



# CHESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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## Newsletter

[www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)

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- \* Allestree Park – childhood memories
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### Future events and gardens open:

- \* Coming soon - CGT Online talks – Autumn/Winter
- \* Planthunters Fair – Dorothy Clive 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> August – book online
- \* Gardens open Abbeywood, Ness and Rode Hall– no booking required
- \* Bodnant, Capesthorpe and Norton Priory – book online



In July, Cheshire gardens started opening up to visitors and I tried to visit as many as I could and Julia Whitfield visited Lane End Cottage Gardens. The gardens had been kept going, often by only one or two gardeners, who had worked their socks off (one head gardener had done 115 days without a break). They had done a tremendous job, but how on earth had they kept on top of all that grass. Obviously, they had had to prioritise and certain areas had been left, but overall the

gardens were looking good. It rained a lot in July but it was still lovely to be out there, with roses, clematis, lawns and trees looking particularly good. In early August some volunteers and some gardeners who had been on furlough were starting to come back.

I'd been visiting **Lyme Park** for walks for several weeks, but suddenly the garden was open and I was able to visit twice. The Head Gardener, Sarah Witt and one other gardener had done a



great job (normally it's 4 gardeners and 70 volunteers). The pièce de résistance was the Italian garden (above), with herbaceous plants replacing the normal bedding, including *Campanula*, *Sidalcea*, *Salvia nemerosa*, *Achillea* 'Lilac Beauty' and A. 'Moonshine', *Rudbeckia* and much more. The terraces in front of the house had been planted up with bedding plants and were looking smart, (see below) with *Calendula*, *Dahlia*, *Penstemon* and pink anemones. It was possible to walk round the lake and look back to the house and then round to the herbaceous borders, with *Helenium*, *Salvia nemerosa*, daylilies, *Achillea* and *Phlox*.



Although outside Cheshire I've always been fond of **Wollerton Old hall** in Shropshire and in Lockdown it was possible to visit without too many crowds. It was well worth a 120 mile round trip. It was looking stunning; most had been done by the Head Gardener working on his own, though volunteers were starting to come back. The courtyard had huge tubs of *Hydrangea paniculata* surrounded by petunias. At the side were stunning hollyhocks (below).

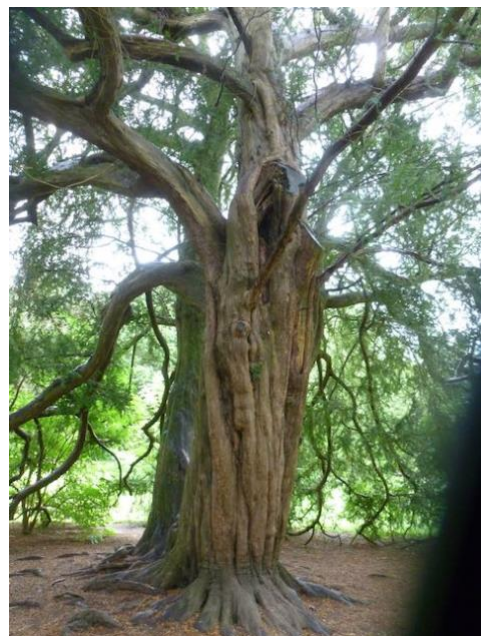


Then into the main part of the garden, starting with mauve and white planting, with lots of *Clematis* and *Phlox*. There were masses of roses, including the view down from the summer house where they were mixed with *Nepeta*. The hot borders were stunning as usual, with *Rudbeckia*, day lilies, cannas, banana plants and dahlias.



At the bottom of the garden is a long walk going across the garden with arches covered with roses and clematis (above). Then back past the main herbaceous border and into the Font Garden with its loggia and simple planting with white *Agapanthus*. The rill garden was looking stylish as usual, with box balls and white petunias. The plant area was open and looking good, but somehow, I resisted.

Again, I visited **Dunham Massey** in the rain. Initially there had been only two gardeners coping with it all, but they had started to bring in two gardeners on any one day, one gardening, one on the gate. There was a one-way system in operation and we approached the Winter Garden from a different angle; the trees and hydrangeas looked great in the rain.



Yew in the main lawn at Dunham Massey

In the main garden, the grass was looking beautiful, with tulip trees, yews and other specimen trees spread across the lawn. In the rose garden it was the *Clematis* over the arches and arbour that was looking particularly good. I visited the orangery to see if I could find any of Patricia's exotics (see page 11); unfortunately it was closed but there were plenty of interesting pots outside.

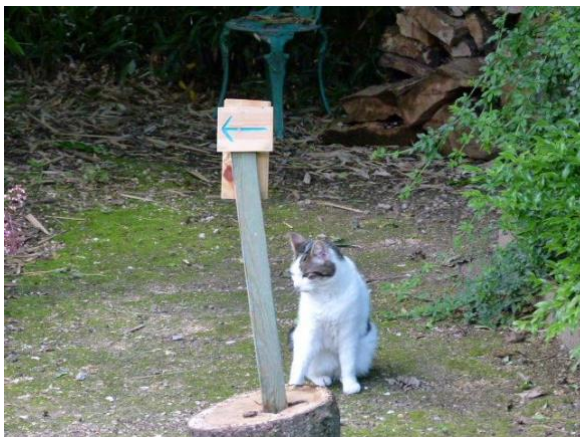
And finally, to **Tatton**. We'd been told that there was no summer planting. Some borders were empty but many had been sown with wildflower seed which was looking very pretty (see front page). But there is such a good structure at Tatton. It was a beautiful day and sunlight was filtering through the trees in the arboretum and catching the acers in the Japanese Garden. Like Dunham the lawns were looking good, dotted with specimen trees (below).



Although the place was very busy later, the garden was mostly very quiet and peaceful, with a few families enjoying the surroundings.

Overall, I think the gardeners have been doing a tremendous job and they and their staff and volunteers need to be encouraged in these very difficult times.

**Text and photos Sue Eldridge  
Lane End Cottage Gardens revisited**



Ozzy the cat showing the way

On 17 July 2019 a group from Cheshire Gardens Trust visited these gardens on the outskirts of Lymm. Almost a year later my sister and I decided to take advantage of the reduction of lockdown restrictions and visited the gardens on one of the open weekends. We went on a pleasant Saturday afternoon and found we were the only 2 visitors there, so lockdown restrictions were thankfully not necessary. The owners welcomed us and were happy to chat before we began our tour, at first being careful to follow the one-way system.



As it was the same time of year as CGT's visit, the plants in the garden were more or less as seen then, but the kitchen garden seemed far more productive this time. Perhaps the owners had had more time to establish this as the usual visits and courses had not been able to take place. My sister was particularly taken by the *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' (Wedding Cake Tree) while I admired *Clematis* 'General Sikorski' (above), *Eucryphia lucida* 'Ballerina' (below) and the *Daphne x transatlantica*, the last one said to flower for about 8 months of the year.



One of the ponds was covered in pond weed and we spent a happy few minutes trying to count the number of frogs resting there, heads just appearing through the weed.

After a very pleasant hour wandering around (though deprived of cake and tea/coffee because of the restrictions) we left, just enjoying a final look back at the orchard.

The gardens are usually open the second weekend of the month until October. Details may be found on the website

<https://laneendcottagegardens.co.uk>

or by phoning 01925 752618.

**Text and photos Julia Whitfield**



*Looking back at the orchard*

## A Garden Re-born

*Christine and Rupert Wilcox Baker gave us a taster of their garden makeover in the June edition of the newsletter but here they give us the full story.*

Climate change predictions suggest that we will see greater extremes of weather. Serious regional flooding and record-setting high temperatures in recent years look like a confirmation of these forecasts. But, these headline events perhaps obscure what's happening in our own gardens. In the autumn and winter of 2017/18 our garden and the adjoining paddock became very flooded after exceptional rain. Large sections of the garden were underwater for several weeks (see below).



We lost a lot of plants to the flood and then, in the drought of summer 2018, we lost more. At that time, we had a typical middle-England garden comprising large beds and borders of shrubs, small trees and other perennials. But, we also had lots of invasive weed species in the beds and paths and, in the 'war-on-weeds', we were clearly losing. This all prompted a long overdue rethink and redesign.



*A blank canvas*

The first decision was to install land drains across the garden in anticipation of wetter winters. The damage caused by digging trenches provided the impetus to start again with a fundamentally new design. We decided, as we have no plans to move, that this was an opportunity to do some future-proofing. We wanted something much more manageable and enjoyable, without the stress of constant excessive weeding and bending. We also however wanted to keep the cottage garden feel and make sure there was still plenty of mixed planting.

The plan we put together was driven by the concept of a kitchen garden comprising raised beds which would allow for both ornamental and food planting. Central to the design were three elements - an ornamental greenhouse, raised beds and paths. That meant no lawns, no borders and no specimen trees. Underpinning the look of the garden were the functional principles of low maintenance and ergonomic beds. Constructing the garden would be DIY where possible to minimise the cost.

The great benefit of tearing up all of an old garden and starting again is that you can do all the things you always wanted to but which were impossible before. We saved in pots all the plants that we wanted to keep. There are never enough taps in a garden for watering but with trenches being dug for drains then throwing in a water pipe at the same time is a doddle. We used 400 square metres of weed barrier fabric and now the whole garden is protected. The old greenhouse was tucked in a shady corner.



The new one (above) is positioned to optimise both catching sunlight and to provide aesthetic benefit. We always wanted a potting shed and now we have one in the unproductive shady corner.

It's reckoned that learning new skills as one gets older helps reduce loss of brain function. It can also be endlessly humorous. We both became quite handy with a mini-digger and a dumper truck and the process of making mistakes and improving was both funny and rewarding. Despite having some DIY skills, we knew our limitations and were very fortunate to be able to employ a couple of excellent specialists to help with building raised beds, paths and brickwork.

Starting in July 2019 we were making good progress with all the wooden raised beds, the greenhouse and some paving complete by autumn 2019 when we basically got rained off and decided to call a halt until the Spring.

March 2020 arrived and we started to think about re-commencing the work and guess what – Lockdown. Initially we thought we would only be able to get a certain amount done ourselves until our materials ran out and then we'd probably have to wait some time to get everything completed. But hey, it was hardly a problem in the scheme of things.

The crisis brought on by the pandemic has had some perverse outcomes. The demand for garden supplies was just one but we found that

the suppliers who had decided to keep going were enthusiastic to help and our tradesmen eager for the work. The horticulture and landscaping suppliers we used were very responsible and creative in finding safe ways to work. The new construction normal in our garden from March to completion in July was coffee breaks at two metres and very limited, mask-wearing, team work.

The finished layout is, as designed, based on a kitchen garden but there are lots of flowers and small shrubs in the raised beds and not just vegetables. In true Monty Don style, we have a series of gardens. From the house you see the 'Pleasure Gardens' with their floriferous beds. One of these is the 'Joy and Friendship' garden and contains many plants from friend's gardens – including CGT's own Joy Uings – thank you Joy, much appreciated.



*'Joy and Friendship' garden through to borrowed landscape*

The central feature is a rather splendid Victorian style greenhouse (opp. Column) and as you walk down the new paths towards the rear of it the 'Productive Garden' is revealed.



*Delicious veg in the 'Productive garden'*

Then there is the fruit cage and the 'Formal Garden' – which consists of one decorative urn! We managed to save a patio-pear tree which is the 'Orchard' and fronts the Formal Garden. Next to that is the potting shed. We're

determined to keep the greenhouse looking beautiful and tidy so all the pots, compost, hay and straw for the sheep, wheelbarrow, etc., are in the potting shed out of sight.

We also have a 'Pond Garden' which is in the shallowest raised bed and the native planting in and around it is coming on a treat. The birds love it and we already have at least two resident frogs. The mini pond came from a family in our village who were making a bigger pond for themselves.

Our planting plan was to try to concentrate on species that will flourish in the free draining raised beds without demanding too much watering. It's clear that Mediterranean plants such as rosemary, thyme and sage are growing vigorously. The next 12 months will show whether or not the ornamental plants are as successful. With any garden evolution is the key and so we'll concentrate on the plants that work well in the new environment and in future plant

less of what turn out to be the more demanding species.



*Starting to mature*

**Words: Christine and Rupert Wilcox-Baker**

**Photos: Christine Wilcox-Baker**

## Armchair Exploration – Verdin Park

When lockdown began it was great to enjoy the enforced holiday, mostly in the garden, relishing the peace and beautiful weather. As the weeks have gone on and days have been wet, the time came for some armchair exploration of historical sites and their designed landscapes.

There has always been a certain amount of research that one could do from the comfort of one's own home, but without the option of libraries or record offices, we have had to look further. Jacquie Williams and I chose to look at a site local to us, Verdin Park in Northwich, and we became increasingly fascinated by what we found.

Maps are always a good starting point. We are so fortunate to have access to Cheshire's Tithe Maps <https://maps.cheshireeast.gov.uk/tithemaps/>. Tithe Maps of the 1840s provide information on ownership and land use, in this case prior to development of the public park. The Ordnance Survey map from the Scottish Map library website <https://maps.nls.uk/view/102341056> shows the earliest OS of the park.

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/> provides an aerial image of the site today, except that in this case the trees obscure much of the layout.

With the name 'Winnington Bank Estate' taken from the Tithe Map I searched Cheshire Archives and found the sale catalogue from 1884 when the property was acquired by Robert Verdin, a salt manufacturer. The company Robert Verdin and his brothers owned employed over 1,000 people



*The Victoria Infirmary, now listed Grade II, enveloped by later hospital buildings.*

and produced approximately 353,000 tons of salt annually; it was the largest salt manufacturer in the United Kingdom by 1881. They also owned a fleet of ships to take the salt down the Weaver Navigation to the Mersey, Liverpool and beyond. Robert Verdin gave Winnington Bank House to the town as the Victoria Infirmary (above) and the grounds as a public park which opened in 1887 containing Northwich's first brine swimming baths (see page 7).

Pevsner says that the park was laid out by James Holland, a designer unknown to us. From Ancestry it appears that James Holland was a ship's carpenter living in Wincham Lane near Northwich in 1881. James Holland is likely to have been among Verdin's employees. A ship's carpenter could draw plans. Confirmation of his

connection to the Verdin family comes from the list of those in his household which include Joseph Ellis Verdin, age 7. Why would this child be living with an employee? Answer – he was a relative, Mary Jane Verdin’s child, born out of wedlock.

The Cheshire Image Bank

(<https://www.cheshireimagebank.org.uk/>)

provided pictures of the swimming baths and the Victoria Infirmary.



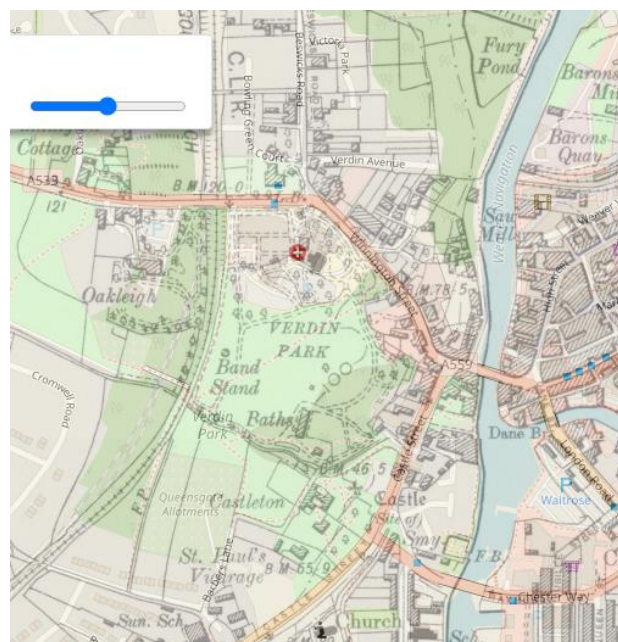
One hot afternoon we visited the park and looked for the site of the swimming baths. The park, which also includes the site of the Roman castle, has great views across the town (see below). The ground slopes steeply to Castle Street with steps and paths of different periods, evidence of change that has occurred due to brine subsidence. The ground is still on the move as shown by the leaning trees marked for removal.



The visit stimulated a further search for information. Jackie found a rich seam of images on Facebook, including this one (next column) which shows the baths at the top of the slope and indicates some of the devastation caused by brine subsidence.



Then a friend sent a link to another website <https://www.archiuk.com> This site has historic maps with a slider that enables contemporary Ordnance Survey to be overlaid with varying degrees of transparency (see below). With the aid of this tool we were able to appreciate the park layout and how it has changed.



So, if armchair exploration appeals to you, why not try out some of these websites and search for a site. If you would like to undertake some research but cannot think of a suitable place, we can always give you a suggestion or two.

Why not join our next Zoom meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> September at 10 am if you would like to share what you find, hear what others are up to, or ask for further tips in searching. We can easily send you the meeting ID and password – and we look forward to hearing from you.

**Barbara Moth, Research and Recording**  
[barbara.moth@btinternet.com](mailto:barbara.moth@btinternet.com)

# Happy Childhood Memories from Derbyshire

Following the April issue of our Newsletter, which included Barbara Wright's article on Circular Overflows in the designed landscape, we received the following email from CGT member, Judy Barry. It was intended as a contribution to our research not for publication. However, since it is such a happy childhood memory, reminiscent of 'Swallows and Amazons' we have persuaded Judy otherwise and now you can read it below. If anyone knows of any other Circular Overflows, please contact us. **Freyda Taylor and Barbara Wright**

"I read with interest your article on Circular Overflows in the April Newsletter. As a child, born 1941, I had nightmares concerning one in our local "Park" in Allestree, Derbyshire. The "Park" was not a park as it is today, in fact it was closed to the public and had been used during the war for some sort of military purposes. However local youths, including my big brother, found ways in, sometimes accompanied by me!

Back then, it was a truly magical place, heightened by the fact that we should really not have been there! It was quite overgrown, with woodland surrounding one of the two lakes. A smaller upper lake, divided by an island and a wall from the larger lower lake below, probably served as a feeder lake. It often froze in winter and people used to skate upon it.



The Victorian map of Allestree Park illustrates the area of the lakes in early years <https://maps.nls.uk/>

The wall was at water level, and in places water flowed over it and trees and saplings grew along it. Daring boys would navigate this wall to gain access to the island, as I did myself, later on. There was a smallish round stone built "well" on the island but it was shallow and dry.

The larger lake also had an island, and at its furthest side, a stone boat house built into a mound, and one of the Circular Overflows. This was some way from the lake edge, very sinister, with branches thrown into it, and no covering. It

flowed out through a stone outlet to form a stream, down the bank in the woodland which bordered this part of the lake. In the 1950s this lake had rowing boats for hire, and a "Parky" to shout at anyone going too near to the island and the overflow!



The circular overflow at Allestree Park

The Hall became a golf club house and some of the land, a golf course, and the park lost much of its mystery.

The counties of Cheshire and Derbyshire are close neighbours, and there is perhaps a possibility that lakes with these overflows were a particular fashion in the landscapes designed at a particular period of time...and maybe, even by the same designer? It would be interesting to find out!

I wish the researchers well, and am sorry that my information is scant, though my memories of Allestree Park, in my childhood, are vivid."

**email from Judy Barry  
photograph Jane Perfect (2016)**

## The Capesthorpe Hall Circular Overflow

Photographed by the editor visiting a Planthunter's Fair.





# A Grand Chicken Coop in Cheshire

In my research into the Winnington Hall landscape in Northwich I looked for photos of the Hall online. I was rather surprised to come across a website about poultry, allotments and gardens. The item is headed "Most Palatial Poultry House Ever" with a photo of Winnington Hall. In the early 1780s the owner of the estate, Richard Pennant, Lord Penrhyn of Penrhyn Castle, built this henhouse attributed to Samuel Wyatt. This photo is from the *'Country Houses of Cheshire'* by Figueiredo and Treuherz.



137. The poultry house at Winnington Hall, late 19th century.

The website included an extract from an 1850 work by J. J. Nolan, *'Ornamental, Aquatic and Domestic Fowl and Game Birds'*, describing the "most magnificent poultry-palace ever built". The front of the poultry-palace was the diameter (140 feet wide) of a semi-circle with a pavilion at each end with a large arched window. The pavilions were connected to the centre by a colonnade of cast-iron pillars, painted white. The pillars supported a cornice, and a slate roof covered a paved walk with compartments to store eggs, corn etc. These compartments had white lattice-work doors with green frames. In the middle of the front there were four stone columns and four pilasters supporting another cornice and a slate roof above a mosaic iron gate. On one side of the gate there was a beautifully papered and furnished parlour.

At the other end of the colonnade there was a spotless kitchen. There was another colonnade around the perimeter enclosing a paved courtyard with a circular pond and pump in the middle.

The henhouse fronted onto a paddock, where the poultry were free to roam. At one o'clock a bell rang, the gate in the centre opened and the 600 hens flew and ran from all directions to get food. The courtyard was kept so clean that "not a speck of dung is to be seen".



The 1876 OS map shows the semi-circular hen house and adjacent paddock south of the River Weaver and west of the Hall. The central pond is labelled as a fountain.

The cast iron columns of the henhouse were among the earliest known structural uses of cast iron. The poultry-palace was brick-built, but then covered with very thin close-jointed slates from the Penrhyn Quarry. It was then painted to resemble ashlar. The paddock was more than 250 yards long.

After Lord Penrhyn died in 1808, the Winnington estate was sold to Lord Stanley of Alderley. He was seldom in residence and rented out some of the estate to a local farmer and the Hall became a girls' school. Eventually the estate was sold in 1873 to the new partnership of John Brunner and Ludwig Mond, who thought the site ideal for an alkali factory. Mond had the poultry house converted into a cottage for one of his senior managers. By 1938 the former poultry house had been demolished to make way for ICI's new Research Laboratory. Today that building still stands beside the A533, but now accommodates a variety of activities.

**Mary Jeeves, Research and Recording**

## Caldwell's Nursery in the Twentieth Century - Part I

Well it has been a very strange spring and summer, but at least I didn't have any children to home school, so I've been able to continue working on the Caldwell Archives.

For years I'd been concentrating on the early period, but, though I hadn't meant to, I started to look at the ledgers from the beginning of the twentieth century. These don't have any

information about plant sales, so they have been more or less ignored up till now. Turns out this is a shame, as they have some amazing information including insights into the wider world. Here's some of what I have found out:

### Payments

The purchase ledger runs from 1912 to 1925, so the information is very different to that in the earlier ledgers. For a start, with the introduction of sick pay in 1911, there are regular payments for "Insurance Stamps". Then came the war and payments associated with employees (N. I. and Wages) dropped massively before recovering in 1919.

The recording of "Travellers' Expenses" indicates sales reps moving around the country. Carriage was usually by train, so there were lots payments to the Cheshire Lines Committee. Never heard of it? Neither had I. Turns out it was the second largest joint railway in Britain, operating in Cheshire and Lancashire; it never got incorporated into the big four (Great Western; London, Midland & Scottish; London and North Eastern; Southern), and so lasted until nationalisation in 1948. (You can learn more on Wikipedia.)

It was fascinating work, taking the name of a company and trying to figure out what was being purchased. Although there were usually many different suppliers of similar products, a few were favoured: Richard Sankey & Sons of Nottingham produced flower pots; Blake & McKenzie of Liverpool made cardboard and paper boxes; G. H. Richards of London had a range of products including insecticide and fertilizers; E. A. White Ltd of Paddock Wood in Kent supplied Abol sprayers and syringes; watering cans came from Haws.

Stationery came from Charles Letts & Co; accounting stationery from the Kalamazoo Works in Birmingham. Three Sheffield tool makers included Saynor, Cook & Rydal, whose advertisement (below) demonstrates the growing multi-national approach to horticulture.



Caldwell's was buying plant material from all over the UK, from Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the Channel Isles; from Carlisle to Tunbridge Wells

and Yorkshire to Somerset, but also from Europe. Purchases from Germany stopped in 1913, and those from Holland and Belgium were disrupted by the war. The French suppliers were well away from the trenches however, and trade with them continued throughout.

There were groups of nurseries around Ussy in the north, Olivet-Orleans towards the centre and Ollioules in the south of France. Levavasseur & Sons specialised in roses and had nurseries in both Ussy and Orleans. I came across this advert, which seems to indicate a huge area under cultivation:



In Holland, there were the Leeuwenstein Nurseries at Hillegom, run by M. van Waveren. They were a huge multi-national bulb producing company, with nurseries in New York as well as Holland. They provided about 21% of the value of plant material purchased by Caldwell's between 1912 and 1925, despite a hiatus between November 1915 and July 1919.

Although most of the nurseries and seed businesses have disappeared in the past century, the names of some that Caldwell's traded with remain well known and others are even still in existence: Veitch & Sons, Notcutts, Amos Perry, Blackmore & Langdon, Clibrans of Altrincham, Kelways, Sam McGredy, Pauls of Cheshunt, Bees Ltd., Thompson & Morgan, Suttons, Dobbies and Unwins are just a handful of the more than 200 I was able to identify.

As a footnote, you might like to know about Samson's nursery in Kilmarnock. They were not a big supplier to Caldwell's, but they were a reputable, old-established firm, begun by Thomas Samson, who was born around 1723. In later life he became a good friend of Robert Burns (despite the 36-year age difference). They used to go shooting together. Burns wrote an elegy for his tombstone following his death in 1795:

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies;  
 Ye canting zealots, spare hm;  
 If honest worth in heaven rise,  
 Ye'll mend or ye won near him.

Joy Uings

## Plant names at Dunham Massey



I thought I would base this article on some of the plants in and around the lovely 18th century Orangery at Dunham Massey (above). The internal rear and side walls of the Orangery are covered with the climbing vine *Passiflora caerulea* (Passion Flower) which is cut back every year but by the end of the year it again reaches the roof. In late summer it starts to produce some of the beautiful flowers which last for about three days each. It is native to South America and the name comes from the Latin "passus" (suffering) and "flos" (flower). Spanish missionary priests of the 15th and 16th century saw in the plant features what they thought represented symbols of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. The five stamens are the five wounds, the three stigmas the three nails, the style of the pistil is the flogging column, the coiling tendrils are the flogging cords, the corona is the crown of thorns or the halo of glory, the five petals and five sepals represent the ten disciples, excluding Peter, who denied Christ three times, and Judas, the betrayer and the digitate leaves are the hands of the multitude.



*Passiflora caerulea*

A number of exotic plants are grown in pots. Olives, *Olea europea*, and ornamental oranges are often moved outside during the summer. The orange trees have wonderfully fragrant flowers and often tiny fruits at the same time. Unfortunately, they have long since lost their labels. The tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica* is quite spectacular. It is named after the British botanist James Dickson (1738-1832) who was one of the original members of the Linnean Society and one of the founders of the Horticultural Society (now the RHS). He published four major works, each with multiple volumes, on cryptogams i.e. fungi, algae and ferns.

The sacred or heavenly bamboo, *Nandina domestica* derives its name from the Japanese name 'nandin' or 'nanten' and the fact that it had various uses in Japanese households. Unfortunately, the common name is confusing since it is an evergreen shrub in the Berberidaceae family and not a bamboo at all. It was introduced to the West in 1804 by William Kerr (1779-1814), a Scottish gardener and plant hunter, who was credited with being the first full time professional plant hunter in China. He discovered, amongst many other plants, *Kerria japonica*, which was named after him.



*Clivia miniata*, the Natal Lily (above) produces vibrant orange/red flower clusters and is native to South Africa. I had assumed it was named for Clive of India but have recently found that it is named after his grand-daughter Charlotte Percy née Clive, Duchess of Northumberland (1787-1866), who was a governess to Princess Victoria and a plant enthusiast. 'Miniata' refers to the colour of the flowers and means vermillion coloured. It is not a true lily but is in the Amaryllidaceae family.

*Aspidistra*, or Cast Iron Plant, is the house plant which was common in Victorian homes. It is

mainly native to China, Vietnam and Japan. Until the 1970s only a few species were known but now it is thought there are about 100. The name comes from the Greek 'aspidion' which was a small round shield, referring to the shape of the stigma.

In Autumn the front of the Orangery has a lovely display of the pink *Nerine bowdenii*, another native of South Africa. It was collected by Athelstan Cornish-Bowden (1871-1942) and introduced into Britain in 1902. The name *Nerine* comes from the Greek 'nereis' meaning a water nymph. The Neriads were the water nymphs who were the 50 daughters of Nereus and Doris in Greek mythology. Its common names include Cornish lily, Guernsey lily, Bowden lily although like *Clivia* it is not a true lily but is in the Amaryllidaceae family. The Guernsey lily name also applies to *Nerine sarniensis*; *Sarnia* was an ancient name for Guernsey, although it too is a native of South Africa not Guernsey.



*Nerine bowdenii*

To the left of the Orangery there are a couple of *Hibiscus syriacus* 'Bluebird' (opp. column) which flower in late summer. 'Hibiscus' was a very ancient name used by Virgil for a mallow-like plant. 'Syriacus' indicates that the plant comes from Syria but it is known to be cultivated in Korea before the 16th century. Another example of how misleading plant names can sometimes be.



*Hibiscus syriacus* 'Bluebird'

Further back in that border is the fascinating shrub from Eastern Asia, China, Nepal and Tibet, *Decaisnea fargesii*. It was first described in 1892 by Adrien Rene Franchet. It has clusters of pretty yellow-green flowers in summer and groups of beans, which mature to bright blue in the autumn from where it gets its common names of 'dead men's fingers', 'blue bean tree' or 'blue sausage tree'. The botanical name refers to two people, Joseph Decaisne (1807-1882) who, although born in Belgium, worked mainly in Paris as a botanist and agronomist, and Father Paul Guillaume Farges (1844-1912) who was a French Catholic missionary, botanist and plant collector who worked extensively in China. The mature beans contain inedible black seeds which are encased in a glutinous jelly. The jelly, despite its unappetising appearance, (it looks rather like a clear worm), is edible and tastes like watermelon. I sometimes wonder who first thought of tasting the jelly. Apparently, in Sikkim it is considered to be a delicacy.

#### Sources:

Johnson, A.T., Smith H.A. & Stockdale, A.P., 2019, *Plant Names Simplified*, Sheffield: 5M Publishing  
Harrison, L., 2012, *RHS Latin for Gardeners*, London: Mitchell Beazley

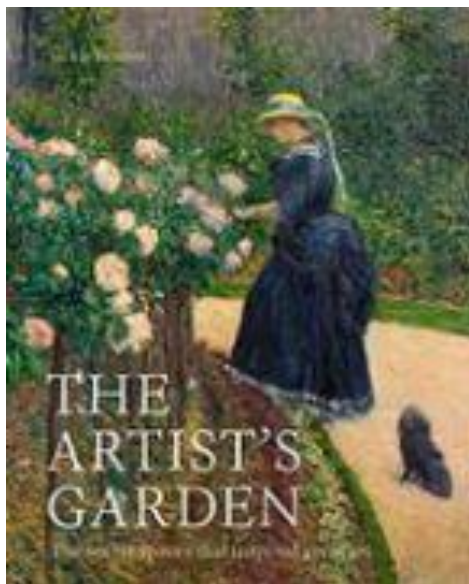
Patricia Hazlehurst

## The Artist's Garden

### The Artist's Garden: The secret spaces that inspired great art: Jackie Bennett

During lockdown I've mostly been rereading books that I already had or reading on Kindle but I couldn't resist treating myself to this book reviewed in the 'English Garden', It's a beautiful book, lavishly illustrated with photos of artists' gardens and reproductions of their art. It covers an incredibly wide range of artists, from

Leonardo da Vinci to Salvador Dali; artists from Britain, Europe, Central and North America. It covers both individual artists and groups, some of whom occupied a particular house and garden or an area for decades, such as the Bloomsbury group at Charleston for 70 years, William Morris and his daughter May at Kelmscott for nearly 70 years, the Skagen painters in North Jutland, Denmark for nearly 40 years.



Some of the painters will be very familiar, such as Monet and the Impressionists, Rubens, Cezanne, Salvador Dali, but others are less familiar, such as Max Liebermann, Henri le Sidaner, Joaquin Sorolla and the beautiful garden he developed in Madrid, or Frida Kahlo and the astonishing Blue House in Mexico. These artists didn't just paint beautiful gardens but created them, worked in them, built studios and invited their friends. The descriptions give an insight into the way they lived, their relationships and their social milieu. Many were influenced by world events, such as

the two World Wars. At the start of the First World War, Kandinsky and his partner Gabriele Muntz fled Germany for neutral countries. He escaped back to Russia never to return, leaving Gabriele behind. After the war, she returned to the garden they had created together in Murnau, Bavaria and spent the rest of her life there.

In many cases it is not just the gardens that have become intricately linked to the artist, but the interiors of the houses and other decorative arts, like textiles and sculpture. We can see the plants that influenced the Morris, especially May, in the wallpaper and textiles of Morris & Co, such as the Strawberry Thief. Charleston House, home to several of the Bloomsbury set, is a work of art in its own right. Many of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings in his Herbal were drawn from the garden while living at Clos Luce.

The book records some astonishing, often turbulent lives. The gardens provided sanctuary and inspiration for so many artists. What is wonderful is that most of these places have been restored, often with the help of trustees and remaining family, so they can be visited and you can see the houses, studios and gardens as they once were. Information is listed in the book. Something to think about post Lockdown.

**Sue Eldridge**

## Dahlias - can you tell fact from fiction?



I thought it would be a straightforward process to find some information about dahlias. How mistaken I was! It seems no one can agree on some basic facts. About the only thing everyone does agree is that they are mainly native to Mexico, where they were chosen as the national flower in 1963, with a few species from Central and northern South America.

They were known to the Spaniards in Mexico from at least 1575 and possibly earlier but

were not introduced into Europe until the late 1700s. It wasn't until the early 1800s that they were introduced into Britain where they quickly became very popular as a florists' flower.

In Mexico they had various names. Chichipatl, Acocotle and Cocoxochitl amongst others but when they were introduced to Spain in 1780/90 to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Madrid, they were named *Dahlia* by the Director, Abbé Antonio Jose Canavilles, after Andreas (Anders) Dahl, who had been a pupil of Linnaeus.

Originally, the name was pronounced as Dah-le-a, and still is in America, but in the UK it is usually said as Day-le-a.

The credit for their introduction to the UK is usually given to Elizabeth Vassall Fox, Lady Holland, a noted society hostess who, in 1804, sent seeds home from Spain to Holland House in London, where Lord Holland's librarian, Mr Buonaiuti, grew plants from them. Her husband is said to have written this poem in her praise.

" The dahlia you brought to our isle,  
Your praises for ever shall speak,  
Mid gardens as sweet as your smile,  
And in colour as bright as your cheek."



*Ball dahlia 'Barbary Ball'*

Other people were also reported to have been growing dahlias with seeds from France. John Frasier and John Woodford were credited with growing dahlias in 1803. Charlotte-Jane, Marchioness of Bute, who was the wife of the English ambassador to Spain, is said to have sent plants to Kew in 1798, although they died out after a couple of years.

By 1808 Richard Salisbury was documenting methods of cultivation for dahlias and by 1836 the Dahlia Register of the Horticultural Society (later RHS) had over 700 varieties. The number of varieties, also, is not something which is agreed upon. The UK Dahlia Society says there are about 17,500 cultivars but I found other references to as many as 57,000! As far as I could work out the RHS dahlia plant list for 1969 and its various annual supplements amount to about 20,000. The National Dahlia Collection, which has been managed since 1998 by Greenyard Flowers of Penzance has about 1,600 cultivars.

The UK Dahlia Society classifies dahlias into 14 flower forms whereas the American Dahlia Society has 19. No one can agree on the number of species, which range from 35 to 42.

Dahlia tubers are commonly said to have been used as a food source by the Aztecs, although this is disputed by some sources and they certainly never found favour in Europe. One Victorian described them as having "a repulsive, nauseous, peppery taste which inspires equal disgust in man and beast." However, I found several modern references to their culinary use on a website [cultivariable.com](http://cultivariable.com) which gives detailed information on edible dahlias.



*Waterlily dahlia Cameo*

Another point of disagreement is the use of dahlias in medicine. Some sources said they were used by the Aztecs to treat epilepsy but again I found other sources which disputed this. However, I have found modern reports of research in the successful use of dahlias for a treatment for Type II diabetes.

There are a number of interesting articles on the UK Dahlia Society and the American Dahlia Society websites. On the latter website is a detailed paper by Martin Kral, Of Dahlia Myths and Aztec Mythology, A History of Dahlias.

**Patricia Hazlehurst**

## Forthcoming events



The Gardens Trust has been running a whole series of online events through lockdown. These are ones that are current and open for booking: September 1<sup>st</sup> sees the start of a 5-week course

entitled '**Great 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gardeners**'. This series which costs £21.00 will bring to life the achievements of Percy Thrower, John Brookes, Rosemary Verey, Percy Cane and Beth Chatto. See <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/great-20th-century-gardeners-tickets-115887044269> for details.

You can also book individual lectures for £5 a time.

On Wednesday September 9<sup>th</sup>, a 12-week course on '**The Evolution and Origins of Plants**'

begins. The cost is £60.00. See <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-evolution-origins-of-plants-tickets-112818037788> for more details.

It has just been announced that on 21<sup>st</sup> September, Margie Hoffnung, Conservation Officer with GT's Historic Landscape Project will be talking on **Threats to Historic Parks and Gardens** and what we can do to help. See <http://thegardenstrust.org/event/planning-training-1-threats-to-historic-parks-and-gardens/> for preliminary detail.

Of course, Zoom lectures are all very well but you miss the inevitable discussion with like-minded colleagues. But on the other hand, there are plus points too; you don't have to travel to them, you don't have to brush your hair and you can even stay in your pyjamas!

**Freyda Taylor**

## Planthunters Fairs

**Abbeywood Gardens**, Delamere Cheshire CW8 2HS

26<sup>th</sup> August, 10am – 4pm, £3 pay at gate



**Dorothy Clive Garden**, Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 4EU

30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> August, 10am-5pm, £4 pay online

**Weston Park**, Weston-under-Lizard Nr Shifnal Shropshire TF11 8LE

13<sup>th</sup> September, 10am-4pm, £3 pay online

<http://planthuntersfairs.co.uk/index.htm>

## British Association for Local History (BALH)

I have received the following information from Jessica Lutkin, Chair of BALH

**BALH AGM and Talk by Prof Catherine Clarke** of the Centre for the History of People, Place and Community, **'What Is Local History?'**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2pm to 4pm

Please register to join us (you don't need to be a member) via Zoom using the following link.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlscemsqzluE9C4lWJZuc6pBPAnfj5XorfM>

## Gardens open

*Every week more gardens are open for visiting. These are some of the most recent to open:*

### Ness Botanic Gardens



Open daily 10am-dusk, last entry 5pm  
Café, shop and plant sales open  
No need to book

**Norton Priory Walled Garden** Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1SX



(satnav Tudor Road WA7 1BD)

Friday – Tuesday 10m-4pm

Booking required

<http://nortonpriory.org/event/plant-hunters-fair-ngs-open-day-2/>

**Abbeywood Gardens** Delamere Cheshire CW8 2HS, open every day 9am-5pm Café and plant sales open. No need to book

**Rode Hall Gardens**, Church Lane, Scholar Green, ST7 3QP, open Wednesdays 11am-4pm  
Gardens and courtyard café  
No booking needed

**Capesthorne Hall** Congleton Rd, Siddington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 9JY  
Book online  
Tickets are released from 11:00pm on a Thursday

to the next Thursday at 11:00pm for Garden entry on the following Sunday and Monday

**Bodnant Garden**, National Trust  
Tal-y-Cafn, near Colwyn bay, Conwy, LL28 5RE  
Open every day 9.30am – 3.30 pm  
Booking required, book online  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/bodnant-garden/whats-on>

## Vote for Historic Houses Garden of the Year 2020

Since 1984 Historic Houses has asked its members and supporters to vote for their favourite garden. Last year, for the first time, they introduced a shortlist decided by their gardening committee and they are doing the same this year.

On the website

[www.historichouses.org/goya2020.html](http://www.historichouses.org/goya2020.html)

you can see the eight gardens on the shortlist for

2020 and vote for your choice. The gardens include two of our favourite North West gardens, **Arley Hall and Gardens** and **Wollerton Old Hall**. You have until 30<sup>th</sup> September to make your choice

There will also be a Judges' Choice', decided by Historic Houses panel of experts, from amongst all member gardens in the association.

## Message from the Events Team

As you will be aware, all CGT Events had to be cancelled at the beginning of Lockdown. However, the group (meeting on Zoom) has been planning alternative approaches and is organising a series of virtual talks for the autumn/winter and is optimistically planning for garden visits next spring and summer.

So, keep your eye open for information on online talks this autumn/winter. We will circulate information by post and email.

Please let us know if you have any good ideas for events.

**Margaret Blowey**

[events@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:events@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)

## Susie Levy

It is with sadness that we learned of the death on June 18 of CGT member Susie Levy from pancreatic cancer. We wish to extend our most sincere condolences to her husband Richard and children Edward, Charlotte and Imogen.

In her memory, over the course of the next 12 months, the family would like to raise awareness of and support funds for [The Christie Charity](#) and [Pancreatic Cancer UK](#).

Richard and Susie opened their garden for Wilmslow Wells in 2016 and Richard has asked to do it again next year in her memory.

**Copy date for October newsletter is 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

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