



Beautiful Bolesworth

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Park
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24th July Castle Park Garden/AGM
4th August, Field 28, Daresbury
20th September visit to RHS Bridgewater
10th October visit to Ness Botanic Gardens

Bolesworth in May



Wisteria on the steps leading up to the house

In May 2023 we had a magical visit to Bolesworth Castle on the Sandstone Ridge in Cheshire, courtesy of the owner Diana Barbour. We were delighted to be joined by five members of Staffordshire Gardens Trust, as well as our own members, old and new. We had last visited as a group in May 2016.

The weather was kind to us and we managed to escape the rain, so that we were able to see the garden at its best. The house was built in the 1820s for George Walmsley: the architect was William Cole. The house passed to Thomas Crallan in 1836 and then in 1856 to Robert Barbour, whose family were originally from Glasgow and became cotton traders in Manchester. In 1921 his grandson, another Robert, employed Sir Clough Williams-Ellis to remodel the

house and garden.

We were guided round the garden by Andy Frostick, Head Gardener. We started on the Rock Walk, high above the house, laid out in about 1800 with paths and steps carved into the sandstone rock. Renovation of this part of the garden was started in 1986 by Anthony Barbour when he took over the estate. The original *Rhododendron ponticum* was replaced by species and hybrid rhododendrons, as well as azaleas, camellias and many other shrubs. In addition to well established azaleas and rhododendrons, there was plenty of new planting, all looking beautiful in the faint spring sunshine. When Anthony died in 2007, local farmers presented the family with a beautiful curved wooden bench which is positioned with lovely views across to the Welsh Hills.



Andy Frostick leading us down through the Rock Walk

When Sir Clough Williams-Ellis redesigned the garden, he introduced steps and terracing below the house, a fabulous setting for the house built in the 1820s. The Temple of Diana was placed alongside the drive (see front cover). Anthony Barbour redesigned the herbaceous and shrub borders around the house and when we visited, they were looking immaculate, much fuller than when we had last visited. In some areas the lawns have been kept long to encourage wildflowers. There are many fine trees and shrubs in this lower part of the garden, including a handkerchief tree next to the drive.

We finished our tour with tea, coffee and cakes and a brief talk by Diana Barbour about the development of the garden. We are very grateful to her, Andy Frostick and other members of a staff for a very welcoming, delightful visit.

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Text Sue Eldridge, photos Jane Bingham and Sue Eldridge



Looking down over Rhododendron planting towards the Welsh Hills

The Sheffield School of Planting

The names Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough, Professors of Planting Design and Urban Horticulture, and Horticultural Ecology, respectively, at Sheffield's School of Landscape Architecture, have become well known in recent years. From their roots in botany and ecology, studying plant habitats around the world, they have created a new approach to planting design, primarily for the public realm; in essence, one based on a natural plant balance, where biodiversity and sustainability are key, but one that has high visual impact.



Planting in the Olympic Stadium grounds in 2012

They came to public prominence in 2012, working as design consultants for the Olympic Park. Their initial brief had been to use native plants, but feeling that this can have limited public appeal (and end up looking scruffy), they widened the remit to use mixes from the meadow plantings of Europe, South Africa and Asia. They did not try replicating exactly one particular habitat, but applied fundamental ecological lessons of how these meadows work, designing something of exuberant joy that engages people.

According to my notes from a 2012 workshop given by James Hitchmough, complexity and randomness are key, both visually and functionally, randomness being the most useful for biodiversity and planting longevity.

It allows plants to be distributed across an area rather than being isolated in one position where they would otherwise have to be constantly 'managed' and then possibly die out, leaving a hole to be filled. Shade and soil moisture varies over time and plants can adapt, seeding and moving into the areas that meet their requirements. Planting becomes more like a woven cloth, a structure of intermingling plants, extending flowering as one layer succeeds another. The mix needs a choice of plants that hold their space and don't colonise or form large patches. A ground layer of early flowering plants, for example, should tolerate shade as light is lost as later, taller-growing flowers emerge. Their modus operandi on large areas is to contour the ground, providing mounds and hollows to allow subtle variation of habitat, and plant a carefully orchestrated seed mix over a bed of sharp sand. With smaller areas, small plants (9cm pot is ideal) could be planted; Hitchmough suggested a mix of 10-11 plants per m², but with no groups of any one flower. But my goodness, the skill they bring behind their choice of plant mixes, the effect they wish to produce, the understanding of seed germination levels, and the proportionality of lower ground layer to tallest species, was mind boggling (basically, you need more of the low growing and fewer of the taller).

Heritage sites bring their own challenges, as there can be conflicting ideas on preserving the historic v. responding to future climate and ecological needs – both are important. In a talk given to Sussex Gardens Trust, Nigel Dunnett discussed one such project: the Superbloom 2022 Queen's Jubilee planting at the Tower of London. Original plans had to be shelved due to Covid, so he came up with the superbloom concept – a natural but rare phenomenon of mass flowering that he had seen in California. There had to be an ecological survey, which showed little biodiversity as this is normally an area of mown grass, replaced regularly. It had to be no dig, because of the archaeology, imported soil being laid on top of the grass and contoured into the mounds and dips needed. Inspiration for



James Hitchmough/Nigel Dunnett sowing/ planting at the Tower of London

colours, from gold to purple, apart from being regal, came from a Monet painting of sunset over the Houses of Parliament. And indeed, the result was like an impressionist painting, paths and bays giving an immersive experience to visitors. But this was an annual planting, and there is now the debate of how to continue. English Heritage don't like the mounds and undulations: a moat should be flat and read without flowers so grass is ideal and doesn't detract from the building; Heritage Lottery is funding the ongoing development and has the opposite view: biodiversity, sustainability, and people have to be at the forefront. So, with ongoing debate and now taken in-house, the mounds will be reduced but the paths kept. Longer-term the



Nigel Dunnett planting at Chatsworth

Tower of London is probably looking at a native wildflower meadow, maybe with some wetland to reference the moat, some trees or orchard, creating an educational and biodiverse resource.

For some, this 'naturalistic' style of planting reads as 'chaos', but if you feel it is all a step too far for your own gardens, remember that the highest plant diversity is in our suburban gardens (900 per hectare in a Sheffield study, v 300 in rainforests) and however they are planted, they are a unique habitat adding enormously to our biodiversity and welfare.

To see their work locally, James Hitchmough has worked at Chatsworth, and Nigel Dunnett at Trentham.

To buy the recording of a talk with Nigel Dunnett at the Garden Museum, see [The Garden Museum](#)

Liz Roberts, photos Liz Roberts and Sue Eldridge

Bruntwood Park, Stockport



Bruntwood Hall, now a boutique hotel

Bruntwood Park in Cheadle in Stockport has a long and mixed history. Windy Arbor Farm, where Bruntwood Park is now, was owned by wealthy landowners, Francis Phillips and Joseph Nadin.

By 1860, both landowners were dead and their executors had sold the land and farm to John Douglas, a wool merchant from Bradford. He built the Hall with a conservatory, stables, coach house, lodge and landscaped gardens with a walled garden for fruit and vegetables, as well as a vinery where exotic fruits could grow.

Unfortunately, John did not live very long after it was all completed. He died suddenly in September 1863 leaving behind his widow Jessie, his four sons and a daughter. The family continued to live there until the death of Jessie in 1877.

The 82-acre Bruntwood estate was sold to Henry Wilson then to James Edward Platt, a very wealthy textile machinery maker from Oldham, known as "the Galloping Major". He married Agnes firstly, who sadly died in childbirth, and then Anne.

Anne and James shared a passion for horses and racing. It was James who set up a stud farm at Bruntwood to breed thoroughbred racehorses. In 1892/3 a stable block and staff accommodation were built, along with a new kitchen and servant's quarters, plus a gun room and estate office. The old conservatory was taken down to make way for a new ballroom. It was replaced by a beautiful glass house that was filled with exotic plants. This became derelict but was restored to become the Vinery café today (right).



The roof of the newly restored conservatory, now the Vinery Cafe

The high life for the Platt family came to an abrupt end in 1899, with Anne and James' divorce. In 1900, John Austin Porritt became the Hall's new owner. The family had been in the textile trade for generations, moving from Yorkshire to Lancashire. By all accounts John was a bit of a character and he had one of the earliest cars in the area. John died after the first World War; his wife Jenny outlived him until 1943. Cheadle and Gatley Urban District Council bought the Bruntwood Estate and the Hall became the Town Hall in 1945.

The Parks Department was created in 1945 and Joseph Huxley was appointed Parks Superintendent. Apparently he did a wonderful job along with his team of gardeners. This was recognised in 1948 with a visit by the Princess Royal, Princess Mary.

In 1958, the Council bought Abney Hall and transferred the Town Hall there. Bruntwood Hall was sold off along with The Lodge and Oak Cottage. For the next sixteen years, the Hall became the offices of a timber merchant called Montague L Meyer.

In 1959 plans were put in place to develop a central park at Bruntwood. In 1967 the farm and its outbuildings were demolished apart from the long cowshed or shippon. This remains in the current car park. By Christmas 1971, the park had a children's play area, a pitch and putt golf course and was a popular place to go for a visit.

During 1973, further improvements took place to make it easier to access the park. Pathways, seating areas and flower beds were also constructed to complete the area. The park has long been open to the public and has many paths and open areas as well as beautiful mature trees. In all there are 120 acres of mature parkland, as well as more formal and landscaped areas nearer to the Hall and vinery. It includes a pond with ducks, a children's play area, a golf course and a bike/BMX park.



The original Lodge and entrance posts

Bruntwood Hall, an imposing Victorian Gothic building, was empty for quite a few years, but in 2017 it was reopened as a boutique hotel called Oddfellows on the Park. Some original features were retained in the redevelopment and it remains a beautiful building. The opening of the hotel gave the park a new lease of life with the restoration of the Victorian glasshouse and improvements to the grounds. It is now a lovely place to walk as well as an area for outdoor activities.

Text and photos Sue Eldridge

CGT Working in Partnership

All three events outlined below are new initiatives seeking to share our love of parks and gardens with others, thus fulfilling Cheshire Gardens Trust's stated aims: to spread understanding of parks and gardens and to help others appreciate their purpose and history (for further aims see [CGT website](#)). It is important that we reach out to other people and organisations so please take part if you can and volunteer for the Queens Park event if you are able to.

Women of the Welfare Landscape 7th July to 31st August 2023, Quarry Bank Mill



Sylvia Crowe captured by Brenda Colvin during a holiday. © Museum of English Rural Life, Brenda Colvin Collection

Researchers at Liverpool University have produced a travelling exhibition 'Women of the Welfare Landscape' which focuses on the work of 20th century landscape architect Brenda Colvin. The exhibition, which has been shown at several venues including the East Kilbride Library, the Stanley Picker Gallery in Kingston and Sheffield University, will be on display at Quarry Bank Mill, Styal, from 7th July – August 31st. Recent research in Quarry Bank Archives has revealed correspondence between the National

Trust and Brenda Colvin regarding her commission for the landscape of Styal village whose 200th anniversary is celebrated this year. On Wednesday August 30th we are planning a visit to the exhibition and have a guided walk around the village to discuss Colvin's proposals led by Professor Luca Csepely-Knorr of Liverpool University, lead researcher of the project.

Salt and Cheshire's Parks and Gardens - Salt Works Exhibition, 17th July to 30th October

Following a talk given in lockdown, Cheshire Gardens Trust was invited by Cheshire West and Chester Museums to create an exhibition at the Lion Salt Works at Marston near Northwich. This will explore the links between three of Northwich's parks and the salt industry. Research and recording volunteers have liaised with museum officers on this exhibition which will hopefully raise awareness of local heritage and the activities of Cheshire Gardens Trust. Normal admission prices for the museum apply but the exhibition is free. For more information visit [Salt Works exhibition](#)

Members are welcome to visit and provide feedback.

Queen's Park Heritage Open Day, Saturday September 16th 2023

With the support of the Gardens Trust Cheshire Gardens Trust is hosting a 'People's Pop up Museum' for Heritage Open Days at Queen's Park, Crewe (see right) in liaison with Crewe Town Council, the Friends of Queen's Park and Cheshire Archives and Local Studies. This is a 'first' for all involved. The Gardens Trust will seek to share what is learnt from the experience with other County Garden Trusts.

The idea is that the People's Pop-Up Park Museum will emphasise the community value and celebrate the history and design of Queen's Park. People will be encouraged to bring photos and share stories about the park, while perhaps discovering something 'new' in



Cheshire Archives images and documents. There will be a range of activities including a Garden History lucky dip, quiz and traditional park games for children.

We are busy making arrangements and preparing displays but would like CGT members help on the day, for which further guidance will be given, as well as members to visit this wonderful park and discover what we are up to. If you are able to help for an hour or two, between 10 and 4.30pm please contact Barbara Moth via barbara.moth@btinternet.com or 07711 624117

If you are not free that weekend there is the opportunity to volunteer manning our stand at Crewe Heritage Fair on Saturday 9th September at Crewe Heritage Centre, 10 -4.30pm.

Text and photo of Crewe Park Barbara Moth

Wilmslow Wells for Africa



Beautiful borders

What a lovely thing to do, visit 16 varying gardens on a summer's day. This was Wilmslow Wells for Africa on a late Saturday in June. It was hot, very hot and perhaps not a day for 16 gardens but I managed 8. The gardens were so varied, some very grand, some very quirky. The planting was fabulous, with the romantic colours of mid-summer, foxgloves, roses, campanula, sweet peas, clematis, astrantia, geraniums, irises, delphiniums, astilbe, lavatera, as well as the more vibrant colours of poppies, alstroemeria and day lilies. There were some beautiful trees and shrubs. Perhaps the most striking was the massive tulip tree in Carys and

David Cash's garden, in full flower and offering beautiful shade.

There were plenty of edibles, gardens bursting with fruit and a whole garden devoted to fruit and veg. Best of all many had flowers amongst the fruit and vegetables, an old apple tree providing shade for seating areas, trellises and pergolas with fruit growing up them.

There was a great deal of design and creativity. Deeply sloping gardens were divided into different areas, paths and vistas tempted you on to the next area of the garden, a rill led down to a wet area at the bottom, another ended in a large wildflower meadow, with paths leading through



Paths inviting you to explore

and views across to the Cheshire countryside.

Water features of all sorts, many wildlife ponds but also more modern water features. And there were plenty of seating areas, inviting you to dwell a while and admire the view. A lovely day out. I shall try and do some more gardens next year.

Wells for Africa is a direct-action charity run by volunteers, working through trusted contacts in Britain and Africa. Helping to improve life in drought-stricken areas of Africa by providing clean water, hygiene and sanitation. They have been running an open garden scheme in Wilmslow for many years.



A place to take in the view across the Cheshire countryside

Text and photos Sue Eldridge

Visit to Mayfield Park – Wednesday, 28th June, 2023



Jim Gibson talking to members

A short walk from Piccadilly Railway Station, within an area of 24 acres of derelict industrial land, there is a brand new 6.5 acre public park, opened in Spring 2022, the first in Manchester city centre for over 100 years. The regeneration project, with Mayfield Park being the first phase will, over the coming decade, comprise homes, offices, shops, a large hotel and leisure facilities.

The whole project is a joint public sector and private business partnership fronted by London-based Developer U + I, Landscape Architects, Studio Egret West and their partners backed by a £23 million Build Back Better government funding package.

On first arrival at the park we were struck by a wonderful sense of Manchester's industrial heritage and a spirit of re-birth. The park is named after one of its principal previous occupiers Mayfield Station, which was closed to passengers in 1960, well before the re-development of Piccadilly Station in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2002.

For our visit of thirty members, we invited Jim Gibson, a Senior Partner at Gillespies (Landscape Architects), who had been appointed the Project Landscape Consultants by the Partnership Team, to be our guide. During our visit Jim explained the site's history, the design concept, as well as the construction works including many of the behind the scenes contractual concerns and problems.

The area chosen for the park was an old abandoned brownfield site, full of rubbish comprising metal, asbestos, oils and dyes from the 18th Century Hoyle Printworks. The River



The River Medlock running through the site with giant Angelica in the foreground

Medlock snaked across the length of the site hidden within the old brick walls, concrete culverts, and its banks full of unwanted materials and discarded rubbish. Surrounding areas were overrun with Japanese Knotweed, giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and other obnoxious perennial weeds and vegetation. A contract challenge with tight deadlines for the Project Team!

The site works started in February, 2020 with a two year construction programme; the Main Contractor under the supervision of Jim Gibson began the site clearance, excavation and profiling works. This operation included the burying of suitable subsoil, cleaning the existing soil, with only a relatively small amount of contaminated material being removed off site, and then overlaying the areas with imported topsoil mixed with green waste and imported sand/gravel from local quarries.

Various different soil mixes were used around the site at varying locations dependent on the end use i.e. lawns, shrub beds, trees, wetland areas and general landscaped areas. We marvelled as Jim explained the work involved with the revitalisation of the River Medlock after being hidden from view, encased in brick culverts, for the past 50 years. Now the river environment encourages kingfishers, sand martins and bats and even brown trout have been seen swimming!



Reclaimed material used in construction of present day site

Where possible many of the existing materials have been successfully re-used to diminish the carbon footprint. Even the heavy Victorian hogback beams originally used in supporting the culvert structure being salvaged to span the river in the building of the three bridges.

From a derelict wasteland to a modern park in two years is an amazing achievement by any standard. The park is now completed and open to the public from dawn to dusk and landscaped with thousands of trees and shrubs. The gravel resin-bound pathways weave around the site making the most of riverside walks, with benches and seating situated along the paths and picnic areas.

The lawn areas are used by the local residents for festivals and events, while the children can enjoy the Play Yard designed and constructed locally in stainless steel. It includes swings, climbing frames and slides all constructed around six octagonally shaped towers inspired by the chimneys that once graced the nearby area. The local wildlife has been well provided for with wetland areas and refurbished habitats along the river embankments. There are toilets and a catering van with future plans to develop the existing buildings “under” the arches into community units.



Mixed perennial planting with a backdrop of the Mayfield Depot



One of our members testing the play equipment

At present, a hidden haven and the future for the park looks very positive.

Gordon J Darlington, photos Chris Driver and Annie Coombs

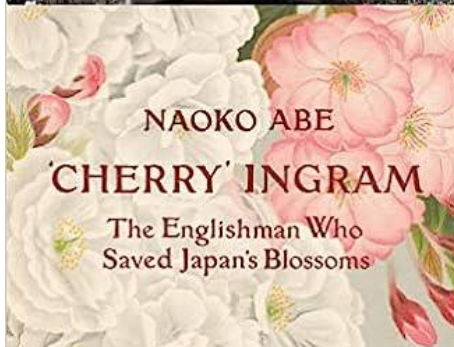
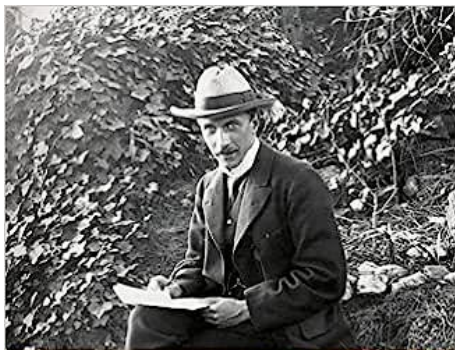
We first featured Mayfield Park in the January edition of the Newsletter. In the afternoon of our visit to Mayfield some of the members went along to the National Trust Site at Castlefield Viaduct, open in the morning for booked visits, 11am – 1pm and in the afternoon for walk-up visits. See [Castlefield Viaduct](#). An article on the visit will be featured in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Book Review 'Cherry' Ingram: The Englishman Who Saved Japan's Blossoms, Naoko Abe, 2019

From ten native wild cherries, over many hundreds of years, the Japanese chose the best of the naturally occurring hybrids. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were hundreds of different varieties blossoming in turn over a couple of months. Cherry blossoms were at the heart of Japanese society.

This began to change in 1863 when Japan's political and social structures underwent an upheaval, but there were still many varieties blooming when Collingwood Ingram first visited Japan as a keen ornithologist in the first few years of the twentieth century.

After serving in the First World War, Collingwood and his young family moved from Westgate-on-Sea to The Grange in Benenden, Kent. There was no garden to speak of at his new home, but there were two Japanese cherry trees. Collingwood was smitten and began seeking out and planting as many different varieties as he could. In 1926 he returned to Japan with the aim of adding to his collection.



He was devastated to find that although there were still many cherry trees, the diversity was rapidly diminishing. A single cultivar was being planted everywhere: the two months of ever-changing colours had shrunk to a few days of just one.

Abe's book certainly tells the story of Collingwood's obsession with Japanese cherries, but she also explains the history of Japan's cherry blossom cult, the political, social and environmental changes that gave rise to the loss of so many wonderful varieties and does not veer away from the horrors of war.

The book ends on a positive note with new cultivars being developed, many of which have been gifted to Britain as a small token of reconciliation.

If you missed this book when it was first published, I recommend it. Japan and Britain have had a long and complicated history; Japanese cherry trees are intimately linked to that history.

Joy Uings

Forthcoming Events

Cheshire Gardens Trust Events

Monday 24th July 1.30 for 1.45 Visit to Castle Park Garden Frodsham followed by AGM

Friday 4th August 11am, Visit to Field 28, Daresbury, full but possible waiting list

Both previously circulated

Information on the following visits will be circulated shortly:

Wednesday 20th September Visit to RHS Bridgewater

10th October visit to Ness Botanic Gardens 10.45 for 11 am



Ness Botanic Gardens in Autumn

Information can also be found on the website [CGT Events](#)

The Gardens Trust

There has been a lull in Gardens Trust activities over the summer but the following events are now on the website:

The Gardens Trust Welsh Study Weekend, to be held from 24th to 26th September. Based in Llandudno, the event includes visits to Bodnant, Plas Cadnant, Bodysgallen Hall and Gwydir Castle Gardens

Historic Landscape Volunteering Celebration and AGM, The Gallery 77 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6EJ, Thursday 7th September

Autumn events should be publicised soon on [The Gardens Trust events](#) website.

Planthunters Fairs continue with events at Cholmondeley on 2nd August, Capesthorpe on 13th August, Dorothy Clive on 27th-28th August and Ness Botanic Gardens on 3rd September

Details [Planthunters Fairs](#)

National Garden Scheme



There are still plenty of gardens open through the National Garden Scheme. Of note are: Stretton Old Hall (left) on 22nd and 23rd July, Tissington Old Hall on 14th and 21st August, Wollerton Old Hall on 2nd September, Sefton Park on 10th September, Abbeywood Gardens on 17th September; Lovell Quinta Arboretum, Swettenham 8th October; Dorothy Clive Garden 21st/12nd October. See [National Garden Scheme](#)

Arley Hall and Gardens

Introduction to Foraging Workshop 8th August, 25th July, 17th September and throughout the year [Arley Events](#)

Dorothy Clive Garden

Salvias in the Garden Workshop with Head Gardener, 16th September

[Dorothy Clive event](#)

Snippets

Sue Beesley, owner of Bluebell Cottage Gardens will be elected unopposed to sit on the RHS Council at the AGM in July. A previous RHS Gold medal winner she was appointed Adviser to RHS Garden Bridgewater and serves as Vice Chair of the Herbaceous Committee.

The RHS has established a new prestigious award in remembrance of Queen Elizabeth II, which will be confined to 70 recipients in reference to the 70 years of Her Majesty's reign. The first recipients, including Piet Oudolf, were awarded at RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Mavis Caldwell 1927 - 2023

In the early days of Cheshire Gardens Trust, Dr John Edmondson made the steering group aware of some of Caldwell's Nursery business ledgers held by Cheshire Archives. Investigation into their transcription began in 2007 but it wasn't until spring 2010 that we arranged to meet Mavis Caldwell, wife of Bill, the last owner of Caldwell's Nurseries. It was conversation with her that made us realise how many memories of the nursery must survive among the family, former staff and customers. Then we felt that we had the makings of a project – oral history and transcribing the business ledgers into a database. So in April when we learnt that Mavis had died aged 95 it seemed like the end of an era; without that initial conversation with her, we may never have collected all those amazing memories of family, staff and customers now available online at [Caldwell Archives Sounds](#)

Mavis was born in 1927 in south Manchester and went to Whalley Range High School, going on to catering college rather than staying on in the 6th Form. She met Bill Caldwell at Knutsford May Day Fair. She said "I don't think Bill wanted a wife who worked, that's the trouble, but I mean he wouldn't have stopped me. I was quite happy being a stay at home wife. It would be different now. I wouldn't want to be a stay at home wife. Why aren't we mature when we should be mature?" At this we both started laughing but her comment was typical – wry, wistful and perceptive about the opportunities available to her and other women post war. She regretted that she never worked in the family nursery business but she loved gardening and was artistic with a sense of colour, as evidenced by the watercolours in her home. She was fun to be with, generous with her time and appreciative of all that volunteers had done to create the Caldwell project.



This is my favourite picture of Mavis (second from the right) at 'Time and Tide, Caldwell and Canute' RHS Tatton Flower Show 2012 with friends and colleagues from Caldwell's Nurseries

Barbara Moth

Copy date for October Newsletter is 30th September 2023

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