

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

Inside:

- Chester Zoo – Minus the Animals
- Jekyll & Lutyens – a privileged & private view
- The Moon & Shamrocks: some fascinating titbits
- Crocodiles & pelicans – a request for help

Some future events:

- A passion for trees: the legacy of John Evelyn, Wed. 14 Feb (eve) including a book sale (see page 5)
- Spring lecture and AGM: Thurs. 29 March. A tour of Ness Botanic Gardens will be followed by the AGM and Spring lecture from Herman van den Bossche

On the evening of 28 November we sat in a lecture theatre in Manchester and were transported back to the Victorian era when Ann Brooks shared with us the story of The Manchester Botanic Gardens.



Today it is a retail park, close to the Old Trafford football and cricket grounds; then it was a haven of peace for its subscribers, out in the countryside to the south-west of Manchester, between the townships of Hulme and Stretford.

The Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society was born on 30 July 1827 at a public meeting at the

then Town Hall in King Street when 86 members were enrolled. The purpose of the Society was two-fold: to lay out gardens for the recreation of the citizens of Manchester and to further the scientific disciplines of botany and horticulture. It was claimed that Manchester was the leading place for the study of botany.

It was the Manchester scientist John Dalton who recommended Old Trafford. This choice of site was important. The prevailing winds were from the West and the majority of factories were to the east of the City. The black smoke belched out by the factory chimneys was to make conditions for plant-life almost impossible as the century progressed, but it had its impact was most strongly felt to the east and north.

Less than two years after that inaugural meeting, in February 1829, sixteen acres of land were acquired and planting began. Within ten years there was an extensive arboretum, plant houses and conservatories, an ornamental lake, a rockery, a rosarium and a fruit garden. The number of hereditary members had increased from 86 to 440.

In 1857 the United Kingdom Art Treasures' Exhibition was held in the Gardens and was opened by Prince Albert. Over a period of five months it attracted 1.3 million visitors. The word 'Royal' was added to the Society's name in 1876, but within a few years this was not considered sufficient. The Society became The Royal Botanical and Horticultural Society of Manchester and the Northern Counties.

The grand name was not sufficient to keep the Botanic Gardens going. Throughout its life it lurched from financial crisis to financial crisis. The second curator, Alexander Campbell, fell victim to one of these and was dismissed, carrying the blame for the failings of others. He was replaced by Bruce Findlay.



Findlay was able to rescue the Gardens from that particular crisis. But the Society suffered from being exclusive (members didn't like the public being admitted) and territorial. In 1887 an Exhibition of Art, Science and Industry was held to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It was hugely successful, with nearly 5 million people attending. But the building erected to house the exhibition was just outside the Gardens and a falling-out between the exhibition organisers and the Society meant that a chance to encourage visitors to the Gardens was squandered.

Bruce Findlay died in 1896 and the loss of his driving force rang the death-knell for the Gardens. Membership had fallen drastically as people moved out of Manchester to the suburbs and were able to develop their own large gardens.

Both Stretford and Manchester Borough Councils declined an offer to purchase the Gardens and they were eventually leased to White City Limited for use as an amusement park. One hundred years after its foundation, the Society sold part of the site to be used as a Greyhound stadium.

Today White City is a retail park (*left*), with only the frontage (*page 1*) remaining, somewhat incongruously, overlooking the road down towards Trafford Park and Salford Quays.



Tucked away at the rear of what were the Gardens, off Talbot Road, is a reminder of a very different era.

Joy Uings

The Royal Botanical and Horticultural Society of Manchester and the Northern Counties still exists and provides financial support for gardens and horticultural shows, and for teaching and research in botany and horticulture.

Tatton Park Pinery: appeal for volunteers

The National Trust has recently completed the rebuilding of the historic Samuel Wyatt pinery (c. 1775) as part of their Walled Garden Restoration Project. The pinery is 40 m long, with three tan bark pits, underfloor heating ducts and spaces in the external wall to allow vine roots to grow outside.

The pinery is now almost ready to receive its first pineapple plants, and volunteers are being sought to assist with the filling of the pits with oak leaves. Traditionally, spent tanner's bark, usually of oak, was used, but as this is no longer available oak leaves are being used instead.

The work is normally carried out on Sundays between 10.00 and 16.00. If you are interested in joining a work party, please contact Manchester National Trust Volunteers, PO Box 118, Sale, M33 4YE or visit their web site at www.mntv.org.uk

Further details of the project are available at http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-ar4_l_mer.pdf

Chester zoo - minus the animals

On Tuesday, 17 October 2006 members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust spent a fascinating morning at Chester Zoo and did not look at a single animal!

Chester Zoo covers 100 acres, and the magnificent gardens which form the settings for the animal enclosures, as well as the appropriate vegetation for indoor and outdoor habitats, are in the charge of Martin Sparrow, the Curator of Horticulture and Botany. Though his staff of eleven gardeners all work on all aspects of the garden, there are specialists in orchids, insectivorous plants, British native species and cacti, and the Zoo probably has more species of plants than animals.



Paul Shipsides showed us round the greenhouses which contain not only plants used in the zoo but also collections of rare specimens of plants as diverse as orchids and cacti. He proudly displayed the new £250,000 greenhouse where temperature and humidity in the five separate areas are automatically controlled by an elaborate computerised system which can get him out of bed with a long-distance alarm call if there is an emergency. The enormous range of orchids housed in part of the house ranged from impressive exotic blooms to others whose flowers Paul compared disparagingly to 'dead flies'.

Another greenhouse held a formidable display of cacti, which is Paul's own love and speciality, and the zoo has applied to the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens for it to be recognised as a National Collection.

All rain water is collected and pumped through the greenhouses, and in the hot dry summer this year the gardeners only had to resort to tap water for a short time in July. The zoo tries to control pests biologically, as chemical sprays might harm the animals.

Another member of staff, Mark Hargreaves then took us on a tour of the gardens, explaining how horticultural interests have to be balanced with the Zoo's mission to attract people. Some visitors still prefer the ordered, showy flowers of traditional park gardens, and the Zoo does use about 70,000 bedding plants a year.

Other gardens have been renovated. Water features have been created which do not use pumps or artificial containers, and water leakage has been cut dramatically.

As the climate has grown warmer, Chester Zoo has experimented with more exotic plants and many have survived, though some have to be wrapped in fleece in winter.

The five-year old 'Garden of Glorious Grasses' has low-growing species we would all identify as grass and others such as bamboos with the potential to grow six times as tall as a giraffe. It has been found that schoolchildren rarely bother to read all the information on notices, so miniature tennis courts and football pitches now demonstrate visually the use of different species for specific purposes.

The Wildlife Garden had visitors busy making notes on its attractive combination of flowers, vegetables and shrubs, designed as a lure and shelter for wildlife as well as a productive garden.

Ecologically, Chester Zoo is trying hard. All green waste is recycled on site so none goes off to landfill, and the water in garden features is kept clean with plants. We saw one site where barley bales were restraining blanket weed very effectively. Where a recreation of a rocky desert was needed for one animal's habitat, latex mould of actual rocks had been taken and then sprayed with concrete, thus avoiding the destruction of a geological site.



The tour was fascinating and instructive – and we did go and see the animals afterwards!

Sheila Holroyd

Jekyll and Lutyens – a privileged and private view.

Back in the dark days of winter 2006, this newsletter carried a snippet about a proposed holiday, based in West Surrey, which would take visitors to see some of the finest work of Gertrude Jekyll and Sir Edwin Lutyens, much of which was not normally open to the public. As a long-time fan of both (but not, as you may be, my reader, a scholar of either – just a simple amateur gardener), my wife and I couldn't resist the exciting promise this held. We booked and were not disappointed.

Probably the most famous collaboration between the pair was the home at Munstead Wood, built for Miss Jekyll herself. The garden, remarkably, was laid out years before Miss Jekyll commissioned the designing and building of the house. In spite of that, it is remarkable how the house and the garden are so at ease with one another, with many of the paths and woodland rides fanning out from the house's vantage points. Miss Jekyll's famous herbaceous border, with the classic trademark colour drifts and colour gradations from each end to the middle is in good shape.



Gertrude Jekyll's famous herbaceous border at Munstead

We had seen the garden before, as it is a regular opener under the National Garden Scheme, but this visit also included the house, where the owner, Lady Clark, gave us a complete tour of every room and passageway in this remarkable building.

However, the original Munstead Wood, as laid out by Jekyll, was significantly larger than today's Munstead Wood. It included the adjacent properties of The Quadrangle (originally her stables- now a private home) the gardener's cottage, now known as Munstead Orchard, and The Hut, where she lived whilst the main house was being built. Although the latter was not included in the tour, the former two gardens were.

Miss Jekyll, as many will know was considerably older than Lutyens: when she died, and was buried at the church nearby, Lutyens designed the most striking family grave for her and her family – unmistakably Lutyens in style.

Millmead, in the village of Bramley, was also a Jekyll home for a period. It is described as 'one of Lutyens smaller houses' (although it would be quite grand by today's standards). It is quite odd in some respects,

as Lutyens seems to have designed the front in his characteristic style – but decided that the rear (see below) should be rather 'Queen Ann' in appearance!

The garden is still probably much as laid out by Miss Jekyll, and according to the present owner, some of the plantings are original. He said that the tiered rear garden wasn't very practical, as there were no lawns for the children (lawns were subsequently laid), but we understood that other than this not insignificant feature, the paths, walls, garden buildings, and planting was true to the original.



Millmead house and garden from rear

The owner made a couple of telling comments about Lutyens skills and style. He said quite bluntly that, when entering a Lutyens house, the first thing to do is turn on the lights! It was certainly true at Millmead, probably because it was a bit 'smaller', but didn't strike one as a problem at Munstead Wood, which seemed perfectly light and airy.

We asked the owner (who seems quite a practical type) what the maintenance problems of living in a Lutyens house were. He asserted that it was fairly plain sailing – after you accepted that the rainwater gutters would always be a problem. "Lutyens was hopeless with guttering!" A problem, we imagined that arose because of his extremely complex roof shapes.

Goddards is a medium sized Lutyens design, built to reflect the Surrey vernacular style, which was never built as a domestic residence. It was originally built as a holiday home for deserving ladies who toiled in London. It was later converted by the architect to be a family home, and is now home to both the Lutyens Trust and leased by the Landmark Trust who offer it as upmarket holiday accommodation. As a consequence of this mixed usage, it didn't have the same 'liveable' feel as the previous two houses. The house is configured with two slightly splayed 'arms' or wings, between which nestles a small Jekyll garden. As with all their collaborations, the garden and the house are a treasure trove of detail typical of the pair – tall, complex chimneys, elegant flights of stairs, window latches, water butts in unusual elongated shapes and tile-on-edge paving designs.

Regrettably, we cannot share with you – either in detailed text or pictures - one of the most impressive parts of our visit programme, because of the request of the owners to maintain their absolute privacy. What can be said was that we were taken to see the most remarkable restoration project of one of Lutyens larger designs, with a very large garden which was ‘touched’, if not entirely designed, by Miss Jekyll. Whether it is included on a future visit programme or whether other equally private houses and gardens are included, the organisers will no doubt advise in advance. But their very privacy – and the privilege that goes with seeing such a project – only enhances the thrill and the pleasure.

The visits took in a number of other sites with Lutyens/Jekyll links, some of which allowed access, some of which could only be viewed from the public highway, but all of which were exciting for those of us who are fans.

We have read that the garden at Hestercombe represents the professional peak for these two talented people. I confess that we haven’t been, but it seems odd, when Hestercombe is ‘just’ a garden, however grand, without a house – and surely the wonder of their partnerships is that gardens and houses complement each other so well. Those reading this may want to correct my impression.

This was the ‘guinea pig’ tour – the first to be organised and run.



Goddard House and garden

However, we are sure they will be repeated. The accommodation – modestly called B+B, was outstanding.

We understand that the organisers, Joy and Jane, intend to organise a number of tours for next year. The content may vary, depending upon the time of year and the personal commitments of property owner, but there are plenty of ‘J+L’ properties in the area to keep visitors happy for many trips.

Should members be interested in being kept informed of future tours, I suggest that they e-mail Joy Jardine at heathhouse@britishlibrary.net

It will be an experience to remember!

John Hinde

Joy Jardine has confirmed that she and Jane had such fun last year that they will be running three tours in 2007. Two will be on the work of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens and will run from 14th to 17th May and from 9th to 12th July. A third tour will be more general - on Arts and Crafts Gardens: 11th to 14th June. Check out their website at www.heathhouse.eu.

Tons of Tomes

The Trust’s ambitious programme requires funding, and in order to keep meeting expenses for members to a minimum we are planning a series of fund-raising events. The first is a **Book Sale** to be held on **Wednesday 14 February** at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester after the lecture by Maggie Campbell-Culver (for details see Forthcoming Events leaflet, mailed on 8 January).

We are now appealing for donations of quality books on gardens and gardening, Cheshire local history (especially relating to parks and gardens) and garden design. These will be sold *after* the lecture – inspection beforehand will be possible, but to ensure equal access there will be no reservation of books beforehand.

As the books will be priced realistically to sell, we need to receive them before the meeting so that prices can be researched. The deadline for receipt of donations is **Saturday 10 February**.

The following members of the committee will be willing to accept donations: John Edmondson, 243 Pensby Road,

Heswall, Wirral, CH61 5UA, 0151 342 8287; Barbara Moth, 28 Greenside Drive, Lostock Green, Northwich, CW9 7SR, 01606 46228; Joy Uings, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS, 0161 969 3300. It may be possible to arrange collection, particularly if larger quantities are involved.

The CGT reserves the right to decline offers of material it considers unsuitable for resale. This could include such items as paperbacks, ex-library copies with stamps, underlining etc., books with shabby jackets or no jackets, and books that are soiled or have excessive signs of wear.

Books remaining unsold at the end of the sale will be retained by the CGT and may be offered for sale on the internet. Further book sales are planned, but first we must make this one a success, so please have a look and see if you have any duplicates, or copies of books that are no longer needed, so that they can be passed on to another appreciative owner.

John Edmondson

Did you know.....

THE MOON AND SHAMROCKS

Gardeners are literally ‘down-to-earth’, busy with such mundane matters as slugs and snails, but there are superstitions associated with gardening practices and plants, some more familiar than others.

Obviously many plants have medicinal properties, but some were thought to have magical properties, such as the root of the mandrake (*mandragora officianarum*), which was used to make such things as love potions and flying ointments.

The forked roots could be seen as resembling human torsos, with a little imagination, and the belief grew that it was inhabited by a devil which would shriek when it was uprooted, so that anybody who heard it would die or go deaf and insane.

Therefore, if someone really wanted a mandrake root he had to take elaborate precautions. These included putting wax in his ears, drawing three circles round the plant with a sword, removing the plant only after sundown or in moonlight, avoiding contrary winds while uprooting it, and using a white dog to pull it up. The dog had to be starved for several days beforehand and then tied to the root by a black thread. Then the owner threw a piece of meat towards it, and as the hungry dog leapt for the meat, the mandrake root was pulled from the ground. The dog was supposed to die afterwards. Just think of your disappointment if you did all this and then the root didn’t work!

Some people regulate their gardening activities according to the phases of the moon. In the first quarter they sow and transplant plants which produce their seeds on the outside, such as lettuce and annual flowers; in the second quarter they see to plants that set seeds inside a pod or skin, such as beans and tomatoes; in the third quarter they plant all root vegetable crops, perennial flowers and bulbs, and in the fourth quarter they clean up the garden.

It is useful to know that a house-leek on the roof will preserve the house from burning, and did you know that a button mushroom won’t grow any more once it has been looked at?

Incidentally, if someone gives you plants you must not thank them, or the plants will not flourish. In fact it is said that the donors should avert their eyes when the plants are handed over so that you can pretend you are stealing them.

Make sure you know the whole of a superstition. Mistletoe has been associated since the druids with kissing and fertility, (shades of Asterix and Getafix!)

but if you put a branch of it up in your house at Christmas you have to leave it there till you replace it with a new branch the following Christmas, or you will suffer bad luck.

A four-leafed shamrock is only lucky if you find it by chance, so it’s no good searching the garden. Eve brought a four-leafed shamrock from Paradise. It was made of copper, silver, gold and diamond, but broke and disappeared when she took her first step out of the Garden of Eden.

I was fascinated by a Victorian account of oysters that grew on trees. In 1898 William Jones stated firmly in ‘Credulities Past and Present’ that ‘the old stories of oysters that grew on trees, and others so large that they required to be cut up like a round of beef, or a quarter of lamb, were formerly considered as so many romances, and, indeed, they were great exaggerations; but the fact is undisputed that there *are* large oysters that require to be carved, and oysters *have* been plucked from trees.’ I think he may have been misled by references to the oyster mushrooms which grow on rotting tree trunks, but if anybody has information about trees that produce shellfish I shall be very grateful if they will pass it on to me.

Sheila Holroyd

THE RUNNER BEAN (*Phaseolus coccineus*), from Central and South America, was being grown in England by 1633 when it was recorded that the “flowers are large, many, and of an elegant Scarlet colour; whence it is vulgarly termed by our florists, the Scarlet Bean.”

The ‘Painted Lady Bi-colour’ also dates from 1633 and at that time the runner bean was grown as a decorative climber in the flower garden rather than as a vegetable.

Phillip Miller (1691-1771), curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, recorded that the long-lasting flowers were used in nosegays and garlands. Miller is also credited with being the first gardener adventurous enough to cook the pods.

Victorian gardeners were advised to save seed early and to “forbear from eating the earliest pods...this is hardly ever done; we keep eating on.”

Helen Thomas

Many thanks to Sheila (who discovered all her information while researching how to make a perfect cup of tea !) and to Helen who sent a flyer for the Disley and Lyme Horticultural Society 100th Show Her information is from The Kitchen Garden A Historical Guide to Traditional Crops (1984) by David C Stuart; and The English Gardener (1838 ed) by William Cobbett.

News from Research and Recording

- Four CGT members in the **Congleton** area volunteered to look at some 20 sites which we had identified as potential historic gardens.

The results of their work are now coming in. In many cases, the history of the house and its owners has been established up to the present day. Where possible, site visits have produced photos of what remains of their gardens. A big thank you to all contributors!

Work in Congleton B.C. will continue with the investigation of another 20 sites and, eventually, the writing-up of results.

- In **Crewe and Natwich B.C.** two CGT members came forward to start research. Again, there are about 40 sites to be investigated: where are they? what is their history? do their gardens remain intact or have they disappeared?

- Work has started for setting up the next project, to research and record historic gardens in and around the city of **Chester**.

If you are interested in your local gardens and their history and would like to get involved with working for our *Cheshire Gazetteer* - **please get in touch**:

12 Belfield Road Manchester M20 6BH or e-mail: ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk

Barbara Wright

Disley and Lyme Horticultural Society - 100th Show 18th August 2007

In the second half of the 19th century the idea of the flower show was spreading throughout the United Kingdom and through all ranks of society. In Disley in East Cheshire Agricultural Shows were staged by the gentry, for the education and encouragement of their tenants, from 1848 to the 1870s, but the first Horticultural Show was held in 1887 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

From this first show, with flowers, fruit and vegetables displayed in a tent near the Ring o' Bells Coffee Tavern, emerged the Lyme Horticultural Society and, from 1888 to 1913 and again from 1924 to 1939, the Annual Show was held in Lyme Park under the patronage of Lord Newton and the Legh family with free access to the gardens of Lyme Hall.

The Horticultural Show was revived in 1949 and has since been held at various venues around Disley village. A main object of the present Disley and Lyme Horticultural Society, as it was renamed in 1950, is 'to encourage the advancement of horticulture' and the Horticultural Marquee remains the central feature of the Show. However over the years the character of the Show has changed many times with various additional attractions

of such as brass bands, Morris dancers, maypole dancers, athletic sports, sheep dog trials, Punch and *Judy shows, acrobats and pony gymkhanas*.

At the 100th Disley and Lyme Horticultural Show in 2007 it is planned to celebrate this milestone in horticultural history with a special and memorable event that will link the past with the present. The Patron of the Society, Lord Newton, has agreed to open the Show and the brass band has been booked!

The 100th Annual Show will open at 12 noon on Saturday 18th August 2007 at Disley Amalgamated Sports Club, Jacksons Edge Road, Disley, Cheshire. The Society is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society, the National Dahlia Society, The National Sweet Pea Society, The National Vegetable Society and The Royal National Rose Society. There will be Open, Novice and Junior Horticultural Classes and all are welcome to enter.

Full information on all Disley and Lyme Horticultural Society events, contact details and a history of 'The Seven Ages of Disley Shows 1848-2007' can be found at www.disleyandlymehortsoc.co.uk.

Helen Thomas

Greg Clark, MP for Tunbridge Wells has been awarded the Culture & Heritage Champions Award. He was nominated by the Association of Gardens Trusts for his work on raising the brownfield status of gardens. Unfortunately his parliamentary bill fell at the second reading but he has promised to continue the fight. He was really pleased with the recognition that the award brings – the awards are voted for by MPs and parliamentary staff. Kate Harwood, Administrator of the AGT, said "There was great joy when [the award] was announced. I also wandered around and listed to lots of comments about how important this issue was for various MPs' constituents."

The other good news is that Greg Clark is the new Shadow MP for Charities. The AGT will be working with him in the future.

Can you help?

In the October Newsletter, I wrote about a new book (Virgins, Weeders & Queens) by Twigs Way. Twigs is now looking for help with her next book.

Crocodiles in the Fernery, Pelicans in the Pool

Twigs writes:

I am currently collecting examples for a small book on the keeping of unusual animals and birds in gardens (or alternatively more common animals but in unusual proximity!)

The theme is the animals themselves and the book is not a history of menageries or private zoos, but more concentrating on individuals and their animal/s. Although for the more unusual and fierce it is likely that small private menageries will be the only examples.

The work is at an early stage at present (although with a tight deadline), and I am hoping to collect examples from around the country and at various historic periods. The book will be alphabetical (C for crocodile, P for pelican etc.) and I hope to tell a single story for each animal category.

Examples would include the Victorian gentleman who kept crocodiles in his fernery, Ostriches at Tring, and James I's (failed) garden for silkworms. Less unusual animals might be included if they had famous owners, for example Gertrude Jekyll's cats, Timothy the tortoise at Selborne.

I would be enormously grateful if your readers could contact me with any examples.

Twigs Way, 25 Elfleda Road, Cambridge, CB5 8LZ. Tel: 01223 710536; e-mail twigs@twigsway.com.

You can find out more about Twigs at her website: www.twigsway.com. There you will discover that she has a personal interest in animals in gardens. She has nine rescued rabbits and opens her garden each year on behalf of the Rabbit Welfare Association. Visitors have the opportunity to see her unique 'rabbit friendly' garden and meet its occupants.

Caldwell Nursery Archive – appeal for volunteers

Caldwell of Knutsford was a long-established nursery supplying plants to a wide range of gardens and parks in the Cheshire region. It was founded in the 18th century at Knowsley, Lancashire but moved to Knutsford and continued in business until the 1930s.

An unusually complete archive of the firm's business records – both order lists and sales accounts – has been preserved. These throw a great deal of light on the trade in plants in our area, and indirectly they provide vital dated evidence of the planting activities of some of our leading historic gardens. Such surviving detail is rare in the horticultural world, making the Caldwell Archive of national importance.

A project is to be launched that will document the contents of the Archive and make them available to researchers by enabling them to make searches on computer and eventually to access the information via the web. Cheshire Gardens Trust is looking for volunteers who can spare some time to undertake the entry of data onto computer.

Essential requirements:

- access to a home computer with Excel
- ability to decipher old handwriting
- an interest in the history of horticulture in our county

Prospective volunteers will be invited to attend a briefing at which the project will be outlined and arrangements discussed. Anyone interested in the Caldwell Archive is welcome, without obligation.

For further details, please write to John Edmondson, Caldwell Archive Project, World Museum Liverpool, William Brown St, Liverpool L3 8EN or e-mail john.edmondson@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk with 'Caldwell Archive Project' as subject.

Diary Date!**Gardens and Tourism**

The role of historic landscape and new design in
attracting custom for business and pleasure

Cheshire Gardens Trust with the support of
the Association of Gardens Trusts and
Visit Chester and Cheshire

is holding this major one-day conference at
Crewe Hall in Cheshire on Thursday 4th October 2007

Please make a note in your diary!

For further details contact Kate Harwood agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk

For those of us who missed the visit to Eaton Hall, here is another opportunity.

Tour of Eaton Hall Gardens, The Duke of Westminster's Estate, Nr Chester, Cheshire

in aid of Perennial – The Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society

Sunday 8th April 2006, 10:30 am – 2 pm. £25

Perennial would like to offer members of Cheshire Gardens Trust a rare opportunity for a private visit to the extensive gardens at Eaton Hall, the family home of The Duke of Westminster since the fifteenth century.

Re-designed by Lady Arabella Lennox Boyd from 1991, the garden boasts no fewer than 88 acres of formal compartments, tree studded lawns, waterways and shrubberies. Beautiful fountains and sculptures spring from formal ponds and pools whilst trellis pillars adorned with roses help the garden to reflect the grandeur of the setting.

The Spring produces a wall of spectacular colour in the Camellia Walk glass house and is the favoured season of Head Gardener Mr Les Armstrong.

The history, planting and work involved in the gardens, which are rarely open to the public, will be explained by Mr Armstrong - our expert guide, to a limited number of guests. Mr Armstrong will lead us on a private tour of his favourite areas of the garden which will be blooming with the colour of thousands of bulbs.

There will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions, and our tour will be followed by a picnic lunch in the grounds (included in the ticket price). Guests will then be free to explore further the remaining extensive gardens and deer park into the afternoon.

Only a limited number of tickets are available so please book early to avoid disappointment. All proceeds raised from the event are for Perennial, the charity which supports people who work in horticulture in times of need. To book your tickets please call Perennial on 01372 384049.

AGM and Spring Lecture – Thursday 29 March at Ness Botanic Gardens

Last year Cheshire Gardens Trust became a limited company and the next step was to obtain charitable status.

Unfortunately the Charity Commissioners will not agree that the Trust's aims are charitable unless we remove one of our Objects.

They say that paragraph 4.3 in the Memorandum and Articles (Rules) of the Association is not a charitable Object. This reads:

4.3 To promote membership and activities of the charity to all sections of the population and to encourage the use of parks and gardens by groups who may feel excluded from them.

To retain this purpose within the Rules we will need to pass a resolution at the AGM, deleting paragraph 4.3 and adding its contents to paragraph 5, which covers the Powers of the Trust.

If we do not obtain charitable status we will be

required to pay Corporation Tax. We would also be unable to apply for charitable grants if we wished to.

We will be taken the opportunity as well to amend the Rules relating to auditing the Trust's accounts to bring them in line with the legal requirements for auditing small companies.

Anyone interested in playing a more active role by joining the Committee will be very welcome. More information on that will be available via the AGM mailing.

However the business of the AGM will be preceded by a special guided tour of Ness Botanic Gardens and followed by our Spring Lecture. This year this will be given by Herman van den Bossche who will be speaking on '*The Kitchen Garden: Is the Museum Garden the Answer?*'.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Joy Uings

Tides of Change: The ebb and flow of gardening in Cornwall – 2007 AGT Conference

The 2007 AGT Conference will be held in Cornwall.

It's a long journey for just a conference, so why not include it as part of a late summer holiday to a beautiful county.

Entitled *Tides of Change: The ebb and flow of gardening in Cornwall*, it will be at The Falmouth Hotel, Castle Beach, Cornwall from 7-9 September, with a full residential cost of £260 per person.

Cornwall Gardens Trust has planned a busy three days, with guided tours of Godolphin House & Garden, Treloarren, Bonython, Glendurgan, and finishing with Pine Lodge Gardens & Nursery to find that special plant you didn't know you could live without.

In between visits there are lectures from the likes of

David Jacques, who was the speaker at our own 2006 AGM, and after dinner speakers on both the Friday and Saturday.

Not tempted yet? Check out the web-sites for all of the above and you'll soon be working out how to get there. The Falmouth Hotel was the very first hotel to be built in Falmouth, back in the 1850s, and is set in 5 acres of landscaped gardens.

There are loads more magnificent gardens in Cornwall, so why not treat yourself to a week of wallowing in wonder.

To get more information or to ask for a booking form, contact Jean Marcus, the Conference Manager – tel: 01398 351 241, e-mail barvanjack@aol.com.

The AGT has organised 2 lectures on the afternoon of Thursday 22 March to be held at the Swedenborg Hall in Barter Street, Bloomsbury, London.

Jennifer Meir will talk on the landscapes of *Sanderson Miller* and Michael Symes on *The Picturesque and the Sublime*. Tickets are £10 and tea and buns will be served. Contact Kate Harwood at the Association of Gardens Trusts, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. Tel: 020 7251 2610. E-mail: agt@gardens-trusts.org.uk.

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 or e-mail joy.uings@btconnect.com.