



'Laced Polyanthus' from The Amateur's Flower Garden by Shirley Hibberd, first published 1871 and re-published in 1986 by Croom Helm Ltd. of Beckenham, Kent

Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust

NEWSLETTER No. 19, Spring 2009

Letter from the Chairman

As I write this, spring is with us once again. A return to a more traditional winter with a period of exceptionally low temperatures has left some of us wondering about the effects on our gardens. Some of the impact may not be apparent until later in the year, but already there are alarming reports from gardens in the south-west. However, the colder weather may also bring definite benefits, particularly as regards disease and pests. Fortunately we gardeners can always find something to enjoy, and something to do, whatever the weather and whatever the season.

During last year we lost Neville Whittaker. Neville had been a loyal member of the Trust for many years, had given valuable service on our Committee, and at one time was the editor of the Newsletter. We all miss him.

Last year, Gilly Drummond was appointed an OBE for services to the environment. Members who came to our inaugural gathering at Wenlock Priory will remember Gilly's enthusiastic and persuasive promotion of the potential role of County Gardens Trusts, a project which she launched in her home county, Hampshire, some 25 years ago. Now every county in England has its own Gardens Trust, but this project is just one of several environmental organizations in which

Contents

Obituary: Neville Whittaker

Church Stretton's Lime Trees

A New Service for Shropshire's Historic Environment

Design for a Bee Garden, 1930

The Georgians in Wales

First Sighting of 'Daffodils'

Wyre Forest Orchard Project

Book Reviews

Forthcoming Events

Exhibitions, including Beth Chatto in London and Sculpture at Attingham

Gilly has played an active and inspiring role. We send her our congratulations.

During the last year the Trust has been engaged in discussions with Shropshire County Council and local representatives in Church Stretton about the future of Rectory Wood. The historical significance of this landscape is greatly enhanced by the possible link with Capability Brown, who was a friend of Professor Mainwaring who owned the Rectory. Our concern to see that this aspect of the landscape is given due consideration alongside the nature conservation needs, has led us to join in commissioning a specialist landscape historian, John Phibbs of Debois, to research and provide a report with management suggestions for Rectory Wood. This project is ongoing and I hope we will be able to publish an article on its progress in our next edition.

I am pleased to be able to report that we have made two awards under the recently launched bursary scheme, and I hope that in a future newsletter we may be able to share with you some of the achievements arising from these grants.

I look forward to seeing many of you at some of the forthcoming events, which you will find listed on the back cover of this newsletter. If this programme appeals to you, may I invite you to consider whether any of your friends might also enjoy these events and might be recruited as members.

John Thompson
Chairman

MEMBERSHIP

Single Adult	£12.50	Life Membership	£150.00
Family	£20.00	Double Life	£200.00
Student	£6.00	Associations	£25.00

Cheques payable to Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust should be sent to:
Mrs. Daphne Capps, The Mount Cottage, 4
The Mount, Shrewsbury, SY3 8PS

OBITUARY

Neville Whittaker, OBE, RIBA

We report with sadness the loss of Neville Whittaker, who died in August last year. Neville was a long-standing committee member, who joined the working party involved in setting up the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust in 1997. For many years he was Editor of this newsletter, as well as being a consistent contributor himself and a wise and willing adviser to subsequent editors.



Neville Whittaker OBE, RIBA

Neville brought a wealth of experience as well as deep knowledge of architectural history and an infectious enthusiasm. He had moved from Durham to Shropshire, with his wife Rosemary, on his retirement. As an architect, conservationist and energetic campaigner, he had proved himself an ideal candidate as the first Director of the North East Civic Trust. It was in recognition of the many achievements of that small group during his 30 years in post, that he was appointed OBE in 1996.

Neville's contribution to the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust took several forms. His experience in Durham of achieving projects through educating and enthusing others led to the approaches he made on behalf of the SPGT to colleges offering

courses in horticulture and environmental studies in Shropshire. He also promoted the idea of the Trust offering a Bursary, which has now been set up (details on page 7).

Most of all the Committee would like to record their appreciation of his unflagging support for the purposes and work of the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust through his well-informed and constructive contributions in all aspects of its foundation and early development. We offer our warmest sympathy to his wife Rosemary and their family.

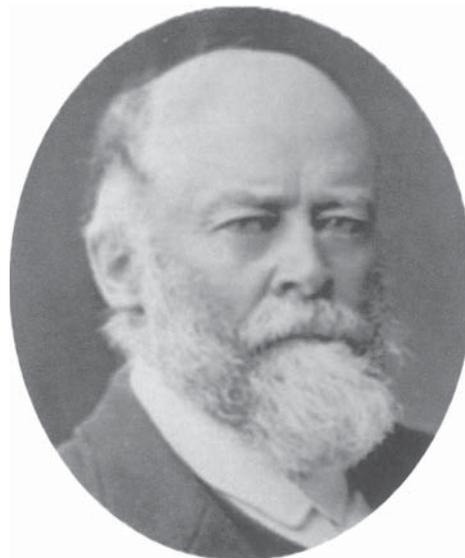
LIME TREE AVENUES IN CHURCH STRETTON

The setting of Church Stretton amongst the hills must always make it memorable, but once the visitor has reached the town itself it is the collection of handsome trees more than any other single feature that makes it remarkable amongst the small towns of England.

The Sandford Avenue

That an avenue of lime trees be planted, extending from the Church Stretton Hotel, on the corner of the Shrewsbury Road, to the railway station, had first been suggested in the early 1880's and this idea was taken up by the Reverend Holland Sandford, who was Rector of Eaton-under-Heywood from 1860 to 1900. Holland Sandford had been born in Shrewsbury and educated at Shrewsbury School. Inspired by his "...boyish recollections of Shrewsbury's glorious avenue, the Quarry...", in 1884 he announced his intention to offer an avenue of lime-trees to Church Stretton "...in recognition of many kindnesses and having lived in the locality for upwards of about 20 years".

A Committee was duly set up with Holland Sandford as President and George Windsor, bookseller, stationer and newsagent in Church Stretton, as Honorary Secretary. Both



The Reverend Holland Sandford (1823-1904)

Holland Sandford and George Windsor were active in the promotion of the town as a place to visit. It is from George Windsor's "A Handbook to the Capabilities, Attractions, Beauties and Scenery of Church Stretton" (1885) that this account of the creation of Sandford Avenue derives.

Sandford's stated aims were, first, to add a new and attractive feature to the landscape of the town and, second, to provide a sheltered walk for residents and visitors. His third aim was the provision of a large mass of foliage which would both dry and oxygenise the atmosphere.

The trees, supplied by Messrs James Dickson and Sons of Chester, who also donated an additional five trees, were planted by local dignitaries on the morning of 19th December 1884. In the afternoon a celebratory banquet was given, culminating in thirteen toasts.

A metal plaque fixed to the wall of the florist's shop in Sandford Avenue (not its original position) commemorates the planting of the first tree by Holland Sandford. On the opposite side of the Avenue a wooden entablature set into a section of old garden wall displays a coat of arms surmounted by the Sandford crest. In the upper left quarter are the arms of Holland Sandford's branch of



Planting the first tree in Sandford Avenue, 19th December 1884

the Sandford family, the Sandfords of the Isle of Rossall, and in the lower right quarter are the Holland of Tenbury arms of Sandford's mother, Frances Holland. The fleur de lys represents Holland Sandford's position as the sixth son.

Sandford subsequently decided to continue the avenue to the top of Hazler Road, the site of the former turnpike, and purchased another 70 trees, bringing the total to 153. In planting this extension to the avenue he tried to associate the planting with names of not only local but also national interest and these included a tree planted in the name of the Prince of Wales. Later he was to ask other members of the Royal family, including Queen Victoria, to grant association of their names with individual trees.

Today more than half of the trees have gone from the West side of the avenue leading to the town centre, but the short stretch remaining near the railway provides an attractive introduction to the town. The trees to the East of the A49 have fared better. Many of the original trees still remain and some replacements have been planted where trees have been felled. All the trees are now protected by Tree Preservation Orders

and if any need to be felled because of disease or safety considerations, they are replaced.

Lime Tree Walk

Less well-known and much more modest in scale is Lime Tree Walk. Sixteen lime trees form a small avenue bordering the footpath which leads from Carding Mill Road to Longhills Road.

It was in the early years of the twentieth century that large villas were beginning to appear on the new roads which had been laid out on the slopes of the Long Mynd between 1897 and 1905 by the Church Stretton Land Co.(1897-1908), and its associated company, the Church Stretton Building Co.Ltd. (1899-1905). The trees in Lime Tree Walk have been estimated as being about one hundred years old and must have been planted during this period of rapid development.

Alternate trees have been removed and those remaining are now 3 meters apart. All are healthy and the Town Council has made great efforts to preserve them, rejecting applications made by owners of neighbouring properties to have them felled. Like the trees

in Sandford Avenue, they are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

Ludlow Road

The remnants of another lime tree avenue can be seen on the Ludlow Road., which was the main road into the town from the South before the construction of the A49 by-pass. Ten trees remain on the West side of the road and a mere five on the East. Little is known of the origin of this avenue but it is assumed that this was another attempt to enhance the approaches to the town.

Mavis Anderson

A New Service for Shropshire's Rural Historic Environment

Shropshire's countryside as we see it today is the product of several thousand years of human activity. Farming, industry, settlement and conflict have all had a hand in shaping our landscape. The physical remains of this history are all around us. They range in size and scale from the huge hill forts that crown so many of our hills, through the ancient woodlands and field patterns and deserted medieval villages and castles that so enrich our countryside, to the ancient burial mounds and spoil tips that cluster together on our open moorlands. These relicts of our ancestors' labours are an integral part of the character and diversity of our county, and ultimately of our sense of place and identity. They also make an important contribution to the rural economy as a result of their ability to attract visitors, tourists and investment. Yet these traces of our past are finite and often fragile and require careful management if we wish to pass them on for future generations to enjoy.

In 2007 Shropshire County Council, with funding from English Heritage, was able to appoint an 'Historic Environment Countryside Advisor'. Several such posts have previously been established in other

counties of England and together provide a vital advisory service that helps to safeguard our rural heritage. In Shropshire the high level of interest among farmers and landowners in the new Environmental Stewardship schemes demonstrated the need for an increased level of service from the County Council for the rural historic environment. As part of the application process for the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, applicants are required to submit a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) which identifies all of the natural and historic features on a holding. In order to compile this, FEP applicants are required to formally consult the Historic Environment Record maintained by the relevant Local Authority. The new post of Historic Environment Countryside Advisor will provide an improved service in relation to these consultations, including the ability to undertake site visits and to provide more detailed management advice.

In addition, the role encompasses forestry and rural utilities consultations. Again, this includes providing management advice, undertaking site visits as necessary and, for utilities consultations, developing mitigation strategies where damage to any archaeological feature proves unavoidable.

With help from our partners, including English Heritage and Natural England, the new post has also provided the County Council with the capacity to undertake a number of projects to increase our knowledge of, and thus our ability to promote, the management of the rural historic environment. These include a survey of the character of Shropshire's historic farmsteads, the renewal of aerial archaeological surveys, and undertaking an additional field survey on the Stiperstones.

All this material forms part of the Shropshire Historic Environment Record (previously called the Sites & Monuments Record), which has been transferred from the previous card system to a new tripartite database system,



Aerial view of Moreton Corbet, recorded in 1588 as having a garden with ‘ divers walks and arbours’ (Shropshire County Council ref. 07-CRM-06-8496)



Brand Hall, near Market Drayton showing pre-parkland ridge and furrow (Shropshire County Council ref. 07-CRM-08-0558)

research had revealed changes over time in the layout of the picturesque walks and their relationship to buildings and views out over the landscape. Laid out in the mid-18th century, Piercefield was visited by many tourists to Wales whose diaries and sketches brought the landscape to life as well as helping to establish details of its features.

Penllegare, near Swansea, was by contrast a private landscape enjoyed mainly by the family of John Dillwyn Llewelyn (1810-82) and close friends. Surrounded by coal mines above and below ground, the owners made their hidden valley into a paradise of gardens, lakes and cascades. In the 20th and present centuries it has been encroached on by housing estates, supermarkets and the M4, and damaged through neglect and vandalism, but detailed survey is helping to identify features that can be rescued and restored.

Ken also showed examples of his survey work from other sites, including Dynefwr and Hafod itself, where his survey and analysis of almost every part of the 500 acre demesne has helped in developing our understanding of the way in which the landscape was manipulated and revealed to picturesque effect.

The next speaker was Dr Caroline Palmer, principal author the book “Historic Parks and Gardens of Ceredigion”. Her talk included an informative and entertaining look at some of Ceredigion’s gardens, illustrating how the family circumstances of owners and changes in fashion had influenced the development of gardens over time.

Among the sites featured were: Plas Penglais in Aberystwyth, where a small stream on the edge of the grounds became the location for a picturesque wooded dingle with a meandering path and rustic stone bridges, created by Anna Corbetta Richardes and her children in the 1840s; the romantic neo-Gothic Glandovey Castle, with its association with the satirist of the Picturesque, novelist Thomas Love Peacock; and the great Nanteos Estate, where successive generations of the Powell family commissioned but then greatly scaled down



The Peiran Falls on the Lady’s Walk at Hafod, a rare double cascade and one of the most famous features of Thomas Johnes’ picturesque landscape. This much painted cascade is not often in full flow. September 2008 (photo: Kunigunda Gough)

or ignored lavish professional plans for the landscape and the buildings within it, instead executing their own version of current fashions in design.

The morning concluded with a talk by Jennie Macve, Secretary of the Hafod Trust, who explained the history of the partnership between the Trust and the Forestry Commission, how it worked in practice, and what it had achieved. She then gave a brief summary of the background and upbringing of Thomas Johnes (1748-1816) and the influences that had led him to create a picturesque paradise at Hafod. A pictorial tour of the estate demonstrated how Johnes had made its superb natural scenery accessible by building walks, and how he had manipulated the landscape features to provide experiences of “surprise, variety and concealment” - essential components of the Picturesque.

After lunch, with exquisite timing, the morning’s torrential rain reduced to occasional light drizzle, and the group was able to enjoy a walk around the historic demesne where the cascades and mountain streams were at their most spectacular.

Jennifer Macve
Secretary of the Hafod Trust

An excellent new guidebook to Hafod has been written by Jennifer, including short essays on the Geology and Natural History, Farming and Forestry, and the Picturesque Tourist, as well as a full account of the Hafod landscape and its many owners since first acquired by Thomas Johnes' grandfather. It is beautifully illustrated, and only lacks a map. Copies can be ordered @ £5 plus £1 for postage, with a further £1 for a map if you are planning a visit, from the Hafod Trust, Hafod Estate Office, Pontrhydygroes, Ystrad-Meurig, Ceredigion, SY25 6DX).

First Sighting of 'Daffodils'

An extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Grasmere Journal' of 1802

We first rested in the large Boat-house, then under a furze bush opposite Mr. Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The Lake was rough. There was a Boat by itself floating in the middle of the Bay below Water Millock, We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows – people working. A few primroses by the roadside – woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and about them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing.

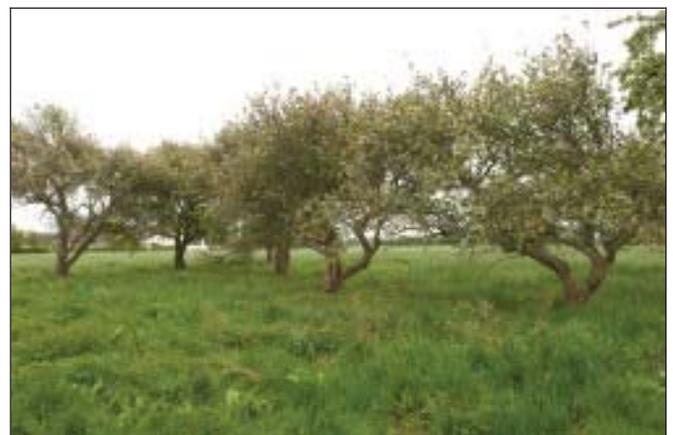
This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers a few yards higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway.

WYRE FOREST ORCHARDS

In the 1920's and 30's orchards near Bewdley in Worcestershire were famous throughout the country for their cherries. However, since the Second World War many of the orchards have been left unmanaged and cheaper fruit imports have meant that they have lost their commercial value. Meanwhile some of the decaying orchard trees have also become a valuable habitat for rare wildlife, including the noble chafer beetle, so the ancient trees are themselves in need of expert attention.

Now a three-year orchard restoration project has been launched in the Wyre Forest, led by the Forestry Commission. Three farms have been selected for the first project, in which a total of 85 new fruit trees are being planted, to be managed by the Wyre Community Land Trust. In all the aim is to restore 15 orchards, using local varieties of apples, plums, pears and damson, plus cherries. The Trust will also set up a crop sharing scheme and a juicing operation to enable local people to enjoy the fruits of these orchards once again.

For more information, see the website www.forestry.gov.uk/growwithwyre



A derelict orchard in the Wyre Forest

BOOK REVIEWS

The past year has seen the publication of a number of books of particular interest to garden historians in this region.

WELSH GARDENS REVEALED

Two recently published books on Welsh Gardens should encourage readers to explore across the Border. Written by a journalist and a historian, the books have quite distinct styles. Both authors now live in Wales and are bringing new gardens to our attention along with some of the famous gardens already well known to visitors.

The former, Stephen Anderton, brings an enthusiastic personal and sometimes provocative response to the 20 gardens he has chosen in *Discovering Welsh Gardens*. Along with well-known historic gardens such as Bodnant and Aberglasney, he has included small individual gems such as Dyffryn Fernant at Fishguard, and a cottage garden at Nant-yr-Eryd at Boncath. Stunning photographs by gardener/photographer Charles Hawes ably capture the particular qualities of design which inspired their selection by Anderton, including the extraordinary garden at Vedddw House in Monmouthshire, created by Hawes with Valerie Wareham. Both author and photographer respond with enthusiasm to topiary, well known at Plas Brondanw but a revelation at Tony Ridlers garden in Swansea.

The second book, *The Gardens of Wales*, whilst being in a more formal style, describes 27 gardens, of which 13 are not covered by Anderton. Helena Attlee, who is already known for her books on Italian and Portuguese gardens, brings a profound interest in the historical background and is well attuned to the foreign influences reaching these sometimes remote locations. In her selection, Bodnant is well known for its rhododendrons, but another large collection at Ffynone in Pembrokeshire may be less familiar. Garden buildings also attract her interest and the recent restorations of

Pulhamite stone grottoes at Dewstow and the Shell House at Cilwendeg in Pembrokeshire are recorded in photographs by Alex Ramsay.

Both authors do Wales and us as readers a great service in bringing to light several hitherto hidden gardens of real interest. It will be difficult to choose between them, and if they inspire a trip or two into Wales, perhaps two further volumes should be squeezed into the glove box. Simon Jenkins' recent book, *Wales' Churches, Houses, Castles*, is a worthy vademecum to illuminate both the social and architectural history of the country, enlivened by an always opinionated enthusiasm. An altogether different but again complementary companion would be J. T. Hughes' *Wales's Best One Hundred Churches*. (How long before we can enjoy a volume encompassing a comparable number of Welsh gardens?) This account is written with a quiet and erudite passion and a sensitivity to the spiritual impetus to the buildings and their association with the landscape in which they are set. The beautiful, serene photographs that accompany his text, by a group of Welsh photographers, also reveal the richness of the surrounding historic landscapes. These two books may well lure travellers away from their planned garden destinations, and all four will certainly enrich the journey.

'Discovering Welsh Gardens' by Stephen Anderton (Graffeg, £18.99); 'The Gardens of Wales' by Helena Attlee (Frances Lincoln, £16.99); 'Wales' Churches, Houses, Castles' (Allen Lane, £25); 'Wales's Best One Hundred Churches' (Seren, hardback £19.99, paperback £12.99)

The Morville Hours, by Katherine Swift, Bloomsbury 2008. £17.99
Based largely on Morville (Shropshire) and structured on the form of the Medieval Book of Hours, this is a fascinating and very insightful read. It is at once biographical, historical, horticultural and a journey – indeed a series of journeys and explorations of life, nature, gardens and relationships. The tone is elegiac, the form of both text and book precise and beautifully constructed.

Champagne and Shambles: the Arkwrights and the Downfall of the Landed Aristocracy, by Catherine Beale, Sutton Publishing. £20.00

A lively and detailed account of the Arkwright family's ownership of Hampton Court in Herefordshire, a property whose garden has become well known since its recent recreation. Drawing extensively on archives, this book describes the tenure of Johnny Arkwright, a great-grandson of Sir Richard Arkwright, who inherited the house and 10,250 acres in 1858 but by his death was struggling to maintain the property which his son finally sold in 1911. The vagaries of farming and dramatic downturns in the economy strike a contemporary note, alongside a vivid picture of life for the gentry in 19th century Herefordshire. The writer achieves the rare feat of conveying a wealth of factual material in highly readable style.

HORTUS Revisited: a Twenty-first Birthday Anthology by David Wheeler, Frances Lincoln Ltd. £20

A selection of 45 pieces from this highly-regarded and beautifully produced journal, with topics ranging from individual histories of gardens or gardeners to particular flowers. The contributors are notable writers in many fields, including Sir Roy Strong on his own garden and Nigel Colborn on garden visitors. Enjoyable quality reading that should bring the pleasures of *HORTUS* to a wider audience.

Darwin's Garden by Michael Boulter, Constable Ltd. £16.99

The garden in question is not that of his Shrewsbury home, but in Kent at Down House, the property where he settled with his young family in 1840 (now owned by English Heritage). The author, himself a Professor of Palaeobiology, describes how in the course of creating and cultivating his new garden, Darwin was also using it as his laboratory where he was able to observe natural processes and test theories, which in due course contributed to the publication of *The Origin of the Species*.

Among many other well-received books of interest to the garden historian are:

Gifts from the Gardens of China by Jane Kilpatrick, Frances Lincoln Ltd. £35

A fascinating account of the introduction of plants from China during the period 1698-1862, lavishly illustrated and with excellent maps.

Forgotten Fruits: A Guide to Britain's Traditional Fruit & Vegetables by Christopher Stocks, Random House Books. £16.99

The author, who is gardens correspondent of the *Independent on Sunday*, claims that all the varieties mentioned have been recommended for flavour and other qualities. Combining practical advice with history, along with a gazetteer of regional plant associations.

The Garden at Bomarzo: a Renaissance Riddle by Jesse Sheeler, Frances Lincoln Ltd. £25

A welcome introduction and essential guide to perhaps the most complex and bizarre of all Renaissance gardens, the iconography of which is discussed in detail, along with the story of its creator, Pier Francesco Orsini (1523-1584).

Gardeners: Encounters with Exceptional People by Diana Ross, Frances Lincoln Ltd. £14.99

20 notable figures are revealed in an engaging and authoritative manner, including designers and writers as well as the more familiar gardening heroes such as Hugh Johnson and Roy Lancaster.

CONTACT: for matters arising from this newsletter, please contact Belinda Cousens, The Grey House, Little Ryton, Dorrington, SY5 7LS. (Tel. 01743 718237) Em: bc7grey@talktalk.net. Contributions – large and small – for the next newsletter will be very welcome, to be received by 1st August if possible.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

for Members and their Guests

Saturday, 2nd May (morning)

Walcot Hall, Lydbury North, near Bishop's Castle

C18th house designed by Sir William Chambers for Clive of India. Landscape work by William Emes. Large lake, excellent shrubberies and arboretum.

Saturday, 30th May

Aberglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire

A coach trip to view the restoration/re-creation of this once abandoned garden. Garden tour with Graham Rankin, Curator of Aberglasney Gardens.

June (date to be announced)

Summer Party at Aqualate Hall, near Newport, by kind invitation of Mr. Ted Juhre

August (date to be announced)

Rectory Woods, Church Stretton

An area of landscaped park at the foot of the Long Mynd. Developed from the C18 but allowed to become extremely overgrown. Now undergoing major research and restoration.

September (date to be announced)

JCB Headquarters, near Uttoxeter

Extensive parkland with work by C20th landscape architects and sculptors.

The following talks will take place at the Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, at 7.30 pm. Members free, guests £2.

Thursday, 15th October

'Harold Peto and the Edwardian Garden'

Robin Whaley

Thursday, 19th November

'How Much these Trees?!' The economics of Trees & their amenity value
Rodney Helliwell

EXHIBITIONS

ATTINGHAM PARK

'GIVE ME SHELTER'

A Sculpture display in the Park

Exploring man's contradictory and fraught relationship with the natural world, this selection of new commissions and recent works by nine leading contemporary artists has been placed in Repton's landscape by Meadow Arts. An exciting opportunity to see thought-provoking sculptural installations in the serene setting of Attingham Park. Open daily 9am-6pm (or dusk) until September 2009

BETH CHATTO IN LONDON

The Garden History Museum, which occupies a redundant church alongside Lambeth Palace, has re-opened after a 3-month refurbishment. Now to be called The Garden Museum, it has been re-launched with a new exhibition celebrating the life and work of Beth Chatto.

One of the most influential living gardeners in Britain, she is perhaps best known for her pioneering ecological approach to gardening, which she developed in the 1960's and yet is so relevant to gardeners today. The exhibition calls on private archives, paintings and photographs to tell the story of how the Beth Chatto Gardens, near Colchester in Essex, grew out of a patch of wasteland at the back of her husband's fruit farm.

Important influences in the development of her approach to gardening are revealed to include her husband Andrew's lifelong study of the natural association of plants, the work of her friend the artist Sir Cedric Morris, her early career as an instructor for the Flower Club movement and her interest in music and architecture.

The exhibition is on until 19th April 2009 and the Museum (which also has a small café) is open Tuesdays to Sundays, 10.30-5.00.