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Newsletter

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Some future events:

- * Kemp Walks – 19th August & 24th September
- * Biosecurity lecture – 20th October
- * William Andrews Nesfield – 18th November



In May Dibleys Nurseries once again won a gold medal for its stand in the Floral Marquee at Chelsea and repeated the process at RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, making it well over 150 RHS Gold medals that it has won over the last 40 years.

Rex Dibley started the nursery, specialising in *Streptocarpus*, in 1976 as a hobby. His son Gareth joined in 1984 and his daughter Lynne, shown above at Chelsea, joined later and became particularly involved in developing new hybrids. In 2016 she was awarded the Reginald Cory

Memorial Cup by the RHS for her hybridisation programme raising new *Streptocarpus* of merit. In 2007 Rex Dibley was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS, for people “who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the art, science or practice of horticulture”.

So, we were particularly privileged to visit the nursery in May. It is situated near Ruthin, with beautiful views over the Welsh Hills. Before visiting the nursery, Rex Dibley took us on a tour of the arboretum which he started 30 years ago.



Rex Dibley showing us his arboretum

It was looking particularly good in the spring sunshine, with fabulous displays of maples, rhododendrons, camellias, prunus, and other spring flowering shrubs. Rex originally planted a belt of conifers to provide a shelter belt and then added more as the area extended. There are many other trees, both evergreen and deciduous, some very unusual.



Abies koreana, *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Sophora microphylla*
'Sun King'

There are now 10 acres of this garden, which Rex has mostly developed on his own. The whole site is on a slope with ponds, walkways and vistas, as well as a miniature railway that weaves its way through the garden. The birds were singing, there were bluebells in the woodland and dappled shade and the journey was just magical.

Following a picnic in the grounds we started our tour of the greenhouses. The main greenhouse was

a sea of *Streptocarpus*, as far as the eye could see (see below). Rex gave us a detailed description of the processes and technology involved in growing the plants. At the bottom of the greenhouse was a collection of perfect plants ready for Chelsea.



But *Streptocarpus* are not the only plants grown here. There were some wonderful and unusual begonias and coleus (now known as *Solenostemon*) and we were able to watch propagation in progress. All in all a wonderful visit and a tribute to a great family. Many a *Streptocarpus* found a new home, including four wonderful plants that graced the CGT display at the Cheshire Show and Arley Garden Festival.



Rex Dibley and Christine Wilcox-Baker with plants for the CGT displays

In the next edition of the newsletter Ruth Brown will write more about the processes and technologies used in the nursery.

For more information on the nursery and its arboretum visit their website

<http://www.dibleys.com/strep.htm>

Sue Eldridge

**Photos Christine Wilcox-Baker, Jane Gooch
and Sue Eldridge**

Croco Bank Farm in the sun



After having to cancel this visit in 2016 due to a storm and torrential rain we were delighted to re-schedule it for June 15th this year.

On a day of breezy bright sunshine 26 members and guests congregated in the garden of John Clowes where his introductory talk succinctly ranged over the forty years he and his wife Linda have owned the farmhouse. Together they have transformed the farmyard into a delightful compartmentalised garden.

We were all soon exploring the fascinating garden which contained glorious roses scrambling up trees and ropes and *Rosa bonica* creating a long-flowering, pink statement near the house. Not far away was a magnificent double red *Leptospermum scoparium* which almost took your breath away.



John and Linda Clowes in front of the *Leptospermum scoparium*

Commonly known as one of the tea trees it is indigenous to Australasia which says much about its hardiness. Vivien Hainsworth commented 'I have tried to grow it innumerable times but my

'frost pocket' garden has seen it off before it reached two feet in height'. But, here in John's garden was a 10 foot specimen in glorious bloom – testament to a sheltered spot and a skilful gardener.

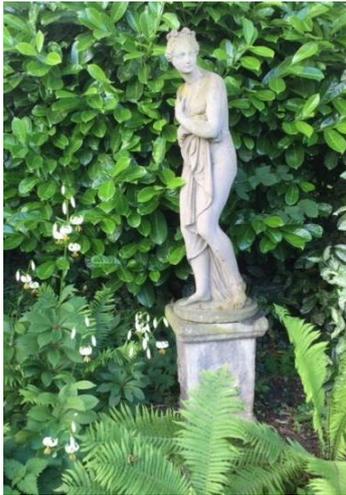
Venturing into the area near the front of the house brought not one but two more surprises in the form of two giant, 10 feet tall, *Cardiocrinum* lilies (below). We were very fortunate to see



these in flower as, being monocarpic, the whole plant dies after flowering and can take at least three to five years to create a repeat performance from the offset bulbs the parent plant leaves behind. John commented that unusually he had been compelled to stake both this year because of the repeated high winds. The large clumps of hostas were an unbidden joy. We've never seen so many plain and also variegated species completely free of mollusc damage. *Sisyrinchium striatum* (see below) made a striking lemon punctuation mark throughout



these borders. The bright pink *Geranium psilostemon*, possibly hybrid 'Patricia' according to John, featured as a repeat planting at its effulgent best. A small green oasis of cherry laurel, white



lilies and ferns was watched over by the classical statue of Pandora (above). A neighbouring large oak formed part of the borrowed landscape and added to a feeling of maturity already suggested by the old apple trees.

Linda kindly provided beverages and biscuits (a vital part of any CGT outing) which we consumed in the sunshine. Much chatting took place, along with plenty of purchases of divisions and cuttings of some of the plants seen in the garden.



After the horrific events of the fire at Grenfell Tower in London John and Linda very kindly decided to give the proceeds from our visit and the plant sale to the fund for those affected.

Dane Meadow

Following our garden visit John, accompanied by CGT's Christine Wilcox-Baker, led a walk at nearby Dane Meadow. This communal country area was once primarily used by dog walkers and was pretty inaccessible in all but clement conditions. Holmes Chapel Parish Council, of which John is Vice-chairman, teamed up with the



Friends of Dane Meadow and other local organisations to give it some help.

Obtaining grants from Natural England, DEFRA, WREN and the like, they have been able to put in new paths, create ponds, add disabled access and enhance the planting. They also commissioned a series of sculptural metal information signs and wooden sculptures (see below). Christine was lead artist for the project and created the designs for the metalwork, liaised with the wood carver and also produced flora and fauna illustrations for the signs and related leaflets.



What can we see here?

Following the walk a good pub lunch was had by many participants at the nearby George and Dragon. Thank you John and Linda for a lovely visit.

Vivien Hainsworth and Christine Wilcox-Baker
Photos Christine Wilcox-Baker

Cheshire Gardens Trust AGM at Norton Priory

Our Annual General Meeting took place at Norton Priory, Runcorn on Thursday 27th April, when approximately 40 members and guests attended the event. On arrival members of the Cheshire Garden Trust were encouraged to do a self-guided tour of the newly constructed Norton Priory Museum, opened last year following an appeal to refurbish the Museum with all its exhibits linked to the Priory and the Brooke family.



Jackie Cawte viewing the Abbey grounds

The Priory was founded by the Augustinian Canons in 1134 and dissolved in 1536, when it was sold to the Brooke family. The Museum itself is certainly well worth visiting with the archives, artefacts and information being well displayed. Displays cover the period of the Priory, the history of the area and the use of plants in the medieval period.



The main treasure is the twice life size late 14th century statue of St Christopher (above), standing in water, with fish around his feet, holding the Christ Child on one of his shoulders. An

interesting commentary is available outlining how the stone was created and the colours that were added at the time in 1391 to bring the statue more alive. All the exhibits (see below) were excellent and a tribute to the many volunteers and people connected with the project.



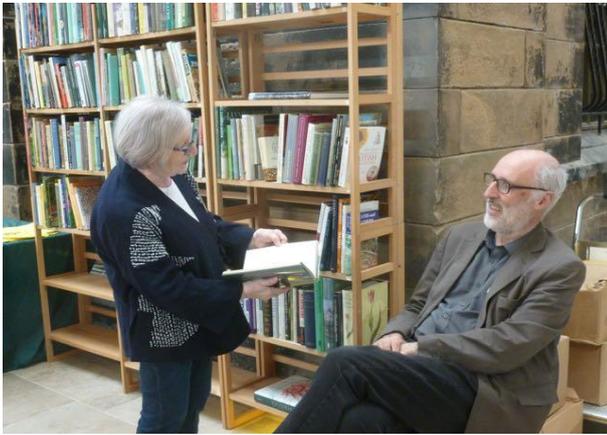
As an introduction to the AGM Moira Stevenson, both a member of the CGT and a Trustee of Norton Priory, gave a brief talk on how the project had evolved and the monies raised to restore the early 1980s museum. She thanked all the volunteers who continue the work of the Priory both at the museum and, of course, the walled garden, which she encouraged us all to visit in the future.

The main business of the AGM then followed with Ed Bennis, acting Chairman, outlining the events of the previous year as well as focusing on the need for new members to join the Council of Management and the Events Group. A number of members have stepped down from the Council, after serving many years on the group, since the launch of the Trust thirteen years ago.

Joy Uings presented the Accounts and gave a brief financial overview, reporting that the figures were slightly more favourable than had been anticipated. The Accounts were approved.

A brief talk was also given to highlight the new booklet 'Kemp's Parks and Gardens in Cheshire' published by the Trust from work done by Barbara Moth and the Research and Recording Group over the past year.

Tina Theis (Events Coordinator for over 10 years) addressed the meeting outlining the number of events and visits to various gardens since the Trust started. Over 140 places had been visited – no mean feat to organise these events. Tina, who is now taking more of a back seat, stressed that it was important for new members



Freyda Taylor discussing a book from John Edmondson's stock

to join the group to continue organising these events for the benefit of all members.

A very informative evening and once again a sincere thank you to all the members of the Trust who work tirelessly behind the scenes organising events and the many projects on behalf of the Group.

And a big thank you to Norton Priory and their staff who put themselves out to provide us with a lovely venue and a very nice buffet meal.

Gordon J Darlington
Photos Sue Eldridge

Gothenburg – Swedish Travels Part 3



There is a working kitchen garden, and it is beautiful: it covers a large area, part walled part enclosed by buildings, set out with formal beds. Leaves, flowers and herbs were being gathered for use in the café and restaurant in the next section of the garden.

On the south side below the terrace, the main garden is level, with two grass plats (a small area of land) and beyond deep formal hedges enclosing four secret gardens (see below).

We continued to Gothenburg, Sweden's second city, to visit **Gunnebo** and **Peter Korn's** garden and the weather was baking hot.

At **Gunnebo (above)**, we walked up through a formal minimalist garden, with huge cone-clipped hornbeam on short legs that made them look like spinning tops (see below). Tucked on one side was a newly replaced Het Loo/Hampton Court style wooden tunnel with lime to eventually clothe it. This led to another summer house, Palladian in style, with columns and decorated windows in painted timber.



These comprised exhibition gardens from prized European estates, including Schloss Dyck from Germany.

The whole of this area is framed by pleached lime and leads onto a circular pool plus fountain with more clipped lime closing this scene.

Gunnebo as we see it today was created when the estate was bought in 1778 by one of Sweden's wealthiest merchants, John Hall. He commissioned Gothenburg's city architect Carl Wilhelm Carlberg to design his summer house, surrounding buildings, gardens and parkland. It was built and completed 1784-1796.



The Schloss Dyck garden

The estate at Gunnebo is recognised as one of Sweden's best examples of neoclassical architecture, and also one that has been strongly influenced by English design. Hall died in 1802, the family business became bankrupt in 1807 and the neglected estate was auctioned in 1832. It passed through several hands before it was purchased in 1949 by the City of Mölndal and became a historic house museum in 1952.

In complete contrast, in his 2 hectare, ten year experimental garden at **Landvetter** (30km SE of Gothenburg), **Peter Korn** cleared trees to create more light, fenced the area off from browsing animals, dug down to the rocks and got rid of his soil (see below).



Jenny from Gothenburg Botanical Gardens was our guide. She told us the winter temperatures here remain at -1 to -4°C (25-30°F) for many weeks. It is the length of time that plants spend in damp soil that is the critical factor, rather than their ability to withstand cold temperatures, so free drainage helps with the wet.

Peter Korn's theory is that when plants from a range of different environments are given low nutrient levels and low rainfall they develop bigger roots and stronger storage cell structures so they can better survive climatic extremes.



The results were visible all around in undulating beds, with rocky outcrops. Where the land dips in the centre and is naturally boggy, ponds and waterways have been created. On the far side a scree slope flanks an outcrop of massive bare rock. Silvered dead tree trunks punctuate the site. It has a stony frugal quality to it.



CGT members exploring Peter Korn's garden

The sand beds provide a moist micro-environment for plants: as water evaporates through the bed this cools the air temperature around the plants, so *Meconopsis* and other rare alpine plants grow freely. Peter's brother is a botanist and collector, and seeds dispatched from across Europe, the Middle-East and China have been introduced. Peter established a nursery here, and between 11-12,000 different species have been trialled in the garden.

All this has been intuitively created. Excessive self-seeders, such as ornamental grasses, have been banished, but it is not maintenance-free. All autumn leaves are cleared off the beds – organic matter is anathema to the system. A mixed (chicken) pellet and powder fertiliser is applied once a year.

The following morning (our last day), we visited **Gothenburg Botanical Gardens**. The gardens cover 20 ha of the 175 ha nature reserve. Started in 1915, the layout has remained largely



Merika Irvine guided us through the gardens

unchanged. The entrance area has recently been redesigned by Ulf Nordfjell. The original layout took great advantage of the topography of the site and, although everything appeared well labelled and grouped, it seemed to be designed with a stronger aesthetic sense than many botanical gardens. We walked up past hundreds of flowering dahlias and into a beautiful bamboo and woodland area and then to the alpine garden at the top, again with exposed rocks and great views out across the city (below).



It was different, more intensive and more enclosed than Peter Korn's garden, but his principles run through here and he was involved in moving boulders to their final positions to create seashore, dry meadow, deciduous and coniferous forests, grasslands and scree, representing native habitats for Scandinavia's flowering plants and ferns. Some substrate is pure sand, but peat and 'nutritious humus soil' is also used.

Our final stop was the end section of a park that runs alongside the old defensive canal



where gardens and a glasshouse are being managed by the **Garden Society of Gothenburg**, part of the City Parks Department. Not only was it surprising to notice that the palmhouse is so strongly reminiscent of Crystal Palace (see above), but outside this were bedding plantings and perennial borders designed by James Hitchmough and Phil Askew.

A number of sites across the city have been selected as part of the Gothenburg Green World initiative. We had already seen some examples at Gunnebo and the Botanical Garden with their land art exhibitions. At this park the greenhouses are used to host exhibitions including the International Garden Photographer of the Year; further along the park is the Japanese artist Tetsunori Kawana's swirling structure composed of green bamboo and old tree roots.



Cecilia Liljedahl with Ed Bennis

Cecilia Liljedahl spoke of the need to train more gardeners, and their future plans which ranged from: establishing more exchanges through EGHN (English Garden Heritage Network) with head gardeners; to setting up a yellow book equivalent national garden scheme in Sweden of private and public gardens opened to the public.

It was a brilliant tour, full of surprises and delights. It was supremely well organised by Ed Bennis and Heather Turner and it would not have been such fun

without fellow travellers from the CGT. And all I can say is that I look forward to the next trip. I fancy Italy.

Annabel Downs

Photos by Annie Coombs, Chris Driver, Gordon Cooke, Ed Bennis



The group at Gunnebo

Cheshire Gardens Trust out on the road

Publicising the CGT and recruiting new members is vital to the future of the organisation. A team of CGT members generously gave their time during a glorious summer week to take the CGT message to a couple of recent Cheshire events.

The Royal Cheshire County Show 20th / 21st June

On a sweltering summer day, probably the hottest of this year so far, a team of trusty CGT volunteers set forth, our destination the showground at Tabley.

Gordon Darlington and Rupert Wilcox-Baker did a fantastic job of installing the timber framework (see below) that Rupert had made in the previous

week.

Digging holes to secure the posts was a very hot job but they kept their sense of humour and by lunchtime the job was done. A big thank you to both.



Christine Wilcox-Baker putting the finishing touches to the stand

Christine Wilcox-Baker (design) and Ruth Brown (horticulture) had been busy in the weeks running up to the show designing posters, working out the display, organising rotas, assessing risks and most importantly sourcing the plants. Arley Hall Nursery very kindly loaned the majority whilst Dibleys generously donated some of their specialist *Streptocarpus*. Remaining gaps were filled using discounted purchases from Fryers Garden

Centre and Windmill Nursery. These were all supplemented by an array of pots, baskets and other items from friends and personal stocks. Now it was time to put it all together and hope it all looked good.

The sunshine on the show days brought huge numbers of visitors and our stand attracted a lot of interest. We were delighted that so many people found our display interesting and overjoyed to win two awards. Two rosettes were duly presented to us – one ‘highly commended’ and the other a



Christine Wilcox-Baker and Ruth Brown being presented with their award by the Show President

‘special’ award from the show President. We were informed the latter was for ‘added value and interest’ for the show and we wondered was that for all the enthusiastic volunteers manning the CGT stand or the display?

Wednesday evening the aforementioned ‘team’, with added help from Vivien Hainsworth, were on hand to dismantle everything and transport it ready for.....

The Arley Garden Festival 24th / 25th June

Friday morning saw Rupert and Gordon back on duty installing the framework and then it was down to Ruth, Christine and Vivien to put in the rest of the display. This time we had additional finishing touches by Vivien who created two beautiful Tussie Mussies (below). These are Victorian style nosegays



full of meaning from the language of flowers and were much admired.

A steady stream of visitors once again enjoyed our display and as always the festival was very floriferous with a delightful atmosphere.

At both this and the Royal Cheshire County Show we ran a competition to win free membership of CGT for a year. This attracted lots of entries and we look forward to welcoming the winners to our future events.



A young visitor to the stand at Arley

The added bonus at Arley was that included in their festival tickets was the opportunity to visit both the gardens and the hall. A beautiful array of floral arrangements had been created by Arley volunteers to really bring the hall to life.



Walled garden at Arley

In addition to all the displays, floral marquee, nursery stands, bands and food offers there was a series of talks. These included an introduction to the proposed new RHS Garden Bridgewater at Worsley near Manchester by curator Marcus Chilton-Jones. For anyone not familiar with this it is to be the

fifth RHS garden and due to open in 2020. Along the way will be the potential for work-in-progress tours and we are hoping to have a speaker for one of our events next year.

Sunday evening when all the festivities were completed the weary but happy CGT team dismantled everything and went home to put their feet up.

Staffing the stands at the two shows and meeting a constant stream of visitors were: Carys and David Cash, Jackie Cawte, Sue Eldridge, Jane Gooch, Patricia Hazlehurst, Janet Horne, Marilyn Jennings, Barbara Moth, Fran Paul, Julia Whitfield and Carolyn Yardley. Our grateful thanks to all of you.

Thanks to their hard work we had a great deal of interest which we very much hope will translate



into some new memberships.

**Christine Wilcox-Baker, Ruth Brown and
Vivien Hainsworth
Photos Christine Wilcox-Baker**

Quarry Bank and the threat of *Phytophthora*



The northern woods on the Quarry Bank estate were originally landscaped by Robert Hyde Greg in the mid nineteenth century to provide a recreational area for the family and included a walk from Norcliffe Hall to the Mill. He created bridges and embellished the woodland with exotic shrubs and conifers. Over the last two years *Phytophthora ramorum* has been identified and the area has subsequently been cleared of all *Rhododendron ponticum*. This has opened up new vistas and recently paths have been improved to make the woods more accessible.

When native species become infected with *Phytophthora* they are killed by the disease but do not spread it. However there are several non-native species that play an active part in spreading the disease, including rhododendron and larch. In the 1930s a large number of larch trees were planted as a cash crop in the Oxbow area of the Chapel Woods and it was felt that these were highly susceptible to *Phytophthora*, posing a significant threat to the woodland. As a

preventative measure the larch trees have been felled and cleared which has been a huge task utilising expertise and heavy machinery. As the timber was still healthy it was sold to help offset the cost of the operation.

Prior to the trees being planted, the area was grassland and cows were brought across the River Bollin to graze. The area is to be allowed to regrow naturally and there are already plenty of young native oak trees. You may notice one tall dead larch has been left as a perch for raptors and other birds as it is only the needles which spread the *Phytophthora* spores.

In the nearby Quarry Bank garden, an area called Ferney Brow next to the river has been cleared and will now be planted with trees and shrubs for autumn interest rather than the original idea of rhododendrons. There are plans to make an exit from the garden into the woods.



**Janet Horne
Photos Janet Horne and Sue Eldridge**

RHS Chatsworth Flower Show



View of Chatsworth House from the Palladian Bridge

It wasn't a promising start to the first RHS Flower Show at Chatsworth, with torrential rain, high winds and traffic problems, but by Friday the traffic had eased, the sun was trying to come out and we had a great day.

The star of the show was the setting, with Chatsworth House on one side, the Capability Brown parkland and edges of Derbyshire on the other. The Show stretched either side of the River Derwent, providing a lovely picnic spot with swooping swallows and baby ducks to watch.

Garden designers had been able to decide on the location of their plot and they took full advantage of this, using the "borrowed views" as part of their designs. The result was that gardens were spaced out, especially in the area nearest to the house where most of the show gardens were

situated; this made for a very relaxed visit.

A new category this year was "FreeForm gardens" which RHS suggested "encourage freedom between plants, sculptures, art and people". They weren't judged in the same way as other show gardens and designers were free to experiment with style, shape and size. The result was an eclectic range from traditional to obscure. Our favourite was Jo Thompson's garden. It used an undulating boundary screen of steel reinforcing rods, projecting out into the River Derwent. Planting was naturalistic and beautiful, with campanulas, roses, dahlias, irises, peonies and candelabra primulas, set amongst swathes of wildflowers, punctuated by field maples and hornbeams. It won the people's choice best FreeForm garden.



Jo Thompson's garden



The show gardens themselves were equally contrasting. On a massive scale was the Institute of Quarrying's Quarry Garden (above). On one side were brutalist designs made from stone, slate, bronze and concrete, on the other more naturalistic planting as wild flowers and other plants take over from derelict quarries. Not to

everyone's taste but its main purpose was to raise awareness of quarrying and the materials it produces, vital for employment in Derbyshire. It won best show garden and best construction award.



We loved the quirky features. Instead of a normal schools' gardening competition there were lovingly created bug hotels inspired by a famous building or architect. Their inspiration knew no bounds, with designs echoing The Shard (above) and more locally, the Hunting Tower.

Next to it was a very familiar local feature with well dressings from local community groups.

They were beautiful, if a little wind battered, all echoing Chatsworth and the local area.

And finally, there were the two inflatable attractions so heavily featured in advanced publicity. Spanning the River Derwent, the **Palladian Bridge** featured a gigantic willow snake and fantastical designs using all manner of plants, created by local celebrity florist Jonathon Moseley (see p.12).



The centrepiece of the floral marquee (see above) was intended to represent Joseph Paxton's Great Conservatory, built for the 6th Duke of Devonshire in 1841. Inside it felt a bit like going into one of the Eden Project domes, with massive moss-clothed poles covered with epiphytes and huge palms and other exotic plants.

Our last port of call was Dibleys stand in the floral marquee. They had won another gold to add to that they achieved at Chelsea.

All in all a great day out.

Sue Eldridge

Photos Janet Horne and Sue Eldridge

Knighthood for John Timpson



John Timpson, the driving force behind the Manchester-based shoe repair and key-cutting business has been awarded a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. He received the

honour for services to business and fostering.

Alongside his career in business and being a father of five children, Mr Timpson and his late wife Alex fostered 90 children throughout their marriage. He said fostering had "taught me a lot about people".

Mr Timpson has run the Timpson business - set up by his great-grandfather in 1865 - for 42 years and prides himself on an "upside-down management approach" which is "not bothered by qualifications or CVs".

We were privileged to visit his garden, Sandymere in July 2016, which he and Alex had owned and developed over 39 years.

Hooker's legacy

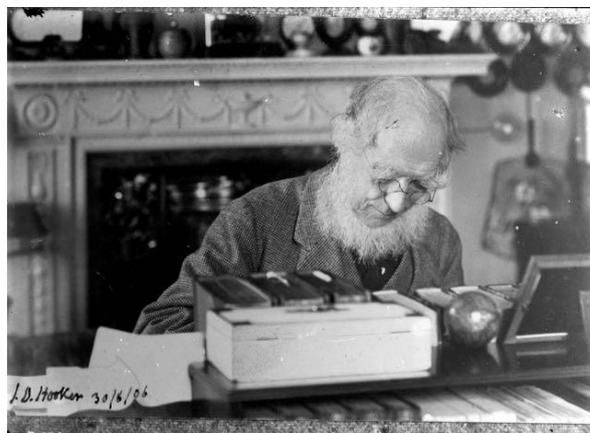


Kew was delightful in early May, lovely sunshine and dappled shade; trees were at their sparkly best with bright new growth. There were plenty of spring flowering shrubs such as wisteria, cornus, rhododendrons in the dell as well as more unusual plants such as *Xanthoceras sorbifolium* and *Paulownia tomentosa*. In the area near Queen Charlotte's cottage, the beech woodlands were paved in bluebells and wild garlic.



In a corner of Kew there are two exquisite galleries. The Marion North gallery is long established, a tribute to the intrepid Victorian woman who toured the world on her own, meticulously painting tropical and exotic plants in their native habitat. She travelled to Canada, America, Jamaica, Brazil, Japan, Borneo, Java and Ceylon. When I visited Cuba the local scenery reminded me of her paintings of Jamaica. In 1879 she offered to build a gallery at Kew if they would display her paintings. The result is quite overwhelming, a remarkable legacy, documenting plant life in all parts of the world before photography became a practical option. Next door is the Shirley Sherwood Gallery, dedicated

to botanical art from 18th and 19th centuries, along with works by contemporary artists. Kew's archive contains 200,000 works of botanical art. Currently it is holding an exhibition: 'Joseph Hooker: Putting plants in their place', to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the great man's birth (1817-1911). Joseph Dalton Hooker (below)



was a traveller and plant collector, who contributed much to the development of Kew. He was an important scientist of the day and one of the most important botanists of the 19th century. His most famous and productive travels were to India and the Himalayas, where he collected more than 25 new varieties of *Rhododendron*, many of which ended up at Kew. He was Assistant Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens from 1855 to 1865 and then succeeded his father, Sir William Jackson Hooker, as Director (1865-1885).

The exhibition is a small but beautiful collection of his journals, published books, paintings and sketches. I loved his line drawings of the plants he had collected (see below) and the places he had visited. The exhibition is on until 17th September.



**Text and photos Sue Eldridge
Hooker photo/watercolour © Royal Botanic
Gardens**

<http://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on/joseph-hooker-putting-plants-in-their-place>

Repton Anniversary coming up!

Hot on the heels of CB300 in 2016 when a series of events were held to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Capability Brown's birth, we have been marking the bicentenary of Edward Kemp this year, and there is the bicentenary of Humphry Repton's death in 2018!

In April The Gardens Trust gathered interested parties together to discuss the coordination of activities on Repton, a meeting attended by CGT member Freyda Taylor. These anniversaries are a great opportunity to raise awareness of historic designed landscapes among a wider audience.

So what are we doing? We have six sites in Cheshire where Humphry Repton (1752-1818) is known to have worked:

| Year | Place | Client | Source |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 1790 | Rode Hall - Grade 2 listed | Wilbraham Bootle | Red Book - with owner |
| 1791 | Crewe Hall – Grade 2 listed | John Crewe | Sketches and hints |
| 1791 | High Legh (CGT report) | George John Legh | Red Book (in John Rylands Library?) |
| 1791 | Tatton Park – Grade 2 listed | William Egerton | Red book (with owner) |
| 1793 | Aston Park – numerous listed features | Harvey Aston | Red book – CGT have copy |
| 1802 | Hooton | Sir Thomas Stanley | Red Book held by Architectural Association, CGT have copy |

Cheshire Gardens Trust Research and Recorders decided that we should make owners and custodians aware of the anniversary, and complete research on sites not included on Historic England's Register. So study of the Red Book for Aston is continuing in order to complete a report on this site where much of Repton's layout remains though the Hall has been demolished.

We have obtained a copy of the Hooton Red



Parkland at Aston with Top Lodge, 2006 (BM)

Book from the Architectural Association and held a research session at Cheshire Records Office where, apart from all the plans and illustrations in the sales catalogues, the cash book for 1800-1811 had the following:

1802 July 2nd By H Repton for his journey to Hooton to suggest alterations in the pleasure grounds etc £105

1802 Sept 23rd By H Repton for a book of drawings for improving Hooton £52.10

And the cash book for 1812–1817 includes payments for the boathouse, and

1813 Nov 17th By Wm Caldwell and Co for flowering shrubs in Nov 6 & Dec 6 1811

There is more to do and a lot of digesting of what we have gathered but good progress has been made. Though the grounds of Hooton became a wartime airfield, the Hall demolished and much of the site occupied by Vauxhalls, some elements remain and we are keen to record these at our site visit on August 23rd.

For all sites, further work beyond the Historic England listing would need to be undertaken to understand Repton's proposals, what was actually implemented and what exists now. All this is quite fascinating if you like wandering and being a detective in the landscape.

Text and photo Barbara Moth

Don't forget there are still two walks in Cheshire Parks, celebrating the bicentenary of Edward Kemp's birth

Saturday August 19th 11am - Queen's Park, Crewe. Meet beside the clock tower. Email: elaine.webster@ansa.co.uk Tel: 01270 686 708

Sunday 24th September 2pm - Congleton Park, Congleton. Meet outside Stock at the Pavilion, the cafe in the park. Email: ruth.morgan@ansa.co.uk Tel: 01625 383 673

Working with Reaseheath College

Once again, Cheshire Gardens Trust was invited to attend the Family Festival at Reaseheath College on Sunday 14th May. This is the sixth year that we have contributed to the Horticulture Department's display by focussing on our work on historic gardens and designed landscapes.



Freyda Taylor with the CGT stand at Reaseheath College

Garden History is an important subject featuring in several Reaseheath courses, from BSc level in Plant Science and Horticulture to other full-time courses that could lead to exciting new career opportunities for the student.

For adult learners there are part-time higher education courses in Landscape Architecture and Garden and Planting Design. Cheshire Gardens Trust, always interested in increasing public awareness of historic landscapes, has played its part in these courses.

In October 2016 Barbara Moth, Mary Jeeves and Freyda Taylor spent a day with Reaseheath

students demonstrating how to recognize the historic features remaining in the landscape at Marbury Park near Northwich. For one of their course assessments, the students had to prepare a report on a historic landscape very similar to our research reports.

Further Education Courses at Reaseheath

For general horticulture, Reaseheath offer the very popular RHS qualifications at levels 2 and 3.

In addition, for the 2017/18 academic year the college is introducing several 6-week courses that may be of interest to CGT members, especially the introduction to Garden History.

- * **Introduction to Garden History**
6 weeks from Wednesday 1st November 2017, 10.00-1.00. This six week course examines the History of Garden Design from the very first gardens through to the modern day. Important periods covered include the Italian Renaissance, French Baroque, the English Landscape movement and Arts and Crafts. It is suitable for beginners or those with an existing interest in the subject.
- * **Introduction to plant propagation**
- * **Design your garden**
- * **The art of plants**

For more information and to apply please contact Horticulture Programme Administrator Karen Keany on 01270 613211 or by email Karen.Keany@reaseheath.ac.uk

*Freyda Taylor
Photo Margaret Blowey*



The Gardens Trust needs your help in finding and informing them about the often unrecognised and neglected mid to late C20 designed landscapes – those laid out between the mid 1960s and 1990. Their campaign '**Compiling the Record – the essential mid to late C20 landscapes**' grew out of a conference about these landscapes which they held at The Garden Museum in early June 2017.

<http://thegardenstrust.org/compiling-the-record/>

West Midlands Autumn Lecture Wednesday 11th October 2017, 6.30pm The Birmingham & Midland Institute, 9 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3B

Dianne Long: Garden and Landscape Historian

Pleasure and Production

Dianne's lecture will explore the landscapes of eighteenth century industrialists, whose gardens have attracted little attention compared with those of the landed gentry and aristocracy.

For further information see The Gardens Trust website

<http://thegardenstrust.org>

X is for Xtraordinary gardens

Apologies if this makes you wince, but what Cheshire gardening item would you come up with for the letter X?

And we do have some xtraordinary gardens in Cheshire. In this piece I will highlight just two – **Mellor's Garden**, near Rainow, and the walled gardens of **Poulton Hall** on the Wirral, whose qualities and detail are difficult to convey in prose and print.

Mellor's Garden

One of our very first Cheshire Gardens Trust visits in 2004 was to Mellor's Garden (below), a visit reported in the Trust's second newsletter. The garden representing the Pilgrim's Progress was built by James Mellor in the 1850s, and restored in the 1980s.



“Mellor was a religious man and follower of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), a leading 18th century philosopher, who believed that the natural world is an allegory of the spiritual world. The garden is designed so that the visitor can enact the journey of Christian in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1678), from his entrance through the Wicket Gate after fleeing from the City of Destruction, to his eventual arrival at the Celestial City (below). The book was chosen to help convey the teachings of Swedenborg, and the visitor's



journey through the garden thus represents a spiritual journey. The site became a popular local attraction and was well visited on Sundays and, particularly, Good Fridays”. (taken from Historic England's list entry for Mellor's Gardens No. 1001284)

The route through the gardens provides many attractive views of the pool, stream, trees, buildings and stones inscribed with biblical quotations that form part of the story, and the garden was planted with many flowers and shrubs mentioned in the Bible.

It is a remarkable survival of an unusual 19th century allegorical garden, in private ownership, and included on Historic England's Register Grade II.

Poulton Hall

The two walled gardens at Poulton Hall were originally built as kitchen gardens in the 1840s. They have become a Storyteller's Garden, the creation of June Lancelyn Green who has celebrated the life and work of her husband, author Roger Lancelyn Green in some very special and whimsical ways. On public open days the garden is entered from the pleasure gardens via a gate in the west wall, “intended to make you think of *The Secret Garden* and to help you enter a world of make-believe”. (see Poulton Hall's website <http://www.poultonhall.co.uk>)

The southern walled garden, entered first, is formally laid out with the **Alice in Wonderland Walk** planted with red roses on one side and white ones on the other, and earlier in the year with red and white tulips.



An **Egyptian obelisk** (left), recalling Roger Lancelyn Green's *Tales of Ancient Egypt*, is placed at the end of the Alice in Wonderland walk leading to the White Garden, a Rose garden and a lawn with sculptures. The northern walled garden is subdivided into four by paths which intersect at a circular feature with metal

arches defining the entrances, curved stone seats and enclosing hedges. At the eastern end of the garden lie the children's gardens which celebrate the interests of Roger Lancelyn Green and his own writings. A sensory garden for the visually

impaired is known as *The Land of the Lord High Tiger Garden* (below) and reflects the story and



characters from the children's book of the same name written by Roger, and a *Pirates Only* area, recalls Roger's fondness for Peter Pan, about which he wrote a definitive stage history.

The walled gardens are an extraordinary mixture of historic fabric, creative re-interpretation, and imaginative use of planting

and modern sculpture, a delightful place for exploration by children and the young at heart.



Circular feature with metal arches

Barbara Moth
Photos Barbara Moth, Barbara Wright and by kind permission of Dr Tony Shaw

(for more information see his blogspot – Dr Tony Shaw Mellors Garden)

So that's what they get up to at the Council of Management



Well we needed a little drama to attract attention, but CGT does have a serious issue in attracting new faces onto various committees. This year's AGM managed to elect some new members but it was a close run thing and we only just managed to get our minimum legal number of members. The past year saw the loss of several members of the Council of Management (CoM) and the Events Group, several

of whom have been on one of the committees from the very beginning. People have left for various reasons but all will still be involved in CGT but at a reduced level. It really is time for fresh faces and ideas to take the Trust through its second decade.

Time commitment: as little or as much as you can give. CoM meets approximately six times a year. Each committee has various schedules. Check the website calendar.

Skills: enthusiasm as everyone brings something different to the table.

Areas: CoM, garden research, events, education, planning, conservation, and anything that relates to the interests of the Trust's members from serious academic stuff to social fun events.

Get in touch with any member of the CoM or various committees via the website or use the Cheshire Gardens trust's phone number 07785 955 823.

Text and photo Ed Bennis

Copy date for October newsletter is 30th September

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, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email sue_eldridge@hotmail.com