

# CHESHIRE GARDENS • TRUST •

Issue No. 2

April 2004

## Newsletter

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

Welcome to a bumper edition of the Newsletter to celebrate the official launch of the Cheshire Gardens Trust on April 29 2004. Included in this edition are reports from two more visits to gardens plus information about future events.

### Contents:

- ✱ The Cheshire Gardens Trust official launch.
- ✱ Report on the Snowdrop Walk at Rode Hall.
- ✱ Report on the trip to Mellor's Garden.
- ✱ The Cadbury Factory – a Jellicoe design.
- ✱ Norton Priory
- ✱ Details of CGT and other events
- ✱ Notes and queries.

### Some future events:

- ✱ Sunday 16 May- visit to Tirley Garth
- ✱ Saturday 5 June – Orchard Villa, Alsager
- ✱ 21-25 July – RHS Tatton Flower Show.
- ✱ Saturday 25 September – J Parker Dutch Bulbs
- ✱ Sat 2 Oct– National Quince Day, Norton Priory
- ✱ Sat 6 Nov – Tatton Park Walled Kitchen Gardens
- ✱ Tues 7 Dec – The National Gardens Scheme

The official launch of the Cheshire Gardens Trust takes place at Arley Hall on 29 April 2004, hosted by Viscount Ashbrook, the Trust's Patron. Speakers include Gilly Drummond and Felicity Goodey. Linden Groves, Conservation Casework Manager for the Garden History Society, will be present to launch her new book *'Historic Parks and Gardens of Cheshire'*.

We are particularly pleased that Gilly Drummond accepted our invitation. Not only is she President of the Association of Gardens Trusts and founder chairman of the Hampshire Gardens Trust, but her family roots lie firmly in the North-West.

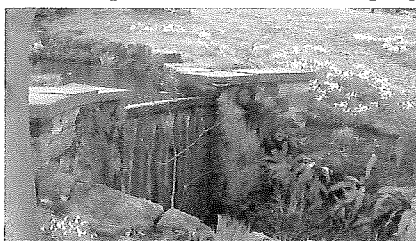
A full report from the launch will be included in the next newsletter.

### The Snowdrop visit to Rode Hall – Details inside

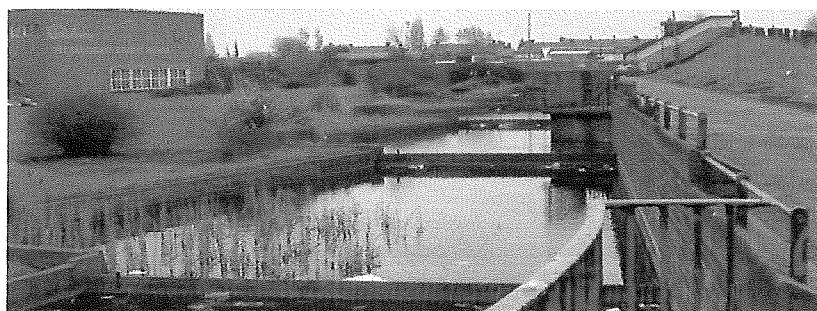
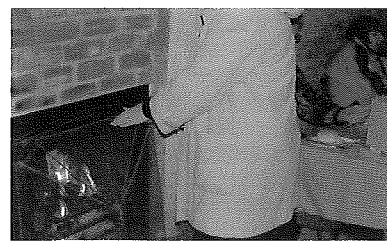
Guided by Lady Wilbraham-Baker



Snowdrops enhance the landscaping



The fire was welcome at lunch



Also inside:

The Cadbury Factory on the Wirral. An important mid-20<sup>th</sup> century design by Geoffrey Jellicoe

## Rode Hall in the Spring – a picture of loveliness

In February the Snowdrop Walk gave us the chance to see a wonderful collection of these charming flowers, but also introduced us to a remarkable garden. Ruth Brown writes:

Rode Hall, the home of Sir Richard and Lady Baker Wilbraham, has been in the family since 1699. Situated in Scholar Green, near Congleton, the house is approached by a long drive bordered at this time of year by drifts of snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*). We were welcomed by Lady Baker Wilbraham (and her dogs). She took us on a very informative and interesting tour, describing the history of the gardens as well as detailing more recent developments.

The gardens at Rode Hall lie to the north and east of the house, with many areas remaining as planned by Humphrey Repton who was commissioned by Richard Wilbraham Bootle to suggest improvements to the park. In his Red Book (1790) Repton recorded:

*'The landscape in its present state is not unpleasing considered merely as landscape but it is much more consistent with the view from a cottage or Farm than from the Portico of a Gentleman's Seat.'*

Repton's ideas remained unimplemented until the early 1800s when the gardener John Webb was entrusted to undertake the re-modelling of the grounds, including the construction of the lesser water dam and the large water dam, which was completed in 1812. According to family tradition, a waterfall painted on canvas was positioned between the two lakes to create the illusion of a cascade when viewed from the house. When the family was away from home it was removed and stored in the stables. An 800-yard long dam wall adjacent to the road acted as a screen so that horse-drawn farm carts did not intrude upon the view. It is just as important nowadays when the road is busy with motor traffic.

Further improvements to the gardens were made in 1861 when W A Nesfield was commissioned to design the formal terraces and the rose garden close to the house, together with the present drive leading to the west front.

In the 1950s the complicated system of ropes and poles, which supported the climbing roses, was replaced with a star-shaped central bed containing the pink cluster-flowered (floribunda) rose 'Queen Elizabeth', surrounding an ornamental urn. Two crescent beds were also constructed and planted with the pale yellow large-flowered (hybrid tea) rose 'Peace'. The L-shaped herbaceous borders were replanted with shrub roses from Hilda Murrell's Nursery in Shropshire. The urn,

destroyed during a storm in 1989 was replaced by a sculpture of a wood nymph by David Williams Ellis (great nephew of Clough Williams Ellis).

In the Wild Garden to the west of the house is a dell with mature plantings of trees and flowering shrubs, including *Daphne* spp., *Mahonia japonica* and massed banks of rhododendrons and azaleas. Old stone steps lead to a grotto and early nineteenth century terraced rock garden. There are also several tall rocks, which have the appearance of those found in ancient oriental gardens. In the centre of the dell is a fountain, known as the Sugar Pool, which provided water for the table, a footman being despatched into the garden as required.

The Boathouse Walk which leads to Rode Pool is fringed with trees and shrubs underplanted with spring bulbs and corms (*Galanthus* species and cultivars, *Cyclamen* corm and *Narcissus* cultivars). Later in the year these are followed by carpets of native bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*). A small stream, which flows beside the path, has been dammed to form the Stew Pond, which is surrounded by bog plants and marginals.

Lady Baker Wilbraham explained that snowdrops are the bulbs of the genus *Galanthus*, of which there are about 19 species found from Europe to west Asia, mostly in upland woodland but also in rocky areas and frequently near to habitation (abbeys, church-yards, cottages). Most snowdrops are vigorous and easily grown but do best in cool dappled shade in moist but well-drained humus-rich soils which do not dry out in summer. Some are suitable for naturalizing in grass or woodland areas and grow well in borders or rock gardens.



The snowdrops at Rode Hall were spread throughout the estate by estate- workers who planted them in the woodlands, in cottage gardens and on dogs' graves. It was this stock that was used to establish the drifts of *Galanthus nivalis* along the main drive.

*Galanthus* species hybridise readily in gardens and show great diversity, with many cultivars being available. Currently, there are approximately 40 in cultivation at Rode Hall, including 'S. Arnott' (honey-scented), 'Brenda Troyle' (inverted V-shaped green mark at the tip of each inner tepal), 'Flore Pleno' (double flowers), 'Robin Hood' (X-shaped green mark on each inner tepal) and 'Lady Elphinstone' (yellow double found in Cheshire in 1890 by Sir Graeme Elphinstone).

The kitchen gardens at Rode Hall cover two acres and are surrounded by a high brick wall. There are traces of the chimneys for the flues which were fuelled by the garden apprentices to provide heat for the espalier fruit trees. The gardener's cottage, built into the south-facing wall overlooks the garden. Further along the wall are the lean-to glasshouses containing fruit (vines and figs) and tender shrubs. In the far corner is the bothy, which provided accommodation for the apprentices. The kitchen garden contains many different varieties of top fruit and soft fruit, vegetables and cut flowers. As far as possible, it is worked organically.

Of great interest are the prize gooseberry bushes, pruned to restrict growth, in order to produce show gooseberries, a skill at which the gardener, Kelvin Archer, excels. In 1993 he grew a Montrose gooseberry weighing 39 penny weights and 19 grains (the size of an egg).

Behind the west wall of the kitchen garden is the

Colonel's Walk which enabled the family in Victorian times to attend Church without having to go through the walled garden. In the afternoon of our visit we followed in their footsteps by visiting All Saints Church to see the Snowdrops and Candlelight display.

From the informative church leaflet we learned that the ancient names for snowdrops include Fair Maids of February, White Ladies and Candlemas Bells. The flower has traditional links to the Christian church, being the symbol of Candlemas, the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary on 2 February.



This was a most pleasurable visit with plenty to interest the garden historian, the plantsman and those who just enjoy gardens. The purpose of our visit was to see the snowdrops at their best but Rode Hall is well worth a return visit when the rhododendrons and azaleas are in flower.

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Rode Hall is open from early April to the end of September. The gardens are open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays plus Bank Holiday Mondays, from 2-5 pm. Admission is £3.

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### **Learning Through Landscapes**

Learning Through Landscapes (LTL) is the National School Grounds Charity. They work with schools, organisations and individuals across the country to help them improve and develop their school grounds. Their aim is for children and young people throughout the UK to be able to enjoy the many unique opportunities and experiences which only well-designed, well-managed and properly used school grounds can provide.

.Every year they run National School Grounds Week – this year from 14-18 June. Last year over 11,000 schools registered to take part.

If you are a parent, teacher, governor or practitioner who is interested in finding out more, visit their web-site on [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk).

## A Pedagogue's Garden

In early April Cheshire Gardens Trust members were privileged to spend a special morning in the unique Mellor's Garden, which tells the story of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress".

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This garden is normally open only twice a year, but the present owners – Mr and Mrs Rigby and their family – laid on a special event for us.

Our expert guide was Mrs Jennifer Rigby. She led us safely up the precipitous steps of the "Hill Difficulty" without losing anyone down a badger hole or even into "The Mouth of Hell".

Christian conviction lies at the heart of this most unusual garden, which is set in the rolling hills high above the town of Macclesfield. James Mellor (1796-1891) conceived the idea of re-creating, within the confines of his three-acre garden, the journey of John Bunyan's hero, Christian, in the Pilgrim's Progress, from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Mellor himself was a local man who lived all but the first few months of his life at Hough Hole House at Rainow. A fervent interest in the spiritual ideas of Emanuel Swedenborg, combined with his own individual Christian beliefs and independent mind set, gave him the impetus and will to recreate Bunyan's allegorical story 'The Pilgrim's Progress' using the natural formations, stones and buildings enclosing his house.

At the start of the tour visitors are taken across the "Slough of Despond" (once a boggy field but now a paved area for cars in front of the house). The steep slope at one side of the garden enabled Mellor to build "Jacob's Ladder" and the "Hill Difficulty", using stones to form steps and paths. He also designated certain areas as "mountains", like "Mount Sinai" based on the natural features of the slope. We follow the story quite literally by means of signs set out to mark the different points of the pilgrimage. As in the theatre, a willing suspension of disbelief is required of present-day pilgrims. For example a pair of fierce chained lions is represented by one rather jolly small stone statue, while the "Dark River" is a channel without water. Imagination is also very much needed in the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" leading to the "Mouth of Hell", as the walk runs along a pleasant path bordering a pretty pond ("The Pool of Siloam") in which a terracotta fish represents the foul fiend Apollyon, whom Bunyan describes:

*"Now the monster was hideous to behold, he was clothed with scales like fish, he had wings like a dragon, feet like a boar, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion"*

climb via the "By-Path Meadow" and past the "Country of Beulah" with its tombstones to the memory of James Mellor and his family. The Celestial City was built into the first floor of a barn with access from outside. Mounting a spiral staircase, we entered through a low door into an attractive small room with windows on all sides. It was light, airy, and high up and had an other-worldly quality. One could imagine James Mellor enjoying himself as he introduced his visitors to the symbolic meaning of his garden with its additional intriguing artefacts.

Because the garden is small and steep, we were split into two groups for the visit. While the first group followed Mrs Rigby, the second was enjoying homemade cherry scones, Victoria sponge cakes and tea. This is in the old tradition followed in Mellor's time, when, throughout the summer months, the garden was visited by teetotal groups and Sunday School parties. We watched a video of the family, Alan, Jennifer, their three children and two dogs, shortly after they moved into the house seven years ago. The video includes an episode of "Songs of Praise" in which Terry Waite was shown round by their eldest daughter Victoria. Terry commented on the small size of the hole ("The Holy Sepulchre") into which Christian dropped his burden of sins. Victoria kindly said: "Perhaps his sins were only small ones".

The garden was re-discovered in 1978 by Ruth and Gordon Humphreys, who were living there at the time. They restored it and opened to the public in 1984. Now the Rigby family continue, with hospitality and humour, the tradition of explaining the history of the garden.

Despite the bitterly cold wind we received a warm welcome. Heaven smiled on us for a couple of hours between heavy showers enabling us to make our pilgrimage round the garden and reflect on a period of 19<sup>th</sup> Century history restored through this garden.

A final comment about the plants. Originally Mellor's idea had been to plant flowers and trees associated with the Bible *"or their nearest practical equivalent, given the climatic differences between the Near East and the Cheshire Alps"*. The garden has two very old Robinia pseudoacacia trees, which probably represent the true acacia tree. In 1885 it was said the garden was stocked with "curious plants, some of them very uncommon". The present Rhododendrons were not planted in Mellor's time and many of the "curious plants" have sadly disappeared.

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Please note: For those who were unable to attend the CGT outing, Mellor's Garden is open to the public this year on May 24<sup>th</sup> and August 23<sup>rd</sup> from 2 o'clock to 5 o'clock pm.

## Geoffrey Jellicoe and the Cadbury Factory

Ed Bennis reports

Cheshire is referred to as a county with hidden gardens, and nothing is further from the truth when you arrive at Moreton in the Wirral - part of pre-1974 Cheshire. Sitting adjacent to the station is a rare piece of post-war modernist building and landscape design, a design for the new Cadbury factory in 1952. The most important features are a set of water pools and cascades that run along the roadside edge of the site. These were designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-1996).

Jellicoe was certainly one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century heroes of the landscape movement, and was a founder member of the Landscape Institute in 1929. His work was full of classical references, yet he was also a great admirer of Paul Klee, as well as friends with Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson. Water played a major role in his work from the earliest days with the publication of *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance*, and in his water gardens at Hemel Hempstead, Shute and Hadlow, the latter now lost. According to Michael Spens, water became a 'controlling element' in a Jellicoe design.

The idea of a factory landscape comes from the social improvers of the previous century and is exemplified by

Port Sunlight, Salt Aire, New Earswick and Bournville. Jellicoe carried these ideas into a modern world. While the ponds acted as a public amenity, his design also included sports fields for the factory workers - still at the back of the site. In a time of post-war reconstruction and rationing, this was a major project to provide employment and to rebuild the country. Importantly, it was in a modern style, rather than the English garden style.

Having only discovered this 'lost' landscape a few weeks ago, Annabel Downs (archivist from the Landscape Institute) and I have contacted the current owners Burton Foods. Not too surprising, the current owners were not aware of the significance of the work or the name of the designer. The drawings for the factory buildings have been lost, but amazingly Jellicoe's drawings are still there and will provide the basis for a possible restoration project. A site meeting is scheduled in May to discuss the future of these rare water works. Hopefully, an extremely rare piece of garden history will have a long-term future.

We will keep you posted.

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### Norton Priory Museum, Runcorn, short-listed for Gulbenkian Museum of Year Prize!

Norton Priory Museum was established in 1975 to care for one of the country's most important monastic sites, which encompasses in its 38 acres museum galleries, the ruins of a medieval priory and a formal Walled Garden. The museum is one of four finalists for the prestigious Gulbenkian Museum of Year Prize for Positive Partnerships, its special relationship being with Astmoor Day Services, a day centre run by Halton Borough Council for adults with a learning disability. This partnership has seen adults from Astmoor working at Norton Priory alongside staff on a variety of projects including the creation of a wildflower meadow and the re-creation of the medieval herb garden.

Steve Miller, Director, says, "Norton Priory is thrilled to be in the final four of this prestigious and exciting award for our special relationship with Astmoor Day Services. I hope that it sends out a message to other organisations that with a little ingenuity, enthusiasm and creativity, museums can be places where long-term community engagement can result in a stunning visitor attraction."

CGT has a visit planned for October, by which time we'll know whether Norton Priory is Museum of the Year!

**The Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year** is a £100,000 award given annually to one museum or gallery, large or small, anywhere in the UK. The four finalists were drawn from a shortlist of thirteen that included *Titian* at the National Gallery, the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Thinktank in Birmingham and the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds.

Public comments on the four projects can be found at [www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk](http://www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk)

The winner will be announced on Tuesday May 11<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Academy, Burlington Gardens, during Museums and Galleries Month.

## **Cheshire Gardens Trust – Events Calendar 2004**

The Events Sub-committee has been busy and has planned the following treats for members:

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May, am**

### **A visit to the gardens of Tirley Garth, near Tarporley**

C E Mallows designed the Arts and Crafts style house in the early 20th century and his layout for the site was developed with Thomas H Mawson's designs for the garden. The property enjoys spectacular views over the Cheshire plain to Beeston and Peckforton castles and the Welsh hills. The rhododendrons should be in full bloom at the time of our visit.

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**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June, pm**

### **Orchard Villa, Alsager**

This unique garden has been developed by John and Christine Trinder, both trained horticulturists. It goes beyond a plantsmans garden in the way plants have been used to create spaces. You will still catch John's irises which he has been breeding for many years, specialising in the American tall bearded irises that are suitable for the English climate.

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**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July**

### **RHS Tatton Flower Show**

We will be in the Heritage Marquee for the second year. This year's exhibit will feature photographs of Cheshire gardens, but with a difference. Lesley Phillips will be exhibiting her unique garden images that have been taken though a pinhole camera and then digitally manipulated. The gardens are seen through the eyes of a photographic artist.

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**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September**

### **J Parker Dutch Bulbs Ltd**

A behind the scenes visit to a garden centre and one of the most successful mail order bulb companies in the UK. Established in 1933, Parkers have 'branched' out into the garden centre business along with garden design. The visit will take place at their newest venue at Parkers East Wilmslow, Lees Lane, Wilmslow.

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**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, am**

### **National Quince Day guided tour of the walled garden, Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, Runcorn**

Norton Priory holds the national collection of quince trees which we will tour with the Head Gardener. There will be an opportunity to visit the museum and the rest of the gardens which recently featured in BBC 2's Hidden Gardens series for their re-creation of a medieval herb garden.

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**Saturday 6th November, pm**

### **Tatton Park walled gardens kitchen – a talk and walk with Sam Youd**

This will be a visit to a project in progress. The visit will include a tour of the restored gardens and associated buildings and the possibilities for further development will be discussed.

**Numbers limited - members only.**

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**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December , 7.30 p.m**

### **The National Gardens Scheme. Lecture by Nicholas Payne at the Grosvenor Museum and Art Gallery, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester**

Many of us will be familiar with the "Yellowbook", the annual guide which lists 3500 gardens of England and Wales open for charity under the National Gardens Scheme. Nicholas Payne, Chairman of the Scheme and County Organiser for Cheshire and the Wirral, will lecture on the scheme which has recently celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is a joint meeting with the Cheshire Civic Trust.



## Notes and Queries

**Linden Groves will be at the CGT Official Launch** at Arley Hall on 29 April with her new book *Historic Parks and Gardens of Cheshire*. The book covers 19 parks and gardens in the county. Although some gardens are still in a stunning condition, others may only be observed in outline and under grass (e.g. Gawsworth Old Hall).

The book looks at the changes in garden design, with some remarkable survivors of different styles.

Included are Gawsworth; Cholmondeley Castle; Dunham Massey; Adlington; Lyme Park; Tatton Park; Eaton; Arley; Crewe; Dorfold; Rode; Birkenhead, Queens and Grosvenor Parks; Mellor's Gardens; Peover; Ness; Thornton Manor and Port Sunlight; Tirley Garth.

The book is available, price £24.95, from Landmark Publishing Limited, Ashbourne Hall, Cokayne Avenue, Ashbourne, DE6 1EJ. Tel: 01335 347349. e-mail: [landmark@clara.net](mailto:landmark@clara.net).

### **Are you. or do you know, a Solicitor?**

CGT intends to register as a Company Limited By Guarantee as soon as possible. We have drafted the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Now, we need a solicitor to check this draft.

Do we have a volunteer among CGT members? Or a garden-loving solicitor-friend of members? Please support your Steering Committee!

Contact Barbara Wright 0161 – 434 7653 / [ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk).

### **Take part in the 'Step into Cheshire' event, 18/19 September.**

The aim is to encourage as many people as possible to celebrate Cheshire's superb countryside by joining in a whole range of countryside events and outdoor activities across the county.

You could take a picnic to your local park, go for a family bike ride, enjoy a day out at a country park or garden, go wildlife spotting, organise a local history walk round your village or town.

If you want to organise an event, or simply join in events that others are organising, then look for details on [www.visit-cheshire.com](http://www.visit-cheshire.com) or look in you local library or Tourist Information Centre.

For detailed access information on parks, gardens, etc visit [www.cheshireforall.com](http://www.cheshireforall.com).

**The Society of Garden Designers, NW Region** will be holding a seminar on naturalistic planting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2004 at the National Wildflower Centre, Court Hey Park, Liverpool.

Whilst researching their new book entitled *A New Naturalism*, Juliet Sargeant and Catherine Heatherington realised that this single heading encompassed an incredibly broad spectrum of styles and approaches. From Oudolf and Kingsbury to the gardens of Mary Reynolds' and HMP Leyhill at Chelsea – it is all 'naturalistic' but obviously very different in execution and effect. They will bring their thought provoking research to this workshop and will give an overview of this subject. There will be an opportunity to go into more detailed discussion so take a planting reference book.

Cost: £60.00 (inc. VAT) for SGD Members  
£105.00 (inc.VAT) for non members

### **Enquiries about bookings to:**

Gill Hinton, Administrator for SGD  
Society of Garden Designers,  
Katepwa House,  
Ashfield Park Avenue  
Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5AX  
Tel: 01989 566695 Fax: 01989 567676  
e-mail: [sgd@assocmanagement.co.uk](mailto:sgd@assocmanagement.co.uk)

### **Modern Gardens Open Day**

Saturday 26 June 2004

This event, sponsored by English Heritage, is an independent celebration of the RHS' 'Year of Gardening 2004'.

Around 250 gardens throughout the country will open. The aim is to highlight gardens of excellence that are wholly or substantially modern in conception, conviction and execution.

The initial list includes Arabella Lennox-Boyd's garden at Gresgarth in Lancashire. Also in is 17 Poplar Grove, Sale, but apart from this, the list is completely lacking in Cheshire Gardens!

If your garden fits the bill – or you know a garden that does – then contact the Co-ordinator, Tim Rook on 01993 831 439 (phone and fax) or e-mail [timrock.coordinator@witneyservice.net](mailto:timrock.coordinator@witneyservice.net).

And if you do, then let us know, too, so that we can advertise the event. Contact the Secretary on 0161 969 1099 or [Joy.Uings@care4free.net](mailto:Joy.Uings@care4free.net).

## Notes and Queries Cont.

**The Association of Gardens Trusts Annual Conference** will be hosted this year by the Yorkshire Gardens Trust.

The date is 3-5 September and the theme is 'The Enriched Landscape: Sculpture and Ornamentation'.

The venue is The White Hart Hotel, Cold Bath Road, Harrogate.

The programme includes visits to local gardens.

The full conference costs £255 (including accommodation) or £155 (excluding accommodation), but it is possible to book for just the Friday (reception, dinner and lecture - £40) or just the Saturday (lectures, visits, lunch and tea £60; dinner £30) or just the Sunday (lectures, visits, lunch and tea £30 or £36 if you are not an RHS member and need to pay for entrance to Newby Hall).

On the Saturday, there will be visits to Castle Howard (with a choice of 5 guided tours) and Nun Monkton.

On the Sunday there will be a lecture from May Sara 'Out of the Gallery: Contemporary Sculpture at Newby' followed by a visit to Newby Hall to see the stature gallery and sculpture trail.

For further information contact (between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.)

Helen Lazenby: Tel: 01423 770485 or

Karen Lynch: Tel: 01943 816747

### **You too can become a Friend of Ness Gardens.**

Eighty per cent of the subscriptions from members goes towards the upkeep of the Gardens, so this is a very effective way of helping to ensure this important garden continues to thrive.

Annual subscriptions are £20 Single Adult (£17 concession) and £35 Double Adult (£30 concession).

In addition to free entry to the gardens whenever you visit, you will receive the Newsletter 'The Gentian'. Among other things, this keeps you informed of developments within the garden and of all the special events that are held throughout the year.

There are coach trips to other gardens and exhibitions. This year Jan Bee Brown becomes Artist in Residence at Ness.

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May (10.00 a.m.) there will be a Bring and Buy Sale, including (at 10.30) an auction of unusual plants.

For more information, contact The Membership Office, Ness Botanic Gardens, Ness, Neston, CH64 4AY or telephone 0151 353 0123.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> annual Robert Penson Lecture on Garden History, St. John's College, Oxford, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2004.**

### **"The Englishness of Capability Brown."**

This year the lecture will be delivered by historic landscape consultant John Phibbs. John's lecture will follow on from his paper entitled "The Assassination of Capability Brown," given for the AGT and GHS in Warwickshire in 1994. He will discuss his current ideas and latest, as yet unpublished, research on Brown.

John hopes to tackle a range of subjects in the Penson Lecture including cricket, flowers, fox-hunts, France, Goths, turnpikes & the theory of garden history.

*Thanks to the generosity of St. John's, this lecture is free and open to all. It starts at 5pm. In previous years there has been a chance to visit the college gardens afterwards.*

### **The Parks and Gardens Data Partnership (PGDP)**

Working in partnership with English Heritage and the Department of Archaeology, University of York, the AGT is firming up its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

This is for a project which is designed to stimulate interest and deepen understanding and enjoyment of historic designed landscapes and green spaces throughout the UK. It will use volunteers to help in researching and recording parks and garden history, with the information being available on the Web.

The AGT and partners have been working on the bid since 2001. A Development Grant of £40,000 has already been made available by the HLF and this has enabled the Partnership to push forward with the Project.

**The Hardy Plant Society Cheshire and Friends Group** meets the first Monday of each month from October to April at 7.45 pm in Lach Dennis Village Hall.

If you are a plantaholic, this is a good group to join – speakers usually bring a good selection of plants for sale and members have plants for sale at each meeting, with some meetings specifically designed as plant sales.

For more information, contact Penny Ivell on 01606 331055.

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