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Newsletter

www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

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- ✦ Members become cartophiles!
- ✦ Floriculture
- ✦ Lowther Castle restoration begins

Some future events:

- ✦ Late bloomers; reliable late-flowering perennials – Sat 20th August
- ✦ Morreys Nursery, Kelsall – Wed 21st September
- ✦ Restored Liverpool Garden Festival Site – Sat 15th October (tbc)



The hall from the west (see 1 on plan, page 3)– photo: Barbara Moth

A large party of members and guests gathered at Gawsworth on a bright spring day in early May to visit the hall and gardens. We were introduced to the property by the owner Mr Richards, then toured the house, and after tea were led into the gardens by Mrs Richards and left to explore at leisure.

To one who had only visited previously to attend an open air Shakespeare performance our visit was a

revelation. Anyone who came expecting plants may have been disappointed but for those with an interest in Cheshire's historic parks and gardens it was absolutely fascinating.

Rick Turner's book about the gardens¹ is enormously helpful in understanding the history, but mature plantings obscure views and a lack of site interpretation made it challenging to understand.

The hall is approached from the north across a causeway between two pools and presents a picture book pretty scene of still water, green lawns, mature trees and ancient black and white timbering. The building is most impressive viewed from the east where its U shaped plan becomes apparent and the timbering and extent of glass can be appreciated.

Rebuilt in 1480 and extensively remodelled in 1701 its architecture retains the feeling of a medieval great hall - like Little Moreton or Speke - though the interior is very differently presented, a family home with an unashamed eclectic mix of furnishings.

The hall was set within a deer park, recorded as 2 hays (enclosures for deer) in Domesday 1086, and clearly shown on Saxton's County map of 1577 and John Speed's of 1610, emphasising its status as "a royal licence was required to create a park and only the very wealthiest could afford to create one."² The extent of the park is indicated on an estate map c.1770 by G. Grey, displayed in the hall, the park distinguished from surrounding land by its larger fields.

A chain of pools north of the hall, originally medieval fish ponds, once five and now four, diminish in size from the viewing point occupied by an 18th century pigeon house (in separate ownership), while a large walled enclosure to the south contains the earthworks of the 'great garden'. The hall appears to have once been moated: evidenced by a ditch like depression separating the hall from the wilderness and to the south delineated by a scalloped brick retaining wall.



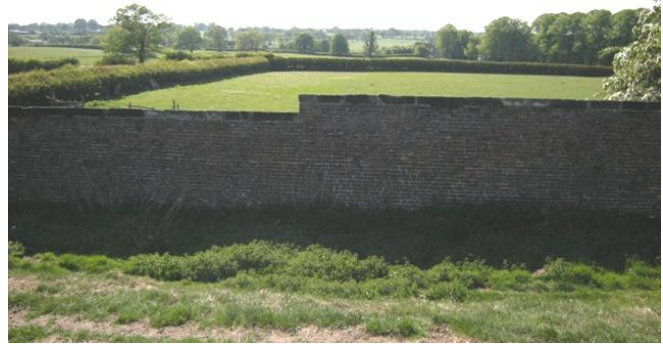
The Wilderness (see 2 on plan) – photo: Gordon Darlington

From the Wilderness we ascended to a raised walk that extends the entire western boundary of the garden offering views out across Cheshire and also over the great garden. Beside the raised walk is a rectangular sunken area with terraced sides to north and west.

Excavations have revealed this to be a carefully constructed garden area using imported clay and brick retaining walls to hold sand and gravel terraces for planting and with regularly spaced tree pits. In the south west corner of the great garden is a viewing mount, formerly mirrored by a similar mount in the south east, but this mount was degraded during the last war when sand was removed.



Members on the raised walk (see 3 on plan)– photo: Gordon Darlington



A view from the raised walk across Cheshire (see 4 on plan) – photo: Jacquetta Menzies

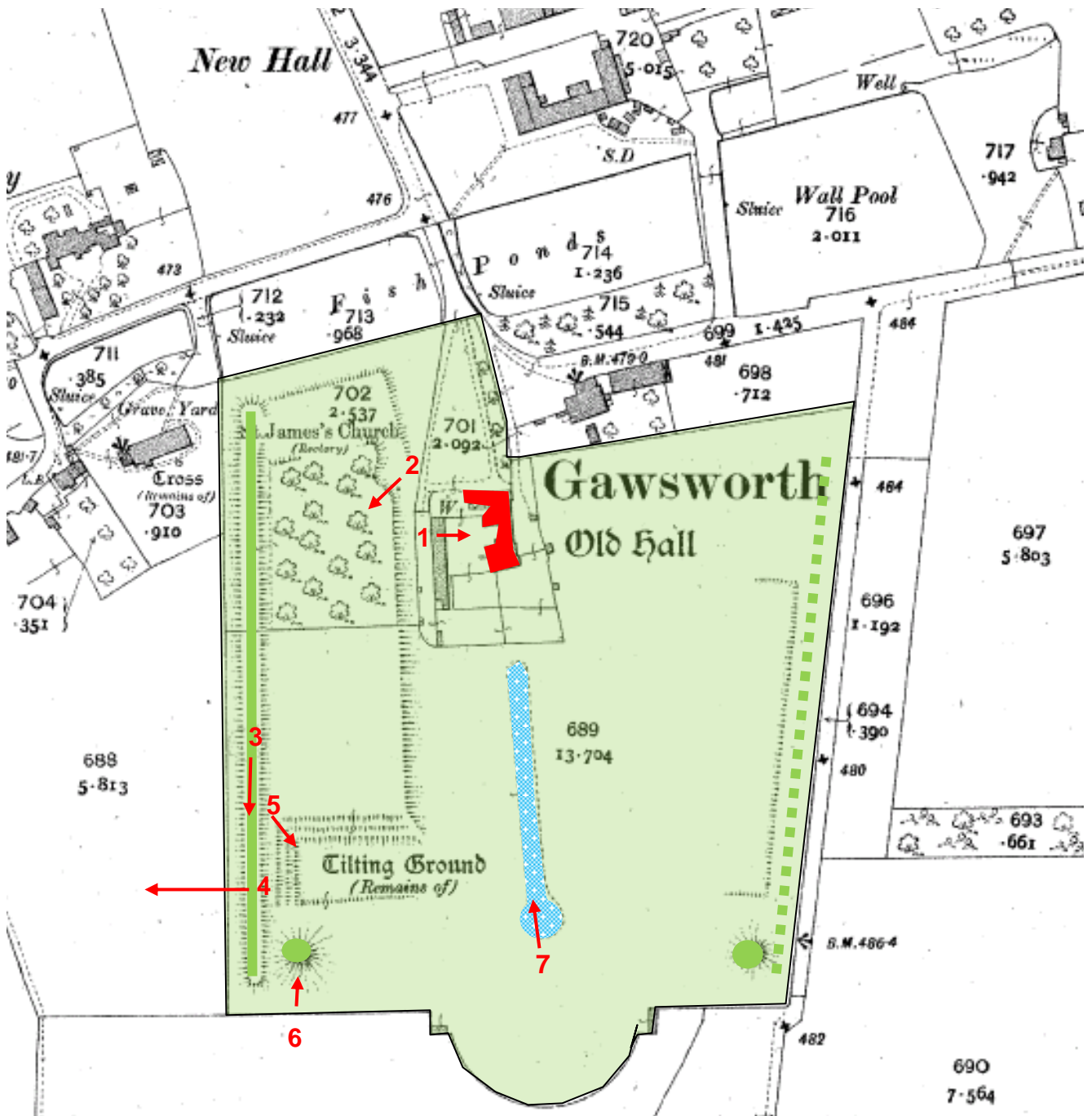


The terraced garden, south west mount and, in the distance, the Cloud near Congleton (see 5 on plan) – photo: Gordon Darlington



The mini gang on the mount: Ruth, Rita and Freyda (see 6 on plan) – photo: Jacquetta Menzies

The eastern boundary walls are also accompanied by a raised walk or terrace overlooking a long sunken garden. There is some evidence from sluices that the whole of the sunken area could have been flooded to create a vast shallow lake, possibly for an extravagant water pageant in honour of a visit by Elizabeth I that never happened. On an axis with the hall is a former canal ending in a circular pool pointing to a half moon in the southern boundary wall.



The former canal (see 7 on plan) –
photo: Jacquetta Menzies

Documents recording the creation of the gardens are lacking so a combination of family history, circumstantial and comparative evidence, and archaeological investigation have been used by Turner to date the great garden to the end of Elizabeth's reign. (This dating has been accepted in listing features and registering the garden.) At that time (1596) Mary, the daughter of the owner Sir Edward Fitton III, was a lady in waiting to the Queen. She is thought to be the dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets. It was Elizabeth's affection for the young girl that may have given her father hopes of entertaining the monarch at Gawsworth and instigated the creation of the garden.

Jacques and Mowl suggest the garden to have been a late 17th century creation, largely on stylistic grounds, but there seems to be no documentary evidence to confirm this view. Raised walks are known in Elizabethan gardens as are wildernesses, water features controlled by sluices and formal gardens, for example at Coombe Abbey near Coventry and at New Hall in Essex.

The scale, ambition and survival of Gawsworth are impressive and their story tantalisingly incomplete.

Barbara Moth

¹ Turner R.C. 1990. *Gawsworth Hall Gardens*, Macclesfield and Vale Royal Groundwork Trust

² *Revealing Cheshire's Past*. <http://rcp.cheshire.gov.uk> HER no 4000, Deer Park in Gawsworth

Tattenhall Hall

It being late May (26th) and almost high summer, CGT members were well wrapped up in waterproof cagoules, hoods and gloves for a visit to a damp and windblown garden at Tattenhall Hall. This was a pity as the gardens merit a lingering wander. The Hall and garden are owned by two couples, Jen and Nick Benefield and Jannie Hollins and Chris Evered.

Tattenhall Hall was built of brick in the first part of the 17th century, on the site of an earlier black and white house and is Grade 2 listed. It was acquired by the Bolesworth estate around 1860 when a "model farm" was set up and continued as a farm till the house and garden were bought by the present owners in 1994/5.

Some of the 1860 farm buildings were demolished, others turned into housing. The present owners found a garden, "run by farmers" but where there were a few plants, several mature trees, (including a fine horse chestnut) and a large pond, previously the mill pond.



View to pond

During the winter, as the sale was being processed, the pond disappeared, so an early task was to have it dredged and re-puddled. The silt from this operation was used to make a terraced slope from the house to the pond, part of which has since been planted as a shady "spinney" with shrubs, trees and bulbs. Previously the house had stood, "on a precipice".

A walk from the pond through the spinney passes under a stone arch labelled "GIRLS", a touch of humour obtained from a local reclamation centre. The pond is fed by a stream but not by a spring, so in a dry season the stream dries up. There is a non-working cascade at one end of the pond which the owners would like to restore.

The house is approached by a drive past a wild flower meadow, which was bright with yellow rattle. *Rosa 'Mme Alfred Carrière'* clammers on the house wall and a sculpted crab waited on the corner.

At the back of the house good use has been made of a walled garden, with a lawn, borders and

shrubs. The delightful borders contain peonies, aquilegia, penstemon, poppies, iris and allium. A plant with nodding blue flowers caught our interest and Jen told us this was an herbaceous clematis, *Clematis integrifolia*. There was also a less obvious pink variety. These clematis looked very much at home in the border but are slow growing, so take a while to become a feature.



Border showing *clematis integrifolia*

Along the wall itself there are shrubs and honeysuckle. Plants growing on the wall of the house include banksia, wisteria and *Carpenteria californica*. In a glass house attached to the house oleander was in bloom. Close to the house a feature has been made of the two original wells, now dry.

The site is more gardens than a garden, for, as well as the wildlife meadow, the spinney, and the garden immediately behind the house there is a vegetable garden, wild areas, more borders and lawns, a small sink garden, and a small collection of bonsai trees. Some of the meadow area is too coarse for wildflowers and here the owners have sown ribbons of plants through the grass. Several of the borders look, at a glance, as if they had just grown, a gently wild mixture but, on a closer look, it is clear that these very natural looking plants have been carefully and subtly colour-themed.



Ribbon planting

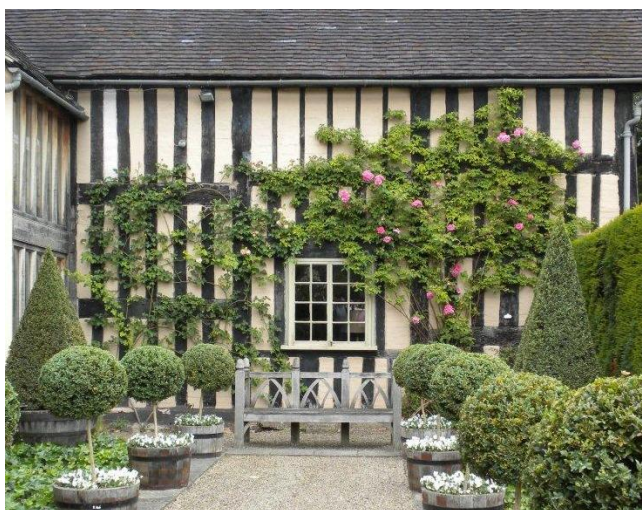
As well as the crab at the top of the drive there are sculptures of ravens, a goose, and a lamb. Real animals were represented by a Labrador, two cats and a chicken.

Wildlife was probably sheltering from the weather!

Tattenhall Hall opens under the NGS scheme.

Some thoughts on our visit to Wollerton Old Hall, Shropshire on Wednesday 15th June 2011

First impressions of Wollerton Old Hall are of the old world atmosphere generated by the mellow ochre walls and oak beams of the 16th Century hall and then delight as you discover the 4 acres of gardens ready to be explored around the house. The way that the gardens are set out in 'rooms' makes the journey more interesting than usual, with new vistas appearing as you turn a corner or look through a hedge. The formality of the hedging, paving, box and rows of conifers is softened by the exuberant planting of the perennials, shrubs and roses.



Even as we first came through the gates to approach the house along the winding driveway, we became aware of the scent of a philadelphus (Mock Orange) and a deep burgundy rose. Scent is a feature throughout the garden.

Before the tour Andrew Humphris, the head gardener, gave us some interesting background information on the history of the hall and gardens and how the present owners, Lesley and John Jenkins, came to live there.



Apparently Lesley had lived there as a child and then later in life, when looking for a house, she discovered that Wollerton was up for sale. Someone had shown interest already but as Lesley and John could move quickly they got the house and in 1984 moved in and started the renovation.

As we toured the garden Andrew pointed out the interesting and rare plants. There are large collections

of salvias and clematis and also phlox and roses. Various areas are still being developed or changed so there will be fresh delights to see on future visits.



The first area we entered was the Yew Walk. Ten tall yews line a wide grass path. The planting is mainly blue, silver and white with flashes of apricot. Moving on through Alice's Garden (named after a cat who loved to doze there), which includes a deep blue *Salvia atrovirens* that reaches 7ft in height, we entered the Sundial Garden. An Arts and Crafts oak gate leading to the Lanhydrock Garden is a feature here.

Nearby is the rose garden, a double border of mainly David Austin roses bounded by box cones in pots and edged with the giant catmint *Nepeta sintonensis* 'Six Hills Giant'. This is an area due for a change in the near future.



There is so much to see that it all becomes a bit of a blur to the novice gardener and further visits will be needed to take it all in. A striking yellow phlox stood out in the Perennial Border. The gorgeous yellow-orange scented English rose 'Lady Emma Hamilton' was memorable and the more delicate pink and white rambling rose 'Francis E Lester' with its huge bunches of small flowers clambering over a pergola was stunning.

Beyond the formal areas there is the Croft Garden. This semi-formal area is defined by a circular green path. Planting includes maples, hydrangeas and

magnolias. Further on still is The Croft, where the garden meets the Tern Valley.

Here informality reigns with grasses, trees and grass paths. The pond in the far corner of the Croft looks like a wildlife haven and a few wild orchids were growing nearby.

Finally after the tour we visited the restaurant. Here we were treated to a magnificent cream tea with warm scones, strawberries, cream and jam. The perfect finish to a brilliant day out.

Jane Brooks and Deborah Densham
photos by Freyda Taylor

Riverside Park, Liverpool

Liverpool's International Garden Festival in 1984 included a Japanese garden. Much neglected in recent years it has now been restored. The official opening is on 23rd July.

More information at www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/en/event/

Jottings..... from (East Cheshire) Research and Recording Group

Hopefully a more regular contribution to the Newsletter from us, so you can see more of what we do....

The Research and Recording Group is divided into a number of sub-groups roughly matching the district council boundaries.

The East Cheshire group recently visited the Cheshire Record Office for a very useful introduction to the historical sources available when researching the historic gardens and landscapes of the county. A 'Mapp of the River Weaver' was on display for us, and we felt it to be one of the jewels held by the Record Office.

The map was created in 1721 by John Billington and so is a very early detailed map for the county. It covers the river Weaver from Frodsham Bridge to Winsford Bridge which was subsequently straightened to improve navigation, and indeed the map is the first part of this process as it surveys all the land abutting the river and lists the landowners.

Not only is it a mine of information, it is beautifully drawn, coloured and huge – over 6' long. It gives a sense of standing above and looking over the Weaver valley. There was a collective gasp of delight when it was unveiled at the Record Office. Through Research and Recording Group we have discovered we are cartophiles, mapaholics.

The discussion about the map went something like this at our last meeting.....

- 'it's so valuable because it gives an indication of the formal gardens before the English landscape style swept them all away, one of the few records we have of this formality'
- 'the paintings of each house and garden are too similar, we should not think they are an accurate representation of them...'
- 'they may be naïve and show similar elements, but every house and garden has its own details – varying numbers of avenues, different parterre shapes and gates - they could be more accurate than we think.....'

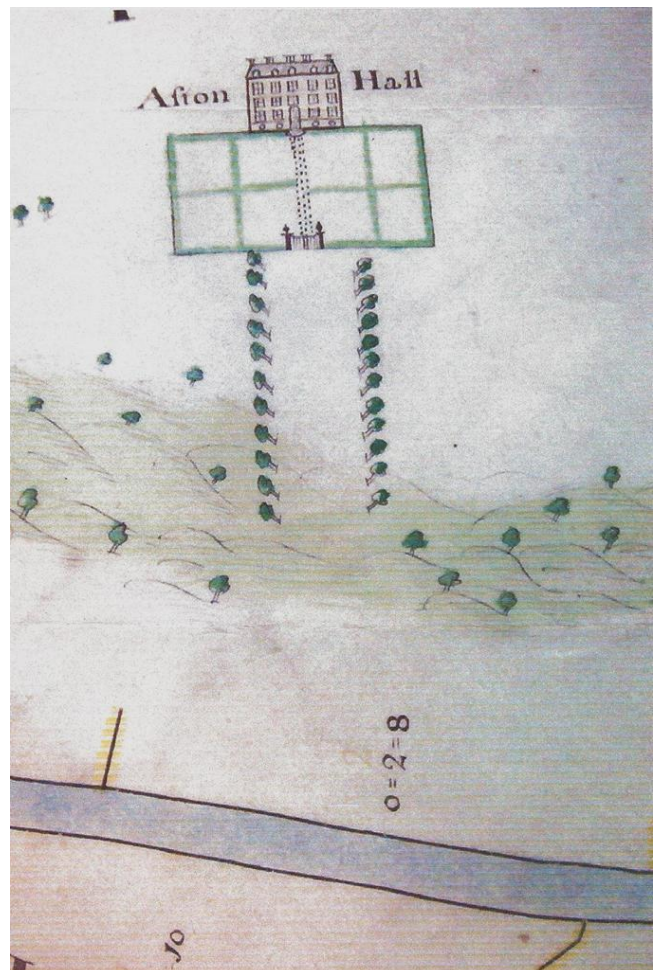
Can we find other information to corroborate or disprove the map?

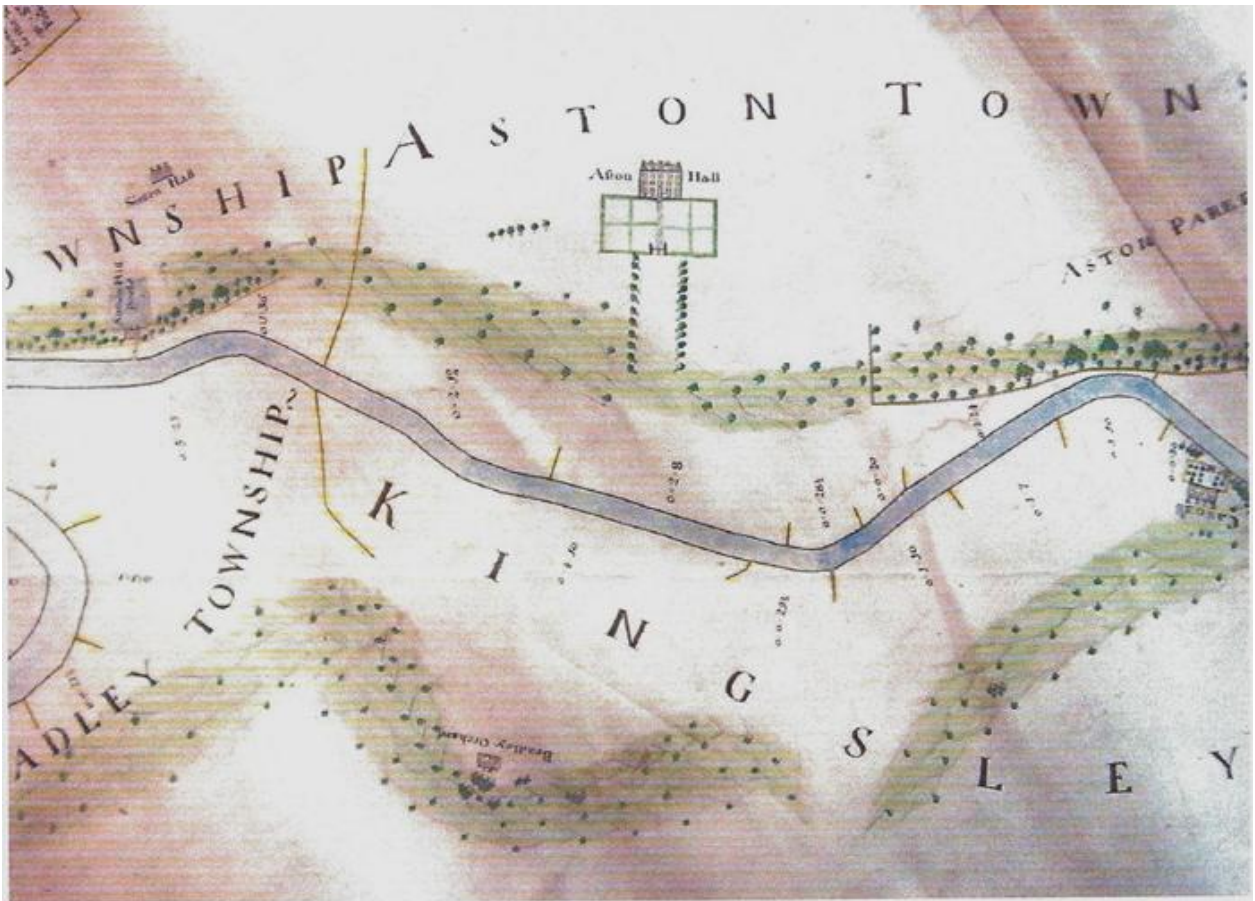
In the meantime we can enjoy its beauty, history and utility – one of the nice surprises about being in Research and Recording Group!

Maria Luczak

Photos Courtesy of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Document Reference D5514

Below Aston Hall close up: Opposite: the hall in its wider setting – that's Crew-wood Hall at the foot of the photo





NATURAL ALARM. – To those who wish to rise early during the summer months the following plan is worth their attention: - Go into your garden in the dusk of the evening, and pick a flower in which a humble bee has taken up its night's lodging, place it near your chamber window previous to going to bed. Soon after sunrise the insect will commence a very loud tune on its trumpet, at the same time beating its wings against the glass in endeavouring to escape. This will soon awake you. When you get out of bed open the window, let your living alarum fly, and proceed to apparel yourself.

Manchester Examiner, 26 September 1846

Floriculture

It's not a word that trips easily off the tongue. Wikipedia defines it as 'flower farming'.

Today there is a 'floriculture industry' where flowers are grown en masse for the cut flower trade, or bedding plants are raised in their millions for nurseries to buy-in when intimations of Spring bring forth customers looking for summer colour.

It was not always thus.

Two hundred years ago, floriculture was not an **industry**, it was a **way of life**. Floriculturists – or, more generally, 'florists' – were fanatical. Check that term out in a thesaurus and you will find, among other words, 'obsessive, dedicated, passionate'. They were all of those.

Some were nurserymen, most were amateurs.

Some were wealthy, most were not.

But they all had the same aims: to raise a new variety; to win first prize at a flower show.

The traditional florists' flowers were: auriculas, tulips, pinks, hyacinths, polyanthus, ranunculus carnations and picotees.¹



Auriculas on show in a traditional 'Auricula Theatre' at Malvern, Spring 2009

The introduction of new plants from around the world increased these by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Anemone, antirrhinum, calceolaria, chrysanthemum, cineraria, dahlia, fuchsia, pansy, pelargonium, petunia, rose, verbena – all these had been added to the list by 1861.²

Five years later, the list had been extended again to include petunias, phloxes and 'American Plants'. These were azaleas and rhododendrons.³

To be '*elevated to the ranks of florists' flowers*', as John Loudon put it, it was necessary for a plant to be

- ✓ perennial
- ✓ capable of producing variation from seed
- ✓ capable of vegetative propagation

There was a great deal of mystique surrounding florists' flowers. Gardeners might be florists, but florists were not necessarily gardeners.

Florists raised new varieties and often named them before showing them. Reports of flower shows would state the name of the raiser as well as the plant, so it would be 'Booth's *Freedom*', 'Litton's *Imperator*', 'Cheetham's *Lancashire Hero*' (all auriculas).

The competition for prizes eventually began to get out of hand: Jane Loudon, (possibly with tulipomania in mind), called florists' flowers '*instruments for gambling*'.

In 1851 The Midland Florist ran a couple of pieces about 'fraudulent' showing. Among examples they noted the row which had erupted in Manchester when one florist accused another of showing someone else's plant. Such arguments could lead to the death of the local group and its flower shows.

That's what happened to one group where the same man was always the winner.

Perhaps members should have wondered sooner why he never let anyone into his garden.

It turned out that he sent to the neighbouring county for the best flowers which were brought to him by the new railway (he lived near to the station).

Jane Loudon also said that florists chose arbitrary criteria for deciding what made a good flower.

She added '*as it requires to be a florist to know the full merits of florists' flowers, they are of comparatively little interest to amateurs*'.⁴

There was a general north/south divide as southern growers looked for different things in their winning flowers than northern growers. This was sometimes argued in print. A letter (probably from Manchester nurseryman John Slater who wrote a great deal on the subject) was referred to in The Florists' Register in 1834. He had tried to explain his approach to judging tulips. But the southerners were having none of it:

*"Were we to publish his notions, we should be perpetuating that which we have determined to extinguish, namely, the toleration of the worst of all bad faults.... Away with straight sides, pail-shaped cups, and dirty bottoms. We hope to see the day when the country showers, as well as the metropolitan, will withhold a prize from the best eleven flowers in the world, if the twelfth has a tinge near the stamina."*⁵

This was probably unfair. Elsewhere John Slater wrote that in some places tulips with these faults often obtained nearly all the prizes, but only where "*the poverty of the exhibitors, would not allow them to purchase those of modern introduction*".⁶ After years of deliberation he came up with a way of awarding and

deducting marks according to good and bad points.

William Robinson blamed the introduction of bedding for the disappearance of florists' flowers, but said that, although their flowers were tended by Florists '*almost as carefully as if they were ... tender exotics*', they were hardy plants and deserved to be in every garden.⁷

Plants still go in and out of fashion.

New varieties of fashionable plants are raised every year by nurserymen.

Sometimes a lover of a particular genus raises new varieties which eventually catch the public imagination and become fashionable.

So next time you are tempted by a new variety – of heuchera or hemerocallis, tulip or pansy – remember the florists of the past.

It was they who led the way.

Joy Uings

¹ Picotees were carnations, but had their own particular colouring, so lists always included both.

² The Garden Manual, by George Johnson et al, 1861

³ Flowers and the Flower Garden by Elizabeth Watts, 1866

⁴ The Ladies' Companion to the Flower-garden by Jane Loudon, 1849

⁵ The same magazine elsewhere stated "*For the display of florists' flowers... the Manchester meetings have... for years maintained the reputation of not having a rival in the country*".

⁶ Midland Florist 1851-52

⁷ Alpine Flowers for English Gardens by William Robinson, 1870

All the books referred to can be found in 'Full View' on Google Books.

Lowther Castle and Gardens

Barely do the sounds of laughter and gaiety from the weekend house party seem to have died away, so comparatively recently were Lowther Castle with its 130 acres of gardens and terraces abandoned.



Completed in 1816, the house was in decline by the 1930s with the requisitioned use by the army in World War II accelerating its demise. By 1956 the roof and floors had gone and this magnificent mock gothic extravagance looked set to join the long list of great country houses now only known through black and white photos from the Country Life archive.

Surrounded by the huge Lowther estate, nature began steadily to reclaim the garden helped by its chicken farmer tenant.

Fast forward to 2011 and 17 years of effort to find a role for the house and garden are now yielding early results.



With funding in place work has started to stabilise the building, develop permanent visitor facilities in the, slightly less derelict, stables and to clear away 70 years of uncontrolled growth from the hidden but once magnificent gardens that lurk beneath.

In a breath-taking departure from normal restoration programmes the trustees have decided that now is the time to open the site to the public when only the most basic of preparatory work has been done.



It's a brave decision and to be highly commended. The gardens are still in a wild state and the sense of having been allowed into a secret world is palpable. Set in rising ground the visitor can roam free in the upland forest area rich with the scent of newly cut timber cleared to expose terraces, steps, pools and follies.



In the central part of the garden least is exposed but it used to contain ornamental areas which cleverly placed signage helps the visitor to visualise. More woods of specimen trees lead via Japanese, rock and water gardens to an extraordinary escarpment with a shelter belt above and in front a classic belle vue of the valley park some hundred feet below.

Now is undoubtedly the time to visit when there is so much promise for the future and so much of this intriguing garden not yet fully exposed nor any restored. But, beware it will be addictive. Only visit if you are prepared to revisit every year or every five years from now on otherwise you will feel that you have left a dream too early and woken up without understanding the ending.

Christine and Rupert Wilcox-Baker

Christine and her husband were inspired to visit Lowther by the information included in the April edition of the Newsletter. The castle is close to junction 40 (Penrith) on the M6 and currently has temporary loos, information centre and a very posh burger van. More info on opening hours etc. can be found at: www.lowthercastle.org.

Keep up to date with events at Lowther via Facebook or e-mail your name to friends@lowthercastle.org for a regular newsletter.

Southport Flower Show

If you've not been to the Southport Flower Show for a few years, you might not realise how big an event it has become.

Michèle Martin (who some members will know, as she gave the February lecture [Expanding Small Gardens the Chinese Way](#)) is the Marketing Executive for the Southport Show and has sent me some information. When I checked out the website as well, I realised it's time I visited it again.

The Show runs from Thursday 18th to Sunday 21st August, with a Gala Preview evening on Wednesday 17th. In addition to show gardens and floral displays, there are competitions: two for garden design (school-children and students) one for photography and one for amateur growers.

Then there are the garden talks. Check the timetable to make sure you go on the right day. Michèle has highlighted Tony Kirkham and Matthew Wilson, but there will be talks by our own Sam Youd and Sue Beesley and Michèle herself will be giving her talk on [Expanding Small Gardens the Chinese Way](#).

Tony Kirkham is Head of Arboriculture at Kew who became a TV celebrity via the programmes 'A Year at Kew' and 'The Trees that made Britain'. He will be talking about Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson, the incredible plant hunter in whose footsteps he travelled when

Kew needed to replace the 500 mature trees they lost in the hurricane of 1987.

Matthew Wilson is (apparently) known as the Mr D'Arcy of Horticulture. He will be talking on 'Making a Garden' and appearing on Gardeners' Question Time from the Show.



Matthew Wilson



Tony Kirkham

But it will be August and you may be wondering how to occupy the children and grandchildren who might not be so keen on plants as you. Every day there will be medieval knights on horseback, sheep dogs herding ducks, teams of eagles, vultures and owls and a dog display team.

There's even a luxury cinema in a 1960s bus – not something you see every day! Check out full details at www.southportflowershow.co.uk.

Images from Arley Garden Festival

This eye-catching portrayal of King Canute certainly caught the attention of visitors at last month's Arley Garden Festival. It's not often you see Knutsford's eponymous patron decked out in begonias and marigolds!

Many of you will know that Caldwell's Nurseries, based in Knutsford from 1780 until its final closure in 1991, used a picture of King Canute sitting on the shore with the sea lapping around his feet as their logo. This image was included on all their stationery, catalogues and on the aprons worn by shop staff.



The Caldwell's Nurseries Oral History Project* has been launched by the Cheshire Gardens Trust with the aim of recording and sharing aspects of local horticultural heritage. It will record the memories of nurserymen and gardeners recalling an era of family-run plant nurseries which had largely disappeared by the end of the 20th century.

To encourage interest in our Oral History Project, we created a bedding scheme to reflect Caldwell's logo - hence King Canute in all his finery - accomplished using a colourful palette of begonias, marigolds, alyssum and lobelia. The bedding scheme was designed and planted by members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust and received a lot of interest and many encouraging observations during the Festival. In fact, King Canute was unable to stem the tide of positive comments!

The process of designing and planting the scheme was fascinating and fun, but not without its problems and Canute went through a number of interpretations before emerging as pictured. His head proved particularly problematic, but a couple of bread baskets and some hessian did the trick! Want to know more? We will be describing how we went about the design and planting in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Oh, and if you want to know why Canute is looking so miserable - well, it's obvious - he's failed at turning

back the tide and his feet are wet!

Our special thanks to the following:

Stewart Jackson, Primrose Hill Nursery, High Legh - for supplying the bedding plants.

Techno Type, 57 King Street, Knutsford - for printing the enlarged, final image used in the design.

CGT Members - for their donations at the AGM to help fund the scheme and Christine Wilcox-Baker, Ruth Brown, Jacquetta Menzies and Tina Theis and for designing and planting.

Mark Lever for the loan of his plastic sword.

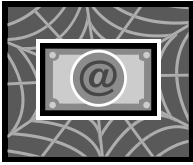


Above, Ruth, Christine and Tina - looks like they had fun

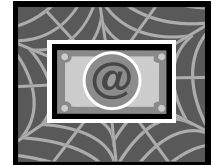
* If you or someone in your family worked at Caldwell's, or if you remember visiting the nurseries and would like to share your memories, we would love to hear from you! Or if you would like to know more about the project, please contact Barbara Moth - 01606 46228 or barbara.moth@btinternet.com.

The Schools' competition brought together art, craft and horticulture. Sometimes it paid to look closely.





Making the right impression



Are you a silver surfer or an internet geek? A blogger, or a tweeter?

Do you have an eye for colour or a penchant for design?

Or perhaps you'd like to discover in yourself a hidden talent.

The Council of Management recently took a good look at what the Trust has achieved and where it is going and how it is going to get there.

We recognised that we do some things really well.

The events are well organised and well attended. The Newsletter is well written and presented.

Those are the more "public" faces of what the Council does. Less visible has been the work on Conservation & Planning and Research & Recording (though see Maria's piece in this issue to find out more about this).

We also know that there are some things we do badly, or not at all.

It's not for want of ideas. They come readily enough.

It's because we don't have the skills.

And we don't have any more time in which to acquire them.

But we came up with an idea to get us moving.

If we don't have the skills or the time, perhaps other members do. We've identified some key areas where YOU, or someone you know, might be the very person we need.

Read on, have a think and let us know.

Website

The website is our interface with the outside world. It ought to be grabbing the attention of everyone with an interest in gardens.

But how? What should it look like? What information should it contain? What links should be included?

If you regularly use the internet then you will know that some websites grab your attention and others repel you. That's to do with the way it looks and how easy it is to navigate.

Creating a really good web-page has to be done in two stages. First you need to know what it is you want to say.

Then you need the expertise to create it.

So there's room here for people who know about using the internet as much as people who know the technicalities of creating the web-page and how to update it. The latter skill can be bought-in if necessary.

To get the ball rolling, we shall be holding an open meeting (see below). We shall be looking to create a working group which will take things forward and report back to the Council of Management.

The terms of reference will be fairly loose at this early stage as we are looking to you, the members, to help us firm up what it is we want from the web-site.

But to get started we need you to consider questions like:

- who should the web-site be aimed at?
- what information should be on it?
- how do we get from where we are now to where we want to be in the future?

Newsletter

This is the 31st edition of our newsletter and they have all been edited and created by Joy Uings. The Council recognises that the task should be shared, as much for purposes of succession-planning as to give Joy less work.

There are a number of different tasks: chasing contributions; finding pieces of information; editing; laying-out; proof-reading.

Bob and Freyda Taylor already help out with the final areas of work – Bob is an excellent proof-reader and Freyda an efficient printer and distributor.

The most time-consuming bits are the "shorts" – those small pieces of information which fill spaces and ensure we have an even number of pages filled.

Several members already send through small bits of information, but maybe you could add to their number. It helps if the tit-bit comes ready written, but don't worry if you can only send the details.

What could it be? Well, that depends on what you would like to submit. It might be information about an event. Or a paragraph about a place you've visited. Or something you've read and would like to share.

If you would like to read it in the newsletter, you can bet that someone else will want to read it, too.

To help we shall in future include in each issue the copy date for the next one – 30th September for October issue.

We have set a tentative date of Wednesday September 14th for the open meeting to discuss the website. Time and venue to be arranged and will depend on where interested members are based. But, if you want to be included and this date is not convenient, please let us know. We want to make sure the meeting is available to as many members as possible, so the date can be changed. If you would like to be included, contact Tina Theis on 0161 442 0657 or e-mail tina@tinatheis.com.

A few things members have been up to recently for Cheshire Gardens Trust

Heather Turner – taking bookings for the Trust’s trip to Germany and ensuring we got a great cream tea at Wollerton

Ed Bennis – organising the trip to Germany

Maria Luczak and Freyda Taylor - manning a CGT stand at Reaseheath Open Day and Cheshire Archaeology Day – lots of interest

Jacquetta Menzies and Tina Theis – undertaking a recce for the Trust’s visit to the Liverpool Garden Festival site

Christine Wilcox Baker – creative completion of King Canute at Arley Garden Festival planted with Jacquetta, Tina and Ruth Brown – children loved Canute!

Ruth Benson – getting to grips with Planning and Conservation coordination – watch this space!

Ruth Brown – reporting to the Cheshire Gardens Forum, ensuring CGT representation at RHS Tatton press and members day and making refreshments for management meetings

Barbara Moth – preparing an introductory pack for Research and Recording volunteers (as suggested by the East Cheshire Research and Recording group) – and talking to potential research volunteers in Bowdon and the Wirral

Jacqui Jaffé – chasing membership renewals

Joy Uings – producing quarterly accounts and ferreting out fascinating facts for the newsletter

Patricia Taylor – helping to research and organise the visit to Tattenhall Hall

Sue Bartlett – minuting discussions at **every** council of management meeting – quite a challenge.

Janet Horne – trialling the new recorder for the Caldwell Oral History project and providing instructions for technically challenged

Barbara Wright – prodigious output of research and recording reports enabling, with others, 12 completed site reports to be issued for East Cheshire

Gordon Darlington – providing local contacts for Jane Gooch’s research in the Macclesfield area

John Edmondson – selling books for CGT

Freyda Taylor – introducing new members and creating interest in the Caldwell project at Reaseheath

And of course all those whose contributions have created this edition of the Newsletter, for some of whom it’s been the first time; not to mention all those who have attended the events, without whom the labours of the Events Group would have been in vain.

To Make a Salad Worthy of a Man of Taste

Two boiled potatoes, strained through kitchen sieve,
Softness and smoothness to the salad give;
Of mordant mustard use a single spoon, -
Distrust the condiment that bites too soon,
Yet deem it not, though man of taste, a fault,
To add a double quantity of salt
Four times the spoon with oil of Lucca crown,
And twice with vinegar – procured from town!
True taste requires it, and your Poet begs,
The pounded yellow of two well-boiled eggs;
Let onions’ atoms lurk within the bowl,
And, scarce suspected, animate the whole;
And lastly, in the flavour’d compound toss,
A magic spoonful of anchovy sauce.
Oh, great and glorious! Oh, herbaceous meat!
‘Twould tempt the dying Anchorite to eat;
Back to the world, he’d turn his weary soul,
And dip his finger in the salad-bowl.

(Ascribed to the Rev Sidney Smith)

According to Wikipedia, Rev. Sidney Smith (1771-1845) was considered by many to be Britain’s greatest wit.

Stockport Museum, Vernon Park

Those who went on last year’s visit to Vernon Park may be pleased to know that the Italianate style municipal museum and art gallery of 1860 where we had our talk has recently been listed Grade II (The Victorian July 2011). It is interesting that in this case the registering of the building has followed that of the park which is already listed Grade II*. The park was given to the town by Lord Vernon in 1860 and the museum was the gift of the town’s two liberal MPs. It was one of the first municipal museums in the country.

At the meeting of October 5th [1869], a most conspicuous figure was a splendidly grown and bloomed plant of *Amaryllis (Hippeastrum) reticulatum*, from Mr. Cliffe, gardener to Lord Egerton, Tatton Park, Cheshire. It had six splendid trusses of deep pink flowers, and was in all probability one of the finest forms of it ever seen. It was awarded a special certificate on the ground of its superior culture.

The Gardener (1869)

The RHS Flower Show - 1869

If you thought that having an RHS Flower Show in our area is of recent date, think again. The RHS held shows in the provinces in the nineteenth century, and in 1869 the venue was Manchester.

Again, if you thought that complaining about the RHS is a modern phenomenon, think again. There were plenty of gripes in 1869.

First of all, there was the site. The Show **ought** to have been at the Manchester Botanic Gardens. But there'd been a dispute. Perhaps there had been "*too much standing on ... dignity*", apparently a frequent fault of governing bodies. If only there had been a little more understanding, then "*a comparative failure [might have been] a splendid success*".

As it was, the Show was on the opposite side of the ground being used by the Agricultural Show. Access was difficult, partly because the Agricultural Show was the more prestigious and hogged all the public conveyances.

The ground was rough and uneven. The tents were too far apart. The staging was hideous.

Not only that, but the Show opened on a Monday.

That meant that anyone travelling a distance had to do so on the Sunday – and Sunday travel was as gruesome then as today "*no rapid express trains or quick journeys, and in some cases no trains at all*".

Those who put off travelling until the Monday found the trains over-crowded and late-arriving; which meant that they were too late to get their exhibitor cards. Mind you, the judging took place far too late, when plants had succumbed to the heat and the judges were impeded by the punters.

The lunch for judges and exhibitors was "*cold, lifeless and uninteresting*" (the previous year's show at Leicester had been *sooo* much better). The Council had made a bad choice in Chairman: he stood up to make a toast – no one had the least idea what it was for!

The Show was a great opportunity for RHS Council members to network, but they treated the whole thing as a "*bore*" and soon disappeared. There were some pretty severe comments on their absence at the evening gathering.

The writer concluded that maybe the RHS Council was not interested in these opinions, but there was no doubt they were widely held. The RHS Council was considered to be a group of men that cared nothing for practical horticulture and only "*for the show and tinsel ... and the aristocratic prestige ...*".

Despite these rather strong comments, there was plenty to see at the exhibition. The central stage of the circular tent held two collections of twenty foliage plants. The one exhibited by Mr Baines, gardener to H J Nicholls (or possibly Micholls – both spellings appear), Esq. of Bowdon was the best and included *Sarracenia purpurea*, *Darwinia (Hederonia) tulipifera*, *Erica Fairriana*, *Alocasia metallica*, *Franciscea confertiflora*, *Bougainvillea glabra*, *Ixora coccinea*, *Erica obbata*, *Croton variegatum*, *Allamanda cathartica* and *Gleichenia speluncae* – some of which are familiar and others not.

Altogether there were 125 classes (not all had entries) plus a further 21 classes for cottagers in which the Buckley family of Arley Green did rather well.

Information from *The Gardener*, September 1869

Power Gardening:

Dukes and generals in early-eighteenth century Oxfordshire

If you are planning to attend the AGT Conference in Oxford in September, you will be pleased to know that the prices have been reduced by 10%. The new discounted prices are:

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| • For the whole conference, residential | £325 |
| • For the whole conference, non-residential | £195 |
| • For Saturday only (non-residential, but including conference dinner) | £120 |
| • For Friday only (including dinner) | £ 45 |
| • For Sunday only (including lunch) | £ 35 |

On Saturday dinner will be followed by a concert of 18th century music in Worcester College's beautiful chapel.

The weekend includes visits to Blenheim, Rousham, Shotover and Heythrop. The owners of these properties were a coherent group of like-minded men at a time when they were all holding powerful positions and when the whole garden design world was on the cusp of change.

More information and booking form is available at www.ogt.org.uk. Or contact Priscilla Frost on 01608 811 818 or e-mail info@oxconf.co.uk.

Copy date for October newsletter is 30 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

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