



The Gardens at Eaton Hall

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Future events (see pages 12/13)

- Cheshire Gardens Trust visit to Walton Hall and Gardens 19th October
- CGT Talk – Phil Esseen 22nd November 2pm
- CGT Zoom talks - Sarah Murch, natural pool designer, 23rd January
- Joe Wainwright, Garden Photographer, 27th February
- Linden Groves – livestream talk 3rd November
- Historic Landscapes Assembly 17th November

The Gardens at Eaton Hall



A long time after our original visit in 2005, Cheshire Gardens Trust members and friends were again granted permission to view the private gardens of the Grosvenor family at Eaton Hall. Usually open to the public for charity on only 3 days in the year when it is very busy, we were allowed to visit as a group with no-one else around.

We drove through the beautiful main gates and into the parkland, the river Dee on one side and fallow deer on the other. These had been brought from Powderham Castle and Petworth House in 1997.

The estate consists of about 11,000 acres, including villages. The formal gardens cover 88 acres. Members were guided around the gardens in two groups by Anna MacDonald (above), Deputy Head Gardener and Andy Smith.



The Spring Garden

The history of the gardens is described in detail in the book 'The Gardens at Eaton' which we were able to purchase. This account tells of the work of William Emes, Thomas Leggett and later John Webb. In the mid C19 William Andrews Nesfield designed new parterres at Eaton and after the second world war the wives of the 4th and 5th Dukes worked with designer James Russell. The book also gives the history of the Grosvenor family. Eaton became the family's main home when Ralph Grosvenor married Joan of Eaton in the 1440s.

Eaton may be the home of the Duke of Westminster, but that does not mean they are immune to the gardening

problems that so many other people have. There is a problem with box blight so yew is being used as a replacement. Rabbits are a constant difficulty and may have been responsible for the failure of tulips this last spring. They are kept out of the kitchen garden which offers the successful rabbit a tasty treat. Then there is the oak bark beetle which burrows under the bark of the oak so disrupting the flow of water and nutrients. This weakens the tree and could eventually kill it. To counter this, several oak trees in the parkland were swathed in a protective mesh.



One of the many beautiful herbaceous borders

Many of the formal areas have been redesigned by Arabella Lennox-Boyd and we were led along the Spring Walk which has a white theme. Flowering here was over for the year, but it was still looking beautiful and calm. Next was a blue and white border along the drive in front of the hall; there were gardeners working here, keeping it all immaculate. On the other side of the drive is the rose garden, a large area divided into 4 colour-themed segments, 2 each on either side of a water feature with 3 fountains, called the Long Pond. The rose garden had originally been designed by Detmar Blow and was redesigned by Arabella Lennox-Boyd. I think this was my favourite area as it reminded me so much of the designs I had read about by Thomas Mawson in the Victorian era with rose swags hanging between timber piers (below). Yew hedges surround each quadrant and the colour themes in each of these were white, pink, red (purple) and yellow.



After wandering around the extensive formal gardens we visited the Tea House with its herb garden and roses (but no tea).



The Parrott House

Next was the Parrot House (but no parrots), then the Camellia House, nearly 400 feet long and built in 1852 with some of the camellias dating back to the 1820s. We walked along the outer wall of the kitchen garden, with a hot border of perennials alongside; there was one of the most beautiful roses I have ever seen climbing by a

doorway. On asking, I was told it is called 'Dublin Bay'. The wall led to the entrance to the kitchen garden (see front page) which provides produce for the hall and the Lancashire Estate, as well as for any enterprising rabbit. This is a wonderful mixture of vegetables, fruit and flowers, with towers, pergolas and step-overs for apples and pears.

The afternoon ended with tea and biscuits in the large room off the courtyard. There, members had plenty of time to chat and discuss the design and planting of these magnificent gardens.

Eaton Hall has been open to the public on 3 days this year, in June, July and August with money being raised for charity. I thoroughly recommend a visit so keep your eye on their website for their open days, see [Charity hosted events \(grosvenor.com\)](http://Charityhostedevents.grosvenor.com). With grateful thanks to the Duke of Westminster, his family, and of course all the gardeners.

Julia Whitfield

Photos Gordon Darlington and Sue Eldridge
More photos on the CGT website

Who designed this?



This is a fine record of a Cheshire garden but who designed it? We would welcome any ideas, or thoughts on comparable gardens in Cheshire.

The original painting was given to the lady's maid, Selina, by the mistress of Wicksted Hall (near Whitchurch) in 1912 on the occasion of her marriage to the Head Chauffeur. The house, by local architect Walter Webb, 1904 -1906, is shown in the background with a large beech tree, now lost due to recent storms. The pond and extensive rockwork remain but sadly almost none of this beautiful herbaceous planting.

Our visit came about as a result of contact from the son of the present owners. Having grown up with the garden, passionate about history, and curious about the design, he contacted Cheshire Gardens Trust after finding Wicksted Hall on our website list of Cheshire parks and

gardens. We were invited to visit and found a quite extraordinary place with a late 18th/early 19th century walled garden, dell and designed landscape for an earlier house, and this early 20th century rock or Japanese style garden together with a formal 'Dutch garden' and 'Rose Garden' beside the Arts and Crafts house. It is easy to see why the site was chosen for a dwelling as it has the most stunning views – northeast over Marbury Mere to the village and church, and northwest over Quoisley Mere and right along the Sandstone ridge.

We are just starting to put some of the initial research together but would be really grateful for members' input to this latest research and recording challenge.



Pond and extensive stonework

Barbara Moth, Freyda Taylor and Mary Jeeves

An Island garden - La Seigneurie



View of the church from the walled garden

Many of you will remember the Zoom talk by Jackie Bennett on Island Gardens, based on her book of the same name, which included the gardens of the Channel Islands. I was very taken with it so booked on a garden/walking trip in May 2022. The best known garden is La Seigneurie on Sark. It is approached by boat from Guernsey, followed by a tractor ride up from the harbour and then a walk to the gardens.

The earliest building on the site of La Seigneurie on Sark was a monastery from the 6th century. Intermittent habitation followed but it was not till 16th century that the system of Seigneurs and Dames was established when Helier de Carteret built Le Manoir in 1565. La Seigneurie was built in 1675, home to Seigneurs thereafter. The Seigneur is more or less translated as Lord of the Manor and there followed a feudal system, though it moved to a fully democratic system in 2008. I met the current Seigneur, Major Christopher Beaumont, working in the gardens as his parents Michael and Diana Beaumont had done for many years before. The gardens are now owned by La Seigneurie Gardens Trust. There are usually six gardeners working there but they were reduced to two when I visited and they were having to prioritise.



Australian Bottlebrush Tree (Callistemon)

The 'Jewel in the Crown' is the walled garden which, along with the greenhouse, was built in 1835-41, framing a beautiful view of the church. The walls offer protection from the wind and, together with a mild

micro-climate, allow many tender and half hardy plants, such as the Australian Bottlebrush Tree (*Callistemon*) and New Zealand tea tree (*Leptospermum scoparium* 'Red Damask') to survive.



Roses in the walled garden, looking towards the greenhouse

The garden is laid out on a fairly formal grid pattern but the planting is exuberant, with a wide range of herbaceous perennials and shrubs. Roses were at their best when I was there. The rose garden is the oldest part of the walled garden, with *Rosa* 'Tuscany Superb' and *Rosa* 'Rosa Mundi' surrounded by box hedging. More recently a second circular rose garden and pergola, known as the Millennium Rose garden, was laid out by Seigneur Michael Beaumont, Christopher's father. The Victorian Glasshouse shelters some long established vines, accessed via the original sliding Victorian ladder.



The Chapel

Outside the walled garden are the maze, orchard and vegetable garden, apple crusher, signalling tower and chapel, all recently restored, as well as a former cowshed, now converted into a thriving café.

It was lovely to spend an hour or two here and then walk to La Coupee with stunning views of the old path joining Sark to Little Sark.

Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery

Driving across country this summer provided an opportunity to visit Bluebell Arboretum and nursery, near Ashby de la Zouch. My aspiration to visit the nursery was born in lockdown. Searching for plants I discovered their excellent website and ordered online, receiving a call from the owner to say that the *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Festival' available was of a smaller size and price than listed, did I still want it? Yes. The plants duly arrived beautifully wrapped, and have thrived.

The arboretum is free to RHS members, £5 for adults and £4 for concessions. It contains a remarkable collection of young trees, often with several varieties of one species planted in proximity so that characteristics can be compared. Another delight is the labelling; each providing details such as the plant's origin, discovery, breeding, folklore, characteristics and cultural requirements.



Cercidiphyllum japonicum 'Boyd's Dwarf'

Two hours rapidly disappeared, there was so much to enjoy and absorb, and then the nursery, a real nursery. A *Tilia henryana* was found and our name put on the list for a *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Boyd's Dwarf', treasures to which we had succumbed. Fearful of planting out the lime in summertime we potted it up, kept it watered, and have had much pleasure watching the pale new leaves unfold.



Tilia henryana

A visit for autumn colour would be a treat – November for the *Liquidambar*, but from late September onwards for other species, though how trees will colour up after this year's drought is uncertain. Should you be passing we strongly recommend a visit, but do go prepared for temptation! For more information see

[Bluebell Arboretum & Nursery - Specialists in Trees & Shrubs \(bluebellnursery.com\)](http://BluebellArboretum&Nursery-SpecialistsinTrees&Shrubs(bluebellnursery.com))

Barbara Moth

Stockport Parks – Chadkirk Chapel and Country Estate



The area around Chadkirk was already settled during the Anglo-Saxon period, but quite possibly earlier. Today, much of the land around Chadkirk is owned by Stockport Council. The site has been designated as a country park and local nature reserve. It sits on the east side of Stockport, close to Marple, just off the A627. There is a car park and the area around the chapel and into the woods can be accessed at all times. The chapel is open on the last Sunday of the month, 12 noon to 4pm, supported by a strong Friends of Chadkirk group.

Chadkirk Chapel (left) is a simple, rectangular building of two parts: a nave and a chancel. Its plan is similar to that

of churches known to date from Anglo-Saxon times. However, the oldest parts of the present building are the half-timbered walls of the chancel and the roof trusses, which probably date from the 16th century.

By the 16th century, the chapel was being used as a 'chantry chapel', a chapel where masses were said for the souls of the dead. Thereafter it had mixed fortunes, used for different denominations, and was restored four times. By 1865, the old chapel was used only for Sunday afternoon services and the fabric once more decayed. In 1971, the chapel was declared redundant and sold to Bredbury and Romiley Urban District Council for community use. Further repairs took place in 1973. The next year, following local government reorganisation, ownership passed to the newly formed Metropolitan Borough of Stockport, which is now responsible for its care and use.



By 1987, further structural deterioration had occurred and the chapel had to be closed to the public. Then, in 1994–95, with external funding having become available, it was again restored. This included the installation of a specially commissioned life-size statue of St Chad near the altar, now moved to outside the walled garden (above) and colourful carved wooden panels depicting scenes from the life of the saint. The walled garden behind the chapel is beautifully maintained by the Friends. An original member of the Friends Group, who I spoke to, thought that the garden was the original kitchen garden for the Farmhouse.



View of the chapel from the walled garden



Nearby is St Chads Farmhouse (above). It has an area of almost 60 acres (25 hectares). The land has probably been in cultivation since Saxon times (5th century) and possibly earlier. The ancient Britons (Celts) may well have farmed the land before the Romans occupied Britain.

It is unknown how old the farm is, but the lower part of the house, the West Wing, was built or altered in 1748, by George Nicholson. The Nicholson family bought the farm estate to enable construction of Chadkirk Mill on the River Goyt – and to use the fields for the fulling and bleaching of cloth. The Nicholson family and their descendants owned Chadkirk House and Farm from 1745 to 1918, when it was sold to the Calico Printers' Association. It, like the chapel, passed to the newly created Metropolitan Borough of Stockport in 1974.

There is a walk around the chapel, meadow and farmhouse and along the Goyt Valley, and it is possible to walk up through beautiful ancient woodland to the Peak Forest Canal.



Also nearby is St Chads Well (above). This ancient well may have its origins in Celtic times, but it has come to be associated with St Chad, the 7th-century Bishop of Lichfield, whose missionary work in spreading the gospel may have brought him to this remote corner of his diocese. The well is dressed by the Friends each summer – one of the few regular well dressings outside of Derbyshire.

For further information see <https://chadkirkchapel.org>

Sue Eldridge, Newsletter Editor and Events Group

Dr Jane Roberts at Dove Cottage



'The loveliest spot that man hath ever found'. Wordsworth wrote these words about Dove Cottage in Grasmere (above). He arrived here, with his sister Dorothy, in 1799 at the age of 29. It was while living at Dove Cottage that Wordsworth wrote much of his greatest poetry and Dorothy her fascinating Grasmere Journals. After he married Mary Hutchinson in 1802 she came to live in the cottage and it was where three of their children were born. In 1808, to house his growing family, they moved to Allan Bank and then Rydal Mount. You can visit Dove Cottage and the newly extended museum next door which contains, amongst other personal items, many of his poems and letters.

Behind the cottage is the garden, their *'domestic slip of mountain'*, that Wordsworth and Dorothy created. This is where I met Dr Jane Roberts in early September, latterly of Cheshire Gardens Trust, a long term member who ran many of our fascinating courses on trees and garden history. She has been employed to recreate the gardens as they would have been in Wordsworth's time, based on his philosophy of being inspired by nature. As a consequence of this neither Wordsworth nor Dorothy followed the fashion for garden design or favoured growing newly introduced exotic garden plants. Instead they predominantly planted native wildflowers, many of which Dorothy gathered from the surrounding fells. However, near to the cottage they did grow plants such as daylilies, sunflowers, London pride and old fashioned roses. Both Wordsworth and Dorothy felt houses and gardens must harmonise with the surrounding landscape. Therefore, they did not like whitewashed walls and so covered those of Dove Cottage with roses, honeysuckle and French beans. They also grew vegetables to feed the family, and fruit was obtained from an already existing orchard.

Jane has been researching as well as recreating the garden. It is very much a Lakeland garden, with native daffodils and bluebells in spring, and wildflowers in high summer. Jane is slowly introducing plants mentioned by Dorothy in the latter's journals or which appear in Wordsworth's poems, such as thyme, wild columbine, celandine, orchids and white foxgloves, as well as fruit and vegetables. It is quite a steep garden, with steps



Jane Roberts in front of wattle fencing in the Sensory Garden

leading up to the top, where there is a terrace. Near here they built a moss hut where, as Dorothy said, *'we pass all our time except when we are walking'*. This is understandable as the views are beautiful toward Silver Howe and other fells. It would have been even more stunning in their day as many of the present day buildings wouldn't have been built, so there would have been a



View down to Dove Cottage and across to the fells from the top of the terrace

full view of the lake. A modern version of the moss hut, constructed out of green oak, has been recreated in the Sensory Garden. Jane also looks after this garden, where she was photographed, and a wildlife garden belonging to the cottage known as Sykeside. In addition to these gardens there is a woodland garden adjacent to Dove Cottage. It is also very steep, and includes both native and introduced plants.

All the buildings are in the local stone and are surrounded by walls, in which their cracks and crevices are filled with numerous plants, including ivy-leaved toadflax and maidenhair spleenwort (see below).

The gardens are works in progress, as all gardens are, and Jane has her work cut out, with only one garden assistant, but she is thoroughly enjoying developing the gardens in their wonderful Lakeland setting.

With grateful thanks to Jane for showing me the garden on a very wet Lakeland morning and for sharing information.

For further information visit the Dove Cottage website <https://wordsworth.org.uk>

Sue Eldridge, with a lot of help from Dr Jane Roberts

Dan Pearson and Lowther Castle



View of castle from parterre

The Lowthers are a long established family, tracing their lineage back to Dolfin, a descendant of a Viking settler who arrived in 1150. A rich history followed. The last castle was commissioned in 1806 and designed by architect Robert Smirke. It was said to boast a room for every day of the year. The gardens were formally laid out in the 17th century by Sir John Lowther, including the great Yew Avenue and knot garden. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and John Webb produced proposals for the landscape in the 18th century. During the Victorian and Edwardian periods, more formality followed; Thomas Mawson was one of many garden designers to be involved. But 130 years later the castle was abandoned; Hugh Lowther, 5th Earl of Lonsdale, the Yellow Earl, had spent all the money. During WWII it was requisitioned by the Army Tank Regiment and in 1957 it was stripped and the roof removed by the 7th Earl. Spruce was planted across the estate and pigs and chickens were kept.



Views across the surrounding countryside from the Western Terrace

Then in 2008 a Trust was formed and Dominic Cole, landscape architect and garden historian, was bought in to advise. A partnership was established between celebrated garden designer and writer, Dan Pearson and the owner Jim Lowther, son of the 7th Earl. The result was a 20 year master plan, an imaginative recreation of the original garden design. The estate is vast, 140 acres, set on a limestone platform, with stunning views across the surrounding countryside. The first task was massive clearance of the spruces, chicken sheds and pig styes and masses of seedlings and undergrowth across the estate.

Here Michael Ogle, the Head Gardener for 10 years, was vital. Initially starting as an assistant gardener he was soon on his own with an almost impossible task. There was no money at that stage to hire much help, so he ploughed determinedly on with the help of local volunteers. Once sufficient clearance had been made it was time for the redevelopment of the garden to begin.



The Garden in the Castle

The first two areas to be redeveloped were the parterre and the castle itself. Neither Jim nor Dan wanted to recreate the formality of previous years but to use it as a backdrop for a more naturalistic approach, Dan Pearson's distinctive style. The garden at Ninfa in Italy was a particular influence. The castle walls are now covered in clematis, climbing roses and *Tropaeolum speciosum* and trees reaching to the sky. Lower down are ferns, grasses, *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana*, *Parthenocissus henryana*. Earlier in Dan Pearson's career he had been involved in the creation of a romantic garden in the medieval ruins of Torrecchia vecchia near Rome, itself inspired by Ninfa.



Planting in the Parterre

The parterre is built in front of the castle in a grid formation with beds surrounded by yew borders. Formal, but with a 21st century twist, with much of Dan Pearson's distinctive planting, including *Aster turbinellus*, *Iris sibirica*, *Selinum wallichianum*, *Veronicastrum virginicum*, *Salvia*, *Sanguisorba* and *Thalictrum*. Further away the South Lawns spread into the distance, with vast wildflower borders on each side. The most recent development has been the rose garden. Dan has based his design on William Morris patterns, with formal beds as well as great swags of roses.



Dramatic pergola in the new rose garden

There is still much to be done. Amongst smaller areas still remaining, are the rock garden, iris garden, Japanese garden and scented garden. These have been cleared of undergrowth but otherwise left as they are. But in the rock garden, once cleared, previous planting has appeared – snowdrops, orchids, wild ginger, colchicum, trilliums; other plants have been added - hellebores, giant cowslips and ferns, which will look amazing in the spring. Beyond these smaller gardens is a path to the Western Terrace, with a fantastic view over the surrounding countryside. Dominic Cole, believes the Western Terrace is one of the earliest prospect terraces of its kind, like Rievaulx and potentially some on Cheshire's Sandstone Ridge. It is a kilometre end to end,



The Rock Garden

wide enough for carriages to ride its length. Wordsworth wrote his long poem 'Excursion to Lowther' in its honour. In the recent renovation, the supporting wall has been strengthened, undergrowth cleared and a shelter belt planted.

To the other side of the escarpment is a patte d'oie, a goosefoot with three wide avenues leading down to Jack Croft's pond, now an overgrown lake, and the castle. Again this has been cleared and replanted with thousands of spring bulbs. Jack Croft's Pond could be the next area to be tackled potentially as a winter garden.

There is still ten years left of the masterplan. The partnership of Jim Lowther and Dan Pearson remains. But Michael Ogle has now finished his ten-year stint as Head Gardener and handed over to Andrea Brunsendorf, who has worked in gardens all over the world, including South Africa and Longwood in USA. Like Michael a bit of a traveller and adventurer and perhaps that's what's needed on this vast complex estate. Do visit if you can.

For further information see the castle website <https://lowthercastle.org> And Ambra Edwards' book "Head Gardeners" with a chapter on Martin Ogle.

Sue Eldridge
Newsletter editor and Events Group

Newsletter support group

The CGT Newsletter was first published in January 2004 with Joy Uings as Editor. It is interesting that at that time there was an education group, a publicity group and a fundraising group, as well as events and research groups. Initially the Newsletter was two sides of A4, but grew to 10, 12, 14 pages very quickly.

There has never been a Newsletter Support Group before (though Freyda Taylor helped Joy latterly by proof reading) so the Editors have had to plough a lonely furrow. The format remained the same till very recently when the website was updated with new logos, fonts and design - a completely new look. The Newsletter followed although apart from the font, it was really only the front page that changed significantly.

I'm not sure where the idea of a support group came

from but it was suggested that it would be useful for the Editor to have some help and backup. Rather than put out a general plea which can too easily be ignored, we targeted members who contributed regularly to the Newsletter and amazingly several said yes. So the group comprises the following:

Patricia Hazlehurst (on the left)



Patricia Hazlehurst has been a regular contributor to the Newsletter, especially with book reviews and the history of plants. She volunteers at Dunham Massey, leading garden tours. Her main interests include garden and plant history, plant hunters and plant names.



Isabel Wright (above) has been a member of the Cheshire Gardens Trust since 2008. She taught Embroidery in the School of Art at Manchester Metropolitan University for thirty-five years and makes stitched textiles. She is interested in all aspects of art and design including garden design. Since retiring from full time teaching she has become a very keen gardener and has an allotment.



Freyda with John Edmondson at AGM

Freyda Taylor joined Cheshire Gardens Trust in 2007, has served on the Council of Management and is currently a member of the Research and Recording Group. Her working life was in the biological sciences field, latterly with her own company producing operating manuals for laboratory instrumentation. After retiring, Freyda took RHS Courses in Horticulture at Reaseheath College where she found she had a serious interest in historic designed landscapes.



Liz Roberts (above) was a garden designer for nearly 30 years, before joining the Gardens Trust in 2017 as a member of the Research and Recording group. As you

would expect she has an interest in garden designers, past and present, and has also taken on the role of keeping us up to date on Gardens Trust activities.



Monica Walker, took horticultural courses at Reaseheath College and has a good network of contacts in related areas, such as Plant Heritage and gardeners working across Cheshire. She has taken a particular interest in parks.



Sue Eldridge, Editor, volunteered at Arley for 10 years and as a result became involved in Cheshire Gardens Trust activities in 2011, in particular the Caldwells project and the Events team. But she'd always had a secret yen to be a journalist, hence the interest in the CGT Newsletter.

The support group have offered support by keeping up to date, writing articles and suggesting topics. But their biggest project has been research into members' views on the newsletter, led by Isabel, which we reported on in the last edition of the newsletter. We are currently trying to follow members ideas. One of the areas we are currently looking at is the format of the newsletter and how we can make it more readable online, possibly moving from two columns to one. Not as easy as you might think and needs a lot of thought.

If you are at all interested in joining this group, particularly if you have experience in this area or if you have IT skills, then please do get in touch.

All best wishes from the Newsletter Support Group
newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

RHS – A change at the top

In June Clare Matterson CBE, officially took over the role of Director General of the RHS, taking over from Sue Biggs, who had steered the RHS for 12 years.

Clare was previously Director, Culture & Society/Strategy

at the Natural History Museum 2018 – 2022 and prior to that was with the Wellcome foundation for 18 years.

She has been an RHS Member for over 30 years and recognizes how the joy of growing plants and gardening can have a positive impact on people and society.

Congleton Bath House and Physic Garden



The Bath House on Heritage Day in September

Only a short walking distance from the Town Hall in Congleton, behind an old timber door set in a high brick boundary wall, lies a hidden gem, a rare surviving example of a private plunge pool dating back to around 1820.

Built in the late Georgian period, within the spacious grounds of Bradshaw House, the Bath House together with a fine neoclassical garden shelter (below), all built around the same time, reflect the fashions in architecture and the prevailing ideas about physical well being. The health enhancing powers of immersion in cold-water was thought to improve the circulation of the blood, as well as hardening the body to help in the prevention of the many diseases of the day.



The Bath House itself is a brick built two-storey structure with a hipped roof. The plunge pool is approximately 3m

square with stone steps leading down to a depth of 1.5 metres. The pool is fed by cold running water piped from a nearby spring. On the upper floor there is an open fireplace which, when lit, would provide warmth and no doubt refreshments would be served to welcome bathers after their cold, if not icy dip!

Unfortunately, over time, fashions and ideas change, the two garden buildings fell into disuse and by the late 20th Century became derelict. Rescue came with the formation of a group of volunteers in the year 2000 to restore the derelict buildings. Included in the project was the creation of a small Physic Garden (below) within the surrounding garden area.



Within the overall planting scheme, medicinal plants in keeping with the health enhancing ideas associated with the Bath House have been included, as well as plants historically used in local industry, such as hemp for the making of strong ropes and dye plants for the textile industry. There is a wildlife area with a wildflower meadow and pond, a fruit garden with trained fruit trees and currant bushes and a culinary bed with plants traditionally used for flavourings.

The garden is open every day, free to visitors, but the Bath House at present can only be visited by arrangement and on Open Days. See <https://congletonbhpg.co.uk>

**Text and photos Gordon J Darlington
Council of management and Events Group**

200 years of Garden Visiting

This year marks 200 years since the opening of the first RHS Garden in Chiswick. To celebrate, RHS Libraries has put together an online exhibition exploring how the experience of visiting RHS Gardens has changed over time. It illustrates the journey from one modest-sized garden attracting 2,000 people per year in 1822 to five major RHS Gardens attracting more than 2 million people in 2022.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections/200-years-of-visiting-rhs-gardens>



RHS Bridgewater – visitor centre

A visit to Castlefield Viaduct: the Sky Garden



A part of the Viaduct not yet developed

After many years spent travelling by Metrolink tram past the disused railway viaduct at Castlefield, in the centre of Manchester, thinking wouldn't it be marvellous if it could be turned into a garden, it has. Since 1969 the viaduct has lain dormant, but nature took over, with birch trees and weeds self-seeding in the gravel.

The National Trust and a number of other partners have invested a substantial sum into the making of a garden that is a pilot scheme for a hopefully permanent garden running the length of the viaduct. The garden was made in the summer of 2022, and is open for pre-booked guided tours daily. These have proved to be very popular so I was only able to book a visit at the end of September. The garden did not disappoint, the design works very well in the setting, and the planting was understated but beautiful. Visitors are encouraged to leave their comments on the garden and the plans for a permanent garden. Only part of the viaduct has been developed, leaving a long curving untouched section visible from the room at the far end of the garden, and another section that visitors walk through to reach the garden.

The garden closes on 24th December until mid February for replanting, etc. 7,000 bulbs will be planted, so it will

be lovely in the spring. If you have not already been able to visit, I can thoroughly recommend it. The garden is only 3 minutes walk (well signposted) from the Deansgate Castlefield tram stop, and slightly further from Deansgate Train Station.



For further information there is an article on the garden in the Autumn 2022 National Trust magazine.

To book your free, timed ticket to visit the viaduct and share feedback on the pilot visit

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/castlefield-viaduct>

Isabel Wright
Newsletter Support Group

The Gardens Trust News and Other Events

The Gardens Trust

A special livestream event, free to members, has just been announced for 3rd November. Linden Groves, Head of Operations and Strategy, will talk through some of the things that have been happening so far in 2022, and future plans.

This is followed on 17th November by the Historic Landscapes Assembly looking at Our Landscape Heritage at Risk: Climate Change and Development (i.e. Planning) This is a day seminar in London – if you can make it down. Both events will be looking at the key work of the Gardens Trust.

One of the Trust's newest strategies is a £2500 Community Grant to seed and fund volunteer projects to support historic designed landscapes in the UK. This newsletter is a little too late for the closing date for

applications of mid-October, but hopefully Linden will be able to say whether this grant will be an annual offer – funding not just for County Gardens Trusts, but for any volunteer group with a project that reflects the Trust's priorities of conservation, sharing knowledge and encouraging participation and enjoyment in historic designed landscapes, be it a restoration plan, setting up a friends group, a research project or volunteer training scheme. Keep an eye on this if you are planning anything of this nature over the next year.

On line talks continue with a four-part series given by Caroline Holmes on Garden Designs around the French Riviera, starting 25th October. This will develop on themes looked at by Stephanie Knoblich in our talk last February (see Newsletter article on our website), and bringing it into C21 with contemporary gardens. After

the Fabric of Flowers finishes on 24th October, there is a follow on series Paradise on Porcelain, continuing the theme on how gardens and flowers have influenced arts and crafts.

Unforgettable Gardens talks continue, this time with four gardens from Suffolk Gardens Trust starting on 2nd November, as well as other events hosted by CGTs.



One of Suffolk's Unforgettable gardens

The News section of the website is worth reading for articles on Unforgettable Gardens and major planning issues – currently Elvaston Hall in Derbyshire, and also a series 'Journeys of Empire', looking at plants brought back from south east Asia.

Details all available on <https://thegardenstrust.org/>

RHS Libraries Digital

There is a new exhibition on Garden Visiting (see page 11) on the RHS Libraries Digital collection as well as the Bicycle Boys/Lloyal Johnson exhibition, which we featured in previous editions. See both on <https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections>

Again if the trains ever run, there is an exhibition at **The Garden Museum** in London 'Lucien Freud: Plant Portraits' which runs until next March.

Cheshire Gardens Trust events

Wednesday 19th October 11am -Informal visit to Walton Hall and Gardens, Warrington

Tuesday 22nd November. Phil Esseen talking about the Conservation role and specialist collections at Chester Zoo, Marthall Hall 2pm

Zoom Talks - Monday 23rd January: Sarah Murch, Garden Designer, specialising in natural pool design

Monday 27th February: Joe Wainwright, Professional Freelance Garden Photographer

Liz Roberts

Newsletter Support Group and Research and Recording

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens



Autumn crocuses with brunnera and acers

On a wet September afternoon we visited Cholmondeley Castle Gardens where Barry Grain, Head Gardener since 2013, gave us a wonderful talk and tour. The site of the house has been in the Cholmondeley family since C12, with dwellings on the site from C13. The building of the house in the current form of a castle, commenced in 1801 and was completed in 1829. The house was Grade II* listed in 1952.

The initial gardens from 1688 by Lecocke were in the French, formal style (after Le Notre) with allees and canals. After his death, the design was taken over by George London (of London and Wise). Following neglect in the C18, the 4th Earl employed William Eames to redesign the garden in the landscape style, planting trees and digging lakes. It was in the 1820s that the existing garden started to emerge, with some specimen trees being planted and some initial design work in the Temple Garden.

In 1949, Lady Lavinia married Lord Hugh the 6th Marquis. She was a relative gardening novice, but had a vision for the garden and wanted to develop a 'garden of great romance'; her legacy is in the gardens she created. She started with the Rose Garden in 1952 and set about transforming the whole 70 acres. Lady Lavinia bought in a huge amount of specialist plant material which now forms important collections and gives Cholmondeley its unique style and charm.

When she passed away in 2015, her son David, the current Marquis, was insistent that the garden should continue to evolve in a manner that Lady Lavinia would have wished. Barry had worked with Lady Lavinia before her death. He and his team of 5 gardeners do all their design 'in house' and are committed to education, having connections to Reaseheath College, also hosting RHS courses.

We started our tour in The Glade. The garden is particularly known for being a spring garden. However, the star in this part of the garden was the beautiful lilac coloured autumn crocuses coming into flower through the pale leaves of the *Brunnera*. The spring flowering *Cornus* were covered with their autumn fruits and there were still roses in flower in the border.

We then moved to the original Rose Garden which is planted with repeat flowering David Austin roses of varying shades of pink, red, white, and maroon (no yellows). At this time of year, it was lovely to see the pink of the nerines which were in harmony with the colour of

the roses. From the existing Rose Garden, it was easy to see Barry's plans for the new Rose Garden beginning to take shape on the site of the old tennis courts. The plan is for the gardeners to work on it over this winter.



The start of the new Rose Garden with the Castle in the background

Then we moved on down the central axis of the garden in the direction of the Temple Garden to admire the double herbaceous borders of the Lavinia Walk, which is a new feature started in 2017 and completed in 2018 in honour of Lady Lavinia. There is year-round structure provided by the ornate rose obelisks repeated plantings of *Malus hupehensis*, which were showing their red fruits, and *Buxus* to give winter structure. There was excellent late season colour when we visited (see below).



Lavinia Walk viewed from the Rose Garden

From there to the Temple Garden, where Barry is in the process of creating a new rock garden extension. 15 large stones are already in place, with more to be added. Large amounts of Laurel have been removed, opening the views beyond the lake over the ha ha to the surrounding parkland. There were tints of Autumn colour just beginning

Onward through the Arboretum towards the Folly Garden, we admired some late blossoms on the



Barry showing us the Temple Garden

hydrangeas and the first hints of autumn shades on some of the acers. The Folly Garden (formerly the duck garden) had been in a state of neglect, being over-run with Japanese knotweed, and darkened by extensive *Rhododendron ponticum* and laurel. In the early part of this century assistance from Xa Tollemache was used to rediscover obscured cascades and open up this part of the garden. The folly is from Tollemache's Chelsea Garden and remains in place. Many of the plants from that show were also incorporated but have now gone. There are now many shrubs that give seasonal interest and ferns, including tree ferns, with underplanting. Barry's vision for this part of the garden includes opening up the back of the garden and making it continuous with the woodland so that the bluebells can be appreciated.



The Folly Garden

It was good to hear Barry's vision for this wonderful garden. His enthusiasm for the future sounded exciting, with a forward plan to open as much of the garden to the surrounding landscape, extending the existing, central, well-defined axis.

Christine Arnold

Photos Christine Arnold, Margaret Blowey and Sue Eldridge

Copy date for January newsletter is 31st December

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