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Newsletter

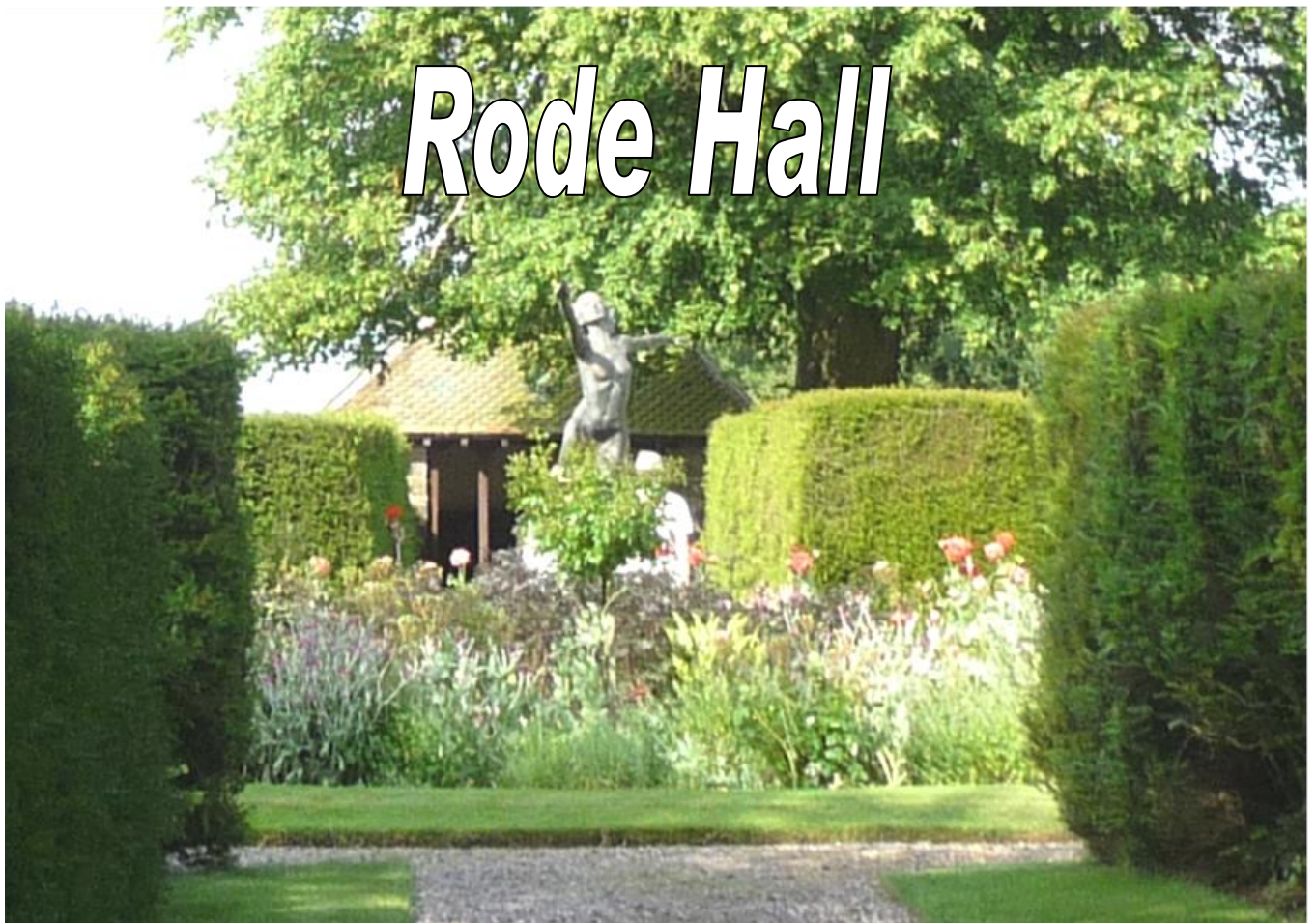
www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Inside:

- ✧ Bluebell Cottage Gardens
- ✧ Lyme Park
- ✧ Treasures of the Kitchen Garden
- ✧ AGT Conference

Some future events:

- ✧ Wildlife Gardening; lecture by Ken Thompson – Saturday 21 November
- ✧ Menageries – January – details to be confirmed
- ✧ Spring Lecture – March – details to be confirmed



On a glorious sunny afternoon we were set to enter another world; like Alice and her looking glass, we stepped through wonderingly and left behind the present century and all its rush and crush, noise and gadgets.

We exchanged it all for a wide hall where poets and writers in black basalt gazed down silently on us, for spacious corridors where finely painted china was ranged behind glass, and for elegant Georgian rooms

where family members from centuries long gone smiled at us from their gilt frames.

Glowing mahogany furniture by Gillow of Lancaster bore the patina of many family meals and gatherings, and all the while our generous host, Sir Richard Baker-Wilbraham, spoke lovingly of the assorted accumulation of the centuries.

Even so I was tempted at every turn to look out through the windows.

It was quite logical to become acquainted with the house before going into the garden. Humphry Repton came here in 1790; he placed great emphasis on the harmony between house and garden, for each reception room was to have a perfectly-composed view from its windows, indeed a magnificent view if possible.

Whatever spoiled the picturesque composition was to be removed, and the improvement would be wrought by channelling water, sculpting earth, re-arranging trees and woods, and placing a well-chosen folly.

A small group from our party was privileged to be shown the delicate Red Book prepared by Repton for Rode Hall and gifted to Mary Bootle in 1790. Repton did not hold back from directness in his recommendations.

The access road to the hall was across the south front, and this track led on to the service wing. *'It is absolutely necessary to avoid the old road, or every coal and dung cart that you possess will be in full view of the drawing room windows'*.

The one pair of illustrations, in delicate watercolour, show on the one hand a view of a farm and its hedged fields, and on the other, with Repton's trademark 'overlay', the view transformed to show a wide park without boundaries stretching to the water on the horizon. Glowing descriptions praise *'the elegance of the scenery'* and *'the glitter of the water'*.

Humphry Repton was the first to style himself 'landscape gardener' and one of the first to simply sell his designs then depart.

John Webb was called in to put the plan to work. Already well-known in Cheshire (Tatton, Cholmondeley, Crewe) and yet to follow William Emes at Heaton Park with work for Lord Egerton, he constructed with the aid of workmen completing nearby canals, the 50 acre lake, its one mile length giving the dramatic approach which Repton envisaged. On our visit the glitter of the water was totally magical as we stood by the boat-house and took in the full expanse.

The rock garden was John Webb's own, and an entry into the world of the awe-ful picturesque. Repton would not have approved: his picturesque was smooth and beautiful, a Claudian scene rather than a rough and rocky scene by Rosa.

We stepped tentatively among burgeoning bushes and the tangled overhang of 200 year-old trees, to discover rocky passages and a secret cave, in an atmosphere more spooky than Webb could have ever wished for. I made a note to return in spring when the azaleas and rhododendrons would be ablaze.

Repton's advice about the coal carts passing the drawing room windows was ignored, until William Nesfield came to Rode in 1860. He banished the approach to the north, and set about making a neat and tidy parterre 'in the Italian style'; how many Italian

styles have we seen over the centuries? No matter, they remind us of sunshine.

Nesfield's perfectly symmetrical, sunken garden, viewed from its embankments like a Tudor knot, tumbled with roses and foxgloves and poppies, and fragrant sweet peas heaped upon obelisks. I loved its heady exuberance. A Walter Crane painting of c. 1870 inside the house captured the atmosphere well.

Sir Richard told us that an ancestor was at Ninfa, the deserted mediaeval village near Rome which has been transformed into a paradise of roses and perfume. How thrilling to have a foot, a toe, in that wonderland of ruins and river and flowers!

Last May wandering through the grassy sward, beside the river, overpowered by summer jasmine reaching up to the ruined towers, I thought I was in heaven. Ninfa has been lovingly nursed by three generations, and the guiding hand was Ada Bootle-Wilbraham, wife of Onorato Caetani.

Already an experienced gardener, she directed the clearing of a tangled wilderness and the planting of the first trees in the 1920s, ordering from Hillier's catalogue. Her two sons and their wives continued the immense task with great flair, and her granddaughter Lelia, a painter, developed the full-blown opulence we see now.

In homage to Ada and Ninfa, an Italian courtyard has been created at Rode, on the foundations of the old tenants' hall.



The roofless enclosure (see above) has warmth and secrecy, a central fountain and four super-slim Italian cypresses, *Cupressus sempervirens*. I just needed the scent of the jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, to take me back to the Roman countryside.

I haven't described properly the voluptuous herbaceous border planted with all our perennial favourites and punctuated with little globes of *Buxus suffruticosa* for strength of form; or the enormous pineapple-scented *Cytisus battandieri* hanging like a curtain from the Georgian façade; or the come-hither approach along the drive, where the house plays 'now you see me, now you don't', or But you know the rest.

There is a very telling connection between Rode Hall in Cheshire and Lathom House in Lancashire.

The Bootle-Wilbraham family once owned both, and Sir Richard is presently a member of the Lathom Park Trust.

I too have a connection here, for in 2002 I was researching its landscape history, and spoke to an archaeologist there of the existence of a Repton Red Book made in 1794.

Conversations were exchanged it seems, and Sir Richard, a keen buyer-at-auction, told me that he

pursued his contacts and located the long-lost book.

As if by magic, it came up for sale, and after a hurried call for funding from Arts bodies, County and local councils, the book has come home and is now lodged in Lancashire County Record Office, Preston.

A facsimile is for sale on CD at £25, a tiny fraction of the price paid.

It is the wealth of historical strands coming together in our landscape history which make research such a rewarding pursuit.

Elaine Taylor

Bluebell Cottage Gardens and Lodge Lane Nursery

It looked very likely it would rain but I set off hopefully and followed the directions with great anticipation of an interesting visit – after driving down a rather narrow and windy lane which felt a bit like I was on the wrong track I found the spot and parked in what is apparently the wildflower meadow but which had been mown, in early August, after the seeds had been harvested.



A few remaining wild flowers

Having only booked a couple of days in advance I was co-opted by my CGT friends to do this report! As a keen amateur it was quite daunting to have to take lots of notes and photographs, and try to spell the plant names correctly, but I still managed to thoroughly enjoy the event.

The 25 plus CGT group were given a very warm and informative welcome by owner Sue Beesley.



Bluebell Cottage was originally three labourer's cottages (one up one down) and was bought in the 1980s by Rod & Diane Casey who converted the building and subsequently purchased an additional six acres of land. In four years they got the garden and nursery up and running and achieved their aim of getting into the RHS Yellow Book scheme.

In 2003/4 it had all become too overwhelming and so they sold up and moved away. The new couple who bought it also found it rather a struggle to run. Around the same time Sue, who was at that stage a keen amateur gardener, had decided "in a moment of madness" to enter the BBC 'Gardener of the year' competition and was surprised and delighted to win it.

Travelling around to various gardens and garden centres with husband David was one of Sue's favourite pastimes and on one of their exploratory trips they found Bluebell Cottage. At that time as Sue put it 'it was a bit of a tip'. However they did rather fall for it not least because of its location alongside the Trent & Mersey Canal. Sue did remark to David that if it ever came on the market she'd be very interested in it.

Fate intervened and when the then owners decided to put it on the market, Sue & David found out and took the plunge. Suddenly here they were with not only a beautiful cottage but also inheriting "an almighty clearing up job". This was February 2007 and since then they have achieved an amazing reincarnation which continues to evolve and grow. Sue's focus is on old, solid, plant varieties along with new varieties that come through with merit and she saves seed in order to propagate her own plants. Her aim is for the garden to always feel homely and like a private garden and to fill it with "things that anyone can do", so you won't find many labels on the garden plants. Sue and David have partly learnt as they go along and have also attended RHS courses.

After her introductory talk Sue took us on a tour of the delightful gardens – there were too many species and features for me to try to mention them all but some of the highlights are here below in note form and Sue does a weekly update of what to look out for, which is given out when you visit.

ORCHARD: The apple trees were all lopped off low when Sue took over and this gives a good manageable height to work with. There is also a *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* tree here which has a scent like toffee apples / burnt sugar as the leaves fall.



Cercidiphyllum japonicum (toffee apple tree)

CANAL BORDER: Running – yes you guessed – parallel to the Canal. This and other herbaceous borders were originally squared off and narrow but Sue and David have now widened and curved them, preferring a less rigid feel.



Like Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter, Sue is not afraid of vibrant colour

CHESHIRE YEAR OF GARDENS BORDERS: in March 2008 some lawn was removed and two special borders created to celebrate Cheshire Year of Gardens. The planting is herbaceous and grasses with no shrubs. (Ten tons of Council compost was dug in as the main existing soil is sandy over clay). The borders look fabulous from early May to October; starting with pinks and blues and going through to hot reds and yellows.



Cheshire Year of Gardens borders

Close to these borders is also a *Helianthus salicifolius* (perennial Sunflower) a plant that can also be found at Great Dixter – Sue's (other) favourite garden!

SHADE: Sue is often asked for shade loving plants and is developing an area to include *Pulmonaria* and *Perennial Linaria*.

POND: They have made a decision to leave this fairly naturalistic thus giving wildlife a centre at the heart of the garden.

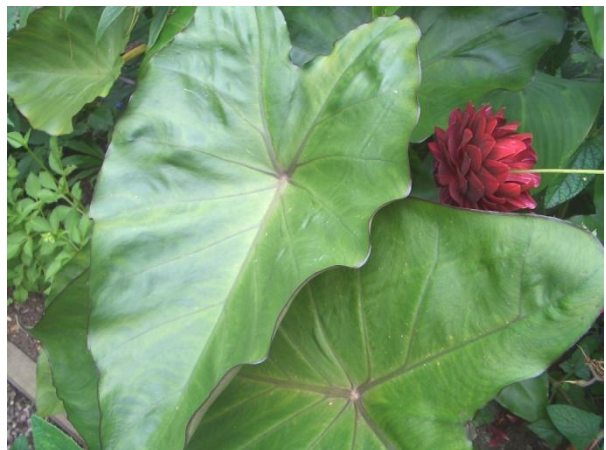


Also look out for the *Sorbus Joseph Rock* – berries start yellow and turn red, and as they do so the leaves turn yellow.



Sorbus Joseph Rock

SUB-TROPICAL: In a sheltered spot Sue has created a garden that 'makes her smile' – several plants, including *Arisaema consanguinum* and *Salvia patens*, seem to be hardy enough here and others she covers or takes in for winter e.g. *Colocasia fontenessii* (below) and *Cyperus papyrus*.



GRASSES DEMONSTRATION AREA: This section allows the visitor to see full grown plants before they buy and Sue also wants to collect more *Thalictrum* and *Aconitum* for this nicely sheltered area.



ORGANIC SLUG CONTROL: Sue employs her hens to eat the slugs – the hens are also rather partial to the strawberries but she says the trade off is worth it!

Left: slug & strawberry loving chicken

NEW PROJECTS:

Huge border planned near pond – 2010 or 2011.

Recover the old nursery beds behind the current ones – interesting gems in there!

Did the rain hold off? Pretty much and after a very interesting and informative tour, when there were a few drops we were ready to take cover for the perfect finale – home made cake and coffee served in the tearoom by David.

PS Sue is currently looking for a good supplier of *Sempervivum* so if anyone can help please do let her know.

Christine Wilcox-Baker

For more information visit their website:

www.lodgelanenursery.co.uk.

BLUEBELLS IN APRIL – need I say more?

Lyme Park Summer Picnic July 28th

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a garden never stands still!

That was the clear message we came away with after a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon in the company of Lyme Park's head gardener, Gary Rainford and his deputy Dave Bisset.

Our visit followed and complemented Gary's excellent talk back in February, which was comprehensively written-up by Maria Luczak in our April Newsletter**.

In that lecture, Gary explained that National Trust policy is to restore garden areas to their 'heyday' period – which is notoriously difficult to ascertain with any certainty – hence the constant appraising and re-appraising of the garden designs and planting schemes.

So we gathered in late July to see for ourselves the recent changes and plans for the future.

Lyme Park's 18 acres of garden was etched out of moorland on the western edge of the Pennines; and at 850' poses a considerable gardening challenge in terms of climate and altitude.

Certainly, on the day we visited, neither 'summer' nor 'picnics' were much in evidence. Rather, leaden skies, heavy rain and cold winds were the order of the day, but it didn't stop a full turn-out of stalwart CGT members and guests.



We started at the front of the house, which is probably the least changed area; the four English yews have been there for generations and are represented in paintings as far back as 1670 - although they have been considerably reduced in size recently.

The view through the courtyard is the first we see of the garden and the eye is drawn up through an avenue of limes. A programme of thinning trees in the woodland area and restorative pruning of the limes has cleared the view considerably and the garden vista is now spread out in front of us.

The next couple of hours sped past as we enjoyed the colourful bedding in the Italianate Parterre (originally a Dutch garden with a cascade similar to Chatsworth);



the Rhododendron walk which has been opened up with new planting; the delightfully named Killtime garden, where the gardeners used to go and 'kill time' so that they wouldn't be seen working while the family was in residence;



the Reflection lake – designed to reflect the back of the house – and famous as the site of Mr Darcy's submersion (though Colin Firth didn't take a dip in that actual lake – but that's another story!).

We continued past the pump house which was designed to pump water from the lake in case of fire and is soon to be a new garden interpretation room.

Then to the Long Border, originally designed by Graham Stewart Thomas, and recently re-planted to achieve a better balance and to disguise a wall rising from 2ft to 15ft.



We were all very impressed with the beautiful, Jekyll-influenced herbaceous borders, which despite 9" of rain in July (a record – now there's a surprise!) looked glorious. Gary is trying out laminated cards with colour images to help visitors identify the myriad plants and flowers – something we were sure would be appreciated (and possibly pocketed).



Gary took us back towards the house to view the formal terraces between the Dining Room and the Orangery. Until recently this area was gravelled, but it now sports fine and unusual bedding displays amid tidy turf. It is also now home to the newly refurbished sundial.

The Orangery, designed by Wyatt, was intended for citrus fruit but they didn't thrive – despite under-floor heating. On the other hand, the original figs and camellias did well and are still there, some 130 years later.

We also visited the Rose Garden which has been

completely refurbished in the past three years and all the roses replaced – the scene and scent were delightful.

The last part of our tour took us to the sunken garden – an intriguing area close to the house – which had been a tennis court and then a car park. A generous donation enabled Gary and his team to excavate and find evidence of the original garden that Wyatt had designed as far back in 1813. But there was no planting plan, so an 'English Garden' was re-created – of the time – with appropriate plants. We were able to enjoy the paths and shapes of the beds from above.



The afternoon was a wonderful insight into the practical day-to-day operation of a splendid garden as well as giving us a broader sense of how complex managing a site like this can be and how the gardens will never stand still. Our thanks go to Gary and Dave and the rest of the team and volunteers for helping to keep the gardens at Lyme Park such a delight – and for giving us such an excellent afternoon – and it really didn't rain that much during the actual tour!

Tina Theis

** If anyone would like a copy of Maria Luczak's extended version of her article about Lyme Park, please contact Tina at tina@tinatheis.com or 0161 442 0657

Cultivate and Celebrate: Treasures of the Kitchen Garden

Three years ago I decided to carve out a full-time career as a self employed Artist.

In order to focus my work I realised I needed to add to my learning. In 2008, after two years part-time study I graduated with MA in 'Art as Environment'.

More importantly my work had gained a clear definition. Always passionate about Nature and our wonderful planet I focused my work on food plants. Now I am continuing my professional development.

As a contrast to University I studied the centuries-old Icon painting technique during a retreat at Turvey Abbey, Bedfordshire. This uses a wooden panel coated with Gesso – typically 15 coats of this fine plaster are applied and sanded to give a smooth finish. Egg tempera paint is then made using fresh egg yolk, as a binder, mixed with pigments. Gold leaf is applied

for the highlights. I now use this technique to create some of my celebrations of Nature.



*'For our fruits they labour'
Egg tempera with gold leaf on gesso panel.*

I am currently very privileged to be spending lots of time at Tatton Park, as Artist-in-Residence.

I am working with Gardens Manager Sam Youd – whom many of you will no doubt have met or at least heard speak – and also Caroline Schofield, Mansion Collections Manager.

Having visited Tatton since I was a small child this opportunity is particularly special to me as I have always been inspired by Nature and feel Tatton has played a part in that inspiration.



Bean flower
Ink, pencil and egg tempera on brown paper

The Mansion is a treasure house and so too is the Kitchen Garden in my eyes. The taste, the smell, the texture of home grown food, hand picked, freshly prepared and eaten is unrivalled.

Whether you have a pot, a patio, or a potager, the excitement of planting and then watching seedlings appear, grow and flourish is really special.

Through my research into the Tatton archives and my experience of spending time in the garden I have found links between the produce of the past and that still grown there today.

The Kitchen garden was once the true heart of the estate and would have fed the extended community of the resident family and estate workers.

My work invites the Visitor to look differently at food and to focus not just on the harvest but on the whole growing cycle and the beauty of the entire plants.

My aim is to highlight the real value of the gift of food, how I believe we should not take it for granted, and to remake the links between the Kitchen Garden and the Mansion Kitchen.

STARTER

I am spending a year at Tatton developing work based on my research; my first exhibition will be from Friday 23rd October through to Sunday 1st November.

Works will include preparatory drawings and paintings, photographs, three dimensional pieces and work-in-progress.

My work can be found in the Kitchen Garden and also the Mansion (Library, Dining Room and Kitchen).



'Not just the harvest' Ink & gold paint on cartridge (Scroll displayed in Tatton Mansion Library)
PHOTO BY Eleanor Pownall



Left:
'Garden Pearl Necklace'
Artist photo of mixed media piece with fresh Garden Pearl tomatoes

'AMUSE YEUX'



Christine with Simon, one of the gardeners, working together to plant 'growing artworks' PHOTO BY Eleanor Pownall

In the garden I am working closely with the garden staff in order to create growing artworks such as 'smiles not miles' and on Friday 30th October, instead of an 'amuse bouche', will be serving up a drop-in event where you can 'grow your own smile'.



'Smiles not miles' and 'Heart of the estate'
Growing artwork in the Kitchen Garden

MAIN COURSE

This will be served in the Spring, from Saturday 27th March to Sunday 18th April, and as the 'ingredients' grow more information will be available on the Tatton Park website:

www.tattonpark.org.uk/WhatsOn/ArtatTatton

Christine Wilcox-Baker

Plant Sale at Frodsham

The Castle Park Arts Centre in Frodsham hosted a CGT plant sale for the second time on Sunday September 6th. It provided a perfect setting – the plants were displayed on tables in the Centre's gardens, and in the adjoining gallery there were gardening books and home-made jam for sale.

Trust members arrived with cars full of plants, stated firmly that they were tidying their gardens and were not going to buy anything, then often left with loads of plants which they just couldn't resist. There was a wide range on offer, from humble geraniums to exotic palms, and the donors were on hand to give information about the rarer specimens and advice on their cultivation.

A talk on Castle Park told members about the long history of the site, and various signs of work in progress showed how a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund is being used to restore Edward Kemp's mid-Victorian design to its original splendour as far as possible, while still keeping the Park as a valuable centre for twenty-first century leisure activities.



After the talk and the first eager inspection of the plants, members relaxed with a drink and some delicious gateaux supplied by the Arts Centre staff, and then the raffle was drawn.

Ruth Brown had amassed a large number of covetable prizes, which included the Rose of the Year, 'Lucky', as well as books, pictures and boxes of vegetables.

The weather forecast had been for heavy rain but luck was on our side and in fact the first drops began to fall just as people started to leave clutching their prizes and their purchases.

It was a relaxed, friendly, enjoyable afternoon, thanks to the organisers – Tina Theis, Heather Turner and Ruth Brown – and to the efficient and helpful volunteers at the Castle Park Arts Centre.

Sheila Holroyd

We would like to thank the following people and places who kindly donated the splendid prizes for the raffle held at our September plant sale:

Arley Hall and Gardens; Arley Hall Nursery; Ed Bennis; Duttons Ltd; Fryer's Nurseries Ltd; Sheila Holroyd; Lady Grey of Codnor; Maria Luczak; Springbrook Nursery; Tatton Park Gardens; Christine Wilcox-Baker; Jenny Wood

For those who love plants, the autumn and winter are a time to browse among the seed catalogues and plan their garden for next year. Whether it's flowers or vegetables, the excitement of choosing seeds, planting and watching them grow is an annual fascination.

For those who want something a little different, why not try Plant World seeds? Their current catalogue includes a mouth-watering array of flowers, from rockery gems to 15' Echiums, climbers, grasses, trees and shrubs. You will find *Musa velutina* (pink, red and orange flowers, followed by pink bananas); the "Bat Plant" (*Tacca chantrieri*) and the related "Cat's Head Plant" (*Tacca integrifolia alba*).

In the vegetable section, there are 78 different varieties of tomato – green, yellow, lemon-shaped, grape-sized, beef-steak – yellow beetroot, red carrots, white radish and many more.

Why not grow some extra for next year's plant sale?

Plant World, St Marychurch Road, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 4SE; tel: 01803 872939 or www.plant-world-seeds.com. Don't forget to mention Cheshire Gardens Trust.

Association of Gardens Trusts – AGM and Annual Conference

It was Lincolnshire Gardens Trust's turn to host this year's AGT Conference and those who thought Lincolnshire is a flat county, were in for a surprise.

The hotel was just across the road from Lincoln Cathedral – a splendid building perched atop a steep hill. And, although the visits on the Saturday were to fairly flat landscapes, Sunday brought inclines of 1 in 3 to test the calf muscles.

This was the AGT's ninth AGM. After apologies for absence, Val Hepworth (Vice-President) read the President's address on behalf of Gilly Drummond whose broken ankle meant her inevitable absence.

The meeting received the Report and Accounts, elected Officers and Independent Examiners, then went on to discuss the Affiliation Fee.

All County Gardens Trusts pay a fee, part of which is 50p per member. The meeting agreed an increase to £1 per member as from 2010.

Pressure on funding means that it is likely to increase again from 2012.

The AGT runs on an annual income of around £27k, a large proportion of which is a grant from English Heritage. This is likely to be reduced when it comes up for renewal after 2011.

Next year's AGM and Conference will be on the Isle of Wight, rather later than usual, as it will be from 1-3 October.

Following the AGM was the Business Meeting. This is held twice a year and all County Gardens Trusts are able to send a representative.

An exciting development is a potential partnership between English Heritage (EH) and Natural England (NE). EH and NE will provide 3-yr funding for the AGT to appoint and manage an Historic Landscape Project Officer to contribute to Higher Level Stewardship schemes in the SE Region.

The partnership could provide a template for similar posts in other areas of the country.

Ian Kennaway, from London, spoke to us about his idea to expand the London Open Gardens Weekend into a national event. The London scheme has been going since 1998 and has become a successful and regular fixture in the capital's calendar. Ian would like to know whether we have any gardens in public ownership which are not normally open – e.g. attached to hospitals, schools, etc – which want to take part.

Rachel Davies spoke briefly, but enthusiastically, about the Parks and Gardens Database and the many interesting elements which have been built up. Check it out at www.parksandgardens.ac.uk.

Finally Kate Harwood donned a green apron and wheeled out a laden wheelbarrow to demonstrate the work being done in Hertfordshire with schools.

There are now 8 volunteers – “Mrs Wheelbarrows” – who go to primary schools in pairs to introduce children to the excitement of planting seeds and watching them grow.

With the meeting over, we had a few minutes to ourselves before a drinks reception and the evening meal, which was followed by a short talk by Shervie Price, current owner of Harrington Hall which is closely bound up with Tennyson (as in “Come into the Garden Maud”, which was the theme of the Conference).

Saturday began with a short talk by Steffie Shields on *Impressions of Lincolnshire*. Then David Robinson gave a fascinating talk, full of snippets of information which don't usually get an airing, on *Joseph Banks, A Lincolnshire Lad*.

Then it was off to the first garden at Doddington Hall, where they had kept an Embroidery Exhibition open especially for us. On the front lawn the *Hairy Bikers* were busy making one of their television programmes, but took time out to say hello to their fans among us.



Above: The Hairy Bikers break off from filming to greet their fans

After a sustaining lunch it was on to Harrington Hall where “Tennyson” in black hat and cape sat in a corner of the garden, reciting verse. On the way back to the hotel we took a detour to see the area Tennyson had grown up in.

In the evening, another lecture was on offer. This was given by John Harris and entitled *Lincolnshire 1959: In Memoriam – the Buildings of Lincolnshire*.

Sunday began with a short lecture on Harlaxton Manor, which was one of the gardens to be visited (and which is owned by an American University). We also went to Aubourn Hall and finished the conference with a visit to Easton Walled Gardens.

Along with the lectures and visits, the weekend provided a useful opportunity to meet up with members of other Gardens Trusts. On the return journey we mulled over the possibilities for when it is Cheshire's turn to host the conference.

Joy Uings and Barbara Moth

Research and Recording update

Bringing the past to life

Our research and recording volunteers are continuing to unearth fascinating facts about Cheshire's historic designed landscapes.

Many of the volunteers are from local decorative and fine art societies and local history groups. While researching they try not to become too sidetracked by intriguing tales of landed families and local folklore.

Often they find links between owners – through marriage, inheritance or the designers they used. One designer who worked at numerous properties was John Webb. He's not so well-known as Capability Brown. Perhaps he was not good at self promotion?

Why do it?

To clarify the purpose of research for everyone we have confirmed the aims and objectives as follows.

The **aim** is to record Cheshire's landscape heritage from medieval times through to the 21st century thus creating a gazetteer of historic designed landscapes for the historic county of Cheshire.

The **objectives** are:

- To raise awareness of the value of designed landscapes – for tourism, the economy, education etc
- To inform planning policies
- To enable us to work effectively with statutory bodies and local authorities- Natural England, English Heritage, Cheshire East, West Cheshire and Chester etc
- To enable informed comment on planning applications
- To make the information more widely available through the Parks and Gardens database and via a series of themed publications

What is a historic designed landscape?

They are varied and can include cemeteries, hospitals, industrial and new town landscapes as well as parks and gardens.

There is a clearly expressed design based on contemporary aesthetic principles, often strongly influenced by the economics of landscape management.

Historic or cultural landscapes, e.g. enclosure landscapes, could also be described as designed landscapes, but are not the focus of our work.

Next steps

The agreed priority for CGT is to undertake a presentation to the East and West Cheshire authorities by Easter 2010.

We will illustrate the talk with examples of designed landscapes which have regional and local importance.

The purpose is three-fold:

- to demonstrate the importance of these designed landscapes;
- to raise awareness of CGT's work;
- to seek support in completing the gazetteer.

Some sites have a high potential for change – maybe as a result of a change of ownership; perhaps because of a planning application. These will be prioritised for research. Findings can be used to inform change and safeguard significance.

Importance

The government has been consulting on a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS 15).

This acknowledges that an evidence base, as provided by research and recording, is **vital** if we are to understand our "heritage assets". An assessment of their extent, significance and condition will be used to inform conservation, enhancement planning policy and decision-making.

If Local Authorities lack expertise in historic designed landscapes (i.e. most of them), the County Gardens Trusts have a leading role to play.

With the latest Cheshire re-organisation we have the opportunity to inform policy relating to the historic environment. The best way of doing this is to demonstrate commitment and local knowledge through research and recording.

Barbara Moth

What about you?

Are you inspired to get involved? Or maybe you have a friend who would be just right for this activity? Or maybe you just want to know a bit more?

You could come and meet current researchers, or get a list of potential sites in your area. Or – really important – you can tell us of any potential sites in your area; particularly if they are under threat.

If anyone is interested Barbara would be delighted to discuss ideas. Any contribution you could make would be much appreciated. Contact Barbara Moth tel. 01606 46228 or email barbara.moth@btinternet.com.

We are happy to provide information, contacts, training and support.



Check out the Parks & Gardens UK database at www.parksandgardens.ac.uk.

This is an on-going project and much more information needs to be collated. Is your garden listed? Can you provide more information? or maybe some photos? Contact Barbara, as above.

Observations of an American in England

THERE is a family at Winson Green, just in the vicinity of B -----m, which I have occasionally seen; and as I consider them, in their manners and style of living, a very good specimen of those in the middle walks of life, I will give you an account of a late visit there, and will mingle character and description with incident. At the close of a fine day, a young Bostonian and myself, conducted by a son of the family, called at their cottage. By cottage, you will not understand me to mean a one-story, straw-thatched building, half hid in woodbine, but a neat two story brick mansion, covered with slate. We paused a few moments, in the front garden, to look at its arrangement. I have often had occasion to admire the taste, which Englishmen of this class exhibit in laying out and decorating their gardens and pleasure grounds. Whenever they fix upon a spot, and call it "home", they collect about it every little comfort and elegance that their means will admit. A garden seems to be a primary object in their rural economy; and even when their means are scanty, and they are necessarily confined to a narrow spot of ground, they contrive to throw over that spot, a thousand beauties. This taste, I conceive, cannot be too highly commended. It is not less elegant in itself, than it is favourable to purity of manners. The same fondness for a garden and flowers may be traced in the lowest artisans and cottagers; and when they are denied the luxury of a garden, they will make a garden of their houses, and fill every window with flowers, and plants. The garden which we were now surveying, was enclosed with a well-trimmed hawthorn hedge, and two gravelled walks led up each side of a close-shaven, oval grass plat, to the front door. Trees of various kinds mingled with shrubbery skirting the edges, and gave to the centre a charming aspect of pensive retirement, and rural quietness. The lawn, by the use of a cast iron roller, and frequent shaving, had become extremely smooth, and was not only cheering to the eye, from its vivid green, but pleasant and soft as down to the foot. From the front garden we were conducted through a gate at one corner of the house, into the fruit and flower garden. This was somewhat larger than the other. Like that, it was enclosed with a hawthorn hedge, which, by constant trimming and good management had become so closely interwoven and matted together, as to form as effectual a barrier against the intrusion of cattle or the prying curiosity of man, as a stone or brick wall itself. The hedge, under the hand of a skilful gardener, can be made to assume the most fantastic shapes. This was so close, that neither the hand nor the eye could penetrate it; and clothed as it then was, in the brightest green, it far surpassed in beauty, any fence or railing, and was more in harmony with the scene around. As might be expected, we found ourselves very pleasantly entertained, in strolling over this enclosure. Flowers of all hues, and every fragrance, spread their charms before us, and together with the fine fruits which abounded in it, our senses were variously regaled. At the termination of the walks was some object to call and divert the attention – a summer-house, an arbour, or a rustic seat. In the centre a sun-dial marked the wane of time; and at the

foot of the garden, flowed a small stream, which formed several cascades, and finally passed off with a rippling sound, and was lost to the eye under an arbour. There was here nothing extravagant, and nothing more than what most of our farmers and tradesmen might command, with a very little attention and trifling cost. The fruit-trees and plants would afford them amusement in their leisure hours, as well as reward them with their products; and the cultivation of flowers would give their daughters a refined and healthy enjoyment.

From this little Elysium we were called to the tea-table. We now first passed compliments with Mrs. M-----, the mother of the family, and having found seats, tea was brought in. Tea in this country is taken *sans* ceremony, and is soon over. Since we are in the house, allow me to say something of the interior. This is more exclusively the female department, and I am happy to remark, that the same neatness and taste which characterized the gardens and grounds, were seen here. The houses of this class of Englishmen are small, but convenient. This had four rooms on the lower floor, with an entry leading between them from the front to the rear. They are handsomely fitted up, and made to appear well at a small expense. The looms of Manchester and Kidderminster, the forges of Sheffield, and the foundries of Birmingham, each yield their articles to grace an English cottage of this stamp. We have the same articles with us, but they are generally of an inferior quality, and seldom arranged with so much reference to effect. The windows, with the aid of curtains and blinds, become the most ornamental part of the house. Though they are "few and far between" on account of the heavy taxes to which they are subject, they appear elegant, whether seen from within or without. The fire-places also, which with us are apt to be black and sooty, exhibit here a very different aspect. They are made of cast iron, with polished grates. The fenders, and fire irons are usually of polished steel. The mantel-piece is always stored with a choice collection of shells, crystallizations, spar beautifully modelled into urns, vases, and the like. Here were shown several elegant paper baskets covered with rice, which were wrought by the daughters. These things, trifling in themselves, yet set off a room, and speak much in praise of the female inmates.

From the tea-table we were led to a summer-house in a corner of the garden. While we were here enjoying a fine evening, a declining sun which added new beauties to fields and trees, and a cool breeze which was loaded with the fragrance of many flowers, Mr. M----- and a son-in-law of his, joined us. Mr. M----- is an extensive button-maker. He rides into town every morning in his pony-gig, pursues his business all day with industry, economy, and system; and at night returns to the bosom and enjoyment of his family. He has an increasing trade to America, and is partial to Americans, but amidst his eulogies of the daughter, it is easy to discover that he secretly thinks better of the mother. He gave us a hearty welcome. At nine o'clock we were summoned to the supper table. Here, the interesting daughters of the family who had returned from abroad, joined us. The

refreshments were liberal. An English supper, you must know, though not exactly Roman, is yet rather luxurious. After the usual accompaniment of music, both vocal and instrumental, we took leave of our courteous and hospitable hosts. Such is a specimen of English taste and manners in the middling ranks of society. Families of this

description are noted for neatness, hospitality, order, and economy; and when adorned and recommended by probity and religion, few spots on earth can be compared with an English fireside, and household circle.

***The Christian Spectator. 1826.
Hezekiah Howe, New Haven***

The above excerpt dates from nearly 200 years ago. Right up-to-date is this following message from Patrick Swan, who left his position as Head Gardener at Arley earlier this year, leaving Cheshire for the more southerly climes of Worcestershire....

“Things are going well here and time has flown by. Had a busy summer with good hay making weather in June, followed by July with weather not fit for anything! Then catching up again in August. But it's great to be back near parents and family. Currently working on putting the farm on the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme, which is a mine-field of government bureaucracy but should be worth it in the end.

On the horticultural side I am getting my act together as a tutor/consultant for country house garden owners and staff. I hope to be at the HHA event in London in November to chat up suitable potential customers..

Family are all well here and the children love their new schools, Benedict is at the same primary school I went to many years ago.

Hope all is well with yourself and that the CGT continues to show the others the way forward! Pass on my good wishes to everyone else.

”
Best wishes, Patrick.

Saturday 21st November, 10.30 am

Wildlife Gardening – a lecture by Ken Thompson, Knutsford Civic Centre

Ken Thompson is a well-known author of a number of very enjoyable gardening books – *No Nettles Required* and *An Ear to the Ground* among others. I'm sure many of you will be familiar with his witty and useful guides to gardening and if not, then be sure to come along and find out why he is justly such a popular writer and speaker.

We all like to encourage wildlife and biodiversity in our gardens, Ken will talk about what makes a successful wildlife garden - it's much more about how we garden than about what we grow. Ken will also talk about the Sheffield University BUGS project – Biodiversity in Urban Gardens in Sheffield – which shows just how diverse and wildlife-friendly our humble plots can be.

His chief conclusion is that “wildlife gardening is easier, cheaper and more attractive than almost anyone would have you believe. In short, you can forget all your worst fears about wildlife gardening. A successful wildlife garden does not have to be large, untidy or full of weeds. The most important thing you can do for wildlife is to grow as many trees and large shrubs as you can, but even that isn't essential – successful wildlife gardening is much more about how you garden than about what you grow.”

Ken is interested in, and has published on, just about every aspect of plant ecology. In the last 5-10 years, he has become increasingly interested in the ecology of gardens and promotion of science to the general public. He has written four gardening books and regular columns for *Organic Gardening* magazine (on the science of gardening). He now writes occasionally for other gardening magazines, including *The Garden* and *Gardens Monthly*.

Costs - £8 members / £10 non-members.

Includes morning coffee

Event Co-ordinator – Tina Theis - tel: 0161 442 0657 or tina@tinatheis.com

Gordon Cooke will be holding an exhibition of his work from Saturday 7 November till Sunday 15 November, daily from 2 to 5. Preview on Friday 6 November from 6 to 8 (includes food and drink treats). 17 Poplar Grove, Sale, M33 3AX. Unrestricted parking in Clifton Road.

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS, tel: 0161 969 3300 or e-mail news.uings@btconnect.com.