



## **A Winter Wonderland**

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### **Future CGT events (see page 15)**

- Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 10:30 am at St Peter's Church Hall, Prestbury. Talk by Alexandra Fairclough: Understanding Historic Registered Park and Gardens
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2 pm at Marthall Village Hall: Talk by Anne Beswick: A History of Manchester in Ten Plants.
- Wed 18<sup>th</sup> March: AGM, Ness Botanic Gardens. Guest speaker Advolly Richmond

## Welcome from the editor

A very happy New Year to you all. I hope you've had an enjoyable Christmas and are now looking forward to everything that 2026 has to offer.



As this is my first Newsletter as editor, I would like to extend a huge thank you to our retiring editor, Sue Eldridge, who has done an excellent job over the last few years and has been incredibly helpful in passing on her knowledge. I'm pleased to say that although Sue will be moving up to the Lake District later this year, she will still be sending us occasional 'Postcards from Cumbria' for the Newsletter. With so many wonderful gardens in that part of the country, the possibilities are endless, and I look forward to her contributions.

As I only became a member of CGT a year ago, I haven't met all of you yet, but I'm hoping that can be remedied over the next few months. When I joined, it was my intention to just enjoy the events, meet new people, and perhaps write an article or two. Little did I know that raising my hand at last year's AGM to join the Council of Management would result in my taking over from Sue as the Newsletter editor and all the responsibilities that come with it. But I always enjoy a new challenge, and am very grateful for all the contributions to this first edition of 2026, and the help received from Sue Eldridge and Freyda Taylor.

So, a little bit about me. Having spent 30 years in financial services, I was a 'career changer' in my early fifties after redundancy allowed me to use my horticultural skills as a garden designer. With RHS and design qualifications under my belt, I joined forces with a friend to set up a little business called '*renaissance garden design*'. We deliberately chose *renaissance* with a small 'r' because it means 'bringing new life' (in our case, to a garden). Fast forward a few years, and it was me going solo and enjoying it enormously. As well as transforming gardens to make a living, I also indulged my interest in photography and visited many gardens throughout Cheshire and beyond.

One of the people I met on my travels was John Bent, who owns the Weeping Ash garden adjacent to Bents Garden and Home in Glazebury. During the pandemic, John took care of his large garden on his own, despite being in his late 80s, and I wrote my first garden article about him. A phone call to *Cheshire Life Magazine* editor Joanne Goodwin resulted in my story being published in January 2022, and a four-page monthly feature followed. The rest, as they say, is history.

The seasonal cover photo for this Newsletter is of Crewe Hill in Farndon, and the credit goes to Head Gardener Tristan Salmon, who also features in the first of the continuing Head Gardener series of 2026. I interviewed Tristan last year for an article that was published in the July edition of *Cheshire Life*, and I hope you enjoy his story.

Best wishes

*Alison*



## The Award Winning Wonky Garden

‘We call it the Wonky Garden because life’s not perfect,’ said co-founder Angela Hayler when she introduced us to their garden based at Ditton Community Centre in Widnes. However, it is actually close to perfect, and when we visited in September 2025, we were all eager to find out more. Angela and her team are truly inspirational, and have created a community garden that caters for a wide variety of people in the local area, as well as being part of a network of similar gardens across the country.



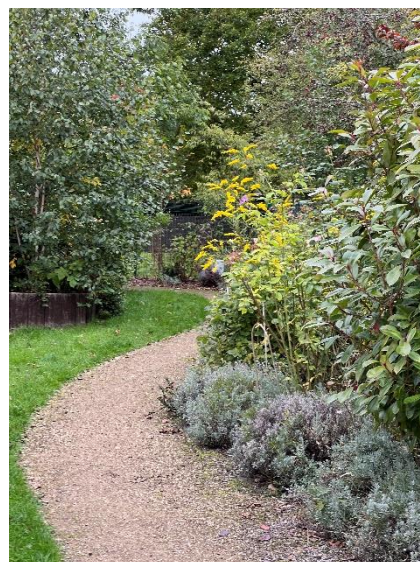
*Angela Hayler and Millie Allen*

Angela started the garden in 2017 when it was a derelict allotment site and a neglected children’s garden. She had undergone radical cancer surgery and needed to rethink her life. Having been able to retire early, she wanted to

give something back to the community. Keen to grow food and create a space for volunteers, Angela, along with friends she’d met at a yoga-for-cancer class, acquired half an allotment, an old children’s garden and a strip of spare land. They needed access to power, water, and a secure location, so Angela developed links with Halton Borough Council. She asked permission for alterations and persuaded HBC to carry out the work until they eventually said, ‘Do as you like,’ because they trusted her.

Since then, the garden has continued to grow from strength to strength. It is open all year round and run by more than 30 volunteers of all ages. They are amazing, turning their hands to all sorts of things, including maintenance and construction. The oldest volunteer, aged 90, made all the cakes for our refreshments and served the tea - an inspiring role model.

The garden is divided into several areas. The flower garden has winding paths with large herbaceous borders, trees and shrubs, all beautifully designed. This leads to a children’s garden, which includes a play area but is kept as natural as possible. Then on to the heart of the enterprise, the kitchen garden, with over 30 raised beds full of fruit and vegetables and an impressive composting system. They are transitioning from a traditional crop rotation approach to permaculture, incorporating a mix of flowers and vegetables in each bed – similar to the system at RHS Bridgewater. The volunteers grow food for food banks and a local community café, while the flowers are used to support people in care homes, hospices, and those who have been bereaved or need an extra boost. They also have greenhouses, one of which was originally used for seed sowing; however, since they now sow directly, they plan to use the greenhouse for growing melons.



*Curving pathway through the garden*



*An aerial view of the allotment and yard*

The team undertakes all its own maintenance and has built every raised bed. Keen to be wildlife friendly, no chemicals are used, and they are part of a hedgehog release scheme, providing a sanctuary for rescued animals. They also work with local businesses, advising on how to invest more in wildlife, while businesses, in turn, support them. Among the many organisations they have collaborated with is the local

Men's Shed group on an adjacent site. The Wonky Garden offered to create a garden and welcome area for Men's Shed, and looks forward to collaborating on projects once they are established. To support all of their work, they have become skilled fundraisers. They began during the pandemic, by building relationships with local businesses, and have secured funding from a wide range of sources, including ASDA, Co-op and National Lottery. In addition, the National Garden Scheme have funded two projects and the gardens open twice a year in support of NGS. Halton Borough Council and Steve Morgan are funding and supporting a community orchard at the front of the site, which will feature fruit trees in addition to further food and cut flower growing. As someone suggested, it will look fabulous in spring and be an important biodiversity corridor.

As we mentioned in last month's edition of the Newsletter, the Wonky Garden was put forward for an award, and we are delighted to say that the team have been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Services. This award is equivalent to an MBE for an individual and is the highest award given to UK volunteer groups for outstanding work in their communities. Angela says, "Getting this award feels a bit unreal, mad, amazing, wonderful and humbling in equal measures. Most of all, our beautiful bunch of volunteers deserve it one hundred per cent! We are so grateful and proud of our Wonky Family".



**The King's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

Congratulations to Angela, Millie and the Wonky Family for this well-deserved award. The garden is truly inspirational; it never stands still and is continually developing new projects to give back to the community.

To find out more about what's happening in the Wonky Garden, you can follow them on Instagram, X and Facebook [facebook.com/thewonkygarden](https://www.facebook.com/thewonkygarden)

**Words: Sue Eldridge   Photos: Sue Eldridge and Angela Hayler**

# The Government Consultation

In March last year, the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government announced it was launching a consultation on removing several statutory consultees from the planning system, including the Gardens Trust. **This consultation was launched in mid-November and runs until 13<sup>th</sup> January this year.**



The Trust responded by issuing a detailed response, warning that proposals to remove their statutory role would significantly weaken protections for England's historic parks and gardens. They argue that abolishing the requirement for Local Planning Authorities to consult on planning applications affecting sites on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest would be "directly damaging" to some of England's most important landscapes. Registered parks and gardens receive only limited protection under current planning law, and the statutory consultation mechanism is a critical safeguard.

They have particular concern for Grade II sites, which make up almost 65% of the Register and for which they are currently the only statutory consultee. Removing this involvement would leave many of these landscapes, including some of the most accessible to the public, vulnerable to poorly informed development decisions. Their response also stresses that Local Planning Authorities do not possess the necessary specialist expertise to assess the landscape impacts of proposed developments in the absence of the Trust's advice.

## What you can do

The Council of Management has written a detailed response on behalf of Cheshire Gardens Trust, and a copy of this has been sent to all members. Your individual support is also vital, and if you haven't already done so, we would ask that you spare a few moments to complete the online survey, which can be accessed via the link below. You can fill in as much or as little of the survey as you like: the only mandatory fields are on page 1, which are your name and email address. **The key question is number 6, shown below, which can be found on page 3, and refers directly to the removal of The Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee, which we oppose.** You also have the opportunity to add brief comments to questions 6 and 7, both of which relate directly to The Gardens Trust.

6. In light of the proposed mitigations, do you support the removal of The Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee?

- ☐ Support
- ☐ Oppose
- ☐ Neutral

Full details, guidance on how to respond and links to the consultation are available here.

<https://thegardenstrust.org/support-us/consultation/>



## An Autumn Visit to Norley Court

The village of Norley lies to the north of Delamere Forest. It is home to the Grade II listed Norley Hall and Norley Bank, once the home of Rowland Eyles Egerton-Warburton (1804–1891), who was to inherit Arley Hall from Sir Peter Warburton in 1813. (I'll save that story for another time.)



*Wonderful views from the top of the garden*

Nearby Norley Court, situated at the top of a hill with magnificent views over the Cheshire Plains, has been owned by Clare Albinson since 1976. She first opened to the public via the National Garden Scheme in 2023, and in mid-October last year, members of the CGT were treated to some stunning autumn colour.

On a fine afternoon, when the rain miraculously held off, Clare met us in the courtyard for a 'walk and talk', starting with the area close to the house. There was a magnificent *Magnolia grandiflora*, which had been covered in highly scented cream-coloured flowers from August

until early October, and everywhere we looked, there were more botanical delights.

Moving through to the back of the house, we particularly admired the vivid orange of *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Viridis'. Clare pointed out some of her favourite trees and shrubs to us, which fill the garden with colour and perfume in spring and summer. *Abutilon vitifolium* (now *Corynabutilon vitifolium*) is a particular favourite, and Clare has both white and purple varieties. *Cornus* × 'Norman Haddon' occupied a prime spot in the corner and was covered in red, edible, strawberry-like fruits. Whilst there are many impressive *Cornus* trees in the garden, this one is unique in being a cross between *Cornus kousa* and *Cornus capitata*, meaning that it can retain some of its leaves in a mild winter. Some new shrubs had also recently been added for year-round interest, including a variety of *Edgeworthia*, which bears clusters of scented yellow flowers on bare stems in late winter.



*Acer palmatum dissectum 'Viridis'*



*One of many magnificent acers*

We meandered past a delightful sunken garden with seating at its centre. Added in 2014, it is surrounded by colourful perennials and annuals. An archway gives a glimpse of the landscape beyond and leads to a very different area of the garden. Clare explained that she bought the land and an old stud farm with her late husband, Adrian, fifty years ago this January. It was three years before they were finally able to move into the property they built, but that didn't stop them from collecting plants and making plans for the garden - a real challenge in that very hot summer! The area near the house was Clare's domain, whilst Adrian

tackled the wider garden with the planting of trees and shrubs. The views over the Cheshire Plains are magnificent, but originally, it felt very open and exposed. Trees and shrubs were planted along the boundaries to soften the landscape while retaining key elements of the view. Most were very successful, and there are now some truly magnificent specimens.

On the lawn at the top of this area, Clare pointed out some of her favourite rhododendrons, including *Rhododendron 'Loderi King George'*, which is highly perfumed. We could also detect the scent of burnt sugar from the katsura tree, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*. The view down to the pond is framed by a tall cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens*, to the left, and ascending shrubs and trees to the right. An *Acer davidii*, commonly known as the snake-bark maple because of its attractive streaky bark, was also visible a little further down the hill. Clare took us a short way down the accessible path to the left, pointing out a *Davidia involucrata*, commonly known as the handkerchief tree, some beautiful acers, and an Indian bean tree that was planted many years ago but, unlike most of the trees, has not settled in well!

After that, it was time for refreshments, or we were free to wander down to the field below. Originally grazing for Clare's horses, it was worth the effort to see the brilliant orange foliage of the *Liquidambar styraciflua* up close, and there were many other specimens to admire before strolling back to the house.

A big thank you must go to Clare and her family for their hospitality, and we can't wait to see the garden again next year, when Norley Court opens for the NGS in spring and summer. We are promised a glorious sight of spring bulbs, including narcissi, erythroniums and bluebells, followed by the summer spectacle of peonies, roses, and perennials. Definitely something to look forward to on a gloomy winter's day.



*Liquidambar styraciflua*

**Alison Moore**

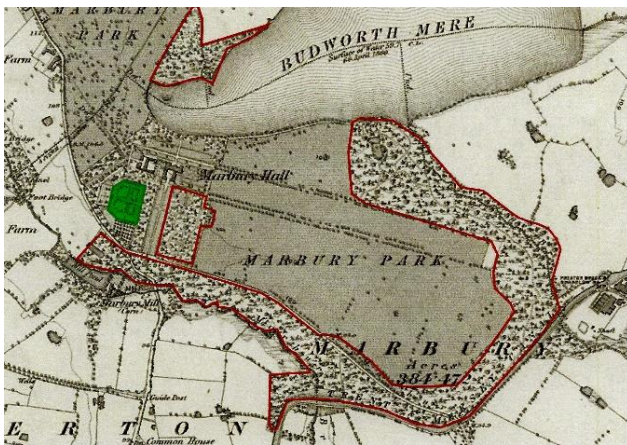


# The longevity of plantations in the landscape

Inspired by Gillian Parker's online talk "The Role of Early Yorkshire Nurseries in Northern Tree Plantations", I looked back over some of Cheshire Gardens Trust's research to see if her discoveries in Yorkshire held true for Cheshire. Gillian remarked on the longevity of plantations in the Yorkshire landscape, citing several examples where the pattern of planting survives, though in some cases the house or hall has disappeared.

A quick scan of maps using [cheshire tithe maps](#) indicated that plantations do indeed endure in the Cheshire landscape; from the great parks such as Tatton and Tabley, which still have their mansions, to the lesser-known and unregistered parks such as Aston, Marbury and Alderley, all of which lost their great houses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At Marbury, an invoice of 1821 from Caldwell's Nurseries of Knutsford indicates the purchase of numerous trees by the owner James Smith Barry. His son inherited the estate and engaged Anthony Salvin to remodel the house, and Salvin's brother-in-law, William Andrews Nesfield, to lay out the formal gardens. Nesfield was also a landscape painter and held clear views on picturesque landscape, but it is not known whether he advised on plantings in the park. Stelfox's Marbury Hall Estate Map 1858 records the layout of the formal gardens, an avenue and plantations in the park, features also shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey.



Cheshire Sheet XXXIV  
Surveyed: 1874 to 1877, Published: 1882



Aerial view of Marbury Park – Bing maps UK

'Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland'

The hall became a country club and was occupied by troops during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, while the park accommodated a prisoner of war camp, which later housed ICI workers. The hall was demolished in 1968, but the layout of the parkland remains substantially intact, with plantations such as Big Wood retaining their original footprint, as can be seen from the images.



At Aston-by-Sutton, Humphry Repton was commissioned c 1793 by Col. Henry Hervey Aston to produce one of his famous Red Books. Repton proposed new plantations to enhance the setting of the hall and its approach, and to screen agricultural buildings. The hall was demolished in 1938, and although most of the parkland is now under cultivation, the mature plantations remain, gracing the Weaver valley.



Cheshire Sheet XXV  
Surveyed: 1874 to 1877, Published: 1881



Aerial view of Aston-by-Sutton

Google maps 2025

'Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland'

In addition to the plantations, all the aforementioned properties retain their walled gardens. At Marbury, the walled kitchen garden is now occupied by a plant nursery; at Aston, the walled garden remains in private ownership, and at Alderley, the walled gardens are occupied by a new housing development. This small selection of properties suggests that both plantations and walled gardens endure in Cheshire's designed landscapes. Despite the loss of great houses, the changing use of the land and the pressures of modern development, the essential structure of these designed landscapes remains visible. In the 21st century, the value of such surviving plantations extends far beyond their historical interest. Mature trees play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity, providing shade and shelter in the face of global warming. They also shape our sense of place, offering continuity in landscapes that have been transformed by the passage of time.

Recognising and protecting these long-lived plantings is not only an act of heritage conservation but an investment in environmental resilience. The plantations that once framed approaches to vanished houses now form green corridors and a refuge for a multitude of wildlife. Their continuing endurance also reminds us that the trees we plant today will shape the landscapes and ecological health for centuries to come.

**Barbara Moth**

## Lloyd's Flower Farm: 'Plan, there is no plan.'

It was not a good day for travelling when we met to hear this fascinating talk. There had been torrential rain all over the North-West, resulting in some rivers, including the River Weaver, bursting their banks and causing problems for everyone. This wasn't enough to deter 24 interested people from making the journey to listen to Diane, though, and they weren't disappointed.



*Diane Lloyd with a seasonal bouquet*

Lloyd's Flower Farm is near Tarporley, on the site of an old walled garden that Diane has been researching. When she acquired the land in 2022, it was a wilderness full of brambles, nettles, and wild flowers - considered by many to be weeds - with no sign at that stage of it having been a walled garden.

Diane's motivation to grow her own flowers came from the fact that many flowers are now imported, following the decline of British flower farms in the 1950s and 1960s. She already had some growing experience both at home and on her allotment, and had entered a flower show at Malham, winning first prize. This success was the spur she needed to begin growing flowers on a larger scale.

Fortunately, Diane had a good circle of friends who shared her ideals. Along with her husband, Steven, they regularly joined her to help clear the land. During this process, they discovered evidence that a garden had previously existed on the site, complete with a potting shed and a large greenhouse. These were exciting finds, as they suggested that the soil would be fertile and perfect for growing flowers. What they also discovered was an ancient caravan, which, when being towed off the site, finally gave up trying to be a caravan and collapsed into several pieces.

Diane brought her own greenhouse from home to nurture her seeds and cuttings. Many of the other items currently used in the garden were begged from various sources or bought cheaply and repaired by a friend's husband - an old lawnmower from the council tip being a good example.

Diane decided to use raised beds and the 'no-dig' method for growing her flowers. She makes vats of comfrey feed in old bins from the council to enrich the soil and uses a mulching product called Strulch to help retain water. Rainwater is also collected, although 2025 was a challenging year for this, as there was very little rain. There are 'pests' in the garden that need managing, but everything is done in a wildlife-friendly way.



*Some of the raised beds in late spring*



Tulip bulbs are coated in chilli powder to deter the squirrels from digging them all up; dead hedging is used as a fence to keep some of the mammals away from the plants, and earth turned over by badgers and moles is collected and reused in the garden

Large quantities of tulip bulbs are planted each year in late autumn, and the reliably perennial varieties are left in the beds after flowering. Alliums and irises follow the tulips, before the arrival of early summer flowers. Strawflowers are one of Diane's favourites, because they last really well in an arrangement. Her advice is to keep cutting, as this will encourage more flowers on longer, stronger stems. Dahlias are another success story, and she chooses varieties that respond well to frequent cutting, such as 'Labyrinth' and 'Onesta'. Foliage is also grown for use as a filler in bouquets and arrangements.

Diane shared some useful advice on conditioning cut flowers: she regards the packet of plant food that comes with a shop-bought bouquet as unnecessary, but recommends keeping the vase water fresh. When cutting her own flowers, she picks them the day before they are needed - as early in the morning as possible - and plunges them up to their necks in a bucket of water. They are then kept in a dark place overnight, with arrangements being made up the next day.



*A beautiful arrangement of funeral flowers*

Flowers from Lloyd's Flower Farm are sold at Tarporley Market on the first Saturday of every month between April and October. Commissions for wedding flowers are also welcome, with flowers once being picked as late as 24<sup>th</sup> October for bouquets, table decorations and buttonholes.

Diane is also an advocate for [Farewell Flowers](#) and [Sustainable Church Flowers](#). Both support and encourage the use of locally grown flowers and foliage that are packaged without the use of unnecessary plastic.

This was an entertaining talk presented by a very lively speaker who started her business 'without a plan'. She has learnt as she has gone along and accepts that there are some things she cannot do - such as growing giant freesias - but she will always research, experiment and try again until she finds a solution. Despite the continuing expansion of raised beds, she has no paid help in the garden, relying upon friends for assistance. Most importantly, she sticks to her principle of having as little impact upon the planet as possible, using no harmful chemicals, and following the philosophy of 'Grown not Flown'.

Diane shares photos of her arrangements on Facebook and Instagram, and tips on growing can be found on her YouTube channel @GardeningTipsWithTheLloyds

**Words: Jackie Cawte Photos: Alison Moore**

## Tristan Salmon, Head Gardener at Crewe Hill

Back in June 2019, our Research Group joined the Clwyd branch of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust to visit Crewe Hill, a four-acre garden near Farndon overlooking the River Dee and the Welsh hills.



*A frosty morning at Crewe Hill*

Part of the Barnston Estate, in the heart of rural Cheshire, Crewe Hill has been a family home since the late 18th century, and underwent a major garden restoration project in the 1980s. Having travelled the world in the course of their work, Michael Trevor-Barnston and his wife, Inger, returned to Cheshire in 1983 with the intention of creating a garden that would reflect their travels and their love of unusual trees and shrubs.

Ten years ago, they appointed Tristan Salmon as Head Gardener, who immediately embraced their passion for developing both the garden and the surrounding estate. I first met Tristan in late summer 2022 when I was invited to visit the gardens, and returned to catch up with him last May while on assignment for *Cheshire Life Magazine*. Not only were the gardens looking stunning, but there were also several new projects to admire, including the tropical greenhouse, aptly named Kew Hill.

Tristan acquired his gardening and design skills through a combination of natural talent and the diverse range of roles he has held throughout his career. After graduating from Pershore College and then the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester, he spent two years in Australia: first as a jackaroo on a cattle station in Queensland, then as a mechanic in Darwin, and finally training horses for a Polo Club in Melbourne. But somehow, it comes as no surprise to learn that during his time spent in these places, he also found opportunities to create gardens.

Designing and maintaining large garden spaces doesn't faze Tristan in the slightest. He feels much more at home with several acres to work with than a small suburban space. Perhaps it was fate then that brought him to Crewe Hill ten years ago.



*Tristan Salmon*





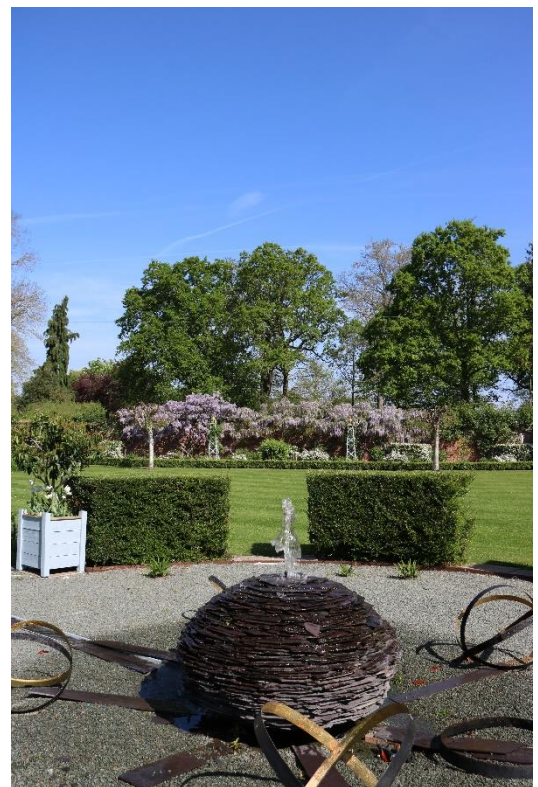
*The red oriental bridge*

To understand what Tristan has achieved, it is also important to appreciate the diverse nature of this special garden. The first project undertaken by the owners in the 1980s was the restoration of the walled garden, which had fallen into complete disrepair following the Second World War.

Over the subsequent decade, the rest of the garden continued to evolve, with one of the most impressive features being a Japanese-inspired pond with a red oriental bridge.

Planting throughout the garden is richly varied, ranging from a sub-tropical zone that reflects the owners' travels, to colourful herbaceous borders and impressive topiary, which allows Tristan to demonstrate his creative pruning skills. The white garden, where the new summer house has been built with Tristan's help, is also home to a stunning pergola covered with *Rosa* 'Claire Austin', and a line of *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' planted along the path of the rill. The central water feature in this part of the garden is one of the first that Tristan built for the family and is constructed from pieces of slate shaped into a sphere. Other water features include one built from recycled materials, backed by gothic-style mirrors and surrounded by shade-loving ferns, with contrasting white lobelia and pelargoniums.

This ethos of using recycled materials and propagation of existing plants reflects the philosophy of the wider Barnston Estate, run by Michael and Inger's son Edward. The estate aims to create value for the local community while being environmentally sustainable and financially viable. You can read more about their fascinating story on the website <https://barnstonestate.com/>



*Slate Water Feature built by Tristan*

It would be remiss not to include a few more details about Kew Hill, mentioned earlier. This rather unusual greenhouse was built by Tristan in 2022. It was created by linking the existing glasshouse to the old bull pen and milking parlour and glazing the roof to make space for the ever-growing collection of plants, including several delicate specimens from the sub-tropical garden.



*The sub-tropical garden*

This particular area of the Crewe Hill garden began with a single banana tree (*Musa basjoo*), planted thirty years ago when such plants were still something of a rarity in an English Country Garden. It was later joined by numerous *Tetrapanax*, some of which are now overwintered indoors in the enlarged space alongside dahlia tubers and exotic brugmansia or Angel's Trumpets.

Unlike a conventional greenhouse, Kew Hill features comfortable seating areas, a waterfall surrounded by lush greenery, and a botanical chandelier fashioned from an old wooden hoist. Tristan built raised beds for the plants and incorporated many charming details that reflect the quirkiness of the garden itself. He also successfully propagates many exotic plants here, including *Sophora microphylla* or weeping kowhai, native to New Zealand.

One might assume that just maintaining such a garden singlehandedly would occupy all of Tristan's time, but last autumn, he and his husband Mally moved into a new property with a large and exciting garden of its own. It comes complete with a well, natural springs and immense potential for the future. We have already enjoyed a little preview on Instagram, and I'm looking forward to following more of his garden adventures @cheshirehead\_gardener



*Inside Kew Hill*

**Words: Alison Moore**

**Photos: Tristan Salmon and Alison Moore**



# Forthcoming Events

## Cheshire Gardens Trust

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January** – a talk by Alexandra Fairclough entitled '*Understanding Registered Historic Park & Gardens*' in St Peter's Church Hall, The Village, Prestbury, Macclesfield, SK10 4DG.

Refreshments at 10.30 for 11 am.

Alexandra's talk will focus on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, which aims to 'celebrate designed landscapes of note and encourage appropriate protection'. She will highlight the background and process of identifying and registering parks and gardens, providing an insight into how best to protect them. This subject is very relevant in light of the Government consultation to remove the Gardens Trust as a statutory consultee.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February** - a talk by Anne Beswick on '*The History of Manchester in Ten Plants*' in The Hall at Marthall, Sandlebridge Lane, Marthall, WA16 7SB. Refreshments at 2.00 for 2.30 pm.

Anne has a background in science and garden design, for which she has received RHS medals at Tatton. She also has a love of Manchester, having explored the city's history and its ongoing development and has enjoyed being a guide around the city. As an experienced speaker, Anne is combining her love of plants with her interest in Manchester to present an interesting and entertaining talk.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March** - Annual General Meeting at Ness Botanic Gardens



Our special guest speaker is Advolly Richmond OBE, a Plant, Garden, and Social Historian, writer, and broadcaster. She will be talking about her book '*A Short History of Flowers: The stories that make our Gardens*'. In the book, Advolly looks into the histories of 60 of our favourite garden flowers, so if you've ever wondered about the origins of particular flowers and how they got their names, then the talk promises to be a fascinating one. Copies of the book will be available for purchase on the day.

Ness Gardens will be open from 10:00 am, and the entrance fee is included in the ticket price. The AGM will start promptly at 1:30, followed by Advolly's talk at 2 pm. After time for questions, refreshments will be served at 3 pm.

Non-members are very welcome, and there will be the opportunity to join Cheshire Gardens Trust on the day.

Booking instructions will follow.

## The Gardens Trust

Women crossing boundaries - a series of 6 talks in partnership with FOLAR, showcasing women pioneers, starting on 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Empires, Plants & Gardening – a series of 8 online talks exploring the influence of political and economic power on garden-making, starting on 20<sup>th</sup> January.

For further information, see [Gardens Trust Events](#)

## The National Garden Scheme (NGS)

At the end of last year, the NGS reported that they had been able to donate a record £3,875,596 to good causes, with Cheshire and Wirral raising just over £140,000 of the total.

You can read the impact report here: [NGS Impact Report](#)

The new season begins in February, with a series of gardens that feature plants for winter interest. Normans Hall is a new venue for 2026.

**Briarfield** – The Rake, Burton, Neston, CH64 5TL

1<sup>st</sup> February

8<sup>th</sup> February

15<sup>th</sup> February

**Weeping Ash** – Bents Garden & Home, Warrington Road, Glazebury, WA3 5NS

8<sup>th</sup> February

15<sup>th</sup> February

**Aberclwyd Manor** - Derwen, Corwen, Denbighshire, LL21 9SF

4<sup>th</sup> February

18<sup>th</sup> February

**Normans Hall** - Brookledge Lane, Pott Shrigley, Macclesfield, SK10 5GN

22<sup>nd</sup> February

**Bucklow Farm** - Pinfold Lane, Plumley, Knutsford, WA16 9RP

22<sup>nd</sup> February

**Meveril Lodge** - Lesser Lane, Combs, High Peak, SK23 9UZ

28<sup>th</sup> February

1<sup>st</sup> March



## Snowdrop Walks

As well as gardens that open for charity, there are several Snowdrop Walks to enjoy in Cheshire and neighbouring counties, including [Rode Hall](#), where over seventy different varieties of snowdrops can be seen along the mile-long walk.



*Rode hall*

Most of us will recognise the common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, which is the most widespread species in the UK, but there are several other species grown here, and over 2,500 recognised cultivars. In addition to *Galanthus nivalis*, the key species that we frequently encounter are *Galanthus elwesii* (giant snowdrop), *Galanthus plicatus* (Crimean snowdrop) and *Galanthus woronowii* (green snowdrop).

Some of the most prized are the yellow snowdrops, with a single bulb of *Galanthus plicatus* 'Golden Tears', bred by Joe Sharman of Monksilver Nursery, selling for £1,850 in 2022. A natural genetic variation causes a lack of chlorophyll, which is responsible for the green pigment, resulting in a yellow-coloured ovary at the base of the flower and yellow markings on the inner petals, or tepals.

A yellow snowdrop with a link to Cheshire is *Galanthus nivalis* f. *pleniflorus* 'Lady Elphinstone'. This form of the common double snowdrop was discovered by chance at Heawood Hall in Cheshire in 1890 by Sir Graeme Elphinstone. It is reportedly rarely available for sale, possibly because it is difficult to propagate and can revert to its green form for a few years after transplanting.



*Galanthus f. pleniflorus 'Lady Elphinstone'*

## More Snowdrop Walks

**Arley Hall** - from late January, the floor of the Grove and Woodland Walk comes alive with hundreds of snowdrops. It's a wonderful place for a wander, and the Hamamelis, Daphne and Hellebores all add to the early season colour.

**Dunham Massey** - one of the most popular National Trust properties in the North West, and the largest winter garden of its kind in the UK, has a magnificent display of spring bulbs. The snowdrops look particularly striking as underplanting to the beautiful Silver Birch trees - *Betula utilis* subsp. *jacquemontii* 'Doorenbos' - in the Birch Triangle.

## **Plant Hunters' Fairs**

The first of the Plant Hunter's Fairs starts in March

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Arley Hall, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> and Monday 6<sup>th</sup> April at Dorothy Clive Garden

For the full list of all events, visit [Plant Hunters' Fairs](#)

## **Other Garden Events**

### **[RHS Bridgewater Events](#)**

A wide variety of events in the early part of the year, including:

20<sup>th</sup> February - Kokedama and Mini Moss Gardens: A Beginners Workshop

28<sup>th</sup> February - Willow Weaving Workshop: Birdfeeders

28<sup>th</sup> March - Create a Living Spring Wreath

### **[Norton Priory](#)**

11<sup>th</sup> January - Wassail

25<sup>th</sup> January - Winter Fruit Tree Pruning

1<sup>st</sup> March - Fruit Tree Grafting

### **[Tatton Park](#)**

18<sup>th</sup> January - A Late Summer Love Affair with Jack Willgoss, co-owner of the Wildegoose Nursery, who discusses his favourite late-season perennials

28<sup>th</sup> February - Japanese Painting Workshop with Ula Fung

### **[Dorothy Clive](#)**

10<sup>th</sup> January - Pruning Workshop: Apples and Pears

17<sup>th</sup> January - Pruning Workshop: Roses

### **[Arley Hall](#)**

Spring Beginners Botanical Watercolour Workshops - various dates in January, February and March

Willow Weaving Workshops - various dates in January, February and March

### **[Ness Botanic Gardens](#)**

Events include Garden Tours, Wildlife Activities and Floristry and Floral Design Workshops

## **Gardens Open All Year**

Many of our favourite Cheshire Gardens remain open on most days over winter, including National Trust Properties such as Dunham Massey with its wonderful winter garden, and Quarry Bank Mill. Arley Hall also opens throughout the season. Check their websites for the latest information.



# News in Brief

## Cheshire Archives

As we mentioned in the October Newsletter, two new Archive Centres for Cheshire will be opening in Chester and Crewe later this year, and you can follow the latest developments on their blog, [Cheshire Story Shared](#)

In the blog published on 10<sup>th</sup> December, we were given a glimpse of what visitors can expect when the new buildings first open. As well as a permanent exhibition space, including what is described as a Big Story Wall (12 metres long), there will also be an online exhibition of Cheshire stories for the new website. Amongst the images already selected is one entitled 'Window Shopping at Caldwell's, Knutsford (Early 1900s)'.

### [A Moving Story](#)

With thanks to Barbara Moth for sharing this.

## Gardens Trust Report

At the beginning of October last year, the Gardens Trust published a report, ***Harnessing Parks and Gardens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: How historic landscapes can support and enhance our today and tomorrow.***



*John Watkins speaking at the launch*

At the launch, Gardens Trust Chair John Watkins said that as a nation with gardens admired across the world, there is a need for “new initiatives and greater investment so that historic designed landscapes can be harnessed to fulfil their potential in addressing key challenges of our time.”

You can read the report here:

[Harnessing Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century](#)

## New Year Honours

Congratulations to Advolly Richmond, who was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List 2026. We look forward to meeting her in March.

## A Gentle Reminder

On page 5 of this newsletter, we gave details of the Government Consultation on removing several statutory consultees from the planning system, including the Gardens Trust. **The deadline for responding to this consultation is just over a week away on 13<sup>th</sup> January, and your contribution really matters.** The process of completing the online questionnaire is very straightforward, and by answering the important questions on page 3, you can demonstrate your support for the protection of designed landscapes.

Direct Link to the online questionnaire: [Reforms to the consultee system](#)

**Copy date for April Newsletter is 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**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, don't hesitate to get in touch with Alison Moore, the Newsletter Editor, on 07412 288929 or email [newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)**