



The Garden in the Sky

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Future events (see pages 7 and 15/16)

- RHS Urban Show, Manchester 18th – 24th April 2024
- CGT Events, including talks at Marthall Hall
- Kevin Pratt 20th November
- Marcus Chilton Jones Curator RHS Bridgewater 11th March
- Zoom talks on 22nd January and 12th February

Castlefield Viaduct, Manchester



Following the report on our visit to Mayfield Park in Manchester (see Newsletter No 79), I mentioned there would be an article on Castlefield Viaduct, which we visited in the afternoon.

After light refreshments in Mayfield Park a number of the group caught the metro tram from Piccadilly Station to Castlefield for a guided visit of the new National Trust viaduct garden. On our arrival, we were met by the National Trust Representative, Sasha Packham (left), who gave us a very interesting talk about the project before we ventured down the Viaduct Walkway.

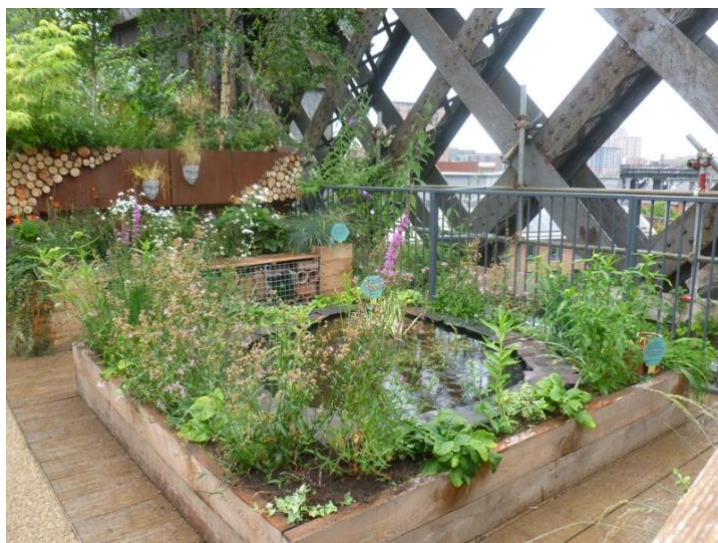
The National Trust, in association with various local community organisations, took up the challenge for more open green spaces in our inner cities, highlighted during the recent Covid pandemic. The project was to create a green 'Sky Garden' on the viaduct similar in concept to the New York "High Line" for people to enjoy. In a relatively short time the sky garden was built and has become a haven for the local wildlife.

The sky garden is constructed on 330 metres of track on the disused Castlefield railway viaduct, built in 1892, abandoned in 1969, but still very much part of Manchester's industrial heritage. Designed and built by Manchester based engineers Heenan and Froude, it is now Grade II listed. This iconic structure allowed heavy rail traffic to use the Great Northern Warehouse located within the Castlefield Viaduct area, near to the present G-Mex Centre, itself formerly Manchester Central Station.

The sky garden opened to the public in July 2022 with a central walkway, allowing superb views of the surrounding area, including the Bridgewater Canal



New high rise buildings in Central Manchester viewed through the dramatic viaduct structure



garden complete with a small pond to encourage local wildlife and insects (see left).

Basin; the area of the Roman Fort Mamucium; a series of Victorian warehouses; and in the distance the Science and Industry Museum, all within easy walking of the viaduct. Along the pathway leading down to the temporary Visitor Centre, raised planting beds have been constructed from old timber railway sleepers and new sawn timber and corten steel. The raised beds have been used for various planting schemes and include plants from the local area, highlighting new planting techniques and demonstration planting of herbaceous perennials, grasses and ferns. There is an interesting sensory nature

A local Community Garden Centre created an urban forest garden complete with fruit trees and edible shrubs. Sasha mentioned the high number of plant specimens already planted on site.



Urban Forest Garden

Small sculptures and well-designed information boards, some constructed in corten steel, a good alternative to wood or plastic. The warm, rich, earthy colour of the corten steel harmonises well with the ironwork of the viaduct.

Only recently the National Trust announced that the sky garden was to remain open for another year until Autumn 2024. A team from Manchester-based BDP's Landscape Department will work alongside the Trust, their partners and community groups to develop plans for the next phase, although currently funding is still required.

An interesting day looking at the regeneration of Manchester's past heritage with visits to both Mayfield Park and Castlefield viaduct, which was enjoyed by everyone who visited the newly transformed areas of our City of Manchester.

Castlefield Viaduct is open in the morning for pre booked guided tours and in the afternoon for walk up visits (no booking required).

For further information visit [their website](#)

Gordon J Darlington

Photos Chris Driver, Annie Coombs and Sue Eldridge

Women of the Welfare Landscape



Brenda Colvin (1897 -1981)

A group of CGT Members gathered in Styal Mill to view the exhibition on the work and legacy of Brenda Colvin (1897 – 1981), landscape architect. We were privileged to hear from Professor Luca Csepely-Knorr from Liverpool University who curated the exhibition, with Dr Camilla Allen. It was inspirational. Several of our group had worked with Brenda Colvin or had been personally touched by the landscape developments in the post war era. 'Women of the Welfare Landscape' is a travelling exhibition, part of a research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and based at the University of Liverpool School of Architecture.

The exhibition focused on Brenda Colvin, but also introduced us to other women working in the field, such as Sylvia Crowe, Elizabeth Buchanan Mitchell, the First Lady Town Planner in Scotland, and Jane Dower who joined the National Park Commission in 1949 and was chair of the sub-committee responsible for designation of the Peak District as a National Park in 1951.

Brenda Colvin was born in India, was educated at Swanley Horticultural College in Kent, and established her independent practice in 1922. Brenda had a long and wide-ranging career, working initially in private gardens, but during WW2 she moved towards more public projects, designing landscapes for new towns, power stations and quarries, national parks and the rural countryside, universities and hospitals. This is why she has had such a great impact on the world we know, part of the vision for the future following the second world war.

New Towns were very much part of that post war vision, an ambitious programme to move families out of the slums and overcrowding in London and other cities. In 1949 Brenda Colvin was appointed to create an outline plan for the landscapes of East Kilbride New Town. Like many other new town developments the vision was to create a community around new industries



Headhouse Greenway, East Kilbride

surrounded by a protected green belt. Tree planting was key, supported by town planner Elizabeth Mitchell. Typical Of Brenda Colvin's method was her approach to the problem of storm management in the steep valleys that cut through East Kilbride. The result was Headhouse Greenway, enhanced so that it could be a place where children play, people walk and rainwater is stored in a heavy downpour.

The University of East Anglia, founded in 1961 and opened in 1963 was one of the new generation of universities created by Royal Charter to meet the rising demand for higher education. The architect and vice chancellor recognised that landscape was an integral part of the campus and appointed Brenda Colvin. To complement the distinctive architectural style, her design principles were a minimal palette, working with the open valley; the importance of the skyline, and structural woodland that enhanced the campus.



Eggborough Power Station

Colvin also worked in many less glamorous settings such as quarries and power stations, including Eggborough Power Station in Yorkshire. The landscape created by Colvin has outlasted coal-based energy generation. She surrounded the site with extensive linear woods and mounding to balance the vertical mass of the power stations and screen unsightly objects. Later, a new parkland landscape was created for the recreation of employees and a habitat for wildlife. She was ahead of her time, not afraid to push the boundaries.

Her passion for landscape architecture reached far beyond the projects she worked on. In 1929 she co-founded the Institute of Landscape Architects (now The Landscape Institute) and became its president in 1951. She wrote *Land and Landscape* (1947, revised 1970). In the 1960s Colvin shared an office with Sylvia Crowe, later also president of the ILA (1957–1959). Hal Moggridge joined her landscape architect practice in 1969 when she was already over 70. The practice continues and celebrated its centenary in 2022.

We finished our afternoon with a visit to Styal Village. When the National Trust inherited Styal Mill and village, they realised they would have to look at the landscaping surrounding the village. They appointed Brenda Colvin to develop a plan. She was keen to keep the rural nature of the surroundings, use a mix of native and ornamental trees and to keep it simple, almost as though there had been no intervention. But it took several plans and a lot of discussion to reach this point. Most of what she originally planned is still there, even though the trees and hedgerows now obscure the view on to open countryside.

It was a wonderful end to the afternoon. With grateful thanks to Luca for giving us such a sympathetic, enlightened tour.



Luca talking about Brenda Colvin's contribution to the development of Styal Village

There is an online History Pin Collection. If you would like to add material or memories please go to [The History Pin Collection](#)

Text and photo of Luca, Sue Eldridge

Photos of East Kilbride and Eggborough Professor Luca Csepely-Knorr

Photo of Brenda Colvin, copyright Brenda Colvin Collection, Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading.

Visit to Betley Court

In July, Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust invited CGT members to join their guided tour of Betley Court - just across the 'border', on the A 531 road.



The restored East elevation

The house was built in 1716 and has been in private hands throughout its history. Most of the Grade II* listed building was destroyed by fire in 2019. In cooperation with Historic England, the exterior has now been painstakingly restored by the present owners, whose family moved into Betley Court in the 1970s. Work on the interior continues.

Our visit began in the comfortable visitors' hub with Dr Nigel Brown's presentation of 300 years of garden history at Betley Court. In 1785, an extensive landscape park was laid out by William Emes (he also worked in Cheshire, for example at Eaton Hall and Oulton Park). Emes' plan for Betley Court is one of his

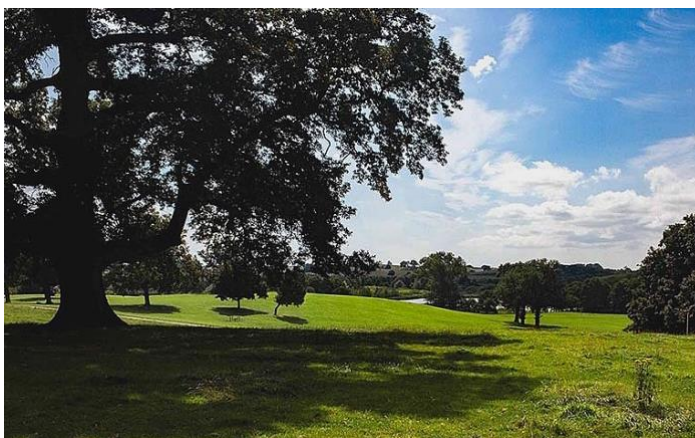
rare plans still in existence (Staffordshire Record Office).

Other well-known garden designers were to follow. In 1865, William Barron moved and planted mature trees; his magnificent Cedar of Lebanon still flourishes. Barron's terrace and Italianate parterre, however, was simplified to six herbaceous borders in the early 1900s, possibly by Thomas Mawson.

We then had the chance to explore the grounds with a good map and at our leisure: the Long Walk of majestic trees leading to the gazebo folly; the winding paths into the woodland valley with its picturesque stream and pond; the Peace Garden of 1995. We also found a (new) full-size rhinoceros, and the main feature remaining from Emes' design – his carefully planned view to Betley Mere.



Barron's Cedar and the modern parterre



Emes' view: remains of the former parkland and a glimpse of Betley Mere

Unfortunately, all our exploring was during a heavy rain storm which prevented clear photographs. Thus, the sunny image of Emes' View is from Betley Court's website, with permission.

Betley Court opens for guided tours on 12 days a year.

As members of the CGT Research and Recording Group, we found the visit a fascinating experience, tracing the many layers in 300 years of garden history within one site.

Barbara Wright
photos Barbara Moth and [Betley Court Gardens](#)

Growing@Field 28



Our introduction to the shop and produce

We were led round the farm by Romy, head of the growing team, and Jess the farm manager. There are five staff on the growing team. It is their fourth season and they experiment and keep notes on their observations of how the crops are behaving. The farm has an air of enthusiasm and experimentation.

Although not certified organic, the farm employs similar techniques and principles. Vegetables are grown in separate beds, not in large fields. This assists crop rotation. Empty beds are covered with tarpaulins to prevent weeds popping up or seeding themselves into the space and to warm the soil which is sandy and lacks nutrients, so RHS peat-free compost is used to boost it. Manure is easily available locally but tends to contain weed seeds, so is not favoured but green manures are grown in spare beds as ground cover and fertiliser.

The farm grows beets, celeriac, brassicas, onions and carrots. Although it does not embrace the “no dig method” (that takes too long) the team operate a “minimum till” policy. We were intrigued by the broad fork

On 4th August, CGT members enjoyed a tour of the Field 28 farm in Daresbury, near Warrington. This is owned by Kevin and Jan Dobbs, dentists by profession, but with a family background in market gardening and farming. They started indoor growing in 2018, followed by outdoor growing in 2019, then opening the farm shop in 2021.

As you enter the shop, you see a purple light behind a glass partition. This is the light that shines on shelves of micro greens which, we were told, can tell the changing seasons and will try to respond accordingly, in spite of the controlled environment (see below).



used to break up strips of soil and our guides demonstrated its use, much like a traditional fork but on a much wider base. It provides a good work out for the user!

The farm prefers natural methods of pest control, such as companion planting, (planting alliums among ranunculus had been successful). Seaweed washes are used to encourage plant resistance. They experiment to find strong varieties. Carrots like the sandy soil and Jerusalem artichokes have self-seeded into a hedge, which makes a useful windbreak. The onion crop had been so successful that they had difficulty finding enough space to dry it.



Romy showing us the edible flowers 1



CGT Members lost in the tomato forest

Seedlings are allowed at least 3 weeks in their seed-tray before being planted out. Most vegetables are sown one seed to a cell, but many are sown directly into the prepared soil. Other plants are grown in pots which means they are portable and can be brought inside if necessary. The team try to extend the growing season for as long as possible.

In one of the polytunnels flowers were growing in trays. Amongst these were begonias, violas and marigolds, grown not as bedding plants but to be used by chefs as food (begonias having a similar flavour to a Granny Smith apple), or garnish. Specialist leaves such as Japanese shiso are also grown for use by chefs in local and London restaurants.

Larger flowers are grown for flower markets and the team hope to develop as wholesalers. They particularly favour flowers that can be dried. An attractive blue flower proved to be chicory, liked because of its colour, a true bright blue. Recently peonies have been bought in and were growing in separate pots. These will, eventually, be planted out and, hopefully, will bloom in three years time.

The in-house florist produces door wreaths and bouquets and can cater for weddings. Field 28 is part of a group "Flowers from the Farm" which hopes to encourage the purchase of English flowers rather than those flown in from abroad.

In the poly-tunnels were cucumbers, tomatoes and squashes in different varieties and shapes. The choice of these is largely dictated by what chefs require. The rows of tomatoes (see above) are grown with two leaders to increase the crop and, once the top of the tunnel is reached they are layered to encourage further growth. Smaller squashes are preferred, as they can be popped into veg boxes. The courgette crop is picked three times a week while young and small.

Many recent developments in farm machinery have proved useful to this style of farming and we saw several machines, some small enough to be hand operated.

In the shop is a wonderful display of vegetables and we found it very difficult to resist temptation.

For more information, see [Growing@Field28](#)



Jess with one of the many unusual squashes

Jenny Wood

Photos Sue Eldridge

RHS Urban Show coming to Mayfield

April 18th- 24th 2024 will see a brand new flower show coming to Manchester. It's a departure from the traditional RHS show, not least because it will be housed entirely indoors, in the vast industrial space of Depot Mayfield, a former railway station, adjacent to Mayfield Park that we visited recently. It's an opportunity to focus on the growing movement of urban and city gardeners and the increasing connection between horticulture, wellbeing and sustainable living. It will cater for people who live in an urban space and who are more interested in small spaces, houseplants and rental garden ideas.

For more information and to book tickets see [the RHS show website](#). Also see the October 2023 edition of 'The Garden'.

Thomas Hayton Mawson in Cumbria

We featured Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) in the April 2023 edition of the Newsletter with Julia Whitfield's article on his early life and his work in Cheshire. Thomas Mawson arrived in Cumbria with his mother and two brothers, setting up a nursery business in Windermere. The business was so successful that Thomas was able to specialise in garden design, while his brothers concentrated on the nursery. His first commission was a local property, Graythwaite Hall. He went on to design gardens at Low Wood Lodge (now Langdale Chase), Holehird, Brockhole, Holker Hall and Rydal Hall. I am still waiting for Langdale Chase to reopen, hopefully in autumn 2023, but in the meantime, I have taken the opportunity to visit several of the other properties.



Balustrading at the back of the Hall

Mawson's gardens are characterised by their brick and tile work, especially on balustrades, steps, paving and terraces; his use of vernacular materials like local wood, stone and native plants and trees; and the use of local craftsmen, with the house and gardens always complementing each other.

There is an astonishing number of sites that he worked on in the Lake District. Many have survived as public buildings, hotels and guest houses, volunteer run gardens and private properties. Holker Hall is one of the grandest, built in the 1600s, still in private hands, though much restyled after the fire in March 1871. It is a vast estate with acres of

undulating parkland, wildflower meadows and pasture. The pleasure gardens cover 25 acres of formal and woodland gardens, with majestic features including a limestone cascade and fountain (you may remember Joe Wainwright's photo featured recently in the Newsletter). In 1910 Thomas Mawson created low stone terraces, a rose garden and a balustraded boundary wall to contrast with the wilder parkland area. I loved the formal landscaping adjacent to the hall with the soft planting of June set against the formal paving and walls.



Formal hard landscaping with informal planting



The rear of Rydal Hall with balustrading, formal beds and fountain

Rydal Hall (left) is very different, but in its way just as grand as Holker Hall and showing Mawson's style very clearly. The le Fleming family can be traced back to 1126 and possibly linked to the Norman Conquest. Michael le Fleming built the new hall in C16. It was enlarged in C17, altered and refaced in C18, with the main front dating from early C19. Since 1963 it has been run by the Church of England Diocese as a place of hospitality, tranquillity and spirituality. It sits in a splendid setting at the end of the Coffin Route, now part of a popular walk round Grasmere and Rydal Water. There are views over the River Rothay, with Rydal Water and Lake Windermere in the distance. In the opposite direction and now rather obscured by trees is the Fairfield Horsehoe.

Mawson worked on the garden from 1909. At the back of the house it is almost Italianate in design, with two terraces, a long narrow upper terrace, leading via a pair of divided flights of steps to the lower terrace with pool and fountain and inset sheltered seats under short pergolas against the walls. There is again lovely balustrading made of concrete, crowned with urns made in moulds (see right), which the estate still retains. It is all still there, more complete than many a Mawson garden. The Carlisle Diocese, in conjunction with Cumbria Gardens Trust and Historic England, has restored the gardens which reopened in 2007. The garden is open daily.



Brockhole (left) is still open to the public, in a stunning setting set above its terraced garden, overlooking Lake Windermere. Unlike the other two properties, house and garden were designed at the same time. The Gaddum family who owned Brockhole, were Manchester industrialists. Mawson worked closely with Dan Gibson, the architect, as they were to do on many other commissions. It is a stunning arts and crafts house with long galleries and balconies overlooking the garden and Lake Windermere. Near the house, Mawson used terracing, garden walls and paving, linking house

and garden, now used very effectively as outdoor seating for the café.

Exotic trees and shrubs, along with lavish floral displays were used near the house. Further out, trees, shrubs, hedges and bulbs were dominated by native species. Mawson's original plantings include some fine specimen trees (Wellingtonias, Caucasian firs and Douglas firs), formal clipped yew and box hedging, rhododendrons, wisteria and magnolia, as well as a wealth of herbaceous plants, scented plants and old fashioned roses.

The Gaddums finally sold the property in 1947 and it became a convalescent home. The Lake District Park Authority purchased the house and grounds in 1966 and opened it in 1969 as the UK's first National Park Visitor Centre. It has been considerably restored and is now a listed UNESCO World Heritage site. But the house and gardens are rather overshadowed by the range of activities going on. You can try your hand at anything from archery to sailing. Hopefully I will visit other Mawson sites and report on them in future issues of the newsletter.



View from the Long gallery

Mawson published two considerable volumes in 1901, 'The Art and Craft of Garden Making' which is widely accepted as the foundation of modern landscape architecture, still available via Amazon.

For further information [The Thomas Mawson pages on the Visit Cumbria website](#)

Janet Waymark has written a very interesting biography 'Thomas Mawson: Life, Gardens and Landscapes', published 2009, available at a cost, though I got my copy at a reduced rate at a garden shop.

Ashton Grange revisited



Delphiniums in the new beds in the front of the house

A group of Cheshire Garden Trust members and friends were delighted to make a return visit to the lovely Ashton Grange, the home of our Treasurer, Martin Slack, and his wife, Kate, on the afternoon of 5th July. We had previously visited in summer 2019 when we were so impressed with the transformation work that had taken place to date, that a four-year return visit was requested.

The whole property extends to approximately 12 acres. Since 2015, Martin and Kate have been undertaking a major restoration project, most of the work being done by themselves. They previously had large properties in Cambridge and Hertfordshire, opened for NGS. Kate and Martin have also opened Ashton Grange through the NGS

scheme on a yearly basis, raising a considerable amount of money for Macmillan as the chosen charity.

Following Martin and Kate's warm welcome on the impressive lawn, Kate showed half of our group around the garden, whilst Martin was pleased to take the rest of the group to the orchard, the kitchen garden, the wildflower meadow, and the woodland. The two groups were exchanged halfway through the visit to enable us to see all wonderful aspects of Ashton Grange.

The garden at Ashton Grange includes a magnificent sweeping lawn and a large pond with a beautiful fountain. Kate guided us around the herbaceous borders and island beds, several of which had been developed since our last visit. She explained how many of the original plants had been transferred from the Hertfordshire Garden and was delighted how they had thrived in the damper conditions of Cheshire. Our visit followed the NGS opening the previous weekend and the garden was at its best, including beautiful delphiniums in one of the newly constructed island beds. The terraces outside the house were a delightful display of pinks and mauves.

Martin was proud to take us to the well-established orchard from which an annual crop of 500kg of apples results in some excellent apple juice! Martin's forte in the kitchen garden was self-evident, resulting in almost self-sufficiency in vegetables and fruit. We then toured the wildflower meadow, developed in conjunction with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, with the important yellow rattle sown amongst other wildflowers. We rounded up Martin's tour by walking through the woodland. This has a preservation order on it but had been sadly neglected before the Slacks arrived. Since our last visit Martin has continued to remove dead, diseased and deformed trees, to thin out old wood, and develop pathways. Planting of hollies, hazel, privet and other native trees along the wood edge had been undertaken. It was also pleasing to see the delightful Simon O'Rourke wood carvings in the wood!

Our visit concluded with afternoon tea and delicious homemade cakes on the terraces. Many thanks again to Martin and Kate for being so generous with your time and showing us how your great garden has developed so well in the last four years.



'Quercus', one of Simon O' Rourke's wood carvings

Heritage Open Day at Queen's Park, Crewe



Bedding plants in Crewe Park, a key feature of the park, but in danger of being lost due to financial cuts



Our stand located in the centre of the park

On a misty morning in September, a band of early rising Cheshire Gardens Trust volunteers arrived in Queen's Park, Crewe, along with several hundred runners! While the runners did parkrun we put up gazebos, tied bunting, unpacked displays, carted buckets of flowers and got organised for the day. Our stand (above) was located beside the cafe in the centre of the park, highly visible – and audible - with the hand bell used for games. The sun shone and there was a steady footfall of people. Partnering with Cheshire Archives and Local



Flower girls - create a Tudor posie with the help of Gerard's Herbal – Rachel Manning, Kate Tobias Buick, Katie Owen, CALS, and Barbara Moth and Jackie Cawte, CGT



Jackie helping children create posies

Studies and with the support of Gardens Trust staff Tamsin, Frankie and Linden we engaged 100 – 120 visitors in conversation, 60 people aged 2 – 95 years old made Tudor posies, memories were collected, historic plans examined, cards made and leaflets taken. Our displays and garden history lucky dip were useful conversation starters and we met some lovely people.



Our display boards



Frankie from The Gardens Trust with the Lucky Dip

We are really grateful for the support of Richard of Queen's Park Friends for his assistance, for Martin for bringing the gazebos, and for all the volunteers who gave up part of a Saturday to join us in the park. Apart from having a good time (and the opportunity to sneak off and try scything with Cheshire Wildlife Trust), the response from all involved has been positive. We have learnt a lot from the experience – have much to think about, do differently or build on – and Cheshire Archives are pleased to have fulfilled part of their National Lottery commitment by partnering with us.

Barbara Moth, Research and Recording Group

Photos 1 and 2 – Chris Driver; photos 3,4,5,6 - Peter Robinson of Crewe Photographic Society

Sheffield Manor Lodge and the Green Estate: Home of Pictorial Meadows



The Lavender Maze

Following on from Liz Roberts's excellent article on Pictorial Meadows in the July 2023 CGT Newsletter, I was fortunate to visit the Green Estate (Manor Lane, Sheffield S2 1U) on one of their open days in July.

Manor Lodge is the ruined remains of a large Tudor manor house, which was one of the many places where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned. The Turret House, that was the former gatehouse, is intact, and can be visited. The extensive grounds are now home to a lavender maze where the walled garden of the manor house would have been, and a number of different pictorial meadows. All

absolutely inspiring!

A short walk from the top part of the site, where Manor Lodge is situated, leads down to the Green Estate, which occupies a post-industrial site. Here we were able to see different seed mixes being trialled, and where experiments in flood management with planting were being conducted. Members of staff from the Green Estate (a Community Interest Company) were on hand to answer questions.

For over twenty years Pictorial Meadows has been at the forefront of the development of urban meadows, which has created a new era of naturalistic, sustainable and designed approaches to landscape planting.

Some of their projects include Superbloom at the Tower of London, Rotherham 8 Mile Verge, Trentham Gardens and of course the London Olympic Park Meadows. This summer the RHS Bridgewater Garden had several areas that were planted with some of the meadow mixes. It was interesting to see how these changed as the season progressed.

The different seed mixes also have wonderful evocative names such as Kingfisher, Dragonfly, Patchwork Quilt and Sundance. I look forward to attempting to plant my own mini meadow next year.

If you have the opportunity to visit next summer it is highly recommended.



One of the wildflower seed mixes

Isabel Wright

For more information see [Pictorial meadows](#)

If you would like to visit next summer between April and October, book online on [Sheffield Manor Lodge](#) website.

Castle Park, a reflection

It was a delight to be back in Castle Park for this year's AGM accompanied by so many members from the early days of the Cheshire Gardens Trust. Despite a dubious forecast we were blessed with a fine afternoon for a tour of the park led by Kath Gee, followed by tea with delicious homemade cakes in the courtyard of Castle Park Arts Centre.



Looking towards the house (photo by Joseph Brandenburg)

Joseph Stubs engaged Edward Kemp to lay out the grounds, and it appears that they took mutual delight in the process, possibly visiting Biddulph Grange together for inspiration and adapting the proposed layout of Park Place to accommodate Stubs latest plants and enthusiasms. Kemp's account of the design is contained within the 2nd and 3rd editions of his book, "How to Lay Out a Garden" and is recorded in Cheshire Gardens Trust book, "Kemp's Parks and Gardens in Cheshire", published in 2017 to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth. Stubs was only there for 10 years but the 1861 sale plan indicates that Kemp's design was carried out, and our visit confirmed that much of the layout survives.

Castle Park Arts Centre occupies what was formerly the Victorian stable block and outbuildings associated with the mansion house. The original late 18th century house was built for the Ashley family and called Park Place, with parts of the foundations of Frodsham Castle incorporated in the foundations and relicts of a former mill pond situated in the park. In 1851 Park Place was purchased by Joseph Stubs, a tool making manufacturer from Warrington, who proceeded to reconstruct and extend the house and outbuildings. The Birkenhead Lancashire and Junction Railway had by this time purchased a portion of the site to the north, constructing a large embankment which cut the property off from the town.



Looking away from the house (Barbara Moth)



Group gathering above American Garden (Chris Driver)

The Wright family gave the buildings and grounds to the local authority for a park in 1933, a gift augmented by the council's purchase of additional land. Castle Park was registered Grade II in 2002 and benefited from a Restoration and Development plan in 2005 funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The restoration improved the park and provided new facilities such as the play area, but sadly some issues, such as the fountains which soon ceased to operate, were not resolved. The impacts of cuts in local authority spending are being felt despite the best efforts of staff and garden volunteers. The so called "American garden" which occupies a pivotal point between the

formal gardens and woodland, has become very overgrown with few if any original or restored plantings surviving.

A Chester photographer, Joseph Brandenburg, has left a fantastic record of the park, 1805 – 1903. The park also has a wonderful collection of trees, contributed by owners and now by the Friends group. These include a group of mature oaks in the upper park, recorded as young oaks by Brandenburg with a bare Overton Hill in the background, and a glorious mature *Magnolia acuminata* near the house (see below).

Barbara Moth, Research and Recording Group

Historic images are available at <https://www.cheshireimagebank.org.uk/> search Castle Park

Castle Park Postscript

Kath Gee, who led us on our walk, offered the following postscript 'The mature Magnolia tree we saw in Castle Park was ***Magnolia acuminata***. It has a spreading crown that can reach up to 30m in height. The leaves are deciduous, oval to oblong, 12–25 centimetres (4.7–9.8 in) long and 6–12 centimetres (2.4–4.7 in) wide, with smooth margins and downy on the underside. This tree bears insignificant, pale green/yellow flowers high in the tree in late spring and early summer. The young fruits look like small cucumbers and give the tree its common name: Cucumber tree.

Magnolia acuminata is native to eastern North America. The species was introduced to the UK – in the mid-18th century but it is not known when this specimen was planted'.



The definitive life history of *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Tiltstone Filigree'



This is the true and fascinating story of 'Donovan's Fancy Lime' as told by Donovan Caldwell Leaman, who was a co-director of Caldwell & Sons Nursery in Knutsford, Cheshire.

In the Summer of 1984, Donovan found a chance lime seedling, 3 inches high, in his Knutsford rock garden. It was a very weird contorted seedling with a strange yellow banding on the leaf blade suggestive of a kind of Mosaic disease. Donovan thought it seemed worthy of "a miss with the Dutch hoe" so it was carefully potted up and in 1986 it was moved with Donovan to his new home, Maplecroft, which is the home of the Caldwell Maple, *Acer campestre* 'William Caldwell'. Then in March 1992, the lime seedling was again moved, this time to Pinecroft in Leyburn, North Yorkshire.

On the 23rd September 1996, Donovan corresponded with the RHS Wisley botanist A.C. Whiteley who declared the plant to be of seed origin and so required naming as a cultivar.

On 22nd February 2007, a phone call to the Wisley Herbarium resulted in the registration of the cultivar. The cultivar was

named *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Tiltstone Filigree'.

The origin of the lime seedling

The 'Tiltstone Filigree' cultivar is most likely to have been a seedling from a 140-year old *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Rubra' which was growing about 30 yards from the rock garden. This source would also account for the Filigree twigs becoming "somewhat rubra" as they mature from their early spring green.

In its first 20 years, 'Tiltstone Filigree', has shown an upswept branching habit without being fastigate. Donovan likens the head of the tree to an elongated diamond standing vertically on a column as represented by the bole of the tree.

In 2003, *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Tiltstone Filigree' was donated to Thorp Perrow Arboretum in Yorkshire where it is planted in pride of place, almost isolated from the famous Lime Avenue at the East South East end nearest to the Lake.

For the record

The *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Tiltstone Filigree' donated to Thorp Perrow Arboretum, was a 1.5 metre whip grown from the stooling of the mother tree growing in Donovan's garden in Leyburn. When measured by a recorder for the Tree Register of the Britain Isles (TROBI) in 2019, it weighed in at a girth of 39 centimetres (diameter 12.41cm) and a height of 8 metres, that is an average annual growth rate of 0.5 metres. In summer 2020, this tree was named the Champion Tree of North Yorkshire in the Remarkable Tree Category in TROBI.

May/June, 2022, Donovan received reports of fine young trees growing at the Peasmarsh Place Arboretum, the Sir Harold Hillier Arboretum and the Yorkshire Arboretum at Castle Howard.

October 2022, F.P. Matthews Nurseries of Tenbury Wells reported that *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Tiltstone Filigree', growing in a 7 litre container has been available from their Tree Shop, though unfortunately unavailable at the moment. See [Frank P Matthews catalogue](#)



Possibly available from [Mount Pleasant trees](#) (see detail right, described as having delicate dissected leaves and dark red winter stems)

Donovan Caldwell Leaman

For those of you who don't already know, Cheshire Gardens Trust undertook a big research project on Caldwell's nursery in Knutsford, which closed in 1992 after 200 years. The project, started in 2011, involved oral history with the Caldwell family, staff and customers and transcribing ledgers which had been discovered in Cheshire Archives. The main outcomes were the [Caldwell website](#) and the book 'Caldwells: Nurserymen of Knutsford for two centuries'. In addition, we built a show garden which won a Silver Medal at RHS Tatton Flower Show in 2012, and an exhibition which ran in February/March 2013.

Editor

Autumn/Winter events



Cheshire Gardens Trust events

Monday 20th November 2pm, Marthall Hall, a chance to socialise and hear from **Kevin Pratt** (left), owner of Village Plants, about his long career in horticulture

Monday 22nd January 2pm (By Zoom). **The Walnut Tree** - tales of history and cultivation, **Charles Hulbert-Powell**

Monday 12th February 2pm (By Zoom) **Market Gardens and Small Holding through the ages**, **Liz Wright**

Monday 11th March 2pm, Marthall Hall, **Marcus Chilton-Jones, Curator RHS Bridgewater (provisional)**

The Gardens Trust

The Gardens Trust programme of Autumn talks reconvenes:

Head gardeners at Historic sites continues with Stephen Herrington at The Newt, Somerset. Series 2 starts on 25th October with Sheila Dass from RHS Wisley.

The series on **World Heritage Landscapes** continues with talks on Kew (10th October), Studley Royal Park (17th October) and Derwent Valley Mills (24th October), Derbyshire still to come.

New series include:

‘An Almost Impossible Thing: Pioneering Women’ which starts on 13th October;

‘American Moderns’, exploring key Modern American landscapes starts on 14th November;

and a couple of talks on **Hisui Sugiura**, pioneering Japanese graphic designer, on 31st October and 7th November.

For further information see [Gardens Trust events website](#)

National Garden Scheme



Open gardens are coming to an end but there are openings at:

Parvey Lodge, Sutton, near Macclesfield 14th and 15th October 10am – 5pm for autumn colour

Millichope Garden, Shropshire (left) 15th October 2pm – 5pm

Dorothy Clive 21st October 10am – 4pm

For further information see [NGS website](#)

[Dorothy Clive Garden](#) also has a number of interesting courses, including classes with Head Gardener Zdenek Valkoun on spring bulb planting on November 13th and Pruning Masterclass on December 2nd.

[Norton Priory](#) has practical courses with Fruit Tree pruning on 3rd December and 28th January and others to follow in the New Year.

Many of our gardens have seasonal events, with floral decorations and demonstrations at [Arley Hall](#), Christmas wreath decorations at [Biddulph Grange](#) (28th, 29th, 30th November) and Seasonal Decorations at Dorothy Clive Garden, 24th November and 1st December (right).



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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