



CHESHIRE  
GARDENS TRUST

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*Newsletter*

[www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](http://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)

#### Inside:

- ✿ Gredington's Viburnums
- ✿ Caldwell – the next step
- ✿ Eyecatchers and follies
- ✿ Your Council of Management
- ✿ Lisbon Study Trip

#### Some future events:

- ✿ Pleasing Melancholy: past, present and future for our cemeteries – Saturday 23 February
- ✿ AGM and Annual Spring Lecture: Arley Hall in America – Thursday 21 March
- ✿ Walk through a Saltscape – Thursday 25 April
- ✿ Manley Knoll – Tuesday 14 May



On a blustery, showery day in mid-October we assembled at the "Bus" (converted to provide much needed indoor café facilities) before setting out on a perambulation of the Festival Gardens. These have recently been refurbished under the auspices of the Land Trust, whose manager Suzanne Carr kindly gave us a guided tour.

Though the original layout of the 1984 International Garden Festival site can still be seen in places, the Festival Gardens now represent less than a quarter of

the original area, much of which has since been developed for housing.

Two international gardens, the Japanese and Chinese gardens, have survived alongside a lake which has attracted a pair of swans, but whose level is well down as a result of leakage – hard to believe given our recent wet weather. The 'river' that runs from the lake has developed an attractive fringe of marginal vegetation, best seen during the flowering of the Yellow Iris, and water-lilies are also well established.



The original tree plantings have thrived around the perimeter, where they were established as shelter belts, and a vista has been opened up allowing a glimpse of the Mersey and its Cheshire shore. (above) For those of us who were involved in the original Festival, the present gardens represent something of an anti-climax, and the Japanese pagoda in particular is not going to impress visitors from Japan, nor the locals, being a very poor facsimile of the original. Nor is there any trace of the original Turkish pavilion, whose name "kiosk" has found its way into the English language.

But the two Chinese structures have survived more or less intact, albeit with some deterioration of the painted decorations, (below) and if and when the waterfall is flowing, the view of the lake and its two stone megaliths (the turtle and the crane) may remind us of a classical Chinese water garden.

After leaving the Japanese garden we climbed to the top of the hill and admired the view of the estuary from a point about 30m above sea level; but the gardens themselves are best viewed from the top of the new axial staircase which directs you to the site of the original Festival Dome (designed by Ove Arup). This was demolished in 2006 to make way for a

further housing development, but construction is currently on hold due to financial circumstances and the bankruptcy of a prospective developer.

Many would say that the high density of the proposed development will sit uneasily alongside the garden area with its large wilderness spaces; but others would point to the greater footfall from local residents that will undoubtedly boost visitor numbers to the site.

It is very much work in progress, with considerable scope for improvements in signage and conservation of existing structures, but the fact that this recent addition to Liverpool's outstanding range of parks has survived at all is somewhat astonishing given its history as a political football.

**John Edmondson**



## Gredington's Viburnums

After a week of rain a sunny day greeted CGT members for a return visit to the Gredington Estate near Whitchurch, home of the National Plant Collection of *Viburnum*.

The National Collection, which aims to develop and preserve a group of plants in trust for the future, was established by Lloyd Kenyon (more formally, The Rt Hon The Lord Kenyon) who was our guide for the tour.

Lloyd Kenyon began collecting *Viburnum* in 1993 after the new house was built. For his collection he cleared a former walled kitchen garden and started planting whichever types of *Viburnum* he could find in various nurseries here and abroad.

*Viburnum* are divided into a number of distinct sub-sections<sup>1</sup> to aid identification i.e. *Thyrsoisma*, *Lantana*, *Pseudopulus*, *Tinus* and *Opulus*. Only two varieties of *Viburnum* are native to the UK i.e. *V. lantana* and *V. opulus*. Many are tropical or semi-tropical with many new introductions coming from Asia. Lloyd Kenyon's collection now totals over 250 varieties. In addition to the collection, the extensive gardens covering 13 acres contain a range of unusual trees and shrubs, many of them planted for autumn colour.



Our tour started with a walk through the south lawn which was originally planted with rows of fruit trees. These have now been replaced with unusual trees and shrubs many of which are not even listed in the RHS Plant Finder.

As a plant addict I made lots of notes on the various cultivars of *Mahonia*, *Hydrangea* and other shrubs plus the many trees such as *Catalpa*, *Ilex*, *Aesculus*, etc. which caught my eye. Some names were totally unfamiliar to me but other shrubs I had grown in the past but had to dig up as they became too large for my garden.

At the end of the south lawn was a large pond with decorative bridge bordered by a path which we followed until we reached the main *Viburnum* Collection next to the kitchen garden. The collection has now reached maturity with the shrubs towering over us separated by winding paths which we

followed looking at the different varieties. *Viburnum* are now classed in 11 sub-sections. Each has different characteristics which enable selection of the most appropriate cultivar for a location e.g some have susceptibility to aphids.

Some of the *Viburnum* had good foliage and berries. I particularly liked *Viburnum plicatum* 'Dart's Red Robin' and the heavily berried *Viburnum hupehensis*.



The foliage of most of the *Viburnum* however had not changed colour yet due to the wet summer and autumn. The vivid red leaves and the striking wax-like orange, red and pink winged fruits of the adjacent small tree of *Euonymus planipes* caught everyone's attention and many members resolved to plant it in their gardens.

From the *Viburnum* Collection we made our way to another walled area known as the Dog's Yard. This was the playground, complete with hole, of a boisterous Labrador. In this section there were many shrubs but most of them were past their peak. There were plants of *Kirengeshoma palmata* and the distinctive seed pods of the Bladder Senna, *Colutea arborescens*. There were also several cultivars of *Sarcococca* as Lloyd Kenyon is building up a National Collection. Many are being introduced into the UK from the Far East by Crûg Farm Nurseries.

From the Dog's Yard we followed the path bordering the lawn passing beautiful varieties of *Hydrangea* to a room in the stables for afternoon tea. Here a cakefest awaited us, guaranteed to throw the most determined dieter off course, as home made ginger, fruit, coffee, lemon drizzle and chocolate cake beckoned!

After tea Lloyd Kenyon took us to the kitchen garden with plantings of sweet peas, kale, alpine strawberries and raspberries etc. A large polytunnel with a raised bed with asparagus, chillies and fennel intrigued everyone. It was made by a company called Keder ([www.kedergreenhouse.co.uk](http://www.kedergreenhouse.co.uk)) and resembled stiffened bubble wrap over galvanised steel tubes. Ventilation was controlled by roll-up blinds in the sides which were temperature operated.

<sup>1</sup> [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com)

Everyone enjoyed their visit which was just as memorable as our last visit seven years ago. If members are interested Lloyd Kenyon still has available a few copies of his NCCPG guide 'Viburnum' published in 2001.

**Heather Turner**



## Sam Youd's Lifetime in Gardening

Those of us who have heard Sam talk before know that he can be relied upon to be entertaining but beneath the light heartedness of his talk about a life in gardening there were some more serious reflections and perhaps messages to ponder.

Starting in Liverpool parks Sam was promoted to an office based post. He soon realised that life with 'phones and filing cabinets was not for him and sought a more practical placement. This dichotomy seems to be present in all fields; those that are good at what they do get promoted to where they are no longer doing it!

Sam arrived at Tatton to gardens that were very different to those enjoyed today. Investment and management interest was limited. The National Trust and visitor attractions in general had yet to realise the power of gardens to draw increased visitors through seasonal change, development and interpretation.

That Sam survived his tenure under the then manager seems to have been a mark of Sam's tenacity, grit and determination, and his manager's inability to counter Sam's scouse logic.

Charged with reducing garden staff, Sam reported on the likely consequences; it would only be possible to maintain half the Italian garden. The dramatic impact of such a proposed change was immediately evident to the manager whose office overlooked the space - and Sam retained his staff!

Sam capitalised on changes and opportunities outside the environs of Tatton Park to restore and develop the gardens. He was awarded a Churchill Fellowship allowing him to travel to China and then Japan, forging links that would lead to the restoration of the Japanese Garden. Heritage Lottery Funding enabled the restoration of the kitchen gardens and glasshouses where teams of volunteers are now involved in cultivating fruit and vegetables.

Sam was instrumental in bringing the Royal Horticultural Society north to hold an annual flower show at Tatton Park. He also used the historic connections of Lord Egerton with his estate in Kenya to develop links between dozens of local schools and their African counterparts, involving exchange visits and dialogue.

So transformations that he spearheaded at Tatton have had benefits rippling out to many in the region and beyond, making accessible, encouraging and stimulating a love for and interest in plants and gardens.

Now Sam has retired. Really? The term has totally inappropriate connotations for the next phase of Sam's life! Sam's enthusiasm and knowledge is being directed in new ways that continue to share his passion for plants, people and gardens. Who knows what may result now that he is free to follow his own path!

**Barbara Moth**

Last October research and recorders met at Sutton Hall where Win Greenwood, a new member of the Trust, provided a fascinating history of the property. A round cairn 200m south west of Sutton Hall, currently on English Heritage's 'Heritage At Risk' Register, is evidence of early occupation of the site. A Saxon farmstead probably existed before the hall was built. East of the Hall (and originally belonging to it) is the Wilderness, a wooded area which contains an interesting series of former water channels beside the Rossendale Brook, a tributary of the Bollin.

Beside the Wilderness is Sutton Pinfold, one of only nine complete pinfolds remaining in Cheshire and the only one to bear its actual construction date - 1845.<sup>1</sup> Pinfolds were constructed to impound livestock roaming the highways. The owner had to pay a fine to

retrieve his animals. Thankfully our research and recorders were freed without payment!

**Barbara Moth**



<sup>1</sup> Hayns, D. 'Thrown into the Verge' Cheshire's Vanishing Pinfolds. Cheshire Local History Association, 2010 - 2011, p33

## Caldwell's Nurseries Project - what next?

So what was the legacy of all that work to create an award winning garden? What is happening to all the information that we are gathering? How is the ledger project progressing?

The answers are that thanks to our volunteers the project continues to move forward. We are still following up leads from RHS Tatton, recording peoples' memories and receiving new information; sixteen volunteers are transcribing two of the ledgers into the bespoke database and enjoyed a Horrible Handwriting workshop (see photo below). Altogether we are accumulating an ever growing amount of information about the nurseries.



To capitalise on progress and publicity, share what we have, gather more and respond to interest shown, the project team considered how best to take the project forward. We decided the aims of the next phase should be:

To bring together the outcomes of the series of volunteer-led projects about Caldwell's Nurseries and share them more widely through a website, exhibition, talks, workshops and a book.

### Our aims are to:

1. Develop and maintain an interactive website
2. Create an exhibition that can be accommodated in various public locations, manned and unmanned
3. Publish an affordable and accessible illustrated book about the nurseries
4. Encourage people of all ages to engage with the project
5. Continue to raise awareness of the heritage of Caldwell's Nurseries through published articles, talks and events

To do this we need external funding. After discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund, we were encouraged to submit a pre-application. This was well received so a full application titled 'Sharing the Heritage of Caldwell's Nurseries' was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2012, and a parallel application submitted to the Robert Clutterbuck Trust. These include funding to train

volunteers to maintain and update the website and give presentations. Outcomes to these applications will be known in March.

If successful there will be increased opportunities to engage new people of all ages in the project and new opportunities for volunteer involvement including:

- Updating and uploading additional information to the website, responding to enquiries and monitoring new information received via the website
- Developing, transporting and manning the exhibition
- Handling comments and information received as a result of the exhibition displays
- Giving talks and helping with workshops
- Photographing plants from Caldwell's for the book and website
- Scanning documents for the book and website
- Book distribution and sales
- Project publicity
- Events organisation

In addition, there are always opportunities for volunteers to participate in existing activities - ledger photography, transcription and researching Caldwell's customers, for which the Project Team provide training, and has developed guidance notes and a handbook.

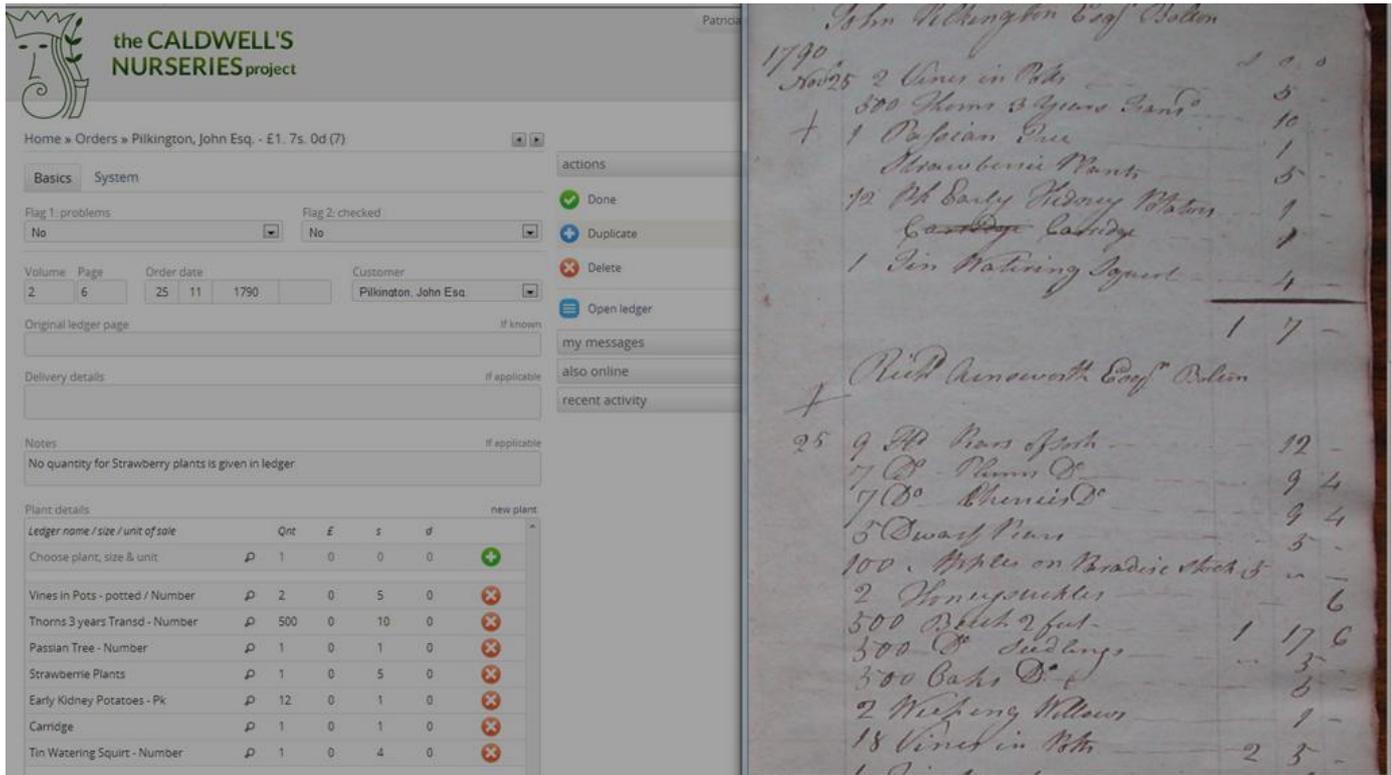
So having gone through the pain barrier of an HLF application in the run up to Christmas..... be assured that you will be the first to know if our applications are successful!



*Acer campestre 'William Caldwell', Field Maple, at Tatton Park*  
Above, in the foreground, below, close-up of the leaves



Transcribing the ledgers provides us with a number of challenges. Generally speaking the handwriting can be easily read, particularly when the words are those we are used to – annual flower seeds read the same in the eighteenth century as in the twenty-first. Other items have fallen out of use and finding them sends us on historical detective quests.



The database order entry form (left) and (right) the corresponding page from the ledgers: the entry is for the top order.

## Strickles

In the last edition of the Newsletter we asked members if they could explain the difference between rubbers and strickles, both of which were used for sharpening scythes, after finding entries for them in the Caldwell ledgers.

Our thanks to Freyda and Bob Taylor for letting us have the following information, gleaned from the 1877 edition of *The Book of the Farm*, a very popular book by Henry Stephens, F.R.S.E. (Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh). Stephens' book ran to many editions and was published in America as well as in Britain. (Print on Demand copies are available today.)

There were various types of scythe, said Stephens, describing them as consisting of the blade and the handle (or sned), which was curved, with two handles for holding it while cutting grass. By the time Stephens was writing, there were patent scythes available – more expensive, but cheaper in the long run, said Stephens, as they kept their edges.

The handle of the scythe could be made of willow, placed in hot water to soften it and so create the curve which it then kept when cold. Straight ones were also available, made of other types of wood and in some types the handle was made of two pieces, one slotting into the other.

Strickles and stones (rubbers?) were needed to sharpen scythes. The strickle was made of fine sand

imbedded in an adhesive material, spread on the surface of a piece of flat wood, 15 inches long. Scythe stones were about the same length, tapering in shape and made of the sandstone used for grindstones. The stone was used first to sharpen the blade and then the strickle to smooth the edge.

Scything was a real skill. "Theory" said Stephens "would advise the placing of the plane of the blade parallel with the ground when the scythe is held for cutting; but practice requires the cutting edge to be elevated above the ground, and above the back of the blade which sweeps along the surface; and the reason is, to avoid the edge running into the ground, while the edge cuts with greater ease the stems of plants with an upward slant".

The grass-nail, which was nailed into the handle and hooked into a hole in the blade, prevented cut plants getting tangled up in the angle between the blade and the handle.

Before the advent of lawn-mowers in the middle of the nineteenth century, the only ways to keep your lawn grass short was either to have it grazed by sheep or scythed. There are not many records of what this entailed, but some information from the eighteenth century has survived.

Thomas Goldney III (1696-1768), a Bristol merchant, kept a garden book where he recorded the flowers he sowed and the bulbs he planted in his garden. He also

recorded when his gardener, Adam Sixsmith, mowed the grass.

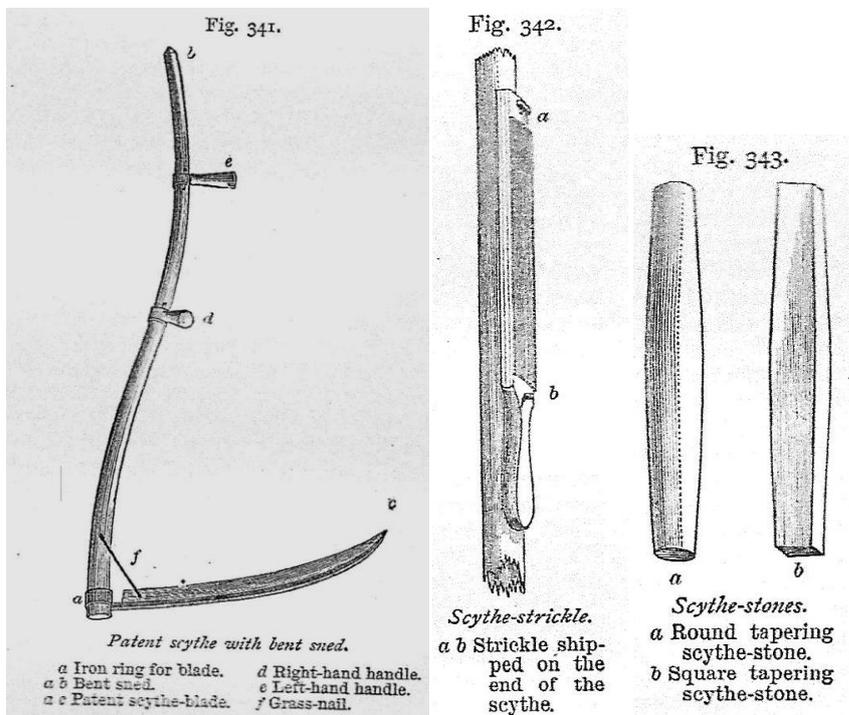
On 9 May (1739?), he mowed both the Long Walk and the Greenhouse Walk. He was finished by nine in the morning “*but then he rose between 3 & 4*”.

On 27 May 1746 “*Adam, & Seddon, Mow’d the 2 long Walks, the Wilderness, & all the other Walks in the lower Garden, in one Morning before X. Rose at III.*”<sup>1</sup>

Gardening was clearly not a 9-5 job! I wonder how long it would have taken with a ride-on mower!

<sup>1</sup> *The Goldney Family, a Bristol Merchant Dynasty*, P.K. Stembridge (1998), p. 126 and 128

Opposite: illustrations from *The Book of The Farm*:



## Bass Mats

Bass mats were an item that all nurserymen (including Caldwell's) once stocked. They were sometimes referred to as Russian or Archangel mats because most of them were manufactured in Russia and shipped out of Archangel. They had multiple uses – as padding, protection from both cold and heat, and for string.

The mats were made from the inner bark of the European lime tree (*Tilia europaea*) and came in different sizes. They must have been woven in some way, as it was possible to pull the threads, or strings, cutting off the required length. Abercrombie described them as the cheapest and handiest for gardeners who needed to bind grafts, tie flower stalks to canes, or tie the leaves of vegetables together to promote blanching – or just generally tie up anything that needed tying.

Bass mats continued to be popular for decades, then in 1829, Loudon published a letter in *The Gardener's Magazine* from Peter Lindegaard, Court-gardener to the King of Denmark in Copenhagen.

Lindegaard supported a previous correspondent's championing of straw mats, which were more efficient and a lot cheaper: "... they produce a great saving of fuel, and afford a great security from accidents of different

kinds ... allow the steam of moist hot-beds to pass easier off". After a heavy fall of snow, bass mats retained moisture, froze and with the weight of the ice could break the glass of the hot-beds. Loudon promised to bring some straw mats into the country for testing, but they seem not to have caught on.

Nearly forty years later William Robinson published *Gleanings from French Gardens*, which was subtitled "comprising an account of such features of French horticulture as are most worthy of adoption in British gardens".

One item he noted was the use of straw mats. "In our cold and variable climate, the winter covering for many minor glass structures is of the greatest importance. It is a thing that at present we do in a very expensive and by no means satisfactory way. The French mode of doing it is much cheaper, neater, and more effective... If I mistake not, one of these [straw] mats, which is much better as a protecting agent than a bass-mat, costs about one-third the present price of a bass-mat, while in point of appearance and amount of protection given the advantage is all in favour of the French paillisson".<sup>1</sup>

**Joy Uings**

<sup>1</sup> p. 265. Available as a free Google e-book.

This year, why not combine garden visits with plant-buying? There will be a Plant Hunters' Fair at Cholmondeley Castle (Malpas) from 11-5 on Sunday 14 April. Special half-price tickets to both garden and fair: £3 adults and £1.50 children.

The same half-price entry will be available at Adlington Hall, Macclesfield on Sunday 4 August. These two events have been arranged in the place of those originally planned for Abbeywood (unfortunately cancelled). There will be more than 20 fairs between March and September. For more information see [www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk](http://www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk).

## E is for Eyecatcher ... F is for Folly

The term 'eyecatcher' (less commonly spelt as 'eyecatcher' or 'eye catcher') seems to speak for itself, though in practice is not so easy to define. One of the most conspicuous skyline features in the south east Cheshire landscape, Mow Cop castle, is a folly built in 1754 as an eyecatcher for nearby Rode Hall, Scholar Green. The manor of Rode was bought in 1669 by Roger Wilbraham, and its hall rebuilt by his son Randle. Randle's son, also named Randle, enlarged the new hall in 1752 to its present size, and then created this gothic eyecatcher on the nearest hill, the highest point of a ridge forming the Cheshire/Staffordshire boundary. The Wilbrahams still own Rode Hall.



Mow Cop folly. Photograph source: National Trust photo library.

Now a restored ruin, the round tower was originally roofed and used as a summerhouse with extensive and stunning views over the Cheshire Plain. There could hardly be a greater contrast between this high stony location, and the delightful sheltered gardens and soft red brick of Rode Hall about 2-3 miles away in the Plain.

The folly looks convincingly like a ruined castle, and it is even more dramatic on close inspection, rearing up from crags of the local gritstone, quarried away right up to the building on the Staffordshire side.

Though it was only built for ornament, it has caused some bitter battles. In the mid nineteenth century a dispute blew up between the Cheshire Wilbrahams and the Staffordshire Sneyds of Keele Hall which was finally settled in court when it was ruled that, since the folly had been built on their ownership boundary, it should be shared.

In 1923 the site was sold to a local quarry owner who intended to quarry it away. Over 500 appalled protesters gathered on one occasion, and a legal wrangle ensued between the local community and the new owner which lasted until 1935. Since 1937 it has been safely in the ownership of the National Trust.

Another eighteenth century eyecatcher in Cheshire is the Folly Tower at Tabley Hall near Knutsford, which dates from around 1780. The artist JMW Turner painted two views in 1808 focusing on the battlemented tower on its island in Tabley mere, one on a calm day, and one on a windy day (illustrated).



'Tabley, the Seat of Sir J.F. Leicester, Bart.: Windy Day': by J M W Turner. Source: Tabley House website

Whilst Mow Cop castle is an example of the mid eighteenth century Gothic Revival set in a 'sublime' landscape (a natural location that has an aesthetic quality that evokes awe and perhaps some pleasurable terror), Folly Tower is consciously picturesque and romantic. William Gilpin wrote later in the eighteenth century "the picturesque eye is perhaps most inquisitive after the *elegant relics of ancient architecture*; the ruined tower, the Gothic arch, the remains of castles and abbeys. *They are consecrated by time*; and almost deserve the veneration we pay to the works of nature itself."

Sham ruins became fashionable, stimulating the imagination, adding apparent time depth, and evoking thoughts of past and present. When wealthy landowners placed them beyond their enclosed parks and gardens as eyecatchers, the areas they brought attention to became 'borrowed landscape' for the park or garden. A further effect was that they made the extent of an owner's influence very visible to others, increasing social status. A ruined castle as an eyecatcher could also imply a lengthy and high-ranking pedigree to those who were unaware of its true nature.

'Eyecatchers' can be at a smaller scale than the examples given, may have varying origins and functions, may overlap with other categories of designed landscape features, and for many gardens may once have been present but are now lost. They could be a rewarding topic for further research.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that 'Eyecatcher' is the title of the Newsletter of the Association of Gardens Trusts!

**Ruth Benson**

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Tabley House website [www.tableyhouse.co.uk/art.html#](http://www.tableyhouse.co.uk/art.html#)

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One problem in finding out more about eye-catchers is that the term seems to be quite recent (the OED dates it from 1923). The term eye-trap appears

earlier, as in this quote from the 1769 *A Description of England and Wales*:

*“The town and castle of Chepstow appear from one part of the bench, rising from the romantic steeps of wood, in a manner too beautiful to express; a small remove discovers the steeple so dropt in the precise point of taste, that one can scarcely believe it a real steeple, and not an eye-trap.”*

By the end of the century, the eye-catchers of Kent’s and Brown’s landscapes had fallen out of favour.

Repton was very dismissive:

*“If, at the end of a long avenue, be placed an obelisk, a temple, or any other eye-trap (as it is called), it will only catch or please the eye of ignorance or childhood. The eye of taste and experience hates compulsion, and turns with disgust from such puerile means of attracting its notice.”*

**Ed**

## Obituary

### Howard Talbot: 22 February 1948 – 11 November 2012

Howard Talbot was born into a historic family of landowners with a military tradition and who lived at Aston Park, near Runcorn. Aston Hall had already been demolished when his family moved into Aston Lodge, the Dower House, when Howard was eight years old. There he was brought up to appreciate the natural world and the history of the landscape around him.

Howard became an accomplished watercolour artist and a historian who researched the Aston and Talbot families. Of particular interest was the life of Sir Thomas Aston (1600-1646) who died fighting for the Royalist cause. Howard joined the Sealed Knot, the charity which educates the public about the history of the English Civil War by re-enacting the battles of that period.

The Aston estate and its design history fascinated Howard. In 1793, Col Henry Herve Aston had called in the famous Humphry Repton to prepare a design for Aston Park and the resulting Red Book was produced in the same year. This Red Book had been lost many years but Howard managed to trace it to the USA and he was allowed to photograph and trace Repton’s landscape images and proposals. Howard was a skilled artist.

Howard could truly be described as a friend of Cheshire Gardens Trust. He welcomed members to the Aston estate where they were taken on a guided tour and introduced to the history of his family and to the remnants of the Repton design in the gardens and parkland. “One of the best CGT Events ever”, it is said.

Howard was enthusiastic in his welcome to the authors of the *Historic Gardens of Cheshire* when they visited Aston to research for their book. He



encouraged local amateur archaeologists in their dig in the Aston grounds. And he would have been fascinated to hear about the information now emerging from the Caldwell ledgers showing the numbers of plants and trees purchased for Aston both before and after Repton’s visit. It is just sad that he did not live to see the facsimile of the Red Book for Aston Park that Cheshire Gardens Trust has purchased to help in our research of the site.

**Freyda Taylor**

## Your Council of Management

Did you know that Cheshire Gardens Trust is just one of 35 County Gardens Trusts in England? The first one was formed nearly thirty years ago, in Hampshire. For a while it stood alone, but then others sprang up – Cornwall, Devon, Kent and Norfolk all date from 1988; Derbyshire, Isle of Wight, Avon from 1989 and Dorset from 1990. By 2002 there were thirty county Trusts, plus one for London and another covering the whole of Wales.

But, despite our county's wonderful gardens, there was no Gardens Trust in Cheshire.

That was to change. Various people interested in gardens and garden history and who lived locally were invited to a meeting at Chester Zoo in February 2003. There we heard about the work of Gardens Trusts – research and recording; conservation and planning; education and events.

We decided it was time to join in.

The first thing to do was to set up a Steering Committee and our long association with Arley and Lord Ashbrook began with the first meeting taking place in the Hall's Library.

It was a busy year. We had a stall at RHS Tatton in July; sufficient funds to set up a bank account in September and our first event in November – a trip to Ness Botanic Gardens.

In January 2004 our first Newsletter appeared (just two sides) and in April the Cheshire Gardens Trust was officially launched – at Arley.

We have come a long way in the ten years since that first meeting at Chester Zoo. Our events programme is well attended; research and recording groups are busy; we respond to development threats to our historic parks and gardens; the Caldwell's Nurseries Project is growing; the Newsletter is appreciated.

None of this would have been possible without the support of members and to all those who have given of their time and expertise, we say a big THANK YOU.

But have you ever wondered how it all works? And why the Trust undertakes some activities and not others? There is so much that could be done – we are rarely short of ideas – but always short of



resources, particularly human resources. Everything the Trust has accomplished has been through voluntary effort.

It is the role of the Council of Management (or Committee) to decide what activities get undertaken. The committee meets eight times a year. Supporting the committee are the sub-groups – events; research and recording; conservation and planning. Some of those serving on the sub-groups have previously served on the Committee.



The amount of time that individual members of the Committee contribute varies – some are retired, others still have challenging careers; some are coping with the needs of elderly parents, children or grandchildren. However, every member gives as much as is possible for them. For some, this means taking on multiple roles. When Ed retired from his role as Chair (after nine years), there was no-one else on the committee able to take it on.



During the past year we have taken it in turns to chair committee meetings. Ruth Benson and Freyda Taylor have both announced their intention to stand down at the AGM, although both have promised to continue their specific roles – Ruth leads on Conservation and Planning; Freyda on networking.

Freyda's role has been important in getting the Cheshire Gardens Trust better known. And it was a

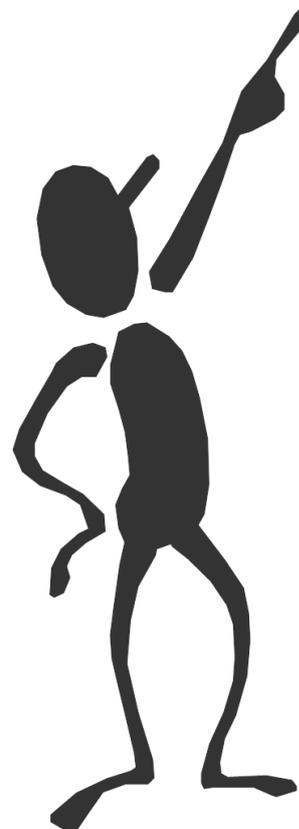
role that was not being fulfilled by existing members when she joined the committee in 2010. As volunteers, we tend – by accident or design – to focus on activities with which we are comfortable. So if an activity has not been tackled, it usually means that there has been no-one on the committee with the interest or the existing skills to make it happen. For example, we want to develop the web-site, but as none of us has the wherewithal to get this moving and, because we have been so busy with other things, limited progress has been made.



Over the past year we have seen an increase in member numbers. We have become better known, not least as a result of the hard work put in by all those who created the garden for RHS Tatton. It feels like the Trust has come of age.

We would like to capitalise on this increased recognition and to do that we need the energy of new people with views, contacts, skills and experience from a variety of backgrounds. We also recognise that half the current Committee members have been serving as such since 2003. That has the benefit of a good understanding of where we have come from and where we are going. But we are also all ten years older (did I really admit to that?) and we need fresh input if the committee is to be sustained and the Trust remain viable and healthy.

So while there are 'posts' waiting to be filled – Chair and Website Developer – there are also opportunities simply to become a member of the Council, contribute to discussion and decision-making, and perhaps fill a need or a niche, develop a role or maybe – in time – take us off in new directions.



Attendance at Council of Management meetings is open to anyone (see below for dates of this year's meetings). Why not come along to our next meeting to find out what it is all about? We meet in the Coach House at Arley at 6.30 on Wednesdays – the next time will be on 27 February.

Without a good Committee, the Trust cannot continue effectively, so if you value the Trust and what it does, please give serious consideration to joining us. Do talk to a council member about what is involved and don't be bashful! We are creating an information pack to help new committee members to participate. It would be lovely if, at this year's AGM, there were to be so many wanting to be on the committee that we actually had to Vote!



### Council of Management meeting dates for 2013

27 <sup>th</sup> February	10 <sup>th</sup> April	22 <sup>nd</sup> May	10 <sup>th</sup> July	11 <sup>th</sup> September	23 <sup>rd</sup> October	27 <sup>th</sup> November
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## Celebrating the Queen's Jubilee

In order to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012, the Cheshire Gardens Trust decided to present a tree to Lord Ashbrook who has been the patron of the Trust since its official launch nine years ago. Arley Hall is the ideal place for the Jubilee Tree because it is accessible to the public and has professional gardening staff to care for it.

Magnolia 'Elizabeth' was chosen, a variety which eventually reaches a height of twenty feet and has beautiful yellow flowers. Incidentally, Lord Ashbrook's mother's name was also Elizabeth. The magnolia was purchased from the Duchy of Cornwall and was sent gift wrapped to Arley.

The planting ceremony, which took place on 10 November 2012, was attended by three generations of the Ashbrook family as well as members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust.

**Ruth Brown**



*Does that look okay?*



*Are you sure it's okay?*



*Well done, everyone*

## Christmas Floral Extravaganza at Arley

This year's Christmas Floral Extravaganza at Arley Hall was based on a Victorian Christmas theme designed by floristry students from The Manchester College.

The students, who are studying at Diploma Levels 1, 2 and 3, worked in teams and were responsible for decorating the library, small dining room and staircase.

The project required them to carry out the research needed to recreate the designs of the Victorian era and gave them real practical experience.

A list of requirements was given to the Arley gardeners who collected moss, holly, ivy and other foliage from the gardens.

Fir cones came from Delamere Forest. The colour scheme featured tartan (popular under Queen Victoria) and dried fruits, including apples, oranges and pomegranates.

As floral displays of this type became more popular the larger estates no longer relied upon the head gardener and his staff to collect the materials and construct the displays, but started to employ professional florists.

Purpose-built storage rooms for the flowers and preparation rooms for the florists were often constructed – a case of one-up-manship.

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In addition to the floral displays in the Hall, Arley also hosted a Decorate a Christmas Tree Challenge for local schools. The children designed and constructed their own decorations, creating individual and imaginatively decorated trees in the Cruck Barn.

**Ruth Brown**



## Lisbon and Its Gardens

CGT is all set to take you beyond the county borders once again; this time to the sun and warmth of Portugal in September 2013. I was very fortunate to be involved in an EU project in Lisbon for two years and can promise you it really is a special place, both the city and the parks and gardens. We are planning on seeing the classical gardens at Fronteira and its recently restored water system, the Ajuda Botanic Gardens – small but a real gem, and we will have a lunch there. There will be full day in Sintra and the Pena Park, Regaleria gardens and the William Beckford's Montserrat Palace and gardens (much restored since I was last there). On the modern side there are the gardens of the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Parque das Nações from Expo 98 by the landscape architect Cristina Castel-Branco. As well as gardens, you will tour the Jerónimos Monastery and see the Tower of Bélem, and nearby there is a special café with the best custard tarts in Portugal!

Plans are still in the draft stages, but we believe that the experience will be as good if not better than the previous trips to Belgium and Germany. We will restrict the numbers to 30 otherwise the group becomes too large for people to see and hear the speakers. As in previous trips, it will be over a long weekend with you making your own way there and hotel bookings. We will recommend some hotels in different price categories and this gives you the opportunity to extend your stay in Portugal.

The dates are 12-15 September 2013; as the schedule is not finalised and we do not have exact numbers, I can only make an estimate of costs around €250. If you are interested, please contact me so we can get an idea of numbers. We should have a final programme ready by the AGM in March.

You can contact me at [e.m.bennis@gmail.com](mailto:e.m.bennis@gmail.com) or 0161 291 0450.

**Ed Bennis**



*Expo '98*



*Palacio Quelez*



*Parque Montserrat*

## Slugs and Snails and Puppy-dogs' Tails – or not

If any of you watched the BBC1 programme Wild Weather 2012 presented by Dianne Oxberry at the end of December, you will probably have recognised Gordon Baillie, Arley's Head Gardener and Cheshire Gardens Trust member, describing the problems caused by slugs and snails in warm, wet conditions.

The summer of 2012 saw a considerable increase in their numbers, which resulted in major damage to susceptible plants, particularly hostas. Arley is notorious for not having ANY slugs or snails. Nobody knows the reason for this. Consequently, a different venue had to be found for filming.

The location chosen was my garden in Grappenhall. In spite of having suffered from their predations throughout the growing season, these molluscs proved to be most elusive when needed. However, sufficient were discovered hiding under stones and logs. Others must have dug themselves in for the winter.

Why puppy dogs' tails? The best and largest slug was accidentally trodden on and squashed flat by me the previous evening when I took the dogs into the garden in the dark. Or not? Of course Pembrokeshire Corgis do not have tails!

**Ruth Brown**

Remember to keep up to date with what's happening in Cheshire's gardens by visiting [www.cheshiresgardens.com](http://www.cheshiresgardens.com).

## Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy

Claude Hitching (Garden Art Press) 2012

James Pulham & Son are remembered, if at all, as a firm of Victorian and Edwardian landscape designers who constructed rock gardens. The story involves four generations of the Pulham family – all of them named James – who adapted stone modelling to the garden fashions of the period, from picturesque rock gardens, to formal Italian, Japanese and Arts and Craft.

Claude Hitchins was researching his family history when he discovered that five members of his family all worked for Pulhams as rock builders. He decided to investigate further, but found that all the firm's records had been destroyed when they closed down at the beginning of the Second World War, so he set up a website and received hundreds of messages from the public giving details of the gardens.

The first James and his brother Obadiah were employed by Lockwood's, local builders in Suffolk, for whom he developed a version of a Portland Cement to use for the fashionable ornamental stonework.

The business expanded into Tottenham where they had a showroom displaying artificial stoneware. Lockwood's closed in the 1820s and Obadiah went to work for Thomas Smith, an architect, while James remained in Tottenham, working under his own name and in close collaboration with Smith on the building and restoration of houses and churches. The business prospered and spread abroad where they worked on the Riviera and Italy.

In 1845 James #2 built a larger Factory at Broxbourne, where he expanded into garden ornaments such as urns, sundials, fountains and balustrades made from his own artificial stone. In 1845 he created his first ever rock garden at Woodlands, Hertfordshire, and this led to an approach by Thomas Gambier Parry of Highnam Court, Gloucestershire, where he built the earliest surviving complete example of a Pulham rock garden. The Pulhams coated heaps of rubble with cement and modelled the surface to simulate the texture and colour of natural stone, which was known as Pulhamite, and placed to create a stratification. The Pulhams worked on an epic scale at many famous gardens, including Leonardslee, Bletchley Park, Waddesdon Manor, and Sheffield Park, and the illustrations are a revelation, but they helped would-be gardeners by offering a less expensive material.

Two Victorian horticultural crazes encouraged by the Pulhams were ferneries and alpine gardens. Catalogues show there were rock-lined glass-houses, tunnels and grottoes for growing ferns. Alpine plants had been grown in pots, but William Robinson's book on the subject advised that they should be grown naturally, so Pulhams made boulders with sheltered pockets and crevices for alpines.

In 1868 Pulhams were commissioned by the Prince of Wales to help change the gardens at Sandringham, with a terrace in front of the house and two new lakes with a boathouse and rock cliff overlooking the upper lake. In 1903 the now King Edward VII commissioned James Pulham #3 to construct rock work on the bank along the lake at Buckingham Palace and two bridges to give access to the islands in the lake, and in 1904 they worked at Frogmore.

The Pulhams were also involved in building the fashionable public parks. From 1865 they worked at Battersea Park constructing a rockery with a stream and waterfall. Preston Parks, Buxton Pavilion Gardens and Mesnes Park, Wigan, were among other works. The growth of the railways also increased the number of people who could travel to the seaside, and coastal towns wanted to change their appearance with rock gardens and flower-lined promenades. Lytham St Annes and the Cliff Walk on the North Shore Blackpool are two examples by Pulhams.

I spotted a number of factual errors, but they do not detract from the author's enthusiasm for his subject. Claude Hitchins has discovered over 100 Pulham sites and gives details of over 40. The gazetteer includes one garden in Warrington and another in Tattenhall, but there may well be others, not yet identified by him, as country house owners were expanding their gardens at this period, and the new industrialists were moving into the county, and creating gardens in a variety of exotic styles. This is a challenge for Cheshire garden historians and I am sure the author would be pleased if anyone could add new sites to his story.

**John Davies**

The recommended retail price for *Rock Landscapes* is £35, but shop around as they can be had for less (and more – I found one on sale at £83.85!). Copies at less than £28 are available via Amazon and Abebooks. **Ed**

Cheshire and Friends branch of the Hardy Plant Society will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an extra-special event on Saturday 13 April at Frodsham Community Centre. In addition to a Plant Sale (admission free), there will be a talk "Tales of a Modern Day Plant Hunter" by Tom Hart Dyke (tickets £5).

You can find out more about the group and all the events for the coming year at [www.hardy-plant.org.uk/groups/cheshire/default.htm](http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/groups/cheshire/default.htm).

## Winning entries from 2012 Photography competition



Above: **1st place** – Richard Connolly Grappenhall Heys

Congratulations to the winners. After being exhibited at the Arley Garden Festival, the photographs from the competition went on show at Grappenhall community library until the end of July 2012.



**2nd place** – Arthur Wood



**3rd place** – Sue Callaghan



**under 16s** – Matthew Smith Grappenhall



## The CGT / Arley Photography Competition 2013

Our theme for this year's competition is *Friends and Foes in the Garden* and we are looking for photographs of wildlife in all its boundless variety. This could include photographs of birds, butterflies, bees or slugs, snails and other unmentionables. All creatures – great or small – the pet dog, the neighbour's moggie, deer roaming through parkland ... so, plenty of scope for creative and imaginative ideas.

The 'garden' can be public or private, large or small, formal or informal, country parkland or urban parks. The photographs don't even have to be taken this year, but they should be fairly recent – ideally, no more than two years old.

There are two categories – under-16 and over-16 with prizes for each category. Prizes include a family

season ticket to Arley, a family day out at Stockley Farm, free membership of the Cheshire Gardens Trust – and more! Everyone entering the competition will get free entry for one person to this year's Arley Garden Festival.

Up to 3 photographs can be submitted - as digital images or prints. We want original, un-enhanced photographs only; your photograph should represent the scene as you saw it.

The closing date for entries is Monday 10 June 2013.

The winners will be announced at the Arley Garden Festival on Saturday 22 June 2013. All photographs

submitted will be on display during the Festival (22/23 June) and for the following week.

Please e-mail your entries to Helen Robinson at [helen.robinson@arleyhallandgardens.com](mailto:helen.robinson@arleyhallandgardens.com) or post them to CGT Photography Competition, Helen Robinson, Arley Hall, Arley, Northwich CW9 6NA. Tel: 01565 777353 ext. 31

Don't forget to include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address. Please give your age if you are under 16.

Also, please let us know when and where you took the photograph.



Last year, in the restored pinery, Tatton produced its first crop of pineapples for a century and they hope this year to raise 300.

Pineapples were the "must-have" fruit of the eighteenth century.

In March 1795 Caldwell Nursery sold 60 succession pineapples (two shillings each) and 151 small pineapple plants (one

shilling each) to James Ackers of Lark Hill, Salford. The Lark Hill estate became part of Peel Park in 1846.

Left: CGT volunteer filling the newly-finished pit at Tatton with oak leaves in 2007; right: pineapples growing in April 2010.

For more information see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-20394037>



## RHS Tatton 2013

RHS members may be disappointed to hear that this year's Tatton show will start on Thursday rather than Wednesday, with no Members' Only Day. The RHS states:

*"The first day won't be a Members' only day, but, for the first time, RHS members will be able to enjoy a dedicated area at the show where they can relax and enjoy light refreshments. This will be available every day, extending the special benefits of RHS membership at the show throughout its duration.*

*"We know that the huge site at Tatton can comfortably support 100,000 people over four days and still create a vibrant, inspiring and entertaining experience for the visitor. The reduction in days allows us to put more resources back into our charitable activities whilst also benefiting exhibitors, by reducing the time spent away from their normal place of business."*

The Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education is offering a Master of Studies course in Historic Environment. The degree brings together archaeological theory and research with modern policy and practice in the management and conservation of landscapes, parks and gardens.

The course runs from September 2013 to July 2015 and is suitable for people in employment, with several short, intensive, study blocks of between three and nine days each.

The cost is £6,500 and additional fees are payable to a Cambridge College, but if you are interested check out the details at [www.ice.cam.ac.uk/mst-historic-environment](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/mst-historic-environment).

Much more affordable are Jane Roberts' courses. The Gardens & Plants of William Morris is on 21 May at Gawsworth Hall (£35) Gertrude Jekyll, Artist Plantswoman and Garden Designer is 13 June at Arley, (£33) and The History, Design & Plants of English Flower Gardens, a series of six morning talks, starts Tuesday 3 September (Gawsworth) and Thursday 5 September (Arley). The cost of these is £65. A two-day residential course at Windermere will cover The History, Design & Plants of Arts & Crafts Gardens in the Lake District (30 April to 2 May) and there will be an Illustrated Talk & Garden Walk at Kiftsgate Court on Friday 28 June.

For details contact Jane Roberts on 01260 2701186 or e-mail [botanical.surveys123@btinternet.com](mailto:botanical.surveys123@btinternet.com).

### Copy date for April newsletter is 31 March

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the

Newsletter Editor, 26 Sandford Road, Sale, M33 2PS, tel: 0161 969 3300 or e-mail [joy.uings@btconnect.com](mailto:joy.uings@btconnect.com).