

# CHESHIRE GARDENS • TRUST •

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

Issue No. 3

July 2004

## Newsletter

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### Some future events:

- ✱ 21-25 July – RHS Tatton Flower Show.
- ✱ Saturday 25 September – J Parker Dutch Bulbs
- ✱ Sat 2 Oct – National Quince Day, Norton Priory
- ✱ Sat 6 Nov – Tatton Park Walled Kitchen Gardens
- ✱ Tues 7 Dec – The National Gardens Scheme

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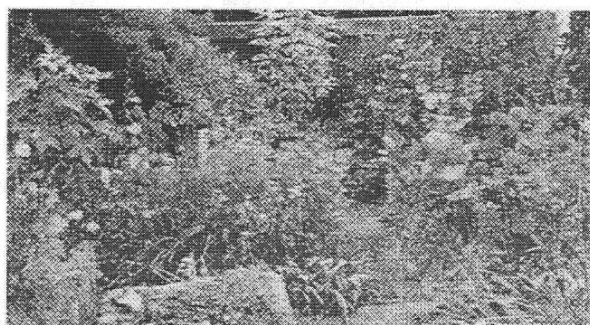
### Arley Launch – The Icing on the Cake



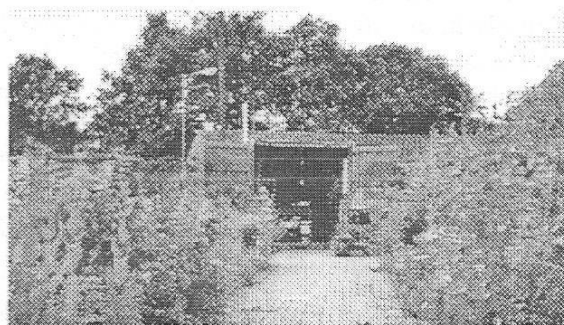
### Tirley Garth – an Arts and Crafts Garden



### Orchard Villa – a plantsperson's paradise



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## The Official Launch of the Cheshire Gardens Trust

took place in April. It was less than fifteen months since the Steering Committee first came together. Below Ruth Brown describes a wonderful evening.

The official launch of the Cheshire Gardens Trust took place on 29 April 2004 at Arley Hall, the ancestral home of the Trust's Patron, Viscount Ashbrook. Following a day of uncertain weather conditions the rain stopped, enabling members and guests to enjoy the gardens. Two garden tours had been arranged before the speeches and formalities of the evening began. One, around the Woodland Grove, was led by Viscount Ashbrook himself, while the alternative tour, around the formal gardens, was led by Patrick Swann, Arley's Head Gardener.

Arley has much of interest, including pleached limes, an avenue of clipped Ilex, a fine collection of rhododendron, azaleas and shrub roses, two walled gardens, a woodland garden and a vinery. The Woodland Grove has been developed by Viscount Ashbrook over the last thirty years and is underplanted with rhododendrons, azaleas and other flowering shrubs.

However, Arley is probably best known for its double herbaceous border, buttressed by yew hedges, and possibly the oldest in existence in England. The summerhouse at one end and the parkland at the other provide focal points from each direction. The borders provide a magnificent display of colour throughout the summer months.

Viscount Ashbrook welcomed members of The Cheshire Gardens Trust and guests to Arley, his family home, the gardens of which had been created by successive generations of his family. He emphasized the importance of privately owned gardens open to the public, especially their contribution to the tourism industry and the rural economy, not just in Cheshire but throughout the country, and the effort and resources required to maintain horticultural standards.

Gilly Drummond, President of the Association of Gardens Trusts, in a speech full of enthusiasm, emphasized the contribution that the network of County Trusts had made, not just to garden heritage and landscape but to education, especially projects



*Above, Lord Ashbrook took one group and, below, Patrick Swann another. The gardens were looking magnificent, though rain threatened.*

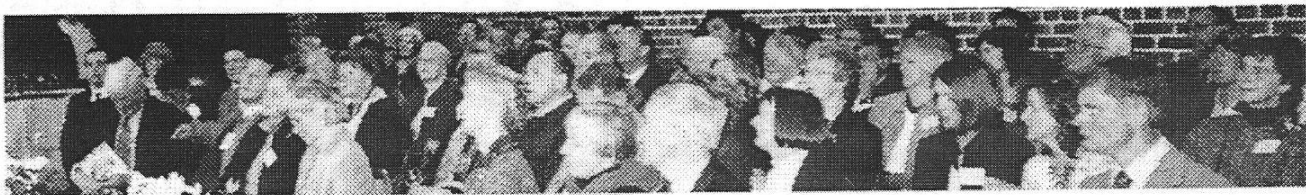


in schools. She congratulated the Cheshire Gardens Trust for its impact and its recruiting a significant number of members in such a short time.

Felicity Goodey, on behalf of the North West Tourism Forum, welcomed the inauguration of the Cheshire Gardens Trust and drew attention to the major role played by gardens and related attractions in the economy of the area. Research commissioned by the North West Development Agency had revealed that Cheshire has the largest number of garden centres in England per head of population. Gardens already formed an important economic resource for the County but there was scope for even greater development in the future.

Ed Bennis, Chairman of the Cheshire Gardens Trust





*Above, a rapt audience listens to some fine speakers*

thanked Viscount Ashbrook, Gilly Drummond and Felicity Goodey for their support and welcomed members and guests, including representatives from the Association of Gardens Trusts, other neighbouring Trusts, the Garden History Society and Local Authorities. Special thanks were made to the members of the Steering Committee for their efforts over the last few months. The membership had grown from seventeen to one hundred and twenty and a number of well-supported events had taken place. He encouraged other members to come forward and offer their expertise or sheer hard work to assist the Trust. Only two counties in England were still without a Gardens Trust and Cheshire had helped to fill a major gap in the North West.



*Above: Linden Groves with her husband and the display of her book 'Historic Parks and Gardens of Cheshire'*

\* \* \* \* \*

Why 'the icing on the cake'? The evening was concluded with the official cutting of a splendidly three-dimensional, sculptured cake depicting the herbaceous border at Arley, complete with colourful herbaceous perennials, yew buttresses and wall shrubs, made by Jola Steadman. The main part of the Herbaceous Border Cake is still on display in the shop at Arley



*Above, some Steering Committee Members preparing for the evening. Ruth Brown is on the left.*

Ed Bennis then introduced Linden Groves whose book 'Historic Parks and Gardens of Cheshire' had just been published. He was extremely pleased with the fact that her book contained sections on Birkenhead Park and Port Sunlight, landscapes that were deserving of greater recognition and understanding by the general public. Members and guests were able to purchase signed copies to commemorate the launch of the Trust.



*Viscount Ashbrook ceremonially cutting the cake: a piece of 'wall' had been made especially for this, so that the main cake (see front page) remained intact*

**Tirley Garth is the only Grade II\* Arts and Crafts designed landscape in Cheshire and is "an exceptionally important example of an early C20 garden laid out in both formal and informal styles"**

The Visit to Tirley Garth was well attended and the weather was fine. In fact a wholly satisfactory event.

Tirley Garth is situated 15km east of Chester on a south facing slope of the mid Cheshire sandstone ridge. It has superb views south across the Cheshire plain to hills crowned by Beeston and Peckforton Castles.

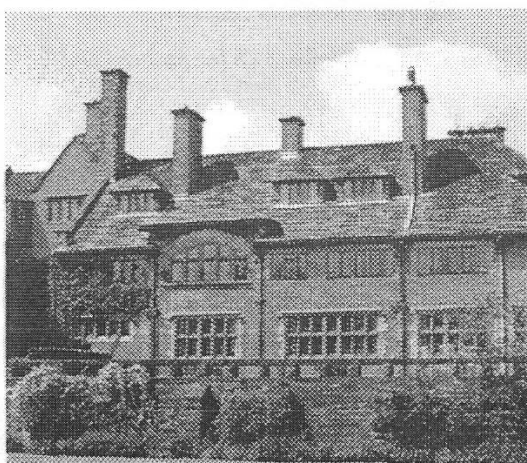
Forty five members and guests visited on a glorious hot sunny Sunday in May. A warm welcome, with refreshments, was followed by a guided tour of the gardens.

Tony Booth, Head Gardener introduced us to the site and Jonathan Lovie, Senior Conservation Advisor for the Garden History Society, provided some background on the work of Thomas Mawson (see page 6).

Historic drawings and photographs of the gardens had been laid out for members to look at.

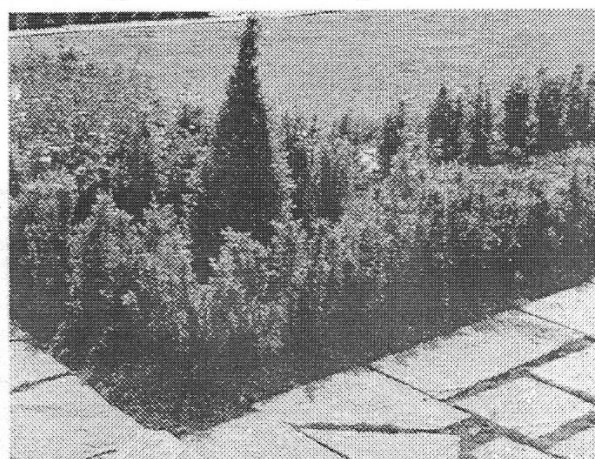
R H Prestwich's daughter Irene continued the rental until 1949 when she established a Trust which purchased the property from ICI as a conference and retreat centre for the Moral Re-Armament Movement. Irene died in 1974 and the Trust sold the property to Mersey Television in 2002.

Mallows and Mawson's design for Tirley expressed the essential elements of the Arts and Crafts style (see page 6), capitalising on aspect, prospect and topography to create a series of outdoor rooms on different levels and with different functions relating to spaces in the house and also included an area of contrasting character, the wild garden.



*The East face of the house*

Brian Leesmith, a director of the chemical firm Brunner Mond, later a constituent part of ICI, commissioned the architect Charles Edward Mallows (see next page) to design a country house for the site in 1906. The project was started but left unfinished until 1911 when the property was leased to a textile manufacturer, R.H Prestwich. The family moved into the house in August 1912 and Mallows was commissioned to complete the design. Mallows involved Thomas Mawson in developing ideas for the gardens and especially the planting.



*Above, the parterre*

*Below, members take careful note*





The house is indivisible from the garden and both have grown from, and take advantage of, the setting. The principal elements of the design remain though the planting has changed over time.

We approached via the main drive from the south which offers an oblique view across ample lawns to the south terrace and principal façade of the house framed by cedar trees. We were shown the internal courtyard or garth, not normally open to the public, and then preceded via the classically restrained entrance court and sunken garden to the south terrace.

The terrace is overlooked by the principal rooms of the house and offers views to the Peckforton and Berwyn Hills across the shrubbery enclosed lawns. The terrace beds have recently been replanted with box edging and there was some debate as to whether the roses should be retained.



The formal gardens are concentrated on the east of the house offering a new vista and opportunities to enter a different garden at every change in direction.

The gardens include formal tennis lawns and a semi circular rose garden. They step down the hillside connected by a long north south axis incorporating the octagonal lily pond garden and the spring walk and passing through the round acre vegetable garden, tilted on the slope, to reach the Bothy or gardener's potting shed (*see below left*).

The bothy terminates the axis with a dovecot above an arched entrance to the greenhouse and frame garden. From the entrance the gardener has a view of his domain set in the context of the wider landscape. Harmony in the various gardens is produced by geometry and the consistent use of materials - local sandstone for coursed rubble walls, copings, chunky balustrades and path edgings, York stone for paving and steps and oak for pergolas, gates and seats. The paving patterns are carefully considered and steps from the formal gardens lead to the wild garden in the stream valley where a sequence of informal pools and planting were envisaged. The present owners have aspirations to recreate the pools.

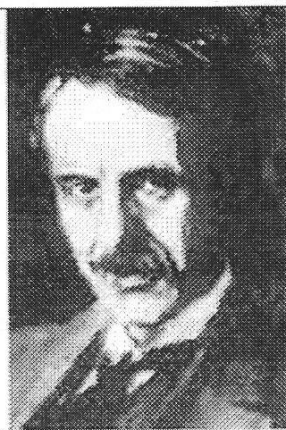
Of the original planting many of the 3000 rhododendrons planted when the gardens were established remain, but other plantings requiring more intensive maintenance have diminished. Some of the specimen rhododendrons have become enormous and others, encroaching the drive, have been subject to a programme of rejuvenation. New planting has taken place in the valley below the azalea walk providing a vibrant display of pink yakushimanum hybrids.

Many members took the opportunity to explore further after the tour, enjoying the tranquillity of the gardens.

**Charles Edward Mallows** (1864-1915) trained as an architect, but throughout his career he retained a passion for drawing and was awarded the RIBA Pugin Scholarship in 1889 for a series of drawings of English Cathedrals. Through drawing he came to observe, appreciate and understand vernacular English buildings and his work drew inspiration from the great houses and halls of late Elizabethan and 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings. His measured survey of Compton Wynnyates is said to have been his inspiration for Tirley Garth.

Mallows contributed some of his fine perspective sketches, for which he was renowned, for Mawson's book *'The Art and Craft of Garden Making'*.

Tirley Garth is regarded as C E Mallows most important commission, is a rare example of his work and undoubtedly his finest surviving design.



**Thomas Mawson** was born near Lancaster in 1861 and died there in 1933. As a teenager he worked for a number of landscape gardeners and at just 23 he set up Lakeland Nurseries in the Lake District, from where he began working as a garden designer.

In 1900 he published *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* which ran to several editions.

He was one of the most influential gardeners of the twentieth century and in 1929 became the first president of the Institute of Landscape Architects.

He created gardens throughout Britain and abroad. More information on Mawson can be found on the internet. Try [www.shellguides.freemove.co.uk/Thm/THM](http://www.shellguides.freemove.co.uk/Thm/THM) which was written by his great grandson, Chris Mawson.

**The Arts and Crafts Movement** refers to the loosely-linked group of craftsmen, artists, designers and architects who aimed to raise the status of the applied arts to that of the fine arts.

There were several organisations promoting Arts and Crafts in the 1880s and 1890s. The most important of these societies were the Art Workers' Guild, which started in 1884, and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, founded in 1888.

Led by Ruskin and Morris, artists and designers sought a return to the principles of art and to the craft skills on which, it was believed, a genuine style must rest.

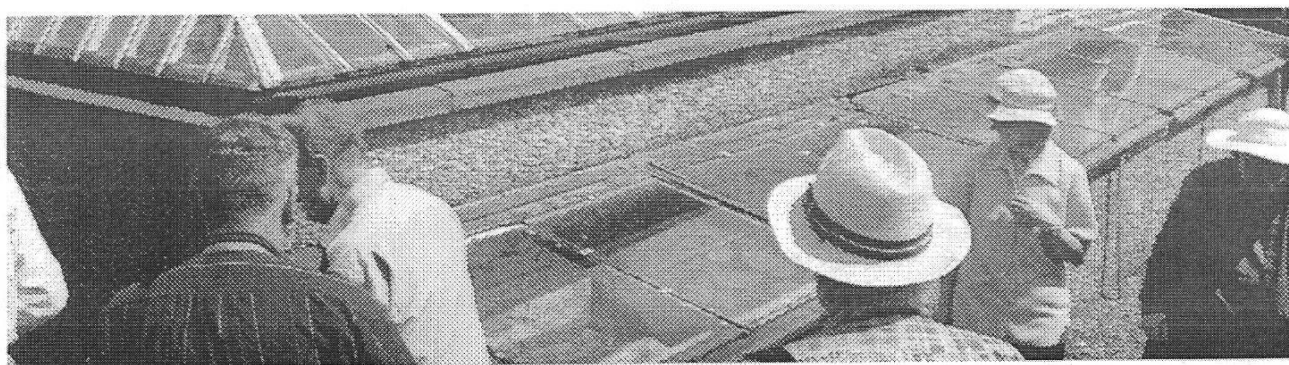
Arts and Crafts gardens generally have a clear boundary between an enclosed area, with geometrical beds, near the dwelling and a naturalistic 'wild garden'. Discernment is exercised in the use of good plants, fine building materials and traditional crafts.

Designers drew inspiration from the fine arts, especially in the handling of shapes and colours. Many famous examples of Arts and Crafts gardens remain in private ownership but a great many examples are open to the public.

Examples of historic gardens which have been influenced by the arts and crafts style include Arley Hall & Gardens and Dunham Massey in Cheshire and Bodnant Gardens in North Wales.

The above information has been taken from [www.speel.demon.co.uk](http://www.speel.demon.co.uk) and [www.gardenvisit.com](http://www.gardenvisit.com).

*Below, members visit the glasshouse at Tirley Garth*





## John and Christine Trinder have been tending their garden in Alsager for the past quarter century

Tina Theis reports on the Cheshire Gardens Trust's visit in June

Driving along Audley Road in Alsager on a rather grey Saturday in early June I began to wonder if I'd taken a wrong turning. Surely there couldn't be a renowned 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of an acre garden on this rather ordinary and unassuming street.

But I was in for a surprise – turning into the front garden of Orchard Villa, I was immediately struck by a delightful picture – full of colours, textures and a wonderful scent sweetening the air – *Philadelphus* certainly, but lots of other underlying fragrances too.

Now, I don't for a moment pretend to be a plantswoman and if you are reading this in the hope of discovering the names of the exotic, unusual or even the commonplace flora grown by John and Christine Trinder, then you will be disappointed.

At the start of the visit I dutifully asked the names, and then how to spell them, but I soon realised that this would be a ceaseless task as there were so many unfamiliar plants.

So I gave up trying to write everything down and settled instead for simply enjoying the many wonderful and interesting plants in this lovely garden.

*Below, outside the front door...*



John Trinder kicked off the visit by talking about the garden and explained that it was built by a railway worker. In fact, we came across an old piece of

British Rail rolling stock, which had been in place when John and Christine moved in 30 years previously, and now doubles as a rather unusual garden shed.

But more of the back garden later.

In his opening remarks, John explained that they have been gardening at Orchard Villa for some 25 years now and their aim is to create something of interest every month. In the spring, the garden features snowdrops, spring bulbs and hellebores and we were in for a treat this month with dazzling displays of irises, alpines, *acquilegias*, geraniums, euphorbias, grasses and much, much more.



*...and above, outside the back door*

John took half the group off and the rest of us enjoyed a cup of tea before Christine led the second tour.

The garden is a long elongated plot and is made up of a series of smaller gardens all linked in some way by winding paths, trellises, arches and gateways.

Each area offers tantalising glimpses of what lies ahead. It is difficult not to rush through into the next 'room', but there are so many plants to ask about and Christine is so very patient at answering

our questions and so knowledgeable that we linger for a while in each section.

We finally came to the end of the garden where John's display of irises was a like an artist's palette.

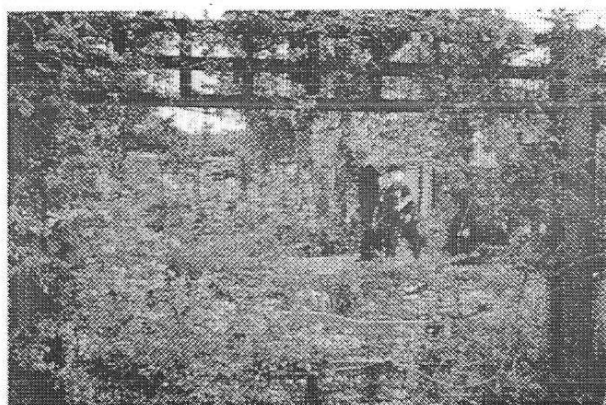


He explained about propagating and breeding and how he experimented with colour and scent – I particularly liked the one that smelled of chocolate!

A vegetable patch and the vestiges of the old apple orchard from which the house takes its name also add to the picturesque scene.

It is difficult to believe that the garden is only about 10 yards wide. The skilful combination of trees, shrubs and plants gives the impression that the boundaries are much more extensive than they really are.

For me, the enchantment of the different areas and the way they cleverly led into one-another was the high point of the visit.



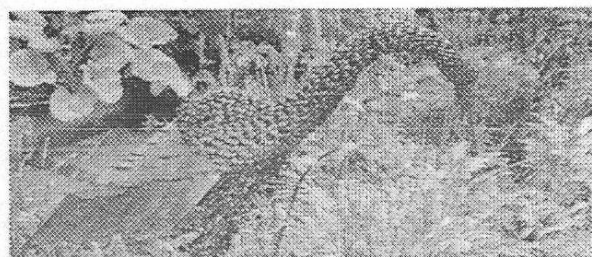
Tea, scones, strawberries and cream came a close second though and there was an opportunity to drift back around the garden enjoying our favourite bits and talking to fellow CGT garden enthusiasts.

And no garden visit is complete without the chance to buy one or two of the plants seen. So, I am now the proud possessor of *Polystichum setiferum*, *Cotula squalida* (I couldn't resist the name), *Imperator cylindrica* and a nice bluey-green grass from which I've already lost the label. As I said, I'm no plantsman/woman, unlike our hosts who according to *Gardening Which* in 2003 are "unashamed plantaholics".

*Below, a strategically placed mirror doubles the impact of an unusual flower*



And it shows in this gem of a garden. We are very grateful that they agreed to open specially for the CGT. Not only were they generous in doing so, but their enthusiasm and evident enjoyment of plants shows through in every part of the garden.



John and Christine open their garden through The Yellow Book, but are more than happy to show people round their garden. If you weren't able to come on the day, phone them on 01270 874 833 and arrange a time to suit yourself.



**At the Launch of the Cheshire Gardens Trust, Gilly Drummond, President of the Association of Gardens Trusts talked about the importance of modern, urban gardens. Below we look at the work of some dedicated people in Hulme, Manchester**

Anyone who has not visited Hulme in recent years will be surprised at the transformation of the area. The grey, concrete 'Crescents' – enormous blocks of flats – have all gone, to be replaced by small scale housing. Although there are still flats, there are many houses each with its own small garden.

One night, over a drink in the pub, a handful of residents, themselves keen gardeners, came up with a bright idea. Why not ask the council for some of the land that had been cleared and not yet re-developed to create a community resource which would cater to the needs of first-time garden owners?

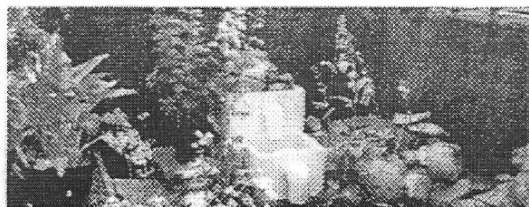
Unusually for bright ideas over a drink, this one has led, four years later, to a thriving Community Garden Centre.



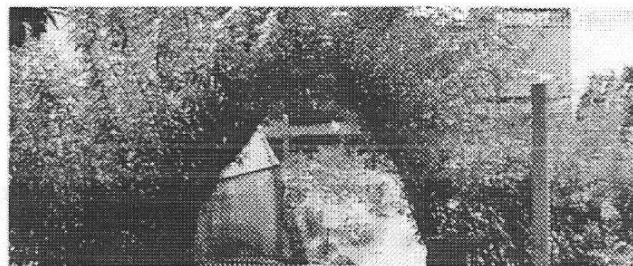
*Above, one of the volunteers deals with a customer*

It has not been an easy road. The Council provided the land at a peppercorn rent, but fencing the area, clearing the ground, laying paths, setting up polytunnels and buying in stock all needed money. Financial support came from a number of sources as diverse as Groundwork, Manchester and Manchester Airport.

*Below, a water feature helps sell aquatic and bog plants*

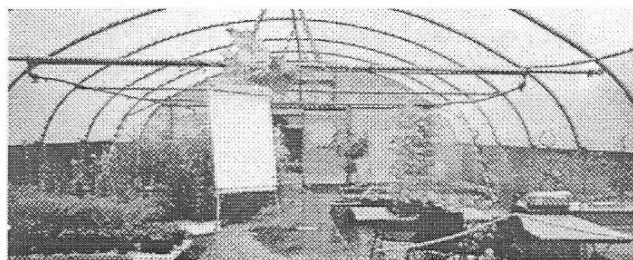


The idea was quite simple. A Garden Centre/ Nursery would be at the front of the site. This would provide local volunteers with hands-on experience of sowing seeds and nurturing plants while at the same time provide some income for the whole project.



*Above, a living willow arch leads through to the garden*

At the back of the site there would be a Community Garden – developed in conjunction with local people. This would be an area where people could come to learn more about different aspects of gardening.



*Above, a polytunnel doubles as a growing and learning area*

*Then, below, lessons are put to use to create the garden*

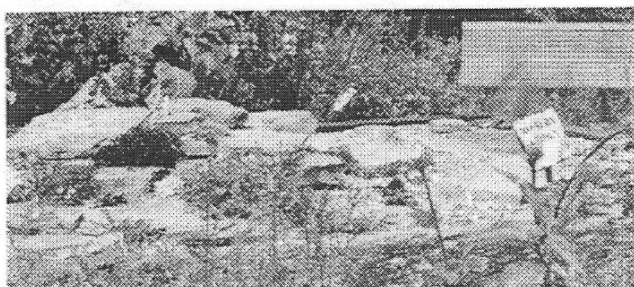


Today the Garden Centre is attracting an ever-increasing customer base. Special events during the year combine fun with gardening.

In the spring Potato Day provides the opportunity to buy an enormous variety of seed potatoes – most not commercially available. And they can be bought by the tuber, so it's easy to try out lots of different kinds.

In the autumn, Apple Day introduces apple varieties most of us have never heard of.

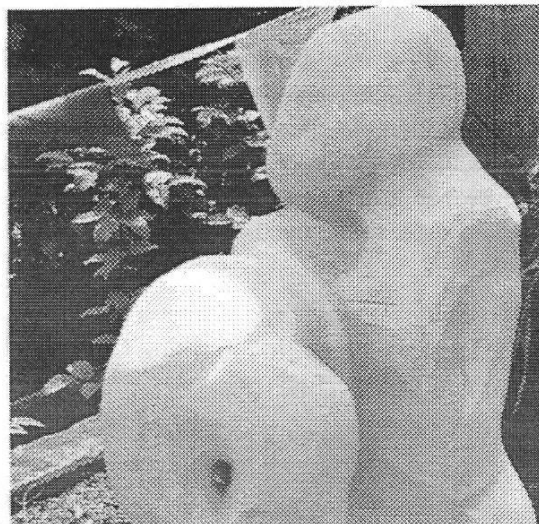
*Below: the garden is divided into many different areas.  
Here we see the rock garden*



No-one would deny that it has been hard work. Staff have been paid for sixteen hours a week and have worked forty. Funding is a never-ending problem.

But those of us who have seen the Centre come from an idea to its current vibrant existence know that it's been worth all the trouble.

*Art is an important part of the garden. The gates are spectacular, mosaics are embedded into the paving.  
Below is one of several sculptures from students of Manchester Metropolitan University*



The Hulme Community Garden Centre is on Old Birley Street. From the A5103 (Princess Road), near Asda just follow the signs.

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Did you miss the Cheshire Gardens Trust visit to Ness Gardens? There is another opportunity to have a guided tour. See the Step Into Cheshire item on the next page.

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### **Volunteers Needed!**

Here is an opportunity for you to work off some excess energy – and it's cheaper than going to the gym.

Nearly three years ago the Congleton Building Preservation Trust was formed to protect a nineteenth-century Bath House and Gazebo within the Gardens at the rear of the south side of Lawton Street in Congleton. The owners, the Borough Council, are leasing the site to the Trust for a peppercorn rent and a bid for HLF funds has been made to enable restoration of the buildings and the garden.

Meanwhile, the site is very overgrown. The existing volunteers are doing what they can, but at the moment, to their dismay, the overgrowth is winning.

Can you help them? If so, contact Nino Mancini on 01260 278 972 or Albert Williams on 01260 278 757.



## Step into Cheshire

The Step into Cheshire weekend is being held on the 18-19 September 2004 and is a celebration of all the excellent things that Cheshire has to offer. There are plenty of events to choose from varying from walks and cycle rides to pond-dipping at Ness Botanic Gardens.

Here are just a few, many of which will run on both the Saturday and the Sunday:

Walks seem to be favourite. You can explore the legacy of the Ice Ages in the Delamere area; take a Heritage Walk in Tarporley; enjoy a ramble around Pickmere Lake; follow footpaths around Vale Royal Abbey and Vale Royal Park; take a walk through woods, lanes and fields in Goostrey; walk along the Northwich rivers or the nature areas of Anderton and Wincham. Saughall offers three walks of differing lengths – one to suit each of us; while the 3-mile walk at Christleton includes a handout guide to animals and plants and the promise of ending at the Cheshire Cat pub and a free sample of local cider.

Artists will be opening their studios and demonstrating their work at Prestbury, Chester, Macclesfield, Neston and Great Boughton.

You can meet an astronomer at Jodrell Bank, see a display of real weapons of mass destruction at Hack Green secret nuclear bunker and look for 3 new geocaches (?).

Norton Priory will be having a horticultural show and Dunham Massey promises a "Really Wild Weekend".

You can plant trees at the Cheshire cat or help collect cut grass from the wet meadow at Moore Nature Reserve.

And if none of the events on offer appeals to you – why not organise your own?

Full details are on [www.stepintocheshire.org.uk](http://www.stepintocheshire.org.uk). There is even a special poem by John Lindley, the Cheshire Poet Laureate for 2004.

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## AGM of AGT

CGT is just one of more than thirty county Gardens Trusts. Like them, we are members of the Association of Gardens Trusts (AGT).

This year the Annual Conference (which includes the Annual General Meeting) is being hosted by Yorkshire Gardens Trust. The Conference runs from 3-5 September and will be held in Harrogate.

The title of the Conference is '*The Enriched Landscape: Sculpture and Ornamentation*'. There will be a number of lectures on Sculpture – ancient and modern – plus visits to gardens and a lead sculpture restoration studio. For plantaholics, there is the chance to visit a Plant Fair on the Sunday.

Members can book for the whole weekend (£255 including accommodation) or for just one day. The Annual General Meeting is at 15:30 on Friday and is free to all members.

Anyone who would like to attend should contact Helen Lazenby on 01423 770 485 or Karen Lynch 01943 816 747 (between 9.00 am and 6.00 pm).

The Cheshire Gardens Trust representative to the AGT is Barbara Wright.

## Art of the Garden

is the title of an exhibition being held at Tate Britain until 30 August. It looks at how the garden has impacted upon all aspects of British art over the past two hundred years.

The exhibition is divided into five sections. Thresholds and Prospects focuses on gardens made by professionals, particularly professional artists. The Secret Garden looks at the emotional attachment to the garden, at spirituality and sexuality. Symbolic objects are considered in Fragments and Inscriptions and this section uses photos particularly to demonstrate the ephemeral nature of gardens. Coloured Grounds includes a floorpiece made from 10,000 cut roses. This section looks at changes in light and colour. The final section Representing and Intervening shows how contemporary artists are still drawn to the garden and how gardens relate to all of us in the modern, urban, age.

If you want to see this exhibition in its entirety, you will need to visit London. But part of the exhibition will be coming to the City Art Gallery in Manchester next March. The Cheshire Gardens Trust is planning a joint event to include a lecture and tour by the curator. Look out for more details in forthcoming newsletters.

For more information about the exhibition, visit [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk).

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## Planning and Conservation

Cheshire Gardens Trust is setting up a new sub-committee which will deal with planning issues as they arise. The Trust has already provided help and support to local groups fighting to maintain existing parks and gardens. We are now looking to extend our expertise in this vital area.

If you have experience of planning issues – perhaps you have already fought a battle and learned by experience or maybe you are, or have been, a planning officer – we would like you to join the committee.

### Conservation and Planning Workshop

**Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2004, 10.30 am to 4.00 pm, Halifax, Yorkshire**

This workshop will be a combination of discussion and exchange of ideas in the morning in Halifax Library followed by a visit to People's Park in the afternoon to look at issues 'on the ground'.

The subjects that we will be covering will be wide-ranging. We hope that trusts already working in conservation, will be able to attend and share their experience with those who are making a beginning.

- ❖ Co-operating with County and District Councils
- ❖ Monitoring Development Proposals
- ❖ Commenting on planning applications
- ❖ Changes in the Planning System
- ❖ Local Development Frameworks
- ❖ Regional Planning System
- ❖ Changes to the structure of designations
- ❖ Preparing written representations for planning appeals
- ❖ Presenting a case at public inquiry
- ❖ Grounds for call in by the Secretary of State

Cost for the day: £10 per person. Tea/coffee/juice will be provided during the morning and over lunch, but please bring a packed lunch. Directions and parking information will be sent nearer the time.

If you are interested in the Workshop and/or the sub-committee, please contact Barbara Moth at [kbmoth@btinternet.com](mailto:kbmoth@btinternet.com) or phone Joy on 0161 969 1099 (evenings and weekends).