



**CHESHIRE
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Newsletter

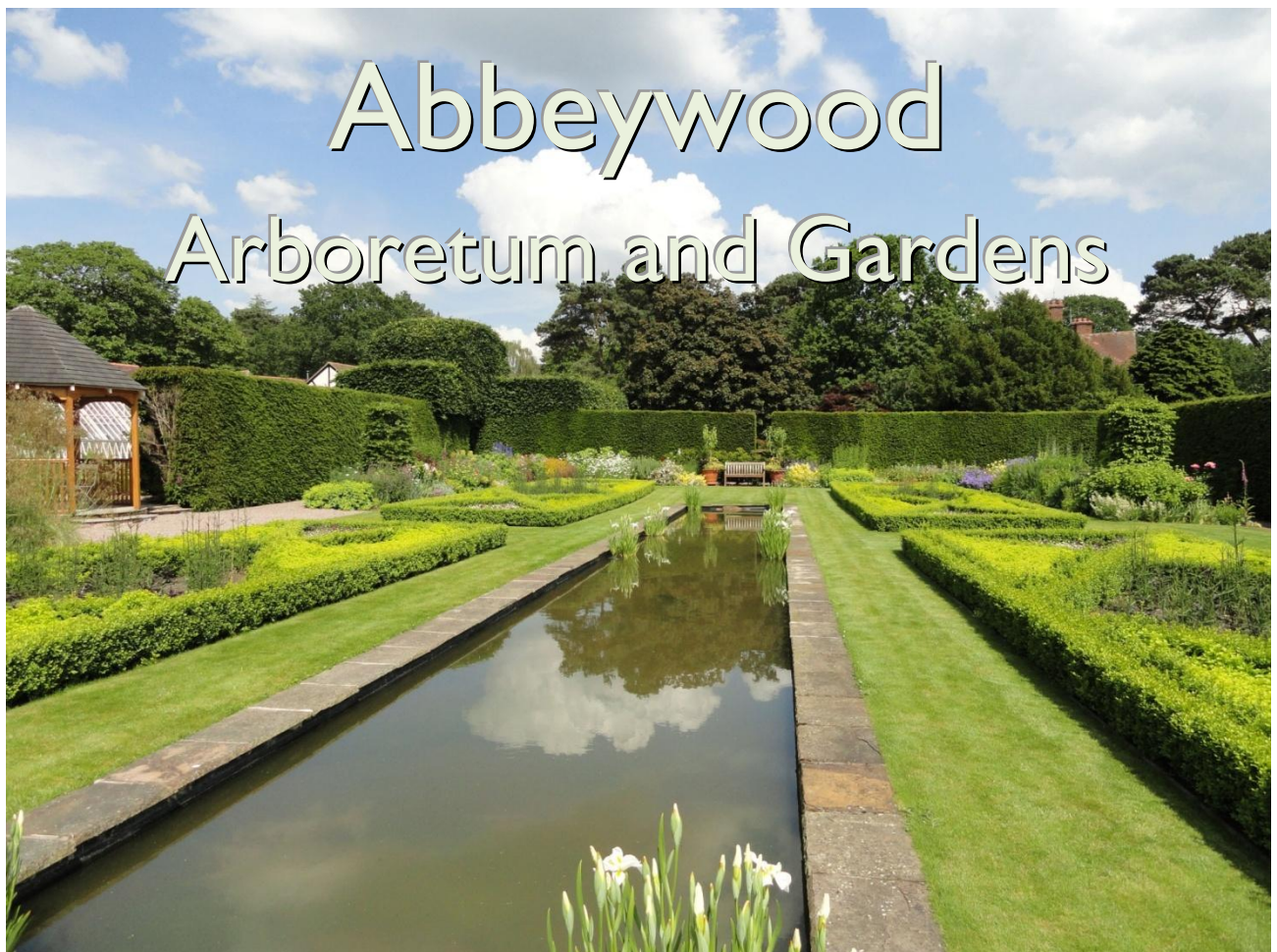
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Some future events:

- ✿ My Lifetime in Gardening: Sam Youd – Saturday 24 November
- ✿ Repton and his Red Books. Talk by Ed Bennis with special reference to Aston Red Book – Saturday 26 January
- ✿ Cemeteries – Saturday 23 February



On a rare sunny day in June, members and friends of the CGT were welcomed at Abbeywood Gardens and Arboretum, a 45 acre estate in the Delamere countryside. Our hosts were Jane & David Rowlinson; the Rowlinson family have lived at Abbeywood since 1987.

The estate includes woodland and a wildlife walk, an arboretum and several distinct garden areas. The seven acre arboretum was begun by David in 1999.

It is very much 'work in progress' with new specimens being added each year.

David's passion for the giant redwoods of California has led him to acquire more than 30 *Sequoiadendron* cultivars, as well as a collection of *Acer*, *Cryptomeria*, *Fagus*, *Ginkgo*, *Liquidamber*, *Liriodendron*, *Magnolia* and *Sorbus*. The grassed areas within the arboretum are allowed to grow long in early summer, to encourage wildlife activity.

The ongoing plan is to integrate the arboretum with a further 14 acres of new woodland planting, to create a nature walk around Abbeywood. There are an additional 12 acres of mature woodland which probably predate the house. This area contains a substantial collection of indigenous tree species including oak, birch, beech, ash and Scots pine. More recently, David has introduced some ornamental tree planting.

In 2003 Lynda and Harry Rowlinson commissioned David Stevens to redesign the main gardens. A tropical garden is one of Abbeywood's newest and replaces a former vegetable garden. The layout is formal with beds enclosed by low box hedging. The planting here is exotic including palms, cordyline and tree ferns. Cannas, ginger and dahlias provide colour.

The pool garden, a former tennis court, features a long, shallow pool established in 2006. Four parterres frame the pool and are themselves encapsulated by a substantial yew hedge. Four large hornbeam cylinders anchor the design, and the central beds and side-borders provide a colourful display of herbaceous planting. The pool garden leads to the chapel garden with a small pool and border of perennial planting enclosed by yew hedging.



A splendid pergola walk is the next garden area encountered. Roses and *Clematis* climb the brick pillars and long, colourful, herbaceous beds line the walk. The planting features *Echinacea*, *Nepeta* and *Monarda* species amongst others. Perpendicular to the pergola walk is four newly planted borders reaching out across the lawn towards the distant hills. *Thuja occidentalis* 'Smaragd' affords formality and *Miscanthus*,



Panicum, *Kniphofia*, *Echinacea*, *Geum*, *Cirsium*, *Sedum* and *Persicaria* species provide informality.

A small glade opposite the house is planted with shade lovers, hostas, rhododendron, foxgloves, *Roscoea*, *Epimedium*, *Erythronium* and *Euphorbia robbiae* amongst others. *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', *Magnolia stellata*, *Magnolia* × *loebneri* 'Leonard Messel' and *Choisya* with herbaceous perennials, form a boundary with Jane's Garden.



Jane's garden was started in 2000 by removing much overgrown woodland. Replanting includes many rare trees and shrubs including *Paulownia*, *Acer palmatum* and *Liriodendron*. This informal woodland garden is still evolving as Jane continually adds to her collection of favourite plants, which include *Galanthus*, *Corydalis*, *Erythronium*, *Trillium*, *Iris* and *Geranium*.

For some, a perfect afternoon at Abbeywood concluded with a cream team in the garden café.

Mary Moxon

Horrible handwriting workshop

(not about how to do horrible handwriting but how to read it!)

Archivists at Cheshire Record Office will be running a bespoke workshop for research and recorders and Caldwell ledger transcribers on **Wednesday 21st November 10 – 12noon**. The session will cover spelling and abbreviations; reading wills and inventories and look at some of the particular challenges we face in trying decipher old documents and business ledgers.

Numbers are limited but anyone interested should contact Barbara Moth – e-mail: barbara.moth@btinternet.com or phone: 01606 46228

RHS Tatton remembered

Our congratulations went to Team RHS in the last issue. Here a few of those who were involved reflect on what it takes to win a silver medal ...

Per ardua ad astra *

It all started about a year ago. I was lured to a secret location in Pickmere and given my instructions. Despite my protests, I became embroiled. Let's just call them "**The Team**".

"C" had this proposition: a metal confection, a whirl of mesh. I was drawn in. "R" was some kind of magician. I felt my will beginning to bend. "T" smiled encouragingly. There was no way out.

I shut myself away and worked all winter: The Team were merciless. Finally, I came up with the goods. A scheme to dazzle and confound "The Society".

Agents across the county would be activated. The Team ran with it. Spring saw the start of covert operations from Bollington to Dutton. Let's just say we were growing. We held a trial run at a secret location somewhere in Merseyside. A factory in Warrington was requisitioned.

Operation "Canute" was underway.

The first sod was cut on 28 June. For the next three weeks it was nothing but "rain, mud and sweat".

I can't say that agents didn't suffer. We took casualties. But you all know the results: there were medals involved.

And I myself am quietly proud to have been able to play my part.

Jacquetta Menzies

* Work hard and you'll get a ~~gold star~~ silver medal



"The Team" at a secret location (Christine's taking the photo)

Paper a-plenty – Working with the RHS

Imagine this – it's like that scene from Walt Disney's Fantasia where the mops, buckets and brooms multiply 'til they fill the screen and poor old Mickey Mouse is running around trying to keep up.

Only in this case it wasn't Mickey Mouse, it was Team RHS, and it wasn't mops and buckets and brooms, but FORMS from the RHS – application forms, draft client brief, actual client brief, media forms, environmental responsibility forms, timber certification forms, cost estimates ... forms in duplicate, in triplicate in as

in as many as you imagine – just multi-plicate! And as for the health and safety forms – well, we nearly needed first aid to revive us from having to complete those.

And that was before we even got onto the Show Ground at Tatton – then we had to manage the parking – exhibitor parking, show ground access, delivery parking, visitor parking, VIP parking on Press Day, volunteer parking during the show. All without getting stuck in the mud – and many did – the tractor was never far away ... !

OK, so once we'd negotiated the soggy ground and parked, then what? well, did we have the right number of build-up/break-down passes? Yes, but with a total of 40+ volunteers changing every day for the best part of 4 weeks, it was touch and go whether the 18 passes a day we'd been allocated would stretch that far. They did (despite many of them turning back into wood pulp as the result of the constant rain), but only because of complex to-ing, fro-ing and waiting around to hand-over passes to the next shift – together with those requisite hi-vis jackets.

But do you know what? Despite all the paperwork, being involved in the whole process was an amazing experience. Being on site from Day One when the Show Ground was an open, empty field and seeing it evolve as the days went by into the extraordinary complex that was RHS Tatton Flower Show is something I will never forget – and I mean that in an entirely positive way. It is a huge operation of manpower, management and organisation and frankly, if we didn't fill-in our forms, complete our H&S assessments and manage our team, it simply could not happen.

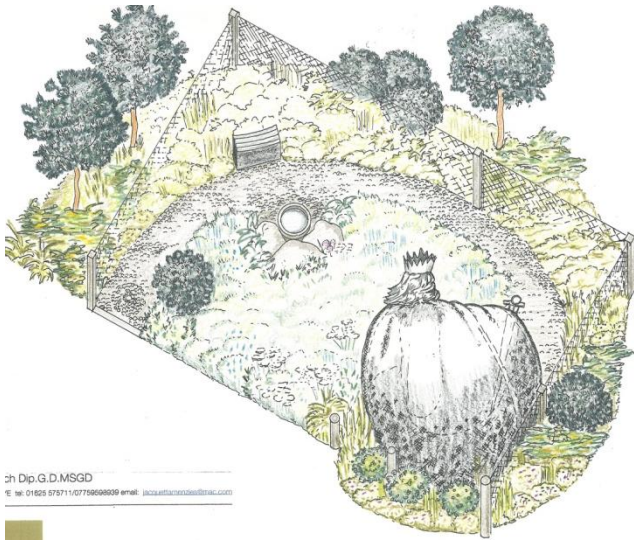
On top of which, the RHS staff were a pleasure and delight to work with. Yes, it was often frustrating to have to complete yet another form; but everyone we dealt with was calm, kind and helpful and didn't seem to mind when asked the same question half a dozen times (which happened quite a lot!).

So, when it came to completing the after-show questionnaire – I was happy to comply!

Tina Theis

King Canute – Concept and Fabrication

When we embarked on the project and agreed our concept of a coastal garden based on the Caldwell's logo and legend of King Canute I was tasked with designing a sculpture, amongst other things – little did I know what I was letting myself in for!



Jacquetta's design: Canute watches over the garden

Having agreed 'he' should be fairly large scale and with a purpose, I set about making a model of my proposed structure and, having no real budget, embarked on gaining sponsorship which I happily secured from The Mesh Company and Locker Group Ltd in Warrington. This was to become a very generous amount in terms of materials and employee time and included a full structural engineers' report and risk assessment.

Working initially with engineers and a computer modelling designer I made a series of sketches and after a number of meetings and lengthy exchange of sketches and ideas the main support structure was designed and fabricated/welded from stainless steel section. I then spent about a month in the workshop – a very hands-on process whereby I manipulated large sheets of stainless steel woven wire mesh to make the 'fabric like' folds of the cloak. I was then aided by welders and fabricators to create the other sections i.e. belt, hands, sword and head with his crown, facial features and flowing tresses. They were a great and talented bunch who made me very welcome in spite of my bright orange overalls which sparked off a series of comments including asking where I'd escaped from!



We created 'him' in kit form for easier transportation and assembled him on site – in spite of the howling wind and rain. This involved two engineers, a fabricator and me, with a kit of large ladders, nuts & bolts, cutters and wire for 'stitching' the sections together. His centre support was bolted to a large concrete block and the cloak supports secured using

18 borrowed marquee pegs each measuring 3' x 1" – ably installed by Steve from WAP Lawton & Son using a large sledgehammer and lots of muscle!

Since the show King Canute has been 'resting' awaiting decision on his new home – talks are on-going but nothing is definite as yet so if anyone has any suggestions please do get in touch.

Christine Wilcox-Baker



Seed sowing for the Tatton Garden

Who would believe that we would be growing plants from seed that might grow, and, quite possibly, grow well enough to be selected for inclusion in the garden at Tatton! But, a few willing CGT volunteers turned up at Arley Hall one morning in early May, ready to do just that!

Some of us had never been inside an estate potting shed before, let alone grown plants from seed! But Ruth was there to meet us and show us how to mix the compost, how to fill the seed trays, and then how to plant each module of compost with a seed.

We planted a range of seeds including barley (*Hordeum jubatum*), borage, carrots, coriander, feverfew, *Nigella*, and parsley. Some had seed big enough to handle individually, which made them seem absolutely gargantuan in comparison with others.

Tiny seeds presented a particular set of planting challenges: it was impossible to pick up a single seed and plant it, and even if this were possible, the seed immediately became heavily disguised when it hit the compost!

Luckily, Ruth had this one covered too: the special seed sowing tool! Tiny seeds were placed in a plastic container which had a nozzle that allowed individual seeds to be coaxed out onto the compost.

A quick spray with water, then cling film applied over each tray to act as a mini greenhouse and also to give protection for the tray's journey to its temporary home in greenhouses around the region.

Oh yes, Arley Hall's potting shed was particularly appealing: it had a ready supply of tea, coffee and biscuits for the seed sowers.

Pat Alexander

Potting on

A group of us assembled one characteristically cold and damp Saturday morning in June at Bluebell Cottage Nursery to help prepare plants for Time and Tide.

A few months before, a mass of annuals and a few quick-growing perennials had been sown and pricked out by Tina and Jacquetta's trusted army of skilled growers. The plants sown may not have been the most spectacular in the garden, but were those that gave it its delicacy of detail and suggestion of the wild froth of the sea: love-in-the-mist, fox-tail barley, white clover, curly parsley, *Orlaya*, *Daucus* (wild carrot) and *Cerinth*.

Our base for the day was the wonderfully atmospheric and well-equipped potting shed at Bluebell Cottage. I am still suffering from a bad case of potting bench envy! When we arrived there were an intimidating number of trays of impressively healthy-looking plug plants, many hundreds in total, ready to be put into individual pots, three at a time.

Sue Beesley, the owner, had generously provided not just the venue, but mountains of specially-mixed compost and towers of pots ready for us to set to work under Ruth's benign but beady-eyed supervision. I learned not to pack the compost too tightly and to pot up plugs faster than I had imagined I could. It was great fun and with five or six of us (Freyda, Joy, Jane, Elisabeth, Sue, Julia and others), we finished in no time at all.

After a sandwich lunch in the garden and a warming cup of tea in the cafe, most of us succumbed to the wonderful selection of extremely well-chosen and well-grown perennials for sale in Sue's Nursery (Bluebell Cottage is a Cheshire Garden of Distinction) and bought a well-deserved take-home present for ourselves. The *Lobelia cardinalis* I acquired is looking spectacular in my garden as I write.

Many thanks to Sue Beesley for hosting us for the day.

Sara Holdsworth

Sourcing the plants

For months before the construction of the Show Garden two members of the Gang of Four and two royal corgis (too busy to audition for the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony) could be seen driving around the Palatine County of Cheshire sourcing plants from a range of local nurseries, both large and small.

Size, colour and texture were essential considerations – they had to comply with the planting scheme.

The herbaceous perennials were not too difficult to obtain but large, suitably wind-distorted conifers were another matter. Sightings made over hedges along country lanes were followed-up, but not always successfully.

Material which was thought to be available was not, or had succumbed to the wet weather. Substitutes had to be organised – yet more sorties into the extremities of Cheshire or even across the border into alien territory.

Once sourced, frequent visits had to be made to check on progress and condition. Volunteers, led by Freyda, spent many hours in the rain picking over and dead-heading – Sue Beesley's tea room was much appreciated.

Meanwhile, annuals, which had been sown in the potting shed at Arley and taken home by CGT members to be grown-on, were eventually transferred to central locations in Arley and Grappenhall where they could be monitored. London gooseberries which had not been enjoying the cold conditions in Bollington were also moved to the warmer climate of Grappenhall.

At last everything was ready for the Show and Peter Evans' vans arrived in pouring rain to transport hundreds of annuals and herbaceous perennials to Tatton – a mammoth task in itself.

Sighs of relief all round.

Ruth Brown



Borage lined up ready for planting

Planting

What an exceptional experience working alongside such a splendid hard working team of like minded people who wished to execute a goal of designing, building, planting up and exhibiting Caldwell's and Canute Time & Tide RHS show garden.

Despite battling on through gruelling days of adverse weather conditions – no, this was not Antarctica this was Tatton Park in Cheshire! – we all continued to soldier on.

The amazing nitty and gritty lengths we went to – never in my life, and probably Gwyneth's too, had we concentrated so much on such infinite detail, and broken so many fingernails on edging a garden path!

Oh how precise we had to be despite our muddy trowels, cold hands and soggy kneeling pads!

Attention to detail was paramount for Jacquetta, and quite rightly so as the sun finally shone upon King Canute and as a consequence we are all very proud of the CGT garden being awarded a RHS Silver medal.

Vera Hitchen



The final touches

Arrived on Tuesday to a sea of mud, but it was lovely to see King Canute looking splendid. Planting on the Tuesday was rained off so we didn't get going till Wednesday. Before planting, there was sorting, picking over, dead-heading and generally making plants presentable. Because of rain, not all plants were in prime condition. The *Nigella* didn't flower till the last day of the show. Planting on a bank, which much of it was, wasn't easy. Also you have to make planting look natural but effective. Then the gravelling, which seemed to move every time you turned your back. Many man hours later (and at least one volunteer did 7 days on the trot) it was time to do final preparations ready for the judging.

Sue Eldridge



That attention to detail was so worth it!

Preparation for judging

The planting is done, the beds are top dressed, the path is laid, the King has his sword defending and protecting his domain. Beyond the garden the site is tidied, the plant pots and labels are sorted and stored in Christine's car for later use, the compost starting to rot on Tina's allotment (demonstrating our "green" credentials).

Vera and Gwyneth on their poor sore knees on the cobbles separating crushed seashells which dress the path from the shingle dressing of the planted beds. Is this madness?? No – this is simply the level of attention to detail needed to create that crisp line between path and planting to meet the Judges exacting standards. Only one person is allowed to walk on the path now – and she has strict instructions about where she can/cannot tread and woe betide her if she blurs the line between the stark bright white of the seashells and the warm golden glow of the shingle. Enter Frances – if anyone can find one of Bluebell Nursery's purple labels when numerous inspections and retrievals have been undertaken – Fran can – and does!!

Gwyneth Owen

Judgement Day



"The Team" display their silver medal

It's Showtime!





Must be gin – she is smiling!



Elegance, Tatton Style. Christine sports trainers with her “Ascot” hat; Gordon wears a specially designed Caldwell apron



The Garden featured in BBC coverage with Monty Don

Break-down

The breakdown operation was carried out with purposeful energy in a mood of quiet reflection.

A Silver gained, yes, but remembered just as well was the vision of the designers, the generosity of the sponsors and the enthusiasm and physical work endured by the team of volunteers. A memorable occasion for everyone involved.

Gordon Darlington



At least the sun shone for this ...



That ever-present smile was so cheering

Plant Repatriation

Just when we thought that it was all over and we could retreat with our aching feet and limbs, we discovered “decommissioning of plants”, a new concept to us and another experiential learning curve to be ascended.

All plant material had to be repatriated to its home nursery and be restored to sale condition. After the appalling planting conditions and then the baking heat during the show this was no small task. In addition to the 18 gorse plants loaned from Morrey’s Nurseries

and 491 herbaceous plants, grasses, shrubs and trees supplied by CGT members there were another 137 loaned by Arley Nursery, 325 on loan from Bluebell Cottage Gardens and Nursery and 258 were loaned by Brentmoss Nurseries.

Following the maxim “last in first out”, the plants were the first to be taken from the garden in the breakdown. This was tackled by the team without sentiment as the landscapers were to follow us and they were in close pursuit. As the plants were dug up, Freyda valiantly sorted the plants into their nursery groups and counted and recounted, often repeatedly. Sometimes the numbers tallied and other times there were discrepancies and search parties were dispatched to find the missing plants, with the nursery transport fast approaching!

Finally the plants were either collected by the nurseries or had a personal CGT taxi service back to the nursery by the transport team (Ruth Brown, Gordon Darlington, Janet Horne, Freyda Taylor and others).

At the nurseries the plants were isolated from the nursery sale stock, ready for the next stage of decommissioning. Teams were organised for each nursery with approximately one or two days of team working at each nursery required. My invitation was for the Bluebell Cottage and Nursery Team – oh, that would just be 325 plants then!

At Bluebell Nursery we divided into two teams of two. Julia Whitfield and I were on the first stage work that involved removing the Tatton Park soil, or RHS

topsoil, from the plants as many had been removed from their pots for planting and had hurriedly been replanted so that they were stable during transport, hopefully to prevent further damage.

Some pots had also been broken so these needed to be replaced. It felt a bit like a chain gang, moving the large trays of plants, removing soil or changing pots, then reapplying compost as required and finally placing in trays again ready to be wheel-barrowed through to the second stage in the potting shed.

Ruth Brown and Tina Theis tackled the more specialist work of plant inspection for pests, removal of damaged material and dressing with bark chippings prior to the final wheel-barrowing to the allocated nursery space.

This activity was being repeated at Arley Nursery by the Arley team, no doubt also with tea and cakes – they certainly helped.

We were surprised that, despite their trauma, the plants were actually in reasonable condition and had even started to root where they had been quickly repotted at Tatton Park in the breakdown and felt that the high quality nursery compost that the plants were planted in had greatly contributed to their survival.

All the plants that had been loaned to us were able to be restored to sale condition at the nurseries so we were absolutely delighted (and very relieved).

Perhaps the final, final word from the breakdown came from Freyda who found a snail crawling up her car's rear window ... now, there's a memory!

Jane Gooch

D is for Deer Parks

Tatton Park in Cheshire is one of the largest surviving active deer parks in England and in the autumn, the guttural and rather frightening roar of a stag during the deer rut can still be heard, as in past centuries. Many more deer parks once existed in the County.

Within their enclosures, instead of the native red or roe deer, most medieval parks had the exotic fallow deer, which according to Oliver Rackham are ‘as strong as pigs and more agile than goats’. Enclosing them was quite an undertaking. Saxton's Cheshire map of 1577 shows deer parks as a scattering of very distinctive, rounded enclosures that appear to be fenced. These were the park pales. Typically there was a perimeter ditch to the inside and earthen bank to the outside, topped by a wooden palisade fence or hedge, with cleared ‘freeboard’ beyond to give access to the pale for repairs or recovery of escaped deer.

The cost and labour involved in creating and maintaining these boundaries, as well as deer shelters, gates, lodges and internal compartments, indicates that venison must have been very highly valued. Economy may have been one reason for the characteristic ‘egg’ shape or rounded rectangle of a deer park boundary

which can often still be discerned on modern maps, long after the park itself has gone. The pale allowed a privileged minority to appropriate landscape for their own use, excluding people whilst safeguarding deer and timber. It also gave them the ability to offer sport, or gifts of venison – a food for special occasions – to those they wanted to influence.



Deer parks at Bramhall, Poynton and Lyme. Source: Christopher Saxton's first map of Cheshire dated 1577

Deer parks could be complex landscapes designed for enjoyment, activity and aesthetic experience. Parks were either compartmented or un-compartmented; compartments allowed better management and protection of stock and woodland. Open grassed areas known as lawns or launds were accessible to the deer at all times, and would have increased the chances of a successful hunt. Where hunting, including coursing with dogs, was important to the owner, chases are likely to have been arranged so as to provide the huntsmen with continually changing views, perhaps with a lodge, deer house or castle coming in and out of view as they rode around (the owner's main house could be at a distance though). Park lodges, the focus for management and entertainment, were often set at the highest point.



Death of a Buck by unknown artist, c1660, Lyme park
Source: National Trust Photo Library

Oliver Rackham takes the view that while deer parks could indeed be the scene of hunts, in many cases their real purpose was rather more prosaic – to provide timber from coppices and pollarded trees, and fodder for stock. As well as venison, the parks supplied other meat from game, cattle or sheep.

The number of deer parks reached a peak in the thirteenth century, but they were not easy to maintain.

The keeping of deer declined gradually, and although occasional parks continued to be created, many others were lost to agriculture or woodland between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. However a few new deer parks were created in Cheshire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including the New Pale in Delamere.

Finally in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most remaining deer parks in Cheshire evolved into 'landscape parks' with a different focus. Tatton Park, Dunham Massey and Lyme Park are three of the hundred or so altered but active deer parks remaining in the UK.

Ruth Benson

Note: This article has drawn on the following references:

Edwards, R. (2008) *The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation*, Cheshire County Council

Rackham, O. (1986) *The History of the Countryside*, Phoenix

Rotherham, I.D. (ed.) (2007) *The History, Ecology and Archaeology of Medieval Parks and Parklands in Landscape Archaeology and Ecology, Volume 6, 2007*. Sheffield: Wildtrack Publishing

Olympic Park in Bloom

In August I was lucky enough to get tickets for athletics at the Olympics. Obviously Mo Farah and Usain Bolt were the highlights for me, but I was also keen to have a look at the planting in the Olympic Park.

Our first sight was coming across the bridge from Stratford Station. It was probably the most dramatic of the planting, making an immediate impact on arrival – very striking *Agapanthus* and masses of *Kniphofia* (red hot pokers) mimicking the Olympic flame. This was part of the South African planting, which also included grasses, *Galtonia candicans* (summer hyacinth, dramatic spires of white flowers), lovely dark red gladioli (*Gladiolus papilio* 'Ruby') and *Dierama*.

Much of the planting is in long beds on either side of the rivers and canals in a necklace development, with very convenient seating spread along the riverbanks. It was lovely to come down from the hectic stadiums and thoroughfares to the relative peace of the gardens beside the water.



This area of planting was designed by Sarah Price, a gold medal winner at Chelsea. Planting came from across the globe. The South African garden is followed by gardens representing Asia, the Americas and Europe. The Asian garden is planted in swathes, with grasses, red *Persicaria* and *Hosta*.



In another part of the more formal gardens there are beautiful umbels of *Ammi majus* (Queen Anne's lace), with spikes of purple *Atroplex* and blue cornflowers growing through it.



Although Sarah had very strict guidelines to follow, including a prairie style of planting, at times her combination of plants is almost magical. In this area of the garden, over 120,000 plants of 250 species have been planted.

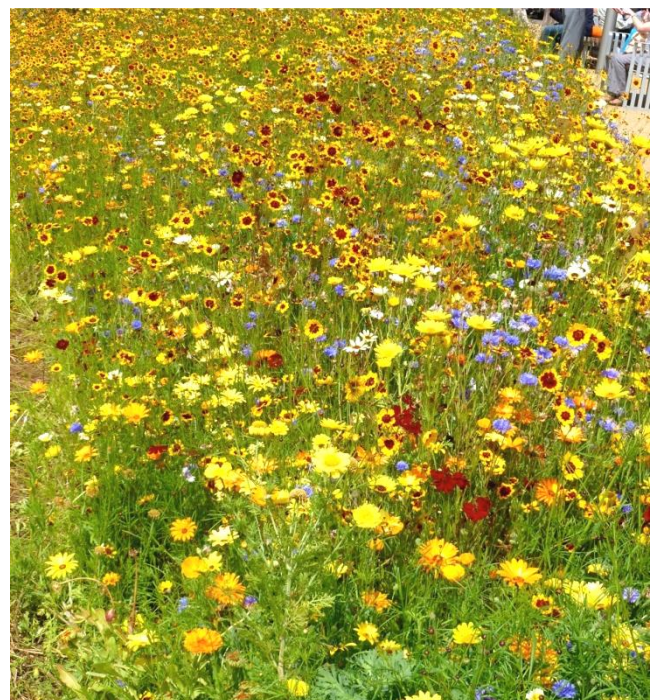
Away from the more formal planting there are vast meadow areas, including both annual and perennial planting. LDA Design and Hargreaves Associates had overall responsibility for landscape architecture of the park. As well as Sarah Price, they worked with James Hitchmough and Nigel Dunnett, from Sheffield University, who specialise in annual flower meadows. Around the stadium there are jewel-like meadows with their yellow, blue and gold flowers. A vivid combination of both native and non-native plants have been selected for the gold meadows, designed to flower from late June until the first frosts, including prairie tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctoria*), cornflowers, corn marigold, star of the veldt (*Dimorphotheca aurantiaca*), Californian poppy.

After the games the meadows will gradually incorporate a range of grasses, both naturally and through over-sowing. The idea is that they will become more self-sustaining and help support wildlife.

Further afield, to the north of the Olympic Park, the planting is more subdued and informal, representing a range of native UK habitats, with wetland areas, rain gardens, bioswales, wet woodland, reedbeds, ponds and perennial meadows. Three hundred thousand wetland plants have been planted – over 30 species of native reeds, rushes, grasses, sedges, wet wildflowers and irises.



Some of the areas are so peaceful, like a piece of countryside in the middle of an Olympic Park. A wide range of wild flowers have been planted throughout the meadows, including musk mallow, meadow cranesbill, devils bit scabious, red clover, bloody cranesbill and great burnet, as well as native herbs – thyme, catmint, origanum, viper's bugloss and wild carrot. The meadows have been designed to be nectar and pollen rich, diverse and with a long flowering season to encourage a range of bees, butterflies, moths and other insects. Specific plants and flower species have been selected to encourage particular wildlife, for example the marsh fritillary butterfly needs devil's bit scabious for their caterpillars and burnett moths congregate around knapweed flowers.



Four thousand new 4-7 metre trees have been planted – ash, cherry, hazel, white willow, crack willow, alder, aspen, black poplar, holm oak, English oak, rowan, lime, field maple, sweet gum and silver birch.

More than a quarter of the plants for the 2012 gardens were not grown commercially in the UK and extensive investigation was required to track down rare seeds, cuttings and bulbs. These included hundreds of South African plants grown from a small collection in Ireland, seed collected in South Africa and thousands of rare white chrysanthemums as well as tall Asian lilies grown from clumps provided by specialist UK gardens.

What is astonishing is that not very long ago the area was derelict and toxic. Regeneration of the river and its former industrial surroundings has been a massive project. Phil Askew, responsible for the overall landscape project said, “*The whole site, which among*

other things boasted the largest fridge mountain in Europe, had to be decontaminated, the river dredged and cleared, and the wetland habitats constructed.”

After the Games the Park will become the largest new urban park created in over a century. The present 50 hectares of greenery will eventually become 100 hectares. And over the years all the trees that have been installed will begin to make their presence felt.

Sue Eldridge

The Olympic Park will reopen in phases from July 2013.

To find out more about the gardens and planting and future visits see: www.2012gardens.co.uk

To find out more about the future of the park as a whole see: www.londonlegacy.co.uk

And for a more personal view:

www.nigeldunnett.info/Londonolympicpark

The Smallest Park in the World

So you think you have a small garden? Well, I am pretty sure it is not as small as the world's smallest park.

Take yourself to Portland, Oregon in America's far northwest. Wander down the riverside and keep your eyes peeled. There it is!

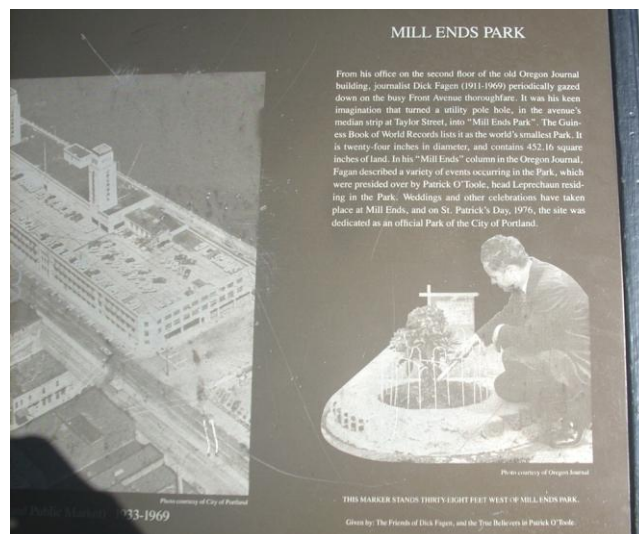


Did you cross the road? Wrong move! Over there it's the riverside. You should have stopped halfway across the road.

Can you see it now? Yes, that's it – that tiny place in the central reservation.



It's official. This tiny space is a park. Read what it says on the nearby post:



MILL ENDS PARK

From his office on the second floor of the old Oregon Journal building, journalist Dick Fagan (1911-1969) periodically gazed down on the busy Front Avenue thoroughfare. It was his keen imagination that turned a utility pole hole, in the avenue's median strip at Taylor Street, into “Mill Ends Park”. The Guinness Book of World Records lists it as the world's smallest Park. It is twenty-four inches in diameter, and contains 452.16 square inches of land. In his “Mill Ends” column in the Oregon Journal, Fagan described a variety of events occurring in the Park, which were presided over by Patrick O'Toole, head Leprechaun residing in the Park. Weddings and other celebrations have taken place at Mill Ends, and on St. Patrick's Day, 1976, the site was dedicated as an official Park of the City of Portland.

Photographs courtesy of Chris Uings. To find out more, simply google “World's Smallest Park”. Mill Ends has its own Wikipedia page, as does Oregon's other small park. Waldo Park, in Salem, is just 12 feet by 20 feet. Planting consists of a single giant sequoia!

Let's hear it for the humble gooseberry!

Gooseberry shows have been held in Cheshire for more than 200 years. Today, they can be found in only a handful of villages. One is Over Peover where the Peover Gooseberry Show took place this year on 5 August, at the Dog Inn.



Held in a marquee in the car park, family members and other visitors were able to refresh themselves from the bar, while the ten competitors sat around the official weighing area. One of the ten had been showing competitively for 65 years.



It's traditional to hold shows at public houses

Competitors take their gooseberries to the show in boxes of drawers lined with cotton wool to keep them safe, though every scrap of cotton wool must be carefully removed before weighing.



There was a great variety of boxes, some had been specially constructed though one had previously seen service at a village post office, and still held labels such as "giro forms" and "savings certificates".

There are different categories: Best in Show; Best Twins; Best Green; Best Red; Best White and Best

Yellow. But "best" when it comes to gooseberries actually means "heaviest". I once asked a gooseberry grower "what about taste?" but it was clearly not a question he understood.



Winning gooseberries set out in the traditional way. At the top, in the middle are the three best in show, flanked by the twins. Then each colour is dealt with in turn.

At the front is the Bronze Medal won by the group at this year's RHS Tatton

Gooseberries are still weighed using the imperial weights 'pennyweight' and 'grain'.



First they are weighed one against another, the heaviest being then weighed against the next, until the heaviest has been found. It is then weighed using the tiny weights.



The difference between gooseberries cannot be judged by eye, so most competitors had their own scales for deciding which of those they had brought should be entered for competition.

The weather had not been kind for this year's competitors; some had had almost no gooseberries at all on their bushes. The smallest gooseberry at the show was a red one – 'Edith Cavell' – and, if there were no other reds, it would have won. Indeed, I was told that the winner one year was so small it had been brought to the show in a matchbox.

It helps to know the variety of gooseberry that you have, as telling the 'greens' from the 'yellows' and the 'whites' can flummox even the experts – it's all to do with the veining, apparently. Only the reds seem to be very clearly different.



The competition at RHS Tatton this year did not depend on weight

The four colours of gooseberry are traditional, but in 1798 Goring & Wright (successors to the famous Florist, James Maddock, in Walworth, London) added 'amber' and 'black' to their catalogue. As early as 1783, Maddock was advertising the "largest and best collection of Lancashire, &c. GOOSEBERRY TREES in England; consisting of many thousand trees, and of nearly three hundred of the newest and finest sorts, the Berries of which have weighed from 10 to 15 pennyweights and eleven grains, and are of excellent flavour."

For anyone keen to get started on gooseberry growing, Goring and Wright offered eight different collections.

For five guineas you could have bought two each of 100 'Different superfine sorts', but if you had only wanted one of each, it would have cost £3 10s. For the smaller garden (!), it was possible to get two each of 75 plants (also £3 10s.) or 75 single plants for £2 10s. Smaller collections of 50 varieties were also available at £2 5s and £1 10s. There was also the 'Very Best Mixture' 15s. per hundred and the 'Very Good Mixture', 10s 6d. per hundred.

What varieties would you get for this? There is no clue. There were only 111 named varieties listed, price each ranging from one shilling to ten-and-six (5p to 52.5p) with the comment at the end: "Also upwards of 50 other fine named Sorts, at 6d. each, of which the necessary Limits of the Catalogue will not permit the Insertion".

Today it is a fruit out of favour, but two hundred years ago gooseberry competitions were taken very

seriously and widely reported. In 1797 a Leeds paper reported on a match between "the gentlemen of Staffordshire and Cheshire for £50". The Cheshire side lost. Staffordshire's heaviest gooseberry weighed 17 penny-weights.

Lancashire, especially, but also Cheshire were renowned for their gooseberries. Caldwell's of Knutsford sold them, but their sales ledger of the 1790s, generally refer to "the best kinds" or "the best and newest kinds". One was known as the "Aston" gooseberry, but whether this was because it originated at the Aston estate is not yet known.

If you want to begin growing gooseberries, it can be hard to find a choice – even the RHS Plantfinder only lists eight varieties. But R.V. Roger Ltd of Pickering, Yorkshire has ten times this number available – including some really old varieties – Alma (1870), Whinham's Industry (pre-1850) and Lancashire Lad (1824).

They even stock a "Red Aston" and "Dan's Mistake", a variety that was entered in this year's RHS Tatton competition:



But, if you have a gooseberry bush in your garden which has been there for decades, take good care of it, it might be the only one of its kind left.

* * * * *

Today you can find Gooseberry Lanes in Liskeard (Cornwall), Ringwood (Hampshire), Keynsham (Bristol) and various other places. They have probably all got a tale to tell about how they came to be named that, similar to that of Gooseberry Lane in Willington, Tarporely.

In 1861 there was a court case about the closing of a footpath, and Thomas Badrock, an old man residing in Gooseberry Lane gave evidence. He told the court that he had lived there all his life. He had taken 57 prizes, in the shape of copper kettles, for showing the finest gooseberries. The lane he lived in was christened Gooseberry-lane in consequence of the prize gooseberries he used to grow. *

Joy Uings

* information from Chester Chronicle, 6 April 1861.



Cheshire Gardens Trust is commemorating the year of the Queen's Jubilee



Cheshire Gardens Trust has purchased a *Magnolia* 'Elizabeth' which will be planted at Arley Gardens, in recognition of the help and patronage given by Lord Ashbrook.

Planting will take place at 10.30 on Saturday 10 November.

Members who wish to attend should gather at the Barn by 10.15 a.m.

Caldwell ledgers

We have taken delivery of some bespoke software to allow us to commence the mammoth task of transcribing the Caldwell ledgers. The software was commissioned with the assistance of a grant to Cheshire Gardens Trust from the Royal Botanical and Horticultural Society of Manchester and the Northern Counties.

We have undertaken two training sessions for volunteers in the use of the software. Six volunteers of Group 1 are now involved in transcribing ledger volume 6, and a further ten volunteers of Group 2 are trying out the software during October, before embarking on the transcription of a second ledger.

We are very excited that one of the volunteers in Group 2 is Joan Zorn, whose mother was a member of the Caldwell family. Joan was brought up in Radshaw Nook near Knowsley in Liverpool which is the original home of the Caldwell Nursery before it moved to Knutsford. John Caldwell (c. 1728-1798) was a nurseryman of Radshaw Nook, Knowsley in Lancashire. John had two sons, William (who continued the family tradition as nurserymen) and James, who became a farmer of Radshaw Nook. James is Joan's great-great-grandfather. Her knowledge of the family is extensive, and we are sure that she will be a great asset to us as we research into the Caldwell family.

Now we have the transcription work well under way, the Caldwell team is beginning to identify potential funding sources to allow us to commission the development of the web site which will host the Caldwell Nursery story, the oral history recordings and the transcribed ledgers.

If you would like to be involved in the transcription work, we are looking for further volunteers to make a third group! Please contact patriciaalexander@tiscali.co.uk (or tel: 01743 872084) for further information.

What is a rubber?

If you thought you knew the answer to that question, think again. (And I am not referring to our American cousins' meaning!) One of our volunteers was working on the Caldwell database when she came across the sale of a rubber to William Egerton of Tatton. In fact, in addition to a long list of vegetable seeds, he ordered 6 scythes (3/6 each), 18 rubbers (3d each) and 36 strickles (also 3d each).

A bit of detective work unearthed Samuel Johnson's definitions for "rubber". It could mean a person who rubs, the thing that they use to rub with, or a game or contest (think "rubber of whist"). However, it could also mean either a coarse file or a whetstone.

Johnson defined "strickle" as '*that which strikes the corn in a measure to level it*', but google it and you find another meaning: '*a tool for sharpening scythes*'. So the mystery continues – if both a rubber and a strickle were used to sharpen scythes, what was the difference?

If you think you know the answer, do let us know.

Do you shop on-line? There is a website – www.givingabit.com – which purports to raise money for charities. Instead of accessing their online suppliers directly, shoppers do so via the givingabit website instead. The supplier then pays a commission, which is passed on by givingabit to the shopper's chosen charity. Do you have any experience of this website (or similar)? Would you be prepared to shop this way? Let us know your views.

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

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