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The top news story – some days the ONLY news story – for much of January was SNOW.

*Those of us who lived through the 1962/63 winter – and even more so anyone old enough to remember 1947 – will have wondered what all the fuss was about. Outside toilets, no central heating: that's when cold really **meant** cold; snow was really deep and winter dragged on for weeks.*

But it was January's top story, so as part of the media, however insignificant in the greater scheme of things, I thought the CGT newsletter should recognise Snow, albeit in an historical context.

I trawled my research notes and found the weather is never to be relied upon:

It turned out that snow was not always confined to the winter. In the 1830s, spring could be cold:

- May 1831: there were two inches of snow round Saddleworth;
- May 1835: the weather was “as cold as that generally experienced in November”. Fruit blossom suffered from the frosts and freezing winds and there was snow in the hills;
- May 1836: Welsh mountains were covered in snow and the cold weather had badly hit the lambing season;
- May 1838: snow fell on Saddleworth.

More surprising were the summer reports:

On July 29, 1839 “Skiddaw was completely covered, even to its very base, with snow, which remained for some hours afterwards, forming a strange object at this particular season of the year, amidst the richly verdant scenery of the neighbourhood”. [Whitehaven Herald.]

September 1831 saw “a quantity of snow” in Grantham (mixed with torrential rain and “hailstones of large dimensions”). [Stamford Mercury] Two years later it was Kent’s turn. The temperature dropped suddenly and gales “attended with abundance of rain, sleet, and, in some instances, snow” caused havoc among the hop fields and orchards. [Maidstone Gazette.]

November 1836 was fairly grim, too. The cold weather seems to have affected the whole country. In Glasgow they had two inches of snow, though in the southern parts of Midlothian it was more than six times that. In London the snow fell heavily enough to create problems for transport. Between Birmingham and London the wind had caused drifts up to four feet deep. Meanwhile Manchester “had a remarkably keen frost on Sunday and Monday” with some sleet, but “since then the weather has been as mild as before the frost appeared”.

So what about January? In 1843, it started and ended well, but the middle was not good. February was not much better.

“The weather, for the first two days of 1843, was beautiful. From the 3rd to the 16th, we had continued storms of rain, hail, and snow. On the 14th we had a complete hurricane, with a deluge of rain. The remainder of the month was mild, open weather, with a little frost sometimes in the mornings. Thrushes, and a few other birds were singing almost every day. Snow drops and crocuses also began to bloom in the gardens and orchards of all the old farm steadings. I never like to see a farm without these flowers and the daffodil. February began with a mild and pleasant day. Then we had heavy snow storms for two days, followed with frosty nights till the 13th, when a very keen settled frost set in and continued till the 19th. On some mornings, at sunrise, the thermometer stood at 17° [that’s -8° Celsius]. Since the 19th the weather has been open, generally dry, and rather cold. To-day is a beautiful one.” [Manchester Times 11 March 1843]

Nine years earlier, the weather was unusually mild, upsetting the normal flowering periods:

“The present winter has hitherto been the most extraordinary within our remembrance. For nearly three months past heavy falls of rain have been experienced in this district almost every day; and this week scarcely a day has occurred in which we have not been visited by showers. On Thursday afternoon a violent thunder-storm set in from the west, which continued for about half an hour, and was followed by torrents of rain. The thunder-claps were loud, but no lightning was observed. Yesterday morning, about eight o’clock, we experienced another tremendous fall of rain, but it was not of long duration. The winter has been so remarkably mild that not a snow flake has yet been seen in this quarter. The gardens, especially those in south aspects, exhibit the appearance of spring. Polyantheses, daisies, gilliflowers, and ten weeks’ stock, in all their varieties, are to be seen in full bloom, but with little fragrance, in most garden spots in the neighbourhood; and in one garden, even in an exposed situation, we saw the other day a cluster of primroses, apparently as vigorous as if the month was that of April.” [Manchester Times 18 January 1834]

Just as in 2010, 1837 saw the deaths of three people who fell through ice. Men and boys continued to skate, despite being told it was dangerous (human nature doesn’t change). The fields and roads had been covered with snow and ice up to two feet deep, but the temperature rose quickly and overnight the snow and ice had disappeared.

In its Supplement of 24 October 1846, the Manchester Examiner reminded its readers of a bitterly cold winter and its gruesome effects:

“The winter of 1697 was so intensely cold that the birds, &c. died in great numbers. The scanty crops of these years were gathered from the snows of November and December, by which many people were frost-bitten, losing their hands and feet. The cattle died in the stalls, and dropped dead in the fields. Little or no meal could be got. To make that little go as far as possible, it was mixed up with wayside herbs and seeds of an unwholesome character, which were almost as fatal as absolute want. The deaths from pure starvation were numerous.”

Six months earlier, the paper had reported another upside down season. A mild start encouraged flowers to bloom. Then came March:

“The mild weather by which the first two months of the year were so remarkably distinguished, continued, with the occasional occurrence of a slight frost, till about the middle of March. A singularly dense fog was experienced in Manchester on the morning of the 9th, during which it was so dark that the shops and warehouses, as well as the Exchange, were lighted up; and objects could not be seen in the streets at the distance of twenty, or twenty-five yards. The fog continued till about ten o’clock, and then suddenly gave place to bright sunshine.

The temperature fell considerably on the 15th of the month; and the weather, from that date, has exhibited all the variableness of an ordinary month of March. We have had wind, rain, hail, snow, lightning and thunder. The fall of snow, on the evening of the 18th, was considerable; and the hail storms on the 24th, which were accompanied by thunder, were remarkable for their violence, and for the rapidity with which the ground was covered with an icy incrustation.

The prevailing winds have been from the west; north-west or south-west. We have had no east wind, except for a few hours, during the month. The quantity of rain which has fallen in the first three months of the year, separately or collectively considered, has been below the average.



The unusual earliness of the season was more apparent in the fields and gardens at the beginning than it is at the end of the month. On the 1st, we gathered the flowers of that singular and pretty plant, the tuberous-rooted muschatel, being at least a month earlier than its usual time of flowering; and we may confidently assert, that all the early spring flowers were at that period from a fortnight to a month in advance of their usual period of inflorescence. In the gardens this was quite as obvious as in the fields. We were quite gay with two or three sorts of daffodils, anemones, blue, white, and yellow crocuses, the beautiful grape hyacinth, the scilla, the moly, polyanthus, wallflowers, the large garden daisy, white and blue sweet violets, purple, lilac, sulphur,

and white double primroses, the purple stock, the dogtooth violet, and the white, blue, and pink hepaticas, the early heath, the greater periwinkle, the arabis, and the houndstongue. Amongst the shrubs and trees, the white and the scarlet pyras, the corchorus japonica, and the ribes sanguinea were conspicuous; and in the orchards the early plums were in full bloom, and some pear trees partially so. The frost which preceded and followed the fall of snow on the 18th did great damage to the blossoms, and to the shoots of early roses, and other plants unusually advanced. It is also to be feared that in many cases the gooseberries will have suffered.



The earliness of the season is at the close of the month most observable in the unusual quantity of grass in the meadows, the strong growth of the wheat, and the leafing of the trees. The lilacs, thorns, and balsam poplars, are in full foliage. The elder, the elm, and the greater maple or sycamore, are rapidly unclosing their leaves. The horse-chestnut is beginning to open its buds, and the hedges are quite green.

These appearances are accompanied by the presence and the notes of those birds, migratory or otherwise, by which they are usually attended; and notwithstanding the lower temperature and variable weather of the last fortnight, we have still all the evidences of an unusually forward spring, and very favourable indications for the coming seasons."

Joy Uings

Manchester Lit. and Phil.

Science, Liberality and Good Taste - The Manchester Botanic Garden

In June 1831, The Manchester Botanic Garden was opened for the scientific study of botany and horticulture and the recreation of its members.

What happened to the Garden? Why is it not remembered today?

Wednesday 10 February 2010. MANDEC 7 p.m.

Non-members are asked to telephone or e-mail the office to reserve a seat. 0161 247 6774
admin@manlitphil.co.uk



On Friday 16th October 2009 Springfield Primary School children swarmed out across Sale to visit local parks. The school had planned one of their creative days to make children more aware of the area in which they live thus fulfilling a school target – to become more immersed in the community and improve community relations. The day was organised by two members of the staff management team who ensured that risk assessments were undertaken for every journey and every park, contacted Trafford Council to have staff available, and recruited a large number of parent and governor helpers to share the day.

Having prepared for all eventualities, a whole school assembly with Blur's Park Life started the day. The nursery classes stayed in the recently developed school garden while the reception class had lessons in water safety by the Bridgewater Canal which lies alongside the school grounds. All the other year groups walked to parks across the town, seven parks in all, the infants focusing on the nearest ones and the juniors walking to those further away – Kelsall Street Park, Harley Road Park, Worthington Park, Walkden Gardens, Walton Park and Ashton Park. For each park the children undertook their own survey, based on green flag assessment criteria, judging things such as the cleanliness of the park and if it was accessible to everyone. At Walkden Gardens Trafford Council staff explained about the facilities and how they are maintained and the children completed a Trafford Survey, assisting with development of the Borough's Green Space Strategy. Year 6 completed a mini Olympics in Ashton Park, using the

occasion to link with their history topic on Ancient Greece. Each class spent time drawing, collecting leaves, exploring, picnicking, participating in organised games and giving the play areas a thorough testing!

Springfield was fortunate that it was the most perfect autumn day – clear, bright and sunny – which contributed to its success. The feedback was universally positive, the day giving enormous pleasure to all who took part. Apart from happy memories the event also provided a wealth of material for cross curricula follow up work, including literacy – creative writing, poetry, accounts, and art – landscape paintings, leaf rubbings and printing. Many rated it “the best creative day ever” and for others it was the opportunity to discover and enjoy free facilities on their doorstep, meeting park officers and Park Friends, and the children seeing people and being seen as part of the community. Such was the success and benefit that the school have in mind a follow up creative day in the parks for spring or summer.

Comment: Springfield recognises that they are fortunate to have so many parks to use creatively, local resources without the transport costs associated with many school trips. Their imaginative use of the local environment for “education outside the classroom” has produced immediate educational benefits across the curriculum as well as a feel good factor. Hopefully this positive experience will have shown the children – and adults- that it is possible to walk to varied open spaces and enjoy simple pleasures - no costs, no car, just cared for green spaces with a diversity of character, facilities and planting – and sunshine!

Barbara Moth



Green Flag Award Survey

Name of Park: Worthington Park

- 1) Are there any trees / flowers? Yes No
- 2) Is there any wildlife? (animals / birds / insects?)
 Yes No
- 3) Are there any benches / places to sit? Yes No
- 4) Is the equipment safe to use? Yes No
- 5) Is the park clean? (no/hardly any litter) Yes No
- 6) Are there bins for litter? Yes No
- 7) Does the park have its own sign / notice board?
(Welcome to Walton Park?) Yes No
- 8) Equal access for all members of the community
(disabled people?) Yes No
- 9) Are there any events being held in the park /
advertised? Yes No
- 10) Did the children think the park was a fun place to
go? (majority agree) Yes No

Score out of 10



Proof-reading for the October newsletter was less than perfect, and the article on Bluebell Cottage Gardens referred to the **RHS** Yellow Book Scheme!

John Hinde is the Deputy County Organiser for Cheshire and Wirral and a Trustee of the NGS. He's also a CGT member....

So to remind us that it is the **NGS** (National Gardens Scheme) Yellow Book:



Never again!

The words are echoed by many a garden owner the morning before the first time of opening for the National Gardens Scheme: you have no idea whether the weather will be as bad as forecast – or maybe they got it wrong! You don't know if anybody will turn up: 'What if no-body comes.....?'

But more often than not, the weather does hold up (sort of) and the people

do indeed arrive promptly at opening time – or even earlier – and the afternoon goes with a swing.

And at the close of the day, when all the visitors have gone home and a celebratory glass is being drunk (with the Chinese takeaway that you have promised your helpers), Mrs Garden Owner will turn to Mr Garden Owner and whisper those immortal words: 'Shall we do it again next year?'

The good news is that it becomes easier each year, so that you can positively look forward to it thereafter.

But why is it that such an apparently stressful event should prove so 'more-ish'? Well, there is no doubt that personal pride – making sure it is all as good as it can be on the day – is a motivator. After all, we are all human!

Many garden owners have said that, by opening for the NGS they have joined a 'club', and it is true that as organisers, we do our best to help people with advice regarding any difficulties they encounter when planning.

Frequently, established garden owners will offer help to other local gardens, if needed on the gate etc, so it is indeed a very supportive environment.

It is also true, that as the years go by, it also becomes a great way to renew old friendships with visitors, many who come year after year, including, in my case many who are CGT members.

And the teas...aaah!

Where does the money go?

In Cheshire and Wirral, during 2009, we opened around 100 gardens (including those in 'groups'),

collected, via teas, plant sales and at the garden gate, around £125,000, certainly a record for us, despite some pretty gloomy weather.

It confirmed our expectation that in a recessionary year, more people would stay closer to home for their leisure time. Again our visitor numbers, at over 22,000, were a record.

The money is pooled nationally and decisions made by the trustees about its distribution. For some years now, the NGS has had a policy of supporting charities that provide nursing and social care within a community environment.

Thus Macmillan, Marie Curie, the hospice movement and Crossroads Care have all benefited from our work in recent years.

Locally, Macmillan has made a significant investment with the money provided from the NGS.

In 2008, they opened a specialist cancer treatment and support unit at Leighton Hospital, Crewe, in co-operation with the NHS Trust locally, using a massive half of all the money that they received that year from us.

It somehow becomes more real, when translated into bricks and mortar, although, as the largest single donor to Macmillan nationally, we know that we make a difference by funding posts on the ground across the country.



above Change Hey, Willaston, Wirral

We also donate money, in smaller amounts, to a range of other charities, some of them gardens related, including the National Trust.

At our stipulation, the latter use the money received to fund bursaries for about a dozen student gardeners per year, who, it is planned will be the next generation of National Trust Head Gardeners, although some do move off into private gardens as well.

Their training has a very local link – because the

academic part of their three years of study is done here in Cheshire, at Reaseheath College.

How did it all start?

Even at the outset, the NGS had roots in the North West.

In late Victorian time, William Rathbone of Liverpool, a well know business man (there is still, of course a Rathbone's in Liverpool) and philanthropist employed a group of women to go out into the city to provide basic nursing services to the poor.

The idea was taken up elsewhere in the country by other philanthropists, encouraged by Queen Victoria and, apparently, Florence Nightingale (again, apparently, a 'celeb' of the day).

Eventually, the Queens Nursing Institute emerged as a charitable body to run the whole organisation nationally.

They became known as the District Nurses, and they set about the problem of raising funds independently.

They stumbled upon the idea of opening gardens of the great and good, and charging visitors a shilling per head.



above Alma Villa, Shavington

From the beginning, it proved a great success and even in its first year (1927), they raised over £160,000 from over 600 gardens!

The District Nurses were subsumed into the NHS after the Second World War.

The garden opening venture eventually became a charity in its own right, but to this day, continues to donate money to the QNI, which now, of course has a different remit.

And the NGS Today....

The NGS has evolved over the years to reflect, in many ways, the changes in society.

We are always delighted to be able to open larger gardens, as we always have done, in the traditional English style, but we now see more smaller gardens, both traditionally planted but also the exotic, as well as community gardens and, of course allotments: there is considerable interest in the latter, especially amongst younger 'urban' families.

The weather has been a real difficulty and frustration for gardeners in the last couple of years, but we are encouraging more and more, to open for two consecutive days to mitigate the weather risk for essentially the same amount of preparatory work.

Inevitably, we see a 'turnover' in gardens: it seems to be an unavoidable consequence of people coming to gardening generally later in life.

Nevertheless, the people of Cheshire and Wirral (and that is BOTH halves of the new Cheshire!) continue stepping forward to enquire if they can open for us. Long may they continue. We couldn't exist without them!

John Hinde

Thinking about opening your own garden? Why not contact John on 0151 342 8557 or e-mail him at John.Hinde@maylands.com

There are other Garden Open arrangements....

Didsbury Open Gardens

This June, Didsbury Open Gardens will be offering another chance for gardening enthusiasts to view the creativity of some of the best private gardens in Manchester. More than twenty gardens, normally lying tantalizingly unseen, will be throwing their gates open for charity on Sunday 13th June, with up to 1,000 expected tickets sales.

Peter Jordan, who opened his gem of a cottage garden for the first time last year said, "It was one of the best afternoons of the year. I opened with my neighbour Simon, and although our terraced gardens are tiny, visitors seemed amazed at how many plants we managed to pack in. I'm really looking forward to opening again."

Anne Britt, a local garden designer who also opens her garden added, "It can be nerve-wracking, willing the roses to open on time and praying my Allium Globemasters don't flop over."

The organiser of the event, Maria Stripling, is keen to encourage even more visitors to the gardens this year. "We try to include a real variety of gardens in the programme – everything from formal courtyard to Japanese, with several gardens also offering refreshments and plant sales. The standard is very high with several of our gardens opening for the National Gardens Scheme."

If you would like to be added to the Didsbury Open Gardens ticket information mailing list, email: maria.stripling@zen.co.uk.

Mrs Delany and Her Circle

Mrs Delany was born Mary Granville in 1700. Married twice, widowed twice, she moved in royal and aristocratic circles. She was an inveterate letter writer, leaving six volumes of correspondence. But she was also the compiler of a Flora, nearly one thousand botanical "paper mosaics" now housed in the British Museum. From 19th February to 1st May 2010, the Sir John Soane's Museum will be hosting an exhibition with the above title. And on March 7th, CGT member John Edmondson will be giving a lecture for the Friends of Ness Gardens entitled "Mrs. Delany and her cut-flower Collages".

Mary Delany was born Mary Granville on 14th May, 1700. At the age of 17, she met Alexander Pendarves. His proposal of marriage was "so strenuously supported by her uncle, whom she had not the courage to deny, that she gave her reluctant consent to the match".¹

The marriage was not a happy one. It only lasted until 1724, when she was widowed, but they were not happy years for her. She made the most of them, cultivating a "naturally vigorous understanding" and beginning the correspondence with friends that would eventually fill six volumes.

Following the death of her husband, she moved from Cornwall to London, where she found that "living alone was a pleasanter thing than she imagined". Nevertheless, after nearly twenty years, she married again, this time to Dr Patrick Delany. This time, the marriage was a very happy one, but at the age of 68, she was widowed again.

Mary "was thirty years old before she learned to draw, and forty before she attempted oil-painting... she excelled in embroidery and shell-work, and at the age of seventy-four invented a new and beautiful mode of exercising her ingenuity. This was in the construction of a Flora. She cut out the various parts of the flower she wished to imitate, in coloured paper, which she sometimes dyed herself, and pasted them, accurately arranged, on a black ground. The effect was so admirable that it was impossible often to distinguish the original from the imitation."²

Unfortunately failing eyesight meant that she had to abandon her Flora at the age of 83. But by that time she had finished 980 flowers.

Ray Desmond, in his Dictionary of British and Irish botanists and horticulturists, records her as "Artist, gardener and maker of shell grottoes on Irish estates. Created garden at her home at Delville, Dublin Bay, with the assistance of Rev. Patrick Delany." He also notes that the British Museum has 970 of her paper flower mosaics.

One of Mary Delany's correspondents was the Countess of Stamford at Dunham Massey. Perhaps we will hear more of that in the next issue of the newsletter.

¹ The Universal Magazine, Volume 93, (1793) page 339

² Hale, Sarah. Woman's Record: or Sketches of all distinguished women, from "the beginning" till A.D. 1850. 1853.

For information on the exhibition see: www.soane.org/forthcomingexhibitions. For details of Friends of Ness lectures, see www.liv.ac.uk/nessgardens/support/friends. The Universal Magazine, Vol 93 and Woman's Record are both available on <http://books.google.com/books>.



Don't forget to visit Dunham Massey's new Winter Garden.

At 7 acres, it's the largest of its kind in the UK and is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. There are nearly 700 different plant species, 1,600 shrubs and 200,000 bulbs.

January brings the snowdrops – more than 12,000 double and single flowers. And there are 20,000 daffodils among the trees.

Camellias are underplanted with cyclamen. February brings crocus, narcissi and iris in the Yellow Meadow and in late February the Blue Meadow has blue and purple iris, chionodoxa and scilla.

For those who leave within easy reach, a weekly visit is called for.

Another sojourn to the continent for CGT?

Seventeen CGT members feasted on the gardens, restaurants and bars of Belgium in Sept 2008. It was an amazing trip and certainly the gardens were as memorable as our local host, Herman (he may in fact be more memorable!). Many members have asked about when and where will be the next European excursion-often forgetting that the UK is part of Europe as well.



Air photo of Shloss Dyck with Miscanthus garden

volunteers would help to organise the trip. If you think you can spare some time...and it is not that difficult of a task ... contact Ed Bennis on 0161 291 0450 or e.m.bennis@mmu.ac.uk.

As in the previous trip, members would arrange their own travel and hotels (we will recommend two-three hotels). Admission fees, internal travel and some meals will be included in the costs.

Provisional Dates:

Dates for Visit: 2/3-5 Sept 2010

Register Interest: 18 March 2010 (Date of AGM)

We have very good contacts in Germany, and rather like Belgium you would be surprised about the richness and diversity of the gardens. We would base ourselves in Nordrhein-Westfalen which includes cities such as Duisburg, Cologne and Düsseldorf. This is the old industrial heartland of Germany not far from the Dutch border. Here you will find gardens in the formal French style at Schloss Benrath; regenerated industrial parklands at Duisburg Landschaftspark; modern urban parks by Israeli sculptor Dani Karavan; the Centre for Garden Art and Culture at Schloss Dyck. Dyck is set in an 18th century English landscape with modern display gardens and the most remarkable Miscanthus gardens. Nearby is the Langan Foundation (a modern landscape and amazing museum) and Insel Hombrich which mixes garden, nature reserve and art in an impressive setting. The entire area is rich in public parks and private gardens and will prove to be a great experience if you have not been here before....there may even be a few surprises for those that have visited the area.

As you can imagine, putting a trip together like this takes time and organisation and CGT needs some help with this. The Committee of Management and the Events Committee with its limited volunteers feel they are not able to take on any more work at this time. We do have the experiences of Belgium which will make things easier. We need to find out how many of you would be interested in going to Germany and if two or three

Draft Itinerary and costs: mid-April 2010

Confirmation and Deposit: 28 May 2010

Final Payment: 30 June 2010



Langan Foundation



Shloss Dyck Miscanthus garden

Dates for your diary

The Council of Management

has set dates for all its 2010 meetings. All members are very welcome to come along – meet the committee, find out how it works, raise issues for discussion. All meetings are at Arley Hall – usually in the coach house – on Wednesdays at 6.30 p.m. If you plan on attending, do let us know beforehand so that we can ensure there are sufficient refreshments and can let you have a copy of the papers so you know what will be discussed.

Put these dates in your diary, and make a point of joining us:

3rd March; 14th April; 19th May; 7th July; 18th August; 29th September and 10th November

Events

An events mailing will be made with booking forms, but why not put these dates into your diary now.

Thursday 18th March – AGM and 2010 Annual Spring Lecture by Michael Walker on *The Trentham Estate - an historic and economic revival*.

To be held at Reaseheath College, Nantwich

5pm garden tour/6pm buffet/6.45AGM/7.30 lecture/8.30 finish. Cost £15/£18 includes buffet

Saturday 10th April, 10am for 10.30 start. Cultivate & Celebrate: treasures of the kitchen garden.

A talk and exhibition tour by Artist Christine Wilcox-Baker at Tatton Park, Knutsford Cost £6/£8 includes coffee.

Numbers limited – so book early

Friday 14th May, 2pm Henbury Hall. Tour of gardens with Head Gardener. Cost £7/£9

Saturday 26th June, 2pm Poulton Hall, Wirral. Sculpture and wildflower meadow.

July – (Date to be confirmed) Vernon Park, Stockport

Saturday 14th August, 2pm Biddulph Grange at dahlia time. Plus geological gallery.

September – (Date to be confirmed) Tour of Trentham Gardens to see grasses at their best and Piet Oudolf's prairie planting

Sunday 17th October 2.30 – Foxhill Arboretum and fungi foray.

Snowdrop and Bluebell Walks



Rode Hall will be open from 30th January to 7th March, daily (except Mondays and Tuesdays) from 12.00 to 4.00 pm. for its famous snowdrop walks. The collection was begun in 1833 and there are now more than 40 different varieties.

If the weather is mild there will also be hellebores, early daffodils and rhododendrons, too.

If February brings snowdrops, then April brings bluebells.

On Sunday 25th April why not go to **Combermere Abbey** for their annual 2 mile woodland walk through glorious bluebell woods. From 1 p.m. with last walks beginning 5 p.m.

If you can't make the 25th, but you can gather 19 or more like-minded people, why not organise a private walk on a weekday (except Bank Holidays) between 19th April and 14th May. Pre-booking is necessary. Phone 01948 662880. [More details via e-mail. If you aren't receiving e-mails from CGT, it will be because we don't have your e-mail address. If you want to be included, send your address to joy.uings@btconnect.com.]

Arley Hall also has Bluebell Walks on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th April and on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd May. It's an opportunity to visit areas of Arley not normally open to the public. Walks last about 1 ½ hours and booking is essential.

And Spring brings Plant Fairs. Combermere Abbey will be having one on 25th April – so not just bluebells to enjoy on that date. Arley will be having its first plant fair on Sunday 4th April, two days after the gardens open for the season.

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 joy.uings@btconnect.com.