



CHESHIRE
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“The detached town gardens are situated in the suburbs of towns, generally collected together and separated by hedges. There are two thousand of such gardens in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, a considerable number at Wolverhampton, some at Dudley, Manchester.....”

J.C.Loudon: Gardening Tours (1831-42)

“Guinea gardens” are Victorian town gardens usually rented for a sum of about a guinea by townsfolk who did not have access to a garden attached to their homes. They were used for growing flowers, fruit and vegetables, relaxation and enjoyment of seclusion from the hustle and bustle and noise of the trading area of town.

These “detached gardens” were grouped together in a similar way to allotments. Rented by individuals, they were quite small – the largest being about a quarter of an acre; the rent for larger ones in Birmingham was as much as 2 guineas a year! A few tenanted gardens survive at Edgbaston.

Hill Close gardens in Warwick are a remarkable collection of gardens situated on a south west facing slope overlooking the racecourse. They were created in 1845 on land originally leased out for grazing.

A Board of Health map of 1851 shows gardens about 3 metres wide, access to the hedged plots being by narrow service lanes. An OS map of 1886 shows each plot numbered with many more trees than the 1851 map. During the 1860s the land ownership changed to freeholder sales with many small freeholder gardens.

Today, fifteen plots survive, each surrounded by private hedges. Such a delight to the eye with colourful flower borders, lawns, old varieties of fruit trees and vegetable gardens.



An especially enchanting feature is the survival of several red brick summer houses of similar styles built in hexagonal shapes with four-sided pointed slate roofs. These have been beautifully restored. Some of you may remember Monty Don featuring one of them in the television series “Lost Gardens”. Several have small iron fireplaces and chimneys. These really

capture one’s imagination, picturing the owners brewing up tea and relaxing after working hard in their gardens (a well on the site provides water.)

Fascinating research has been done into the history of the owners and tenants and there is still much more research to be done says Dr. Sylvia Pinches.

Photographs survive of some of the owners such as William Sleath who had a successful boot-making business and was contracted to make boots for Warwickshire yeomanry in the 1850s. He had 18 children all living over the business in Market Place, Warwick in two bedrooms and two attics. His eldest son became a successful trader in sewing machines and bicycles and occupied an adjacent garden.

The Margetts family were local auctioneers who arranged the sale of the plots in 1865. Plot 10 remained in the family until around 1980.

The Chadbands, a family of pork butchers, first rented a plot in 1870 and used part of it for keeping pigs. The pigsties have recently been converted into a garden shed and the shop was used as a pork pie shop until 2006. The name Chadband was the inspiration for Charles Dickens’ character the Rev. Chadband in Bleak House!

The plots are bordered on two sides by Edwardian terraces which had formerly been gardens and other peripheral gardens were taken for stabling for the racehorses which has since become new housing.

The twentieth century brought many threats to the continuation of the gardens. A 1947 post war development plan for Warwick proposed an inner relief road and housing for the site and the Council started to purchase plots. This was difficult due to the divided ownership of the individual gardens. However, by 1993 the Council had managed to acquire all the gardens.

Local agitation to the Council’s proposed development, a realization of the historic importance of the gardens and a fast listing of four of the brick summerhouses (Grade 2*) determined their survival.

Warwickshire Gardens Trust played a significant part in persuading the Council to let planning permission for low cost housing lapse and to restore the gardens instead. WGT member Christine Hodgetts undertook detailed research into the history of the gardens. Hill Close is one of only 4 sites of detached town gardens remaining in the country.*

Local volunteers started clearing the derelict gardens in 1998 and a trust was set up with the task of fundraising and ensuring the future management of the gardens. This has been extremely successful with important Heritage Lottery Funding and local sources of funding.

Archaeological research has established the original footpaths, steps and building structures. A schools programme was introduced with classroom facilities and a special garden area for the children.

An impressive Visitor Centre has been built. Its green

roof, planted with several varieties of sedum, provides minimum environmental impact on the site and its heating system is free, a heat pump extracting low grade heat from the earth. It has its own wind turbine to reduce power consumption further!

A reproduction Victorian glasshouse provides shelter for growing on plants. Fruit, vegetables and plants are available for sale to the public.

Auriculas can be purchased and viewed in the auricula theatre. All this is staffed by volunteers. Indeed the approach to the whole project to me appeared to be exemplary. Funding has even been found for a full time gardener.

There is one communal plot tended by members of Plant Heritage (formerly NCCPG) but most are individually worked by volunteers.

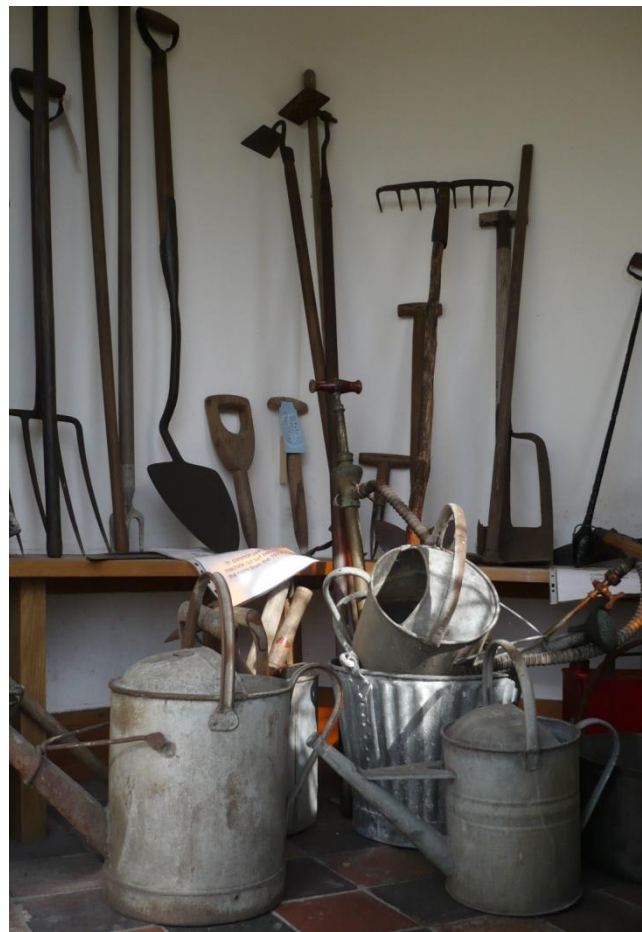
Each has its own character. The communal plot cultivates old plant varieties and wild plants native to Warwickshire. Most detached gardens cultivated fruit trees and here apples are carefully labelled: Beauty of Bath, Blenheim Orange, Bramley's Seedling and Ribston Pippin. Pears include William Bon Chretien (Bartlett) and Beurre Hardy. Warwickshire Dropper is the wonderful name given to a local plum variety.

I was struck by a plaque in a plot growing rhubarb: 'Rhubarb originated in China. As a medicine it has been in use since c.2700 BC. In AD 1620 the Emperor of Guangzong was, by using rhubarb, remarkably cured of a severe illness to which he had succumbed after enjoying four "beautiful women" sent to him by a high official.'

Whether this is true or not, Hill Close Gardens are a "must" for a visit to Warwick!

Gaye Smith

* www.hillclosegardens.com. Award-winning published guide: Hill Close Gardens Guidebook available from the Visitor Centre, £2.50.



Photos courtesy of Dr. Sylvia Pinches

Edgbaston Guinea Gardens.
www.edgbastonguineagardens.org.uk

Hillside Gardens, St Ann's Allotments, Nottingham.
www.staa-.allotments.org.uk

Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry; information at
www.parksandgardens.ac.uk/component/option,com_parksandgardens/task,site/id,4260/Itemid,292/

Detached town gardens are a fascinating part of gardening history, now almost forgotten. The most famous are the ones in Nottingham. I found this excerpt from Howitt's *Rural Life of England* reproduced in an 1843 Manchester newspaper. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

"There are, in the outskirts of Nottingham, upwards of 5,000 gardens, the bulk of which is occupied by the working class. A good many there are belonging to the substantial tradesmen and wealthier inhabitants; but the great mass are those of the mechanics. These lie on various sides of the town, in expanses of many acres in a place, and many of them as much as a mile and a half distant from the centre of the town. In the winter they have rather a desolate aspect, with their naked trees and hedges, and all their little summer-houses exposed, damp-looking and forlorn; but in spring and summer, they look exceedingly well, – in spring all starred with blossoms, all thick with leaves, and their summer-houses peeping pleasantly from among them. The advantage of these gardens to the

working-class of a great manufacturing town, is beyond calculation; and I believe no town in the kingdom has so many of them in proportion to its population. It were to be desired that the example of the Nottingham artisans was imitated by those of other great towns; or rather, that the taste for them was encouraged, and in fact, created, by the example of the middle classes, and by patriotic persons laying out fields for this purpose, and letting them at a reasonable rate.

Early in spring – as soon, in fact, as the days begin to lengthen, and the shrewd air to dry up the wintry moisture – you see them getting into their gardens, clearing away the dead stalks of last year's growth, and digging up the soil; but especially on fine days in

February and March are they busy. Trees are pruned, beds are dug, walks cleaned, and all the refuse and decayed vegetation piled up in heaps; and the smoke of the fires in which it is burnt, rolling up from many a garden, and sending its pungent odour to meet you afar off. It is pleasant to see, as the season advances, how busy their occupants become; bustling with their basses* in their hands and their tools on their shoulders; wheeling in manure; and clearing out their summer-houses; and what an air of daily increasing neatness they assume, till they are one wide expanse of blossomed fruit-trees and flowering fragrance. Every garden has its summer-house; and these are of all scales and grades, from the erection of a few tub staves, with an attempt to train a pumpkin or a wild-hop over it, to substantial brick houses with glass windows, good cellars for a deposit of choice wines, a kitchen, and all necessary apparatus, and a good pump to supply them with water. Many are very picturesque rustic huts, built with great taste and hidden by tall hedges in a perfect little paradise of lawn and shrubbery – most delightful spots to go and read in of a summer day, or to take a dinner or tea in with a pleasant party of friends. Some of these places which belong to the substantial tradespeople have cost their occupiers from one to five hundred pounds, and the pleasure they take in them may be thence imagined; but many of the mechanics have very excellent summer-houses, and there they delight to go, and smoke a solitary pipe, as they look over the smiling face of their garden, or take a quiet stroll amongst their flowers: or take a pipe with a friend; or to spend a Sunday afternoon, or a summer evening, with their families. The amount of enjoyment which these gardens afford to a great number of families, is not easily to be calculated – and then the health and the improved taste! You meet them coming home, having been busy for hours in the freshness of the summer morning in them, and now are carrying home a bass brimful of vegetables for the house. In the evening thitherward you see groups and families going; the key

which admits to the common paths that lead between them is produced; a door is opened and closed; and you feel that they are vanished into a pure and sacred retirement, such as a mechanic of a large town could not possess without these suburban gardens. And then to think of the alehouse, the drinking, noisy, politics-bawling alehouse, where a great many of these very men would most probably be, if they had not this attraction, – to think of this, and then to see the variety of sources of a beautiful and healthful interest which they create for themselves here: – what a contrast! – what a most gratifying contrast! There are the worthy couple, sitting in the open summer-house of one garden, quietly enjoying themselves, and watching their children romping on the grass-plot, or playing about the walks; in another, a social group of friends round the tea-table, or enjoying the reward of all their spring labours, picking strawberries fresh from the bed or raspberries, gooseberries, and currants from the bush. In one you find a grower of fine apples, pears, or plums, or of large gooseberries; in another, a florist, with his shew of tulips, ranunculuses, hyacinths, carnations, or other choice flowers that claim all his leisure moments, and are a source of a thousand cares and interests. And of these cares and interests, the neat awning of white canvas, raised on its light frame of wood; the glasses, and screens of board and matting, to defend those precious objects from every rude attack of sun, wind, or rain – all these are sufficient testimonies; and tell of hours early and late, in the dawn of morning and the dusk of evening, when the happy man has been entranced in his zealous labours, and absorbed in a thousand delicious fancies, and speculations of perfection. Of late, the splendid dahlia and the pansy have become objects of attention; and I believe of the latter flower, till recently despised and overlooked, except in the old English cottage garden, there are now more than a hundred varieties, of such brilliance and richness of hue, and many of them of such superb expanse of corolla, as merit all the value set upon them.”

* Bass-mats were sold by nurserymen, etc and used in gardens to provide protection from sun, etc.

The gardens in Manchester have long gone, but some information about them survives in the form of advertisements. In 1801 a garden in Strangeways was available. It had “a good brick Summer-house, and other conveniences, well stocked with fruit trees and flowering shrubs”. The following year a garden situated between Gartside Street and Quay Street was available. It had “a small Green-house, containing a number of rare Plants, and the Garden is well stocked with Trees, Roots”.

In 1804, following the death of the owner (Mr. Thomas Jones, attorney at law), a garden near Shooter’s Brook was on the market. This had a “large well built summer-house, and hot-house, and, like the others, “The garden is well stocked with fruit trees, and the hothouse has a good assortment of vines and exotics”. This advert gives us a hint of the developments which would in due course consign these gardens to history. It states “The summer house is well finished, and might, with a very trifling alteration and a few additions, be converted into a commodious residence for a small family”.

If that is what happened, it would not have been used that way for long. As Manchester expanded, gardens disappeared and houses changed from residential to commercial use.

One set of gardens were further out, at Cheetwood, on land owned by the Earl of Derby and leased to Dr. Charles White, a well-known and respected doctor who lived in King Street in Manchester, and whose country house was in Sale. He leased the gardens out to various local business people, but by the time of the Ordnance Survey maps of the 1840s, that area was covered with villas.

Reflections on the CGT trip to Germany, 1-4 September

Thirty-two energetic garden and landscape-lovers kept pace with Ed Bennis' action-packed four day trip to the North Westphalia region of Germany. Twelve hour days of site-seeing, tours and talks were the norm. But there were opportunities to sample the delights of German cuisine, wine and beer. We were all bitterly disappointed not to get to the restaurant offering "Heaven and Earth" (potatoes, apples and black pudding). But the wine-tasting has certainly boosted sales of German wine in this part of Cheshire!



Water featured everywhere we went, the Rhine, other rivers, pools, fountains, lakes, water meadows, wetlands,

We stayed in **Düsseldorf** and most people took the opportunity to explore some of the city's attractions before or after the organised visits. Near the hotel was Ständehauspark, where the imposing, former legislative building (now housing 21st century art, "K21") stands, reflecting in the swans-mirror lake. On walking down to the Rhine; wide, busy, transporting goods and spanned by many bridges, there is the opportunity to explore the Altstadt (Old Town) in one direction and the modern Medienhafen (Media community) in the other.



Medienhafen's regeneration, activated by the construction of the state parliament, has become the trendy water-side place to live, work and play; with world-renowned architects commissioned to stamp style on the quarter – all linked to the Rhine with the ambitious Rheinpark Bilk designed by the landscape architect Georg Penker.

Langen Foundation former NATO missile base

Through the impressive entrance, with its curve inspired by and replicating Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens, architect Tadao Ando's minimalist exhibition

centre is visible with its reflection in the still waters of the shallow pool on which the glass, steel and concrete box appears to float.



The Langen Foundation originates from art-lovers and philanthropists Viktor and Marianne Langen, who developed a 13 hectare place for artists in the broadest sense to live, work and display their creations.



It also opens up an impressive collection of art to the public which includes 20th century Western paintings and the largest Japanese collection outside Japan. The Langen Foundation is an autonomous institute within the wider Hombroich cultural area.

We had time to explore the area surrounding the exhibition centre, where former mounds which hid the NATO base activities from aerial photographs have been converted to artist's work/live units. All they have to pay is the electricity and phone bills. Amongst the quirky residences sit examples of their sculptures, all in a peaceful, woodland setting in the countryside only a few kilometres from Düsseldorf.

Museum Insel Hombroich

"Art parallel to nature" is the motto of this 1 km x 6 km park, which is devoted to 20th century art in the landscapes designed to reflect Dutch polder landscape and a more formal early 19th century garden. The park was designed by landscape architect Bernhard Korte in 1984 as part of a long term plan for a centre for the arts. The project is part of a visionary project of estate agent and art collector Karl-Heinrich Müller to turn a neglected area into a unique synthesis of art

and nature. It was a protected area for farmers' land which meant no buildings. His way round the planning condition was to call the structures that housed the art "walk-in sculptures" not buildings!



We heard all about the museum from one of the artists as we sat in the shade near the modern café after lunch which was included in the cost of the entrance ticket. We didn't have time to do full justice to the parkland and wetlands, created with nature as the design philosophy, which contained pavilions, sculpture, cabins, large exhibition buildings full of art and sculpture. The designed wetlands blend imperceptibly with the natural water meadows of the River Erft (a tributary of the Rhine).

Schloss Dyck

53 hectares of park surround a baroque moated palace that sits on four islands. The park has become an international centre for garden art and landscape culture working with the European Garden Heritage Network (EGHN).



There is masses to explore: the formal parterre and flower gardens, the English landscape parkland with its impressive avenues and large specimen trees, the display gardens area and the new gardens – a series of 22 themed gardens designed by different landscape architects within geometric structure planting of Miscanthus for the 2002 regional garden show as well as hectares of apple orchards, which generate income from fruit and juice.

The Miscanthus gardens (*right*) were the ones that elicited most divided opinion – "intimidating and out of proportion" to some, a "fascinating concept promoting renewable energy" (as the castle converts to biofuels for its power) to others. We did all agree the Miscanthus gardens suffered from lack of maintenance.

Whilst some of us wandered more fully round the gardens others were attending the EGHN European Garden awards. Lord and Lady Ashbrook arrived back on our bus from the awards ceremony to a round of applause carrying a bouquet of roses and the Schloss Dyck Foundation Special Award, presented to Arley.

Schloss Dyck provides a spectacular backdrop for the Illumina, which we attended in the evening. Synchronised music and lights bathe the castle, reflecting in the pool in front. A walk through the grounds guided by candles with incidental sound and light events was very popular, attended by hundreds of people.

Schloss Augustusburg

The formal gardens, considered to be one of the most authentic 18th century gardens and contributory to Schloss Augustusburg's UNESCO World Heritage status were created by Dominique Girard who was trained in Versailles under André le Nôtre. The main parterre with its filigree designs in box that look like embroidery, the fountains and ponds and the reflective pool are located in-front of the south side wing of the palace and not, as was usual, in-front of the main wing. We had time to contemplate the parterre and the reflections of the palace itself in the pool, then retreat from the sun and 28°C into the 19th century, forest-like "Grand Parc".



We watched as a bride and groom sweltered in the heat in the search of perfect wedding photographs using the palace and gardens as a backdrop. Some of us managed the mile or so walk along one of the diagonal axes to the Falkenlust hunting lodge, which was located on the flight path of heron; the favourite prey for falconry at that time. The hunting lodge itself is a lavish example of German Rococo architecture.



Konrad Adenauer's House and Garden, Rhöndorf

Adenauer was the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) from 1949–63. He was also the founder and leader of the Christian Democratic Union, a coalition of Catholics and Protestants.

Konrad Adenauer's house, now a museum, is approached through a Bauhaus-style lobby and exhibition area that leads to the steeply sloping gardens and up to his house, from which there are spectacular views over to the Rhine and the mountains beyond.



We were shown round by historian Dr. Jürgen Peter Schmied, who was full of the most fascinating information about Adenauer's life. As well as an influential politician Adenauer was fascinated by flowers and gardens and also committed to the desirability of public access to greenspace, insisting on the creation of a green belt round Cologne so people without gardens could visit open space nearby. Dr. Schmied also told us about Adenauer's predilection for inventions. These included; a watering can with two heads, an illuminated darning mushroom, a brush generating electricity to kill insects (too dangerous for a patent!) and a soya and bread sausage (but not vegetarian as it contained blood for flavour!).

Landschaftspark, Duisburg-Nord

Duisburg-Nord is part of the 320 km² Emscher-Park planned by Peter Latz and Partners in 1994, which converts industrial dereliction and wasteland into an award-winning landscape-scale park.

The park celebrates the area's industrial past, integrating vegetation and industry, cleaning up contaminated land and watercourses for economic benefit. Each area retains its own character, with memory being an important aspect of the design (memory not as in preservation but as transient quality). Duisburg-Nord was created at the former Thyssen smelting works. The design embraces and emphasises the rigour of the industrial past, whilst

allowing nature in and making creative use of the relics: scuba-diving in a water-filled former gasometer, rock-climbing up the sides of bunkers, extreme, imaginative play spaces and gardens in the bunkers, performance spaces for bands, regimented stands of trees add structure and formality contrasting with regeneration of willow, buddleia and birch.



As we started to walk round Duisburg-Nord, the sky got darker, thunder rumbled at first, clapped later and lightning flashed right overhead. Some of us sheltered in ground level structures, others were caught in the heavy deluge of rain at the top of the blast furnace – sheltering under huge iron edifices, watching the rain invigorate the water features.

Garten der Erinnerung, Duisburg

Also part of the Emscher Park, another former industrial area, formerly the largest European inland port has been the subject of a new masterplan led by Norman Foster for the Duisburg inner harbour. Garten der Erinnerung (or Memory Garden) is a part of this area designed by Israeli sculptor Dani Karavan. He wanted to retain the memory of the location and achieved this by only partially removing the structures and buildings, preserving staircase shafts (one of which is now an art gallery), piling up foundations and retaining ground floor plans as low white walls.



We wandered through the spaces, some of us jumped on the walls and balanced on the vaulted grass-retaining kerbs, others sauntered along the wide marina walkway and watched the world go by from the footbridge. Others just had an ice-cream! The garden sparked conversation, opinions ranged through "stark", "out of the ordinary" to "horrible"!

As you can see, not everyone liked everything, but we all agreed it was a fantastic, contrasting programme of visits that sparked conversation and debate and had something for everyone. As well as gardens there was internationally renowned architecture, a long list of

bird species with an osprey even flying over the bus, a red squirrel only a couple of metres away and proximity to the exclusive retail therapy available on Königsalle.

Annie Coombs

Photos Chris Driver



From **Adenauer his authorised biography** by Paul Weymar translated from the German by Peter De Mendelssohn; E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc. New York 1957. p.15

“Behind the house was a garden. It was small, but to me it meant a great deal. There were a tree, two vines, and in the centre a plot of lawn which my mother used for bleaching her linen. Later, my father planted a plum tree, and I remember well the loving care with which he spread out its roots before placing the slender stem in the earth. In this garden I was allotted two small beds for my own purposes. I sowed flowers in one, and radishes in the other. From day to day I watched the growth of my plants. But one day, in my impatience, I pulled up the radishes to see how fat their red tubers were, and of course the next morning they had all withered. ‘One must be patient and give things time to grow’ said my father.

“This was the first lesson the earth taught me, and, as I have remained faithful to my love of gardening, many others were to follow. Some years later I tried to cross pansies and geraniums. It was my ambition to grow creeper pansies, and I dreamed of making a name for myself in horticulture with my own creation, ‘*Viola tricolor Adenaueriensis*’. Naturally my attempt failed, and my father summed up the result of my endeavours, ‘One must never try to interfere with the work of God’, a warning I have remembered in many a political situation. Indeed it is not too much to say that the wisdom of the earth and the basic rules given to me by my father have helped me, time and again, in mastering difficult situations in private and public life.”

A Visit to “The Morville Gardens”

Earlier this summer Frodsham gardening club had a day out which included The Dower House Garden at Morville Hall. I had never heard of “The Morville Gardens”, which is surprising since they are near Bridgenorth in Shropshire – not exactly the far end of the world – and their creator has written two books, one of which was serialised on Radio 4 a few years ago.

Morville Hall itself is owned by The National Trust but is only open by appointment. It sits in a beautiful position, flanked by similar, smaller properties close to an attractive Norman church. The Hall has gardens but our visit was to the gardens of the Dower House of the Hall.

The creator of these gardens is Kathryn Swift, who has leased the land from The National Trust for over twenty years. She gave up her job as a rare books librarian to make the garden, or rather gardens, as each section reflects a period and style in English gardens and accompanies episodes in the history of the Dower House.

Kathryn's former life enabled her to work from original sources as she created the garden. Immediately behind the house is a knot garden planted with herbs, striped poles and a board telling the somewhat scandalous stories of the house's Tudor occupants. Its earlier history is portrayed in the cloister garden, with turf seats and the kind of plants and herbs the monks would have cultivated.

Later periods are depicted in the canal garden, the Edwardian fruit and vegetable garden and a Victorian rose border. There are less formal areas including a nuttery and a meadow. In the canal garden (*pictured below*) there is a very tall pear tree, thought to date back to the 17th century. One can understand why dwarf rooting stocks developed for ease of picking!



Kathryn Swift tries to use traditional techniques when building the structure of the garden, which is managed organically. Having given up her job, buying expensive plants for the garden was not an option. The tall yew hedges, which divide the sections of the garden, were planted by Kathryn herself, using the smallest plants she could find. She told us that almost all the plants were grown from seed, cuttings or gifts from friends.

The garden today is the outcome of research, vision, love and a great deal of very hard work. The garden is open Wednesday, Sunday and Bank Holidays, 2pm to 6pm, from April to September and by appointment.

It also opens under the NGS scheme, together with other gardens at the Hall. Weather permitting cream teas are served in the ivy garden, a secluded area near the house where the birds come to the bird table apparently unconcerned that there are people about.

Jenny Wood

The Dower House
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Quite by coincidence, in addition to Jenny's article, I received this book review from John Davies.

The Morville Year by Katherine Swift. Bloomsbury, 2011

The Morville Hours, by Katherine Swift, was published in 2008 and has become one of the most widely admired gardening books of all times. Now the author has published a sequel, The Morville Year, which continues the story of her creation of the garden at Morville, which lies over the Cheshire border, near Bridgnorth in Shropshire.

Katherine Swift moved to Morville in 1988, taking a lease of the Dower House from the National Trust. Over the next few years she cleared the overgrown grounds and conceived the idea of extending the garden and making a series of small enclosures, commemorating the people who had lived at Morville and in the surrounding area.

She managed to persuade the National Trust to endorse the plans of an amateur and began her life's work. There was the Cloister Garden with its flowers like medieval tapestries, the Knot Garden with its designs of herbs, the Plat with the small boarded beds filled with seventeenth century tulips and the Canal Garden with its rows of orange trees in tubs. Among the other features were the Victorian Rose Border, the Orchard and the Vegetable Garden.

The broad outline of the garden was in place by 2001, but she continued to collect plants, studying their history and modifying the plans. In 1993 she began writing a book on the creation of the garden and worked on it intermittently for the next fifteen years.

Katherine Swift is an expert on rare books, and while writing her description of the garden throughout the seasons, she recalled her mother's copy of the Book of Hours and the calendar, with its illustrations of the agricultural tasks allocated to each month. Interspersed with the history of Morville and the feasts of the church, were stories of her parents' life and her peripatetic childhood. The Morville Hours was finally published in 2008.

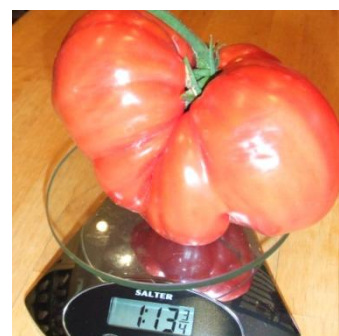
From December 2002 until July 2005, Katherine Swift wrote a weekly gardening column for The Times, recording what she was doing and thinking in the garden, and trips to see other people's gardens. It is these columns which provide the basis for her new book, The Morville Year.

This new volume is perhaps a more practical work, with descriptions of a year's work in the garden: pruning, weeding, sowing seeds and growing fruit and vegetables. There are notes on cooking, the weather, cats, her neighbours' gardens, and above all the garden at Morville and the history of the plants it contains. It is a worthy successor to her first work.

John Davies

Giant fruit and veg

In 1779 James Clegg of Kirkdale near Liverpool produced a cucumber which grew, and grew, and grew. It ended up weighing 64 lbs., measuring 2 ft 5 in long and a whopping 3 ft 8 ½ ins. in circumference! I asked our allotment prize-winner, Tina Theis if she had ever managed anything like that. The best she could come up with was this giant tomato – “it tasted really good – it was just a shame to cut it up – though it lasted ages!” – said Tina, who won second prize again this year in the annual allotment best plot competition: “always the bridesmaid – never the bride!”. Maybe next year...



The Garden Museum, London (formerly the Museum of Garden History)

The Garden Museum is located on the south bank of the river Thames next to Lambeth Palace and across the road from Lambeth Bridge. It occupies the former parish church of St Mary and the adjoining churchyard. The first church was built on this site by the sister of Edward the Confessor in 1062. The church was restored and rebuilt in 1851, but the tower remains from the 14th century. The church building was deconsecrated in 1972.

By 1977 the building was in a bad state of disrepair and was under threat of demolition. The discovery of the tomb of 17th century plant hunters, the Tradescants, in the churchyard led John and Rosemary Nicholson to save the church from demolition and found the Museum of Garden History.

In October 2007 a competition for the design of a new interior was organised and won by London based architects Dow Jones. The historic structure of the church remains untouched, but the newly designed interior has a free standing timber structure creating an upstairs space. This allows for a sequence of individual spaces for temporary exhibitions, the permanent museum collection, an education room, cafe and shop. The transformed building re-opened as the Garden Museum on 18th November 2008.



The upstairs space houses the permanent museum collection. Since 2008 funding from the heritage Lottery Fund (Collecting Cultures) has enabled the Museum to greatly strengthen its holdings of designs and artists' views of gardens. This means that collection highlights such as Gertrude Jekyll's desks have been joined by *South Border at Munstead Wood* (c.1900), a watercolour by Helen Allingham accurately depicting part of her friend Jekyll's celebrated garden.

Pictures by the photographer Martin Parr, prints by Anthony Gross, a Dig for Victory poster and many more art works have also been added to the collection through this fund.

Other highlights include the Vegetable Lamb of Tartary, thought until the eighteenth century to be a cross between an animal and a vegetable (it is actually the root-like stem of a variety of fern), and many

unusual garden tools, from Neolithic implements to a Victorian cucumber straightener.

The Museum also holds a number of rare books, including the diarist John Evelyn's personal copy of the *Musaeum Tradescantianum*, the seventeenth-century catalogue of the museum collection of the John Tradescants (whose tomb is in the Museum garden), as well as a *Hortus siccus*, a mid-seventeenth-century herbarium once owned by the botanist Dr John Fothergill.

The downstairs space houses temporary exhibitions, and an excellent shop and cafe. The temporary exhibition when we visited was Tom Stuart Smith's *Planting Paradise*, which provided an insight into the creative process behind the design of six private gardens. There were also project books of other gardens he has designed including *Trentham*, which was recently visited by the Trust. A new exhibition opens in September 2011 called *From Garden City to Green City* which explores historic and futuristic visions of growing in the city.



The church yard is laid out with a 17th century style knot garden designed by the Museum's President, The Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury (who was then also re-making the gardens at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire), which was opened by the Queen Mother in 1983. The knot garden and its surrounds are planted with species introduced by the Tradescants - such as the scarlet runner bean, red maple and tulip tree - and many others grown by them in their Lambeth garden. It is not only historically significant but also a lush and beautiful spot in the centre of London, cared for by a small horticultural team of staff and volunteers.

We visited the museum in June 2011 when staying at the County Hall Premier Inn, which is a short walk along the embankment. Our visit lasted about 2 hours. The museum is not large but contains many interesting areas and items and is well worth visiting when in London.

The Garden Museum is open most days and currently costs £7 for adults (£6 senior citizens). They have a very informative website where more details including travel directions can be found.

www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

Stephen and Jean Evans

Everything you always wanted to know about creating King Canute from bedding plants, but were afraid to ask



Back in the summer, a group of CGT innocents decided that it would be a nice idea to use the old Caldwell's Nursery logo – King Canute – and turn him into an eye-catching bedding scheme for the Arley Garden Festival. The Trust is currently in the process of recording the memories of nurserymen and gardeners in our Caldwell's Oral History Project and the bedding scheme depiction of King Canute was intended to encourage interest in the project.

What started as a straightforward idea back in March – “we just need a few trays of colourful bedding and we can plant them up as a picture of King Canute using a simple stencil ...” - soon blossomed into something a bit more complex. And this is what we learned:

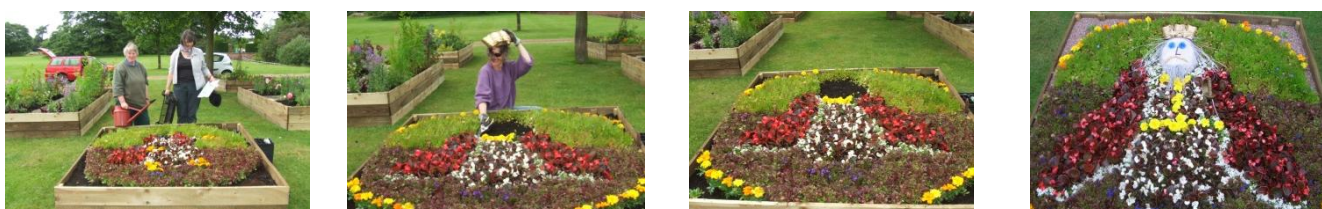
- You need the following skills - someone with creative vision; a garden designer; a source of horticultural knowledge and someone who can wield a trowel. And so it was (in that order) that Christine Wilcox-Baker, Jacquetta Menzies, Ruth Brown and Tina Theis formed the Canute line-up.
- First of all the image - we created the initial design from Caldwell's logo, decided what colours to use depending on what plants would be at their best at the end of June (e.g. blue lobelia for the sea and red begonia for Canute's cloak) and then had the design enlarged to fit a 6'x 6' raised bed, which had been expertly crafted for us by Arley staff.
- Transferring the design – we then made a stencil-cum-template that could be placed directly on the soil and used spray paint to mark out the design ready for planting. That was fine until it rained and the paper stencil started to dissolve – but Jacquetta was quick on the button with the spray paint. The plants themselves – choosing them, deciding the quantities, sourcing them, collecting them and last, but not least, planting them according to our initial design – Ruth and Jacquetta's big challenge.
- Day One: planting the image. And that's where the fun really started. At the end of day one, we had indeed successfully transferred the design and planted according to the agreed plan, BUT sadly, it looked nothing like King Canute – whatever angle we viewed him from.

- Our first problem – basically, the overall design was too detailed and the disparity in plant size between, for instance, the alyssum and the marigolds meant the final likeness was patchy and irregular. An additional problem was that the plants were not all in flower at the same time. Chilly conditions in the run-up to Arley meant our blue lobelia for the sea and sky were in fact still green!
- Day Two: re-planting the image – Christine's artistic eye was quickly able to re-appraise and re-interpret and we re-planted (using the same plants) a new, simpler image of just Canute's head and shoulders – but the big predicament was his head – it just looked like some randomly placed marigolds – which in fact, it was. Christine's remit as chief creative was to go away and come up with a concept for his head.
- Day Three: Canute's head – two breadbaskets, some hessian and a few other bits n' bobs were all that was needed (!) to give Canute his new, improved head. And a plastic sword for that extra touch of Viking authenticity.
- We had lots of very positive visitor feedback during the Arley Festival and a photograph of the bedding scheme is on display at Primrose Hill Nursery – they provided the plants.
- Dismantling the display – it was rather sad to find ourselves back a couple of days after the festival having to take apart our carefully planted scheme – what to do with all the plants? Jane Foster and Rosie Jackson of Arley Hall Nurseries came to the rescue and sold them on our behalf – raising just over £100 – covering our costs very nicely – so a big thank you to them.

Would we do it all again? Well, put it this way ... we have a plan for RHS Tatton next year to further publicise the Trust's work with the Caldwell Archive. And we'll need help, advice and lots more besides. So, watch this space, we'll be asking members to give their time and expertise in helping to construct a bigger and better King Canute. RHS Gold, here we come...?!

Tina Theis

And thanks to all members for the donations which made this garden possible.



News from Research and Recording

Backford Hall - going, going, gone?

News that Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) were vacating Backford Hall and putting it up for sale prompted us to research and record the property. As ever, more has been recorded about the house than the landscape but this time we had allies in Linda Clarke (Cheshire Archives and Local Studies), Moya Watson (Cheshire Historic Environment Record), John Hess (Mollington and Backford Local History group) and Sid Hawes (caretaker at Backford for 36 years) who all helped to piece the story together.

Backford was owned by a family rejoicing in the name of Birkenhead Glegg. The grounds were designed by John Webb and included walled gardens, orchards and glasshouses. Edward Holt Glegg commissioned John Cunningham, a Liverpool architect, to design his Jacobethan hall, dated 1863, the third hall to occupy the site.

Here the plot thickens because Ormerod says "The grounds of the new Hall were laid out by Gray of London, the landscape gardener, in 1857, when the new Hall was built". A coach house in the same diaper brickwork as the hall is dated 1853. According to Sid Hawes the first Cunningham hall burnt down and was rebuilt, which would explain the date stone of 1863. In addition beneath the forecourt is a large brick-lined tank taking water from the front roofs of the hall, presumably to provide a reservoir in case of fire.

In 1928 the property was inherited by a cousin's daughter with another delightful name – Lettice Valentine Lee Townshend. She never lived at Backford but placed the property in the hands of Gandy and Son, surveyors of Northwich. Prospective tenants included a boys school, Mr and Mrs Jacobs (Jacobs biscuits), and a Salvatorian Order who occupied the hall for 3 months.



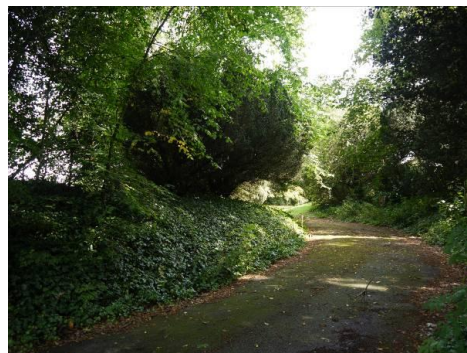
c.1900 Backford Hall from the south

After a period as a country club the hall was finally sold to a shipping company in 1941. The Gandy's letter books during Miss Townshend's ownership record that the kitchen garden was taken over as a market garden; Foster and Pearson came to provide quotes for new glasshouses and central heating, and Dickson and Son, nurserymen of Chester, provided quotes for new shrubs.

Cheshire County Council purchased Backford Hall in 1946 to accommodate the Surveyors Department, importing army surplus buildings to provide extra accommodation and later constructing purpose built offices for trading standards, and houses in the walled garden for caretaking staff. Notwithstanding these additions much of the mature pleasure ground planting remains together with substantial sections of wall from the walled garden, a pond, the main drive and a walk as well as the hall, stables, coach house and lodge.

It was good to be able to record this site before it changes. We hope that the information, issued to CWaC, CHER and CALS, will be used to inform the proper consideration of proposals at Backford Hall.

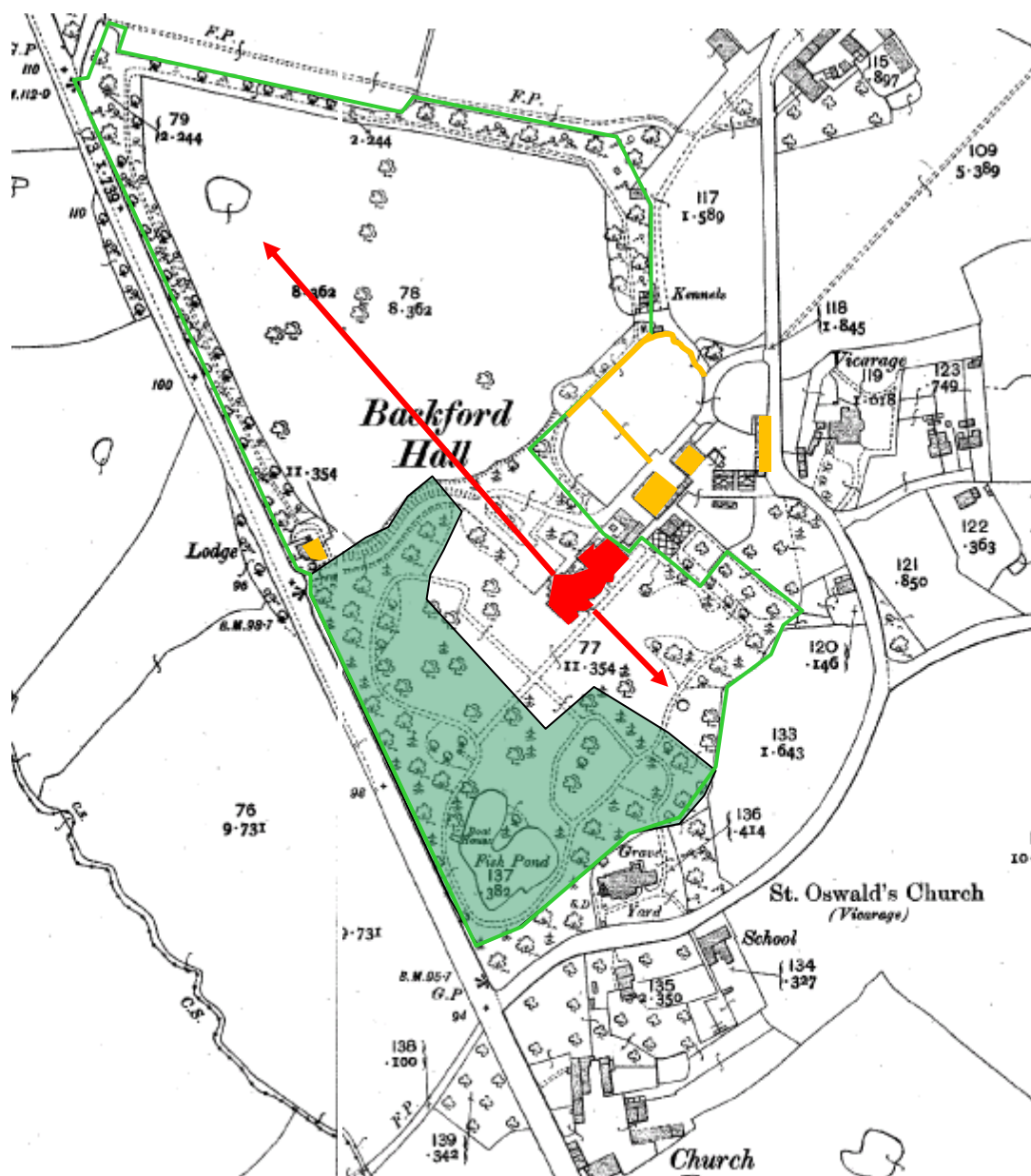
Barbara Moth



Left: Doorway in walled garden, consistent with entrance shown on 1st edition Ordnance Survey.






Middle: main entrance drive.

Right: Lodge dated 1863 beside drive, now closed.



Principal elements of surviving landscape

Key

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Remaining historic designed landscape | | |
|  | Principal building |  | Principal designed views |
|  | Historic buildings and structures |  | Historic tree groups |

Map is based on 1910 Ordnance Survey. The full report is available from Barbara Moth – barbara.moth@btinternet.com

Snippets from Caldwell's Nurseries Oral History Project

We are now well on our way to having an initial batch of recordings complete by the end of the year. It has been enjoyable, and a privilege to listen to some very moving memories and some delightful ones such as Mavis Caldwell (wife of the last William/Bill Caldwell, who lived at the main nursery on Chelford Road) recalling unexpected visitors:

"We were sitting down for Christmas lunch and these two people came to the front door and asked for a bunch of

parsley. We couldn't believe it! I wonder if they did it as a joke. Our dining room was situated so they must have seen us all round the table and yet they came to the front door. They didn't get their bunch of parsley anyway."

Donovan Caldwell Leaman, former managing director, remembered staff at Caldwell's in 1953:

"In January I went back to the rose nursery because it was planting time. I think that there was only one other Englishman working at the rose nursery, Stanley Batty by

name, a bit younger than I was. All the rest were DP's, displaced persons, ex-prisoners of war. There were certainly two Ukrainians, one Latvian who was the foreman they had all served in the SS. They'd lived. The tales they could tell, but I think that I grew to more than manhood in that year rubbing shoulders with those who had experienced the very, very rough end of life; displaced – they could not go back to their own countries.”

The workforce of Eastern Europeans was also recalled by David Cooke who worked at the rose nursery in the early 1960s.

Another wartime tale came from Peter Acton about the nursery at Ollerton where there was running sand: “An old chap recounted how a bomb had dropped in the area during the war. The bomb disposal team came and got the bomb ready for disposal. They went to lunch and

when they came out the bomb had disappeared, so there is still an unexploded bomb there.”

He also recalled:

“Caldwell's Tatton nursery belonged to Lord Egerton. One day the nurseryman was told that Lord Egerton may be coming round labelling trees. When asked if Lord Egerton had been he said no, only an old man in a raincoat had been round. This was Lord Egerton.”

During our training with Rosalyn Livshin she told us that the practice of making full transcripts of recordings is no longer deemed essential because it is **oral** history. Much of the emphasis, inflexion and accents are lost in transcription. These quotes seem flat compared to the recordings but hopefully provide a tiny taste of the range of material we are gathering.

Barbara Moth

Dicksons of Chester, Nurserymen

In the 19th century, Chester became a centre for market gardening, plant nurseries and seed merchants, while the coming of the railways allowed some of these to expand greatly. The story goes that two cousins, Francis R. Dickson and James Dickson came down to Chester from Perth and set up as nurserymen in the early 1800s. In the 1841 Census, Francis and his Chester-born wife were living at Upton House with their six children. The occupation of their eldest son, another Francis, was recorded as ‘nurseryman’. In the 1851 Census, their son John is listed as a seedsman. Presumably, James settled at Newton where his family were running a flourishing nursery business throughout the period with extensive grounds in Newton and offices in Chester. Things did not always go smoothly, for by the late 19th century a significant number of Chester workers were joining Trade Unions, partly in response to the poor working conditions which they faced. In 1874 there was a wage strike at F & A Dickson's nurseries.

Phillipson & Golder's Directory of Chester for 1878-79 has the following entries –

F & A Dickson and Sons, nurserymen, seed merchants and implement dealers, 106 Eastgate Street and Upton Nurseries

J. Dickson and Sons, nurserymen, seed merchants, etc., Newton Nurseries and 108 Eastgate Street.

The two enterprises merged in the 1880s. Newton Villa was used as the main office, with the gates on Brook Lane, and the drive, (now Dicksons Drive), a cobbled road leading north towards Upton was surrounded by ornamental gardens, with the grandest feature being The Marble Arch. There were nearly 100 glass-houses, and the firm supplied all types of bedding plants, roses, shrubs, herbaceous plants, ornamental and fruit trees, and far and garden seeds, while agricultural implements and machines were sold at the Corn Exchange Implement Warehouse.

The Guide to Chester in 1892 has an extensive description of the work of Dicksons Ltd., at Chester and their branches in North Wales:

Dicksons, Limited, Nurserymen and Seedsman to the Queen and to the Prince of Wales, Chester

Dicksons of Chester, are well known to all connected with floriculture, horticulture, and agriculture. They are by special appointment, nurserymen and seedsman to H.M. the Queen and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and besides the extensive grounds, the largest in the county, at Chester, they have branches in Newtown, Montgomeryshire; Dolgelly, Merionethshire; and Pwllheli, Carnarvonshire ... Their extensive nurseries at Chester are situated within ten minutes walk of the Railway Station. It is one of the largest businesses of the kind to be found in the whole of the United Kingdom, the grounds under cultivation exceeding four hundred acres in extent.

Edward Hubbard's The Buildings of Wales: Clwyd lists two landscapes by the Dicksons. In the 1870s Nantclwyd Hall, Llanellidan, passed into the possession of Thomas Naylor-Leyland and the house was enlarged and the grounds laid out by F. & A. Dickson of Chester. In 1872 Nantlys, Tremeirchion, was built by a branch of the Pennant family and the gardens designed by James Dickson & Sons of Chester. Their garden designs are an aspect of Dicksons' work which needs more research.

The business appears to have been in financial difficulties by the early 20th century, and they began selling off land for housing – while the nurseries closed in 1933. The Chester shop finally closed in 1936.

The firm was responsible for introducing a number of notable plants including:

Grane's Pearmain Apple. Raised before 1829 by James Grange, a market gardener in Kingsland, Middlesex,

and distributed from Chester.

Narcissus 'Sir Watkin'. A daffodil with soft lemon petals and a darker cup, which was traditionally found in a cottage garden in North Wales before 1884 and introduced by Dicksons.

Ulmus minor, sub-species *Sarniensis*, 'Dickson's Golden Elm'. This was a yellow leaved form of the Guernsey Elm, raised by Dicksons in the 1900s. Regrettably it has been destroyed by Dutch Elm disease except for a few specimens.

John Davies

Interested researchers should go to www.historyofuptonbychester.org.uk/uptondicksons.html for more information on Dicksons' Nurseries.

Nantwich Walled Garden

The fight to save this historic garden in the heart of Nantwich has begun again. It was thought that the battle had been lost in 2009 when a developer was given planning permission to build six houses and two flats on the site (although it was a condition of planning that the walls be repaired). However, the developer has gone into receivership, so the garden is again on the market. The Walled Garden Society wants to raise the £150,000 purchase price to retain this garden and create a new amenity for the town which would boost tourism. More information on www.nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk

Sale Hotel

Sale hotel, opposite the Walkden Gardens, is of note because it was formerly associated with Sale Botanic Gardens. In 2009 it was under threat of demolition. The Victorian Society had requested English Heritage to list it, but they at first refused. Local people organised a petition and additional research was undertaken. English Heritage announced an intention to list the building. CGT Conservation and Planning Group played a small part in the battle to save the hotel.

Thanks to the combined efforts of all, the building was saved and the hotel has now re-opened.

Jane Foster, Ruth Brown and Paul Atkins have created a number of illustrated panels tracing the history of the family and the gardens at Arley Hall through several centuries.

Cheshire Gardens Trust members were among the select few invited to attend the launch of this exhibition. It was good to see Patrick Swan again and to find out that he is now busy as a "*Horticulturist, Consultant, Tutor and Designer*".



Lord and Lady Ashbrook were among the members who went on the CGT tour of Germany (see page 5) which fell at just the right time for them to be presented with the Special Award of the Foundation Schloss Dyck, in the European Gardens Heritage Network awards. They express their pleasure on the Arley website:

"We were given a wonderful reception at Schloss Dyck, it was very exciting," said Lord Ashbrook. "I think what made Arley stand out to the judges was the commitment of the family to the gardens through so many generations and the

standard of maintenance. To be recognised on an international stage is fantastic. Everybody at Arley should feel very proud."

The gardens were commended for their 'unusual blend of long history and traditional design with inspired modern ideas and additions'. Praise was given to Arley's herbaceous borders – thought to be one of the first of its kind planted in England – and the Ilex Avenue of 14 cylindrical evergreen holm oaks. Judge Roswitha Arnold said: "The result is a garden rich in atmosphere, interest and vitality – a wonderful example of the idea that the best gardens are living, changing works of art."

Many thanks to all those members who have contributed to this edition of the Newsletter. I think it is quite one of the best I have ever sent out.

Gardens and gardening cover such a wide area of history, design, plants – and of course, pleasure – that everyone has something to share. Please keep those contributions rolling in.

Copy date for January is 31 December.

American plants – a Quiz

No prizes, but – as the BBC Caption Competition has it – a small amount of kudos for anyone who correctly answers the following. Or rather a small amount for Ed Bennis who has an unfair advantage, and a large amount for anyone else.

Asking a friend, consulting books and surfing the internet not allowed!

Send replies to the Editor. Winners announced in the next issue.

1. Which flower was chosen by the US Congress as the official flower of the nation in 1986?
 - a. Oleander
 - b. Rose
 - c. Opuntia
2. Famous as the biggest tree in the world, what species is General Sherman in California?
 - a. Wellingtonia
 - b. Douglas fir
 - c. Swamp cypress
3. Which plant is known as the pieplant in America?
 - a. Rhubarb
 - b. Apple
 - c. Blueberry
4. Which major golf tournament is played on a course in Augusta that was once a plant nursery and has holes named after flowers, such as Rosebud, Azalea and White Dogwood?
 - a. U.S. Open
 - b. U.S. PGA
 - c. U.S. Masters
5. The Oregon Thornless is a thornless variety of which fruit?
 - a. Raspberry
 - b. Gooseberry
 - c. Blackberry
6. The first botanic garden in America was founded in 1728 by John Bartram in which city?
 - a. Boston
 - b. Philadelphia
 - c. New York
7. The Cypress Gardens at Charleston in America are among the best examples in the world of what kind of garden?
 - a. Water garden
 - b. Japanese garden
 - c. Rock garden
8. Which plant collector of the mid-19th century introduced several new varieties of conifer into England from America?
 - a. Joseph Hooker
 - b. David Douglas
 - c. John Redwood
9. Where is the famous rose nursery Jackson and Perkins based?
 - a. Florida
 - b. Utah
 - c. California
10. In America a tradition existing of reciting the words ‘as round as my head and as big as my butt’ as a kind of incantation when planting the seeds of which vegetable?
 - a. Cabbages
 - b. Marrows
 - c. Pumpkins

The University of Oxford’s Department for Continuing Education has an on-line course on Garden History, covering the period from 1650 to the present day. Cost is £200 and the course does require students to submit written work. For anyone interested go to: www.conted.ox.ac.uk/V200-48#Abstract.

Copy date for January newsletter is 31 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, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS, tel: 0161 969 3300 or e-mail joy.uings@btconnect.com.