



## Burton Manor

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### Future events

- Cheshire Gardens Trust zoom talks:
- 1<sup>st</sup> February “The Côte d’Azur - the English dream of paradise” Stephanie Knoblich
- 15<sup>th</sup> March, “ Plas Cadnant, Anglesey”, Anthony Tavernor
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# Burton Manor Walled Garden



One of the overgrown greenhouses

Ten years ago, the Friends of Burton Manor College, together with College staff, applied to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for help in restoring one of two glasshouses that had fallen into serious disrepair.

The bid was successful. A volunteer working party was formed, now nearly 50 strong, and work began. The Walled Garden resembled an overgrown bomb site. The restoration of one of the glasshouses was completed two years later, receiving an award from Cheshire West and Chester Civic Awards for Design and Conservation. The main work now is to maintain and improve the visitor experience.

Burton Manor Garden is an early 20th century formal garden, Grade II listed, designed by Thomas Hayton Mawson. Following a simple design plan, the Walled Garden is laid out to provide beds for both fruit and vegetables as well as for herbaceous perennials. Henry Neville Gladstone, one-time owner of the estate, would have enjoyed the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables and also cut flowers for the house. Chrysanthemums and dahlias provide the bulk of our cut flowers, supplemented by blooms grown in a small bed by the rear wall. In the glasshouse, the now re-named Friends of Burton Manor Gardens grow a few ornamentals and have space for propagation (see below).



Seasonal bedding is always a feature by the garden entrance. Summer and autumn colour predominates in the five flower beds where many perennials provide interest well into autumn. Several asters have been donated by our friends at Ness Botanic Gardens. A group of the giant Canary Island bugloss, *Echium pininana*, astonish visitors.

Leaving the Walled Garden via the arched gateway and crossing the drive, visitors enter the Sunken Garden (see front cover), a cool restful area where birds flit from tree to tree and scented deciduous rhododendrons add spring fragrance. *Rhododendron luteum* forms a border on the south side and, lower down in beds surrounding the cross paths are examples of Ness-raised hybrid rhododendrons, later flowering and selected for fragrance and autumn leaf colour. On the opposite north side, a bed of pink Ballerina roses flowers from June into August.



*Rhododendron 'Burton'* from a painting by Joan Wilkinson, Ness Botanical Artists

The large, purple beech was planted in 1815 to commemorate the victory at Waterloo during the Napoleonic Wars. Sadly, the tree is showing its age and may have to be felled before long. Underplanting this elderly tree is the ivy-leaved cyclamen, *Cyclamen hederifolium*, self-seeding happily in the shade.

The parts of the garden most recently brought into cultivation include a small Winter Garden, an Ornamental Grass bed, a collection of shrubs underplanted with bulbs and ground cover, and the Gladstone Rock Walk. This section comes under the general heading, the Perimeter Path. Those who walk this roughly circular walk are rewarded by splendid views of the Dee Estuary and the Clywd Hills beyond. Under the Directorship of developer Peter Betts of the newly formed Burton Manor Restoration Company the removal of a number of large Sycamore trees which, as self-sown seedlings had been allowed to dominate the area, was undertaken. Heavy equipment was brought in with a resultant compaction of the soil necessitating

laborious efforts to overcome the poor penetration of vital oxygen to future root growth. Once the area had been cleaned, it was seeded with grass and now provides a pleasant area for quiet contemplation before resuming the walk past the Winter Garden.

Planting in the Winter Garden has been done along traditional lines with coloured stems of willow and dogwood together with *Daphne bholua*, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, *Hamamelis* 'Arnold Promise' and *Skimmia japonica*. In time *Colchicum*, *Crocus*, *Galanthus* and *Anemone* will provide further interest but these will need a while to show their true worth.



*Crocus pulchellus* 'Zephyr'

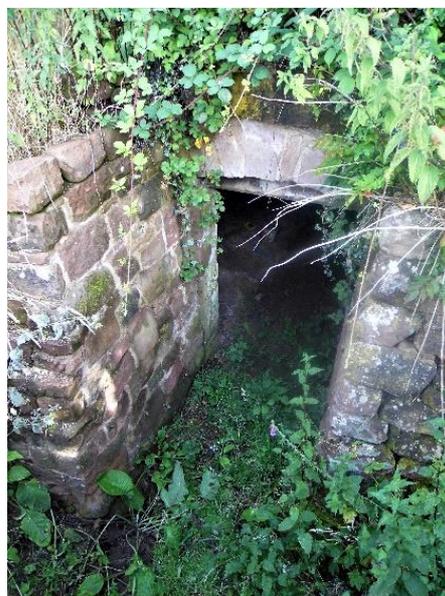
Just down from the Winter Garden, but on the left, is the Ornamental Grass bed on a well-drained site exposed to the wind. This too will provide colour and movement later in the year and, of course, coloured foliage and striking flower heads. On the right of the path is the new shrub bed, South Bank. *Rhododendron* and *Camellia* now predominate together with *Crinodendron*, *Enkianthus* and *Amelanchier*. *Trillium*, *Cardiocrinum* and *Roscoea* provide further interest and *Persicaria bistorta*, *Ajuga* and *Tiarella* will cover the ground to keep weeds at bay.



*Crinodendron hookerianum*

The Perimeter Path continues downhill past the Wildflower Meadow and the Ice House, to turn right up the Gladstone Rock Walk. Unfortunately, the condition of the Ice House is giving cause for concern. Firstly, the

old lime mortar is beginning to degrade which may lead to some of the roof stones falling and, secondly, seedling trees had become established on the area immediately above the scheduled monument. Rounding the corner near the bottom the visitor enters a typical Victorian garden feature of a sandstone paved path leading up between a jumble of rocks giving a shallow canyon effect. The 100 metre path leads up towards a flight of sandstone steps and bears right to rejoin the Perimeter Path.



*The Ice House*

A considerable amount of work was needed to bring this area back into shape, following removal of the seedling sycamores mentioned above. Today this work, which began in earnest at the start of 2012, is on-going and likely to continue. The walk inherited hundreds of double snowdrops which make a wonderful display in early spring to be followed by *Corydalis solida* collected in woods near Budapest and inserted among the sandstone rocks. *Tulipa sprengeri* with its scarlet flowers and *Tricyrtis macrantha* ssp *macranthopsis*, only occurring on the Japanese island of Honshu, also make lovely displays.



*Sandstone paved path*

Thanks are due to the ongoing support of the developer, Peter Betts and his team who have given so much in so many ways to help with the restoration of

those parts of the estate managed by the Friends, to the Friends who have offered encouragement throughout and, of course, to the hard-working team of volunteers without whom none of this would have been possible.

**Text and photos Peter Cunnington, Lead Horticulturalist, Burton Manor Gardens**

Thanks to Peter for providing this article, which also appeared in the Winter 2021 edition of *The Gentian*, Ness Botanic Gardens newsletter.

The garden is open daily from 10am to approx. 6pm. Further information can be found on the Friends website

<https://friendsofburtonmanorgardens.chessck.co.uk>

Burton Manor, its garden and its ice house, are all listed Grade II on The [National Heritage List for England](#).

You can read about the history of the park and garden on the Historic England website at [BURTON MANOR, Non Civil Parish - 1001422 | Historic England](#).

## Norton Priory Walled Garden



As the rain cleared on 19<sup>th</sup> October, CGT members walked down from Norton Priory through the woods to the rabbit gate of the walled garden. The 2 ½ acre garden was built in the eighteenth century after the Brooke family received compensation for allowing the new Bridgewater Canal to cut through their estate.

Our guide, Anthea Mills, led us through and around the garden with interest and surprises round every corner and we were able to absorb a feel of autumn with seasonal colour and mellow hues. Although summer plants had faded, there were seed heads and patches of colour to enjoy, such as the annuals in the vegetable garden (below).



The trees of the National Collection of quinces (genus *Cydonia*) were spread throughout the garden but the fruits had been picked a couple of weeks previously for an apple and quince event. A large tree by the herb

garden still had a few fruits hanging on high up and there were displays to show the different varieties.



*Quinces on display*

Anthea gave us detailed information to bring the garden to life, from the early days of the Head Gardener and his apprentices to present day weddings held near the crown green croquet lawn and the trails set up to follow golden apples and artworks. In the area of the early glasshouses Netflix had temporarily glazed around the pergola for filming 'The Irregulars' which had enabled the fig by the wall to put on vigorous growth.



The original Head Gardener's cottage (above) was tucked round a corner where it overlooked his private garden with clipped hedging and dahlias. Inside the cottage there was a sound installation of 'birds and

bees' and displays including dried herbs and *Hydrangea* flowers. Outside, there were tall stalks with the large green seedheads of Himalayan lilies (*Cardiocrinum giganteum*), which had taken seven years to flower. Also striking were the vivid blue flowers of the Brazilian Glory Tree, *Tibouchina urvilleana* (below).



Another area that had retained the feel of the original garden was the rose garden bordering the long path down to the gate with the Brooke urn taking centre stage.

The garden is now closed for winter although Anthea



*The rose garden*

said that it has a magical feel when covered in frost. I think an autumn visit was quite special and I look forward to visiting again next summer. The group returned to Norton Priory for refreshments and a chance to see the museum and the moon installation. It was then time for me to return home carrying my bag of quinces to make the jelly.

**Janet Horne**

**Photos Jim Jeeves and Sue Eldridge**

*This was the last CGT visit of the season. The Walled Garden is now closed till the beginning of April, but the museum is open Friday to Tuesday 11am to 4pm*  
<https://www.nortonpriory.org>

## Alexandra Park, a King George's Field



Oak trees at the entrance to the park

Alexandra Park (above) is a small park in Stockton Heath, south Warrington. It lies immediately to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal.

In 1923, the land was just scrubland and was donated to Stockton Heath Parish Council by local brewers, Greenall, Whitley & Co Ltd. This was despite the fact that houses were being built all around the site, so was a generous act by the brewery.

According to the history drawn up by the Friends of Alexandra Park, not much was done with the land until 1936 when King George V died. In 1936, after the king's death, Sir Percy Vincent, the then Lord Mayor of London, formed a committee to determine a memorial to the

King that was not solely based on the idea of a statue. They arrived the same year at the concept of funding and erecting a single statue in London and setting up the King George's Fields Foundation with the aim:

*to promote and to assist in the establishment throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of playing fields for the use and enjoyment of the people.*

Each of the playing fields would be styled 'King George's Field' and be distinguished by heraldic panels or other appropriate tablet, medallion or inscription commemorative of His Late Majesty and of a design approved by the Administrative Council.

So it was that Alexandra Park became one of the 471 'King George's Fields' across the country and was formally opened in 1937 to mark the coronation of King George VI.

In 1965 the Foundation was wound up and the 471 fields passed to the National Playing Fields Association, now Fields in Trust, which legally protects the sites. Locally the Fields are managed by councils or boards of local trustees. Alexandra Park has an active Friends group which carries out a lot of maintenance work and fund raising.

Today the park has 2 bowling greens, a hard-surfaced court for ball games and a children's play area. There is a bowling pavilion and café, the latter selling home-



made cakes on Saturday afternoons during the summer (above). Also on the site is the local library, built in 1959. Beyond the library is a further green space used by families for picnics and games. In 1974 part of the park was taken to build a new primary school. Around the edges of the park are trees and shrubs, and flower beds separate the two bowling greens.

Gate piers either side of the original entrance still display the heraldic panels, although these are now badly eroded and difficult to read. Just inside the gates are two oak trees, planted on either side of the gate when the park was established (see previous page). A walk around the park leads on one side to a path off to a bridge over Lumb Brook. It is very pleasant to stand here listening to the trickling brook below. The path leads onto another green space, Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Park. This area has been sown with wild flowers by children



*One of the heraldic panels on the gate piers*  
from the primary school. As my visit was in late November, there were no flowers to be seen.

Further research has revealed that there are other King George's Fields in Cheshire, though they may be called something else now. One of these is Woodbank Park in Stockport featured in a previous newsletter. It would be interesting to hear from anyone who had visited any of the others in Cheshire, listed below.

**Julia Whitfield**

*For further information see*

[https://wikishire.co.uk/wiki/List\\_of\\_King\\_George%27s\\_Fields\\_in\\_Cheshire](https://wikishire.co.uk/wiki/List_of_King_George%27s_Fields_in_Cheshire)

<https://www.fieldsintrust.org/historic-programmes>

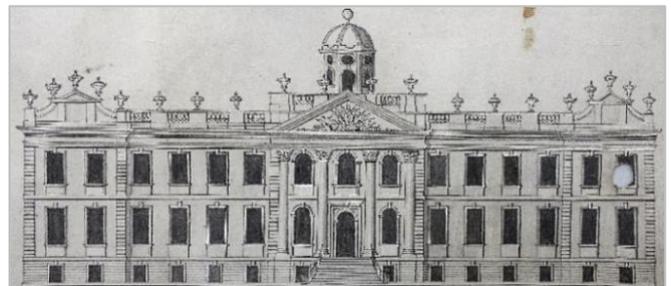
## Why is this here? The Malpas Gates

Sometimes we find traces of vanished gardens in unexpected places – as in Malpas. Walking up Church Street, you find two gates of wrought iron at the entrances to the churchyard. These gates are more than 300 years old and were moved here in 1773.



*Gate and piers in the SE corner of the churchyard*

Where did the gates come from? The coat of arms on the overthrows identifies the previous owners as the Egertons of Oulton Park where, by 1715, John Egerton was building his grand Baroque house. The wrought iron gates were made for his gardens, probably by the Davies Brothers of Bersham, near Wrexham.

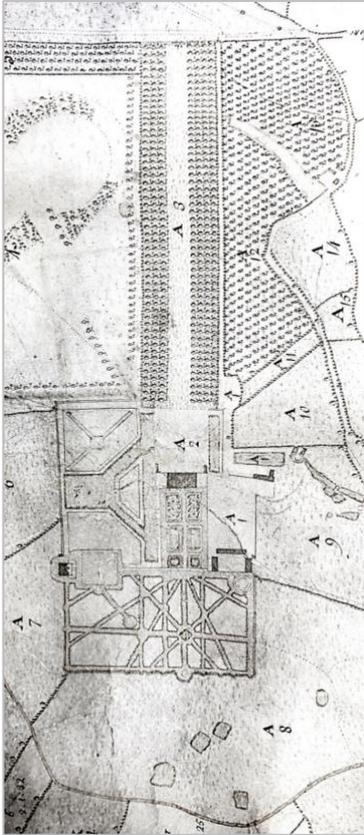


*North elevation of the mansion in 1735*

Today Oulton Park is a motor racing circuit, and nothing remains of the house and formal gardens created by John Egerton – with one exception: 'A Map of Oulton Demain...1735', held by Cheshire Archives. It shows the formal parks and gardens of its time, dominated by straight lines and set about an axis of symmetry centred on the house.

The whole 'Design Park' of 230 acres was surrounded by a wall. North of the house is a broad allée, here named 'Visto', 660 yards long and edged with 7 lines of trees. Parallel to it runs a straight bridle path. Like the Visto, it ends at a gap in the wall.

These gaps are the most likely sites for the Malpas gates. Here they would function as a **clairvoie**, "an openwork gate or grille at the end of an allée and a long vista".



*Detail from 'A Map of the Oulton Demain...by WmWilliams,1735'*

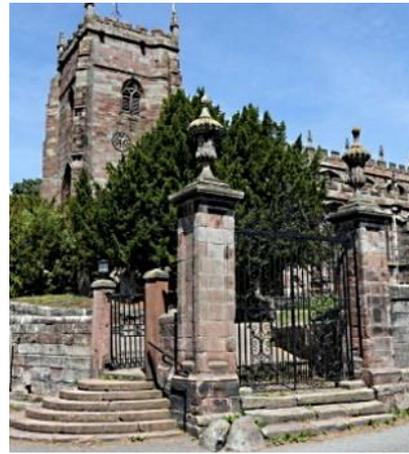
The clairvoies permitted views out (nowadays to traffic on the road to Little Budworth), and also views in to the splendours created by a powerful and wealthy owner.

Why were the clairvoie gates removed, and why to Malpas? By 1770 they were very old-fashioned. In that year Philip Egerton (jun.) commissioned William Emes to transform the formal gardens into a large landscape park. The clairvoies had to be removed, but they were too costly to just throw out or melt down. Who would buy them?

The Egertons were notoriously hard up. For many years they had not paid their dues of the Malpas church mize (tax) for lands they held in the area. It appears that the disused gates were presented to the Malpas church wardens in lieu of this tax.

But they had to collect them. The wardens' accounts for 1773 show several entries relating to the gates' removal, for example: "Assistance required in taking down iron at Oulton 6s., Carriage 40 s." or "In going to Oulton for more iron 8 s".

Fortunately, they already had the piers, built in 1725 (SE corner) and 1765 (SW corner). Timber gates were



*Gate, piers and steps in the SW corner of the churchyard*

replaced with the iron work from Oulton. Steps had to be built to access the steeply rising churchyard, also at a smaller gate for everyday use (SW). The wrought iron gates, sandstone piers and steps have been valued and conserved by the town ever since. They are listed Grade II\* by Historic England.

At Oulton Park, the gaps of the clairvoies were walled up. In 1775 a much grander archway was built by architect Joseph Turner. It remains listed Grade II\* and can be admired from the road to Little Budworth.



*The 1775 archway at Oulton Park*

Oulton Park remains strictly private. But if you stay on the public highway, you could take a walk (west, then south) along the wall which still surrounds the property. From 1752 it enclosed an enlarged park of 520 acres, where Philip Egerton (sen.) kept 200 head of deer. Perhaps you can spot the deer leap. This 270 years-old wall is not listed and thus not protected.

**Barbara Wright**

**Photos 1-3 by BW with permission from CALS. Photos 4, 5 from Historic England Archives.**

The author acknowledges the help of David Hayns in this article.

#### **Further information**

Bostock, T. 2004. *Oulton's historic park and garden*. Cheshire History No. 44, 2004-05, p.50.

Crossley, F.H. and Wolley Dod, J.C. 1949. *An Architectural History of the Church of Malpas....* Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society, XXXVII, Part 2. p.173.

Hartwell, C. Hyde, M. Hubbard.E. Pevsner.N. 2011. *Cheshire:The Buildings of England*. Yale UP. p.470.

# The Fight against Extinction at Chester Zoo

Following Sonia Chapman's article on Plant Heritage, it was a treat to be invited to the Arley Memorial lecture given by Phil Esseen, Curator of Botany and Horticulture at Chester Zoo, which holds five National Collections of plants, orchids, cactuses and pitcher plants.



*Albert Mottershead, Chester Zoo's first Head Gardener*

Chester Zoo was opened in 1931 by George Mottershead who had a vision for a zoo without bars. George's father Albert was a very keen horticulturalist and he took on the role of Head Gardener. Initially, the grounds were quite formal with rose and fuchsia beds. Walter Worth, Head Gardener from 1976 to 1985, recalls his time at the Zoo in the 1960s and 70s buying roses, in particular from Caldwell's Nursery.



*Madagascan natives, Pachypodium lamerei, grown outdoors in the summer*

In the 1980s the gardens started to change to better reflect the animals' natural environments. Today, there is a vast range of habitats, from the island, forest and

grassland zones, to the arid landscapes of Africa and Madagascar. An obvious difficulty is to replicate tropical zones in a temperate climate, but plants like *Robinia*, *Gleditsia*, palms, *Kniphofia* and ornamental grasses are used to suggest drier, arid habitats. In the forest areas, big leaved plants like banana, bamboo, tree fern, *Paulownia* and *Catalpa* can be seen.

There are six island habitats, reflecting the islands of South East Asia. Tropical looking plants have been used and there is even a warden's garden growing Asian herbs and vegetables. Indoors there is Monsoon Forest, the biggest zoological building in the UK, which has been carefully restored after a fire in 2018 meant that all the plants had to be replaced while the habitat was repaired.



*The Dragons Garden, with Acacia dealbata*

In general, across the site the more formal garden areas have been replaced by more informal planting, with herbaceous perennials and grasses better for wildlife. In addition, there are themed gardens - the Asian Rock Garden; the Sunken Garden, originally an old quarry; the Dragons Garden, with mainly sub-tropical planting; the Andes Garden and the Enrichment Garden.

Then there are the National Collections:

***Nepenthes***, the carnivorous tropical pitcher plants (below) are growing in the greenhouses that used to produce bedding plants.



There are around 120 species at the Zoo, which originate mainly from South East Asia, but some are from India, the Seychelles, Madagascar etc. There is a vast diversity of pitchers with different shapes and sizes designed to attract many different prey species. There is even a special *Nepenthes* which the tree shrew uses as a toilet. As part of the overseas work, Chester Zoo is working with a group in Java to promote conservation of rare *Nepenthes*.



Chester Zoo also holds the National Collection of very rare **Pleurothallidinae orchids** (above), first started in the early 1990s by Steve Manning, a private orchid grower from Nantwich. It holds more than 1,500 of these special plants from South America where they are now threatened with extinction in the wild.

The remaining three collections are **cacti**: *Copiapoa*, *Mantucana*, and *Turbinicarpus*. These were originally from very hot areas like Chile, Peru and Mexico.



*Cactus collection*

Keeping these National Collections and preserving plants often in danger of extinction is just part of Chester Zoo's wider conservation brief. They have recently published a Conservation Masterplan, with ambitious targets to preserve 150 new species, halt the decline of 200 wild populations and train 5,000 conservationists. They work in six areas across the world – UK and Europe, South America, Africa, Madagascar, mainland Asia and South East Asia.



*Zoo funded expedition to Mount Kelam, Borneo*

The conservation team ensures plant collections for the future through propagation and encouraging diversity. They work with scientific experts from Kew as well as further afield. They also work on native species, such as the Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia*), a native timber tree where they take cuttings, grow them on and send them to landowners to improve diversity and the gene pool. They have also sown seed of the Llangollen Whitebeam (*Sorbus cuneifolia*) in partnership with the Millennium Seed Bank.

The Zoo also has links with the Canal and Rivers Trust to help reinvigorate plant populations, such as floating water plantain and sea holly. A new project involves work to develop a wildlife corridor along the Shropshire Union Canal.



*Reintroducing rare aquatic plants*

Chester Zoo works with conservationists across the world, bringing stakeholders together, supporting local populations to work with wild populations, delivering workshops and visiting countries to support the region, such as the littoral forest in Madagascar.

This was a fascinating talk bringing a whole new dimension to the work of horticulture in different settings in Cheshire.

Thank you to Phil Esseen and Chester Zoo for letting us use this information for our Newsletter.

**Sue Eldridge**

**Photos Phil Esseen and Chester Zoo archives**

For more information see the Preventing extinction pages on the Chester Zoo website:

<https://www.chesterzoo.org/what-we-do/>

## Benton End



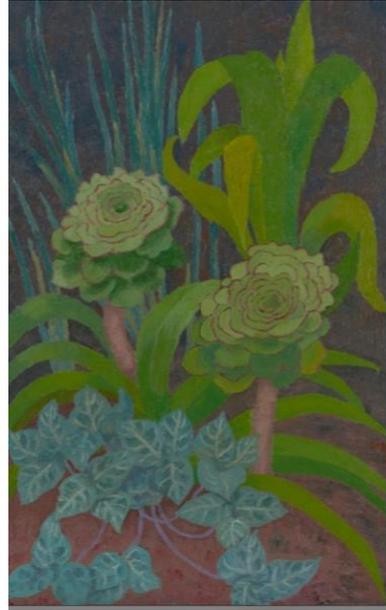
*Benton End farmhouse - to be restored to its original Suffolk pink or blood lime-wash, and Newlyn Blue doors and window frames*

Benton End (above) is a charming C16th manor house near the village of Hadleigh in Suffolk. In 1940, at the start of the war, the artist (Sir) Cedric Morris and his partner Arthur Lett-Haines, also an artist, bought it with a view to fully establishing their East Anglia School of Painting and Drawing, which they had started a few years earlier. It soon became a haven for an eclectic range of artists, students, writers, musicians and horticulturalists. Lucien Freud and Maggi Hambling, Frances Hodgkins, Beth Chatto and Elizabeth David were just some of the influential post war alumni who were nurtured and mentored by Morris and Lett-Haines. In later years, the author Ronald Blythe wrote: "It was 3 guineas a week, bring your own sheets. All of us flowered at Benton End – the atmosphere was one of intellectual freedom. Everything was discussed." Exciting and liberating, it was bohemian in the richest of ways.



*Cedric Morris c.1970, courtesy of John Morley*

Considered one of the great British colourists of the C20th, Cedric Morris was a painter of the natural world, known for his depictions of landscape, birds, and flowers. He travelled freely in Europe and North Africa,



*Aeoniums (Experiment in Green) 1971*

and from a young age had collected succulents and aeoniums, often depicted in early paintings. With travel curtailed, he spent much of the next 40 years developing the garden at Benton End, a garden as influential in its day as Sissinghurst. It can be seen as one of the first modern gardens of naturalistic design; he championed old roses, and bred a variety of different plants: *Rosa* 'Sir Cedric Morris', *Papaver rhoeas* 'Cedric Morris', *Fritillaria pyrenaica* 'Cedric Morris' (below), and most famously



some 90 Benton bearded irises, named after friends and pets: *Iris* 'Benton Baggage' after the cat, *I.* 'Benton Rubeo' after the macaw. These plants were widely sold and the nursery at Beth Chatto's garden still sells some Cedric Morris varieties. In 'Benton End Remembered' (2002), John Morley, a friend of many years and a fellow artist/plantsman, talks of a garden unlike any other. An alpine meadow of winding paths, a magical place for plantsmen with no specific design arrangement, Morris was only interested in placing plants where they grew best. Yet his artistic eye informed the effect of shape, balance and colour - a wonderfully free, aesthetically



Iris 'Benton Nigel'

pleasing whole, full of interest for students to paint.

The revival of interest in Cedric Morris and his garden began in 2015 when former Sissinghurst Head Gardener Sarah Cook displayed a collection of his Benton irises at Chelsea Flower Show. She was born in Hadleigh, and remembers visiting Benton End as a child; at Sissinghurst, she had come across *Iris* 'Benton Nigel' which sparked her interest in establishing a National Collection. She now has 35 of the 90 named irises. In 2018 there followed two exhibitions, one at The Garden Museum, 'Cedric Morris, Artist-Plantsman', and the other at Philip Mould & Company's Fine Art Gallery, 'Cedric Morris: Beyond the Garden Wall'. Thus introduced to the world of Cedric Morris, Garden Museum supporters Robert and Bridget Pinchbeck saw that by pure chance Benton End was up for sale, and decided to buy it.

This was no domestic buy, however: it was purchased through the charitable Pinchbeck Trust, with a view to restoring it as a place of botanical and artistic learning, a

new centre of gardening, art and creativity. Under a very generous donation, ownership has now been transferred to The Garden Museum, and Benton End is leased to a new subsidiary charity: The Benton End House and Garden Trust. Trustees include key players – Sarah Cook, Philip Mould, Bridget Pinchbeck, as well as members of The Garden Museum, the local Hadleigh community, and garden designer Arne Maynard. The Garden Museum Head Gardener, Matt Collins, decamped to Suffolk and spent this last year of lockdown living and working at Benton End to identify what if anything is left of Morris's garden. The house had been in various private hands since Morris's death in 1982, but luckily the garden suffered nothing more than benign neglect, with little added or altered. He found a tumble of *Rosa* 'Sir Cedric Morris', while the long grass finally mown allowed 80 year old bulbs to spring to life. Luckily John Morley has lots of photographs and letters for reference, and is helping the project by collecting seeds, digging up bulbs and taking cuttings from his own garden – from plants that were themselves gifts from Cedric Morris over 40 years ago. These will join the growing collection of Cedric's plants. The house, in time, will be restored to its post-war bohemian heyday, a new exhibition gallery built, and spaces for learning dedicated to the art of the garden, and offering creative residencies.

'The Story of Benton End: A Paradise of Pollen and Paint' – a talk on the garden's history and atmosphere - can be seen on The Garden Museum website, ([The Story of Benton End: A Paradise of Pollen and Paint - Garden Museum](#), £10), and for developments you can subscribe to the Benton End Newsletter at [www.bentonend.co.uk](http://www.bentonend.co.uk).

Liz Roberts

Photos courtesy of Benton End House and Garden Trust

## How did their Gardens grow?

In 1676 the Head Gardener at Cholmondeley sent off an order for seeds for the estate gardens. His shopping list included seeds for 'colley' flower; 'Romane' lettuce; yellow, white and red 'carretts'; kidney beans; 'sugar pease'; basil; and sweet marjoram. Four years later Philip Henry, a Presbyterian minister living at Iscoyd (Whitewell), recorded in his diary on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1680 that he had 'sett in ye kitchin garden' a number of fruit trees including pear, apricot, cherry and plum, then added a note 'whether I may live to eat the Fruit of any of these God knows!' (He actually survived for another sixteen years).

That in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries there were many keen gardeners living in the area is suggested by a surviving printed copy of a sermon on 'The Antiquity, Innocence, and Pleasure of Gardening', preached to a meeting of

gardeners and florists in Malpas church on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1732. The preacher was William Harper, Chaplain to Lord Cholmondeley. Eighteen years later Thomas Townson was appointed to the living of the 'Lower' Rectory of Malpas. Before moving into the Lower Rectory house he paid a visit to inspect the property and wrote in a letter of his delight on discovering the large garden 'which I intend shall be a very paradise for shrubs and evergreens and sweet-smelling flowers. Besides this there is a very good kitchen garden abounding with Espaliers, Nut trees, Artichoaks, Asparagus beds, and several other good things'.

Clerical gentlemen seemed often to have had a love of botany and horticulture. Among them was the Reverend Charles Wolley Dod, of Edge Hall. After he had retired in 1878 from schoolmastering at Eton he moved to Edge

Hall, looking forward to indulging his hobby of gardening on a large scale. He found the Hall's land to be stiff clay 'with poor drainage and an eager population of slugs'! Over the next twenty-seven years he created ten acres of wonderful gardens, brimming with choice plants. He became an expert plantsman, lecturing at the Royal Horticultural Society, and was an acknowledged authority on daffodils. Gertrude Jekyll held him in very high regard, calling him 'the kindest of instructors'.



*The Wolley Dod Rose*

He is still known for 'Wolley Dod's Rose', with its clear pink flowers. On his death in 1904 the Gardeners' Chronicle reported 'truly in later times horticulture has not sustained a more severe loss than in the person of Charles Wolley Dod'. During his lifetime, many local

Floral and Horticultural Societies became established in places such as Malpas and Cholmondeley. Full reports of their annual shows can be found in the files of the *Chester Chronicle* and *Whitchurch Herald*, from the 1880s onward. I have in my collection a copy of the programme for the annual show of the Cholmondeley Floral & Horticultural Society, held in Cholmondeley Park in August 1895 when, besides the numerous entries on show, the attractions included refreshments, open-air dancing to a band, and a lecture on bee-keeping. 'Competitors shall be of three classes: A. Gentlemen's Gardeners; B. Amateurs; C. Cottagers'.

One of the Cholmondeley show secretaries was Charles Flack, Head Gardener at the Castle, and it was his late daughter Ida who wrote an article 'Eighty Years in Cholmondeley' for the *Malpas History* magazine in 1987. In the article she recalled: 'There was a wonderful range of greenhouses where exotic plants and fruits were grown, carnations, orchids, peaches, nectarines, figs, melons and three vineries. They were manned by young men doing a horticultural career. They usually stayed for two years and then passed on to another estate to continue their training.'

My thanks to Harper Wright for information on Charles Wolley Dod.

The article was originally published in 'My Village News' 2019.

David Hayns

## Landscape History Study Day

In October Chester Society for Landscape History went ahead with their first 'live' study day for two years to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society. St John's Church in Ashton Hayes was the venue. Recently reordered the church provided a pleasant environment with plenty of space and good technical facilities as well as a neat kitchen area for refreshments.



*Carved pulpit at St John the Evangelist Ashton Hayes*

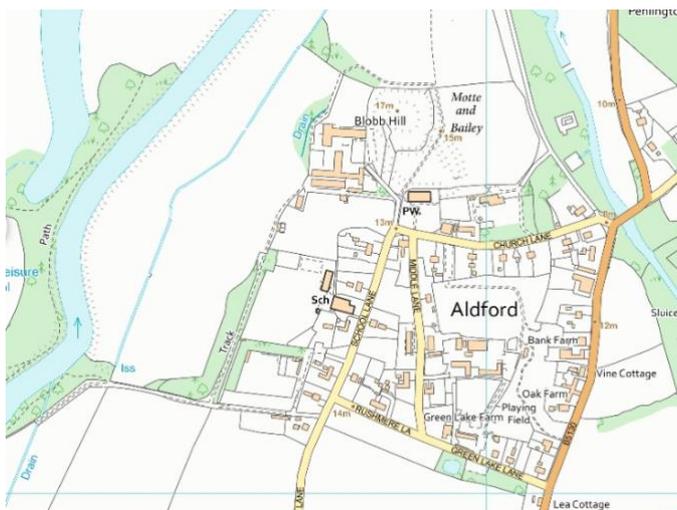
Ian Wray commenced with a talk about *Birkenhead Park*, drawing from a chapter in his book, 'Great British Plans', emphasising how many great British plans have originated from the ideas and commitment of inspired individuals rather than government diktat. Tom Pickles spoke about *The Early Christian Landscape of Chester and Wirral* illustrating his talk with some fascinating maps and beautiful sculpture.



*One of the exquisite sculptures illustrating Tom Pickles talk*

Graeme White spoke about *Contrasting Frontier Settlements along the Dee Valley* explaining how 'The differences in the morphology of Aldford, Holt and

Threapwood reflect both the character of the frontier at the time they either originated or took their present form, and the contrasting roles they played on that frontier'. At Aldford, a town that developed in the late-eleventh and mid-thirteenth centuries, the emphasis was on defence, with the site of a motte and bailey remaining. Holt is a small planned town, a crossing point of the Dee, and Threapwood, a place of refuge between two counties and two countries 'where those escaping the rigours of the law could resort. This is reflected in the network of lanes and the patchwork of irregularly-shaped woody enclosures still apparent today.'



*The planned settlement of Aldford with the castle to the north and medieval properties laid out along School and Middle Lanes with a green occupying much of the triangular area of land between.*

*Courtesy Cheshire Archives and Local Studies*

Maggie Taylor recounted the story of her research into 'Cringlemire', near Windermere, a holiday home created for James Nicholson of Thelwall Hall. The site was planted by nurseryman John Grier, but later the property was sold and re landscaped by Thomas Mawson. Cringlemire remains in private ownership.

*The Effects of the Railways on Chester* by Chris Pilsbury was an interesting exploration. The coming of the railway did not really disrupt the historic town. Chester railway station was designed by CH Wild and Francis Thompson, with some involvement by Robert Stephenson. The contractor was Thomas Brassey. When it opened in 1848 the station had a rural setting. Chester station is now registered Grade II\*.

Vanessa Greatorex's talk about *Carnegie Libraries in Cheshire* emphasised what a great debt we owe Carnegie. Many of these fine buildings and their settings are now at risk, closed or closing, with the buildings repurposed or left empty.



*Former Carnegie Library in Knutsford*

Julie Smalley closed the day with *Identity Words: Landscape, Heritage - and Us*, explaining how the origins of names are so often linked to local landscape characteristics.

The presentations were varied and interesting and members really appreciated the opportunity to participate in such a stimulating day.

**Text and photos 1 and 4 Barbara Moth**

## Local Listing

On a sparkling December day members of the Research and Recording group with colleagues from FOAM (Friends of Anderton and Marbury) and Weaverham History Society met in Marbury Country Park with Dr James Dixon of Cheshire West and Chester Council and Moya Watson, Cheshire Historic Environment Record officer. The object of the visit was to look at elements of the historic landscape and discuss their inclusion, or not, on the local list. We have already completed a report on Marbury encompassing most features of interest, but additional features meriting discussion were the sculpture of the Marbury Lady and an area of parkland that once belonged to the Marbury but lies outside the boundary of the country park.



*The ghostly face of the Marbury Lady, Barbara Moth*



*Mary Jeeves explaining the myth, photo Barbara Moth*

Ably guided by Mary Jeeves, the group was shown the Marbury Lady and the myth behind the sculpture was told (above). The parkland beyond the boundary, occupied by part of the wartime camp, was also viewed. James and Moya considered that both elements warranted individual entries on the Local List.

Locally listed features have a degree of protection in the planning system because any proposals for change must take account of their significance. Therefore the inclusion of many of our historic landscapes on the local list is vital for ensuring that their significance is conserved. For further information see the Cheshire local listing website, developed as part of the government funded local listing project, at [Home - Cheshire Local List Project \(local-heritage-list.org.uk\)](http://Home - Cheshire Local List Project (local-heritage-list.org.uk)). N.B you will need to sign in or register to see the listing.

**Barbara Moth**



*Members enjoyed the wonderful view across Marbury Mere to Great Budworth church – Jacquie Williams*

## Plans in the pipeline

### Is a site near you under threat?

Fulfilling the conservation and planning part of Cheshire Gardens Trust's remit requires considerable effort by the team and yet we are aware that there are many more planning consultations where our input could inform the planning process. There are two areas where you can help:

Near your home there may be a site with a designed park or garden that is up for sale, displays a planning notice, or that you hear is about to undergo a change of use or ownership. You can check if it is a site on our list by looking up the Parks and Garden tab on our website and check online to see if a planning application has been submitted. If you are unsure, or think that the site should be on our list, please let us know, and then with your local knowledge we can, as appropriate, prepare a response to the planning authority.

It is difficult for existing members of the Conservation and Planning Group to respond to applications in all areas of the county. We have members who assist in the Cheadle Hulme, Wilmslow, Knutsford, Frodsham, Macclesfield and Northwich areas, but could do with more help in all areas and especially the Chester area, Ellesmere Port, Wirral, Crewe and Nantwich, Stockport and south Manchester. This might mean visiting a site, taking photographs and checking visibility public rights of way, or attending a pre planning application consultation.

This input would help enormously, so please get in touch

with Sue Bartlett at [pyrus4891@gmail.com](mailto:pyrus4891@gmail.com), Conservation and Planning Co-ordinator or Barbara Moth at [barbara.moth@btinternet.com](mailto:barbara.moth@btinternet.com), Research and Recording Co-ordinator.

And be assured our input is valued and making a difference. This is evidenced by the number of reconsultations and by planning officer's decisions. Our scrutiny of proposals can result in improved awareness, understanding and planning submissions, support the conservation of historic landscapes and reduce the degradation of heritage assets.

### Plans in the pipeline

Since October 2021 Cheshire Gardens Trust has been consulted on the following:

Appeal Ref: 3235840 Thornton Manor, Marquees appeal 21/5020M Booths Park, Knutsford - Application for 3 new car park barriers, alterations to the internal access road and the installation of ticket validation booth

Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan

Warrington Borough Council Local Plan, updated

105755/FUL/21 Dunham Massey - Creation of a new hardstanding footpath along Middle Avenue etc

21/03822/FUL Tilstone Lodge - Erection of an Agricultural shed within residential curtilage

19/0015N 19/0016N Nantwich Walled garden -- RECONSULTATION Erection of 6 x 2 bed dwellings with restoration of listed structures and creation of new vehicular & pedestrian accesses

21/3556M Villa Farm, Chester Road, Tabley - Part conversion, part demolition and replacement of existing redundant farm buildings to create a mixed use development consisting of a public house, flexible commercial office space and children's nursery.

20/04750/FUL Eaton Hall - Catholic High School Old Wrexham Road Chester - RECONSULTATION Installation of new 2.4 metre high green weld mesh fencing to the rear boundary of the site etc.

21/5580C Smithy Farm, Buxton Road, Congleton - Covered silage clamp

21/5782M High Legh Park Golf Club, Warrington Road, High Legh - Construction of an adventure golf course

21/3335N Dorfold Hall, Chester Road, Acton - Listed building consent for conversion to visitor accommodation

21/3357N Dorfold Hall, Chester Road, Acton - Listed building consent for single storey side extension and conversion to visitor accommodation

Cheshire East Local Plan - Draft Jodrell Bank

Observatory Supplementary Planning Document Consultation

21/5978C Great Morton Hall Walled Garden - Conversion of three existing buildings into three dwellings within the Walled Garden at Great Moreton Hall

21/6096M Toft: The Coach House, The Stable Yard, Toft Road, Toft - ... addition of a single storey timber clad side extension and internal alterations...

21/04464/FUL Flats adjacent to Grosvenor Park - Changing balcony balustrades from timber to glass

21/04389/FUL 36 Howey Lane Frodsham, adjacent to Castle Park - Ground floor side extension and porch

21/02618/S73 Burton Manor RECONSULTATION – variation of conditions for redevelopment of site

All these cases have been considered and our responses objecting, expressing concern, or with 'no comment' have been submitted. For further details see the Cheshire Gardens Trust planning log on the website under the Conservation tab.

Barbara Moth

## Forthcoming Events

### Cheshire Gardens Trust zoom talks:

The season of winter talks follows with:

1<sup>st</sup> February **"The Côte d'Azur - the English dream of paradise"** The speaker, Stephanie Knoblich, writer and journalist, now living in the South of France, promises to whisk you off to the gardens in the warmth of the southern coast of France, from St Tropez to Menton.

15<sup>th</sup> March, **Plas Cadnant, Anglesey.**

In his talk Anthony Tavernor will journey through Plas Cadnant's history from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century; through its heyday and decline; to the rediscovery and restoration of the gardens over the last 24 years

Information will be circulated by email or see the website <http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk/?Visits-Walks-and-Talks>

### The Gardens Trust

The Trust's ongoing remit of **Unforgettable Gardens** continues through January/February with talks from Kent Gardens Trust: Sissinghurst and Balmoral Cottage, Benenden still to come, followed by Sussex Gardens Trust: Denmans (John Brookes's garden), Highdown Gardens, Borde Hill and a selection of Sussex gardens designed by Gertrude Jekyll. Also, in conjunction with Kent and Sussex, are the last two of Caroline Holmes's talks on her theme **'Where the Wildness Pleases'** - 21<sup>st</sup> January and 25<sup>th</sup> February.

The last of the Garden History series looking at the C18th



*Borde Hill Garden*

reaches **The Landscape Garden**, a series of 6 Lectures starting 13<sup>th</sup> January. The team will be moving on to C19th and Victorian gardens in future series.

**'Why so special? Iconic C20 Landscapes'** series of 21 talks are into their final two categories – semi-public gardens, with Ed Bennis's talk on Roper's Garden on 18<sup>th</sup> January, followed by Private Housing and Private Gardens – the last four being Beth Chatto's Garden, Denmans Garden, York Gate Garden and Shute House, some or all of which you may have visited.

There are two talks on the **Early Illustrators of Natural History** on 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January, and a series of 6 talks on **Forgotten Women Gardeners** which began on 11<sup>th</sup> January and continues until 15<sup>th</sup> February.

Starting 7<sup>th</sup> February, is a series on **The Life and Work of John Bradby Blake (1745-1773)** – a young man with rare access to China, living in Canton, who working with a Chinese artist produced botanical drawings of Chinese

plants, many of which were unknown in the West. These drawings recently resurfaced, and the academics who have worked together bringing these talks come from UK, US and Taiwan, and cover the fields of botany, art and garden history, and the history of science.

As usual, all talks can be subscribed to either as a series or individually, recordings available for one week if you cannot make the actual lecture, and you can sign up to David Marsh's weekly blog <https://thegardenstrust.org>

**Planthunters Fairs** are opening up again, with early fairs at Ness Botanic gardens (20<sup>th</sup> March), Arley Hall and Gardens (27<sup>th</sup> March) and Capesthorpe Hall (10<sup>th</sup> April) <https://www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk>

**The National Garden Scheme** has gardens opening in Cheshire in February and April, but many more virtual and other events on their website, such as Designers gardens and Special Garden events <https://ngs.org.uk>

Liz Roberts and Sue Eldridge

## Ode to Joy



*Joy receiving her award from Jonathan Pepler, Chair of Cheshire Local History Association at the Association's AGM*

Having been deeply involved at the heart of CGT ever since its inception in 2003, Joy Uings has now decided to step down from the Council of Management. As a member of the initial steering group she was instrumental in ensuring that the Trust was set up correctly as a charity, and did much to establish the solid base necessary for the Trust to thrive. Ever since, she has been assiduous in keeping us on the right track – particularly with regard to legal and financial matters. Her career as Finance Director of a Housing Association undoubtedly equipped her well for her first role as secretary to the Trust and later as Treasurer.

In addition to those key roles, Joy has been integral to many other CGT activities. She started our Newsletter and edited it for many years before handing that role over to Sue Eldridge in January 2017. Her appreciation of history, and particularly garden history, allied with her evident delight in unearthing all manner of information on the internet has resulted in many fascinating articles - all in the archive to be re-read!

Then there is the Caldwell's Nurseries project. Joy was part of the original group which identified the potential of the project and subsequently devoted many hours to

transcribing the ledgers, becoming expert at deciphering copperplate handwriting along the way. She was instrumental in developing two key outcomes of the project, The Caldwell's Nurseries project website <https://www.caldwellarchives.org.uk> and the book *Caldwells: Nurserymen of Knutsford for two centuries*.

Alongside the contribution she was making to CGT, Joy found the time to achieve a PhD. Her thesis "Gardens and Gardening in a fast-changing urban environment: Manchester 1750-1850" dated April 2013 is available to be read on the internet. It was particularly satisfying that in his very interesting book "An Economic History of the English Garden", the eminent academic Roderic Floud makes a number of references to both the Caldwell book and Joy's thesis.

An article Joy produced entitled "The Caldwell Ledgers: from Record Office to Website" described the development of the nursery from 1790 until 1920, identifying the changing demand for plants and the economics of plant purchases in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It resulted in Joy being awarded the Cheshire Local History Association prize for the best article in 2015 (photo shows Joy receiving the award).

Joy loves plants and in particular buying new plants. Whenever there is a garden visit, Joy will ask whether there is a plant sale and if there is, she will probably be taking some home with her. How does she fit them all into her garden we may wonder?!

The last year has been particularly tough for Joy as she suffered a complex ankle fracture which coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic. Typically, she is steadily fighting her way back to full health and we all wish her well with her continued recovery. We also want to say a massive thank you to her for everything she has done over the last nineteen years and look forward to seeing her again at CGT events before too long.

Copy date for April newsletter is 30<sup>th</sup> 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, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email [newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)