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### Inside:

- Dunham Massey
- Castle Park Gardens, Frodsham
- Crewe Hall Gardens
- Caldwell Nursery Archives: Update

### Some future events:

- Tercentenary of Linnaeus (lecture) – 29 November
- Plant form and flowers in textiles – January
- Winter walk – February
- Spring lecture & AGM – 27 March



*Above: Some of the delegates pictured in the delightful surroundings of historic Crewe Hall*

Gilly Drummond, President of the Association of Gardens Trusts was the Chair for CGT's Conference 'The Roles of Historic Landscape and Excellent Design in Attracting Custom for Business and Pleasure'.

Ed Bennis spoke first. His talk "The Importance of Sunday Voyeurs" reminded us that garden visiting, and its impact on the local economy, is nothing new.

He took us on a quick trip through history. Aristocrats on the Grand Tour, not only visited Italian gardens but also ate and drank (sometimes to excess) and came home burdened with keepsakes – like marble statues and Old Masters.

In other words, their visits were of economic benefit. In Staffordshire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hawkstone Park

became so popular that a hotel was built to cater to visitors.

Chatsworth house and gardens have been a tourist attraction for a long time (*see box on page 2*).

Today, gardens and gardening contribute £4bn annually to the UK economy.

Next up was Barrie Kelly, Director of Operations for Visit Chester and Cheshire. His talk was about how to attract visitors to Cheshire's gardens.

The majority of around 12 million visits to UK gardens annually are in the summer months. Visitors are overwhelmingly female and on the mature side of 40. So there are gaps to be filled – increasing visits during the winter months; attracting new demographic groups.

*'The park and grounds were swarming with holiday-makers, for it was one of England's great holidays, Whit-Monday. Here were pale faced men and women from the cotton factories of Manchester, dark denizens of the Staffordshire potteries, and the sharp-active looking mechanics of Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax, all brought hither by special trains, and, in the full heyday of the English holiday, rushing through gorgeously-fitted-up rooms of a ducal mansion – admiring the conservatories, rockeries and fountains, or, stretched at full length, discussing their commissariat under the cool shade of oak, elm, and beech trees.'*

**The Gardener, 1867**

Increasing awareness is key. Surprisingly, even among garden visitors, awareness of Cheshire's gardens is low – only Tatton scoring higher than 50% recognition

The challenge is how to attract new visitors. Barrie's suggestion (perhaps not entirely serious) that owners might wish to avoid encouraging children to their gardens, was challenged by Gilly Drummond. Quoting the Jesuit saying 'give me a child until he is 7', she reminded the Conference that today's children are tomorrow's paying visitors.

The Year of Gardens '08 is a big opportunity for new approaches. The plan is that "by 2012 Cheshire will be the UK's Garden County".

Mike Buffin is Gardens and Parks Adviser to The National Trust. With more than 300 houses and gardens, not to mention coastline, farmland and World Heritage sites to care for, keeping the visitors coming is essential. A visitor survey in 2005 found that it is the gardens rather than the houses that are the reason for repeat visits.

*"The top motivators are the Gardens and the related areas of Walking and Peace and Quiet. History provides the main 'intellectual' context"*

The Trust has developed a Conservation Performance Indicator to help it decide how to move forward with gardens. It recognises that gardens change over time. The decision is not always to maintain or re-create; it may be to develop. At Anglesey Abbey, for example, they have created a winter garden to bring interest for visitors in that season (*below*).



Mike left us with views of the devastation caused by floods and storms and reminded us that, with climate

change, we need always to plan for future changes.

*"Conservation is the transfer of maximum significance from the present to the future. We do not simply preserve landscapes, we manage their change."*

At English Heritage, Emma Carver is Head of Interpretation. She too had facts and figures for us, including the changes in visitor numbers between 2000 and 2004 of ten garden attractions in England and Wales. All except one had an increase in visitor numbers in that period.

Their survey of visitors found that there are three main types – Walkers; Historians and Horticulturists.

Walkers are the most prevalent type and they visit for the emotional satisfaction of walking in a pleasant environment.

Historians hope to find out about all aspects of the place they are visiting, including the gardens and how they relate to the house. They can only do this if there is sufficient information available to them.

Not surprisingly, horticulturists are interested in the plants and how they are grown. They are looking for ideas for their own gardens.

Popular interpretation methods are guided tours, events in the gardens and plant labels. Emma left the delegates with the challenge of making the interpretation simple but effective.

With plenty to think about, it was time for a coffee break, after which there were presentations from Michael Walker (Trentham Gardens) and Sarah Callender-Beckett (Combermere Abbey). Their overview of the past few years in the development of their respective gardens was fascinating.

We saw slides of Trentham as it had been (neglected) as it is (partially renewed) and as it will be:



With £100m investment, Trentham is being revitalised, but plans need to be fluid to react to changing circumstances.

At Combermere, Sarah has different challenges. Being privately

owned means there is no corporate money and ways of generating income have had to be found.

Creating holiday cottages from the stables was one and turning a derelict greenhouse into a wedding venue is another:



Above, the greenhouse at Combermere before, and below, after renovation



After lunch, the delegates split into three workshops before coming back together for a final session on “Finding the Funding”.

Finally, Gilly Drummond summed up the day, thanking “the three Graces” – Jacquetta Menzies, Barbara Moth and Tina Theis – for their hard work which had resulted in such a successful conference.

*Joy Uings*



Above: nicknamed ‘the three Graces’ by Conference Chair Gilly Drummond, Tina, Jacquetta and Barbara, organisers of the Conference on the steps of Crewe Hall at the end of a very successful day

## The history of Crewe Hall Gardens

Dating back to the early seventeenth century, Crewe Hall has had to deal with wars and a devastating fire. During the Civil War it was occupied, at different times, by both sides in the conflict. In the 1940s it housed soldiers and the grounds became a prisoner of war camp.

But it was in 1866 that a devastating fire virtually destroyed the home of the Crewe family. It was rebuilt by the owner of the time – Hungerford Crewe – with the aid of architect E M Barry.

Hungerford Crewe poured the equivalent of millions of pounds into the house and gardens.

The gardens of the original house were in keeping with the fashion of the time. This early painting dates from around 1650.



By 1710, the grounds had already undergone a



transformation. The gardens appear more extensive and the ponds have been changed. The walled gardens reveal formal walks and possibly fountains.

These formal gardens all disappeared in the eighteenth century:

*“Down went garden walls, outhouses, and offices, until the hall could stand in its majesty in the park alone, according to the taste of the day.”<sup>1</sup>*

Humphry Repton prepared one of his Red Books for Crewe Hall, though it has not survived. The lake may have been his work, but another landscape gardener – William Emes – was employed and it is not clear who had what input.

Hungerford Crewe inherited the Hall in 1836 and set about restoring it to its original Jacobean look. He also employed William Andrews Nesfield to create gardens around the house that were sympathetic to the hall’s origins.

<sup>1</sup> Country Houses in Edwardian Cheshire, compiled by Helen Maurice-Jones from the books of Fletcher Moss. 2003. p. 58

Nesfield's preliminary report was presented in 1842 and he was still providing advice and suggestions twenty years later.

Nesfield's designs included elements from the gardens of the early Tudors and the parterres of seventeenth-century France. Like the original Jacobean garden, his designs were best viewed from above.

*"Nothing ..., in its way, can be more beautiful than to look down from the long gallery at Crewe Hall upon the formal garden with its curves of variegated gravel and its thick box edging, its broad terraced walks and flights of steps, guarded by quaintly-carved balustrades and strange heraldic monsters."*



*But it hardly strikes me as a garden; it is rather an appendage to the house itself, adding to its stateliness, and recalling by its prevailing colours of buff and blue, the old traditions of the family."*<sup>2</sup>

(Hungerford's grandfather, the first Baron Crewe, was a Whig politician. The Whigs adopted the colours worn by the Prince Regent, whose coats were blue lined with buff, with buff waistcoats and breeches.)

From 1863 onwards, the gardens at Crewe Hall featured three times in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* and twice in *Country Life*.

Nesfield introduced a young man – William Whitaker – to Hungerford, who took him on as head gardener. He was to remain at Crewe for over sixty years. In 1855, *The Gardeners' Chronicle* wrote:

*"Mr Whittaker has charge of the gardens, which are comparatively small but well kept, with the help of five gardeners."*

and in 1892, the same journal returned to Crewe:

*"I have seldom, if ever, enjoyed a stroll through glass-houses as I did under Mr. Whitaker's guidance. His wide knowledge of plants, and his evident fondness for everything under his charge made me realise how he had grown to a Gladstonian old age in his master's service."*

(The reporter was being less than complimentary about Mr Whitaker's age – Gladstone was already 82 – or

Mr Whitaker lived to an incredible age – he was still working twenty years later.)

Under the joint care of Hungerford Crewe and William Whitaker, the gardens flourished. In addition to the flower gardens, dahlia beds, rosery, fruit-houses (peaches, melons, figs, pineapples) there were three conservatories.

Each conservatory was kept at a different temperature. The hottest was home to a huge variety of orchids; the middle one had different climbers clambering up each iron pillar. This was a favourite place for Hungerford to spend time. The coolest conservatory housed palms, tree ferns and cycads.

Hungerford died in 1894. *Country Life* visited twice – in 1902 and again in 1913. The gardens were still worth seeing. But in 1922 the family stopped using the Hall as a residence and in 1931 it was sold to the Duchy of Lancashire.

The war stripped away the remains of the gardens. The lake had to be drained as bombers were sighting on it. Today its site is a poplar plantation.

After the war, Crewe Hall was used by Calmic Ltd, later a part of the Wellcome Corporation. In 1998 it entered a new lease of life as a hotel and is today owned by Qhotels.

It is amazing how well the house has survived its different incarnations. But the gardens are a different matter. Some elements still survive, though, and it is possible that, in the future, the gardens will once more be an attraction for tourists.

*Joy Uings*



*Above, the sundial; below, the dovecot: relics of the past*



<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Victorian Gardens* by Brent Elliott, 1986.

## Dunham Massey – a Plantsman’s Garden

On a bright and baking afternoon in August Damien Harris, the National Trust’s Head Gardener, took us round the 30 acres of gardens at Dunham Massey.

Damien has been in post since early 2007 but knows the garden well having previously been Assistant Head Gardener. Four other gardeners, ten practical volunteers and fifty garden stewards share the work.

It was a good time to visit and absorb the challenges and changes taking place.



Dunham is unusual among National Trust properties in being a “Special Trust in Credit”, which effectively means that it is its own cost centre with money generated by the estate being ploughed back into repairs, improvements and new projects.

Future proposals include upgrading the car park adding a nursery, refreshments facilities, shop and toilets, and developing a winter garden, to be open for the large numbers of visitors who visit the property on winter weekends and adding to Dunham’s reputation as a plantsman’s garden.

Recent repair work to the house involving extensive scaffolding, has caused considerable damage to adjacent borders and served as the catalyst for outsize shrub management and replanting.

Some enormous rhododendrons are gradually being reduced in scale, hydrangeas moved back from the border edge, and self-sown hypericums removed to make space for choicer and more interesting plants in what has been regarded as a problem border.

The parterre at the back of the house is the only formal part of the garden but the precision of the bedding has been marred by pests, last year rabbits and this year Canada geese who chose the parterre as their residence during their two week moult in July when they cannot fly and graze heavily on anything in reach!

The centrepiece of the planting is provided by a Yucca, due for some drastic treatment because it does not flower, surrounded by Physocarpus opulifolius ‘Diablo’, cut each spring to keep it compact, whose purple foliage links well with that of purple Corylus rising above the yew hedging below the mount.

Four evergreen Quercus phillyreoides hard pruned into balls add to the structure of the space. Mahonia pinnata beside the house have also responded well to hard pruning, clearing the York stone path, which has to be pressure washed and pan scrubbed to reduce the risk of

visitors slipping.

I have always admired the dry shade borders at Dunham, full of texture, varied shades of green and excellent ground cover planting but the loss of trees in the border to honey fungus has heralded a planting review.

The prevalence of the fungus is attributed to rushed work after the Trust took over the property in 1976, when oaks were felled but stumps left in the ground.

Damien is seeking to reduce the species repetition of shade border clumps and prune back the rhododendron on alternate sides, maintaining the path’s character but increasing its width so that two people may walk abreast.

The canal border of Hemerocallis, Peonies, Iris ensata and Crinums always seems to have something in flower.



Splitting the Crinums can be a challenge as the bulbs are like icebergs, huge beneath the surface.

The gardens are constantly changing, not all at the behest of the gardeners, as clumps of bamboo flower, then die and open up new spaces.

A huge laurel hedge backs astilbes planted as a stream.



Beyond the hedge is a woodland glade, a delightful and unexpected contrast to the designed plantings of the canal side.

Despite ground conditions having foiled previous plantings, there are proposals for the replacement of native birch with more ornamental trees, an idea generally disapproved of by our party!

The lawn is an attractive space with some wonderful trees but even here things are not what they seem. Squirrels eat the lead off the bark house roof and the tree labels, fast growing trees consume their tree tags, Prunus Tai Haku has been removed due to fungal

attack and *Fraxinus angustifolia* Raywood, with their brilliant russet autumnal shades and fine textured foliage, are reaching an age where brittle snapping branches present a safety hazard.

The lawn also contains a Lucombe Oak (*right*), an early grafted specimen with a waist band, Turkey oak below and Cork oak above.

Passing a lovely pink *Hydrangea serrata* Rosalba and the stately pods of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* we passed into woodland, part of the park 100 years ago, and now to host the new winter garden.

The woodland already contains a collection of Pratt azaleas, the rest being at Ness Gardens, and an area of bluebells, but other areas are dominated by scrubby birch and *Rhododendron ponticum* that took hold during the war.

It is this area where extensive thinning has taken place



and a first phase of new planting is planned for this autumn.

The additions will include new trees, hollies, bulbs and shrubs with autumn colour and scent. The plans are ambitious and the gardeners have much to do but if successful, the work may result in realising aspirations for the walled garden, now largely derelict, where there was once the largest herbaceous border in Europe!

So check out Dunham, watch it change and wait for the winter openings to begin!

*Barbara Moth*

## Castle Park, Frodsham

*On 15 September, Sheila Holroyd took a party of CGT members around Castle Park in Frodsham. She brought alive the murky characters from the past who had been associated with this piece of land. Here she reproduces her talk for those members who could not be present.*

Castle Park, Frodsham, is a flat piece of land with springs of fresh water, sheltered by the bulk of Frodsham Hill, and is a very convenient spot for keeping an eye on traffic from Chester, Wales and the Wirral.

It was therefore the natural place for the first Norman Earl of Chester, Hugh Lupus (Hugh the Wolf) to build there in 1070 after William the Conqueror had given him the manor of Frodsham as part of his estates.

Hugh's shield showed a wolf's head with jaws opened and teeth bared, and this seems to have reflected his cruel, ruthless efficiency.

When the line of the earls of Chester died out, Frodsham reverted to the Crown and had many owners in its long history, including David ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewellyn, the last king of Wales.

David, who held the manor from Edward I, changed sides so often between his brother and Edward that his own men finally gave him up to Edward, and as he held land such as Frodsham from the English king he could be treated as a traitor rather than a patriotic Welshman, and David became the first man in England to be hung, drawn and quartered for treason.

In the early seventeenth century the manor was acquired by the Savage family.

John, Earl Rivers, was one of the worst landlords Frodsham ever had.

He shortened leases, raised rents, and took the roofs off the houses of tenants he wanted to get rid of.

He died in Frodsham in 1654 and the manor house (not a castle!) was burnt down over his body that night, though his corpse was saved. Nobody thought it was an accident.

His son was an even worse landlord, if possible.

The people of Frodsham managed to get Charles II to grant a Royal Commission to investigate Rivers' behaviour, but then found that every member of the Commission was either a relative or a friend of the Rivers family!

The ill-will between the people of Frodsham and the Savages explains why the house was not rebuilt until the estate was sold. At the end of the eighteenth century a new house was built and the house and the area around it were known as Park Place.

In 1851, the estate was bought by Joseph Stubs of

Warrington. His father, Peter Stubs, ran an inn in Warrington, brewed his own beer, set up a small tool-making firm, fathered eighteen children and died in his early forties after signing his will with a cross.

His widow promptly started to take in washing to help support her brood. However Joseph and two of his brothers built up the tool-making firm into a business which flourished until well into the twentieth century.

At 55, after being mayor of Warrington, Joseph Stubs decided to retire and spent the rest of his days as a country gentleman indulging his love of plants.



*Above: Sheila keeps us enthralled with the story of the Park. In the foreground the plants for the Plantsale*

With a fortune equal to five million pounds nowadays, Stubs could afford the best. He had the house renovated by the firm of Penson, which was responsible for many of Chester's Victorian buildings, and for the garden he employed Edward Kemp.

Edward Kemp trained at Chatsworth under Sir Joseph Paxton. Although Paxton designed Birkenhead Park, the first major municipal park in the world when it opened in 1847, Kemp became superintendent of the Park in 1845 when he was only 22, and was therefore responsible for the actual planting and development of the Park.

He remained at Birkenhead Park as superintendent for forty years, and he and Paxton popularised formal park design throughout England.

Kemp arranged with his employers to take a reduced salary in exchange for the freedom to design gardens elsewhere. He designed Hesketh Park, Southport, and Stanley Park, Liverpool, as well as many gardens for private individuals such as Joseph Stubs.

Kemp included a description of the gardens he designed for Park Place (not yet Castle Park) in his book, "How To Lay Out a Garden". This was reprinted many times, sometimes under the title "How To Lay Out a Small Garden", by which he meant a mere ten acres or so!

Joseph Stubs took an active part in planning the garden. Kemp said that, "Mr Stubs is enthusiastically attached to his garden, and being an energetic and successful collector and cultivator of rare plants, is constantly making little changes for the sake of accommodating new favourites." In other words, he kept interfering with Kemp's plans.

After the death of Joseph Stubs the estate was bought



*Above: details like the drainage channels remain in 1861 by Edward Abbott Wright, a cotton manufacturer from Oldham, for the princely sum of £9,574 19s.0d.*

Wright promptly renamed the house and gardens 'Castle Park'. He died in 1891, and his two unmarried daughters continued to live there until Harriet, his last surviving child, died in 1931.

The grandchildren of Edward Abbott Wright then decided to present the mansion and twelve acres of grounds to the Runcorn Rural District Council 'for the use, enjoyment and benefit of the inhabitants of the Rural District of Runcorn'. The reorganisation of local government means that it is now the responsibility of Vale Royal.

A beautiful series of photographs of the house and gardens taken in 1899 shows the carefully-tended splendour of the grounds in their Victorian heyday.

Even today it is possible to see that Kemp's basic layout has remained intact, and many of the trees he and Stubs chose and planted with such loving care still survive.

There have been changes, of course. The kitchen garden is now the site of tennis courts and the falling water table has led to the fish pond being turned into a car park, but the formal flower garden's design agrees with Kemp's plan.



*Above: the walls of the kitchen garden still bear the labels of the fruit trees grown – here Peach 'Barrington'*

English Heritage added the grounds of Castle Park to its register of parks and gardens of special historic interest in 2002.

Following the recent superb refurbishment of Castle Park House by Vale Royal as a one-stop shop for council services, an application is now being prepared for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund with which it is hoped to restore the grounds to much of their former glory and make them even more attractive to the people of the area.

*Sheila Holroyd*

# Tides of Change

## AGT AGM Falmouth 7 - 9 September 2008

Set overlooking Falmouth Bay with Pendennis Castle lighting the night sky, and helped by warm sunny weather, the setting for the 2008 conference was as inspiring as the content of the weekend.

*Tides of Change* highlighted the somewhat gloomy future for our historic gardens. The speakers raised the issues of how gardens are managed at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How the 'Tea and Pee' and visitor 'experience', which includes shops and other money-spinners are destroying the very meaning of the gardens they seek to protect.

Very, very few gardens are now approached the way Repton or Brown intended with the views and surprises to whet the appetite. Instead straight through the tearoom and shop (preferably parting with yet more cash en route) and into the garden at a random point.

Dr Tim Mowl argued that the garden history has gone out of these places and that, at the most, we are left with pretty plants, citing examples of historic flower beds which are planted up with the latest fashion 'as that is what the public wants'.

Tim wants us to put the history first but most of the audience was with the V & A slogan of 'An Ace café - with rather a good museum attached' as there is so much choice now that faced with 'History First' most visitors will go off elsewhere.

But there must be a balance and history, with health and safety legislation weighing heavily against authenticity, seems to be on the losing side.

Gloom was deepened with Richard Sneesby, Course Tutor for the BSc Landscape Design at Falmouth College who showed us the designers of the future. These are students who have no historical feeling at all - we are lucky if they are interested in plants.

When asked to name an important historic landscape designer they come up with Alan Titchmarsh, and their inspirations are not plant explorers or philosophers or literature but the media and computer-generated pattern.

### ***The Garden Visits***

These issues were forcibly brought home to us by the visits. ***Godolphin*** - a very important early compartmented garden where the owners have had to give up the unequal struggle and the National Trust is taking over. An excellent 'before' example. It will be interesting but may be rather depressing to see it again when it has been 'restored'.

On to ***Trelowarren*** where Sir Ferrers Vyvyan (also Chairman of Cornwall GT) is restoring his important Rococo garden. A totally different approach here with sustainable time-shares in the estate cottages, an excellent restaurant in the old service yard and very thorough research into the early garden. It is being re-

instated slowly and carefully as part of the wider estate management and no concept of 'visitor' numbers' allowed to enter into the equation. It is no co-incidence that Ferrers is a graduate of the Architectural Association's highly regarded landscape conservation diploma.

***Bonython***, owned by the Nathans is open to the public three days a week and is being gradually uncovered - they found a 'new' old lake not long ago. The planting alongside it reflects the flora of Sue's native South Africa and there is an innovative modern garden which fits very well into a corner near the house.

Then on to ***Glendurgan***, once one of the renowned Fox gardens around Falmouth but now owned and being restored by the National Trust, with much-needed work on the shelter belts, the maze, trees and other features. An excellent fillip, marred by 'little' things - the paths are now smooth and brightly coloured, the entrance is not from the house... but these are enough to blur the original aesthetic intentions of Alfred and George Fox. Next day there was ***Tregothnan*** where the Boscauens have been gardening since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (having owned it since 1335) where new projects are horticulturally inspired such as the Tea Garden - which does actually contain tea plants.

And finally, ***Pine Lodge Nurseries***, (a nursery being a traditional last port of call for AGT conferences), where the owners demonstrated the changing spectrum of plants we are able to grow here - and in Cornwall that is very evident. Unfortunately with this change also comes a new and nasty flood of plant pests and diseases - whose motto must surely be Et in Arcadia Ego!

### ***The Meetings***

The meetings of the County Gardens Trusts held after the quick visit to the Falmouth Parks on the Friday afternoon highlighted the threats, not only those outlined above but also from the philistines who draft legislation.

The AGT has commented on many of these: the Heritage White Paper and the Planning White Paper - each drafted by a different set of government departments with apparently little inter-departmental consultation so in parts they are contradictory; the Dreaded Defra reports (I am just about to put in a comment on the Coastal Access Consultation, which is about as ill-informed and spin-manipulated a document as I have seen) and many more.

The debate about gardens as brownfield sites has seen many words, both written and spoken, from the AGT and CGTs to government and agencies and we have worked with English Heritage and other bodies on the new *Conservation Principles*. The Parks and Gardens Database, launched on 18 October, will, it is hoped,

raise the profile of our historic gardens and inspire more research.

Juliet Wilmot has been inspirational in getting many trusts into schools to work with children in the first stage of getting them to appreciate gardens and understand where, for example, food comes from. Hope for older children is to be found in the new environmentally biased school curricula where gardens can be used for so many themes.

The opinion of many of the delegates was that the County Gardens Trusts and AGT have, for the most part, worked hard to protect our historic gardens but

that the future does not look too rosy with not only all these problems but also the diversion of Heritage Lottery Fund money to the Olympics.

Many of us went away with the depressing feeling that it is really up to each and every gardens trust member to do more, as English Heritage, itself under another funding cloud, needs all the help it can get to protect our historic gardens.

**Kate Harwood**

*(Kate is administrator of the Association of Gardens Trusts and a member of Bedfordshire Gardens Trust. She played a pivotal role in organising the Crewe Hall Conference)*

## From soap suds to Strulch – 200 years of manures and mulches

One of the sponsors of CGT's Conference at Crewe Hall was Strulch. This company makes mineralised straw mulch (hence the name). It is much praised by Eaton Hall's head gardener, Les Armstrong.

Strulch is the result of research undertaken at York University by biology lecturer Geoff Whiteley. His product, made from shredded straw treated with iron minerals, is now available commercially.

Strulch meets the needs of today's gardeners – it effectively controls weeds and is a deterrent against slugs and snails.

So if you want to give your garden that little something extra, you could do worse than try Strulch.

But what would you have used two hundred years ago? Chances are it would have been rather smelly.

In the eighteenth century people really began to understand the importance of manure in farming.

*“The nature of London street dirt is demonstrated by the value put on it by the market gardeners round about, who bought it by the cartload to spread on their gardens.... It was a rich, glutinous mixture of animal manure, dead cats and dogs, ashes, straw, and human excrement...”*

Lisa Picard, Dr Johnson's London, (2000) p.10

Thomas Butterworth Bayley (1744-1802) was one of Manchester's foremost citizens and a Fellow of the Royal Society. His home was Hope Hall on the road from Manchester to Eccles and agriculture was one of his special interests.

At the end of the eighteenth century Britain was at war with France, which meant it was impossible to import wheat. It was vital to increase home production.

On October 12 1795, Bayley gave a lecture to the Manchester Agriculture Society on Manure. Two years later it was later published in book form. It makes fascinating reading. It starts well:

*“Under our common management of manures, the practice is quite the contrary of what it ought to be; we*



*Left: a bag of Strulch. Above: Geoff Whiteley enjoys the Conference.*

*converted into a manure and improve the soil.”*

It goes on to explain how best to site and create dunghills and then lists various other things which would be useful but are going to waste.

For example, mud is useful because it is ‘composed of decayed and fermented leaves... drainings from dungills...of the urine from stables... finest soil from new-plowed lands and fields recently manured or limed: from streets, highways and manufactories etc., which are all perpetually washed and carried off by the rains, and deposited and **lost** in ditches, brooks, ponds, mill-dams and rivers’.

Bayley is somewhat repetitive. Urine crops up several times. Apparently human urine was more beneficial than animal. Then there was night-soil (i.e. human excrement), bones, refuse that hadn't turned into mud, sea weed, sea shells and sea gravel.

Bayley observes that the Romans were ‘remarkable for employing every means of increasing their manures; and to a similar attention of the government of **China**, is principally to be ascribed the subsistence provided for the immense population of that extensive empire’.

It is the example of the Chinese that he draws attention to when it came to Soap Suds: “the quantities of this valuable article, which are thrown away throughout this kingdom, are immense.... The Chinese are minutely attentive to this article; even their barbers save their suds.”

In the 1850s, the Cottage Gardener's Dictionary was published. In the intervening sixty years there had clearly been plenty of research carried out and some of the results are included in the Dictionary.

For example, for water absorption horse-dung and putrefied tanner's bark were equally effective; more so than other types of dung and far more so than other additives such as soot and lime.

Cuthbert Johnson's detailed analysis of dung and urine was included in his 1839 book 'On Fertilizers' and he found that night-soil was the richest of the manures. (In the nineteenth century, Manchester's night-soil was collected up and carried to Stretford where it was used in the rhubarb fields.)

The experiments of M. Schubler and others had provided the following useful information:

*"If a given quantity of the land sown without manure yields three times the seed employed, then the same quantity of land will produce five times the quantity sown when manured with old herbage, putrid grass or leaves, garden stuff &c.; seven times with cow-dung, nine times with pigeon's dung, ten times with horse-dung, twelve times with human urine, twelve times with goat's dung, twelve times with sheep's dung, and fourteen times with human manure or bullock's blood. But if the land be of such quality as to produce without manure five times the sown quantity, then the horse-dung manure will yield fourteen and human manure nineteen and two-thirds the sown quantity."*

So – you can take your choice. A nice crumbly mulch from Geoff Whiteley or the contents of your loo.

*Joy Uings*

You can find out more about Strulch at [www.strulch.co.uk](http://www.strulch.co.uk), where there is an on-line calculator which will work out how many bags you need for your garden. Strulch can be bought direct, in bulk, or, at £6 a bag, on-line from Harrod Horticultural or Wiggly Wiggles. You may also find it at your local independent garden centre.

Our thanks to Strulch for their sponsorship of our Conference.

## Tina and her prize-winning allotment

CGT Council member, events organiser and one of the 'three graces' of the Conference – how Tina finds time to do it all, I don't know.

One of her many interests is her allotment – and this year Tina won the prize for best kept plot (out of a total of 96).



*Tina and Andrew at their allotment*

Tina and husband Andrew share the work: Tina does the sowing, planting, tending, weeding and harvesting and Andrew the heavy work, though they share the digging.

Andrew's particular passion is making compost – "he spends a lot of time talking rot", quipped Tina, but they also use fertilizers like Growmore, and fish, blood and bone. "I'm thinking of trying Strulch round the strawberries" says Tina – "I'll let you know if I do".

### *Some facts about allotments:*

Did you know that it is exactly 200 years since the bishop of Bath and Wells began letting out allotments? Neither did I until I decided to look for some background to this story. The practice became common in 1830, but George Johnson, in the Cottage Gardener's Dictionary, could see both benefits and disadvantages. This is his definition of Allotment:

*"A space of land divided amongst so many labourers or artisans, and generally at the same price as that which the farmer pays. It may just be such a piece of ground as a man and his family may successfully cultivate in their over-hours, after attending to their usual employment during the day. The term allotment thus becomes synonymous with garden; and, if near to the occupier's home, such a piece of ground is of great importance to him, socially and morally. Or, secondly, an allotment may be such a space of ground as will secure the labourer in employment when otherwise he might be without it. In that sense it becomes a mere temporary palliative for a social evil, and ultimately entails upon its occupier all the disadvantages of a small farmer, without many of his benefits."*

A quote from 1944 "in Britain the playing of tennis and golf has been succeeded by the weekend pastime of working in one's allotment", which is a kind of 'Victory Garden'".

Today the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners provides support and encouragement to the nation's allotment-holders. Visit their web-site at [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk).

*Joy Uings*

## Caldwell Nursery Archives Project – update

Since the last newsletter work has continued on this exciting project. The archives, dating from 1789 onward, consist of records from both the Knowsley and Knutsford Caldwell nurseries.

John Edmondson has already digitally photographed a substantial part of the archive, which consists of ledgers and day-books.

Every page in each ledger is photographed and the information is being transcribed by volunteer Pat Alexander into an excel spreadsheet. A decision as to whether to stay with spreadsheets or to transfer into a database will be made at a later date.

The skills of the current three volunteers complement each other. Pat has been a landscape architect and has lots of project-management experience. John's knowledge of plants is vast. Joy is currently studying gardens in Manchester from 1790-1850.

Pat says *"this is a project that is as much about the social history of the land owning classes as it is a project about a horticultural plant nursery"*.

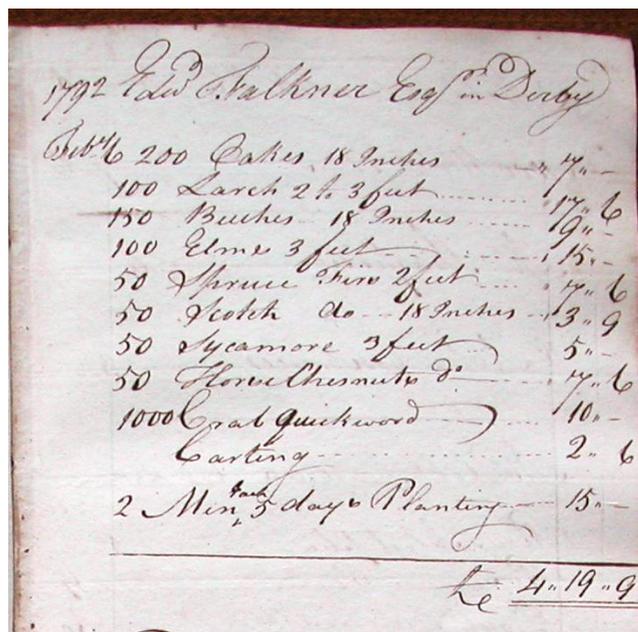
The first orders to be transcribed by Pat were for William Egerton of Tatton. In November 1789 he ordered two each of three different types of rose and an ounce of Egyptian green lettuce seed. The following month the order was for two different types of pea and in January 1790 two more types of pea and two types of onion.

It did not take Pat long to 'get her eye in'. The handwriting is fairly easy to read, but changes in spelling over the past two hundred years is not always so easy to understand. Peas appear as pease (which explains pease pudding), but is 'Bleak charter rose' a mis-reading? Pat was puzzled by 'Bafs mats'. Joy's knowledge of late eighteenth century books was useful here. The first s in double ss, used to be written long, making it look like an italicised f.

But what was a bass mat? A search of eighteenth century garden writer John Abercrombie's work *"The Complete Kitchen Gardener"* showed that bass mats were indispensable:

*"They are of great utility ... to cover the glasses every night ... in winter and spring; or...to shade [tender] plants from the sun in hot weather in spring and summer; ... likewise for shading from the sun several sorts of small young pricked-out plants in hot weather in summer, ... having some mats drawn over in hot sunny days, protects them from being withered or scorched, till they take good root...."*

*"Mats are also very serviceable ... with wall-trees, to defend from frost some of the more desirable early sorts, when in blossom and young fruit in March and April, by nailing them up of nights, &c when frosty weather."*



An order from February 1792: 1,750 trees plus carriage and planting – all for less than £5.

*"They are also useful more or less in nurseries, and most other districts of gardening."*

*"These mats, for the above several purposes, are sold at most of the nurseries and seed shops, from six to nine, ten, or twelve shillings per dozen, according to the size, small, middling, or large..."*

Caldwell's charged twelve shillings per dozen and William Egerton ordered 50 in January 1790. The OED tells us that, strictly speaking, bass was 'the inner bark of the lime or linden' but the term was also used for any similar fibre like split rushes or straw.

Johnson, in the *'Cottage Gardener's Dictionary'* was not quite so enamoured of bass – or 'bast' – mats:

*"These are chiefly made in Russia, from the inner bark of trees (bast in the Russ language). ... as a protection to wall-trees they are inferior to netting, and to standard shrubs, structures made of straw are to be preferred. They are very serviceable, however, to place over beds of early spring radishes, &c., to prevent the night radiation...."*

Pat is "trying not to be daunted by the scale of the project - and hoping that there will be other people who will be interested enough to participate in it, and learn about some of the horticultural, business and social history of Cheshire in the 18th and 19th centuries"

She continued: *"Full training will be given to anyone who will volunteer to assist with this fantastic project! I will train as many folk as we can muster. I would think it will be early 2008 when we shall need more hands to the pumps!"*

Please join us. It's fascinating. Contact me at [joy.uings@btconnect.com](mailto:joy.uings@btconnect.com).

## Whatever the weather.....

It's our favourite topic of conversation – Weather! And 2007 has been a year to give us plenty to talk about – a very warm and dry Spring, followed by a wet and miserable Summer and now a mild Autumn.

I'm writing this on the anniversary of **The Great Storm of October 1987** – the worst for 250 years.

I slept right through it.

I was staying north of London with work colleagues (team-building). We woke in the morning blissfully unaware of the events of the night before, but wondering why the hotel staff seemed abstracted and breakfast was not yet laid out.

Then one of our number returned from the village shop. A tree was down. We went into the garden – devastation. Returning to London later that day was sobering. Driving through Hyde Park, surreal. Huge trees lay everywhere and an eerie silence from lack of traffic.

During the nineteenth century, Manchester seemed prone to storms. There were several that were bad enough to be recorded in the *Annals of Manchester* (1886), mostly because they resulted in damage to property or loss of life. In December 1817, two men were killed at Pendleton by a thunderstorm.

December 1833 saw 'a tremendous storm of wind, which did great damage in various parts of the town. The high chimney at Mr. Langley's works, Sandywell, Salford, was blown down' and in July the following year: 'A tremendous thunderstorm in the neighbourhood of Manchester did much damage. Two men were killed at Newton Heath, and a woman at Prestwich, by the lightning'.

Eleven months later: 'A tremendous thunderstorm burst over Manchester and neighbourhood. A man was killed at Ardwick; several hurt in Hulme.'

On 5 February 1850 'A hurricane of a more destructive nature than any known in England for many years visited this neighbourhood'.

August 1852 'Four men were killed in Ridgeway Street, Bradford Road, during a terrific thunderstorm' and there were 'severe gales of wind' in September 1853.

In December 1863 a 'severe gale caused great damage in Manchester', but even worse was 4 January 1872 when 'A storm of unusual violence occurred in Manchester and neighbourhood... The wind blew with great violence and hail fell heavily. Lightning and thunder followed, the flashes succeeding each other with great rapidity and were very vivid. St. Mary's Church, Higher Crumpsall, was struck by the electric fluid, and the entire of the internal portion of the sacred edifice was thereby reduced to a shapeless mass of debris'.

Hail can be very damaging, as we can see from the following extracts:

### **June 1652. John Evelyn**

"After a drought of near four months, there fell so violent a tempest of hail, rain, wind, thunder, and lightning, as no man had seen the like in his age; the hail being in some

places four or five inches about, brake all glass about London especially at Deptford, and more at Greenwich."

### **July 1831. Jane and John Loudon**

"The weather during July has been remarkably warm, with frequent showers; and on the whole the agricultural crops and woods never looked better. ... On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July a dreadful hailstorm happened at Penruddock, about six miles from Penrith, on the road between that town and Keswick. It extended over a tract of country nearly two miles in diameter, totally destroying the field crops, and killing many of the birds, hares, rabbits, and poultry. The hares took shelter in the same shed with men and cattle. The leaves of the large Tussilago, by the roadside, and those of all the crops in the cottage gardens were cut into shreds; the potato leaves and stems were lacerated, and every stalk of corn was broken. Two extensive farmers lost every thing but their cattle. The storm began in darkness, about four o'clock in the afternoon, and continued nearly two hours; the hailstones which fell were from 4 to 6in. round; they formed a body in many places from 15 to 18in. deep; and lay on the ground three days before they were all melted."

### **Saturday 8 June. Beth Chatto**

"It was sheer heaven this morning to walk through puddles on the nursery after a desiccating dust-dry week. Still no rain. But last evening the sky closed in, flat and menacing, the air heavy and still. The temperature was over 25C (77F) in our shady wood-ceilinged living-room. Thunder storms were forecast, but we don't believe it; maybe – but more likely not. I went to bed with only a sheet, too tense to sleep. By 11.00pm distant lightning flickered feebly round my room, but there was no sound – the drama was too far way. Slowly, slowly, the storm crept closer with vivid sheet lightning and reverberating thunder sounding like piles of heavy furniture being tumbled above in the attics of the universe. A slight and silent pause – and then a drumming of heavy raindrops on my window-sill, on the magnolia leaves and on the table and terrace below. It was all we've waited for, a release, after so much anxiety and tension. I got up to walk about the house and watch from all the windows as lightning lit up the garden. It lasted about 20 minutes. I went back to bed and slept.

"This morning I measured 8mm (1/3 in), and was thankful even though it is little enough. But we had been spared golf-ball-sized hailstones which visitors later told me had fallen near Cambridge, smashing glass in greenhouses and denting cars."

### **Monday 8 July. Christopher Lloyd**

"We had a most destructive hailstorm, on Saturday, two days ago.. The hailstones were large and didn't melt for a good half hour after falling. There was a lot of soft foliage for them to pepper, as though a shot gun had been fired at them. It was the day of our local flower show. Even with the rain during the run-up, a class for roses which had eight entries only mustered one exhibitor, in the event."



## The Story of Alnwick Garden

The Manchester Association for Environmental Studies has booked Mr. Ian August, Liaison Director of Alnwick Garden to talk on the Story of Alnwick Garden on 9th. November at East Didsbury Methodist Church, 495 Parrs Wood Road at 7.30 p.m.

CGT members are welcome to attend, provided there are spaces available.

If you are interested, please contact Mr Michael Fisher on 0161 445 7505, mentioning Cheshire Gardens Trust. He will be able to tell you whether or not spaces are still available. Cost is just £2.00.

## Proceeds from Plant Sale

On 15 September, as part of the visit to Castle Park, Frodsham, CGT members held our first plant sale. Our thanks to all those who both brought and bought plants. We raised £140 towards CGT's funds. Special thanks to Ruth Brown for her organisational work.

## Extending the concept – London Garden Squares Weekend wants to go national

Over the past decade, the London Parks and Gardens Trust has been organising an annual Open Garden Squares weekend. In 2007, supported by English Heritage and Loire Valley Wines, more than 160 gardens took part.

London is famous for its garden squares. They date back three hundred years and often bear the name of the landlord – like Grosvenor Square. Manchester Square took its name from the Duke of Manchester, who lived on the north side. It was laid out between 1776 and 1778, but the concept is still alive – the redevelopment of Arsenal Football Club's previous stadium uses the pitch as a ready-made garden.

Although it began as just the Garden Squares, in 2007 the weekend included gardens belonging to prisons, religious institutions and museums. So, although other towns do not have the wealth of garden squares that London has (600 of them), the idea has grown that other private or semi-private gardens could be opened elsewhere in the country.

With 2008 being the Year of Gardens in Cheshire, it may be an appropriate time to consider how we might bring this idea to the North West. There are all sorts of gardens that are not open to the public, or that are not closed as such, but could do with a wider audience. For example, gardens attached to hospitals, hospices, fire stations, prisons, police and ambulance stations, corporately owned roof gardens, or gardens of gated developments; gardens of museums, universities, schools and libraries, gardens of hotels, pubs and clubs; allotments.

If you know of a garden that might fall into one of these categories, why not let us know.

## 17<sup>th</sup> Century Gardens

The Association of Gardens Trusts will be having two lectures in London on 29 November. Edward Martin, Archaeological Officer, Suffolk County Council and Chairman of Suffolk Gardens Trust will talk on *The Canale beautiful...* Garden Fashion in Suffolk around 1700 and Jennifer Potter will speak on the lives of *The Tradescants*. Jennifer is Author of *Strange Blooms: the lives and adventures of the John Tradescant*. Details from Kate Harwood: tel: 01582 762432 or e-mail kateharwood@fsmail.net.