



## Cholmondeley's Head Gardener

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### Forthcoming events

- CGT Zoom talks:
  - 12<sup>th</sup> April, Sheer Folly, Caroline Holmes
  - 17<sup>th</sup> May, Island Gardens, Jackie Bennett,
  - 14<sup>th</sup> June, Beth Chatto, Catherine Horwood
- 11<sup>th</sup> May RHS Bridgewater opening
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# Barry Grain, Cholmondeley Castle

## Thirteenth in our Head Gardener Series



*Cholmondeley Castle*

I was born in Chester and attended Upton High School. I was inspired in the garden as a young boy by my Grandpa who was a trained gardener himself, having worked at Gredington Hall and Dunham Massey, (where he met my Grandma who worked in the hall). So it was never a conscious decision to venture into horticulture, as I was already gardening by the age of 8 and took over the allotment from my dad by the time high school came around. During high school I worked on Saturdays at Bramblewood Alpine Nursery near Chester, which was family run by a friend's dad. Sadly, the nursery is no longer open but alpines always have a special place for me.

On leaving school at 16 I went straight into an Apprenticeship in Amenity Horticulture at Chester Zoo, and attended Reaseheath College day release. The zoo was a brilliant experience for me. One of my first jobs was planting bamboos around the new monkey islands, which opened up a whole botanical world to me. We also managed the indoor collections across the zoo and,



*Barry Grain with some of his social distanced team, from left to right Richard Carden, Barry Grain, Kerry Shone and Karl Roberts (assistant head gardener)*

despite being an apprentice, I was given the temperate plantings in the old elephant and rhino houses to look after, as well as assisting in the Tropical Realm. When I started in 1996 the Zoo was still all about roses and bedding displays, but then it started to transform into the naturalistic planting themes that you see today. During my time there I got to work on some great projects with the full range of plant material from across the world, including orchids and bromeliads which have been a specialist interest for me ever since.



*Daffodils below the castle*

I left the zoo after 5 years, 3 as a full-time horticulturist. I then spent 3 years travelling Australia, Central America and parts of Europe, often able to appreciate the plants I'd grown up with at the zoo in their native climes. I spent a year in Australia and fell in love with the flora out there. I would urge any plant obsessive like me to go, especially to the South West and Tasmania which are essentially just huge botanical gardens.



*The Glade in mid Spring*

In February 2005 I was lucky to be given the opportunity to work as part of the borders team at Eaton Hall, Chester, home to the Dukes of Westminster. I spent the first four years working on the borders learning the intricacies of herbaceous borders and had quite an extensive section which included the Rose Terrace, Hot Borders, Spring Walk and Peony Beds. In my last two years there I moved inside to manage the glasshouse, where we grew a huge volume of cut flowers and house plants ranging from tropical shrubs to annuals according to their usage in the hall. I left Eaton in late 2011 to take a Head Gardener role at Turville Grange near Henley-on-Thames. This was a private estate owned by the Ford family (yes, those ones), which was really good management experience. However, in the new year of 2013 the job came up at Cholmondeley, and it was too good to refuse.



*Temple garden in April*

Cholmondeley Castle was built in phases between 1801 and 1824 on a previously wooded hill, and it was during the 1820s that a garden started to emerge. Specimen trees were planted and some initial designs were implemented in our famous Temple Garden. Various pockets of planting were added during the Victorian era but it wasn't until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century that the garden you see today took shape. In 1949 following her marriage to Lord Hugh 6<sup>th</sup> Marquess, Lady Lavinia arrived at Cholmondeley to a garden that was largely a blank canvas of mature trees and sweeping lawns, with the Victorian era planting overgrown and neglected during the war years. Despite a lack of experience or knowledge she set about creating a 'garden of great romance'. And so starting with the Rose Garden in 1952, she set about transforming all 70 acres of the garden, adding a huge volume of specialist plant material which now form important collections. She did all this in her own uncontrived style, which today gives Cholmondeley its charm and character. Following her passing in November 2015 I have worked closely with her son David, the current Lord Cholmondeley, to ensure that her legacy remains and that the garden continues to evolve in a manner that she would have wished. Included in these recent works has been the creation of



*Lavinia Walk in June*

Lavinia Walk, a 100m double herbaceous border in her honour.

I enjoy a really good relationship with Lord and Lady Cholmondeley and liaise with them directly on our ongoing programme of projects. We do all our garden design in house, and we discuss their vision before I set about making it reality. The day to day running of the garden is left to my judgement and experience which means that I enjoy a lot of freedom and creativity that other Head Gardeners perhaps wouldn't. Added to this the role of the modern Head Gardener includes all the usual paperwork, garden tours, social media and marketing.



*Planting up Lavinia walk*

I have a team of 3 full time staff plus one apprentice, no volunteers. We are committed to training, a long time passion of mine, and rather than volunteers we take a lot of Reaseheath students on work experience which works well for both parties. An exciting new development is that in the autumn of 2020 we started hosting RHS Practical Levels 2 and 3 courses from Reaseheath. Every week we host two student groups, one from each course and this, despite the COVID situation, has started really positively. We have thus become one of the College's off campus centres and one of my longer term aims is that both practical and theoretical RHS courses can be run from Cholmondeley. I firmly believe that the best way to deliver land based

education is from the land itself, and our longer term thinking not only includes horticulture, but also conservation and environmental and woodland management.

We are still forging ahead with a host of projects this year including: remodelling the garden entrance around the Temple Garden; creating new vistas; re-designing the top terrace borders; adding borders in The Glade, creating a rock garden extension in the Temple Garden; and most exciting of all we are starting to lay out foundations for a completely new Rose Garden next to the existing one in the heart of the garden.

The team has coped well during the lockdowns. We are very fortunate to have been able to carry on throughout, and without public distractions it has been an extremely productive year. The trick has been to balance the workload whilst working in isolation and keeping the team positively engaged during this difficult year. But as we have so many exciting things going on I think that working in the garden has been highly beneficial to the team, collectively and individually.

I have been really fortunate to work in highly diverse gardens which have offered completely different experiences. And better still I have worked with some really good people who continue to inspire me from experience. Special thanks must go to Eric Rudman,



*Barry Grain with the camellias*

Johnny and Jean Johnson, Clifford Johns, Les Armstrong and Sam Youd, for making the journey so far as good as it has been.

**Barry Grain**

**Photos Barry Grain and Barbara Moth**

*I'm really grateful to Barry Grain for giving up his time to write about his career and provide photos. Cholmondeley Castle Gardens will re-open from 1<sup>st</sup> April. Their new website is well worth a look*

<https://cholmondeleycastle.com>

## Martin Fish – Judging with the RHS



*A Gold Award for the Barbados Horticultural Society exhibit at Chelsea*

In February Martin Fish gave us a fascinating zoom talk. He began by telling us about his own career. He hails from Nottinghamshire and has spent his whole life in horticulture. After an apprenticeship he worked for the Parks Department before being appointed Head Gardener at Rufford Abbey in the Dukeries of Nottinghamshire when he was only 21! In his mid-20s he bought a nursery and ran it for 20 years before moving to Yorkshire 12 years ago. For his first 8 years in Yorkshire Martin ran the Harrogate Flower Show.

He is now essentially freelance; he enjoys writing for a number of gardening magazines and broadcasting on BBC local radio stations as well as working for the RHS.

He is Chair of the 'Tender Ornamental Plants Committee', a member of their important 'Garden Committee' which embraces all the RHS gardens, and of course, is an experienced RHS judge at many of the Flower Shows. Martin and his wife, Jill, have their own  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre garden which they have developed as an 'all year garden' with summer colour, lawns, pathways, winter structure and a productive vegetable garden. Jill is a hands-on gardener and also a brilliant cook. Martin and Jill are co-authors of the book 'Gardening on the Menu' published by 2QT in 2017.



*Paddles used by RHS Judges*

After the personal introduction Martin gave us a behind-the-scenes account of the judging process which is taken seriously and aims to be uniform across all RHS shows. When new judges present themselves for accreditation they first of all shadow experienced judges before

completing a training programme which is offered once a year. Accreditation is for 3 years for all judges; re-accreditation then takes place if judges wish to continue. Most judges work either in the floral marquees/pavilions or out in the show gardens. Martin's judging is mainly of exhibits in the floral marquees but, he does have experience of judging show gardens too. In both situations the end result is one of 5 awards: gold, silver-gilt, silver, bronze or 'no award'. Awards are decided by panels of judges and agreed by moderating judges. Martin described and illustrated the process of judging exhibits in the floral marquees in some detail and with reference to several specific examples.



*Plantagogo Heuchera exhibit at Chelsea, awarded Gold*

For instance, at the Chelsea Flower Show, which opens to members on a Tuesday, 'goods' are delivered and displays assembled from early on the preceding Sunday. Most exhibits are completed by mid-Sunday afternoon and judges can benefit from wandering around informally, on their own, making preliminary notes. Judging begins in earnest at 7am on Monday. There are around 100 exhibitors at Chelsea and 6 or 7 judging panels each with 5 judges. Panels are allocated groups of exhibits for judging. One senior judge acts as Chair of the panel and an RHS official is assigned as panel secretary. Exhibits are judged according to 3 equally weighted criteria: the quality of the plants in the exhibit; the overall impression created by the display; the work needed to produce the exhibit from the initial growth of plants to their display at the show, i.e. endeavour. Judging panels assess exhibits with paddles, in much the same way as the judges on *Strictly Come Dancing*. The numerical equivalents from best to poorest are: 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0. 11 or 12 points across the 3 criteria are needed for a gold award, 10 for a silver-gilt, 8 for a silver etc. At the same time as the judging panels are working, 4 moderating judges individually view all the exhibits, and record their assessments based on the same 3 criteria.

When judging is completed, panels meet with the moderators to compare marks. Agreement on an exhibit seals its award, but disagreements need further discussion and maybe further voting. Martin thought that moderation did tend to level out the awards both within a show and across different shows.



*A spring garden at Chelsea Flower Show*

Martin showed several examples of gold winning exhibits including the tropical plant exhibit brought to Chelsea by the Barbados Horticultural Society and the *Heuchera* exhibit at Chelsea by Plantagogo Nursery in Cheshire. Martin also explained that good labels were essential, i.e. labels must blend well with the exhibit, be uniform in style and use correctly spelt botanical names; inclusion of the common name is optional.

In contrast, show gardens are judged by panels of 7 who are qualified to assess the 9 criteria. Martin illustrated and discussed the merits of several winning show gardens including a pleasing spring garden and a modern garden with a lawn – a rare sight at any garden show! And, to illustrate the ultra-modern conceptual gardens at the Tatton Flower Show, he included one example receiving publicity from the media and a celebrity. The final decision the judges make is deciding the 'Best in Show' award. This is chosen from the best exhibit or show garden selected by each of the judging panels.



*A modern garden with an enhancing lawn at Chelsea*

Monday is not only judging day at Chelsea, it's also the Press Day and the day when celebrities and Royalty visit. Martin spent some time telling us about the gardening interests of celebrities who regularly visit Chelsea and the protocol of arrival and likes associated with their royal visitors. For instance, the Queen is always last to arrive and her group always spends an hour with an RHS guide viewing exhibits in the Floral Pavilion and some of the show gardens. After that she joins other members

of 'The Firm', plus judges and guides, for a well-earned reception.

Before the Chelsea Flower Show opens to members on Tuesday RHS staff will have placed the award certificates on the exhibits ready to be discovered by exhibitors. Judges are allocated exhibits or gardens where they will provide exhibitors with feedback about the award they have received. i.e. where they had lost marks and how it



*A conceptual garden at Tatton Flower Show*



*A naturalistic exhibit of Sarracenia at Malvern*

might have gained more. As we know, this is sometimes done 'live' with the TV cameras present!

Martin clearly loves judging at RHS flower shows as well as meeting fellow gardeners and visitors. His Zoom talk was pleasantly informative, well illustrated and enjoyable to watch.

**Kath Gee**

**Photos courtesy of Martin Fish**

## Congleton Park – the Public Park “where Nature has done so much”

When Congleton Town Council decided to create a public park on land they already owned, they turned to **Edward Kemp**. In 1869-70 local newspapers reported: “The Town Council have engaged Mr. Kemp of Birkenhead Park, one of the ablest landscape gardeners in the kingdom, to come and examine the capabilities of the grounds.”

Kemp duly visited Congleton and “spoke in the most eulogistic terms about the chosen site where nature has done so much”. A few months later: “Mr. Kemp proposes to lay out the Town Wood in walks, and to form the land between it and the river Dane into recreation and ornamentals grounds”.



*1873: Ordnance Survey map*

Construction work on the 24 acre site was carried out by the Town Surveyor. Kemp advised on the choice and siting of trees and shrubs. The cost of £ 3,000 was raised by public subscription. In 1871 the park was opened with a civic procession, bands and a rural fete.



*1871: The first image of the new park*

So successful was the park that soon other features and amenities were added, like the landing stage and shelter by the river where rowing boats were for hire. Kemp's plans for the park were lost in a fire in the Town Hall. However, we can discover his design and planting instructions in the many features remaining. All were refurbished in the park's restoration of 2002-05.

**Promenade:** Kemp's main design feature is the wide promenade. It winds along the foot of Town Wood separating the dense woodland from the open parkland.



The steep slope is held back with rockwork and evergreen plants and shrubs. Stone piers mark the entries to Town Wood.



**Town Wood** is mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was granted to the burgesses in 1272 and handed over to the Corporation in 1583. In ancient times, the woodland consisted of mostly ash and oak. Today sycamore and beech predominate among the 14 tree species. The understory of laurel, hazel, holly and yew was introduced when the park was created. Now oaks are being planted again.

Kemp designed the **grid of paths** in the woodland to create unexpected twists and views.



Steps and paths lead to the highest point of Town Wood from where views range to the open parkland and the town beyond.

The viewpoint used to be a mock fort with a Russian cannon captured during the Crimean war. The council bought it for £30. It fired a salute at the Park's opening festival. In 1940 it was given to the war effort.



At the promenade's northern end it turns south and continues as a **circuit walk** along the river Dane. The turning point is marked with an ash tree. A wildflower meadow lies below.



Lined with mature horse chestnut and lime trees, the walk leads south to the bowling green.



Looking across Kemp's **oval bowling green** at trees planted by the promenade; their foliage colours contrast with the woodland, and evergreen trees provide interest in winter.



The circuit walk shown on this 1910 postcard continues along the river Dane. Horse chestnut trees provide shade.



The circuit walk today - only one line of trees remains, and the river bank is fenced for safety.



The circuit walk leads towards the main entrance and the vivid colours of mass bedding and floral designs. These were popular in Victorian times but are now a rare horticultural art.



Congleton town is fortunate in having its own horticultural team provided by Streetscape Services.

Their skilled gardeners and apprentices raise thousands of plants in the propagation unit at the westernmost part of the park (but not in diagonal beds as in 1873). They work closely with the 'Friends of Congleton Park'.

During the park's restoration, the beds of the Jubilee Gardens of 1953 were redesigned in patterns recommended by Edward Kemp in his book 'How to Lay out a Garden' (1864). Flower beds and paths lead to the remains of the town's medieval market cross. Since 2008, Congleton Park has won the Green Flag Award every year and is listed Grade II by Historic England.



Time for a rest in the rebuilt pavilion café? The restored rock fountain of 1886 marks the start of the promenade.



**Barbara Wright**

Photos CGT Research team  
Historic images courtesy of

[www.cheshireimagebank.org.uk](http://www.cheshireimagebank.org.uk)  
[www.friendsofcongletonpark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofcongletonpark.co.uk)

## RHS Lindley Library

We all know the Royal Horticultural Society through its gardens, shows and publications and are eagerly awaiting the opening of RHS Bridgewater in May. But it also has a vast resource of publications, documents and art works in its collections, spanning over 500 years of

garden history, art and science. They hold exhibitions at the Lindley Library in London, but also at Wisley and Harlow Carr. We have reviewed their resources in previous editions of the newsletter ('A Day in London' January 2018 and 'Collecting in the Clouds' April 2018).



During the Lockdown the library buildings are closed, but they are offering ebooks for members and online exhibitions featuring highlights from their collections, currently covering daffodils, dahlias, orchid art, apples and the healing garden, among others. But perhaps the most fascinating is Gardening by the Book, gardening tips and techniques told through 12 remarkable gardening manuals from their collection. It includes

gems such as *'The Profitable Arte of Gardening'* by Thomas Hill (c.1558), *'The City Gardener'* by Thomas Fairchild (1840), *'The Ladies Flower Garden'* by Jane Webb Loudon (1840) and *'The Wild Garden'* by William Robinson (1870).

It's worth a look <https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections>

Sue Eldridge

## Why is this here?

In the historic landscape of Marbury Country Park you may notice a short length of privet hedge on the left, as you approach the canal bridge on Marbury Lane.



The postcard below shows the hedge in front of Marbury Lodge and the toll gate on the lane in about 1920.



Volunteers began excavations behind the hedge in 2018. The clearance of brambles, small trees and soil revealed the concrete and brick foundations of the lodge.



There were ridge, roof and floor tiles amongst the rubble and the remains of a garden path to the rear of the



cottage, where volunteers also uncovered a brick-lined cesspit. There is still a large slab of red sandstone under the hedge, probably part of one of the gate posts. Maps indicate that the lodge was built between 1874 and 1897, when the garden path led to an enclosure. In 1908 this enclosure was marked as a nursery.



Descendants of the last residents of the cottage remember it as an orchard before the owners, ICI, demolished it around 1960.

You might see indicators of Marbury's more recent history elsewhere in the park. The tarmac roads and raised tracks date back to 1942 when U.S. servicemen first arrived at Marbury Hall Camp during World War 2. Fruit trees and raspberry canes were probably introduced after the war, when prisoners established allotments in the camp. These allotments became a small market garden supplying fresh produce to the families of ICI workers, who were residents of the former POW huts until the mid-1960s.

Marbury Lodge is now the name given to the oak-framed shelter, which was erected in the park in 2011.

(Maps of 1897 and 1908 from National Library of Scotland)

Mary Jeeves  
Research and Recording

# Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens

## The role of The Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trusts

In March 2021 Margie Hoffnung talked about The Gardens Trust and county Gardens Trusts via zoom.

Margie is a Conservation Officer, working part-time, with The Gardens Trust. Her role involves considering difficult, major or sensitive planning applications; summarizing and liaising with the relevant County Gardens Trust; liaising with other amenity services, such as Historic England; and getting involved in pre-application discussions which can be extremely helpful.

Every report on a designed landscape produced by the Research and Recording group of Cheshire Gardens Trust is lodged with the Cheshire Heritage Environment Record and this group must be consulted by any planning applicant under the heading 'History' on the application. This does not always happen and not every designed landscape has had a report produced, yet!

Our Gardens Trust keeps its eye open for planning applications that may impact on a designed landscape and a submission is made to the local planning authority as appropriate. If it is a major application, then we can rely upon the support of the Conservation Officer at The Gardens Trust.

Margie went on to detail all the types of cases that require a response from her department, giving an example of each.

### Neglect

Where there is a genuine lack of money, neglect can quickly happen. The example given was a Registered Park and Garden that had been designed by Capability Brown. Following a discussion with the landowner a compromise was agreed.

### Change of Use, Road Widening Schemes, Renewable Energy

These can happen where there is a conflict of interest in the community. At Panshanger Park (below),



a company wanted to extend its gravel extraction business, necessary for so many building projects, but the landscape had been designed by Brown and Repton. However, the Brown landscape had already disappeared, and the intention was to remove the Repton landscape. The outcome of this was to register the landscape on the Heritage at Risk register, which offered some protection.

Another site received an application to widen a road to relieve traffic congestion, but it would have cut the site in two and destroyed it geographically and aesthetically. Applications to build solar panel farms or wind turbines are also conflicting the community. We understand the need to end the use of fossil fuels, but should it be at the cost of losing a designed landscape?



TOURISM



### Tourism, Key Designed Views Lost, Vandalism

Sites, such as Warwick Castle or Tatton Park, which depend upon attracting visitors for the income required to preserve the building, are often putting in planning applications for attractions which will creep into the designed landscape. This may impact upon the designed view, such as the application opposite Hampton Court Palace, which will destroy the view from the palace across the river. Many sites suffer vandalism, especially if they are not being developed quickly enough or if they attract nighttime visitors, such as Daresbury Hall, near Warrington, which was destroyed internally by fire.



VANDALISM



### Tricky Ones, Non-Consultation

Some sites have covenants, which prevent the owners from using commercial activities to provide income. This happened at Painswick Park, Gloucestershire, a Grade II\* site, which could not have an adequate visitor centre, café or facilities for visitors within the house boundary. Instead, the only suitable development was virgin parkland. In this case, the Gardens Trust was able to support with advice.

Newark Park, Gloucestershire, a National Trust property, wanted to construct a playground, but in what was considered by the Gardens Trust, an unsuitable location. Another location was suggested but this was rejected, and the application was approved by the local council and was built. Landscaping is going ahead but Margie felt there seems to have been a disregard place for the spirit of place.

### Other issues

Margie talked about Non-Designated Heritage Assets, which are precious locally. There are many examples of these, where the landscape and wildlife are at risk, but it has just been announced, since Margie's talk, that grants have been allocated to fund this research and Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East are the recipient of a grant (see below). This should enable the local authorities to identify and protect these sites and will provide a unified approach across the county, whilst



Stockley Park, Uxbridge  
Registered Grade II  
August 21<sup>st</sup> 2020

Subject of current  
planning application,  
paused due to new listing  
before a decision could be  
made



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### CONSERVATION VALUE OF CGT RESEARCH

Parlington, Yorkshire



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allowing the community to put forward sites for local listing.

Margie repeatedly spoke of the importance of the county Garden Trusts in identifying sites at risk. When you are out on a walk, or reading your local newspaper, keep your eyes open for developments or proposed developments that will impact upon the area in which you live. You can get in touch with Cheshire Gardens Trust, with photographs if you can, via the website and your information will be welcomed, especially as the old county of Cheshire is now split into six authorities.

Margie has an onerous but important job. From April she will cover 32 County Gardens Trusts, instead of 36! There are huge pressures upon our land as it is vital to find homes for our ever-growing population and to provide the accompanying infrastructure, but it is important if we value our green and pleasant land, to at least try to preserve as much of it as we can. The current situation has proved how relevant it is to our mental health to have spaces for us to visit that are calming and soothing.

Margie concluded with a quote from William Morris: "Every man who has a cause at heart must act as if it depended on him".

Jackie Cawte

Images courtesy of Margie Hoffnung

## Funding boost for Conservation in Cheshire



Bostock Hall near Winsford

Late last year Cheshire West and Cheshire East submitted a bid for government funding to support the local listing of heritage assets. These are buildings, landscapes and monuments that are of local importance and contribute significantly to local heritage, but do not merit national designation (listed building and registered landscapes). Photos give examples of these sites. Planning guidance stresses that all local authorities should maintain such lists, but few have the resources to do so.

In February we heard that Cheshire's bid was successful, and the good news is that working with Cheshire Gardens Trust is a specific part of the project.

Merseyside and Greater Manchester were also



*Birtles Hall near Alderley*

Successful in obtaining funding.

One of the first tasks is for Cheshire Conservation Officers to develop criteria for listing, and then to set up an Exegesis platform for entering assets. This will be made publicly accessible so that anyone will be able to put forward a landscape or building for inclusion. The submissions will be reviewed and confirmed (or not) on a regular basis. One of the good things about this project is that it will provide a unified approach across Cheshire.

It is considered that many of the sites we have researched are likely to meet the criteria and could be added straight away. There is recognition that both authorities lack proper local lists for historic landscapes and there is concern that this omission be addressed. Once a historic landscape is locally listed, it will be added to a landscape layer on the Geographic Information

System (GIS). This is really important as the GIS allows planning officers to check who should be notified about a planning application. At the moment Cheshire Gardens Trust is often notified simply because this information is missing from the system. Planning officers have the power to refuse an application on the grounds of harm to a non designated heritage asset.

News of this project is really encouraging. After all this time it does feel as if we are making progress in raising awareness of historic landscapes and their conservation.

The project should move swiftly as the money is just for this year. If you have any questions do get in touch -

Barbara Moth 01606 46228

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*Cogshall Hall, near Northwich*

**Text and photos Barbara Moth**

## The Future of CGT: Amber Flag Warning!!!

For some time, in fact for several years, I have been encouraging members to help in the day to day running and management of the Trust but with limited success. We have been very fortunate to have gained four new(ish) members on the Council of Management (CoM): Margaret Blowey, David Cash, Gordon Darlington and Nick Lightfoot. Their joining was timely as we had recently lost some members of the team and their contributions have been invaluable. We were very fortunate that Sue Eldridge took on the editorial role of CGT Newsletter after having been so successful in the hands of Joy Uings. Along with these five, there are many more members who contribute to the Trust but are not necessarily members of the CoM. Volunteers help with research and recording our historic parks and gardens, others help with events by pre-site visits, arranging bookings, speakers and refreshments. Everyone is a volunteer and as with most voluntary organisations, it is often the same people that we rely on all of the time.

But notice has been given by several key people that they wish to step down/resign and unless we can find replacements I do fear for the future of the Trust. Joy and I were involved in starting the Trust and have



*A Research and Recording team visit*

supported it for 18 years; Joy as Company Secretary for 15 Years, and Treasurer for 12 years. I have been chairing since the start except for two years when we experimented with yearly appointments. Both Joy and I wish to make it clear that we will resign from the CoM as of 30 Sept 2021. Joy wishes to spend more time on her research, and I believe that it is past time for a change of chairmanship. Both of us will continue to be involved in the Trust in some form, but at a reduced level. Barbara Moth has been coordinating a team of Research and Recording volunteers for ten years and feels it is time

for someone else to take the group forward. And lastly, Sue Eldridge has given us warning that she will step down as Newsletter Editor within the forthcoming year. Thankfully Margaret Blowey, Events, hasn't handed in her notice yet!



*Visit to Ashton Grange*

As you can see, we are facing a serious crisis in terms of support in key roles but also across all areas. Research and Recording, Planning and Conservation, and Events all need additional volunteers to ensure the successful operation of the Trust; the Events group would particularly welcome someone with good IT skills. At the management level, we are facing a serious issue. The current number on the Council of Management is at its minimum legal number of seven. Should we fall below this number, the Trust will in effect be operating illegally and should be closed.

Each year at the AGM we ask for volunteers across the range of our activities. Some require a level of professional knowledge such as Conservation and Planning, while others such as Research and Recording can be supported with in-house training. The role of Treasurer and Company Secretary (2 separate roles) are not onerous or highly time consuming. Volunteers to help with events need enthusiasm and organisational

skills. The Newsletter certainly requires IT skills, and a person or persons who enjoy writing and talking to contributors.

There is great personal satisfaction for those directly involved by helping to understand, explain, enjoy, conserve and protect Cheshire's rich heritage of Parks and Gardens. My concern is the future, and I fear that the Trust will not have a future unless there are new volunteers to take over critical positions and we increase the number of volunteers in all areas. However, we should reflect and take credit for our successes: Cheshire Gardens Trust is highly regarded nationally for its regional work. It has been successful in research and recording of historic landscapes, commenting on planning applications, student bursary, publications, garden shows, visits, speakers and a broad range of activities. Our membership has been steady, nine new members have joined recently as a result of our on-line presentations. And I am very pleased to say that we are economically healthy.

Perhaps I am feeling rather despondent in these gloomy days, but the Trust can and should have a bright future but it does depend on you as members to support it. This is an opportunity for fresh faces, new ideas and a positive outlook to take the Trust forward. I am proposing a Zoom session in June to discuss ideas, answer questions and concerns. In the meantime, we have agreed that it would be helpful to have a small editorial group to support Sue Eldridge in the production of the newsletter, for example writing articles, commissioning pieces on particular topics or researching new areas. Please contact Sue Eldridge ([newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)) directly if you would like to talk this through. You will find further contact email addresses on the website and I truly hope that my rather downhearted message brings some positive results.

**Ed Bennis**

**Acting Chair, Cheshire Gardens Trust**

## Birkenhead Park Peoples' Garden – a World Heritage Site?



You will no doubt be aware that Birkenhead Park is a very special place with a remarkable history. It's already recognised as one of the UK's most important landscapes, being listed Grade I on Historic England's

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. However, Wirral Council as the Park's custodian, along with the hundreds of thousands of people who enjoy its delights every year, have been quite modest in sharing with those from further afield just how remarkable it is. If things go to plan that will change and Birkenhead Park Peoples' Garden will be recognised for its pioneering importance on the world stage.

It is reputed to be the World's first publicly funded



*Birkenhead park from above – a very special place*

municipal park, being created for the growing population of Birkenhead. It opened to the public in 1845 (and was officially opened by Lord Morpeth a couple of years later). It was a forerunner of the urban Public Parks Movement throughout the world and influenced the development of numerous parks, most famously Central Park in New York. For the 'new town' of Birkenhead, the Park was a key component in a much wider, and comprehensive, town planning scheme.

The Town Commissioners were certainly visionary, anticipating the rapidly growing urban population during the UK's Industrial Revolution. Birkenhead's new park would serve as an antidote to the poor living conditions commonly experienced in industrial cities at the time. And most significantly, it was to be wholly and freely accessible to all people regardless of their position in society. It has been referred to as the 'Peoples' Garden', and this is what it still is today as it continues to provide for the enjoyment, recreational and health needs of Wirral's communities.

Birkenhead's visionary municipal authorities followed through with these grand intentions by appointing Joseph Paxton, later most famously known for his Crystal Palace design at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London's

Hyde Park. He created a landscape masterpiece at Birkenhead Park, informed by his extensive experience of developing the gardens and estate of the Duke of Devonshire's Chatsworth House in Derbyshire. His 1844 plan, embodied in the irregularity of the lakes, the planting, earth modelling, rockwork, as well as in the wide range of architectural elements, is a work of art and excellence. Indeed, it laid down the key design principles that determined the development of urban parks for future generations.



*Tree lined path in Birkenhead Park*

Wirral Council's ambition, working alongside the Friends of Birkenhead Park, is to seek UNESCO's recognition of the Park as a World Heritage Site (WHS). If successful, the benefits are potentially enormous for Wirral and its communities. Not only would it help to protect and improve the management of this unique heritage asset for future generations, but would also result in heightened international awareness, increased community and civic pride, growth in the local visitor economy, and higher levels of inward investment and a significant positive impact on local regeneration.

**Rob Belcher, General Manager, Birkenhead Park**

## The Tudor Garden

This article covers only a small section of the vast amount of information conveyed by Jill Francis and David Marsh in the Gardens Trust lecture series on Tudor Gardens.

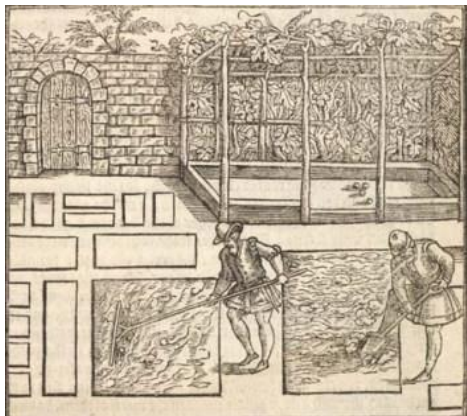
Gardens did not change overnight with the accession of Henry V11 in 1485 but house and garden building thrive when a country is stable. The Wars of the Roses had ended. The nobility no longer needed fortified castles and the scene was set for a building boom. By Elizabeth's reign new plants were being cultivated and foreign travel and travellers brought new plants and gardening techniques. Perhaps the most significant change of all was the advent of the printed book.

After 1450 the printing press and the manufacture of paper in Europe, made it possible for many more readers to access all kinds of literature. 1300 pages a day could be produced and books from Europe, classical texts, pamphlets and broadsheets began to be translated and circulated. Printers encouraged the writing of books in the vernacular to encourage more purchasers.

The first gardening books began to emerge in the early 1500s. These were classical texts and the advice was more appropriate for farmers. Advice for growing plants in the Mediterranean may not have been ideal information for the north of England!

Herbals were not new but could now be circulated to a

wider readership. These, also, were translated from classical treatises, or were a compendium of existing literature. They were about the usage of plants rather than how to grow them. In 1551 William Turner produced *'The New Herbal'*, the first herbal "written in English by an Englishman". The famous Gerard's *'Herbal'* did not appear till 1597. It included some new plants but was not an original work.



From *The Gardeners Labyrinth*, Thomas Hill

The first book on how to garden was by Thomas Hill and titled *'The Profitable Arte of Gardening'*. It came out in 1563, followed by *'The Gardener's Labyrinth'* in 1577. The earliest books had few illustrations and these were supplied by the printer, not the author. Often they had nothing to do with the text. In 1572 a book which did have relevant and original illustrations, was translated from the work of a French monk. *'A Booke of the Arte and Maner Howe to Plant and Graffe all Sortes of Trees'*, had section headings such as, 'How to water plantes when they waxe drie' and, 'How ye must proyne or cut your trees'. In 1599 aptly named Richard Gardiner wrote on the growing of kitchen garden plants, "Greatly for the helpe and comfort of poore people" (who could, probably, neither afford nor read it!).

We cannot know how much of the advice was followed but there is evidence that the books were well used.

The Tudor garden was not, primarily, about flowers and was not seasonal. It was about prestige, uniformity and control. As ever the country's elite set the trends. Knot gardens were popular and the intricate designs could be echoed in plasterwork, embroidery and carved into house and garden walls.



*Richmond Palace by Wyngaerde 1562*

When Henry V11 had to leave London during an epidemic he escaped to the ancient palace of Sheen. When this burnt down he had it rebuilt in stone, with a garden and renamed it "Richmont". From his private

apartments in the palace he could walk out on to the roof of a two storey gallery. Such galleries, open at ground level but roofed above, were known in Europe but new to England. They allowed a view of the garden from above, protection from rain and kept the sun from darkening the ladies prized white skin. The gallery edged a private garden, quite separate from areas used for growing food crops. The garden was designed in squares in which heraldic beasts were laid out in lead and coloured sand. A single storey gallery led directly to the chapel. Religion remained important but the religious symbolism seen in the medieval garden changed to that of wealth and status.

Henry V111 built several extravagant palaces himself and when Wolsey fell out of favour he took on Wolsey's grand houses, including Hampton Court, on which he spent large sums of money. Having destroyed all signs of Wolsey, he installed tennis courts, a bowling green and a double height gallery. The garden was divided into hedged compartments. Sometimes a gap would be left to give a vista through the hedge. There was a "great round arbour" on top of a large mount from which to view the garden. 180 timber posts were installed, painted green and white and topped with carved heraldic beasts, greyhounds, dragons, lions, harts, etc,



*Re-imagined Tudor Garden at Hampton Court, with heraldic beasts* both Yorkist and Lancastrian symbols to show a desirable lineage. The money for his extravagance came from the monasteries he had dissolved. Some of the monastic buildings, such as Lacock Abbey, were bought by the new aristocracy, people who had supported the Tudors. Lacock cost its new owner £782.00. A growing gentry class and wealthy merchants also built new homes, sometimes using monastery stone and new houses meant new gardens.

After power struggles during the reign of boy king Edward and the upheaval of Catholic Queen Mary, building resumed, not by the monarch but by courtiers, keen to impress her and hoping she would visit them, although their efforts might lead to bankruptcy and the queen might not come.

William Cecil, Elizabeth's chief minister, loved gardens, designed his own and employed Gerard as a gardener. A plan of his London garden has survived. This garden had limited space but still comprised a kitchen garden, an

orchard, a bowling green and a garden divided into compartments. The orchard was laid out in a quincunx pattern. The bowling alley was hedged, possibly to shield it from neighbours. There was a wall on which one could walk, a snail spiral mount and a tree in each corner. The garden at Theobalds, his country retreat, was “dressed to impress.” The visitor passed through a series of archways, passing increasingly grand buildings before reaching the house itself. Visitors recorded that the garden was “encompassed with a ditch of water”. It was a grand “ditch”, as one could row on it through the garden, to view the variety of “plants, columns and pyramids”. The knot gardens had white marble fountains in each one and a central fountain sprayed unwary passers-by. There were model water mills, a summer house painted with Roman emperors a banqueting house and many more delights.

Banqueting houses, reached by walking through the garden, were a feature of many houses. These were not for banquets but dainties after the meal, a grand version of moving from the dining room to the lounge for coffee and petit fours. They too, allowed appreciation of the



*Burghley House, built for William Cecil, from Jones's Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen 1829*

garden from a high viewpoint, as did the popular mount. The queen had a suite of rooms at Theobalds and Cecil was not bankrupted.

The Gardens Trust series has now moved on to Jacobean gardens, with more extravagances and watery delights to come.

**Jenny Wood**

**Photos and other images courtesy of Wikipedia and National Archive**

## What's On

You will have received a lot of information about forthcoming zoom events, including Cheshire Gardens Trust zoom talks: <http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk/?Garden-Visits-and-Talks>

And a whole series of Gardens Trust Talks <https://thegardenstrust.org/events-archive/?events=gardenstrust>

But I thought you might like to hear about some gardens and activities open.

### Cheshire gardens

Many gardens in Cheshire have remained open or have re-opened over the last few months: Arley Hall and Gardens, Biddulph Grange, Dorothy Clive, Dunham Massey, Grappenhall Heys, Lyme Park, Ness Botanic Gardens, Quarry Bank Mill, Quinta Arboretum, Hare Hill and Abbeywood.

Other gardens have been closed but are re-opening in April or May:

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens – open from 1<sup>st</sup> April  
Adlington Hall – open Sunday afternoons from 2<sup>nd</sup> May to 29<sup>th</sup> August  
Capesthorpe Hall – reopening from 2<sup>nd</sup> April, then

Sundays and Mondays

Bluebell Cottage Gardens – open from 14<sup>th</sup> April

Norton Priory garden and estate open from 16<sup>th</sup> April

### National Garden Scheme

The Yellow Book is available and more gardens are now open for visiting. If you can check and book online <https://ngs.org.uk>. You can also purchase a copy of the Yellow Book via JEM 01483 204418 or you may be able to find a copy of the Cheshire leaflet at local garden centres. But best to check before travelling.

### Plant Hunters' Fairs

Sat 17<sup>th</sup> April 10-4, Arley Hall & Gardens CW9 6NA

Sun 25<sup>th</sup> April 10-5, Cholmondeley Castle Gardens SY14 8AH

Sun/Mon 2/3<sup>rd</sup> May, 10-5 Weston Park TF11 8LE

Sun 9<sup>th</sup> May 10-4, Adlington Hall SK10 4LF

Sun 16<sup>th</sup> May, 10-4pm, Norton Priory WA7 1SX

Fri 21 Sat 22 May 10-5, Dorothy Clive Garden, TF9 4EU

Sun 6<sup>th</sup> June 10-4, Bramall Hall Stockport, SK7 3NX

But check before you travel and pre book if necessary.

<https://www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk/index.htm>

**Editor**

Copy date for July newsletter is 30<sup>th</sup> June

**Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email [newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)**