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- ✦ Bluebell Cottage Gardens and Lodge Lane Nursery – Saturday August 15
- ✦ Plant sale and social – September 6
- ✦ Tatton Kitchen Garden – includes a demonstration of fruit tree pruning: October 14



Despite a dubious forecast and lunchtime downpour we were blessed with glorious sunshine for our visit to Stamford Park.

Gathering in the oldest part of the park, the site of Highfield House and grounds, we visited the former kitchen garden which is now a bowling green. This is overlooked by a bowling pavilion that incorporates part of a historic fruit wall.

Descending into the flower gardens which formed part of Gregory Gill's 1873 competition design, we saw a magnificent planting display designed by Mark Porter and tended by the park staff.

The tulips maintain a tradition of over 100 years of tulip planting and form the focus of the annual celebration of "Tulip Sunday".



The thousands of tulips and spring bedding are replanted each year, and the discarded plants and bulbs are distributed to local schools.

Comparison of historic photographs with current views of the display demonstrates how faithfully the beds have been retained.

After relishing the colour we entered the Dingle, a shady, green, steep-sided valley along the west side of the park, the site of Ashton's first cotton mills, powered by water then steam, fed by reservoirs above Chadwick's Dam.



Though overgrown, the valley is a magical place, a carefully designed and detailed landscape where natural rocks have been placed to create outcrops, promontories and planters, artificial rustic rockwork forms balustrades, and medieval carved heads from a demolished church embellish a bridge over the Cock Brook.



The path passes from the confines of the lower Dingle, to a glade with jagged rockwork on one side and then

along a broad promenade with rock outcrops and a grand flight of steps to culminate in a grand cascade fed from the boating lake.

The rockwork is the work of George Briggs, son of Francis Briggs, a landscape gardener who worked at Chatsworth under Joseph Paxton. It was commenced in 1898 when a rockwork retaining structure was needed to support George Mellor Road which was being laid out along the western park boundary. The client must have liked the result – or George Briggs was a good salesman – for the resulting rockwork is extensive.

Reaching the top of the Dingle we looked across the boating lake with its boathouse (1893) by local architects Eaton and Sons and up to the moors and Hartshead Pike.

Returning to the bowling pavilion for tea we viewed drawings for the proposed new pavilion by OMI Architects and proposals for restoration and improvement of the park.



These proposals, prepared by LDA Design using research, site survey and wide public consultation, have been successful in receiving funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund under their Parks for People Initiative.

Detailed proposals have now been submitted as a second stage application and when approved will release funds for implementation to commence in 2010.

Nicola Marshall the Project Officer was on hand to answer questions as well as to supply tea and cake as we sat ensconced on the benches in the sun.

Barbara Moth

The artist in the garden: Rose Farm, Over Peover

On Wednesday 20th May, we had a most interesting morning visit to the fascinating garden of Jacquie Blakeley at Rose Farm in Over Peover.

Jacquie is a successful watercolour artist and she has used her talent to become a very professional garden designer. In her paintings, Jacquie is inspired by nature, the colour layers in the landscape and the trees bending away from the prevailing wind. And her garden clearly reflects the artist's vision and skill in the balanced layering of colour, structure and texture.



Layers of colour, structure and texture

As happens with so many people, a change in circumstances in life made her decide to put her artistic talents to use in garden design.

First she took a course at Reaseheath College where she was awarded a distinction in Garden Design.

More courses at Reaseheath followed with Jacquie learning about plants, their propagation and other horticultural subjects.

With the basics firmly established in her mind she took commissions in garden design and at the same time slowly began to transform her own land into the garden we were to see.

On arrival, our group of 20 or so members and friends found itself in Jacquie's kitchen to collect a mug of hot tea or coffee – a pleasant informal welcome to this garden visit.

As we stood at the back door, mugs in hand, we should have realised that the Bonsai *Sorbus* on the table was a clue to what was in store for us.

The entire garden is a delightful mystery tour of unexpected areas and unconventional plantings.

We followed Jacquie along narrow paths of lawn, gravel or stepping stones, weaving our way through ever-changing views of the trees, grasses, compact shrubs and herbaceous perennials.

The pathways led us from one "room" into another, each with a different genus of plants.

The evergreen planting along with shaped trees and shrubs ensures year round structure and colour.

There are *Lonicera* hedges and Yew separating the "rooms" and as Jacquie says "when seen from one

angle, a hedge appears as waves rushing to the shore, while another hedge is like a dragon. The Yew is the outline of hills."



Pathways weaving through the garden



The hedge of Lonicera nitida 'Baggersons Gold'

Rounding each corner opened onto different textures, colours and structures but with everything under the firm control of the artist's shears and secateurs. The shaping of the trees was perhaps the most marvellous part of it. They had been pruned into images of clouds to give a balanced light and airy appearance. Just look at the example below of *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans' and, could you ever forget the *Cornus controversa* 'Variagata'?



Cryptomeria japonica 'Elegans'



Cornus controversa 'Variagata'

Jacque explained that as well as looking beautiful, this method of pruning has many advantages for the health of the tree or shrub.

There is no overcrowding of the branches and, with plenty of air circulation, the incidence of pests and diseases like fungi and moulds is greatly reduced.

The shaping of the trees adds to the artistic layered effect and it can be used to complement the characteristics of each individual plant.

This was clearly demonstrated by the pruning of the variegated *Pittosporum* to enhance the blackness of the trunk and branches.

Jacque told me later that she had taught herself to prune in this way just by careful study of each plant and continual practise to ensure success.

Of course when she visited Japan she could study this pruning method further to confirm her own technique. Other Japanese influences can be seen in the use of standing stones (Donegal quartzite), and the domed lawn islands with "rivers" of gravel "flowing" around them.



The Stones

Of course, no garden could be complete without a pond. Jacque explained that the soil in the garden was found to be of extremely poor structure, low nutrients, well compacted and full of rubble. So one of the first things she did was to slowly dig out a very large pond, now planted around with marginal plants.

There is an area of grass to the side of the pond together with a small Iris water feature.

The pond is best viewed through a window in the Gazebo which Jacque designed and built while at college. This looks over the pond and has a seat where booklovers can read and relax.



The large pond

We were very fortunate with the weather for this visit for in the preceding days there had been momentous downpours. The rain held off until we had almost reached the end of our tour, then a heavy shower left the stone paving wet and glistening to complement the surrounding plants.

Jacque's garden is not normally open to the public but she is happy to open it in aid of a charity.



Jacque beside her Acers

You can see more of Jacque's garden and her paintings on her website at <http://www.studio-j.org.uk/>.

And, by the way, Jacque's house is on the market at the moment so anyone looking for a delightful country cottage with a premade professionally designed garden, should contact Gascoigne Halman, the estate agent.

Freyda Taylor

with thanks to Jacque Blakeley and Jacquette Menzies for the photographs.

Boden Hall Gardens

These impressive gardens were seen by the group in ideal conditions. Though warm it was not oppressively hot, and the roses, which are a feature of this small estate, were at their magnificent best.

This is a quite recently renovated garden (1997) but has the benefit of mature trees planted by the previous keen gardener owners. It surrounds a serene late-Georgian house with lake and boathouse. A superb 'Rambling Rector' rose climbing over and almost smothering a pear tree beckoned us to the garden entrance.

Vegetable Garden. This is run on organic principals and most of the plants are culinary or herbal. The box hedging dominated the space but as this shows signs of blight, its days may be numbered.

Rose Garden. Surrounded and intertwined by a precisely cut box hedge parterre the 16 varieties of David Austin rose in standard, bush and climbing form were breathtaking in their impact.



At one end, are Ligustrum standard balls, some of which have been left in their bottomless pots to give extra height. At the conservatory end were standard 'Iceberg' roses in beds which have not yet found their best under-storey. There was a fine restored greenhouse against the south facing wall which led to a wisteria-draped pergola complemented by purple iris at their season.

South Garden. This renovated and restored area runs from the house to a French birdcage at the north end. At its centre is a sunken pool surrounded by box hedges which are level with the wall.



Pots of Agapanthus, stone balls and a fountain complete the area. Lavish herbaceous borders, brimming with pink peonies, delphiniums and alliums furnish the west edge. Two elegant wire urns form a focus at the house end.

Contemplation Garden. Making good use of an awkward triangular shape, this is the only nod to modernism in the garden. A tranquil area of mown path meanders amongst silver birch and wildflowers.



You emerge from this lovely area to be confronted by open countryside, without fence or even ha ha, giving on to the lawn with majestic mature trees.

Bog Garden. This recently planted glade looked more mature than its two years. A good contrast to the more formal areas, this well planted garden felt cool and shady with a bridge which led to the summerhouse overlooking the lake.



Lake Walk. Giving good views back to the house, this final flourish is a walk round the lake on a rather unsympathetic path which was not in keeping with its surroundings. A romantic view through the boathouse to the lake beyond, and we were ready for a glass of wine back in the rose garden.



This project is a huge achievement for Mr and Mrs Wrather and a splendid continuation of traditional design ideas. It was very generous of them to let us see it and we look forward to seeing their new developments which hopefully will include new and truly modern design to compliment the traditional schemes nearer the house.

Gordon Cooke

Trafford Hall Gardens

The AGM and Spring Lecture in March were held at Trafford Hall in Cheshire. The April Newsletter carried a report of those. Here is a report on the gardens toured before the meeting.

Trafford Hall is the home of The National Communities Resource Centre.

This organisation runs residential and day courses for tenants and volunteers to build up their skills, knowledge and confidence to help them improve their neighbourhoods.

The Hall can also be hired for functions and hosts "green" weddings. It is run on ethical lines and the garden is cultivated organically.

The garden has many purposes: to provide pleasant areas where participants on courses can relax outside; to provide food for the residents; to encourage wildlife; and to carbon off-set the activities of The Hall. They are also sometimes used as part of the learning activities.

The old stable block, next to the main building, had to be demolished and the gardeners have been making a garden to the rear of a new building on the same site. This area has slabs and naturalistic planting, including grasses.

Rabbits are a huge problem and planting has had to take account of this. The area has had to be planted several times! Also the soil was poor and compacted following the building work. There are log piles for the resident amphibians, a bird feeding area and a wildflower patch.

The small area at the front of the block awaits funds before it can be tackled. The ground in this area has been so compacted that it will be necessary to build and fill raised beds in order to grow anything there.

We walked round the field. The edge of the field is being planted with native flowering and fruiting trees, (e.g crab apples and hawthorn). Apart from being decorative, their purpose is to offset the carbon emissions caused by the other activities at the hall.



By the corner of the field are three ponds which have developed in an old marl pit. Two of the ponds are still connected but the gardeners have dammed the channel to help in the cleaning of the main pond. This has been partly cleaned and the surrounding shrubs thinned to let in more light.

The second pond is full of leaf deposits but is to be left

as it is, on the advice of pond conservation specialists, as the deposits are good for several beetles.



The third only has water in it intermittently and always has grass in the base.. A small orchard has been planted in another part of the field.

Close to the house is an area once used for children to make gardens while at the hall. This has become overgrown but the hope is to make it into a family and learning area where various activities, including making small gardens, can take place. A winding path has been restored to allow easier access through the woodland surrounding the hall. This is partly oak and partly a mixed wood.

Outside the ballroom, where we had the AGM, there is a listed cedar at the rear of a lawned area. We had just missed the carpet of snowdrops and were too early for the bluebells! The gardeners hope to spread these plants more widely through the woodland.

Like most Georgian and Victorian houses, Trafford Hall once had a walled garden. One of these walls has been used as the rear wall of a long block of bedrooms.

There is a similar block on the other side of the garden. These have turf roofs to replace the turf removed when they were built. A few daffodils had seeded and were flowering in the turf! The gardeners believe some broom may have also seeded itself but this will need to be removed.

Within the walled garden, overlooked by the bedroom blocks, are the kitchen garden and sunken garden.

The kitchen garden is planted in beds to be ornamental as well as productive.



Gardener Jo Dyer has added arches to increase the space by some vertical gardening. Potatoes are not grown, as it would not be possible to grow sufficient for the hall's needs in the available space but fruit, herbs, courgettes, pumpkin, salads and rhubarb are among the crops which are produced.

In the greenhouse the gardeners raise bedding plants, vegetables, especially tomatoes, and some plants for sale. In the centre is a small pond and the gardeners were pleased that there was frog spawn in it, the frogs being a valuable help in organic slug control.

The gardeners also find "Growing Success" slug pellets helpful. There is a large area for the all important compost and leaf mould and also a wormery. A wall in the middle of the garden was almost certainly once part of a glasshouse. A pergola with rambler roses and clematis leads down from the sunken garden and along the wall.

When the trust took over the gardens they had been badly neglected. There is a story that someone fell into the undergrowth and so discovered the remains

of the Victorian sunken garden! There were no records of the planting so the garden was redesigned in the 1990s.

The two ends of the garden have different growing conditions, so different planting schemes, with plants such as camellias, ferns and azaleas at the south but wetter end, and buddleia, potentilla and sedum at the north but sandier end. There are two box-edged borders planted with, mostly, white summer flowers.

One of the borders is shaded by a conifer, which also takes moisture from it and this makes it difficult to keep the borders growing in tandem.

There were spring bulbs and fine hellebores out in the garden. At the south end there are two large Rosa Kiftsgate which climb over the arbour over the path from the garden to the house.

One fell off its support a while ago. This did give an opportunity for some useful pruning and, fortunately, nobody was underneath it at the time.

Jenny Wood

More pests recycled

I have been quite surprised to find how many people solve the problem of garden pests by eating the little horrors. Many of my friends eat wood pigeons, and even the Sainsbury's web site gives three recipes for cooking them. A pest controller who culls grey squirrels is having difficulty in satisfying the demand for them from top chefs.



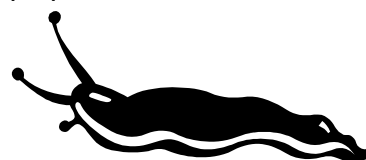
People who have been horrified at the sight of magpies taking fledglings from nests and devouring them have asked if these black-and-white killers can be eaten.

The answer, apparently, is 'yes'. After all, magpies are related to rooks and rook pie used to be a common delicacy. Unfortunately magpies are apparently tough and tasteless, so they are only useful as free food if you are really hungry.

Incidentally, don't be misled by the nursery rhyme which talks about 'four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie.' This was an amusement, not a food. Live blackbirds were put in a pie dish under a baked crust. The pie was brought to the table, the crust was cut open, and then, with luck, 'the birds began to sing.' Some hosts substituted frogs for blackbird, laughing merrily when the frogs hopped out and surprised the ladies.



Snails, of course, are an accepted part of one's diet in some European countries. Heston Blumenthal's famous recipe for snail porridge involves porridge made with snail stock and a lot of other ingredients topped with Parma ham topped with snails. I might eat it at his restaurant, but it is certainly not a dish you can casually prepare for tea.



But what about slugs? Apparently they were eaten by the poor in England in the late 17th and early 18th century, and Jenny Bond did eat some as part of her 'bush tucker' diet in "I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here". They must be fried, grilled or roasted, however, to kill a dangerous parasite they carry.

Reluctantly I have decided that not all garden pests are edible. However, while researching this article I found one recipe which suggested that small savouries made from various birds should be served on croutons made from gin-soaked bread which is then toasted and buttered. Now that does sound worth trying!

Sheila Holroyd

Frodsham's Best Kept Garden Competition

Cheshire Gardens Trust was invited to judge the garden competition this year. The weather was kind for judging the front gardens and hanging baskets which were nominated by the public, councillors or the owners themselves. Criteria used in judging the gardens were:

1. Contribution to the visual environment - impact on the street
2. Design quality – imaginative use of space and materials, creativity, practicality and interest (access, car parking)
3. Quality of planting - colour, texture, form, composition, and horticultural practice.
4. Quality of construction and detailing
5. Environmental consideration - use of native plants, encouragement of wildlife, water conservation, peat free, chemical free, composting, and energy conservation.

But it always had to be borne in mind that this was a “Best Kept Garden Competition”. The hanging baskets were assessed on composition, colour and overall impact. Allotments, also included in the competition, were simply judged on best kept principles though this proved difficult because so many of them were beautifully tended and exhibited splendid crops.

The gardens were varied in scale and character but most were well manicured and had a significant component of bright bedding, even though the layouts were somewhat dull and most scored low on environmental considerations.

Tilbey Drive impressed for the number of beautifully kept small gardens including no. 24, a miniature show garden, which was given first prize in West Ward.



winning garden on Tilbey Drive

East Ward presented the strongest competition with Springbourne's gardens making a huge contribution

to the attractiveness of the close as a place to live, and properties on Greenside Avenue, Doric Avenue and Townfield Lane all presenting beautiful and varied gardens with good planting.

The winner in East Ward and overall competition winner was Little Orchard on Bradley Lane chosen for the quality, care and presentation of the planting providing a range of interest and colour in generous borders and with carefully detailed planting at the base of the hedge along the lane. The garden must give a great deal of pleasure to those who walk this popular lane as well as to the owners.



Little Orchard overall winner on Bradley Lane

The competition did raise some issues: at its simplest and perhaps in the public mind “best kept” seemed to equate to tidiness and bedding, neither of which are particularly green in terms of biodiversity or sustainability.

It was commented that there were fewer hanging baskets than in previous years (a sign of recession for commercial premises,) but planters of all kinds proliferated and these can be equally demanding in terms of time, attention and water.

There is a balance to be struck between the appeal of bright coloured bedding, gloriously overflowing hanging baskets and the sense of care and attractiveness they can give a place, with the cost - financial and finite resources.

Alternative plantings could be more permanent and wildlife friendly. It is a difficult one and perhaps comes down to education and culture: everyone understands and can “read” bright bedding whereas other plantings have less primary appeal though they can still be attractive and be better for the planet!

Barbara Moth

Don't forget the CGT visit to Bluebell Cottage Gardens and Lodge Lane Nursery on 15th August. If you've not yet booked, why not contact Jacquetta Menzies (tel: 01625 575711 or jacquettamenzies@mac.com) right now. And if you can't make the Saturday, but are free on the Sunday (16th) then visit the Plant Fair which Sue Beesley will be hosting – 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Ramblings from a Cheadle Hulme Garden

This has certainly been a different summer to last year; while we have had rain, we have also been blessed with sun and warmth.

For nearly 20 years I have had a group of *Yucca flaccida* in my garden which has rarely flowered, probably three times in those years. Having totally despaired in hope of decent flowers, I left one plant for its leaf and texture. It must have known that it was on borrowed time as I intended to remove that one as well.

So there it is, in its glory this year for the first time in at least ten years.

I would like to say it is my horticultural skills, but I really am a rotten gardener at the best of times. The right weather and nature did the work for me, and you can see magnificent yuccas in flower around the region this year, just to prove that is not my amazing skills!

Now I wait and hope that last years purchase from the Tatton show will blossom with its watermelon colour flowers one day.

Lagerstroemia indica, aka Crape-myrtle, is a plant of my childhood from the southern United States. It was in full flower in June when I was over there, so I guess it would be August should it ever flower here. When it does, I will open a bottle of bourbon and sip a mint julep, dreaming of times past.

Ed Bennis



Do you have anything that has responded well to this year's weather patterns? Why not let us know.

Weather is a constant source of frustration to gardeners. Sometimes the combination of rain with sun gives us a happy result – as with Ed's *Yucca* above.

It is not always so. Extremes of temperature, too much or too little rain, high winds, hail ... there is only so much you can do to protect your poor flowers.

They respond by blooming too early or too late; finishing too soon or being shredded. Currently we blame global warming, but the problem is age-old.

This year flowers are blooming, but ...

They had a dull, wet summer in 1860 followed by a very cold winter. On Christmas Eve the temperature plummeted; snow storms were exacerbated by fog. Public transport was immediately affected. Trains were delayed and horse-drawn omnibuses, even with an additional horse, found it hard to get up hills.

In London, the temperature fell 20° (F) below freezing. The Serpentine in Hyde Park froze over, as did the Thames and other rivers around the country, including the Dee and the Irwell. Skaters had a great time.

When the spring finally arrived, a Mr. T. Appleby went round south Manchester to find the effect of this severe weather. It was quite surprising what had survived and what had succumbed.

At Burnage Hall, in Ashton-on-Mersey, at Abney Hall and at Sale Bank, the story was much the same.

"...fine trees of Araucaria imbricate, from 15 feet to 20 feet, are now quite dead; Portugal Laurels, immense bushes, in a similar condition, but will push again from the bottom; Juniperus recurva quite dead; several lofty

Cryptomeria japonica, 20 feet high, much browned, but may recover; Cedrus deodars in as sad a state; Cedrus Libani browned; Roses, standard, all killed, with the exception of Austrian Briar, Harrisonii; seedling varieties of scarlet Rhododendrons quite killed." And yet:

"The following alive and as fresh as possible:- Irish Yew, Pinus excelsa, Pinus austriaca, fine trees; Rhododendrons of the Catawba breed are quite safe, indeed better in health and foliage than the common hardy ponticum and varieties."

Tatton Park had not suffered quite so much. Even so, the avenue of *Araucarias* and *Deodars* at the front of the house showed the effects of the cold: *"some of the Araucarias are alive and pushing young shoots, whilst others are much injured and will never make handsome trees; the Deodars also are injured, but may recover"*.

In the pinetum *"Abies Douglasi, A. pinsapo and cephalinica; Picea nobilis, Pinus cembra, excelsa, neglecta, ponderosa, Lambertiana, Sabiniana"* had all survived, but *"Fitzroya Patagonica is quite dead"*.

Mr Appleby comments are still relevant today: *"The record is a melancholy one, but not useless, because it teaches us gardeners useful lessons to guide us hereafter... It will also serve as a guide what to select to plant in peculiar localities and soils"*.

So whether the result is happy or unhappy – take note of the effects of the weather on your plants. It will help you plan for the future.

Joy Uings

Information taken from Manchester Times, December 29, 1860 and The Journal of Horticulture, July 2 1861.

Catch them young....

Encouraging children to garden is not new. In 1824 a book was published entitled *"The juvenile gardener, written by a lady, for the use of her own children, with a view of giving them an early taste for the pleasures of a garden"*.

The children were as well-behaved and obedient as any parent could fantasise about.

Young Frank was rewarded for studying hard by being given a piece of garden.

When asked what he wanted to grow it was "... roses and tulips, and peas and cabbages, and fine fruits, and all kinds of things that grow..."

William the gardener put him straight: it was too late to plant tulips, roses wouldn't bloom this year and there wasn't enough room for fruit-trees.

This paragon of virtue did not throw a tantrum, but said *"I am quite content"*.

This book was obviously aimed at children. Jane Loudon's *"My own garden; or the young gardener's year-book"*, despite its title is addressed to parents:

"Almost all young people are fond of a garden; and as gardening is a fine healthy exercise, it is desirable to encourage a taste for it as much as possible: consequently there are few persons, I believe, who have a family, who, if they have any quantity of garden ground to themselves, do not set aside a small portion of it for their children."

She goes on to warn that the gardener, *"if left to himself"* will give the child the poorest part of the garden to cultivate. Make sure the child has good soil in an open airy situation and

"contrive the garden so as to have it contain as many different things as possible. Children like to have their gardens constantly producing something to keep up their interest... I once heard a little boy say: 'Those lettuces are my own, out of my own garden...' with an expression of intense enjoyment, that I have never forgotten..."

Encouraging children to garden has been a key feature of the Arley Garden Festival and the Tatton Flower Show and we show some of the results overleaf.

Below, Ed Bennis tells us of the efforts in Manchester.

Rotary's Manchester Young Gardeners

In its fourth year, children from Hulme, Moss Side and now Wythenshawe have shown their horticultural and artistic skills by growing and exhibiting their 'beautiful and edible plants'.

A project seeded by the Rotary Club of Manchester Breakfast, it has grown and blossomed into an annual event.

Seven Manchester schools took place and exhibited their gardens at The Birches Special School.



The displays combined not only the growing of plants, but geography, art, design cultural studies and much more. Jenny McGarry, a teacher at St Mary's CE Primary School said:

"We have found benefits from the kids growing plants right across the curriculum – I counted over 20 areas – everything from Design Technology to Health, with a good lot of fun thrown in. One thing's for sure, our kids certainly

won't be amongst the one in 2 of primary school age who think that potatoes grow on trees'.

The Councillor Alison Firth, Lord Mayor of Leeds, visited the show and certificates were presented by Eddie Newcombe, President of The Rotary Club of Manchester.



The event was followed up with a stand at the Tatton Flower Show, and another visit from the mayor.

So why is this in CGT's newsletter? First, because I initiated the project with fellow Rotarian Andrew Goodliffe, and second because I believe that we can actively help kids by developing skills and understanding about plants and healthy eating.

What we had not anticipated was that it would tick more boxes than we ever imagined.

Next year there are plans to build a garden at Tatton ... any volunteers to help?

Ed Bennis

Arley Garden Festival Schools' Competition



Tatton Flower Show: RHS Schools' Competition

Re-cycling was the theme. That old bathroom suite, umbrella, teapot, computer... don't throw it! Plant it!



Is it in your library?

Ann Brooks is busy writing a book on the Manchester Botanic Gardens, based on the research she did for her PhD. She has tried, so far in vain, to find a copy of the Guide to the Manchester Botanic Garden published in 1859. The copy at the Manchester Central Reference Library has disappeared.

Do you have a copy? Or do you know where one is located? Would Ann be able to view it? If you can help, please contact Ann on 01373 834978 or e-mail ab_botanics@yahoo.co.uk.

CGT Bring and Buy Plant Sale and Social

Sunday 6th Sept at CGT member Chris Talbot's lovely garden at Bunt Thatch, Aston,

2pm - 4pm £3 members/£5 non-members. Includes home-made cakes and afternoon tea and a special raffle of fine specimens of plants from local gardens and garden centres as well as other garden-related objects. Also, gardening books for sale. And a great opportunity to meet fellow CGT members, to enjoy a lovely garden and find some interesting plants to take home for your own garden.

But, we also need your plants - please bring any plant donations with you on the day - clearly labelled. If you prefer, we may be able to arrange collection/delivery. Contact Ruth Brown on tel 01925 263337

Look forward to seeing you there

Rhubarb: food or medicine?

It was simply an account of a meeting of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. But there was a juxtaposition of information which led to a sharp exchange of letters.

The year was 1838. The meeting received some reports. The first was an account of a botanical and horticultural journey undertaken by Mr. James McNab through England and Ireland. The second was a recipe for red rhubarb jelly and jam.

Joseph Johnson of Northenden saw the report and jumped to the conclusion that James McNab had introduced **his** rhubarb jelly into Scotland, without acknowledging him. He thought he had reason:

"Mr. Johnson, in the year 1834, having an unusual quantity of rhubarb stalks, suggested the idea to his daughter, Miss Johnson, of trying how they would make into jelly. The success was complete. In 1836, Mr. Johnson mentioned this jelly to Mr. Campbell, the curator of the Botanic Garden, Manchester, and sent him a jar of it. Mr. Campbell mentioned the circumstance to Mr. McNab, who was on a visit at the Manchester Gardens; and this, it is presumed, led to Mr. McNab's making some when he returned home."

Mr. McNab was not prepared to accept this. *"Mr. Joseph Jonson ... evidently wishes to be considered the original inventor... He may be; but I do not see what right he has to say that I got the hint at Manchester."* McNab had made jelly in 1837 from RED rhubarb. Mr. Johnson's was made with GREEN rhubarb *"...and I suppose it was from this frightful specimen that Mr. Johnson supposes that I was*

*led to the making of it... he was never more mistaken."*¹

Rhubarb jelly seems to have been quite new. Cookery books of the 18th century suggest rhubarb for tarts.

*"Take the stalks off the rhubarb that grows in the garden, peel the skin off, and cut them the size of a gooseberry, put them into China or earthen-ware patty-pans, with sugar over them, and put on a paste either puff or tart, ice them and bake them the same as garden gooseberries, and they will eat like them."*²

Hannah Glasse added: *"These tarts may be thought very odd, but they are very fine ones and have a delicate flavour..."*³ and in 1819 Elizabeth Hammond added *"these tarts are very delicious"*⁴

But rhubarb was more for medicine than cookery. It was considered good for nausea (after vomiting); colic (but only the sort you get after too much eating; if it was from getting wet feet, then bathe the feet and legs in warm water); both constipation and diarrhoea; gout; thrush and worms!⁵

Joy Uings

¹ The Gardener's magazine and register of rural & domestic improvement 1838

² Briggs, Richard. The English art of cookery, according to the present practice. 1794

³ Glasse, Hannah. The compleat confectioner: or, the whole art of confectionary made plain and easy. 1760

⁴ Hammond, Elizabeth. Modern domestic cookery, and useful receipt book. 1819

⁵ Cole, Mary. The Lady's Complete Guide. 1789