



CHESHIRE
GARDENS TRUST

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Newsletter

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- * Members' garden projects
- * David Cash, member of CoM

Future CGT events and gardens open:

- * CGT Virtual AGM 29th June 4pm
- * NT properties open – Lyme Park, Tatton, Quarry Bank – book online
- * Arley Hall and Gardens and Grappenhall Heys open



Our party was one of the last tour groups in Marrakesh at the time of the Covid-19 outbreak. Our knowledgeable team ensured minimal disruption of our itinerary but, returning to Britain was quite another adventure!

Marrakesh, the red-walled city founded in 1062, was once capital of Morocco. It has long been a place of productive gardens both large and small, fed by intricate systems of **seguias** (surface channels) & **khettaras** (underground tunnels)

bringing water from the foothills of the High Atlas right into the city. We were delighted to visit the recently opened **Le Jardin Secret** in the Medina and the well known **Jardin Marjorelle** in Gueliz.

The last owner of the Le Jardin Secret, Loukrissi, was a wealthy business man and former Chamberlain to Sultan Moulay Abd-al-Hafiz. The Sultan had ceded the sovereignty of Morocco to the French in 1912 and was soon exiled. Loukrissi retired to one of the largest **riads** in the Medina

of Marakesh. A *riad* is a traditional manor house or palace with an enclosed garden. Loukrissi brought with him his three wives, Hbiqa (Basil), Oud el Ward (Rosewood), el Yasmine (Jasmine) and their children. After Loukrissi's death in 1934 the *riad* fell into disrepair. Restoration this century has involved site excavation of the garden's carefully engineered gravity-fed water supply, and the refurbishment of the garden under the guidance of landscape designer Tom Stuart-Smith and his team. This hidden space, surrounded by a 9m high wall, finally opened its doors to visitors in 2016. Le Jardin Secret is actually made up of two contrasting courtyard gardens, the larger Islamic Garden and the smaller Exotic Garden as seen on the model.



The larger **Islamic Garden** would have been the central courtyard garden of a palatial *riad* in the early twentieth century. The space has been restored and replanted as a typical Moroccan Islamic Garden showing how it might have been before European influences introduced significant changes. Today it is an oasis of peace and quiet in various shades of green, and, like the traditional Islamic Garden, it is divided into four quadrants with **bejmat** (tiled) pathways – see below. Several *Phoenix dactylifera* (Date Palms) tower above the citrus tree-tops.



At its centre of the four quadrants is a scalloped Carrara marble basin and gently splashing fountain (see opposite) reflecting the Gardens of

Paradise described in the Qur'an. Beyond this is the central trickling rill and the restored Hbiqa Pavilion, former home of one of the wives.



The smaller courtyard of Le Jardin Secret is described as an **Exotic Garden**. It is planted in a more contemporary romantic style and is considered to be more Christian in concept: its plants brought from similar environments in different continents are more representative of the Garden of Eden described in Genesis. As in the restored Islamic Garden, the principal paths, fountains and rills are raised 20cm above the planting areas so that the water can be diverted to gravity-nourish the beds. The plants chosen for the Exotic Garden are all drought tolerant and colourful, with Prickly Pear, Beaked Yucca and Mountain Ebony either side of a central rill (see below).



Although the two courtyard gardens comprising Le Jardin Secret have contrasting characters and planting schemes, they are adjacent to each other and connected by a short staggered, or 'bent', passageway so that neither space is visible from the other, thus allowing greater privacy for the occupants.

My writing of this account has gratefully drawn on information in Tom Stuart-Smith's guidebook published by Le Jardin Secret on the occasion of its opening in March 2016.

Jardin Marjorelle was the second small garden we visited. It is one of the most famous and most visited of all the gardens in Marrakesh. It was established by expatriate French painter, Jacques Marjorelle in 1923, after he purchased an area of palm grove and began to create a botanical sanctuary. Marjorelle favoured the exotic and rare plants he collected on his artistic travels to the Orient and beyond. In 1931 he commissioned the French architect, Paul Sinoir, to build a Studio in Art Deco style. This is now the on-site Berber Museum and the building is still painted a rich cobalt blue, the colour Marjorelle patented as 'Marjorelle blue' towards the end of his life. The garden was opened to the paying public in 1947 in an attempt to recoup maintenance costs. After Marjorelle's death in 1962 the site fell into abandonment.



In 1980 the French fashion designers, Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Berge, rescued and began to restore the garden. They constructed informal pathways that cross one another creating irregular-shaped parterres which were planted with different combinations or groups of plants. The Memorial to Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008) built in the garden by Pierre Berge is a sensitive addition at the garden's edge. Following Pierre Berge's death in 2017 the 'In Memoriam Plaque' to both partners was added to the Memorial (above).

On the front page of the newsletter is the

typically Moroccan tiled pool and fountain at the Garden Entrance. It introduces the colour palette of the garden and creates an air of calm. The Waterlily pond (below) continues the blue theme (even the staff wear blue) and shows the bougainvillea and palms typical of the garden.



A complete contrast is the cactus garden with *Echinocactus grusonii* (Mother-in-law's Cushion) at the centre of the image below.



Jardin Marjorelle is an enchanting garden that more than met our expectations. We found it immaculately maintained and a delight to explore. We hope that the lack of visitors resulting from Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 will have no long term detrimental impact on its future.

My account of Jardin Marjorelle was assisted by the site leaflet, Wikipedia and Eyewitness Travel Guides.

Text and photos Kath Gee

AGM Notice

Cheshire Gardens Trust is planning its AGM as a Virtual experience, first time for everything! We know that not everyone will be able to join the meeting, however we are required to hold an AGM. It will take place on 29 June at 16.00 via Zoom. More information will be included with the AGM papers including the invitation/registration, agenda, accounts, previous minutes, etc. You will need to return the

registration (electronically) with your email address and to download Zoom in advance to your computer. Any proposals and questions should be submitted in advance, although you can raise questions at the AGM as well. We will follow up the AGM with a summary with minutes, but also of the main points in the newsletter. Hope to see you there.

Ed Bennis

News from Arley

I'm delighted that we have an article from Viscount Ashbrook, Patron of Cheshire Gardens Trust and owner of Arley Hall and Gardens. In May 2016 Michael Ashbrook was kind enough to share his knowledge of rhododendrons at a CGT Workshop.



Lord Ashbrook sharing his knowledge at the CGT Rhododendron workshop

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to send good wishes to all members of the Cheshire Gardens Trust. It is a little time since I was in touch and having the date of the AGM securely in my diary it was disappointing that like so many other events this had to be cancelled. It is gratifying that in spite of lockdown it is still possible for the newsletter to be produced. This gives me the chance to say something about the gardens at Arley and what Zoë and I have been doing over the past weeks.



The Grove

Like others similarly placed we feel so fortunate and privileged to have the opportunity to be outside and to occupy ourselves with gardening. It is indeed ironical and so sad that during one of the sunniest springs in living memory almost no one sees the gardens at Arley which at this time of year I have seldom seen look more beautiful. We have two gardeners working, Gordon and James, who are doing a wonderful job. The fact that April was so dry helped considerably as the

weeds hardly grew at all and nor did the grass so the lawns needed little attention. Watering has been one of the main activities and this occupied me for many hours a week in The Grove, the woodland garden where most of my gardening takes place. It so happens that I had acquired quite a number of new shrubs which being recently planted needed regular attention. Newly planted rhododendrons in particular need watering every few days if there is no rain. I do it by hand with very long hoses from four mains standpoints.



Rhododendron 'Lems Monarch'

Spring came early this year and, as we have come to expect, there was very little frost. The magnolias in The Grove were stunning and bloomed in profusion. My favourite is a form of *M. sprengeri* which I believe to be var. 'Diva'. The only problem with the Asiatic magnolias, such as the various forms of *M. campbellii* and its hybrids, is that by the time they flower they have attained such a height that looking at them gives one a crick in the neck. We now have a few yellow varieties including one of the deepest coloured 'Daphne', in flower as I write (7 May) as is the beautiful *M. 'Elizabeth'* (below) presented to me by the CGT in Jubilee year 2012.



Many know me as an unreconstructed 'rhodoholic' so it will not surprise that I am spending much time at present admiring the large collection of rhododendrons in The Grove producing a spectacular display. The azaleas are just coming out. The Rootery (below) in the main garden which is full of them is a magical sight. Dead heading rhododendrons is not essential, and is indeed impossible in large numbers, but I find it therapeutic and worthwhile as it encourages new growth more quickly. I have three Davidias in The Grove two of which are blooming at present. Can there be more of a show stopper?



One task I am heavily engaged in is the compilation of an accurate inventory of all the trees and shrubs in The Grove and trying to ensure that all are correctly labelled. This is very time consuming but I feel essential as in many cases I am the only person who knows the



Davidia involucreta (Handkerchief tree)

precise names. Indeed, in some cases I am myself defeated as over the years my record keeping has left much to be desired.

Zoë and I are truly grateful that at this extraordinary time, when so many other occupations are off the agenda, we have the solace of gardening which thank goodness still has to be done largely by hand, technology being of only limited use. I find that reassuring. I hope that many of you are similarly placed.

With all good wishes and I look forward greatly to seeing every one again. Perhaps there can be a gathering of CGT members at Arley in the autumn?

At the end of May Arley opened its doors to visitors again, open daily 10am to 5pm

Text and photos Michael Ashbrook

Head Gardeners in Lockdown

The horticultural industry has had a hard time during Lockdown, with so many gardens closed and nurseries struggling. Head Gardeners were often trying to keep things going on their own or with very few staff. I'm extremely grateful to those Head Gardeners who have been prepared to share their experiences. At the end of May many gardens started to open their doors for the first time since Lockdown.

Emma Hill, Head Gardener at Hare Hill reported:

'The impact of the lockdown has been huge, where to start?

This is usually one of the busiest times of the year for Hare Hill, for years known as a spring garden we would normally be welcoming upwards of 1000 visitors a week through May and June. The Erythroniums, Hepaticas, Magnolias, Amelanchier, Wisteria and countless Rhododendrons are among some of the plants

that visitors flock to see. This year however they have been left unseen by all except birds and



woodland creatures taking sanctuary in the deserted garden at Hare Hill.



Hepaticas in the rockery

The Walled Garden takes over from the Wooded Garden as summer follows spring and Colonel Brocklehurst's White Garden comes into its' own. 'Madame Alfred Carriere', planted on a south facing wall is usually one of the first of the 30 or so varieties of roses to flower and the garden is filled with picnicking families and people doing Tai Chi. Not this year though; the Walled Garden stands empty apart from the rooks on duty scarifying the lawn in their search for crane fly larvae.

There are no busy garden volunteers carrying out all the essential tasks needed to keep the garden 'kept'. The volunteers were stood down right at the beginning of lockdown. I feel it will be a huge, but not insurmountable challenge to find a new way of working with volunteers as the room where up to 6 of them would sit and have tea breaks would almost certainly not pass muster for the new social distancing rules. Being only about 8 x 8ft we could now barely allow 2 people in there at any one time. I am really missing people in the garden, volunteers and visitors and though I feel very lucky to be able to see the garden in privacy, it really isn't the same without the people.

Staff soon followed the volunteers as almost everyone based at Hare Hill was put on the furlough scheme, and I was only allowed to travel to work to carry out essential duties. These duties include security checks, and whilst doing this I am also able to water the stock in the greenhouse and anything newly planted in the

garden. I am also allowed to mow the grass and weed. I decided early on that I would prioritise the work, and I chose to concentrate on 2 areas: the Walled Garden and the newly planted Family Garden. It made sense also to keep all the grass tidy if possible.



New planting in the Family garden

Last year we were lucky enough to receive a generous donation from the Oglesby Trust, enough to complete the Family Garden project over 3 years and reinstate the only complete border design by James Russell we have at Hare Hill. The borders on the west side of the Walled Garden were cleared, dug and mulched during the horrible mild and wet winter, and we finished the first wave of planting in the week lockdown began. It's hard to imagine now that planting was slightly held up, and we even had to close the garden to visitors for several days in late February due to flooding.

It didn't really occur to me back in March when all this began that it might only rain once or twice in the traditionally wet months of March, April



New planting in the Family garden

and May, what a shock. I have been watering continuously since lockdown began, but despite my best efforts it seems as though we have sadly lost some of the new plants, and even some well-established favourites such as one of the *Rhododendron augustinii* 'Electra'.

Most of the new plantings are doing well however, though the garden is looking decidedly weedy in other areas! Something else I've noticed is all the paths are looking 'woolly' with leaves etc, and the stone steps are greening up. This, I realise is because there are no visitors whose constant footsteps have the effect of wearing away the algae growth on stone and grinding down the path debris which is then blown away or simply disappears. I've never thought of the visitors being useful in that way before!

At Hare Hill we have no indoor space for visitors and our figures plummet when it rains, so the irony of having perfect weather for visitors over the Easter holidays and beyond but being unable to let anyone in, whilst praying for rain to water the plants, has not escaped me.

A major advantage of not having people in the garden has of course been that the wildlife is much less disturbed. I have noticed so much more in terms of birds nesting in the garden. There are more nests this year in the sheds and the walled garden while normally they are in the wooded garden, away from visitor routes and noisy gardeners. One day I saw a beautiful big fox trotting through, who looked at me as if to say, 'oh, what are you doing in my garden?'

As I write this in late May the Trust has already started to reopen some outdoor sites, and we are working hard at all levels to be ready to reopen further sites when it is safe to do so. I hope to see as many of you as possible at Hare Hill at some point soon. Until then, stay safe and keep gardening!

Graham Richardson, Head Gardener at Grapenhall Heys walled garden reported:

'When the lock-down was announced in late March there was some confusion amongst us Head Gardeners as to what constituted "essential" work. OK, so we weren't essential but at the same time we were not about to let years of hard work and dedication go to rack and ruin. At Grapenhall Heys we had glasshouses to water, vegetables to grow and bees to attend to, not to mention all the jobs to catch up on following the wettest winter on record.

We closed the gardens to the public. We don't



Graham Richardson and Kate Fitch in the glasshouse charge admission but we are not a public park and the layout of the gardens would make it difficult to manage the movement of visitors. We suspended our volunteers and "furloughed" our apprentice Bradley, as at the time I wasn't even sure if I would get in! Our Outreach Officer Kate Fitch and I then carried on as best we could.

Now things have settled down a bit we have called Bradley back as it's not that difficult for the three of us to keep our distance, and we are carrying on as we normally would at this time of year, sowing and planting vegetables so at least there should be something in the ground when we do re-open. Kate regularly posts updates and pictures online so that you can see what we're up to. We know we are very lucky and privileged to be able to work in such an environment at this time and we look forward to welcoming our visitors back soon'.



Cut leaf beech in the woodland area

At the end of May, Graham reported

The Parish Council is opening just the Pleasure Garden for now, from next Tuesday (Tuesday-Saturday, 1-4pm), so the kitchen garden and glasshouses will remain off-limits. I have also been inviting some of my volunteers back, albeit in ones and twos rather than as a group. I think the main challenge for us gardeners at the moment is keeping everything watered.

Jan Lomas, Head Gardener at Eaton Hall reported:

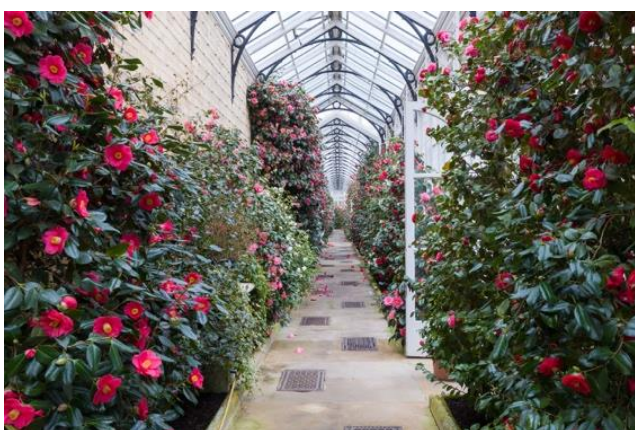


Jan and team member Stuart

During the lockdown there have been just four staff in carrying out essential duties, but at first, from March 23rd there were just two of us! This lasted a week and was gradually increased to three then finally four of us! Rebecca in the Kitchen Garden and me in the glasshouses and carrying out essential jobs such as irrigation and keeping ponds clear, Stuart on lawns and grounds and Andy on the borders. I have found it extremely stressful but understand that we have to comply like the rest of the world; we are not special. What was hard was seeing weeds pop up everywhere on the borders after years of hard work to keep them weed free; it was a lot for Andy to cope with. The lawns have not been too bad as they haven't grown too much because of no rain.

The four of us have worked hard, keeping our distance and working to a new safe way of carrying out various tasks, no sharing of machinery no sharing of vehicles or tools and it's worked well.

The team are now all back as of the 18th of May and there is a lot of hard work ahead to claw



The Camellia House

areas back! But we are all still here, nobody has been ill and we are all grateful for that. On the plus side the four of us have seen glorious blossom from Cherry trees, Magnolias, Rhododendrons and Camellias so a little blessing for us!!

Adrian Lovatt, Head gardener at Cogshall Grange reported:



Who could believe life would change so dramatically and suddenly as it did on 23rd March this year with the Covid-19 lockdown. At Cogshall Grange (a large private country estate garden) we felt on one level perfectly isolated and protected from the outside world but never the less every human interaction and touch of shared objects had now become a hazard and life threatening. Fortunately my employer agreed that we were safe to carry on working as long as we observed social distancing and recommended hygiene – outdoor working is naturally safe. For our small team of three this meant only one person in the messroom at a time, no shared gardening tasks in close proximity and break times sat outside under the canopy of the stables at a very antisocial distance apart – to be extra sure we put 10 metres between ourselves and now have to shout to chat over lunch! The extra hand washing is playing havoc with our already hard-worn gardener's hands!

Something that has really hit home for me is just how fortunate we are as gardeners to spend our working life in amongst such beautiful, stimulating and inspiring surrounds. My heart goes out to all who have had to self isolate and remain indoors with the lockdown. Never before have gardens and the great outdoors been more important for our health and wellbeing and I would urge everyone, when the time is right, to visit and support our county's fabulous public gardens once again.

Plant names

Like many people, for most of my life, I took plant names for granted, never stopping to think how or why a *Narcissus*, *Camellia* or *Magnolia* were so called. Then, about 10 years ago when I started to volunteer as a garden guide, a friend gave me a little book 'Plant Names Simplified' by Johnson and Smith. It was the 2nd Edition, published in 1946, so out-of-date in some respects, but full of useful information and very easy to carry around. I'm now on my second copy. I knew that the botanical names for plants were expressed in Latin, but had no idea that so many were based on Greek. Lots of plants have names which are descriptive of some characteristic and I was vaguely aware that some plants were named after people, *Dahlia* and *Fuchsia* for example, but had no idea why or who they were. This started a fascination with plant names, what they mean, where they come from, who they are named after. Of course, plant names change as botanists discover more about plants and they are reclassified. It took me ages to be confident in saying *Schizostylis* only for it to be re-named as *Hesperantha*.

These are a few of my favourites:

Plants with descriptive names:

Galanthus, from the Greek 'gala', milk and 'anthos' a flower, alluding to the whiteness of the flower.

Osmanthus, from the Greek 'osme', perfume and 'anthos', a flower, alluding to the fragrance of the blossom.

Penstemon, from the Greek 'pente', five and 'stemon', a stamen referring to the five stamens.

Calceolaria (below), from Latin 'calceolus' meaning slipper or little shoe in reference to the shape of the flower.



Plants named after people, real or mythological:

Camellia after George Joseph Kamel (or Camellus) 1661 - 1706, a Jesuit priest from Morovia who travelled in Asia and the East and

Morovia who travelled in Asia and the East and produced the first report of the fauna and flora of the Philippines.

Magnolia, after Pierre Magnol 1638 - 1715, a professor of botany and Director of Montpellier Botanic Gardens.

Gunnera, after Johan Ernst Gunnerus 1718 - 1773, a Norwegian bishop and botanist, author of *Flora Norvegica*.

Cautleya, after Proby Cautley 1802 - 1871, a British engineer who designed and oversaw the building of the Ganges Canal, which opened in 1854 and was 560 kilometres long.



Cautleya spicata 'Robusta'

Philadelphus, after Ptolemy Philadelphus, 308-246BCE an Egyptian pharaoh of 284-246 BCE. His name means friend or lover of his siblings and he married his sister, Arsinoe.

Daphne, a mythological character, the daughter of a river God, who, on being pursued by Apollo, prayed for help and was transformed into a shrub *Leucothoe*, a mythological character, the daughter of a Babylonia King, who, on being buried alive by her father was transformed into a shrub by Apollo.

Rodgersia, named after Admiral Rodgers 1812-1882, a USA naval officer who commanded the expedition when *Rodgersia podophylla* was discovered.

There is a lot more to plant names, of course, and it is a fascinating subject. Check your favourite plant and discover what it means.

There's now a 3rd Edition of 'Plant Names Simplified', published in 2019 and edited by AP Stockdale, which expands and updates some of the information since the 1946 edition. Other books about Plant Names which may interest you are:

'RHS Latin for Gardeners' by Lorraine Harrison.
'The Naming of Names. The Search for Order in the World of Plants' by Anna Pavord
'100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names' by Diana Wells.

Patricia Hazlehurst

David Cash, Member of Council of Management

During this period of Lockdown we felt it would be good to tell you a little more about the members of Council of Management. This is David Cash in his own words.



I was fortunate to be brought up in the beautiful city of Bristol where I attended Bristol Grammar School. After losing touch for over thirty years, five former schoolmates and I re-connected recently. We've all had different life experiences and really enjoy getting together, frequently debating topical issues from our varied perspectives - Zooming over the last few weeks! We've re-visited our school and have even been away on a couple of holidays together.

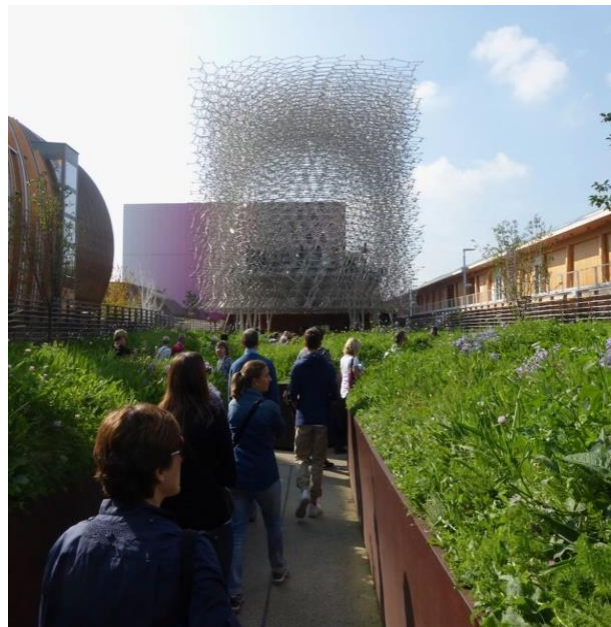


David at the top of Point Percee in the French Alps

My decision to become an architect arose out of a visit to Coventry Cathedral as a young teenager in the mid-60's. I was inspired not only by the beauty of Basil Spence's design and the work of the artists with whom he collaborated such as John Piper and Graham Sutherland but also by the regeneration story it communicated so powerfully.

I studied architecture at Sheffield University, specialising in landscape architecture for my master's degree. At that time Professor Sir George Grenfell Baines, founder of BDP (Building Design Partnership), headed up the Sheffield School of Architecture. He undoubtedly

influenced my decision to join BDP but that came later, four years after graduating. My first job was with Jack Whittle who ran a small practice based in Abbey Square, Chester where I enjoyed a view of the cathedral from my desk! During my time in Chester, I met Carys who was working as an optician in the heart of the city adjacent to the Cross. We were married and settled into the terraced cottage we'd renovated in Handbridge when one year later in 1980, the opportunity rose to join the original BDP office in Preston.



The UK Pavilion at The 2015 Expo in Milan designed by BDP and now recycled as The Hive at Kew Gardens

I became project architect for a major mixed-use redevelopment in the heart of Carlisle called "The Lanes". This was a wonderful experience which dominated my professional life for six years although time was also found to produce two children and renovate another house. Other projects followed, primarily city centre redevelopment work, and fortunately for me so did progression within BDP.

In the early 90's the construction industry was hit by a major recession, far worse than the several which had preceded it. In 1994, the decision was taken to close BDP's Preston Office amalgamating it with Manchester and I was asked to lead the newly formed studio. We moved back to Cheshire, now at its eastern end in Wilmslow. The early years were hard as design opportunities were scarce but everything changed in 1996 when an IRA bomb exploded in the city centre. Manchester's renaissance began, bringing many opportunities for architects. Later,

Liverpool followed suit with a succession of projects such as Liverpool One and Alder Hey Hospital.

In 2008, having developed a new building for the office to move into near Piccadilly Station, my career took a change of direction as I took up the challenge of developing BDP's international profile. This involved winning work and setting up new studios in Shanghai, Abu Dhabi and New Delhi so there was plenty of opportunity to travel and see the world! In 2012, I was elected as Chairman of BDP, a role I performed until I retired at the end of 2016.

Since retiring, my main architectural activity has related to education. As a visiting professor at Sheffield University, I tutor students there several times a year. Carrying out critiques via Google Meet during lockdown with groups of students who have returned to their homes, often in far-flung corners of the world, is interesting and has worked amazingly well!



At Easter – in the middle of David's latest garden project

I joined Cheshire Gardens Trust a few years ago having been contacted after we opened our garden as part of the Wilmslow Wells for Africa Gardens Day. When working, it was difficult to attend many of the activities but I have now got more involved – for example through membership of the CoM. I particularly admire the work undertaken by the Planning and Conservation Group defending Cheshire's rich parks and gardens heritage. Perhaps people have come to appreciate the value of this more during lockdown. The P & C Group's work can become demanding at times when it is only shared amongst a few people. If more members offered to get involved, for example to comment on applications for a specific area of the county, I'm sure life would become easier and more satisfying for all!

I also enjoy the CGT's programme of lectures and visits. For me, the trips to Belgium, Germany and Portugal were a highlight. We saw many wonderful and varied gardens, modern, historic and much in between! We also benefitted greatly from Ed Bennis's wide knowledge and extensive

network of contacts.



The end result, waiting for the plants to mature

Gardening has always been one of my pleasures and since retiring, it has become something of a passion! The garden is a place where I relax. For me, that means being busy and pottering around. I enjoy designing our garden – it's constantly developing! I also love growing plants and the way in which the garden evolves and changes with the seasons. Recently I've acquired a new greenhouse and during lockdown, have been re-modelling the adjacent space to make a new sitting area.

I am responsible for organising the Wilmslow Wells Gardens Day at the end of June. Around 18 – 20 gardens in the area open to raise money for a local charity which provides water and sanitation for remote and frequently drought-stricken communities in Africa. Last year, we made nearly £18,000, a tremendous achievement! This year will be a particular challenge as the event cannot go ahead in its usual form because of Covid 19. Instead, we're putting together a 'Virtual Gardens Day' which is proving to be a good learning experience! The idea is to feature a series of short films, garden stories, compiled by the gardeners who would have been opening. The plan is to go live on YouTube on 27th June, the originally planned day. I hope you manage to access it - through wilmslowwells.org – enjoy watching it and if so, perhaps you will make a small donation!



The tulip tree – a special feature of David and Carys's garden

Text and photos David Cash

Members' gardens in Lockdown

My Lockdown garden in Warrington

Never have I been able to spend quite so much time in my garden. In the past I have either been working or going out with friends and family, but not since late March.

My house is built on a plot shaped roughly like a right-angled triangle with the long side facing south and overlooking the Manchester Ship Canal and the old Walton Locks. Willow trees and Silver Birch trees abound and it is a little like living on the edge of a wood. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

I am at the end of a cul-de-sac and I am fortunate enough to have quite a long front garden. The garden wraps around 3 sides of the house and I have planted several Silver Birch trees, giving the plot the feel of being on a woodland edge when viewed against the background of the trees growing around the old locks. I have developed it to be a wildlife garden more than anything else and have a badgers' sett a few yards over the boundary fence. Badgers and foxes visit, mice live in burrows in the back garden, much to the joy of the local cats, and birds nest in boxes around the house.



Julia's Spring garden

During lockdown I have managed to tidy up rather more than usual but some work is on hold until the birds have stopped nesting. Fortunately one of my projects was from a member's letter in the RHS magazine. It is a 3-tiered garden attached to the fence and I am experimenting with vegetables. The peas are doing fine but the leeks and spring onions are slow, possibly due to the seed being too old. Dwarf French beans are coming on well and should soon be ready to plant

out in the middle tier. I also have 2 Butternut Squash seedlings which I shall try in the bottom layer. I just hope I get something to eat later in the year.



Another project (less serious) was my pig in a barrel which a neighbour gave me a few years ago. It had been sitting by my front gate for some time and had become rather dirty and moss-covered. Following the last of Ed's talks when he told us about gilt frogs in a garden, I decided I would transform my pig. It was duly scrubbed clean and sprayed with gold paint. It is now back in its usual place looking very smart (above).



In early lockdown I spent many hours trying to identify and label the primula auriculas in my garden as I intend to transplant them to new beds. A couple of years ago I had lost a lot which were growing in pots, and I never labelled the ones transplanted into the garden. A few have not flowered this year so I shall now have to wait till next spring before I can identify them.

For the time being I am enjoying my garden but, come the autumn, I intend to build the pond I have wanted for so many years. I have identified a site and just hope there is not too much builders' rubble when I start digging. I shall probably always refer to it as my lockdown pond!

Julia Whitfield

Barbara's Spring project

Repton included deer in his sketches, lending scale and animation to the proposed landscape. The animation in our landscape has been a suitably scaled rat. We enjoyed watching him scurry across the lawn to gobble grain from the beneath the bird feeder beneath the Japanese maple, and leap into the foliage at any sound. Then one day it dawned on us that we were probably watching two rats. We called Environmental Health. To our amazement the call was answered promptly and for a small fee the rat man was despatched. He found a nest under the carpet on the sleeping compost heap and laid his bait. On next week's visit he confirmed that mother and offspring had gone to ratty heaven.



Barbara's Spring garden

But what of the wily male? After one more sortie and un-tempted by the bait he seems to have departed to pastures new.

And in case you ask, the golden leaved shrub centre photo is *Viburnum lantana* "Aureum" purchased from the late Lloyd Kenyon on our first CGT visit to Gredington, home of the national collection of *Viburnum*. The espaliered apples behind are from Caldwell's Nursery, and the oak, lifted last winter, is a seedling planted 40 years ago.

Barbara Moth

I'm very confused about gardening!

There is much excitement in our household as we approach the conclusion of a major garden make over. As I look back at the work we have done, I realise that I have acquired new skills. I can now drive a dumper truck and I'm damn nifty with a mini-digger. My soft skills have also had a lift as I have become expert in sourcing every kind of landscaping product during lock-down. But my leading speciality skill is moving vast amounts of soil and gravel with just a shovel and

a wheelbarrow. What I knew nothing about at the beginning was gardening or is that horticulture? As we approach the 'grand opening' of the new look garden, I find that I still know nothing about gardening!



Where do you want this gravel

I watch Gardeners' World only because not to do so is regarded in our household as a mortal sin on a par with disliking the music of Take That. I am clearly on the way to damnation. However, I have started recently to take more notice of Saint Monty and his utterances. The conclusion I have reached is that either he is not doing gardening or I'm not. I guess most likely me.



If you plant that it will never grow

I watch with awe as he teases out some seedlings whilst standing in an artfully distressed bothy with a row of quaint hand tools lined up in a telegenic row behind him. And, most mysterious is the unexplained role that dogs play in the whole gardening experience. Their presence I really don't understand as they never seem to do any weeding or digging.

My life in our garden is almost exclusively given over to the most arduous and unskilled labouring. As an alternative to an expensive gym membership, gardening as I have been introduced to it, has much to recommend it. The fitness achieved is remarkable with no subscription to pay and no irritating gym-bunnies sneering at the



Creating a garden during Lockdown

untanned weaklings. But I'm allowed no snazzy or for that matter rustic hand tools with which to do subtle things to an obscurely named plant. In gardening, as I know it, there is no elegant snipping of the topiary or expert grafting of a hybrid whatnot.

My only conclusion is that there is some kind of unspoken caste system in gardening and unknowingly I've ended up in the lowest. As an 'untouchable' I am condemned forever to move vast amounts of base materials. Or perhaps this is a form of medieval apprenticeship and in seven years time I will be trusted with a trowel. Whatever the explanation, it's clear that I'm not really 'getting' the joy of gardening that I so often hear referred to. Perhaps, if I persevere with the endless digging and shifting, I will achieve some form of gardening enlightenment - I hope so as, to be completely honest, the whole gardening gig is not really doing it for me right now.

Rupert Wilcox Baker

May I just add a footnote – we were planning to do a 'before and after' type article for the newsletter but as we're still so busy making the most of the amazing weather and getting the garden (nearly) finished that we haven't had time. We thought therefore we'd give you a taster and will do the finished results in a later edition! I've not been idle, just not doing quite so much heavy lifting. I'm in charge of planting, which does often involve shifting soil and pots and also sowing and planting out vegetables and the like – we haven't bought salad since January so are thinking of renaming ourselves Tom and Barbara. More soon.....

Christine Wilcox Baker

Photos Christine Wilcox Baker

Notes from a Locked Down Allotment

Would we/wouldn't we be allowed to visit our allotment?

The announcement of Lockdown in late March left allotment holders wondering whether visiting our plots would be allowed. Luckily for us, allotments were declared ideal places where one could exercise at an "anti-social" distance.

As most of our other activities have been banned, it was the allotment every day. Projects that had been talked about for years finally started to come to fruition. I'd always wanted a bed of cutting flowers – in March we turned the site of our old shed into our answer to Holland – the shed's foundations serving as paths between blocks of dahlias, lillies, gladioli, sunflowers, cosmos, zinnia and gypsophila.

We've moved compost bins, planted a new raspberry bed and cleared (very) overgrown patches from under the fruit trees. It's never looked better!

The Allotment's Answer to Socially Distanced Shopping

Our allotment shop – open Sunday mornings 10-12 - has sold gardening sundries and allotment essentials for years. Sadly, it wasn't designed for socially distanced shopping. So our ever-inventive committee came up with their take on 'click and collect'

E-mail your order by Thursday evening, it's processed and you're allocated a timed slot for pick-up – one at a time – with the exact money. Compost, canes and large items are delivered direct to the plot.

To some plot holders' surprise, the system has worked and we were in the happy position of access to garden supplies that weren't easily available elsewhere. That has ensured the shop's turnover has continued and our usual wholesale suppliers have been supported. Win-win!

More from the Locked Down Allotment next time

Water Wars and

A heart-warming story of Lost and Found

Tina Theis

Copy date for July newsletter is 30th June 2020

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk