

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook

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Some future events:

- ☀ Sat 6 Nov – Tatton Park Walled Kitchen Gardens
- ☀ Tues 7 Dec – The National Gardens Scheme
- ☀ Wed 26 Jan 2005 – Talk on William Nesfield
- ☀ Feb 2005 – Talk on Japanese Gardens
- ☀ Themed programme on Japanese Gardens throughout 2005

**Walled Gardens
Special Issue**

Walled Gardens are to be one of the themes for Cheshire Gardens Trust over the coming months

- In November we will be visiting the restored Walled Kitchen Garden at Tatton Park.
- Last May we were contacted by a group of people who were trying to save the walled garden at Nantwich from Developers. Inside we have a report on their progress to date.
- The Research and Recording Working Group has begun its work and is looking to members for help in compiling lists of Walled Gardens in Cheshire.
- The Theme for next year's stand at the RHS Tatton Flower Show will be Walled Gardens

Nantwich Walled Gardens



Today's reality



Tomorrow's vision

Walled Gardens have a particular attraction. Perhaps the warmth of their enclosure gives us a womb-like comfort. Maybe it is the idea that behind the walls lies a secret world.

Possibly we feel a link with our past when we all had to be more self-sufficient.

All over the country there is a fight on to save and restore walled gardens. There is even a Walled Kitchen Gardens Network (see their web-site at www.walledgardens.net).

Here in Cheshire, the walled garden at Norton Priory has been restored and planted (see page 7). The walled kitchen garden at Tatton has been undergoing restoration. In November members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust will be shown around the gardens by head gardener Sam Youd.

The Tatton walled kitchen gardens used to supply the estate with fruit, flowers and vegetables. The restoration project has taken the gardens back to

their heyday around the end of the 19th Century.

At least Tatton's walled gardens have been maintained to a certain level, even if they were in need of repair and restoration.

The walled garden at Nantwich is in a sorry state. The walls are listed Grade II, but within them the garden is a wilderness of self-sown trees and a tangle of grass and weeds.

For the past three years, a group of local people, including some Cheshire Gardens Trust members, have been fighting plans for using the garden for housing. Below we look at what they are trying to save.

The information below has been taken from the **Nantwich Walled Garden Society** website. For full information, visit it at www.nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk

Nantwich Walled Garden

In 1580 Richard Wilbraham built Townsend House in Nantwich. It was to be the family home for two centuries.

All of the house and garden have since been lost, except for the Old Walled Garden.

There is considerable archive material available at Rode Hall, the home of Sir Richard and Lady Ann Baker-Wilbraham. Also, the garden was featured in James Hall's *History of Nantwich* and in 1986 it was described in a Department of the Environment report.

Archive material is crucially important when attempting to restore old gardens.

The Garden's Walls

Despite the intervening four centuries, most of the garden's wall remains intact, though needing restoration.



The walls are described as of "small red bricks in English Garden Wall Bond with stone dressing,"

and the enclosure is of "quadrangle form with walls up to three metres in height. High stone plinth, of two brick thickness, with wall reducing to one-and-a-half brick thickness above the stone brick cornice. The two-section-wide overhanging stone coping has coves on the underside and weathered upper surfaces to the lower section. The upper section is stepped up with weathered upper surfaces flanking a central roll. Both the plinth cornice and the coping return vertically at the many steps in the level of the wall."



Not all of the wall is still standing. In just two years, this part has gone from this



to this

This doorway had "projecting stone dressed brick piers and a massive stone lintel with chamfered and slightly cambered head surmounted by a coved coping".

Originally there was a small group of people known as the Campaign to Conserve the Old Walled Garden. The Campaign grew in strength and in June this year was formally launched as the **Nantwich Walled Garden Society** by Cheshire Gardens Trust Patron, Lord Ashbrook.

It is the aim of the society to save and restore the garden and surrounding wall for the people of Nantwich and as a tourist attraction.

The garden is owned by developers and two development proposals have so far been defeated. Most recently, a plan to build two blocks of flats within the garden was turned down by the Development Control Panel of Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council. The developers have until October 29 to appeal against this decision.

Three hundred and fifty-six people wrote to the Borough's Planning Officer against the proposal for housing and 94 people signed a petition.

The Future

The Aims of the Society are

- to prevent the development of housing within the gardens
- to ensure the Elizabethan walls are fully restored and re-instated
- to restore the garden in a way that reflects its history

The artist's impression on the front page of this newsletter gives an idea of what the garden might look like when restored.

The archives provide information about what the garden used to look like. The Garden contained various features, such as an arbour, a banqueting house, columns, flower pots and canals. In the southern wall there are three bee boles, where wicker bee-hives would have been kept.

In the nineteenth century a stone gateway with carved lionesses, leading to the garden was removed and re-erected at Dorfold Hall in Nantwich.



Above, the three bee boles

To ensure the Garden is both saved and restored will require a lot of hard work and a great deal of money. The Society knows that a way must be found not just to do the restoration but to maintain the garden once restored.

If you are excited by this campaign, would like more information or would like to get involved, contact the Secretary, Pat Fulford on 01270 623575 or e-mail her at secretary@nantwichwalledgarden.org.uk.

We need your help – Cheshire Walled Gardens Project

Is there a walled garden near you? Or do you know of one in Cheshire, Wirral or South Manchester? Please use the form below to tell us about it or e-mail the information to the secretary at Joy.Uings@Care4free.net

Name of garden:

Address/map reference:

Period (if known):

Ownership: (if known):

Current condition:

Any other information:

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*Barbara Wright reports from
the Annual Conference of the*
**ASSOCIATION
OF GARDENS
TRUSTS**



Cheshire Gardens Trust is the newest member of the family of 34 County Gardens Trusts, and we were given a warm welcome at the recent AGT Annual Conference held 3-5 September 2004 in Harrogate.

AGT is of crucial importance to us all as the Association represents and promotes all County Gardens Trusts at national level - and does so actively and effectively. CGT would not exist without AGT initiative and support.

The County Gardens Trusts take it in turn to organise the annual AGT conference. This year, Yorkshire Gardens Trust's three years of preparation resulted in a most successful and packed event for more than 100 delegates. CGT was represented by three members, all self-funded.

Two days were devoted to the theme, 'The Enriched Landscape: Sculpture and Ornamentation'. There were lectures on 18th century lead statuary, their creators and today's problems of conservation, and an introduction to modern artists' garden sculptures and their siting. These were followed by specialist-guided site visits of 18th century Castle Howard and Nun Monkton Priory, and of the 2004 Sculpture Trail at Newby Hall.

Please note the date of next year's annual conference organised by Sussex Gardens Trust at Hove, 2-4 September 2005...perhaps combining it with a holiday? You'd find it a very enriching experience.

Most important for CGT members, however, were the AGM and Business Meeting, and the vast fund of information, experience and advice to be tapped in three days of conversation with other delegates.

Your representative returns proud of CGT's many achievements to date, but also awed by the amount of work still to be done.

Your name:

Your address:

e-mail address:

Do you know of any archive material for this garden (please specify)

Have you done any research yourself (not necessarily on this garden)?

Would you like to do any research for the Cheshire Gardens Trust?

How much time do you have available?

Cheshire Gardens Trust is like a plant. If we nourish its roots, it will grow and flourish. What are its roots?

Events and Newsletter:

growing strongly,

but the Events sub-committee and your Newsletter editor would welcome assistance. Why not tell her of a garden you know, write an article or send details of other events.

Education:

not quite dormant, but needs potting up

for example, contacts with schools and their initiatives and projects for a greener environment and our parks and gardens heritage. Could you contribute?



Conservation/Planning:

healthy buds but needs feeding

for example: contacts with County/Borough Councils' Planning, Environment and Heritage departments; reading and reporting on regional planning applications. Can you help?

Research and Recording:

beginning to sprout but needs TLC

from those interested in our region's history and designed landscapes. Why not join the working group?

There are many openings for **your contribution** in CGT's four main aims or 'tap roots'. Just choose the area you are most interested in and phone or e-mail the contact below:

Newsletter: Joy Uings - Tel: 0161 969 1099. e-mail: Joy.Uings@Care4free.net

Events: Gaye Smith – Tel: 0161 796 7708. e-mail: g.smith@mmu.ac.uk

Conservation & Planning: Barbara Moth - Tel: 01606 46228. e-mail: kbmoth@btinternet.com

Education: Ruth Brown Tel: 01925 263337

Research and Recording: Barbara Wright Tel: 0161 434 7653. e-mail: ib@wrightmanchester.fsnet.co.uk

Research and Recording Working Group

The first meeting of the Research and Recording Working Group was held in October, where we opened the discussion on Cheshire Gardens Trust's Aims and Strategy for this important area of work.

One thing is certain: if we are to make any real impact, we need **YOUR** help.

And everyone **CAN** help. You don't need to have lots of time at your disposal, you don't have to know a great deal about garden history. Every small piece of information will help (see the request for help on walled gardens on pages 3/4).

BUT, if you would like to do a bit more, let us know. Perhaps you would like to spend an enthralling afternoon at the local library, going through old magazines to find articles on Cheshire gardens (you will be fascinated at what you find: try to keep your mind on the job!). Maybe you would prefer searching through undergrowth to find long-lost garden features. Or perhaps you have already researched a local park or garden and would like to share your findings. Or have valuable old photographs sitting in the loft.

Whatever you can offer – contact Barbara Wright (see details above).

A visit to Hulme Garden Centre

On a damp, dreary Saturday in late September a select group of Garden Trust members visited Hulme Garden Centre and were thoroughly inspired by what they saw.



As described in the last newsletter the Centre was established as a community project in 1998 to involve local people in improving the physical environment of the area, whilst providing health and education benefits to the community, schools and disadvantaged groups.

One full time member of staff runs the centre with the assistance of volunteers and three young people gaining work experience. Between them they manage an attractive plant sales area, growing areas and a series of different gardens, all constructed with limited budgets and imagination to demonstrate what can be achieved on a small plot.



The site and staff are welcoming, the sales area well presented and throughout a love of plants is expressed in the diversity of plant material and careful maintenance of the gardens. These include recently planted pond and woodland gardens, vegetable areas with a range of tomatoes, cucumbers and giant pumpkins, herb and container gardens, all organically grown and encircled by a hedge of mixed native plants inhabited by wrens and robins.

The environment has clearly made an impact on the young people whose commitment is demonstrated by attendance outside hours, study for NVQ's and a sense of pride and achievement in what has been accomplished.



Sadly uncertainty over funding means that the future of the centre is unsure with income from plant sales only meeting a proportion of running costs. Notwithstanding the excellent staff, welcoming and peaceful atmosphere and all that has been achieved in a short period of time, the management appears to have failed to develop real engagement with the local community that will ensure the centre's sustainability.

A gem like this could so quickly become run down and disappear, despite visitors like us coming away with bags of plants.

Is this the sort of project that Trust members should be more actively engaged with?

Norton Priory Walled Gardens: National Quince Day

Norton Priory is an unexpected delight, remains of an Augustinian monastery and Georgian landscape surviving amidst the 20th century landscape of Runcorn.

The focus of our visit was the walled garden, across a bridge over the Runcorn expressway from the museum.

John Budworth the Head Gardener proved an excellent and informative guide. He described how the Brooks family acquired the site following the dissolution of the monasteries and only moved away in the 1920s due to the encroachment of local industry. The landscape decayed and the house was demolished but in 1975 Cheshire County Council acquired the 38-acre site and the Norton Priory Trust set up the museum.

The establishment of the Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation brought new opportunities to the site in the 1980s when an MSC scheme enabled work to proceed to clear and replant the walled gardens. As most of the original artefacts and layout had been lost through wartime use as a market garden, a decision was taken not to attempt a complete recreation but to create a series of theme gardens.

The walls enclose two and a half acres in a trapezoid shape with, strangely, the north-facing wall being the longest. One of the walls was heated and supported peaches and nectarines at a time when there were 13 gardeners to attend to cultivation!

The walls were originally 16 feet high but are now substantially less. They contain a beautiful gate by Diane Gorvin, one of several artworks in the gardens. The gardens include an orchard planted with spring bulbs, soft fruit and vegetable beds, cottage garden beds, wall trained fruit and arch trained apples, a croquet lawn, a rose walk based on historic photographs with Jekyllsque planting and a large herb garden disposed in groups for medicinal, household, culinary and dyeing purposes.

The walled gardens contain the National Collection of tree quinces *Cydonia oblonga*, the focus of our visit, together with the shrubbier *Chaenomeles* or *Cydonia cathayensis*, the Chinese quince, both belonging to the genus *Rosaceae*.

(The nomenclature of the species is fairly confused.)

The native region of the quince is not precisely known, but it is probably wild only in parts of Asia including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkestan, Iran and Saudi Arabia. It has been cultivated in Mediterranean regions for millennia and has become naturalised in many parts.

The fruit was highly regarded by the Greeks and Romans, and was the 'golden apple' that Paris awarded to Aphrodite as a symbol of love, marriage and fertility.

It is still an important fruit crop both in its native region and also in South America (Argentina produces 20,000 tons annually).

It was introduced to Britain at an early date (first accounts of its cultivation are from 1275) and was commonly grown in the 16th-18th centuries, when it was usually used for making quince marmalade. Its cultivation reached a peak here in the 18th & 19th centuries, then declined with the increase in popularity of soft fruits.¹

The quince can be propagated by grafting, layering or cuttings. The tree commonly grows to between 10 and 20 feet depending on the root stock and can be grown as a cordon. The species like a moist and protected location and have a tendency to become top heavy and need crown thinning.

At Norton Priory, John tries to limit pruning so that visitors are able to see the tree's natural form. Blossom time is between February and May, most commonly April, and heavier insects such as bees pollinate the flowers but self-pollination can occur, though this usually results in fewer fruits. All varieties have similar flowers – white tinged pink.

Leaves are oval or elliptical, dark green above, paler and felty beneath especially when young and turn a rich yellow in autumn.

This year many of the trees at Norton Priory have suffered from Quince leaf blight, a fungal infection, for which a garlic spray will be applied as an experimental means of control. Of the varieties at Norton, 'Vranja' appears to be the most resistant to the leaf blight.

The fruits vary considerably in size and shape - light golden-yellow, green or orange, usually pear

¹ www.agroforestry.co.uk/ansample.html

shaped but sometimes round and apple-shaped with over 50 seeds per fruit.

The fruits of *Chaenomeles cathayensis* are among the largest and greenest and are borne tight to the very prickly stems on very short stalks.

Quinces have long been grown for flavouring apple pies, making Quince paste or Quince jelly, pectin levels making the jelly set easily.

In Britain they rarely ripen enough to become soft and juicy but after a few weeks of storage the flesh becomes softer. We'd be pleased to know what members made with the Quinces they purchased at

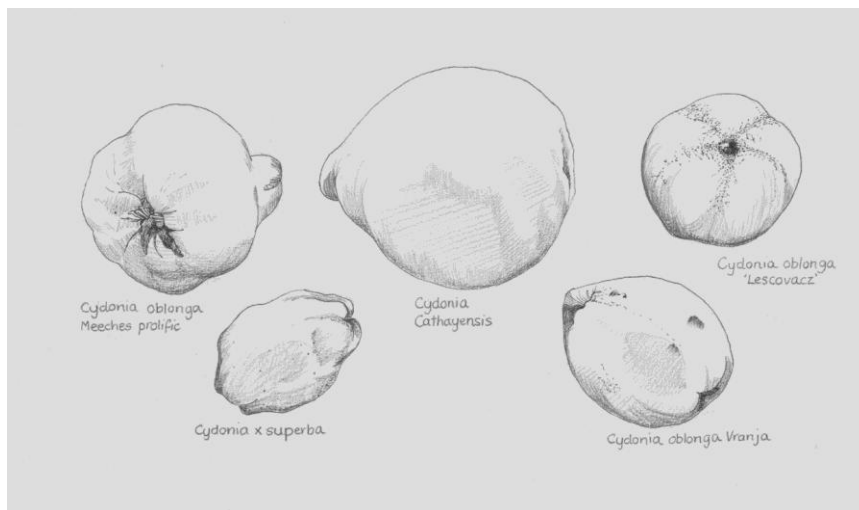
Norton Priory.

Spring would be a good time for another visit to see the blossom and visit the replanted pear orchard and large ice house - for those who missed these on our autumn visit.

In addition to Norton Priory's education work with schools, they offer NVQ courses, pruning training days and seasonal events, and undoubtedly new volunteers would be welcomed should members wish to assist and work in such a welcoming and beautiful environment.

Below, Cydonia varieties

Our thanks to Barbara Moth for the articles on Hulme Garden Centre and Norton Priory Quince Day



Advance Notice

**The CGT Christmas 'do'
Toft Cricket Club,
Knutsford**

Wednesday 15 December

Put it in your diary!

RHS Tatton Flower Show

For the past two years Cheshire Gardens Trust has had a stand at the RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park. We hope that those of you who went to the show this year took the opportunity to meet up with us in the Heritage Marquee.

It is useful to have a presence at the Show, to keep the Trust in the minds of visitors. However, we have started to review the purpose of the stand.

The first year, we attracted a fair amount of interest from people who subsequently became members. However, this was not the main outcome from this year's stand.

We want to set up a working group who could consider what it is we want to achieve by having a stand, review the amount of work that would be required, find volunteers, etc.

One idea is that we take the subject of Walled Gardens and develop this theme for Tatton. This might lead to an interactive stand, a simple set of before and after photographs, discussion of the merits of saving gardens, etc. Enthusiastic members might even want to re-create part of a garden. We would be happy to support members with this, although there would be a need for fundraising as well as a considerable amount of hard work.

Do you have any ideas? Would you like to be part of the group that considers this? Would you have any time to help put a stand together? And, of course, would you be able to be at the show to meet the public?

Please let us know. Get in touch with the Secretary: Tel: 0161 969 1099 or e-mail Joy.Uings@Care4free.net.

