



Magical Manley Knoll

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- Cheshire Gardens Trust visit to Cholmondeley Castle, 22nd September
- Planthunters Fairs – Capesthorpe Hall, Ness Botanic Gardens
- The Gardens Trust autumn zoom talks starting 19th September

Magical Manley Knoll



On a warm dry day in May Cheshire Gardens Trust made a return visit to Manley Knoll, the home of James and Roisin Timpson, who have lived there since 2010. It has been several years since our last visit and it was interesting to see how this garden has been developed. On our arrival we were greeted by the Estate Manager, Thomas Leese, and the Groundsman, Tom Saxon (above), who gave us a brief introduction to the history of the site, from its early days as a quarry for Manley White Stone to its current incarnation as a family home, and some of the recent developments in the garden. The whole estate is about 50 acres and the gardens are 9 acres. The site has very acid, shallow soil, particularly in the Quarry Garden, and although the estate has a bore hole for water, keeping plants sufficiently watered is a problem. The current house is in the Arts and Crafts style, in an elevated position with views towards Chester and the Welsh Hills. We were invited to wander around the garden and the two Toms also walked around ready to answer our questions.



To the north of the house there is a small lake (above), home to wildlife, with a walkway around it and with views towards Manley Wood. The formal gardens are to the south, sloping down to the road and are made up of several individual areas, divided by neatly clipped yew hedging. Dotted about the garden there are a number of statues. I spotted a Minotaur, hunting dogs and a wild boar, and lots of seats, either Lutyens style wooden seats or metal seats with interesting backrests, including one

with a key and shoe design, reflecting the family's business interests. Immediately next to the house there is a wide terrace, with space for entertaining, overlooking a herbaceous border and herb garden. The retaining wall had a lovely wisteria in flower (see below).



On the right is the closely mown Tennis Court lawn which leads down to the Magnolia Walk and an area with mown paths through grasses where wildflowers have been allowed to grow; an increasing popular feature. To the left are small formal gardens, including a Hosta Walk and Azalea Bed. Further down the sloping lawn there is a formal sunken garden with a short canal, flanked by statues of dogs (see below) and surrounded by yew



hedging with pleached hornbeams, towering above. Next to it is the Nuttery, where the grass has been allowed to grow around the hazels, which are popular with squirrels! Further down again is the path behind the cottages leading to the orchard and potager garden, with raised beds, a greenhouse and beehives.

The highlight of Manley Knoll is the spectacular Quarry Garden (see front page). When Roisin and James Timpson arrived this area had been neglected for many years and was filled with tons of leaves which had accumulated to cover all the many features. Over time these have been uncovered and some features restored using old photographs as reference. It's not an easy garden with many steep and potentially slippery steps

for the unwary. Fortunately, it is also possible to access the Quarry from a lower level. There are several ponds, streams and a waterfall with a large variety of old rhododendrons, azaleas and a tulip tree. Work is ongoing to try to identify some of the rhododendrons. More recent developments include a Fernery and a Stumpery, using roots from felled or fallen trees.

After our visit we were entertained to tea and delicious cakes in Roisin Timpson's studio.

Patricia Hazlehurst

Photos Jim Jeeves, Kath Gee, Freyda Taylor and Sue Eldridge



Steps leading up to the Stumpery

A Film Crew in my Garden



Many of you will know Gordon Cooke, one of our members, a ceramicist and designer. He reported on his garden in Portugal recently and then appeared on *Gardeners World* on 22nd May. This is a report on the filming. You can see more of his work on <https://www.gordoncooke.co.uk>.

Not all gardeners would relish their garden being invaded by a camera crew; too disruptive and too damaging to plants etc. My suburban plot in south Manchester has had a lot of attention from the press over the years, some of which I have encouraged to bring more visitors and potential customers to my shows of ceramics. Others were so badly written and photographed I wish I hadn't bothered! The BBC contacted me some years ago with a view to filming but they, not unreasonably, lost interest when I told them I was absent in my Portuguese home for large parts of the year. This time, however, the researcher knew the garden and had visited before which made all the difference.

I had also made a short movie on my phone the previous September when I'd returned after a long period of isolation in Portugal, which I'd sent to the BBC. Gardens, as we all know, are about catching the moment, and it's much easier to do that in one's own space and time.

Covid was still affecting everything when the due date

arrived. I returned from Portugal just a few days before and I was 'pinged' by the airline as someone on the flight was positive for the virus. This was the day before the filming! I thought, this isn't going to happen, but surprisingly, after I contacted the director who was already on his way from the south, he said, 'leave it with me and I'll speak to the producers'. As we had all been double vaccinated and it was an outside event, he said it could go ahead. We had to provide a private loo and they weren't allowed in the conservatory which I had lovingly prepared...



Stoneware garden sculpture by Gordon Cooke

The film crew had been pared down to an absolute minimum, so no hours in make-up trying to make me look ten years younger! The cameraman had the most to do and it was physically demanding for him to move the big equipment around. As no drones were allowed in suburbia, a long 'boom' was produced to get something like a bird's eye view. Pointing his camera to an orange *Thunbergia*, he asked us where the flowers were as he couldn't see them. Turns out that he is colourblind!

As it was a cold, heavily overcast day, I was surprised that they started the interview by cancelling out some of the light with black screens. It seems the cameras are so light sensitive that they can afford to lose some light to increase the modelling on facial features.

The crew were very polite, professional and efficient. I couldn't detect any plant damage. No cables dragged amongst the flowerbeds as all is battery powered. From 5 hours of film, they edit it down to just 7 minutes. A lot of time is wasted waiting for odd sounds to stop.

It's surprising how noisy suburbia is in what we think of as a quiet area. The occasional frustration of them choosing the less good plant to film was offset by their understanding when I fluffed my 'lines'.

I was impressed by the editing. I understood why some interesting things were omitted. It is a magazine programme after all and it's not the style of TV that goes into depth. Unusually, it concentrated on design rather than plants which was fine by me. It was nice that Monty Don continued the vista/cone debate with examples in his own garden.

Text and photos Gordon Cooke



lochroma australis "Alba". An easy shrub which likes my free draining soil. There's also a blue form

Poynton Park – continuing our series of parks in Cheshire



During Lockdown I rediscovered Poynton Park, commonly known as Poynton Pool (above), a beautiful place to walk and over the years used for community projects such as Poynton Show and the firework display. It is situated between Hazel Grove and Poynton, just off the road to Macclesfield. The pool in particular is magical with parkland and ancient trees on one side and a beech tree walk on the other. It has bullrushes, weeping willows, and is a habitat for wildlife; great crested grebes, mute swans, tufted ducks, herons, dragon and damselflies. It's surrounded by very grand houses, some with sweeping lawns leading down to the lake.



The Park in autumn

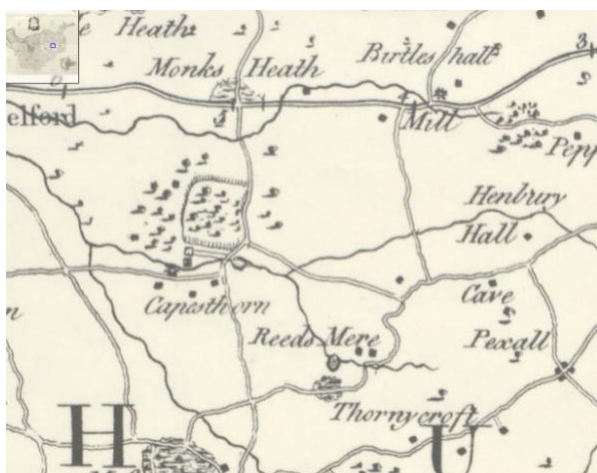
The Warren family built a manor house on the site, just north of Tower Road, between 1548 and 1552. Originally it was a timber framed building, typical of Cheshire at the time. Later twin towers were added and a bridge to keep out the deer. The driveway was lined with lime trees, some of which still survive. The second house was built by Sir George Warren (1735-1801), a more modern building in classical style. He laid out a park in the manner of 'Capability' Brown and built a road alongside, following the route from Hazel Grove to Macclesfield. He also created the Lake, known as Poynton Pool, by damming a tributary of Poynton Brook as part of the landscaping project. The Vernon family held it from 1826 to the final sale in 1920. Sir George Warren developed the coal mining industry in Poynton, which was later taken on by the Vernon family. Eventually the hall fell into disrepair and it was demolished in 1936 and a housing estate built on Towers Road.

The park and pool remain, as does the ice-house (below) dating from 1758, now on the other side of Towers Road from the Park. It is now a listed building, but not easy to find.

Text and photos Sue Eldridge



Research and Recording at Capesthorpe



Burdett 1777 map courtesy of Cheshire Local History Association

Capesthorpe Hall and Gardens, west of Macclesfield, are well known and much visited – indeed CGT had a group visit there a few years ago. But while the main buildings are listed, and the Scheduled Monuments from Bronze Age barrows to Medieval hamlet and water mill are documented, the designed Landscape Park itself is not Registered by Historic England, and not even on Cheshire's local list. The Research and Recording Group thought it time to rectify this and draw up a description of the garden and its history.

Much has already been written and published, so tracing the broad sweep of development is not hard. Held within the same family from its earliest time, the site of the old medieval house is now marked by a pillar (below). The chapel and original core of the new house were built from the 1720s, and the park begun. Key stages came in the late C18 when the lakes were formed, and then major changes through the early part of the C19 with the dramatic redesign of the house to a turreted 'Jacobean' style. There were later changes again as the house was gutted by fire and rebuilt in later C19; the garden was formalised before its decline through early C20, and its post war renaissance.



The joy of research is the random snips of information that give insight into the how and why. Looking at the Cheshire County map of 1777, we see that Capesthorpe has a hall and chapel, with a long drive and an enclosed park (with palings); that there is a water mill and also – of significance – that while there are no lakes indicated, the waterway running from the small natural Redes Mere has been dammed and is forming a larger pool. In



View from 1843 bridge across Middle Pool to old kitchen garden

all, a lot more information than neighbouring properties show. This damming is preparatory to the lakes being formed and is a key piece of evidence. Capesthorpe's owner in 1777 is Davies Davenport III, a young man barely 20 years old and about to be married to Charlotte Sneyd of Keele Hall, where the landscape designer William Eames has just finished building his elaborate lakes. Maybe it is from him that young Davenport has inspiration for his own lakes? With County maps usually funded by subscription, local landowners likely paid to have their estates marked on; what leaps out is a young man just taking charge of his inheritance and eager to literally put himself on the map, going on to commission the major changes in the 1830s.



Site of Paxton's original conservatory which spanned from house to chapel, just visible pads where original pillars would have been

When Walter Bromley-Davenport inherited in 1949, his American wife Lenette undertook a huge amount of family research and wrote many articles. Post war, as so many of these grand houses were lost, the National Archives had offered to store family muniments. So gradually, as Lenette took over the reins and sorted family papers, large deposits were made, now being held at John Rylands Library in Manchester. Here I found the original 1834 estate plan and drawings for the landscape park prepared by the architect Edward Blore, beautifully drawn, delicately coloured – evidence of the ambitious proposals, including a wonderful conservatory by Joseph Paxton, against which we can see what was actually built

what modified, and what remains. Later garden plans from 1869 show the changes proposed after the fire and Salvin's re-build. These I'm sure were drawn up by the Head Gardener for, while the idea was to formalise and enclose the garden behind the house and put in the fashionable 'broderie' flower beds, the design is worked round the old Mulberry tree that must already have been on the site since its C18 inception, and perhaps, the family felt too dear to lose.

The renaissance of the gardens came post-war, as the house and grounds were open to the public by early 1950s. Attending Emma Hill's CGT talk a couple of years ago on the designer/nurseryman James Russell whose designs at Hare Hill they are hoping to restore, I found he had worked at Capesthorpe too. From his archive held at York's Borthwick Archive Institute, it's been possible to ascertain what input and thoughts the family had already had on the garden, and what their aims were (to look good in June/July when they had most visitors), and how Russell helped with suggestions. The photo opposite shows a view into the original Pleasure Grounds of Mill Wood, opened up according to Russell's 1956 plans by removal of a row of fastigate yews, two of which remain.

This has been invaluable in understanding this later flowering of the gardens, as most published work only takes its history to the Victorian heyday.



And so it was that the R&R group had our last meeting and very nice lunch at Capesthorpe, where we happily wandered about uncovering the layers of its history – and I anguished about whether I should yet again add to the report with the latest ongoing changes to this living, well-loved landscape.

Liz Roberts, R&R Group

C19th Picturesque Garden on Sandstone Ridge?

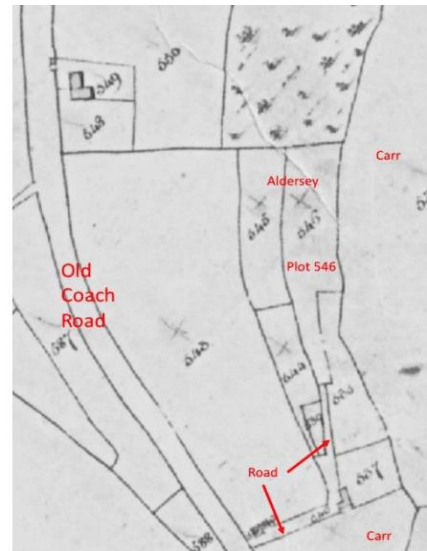


View from Sandstone Ridge at Barnhill

The Sandstone Ridge is a significant feature in the landscape, rising dramatically from the Cheshire plain. It covers approx. 230 square metres, running from Frodsham in the north to Malpas in the south. The Sandstone Trail, a popular distance walk, runs 34 miles along its route with stunning views across the Cheshire Plain and towards Wales. Bolesworth, Manley Knoll and Foxhill, all gardens that we have visited, sit on the Sandstone Ridge, taking advantage of the view. The area has been identified by Natural England as a potential AONB with formal evaluation beginning this June.

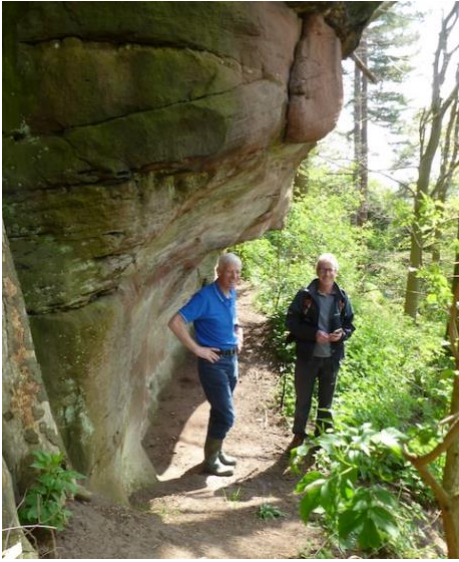
The Sandstone Ridge Trust was formed in 2011 and has undertaken a wide variety of projects and research. Recently they have uncovered evidence of what appears to be an early C19th picturesque terrace, about 30-50m long, cut into the west-facing escarpment at Barnhill. It

is now part of the Bolesworth Estate but it is thought that the original garden might have been built by Mary Aldersey (1778 - 1861) who owned the site, as shown in the 1840 tithe map (below).



Tithe map 1840

She may have wanted to develop the ground as a picturesque garden with stunning views for travellers on the Old Coach Road. The land was bought by a wealthy businessman, Isaac Hadwen, in 1864, and when in 1876, the Barbours at Bolesworth acquired it, the deeds show that it was described as "pleasure grounds". The house, Bellfield, was renamed **Bankhead**, and became the Dower House for Bolesworth.

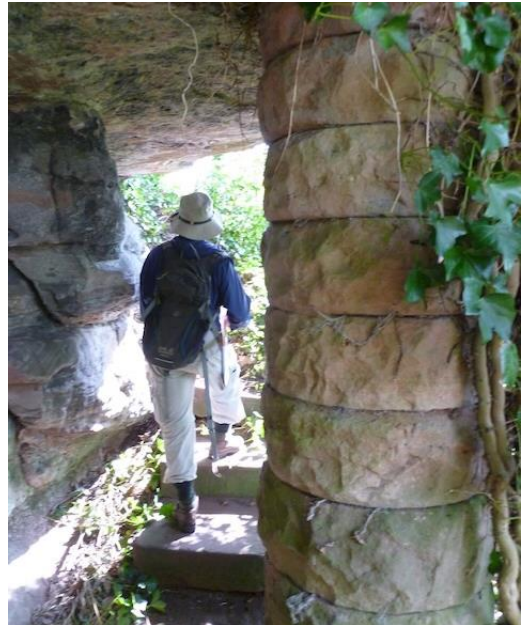


Derek Bell and Nick Holmes alongside one of the overhangs

The group undertaking the research had already identified various features, stunning natural stone outcrops with overhangs and a path below. Before the plantation of trees, the path would clearly have enjoyed impressive views to the west but these are now obscured. Towards the northern end of the path there is a remarkable collection of man-made features designed to adapt the natural overhangs in a manner reminiscent of the late C18th passion for the picturesque. One of the overhangs is massive and, with the potential for collapse, has been supported by a column constructed of 11 circular sandstone segments about 60cms in diameter. Stone steps run up to the field boundary above which there is what appears to have been a semi-circular viewing platform. This access to the top of the cliff is visible on the 1892 Ordnance Survey map.

The Sandstone Ridge team was keen to establish if there had been any garden planting in the area. They consulted Cheshire Gardens Trust and late in Autumn 2021, Barbara Moth visited. But at that stage there was limited vegetation and little to see. It was decided that a spring visit would be better. Barbara put out a challenge for CGT members to become involved. I accepted and turned up to meet three of the Sandstone

Ridge team on a sunny day in April. The ground was accessed via one of the team's gardens. The plan was to investigate the path at the bottom of the ridge and identify plants. There was not a lot to see but there were a couple of lilacs along with a lot of wildflowers (foxgloves, campion, hogweed, arum, bluebells, elderflower, ivy).



Peter Winn climbing the sandstone steps alongside sandstone column

Then the ridge itself, very steep and not for the faint hearted. On the way up the slope we noticed a lot of what might have been planted trees – Scots pine, chestnuts, beech. We fought our way up to the top and the path along the ridge below the magnificent outcrops and overhangs. It certainly had been added to, with the steps, pillars and viewing balcony. Wrought iron railings could have been part of the original garden. But the only other garden-style shrub was a rhododendron.

So, what now? The group plans to get help with some further clearing and possibly some funding to do further research.

Sue Eldridge and Barbara Moth

**With thanks to Peter Winn, Derek Bell, Nick Holmes
from the Sandstone Ridge Trust**

<https://www.sandstoneridge.org.uk>

Newsletter feedback

One of the outcomes of having a group to support the Newsletter is that members of the group question everything, including the purpose of the Newsletter, what people think of it and what should be the content. It was always assumed that no one would respond to a questionnaire sent out to all members but Isabel Wright proposed and trialled a method of contacting people personally to see what they thought. She got a good response so in order to extend this, we each agreed to contact 10/12 members. In all we contacted around 60 people, around a third of the membership. More than

thirty responses were received.

The length of responses varied from one-word answers to the questions to very comprehensive ones. The vast majority of responders were very complimentary of the Newsletter: -

"I find everything interesting and informative and huge thanks to the contributors and the Newsletter team."

"...The Newsletter is an excellent publication. All the articles are so well researched and written and the photos, particularly the striking ones on the front cover

are lovely.”

“Keep up the great work!”

“The present mix of articles is very good and much appreciated – my grateful thanks to you, Sue...”

“... congratulate the team on doing a fantastic job! I think the Newsletter is superb and demonstrates there is great vibrancy within CGT.”

We found that very few people printed out the Newsletter, but some members were sent paper copies. The Newsletter was read on phones, tablets, laptops and PCs.

Several people commented that it would be much easier to read online if it were not in two columns, which we will be experimenting with.

There were also general comments about making the Newsletter available to a wider audience and increasing the use of our website.

Suggestions on content were:

Increasing the information on CGT and its working groups, which we will be definitely taking on board.

Other topics suggested were: Cheshire nurseries – past and present; past and current garden designers, not the usual ones; new gardens, parks, open spaces; aspirations of owners; lives and careers of some of our members; members’ own gardens; members involved in opening their gardens for NGS; what’s good this month, plant of the month; specialist plants, like previous articles on hostas, hellebores; historic woodland; restoration; conservation “threats”.

We will take on several of these on an occasional basis, particularly designers and a focus on individual members and their gardens. We will continue with parks, Head Gardeners and ‘Why is this Here?’ on a regular, but alternating basis.

Please continue to send in articles as part of a series or on an ad hoc basis. We really welcome members’ contributions; without them there would be no Newsletter! Maybe we have given you some ideas for subjects to write about?

The Newsletter Support Group
newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Peter Shephard, Landscape Architect 1913-2002

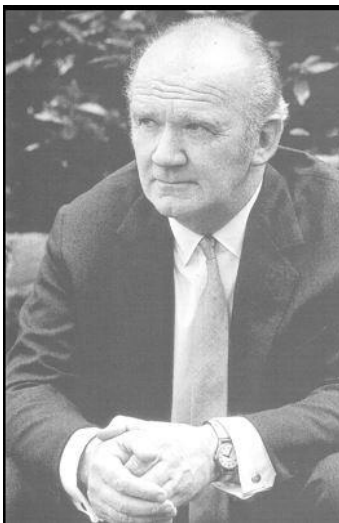
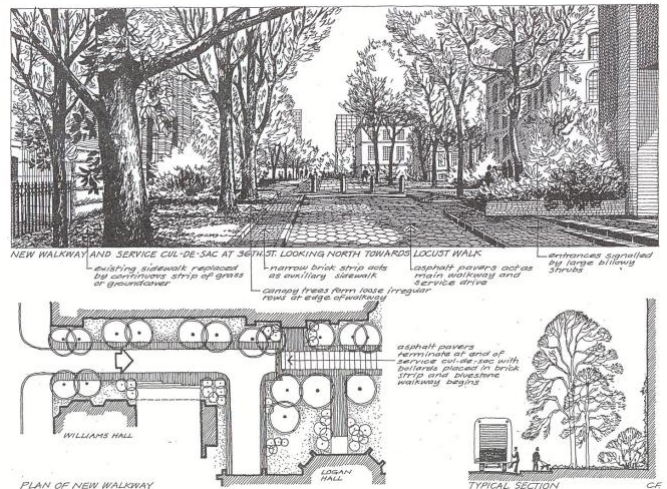


Photo of Peter Shephard by John Donat for RIBA

As part of the Gardens Trust’s series of Zoom talks (in association with FOLAR*) on Post War garden designers, Ed Bennis gave us a fascinating insight into the career of Peter Shephard (above). Shephard studied architecture at Liverpool University and had a long and illustrious career in architecture, landscape architecture and town planning.

His early career included the Festival of Britain and work with GLC Housing. He was excellent at drawing and one of his keynotes was simple structures and attention to detail and the spaces between buildings and other structures.

In 1962 he became a visiting lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania and then Dean of the Graduate School of Fine Art. Some of the work he did here typified his style:



Peter Shephard’s drawings for the University of Pennsylvania

beautiful graphics, interesting use of different pavings, wide pathways, spacious areas and use of sculpture. It still looks good today. At Longwood Gardens in the USA, Shephard was consultant from 1971 to 2001 and enlarged the lily pond to ensure more pleasing proportions.

In the UK, Shephard worked on a modest sunken garden at Goldsmith’s College, with narrow strips of planting and good use of paving material, a perfect place for sitting. Roper’s Garden (also known as Cheyne Walk Gardens), the focus of Ed’s talk, was part of a marriage gift from Thomas Moore to William Roper and Margaret Moore in 1521. The garden was on the site of later buildings here and was destroyed by a bomb in 1941. It was an awkward site on different levels with chicken wire, barbed wire, bricks and rubble but also wartime



Goldsmith's College, photo Ed Bennis

allotments when Shephard started his design in the late 1950s. Shephard made a sunken garden, raising the walls to give height with a terrace on one side overlooking the garden. He produced a lovely drawing of a corner of the garden, sheltered by high walls with seating and lovely planting. This included some of Shephard's favourite plants, climbers, foxgloves, irises, roses, geraniums and sedum. The garden is very accessible with well-placed seating and a disabled ramp. Shephard said he'd never seen the garden empty.



Peter Shephard's drawing for Roper's garden, Landscape Institute University of Reading

Many of Shephard's later commissions were private gardens, albeit on a grand scale in some cases. He designed a series of gardens for Winfield House, Regents Park, the official residence of the United States Ambassador. He helped to restore Charleston Farmhouse in East Sussex, the home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, depicted in one of Grant's paintings.

Ian McHarg, influential Scottish landscape architect, said of him *'It would be difficult to find a figure in the environmental profession at once so talented and so modest, as wide in scope and yet so meticulous in design, and yet so committed to human values as Dean Peter Shephard.'*

*Friends of the Landscape Archive at Reading

Sue Eldridge, with support from Ed Bennis

RHS Bridgewater Wins 1st Place in European Garden Award

TIM UPSON
RHS Director of Horticulture, Education and Communities

RICHARD GREEN
Head of Site, RHS Bridgewater

JOHN PYE
Head of Capital Projects - North

TRACY SNELL
Garden Manager

Investor, Ownership and Management:
Royal Horticultural Society RHS

Masterplan: Tom Stuart-Smith

Completed: 2021

not be more delighted that RHS Bridgewater has been named the winner this year against such strong competition from other outstanding projects across Europe.' Richard Green, Head of Site at RHS Bridgewater added *'this is a wonderful tribute to the work done by the incredibly talented team who realised a magnificent vision for our fifth RHS garden...'*



Schloss Dyck in Germany

The European Garden Awards are hosted by the European Garden Heritage Network (EGHN) which has membership of over 200 parks and gardens in 15 countries. RHS Bridgewater took first place in the category *Design or Concept of a Contemporary Park or Garden*; joint second place went to La Pista 500 in Italy and Podzámeký in the Czech Republic. Tim Upson, RHS Director of Horticulture, Education and Communities accepted the award for the RHS at Schloss Dyck in Germany. He said that the award *'was one of the most coveted titles that a garden can earn, and that we could*

The international jury of designers, horticulturalists and managers were particularly impressed with Tom Stuart-Smith's master plan and design, the build and planting

quality, the social commitment and connection to the local community. The sense of maturity of planting in such a short time was very impressive. Ed Bennis' laudation was presented by Christian Grussen: he said that *'This is the start of a heroic scale adventure into the world of gardens and an important resource in terms of social inclusion, education, job creation, inward investment and the promotion of horticulture and all aspects of gardens.'*

A jury member placed RHS Bridgewater into context and said *'It is the combination of modern garden design in an historic landscape and its special location that makes Bridgewater an outstanding garden of the highest quality.'*



Information on this year's awards can be found at: <https://wp.eghn.org/en/ega-2022/>

Ed Bennis

Abbeywood Gardens, Afternoon Tea and AGM – a perfect combination



CGT Members gathered in Abbeywood's gardens

On a fine afternoon in late June, Head Gardener Simon Goodfellow welcomed nearly 60 CGT members and friends to the Abbeywood Estate. Simon and his recently appointed deputy Carolyn Jones led an informative garden tour which also gave us plenty of time to stop and enjoy the garden layout and planting. It also allowed a welcome opportunity to catch-up with fellow members – for some of us it was the first actual event attended for over two years.



Fan Palm in Tropical garden

The gardens at Abbeywood were a delight – the Exotic Garden thrilled with its exuberant planting. Truly it felt as though you were in some far-flung tropical oasis with huge bananas, papayas and palms interspersed with cannas, dahlias and begonias. Many of these tender plants are lifted each winter and replanted in the spring, though some become too large and are left to fend for themselves – and many do survive (though they are also regularly propagated ... just in case!)



The pretty Chapel Garden offered a calming contrast with a planting scheme of mostly blues, greens and whites. The adjacent, more formal Pool Garden (above) originally featured traditional box parterres but now has a more contemporary feel. Massed planting of red *Lychnis* is striking in the cottage-garden style borders, complementing the pretty white irises in the central pool.

Rose-clad pergolas and wide herbaceous borders jam-packed with naturalistic planting greet us in the next section of the garden with a splendid *Thuja* avenue leading to a prairie-style garden as an end point – swaying grasses and curving mown paths overlook the Cheshire countryside.

And there's more to come as we potter round the fruit and vegetable plots before heading to the Glasshouse



The Glasshouse and tea

for our afternoon tea – stopping only to breathe in the sensational scents in the Rose Garden. We were astounded to discover that Abbeywood employs only two full-time gardeners and a small band of volunteers to look after this glorious space.

The AGM took place as we enjoyed tea, sandwiches and generously proportioned slices of cake. Members of the Council of Management highlighted CGT's achievements over the past year – noting that, despite the difficulties presented by the pandemic and an ever-dwindling CoM Team, we continue to function as an active Trust.

Events have continued and we now have a regular and popular programme of virtual and actual talks and visits. Membership has remained stable with a steady stream of new members. Thanks are due to Research and Recording for their tireless work recording our Cheshire parks, gardens and landscapes and to Conservation and Planning for continuing its essential role in commenting on planning applications.

Special mention went to the Newsletter Team for its excellent coverage of the Trust's activities and to the Website Team for the new, improved website which members were encouraged to use. Our new('ish) Treasurer promised online banking and easier, more efficient methods of payment in the future.

We ended with a tribute to Ed Bennis for his sterling work as Chair – Ed has finally and formally stepped down after many years at the helm – we will miss his leadership but look forward to his continuing presence in CGT.

Finally, Ed and the CoM Team made a plea for volunteers – without people to step in and help with our many and varied activities, there is a real risk that the Trust will become moribund. Cheshire Gardens Trust needs you!



Ed Bennis receiving a map of Cheshire as a tribute to his outstanding contribution to CGT

Tina Theis

Photos Gordon Darlington, Kath Gee and Jim Jeeves

Manchester's trial "Sky Park"



Viaduct showing construction equipment engaged in developing the Sky Park along the rail track.

For some years the National Trust has expressed the desire to have a greater presence in urban areas and engage with inner city communities. We have all been more aware of the need for green space in urban areas during the last two years with the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. This was particularly apparent in central Manchester. While the city overall can boast 143 parks

there is a distinct absence of green space in the city centre. The opportunity to develop a new park in the densely developed urban centre is limited. The success of the High Line park in New York, developed on the abandoned elevated rail track, identified the potential of the Castlefield viaduct.

The trial 'sky park' will be supported on the last of the three railway viaducts to cross Castlefield basin, the Manchester terminus of the Bridgewater Canal. The viaduct was constructed in 1893 to take rail traffic to and from the Great Northern Railway Company's Warehouse located adjacent to Deansgate. It was designed and built by Heenan and Froude engineers of Miles Platting who were also responsible for Blackpool Tower.

The structure is impressive with the main girders supported on cast iron cylindrical columns which are bedded in Portland cement and resting on solid rock some 20ft below the surface. The longest column is 60ft high from the ground to the rail level. For 77 years the viaduct carried heavy rail traffic until it closed in 1969

and has remained surplus to the rail infrastructure requirements. Lacking a commercial use to justify a substantive maintenance programme the viaduct poses significant challenges for the conservation and long term future of this Grade II listed structure.

The National Trust is working in partnership with The National Highways Historic Railways Estate Team to deliver the project supported by Manchester City Council, GMCA Transport for Greater Manchester, and the local community businesses and supporters. The project forms part of the National Trust's Urban Places work which seeks to address the lack of green space in and around urban areas after finding 296 grey desert areas across Britain with no trees or accessible green space.

Duncan Laird, Head of Urban Places for the National Trust said *"We're delighted to be starting this project to bring new life to the viaduct, establishing its place in this vibrant area of the city.... Our ambition is to give more people the opportunity to enjoy the health and well-being benefits of green, nature-rich havens on this remarkable heritage structure in the city."*

The 'sky park' development has temporary planning permission for a year to trial the concept. After the testing phase the Trust will consider all the learning, ideas and visitor feedback which will inform proposals for a long term sustainable solution for the future of the Castlefield viaduct. The aim of the project will be to provide a cultural, heritage and green space amenity in the heart of the city, a place that the people of Manchester can use and benefit from well into the future.



The Trust is working with community partners to develop the trial 'sky park'. The partner organisations include Urban Wilderness, City of Trees, Castlefield Forum and The Science and Industry Museum. Each organisation is engaged in the development of planting plots and will be engaged in the organisation of tours and events throughout the year. The planting schemes will be designed to attract pollinators and birds to the viaduct. There will be interpretation, installations and a flexible space to host events and community engagement. Part of the viaduct will be left untouched to provide a sense of how nature has reclaimed the site over the last 50 years.

Initially intended to open in early July this year, it is running behind schedule and is now planned to open by the end of July. Visitors will be able to pre book places on daily guided tours. Visit the website <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/castlefield-viaduct> to check progress and book places on tours.

Moira Stevenson

CGT Activities – The Events Team



Events team at Eaton Hall, l to r Jackie Cawte, Margaret Blowey, Julia Whitfield, Sue Eldridge, Gordon Darlington, Carolyn Yardley, Janet Horne

Feedback from the Newsletter questionnaire that we sent out suggested that members would like to learn more about Cheshire Gardens Trust and its working groups of volunteers. So, we decided we would feature one group in each future issue in order to encourage more people to get involved.

There has been an Events Team since the launch of CGT in 2004. Tina Theis led the first group, followed by Jane Gooch and Jacquetta Menzies. Now it is Margaret

Blowey, also a member of Council of Management (CoM), who leads the group. The other members are Jackie Cawte and Julia Whitfield, both also members of the Research and Recording Group, Gordon Darlington, who is also a member of CoM, Janet Horne, who takes our minutes and has organised many events, Sue Eldridge, who also edits the Newsletter and our most recent member Carolyn Yardley.



CGT Visit to Norton Priory – Sue Eldridge far left, Janet Horne in the middle



CGT Visit to Manley Knoll

The main purpose of the group is to organise summer garden visits and winter talks. This has been difficult during the Pandemic and we took very tentative steps last year to resume visits. But there is obviously an appetite now to get back to visiting gardens and meeting up with friends. We try where possible to explore new gardens and, to make CGT visits special, have Head Gardeners or owners show us round. In normal times we'd be scouring the National Garden Scheme book for new gardens, doing a 'recce' this year, ready for a visit the following year. But these are still not normal times, which is why we have not been able to plan quite so far ahead.

Also, in normal times we'd meet up in a village hall for teas/coffees and an interesting talk. We're still pondering what we might do for winter 2022/2023. Zoom talks kept us all going over the last couple of years. We're just so grateful to Margaret Blowey who mastered the technology and often coached the speaker through



Margaret Blowey at Manley Knoll

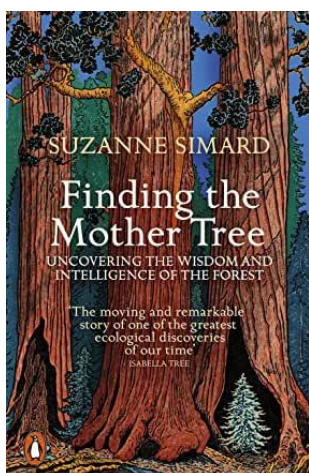
their paces. We were able to travel far and wide in search of speakers, including to the south of France, and were able to have a really interesting programme. But some of us would like to get back to meeting up. We need to decide now what we do; possibly a mixture of in-person talks and Zoom.

If you have some spare time, you'd be very welcome to join us in the Events Team. We meet every few months, (by zoom or in person). We need your ideas and suggestions for events as much as anything else and members prepared to get in touch with owners/head gardeners/speakers.

So, see you at one of our events. Get in touch if you would like to join us or if you have ideas about visits or speakers.

All best wishes from the events team
events@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Finding the Mother Tree



What makes a forest? That is the question at the heart of the book *Finding the Mother Tree: Uncovering the Wisdom and Intelligence of the Forest* by Suzanne Simard Published by Penguin Books, 2022.

Simard has spent a lifetime searching for the answers

to what makes a forest – and more importantly – what makes a *healthy* forest. We all know that trees are important to life on earth – and to our own well-being but do we really understand this part of the ecosystem? Tracing the personal and professional journey that she took over several decades, Simard's book is a tour de force. What could be a dry exposition of the research she has undertaken becomes a lively and intriguing story of human interactions. At the same time, she explains how a forest works: and that too is intriguing.

This is a fascinating read which explores the failings of the timber trade in the twentieth century and how those failings have impacted upon the health of Canada's forests. It will be of interest to botanists, researchers, feminists and anyone who cares about our world.

Joy Uings

The Gardens Trust News and Other Events



The Fabric of Flowers

Most events and lectures series have drawn to an end for the summer break, though new monthly **Unforgettable Gardens** nominated by County Gardens Trusts are still being added to the main Gardens Trust website and can be read under the Campaigns section <https://thegardenstrust.org/campaigns/unforgettable-gardens-saving-our-garden-heritage/>. It also includes a link to The Bicycle Boys online exhibition, which features Loyal Johnson and Sam Brewster's trip to Eaton Hall and other gardens in 1928.

Autumn Events announced so far start with The Fabric of Flowers, exploring how flowers and gardens have inspired textile artists, from 19th September. This is followed by Restoring Historic Gardens from 5th October; and Gardens Designs around the French Riviera, starting 25th October, which will be interesting following Stephanie Knoblich's zoom talk in February. Full details are available at <https://thegardenstrust.org/events/>

The core work of The Gardens Trust is to protect our registered designed landscapes and, as Statutory Consultees for any planning applications, they have been involved in some high profile cases recently. An appeal by London Gardens Trust was brought to the High Court against the proposal to build the promised Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, a protected (by law in 1900) park next to the Houses of Parliament. The appeal was successful, the public garden remains a protected space, and an alternative site will have to be found for this important memorial centre.

The second appeal has been less successful – the House within Stowe's C18, Grade I landscape, seen as one of

the most important registered gardens and managed by The National Trust, is used by Stowe School. They had applied during lockdown to build a new Design and Technology Centre in part of Rook Spinney, one of the oldest unaltered areas of the Park and, despite opposition from the local Aylesbury Vale District Council, The Georgian Society, Historic England, and The Gardens Trust, Bucks CC have decided to approve the plans; Government has declined to intervene.

More lockdown developments occurred at Thornbridge Hall in Derbyshire, a Grade II registered and an RHS partner garden, where several planning regulations were breached. The Peak National Park Authority has called in the help of GT over enforcement action for unauthorised developments. It seems strange that both the National Trust and RHS have not been more sensitive to these Registered Landscapes. And the next big battle will be over the protected wider landscape at Hampton Court, where a major development has been proposed, rejected, and has gone to appeal; The Gardens Trust will be represented at the Inquiry.

CGT Events

There will be a CGT visit to Cholmondeley Castle on 22nd September and talks in person or by zoom over the autumn and winter. Information on both will be circulated later.

Plant Hunters Fairs: within Cheshire - 14th August, Capesthorpe; 4th September, Ness Botanic Gardens. Check website for fairs further afield, and for ticket information. www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk and there are still plenty of gardens open through the **National Gardens Scheme** <https://ngs.org.uk>



Ness Botanic Gardens

Liz Roberts

Don't forget to visit the CGT Website <https://www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk/>?, to find plenty of information on our Parks and Gardens, Research and Recording; find out about our latest visits; look at what's going on in Planning and Conservation, including a log of consultations; and see photos of all our activities in the Gallery, including the Loyal Johnson/Eaton Hall project. There is an excellent facility, developed by Tina Theis, to search for information across the whole of the website using key words. So many people say "We didn't know this was here", so have a look and be amazed!!

Copy date for October newsletter is 30th September

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