown round the estate by Kevin Woods, the Head Gardener and Phil Handley, the Kitchen Garden Manager. With a range of community helpers they try and do what 52 gardeners might have done before the First World War, though they do have help from a full time groundsman who takes care of the lawns.

There are formal areas near the house, including a rose garden currently going through transition, with roses gradually being replaced by tulips and dahlias. After the formal area we moved to a large lawn area with specimen trees and a broadwalk with cedars of Lebanon. In 1908 the family travelled to Japan and brought back planters and other Japanese artefacts as well as ideas. They built a Japanese garden in 1913 for £250, including £40 on planting. They imported 125 tonnes of limestone for use in the garden. Looking down to the Japanese garden there would originally have been a vista, but now there are spruce which are too tall and much self-seeding.



Kevin showing us the limestone terrace in the Japanese garden

Then a lovely sweeping path through woodland, initially on Marine Drive, with a ha-ha and a fabulous view over the Dee estuary (see top of next column). Then the path started to climb back up through more woodland. We looked

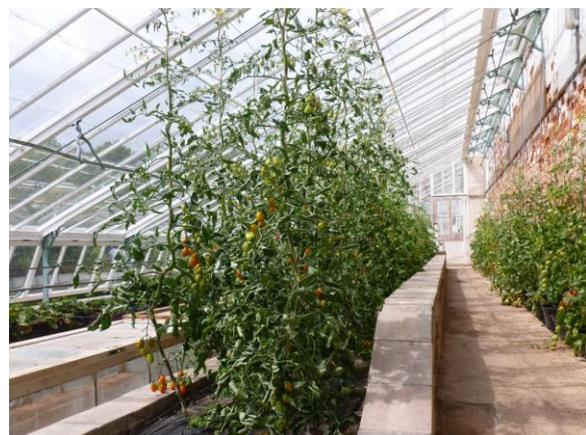


down on an area which was originally a gravel pit, but has now been cleared by Kevin and helpers and planted with lawn, trees, shrubs and marshy plants, such as *gunnera*, with a lot of fairly eccentric features such as “Kevin’s Henge”, a line of slate slabs. Kevin and his helpers have gradually opened up the woodland revealing spectacular trees, 150 years old, such as Monterey pine, Wellingtonia and beech. Kevin has now been with the estate 10 years and Phil thinks the changes he has made have been fantastic.

Next we came to a more open area with a large herbaceous area between us and the estuary. Originally there was a very long herbaceous border below the kitchen garden wall. This would have been impossible to maintain and has been replaced by a long line of graceful cherry trees and, in Spring, a spectacular display of daffodils.

Finally we moved into the kitchen garden. This is Phil’s domain. He arrived seven years ago in charge of a community project working with unemployed 16-24 year olds. The project was only funded for a year, but Phil managed to get a lot of community involvement which is what the family wanted, so Phil was employed full time.

The walled kitchen garden is 2.5 acres, built in 1790. The 1860s glasshouses, built by Thomas Messenger, are slowly being restored and put to good use (see below). Phil and his wife live in the old gardener’s cottage and make jams and



chutneys which are sold to local companies. They are supported by a variety of groups, such as young people from special schools, Italian students and unemployed teenagers.

The last people to use the kitchen garden properly were the Land Army, so there's a lot of catching up to do, but there are hens, productive vegetable plots and glasshouses, weeping trees and fruit. Adjacent to the walled garden are old orchards with low growing apple trees (see opposite), very beautiful and very atmospheric. Overall a magical place and an excellent visit, thanks to Kevin, Phil and his wife.



Sue Eldridge

Two contrasting gardens in Eyam



Gill Bagshaw's flower garden, 'Wild in the Country' focuses completely on the growing of flowers and foliage for cutting. She sells to florists, floral designers and others, including members of the general public, who can visit the garden and buy a bucketful of flowers (see previous column), a bouquet or just a few stems. Her garden is approximately the size of 2 allotments and is divided into 20 raised beds (see below) of mainly 10 feet by 3 feet size built from scaffolding boards with 3 foot paths in between for ease of access and maintenance. They are planted north to south to ensure maximum, even sun on all beds.

A glorious day out in Derbyshire in August and two contrasting gardens. Each reflected their makers' particular ambitions and talents, enabling them to make their living within their own home patch! Both our hosts were delightful, and generous with their knowledge. We were divided into two groups, alternating a morning and an afternoon in each venue. We were sustained by a superb lunch between visits in a local cafe, enabling us to take in some of the ancient Eyam architecture en route.



Gill began growing flowers to sell in 2015 and described the gradual growth of her business, which built on her enthusiasm to achieve sustainable, UK flower crops, rather than imported "air mile-costing" exotics. Her training consisted of one very short course with a Cornish grower!

Her first "office", shelter and work space was a single corrugated iron Pig Arc (in which she would crouch to shelter from bad weather!). She now has a smart balconied shed, and a collapsible gazebo for events and tasks such as flower

selection, grouping and conditioning. She started with annuals for cheapness and in the first year the garden was a mass of flowers. She soon realised she needed foliage and key flowers such as roses, peonies and dahlias for bouquets. To extend the season she moved onto biennials, perennials, bulbs and herbs. She also makes Christmas wreaths.

Every year she tries new plants which this year have included *Antirrhinum majus* 'Madame Butterfly'; *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Velouette'; a dwarf sunflower *Helianthus annuus* 'Double Dandy'; *Calendula officinalis* 'Pink Surprise'; and annual *Phlox drummondii* 'Creme Brûlée'.



Gill talking about her methods for growing cut flowers

Her bouquets have a natural, country garden feel and her use of many different foliage types as well as seed heads and scented herbs, means that her arrangements are both longer lasting and fragrant. We were passed examples of several of these, to smell, study and even taste. Gill talked about the requirements for growing flowers suitable for cutting and selling. Stems must be long and straight and to achieve this she uses pea netting gradually moving it higher as the plants grow. Flowers must also have a good vase life, which means some flowers are not suitable. Flowers need to be "conditioned" before being arranged in a bouquet which involves standing them in deep water, preferably overnight.

After a most interesting talk we were able to wander round to smell the scents and admire the huge variety of flowers. These included

Verbena bonariensis, poppies, foxgloves, *Scabiosa stellata* 'Ping Pong', blue and black cornflowers, sweet peas, dahlias and several *Umbelliferae* (see below) such as *Ammi* and false fennel which help to create the "vintage" look so fashionable currently.



Although the strip planting was not set off against the usual background of green grass, the particular joy of this garden was the ever changing colour combinations as one meandered between the beds and viewed one flower type or species against another.



Hannah Bennett giving us information about the sculptures in her garden

Hannah Bennett's sculpture garden was particularly interesting in that it was set on rising ground and gave the impression of a large space due to the fact that, to view the sculptures, one followed a winding route up and down the mound.

The sculptures were of many different materials, by various artists, and were set at suitable points amongst the grass and trees. Our favourite was the group of stainless steel wire constructions, growing out of long, un-mown grasses. Entitled "The Copse Project", it had the effect of skeletal plant forms straining up towards the trees above.



Hannah's own pieces were mainly large scale, smooth and organic pebble-like forms, which could be used as seating in a landscape or garden setting. Some, like the Bee Drinkers (above) held gentle spherical depressions to hold rainwater, shallow enough for insects to gather in a circlet at the rim, to drink.

Tucked into the mound at the top of the garden, shaded by a lovely Field Maple tree was Hannah's beautifully designed workshop/studio (see below).



Its grass-covered roof at the top of the mound gave a good vantage point from which to view the sculptures in their settings. It also formed the "launch pad" for a children's' slide. A willow archway marked the start of the slide, forming a sound safety net of handholds for any youngsters eager to get to the slide! (see top of next column) Hannah told us that the workshop was inspired by Yorkshire barns, with their slat and space construction. But in this case, the spaces were glazed with strong re-enforced glass, equal in proportion to the weathered wooden slats. The whole thing was utterly beautiful, and absolutely integral to the surrounding space.



There were several lovely trees, besides the Field Maple. A yellow-berried Mountain Ash was heavily laden, as were the espaliered apple trees marking the garden's boundary (see below).



The whole day was a visual delight, varied and in such a beautiful setting! There were no "head gardeners", nor even "garden boys" at these two gardens! Both were the result of their owners' passion and their drive to remain individuals and earn their living with their own fair hands!

Thank you to the garden owners and organisers of this extremely enjoyable day out!

Judy Callaghan and Viv Coughlin
Photos Bron Hargreaves, Ed Bennis, Sue Eldridge

Behind the scenes at Tatton Flower Show



The call went out, Dave Green was desperate for someone to help him on his Tatton garden build, having been let down by his contractor. Jane Loxley, a CGT member, contacted me, I circulated members, and two wonderful CGT members, along with two others (see above), volunteered to help Dave with his garden and apparently they made all the difference. They were right up against it, building pyramids, with a wooden structure, soil underneath and then gravel on top, not an easy task. They were planting right up to the last minute.



Dave Green's garden from above

The idea of the Oasis garden is that, with predicted rising future temperatures it provides shady spaces for plants and people living in an urban apartment complex with a south facing courtyard. The garden has been designed to create microclimates so that a range of planting can still be grown and enjoyed despite hotter weather.

Three large pyramid structures frame the entrance and absorb most of the day's hot weather. Nestled behind each are green living walls and pockets of lush planting. The dry, dusty pyramid faces contrast with the lush planting and cool inner courtyard where apartment residents can relax and socialise. The planting palette is lush and green with a rich tapestry as well as dry, wiry and glaucous. A central large specimen tree casts



Dave Green with Ruth Farley at the entrance to the garden

shade, complemented by cool, calming colours. It was a complex garden, with sparse but beautiful planting on the gravel pyramids, lush shady, woodland type planting on the north side and then a beautiful restful sunken patio. One lady next to me said she'd have loved to take it home with her. And they won gold, so congratulations to Dave and his team of volunteers, including Ruth Farley and Jane Loxley.

But they were not the only garden to win gold. James Youd, who gardens at Arley, built his first Tatton show garden last year. And this year he won gold for his back-to-back garden, "The Flowers of Arley", celebrating both the gardens at Arley Hall and Lord Ashbrook's family who have nurtured them for more than 250 years. The planting was dark and rich with jewel-like colours of intense blue, purple and burgundy, with rich dahlias and salvias.



James Youd with his gold

A gate at the back of the garden had been borrowed from Arley for use in this Back to Back Garden. Originally commissioned by the Ashbrooks, this allows you to see through into the neighbouring garden. This was Sue Beesley's garden, "Don't chop me down" another beautiful garden illustrating that many perennial plants live well into the autumn and winter with their architectural qualities.



Sue Beesley's garden with the gate through into the Arley garden

The volunteers on Dave Green's garden were not the only CGT volunteers at Tatton. Christine Arnold volunteered for the RHS stand (see her report below). The other highlights for me were the Young Designers and the very young designers in the schools category.

The Young Designer category was celebrating its 10th edition this year. Five budding young designers were chosen to take their design forward and given £11,000 to put the plan into action. There were some great ideas and some beautiful planting. The category was won by Will Williams for his garden "At One", designed as a relaxing space for a professional couple, with

health of people and wildlife in mind. The planting was lovely with *Buddleja*, *Verbena* and *Hydrangea* attracting wildlife, but the hard landscaping was stunning.



Bruche Primary School entry, inspired by Salvador Dali

The Schools category seemed to have extra life in it this year, with gardens inspired by artists. There were some really imaginative interpretations and the teachers and pupils had worked so hard. I particularly liked the Van Gogh, Monet and Dali gardens. But there was so much more.

Sue Eldridge

Photos Dave Green, Ruth Farley, Andrew Moores and Sue Eldridge

RHS Plant Finder Volunteer



Christine Arnold at RHS Tatton

I had long wanted to help at the Tatton Park Flower Show, and as a long-standing member of the RHS I wondered if I could support them in some way at a show I have loved for years.

The appeal for volunteers at the next seasons' flower shows was advertised in the November edition of 'The Garden' magazine. I registered and filled in an on-line form of my interests and relevant experience before the closing date which was in mid-January 2018.

By the end of January, I was invited to a selection half-day in March. The selection day for Tatton and Chatsworth was in Sheffield, but travel was reimbursed. Those of you who know me will know that I was incapacitated at that time due to shoulder surgery, but the RHS were very accommodating and interviewed me by phone. I was successful and asked to register for at least two sessions at the show together with a briefing session. I was asked to be a Plant Finder in the Floral Marquee.

The briefing session took place the day before the first main day of the show and involved a talk on what was expected of the volunteers and the reasons that the RHS promote membership at the shows. Questions were answered, and we were told about how to claim expenses and log our hours. We were then sent to talk to the person who would be our manager, obtain telephone numbers for queries during the show and for specific information about our role on site. After that we had an opportunity to wander round the show having a look at the exhibits

without the crowds.

The worked sessions were six and a half hours long, however that included a 2-hour meal break (lunch provided) giving plenty of time to look round the show. You were also able to look round the show before or after your session.

The Plant Finder role required some basic plant knowledge. We were provided with a list of all the plant retailers, a generic list of the type of plants they sold and a map of the show to direct the visitors to purchases they might wish to make. Our main function was to be friendly and welcoming and able to direct visitors. There was an RHS advice stand in the marquee with experts to help with specific plant problems, which we could direct complicated enquiries to.

I had a lovely time. I can chat for England.

Unsuspecting visitors were engaged, asked about their show experience and asked if they needed help with anything. Weary looking partners of keen shoppers, sitting on the benches, were given a chance to chat and gain a sympathetic nod about the impending state of their bank balances. As I walked the marquee I got to know what was on sale and was able to send people for specific plants as well as eyeing up my own potential purchases for later! The plant sellers are knowledgeable folk and specific queries about their type of plants were sent for further advice and perhaps an impulse buy. A sense of humour was essential. I had a 'Miss World' style 'Plant Finder' sash over my RHS purple top and lost count of the wise-cracks along the lines of 'Can you find me a plant...ho ho.' All good fun!

Christine Arnold

Crispin Spencer at Trafford Hall

Second in our Head Gardener series



As we reported in the July 2016 edition of the newsletter, Crispin Spencer is our Membership Secretary, but he is also head gardener at Trafford Hall, near Chester. He started in gardening at a very young age, growing and selling pumpkins to the local greengrocers in Lymm when he was only nine. It was in the blood. His grandfather and mother were both professional gardeners and his father was a keen amateur.

Crispin did his degree in biology at Liverpool University. He wanted to specialise in plant sciences, but was advised against it and took environmental biology instead, which he felt would open up more options. It was difficult however, to find a role that focused on field work. He definitely didn't want to sit behind a desk, so he started on the horticultural route, studying for the RHS Level 2 Diploma at Tatton Park with Sam Youd. With a good balance of horticultural

qualifications and practical experience, Crispin moved to Hodnet Hall. Being a 60 acre garden there was plenty of opportunity to gain experience and he stayed there for two years. He was keen to use his experience to become a head gardener, so he moved to Claughton Hall near Garstang. But this was a private estate and eventually he wanted a move to somewhere he could be more involved with a range of people and make more impact. So he moved to Trafford Hall, which fitted the bill perfectly. He's now been there a year and he feels it's more in tune with his principles.



Trafford Hall is a beautifully proportioned Georgian hall (see above) built in 1756, on the ruins of an old manor. It is set in the middle of the Cheshire countryside near Chester with views of the distant Welsh hills. It was in private hands for most of its life but towards the end had become extremely neglected and needed a lot of work. In 1991 it was taken over by the National

Communities Resource Centre. They had been hunting for a national residential base for tenant training for some while. They overcame incredible odds to raise the money for restoration and galvanised a lot of supporters.

Their mission is to close the inequality gap that exists in communities across the UK by providing training, support and resources for people living in the lowest income neighbourhoods. There are training, conference and wedding facilities within the main house, and the Walter Segal designed eco-chalets, assembled by volunteers, provide bed and breakfast accommodation. This all helps to subsidise their core activities.

The garden was restored, mainly by volunteers, in the early 1990s, but more latterly had become a little neglected. With weddings and other events taking place at Trafford Hall they decided to invest a bit more in the garden so they employed a head gardener (Crispin Spencer, our Membership Secretary) and another full time gardener. They still have some volunteers but it's not a lot of gardeners to look after 14 acres.



At the back of the hall is a wide lawn (see above) with specimen trees, particularly two protected Blue Atlas Cedars (*Cedrus atlantica*). This area was badly in need of renovation, largely to help accommodate regular marquees for weddings. One of Crispin's first major tasks after arriving was to extend the lawn area into the surrounding scrubby woodland, then install a drainage system before re-turfing the whole area. The remaining adjacent wooded areas have also been tidied up to help improve the aspect, highlight the specimen trees, and not least to make the best of the extensive swathes of snowdrops and bluebells. To the left is the sunken arts and crafts style garden, with hard landscaping including terracing/retaining walls and Lutyens style steps at each corner. There are some attractive shrubs and plants in the border, but Crispin feels the overall planting is probably

in need of a redesign.



Arts and crafts style garden

Beyond is a small memorial garden in the place of the old greenhouse with a pergola covered in a vine and other climbers and exotics like canna. The memorial is to Brian Abel-Smith, professor of social policy at the London School of Economics, who helped found Trafford Hall.

Beyond this is a small orchard with low growing apple trees and the kitchen garden. This is an attractive design with a pond in the middle surrounded by triangular raised beds filled with fruit and veg. There is a fruit cage, a very attractive greenhouse and flowers for cutting, especially dahlias and chrysanthemums. Surrounding the gardens in this area are the Walter Segal eco-chalets, meaning guests need only to step out of their door to be in the midst of the gardens.



Orchard with eco-chalets beyond

Beyond is a huge field, used by groups as an open space, with a small orchard of Cheshire heritage apple trees, a shelter-belt of trees and wildlife.

In addition to his head gardener role, Crispin enjoys training people. He is regional manager for WFGA (formerly the Women's Farm and Garden Association, but now open to men as well as women) for Lancashire and Cumbria, coordinating training and trainees and finding opportunities for them. He is also involved with the Northern Fruit Group, who hold workshops at Trafford Hall, and

the Professional Gardeners Guild. Crispin sees tremendous potential in the garden and grounds for involving a wider range of groups. He would like to restore the garden to how it was in the 1990s, but probably needs more volunteers so if you are interested please contact him at crispin.spencer1@gmail.com. Trafford Hall is generous with expenses for its volunteers.

I am very grateful to Crispin for giving up his time to tell me about himself and the garden and to Trafford Hall for allowing him to do so.

For more info see the website

www.traffordhall.com

There is a very moving account of the setting up by Anne Power, one of the founding directors and now chair of the National Communities Resource Centre "Trafford Hall: A brief history of the National Tenants Resource Centre 1987-1995"

There is also information from Jenny Wood, a CGT member, on the Parks and Gardens website <http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/6885?preview=1>

Text and photos Sue Eldridge

Ness and Cheshire Gardens Trust Travel Bursary

Autumn 2017 saw the establishment of a £500 travel bursary co-funded by Ness and the Cheshire Gardens Trust. The aim of the fund is to help RHS students and garden staff to broaden their horticultural, botanical or landscape knowledge. Applications opened in January and we were delighted to award funding to two projects.

One to RHS student and primary school teacher, Emma Rhodes, to fund a visit to the Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. Emma is planning to look at ways of developing her school garden and outdoor teaching. The second was to Greg Jones, another RHS student who is also completing a placement at Ness. He has prepared a short report of his work.

Andrew Lambie, Ness Botanic Gardens

If you go down to the woods today....

During May I was fortunate enough, through the generosity of Ness Botanic Gardens and the Cheshire Gardens Trust, to attend a field course on the identification of ancient woodland indicator species. The course was run by the Field Studies Council in Beechfield Dingle, Shropshire in an almost perfect piece of Spring woodland.

Common and lesser-known species were encountered such as *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* hybrids (Native bluebell hybrids) and *Lathraea squamaria* (Common toothwort) - a parasitic plant that grows on the roots of *Corylus avellana* (Hazel) and flowers briefly in early to mid-May. This was a fascinating challenge to my skills using dichotomous keys and terminology relating to plant structure.

Initially a group of about 15 people including avid enthusiasts, university students, ecologists and land surveyors gathered around the course leader, for him to start describing how to differentiate between a Native and Spanish bluebell (*H. non-scripta* and *H. hispanica*). The leader had brought some Spanish bluebells to display, while there were some Native bluebell hybrids (resembling the native bluebell rather than the Spanish) conveniently placed on the road verge, that must have either originally been fly-tipped nearby or were garden escapees that had crossed with the native population. However, the group leader was keen to emphasise the importance of returning the Spanish bluebells to a plastic container, so as to make sure that none of the material was released into the surrounding environment.



Hyacinthoides non-scripta hybrids (Native bluebell)



We then progressed further into the dingle. There were countless plants under the wild garlic (*Allium ursinum* - see previous page), carpeting the floor. These included Lesser Celandine – see below (*Ficaria verna subsp. bulbifera*), a species that indicates the presence of ancient woodland and is part of the buttercup family; Townhall clock (*Adoxa moschatellina*); Dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), a plant that has historically been used a source of poison, although the “dog” denotes that it is an inferior poison to that of mercury and



Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*).

Especially intriguing was establishing the difference between lady and male ferns. This is often overlooked with ferns not being flowering plants. However, by revealing some relatively simple facts such as the difference in their anatomy, I gained a greater appreciation of them and their significance within the habitat they occupy.

This also sums up my overall experience of the course. By viewing many different species within their natural habitat, which are not normally cultivated, I gained a greater insight than just reading the facts in a book. I would highly recommend not only attending this course, but getting outside and identifying as many plants as possible, wherever it may be.

The course has enhanced my identification skills, which will contribute to my studies when I start my degree course in Plant Sciences at the University of Sheffield in September.

Text and pictures Greg Jones

Steffie Shields awarded an MBE



Steffie Shields, who spoke on Capability Brown at our Spring Lecture in 2014, has been awarded an MBE for services to Conservation Heritage. She is recognised as a great ambassador for garden heritage and her work with the Gardens Trust and county gardens trusts.

Her award has recognised the breadth, depth and value of her voluntary work, leadership and expertise, and in particular as a ‘Capability’ Brown scholar.



**A Discussion and Networking Day from the Garden Trust’s Historic Landscape Project
19th November 2018, at The Hospitium,
Museum Gardens, York, £30 - £45**

The third annual, national networking forum from the Gardens Trust, an opportunity for all those with a stake in historic designed landscapes and their conservation to meet and discuss current

issues. The theme will be “The 20th century and beyond”. Speakers will include representatives from the Gardens Trust, Historic England, Natural England, Parks and Gardens UK and the Sharing Repton Project plus case studies from County Gardens Trusts.

The venue will be the Hospitium, a 14th century building set within the beautiful York Museum Gardens in York city centre.

**The Picturesque Garden in England
Friday 31 May to Sunday 2 Jun 2019,
Rewley House, Oxford Cost £159**

Held in association with the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, The Garden’s Trust weekend conference takes as its

theme, the 'Picturesque Garden'. The Picturesque is one of England's most distinctive contributions to garden history, but it is difficult to define. For further information and booking visit The Gardens Trust website (see below) or obtain an application form from:

Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA

Scottish tour of Picturesque Landscapes around the Clyde from 15th to 21st June 2019 comprising 6 nights and 7 days

At the end of the 17th century travellers were making a special journey to view the Falls of Clyde. Sublime and picturesque natural landscapes were valued in Scotland long before they were in England. This tour looks at romantic and Picturesque landscapes and gardens around Glasgow taking advantage of both the sea and inland wild scenery.

The tour will be led by Kristina Taylor and Robert Peel. It will include New Lanark, Chatelherault in the Clyde Valley; Mount Stuart on the island of Bute; Kelburn Castle and Ardgowan overlooking the Firth of Clyde; Benmore botanic garden and Glenarn in Rhu. Walking may be strenuous and uneven in places on this tour and thus members should take this into account when booking. To express interest in the tour please contact Kristina Taylor on wowkristina@hotmail.com

For further information on these and other events and activities look at The Gardens Trust website <http://thegardenstrust.org>

You can also download a copy of the latest edition of The Gardens Trust newsletter from the website.

Report from the Gardens Trust AGM

The Gardens Trust AGM, 1st September 2018

The Annual General Meeting took place at Birmingham University this year where, ironically or promisingly, the heart of the campus is being dug up to create the Green Heart, "a striking new parkland" due for completion in 2019. The meeting was handled with a light touch, reports were short, and after the angst over the merger of the Garden History Society and the Association of Gardens Trusts, the present organisation appears leaner, meaner and open for business. Some points of interest that I took from the meeting are:

- * The Gardens Trust (TGT) is seeking to reach beyond the membership and partner with other organisations – through the Historic Landscape Project, events, training and e.news . TGT has held 2 events with the Landmark Trust and is exploring joint training with the Woodland Trust
- * Successful collaborative working with County Gardens Trusts resulted in TGT responding to in excess of 1300 planning cases last year
- * With the Annual conference and AGM it is hard finding something that suits everyone. In 2019 this event will be held 6th – 8th September
- * Linden Groves – TGT Strategy Officer spoke about the HLF grant for 'Sharing Repton: Historic Landscapes for All' (just

under £100,000) which will pilot 5 activities, each held at a different venue, that will have a template and so be repeatable elsewhere. The activities are about considering how to be relevant and engage with new people, and so becoming an organisation that new people want to be part of

- * Philip White of Hestercombe spoke briefly on the progress and development of the website Parks and Gardens Database UK – expect to see changes soon.

The Gilly Drummond Volunteer of the Year 2018 was awarded jointly to Sally Bate of Norfolk Gardens Trust and Jill Plater of Essex Gardens Trust (below) at the Gardens Trust AGM.



I found the AGM positive and encouraging. It is always interesting to see something of the wider picture.

Barbara Moth

Rousham



I've wanted to visit Rousham for a long time and earlier this year, in July, I got the opportunity. The garden was designed by William Kent around 1738, building on previous work by Charles Bridgeman, and thought to be the first phase of English landscape design: it remains almost as Kent left it. The house (see above) is still in the ownership of the Cottrell-Dormer family, built in 1635 by Robert Dormer and remodelled by William Kent in 18th century.

William Kent (1685-1748) was an architect and interior designer. After initial training as a coach and house painter he spent time in Italy before returning to England at the behest of Lord Burlington. His most original and influential contribution is as a landscape designer, often collaborating with Bridgeman, for example at Chiswick House, Alexander Pope's Garden and Stowe. His most important garden was that at Rousham.

Rousham is very uncommercial and unspoilt, with no tearoom or shop, no children allowed under 16, no dogs and only taking cash (much to the disgust of some people on Trip Adviser), but there were plenty of people picnicking in the grounds beside the river.

There are really two layers to the Rousham gardens, the more formal gardens near to the house, and the lower landscaped woodland area, with a classical Roman feel. Immediately on entry to the grounds, in front of the house, are two lawn areas with old trees with some spectacular sweet chestnuts.



Behind the house is the "Bowling Alley", a large area of lawn, with a ha-ha at one end overlooking the river and a seat by William Kent at each corner (see previous column).



View back to house from herbaceous border

Then we went through the yew hedge in one corner into the enormous walled garden. Along one side is a double herbaceous border (see above), not quite at its best after the summer drought, but still impressive, backed by views of the house. There were lilies, *Echinops*, roses, *Phlox*, *Rudbeckia*, *Hosta*, *Clematis*, *Cotinus*, *Campanula*, anemones and lots of butterflies.



Then through the wall to the pigeon house garden. To the right was a lovely greenhouse, filled with tomatoes. Outside were banks of pots containing salvias, *Nicotiana*, pelargoniums, *Heuchera*, *Cosmos* and succulents. Immediately ahead was a formal garden, a box edged parterre planted with lavender, valerian, roses, foxgloves and *Alchemilla mollis*, backed by a round tower.

This was the pigeon house (see previous page), still used by the birds, and covered with roses and other climbing plants and fig trees. Beyond the pigeon house was a lawn area, with old mulberries, dahlias along one wall, climbing roses and hops and then a wonderful *Cotinus*, covered in “smoke” and hollyhocks. A lovely place to sit for a while. Beyond the *Cotinus* was an entrance into the old church, an early medieval building, with tombs and memorials to the Dormer family.

Back into the herbaceous border and we followed a pergola down to an octagonal pool, surrounded by climbing and rambling roses, and an orchard with some wonderful espaliered apple trees.



View back to the church from the rose arbour

At the end we went into an old-fashioned kitchen garden, full of flowers and butterflies. There was asparagus, artichokes, all sorts of fruit, blackberries, courgettes, climbing squashes and cottage garden plants – *Verbascum*, sunflowers, marigolds, hollyhocks and *Penstemon*.

Then back to the bowling green area and a path through the woods down to the landscaped area



Apollo at the end of an alley

bounded by the River Cherwell. Horace Walpole likened it to “Daphne in little, the sweetest little groves, streams, glades, porticos, cascades and river imaginable”. It was lovely walking through the meadow and then wooded areas, mainly beech with laurel throughout as an underplanting, and suddenly coming across Pan, Venus or Apollo at the end of a vista. And throughout, running water in the river, rills, ponds and cascades (below). Arcadia indeed.



Text and photos Sue Eldridge

Overseas garden tours

First of all a sincere thank you to everyone who responded to our recent survey regarding future visits to overseas gardens.

The following is a brief summary of the answers to the questions outlined in the survey document. There were only 20 replies completed from a membership of 136, which in itself does beg the question of the need for such trips!

However the following gives a reflection of the forms received back:

- The preferred months for the visits are spring (May/June) and autumn (September)
- Number of nights spent away would be four with overall budget costs for a trip

being in the region of £700.00 per person

- * There was no clear country in Europe that was a preferred option

However, at our last Events Group Meeting it was decided that we would continue to look at and review the availability and costs of visits to Northern France and Italy using specialist companies. Details of our findings will be published in the next newsletter in the New Year.

N.B. for a full copy of the results and comments from the questions of the survey, please look at our website www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Gordon J Darlington

Elizabeth Gaskell's home



A tour of the garden at Heathwaite House (above), Knutsford, Elizabeth Gaskell's childhood home, was available as part of Heritage Open Days. In Elizabeth's day the property lay at the edge of the town, near a farm, and overlooking the Knutsford Racecourse. The town has grown considerably since but remarkably the footprint of the 18th century garden remains largely intact.

In 1811 Elizabeth was brought to Knutsford to live with her aunt, Hannah Lumb, following the death of her mother. She was just thirteen months old. Later in life she described the Heath, (now Heathwaite), as a Queen Anne house, with a square of garden in front and its drawing room windows at the back looking out over lawns surrounded by flower-beds and shaded by a huge cedar with vegetables, fruit trees, poultry, and a paddock with two cows and a pony beyond.

Hannah Lumb was a customer of Caldwell's Nurseries. In 1795 and 1796 her purchases of trees included Weymouth pine, Scotch Fir, Black Poplar, Beech, Horse Chestnut, Sycamore, Scotch

Laburnum, Plane and Larch which suggest that she was undertaking substantial work in the garden. She also ordered a Violet Plum, Greengage Plum, shrubs and vegetable seeds. It is possible that the large cedar, a Deodar, was purchased from Caldwell's. The tree is included in their 1873 General Catalogue with the comment that "Deodar is so well known that it requires little or no comment. It is one of the most graceful trees grown."



View down the garden

The graceful Deodar under which Elizabeth read dominates the garden. There is still a long lawn with shrubs borders and small trees as well as a pet's cemetery, vegetable garden and, away from the house, a tennis court. Garden walls near the house bear the signs of having supported a glasshouse with heating. Though the coach house has now been converted to housing, the narrow cobbled drive remains and cobbled paths around the house appear undisturbed (see below). A delightful survivor.



The Deodar cedar



Text and photos Barbara Moth

Blue sky thinking for bright ideas



Dear Members

The Council of Management has decided that now is the appropriate time to carry out a strategic review of the work which Cheshire Gardens Trust has been doing with a view to deciding whether it would be appropriate to introduce changes to the way in which our organisation might evolve going forward. In particular, the following topics were discussed at our last meeting:-

- * *Planning Issues - should the work of the Conservation and Planning Group be given a higher profile so that our members have greater awareness of this important aspect*

of the CGT and if so, how might this best be achieved?

- * *Fundraising and the use of surplus funds - should we set specific aims for fundraising and expenditure?*
- * *Encouraging a new and younger membership - is this considered necessary and if so, how might it best be achieved? Perhaps there is a natural link to the recently introduced bursary programme?*
- * *Education - the Events Group has been considering arranging an annual lecture using a high profile speaker but this would probably necessitate paying fees. Another possibility is arranging joint lectures with appropriate organisations such as Ness Gardens.*

The above list is by no means exhaustive, the intention is to take a 'blue sky' approach! We have decided to hold a strategic focus session with a group of individuals who have been involved with the CGT over the years. If you have any ideas or suggestions which you would like to contribute to the discussion, please can you send them to David Cash (email: dcc5461@gmail.com).

Many thanks, **David Cash**

Events

The Landscape Designs of Humphry Repton Friday 2nd November

If you are unable to make the CGT talk by Kate Harwood at Reaseheath College on Thursday 1st November she is giving a second talk on Repton on Friday 2nd November at 10.30. This talk is organised by THEA, the society of former Reaseheath students of horticulture and will be held in the same lecture hall next to the restaurant at Reaseheath. There is a charge of £5.00 payable on the day for this talk. Please book by contacting Freyda Taylor Email: taylor1157@btinternet.com.

Text or phone mobile 07860 852070.

Stunning seasonal flower displays - a demonstration by Marion Barker

Friday 16th November, 6.30 for 7.00pm at St Helen's Church Northwich CW9 5PB Tickets £5.00. Proceeds to Christian Aid. Contact Barbara Moth 01606 46228 or barbara.moth@btinternet.com for further information and tickets

Garden Hunting in China with Timothy Walker. The Elizabeth Ashbrook Memorial Lecture

Sunday 25th November 2018. Talk 2pm followed by tea/coffee and cake. Tickets £13.00

Timothy Walker is formerly the Director of Oxford Botanic Garden, TV presenter of 'History of Botany', now lecturer in Plant Sciences at Somerville College, Oxford.

Contact Plant Heritage, 30, Winstanley Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 2AR Tel: 0161 962 5698. Cheques payable to 'NCCPG Cheshire Group' with SAE.

Copy date for January newsletter is 31st December

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, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email sue_eldridge@hotmail.com