



CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST

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

Issue No. 44

October 2014

Newsletter

www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

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- ✦ Continuity and Change – the AGT Conference
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- ✦ Exciting new learning opportunities

Some future events:

- ✦ Restorations and renovations in the gardens at Quarry Bank, Styal – 10.30 a.m. Saturday 15 Nov
- ✦ William Roscoe and the first Liverpool Botanic Garden – 10.30 a.m. Saturday 17 January
- ✦ Snowdrop Talk and Walk at Rode Hall – 12 noon Wednesday 11 February



“When Elizabeth Gaskell first mentioned Capesthorpe, in a letter dated 12th May 1836, she had lunched there and found it *‘such a beautiful place – not the house which is rather shabby but the views from the park’*. However, a year later, Davies Davenport who was MP for Cheshire, died and his son set about remodelling the house to the plans made by Edward Blore ...

“The large conservatory, at Capesthorpe, that linked the house to the chapel was built about 1845 by

Joseph Paxton, some years before his Crystal Palace of 1851. Elizabeth enjoyed a visit there one Sunday, when children *‘...came into the beautiful conservatory to be taught, and are clean wholesome country-looking children in the midst of camellias & sweet scented geraniums – the chapel through the conservatory a parlour with low luxurious sofas, a fire place – how easy it seems to be good compared with a long wet tramp down to a close school-room, full of half-washed children – that’s very*

wicked is it not?' After dinner children and a choir sang 'In a green bower'.

Elizabeth must have greatly admired Capesthorne's gardens for she wrote to Lady Kay Shuttleworth in June 1851:

'Is Mrs Davenport with you? If she is I have a request which I should like to make to her, if the granting it will not be against her rules: we have a gardener, for whom we [have] a great respect, as he does a great deal of good amongst the poor etc. I find he has a great wish to see the gardens at Capesthorne, and I should be glad to know if this is ever permitted'. (From Visit Cheshire)

Very fortunately nowadays visiting is not only permitted but encouraged. After our extensive tour of the house and chapel, we were handed over to head gardener Peter Phillips and his assistant Don.



"Capesthorne Hall I" by Edward Blore - de Figueiredo, Peter; Treuherz, Julian *Cheshire Country Houses* (1988). This view from the north shows the impressive size of Paxton's conservatory.

Of Paxton's great conservatory (see above) the only visible remains are the entrance to the service tunnel which would have seen the delivery of many barrows of coal to fire the boilers warming such a large glasshouse. There are large yews on either side of the chapel, the final one leaning over to hide this relic.

Opposite we admired a lovely pair of rococo gates. Dating from 1750, they were brought from another property, Wootton Hall in Derbyshire, in the mid nineteenth century.

However, the delights of the flower borders were yet to come and we were led down the Lime Walk towards the Arboretum. Individual lime trees were donated by friends of the Bromley-Davenports and planted when the garden was first opened to the public in 1952. There are plaques at the base of each tree to record this generosity.

The Arboretum has been the focus of much clearance work. Once the brambles were gone, bluebells and other woodland plants have begun to thrive. A complete survey of the trees has been carried out by the Lowther Estate, and the family is ensuring that any felled trees are replaced.

The forest trees are Wellingtonia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*), sweet chestnuts and oaks, which are 250 years old.

New species which are to be introduced include American white oaks (*Quercus alba*) and Japanese white cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*).

In 2000 a collection of maples was planted. Smaller additions include the wedding-cake tree (*Cornus controversa* 'Variegata').

The Arboretum looks at its best in Spring with the bluebells and an extensive rhododendron collection. This is being improved and augmented.

The eyecatcher amongst the enormous trees is the 'Millenium Dome', a little folly made from the Chapel bell, set on legs (below).



The Ice House was built to collect ice from the lake during cold spells, to be used in the kitchens. It forms a deep brick built cylinder but is in good repair and Peter Phillips told us that they were hoping to lay on lighting so it will be possible to see the structure.

This was the site of the estate mill, and the mill race can be heard tumbling down a stone cascade.

We turned away from Mill Wood and followed a deeply shaded path which opened up to a lovely view of the elegant bridge across the Middle Lake. Sadly, this summer there have been problems with algal growth, mostly due to excess nitrate run-off from farmland. Two swans have died.

The yellow native water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) was doing its best to flower. We saw the impressive swallow hole (see below) through which water drops 20 feet from the middle lake to the lower pool and cascade.



We then came into the flower gardens, past the former peach cases. These were lost during the war, when a stray bomb landed in the fields and shattered

all the glass. The foundations of the walls were discovered when a previous rose garden was being taken out. The line was marked with dwarf walls, forming a terrace walk with seats.

The focus of this area is a gazebo, made in 2007 by the local Siddington blacksmith.



The borders on either side of the gazebo walk were designed by Lady Bromley-Davenport and form an ideal wedding photo venue. Dominated by the *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', there is a bridal (white) theme, with multi-stemmed Himalayan birches and the wedding cake tree.

On the lawn, a line of Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) will, by now, be giving vivid autumn colour. The *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Brilliantissimum' were suffering from scorch after the hot weather. An old weeping ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* 'Pendula') marks the corner. The borders at right angles to the gazebo walk were designed by Vernon Russell-Smith in the 1960s. The smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria*) and silver leaved pear (*Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula') are predominant.

The gardeners have worked extremely hard. There are only three of them to cover 60 acres. They have toiled to rid the borders of bindweed: by completely digging out and then pouncing on every little tendril, they have finally eradicated the bulk of this menace.

We had hardly begun to explore those 60 acres, but it was time for tea, so we gathered at the Butler's Pantry, where we feasted on a seasonal treat of scones, cream and strawberries.

There are lovely walks around the estate – to the site of the former Hall near the entrance drive (with signs of a deserted medieval village still visible); along the south side of the middle lake and over the bridge. There is more to discover beyond the Arboretum through the Mill Wood, which gives a view of the house from beyond the ha-ha.

It is well worth a further visit. Capesthorpe is open on Sundays and Mondays from March to October.



A Capesthorpe container

Jacquetta Menzies

You can read more about Capesthorpe at <http://www.visitcheshire.com/dbimgs/Capesthorpe-screen.pdf>

Capesthorpe and the Caldwell Connection

Davies Davenport lived from 1757 to 1837 and he was a customer of the nurseries at Knutsford in the 1790s. Most of his orders were for seeds and plants for his kitchen garden. Then in 1792 he purchased a number of trees – 200 Scotch Fir, 80 Black Poplar, 20 Norway Spruce and 10 each America Black Fir and America White Fir. Two years later he bought 24 Weeping Willows.

In the Spring of 1793 he also bought a number of different flowers – 68 tender and hardy annuals (probably as seed), then 3 sorts each of larkspur, sweet peas and convolvulus (was that the source of the bindweed problem?), one each of a Flos Adonis, Wing Pansy and Lobel's Catchfly. The following Autumn he purchased 100 different Crocus – 25 sulphur and yellow (striped with black), 25 Violet and White, 25 Striped Blue and 25 Autumn Crocus. Six days later he purchased 31 shillings-worth of four sorts of roses, five of honeysuckles, plus 4 double lily of the valley.

Less likely than the trees to have survived for 220 years, perhaps their offspring are still to be found ...

Elizabeth Gaskell

Some members will have attended Ann Brooks' talk at Elizabeth Gaskell House when it was still in its dilapidated state. You may have seen on the local TV news that the renovation work has been completed. The transformation of this famous novelist's home is startling. The House is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admittance is £4.95 (£3.95 concessions). For more information, including volunteering opportunities, see www.elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk.

The East Garden, Arley Hall

On the 8th July, CGT members gathered at Arley to view a garden not often open to the public. Our host, Jane Foster, gave us a brief history of this area of the gardens before we wandered around at leisure. This report is taken from Jane's printed History, of which we all received a copy.

As far as is known the earliest substantial ornamental garden made at Arley Hall was on the east side of the house.

The Estate Plan of 1744 shows what looks like rows of vegetables growing on the south side (in what is now the Park). Adjacent to the northwest corner of the Hall 'The Brick Garden', a small area enclosed with a brick wall, had direct access from the Saloon on the ground floor. The moat, which had originally enclosed the Hall, remained on the west, south and east sides of the house.

There is no evidence on the plan of any horticultural activity on the east side of the house, but by the time the 1786 plan was made things had changed. The extensive walled kitchen gardens, still to be found, had been built, although rows of what look like vegetables could still be found to the south-west of the house.

But on the east side, was an area clearly designed to be ornamental – today part is the East Garden and part is the Grove – and looks to have been designed in the very latest style. A number of irregularly shaped and unevenly sized beds were interspersed by wandering paths. Many trees had been planted, both amongst the beds and around the perimeter. This was undoubtedly a 'natural' 18th century garden overlooking the elegantly landscaped park which abutted it on the south-east side.

The changes were the result of a change of ownership. Sir Peter Warburton, the nephew of the previous owner, had lived at Arley since he was 20. In 1744, aged 34, he not only inherited the estate, but also married Lady Elizabeth Stanley, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Derby. They were young, energetic and lucky enough to have a large income.

So they set about improving very many things on the estate, including the house and its immediate surroundings. They employed the well-known landscape gardener William Emes who worked in the style of 'Capability' Brown, creating beautifully landscaped parks and so-called 'natural' gardens.

Their son, another Sir Peter continued these improvements, although he spent much of his time on the South Coast. He was an active member of the Militia, and following the French Revolution was stationed there as the Napoleonic Wars gave rise to fears of an invasion. After the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 he returned to Arley, but, by then middle-aged, he perhaps no longer had the energy to plan further improvements.

After his death in 1813, the estate was inherited by his great-nephew, Rowland Egerton-Warburton who was still a child, aged nine. Rowland's father took over management of the Estate, but had little income

available for further improvements, as Sir Peter had left large sums to his widow and two sisters.

The three old ladies lived until the late 1830s and it was only then that Rowland, by then grown up and married to Mary Brooke, was able to start making improvements to his inheritance.

The most urgent need was to rebuild the Hall which was in poor condition, so it was not until 1845 that they began work on the gardens. Their inheritance included land to the west and south-west of the house where there were extensive 18th century walls. These provided essential protection from the north-Cheshire winds, so were ideal for the extensive ornamental gardens which lie beside and beyond the kitchen gardens.

Rowland and Mary were both interested and skilled in art and design, so without any professional assistance designed and created the Ilex Avenue and the Rootery and transformed the Alcove Walk into the famous Herbaceous Border.

For the imposing East front of the house, they decided to replace the William Emes' creation with a fashionable formal parterre. For this, they employed W. A. Nesfield. (At the same time, Nesfield's brother-in-law, Anthony Salvin, designed the Chapel.)

Nesfield provided a very elaborate plan of a large sunken, level, parterre of formal beds with topiary and urns set in gravel paths, all enclosed by an elegant stone balustrade which, on the east and south sides was built on a retaining wall as the level of the park just there is much lower. The design of the central pond was based on that of one in the Vatican, and a 'Garden Door' in the corner opposite the Chapel (still in existence) provided direct access from the house.

This labour-intensive parterre lasted until the beginning of World War II, when the Hall was put into use, first as an evacuation home for children and then as a hospital for wounded soldiers. It was felt that the garden would provide a useful recreation area. The beds and paths were ploughed up and the whole area sown with grass – only the balustrading and the stonework surrounding the central pond remained. In the 1960s even that was lost, the stonework recycled into the pond in the present Walled Garden. That decade also saw the demolition of the part of Arley Hall which overlooked the East Garden.

Between 1987 and 1990 the Courtyard houses at the back of Arley Hall were built and the East House was constructed on the site of the old Dining Room, linking the Chapel once more to the Hall. The area immediately in front was provided as the private garden of this house. It is now looked after by Tess Holmes who lives in the East House. The clipped

yews beside the Chapel are all that remain of the formal parterre.

Then in 1992, Lord Ashbrook's sister, Jane, moved into the East Wing Flat at Arley, with her husband Charles Foster. Jane arranged with her brother that she should create a garden on the East side of the house. At that time the whole area was empty except for the large Ilex tree in the north-east corner and the group of rhododendrons nearby. Planting started in 1992.

Most of the trees now to be seen, including *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Hippophae rhamnoides*, all the clipped yews, *Zelkova serrata*, *Elaeagnus angustifolia* and the avenue of *Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia' leading away from the Drawing Room window, date from that year. A year or two later the brick paths were laid by Charles Foster (4,500 bricks in all) and the first shrub roses were planted.

The circular herbaceous borders were started in 1994 – it was the late Lady Ashbrook who suggested that the borders should be circular. The summer house inside the circle was designed by Harry Graham and built from green Arley oak in 1994. The four *Malus* 'Everest' were planted in 2004.

The yew topiary is clipped and the large grass areas are mown by the Arley garden staff, but Charles mows the circle and the fiddly bits of lawn around the edges of the garden while Jane looks after the flower-beds.



Beyond the stone urn, part of the balustrading



Looking back to the house from behind one of the circular borders



Above and below, the borders burst with perennial plants



Association of Gardens Trusts Annual Conference: 5-7 September 2014 Continuity and Change in Cheshire Gardens

The Cheshire Gardens Trust was honoured to host the AGT conference for 2014. Fortunately late summer sun showed West Cheshire and the Wirral at its best and the quirky decor of the Queen Hotel, Chester provided amusing and comfortable accommodation.

Those of us not attending the AGM on Friday afternoon walked to the newly restored Grosvenor Park, past some of John Douglas's town architecture and his Grosvenor Park Lodge. The second Marquess of Grosvenor, the park's benefactor, was one of Douglas's principal clients and we were to see more of this underrated architect's work in our travels through the Cheshire countryside.

The Marquess himself forms the centrepiece of the

park in the form of a large statue erected by his tenants in 1869. Our talk on the park by Denise Snelson who is in charge of "The Environment" for Cheshire West and Chester, which seems to include public parks, told us in detail about the mechanics of the recent HLF lottery bid and the restoration, and the public consultation that is now a vital part of such enterprises.

Fortunately we had Barbara Moth with us and her essay on the history of the park (created by Edward Kemp, Paxton's protégé) is in the excellent conference booklet edited by Moira Stevenson.

That evening Ed Bennis gave us his thoughts on Cheshire gardens and the theme of the management of public and private gardens started to emerge. The

highlight for some was a spin round the motor racing track in Oulton Park. This video demonstrated an unusual form of preservation and an alternative view of a historic landscape.

An early start on Saturday for Port Sunlight heralded a full day. Michael Shippobottom told us about William Hesketh Lever from Bolton, the founder of Lever Bros and architect manqué who founded the planned village with its Art Gallery and War Memorial. This was only one of many of his projects which often involved Thomas Mawson. We were not surprised to hear that eventually he died effectively of overwork.

Lionel Bolland (Chief Executive of the Port Sunlight Village Trust) explained the management of the village and its landscape during the transition from Lever Bros to a trust. Then it was off to one of Lever's homes, nearby Thornton Manor (Lever was able to ride from here down a designed route to the soapworks).



Barbara Moth introducing Thornton Manor Gardens to delegates

Altering the existing house several times Lever designed the grounds with Mawson one morning before breakfast. It incorporated his characteristic straight walks (for thinking), raised terraces and a lake for boating and swims.



Boating on the lake is still available

Thornton Manor is now owned by Phillip Cowan who runs it as a very fine Wedding venue able to cater for up to four weddings at a time by the use of beautifully sited marquees. The gardens are not highly maintained as yet, but will be as finance allows. We were guided by Barbara Moth, Peter de Figueiredo, Michael Shippobottom and Maria Luczak.

Our final visit of the day was to Burton Manor, another Mawson design, also on the Wirral. The house eventually became an Adult Education College

which closed in 2011. Prior to the closure the HLF had funded the restoration of the walled garden and a Foster and Pearson glasshouse.



Inside the restored glasshouse at Burton Manor

The garden is not large and is now run by volunteers but at one time there were 18 gardeners four of whom worked in the greenhouses.



The walled garden at Burton Manor

Burton Manor's future is uncertain but a Conservation Plan has been drawn up. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers showed us round. I hope they did not hear the disobliging remarks by two of our Southern visitors.

Back to the Queen Hotel, and after a convivial dinner we heard informal talks from our Chairman, Barry Grain of Cholmondeley and our Patron Lord Ashbrook and Sam Youd who discussed the relationships of private owners and head gardeners today which seem to be remarkably serene.



The name may not have been right, but this touch by the hotel catering staff was much appreciated

On Sunday morning our drive through the sunshine passed Beeston and Peckforton castles which had featured in Ed's talk on our first evening.



Cholmondeley (above) was looking particularly good and we heard from Barry and his team how the Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley has created the present garden in the decades since coming as a bride in 1950. She still gardens every day.

There has been some effective renewal since Barry took over, a reminder that no garden stands still. We were surprised to learn that the garden only gets 18,000 visitors a year and diverted to hear that most of Waitrose's organic milk is supplied by the estate.



The Temple Garden at Cholmondeley was hugely admired

At this point the hitherto seamless arrangements started to go awry.

An accident on the A49 and evasive action meant that two coaches got stuck in a typically leafy Cheshire lane necessitating much skilled backing until a kindly farmer opened his gate to allow us to turn round.

Arriving an hour late at Arley, Lord Ashcroft led us on a tour of the celebrated herbaceous borders until called away to help a visitor who had fallen over the wall of the ha ha. Such are the hazards of opening to the public...

However Arley was looking good and there was the bonus of a plant fair.

The day ended with tea and cake and a talk by head gardener, Gordon Baillie, a Scotsman who had previously worked for owners for whom money was no object.

He rather enjoyed the contrasting make do and mend of a traditional private estate, not that such an economical approach shows in the immaculate horticulture at Arley.

So finished a most successful and enjoyable conference.

We were given much to think about regarding the contrasting management styles of gardens in the twenty-first Century.

Our thanks are due to the many hard working organisers and our welcoming garden hosts.

Susan Bourne

Huge thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make the Conference such a great success. You really showed them what Cheshire can do!

Copies of the Conference Book, with information about all the places visited are available, price £10. These are available from Jane Gooch (janegardendesign@aol.com or 01663 765773).

Proposed Merger between GHS and AGT

The proposed merger between the Garden History Society and the Association of Gardens Trusts, which was explained in the last issue of the newsletter, was a major item on the Agenda of the AGT AGM, which was held on the Friday afternoon of the Conference weekend.

Cheshire Gardens Trust had put forward the motion "This meeting requires that a decision on merging GHS and AGT be postponed until such time as adequate financial and business planning for a merged organisation is available."

Having put the AGT point of view, the Chair attempted to put the motions to the floor without any discussion at all. This was objected to by some members, but a full discussion was not possible. Cheshire's motion received support from many County Trusts, but not in sufficient numbers to be passed.

The AGT's own motion to move forward with the merger was then passed, though by no means unanimously.

The concerns of Cheshire – and of other County Trusts – were, they said, taken on board. Whether these are actually addressed is another matter.

The issues are:

- Will the Memorandum and Articles be adequate to meet the needs of members from two very disparate organisations;
- Will the Business Plan (which we are assured will be forthcoming) adequately address the funding issues facing the two organisations;
- How will the proposed new organisation actually deliver on its promised programme without any new money?

We await further developments.

M is for Mount

“A mount is an artificial hill within a garden, made in European gardens, especially in Britain, from the 14th century up to about 1720.”¹

Some authorities think mounts originated from sacred hill constructions in the Middle East, such as the hanging gardens of Babylon. English mounts, though, seem to have been created to provide elevated viewpoints from which to look over the surrounding countryside. In Medieval times raised walkways were used to give a good view of the intricate layout of knot gardens, but by the seventeenth century high grounds were being used rather differently.

John Evelyn (1620-1706) spent many years writing his *Elysium Britannicum*. It was only published (complete with all his corrections) some three hundred years after his death. He described Mounts as:

“... the highest and most aspiring Relievos of Gardens, whether raised by Art or Nature, and would best be situated towards the remoter parts, as from whence to take a universal prospect not only of the Gardens, but of the whole Country... Mounts then cannot be too high: As for the shape whether round square or bicepitous ... let the gardener please his fancy:”

They were “to be ascended by a winding circle or spiral passage of two yards broad, and with a moderate acclivity; of which sort we remember to have seen one in the gardens belonging to the right honourable the Lord Seymour near the town of Marlborough, which is said to be a mile from the foot to the summit: where the area would be flat and sufficiently spacious either for a small Coronarie Garden and a Speculatory Tower built fortress-like with battlementsor else a peruke of trees be planted, such as are the pine, fir and other perennial greens, lovers of proud and lofty situations:

“But there is incredible pains and cost required for the raising of the eminencies and therefore not to be rashly undertaken; but where there is much rubbish and earth to be furnished from other places, either for the sinking of wells, ponds, hollowing of grottos and caverns, and the like these works do suddenly swell, may be perfected with success and at reasonable charges...”²

An excerpt from Evelyn’s Diary dated 22 March 1652, describes the effort involved in removing a mount:

“I went with my brother Evelyn to Wotton, to give him what directions I was able about his garden, which he was now desirous to put into some form; but for which he was to remove a mountain overgrown with huge trees and thicket, with a moat within ten yards of the house. This my brother immediately attempted, and that without great cost, for more than a hundred yards south, by digging down the mountain, and flinging it into a rapid stream; it not only carried away the sand, &c., but filled up the moat, and levelled that noble area, where now the garden and fountain is.”

By the time Batty Langley (1696-1751) was writing, the style of gardening that Evelyn knew was rapidly going

out of fashion and his *New Principles of Gardening* (1728) may be thought to have rather missed the boat, as by then people like William Kent were already producing the more natural designs which would reach their apogee with ‘Capability’ Brown.

Langley’s comments may have been almost completely out of date, but they do give us more detail about what a Mount was for and how it should be used – as an eye-catcher at the far end of walks.

His descriptions explained how Mounts were created “*Earths call out of Foundations, &c. be carried to such Places for raising of Mounts, from which, fine Views may be seen*” and how they should be shaped and used:

“... *That the Slopes of Mounts, &c. be laid with a moderate Reclination, and planted with all Sorts of Ever-Greens in a promiscuous Manner, so as to grow all in a Thicket which has a prodigious fine Effect.*”

“... *That the Walks leading up the Slope of a Mount, have their Breadth contracted at the Top, full one half Part; and if that contracted Part be enclosed on the Sides with a Hedge whose Leaves are of a light Green, 'twill seemingly add a great Addition to the Length of the Walk, when view'd from the other End.*”

“... *Such Walks as must terminate within the Garden, are best finish'd with Mounts, Aviaries, Grotto's, Cascades, Rocks, Ruins, Niches, or Amphitheatres of Ever-Greens, variously mix'd, with circular Hedges ascending behind one another, which renders a very graceful Appearance.*”

But do get it right!

Langley could be quite severe about those who ornamented their gardens without any understanding. Putting statues in the right places would have shown off your real or pretended classical education. It’s interesting that people were getting it wrong, so there must have been plenty of parvenus around!

“... *There is nothing adds so much to the Beauty and Grandeur of Gardens, as fine Statues, and nothing more disagreeable, than when wrongly plac'd as Neptune on a Terrace-Walk, Mount, &c. or Pan, the God of Sheep, in a large Basin, Canal, or Fountain. But to prevent such Absurdities, take the following Directions...*”

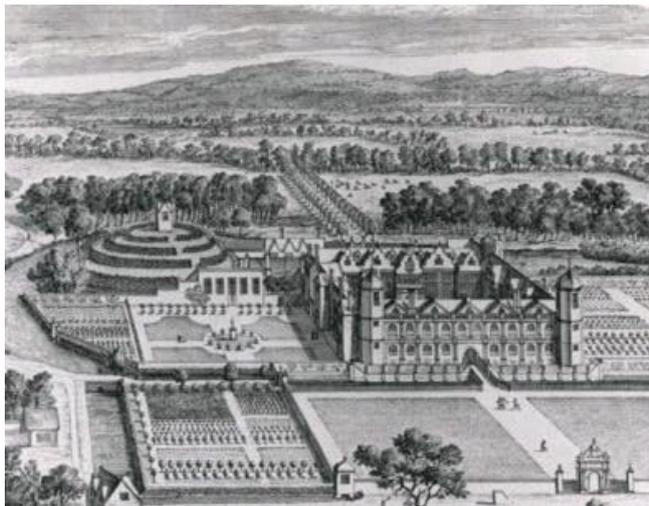
He then had a long list of which statues should be in which parts of the garden. Under the heading “*For Mounts, high Terrace-Walks, &c*”, there were two to choose from: *Æolus, God of the Winds* and *Orcedes Fairies of the Mountains*.³

Many mounts have been lost with loss of gardens and changes in garden design (as evidenced by John Evelyn’s Diary); those that remain have lost their ornamentation - the evergreen planting and statuary.

At Little Moreton Hall in Cheshire (National Trust) we have not one mount but two, situated within the moat surrounding the hall.

At Dunham Massey (National Trust) a single mount, also related to a former moat around the hall. It can be clearly seen in a *Bird's eye view of Dunham Massey*

from the south, engraved by J. Kip after Leonard Knyff, 1697 (reproduced below).



The mount appears to be a more prominent structure than it is today and to be topped by a small building or shelter. John Harris's series of paintings of Dunham Massey c.1759 also show the mount, but less dramatically, perhaps because by this time mounts were no longer fashionable.



The mount at Dunham Massey 2014 Photo by Barbara Moth

¹ Huxley, A. 1981. *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Gardening*. London: Allen Lane Penguin Books, 196

² 194/5. The Transcription of Evelyn's notes was published in 2001 by University of Pennsylvania Press. [Here the errors and crossings-out have been omitted and the spelling updated.]

³ Langley, B. 1728 *New Principles of Gardening*, Part 6, Section II *Of the Disposition of Gardens in general* paragraphs XII-XIV; XXI; XXXVII. An electronic version of the book is available at <http://books.google.co.uk/books>.

Research and recorders - out and about

This summer the research and recording group has enjoyed fine weather visiting gardens near the county boundary. The grounds of Brook House, Hankelow Court and Doe Meadow House are not included in any local listing, but all the sites have interesting histories and lie in areas under pressure from housing development. There the similarities end.

Brook House lies on the outskirts of Tattenhall, a mid-19th century villa overlooking a modest area of parkland. The property is now subdivided; the house forming two dwellings and the coach house a third residence. The house is reached via the original drive which passes through a shady treed area and curves round to present a view of the house set in open gardens, the approach suggesting Repton's influence, passing from shade into the light. The garden is graced by some beautiful mature trees including a fine beech and Wellingtonia, but easterly views towards the sandstone ridge are now screened by boundary planting.

The house had kitchen gardens, enclosed by a north wall and with a southern boundary formed by a hedge that has been removed so that the garden wraps round the house on two sides. One former kitchen garden contains the layout of a later rose garden, now put down to grass, and there are some ancient apple and pear trees which still yield flavoursome crops. The property is attractive, but as more and more such properties are lost to development, their rarity and therefore significance must surely increase.



An early photograph of the house showing recently established conifers. Courtesy of the owner



Brook House from a similar vantage point in 2014, extended on the left hand side, with the mature Wellingtonia, right of picture

Hankelow Court is a splendid late Victorian villa constructed around an earlier house, which in turn was altered and extended in the Edwardian era. The house, stables, yard and walled kitchen gardens remain in single ownership. Much of the current layout dates from the late 19th century when the garden was extended beyond the ha ha to create a sunken garden, now a tennis court, and the kitchen garden was developed as a series of gardens separated by low walls stepping down the slope.



Hankelow Court seen from the garden



Westerly views to the sandstone ridge from the upper kitchen garden



Members trying to identify the inscription on the sundial

Doe Meadow House lies within the former grounds of 17th century Langley Hall. The property underwent change in 1780 when the River Bollin was diverted and

a walled kitchen garden was created within the bend of the newly aligned river. Increasing industrialisation made Langley Hall less attractive as a gentleman's residence, so the owners sold up in 1810 and by 1837 a silk dying works had been constructed over the kitchen garden.

The present owner of the silk works has created a home in one of the buildings, a holiday cottage in another and is in the process of creating a series silk route gardens in the main dying shed. Artefacts gathered from a range of sources embellish the trail to be followed by visitors and educational groups following the silk route from China to Europe.



The former dying shed at Doe Meadow House containing the silk trail



The 'Persian garden'

The silk trail gardens are a work in progress and add to the number of 'story' gardens in Cheshire - Poulton Hall and Mellor's garden to name but two - and perhaps extending concepts of what a garden is. So: where next for the Research and Recorders?

Barbara Moth

The two Historic Landscape Project Officers at the AGT (Verena McCaig and Linden Groves) have set up online Discussion Groups on subjects of interest. As they say, the discussions will only be as good as those taking part. So if you want to find out more go to www.gardenstrusts.org.uk/hlp.html, hit the Enter button and register as a user.

Do let us know how you get on. And remember that anything of interest can be shared with the membership via this newsletter.

Wildflower plants commemorate 100 years since World War I



Northwich Town Council decided to use some community funding for wildflower planting to commemorate the centenary of World War I. The very beautiful tapestry of flowers situated in sunny area of Witton Cemetery has added “another dimension to this tranquil area” according to the Town Clerk.

The planting has provided weeks of colour and been much appreciated. Absolutely alive with bees, hoverflies and other insects, it has proved a moving commemoration to the death and sacrifice of World War I. It is hoped to repeat the planting for the next four years.

On a rare visit to the cemetery I was really moved by the beauty of the flowers and the movement of the flowers and insects.

Barbara Moth

King Canute returns to Knutsford

We are pleased to announce that King Canute has returned to Knutsford.

In 2012 he stood proudly at RHS Tatton in the Cheshire Gardens Trust Silver-medal winning Show Garden entitled *Time and Tide: Caldwell's and Canute*. The garden showcased our Project on the Caldwell Nurseries.

Next time you are passing through Knutsford, look out for him. He can be found outside the Council offices on Toft Road.

Knutsford Town Council was always keen to acquire him, but planning regulations have meant a rather long delay.

However, now he is resplendent in his new home in the town to which he gave his name.

Many thanks to Christine Wilcox-Baker, who created this splendid sculpture, for dealing with all the negotiations and ensuring that the memory of Caldwell's lives on.



A great genius, said the late Lady Maynard, does not shut a door like an ordinary man. Apply this to the little ground of Lord Godolphin, in St. James's Park: it was laid out by capability Brown, and though an object of the smallest kind, is able to exemplify his very transcendent ability.

Morning Post and Daily Advertiser 30 July, 1783

You can keep up-to-date with the plans for Capability Brown's Tercentenary in 2016 by visiting the website www.capabilitybrown.org. This shows all the places Brown is supposed to have worked (though some are more definite than others). There is a page for events another for a blog. If you would like to receive their e-newsletter, fill in your details on the Contact page and tick the box.

New initiative

In case you've forgotten, this is our 10th Anniversary year and we can look back on a very successful decade.

We have hosted two Conferences. The one-day Gardens and Tourism Conference was held at Crewe Hall in October 2007 and last month we took our turn to host the Annual AGT Conference.

We have run three 3-day Study Trips abroad – to Belgium, Germany and Portugal.

Each year, we have had a very successful Events programme.

We have held training for members – a five-week course on Garden History for Researchers has been supported by learning how to read maps, how to read old handwriting, etc. The guidance and training have been compiled into a handbook.

The Research group has uncovered previously unknown gardens. Forty-two completed reports have been lodged with the Cheshire Historic Environment Record.

We have forged links with the Cheshire Gardens Forum, Cheshire Gardens of Distinction, the Cheshire Local History Association, Reaseheath College, and others. We have contributed information to local authorities on planning issues.

We are undertaking the exciting and extensive Caldwell's Nurseries Project.

I could go on, but it is now time to look to the future. These initiatives will continue (the next study trip, this time to Sweden, is in the planning!)

As you know, we are fortunate to have a new Chairman who is young and full of new ideas. Barry Grain impressed all the delegates at the AGT Conference with his energy and enthusiasm.

Along with this newsletter you will receive a letter and a questionnaire. They are an important first step in bringing to life an Educational Strategy aimed at the young gardeners in whose hands lie the future success of Cheshire's historic Gardens.

Without the knowledge of how and why gardens have been designed in the past it is not possible to avoid making costly and perhaps permanent mistakes.

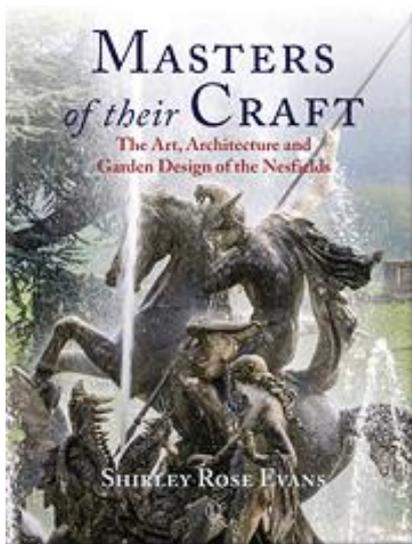
CGT members (and others) have that knowledge and understanding and Barry has the vision as to how that can be passed on to those who need to know.

You may be able to help in a small way – perhaps your garden could be the venue for one training session; maybe you have knowledge of how and when plants arrived in our gardens; perhaps you have ideas as to how this project could be carried forward.

And, of course, you may yourself wish to attend one or more of the training sessions that will be planned – with your help. Please read the letter and return the questionnaire.

Masters of their Craft –

The Art, Architecture and Garden Design of the Nesfields



This new book by Shirley Evans is an extensive biography of William Andrews Nesfield and his son William Eden Nesfield, who were responsible for the design of many Victorian gardens and buildings, several of which were in Cheshire.

The book is the result of many years of extensive research by Dr. Evans who was given exclusive access to the Nesfield family archives.

The sites in Cheshire that the Nesfields worked on include Arley Hall and estate, Crewe Hall and estate, Dorfold Hall, Eaton Hall, Rode Hall and Tabley House.

The book is published by the The Lutterworth Press and more details can be found at www.lutterworth.com.

“Shirley Rose Evans' long-awaited study of the Nesfields launches them into the limelight at last; her warm-hearted and colourful family saga of war and peace, of dutiful soldiering unleashed into passions for watercolours, decorative gardening and architecture reveals the humanity of these Victorian taste-makers.” (Jane Brown, author of *The Pursuit of Paradise*.)

Giving Tuesday, the global campaign encouraging people to give their time, money or voice to charity on one day takes place on 2 December 2014. See www.givingtuesday.org.uk/ for more information.

Copy date for January newsletter is 31 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

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