



**CHESHIRE  
GARDENS TRUST**

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# *Newsletter*

[www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)

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- ✳ Portugal visit, part two
- ✳ J is for Japanese Gardens
- ✳ Vintage horticultural tools
- ✳ Anniversaries

## **Some future events:**

- ✳ Early nurserymen of Manchester and the north-west – Saturday 22 February
- ✳ AGM and Spring Lecture on Lancelot 'Capability' Brown – Thursday 27 March
- ✳ Art in the Garden – Garden Photography Course – Saturday 26 April



On a bright October afternoon, the only one in a week of endless rain, the members and friends of CGT met at Henbury Hall, the home of Mr & Mrs Sebastian de Ferranti.

A house is recorded on the site in the Domesday Book and presumably there would have been some cultivated land at that time to grow food.

Sir Vincent de Ferranti bought the Henbury estate after the last war from the executors of the Brocklehurst family which had died out.

The present Palladian style house was built by his son Sebastian de Ferranti in 1984. It is built of French limestone from a quarry near Rheims and the architect was Julian Bicknell.

There are records of the garden being open to the public in the 1890s. It is alleged that Humphry Repton worked here when he worked in Cheshire but no records survive.

When Sir Vincent de Ferranti came here after the war the gardens were set out more or less as they are seen now but they were completely derelict. The walled garden and the peach cases were also in a very derelict state.

The two lakes were here but there had previously been a third lake which was lost in 1872. It was a 12 acre lake in the wood and was lost due to a catastrophic storm. The top two dams broke and the water cascaded out, flooding much of the area and causing great damage to land property and livestock. There were claims for reparation and the case finally went to the Upper House. Their Lordships decided it was an Act of God so no damages could be claimed. The case was *Marsland v Rex* which is both a famous and landmark case still quoted.

Sir Vincent took a keen interest in the garden and Mr Matthews from the nearby Matthews Nursery at Alderley Edge was instrumental helping Sir Vincent to bring the garden back to life.

The garden has become over-planted and congested. Many wonderful trees and shrubs have failed to flourish due to being ill-sited. The ongoing task is to 'clear the decks' discarding what is not required and re-siting/exposing those plants selected for retention. The aim is to create a simpler, more structured landscape with strong planting of specimens that are suited to the location.

The main garden is centred on a large lake, with walks leading around the water. This is a very peaceful and tranquil part of the estate with fabulous views and we enjoyed spectacular reflections of the sunshine and autumn colours on the water (see below). Surrounding the lake are several specimen shrubs and trees. Some of the steeper areas are identified as being in need of attention and will be tackled in due course.



The main features of the garden include a Gothic folly, a red octagonal Chinese summerhouse, an oriental bridge and a temple bell from Japan. This was brought from Tokyo in 1880 and installed in the garden by Mr. Thomas Unett Brocklehurst.

The Walled Kitchen Garden (see below) is a major and current project. Following years of neglect and little use, it had become a sorry state. A decision to restore the >100 year old Foster & Pearson greenhouses was taken and they are now fully operational. The plan is to use them for collections of ferns and orchids as well as a source of plants for use in the house. The walled garden is now beautifully laid out as a working vegetable and cutting garden and is nearing completion. New beds are being planted with vegetables for the forthcoming season.



Also in the garden is a swimming pool housed inside a pool house designed by Sebastian de Ferranti and built by Francis Machin.



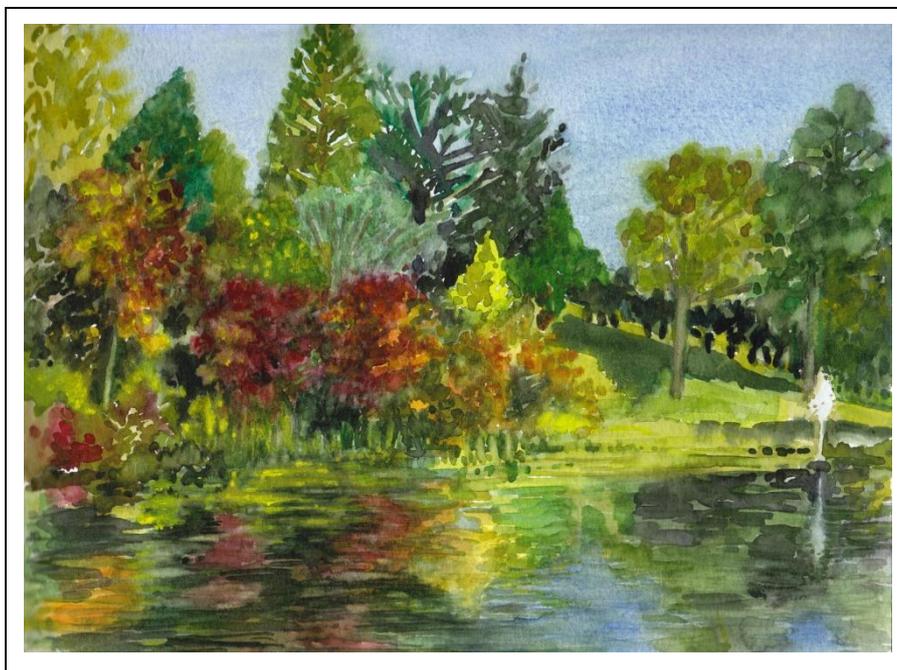
*The pool house outside (above) and inside (below)*



Nearest to the house is the Little Garden where once cows were kept. This is an enclosed area with a formal garden of box edged parterres and yew buttresses all beautifully clipped. This area has some wonderful features including a window overlooking the parkland.

A beautiful afternoon was concluded with afternoon tea in the stables, built circa. 1690.

*Mary Moxon and Gilly de Ferranti*



CGT members have such a range of skills. We certainly number two artists among our membership.

Anne Mackinnon sent me this lovely painting. She wrote:

*"I really enjoyed our visit to Henbury Hall Gardens last October and was inspired to paint from it. This is of the Autumn colours by one of the lakes."*

If you would like to see more of Anne's work, why not visit her website at

[www.annemackinnon.com](http://www.annemackinnon.com)

And why not share your own impressions with others. You can send paintings, photos, comments, or articles to the address at the end of this newsletter.

## Birtles Hall, Macclesfield

CGT members and friends (48 in total) were given an introduction to the estate by our hosts for the afternoon, Ray Sheldon and Martin Dearden.

With respect to the history of the property, we were told that the manor of Birtles originates from around 1260 when John de Asthull became Lord of the Manor.

Birtles manor was extensive and significantly larger than today due to inclusion of the land which covered much of Henbury parish. The ownership of the manor and lands subsequently passed through many different proprietors.

The current manor house was built in 1819 to replace the Old Hall but has been modified by its owners over the years and in response to damage by fire.

In 1995, the Hall was sold to developers and the current estate now includes 6 apartments in the hall, 6 cottages and 2 houses. The development was controlled by English Heritage and the estate is now Grade II listed.

The Birtles estate is currently 13 acres. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the estate was estimated to be some five

times larger. Robert Hibbert, owner of the estate 1791-1797, was an important collector of trees and plants. He was a major customer of Caldwell's of Knutsford, who supplied most of the mature trees visible in the garden today.

The gardens were once formal in design with extensive parterres. Some of the land has since been returned to agriculture and the gardens fallen into significant decline.

As part of the post 1995 development, clearance work and replanting has been undertaken by a management company created by the fourteen property owners. Although significant progress has been made, work is ongoing with many projects still in the pipeline.



The entrance forecourt to Birtles Hall is a terrace with simple flower beds and a balustrade that defines the space. The views overlook the parkland and the croquet lawn (original tennis court) with its pavilion circa 1938.



A serpentine path leads to the long walk beside a rill. A small stream, Bag-brook, flows through the gardens. It has been straightened in part to form the shallow rill incorporating three cascades. The walk leads west through woodland including mature beech trees of considerable girth.



To one side of the path and beside the rill, is the cherry orchard planted in 1970 with trees supplied by Hilliers nursery. The walk continues towards the Japanese Garden which was uncovered during the recent restoration activities.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, interest in Japanese gardens was at its peak. The owners of the Hall at the time created a water feature, using stone from on-site building demolition and the stream which runs through the estate. Some mature rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias are evident and have been supplemented with recent replanting. To the north of the Japanese garden is an informal woodland of beech trees underplanted with bluebells.

The Hibbert family and the later Close-Brookes family, were major benefactors to the residents of Over Alderley. Birtles House and buildings/bothy, also known as the gymnasium, were used by the gardeners and by the local community to stage dances and plays. It is now a single property with a walled garden.



The Barn House, originally attached to the Hall, was probably part of the estate manager's office/accommodation. It is now a detached residence with a small garden.

Our visit to Birtles Estate was concluded with an informal summer picnic. As no charge for the visit was made, CGT made a donation £240 to the East Cheshire Hospice as a gesture of thanks.

**Mary Moxon**

\* \* \* \* \*

The history of Birtles Hall, its gardens and owners over more than two centuries has been uncovered by the Research and Recording Group. Their report was the basis for these notes which were given to attendees.

The original Birtles Hall lay close to the road between Chelford and Macclesfield. The hall no longer survives but the site is known as Birtles Old Hall. The Birtles Hall we visited, was constructed on land known as 'the Pastures' north-west of the old hall after both estates came into the ownership of Robert Hibbert c.1796. It was Robert Hibbert's fortune from Jamaican sugar plantations and the slave trade which allowed him to purchase the estates and build Birtles Hall.

In 1819 Robert Hibbert moved to his new house, Birtles Hall, built in the neo classical style with a five bay ashlar front, Ionic porch, cornice and balustrade, placed on a manmade terrace facing south over undulating ground falling south to the road between Macclesfield and Chelford. To the south east small hillocks marked as tumuli on the Ordnance Survey map (see page 6) include one late Bronze Age barrow, a scheduled monument. The surrounding topography

was ideal for laying out a park. Evidence from Caldwell and Sons, nurserymen of Knutsford, customer ledger, 1789 -1796 indicate that Robert Hibbert was purchasing considerable numbers of trees in **1791**, suggesting that he was improving the Birtles estate at this time. The orders also include a large number of vegetable seeds, probably for the walled garden at Birtles Old Hall which continued to be used by the family.

Robert Hibbert died in **1835** leaving the Birtles estate, his Jamaica estates and slaves, and a considerable fortune to his eldest son Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

A plan of the 'Birtles Estates in the Townships of Birtles, Alderley, Henbury and Macclesfield, the property of Thomas Hibbert Esq' dated **1837** records the property at this time. The plan indicates a direct tree lined approach to the Hall from Birtles Lane to the east as well as a drive south through the parkland to Birtles Lane and the main Macclesfield - Chelford Road. In **1850** the hall was described as being '*situate in a fine park of about 50 acres, ornamented with a fine sheet of water and diversified with sylvan beauty*'.<sup>2</sup> The Hibbert family reputedly constructed the lake (on the old Birtles estate) as a means of alleviating unemployment after the Crimean War (post 1856), and it is understood that the rills in the brook at Birtles Hall were created by the same means. The '*fine sheet of water*' would have been visible from the front of the hall.

The **1872** Ordnance Survey indicates the extension of the grounds north of the hall and development of the gardens to the east along the brook. In **1879** Thomas Hibbert died and the property passed to his son Colonel Hugh Robert Hibbert of the 1st Fusiliers. Hugh Hibbert had financial difficulties, and in **1884** some lands were sold to Lord Stanley of Alderley who then purchased the whole property in 1890 while it was tenanted by the Close Brooks family.

It seems likely that the development of the Edwardian style gardens seen in historic postcards were carried out by the Close Brooks family. It is not known whether they developed a rockery around the stream or whether this existed previously. Nor is it known whether they developed the area as a Japanese style garden or whether this was a name that became attached to the area by others.

In **1914** the property is recorded as belonging to Lord Stanley KCMG of Government House, Melbourne and being occupied by Mrs Brooks Close-Brooks. During the First World War Birtles Hall and grounds were

used as a military hospital and in **1917** became a specialist venereal disease hospital for 50 officers.

In **1920** the property was sold to Frank Abraham Howarth. The family used it as a country house enjoying fishing rights on the lake, hosting tennis parties and having vegetables delivered from the old walled garden. In **1937** the estate was sold to the Norton family who demolished the west wing. In September **1938** there was a major fire which destroyed the interior. Mr and Mrs D. G. Norton engaged the Manchester Arts and Crafts architect Henry Sellars to prepare designs for reconstruction. Sellars remodelled the interior of the house but retained the relationship of the principal rooms to the grounds. During the Second World War Mrs Norton prevented military requisitioning of her new home by employing local women to sew uniforms at the hall.

Mr and Mrs Norton took a keen and active interest in their garden and opened it for the National Gardens Scheme. It was they who planted the cherry glade, probably in the 1950s, replacing the flower garden shown on one of the historic postcards. Mr Norton died in 1970 but his wife remained at the Hall until her death in 1993. In May **1994** the contents of the Hall were sold by Sothebys at auction and the Hall and main part of the curtilage, excluding the home farm, put up for sale. The Hall was sold to Mr Christopher Bauer and Mr John Andrew who developed the current estate with 6 apartments in the hall, 6 cottages and 2 houses, completed in 1996.<sup>3</sup>

Birtles Hall Estate Management Company Limited was formed in 2002 and purchased the freehold from Bauer and Andrew. Each property owner has an equal share and if a property is sold then the share is transferred to the new owner. The company has three directors who hold office for three years and retire by rotation. They are responsible for the management of the estate and also for the purchase of LPG which is stored in underground tanks. The reed bed waste system was installed in 1995 and is maintained by the management company.

Andrew Norton owns the park and leases it to a farmer.

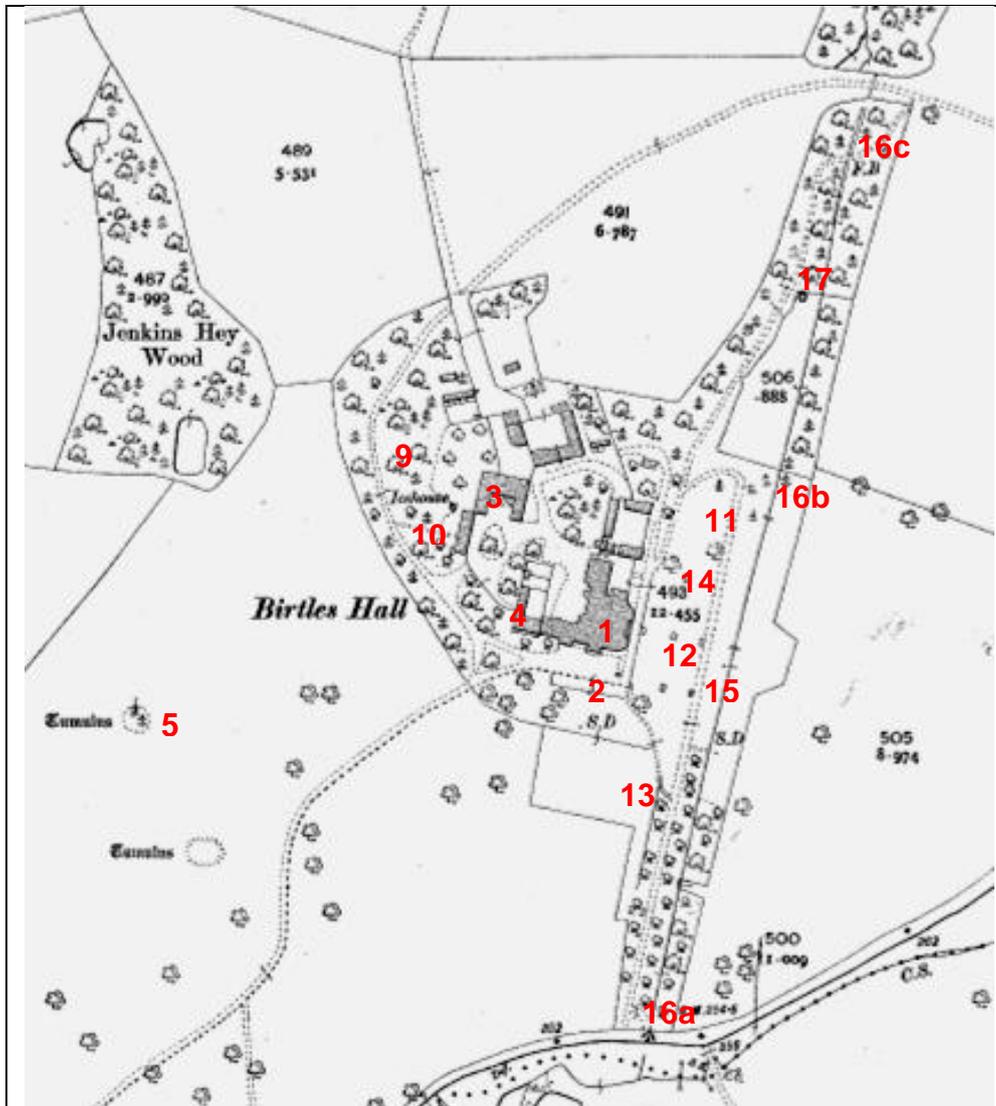
<sup>1</sup> Some of his fortune came from compensation received via the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.

<sup>2</sup> Bagshaw's Directory 1850

<sup>3</sup> The cottages were converted first then the Hall. Birtles House was next and then finally the barn was converted. Mr Michael Atherton the cricketer lived there for a while.

The full Research report, complete with photos and maps is available as a pdf. If you would like a copy, please contact Barbara Moth: [barbara.moth@btinternet.com](mailto:barbara.moth@btinternet.com)

Overleaf: The principal remaining features of Birtles Hall  
shown on 1910 Ordnance Survey  
(ns = not shown)



1. Birtles Hall - listed building Grade II, English Heritage  
**UID:** 58324
2. South and east terrace walls - listed building Grade II, English Heritage  
**UID:** 58325
3. Stable block - listed building Grade II, English Heritage  
**UID:** 351249
4. Former Haybarn - listed building Grade II, English Heritage  
**UID:** 58326
5. Tumuli - bowl barrow - scheduled monument English Heritage  
**UID:** 22577
6. Gate pillars - at entrance on A537 and on Birtles Lane beside Vicarage (ns)
7. Gate Lodge - unlisted but thought to be contemporary with the hall (ns)

8. Tree belts - along A537 (ns)
9. Plantations - west of hall
10. Icehouse
11. Walks - principal walk in garden
12. Lawns - east of hall
13. Rustic summerhouse beside croquet lawn
14. Steps - flights of stone steps
15. Rill
16. Cascades - three - a, b and c
17. Japanese style garden - perhaps originally simply a Victorian rockery
18. Specimen trees - oaks in the park and exotic trees in the gardens (ns)



Lancelot "Capability" Brown, the great landscape gardener of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not renowned for his modesty.

*"Mr. Capability Brown, the great Arbiter of British Taste, a few Days ago, standing in Blenheim Park, and surveying with infinite Delight the very magnificent Piece of Water which had been suggested by his Fancy, and finished under his Direction, was overheard to say, Thames! Thames! thou wilt never forgive me for this!"*

**Public Advertiser, 9 September, 1772**

# The CGT Lisbon Trip, 13-15 September 2013

## Part Two

Day Two was to the hilly area of Sintra, close to Lisbon, where we visited three very different but equally impressive cultural landscapes and gardens. The parks and palaces of Sintra comprise a World Heritage Site.

### Pena Park

Pena is the most important part of the World Heritage Site. It transformed a barren, rocky, granite mountain to a romantic landscape with castles, lakes, model farm, valleys grottos, arboreta and gardens.

We were lucky to have Nuno Oliveira, an agronomist responsible for Pena, Queluz and Monserrate, as our guide.

We learned that Pena is the site of an abandoned convent, and Don Ferdinando II Saxe Coburg and his bride Dona Maria, the Portuguese Queen visited here on honeymoon. He was quite a visionary, seeing it had potential for a romantic landscape, a cross between a tropical paradise and the German forests.

He bought the convent, castle, properties around and 200 hectares of land for his park in 1838. Work was still ongoing when he died in 1885. The vegetation we see now is not natural, although it covers the hillsides.



Management is an immense challenge, with only the funds from visitors to cover the costs and a team of 5 gardeners, 2 path people and 6 foresters (for the 600 hectares under Nuno's management). But he is full of creative interventions.

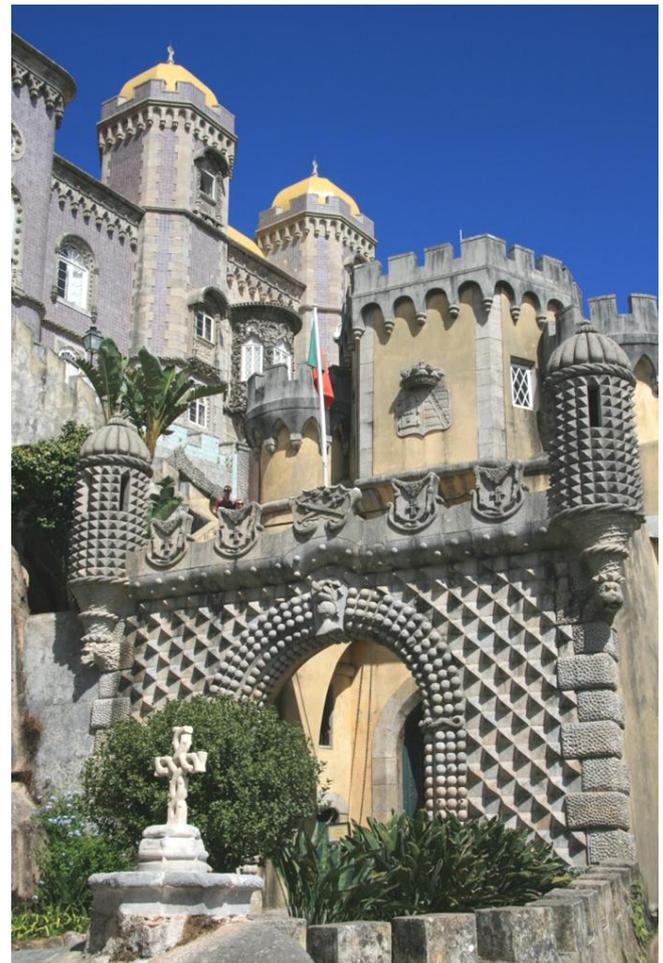
Young goats are fed acacia shoots, to teach them to eat the acacia (which is Pena's equivalent of rhododendron, 'our biggest nightmare' says Nuno).

He has imported draught horses from Belgium, to eliminate more damaging tractors and mechanical equipment. He explains 'this is a spa for them, they only work two days on, one day off – where as in Belgium they worked every day.'

Nuno says they have no volunteers, because there is no tradition of volunteering in Portugal, although he is trying to introduce the idea. Many of his best workers are prisoners, especially older ones in their 50s who recognise being given an opportunity to work, gain skills and be paid a small sum is their chance for a better life.



Nuno led us up to the castle via the historic route, where views of the castle are only glimpsed momentarily, rather than up the usual tourist's route from the large car park. This helped us understand the overall concept. As we round the corner, and the palace comes partially into view it stands proud and colourful against a clear blue sky. The eclectic architecture becomes even more obvious as we move into the palace enclosure itself. From here there are spectacular views across Pena and other parts of Sintra.



## Monserate Palace

This 33 hectare county estate with botanical species from across the world first had a convent on the site in 1540, which became a family residence in 1755.

Today's palace and garden started life in 1790, with a new gothic style house, and the garden broke with the formality of the period and was created in the newest fashion, the English Landscape style.

The gardens were decorated with embellished rockwork, architectural elements, a hermitage, a rocky cascade and exotic plants.



The house was rented by the Englishman William Beckford, perhaps Monserate's most famous and infamous resident. He continued to develop the garden; but by July 1809 when Lord Byron visited, the garden was overgrown and abandoned. In his poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron writes of Monserate's demise. The popularity of Byron's poetry and the well known wanton lifestyle of Beckford enhanced the exotic and romantic reputation of Monserate.

The palace and garden today are the result of the next English owner, Francis Cook, who purchased a roofless palace set in a derelict garden. The new house is of its time, an eclectic mix of classicism, Gothic and Moorish forms and details... 'the Alhambra crossed with the Brighton Pavilion, with Portuguese features' says Ed.

In 1949, Monserate was purchased by the Portuguese government, but it continued to decline. In 1992 the Friends of Monserate was founded, and helped fund restoration of the estate. Three years later, Sintra and

its parks including Monserate became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A few weeks before we visited Monserate received the EGHN annual award for the restoration of the garden.



We were shown round by Gerald Luckhurst, who has been involved in the restoration, spearheaded by Emma Gilbert.



We clambered down through a grotto, admired the cascade and falls, walked under the Indian arch, wandered through fern valley into the chapel and folly with the massive roots of a fig tree and were astounded at the height of some of the monumental trees as well as the sheer opulence and finery of the palace itself.



**Annie Coombs**

*The rest of Annie's report is being held over to the April edition of the newsletter.*

*Plans are already being made for the 2015 trip to Sweden.*

## J is for Japanese garden

At a study day last year on 'the Japanese Garden in England',<sup>1</sup> the first speaker argued that such gardens should be termed 'Japanese style gardens' on the basis that a Japanese garden can only be found in Japan. In Cheshire we have a number of Japanese style gardens and through our research and recording are discovering more that might be placed in this category. Though Chinese gardens had an influence in Europe since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Japan was largely closed to foreigners until the Meiji restoration (1868) opened the country to trade and consular relations with the west.

It was the plants collected by J G Veitch and Robert Fortune (which included pines, Japanese larch, lilies, *Magnolia stellata* and *Aucuba japonica*), and the accounts of their travels, that first created interest among gardeners in Britain.

Japanese artefacts were imported and displayed at exhibitions in London and Paris. In the 1880s and 90s the return of diplomats and tourists triggered a real interest in putting Japanese plants in their proper context – the Japanese garden.

Josiah Condor's 'Landscape Gardening in Japan' (1893 Tokio: Kelly and Walsh) provided a comprehensive account of the principles of Japanese garden design.

The book proved influential and many gardens were constructed following its guidance. Other publications followed.

In 1910 the Japan-British Exhibition in London proved hugely popular. The exhibits were reported on at length in the gardening press, leading to a flurry of interest exhibited in subsequent gardens and the work of major garden designers including Thomas Mawson and Harold Peto.



*The teahouse in the Japanese garden at Tatton Park*

The Japanese garden at Tatton Park was almost certainly the outcome of Alan de Tatton's visit to the exhibition. Started in 1910, it was laid out by Japanese workman in the style of a tea garden with artefacts and plants from Japan, and restored by others in 2000/2001 after years of research. The garden is

recognised as being one of the best and most authentic in Britain. (See [www.tattonpark.org.uk/what\\_to\\_see\\_at\\_tatton\\_park/gardens/garden\\_areas/japanese\\_garden.aspx](http://www.tattonpark.org.uk/what_to_see_at_tatton_park/gardens/garden_areas/japanese_garden.aspx)).

At Walkden Gardens in Sale there is a Japanese garden created in the last 10 years by the Friends of Walkden gardens with guidance from members of the Japanese Garden Society, its completion enabled by funding from Greening Greater Manchester.

Whereas the Japanese garden at Tatton is modelled on an essentially private space, a place to which one is invited for a tea ceremony, and which the public now enjoy from a variety of external viewpoints, the garden at Walkden is modelled on a 'Stroll Garden', intended to be walked through in a contemplative way, providing a number of different scenes as the visitor walks along. It is described as

*'an attempt to create the feel of a garden as it might be seen in Japan, using design ideas commonly used in the Japanese garden tradition.'*

[www.walkdengardens.co.uk/about.html](http://www.walkdengardens.co.uk/about.html)



*Walkden Gardens, Sale*

Both gardens invite one to pause, reflect, enjoy pattern, shape and texture, and to see the careful composition of natural (and often manicured) materials in a new way.

At Foxhill near Frodsham, now the Chester Diocese conference and retreat centre, the quarry garden has become known as the 'Japanese garden'.

The garden appears to have been developed by 1910, the original quarry being extended to provide huge blocks of stone used to enclose the space on the western side and create planting areas that contain exotic species including camellia, magnolia, rhododendron, Japanese maples and various conifers.

There is no apparent philosophy behind the layout of the garden, and no evidence that it ever contained any Japanese ornaments, so it is in effect a secret quarry garden using plants redolent of Japan.



*The garden at Foxhill*

At Birtles Hall near Macclesfield an area of the garden has become known as the 'Japanese Garden'.

Examination of an early photograph from a family album suggests that this area was originally a 19<sup>th</sup> century rockery that straddled the stream through the garden.

The rockery appears to have been cleared of evergreen shrubbery and developed by subsequent owners with the planting of species from Japan including magnolias and Japanese maples.

The theme has been continued by the current owners, the Birtles Hall Management Company, in recent planting and with the addition of a Japanese inspired bridge installed in 2013.



*The rockwork bridge at Birtles (centre of picture) almost hidden by planting, taken from a family album, image kindly provided by Cath Sproston*

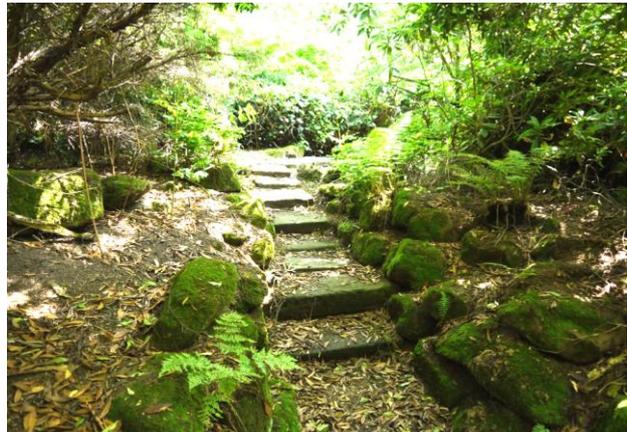
On a summer visit to Norton Priory in Runcorn, research and recorders explored an overgrown area of the former garden that appears to have had Japanese influence in its layout, use of stone and



*The same rockwork bridge at Birtles (different angle) 2013*



*The recently installed bridge at Birtles*



*Steps in part of the overgrown Japanese style garden at Norton Priory*

planting. Little is known about this area and we are hoping to discover more about the original design, construction and appearance.

So in Cheshire we have Japanese gardens of great authenticity and national if not international importance, and gardens influenced by Japan in choice of plants and use of stone which contribute considerably to the richness and variety of our local heritage of gardens.

If you are aware of other Japanese style gardens we would love to hear from you.

**Barbara Moth**

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese Garden in England Study Day at Felden Lodge, Hemel Hempstead, Friday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2013 organised by the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust

# Vintage Horticultural Tools

## The Boot Iron or Digging Shoe/Sole

A junior gardener's working boots were probably made of poor quality leather but had to suffer heavy usage for long periods, often on very wet soils. As protection for the sole and to extend the life of the boot, a Boot Iron, sometimes known as a Digging Shoe, was fitted to the sole of the boot. This metal plate was held in place against the sole using leather straps or laces.

The two Digging Shoes in our collection were both made to fit the right foot, the predominant foot used for digging. Both examples probably date from C19th or early C20th.

The shape of the boot iron is interesting; there is a lip to locate it into the step between the heel and sole of the boot. This can be clearly seen in both photographs below. The gardener's spade would locate into this lip. On both examples there are side arms to accept a cord or leather straps to secure the sole firmly in position under the boot.



The first example (above), made from good quality wrought iron, was probably made by a country blacksmith. In consequence there is little sign of wear. Two small mushroom shaped pillars are located on each of the side arms; it is thought that a cord or leather lace would have been wrapped around them and tied across the instep to hold the protection in place.

The second boot iron (right) has been made from sheet steel and may be a later example.

The four strap holder arms each have rectangular slots for the ties, probably two buckled leather straps, to



secure it to the foot. The inner sides of the slots have mild burrs which suggest that the slots were stamped out with a metal screw punch. The sole itself is curved in two directions to give it a secure fit over the workman's boot. At the toe end there is evidence of rough treatment indicating that it has been well used in real life.



On the top side of the sole a number "4" has been impressed with a professional punch. This is thought to be the size of the boot and certainly looks a similar size to a modern size four shoe. Every indication is that this example has been mass produced and even marketed commercially.

If you have any comments on this vintage find or if you have found other interesting old horticultural items, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

**Bob Taylor**

([taylor1158@btinternet.com](mailto:taylor1158@btinternet.com))

## Social Media

We have been wondering whether Cheshire Gardens Trust should have a presence on Social Media – Facebook, Twitter, etc. Sue and Joy have recently attended courses, but are still unsure of how they might be used to best effect. The big plus seems to be the possibility of reaching a wider audience. The big minus is that it has to be managed!

If you have experience (good or bad) of using Social Media, we would be glad to hear from you. Please e-mail: [joy.uings@btconnect.com](mailto:joy.uings@btconnect.com).

## Anniversaries: 10 years ...

Can you believe it? This is Cheshire Gardens Trust's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year!

Our official launch was in April 2004, but our very first newsletter (just 2 sides!) was published in January 2004.

In it we looked back over 2003:

- ✨ February. We meet to discuss whether Cheshire will become the 34<sup>th</sup> county in England and Wales to have a Gardens Trust.
- ✨ March. The first meeting of the CGT Steering Committee is held in the library of Arley Hall, courtesy of Lord Ashbrook.
- ✨ July. Cheshire Gardens Trust has its first official outing at the RHS Tatton Flower Show.
- ✨ September. Setting up a Bank Account makes the CGT official.
- ✨ November. Our first event – a guided tour of Ness Botanic Gardens.
- ✨ December. Members enjoy a social evening with quizzes, raffle and good food

And we looked forward to 2004:

- ✨ Saturday 7 February. Snowdrop Walk at Rode Hall.
- ✨ Thursday 29 April. The Cheshire Gardens Trust official launch at Arley Hall.
- ✨ A Gazetteer of Cheshire Gardens.
- ✨ We will be at the Tatton Flower Show again

Our very first visit had been to Ness Botanic Gardens on 16 November 2003 when twenty-nine members and guests enjoyed a guided tour of the gardens,

followed by lunch and an afternoon lecture. Barbara Moth wrote the article for the newsletter.

In April our second edition of the newsletter appeared. It had grown to 8 sides and included a report on the Snowdrop Walk at Rode Hall held in February and the early April visit to Mellor's Garden.

There was also a report from Ed Bennis on the discovery of the Jellicoe drawings of the water gardens at the Cadbury Factory at Moreton in the Wirral.

The report of the official launch appeared in the July 2004 newsletter, the only edition that I don't have in full as it failed to transfer properly from my previous computer (in 2005! Time for a new one, I think.)

However the picture of the celebratory cake has survived and can be seen below.

Interestingly, given the subject of the AGT Conference in September (see page 14), we had visited the Arts and Crafts garden at Tirley Garth and we included a very brief introduction to Thomas Mawson.

Since 2004 we have visited numerous sites – some well-known and others not. We have met owners and head gardeners. We have had lectures and even a film show. All have been faithfully recorded in the newsletter.

But it would be great if you would send us your memories of the past ten years. After all, without you there would be no newsletter.

What has been special to you? Was it a visit? Some research? Meeting new friends? Do write and let me know. Contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

**Joy Uings**



This splendidly three-dimensional, sculptured cake depicting the herbaceous border at Arley, complete with colourful herbaceous perennials, yew buttresses and wall shrubs, was made for our official launch by Jola Steadman. Jola will be making another for our AGM and Spring Lecture in March, where we will celebrate the past ten years. Just one of many good reasons to book for the event.

## ... 25 years

The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust has been going rather longer than CGT, but if we have members in fifteen years' time that are as adventurous as those of WHGT, we can be sure of a great future.

To draw attention to their up-coming silver anniversary, one WHGT member had the bright (?) idea of entering Eggheads. A team was assembled and named themselves the WHIGETS (Welsh Historic GardEns TruSt). They will be appearing on BBC2's tea-time programme The Eggheads later this year.

For those of you unfamiliar with this, it is a quiz in which teams try to win against the Eggheads (all past winners of various quizzes, like *Brain of Britain*). In

order to take part in the crucial final round, each member of both teams has to survive their individual round.

The WHIGETS submitted an application, survived the audition and were invited to take part. They travelled to Glasgow to record the show last October.

Were they successful? They won't (can't) say. For the rest of us, we wait until that particular show is transmitted to find out.

Chances of winning the cash prize are slim at around 10%, but they will have been able to tell the audience about the work of Gardens Trusts and for that we are all grateful.

## ... 50 years

The Bollington Festival will be celebrating 50 years since its beginning in 1964.

Between 16 May to 1 June there will be a wide variety of events including two days of Open Gardens.

24th May Ingersley Vale Gardens 'Fete': This will be an opportunity to visit community allotments, woodland and cottage gardens and traditional craft workshops in the lovely setting of meadows, woods and waterfall.

25th May Kerridge Open Gardens: A rare chance to see hidden gems behind the stone walls of Kerridge. There will be stunning views, a tower, a labyrinth, standing stones, secret summerhouses and of course a wonderful variety of spring flowers.

Home made refreshments will be available on both days.

Not wheelchair accessible. Stout footwear advisable

For details see [www.bollingtonfestivalgardens.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.bollingtonfestivalgardens.blogspot.co.uk) or ring 01625 572197



## ... 100 years

This year also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War I.

The Community Collection Roadshow – a chance to share stories, photos, objects and documents about Cheshire Families during the Great War – has been running since last October, and will continue at various venues until November this year. (See <http://thegreatwarcheshire.co.uk> for more information and dates and a blog at <http://greatwarcheshire.blogspot.co.uk>).

If you have any stories relating to gardens, gardeners or nurseries during that period, why not let us know.

We recently received this photo of the Caldwell family. It dates from 1916. Centre is William Caldwell (1855-1918) and front left is his son, also William, (1887-1953). The photo includes (in



uniform) Lance Corporal Tom Caldwell of the Canadian Princess Pat's Regiment, who was killed the following year at Vimy Ridge.

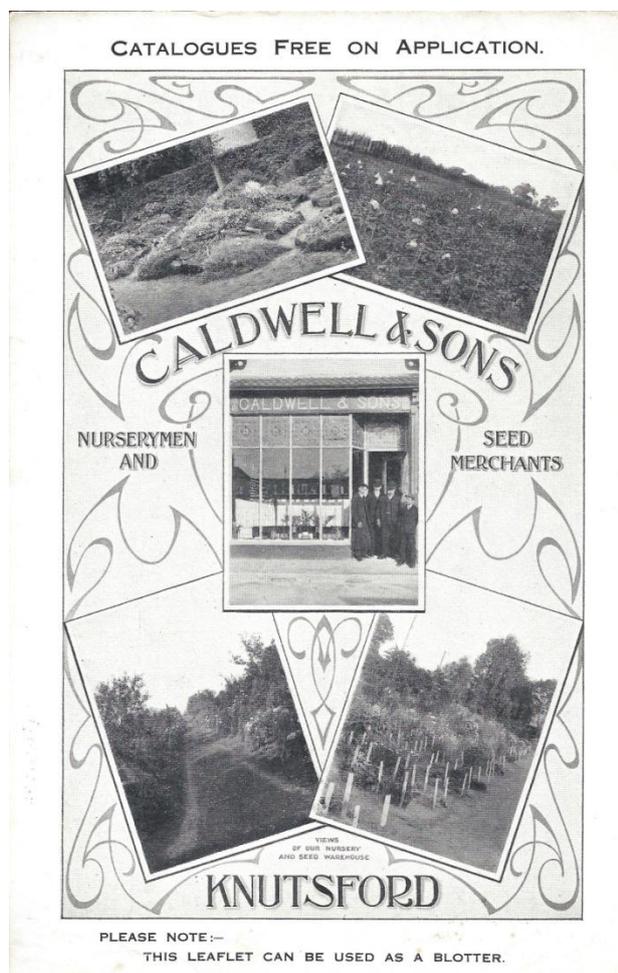
## Caldwell progress

- the website home page has been greatly improved (in fact it looks fantastic) – see [www.caldwellarchives.org.uk](http://www.caldwellarchives.org.uk).
- photography of the ledgers is planned for completion this month so that they can be put online
- research into some Caldwell customers is ongoing
- excerpts of oral history are being identified for the book and website
- images for the book are being identified
- we have received lots more wonderful information from David Caldwell
- we have had some positive feedback and outcomes from the Caldwell newsletter
- we will have given 6 talks (out of the 6 projected) in the first year of HLF funding!

So all in all we are on a bit of a roll which we hope to maintain – if the energy levels keep up and generosity of volunteers is maintained!

**Barbara Moth**

*Right: An Edwardian era Caldwell's Blotter showing scenes from the Nurseries including the frontage of the shop that William George Caldwell established at some stage between 1852 and approximately 1865*



## Parks & Gardens UK

Dear County Gardens Trust,

As I'm sure you know Parks and Gardens UK is the leading on-line resource for historic parks and gardens providing information on UK parks, gardens and designed landscapes and their promotion, conservation and management.

Much of our information is provided by your members and in 2013 we had an average of 18,000 unique visitors a month, with a total of over 172,000 unique visitors from 172 countries. There is clearly a huge amount of interest out there and we want to try and capitalize on that. So we're starting a blog and a newsletter, aiming at raising awareness amongst an already potentially interested clientele, and in particular at getting people to look beyond the most obvious historic sites and people. In doing this we're definitely not trying to duplicate what you and others are already doing [or tread on anyone's toes!] but instead would like to promote the work that CGTS and other garden-related groups are doing, but with what is probably a slightly different and wider audience.

One easy way of doing that is to draw on the information and knowledge that you're already sharing and so we'd welcome going onto your emailing list and receiving your newsletters etc, so that we can draw on the broadest geographical spread of information. In return we'd be very happy to keep you up to date on what we're doing and would welcome hearing your comments and views. You will shortly be able to sign up for the blog and newsletter at <http://www.parksandgardens.org>

David Marsh

on behalf of the Trustees of Parks and Gardens UK

*If you've not checked out the Parks and Gardens UK website, why not do so right now! Ed.*

## Locomotion of Plants

With Spring on its way and after a very wet few weeks, you might be wondering how your bulbs are surviving the weather. I found this piece which should tell you which bulbs are better placed at surviving floods...

Gardeners know that their patches of crocuses rise to the surface in a very few years, so that you cannot rake the beds in which they grow without dragging them from their places. In old, neglected gardens about farm-houses or untenanted mansions, the corms, or, in popular language, the bulbs, will probably be quite exposed, without a sprinkling of mould over them. There must be some final cause, if any, for this gradual uprising, by the annual formation of a new corm above that of the previous spring. Having occasion some years ago to pass through Switzerland by the route of the Simplon, I observed, a little below the village that bears that name, and of course on the Italian side of the descent, a large tract covered with crocuses. The spot occupied by the crocuses was a swampy hollow of considerable extent, but I observed none on the drier hillocks around it. The swampiness was caused, not by one of those little burns so innumerable and so beautiful in mountainous countries, but by the trickling down of the water from the line of melting snow, which brought with it from the hill-side, a small but perceptible deposit of mud. This thin layer is, of course, annually repeated, and a stationary bulb would in a few years be buried beyond the power of vegetation. I cannot think it fanciful to believe that the upward progress of the corms is designed to enable them to keep pace with the gradual elevation of the soil in which they are rooted. The narcissus, which grows wild in the south of Europe, in marshes that are from time to time inundated, also rises, though more slowly than the crocus. The garden hyacinth likewise moves upwards. The tulip and the meadow saffron appear to have the faculty of accommodating themselves at once to the most

suitable depth of soil, forming an entirely new bulb above or below the old one, which is left, a hollow shell; as if its whole substance had been transferred, like the honey that bees will remove from the comb in a bell-glass to the hive beneath. A curious essay might be written on the locomotion of plants, by any one who chose to avail himself of the information which our great horticultural and botanical institutions render available to the industrious. Were it not for the power of rising to the surface, my unknown crocus of the Simplon would in a few years certainly be overwhelmed by the yearly top-dressing; and the species affecting such situations would become extinct, for the crocus rarely seeds. As it is, those in the Alps may have risen yards. Some of our native orchids, by the yearly decay of one of their two bulbs, and the formation of a fresh one on the opposite side, proceed onwards at not a slow rate. The strawberry puts on seven-leagued boots in comparison, and frequently escapes from the rich man's garden to refresh the wayside traveller. How many years would it take a new seedling strawberry to travel by runners from London to the land's end? The raspberry mines its way to a fresh station, by a subterranean mole-like process, blind, but not unguided, and then rises unexpectedly to the light of day. The elaterium or squirting cucumber is furnished with a fire-engine for the dispersion of its seeds; the touch-me-not balsam scatters them like an exploded shell. Even the humblest of the race, the champignon and many other fungi, start from a centre and travel outwards in circles, imitating, in their lowly way, the progress of sound and light.

*Gardeners' Chronicle, 1847*

The Events Mailing was despatched in mid-January and gives us plenty to choose from. But if, like me, you send off all your bookings for the coming four months immediately, please make sure that you have recorded it in your diary. Circumstances change and it is sometimes necessary to forego a treat. If you realise that you won't be able to get to the event after all, then please let the organiser know straight away. There may well be names on a waiting list ready to fill that place.

We have just heard that the date of this year's Bluebell Walk at the interesting Tushingam Hall near Malpas, has been decided. Owner Peter Moore-Dutton says that the garden and woods will be open from 2 – 5 o'clock on Sunday 27th April. Entry, which includes a cup of tea, is £5.00. Children are FREE. Proceeds go to Tushingam Church and the Hospice of the Good Shepherd. For details, please contact Sarah Collard on 01948 860294.

The address of the Bluebell Walk is: Tushingam Hall, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 4QP

Jane Roberts has created another series of talks on garden history including *Cottage Gardens: A Nostalgic & Romantic Vision* (Gawsworth Hall, 21 May, £36); *An Introduction to the History, Design & Plants of English Gardens* (Lindeth Fell Country House Hotel, Windermere, 24 April, £67; Chatsworth House, 8 May, £56; and Arley Hall, 12 June, £43) and a series of 6 talks on Edwardian Gardens *The 'Golden Age' of English Gardens* which will be run at both Gawsworth Hall and Arley Hall in September and October (£65). For more details contact Jane Roberts on 01260 271186, e-mail [botanical.surveys123@btinternet.com](mailto:botanical.surveys123@btinternet.com).



The Association  
of Gardens Trusts

## Continuity and Change in Cheshire Gardens

5-7 September 2014



Cheshire Gardens Trust is hosting this year's AGT AGM and Conference, which will be based at the Queen Hotel in Chester.

We will be looking at 20<sup>th</sup> century clients and designers and how industrial wealth and patronage has influenced the Cheshire landscape. Many gardens created for the nouveau riche are now faced with uncertain futures and, like our more traditional gardens, are having to come up with innovative ways to ensure their futures.

The weekend will explore the relationship between clients, architects, designers and gardeners and focus on the challenges of sustaining and maintaining parks and gardens in private ownership.

The visits on Saturday are to Thornton Manor, Port Sunlight and Burton Manor on the Wirral. These are all gardens where Thomas Mawson had a design input.

On Sunday we will be visiting Cholmondeley Castle and Arley Hall.

Full details are available on our website, complete with booking form. It is a great opportunity to meet up with members of other Gardens Trusts, share experiences and get ideas.

If you don't want to attend the whole weekend, it is possible to book separately for each day. On the Friday there will be a visit to Grosvenor Park, Chester. Or you can book for the Friday evening (meal and lecture from Ed Bennis) or the Saturday evening (meal followed by our Patron and Chair, Lord Ashbrook and Sam Youd, "in conversation").

The number of places available for session booking will be limited according to the overall bookings, but we will keep a list of those who want to attend the evening sessions and fit in as many as possible.

## Volunteer Opportunities

There will a number of ways to help out at the conference. For some roles you will need to be a delegate on the day please, or, there are opportunities just to help out. We are grateful to the Arley Volunteers who have been very quick in coming forward - thank you.

The list below indicates the areas where we would be very pleased for your help. If you think that you are able to lend a hand, or for more details, please get in touch with Jane Gooch ([janegooch@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:janegooch@hotmail.co.uk)) or any of the Conference Planning Team. We look forward to hearing from you!

*With thanks from the Planning Team*

### Volunteer roles:

- Conference Reception Desk
- Conference pack preparation (July/August)
- Coach hosts (delegate on the day)
- Set up volunteers for Port Sunlight (muscle power)
- IT support (delegate)

This is our initial list and undoubtedly other opportunities will pop up, so please do get in touch if you would like to be involved. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

## Books for sale

Books donated to the Trust can be a valuable source of additional income and member John Edmondson sells on our behalf. John will be attending the Conference both as a delegate and as a bookseller.

If you have any books to donate to CGT, please bring them along to the AGM in March.

John will be having a bookstall there, so don't forget your purse/wallet.

**Copy date for April newsletter is 31 March**

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](mailto:joy.uings@btconnect.com).