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Newsletter

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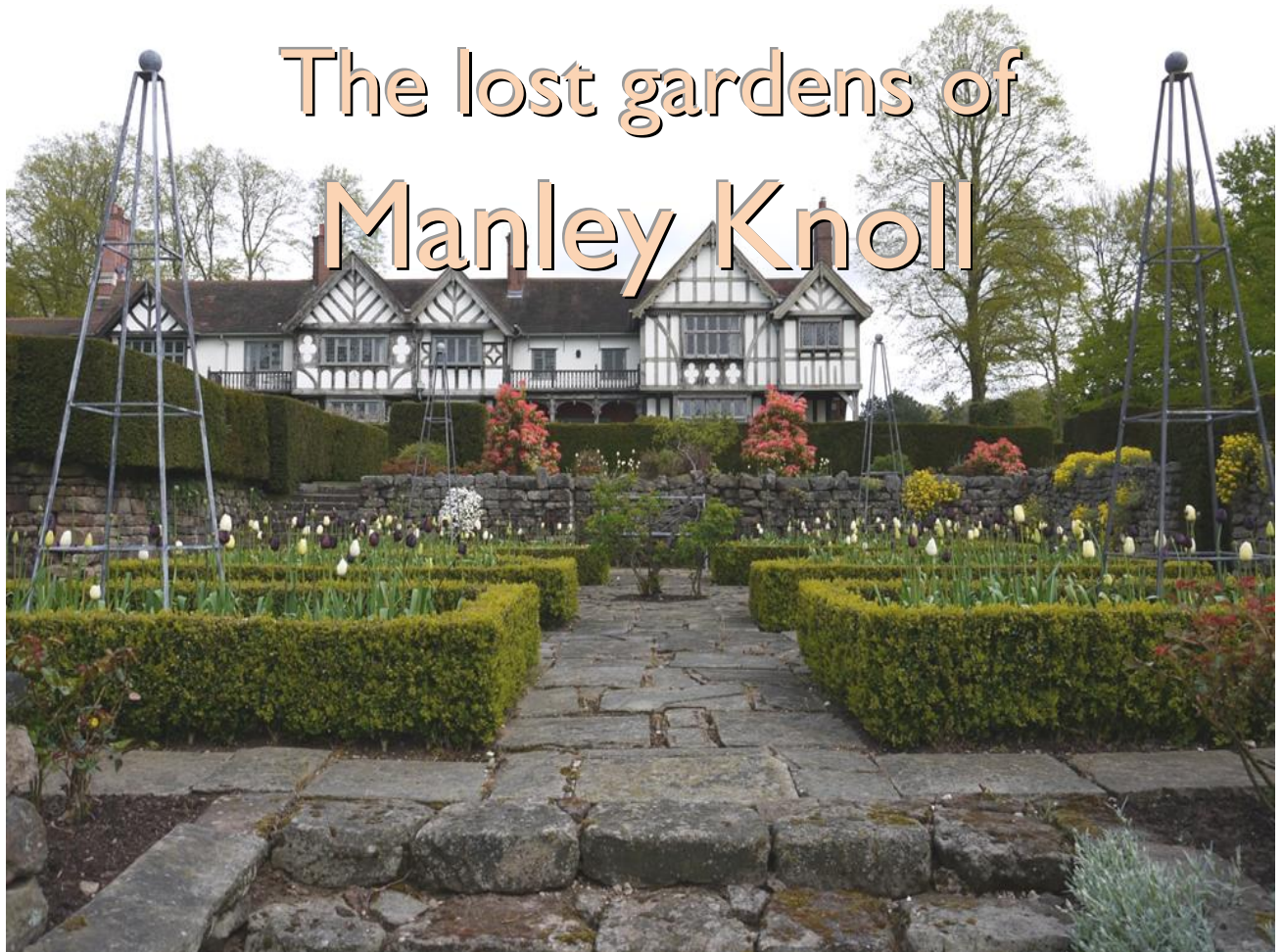
Inside:

- ✦ Morville Hall and the Dower House Gardens
- ✦ Walk through a Saltscape
- ✦ Learning about trees
- ✦ H is for Ha-Ha
- ✦ Digging up Kemp

Some future events:

- ✦ Birtles Hall – Tuesday 13 August
- ✦ A dahlia-filled garden in Bredbury (to be featured on Gardener's World) – Tuesday 10 September
- ✦ Henbury Hall gardens – Thursday 17 October
- ✦ North-West Film Archive – compilation of gardens, landscapes and horticulture in Cheshire – Saturday 30 November

The lost gardens of Manley Knoll



A large group from the CGT made a very special visit to this extensive Arts and Crafts garden.

We were greeted by Roisin Timpson who let us lounge on her sofas while she gave us an introductory talk about the house and garden, and the work that they have already done, and their plans for the future. The Timpson family bought the house in 2011, and since then has been uncovering the structure of the

garden, which had gradually been engulfed by huge rhododendrons, laurel, and thickets of overgrown trees. The previous owners had only been able to cope with the upkeep of the area of garden immediately to the back of the house.

The property today comprises approximately 20 acres of paddocks, 20 acres of woodland, and 10 acres of gardens including a quarry garden of about 3 acres.

We were then divided into three groups for tours of the garden led by Roisin, and James, the Head Gardener, and his assistant Matt.

The house, described as “Eclectic Vernacular Revival style” is Arts and Crafts, built between 1912 -14. It is not known who the architect was, but further research is being undertaken. The property stands on the top of a hill, with views to the front over rolling pastureland, and to the back over the Cheshire plain west towards Wales.



Some members of CGT had visited previously and have been helping with uncovering the history of the house and garden, and with developing the garden plan. Jane Roberts has written a short guide to the house and garden.

The tour took us past a large pond which previously had been choked with leaves, but which had been cleared. It now had clear water, wildlife had started to return and inhabit it. Beside this was a large area of overgrown woodland, as yet un-tackled, which gave us an idea of just how much clearing had already been done.

We then went to the rear of the house to the more formal part of the garden with lawns, and much original hard landscaping of stone retaining walls and paths. Beds were planted up with tulips, alliums and roses as well as other herbaceous plants and shrubs, and it looked as if there would be much more to enjoy as they became more established.



There was also a magnificent old Wisteria along a wall near the house, which was in bud, but promised to be fabulous in a few weeks time (top right).

Yew hedges were also a feature, some of which needed to be severely pruned because they had been allowed to get out of control in previous years. Down the hill was a new greenhouse, and plans for a vegetable plot and a nuttery in this area.



We then walked on to the quarry garden. This turned out to be enormous, and had become totally overgrown with rhododendrons and self sown trees. But now light and air were allowed in, and extensive excavating of the floor had exposed long forgotten paths, steps and the remains of water features.



We were able to see just how much work had been done, and were thinking about all the wonderful plants that could now be grown in this space.



After a fascinating tour we were then given very welcome refreshments in the kitchen. Thank you to the Timpson family, and especially to Roisin, for their generosity in allowing such a large group to visit, and for sharing the delightful garden with us.

Postscript:

I enjoyed the visit so much that I returned a month later on 16th June when the garden was open for the National Gardens Scheme. The weather was much warmer so tea was enjoyed on the terrace, and the Wisteria that showed such promise truly was

fabulous! The beds had filled out, and roses were in bloom, and there was also evidence of yet more excavations in the quarry garden. The field that we had parked in on our visit was full of buttercups and other wild flowers.

If any of you did not manage to come on the visit the garden will be open under the National Gardens Scheme again in 2014, and I can heartily recommend it.

Isabel Wright



Morville Hall



On 15th June 2013 Cheshire Garden Trust members and visitors met at Crewe for the coach journey to Morville, stopping en route for coffee at the historic small town of Much Wenlock.

Morville Hall lies three miles west of Bridgenorth in Shropshire. An avenue of lime trees leads to a semi-circular lawn fronting the seemingly Georgian grey stone house with curving garden walls and twin pavilions, the Norman church of St. Gregory to the left.



The group was welcomed by Dr. Chris Douglas and his wife, Sarah (above), who took out a lease on the property with four and a half acres of land from the National Trust sixteen years ago.

The Hall had been very run down and they embarked on a programme of restoration to initially include wiring, heating and water. They have furnished the Hall with their own collection of 17th and 18th century English furniture. Chris explained the history of Morville before a tour of the rooms.

Morville had been the site of a Saxon settlement and the present Norman church was built in 1118 by the Benedictine Monks of Shrewsbury Abbey, who made it into a Priory. Morville Hall was built on the site of the ruined Priory in the mid 16th century by Roger Smyth, the MP for Bridgnorth, probably using some of the Priory stonework.

Chris explained that the entrance hall in which the group was standing was part of the original Tudor Great Hall. Morville Hall was passed down the male line until John Smyth died at the battle of Edgehill in 1642. The Hall subsequently passed to Arthur Weaver of Montgomeryshire who was married to Jane Smyth.

In 1747, Arthur Weaver III succeeded to the property and he commissioned the architect William Baker from Audlem to modernise the Tudor house. The two pavilions were added, the windows changed to sashes, oak panelling inserted, doors widened and columns put at the front of the wings.

Further alterations, including the porch and drawing room bay window, took place in about 1770 by Arthur Blaney who had succeeded to Morville from his cousin.

After 1797 the property descended through the female line to the Hanbury Tracys of Toddington Hall, Gloucestershire, and was then sold in 1814 to Lord Acton after which time Morville was let to a succession of tenants.

In 1930 the property was bought by Mr. Bayliss, a Midland cinema owner, who made considerable alterations including the removal of a Victorian library and the Georgian staircase. In 1936, the property was sold to Dr. Bythell and, in 1966, was given with 140 acres of land to the National Trust by his daughter Audrey. The Bythell family were Manchester mill owners and came with servants and three gardeners.

On entering the first reception room it was instantly apparent that the beauty of Morville Hall was the stunning location with views out over the garden and beyond to the green countryside and wooded hillside. All the rooms have been lovingly restored by Chris

and Sarah with Farrow & Ball paint, beautiful oak furniture, pictures, and blinds at the windows. The first room has a loaned picture over the mantelpiece showing the Weaver family at the Hall in 1750. The adjoining drawing room has a large tapestry on one wall and portraits by Arthur Davies.

Several of the rooms have the oak panelling but in the dining room this is unpainted. Part of the panelling by the window would have been lowered to make the 'rent table'. In this room and the entrance hall there are five Queen Anne portraits which are on loan from the De Winton Trust.

The 16th century kitchen is an interesting room with a moulded plasterwork ceiling of the period. The room would have originally been used as a bedroom and then as a winter parlour but is now used as a kitchen and the Douglas's have put a spit rack above the large fireplace. There is a lovely painting which is a copy of 'Three Sisters' in the manner of Robert Peak, the original being in Denver, Colorado.



Everyone was keen to go into the garden and it began to rain! Chris and Sarah have been working hard to restore the garden and they have a wonderful setting in which to work. The two rows of yew trees were planted in the 1790s and have undergone radical surgery. The ha-ha also dates from the 18th century at which time the medieval stewpond was probably canalised.

There is a gardener's cottage where Joyce Needham lived for fifty six years after coming in 1936 as an



undermaid. She was able to help with the garden restoration through her memories. There are roses on the south and west walls of the Hall and a revolving summerhouse across the lawn.

The south facing loggia by the house has been painted featuring orange trees by a set designer friend. Chris pointed out the turkey oak tree and the Morville Hall bench. The new vegetable and herb area is spacious and given colour by the alliums. The new parterre has been laid out using the pattern of the plasterwork ceiling in the kitchen.

A pool was built in the 1930s and was known as the Brownie swimming pool. Miss Bythell was very active with the Brownie Movement and hosted Brownie Camps using the south pavilion. The pool is now ornamental with water lilies and a fountain.



Following a wet garden visit there was opportunity after lunch to visit the church and revisit the garden before going to the Dower House garden.

Janet Horne

Morville Dower House

The Dower House Garden tells the history of Morville Hall and the people who have lived there, from the coming of the Benedictine monks in 1138 through war, peace and prosperity up to the beginning of the twentieth century and the sale of the hall after the First World War.

The garden consists of a sequence of separate gardens designed in the style of different historical periods, each garden linked to a particular individual or family in the history of the house. There was nothing but a 1.5 acre field and some mature trees when the garden

was started. It is in the grounds of Morville Hall. The owner took a 20-year lease on the field together with the house where she still lives.

Tall lilies in terracotta pots line the entrance to this deeply romantic garden made over the last 25 years by the garden historian and writer Katherine Swift. Her best-selling book, *The Morville Hours*, was chosen as a BBC radio 4 'Book of the Week'.

The soil is stiff Shropshire clay and the garden is north facing. Many plants are allowed to self seed and this sets the tone of the gardens.



The two **knot gardens** (raised beds edged with lavender and planted with sage) in front of the house are all that confronts us as Katherine explains that the clipped orange trees were grown by her from pips. They are kept small as they are taken into the house for winter protection, as are the agapanthus.

There is just a modest narrow grass path which invites us into the main garden, up a slight rise which, together with the yew hedges, conceals the delights beyond.



The design is largely formal with lax, dense planting and clipped topiary all around. Katherine calls it 'a formal garden in a natural setting', but jokes that a 'natural garden in a formal setting' might be a more appropriate considering the way that nature has been allowed a freer hand than some would find acceptable.

I found it exuberant and generous, yet there are quiet and restrained areas too. It is loose and yet clipped.

The **Victorian rose garden** is swagged and heavy with bud; artichokes, fat and grey, below. This edges the **fruit and vegetable garden**. Pear and apple tunnels dissect the whole of this area and each quarter is centred by a wigwam of sweet peas.

Tall yew hedges, planted by the owner in 1989, surround all of the formal gardens, and a gap and vista invites us through to the **cloister garden**. Alliums, aquilegias and foxgloves clothe every inch of space under the canopy of old roses.

This garden is also divided by narrow grass paths. Foxgloves are allowed to display themselves against the dark yew hedges, clipped into a series of arches in this case and backed by further yew, which entices us into the **wild garden**.

Idyllic, soft and scented, this area is a nuttery, orchard and the least formal of the areas and leads us round to the 'mound' which is the spoil from the canal pool. The path leads us up and through an embryonic willow tunnel where we can see the roses as they emerge from the undergrowth to the light at the top of the trees they are climbing up.

We go down and round between two huge white roses in full sway into the **canal garden**. This area is tighter and clipped box edges the *plates-bandes* adorned with a further six orange trees.

The design is offset by an old and venerable pear tree to one side, the deep fissures in its bark set into sharp relief by the sunlight. A circular pool at the end prepares us for the quiet centre of the garden, a **turf**

maze complete with toadstools as a miniature centrepiece. Echoes of Hidcote and Sissinghurst here, as the classic restrained rondel allows us to draw breath from the heady roses and wisteria.

Curved paths lead through the **new flower garden** to a small Greek temple, partly concealed by a multi-stemmed tree right in front, lessening the impact, but creating instead a secluded and relaxed seat on which to contemplate the scene.

Two auricula theatres lead you into the **ivy garden**, at the side of the house. This sheltered and walled garden is the home to more tender plants, a decaying mangle and all the comfortable paraphernalia that gardeners accumulate. It is viewed from the Victorian house, a modest home with delightfully quirky details and where we go for tea and scones, as lavish as the garden with clotted cream and Membrillo made from their own quinces. Superb!

Gordon Cooke



Walk Through A Saltscape - 25 April

This visit to Northwich Woodlands including Marbury Park and the Anderton Boat Lift was unlike any previous excursion by the Trust, and was a salutary reminder of the effect that man can have on the landscape when he is seeking profit instead of trying to create beauty.

Northwich is one of the three Cheshire 'salt towns' and where rock salt was first mined extensively in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Inevitably, abandoned mines, and sometimes working ones, were flooded and salt pillars, left to shore up mine roofs, dissolved in groundwater.

Like rock salt, brine was an important resource and vast quantities were pumped out of flooded mines, causing catastrophic land subsidence in both town and country. The subsidence depressions quickly filled with surface water creating lakes known as flashes.



The flash environment today

In the Northwich area, waste from the nearby chemical industry was dumped in flashes and began the process of reclamation: the end result is the public open space extending from Northwich town centre to Marbury Park.

This manmade landscape has acquired a weird beauty as trees mature and aquatic birds such as swans and

moorhens settle on the remaining areas of open water.



Heron at the edge of Great Budworth Mere

Though now popular as an area for recreation, the past is still visible: industry can still be seen on the skyline and great pipes still carry landfill gases through the park. A notice near a bench instructs you not to smoke while you are resting on the bench – leaked gas might explode!



Entrance to The Dell at the edge of Great Budworth Mere

Our walk continued past Budworth Mere and into Marbury's parkland landscape. The Mere occupies a 'natural' subsidence depression formed slowly as the climate warmed thousands of years ago. The Mere exhibits maturity with its reed beds and wildlife and is overlooked by the tower of Great Budworth Church.



Remains of Marbury's Ice House

Marbury Country Park has evolved from the once private estate. Pevsner deplores the fact that only a pair of massive gateposts remain of Marbury Hall, which was demolished in the sixties, though the

remains of the gardens still provide pleasant walks. Unfortunately, the late spring meant that there was little sign of the promised bluebells, though drifts of wood anemones illuminated the woodland glades.



Pink-tinged Wood Anemones in woodland glades

Our walk ended at the famous Anderton Boat lift, another reminder of Cheshire's industrial heritage which has now become a tourist attraction.

Kath Gee & Sheila Holroyd

Learning about Ancient Trees

Most people will have heard of the Ancient Tree Hunt, the Woodland Trust's initiative to find significant trees and to record them on the national database on their website <http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/>.

Unfortunately the level of recording in Cheshire has been low compared to other parts of the country so the Woodlands Trust approached the Sandstone Ridge Trust with the aim of training their members to record these special trees and to inspire others to spot trees too.

When we heard that a training session had been planned we felt that Cheshire Gardens Trust should be involved too – after all, many of the ancient trees are found in designed landscapes where there has often been continuity of ownership for hundreds of years. Our Research and Recording Group is visiting sites like this throughout the county so we should be able to record any special trees that we find. There are about 40 historic designed landscapes within the area of the Sandstone Ridge alone.

The training was held on a sunny Saturday, 8th June, at the Macdonald Portal Hotel, Cobblers Cross near Tarporley and was led by Jill Butler, Conservation Adviser (Ancient Trees) for The Woodland Trust. She taught us how to recognise, measure and record significant trees and input the data into the national database.

We learned that the term 'ancient tree' encompasses:

- Trees in the ancient or third and final stage of their life

- Trees of interest biologically, aesthetically or culturally because of their great age
- Trees often recognised by being fatter than others of the same species nearby

A 'veteran tree', although not quite so old, harbours the same important wildlife as the ancient tree. It might have hollowing and associated decay fungi, holes, wounds and large dead branches. It could be an old tree or a middle aged tree where premature aging is present.



The 'Veteran' Spanish chestnut with girth of 5.45m. When entered on the website it was given the number 113839.

A 'notable' tree is one of local importance and may be a specimen tree or one considered to be potentially of the next generation of veteran trees.

Following Jill's talk we investigated the area of the hotel to evaluate the trees. Although now a golf course this landscape was previously Arderne Hall, the family home built in 1865 for Earl Haddington. Earlier it has been called Eaton Banks, home to Gen. Richard Egerton who is thought to have consulted John Webb on the design of the estate. In other words many of the trees here would have been planted in the late 18th or early 19th century, so it came as no surprise that we found some very interesting examples.



A copper beech at Portal, still living and with healthy upper growth but with "hollowing, holes and associated decay fungi"



The 'Ancient' Sycamore number 113853, with girth of 6.4m, found on the Arderne Hall site on training day.

The map of the area and position of this ancient tree can be found on www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/recording/tree.htm?tree=92ec167d-2a6e-420e-8774-b18c1f43f225

Based on this day's training, a small group of tree spotters has been formed to share their experiences. If any CGT members find a significant tree during their researches or garden visits and want to know more about recording them, please get in touch with Freyda Taylor (taylor1157@btinternet.com) or Barbara Moth (barbara.moth@btinternet.com) for more details.

Freyda Taylor

H is for Ha-Ha

A ha-ha comprises a ditch with one sloping grass side and one vertical side supported by a retaining wall. It was a device, sometimes referred to as a sunk fence, that combined stock control with landscape design in pre lawnmower days as it enabled an uninterrupted view from the house and immediate grounds, where any grass would have had to be maintained by scythe or sickle, to the parkland grazed by livestock.

Horace Walpole (1717 - 1797) credits Charles Bridgeman with the innovation of the ha-ha:

"But the capital stroke, the leading step to all that followed, was (I believe the first thought was Bridgman's) the destruction of walls for boundaries, and invention of fosses – an attempt then deemed so astonishing, that the common people called then Ha!

Ha's! to express their surprise at finding a sudden unperceived check to their walk." ¹

He then went on to explain why he considered the ha-ha so important:

"I call a sunk fence the leading step for these reasons. No sooner was this simple enchantment made, than levelling, mowing and rolling followed. The contiguous ground of the park was to be harmonized with the lawn within; and the garden in its turn was to be set free from its prim regularity, that it might assort with the wilder country without."

Although popularised by Bridgeman and widely used by Capability Brown and William Kent in their designs, the origins of the ha-ha may lie in medieval fortifications or canals, or in the saut-de-loup (Wolf's

jump) surrounding French kitchen gardens. There were ha-has at the Grand Trianon at Versailles and the concept of the ha-ha was described by Dezallier D'Argenville in 1709.

The first ha-ha in England is thought to be that constructed by the French gardener Beaumont at Levens Hall in 1692.²

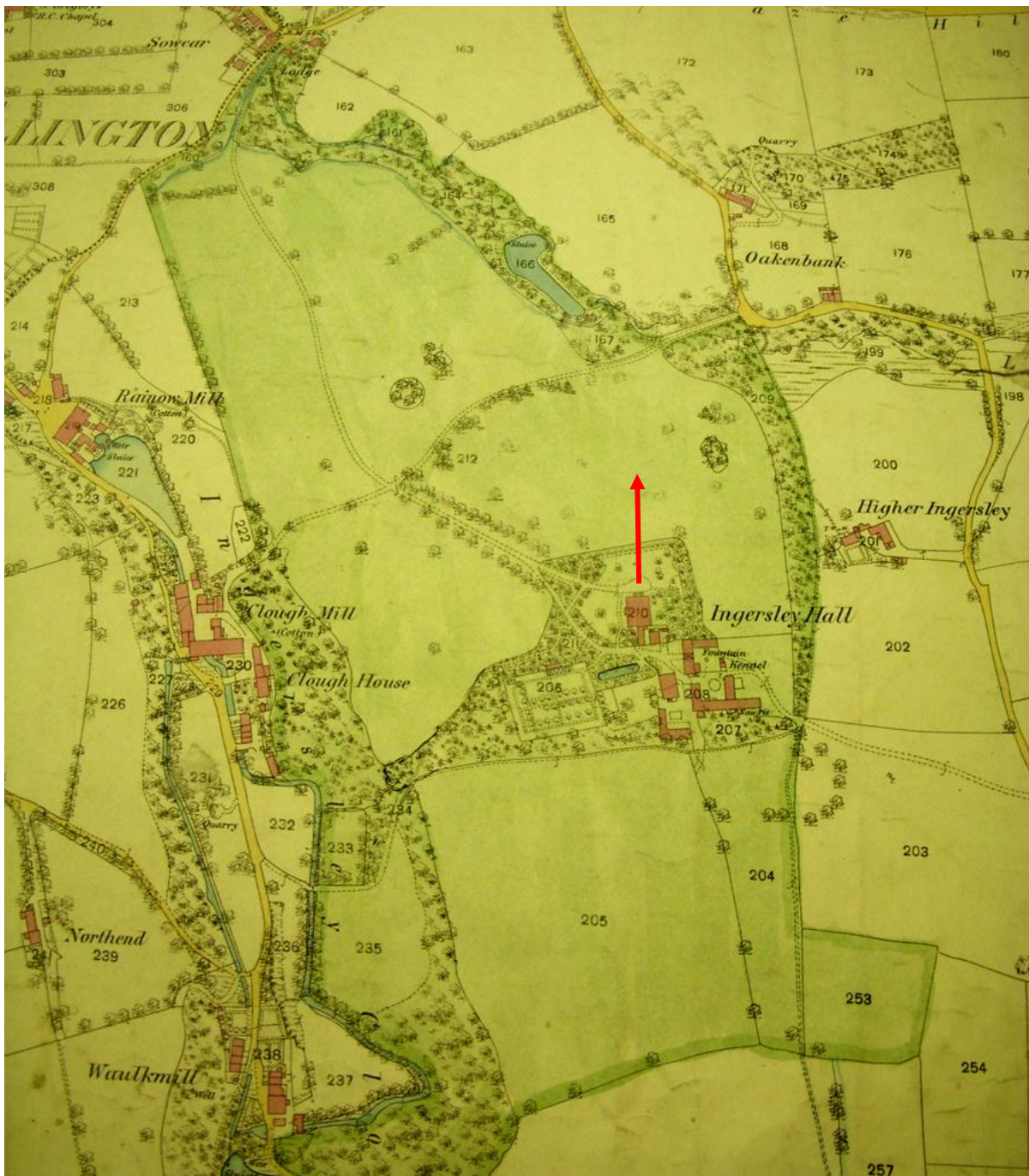
The ha-ha became an accepted component of the English landscape garden and was used by Capability Brown's followers and successors. So far most of the ha-has that garden's trust volunteers have recorded in Cheshire have been early 19th century, and generally smaller in scale and extent than ones such as that at Heaton Hall, Greater Manchester. At Ingersley Hall near Bollington (now called Savio Hall), the ha-ha appears to have been constructed in association with extensions to the hall c1833. The extensions resulted in a new main entrance facing north from which there

were uninterrupted views over the ha-ha and across parkland to Nab Head. (map, below) At Ravenscroft Hall near Middlewich, (see page 10) the ha-ha enables the Hall and gardens to have views across the Dane valley, a landscape of parkland character. At Cogshall Hall near Comberbach the original ha-ha was constructed c1830 when the hall was built. By 1985 the ha-ha had been relocated further south allowing a more generous frontage to the hall, and since 2004 the ha-ha has undergone restoration.

Barbara Moth

¹ Walpole, H. 1995. *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*. New York; Ursus Press, 42. An essay first published in 1780 as part of Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

² Willis, P. 2002. *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden*. Newcastle upon Tyne. Elysium Press Publishers, 20





The ha-ha at Ravenscroft Hall



Cogshall Hall, with ha-ha in foreground



Close-up of Cogshall Hall ha-ha

Digging up Kemp

Edward Kemp (1817 – 1891) was a landscape gardener who trained at Chatsworth House under Joseph Paxton. Paxton was commissioned to design and build Birkenhead Park which was the first in the country to be provided at public expense and Kemp was appointed superintendent of the Park in 1843.

Once the Park was completed and opened to the public in 1847, Kemp had less to keep him occupied and by 1849 the park commissioners decided they no longer needed him. He negotiated with them to keep his house and some land in the park in return for providing his services for free and started his career as a private landscape gardener.

His first recorded private Cheshire commission came in 1849 for James Barratt who had bought Lymm Hall in 1846 when the Lymm estate was sold off in lots. The commission was for a flower garden and the plans are detailed in Kemp's book "How to Lay Out a Garden" which is still available today as a reprint (ISBN 1-84530-042-4) by The Grimsay Press. It is possible Barratt had the garden created for his wife as the style is very feminine. Unfortunately she died in 1851 and there is a stained glass window in St Mary's Church, Lymm in memory of her.

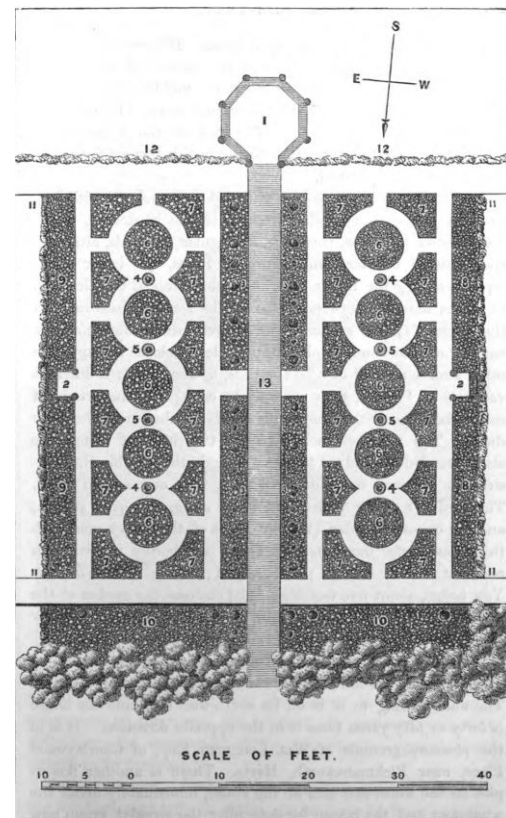
Lymm Hall has a long history, the original manor house being mentioned in the Domesday Book. The current hall dates back to Tudor times but has Victorian additions. The remains of a moat may still be seen.

Just over a year ago Barbara Moth, leader of CGT's Research and Recording Group, suggested I investigate the grounds of Lymm Hall. I am appalled to admit that, despite living in the Warrington area for most of my life, I had never heard of Lymm Hall! It is a well-kept secret in Lymm as it sits in nearly 10 acres of ground and is completely screened from the road.

I contacted the owners who made me very welcome and showed me around. The Hall is listed Grade II* and a bridge over the now drained moat is listed Grade II. The Hall, an ice house and 2 cock fighting pits are classified as scheduled ancient monuments, and the whole property lies within the Lymm Conservation Area. Kemp's garden is still there but the hedges have been altered to include beech and

more yew than on the original plan, and all the above-ground features have disappeared (2 seats and a summer house, as well as the plant supports). Most of the garden is down to grass with some flower borders, but the central grass path remains.

Kemp's plan included 2 parallel rows of circular flower beds surrounded by gravel paths the length of the garden.



From p. 267 of Kemp's How to Lay Out A Garden

This made me wonder if they might remain underneath the grass and contact was made through Trust member, Ruth Brown, with a retired museum curator, Dr Andrew White, to find out if an investigative dig could be carried out. A small, enthusiastic team met on a glorious day in early June and, after a preliminary guided tour by the owners around the grounds, we set to work marking out a trench and removing the turf. Then, in true Time Team tradition, we were on our knees scraping away the soil! I think Barbara was the first to reach gravel

but gradually another section was uncovered and by the time we had finished, we were convinced that the paths were still below the surface.

Unfortunately we do not have the time and resources to excavate the site completely so the trench was filled in. Our findings will be recorded in the report on the site and, who knows, someone in the future may decide to resurrect Kemp's flower garden.

Julia Whitfield

I should like to thank the owners, Dr and Mrs Cotterill, for their kindness and patience during my research of their grounds.

If you have access to the Internet and would like to find out more about Kemp and his garden, a concise biography can be found on Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia.



Roy Strong's book, "Gardens through the Ages (1420 – 1940)" includes his own design for a mid-Victorian rose garden which he based on one of Kemp's designs and shows how the roses would have been supported as festoons along the paths.

100 years of Chelsea

1913

Queen Alexandra visited the gardens during the morning, and many well-known people from the world of fashion were there both in the morning and afternoon. In spite of the rather cool weather, the flimsiest and most summer-like garments were worn, and the multi-coloured hats, daring both in size and shape, proved almost as attractive as the heaped-up orchids and roses. It is perhaps worth noting in passing that the silk hat is now practically discarded by men with any pretension to fashion. It is only the business man from the provinces who is courageous enough to affect this out-of-date headgear. The rockery gardens proved the most attractive spot of the show. Hundreds of ladies walked up the narrow pathways bordering the miniature waterfall and brook that have been artificially made for the occasion, though there was but scanty room for them to pass each other...

In the great tent there are 84 large groups of flowers, plants and shrubs, besides 95 exhibits arranged on tables. In numerical strength the exhibits almost number those of the International Show, but the quality, generally speaking, is higher. The display of orchids is remarkable for the beauty and perfection of the exhibits. The orchids sent by one firm alone are valued at £10,000, the price of a single flower being put in one case at £500. The orchids are much larger and finer than those at the International Show. Roses and carnations are also an unusually brilliant contribution to the show, which on the floral side is a splendid spectacle. There are a number of novelties in the exhibition.

(Manchester Courier, 21 May, 1913)

In 1913 the Royal Horticultural Society moved its spring show from the Temple Gardens to the Royal Hospital at Chelsea – and an iconic event was born.

Watching some of the seemingly interminable, extremely repetitive and deeply unsatisfying coverage on television this year, I wondered how the event had been reported by that old-fashioned medium, the newspaper.

The British Newspaper Archive currently has only a few twentieth century titles in its online database and even fewer that date beyond 1920, so the information gleaned from it provides a somewhat limited view. Few reports gave more than a modicum of information. Even on the radio, coverage of Chelsea eighty years ago was easily missed, though it did increase from five minutes in 1930 to twenty minutes in 1934.

The impact of national and international events can also be found. In 1926 the show was postponed for a week because of the General Strike and the report highlights the divisions in society, reporting on plants such as orchids which would have been beyond the means of most of the population. See the report above from 1913 to find out just how expensive these wonderful plants then were. By 1933 prices were coming down:

“One of the salesmen said “Orchids are becoming a middle-class flower. We have some at £30, but others can be bought for £2 2s. or even £1 1s.” (Hull Daily Mail)

The War meant that Chelsea shows were suspended for the duration. They resumed again in 1947, when the King sent a brilliant display of schizanthus and a range of vegetables:

"The King's flowers were admired, but in these days of vegetable shortages the adjoining display was positively worshipped." (Aberdeen Journal)

A ticket for this year's Chelsea cost a friend £65; in 1949 the price was ten shillings (the same price as in 1916). The difference seems vast, so I did some calculations. In 1949 in Chelmsford an experienced shorthand-typist could earn £308 per year; a twenty-one year old M & S assistant £3 10s. a week. So to pay the same proportion of their earnings for a ticket this year, the equivalent salaries would need to be £40,040 p.a. and £455 a week.

It was also interesting to see that the admission price to that year's Essex Show on the second day was five shillings – which was also the price for parking! For the gardener, a carton of Tomorite was just 1/6. On the other hand – probably due to the restrictions on growing them during the war – ten shillings would buy only six dahlias.

Throughout the years there were some common themes: royalty, fashion, weather and local winners, along with flowers and the rock gardens for which Chelsea is well known. I've chosen a few snippets from the first fifty years.

Joy Uings

1922

At Chelsea Flower Show, several men, who may or may not prove to be heralds of a new fashion, carried sunshades. They certainly had the excuse that the day was hot enough for some protection to be necessary. But sunshades! Most men would probably rather risk sunstroke.

(Dundee Courier, 26 May, 1922)

1925

"I think this is the loveliest of all" exclaimed the Queen at the Chelsea Flower Show of the Royal Horticultural Society, on Tuesday, referring to a grass garden exhibited by Mr. James Macdonald. The King laughingly acquiesced in Mr. Macdonald's suggestion that grass was the only plant that would grow throughout his Majesty's Dominions, but he added, "There is no grass like the grass you can grow at home".

(Herts Advertiser, 23 May, 1925)

1931

"I am Derbyshire bred and born, and because I love my county I am going to show Londoners a typical Derbyshire scene. Rock gardens are my speciality, and this garden is going to be an all-Derbyshire one.

"It is indeed an honour to have been allotted so big a site – it measures over 1,000 square feet. For a start, I am using all Derbyshire stone – 25 tons of Derbyshire tufa – and this is being quarried at Matlock and conveyed here by motor lorry.

"This pebble" – he indicated a mighty slab of tufa – "weighs over two tons. Tufa is the finest medium for rock gardens that I know, for plants will not only grow on it, but in it as well.

"The garden will include a waterfall and a winding stream. I have even brought up from the county sacks of moss gathered from Derbyshire hills with which to line the stream.

"We hope to have the constructional work finished by Sunday, and then we go back to Draycott to collect from my nurseries there the 5,000 rock and alpine plants which are to be planted in the rockery.

"When it is all finished, London will see as typical a bit of Derbyshire scenery as it is possible to devise."

(Derby Daily Telegraph, 5 May, 1931)

1934

MIXED group exhibits at the wonderful Chelsea Flower Show have their counterpart in the crowds that are pouring through the turnstiles. Few big events of the London season show such contrasts – the fashionable "toppers" of West End personalities mingling with ancient specimens brought up from the Country for the day.

(Hull Daily Mail, 31 May, 1934)

1936

Queen Mary, accompanied by the Duke of Kent, paid a surprise visit to the Chelsea flower show at the Royal Hospital Gardens, today. She arrived at 10.30, while workmen were busy assembling the blooms and preparing the exhibits for the official opening tomorrow. Workmen in overalls and gardeners carrying spades and forks hurriedly retreated as they saw the Royal party approaching.

(Nottingham Evening Post, 19 May, 1936)

1938

The most spectacular exhibit is a rhododendron called "Fortunei". It stands over six feet high, and has nearly 2,000 blooms. A special railway truck was required to bring it from Penrhyn. All the members of the Royal Family were taken to see this wonder plant.

(Aberdeen Journal, 25 May, 1938)

1939

Mr. A. G. Snow questioning the necessity of a recommendation of the Parks Committee that the head gardener should attend Chelsea Flower Show at the expense of the rates, said when they discussed sending delegates to conferences they were told they had to do it in the hope of getting the conferences at Ilfracombe. There was no hope of getting Chelsea Flower Show to Ilfracombe.

Mr. Reed, chairman of the committee, considered it money well spent, and said through last year's visit the head gardener was able to obtain a certain plant, of which at the time only two other Corporations had specimens.

Mr. Snow's amendment to delete the recommendation was defeated, and the committee report adopted.

(North Devon Journal, 4 May, 1939)

Private View Day at Chelsea Flower Show was, in effect, an exhibition of the triumph of mind over mud.

Royalty and others stepped heroically through lanes of mud, stockings were splashed, trouser turns-up coated with mud, and the occasion was a happy one merely for the "moisture-loving plants" on exhibition.

(Gloucestershire Echo, 17 May, 1939)

1949

This house and garden, with its kitchen garden at the side, is sponsored by the Women's Voluntary Service to show what can be done through its Garden Gift Scheme.

The Dowager Marchioness of Reading, head of the W.V.S., told the Queen of the growth of the scheme, under which garden-lovers send their surplus plants and seeds to the W.V.S., which distributes them to pre-fab tenants and others.

(Gloucestershire Echo, 24 May, 1949)

TWO large marquees were filled with every imaginable type of flower from the hairiest and most opulent cactus to the largest White Delphinium, one of this year's speciality exhibits. Here I had a chance, when not being pushed violently into beds and bowls of flowers to take a look at the crowd.

Of colour, worn by women, the most popular was grey. This is, of course, one of the most fashionable of colours in the Spring collections. The most charming was a long coat, swing back, worn by a tall fair girl. The coat was grey, but as contrast she wore a tiny Dutch style bonnet in Primrose yellow. This was stabbed-stitched around the edges which gave it an expensive look. To match in the same material, she carried a bag of the type made popular by Princess Margaret. It was a pouch bag: Very simple, with a double wrist handle. Her shoes were lemon yellow too...

I was gazing at a mass of Azaleas, somewhat overawed by them. They were very beautiful, and among them was a particularly brilliant variety.

Suddenly, as if propelled by some unknown power, one of them started moving along, passed the stand, and down towards a vegetable stand. There it hovered and stopped.

This was no ordinary Azalea, I felt. I must get nearer and put on my glasses. Well, it wasn't an Azalea – it was a Bird of Paradise, and it was dead. This flame bird perched solemnly and unashamedly on the top of a grey hat.

The wearer was an elderly woman, dressed in a very beautiful grey ensemble, topped by sables. But that bird – with a wing span of at least sixteen inches – would have been happier bringing joy to some younger face.

(Chelmsford Chronicle, 27 May, 1949)

1954

Mrs. G. Lewis of Singapore is proud of her orchids, so proud that she flew them to London to show them at the Chelsea Flower Show (May 26th, 27th and 28th). Frozen flowers from Australia have been exhibited at previous Chelsea shows but this will be the first time that live flowers have come such a great distance to go on the stands.

The flying distance from Singapore to London is 7,921 miles, the single fare between £177 and £221 (£318 12s - £397 16s. return). The journey takes between two and three days. (West London Observer, 28 May, 1954)

BeWILDerwood in Tatton Park - will it happen?

Well at the moment we don't know, but we have done our best to argue against placing a theme park in one of the most intact and special parks in the country, one included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens as Grade II*.



Tatton Park: looking towards area of proposed Bewilderwood development across mere.

With assistance from colleagues, Ruth Benson (now working in North Yorkshire), penned an excellent letter on behalf of Cheshire Gardens Trust citing many forceful planning reasons why the development should not be permitted and we wait to hear the outcome.

Bewilderwood is perhaps the most important case in Cheshire where we have made representations, but as

You can look at the planning application for BeWILDerwood at Tatton, ref 12/1166M and the comments at <http://planning.cheshireeast.gov.uk/applicationdetails.aspx?pr=12/1166M&query=bc7a8f74-e8f3-41db-b181-ff06c34d631d>.

If you would like to look at planning applications, for Cheshire West and Chester go to:

<http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=8565>, where it is possible to search for applications on a map.

For applications in Cheshire East go to:

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning/view_a_planning_application.aspx

members are probably well aware, the current profusion of planning applications is stretching local authorities and testing groups like us who comment on them.

As a Trust, our remit is to consider those planning applications that affect designed landscapes or the designed settings of listed buildings; for example housing development in historic gardens, car parking in parkland or the wholesale redevelopment of a historic hospital site.

Research and recorders are doing a great job on a range of sites and their completed reports are proving invaluable in informing planners and heritage officers who have to make recommendations but we are still concerned that much is passing us by.

In order to contribute to consultations we have to know where development is proposed. At the moment our small group of volunteers don't have the capacity to trawl all the planning lists or the local knowledge necessary to make informed comment.

So please, if you are concerned about a proposal in your area that falls within our remit, or you think it may do, please bring the application to our attention. Then with your local knowledge we can decide what, if any, response is appropriate from Cheshire Gardens Trust.

Barbara Moth

Badgers and Strulch

Strulch is a garden mulch made in West Yorkshire from wheat straw to which calcium, magnesium, iron and organic acid preservative have been added. The latter gives it a characteristic but not unpleasant smell.

Jacquetta Menzies, who has the badgers of Bollington crossing her garden with great regularity, has recently spread Strulch on her flower borders. She has made an interesting observation – the badgers no longer dig her borders but have persisted in scratching holes in the lawn. Her neighbour, who has applied Strulch to some of her borders, has noticed that the Strulched

areas are no longer being dug whereas the un-Strulched areas are still attracting the badgers. This is happening even though the earthworm activity increases under the mulch. Is it the smell of the preservative which they dislike?

What happens if Strulch minus the preservative is spread? Or the preservative is sprayed directly on to the soil? Will the badgers resume digging once the smell has worn off? Do other mulches produce a similar response? It looks as though there is scope for further investigation.

Ruth Brown

Strulch is marketed as being a slug and snail deterrent (and I have to admit I seem to have been bothered less by these pests since using Strulch). Have you used Strulch and noticed its effect on the wild life? Why not let us know. And if you've not used it but wonder if it would be effective, why not conduct your own experiment? Strulch can be obtained from a number of on-line suppliers, but why not go direct to www.strulch.co.uk?

Talking About Caldwell's

Over the coming months, you may well have the opportunity to attend a talk or exhibition on Caldwell's Nurseries courtesy of the Heritage Lottery Fund which recently granted an award to CGT.

The grant will enable the Trust to set up a website, enlarge the exhibition, prepare a book and present more talks about the history of Caldwell's.

Although I had picked up snippets about this research over the past year, I decided I should learn more about it so took the opportunity to attend 2 talks.

One was given by Joy Uings at the AGM of the Cheshire Local History Association, hosted by CGT, and the other by Barbara Moth at Knutsford Library. The latter was the first public talk given by CGT on Caldwell's.

There are many ways to approach a talk, depending on

the audience. It may be from an account of the firm's history, or looked at from a social and economic history. Perhaps the types of plants supplied are of particular interest.

Maybe there are people interested in the way the ledgers are being transcribed and the data added to a website. Many people still have memories of Caldwell's and these are being collected and recorded. Possibly you know of someone who may like to add to these.

So, if you are a member of a local history group, gardening group, WI group, etc, etc, and think they may be interested in hearing about some aspect of Caldwell's, why not contact Joy or Barbara to find out more? It is a fascinating part of Cheshire's history.

Julia Whitfield

You are invited to a Caldwell 'Tea and Cake' event

Progress continues to be made on our project 'Sharing the Heritage of Caldwell's Nurseries'. The website is now in preparation.

For a sneak preview – or just to find out more about what is happening with this project – why not join the Caldwell volunteers on Monday 2 September at Marthall Village Hall, Sandlebridge Lane, Marthall, Knutsford, WA16 7SB (2-4 p.m.).

Everyone is welcome, but – to make sure there is enough tea and cake to go round – you must let us know you are coming. So RSVP to Janet Horne by Friday 30 August: tel: 01625 523013 or e-mail: janet_horne@btinternet.com.

Capability Brown Tercentenary

Lancelot (Capability) Brown was born in 1716, so we are not far from the time when we can celebrate his tercentenary. A national steering group has been established to co-ordinate the festivities.

Cheshire is short on Brownian landscapes, but if you have any ideas for how Cheshire might engage with this anniversary, do let us know. Meanwhile, I have been gathering a few bits of information about Brown which I will scatter through the next few issues of the newsletter. I start with the notification of his death, 230 years ago this year, which gives an insight into his standing in society.

"Thursday morning, Feb. 6, 1783, about nine o'clock, died Lancelot Brown, Esq. of Hampton-Court, aged 67. His death was probably occasioned by a violent blow he received falling in a fit in the street, as he was returning from a visit at Lord Coventry's house in Piccadilly to the house of his son in law in Hertford-street. For above thirty years he had laboured under a very troublesome asthma, and though he bore it with an uncommon degree of fortitude and good spirits, yet at times, it reduced his life to alarming

situations, and had lately prevailed so as to make him consider himself as drawing near that period, which he believed (with great strength of mind and resignation) as the price of a future state of perfect happiness. His great and fine genius stood unrivalled, and it was the peculiar felicity of it that it was allowed by all ranks and degrees of society in this country, and by many noble and great personages in other countries. Those who knew him best, or practised near him, were not able to determine whether the quickness of his eye, or its correctness, were most to be admired. It was comprehensive and elegant, and perhaps it may be said never to have failed him. Such, however, was the effect of his genius, that when he was the happiest man, he will be least remembered, so closely did he copy nature, that his works will be mistaken. His truth, his integrity, and his good humour, were very effectual, and will hold a place in the memory of his friends, more likely to continue, though not less to be esteemed."

(Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser,

8 February, 1783).

Transforming London's Landscapes from Abercrombie to the Olympics

This year's Association of Gardens Trusts Conference (with the above title) is being hosted by the London Parks and Gardens Trust. It will be held at Queen Mary College in London's East End from 6-8 September and will include lectures on 'Abercrombie, the Festival of Britain and the Lansbury Estate', and 'The planning, design and planting of the Olympic Park'. Visits include the Mile End Park, Thames Barrier Park and Canary Wharf open spaces and, on the Sunday, the Olympic Park.

Full details, together with costs for all or part of the conference, and a booking form can be found on www.gardenstrusts.org.uk/docs/AGT2013Conference.pdf.

Rhododendron Seminar

The Harlow Carr Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group is holding a seminar on 'How to Succeed with Rhododendron Species in Northern Gardens' on Saturday 10th August at RHS Garden, Harlow Carr, Harrogate. See www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr/what-s-on; for a full programme and booking form telephone 0161 764 1116 or e-mail: hammondsrhodies@supanet.com.

Walled Kitchen Gardens Network 2013 Forum

The Walled Kitchen Gardens Network is an informal group of national organisations and individual experts. Their aim is to offer help and support to owners, enthusiasts and professionals who want to restore or find new roles for surviving gardens.

The Network is holding its forum for the current year at Attingham Park, near Shrewsbury in Shropshire on 5 October. This is a one day event and the cost of £60 includes lunch and tour of the gardens. Attingham Park is a National Trust property currently in its 5th year of a major restoration. There are two walled areas. The larger one has three of its quarters in cultivation and the smaller one has three restored glasshouses in full production.

See www.walledgardens.net for more information about the network. Bookings should be sent, with a cheque payable to The Walled Kitchen Gardens Network, to Anne Richards, WKGN, 5 The Knoll, Hereford HR1 1RU. There is a £20 reduction for students and community groups, but students must say which university or college they attend and representatives of community groups must say which group they belong to.

For more information on the Network you can contact them on events@walledgardens.net.

If you don't want to try Strulch to keep your slugs and snails at bay (see page 14), why not try this tip from the first volume of the *Florist and Pomologist* (1848).

SLUG TRAP

MANY of your young *Florist* friends are doubtless much annoyed by slugs; let me recommend them a neat, sightly, and most attractive trap—one which I have used myself most successfully.

Take a piece of slate—say six inches square—smooth the ground, and place it flat; on this put a small quantity of bran, and two small stones to rest an upper piece of slate on, and to leave room for the slugs to get between the two pieces. Some will get on the bran, and others lie under the lower slate, both on the ground and attached to the slate itself.

The slugs come at all hours of the day. The trap does not require baiting again oftener than once a month, if you are careful.

I have placed three or four traps round my *Ranunculus* bed, and I believe I have hardly had one favourite injured.

M. D. P.

Copy date for October newsletter is 30 September

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS, tel: 0161 969 3300 or e-mail joy.uings@btconnect.com.