



**CHESHIRE  
GARDENS TRUST**

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# Newsletter

[www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)

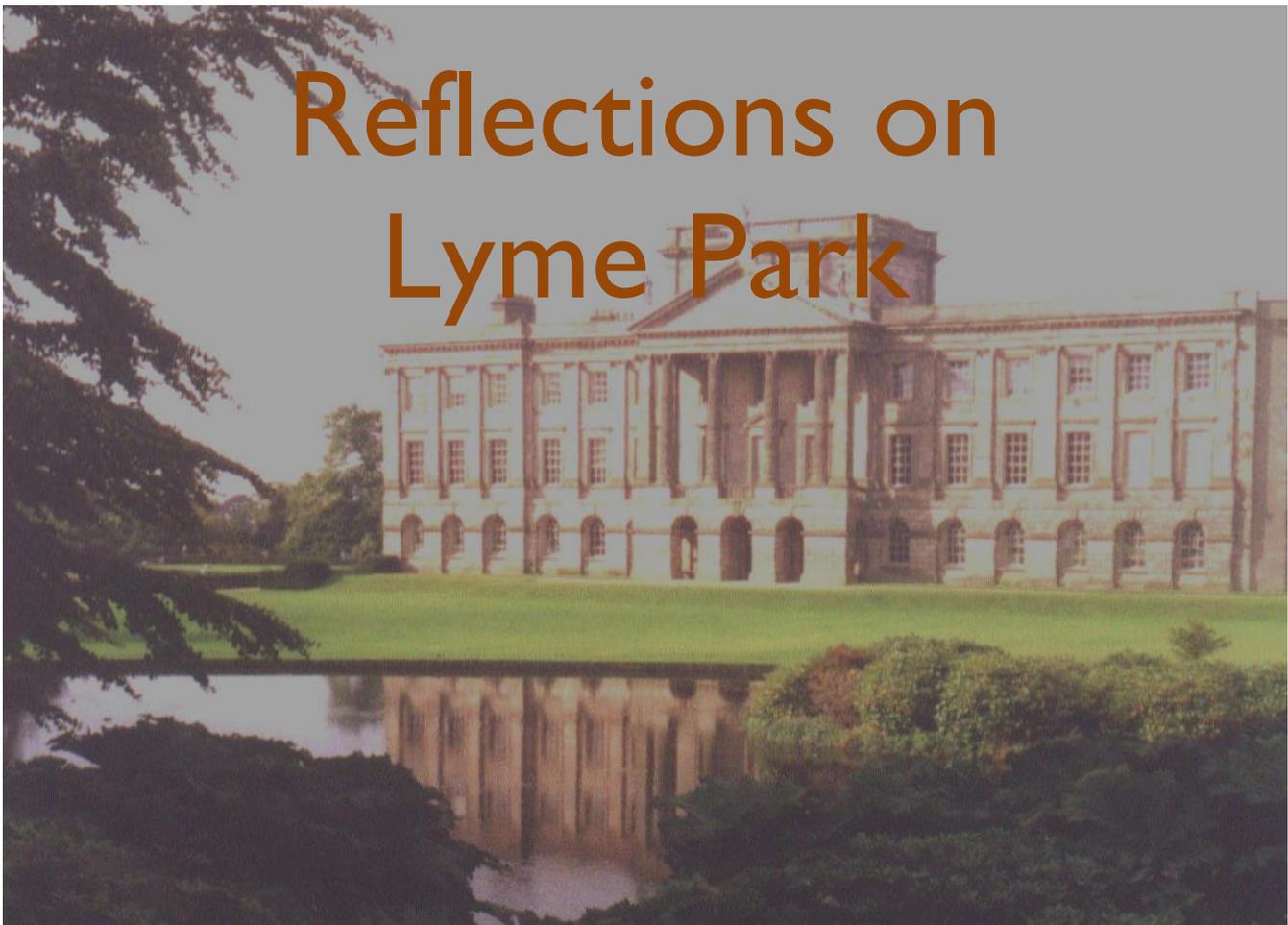
## **Inside:**

- ✿ A quiet spot in Cheshire
- ✿ Capesthorpe - 1850
- ✿ AGM Report
- ✿ Spring Lecture Report
- ✿ Book Reviews and coming events

## **Some future events:**

- ✿ New and old at Over Peover – May 20. Bring a picnic or opt for a pub lunch
- ✿ Rode Hall, Congleton plus the private garden at Boden Hall – June 25
- ✿ Summer picnic at Lyme Park; check out the details of our report, below – July 28

# Reflections on Lyme Park



*Head Gardener at Lyme Park, Gary Rainford, gave the following talk as an introduction to the gardens at Lyme Park, before we visit on Tuesday 28 July 2009.*

*This article is a slightly shortened version of his talk, (about 6 garden areas have been omitted), for reasons of space in the newsletter. We will produce the full set of notes for those who book for the visit.*

Gary was appointed as Head Gardener at Lyme in 1994. Prior to that he had been Head Gardener at Speke Hall, also owned by the National Trust (NT), overseeing the restoration of the gardens there.

His horticultural career began as an apprentice with Liverpool City Council. Gary's track record in restoration was obviously a factor in his appointment to Lyme, since this has been a major part of his work.

Gary has also overseen the restoration of the garden at another nearby NT-owned property, Quarry Bank Mill. He therefore wanted to show us how the gardens at Lyme have changed during his tenure – the ‘before’ and ‘after’ photographs – and explain some of the reasoning behind the changes.

### **Background**

The Legh family lived at Lyme for 600 years, having exchanged an annuity rewarded for service in the battle of Crecy, for land in the Macclesfield Forest. The battle is where part of the family crest - the severed arm waving a flag - originates.

The name ‘Lyme’ means a barrier or frontier, which is what this part of Cheshire always has been in relation to the Peak District. (‘Dee’ on the western side of Cheshire means roughly the same.)

Lyme Park sits in a valley right on the western edge of the Pennines at an altitude of 850’. The deer park covers some 1400 acres and the gardens about 19 acres. The house itself is the largest stately home in Cheshire.

In 1946 the Leghs gave Lyme to the NT as part of their death duties, an event which was repeated with a number of stately homes throughout the country where owners had died during World War II.

The NT leased the property to Stockport Borough Council for 100 years. However by 1994, Stockport felt that managing Lyme was not where their priorities should lie, and the Trust took on the management.

In 1994 the annual cost of managing the property was £660,000; in 2009 it is £1.2 million.

### **Restoration philosophy**

There is very little written evidence about the gardens, although there are some documents in the John Rylands Library.

Most of the evidence available for garden restoration has come from paintings and photographs. The NT owes a great debt to ‘Country Life’ which photographed, and so recorded, country houses, often at a time when few others were interested in them.

In 1995 the NT Gardens Panel assessed the gardens area by area, and recommended how each should be restored to their ‘heyday’ period. Of course the great question is always – what is the ‘heyday’?

Although the house dates from the Elizabethan period, in most cases at Lyme, the gardens have been restored to the Victorian one. Many areas also have mid-late

20<sup>th</sup> century planting created by Graham Stuart Thomas, the NT Gardens Advisor.

Gary said that the most important considerations in deciding upon the period of restoration are

- In accordance with the ‘Statement of Significance’ to consult ‘the spirit of the place’ – basically, to create something which is in sympathy with the rest of the gardens and its principal owners. This is an important part of NT policy.
- To create something which is feasible within the constraints of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in terms of maintenance commitment and visitor management. Three gardeners are now employed at Lyme; once there were seventeen. However, thankfully, the 3 are now assisted by 35 gardening volunteers and 60 garden stewards.
- Taking both the above points into account, to develop justifiable reasons for choosing one period and style.

Gary said that the NT is finally writing a Conservation Statement for Lyme, and this may again lead to areas of the gardens being reviewed.

He noted that NT gardens often receive attention **after** the houses and parks. For example, currently there is only a very basic garden guide available, and it does not explain the history and complexity of restoration for each area which is given below. Gary hopes to remedy this in the future.

### **Front of the house**

The earliest painting of the front of the house dates from 1670. This is now perhaps the least changed area of landscape –

- The Lime avenue and 4 Yews remain as in the painting; the Taxus have recently been reduced to 8’ cones, as in the picture
- The fence and gateposts also remain, the latter with their niches and integral chimneys which kept the servants warm whilst waiting for carriages, (important at a location like Lyme!)
- The surface is currently cobbled, but the likely original gritstone is inappropriate since it is too fragile for present levels of use and breaks up, generating grit which travels into the house; a resin-bonded gravel may eventually replace the cobbles.

### **View through the courtyard**

This is the first view of the garden, and the eye is



*Talks give members a chance to catch up with each others’ news over a cup of tea.*

drawn by an avenue of Lime up Park Moor, through the woods to a viewpoint. Fourteen years ago it was not possible to see this view.

The woods were thinned and the Limes trimmed back to recreate it. Obviously this work now has to be repeated to maintain the view. It is thought that this was probably a 'crow's foot', with a number of views radiating from this single point.

### **Italianate parterre**

A Dutch garden in 1720 with a cascade similar to Chatsworth, this area was re-designed in 1860.

- Clipped Irish Ivy, *Hedera hibernica*, forms the outline to each bed and remains. This enclosed another clipped line of green or variegated Box. The drains were blocked and so the garden had become cold and wet, causing the Ivy to deteriorate and the Box to die. A new drainage system was installed. The replacement Box did not survive, due to attack by Box blight imported on the plants.
- Spring and summer bedding schemes are enclosed by the Ivy. This is planted in blocks of a single species per bed, typical of 'high Victorian bedding' in country houses. (Parks often had more complicated schemes, using multiple species.) Daffodils are used in preference to Tulips, since the mice are particularly partial to Tulip bulbs!
- The family took the statues from the garden and urns from the top of the buttress wall in 1946; the replacements are reconstituted stone. Again, wildlife intervenes and the squirrels remove plants from the urns, throwing them onto visitors below. So currently they are architectural only and contain gravel.

### **Terrace**

This area of formal bedding in turf sits between the dining room and the orangery, over a passage to the kitchen. It is effectively a roof garden, with a very shallow depth of soil (4").

Ninety years ago half the area was converted to gravel, and this area has only recently been replaced with bedding/turf.

The sundial (currently being restored) is unusual, since it gives minutes as well as hours, and was used to set all the clocks in the house.

The view from the dining room is up through Lantern Wood to a folly. If they could see the folly, the family knew it was worth going out hunting!

### **Orangery**

Designed by Wyatt and built 1813-25, modified by Derbyshire in 1865, with under-floor pipes and a heated wall. Light levels at this altitude are not consistent enough for Citrus and so it became a conservatory.

The Figs and Camellias on the wall are original and

therefore some 130 years old. The Camellias are both *C. japonica* (cultivars unknown) and red, one single and one double.

As old cultivars they retain their flowers, and Gary therefore tries to prune them as soon as possible after flowering. They are high maintenance, requiring 3500L of water per day and lots of fertiliser.

The conservatory is unheated now, so planting has to be 'in the spirit' of a Victorian scheme, rather than a replica. It includes scented *Rhododendron*, *Itea salicifolia* and *Abutilon*.

### **Sunken garden**

A design for this area was shown on a Wyatt plan of 1813, but it had been used by the family as a tennis court and then became a car park.

Was the Wyatt garden ever created?

A £50,000 donation enabled Gary to answer this question, with removal of the car park and archaeology.

Not only was the 1830 design found, (its edging stones), but the original 1670 one too!

There was no 1813 planting plan, so plants of that period were sourced and an 'English garden' created. It may have been a 'Ladies garden' as it had lots of paths and was close to the house.

### **Kitchen garden**

A large range of Victorian glasshouses was removed by Stockport Borough Council, and the kitchen garden is currently not used as such.

The NT is promoting local food and wants to develop allotments at as many of its properties as possible. Allotments may be the next stage in the history of this part of the garden.

### **Reflection lake**

The lake is so named since it was designed to do just that – provide a large, broad, calm surface, sheltered by trees, in which to reflect the whole of the rear of the house. (It is however smaller than originally designed.)

For this purpose the lake only needs to be shallow, so it is less than knee-depth for much of its outer reaches.

It is also heavily silted, reducing its depth further, and the NT aims to drain and clean it eventually.

So, ladies, you may be surprised and disappointed to know that Colin Firth (Mr. Darcy) was filmed near a pond in the park but he actually dived into a tank of water! Can we ever believe the BBC again?

Gary was an excellent speaker and we very much look forward to our visit on **Tuesday 28 July at 2pm**.

We will be able to picnic in the Park beforehand. Further details and booking forms will be sent out in due course.

**Maria Luczak**

# The AGM and Spring Lecture

## Trafford Hall Gardens

On Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March, nearly 40 members of CGT gathered at Trafford Hall, near Chester, for the AGM and Spring Lecture. It was cold, but the rain held off as we began by taking a tour of the gardens and grounds.

We split into two groups, each headed by one of the two part-time gardeners. Trafford Hall is a charity and money is tight, so there is a lot of reliance on volunteers. [If you live in the area and would like to offer your services, they would be pleased to hear from you.]

Despite the lack of resources, the gardens are being slowly developed. An avenue of fruit trees has gone in to a field and leads up to the pond which has formed in the marl-pit.

[Am I the only person who didn't know what 'marl' is? I finally got round to looking it up and it is "*An earthy deposit, typically loose and unconsolidated and consisting chiefly of clay mixed with calcium carbonate, formed in prehistoric seas and lakes and long used to improve the texture of sandy or light soil.*"]

Trafford Hall is a residential centre and plays host to various groups from disadvantaged backgrounds. This sometimes includes children and we were shown the area which they are hoping to turn into a garden for them. The hope being that the other garden areas will suffer less as a result.

As always, members were keen to hear of the trials and tribulations faced by the gardeners and were ready with suggestions for plants in areas where improvements are planned.

The tour completed, we sat down for some very welcome refreshments, before entering the hall for the AGM.



Above: The sunken garden at Trafford Hall

## Chair's address and elections to Council

Ed Bennis, the Chair of the CGT welcomed everyone and ran through some of the events of the past year: the very successful trip to Belgium (perhaps Germany next time?); the sterling work being done by members

of the research and recording groups; the work of the conservation and planning group – not always successful as we had just heard that planning applications in Nantwich (for the walled gardens) and Didsbury (for the Marie Louise Gardens) had been approved, despite our objections.

The Newsletter continues to be, in the words of the Chair "one of the best produced by the Gardens Trusts". It always carries a range of items, but new contributors are always welcome.

The Trust has been re-branded with a new logo: Council is keen to see that CGT promotes new gardens and landscapes just as much as it seeks to preserve the best of the historic gardens.

The book on Cheshire gardens by Tim Mowl (see last year's Spring Lecture report) had been published. For the first time, Tim had included public parks: it could be said that the influence of CGT had broadened his approach. Copies of the book were available.

Ed passed round copies of the new CGT leaflet, asking that each member sign up one new member in the coming year – perhaps as a gift. He concluded by remarking that the Council relies upon the membership – to say what is needed and to get involved in any small way that they can.

Elections to Council followed. Ruth Brown and Heather Turner were standing down, according to the rules of the Trust, but were both willing to be re-elected. Christine Wilcox-Baker also offered her services. These three were duly elected to the Council.

## Presentation: The Caldwell Archives

CGT member Pat Alexander has been working on digitising the Caldwell archives for nearly two years. She gave the meeting some background information on her work.

The Caldwell nursery was in Knutsford and the Cheshire Records Office holds archive material in the form of ledgers dating back to 1789. The nursery supplied plants, seeds, etc. to most of the county.

Very few nurseries existed prior to 1700 and they increased slowly, mostly around London. In Cheshire, the first known one was run by John Nixon, dating from 1759 and it was to John Nixon that William Caldwell was apprenticed, in 1780.

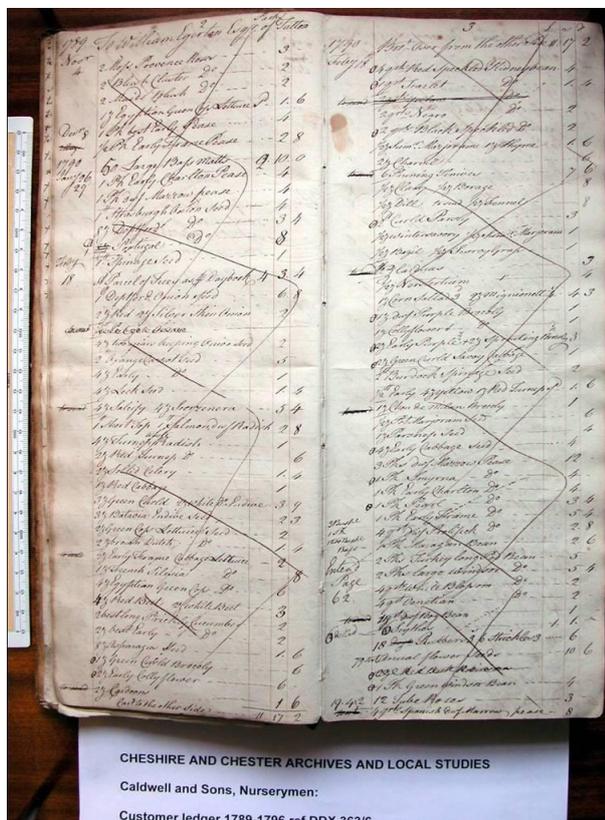
Caldwell's father had a nursery in Knowsley and William (the first of seven in succession to bear that name) started his Knutsford-based business in 1789, when he sold predominantly vegetables. Later ledgers tell of a greater variety of plants.

All the ledgers have been photographed and it is from these photos that Pat is working – listing out every line. The aim of the project is to eventually have the

whole of the archive available on the internet for wide accessibility.

There is also a short-term aim, for which volunteers are needed – and that is to look at the list of customers, to try to identify them and their gardens and to re-create their back-story.

Anyone interested in helping in transferring the information onto computers or in searching out information about customers, should contact Pat on [patriciaalexander@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:patriciaalexander@tiscali.co.uk) or any member of the Council.



Above: a page from a Caldwell ledger

### Presentation: Massey Hall

Maria Luczak is a member of the conservation and planning group and explained how CGT got to know about Massey Hall (see October newsletter). The story highlighted the importance of networks.

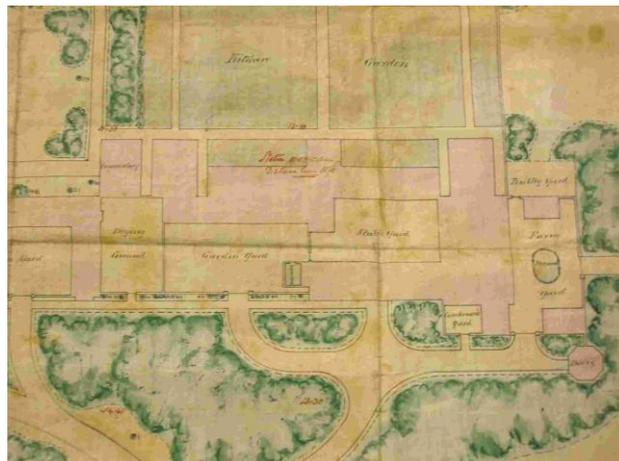
Apart from being a valuable member of CGT, Maria also belongs to a local history group. She attended a lecture given by Mike Taylor about Thelwall, which remained rural though still local to Warrington. That made it just the place for wealthy business men to make their homes.

Mike Taylor lives opposite Massey Hall. He mentioned, as an aside, that it had been a special school which was going to be closed. That would mean change. Maria's ears pricked up and she donned her CGT 'hat'

Mike mentioned a roll of plans and suggested they go for a look. At Warrington library they were told the plans couldn't be found! But persistence won through and eventually they were unearthed.

A canal runs along one side of the estate and roads on

two other sides, so the park is very visible. With a photo of the plans in her hand, Maria walked round the site and was amazed to find it is all still there.



Above: one of the plans from yesteryear  
and  
below: some of the trees today



As a garden historian, Maria was able to tell Mike what he didn't know – which is that the park has great significance because the plans were an Edward Kemp design.

The house was up for auction. That would mean Developers. And the possible loss of an historic site. CGT sent a letter to Warrington Borough Council. Because historic designed landscapes are a specialist area, it is important that CGT help local planners who are unlikely to have this specialism.

There was silence! But the letter had had its effect. In January, Mike reported that the Borough Council had surveyed the park and put Tree Preservation Orders on just about every tree in the park.

CGT has also contacted English Heritage and asked them to put the park on the Register of Parks and Gardens. This application is still being progressed.

Maria concluded by saying there are three ways for members to help the conservation and planning team:

- Keep an eye on local papers and local planning applications.
- Be aware of what is in your area; read local history books, walk the area, note down gardens.
- Use your local knowledge – CGT depends upon it. Together we can act as an effective network.

## Presentation: The Accounts

Although the accounts had been sent out to members, this presentation provided the same information, but in visual form.

Gross income included all the receipts from events, but there were costs attached to these, so the income was shown net as well.

The greatest expenditure is on the Newsletter and on Publicity.

The budget for the coming year showed a surplus of £338. However, results depended on assumptions coming true – renewal of membership; surplus on events, etc.

The expenditure on the Newsletter had been heavy. However, for the coming year, People First Housing Association would be allowing this to be printed at cost and in addition, the first £30 for each issue would be discounted. This was a very welcome and much appreciated gesture.

The presentation concluded with consideration of membership rates and renewal methods. Jacqui Jaffé had looked into direct debits, and had found that they were simply not cost effective for the current membership numbers.

Instead we would be offering standing orders. This would make it easier for membership renewals. But members would need to take positive action if membership rates changed, it was suggested that an increase by made this year, with a view to keeping the

rates steady for at least three years.

The meeting agreed to increase single membership from £14 to £15, and joint/family membership from £20 to £22.

## Presentation: The Awayday

Tina Theis explained that the presentations just made and the additional information on finance were all a direct result of the Awayday held in January.

It had been clear that we need to communicate more effectively about what is being done.

Some long-term issues came up, relating to funding and staffing, and these will be dealt with in due course, but some of the short-term items are already being dealt with.

One proposal was for open meetings for each area of the Trust's work. There will be a research field day at Tabley in April and a conservation and planning open meeting will be organised.

The open Events meeting had already been held. Members had discussed how to expand and extend what is currently done. Sam Youd will be looking at how CGT can work more closely with the Gardens of Distinction. There will be repeat visits to gardens at different times of the year and we will occasionally venture outside the county. There should be another European trip and more "how-to" horticultural events. Thanks were due to all the events team and to all who had opened their gardens for the Trust and written reports for the newsletter.

CGT 2009 Annual Spring lecture given by Jane Bradney

## Biddulph Grange:

### A Nineteenth Century attack on Charles Darwin?

'A personal view, deliberately contentious' was how our speaker, Jane Bradney, prefaced her lecture - which is just the sort of thing we like to hear at a CGT AGM. Remember Professor Tim Mowl last year ....?

Jane introduced us to four Victorian characters – the main players in an intriguing tale of God, geology and gardens.

First we have James and Maria Bateman – creators of the iconic garden at Biddulph Grange; then Edward William Cooke, polymath and friend of the Batemans and last, but not least, Charles Darwin himself.

A cast of incidental characters includes Edward Kemp, Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins and Richard Owen, who was Darwin's main critic at the time.

James Bateman was an accomplished horticulturalist with a life-long passion for orchids. His wife, Maria (who came originally from Arley Hall) had a particular interest in herbaceous plants, especially lilies. Many plants bear the name Batemaniae - an indication of her influence in the horticultural world.

Interestingly, there appears to be no known picture of Maria Bateman, so she remains rather a mysterious figure.

The Batemans were also keen plant collectors and had the funds to commission plant hunters to seek out rare and interesting specimens from around the world. The gardens at Biddulph Grange were designed to display this extensive collection.

The third character Jane introduced was Edward William Cooke, a polymath whose many talents included marine painting, garden design and a serious knowledge of geology.

He had a family connection with Loddiges – one of the biggest plant nurseries of the day - and it is thought that Bateman and Cooke met via the nursery.

They became friends and shared an interest in fossils and geology as well as horticulture and garden design. Cooke worked with the Batemans on design of the gardens at Biddulph.

Our fourth main character is Charles Darwin.

Most of us are familiar with at least some of his ideas about evolution and the origin of species. The first edition of *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 and sold out immediately.

Darwin challenged the idea that divine intervention explained man's progress; suggesting instead that natural selection was the primary explanation for the development of species. Unsurprisingly, this caused considerable religious and political controversy at the time.

So how do these four characters link together and how does the garden fit into the story? Jane suggested that the gardens at Biddulph Grange developed as a series of ideas that could be read as a challenge to Darwin's ideas.

The gardens were laid out before the 1859 publication of the *Origin of Species*, so it is impossible that they started out as a direct confrontation.

Rather they are evidence of the conflict between our protagonists' deeply-held religious beliefs and emerging science.

Interestingly, the Batemans welcomed the public, often waived the entrance fee and would willingly open specially for visitors who had come far; but the gardens were *never* open on a Sunday. Again, we can see this as confirmation of strong religious convictions.

From 1856, the garden designer, Edward Kemp published a series of seven articles about Biddulph in the *Gardener's Chronicle*.



In one, he describes the Geological Gallery through which one entered the gardens. It was divided into six sections which represented the six days of creation; each displaying examples of rock strata and fossils from different epochs, seemingly in an attempt to show how millions of years could be accommodated by the story of creation.

The Geological Gallery was probably created at about the same time as publication of the *Origin of Species* and again, Jane thought it unlikely to be a direct attack on Darwin, rather it reflected the uncertainties of the times. In particular, she felt it reflected the Batemans' attempt to reconcile theology and geology.

The Gallery ends at day six, at which point the visitor enters the gardens proper – God rests on the seventh

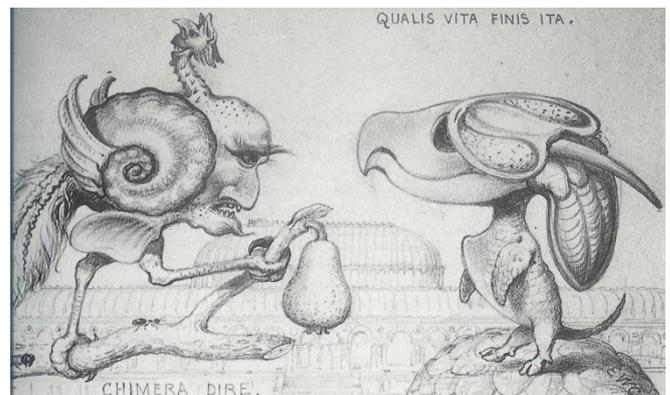
day, while man is active. This could be read as Bateman's attempt to capture and exhibit man's history and culture around the world using themed gardens - Egyptian, Chinese etc. Cooke travelled widely through Egypt and both the hieroglyphs and temple architecture have an air of authenticity rather than pastiche.

There are many statues of pagan gods throughout the gardens where one might have expected classical statuary in the 1850s. Again, Jane suggested that this was intended to highlight man's religious development through history.

At least one of these statues – a gilded water buffalo in the Chinese garden – was by Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins.

He was a sculptor and anatomist who worked closely with Richard Owen, founder of the Natural History Museum, and one of the main voices opposing Darwin's new theories. Owen and Waterhouse Hawkins collaborated on the creation of the famous, life-sized sculptures of dinosaurs for the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851.

Thus, Waterhouse Hawkins aligned himself with Owen against Darwin. Cooke too, went on to throw down the gauntlet by drawing a series of grotesque animals clearly intended to caricature Darwin's theories of evolution.



And James and Maria Bateman, by creating their own version of the six days of creation, are also challenging the emerging science of the time.

Jane concluded her fascinating and thought-provoking lecture by recognising that though Biddulph Grange is a something of a conundrum, it is also a very beautiful garden.

Jane Bradney is a garden and landscape historian. Her doctorate explored 'The Italian Garden in England from 1787 to 1863'. She is particularly interested in the work of Humphry Repton, the Picturesque Movement and nineteenth century English gardens. She is a keen gardener and lives in south Herefordshire.

We hope to organise a visit to Biddulph Grange next year. The Geological gallery is undergoing restoration but we will try to arrange access.

**Tina Theis**

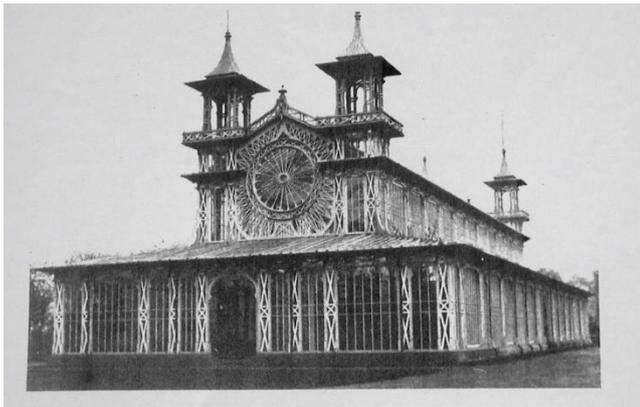
## Manchester and the Royal Horticultural Society 1869

In 1998 the Royal Horticultural Society (R.H.S.) came to Tatton Park and a new regional annual show was born.

This was not however the first time that the R.H.S. had come to the region.

In 1868, Lt. Col. Scott wrote on behalf of the R.H.S. to the Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society (M.B.H.) proposing that the Manchester should be the site for their next show in the provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Prince Albert had suggested in 1861 that the R.H.S. should stage provincial flower shows to encourage the practice of horticulture. Two previous shows had been held with success, in 1867, in Bury St. Edmunds and, in 1868, in Leicester.<sup>2</sup>



*The New Exhibition House, opened 1854, designed by Thomas Worthington for The Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society (Source: The Builder, 6 November 1854, p. 11) – “Quite outrageous, but interesting”, says Ann*

In July 1869 they wanted to move North and stage the show in the Manchester Botanic Garden with ‘mutual guarantees’; in return for providing the venue the Manchester Society would have a ‘mutual share of profits’.<sup>3</sup>

Unwilling to take the sole risk, the council of the M.B.H. wrote to the Council of the Manchester Agricultural Society asking if they would donate £600 towards the enterprise and in return they would have a half of the Botanical Society’s profits.<sup>4</sup>

Things did not go well.

On 25 January 1869 a deputation from London arrived to discuss the prize fund. No agreement could be reached and the Society’s minutes show that on 8 February only £25 was forwarded to London.<sup>5</sup>

Further correspondence resulted in the M.B.H. agreeing to match the £600 to be provided by the R.H.S., but they would not increase their donation to the special prizes.<sup>6</sup> They still required an equal share of the profit and if that was forthcoming they would place the Garden at ‘the disposal of the Royal Horticultural Society’.

There was however a final condition - all the M.B.H. subscribers were to have free entry. The R.H.S. replied on 16 April in the negative as they were convinced profits were doubtful if so many were allowed free entry.<sup>7</sup>

The Manchester Council were adamant, families could not be excluded from their own garden, so on that basis they withdrew their offer to share the costs.

With the date of the show growing ever more imminent, these disagreements drew the attention of the national gardening press. On 19 May, *The Gardener’s Chronicle* published a letter from Bruce Findlay, the curator of the Manchester Botanic Garden.

He informed readers that subscribers were always free to their own shows and these always generated profits so why would allowing them free entry to the R.H.S. show result in a loss?<sup>8</sup>

He pointed out that the Manchester Society already held impressive annual shows so the R.H.S. show would be ‘no novelty’ and he wished them well in their new venue. For, not to be defeated, the R.H.S. had arranged to join in the Agricultural Society’s annual show opening on 19 July.

A happy outcome one would suppose, in fact the reality for the R.H.S. proved otherwise.

*The show itself, as a whole, may be said to have been one of average quality ... the local arrangements were anything but good. ... The agriculturalists were to have it all their own way. ...*

<sup>1</sup> Elliott, *The Royal Horticultural Society*, pp. 338 - 339.

<sup>2</sup> Findlay would have been aware of these arrangements and they may have been the source for his own scheme of guarantors. Incidentally, Bury St. Edmunds did have a botanical garden.

<sup>3</sup> Elliott, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> The Manchester Agricultural Society was founded in 1767 and offered annual premiums for ‘useful discoveries’. There was an annual exhibition of cattle and agricultural implements. See: Joseph Aston, *A Picture of Manchester*, Manchester, 1816, p.180; Benjamin Love, *Manchester as it is*, Manchester, 1839, p.123.

<sup>5</sup> MBH 2/1/4, *Minutes*, 8 February, 1869. At this meeting the Society is able to pay £1,785 to the bank to reduce the debt. Though the minutes of 14 December, 1868, had noted they approached the Lancashire Insurance Company with a view to extending the mortgage.

<sup>6</sup> MBH 2/1/4, *Minutes*, 8 March, 1868.

<sup>7</sup> MBH 2/1/4, *Minutes*, 16 April, 1869. See also: Elliott, *The Royal Horticultural Society*, fn. 12, p. 415. This gives the references for the Council Minutes relating to the Manchester Show.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Letters’, *Gardener’s Chronicle*, 8 May, 1869. See also: *Gardener’s Chronicle*, 15 May, 1869, p. 528. Announcement that the R.H.S. would join with the Agricultural Show on a site in Old Trafford, not with the Botanical and Horticultural Society at their gardens.

*Poor horticulture was pushed on one side in a remote corner and access was on foot. ... it is still a fact that the arrangements were bad.*<sup>9</sup>

When the Prince and Princess of Wales had visited on the Wednesday, they had been the main attraction, so much so, that any visitor who wanted to see the floral displays could do so 'with tolerable facility'; though there were many gaps as several exhibitors had not arrived.

The show's main review appeared later in the same issue of the *Gardener's Chronicle* and was not quite as damning and concentrated on reporting the classes and prize winners. The disappointment was compounded by expectations that the show would have been a notable one due to the 'great reputation of the local exhibitions held in the "Cotton Metropolis".'<sup>10</sup>

One of the competitors felt the report was overlong and commented, 'I have been one of your chief exhibitors for thirty years: I have just returned from Manchester; it was simply a big muddle and a big failure.'<sup>11</sup> He pointed out the R.H.S. had 'refused the co-operation of the Manchester horticulturalists' and it seemed to him that the Council lived in:

*... a very elevated atmosphere, and do not really understand the practical workings of such matters. Dukes and Lords give a flavour to the Society but we want some good practical horticulturalists.*<sup>12</sup>

Though the Manchester Council refused to co-operate in staging the show, the press reports reveal that they did donate prizes for some of the floral classes as did other local organizations. These included the City of Manchester, the Manchester Guardian, Manchester Courier, Examiner and Times, local nurserymen and many individual proprietors of the Botanic garden.<sup>13</sup>

The Manchester National Horticultural Exhibition of 1869 was another resounding success for the MBH Society and the report in *The Gardener* claimed; 'This is now the great Horticultural Exhibition of the Midland districts ... a gathering from all parts of the kingdom.'<sup>14</sup>

At its 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting on 17 January, 1870; 'The Council regretted that the Royal Horticultural Society

did not hold its July Exhibition in the gardens; but it was imperative to preserve the rights of the proprietors and subscribers.'<sup>15</sup>

The Council seemed to have right on their side as the accounts were in profit and their debt had been reduced by £1,000. In addition, they had managed to build a new orchid house at a cost of £230 14s 8d. for the income for the year had been over £4,000.

Though the argument with the R.H.S. might have been avoided, this was not the first time that the two Societies had been in conflict. Their previous dispute may explain the stance taken by both parties in 1869.

In 1866 a small problem had arisen between Manchester and the R.H.S. because the dates of their respective shows would clash. A letter in the *Gardener's Chronicle* had contained an opinion not favourable to the R.H.S.:

*... two great flower shows are fixed to come off at the same time. For many reasons this is to be regretted. Manchester folk have been ... making a noble effort to secure a grand show in June next. ... Both the Royal Botanic Society and the Committee of the York Floral Fete have evinced a friendly spirit in avoiding a clash with the Manchester Show.*<sup>16</sup>

The minutes of 14 January 1867, recorded that Findlay went to London to consult about a change of dates for the R.H.S.<sup>17</sup> No alterations were forthcoming and fortunately for Manchester this did not deter the famous plant nurseries in London and the South of England from exhibiting their plants.<sup>18</sup>

A revealing explanation was given the following December when it became clear the two shows would clash again in 1868. The R.H.S. Great Spring Show was part of the London Season and, the RHS made clear, the dates were constrained as, 'Epsom and Ascot, and other metropolitan shows, left the Society no alternative.'<sup>19</sup>

An article in a Scottish magazine, *The Gardener* August 1868, also mentioned this point when the editor explained that the Royal Caledonian Society would hold an Autumn Exhibition of fruit as they were not well served earlier in the year as:

<sup>9</sup> 'Editorial', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 24 July, 1869, p.785

<sup>10</sup> 'Societies Royal Horticultural', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 24 July, 1869, pp. 790 -793

<sup>11</sup> 'The Manchester Show', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 31 July, 1869, p.817

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* See: Elliott, *The Royal Horticultural Society*, p. 338 -341, 'Regional Shows: 1867-1873 and after'.

<sup>13</sup> 'Royal Horticultural Society's Great Provincial Show at Manchester', *The Gardener*, September 1869, pp. 422 - 433. A full list of the prizes was included and shows that their were prizes for cottagers classes.

<sup>14</sup> 'Societies', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 29 May, 1869. The report of the 1869 National Horticultural Exhibition was described as 'the best ever held in Manchester.'

<sup>15</sup> 'Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Show', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 22 January, 1870, p. 112. At the same meeting a vote was again taken on Sunday opening and defeated by 119 votes to 183.

<sup>16</sup> Letter, *Gardener's Chronicle*, 12 January, 1867, p. 30. The author was A. Pettigrew, Brighton Grove Manchester.

<sup>17</sup> MBH 2/1/4, *Minutes*, 14 January, 1867

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> 'The Manchester National Horticultural Exhibition', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 21 December, 1867, p.1293.

The great London Societies are by force of circumstances compelled to have their exhibitions during the London season ... The English provincial Societies generally hold their exhibitions to suit the early summer holidays.<sup>20</sup>

The *Gardener's Chronicle* described the MBH Exhibition on 15 June in fulsome terms. In addition to its own report, the article pointed out that they had received articles praising the show from readers from the

whole of Great Britain. Findlay was given the credit for the success of 'a grand exhibition ... and from the immense influx of visitors by which the garden is thronged ...'.<sup>21</sup>

Fortunately for the R.H.S., their show at Tatton in 1998 proved a great success and has become an annual feature of the Northern 'season' and continues to go from strength to strength.

**Ann Brooks**

20 'International Fruit Show', *The Gardener*, August 1868, p. 360

21 'Societies', *Gardener's Chronicle*, 15 June 1867, p. 632

## This year's RHS Show Tatton Park will run from 22-26 July

### A quiet spot in Cheshire

It has been said that a landscape is like a palimpsest, traces of its former history surviving through the centuries, and this is true of the ten acres or so of land just outside Frodsham which is now known as Castle Park.

Originally the marshes, now just visible across the M56, came almost to the foot of Frodsham Hill, leaving a narrow strip of land for traffic to and from Wales.

It was therefore strategically important and this may have been the reason why William the Conqueror gave the manor of Frodsham to his nephew, Hugh d'Avranches, a ruthlessly efficient Norman earl nicknamed 'Hugh Lupus' (Hugh the Wolf).

He was described by Orderic Vitalis as 'so much a slave to the gluttony of his belly that, weighed down by his fat, he could hardly move. From harlots he had many children of both sexes, who almost all came to an unfortunate end.'

There is no memento of this interesting character at Castle Park, though an earth bank may have been the site of the archery butts where his soldiers practised. Neither is there anything left by Dafydd ap Gruffydd, brother of Llewellyn the Great.

When the line of Norman Earls of Chester died out, the manor of Frodsham reverted to the Crown, and Edward I gave it to Dafydd in an attempt to keep him loyal. Dafydd turned against Edward, however, and after he was captured he was sentenced to death and was the first person in England to be hung, drawn and quartered as a traitor.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1283, at Shrewsbury, Dafydd was first hanged as a thief, then cut down and revived so he could watch his entrails cut out and burnt to show he was an incendiary and a homicide. Then he was beheaded.

His limbs were then cut into four parts and exposed in various parts of England: the right arm with a ring on the finger in York; the left arm in Bristol; the right leg and hip at Northampton and the left leg at Hereford.

His head was bound with iron to prevent it falling to pieces and set on a spear shaft in London.

However, Dafydd did leave the town of Frodsham with one reason to think of him with gratitude, because it was he who obtained permission from the king for a weekly market to be held in Frodsham. So he should be remembered every Thursday when the bustling market fills Main Street.

Throughout the mediaeval period Castle Park was the centre of administration for Frodsham. The surrounding acres provided springs of fresh drinking water and the watercourses which powered the mills which ground the corn can still be traced.

Centuries later the springs were bursting through tarmac used to cover a car park.

The manor of Frodsham probably had a fortified manor house which never rose to the dignity of a real castle, though in the period of the 'Great Rebuilding' between 1540 and 1640, between the early reign of Henry VIII and the English Civil War, the house may have been extended or even rebuilt, and there are references for the first time to 'Frodsham Castle'.

Work on the house between 1612 and 1614 included decorating, plastering and mending the chimneys.

By this time the manor had been bought by Sir Thomas Savage, who as landlord certainly lived up to his name.

It has been said of Sir Thomas that 'his maxim would appear to be that a man's actions need not be lawful or just, provided that they appeared to be so.'

As soon as he had bought the estate, the bailiff was instructed to increase all the long-term rents.

'He (Sir Walter) denied the right of anybody in the parish to hold land unless they had indisputable written proof of title to use the land.

'As few, if any, could do this, virtually the whole parish and, in particular, the burgesses, were dispossessed on the spot.'

The people of Frodsham demanded a Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of the Savages. Unfortunately for their tenants, every member of the commission was either a friend or relative of the Savages!

The townspeople refused to take part in the Inquiry and there were frequent outbursts of violence between them and the estate officials.

Sir Walter's son John, Earl Rivers, was also a harsh landlord and when he died in 1654 the manor house at Frodsham was burnt down over his corpse.

Because of the bad feeling between landowner and tenants, Castle Park was virtually abandoned, only the blackened ruin marking what had been the most important building in Frodsham after the church.

A misleading engraving by the Buck brothers, dated 1727, is largely responsible for the belief that there was once a castle in Castle Park.

The engraving is vague and imaginative and it is difficult to tell where the castle is meant to be situated, as the ruin seems to be suspended in mid-air somewhere over the marshes.

But times changed.

The Industrial Revolution produced men who grew rich through their own efforts without the help of noble blood, and in 1794 the estate, then known as Park Place, was sold to Daniel Ashley, who had first come to Frodsham as a solicitor's clerk.

Now the area was about to become a private gentleman's house and grounds. Daniel Ashley built a new house which is still basically the house which is standing today and he died there in 1841.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the estate was owned by two wealthy, self-made men. Joseph Stubs of Warrington retired to Frodsham in 1851 to indulge his passion for gardening and collecting rare flowers, having made a fortune equal to several million modern pounds with his tool-making firm. When he died ten years later the estate was bought by Edward Abbott Wright, a cotton manufacturer from Oldham who renamed the estate 'Castle Park'.

Stubs definitely made the strongest imprint on the estate. He had the house extensively remodelled and then had the gardens laid out by Edward Kemp, who included a description of them in his book, "How to Lay Out a Garden".



Railways were a new complication for landscapers at this time as the network began to cover the country,

but Kemp was particularly pleased by the way the railway embankment at Park Place became a positive asset when planted with trees and shrubs and pointed out that it screened the grounds from north and north-west winds.



The layout of the buildings was designed to distance the owners of the house as far as possible from the townspeople of Frodsham.

Nearest to the town was a farmhouse with a farmyard and a nearby vegetable garden so that the estate was virtually self-sufficient in fresh food.

With the farm noises and smells as far away as possible, the next building was the stables, topped by an imposing clock which is still working.

Then came the footmen's cottage, and finally the big house, with the family rooms facing the sweeping lawns and giving maximum privacy from the town.

This privacy would have helped one of Edward Abbott Wright's daughters when one night she knotted her bedclothes together, tied them to the bedpost, climbed out the window and eloped with a solicitor of whom her father disapproved.

All the buildings still survive, though they have been converted to other uses. The stable block, for example, is now the Castle Park Arts Centre.

The Wrights do not appear to have made any drastic alterations to Kemp's garden, and historians are grateful to them for a set of photographs taken in 1899 which shows the gardens in their full glory.

With the help of a Heritage Lottery Grant, these photographs will soon be available on the [A2A.org.uk](http://A2A.org.uk) website. The lawnmower shown in some of the photographs was horse-drawn, and pads made from the housekeeper's old felt hats protected the lawn from its hoofs.

After the death of Edward Abbott Wright in 1891 his two unmarried daughters continued to live at Castle Park. When the last surviving daughter died in 1931, the family found themselves with an unwanted large house and garden.

They solved the problem by presenting the house and its grounds to Runcorn Rural District Council 'for the use, enjoyment and benefit of the inhabitants of the Rural District of Runcorn,' and so Castle Park entered

a new incarnation, that of public park, and the house provided offices for the council.

In addition to the wells and watercourses, the mounds that may have been archery butts, the trees planted by Kemp, the buildings whose uses have changed with society's needs, there are apparently less tangible traces of the past.

People alone in Castle Park House have heard footsteps crossing the floor and coming down the stairs.

In the grounds, Jenny Greenteeth lurks in the pond, waiting to drag down and devour unwary children.

Vague white shapes sometimes flit across the paths, and terrified visitors have sworn that they were aware of something or someone unseen standing beside them.

After the reorganisation of local government in 1975, Castle Park became the responsibility of Vale Royal.

As a park it has been a great success. Local people enjoy wandering through its flowerbeds, lawns and woods, which in 2002 were added by English Heritage to the register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

There are facilities for sporting activities such as bowls, the vegetable garden has become tennis courts, and children love the playground.

As the water table sank, the fish pond became a car park, though the elegant balustrade and the steps down to the pool are still there.

But Vale Royal found it an expensive responsibility. The house was deteriorating and there were rumours that it might be sold and turned into flats or a hotel, or just left to fall down. But all ended well. The house was restored externally by Vale Royal and sympathetically altered indoors to provide council offices, a computer centre and private offices.

Now, with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery, the grounds are also being restored. For nearly one thousand years Castle Park has reflected the history and social changes of England.

It now looks as if it will go on giving pleasure to the surrounding area for the foreseeable future, and that the past will continue to enrich the present.

**Sheila Holroyd**

*If, like me, you think that Sheila revels in blood and gore, check out her comments on pigeons on page 16.*



## The best-laid plans.....



It was New Year's Day, 1850. Macclesfield town centre was thronged with people braving the cold weather, wanting to be among the first to use the brand-new Baths and Wash-houses.

There were first-class private baths (unlimited hot water – price 6d. a time); second-class private baths (limited hot water – price 3d. a time; or, for 2d, cold water only). There was a private plunge bath for parents with several children – cost 1s. Or for the same price a vapour bath. Shower baths cost the same as second-class.

There were two swimming-pools – one for men and one for women. Charge: 3d before noon and 1d after.

The women's swimming pool was half the size of the men's to make space for the wash-house where washers were provided with two tubs each – one for washing and the other for boiling clothes.

Water was supplied from the Macclesfield Canal, heated, used and sold on to the railway companies.

It was a masterpiece.

And, like all public works, it cost twice the estimate.

Despite all the fund-raising £900 of the total £2,500 was still outstanding.

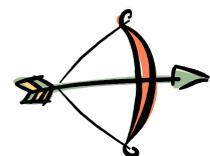
This was reduced to £800 courtesy of the Marquis of Westminster and Mrs Davenport of Capesthorpe Hall,

who each donated £50. A loan took care of £500 and three men each stood surety for £100. But what was really needed was a BIG fund-raising event.

Mrs Davenport came to the rescue. Capesthorpe Park would be made available for a GRAND FETE CHAMPETRE.

The first mention came in March. There would be a two-day event in Whitsun week. The Hall and 'splendid grounds' would be thrown open.

There would be floral and horticultural displays; tents for refreshments; cricket; dancing; music; the Cheshire archers would be there.



Over the following weeks, the announcements became fuller and more enticing.

In April, the Conservatory (thought to be designed by Joseph Paxton) was added to the list of attractions and the amusements would be 'of a brilliant and attractive character, consisting of a Fancy Fair, a Flower Show, an exhibition of Choice Plants and Flowers, Archery, Cricketing, Boating, &c. &c. with Military Bands, and other kinds of vocal and instrumental music'.

Tenders were invited for the supply of ‘Dinners, Luncheon, Tea and Coffee, Wines and Refreshments’.

Arrangements would be made with the railway companies ‘for the accommodation of visitors from Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire’.

By 1 May, the price had been set. Admittance would be one shilling.

In addition it was announced that there would also be a bookstall, which would include books specially written for the occasion.

One was ‘a Guide Book, entitled “A Whitsuntide Ramble to Capesthorpe Park”, descriptive of the hall, conservatory, gardens, &c. with a catalogue *raisonne* of the pictures, statues, &c. &c.’ Excursion Trains were planned. Fishing would be allowed at a cost of 7s. 6d.

Planning continued. On 11 May, the announcement added the following: ‘A grand cricket match will be played between the Manchester Cricket Club and selected members from the Macclesfield, Congleton, Knutsford, and Sandbach cricket clubs. There will be foot steeple chases over six flights of hurdles; an assault of arms, fencing, and single-stick, by gentlemen amateurs; and all the other fashionable English games and sports lately played before her majesty and the court, at Holland House’.

The excitement was growing, and Manchester businessman John Chorlton was not slow to use the occasion to advertise his Archery Warehouse in Piccadilly.

The week before the event, the advertisement made sure to catch all those who would have gone, but were put off by the 2 mile hike from Chelford station: ‘omnibuses will run constantly during the two days to and from the station’.

At last, the first day of the fete, dawned. The ‘the sun shone brilliantly, and the sky had scarcely a cloud’.

There were visitors from Manchester and Stockport in the north, Macclesfield and Bollington in the East, the Potteries in the South and Knutsford and Sandbach in the west.

There were even people from as far away as Birmingham, Chester, Liverpool and Derby.

All descending on Capesthorpe Park for a day of unbridled pleasure.

The Band was playing, the cricketers were warming up, the queues were forming in front of the hall.

But to the north, a cloud was gathering. Thunder rumbled in the distance.

And then the storm broke, right overhead!

The lightning flashed, the thunder roared. Trees were split in two. And, boy, did it pour! Visitors – all in their best clothes – were soon soaked to the skin.

Mrs. Davenport ordered every place of shelter to be thrown open including stables and coach-houses. The tents were crammed.

And so it continued for **TWO** hours.

At Chelford station a train packed with visitors arrived. They took one look; stayed in the train and returned to Manchester.

At last, the storm wore itself out – or went off to cause grief elsewhere – but everyone was soaked through. All they wanted was to go home.

The next day again started fine, but another storm, not quite so bad, hit the grounds around noon.

It had promised so much and fallen victim to the British weather.

Mrs Davenport ordered the tents to stay in the grounds and opened again the following week. Three hundred people attended.

And it didn’t stop there. Less than a month later, the grounds were thrown open again, this time for a musical fete.

Did they make a profit? Did it write off the debt? I’ve not discovered. Perhaps you know the answer....

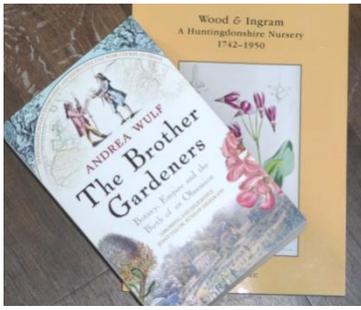
**Joy Uings**

*Capesthorpe continues to provide interesting events. Check out their web-site [www.capesthorpe.com](http://www.capesthorpe.com) for events from bluebell festivals to hot air ballooning.*

*DUKE OF BEDFORD AND HIS GARDENER. – in the year 1743 the duke planted the large plantation in Woburn Park known by the name of the “Evergreens,” to commemorate the birth of his daughter, afterwards Caroline Duchess of Marlborough; the space was something more than 100 acres; and was, before that time, a rabbit warren, producing nothing but a few blades of grass, with the heath or ling indigenous to the soil, and without a single tree upon it. In the course of a few years the duke perceived that the plantation required thinning, in order to admit a free circulation of air, and give health and vigour to the young trees. He accordingly gave instructions to his gardener, and directed him as to the mode and extent of the thinning required. The gardener paused, and hesitated, and at length said, “Your grace must pardon me if I humbly remonstrate against your orders, but I cannot possibly do what you desire; it would at once destroy the young plantation, and, moreover, it would be seriously injurious to my reputation as a planter.” The duke replied, “Do as I desire you, and I will take care of your reputation.” The plantation was consequently thinned according to his instructions, and the duke caused a board to be fixed in the plantation, facing the road, on which was inscribed, “This plantation has been thinned by John, Duke of Bedford, contrary to the advice and opinion of his gardener.” – Lord John Russell.*

**Manchester Times 4 December 1842**

# Book Review



For those interested in the history of the soft parts of a landscaped garden, I can recommend these two books.

**The Brother Gardeners** is by Andrea Wulf. Sub-

titled “Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession” it chronicles the history of plant introductions throughout the eighteenth century.

It includes people most of us know of – Linnæus, Joseph Banks, Philip Miller – but introduces us to less well-known characters: John Bartram, Peter Collinson, Lord Petre of Thorndon.

Bartram was an American farmer; Collinson an English merchant, trading out of London. They formed a partnership for the transfer of American plant material into the gardens of England.

Bartram collected seeds and packed them into boxes for transport to England. Collinson drummed up customers. It was a risky undertaking. Boxes could be washed overboard or fall into the hands of French or Spanish foes. If they reached England, the seeds might not germinate. And noblemen, who bought the boxes, were notorious for not paying their bills.

Wulf weaves her story about these two through the background of gardening and botany in the eighteenth century and brings her characters to life.

Philip Miller, gardener *extraordinaire*, whose stubbornness put him at odds with Linnæus and, eventually, his employers.

Linnæus, equally obstinate and self-aggrandising, whose efforts to introduce his new bi-nomial system for naming plants was being accepted everywhere except in England.

Daniel Solander, one of Linnæus’ pupils, dispatched by him to England. As popular with the English as his teacher was disliked, Solander avoided carrying out Linnæus’ wishes by ignoring his instructions and failing to keep in touch. He accompanied Banks on his journey in the *Endeavour*.

This is a book for everyone. The text reads as a story, but for the serious historian, there are 14 pages of bibliography and 52 of notes. And for the plantsmen, there are 18 pages of information about plant introductions.

Having finished *The Brother Gardeners*, I picked up **Wood & Ingram; A Huntingdonshire Nursery 1742-1950**. And on the first page I encountered Bartram and Collinson again!

The history of the nursery trade in this country is gradually being pieced together. Like most businesses, the records of nurseries tend to die with them.

A few, like some of the ledgers of the Caldwell Nurseries, which CGT member Pat Alexander is slowly digitising, remain and give us a glimpse into the world of plant producing and selling in the past.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust has been slowly retrieving records of the Wood & Ingram nurseries in and around Huntingdon and this book is the result of their researches.

The records begin in 1742 with James Wood as sole proprietor. Tucked into that first ledger, dated May 22, 1748, is a list of plants from America and Siberia and which probably came to the nursery via Peter Collinson.

The book takes us through the history of the Wood family, as the nursery passed down the generations and then introduces John Ingram, who may have been family, also – the suggestion is that he was the nephew of John Wood who died in 1844.

John Ingram left a diary, covering the years 1857-1875, where he recorded the daily tasks of the nursery, with comments on the weather. The chapters which give excerpts from these also have fascinating footnotes. Did you know, for example, that cucumbers were originally grown in Egypt?

Throughout the book we see examples of plant orders and their costs. In 1769, it was possible to buy 100 hollies for 12s. (60p). But variegated hollies were much more expensive: in 1771 £1 5s. (£1.25) would only buy 50.

This is a fascinating book which I can recommend to those interested in the history of plant production Wulf, Andrea. *The Brother Gardeners*. Published 2009 by Windmill Books. Price £8.99. Hardback copies (2008) are also available. Try Amazon.co.uk for either hardback or paperback either new or second-hand.

Drake, John. *Wood & Ingram, A Huntingdonshire Nursery 1742-1950*. Published 2008 by Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust. The book is available from the Trust - Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust, The Grange, Easton, Huntingdon PE18 0TU for £14.00 (incl. p&p). Cheques made payable to Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust.

If you are planning on visiting Norton Priory or Tatton Park this year, be sure to look out for a blonde hedgehog. Two were rescued by the RSPCA last year and have been re-homed at these Cheshire Gardens, because they would be unable to survive in the wild.

Blonde hedgehogs are extremely rare; their colouring is due to a recessive gene. But being pale makes them attractive to predators. It is hoped that the sheltered environments will give them a degree of protection.

## The importance of networks

Networks seemed to be a theme at the AGM and Spring Lecture.

Maria's networking skills brought the Edward Kemp designs for Massey Hall to light.

And Jane's talk on Biddulph Grange highlighted the opposing networks of different thinkers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Which reminded me of Thomas Glover.

You may remember (*Newsletter, July 2005*) that Glover was a friend of Edward Leeds, the Manchester businessman who raised many varieties of daffodils.

It was thanks to Glover, that Leeds became a correspondent of William Hooker. It seems probable that Glover and Hooker knew each other through membership of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Whatever the source of their friendship, it was strong enough for Glover to take a keen interest in Hooker's son Joseph who, as a boy, was an enthusiastic entomologist. Glover sent him samples of beetles and had him to stay when he was passing through Manchester.

Glover was a keen amateur scientist – botany, geology, entomology... He was a member of the Manchester Natural History Society and provided many samples of plants, animals and rocks for the museum in Peter Street

Joseph went on to become the great Sir Joseph Hooker, botanist and (following on from his father) director of Kew Gardens. He was also one of Darwin's closest friends.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September 1857, Darwin wrote to Hooker:

*"In looking over my scraps I find one from you with some cases of Hybridism from M<sup>r</sup> Glover of Manchester: Who is he? is he alive & do you know his address, as I sh<sup>d</sup>. like to write & ask him some questions on one of his crosses of Cereus? Is he a man to be trusted?— ..."*

Hooker clearly thought so. Darwin wrote to Glover for more information and on 26<sup>th</sup> October, received a full reply:

*"...Many years ago, it struck me that if a flower resembling speciosissimus could be produced upon a plant of the habit of stellatus, it would be a desirable acquisition & with the view of accomplishing this, I impregnated speciosissimus with stellatus, & stellatus with speciosissimus— I obtained, from each fruit, an abundance of perfectly fertile seeds— It never occurred to me to count the number, but my recollection serves me so far as to say confidently that the numbers which vegetated were about equal— they amounted in the whole to 3 to 400...*

*"...I have impregnated speciosissimus with flagelliformis & obtained plants almost identical with those known under the names of Palmerii, Mallinsoni &c all of which had brickly red blossoms...."*

Charles Darwin thought cactus hybrids indicated that even externally different species could produce fertile seeds. He included a chapter on hybridisation in *The Origin*, challenging the perceived wisdom that hybrids were necessarily sterile.

Glover had also crossed Gloxinias, with little effect and hybrids from "... *Franciscii confortiflora* impregnated with *latifolia*" produced plants which were "sickly & all variegated in the leaves." He concluded his letter:

*"I should have pleasure in sending you any of the above if you deemed them worth the Carriage."*

Spreading Darwin's network further, Glover mentioned :

*"There is or was a M<sup>r</sup> Lukis & also a D<sup>r</sup> Brock in Guernsey or Jersey who have done a good deal in this way."*

You can find out more about the extent of Charles Darwin's scientific network – and read his letters – by visiting [www.darwinproject.ac.uk](http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk).

**Joy Uings**

### Arley Bluebell Walks 2009

There will be guided walks through the Park and the Big Wood on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May and Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May at 11 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m. & 2 p.m each day.

Visitors are advised to wear waterproof clothing and footwear and the walks are not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.

Too late to book? Available places on the walks will be sold on the day to Garden visitors for a flat rate charge of £1.50.

And don't forget.....

**Arley Garden Festival – Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

## If you can't beat them, eat them!

Now that even Heston Blumenthal seems to be taking the advice I gave in an earlier article and has started cooking squirrels, may I draw your attention to another edible pest?

Pigeons are perfect pests! Let me make clear straight away that of course I am not talking about your beautiful, intelligent racing pigeons but about the messy, noisy, greedy garden-blighting wild pigeons that infest our gardens, eating buds, ruining crops, and leaving a coating of guano everywhere. But there is a solution. Pigeons are not just edible, they can be delicious, and many people are still continuing the ancient tradition of eating the little varmints.

They were once so popular that thousand of dovecotes were erected to house them conveniently till they were wanted for the table, but they did not always make good neighbours. In 1620 Sir Gervase Markham estimated that the amount of corn ruined by pigeons could have provided bread for 100,000 people

Recipes for pigeon stew have survived from the fourteenth century, when it was suggested that they should be stuffed with garlic and cooked with plenty of herbs and spices and modern recipes still recommend adding plenty of flavourings.

Pigeons can be roasted, stewed, made into pies or potted. The "New London Cookery", by S.W.,

published in 1837, contains recipes for Pigeon Compote (stuffed and casseroled), Pigeons au Poire (oven roasted and garnished), Pigeons Surtout (roasted on a spit and then served with gravy and truffles), and Jugged Pigeons.

The young pigeons, the squabs, are tender but because they lead active outdoor lives mature pigeons tend to be tough and therefore the only part really worth eating is the breast, which should be cooked slowly.

Basically, you brown the pigeon breasts, add flavourings such as bacon and onions and any other seasonings you like (one recipe suggests 24 cloves of garlic for four pigeons!), add stock or a mixture of stock and red wine, and cook slowly for a couple of hours. This is an ideal recipe for the slow cooker – cook it on low for eight hours.

You can then enjoy a delicious meal, and as you savour each mouthful you will be smugly aware that you are also helping to rid your garden of a feathered pest.

*Sheila Holroyd*

*Our thanks to The Frodsham Post for allowing us to reproduce this article by Sheila.*

*You may remember a similar attack on the grey squirrel.*

*Now if she would only tell us how to do the catching and killing...*

## “For the foreseeable future we're in a period when we've got much milder winters”

Fortunately, unlike pigeons, most birds are welcome visitors, but mild winters – and it is said they will continue to be mild for the foreseeable future – impact upon bird numbers as well as encouraging birds to nest out of season.

Although, interestingly, they seem to reduce the number of birds we see in our gardens. This is because food is more readily available elsewhere.

The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch survey took place on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of January.

Over six million birds were counted in gardens and parks by the 400,000 people who took part.

The average per garden was down from 34.8 to 28.4. This reduction is also caused by the long-term decline in key species such as sparrows and starlings, although these two still topped the list.

Other birds have increased in numbers – sightings of the yellow and black siskin have increased by around 66% and the number of gardens it visited has tripled. Part of the reason for this is that it's normal winter home – Scandinavia – has had poor conifer seed crops in recent months.

Making it into the top ten for the first time was the

goldfinch. I had three visit my garden to feast on the seed heads I had left standing over winter, and managed to get a photo through the kitchen window:



Although the numbers of sparrows and starlings, blackbirds and chaffinches have fallen in recent years, the numbers of wood pigeons and

collared doves have rocketed.

The top ten sightings were as follows:

1: House sparrow; 2: Starling; 3: Blackbird; 4: Blue tit; 5: Chaffinch; 6: Woodpigeon; 7: Collared dove; 8: Robin; 9: Great tit; 10: Goldfinch

In my own garden, apart from the goldfinches – a rare sighting – I have seen blackbirds and wrens, blue tits and great tits. But it is the larger birds which seem to appear more often. Maybe it's because they take up more space. Along with the woodpigeons and collared doves there are magpies and ravens. And in the spring the herons fly over from the Chorlton Water Park to feast upon the frogs as they thrash around in a mating frenzy.

*Joy Uings*

## Selection of NGS Gardens open in May and June

**Maylands**, Latchford Road, Gayton, CH60 3RN. A ½ acre garden belonging to CGT member John Hinde. Rhododendrons, camellias, Magnolias. Joint opening with 69 Well Lane – 1 acre with “surprises at every corner”. Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May; 2-5 p.m. £4, children free.

**Hare Hill Gardens**, Over Alderley, SK10 4QB. Ten acres including a walled garden. Rhodos and azaleas; specimen trees and a good collection of hollies. Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May; 10-5p p.m. £3.40, children half-price.

**Tirley Garth**, Utkinton, CW6 0LZ. For those who missed the CGT visit. 40 acres, designed by Thomas Mawson includes 3,000 rhododendron and azaleas. Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May; 1-5 p.m. £4, children free.

**17 Poplar Grove**, Sale, M33 3AX. Garden of another CGT member and location for a previous CGT event. If you've not been, make sure you don't miss this chance to see what Tim Mowl describes as the “best contemporary garden” in Cheshire. Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May; 2-5 p.m. £3.50, children free.

**Sandsend**, 126 Hibbert Lane, Marple, SK6 7NU. A new opener under NGS, this has long narrow gardens, front and back, in sun and shade. Planted for year-round colour and backing onto woodland. African craft and jewellery will be for sale and home-made teas in aid of Christian Relief Uganda. Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May; 1-5 p.m. £3, children free.

**The Old Parsonage**, Arley Green, via Arley Hall and Gardens, CW9 6LZ. The private garden of Lord and Lady Ashbrook; 2 acres in an “attractive and secretive rural setting in secluded part of Arley estate”. Herbaceous and mixed borders, roses, climbers, woodland garden and pond with water plants, etc. Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June; 2 – 5.30 p.m. £4, children free.

*Full details of these and all other NGS gardens in the Yellow Book*

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## Plant Fairs 2009

For members who just can't stop themselves adding to their already extensive plant collection, why not visit a Plant Hunters' Fair, this spring or summer:

**Sunday May 24<sup>th</sup>**, Adlington Hall, Mill Lane, Macclesfield. 10.30-4. Half Price Entry of £2.00 includes garden as well as plant fair. There will be a free guided tour of the garden (ideal for those who missed our visit last year).

**Monday May 25<sup>th</sup>**, Stonyford Cottage Gardens, Stonyford Lane, Cuddington, Northwich. 10-4. Free entry to the fair. Entrance to the 'Monet-style' garden is £3.50 (children free).

**Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup>**, Norton Priory Museum & Gardens, Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn. 12-4. Free entry to fair.

**Sunday July 12<sup>th</sup>**, Bramall Hall, off Hall Road, Bramhall. 11-5. £1 entry to fair.

For details of Plant Hunters fairs see [www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk](http://www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk)

Additional Plant fairs:

**Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup>**, 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Renishaw Hall, Nr. Sheffield. Twenty-five nurseries attending. And in addition to the plants, enjoy the Stunning Italianate Gardens with Lakeside walks, the Children's Adventure Garden, Museums, Galleries – and, of course, the Café.

Renishaw Hall is 7 miles from Sheffield City Centre, 3 miles from Junction 30 of the M1. The gardens were laid out over 100 years ago by Sir George Sitwell, whose design, dividing the gardens into 'rooms' with yew hedges, remains wholly intact. The National Collection of Yuccas is housed in the converted orangery.

Admission to the Plant Fair is £2.00. Parking is free. For more information [www.renishaw-hall.org.uk](http://www.renishaw-hall.org.uk).

**Saturday and Sunday May 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>**. For those who like to travel a bit further afield, there will be special Auricula Open Days at Field House Nursery, Leake Road, Gotham, Nottingham, NG 11 0GN. Entry is free and refreshments will be available. The nursery has over 750 varieties of auricula. They will have 350 of these for sale, plus bog primulas, double primroses, Primula hybrids; *P. marginata*, *P. sieboldii*, not to mention rock plants, bulbs, perennials.

## Events at Grappenhall Heys Walled Garden

Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2009	1pm – 4pm	Music in the Park by 'Casual Brass'
Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2009	1pm – 4pm	Bring & Buy Plant Sale / Flower Arranging
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> June 2009	5pm – 8pm	Picnic in the Park with "Wire Brass" (tickets required)
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2009	1pm – 4pm	Strawberry Cream Tea Afternoon
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2009	1pm – 4pm	Strawberry Cream Tea Afternoon

For further information on any events please contact either Elizabeth on 01925 604990 or Parish Council Office on 01925 264918  
[www.ghwalledgarden.org.uk](http://www.ghwalledgarden.org.uk)

## Didsbury Open Gardens Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2009

For a second year, a Didsbury Open Gardens afternoon is being planned to raise funds for St. Ann's Hospice. More than twenty-five private gardens are expected to open as well as there being a woodland to view.

Fletcher Moss Gardens will also put on guided tours, local allotments are expected to open their gates and there will be chainsaw wood carving and 'sculpture in the garden', all as part of the afternoon's programme.

Further details can be obtained from Maria Stripling Tel 0161 445 7498 e-mail [maria.stripling@zen.co.uk](mailto:maria.stripling@zen.co.uk)  
 Programmes will go on sale mid-April from local Didsbury shops, and cost £5.

## SURREY GARDEN TOURS

Escorted visits to private Surrey gardens

Tour dates: 15 – 18 June and 7 – 10 September 2009

Surrey Garden Tours arrange exclusive visits to some of the most important private gardens created by Gertrude Jekyll in collaboration with Edwin Lutyens, who together defined the form of the English country house and garden in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Munstead Wood, Millmead and the Manor House, Upton Grey always included. Small groups, great accommodation, good fun.

Contact: [info@heathhouse.eu](mailto:info@heathhouse.eu); tel: 01483 416961

[www.surreygardentours.com](http://www.surreygardentours.com)

Next time you are near library with a local studies centre, why not pop in for a browse through some old newspapers.

It is surprising just how much of life in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century is like life in the 21<sup>st</sup>. There were bank failures, credit crunches and recessions; pirates on the coast of Africa.

Snow stopped the rail service between London and Brighton in 1849. Doctors and scientists were warning about the health risks of smoking.

In a time when divorce was virtually impossible except for the very wealthy, bigamy was the life-style of choice for those seeking a new partner (though not everyone had Mr. Rochester's excuse).

Did you know that Tony Blair stole his "education, education, education" from the 1830s' mantra "educate, educate, educate"?

There was a streaker (drunken bet). I even found a reference to pole dancing – though somehow I think that had a different meaning.