

Helleborus niger, ill. by W. Clark in 'Medical Botany'
by J. Stephenson and J.M. Churchill, 1831

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Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust

NEWSLETTER No. 20, Winter 2009/10

Letter from the Chairman

My election as Chairman at the Trust's AGM in March was an auspicious occasion for me, and I am conscious of my illustrious predecessors. Fortunately John Thompson has agreed to remain as a committee member and continue his valuable contribution to the work of the Trust.

In May came the sad loss of Michael King (an appreciation of his life and work appears elsewhere in this issue). With Mavis Anderson's departure to Sussex the Trust has been without a Secretary but in the last few weeks the clouds have lifted and Mary King has kindly agreed to fill the post which considerably strengthens the effectiveness of the Committee.

Visits through the summer were very well attended and both Walcot and Aqualate revealed the ingenuity and flair with which private owners are managing their parkland and houses into the 21st century. The hospitable welcome given to groups of Trust members is very marked and we should be thankful that this beautiful county has such a diversity of traditional family owners willing to take on the challenge of maintaining a sustainable future for what amount to large areas of historic landscapes.

The visit to Rectory Wood in August was a chance for members to get a feel for a historic place whose charm and vistas could be enhanced in the future by gentle, incremental

management work and conservation. It was good too for the Trust to work alongside officers from Shropshire Council, and collaboration will be an important theme for the future.

Publicity for the work of the Trust needs to develop during the next few years and all members can play their part by encouraging like-minded people to join.

Tony Herbert
Chairman

MICHAEL JOHN KING 1938-2009



Although Mickey King was widely known as one of the greatest characters of the world of Building Conservation, he also took a keen interest in Natural History and in Landscape Conservation and Garden History and was a longstanding member of the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust Management Committee. He was extremely knowledgeable on all aspects of heritage planning and a powerful warrior on the side of good when it came to assessing the merits or demerits of planning applications, borne of long experience as a Conservation Officer, first at the City of Liverpool and then at Shrewsbury.

Mickey qualified as an architect at the University of Liverpool in 1964, following which he worked for the Runcorn New Town Development Corporation and also Cheshire County Council. This was followed by

several years domicile in Malta, where he acted as a tutor at the University of Malta Faculty of Architecture alongside Professor Quentin Hughes. He also worked on the design of new university buildings. Mickey greatly enjoyed his time in Malta and was often to return there in later life having established lasting friendships with ex-colleagues and former students.

His next key appointment was with Flintshire County Council, where he designed new buildings for Theatre Clwyd in Mold.

Following Local Government reorganisation in 1974, there was an urgent need for architects to work in planning departments as Conservation Officers. Mickey was extremely well suited to this task, being full of enthusiasm, never afraid of hard work and always with a positive attitude. In 1975 he took up the position of Conservation Officer with Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. In 1985 he became Conservation Officer for Liverpool City, joining the Council at a critical time in its turbulent, post-war history.

Being a Conservation Officer in Liverpool at that time was extremely difficult and required endless patience and tremendous spirit. For many years he battled against an awesome mixture of political indifference, apathy and bizarre occurrences - thefts, fraud and corruption.

This was when I first met Mickey, having been asked to act as a consultant for the City Council, which was at that time seeking to demolish an entire street of Listed Buildings. Together, we plotted how best to achieve a favourable outcome against a policy background that saw no future for the preservation of many of Liverpool's decaying Georgian streets. Inevitably, the matter went to appeal followed by a Public Inquiry, at which the Inspector was asked by Mickey to take into account the positive outcomes of a number of recently completed conservation schemes in the city, which he had been involved in (Canning Street and Duke Street

areas in particular). We set off on a tour of inspection but, being Mickey, the tour had to take in every aspect of the city's cultural heritage.

It was not long before we visited our first listed pub interior, which then lead to a whole chain of similar visits, all intended to impress the Inspector with the finer aspects of Liverpool's architecture. I cannot now remember how it ended up, but I certainly remember Mickey's enormous enthusiasm, banter and wit on that occasion.

After a short period in private practice, Mickey became Conservation Officer in Shrewsbury in 1995 before retiring in 2003 to set up the King Partnership, working on urban design and historic environment issues in partnership with his wife, Mary. He was particularly pleased to be working in Wales, especially in the beautiful gardens of Plas Brondanw near Portmeirion where one of his last jobs was to restore Clough Williams-Ellis's garden pavilion.

With all his wealth of experience, he was the ideal person to assist the Parks and Gardens Trust when it came to assessing Planning Applications and advice on planning matters. He had a great deal of local knowledge and a sensitive understanding of landscape gardens and natural history. He will be sorely missed, but never forgotten.

Andrew Arrol



Shropshire Archives

Rectory Wood, Church Stretton

Rectory Wood and Field lie on the lower slopes of the Long Mynd, on the western edge of Church Stretton. Nowadays a Country Heritage Site, owned by Shropshire Council, it was formerly part of an extensive, historic woodland garden attached to the Old Rectory. The woodland remains, although many built structures have been lost (according to an archaeological survey carried out by Shropshire County Council in 1984).

The Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust has recently promoted initiatives to give greater prominence to the issues of designed landscape within the management proposals for this historic area. The Trust and Council jointly commissioned new research from a historic landscape management specialist, John Phibbs, who is an authority on the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Brown's name has long been connected with the Rev. Mainwaring, the resident vicar in the later C18, whom Brown is believed to have visited in 1775, if not before. The joint grant aid enabled new desk and ground research to be carried out in 2009. Careful site survey work has now revealed many surviving landscape elements which have an overall design character consistent with Brown's influential design philosophy at that period. John Phibbs led a walk for members of the Trust in the spring and the key points of interest are now summarised for members and friends who might wish to retrace his recommended route.

The designed walks around this landscape are believed to have been laid out by Rev. Mainwaring in the late C18, with probable additions in the early C19 by a later incumbent, the Rev. Robert Norgrave Pemberton. At this period it was often customary to provide a choice of walks, each including a variety of designed views (categorised in italics later). Phibbs suggests that at Rectory Wood there would have been two walks: a gentler 'Ladies Walk' through



Fig 1: *The Pool, Rectory Wood (13 on plan below) (ph. K. Gough)*

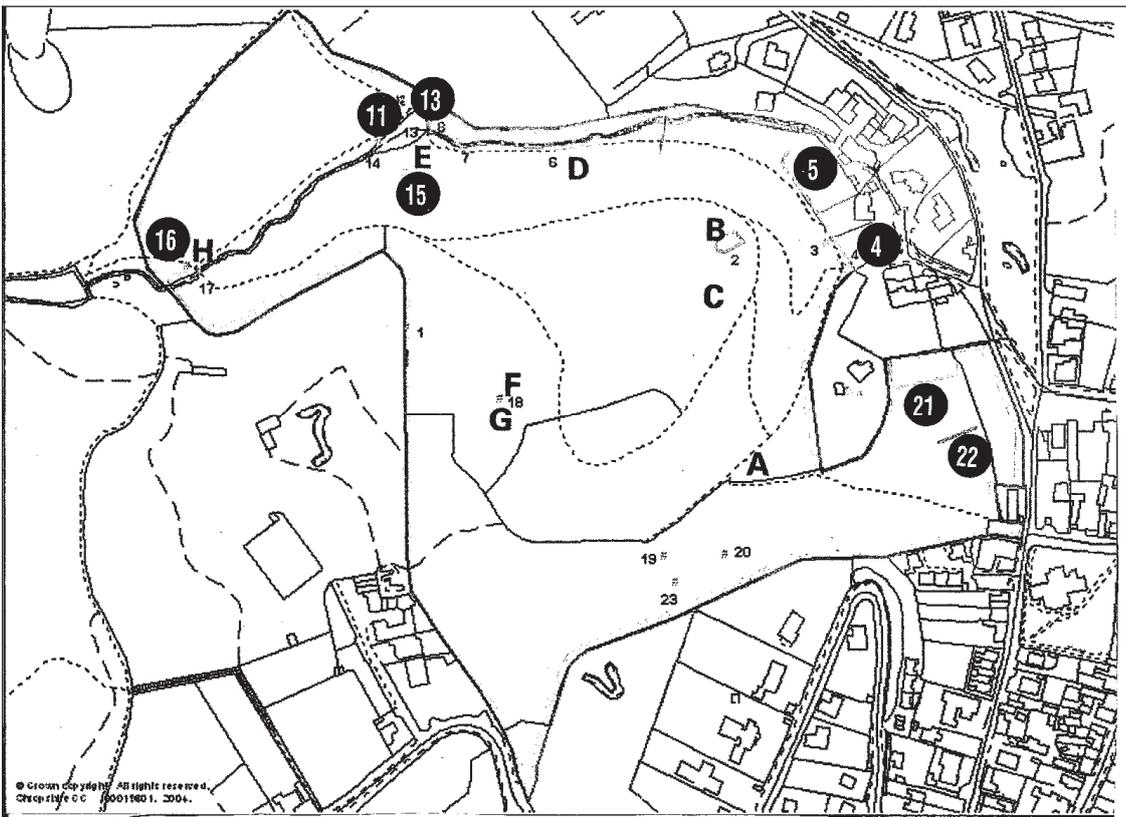


Fig 2: *Landscape viewpoints A-H (Phibbs) superimposed on Archaeological Survey (SCC). Archaeological sites are numbered 1-23. Entrance to Rectory Wood is bottom right (below 22), opposite the Church; the Old Rectory is below 4. (Image: Shropshire Archives)*

the gardens which included a Lawn Walk, the church, and viewpoint A, and a longer ‘Gentlemen’s Walk’.

Part of the Ladies Walk is now within the public Rectory Field, below Rectory Wood, (although originally part of the private Rectory garden). From the Rectory’s terraced gardens (**21** and **22** on plan, Fig. 2) the family and their visitors would have enjoyed a view of the town, with the church on one side and the Cunnery woods on the other. The trees which we pass by today are successors of the original small groups.

Viewpoint A

The modern path leads uphill, via a long flight of timber steps, at the top of which survives an important, levelled viewing platform (with an old Scots Pine on the right) where in the C19 visitors would have paused to admire the almost *panoramic* views of the church and the town clustered around it. What would have been lovely, extensive views are now largely obscured in summer by self-set trees and scrubby growth, creating a view of a different character.

The path through woodland drops downhill to the valley of Town Brook Hollow, where it initially follows the old walls of the former Rectory Kitchen garden (**4,5**)

Feature 3: The Grotto

From the starting point of the Rectory, the original historic path led through a Gothic arch (since lost). A large pollarded Horse Chestnut survives on the route of the Gentlemen’s Walk. This tree may predate the still visible remains of the former Rockery, or ‘Grotto’, believed to have been constructed as a typically *Picturesque* introductory feature of interest on the Walk.

Viewpoint D

The modern path closely follows the brook. The original historic path followed an entirely different course, leading slightly uphill and meandering at a higher level than now (still traceable as a ledge on the far side of the stream). Phibbs has identified a broad,

levelled platform. The design intention was that from this level resting place you could not see the edge of the stream (possibly hedged), only hear it, and did not know how far away it was. This was a typically deliberate and fashionable C18 deceit, it being the sound of the water which was important at this point. It is likely that the lower slopes were relatively open – with few trees – as at the Leasowes, Shenstone’s iconic landscape in Halesowen.

In this first section of Walk to be constructed, not far from the Rectory, Phibbs suggests that Brown’s suggestion would probably have been to create a Grove, a form of planting which was typified by occasional big trees with large shrubs set between them: a far more open landscape than the one we walk through today. Its form could have been inspired by Stephen Switzer’s concept of ‘a garden island’ or semi-natural space ornamented with native shrubs. Within the Arcadian setting of this little valley, a deliberately *confined view* was created: the distant ground being concealed by evergreens (regularly spaced yew trees led up to the nearby pool, succeeded by laurels beyond it). Ideally future management should include the clearance of recent self-sown sycamore and scrub to enable the restoration of a resting point from which to enjoy the mysterious sound of unseen water. The succeeding curving section of the walk originally gave glimpses of the next designed viewpoint.

Viewpoint E: The Pool and Pumphouse

A modern footbridge crosses the dam of the Pool (**13**) which dates from before 1767. The original bridge would have crossed the pool itself, so that emerging from the historic shrubbery visitors would have had a *burst* view direct to the Gothick pumphouse (**11**). This largely ruined pump house is believed to be of C19 reconstruction, although retaining a gothic character. The succeeding hundred yards of the valley does not include a stream bed, this having been culverted in connection with the early supply of water to the town. John Phibbs speculates that the stream may

have been deliberately culverted even earlier, to provide the design contrast of a smooth, grassy sward on the valley floor, grazed by sheep.

Around the pool the design intention was again to create a *closed view*, but this time having the character of ‘a garden in the wood’, rather like the enclosed flower garden of Nuneham Courtenay, and (in literature) Milton’s Eden. Unlike the earlier regular spacing of yews to act as the background of shrubbery planting, here they were irregularly set out with more ornamental planting fringing the water’s edge.

Set into the southern bank is the Ice House **(15)**. Recent excavations by the Rectory Wood Group and local volunteers, under the direction of Hugh Hannaford, successfully revealed the form of this early structure (since temporarily reburied for safety and conservation reasons). Typically it was sited above the valley floor, to enable melted water to drain away, and it is likely to have had a thatched roof for improved insulation. Future investigative work may include the removal of later infill material inside the ice house.



Early postcard of the C19 Rectory (Shropshire Archives)

Viewpoint H

The Summerhouse **(16)**. A second exciting discovery, formerly hinted at only by traces of a cobbled surface, has been revealed through this year’s excavation work. Its location is consistent with that of a presumed summerhouse which is shown on an Estate

Plan of 1834 and it is likely to have been used as a sheltered resting place from which to admire the prospect downstream. From the evidence of foundation bricks and former postholes it is deduced that this would have been a circular structure, again possibly with a thatched roof, with additionally an open D-shaped patio. The pebbled floor was further revealed, with an apparent ‘M’ inset in coloured stones. John Phibbs noted that the five openings between supporting posts are rather unusual, and asked Trust members to take part in an experiment. With members carefully positioned to act as the lost ‘posts’ we saw that the ‘biggest’ view was obtained through gap 4, which he felt would have been the principal designed pastoral view – a *closed view* over a sheep-grazed sward, (he assumed that from the summerhouse the area of the pond itself would have remained hidden, as a ‘secret garden’). One theory is that the C17 bricks of the summerhouse might have been re-used from the earlier, pre-C19 Rectory.

Viewpoint B

Having crossed the stream via Deadman’s Bridge (made from a gravestone), a long, steep climb leads eventually to an artificial conical mound. Its flat top was probably intended for a seat from which to enjoy ‘the finest composition in Church Stretton’. John pointed out that two oak trees act as a frame for a perfect *Claudean* view over the valley of Church Stretton (the idealised landscapes of Claude Lorraine having been hugely influential on the creators of C18 Picturesque landscapes). The design intention was again a *controlled view*, with ‘one view only’ - that across the valley - with the town of Church Stretton itself being deliberately blanked out by planting. This would have been one of the key viewpoints of the carefully designed circuit walks.

Our expert guide felt that these upper hillsides would have been a ‘*riante*’ (or *pleasant*) landscape – not densely wooded, as at present, but rather one of typically Brownian clumps of trees set out in sheep pastures.

Viewpoint F (18)

Steps lead up to the summit of the hill and a fine *prospect* giving long views to the east and south. The bricks lying around this spot suggest that a lost small structure may have been built to take full advantage of this view.

Viewpoint G

A knoll on the side of the hill would again have offered a controlled, *Claudean* view to the south.

Sadly, modern ownership subdivisions of the landscape have made the furthest reaches of the designed walks lost to us, particularly those elevated views westwards which in John's opinion reach towards '*sublimity*'. Even from today's public walk the views looking back towards Tiger Hall are breathtaking, but the view up to the Long Mynd (from the currently inaccessible higher field behind Tiger Hall) was regarded as '*sublime*', the highest term of praise for an C18 landscape. The total landscape experience prompted Lancelot Brown to write to a friend that '*I was never nearer to the mountain than the romantic territory of the Rev. Mr. Prof. Mainwaring at Church Stretton, which lies at the foot of it. This of itself is an enchanting spot, but by the kindness of Lord Weymouth he could extend his walks near half a mile through a forest by a trout stream to a natural water-fall.*'

On the shortened walk which is possible through this public open space, the return path down the broad valley which leads to the entrance and the town passes traces of a pond and former planting areas. Hopefully further work may extend our knowledge of this important Shropshire landscape. Any opportunity of restoring the historic elements within Rectory Wood should ideally be accompanied by integrated landscape management which protects this significant historic designed landscape as well as caring for a much-visited semi-natural habitat.

Kunigunda Gough

THE HARVARD GLASS FLOWERS

Of the tens of thousands of people who visit the glass flower collection each year few would fail to be enchanted by the fragile beauty and botanical perfection of these exhibits. Gardeners, historians, botanists and artists all find inspiration in the collection fashioned from glass by two talented men, father and son, Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka of Dresden, Germany.

With a long family tradition of glass working these two men were, in 1886, providing glass sea creatures to museums worldwide (including Cardiff and London) responding to the Victorians' fascination with new discoveries since the invention of the deep sea diving kit in the 1880s. Their glass models provided accurate representations, which captured the creatures in life like colour, far superior to the insipid lab specimens.

This work attracted the attention of Professor George Goodale of Harvard Botanical Museum. He set out to influence the growth of science not only at Harvard but throughout the USA and desired to establish a museum that would serve the needs of scientific research and instruct the public.

Goodale had been grappling with the problem of representing flora and despaired of the dried specimens which were robbed of colour, drawings which were flat and crude papier-mache models. The wax flowers and plants often used for teaching purposes were, he thought, 'exaggerated and grotesque'. Goodale, knowing of the quality of the work, believed that glass models were the answer and he travelled to Dresden to discuss the project. At the Blaschka's home, Goodale saw superb examples of glass orchids made by Leopold for his own pleasure and he knew that he had found the answer to his problem.

With the financial backing of the Ware family, Boston residents who had made their fortune in the whaling industry, Goodale



The Blaschka's home and garden in Dresden. Leopold and Rudolph in the foreground c1895

commissioned the Blaschkas in 1889 to work on the collection and they agreed to do so on a part-time basis while continuing to make the glass marine invertebrates which provided them with a good living. Later however they accepted a contract to work full-time on the Harvard flowers and make nothing else. The work would take 50 years and end in over 4,000 specimens. Leopold and his son visited the Caribbean and the USA to study specimens, making drawings and notes. Many of the plants on the 'order list' from Harvard they grew in their own garden and the royal gardens of Castle Pillnitz, near their home, were made available to them for their studies. They worked without apprentices and after Leopold's death in 1895 Rudolph continued the work alone. He was almost 80 years old when the last shipment was received in Harvard in 1936.

The flowers are not fashioned from blown glass but carefully modelled and represent the plant in all of its life cycle; some models even show the effect of disease and insect attack. The colour is superb and the detail exquisite, from the tiny hairs on the Pasque flower to the delicate, translucent colour of the Morning Glory. Such detail made them excellent teaching tools.

Transporting the fragile specimens from Germany to Harvard was in itself an amazing feat and the packaging described by Dr

Goodale to the Boston Society of Natural History, was 'as wonderful as anything about them'

The Ware collection of Glass Flowers, as they are officially known, contain around 847 life size models, 780 species and varieties of plants in 164 families and 3,000 or so enlarged flowers and anatomical sections of flora and vegetative plants.

The models are no longer used for teaching purposes but remain a wonderful, timeless, display of the most beautiful flower collection ever produced and a testimony to the skill of the Blaschkas. Their work is a combination of skill, observation, patience and the merging of artisan and science. It is a marvel and unsurpassed.

Veronica Thompson

The glass flowers are on display at the Harvard Museum, Cambridge. USA.

LINCOLNSHIRE CONFERENCE & 2009 AGM OF THE ASSOCIATION OF GARDEN TRUSTS

On the 4th September, about 100 delegates, a broad representation from the 36 Gardens' Trusts, convened at The Lincoln Hotel for the annual AGT Conference, this year hosted by the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust. The title 'Come into the garden...' reflected the literary theme, and alludes to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem 'Maud' in particular, Tennyson being Lincolnshire's most famous poet.

An excellent range of visits and talks had been arranged for us, but first there was the AGM to attend. Unfortunately Gillie Drummond, our president, was unable to be there, since she had recently broken her ankle. The most relevant item for individual members is the impending withdrawal of English Heritage funding, which will mean a

slight rise in the cost of subscription over the next few years.

After dinner that evening, Shervie Price, the present owner of Harrington Hall, (which we were to visit the following day) and editor of the LGT Newsletter, gave a talk about 'Sharing a Garden with Maud'. Harrington was the inspiration for some of Tennyson's poetry, including 'Maud'.

The next day began with an introductory talk from Steffie Shields, Vice-Chairman of the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust, introducing us to the many pleasures that Lincolnshire has to offer. This was followed by a talk by David Robinson on Joseph Banks, who was another 'Lincolnshire Lad'.

Our first visit was to Doddington Hall, a place I had wanted to see for some time. I was not disappointed, the hall is a mellow, red brick Elizabethan house, with 'quaint pepper box turrets' (from the novel by Hawley Smart in 1869, based on Doddington), built at the end of the 16th century by Robert Smythson. The impressive view of the house and lawns was somewhat marred by the presence of the 'Two Hairy Bikers' who were using Doddington as a backdrop for an episode of the television programme. The house has never been sold; the present owners James and Claire Birch came out to greet us and invited us inside, where we were able to wander around and admire the elegant 1760's Georgian interiors.

Another special treat was to be able to view a range of original publications laid out on the hall table: Philip Miller's 'Gardeners Dictionary' (1731), and John Parkinson's 'Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris' (1629) to name just two. The hall and gardens are featured in a Kip engraving, which hangs in the hall, and shows the usual formal layout of the period. Some of the original walls still remain, to create three attractive, enclosed areas: the lawned area in front of the house, a charming flower garden with box parterres on the opposite side, and a traditional kitchen garden to the east. This has recently



View of the west parterre, Doddington

undergone a major restoration, led by Claire Birch, and it is now wonderfully productive, with apple espaliers and rows of healthy looking vegetables.

<http://www.doddingtonhall.com>

After eating a delicious lunch, we pressed on to Harrington Hall, to see the garden made famous by Tennyson's poem 'Maud'. The house was originally built in the 15th century, but has since been much altered. The terrace, known as Tennyson's 'High Hall Walk' survives. Built of mellow grey stone, it is beautifully planted on both sides of the central paved walk, with extensive views out across the landscape and into the enclosed garden below. We were surprised and delighted to see that the spirit of Tennyson still pervades the garden: on entering we spied a black cloaked figure, wearing a large black hat, seated on a bench in the corner – perhaps penning some fresh verses in his notebook!



The spirit of Tennyson survives at Harrington

Four enclosed areas surround the house, one of which is an attractive productive garden, imaginatively laid out and divided into several areas enclosed by hedges or espaliers, with some ancient mulberry and apple trees and a fruit and nut garden. After admiring the gardens we went into the house for a delicious home-made tea; we found it hard to believe that over half the house had been destroyed in a disastrous fire in 1991, as it has since been successfully rebuilt and the interiors meticulously restored.

<http://www.harringtonhallgardens.co.uk>

That evening, after dinner at the hotel, John Harris, the eminent architectural historian, spoke of the sad loss of many of the grand historic houses in Lincolnshire. Harris co-authored 'Lincolnshire' with Nikolaus Pevsner, as part of the Buildings of England series (published 1964), and thanks to this research he has an exhaustive record of those houses that are no longer with us.

The following day, Beryl Lott, Conservation Officer for Lincoln County Council, gave us a tantalising preview of what the day had in store for us. The title of her talk was 'Harlaxton Manor – a Gentleman's Dream' which we were to see for ourselves later that morning.

But first we went to Aubourn Hall, a beautifully sited 17th century house, designed by John Smythson, son of Robert, on the banks of the River Witham (5). The Hall was home to Sir Henry Nevile, the founding President of the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust, and he and his wife designed and laid out the gardens in the Seventies. His widow, Lady Jean Nevile, and her son kindly showed us around the gardens, a delightful combination of the formal and the informal. Many of the different garden areas are named after various family members, reinforcing the impression of an intimate family garden.

It was then on to Harlaxton Manor, an impressive 'pile' built in the mid 19th century by a wealthy bachelor, Gregory Gregory. On

entering the gates, the vast mansion comes into view at the end of a long straight drive nearly a mile in length - it was definitely built to impress. It is built in a mock Jacobean style, which at times appears to border on the Baroque. It took years to build and Gregory scoured the world looking for suitable artifacts for his dream house and gardens. The latter include an Italian Garden, the Lion Terrace (currently being restored and featuring two stone lions from Witley Court), a remarkable conservatory (a later addition) and an impressive walled kitchen garden. This is situated halfway down the drive, and was obviously intended to be viewed by visitors on their way to the mansion, since the massive walls are pierced by wrought iron railings, through which one can see into the semi octagonal interior. Surrounding this inner garden are massive 28ft high walls, at least four of them hot walls.



The conservatory at Harlaxton

There are many contemporary descriptions of the gardens, John Loudon was one of many who admired the gardens, and he described his visit in the Gardener's Magazine of 1840. Sadly Gregory died before he was able to move into the house.

www.ueharlax.ac.uk/harlaxton/index.cfm

After a picnic in the grounds, we moved on to our final visit, Easton Walled Gardens. The gardens have been in the Cholmeley family for 14 generations, however the house was demolished in 1951, and the gardens, parts of which date back to the late 16th century, were abandoned. They were remodelled in the 19th century, and this is largely what we see today.

Seven grassed terraces descend to the River Witham, where an ornamental stone bridge leads to the walled garden.



Easton Walled Gardens

The old garden walls probably date back to the earlier period. It is divided by a yew tunnel, originally once mere hedges, with four decorative pavilions built into the walls (9). One is now used as an apple store, the other as a tool shed, and the two corner ones have been extended to make dwellings. The reincarnation of the gardens began in 2001, when the terraces were reinstated and sown with wild flower and grass mixtures, and a 'Pickery' garden created consisting of a cottage garden and a vegetable garden.

www.eastonwalledgardens.co.uk/Index.asp

We left for home having discovered that Lincolnshire has indeed much to offer garden lovers and historians alike. I much appreciated the opportunity to hear some excellent speakers and to visit some fascinating gardens, and I would like to congratulate the Lincolnshire Gardens Trust for having organised a most successful event.

Fiona Grant

Visit to Walcot Hall and Gardens

Our 2009 visits began with Walcot Hall - an impressive and charming country property which sits in 180 hectares of parkland, gardens and arboretum. It is situated near Lydbury North, just 5 minutes from Bishop's

Castle. My first impression was of a handsome and historic country property, on a low rise overlooking the River Onny.

Walcot was owned by the Walcot family until 1763, when it was sold to Clive of India. It was then that Sir William Chambers was brought in to rebuild the house and William Emes was employed to improve the surrounding area. In 1774 it was inherited by Clive's son Edward, who became Earl of Powis in 1804. Further alterations were made to the house, including a ballroom and hothouse with additions of many specimen trees which form part of the Arboretum seen today. Walcot was sold by the Clives in 1933 and it now remains in private hands.

Our visit commenced with a guided tour by Mrs Lucinda Parrish (the owner), and her head gardener. The gardens comprised of new herbaceous borders, which included many interesting plants in bloom including tulips, tree peonies, magnolias, clematis, rhododendrons and *ribes* to mention but a few. I could appreciate the thought care and planning that had gone into designing the herbaceous borders for a succession of interest throughout the year. We continued up the hill to the Arboretum, passing a very impressive fountain, which had recently been built by estate staff. The Arboretum was developed by Lord Clive's son, Edward, in the early 19th century. It includes a Douglas fir, grown from original seeds supplied by Douglas, the famous plant hunter, in 1827. The area also includes enormous walled kitchen gardens and two triangular fish ponds.

It was wonderful to hear Lucinda's personal memories of her early times at Walcot when she was first married, that gave such a personal touch to our visit. I immensely enjoyed our visit and appreciated the atmosphere of the place with the layers of history still intact. I would like to thank, on behalf of the group, Lucinda for a most enjoyable visit - one of my favourites so far.

Rachel White

SEVERN TREE TRUST

Set up in 1924, The International Tree Foundation has published its vision as *"A world where trees and forests flourish and where their vital role in supporting life on earth is fully realised and valued."* It promotes the planting and protection of trees around the world in partnership with local communities. Particular emphasis is placed on tree-planting to provide food and income for local people, which may also involve habitat restoration. In the UK the ITF has been promoting awareness of the value of trees, often working with schools, and campaigning for the protection of those woodlands that are under threat.

The Shropshire & Montgomery Branch of the International Tree Foundation has now left the ITF to become an independent tree group. This is in line with ITF policy as it wants to concentrate its funds on overseas tree planting. So in November 2009, the "Severn Tree Trust" was formed with the aim of promoting the value of trees and encouraging the planting of more trees.

The STT has established a regular programme of talks and visits throughout the year alongside its tree planting sessions. Any interested person is invited to these. The first two talks of the new group are:

Tuesday, 8th December: Talk in Shirehall by George Powell - *"Ancient and Veteran Trees of the World"*

Tuesday, 12th January: Talk in Shirehall by John Blessington - *"The Work of a Tree Officer"*.

Non-members pay £2 for the evening, but should anyone like to join and be in at the beginning of this exciting venture, annual membership subscriptions of £15 should be sent to STT Treasurer Mr. Jay Mitchell, 11, Brook Road, Shrewsbury, SY2 6AJ.

John

APPLE MAN FROM OSWESTRY

The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust offers grants of scholarships to people eager to develop their skills. Established in 1990 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association and the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, its aim is to give awards to craftsmen and women of all ages to help them further their careers.

Tom Adams, from Oswestry, has been one of the beneficiaries of this trust. He received a £3,100 Queen Elizabeth Scholarship to attend a master class in orchard skills. He hasn't always had a passion for all things apple-related: he previously worked in the homeless sector in Nottingham before turning his hand to gardening. A request to prune some fruit trees led to several day courses on pruning that awakened his hunger to learn more about our declining orchards and endangered apple varieties.

For the past eight years Tom has worked planting up orchards, and offering management and pruning services using traditional techniques. He explains how his year pans out as an orchard specialist. 'The orchards, pruning and hedge laying are winter work. In the summer I do green woodcraft and sell my fruit trees.' Tom also grafts traditional and heritage varieties of apple and orchard fruit and at the moment is looking for a loan or funding to help him buy some land to establish a nursery.

'More and more funding is being directed to planting new orchards and restoring old ones,' he enthuses. 'I want to be one of the first ports of call with the resurgence in British grown fruit. There will definitely be a need for skilled orchardists to offer advice on planting, pruning, grafting, surveying and nursery production, and on pest and disease control.'

Tom Adams can be contacted via his website: www.tomtheappleman.wordpress.com

Bursary Report

Below is a report by one of the two beneficiaries of the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust's new bursary scheme. Applications for these awards are welcome at any time. Details are available from the Secretary or on the Trust's website

I thought you might be interested to know that I spent the grant you kindly awarded me in November of last year on an Olympus camera. This has allowed me to take digital photographs of a high enough quality to be published where appropriate. I am very pleased with my choice which has fulfilled its promise of being idiot proof.

I graduated in February from the MA Garden History degree course at Bristol University, led by the irrepressible Professor Tim Mowl. I am pleased to say that I was awarded a distinction, and the highest mark, for my dissertation on the gardens of David Hicks. It was a wonderful experience to be welcomed into the gardens he designed, by their current owners, and to be allowed free access for photographs. More difficult was managing to produce a critical analysis in the face of trust and kindness. This is a major problem for those who would like to see gardens as cultural artefacts, judged on the same level as paintings or architecture. People do not like to publicly criticise other people's gardens! I was encouraged to present my work on Hicks to Frances Lincoln for publication.

Whilst they were enthusiastic about the writing they felt Hicks would not be a commercially viable subject but have encouraged me to continue in this field.

My academic exploration of gardens has fed my practical design skills. Over the spring and summer I have worked on a number of small gardens in London and a large (twenty acre) project in South West France. My client here wanted an 'instant makeover', reversing front and back facades of the chateau, and creating a framework for the building, which



Bouffereille, south west France

was essentially floating in a field. The challenge of making changes on this scale within four months was considerable, and especially since spring is such an unpredictable season these days. However, my tenacious team managed to pull it off.

Despite difficult economic times people are, thank goodness, still investing in the joy we all get from gardens. I look forward to a busy autumn and will also be working on a book on the gardens of Marrakesh – more work for the camera. My grateful thanks once again for your support.

Angelica Grey

Angelica has recently written in the Autumn 2009 issue of Hortus on the restoration of two historic gardens in Marrakesh which have been presented to the public as a cyber park.

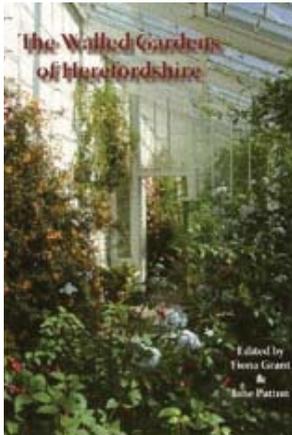
BOOK REVIEWS

The Flowering of Aberglasney, by Graham Rankin, published by Aberglasney Enterprises Ltd., 2009, on behalf of the Aberglasney Restoration Trust. £30

If you came on our Parks & Gardens Trust visit to Aberglasney in late May, you will know just how wonderful this garden is. Graham Rankin tells the story of its restoration, illustrated with his sumptuous photographs. The meconopsis leap from the pages, the detail is breathtaking.

If you feel you are in need of a treat, or could persuade someone to give you one, this is it. I have only just received my copy, a present from Martin my son. Winter is approaching, perfect reading for those long evenings and an ideal Christmas present. *Daphne Capps*

All proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to further the work of the Aberglasney charitable trust.



The Walled Gardens of Herefordshire
edited by Fiona Grant and Jane Patton,
published by Hereford and Worcester
Gardens Trust in association with Logaston
Press, 2009. £10. Available on request to
f.grant14@tiscali.co.uk

Walled kitchen gardens have often been overlooked by garden historians, and this book is an attempt by the H & W. G. Trust to redress the balance. With a foreword by Susan Campbell, it includes six case-studies covering a range of walled gardens, supported by maps and copiously illustrated with both colour and black and white photographs. There is also a survey of extant walled gardens in the County (157).

There is an urgent need to establish the scale and condition of surviving walled kitchen gardens in the UK and it is hoped that other Garden Trusts may be inspired to follow this example.

(Fiona is leading a course on Garden History with Jane Bradney at Weston Park starting 16th January. Details on leaflet enclosed)

The Historic Gardens of England – Cheshire, Tim Mowl and Marion Mako,
Redcliffe Press, 2008

The controversial and thought-provoking garden historian Tim Mowl is already well-known for his “foots of Pevsner” county gazetteers of historic gardens. Oxfordshire (2000), Gloucestershire (2002), Dorset (2003), Wiltshire (2004), Cornwall (2005), and Worcestershire (2006) were published by Tempus Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire. We are fortunate that recently guides to two of Shropshire’s bordering counties have been published : Cheshire and Staffordshire, both now in a new lavish format with co-authorship. Cheshire has more than sixty colour plates and ninety black and white images. Mowl was able to splash out with researcher and new publisher (Redcliffe Press) after receiving a prestigious Leverhulme Grant of £314,000 to continue this important series.

Mowl’s historic gardens of England series lacks the Germanic precision and topographical arrangement of Pevsner and, due to the speed of output, occasionally errors appear. However, the titles benefit from a lively approach in contrast to the rather solid, dry, texts of Pevsner. Mowl believes in the importance of walking the landscape to conjure up new ideas in addition to the traditional trawl through primary sources in Record Offices or private hands. He is also interested in the social context of the garden; knowing what people thought and how they used them with a little piece of scandal wherever possible! Chapters are arranged chronologically and the narrative is a delightful read. A map and index are included.

Cheshire is the first in the series to contain a chapter on public parks, a new nineteenth century public amenity. Of prime importance is Birkenhead Park (1841-1847) by Joseph Paxton which influenced Frederick Law Olmsted in his design for Central Park, New York. Two chapters are devoted to Twentieth

Century gardens including Henbury Hall designed in the style of Palladio's La Rotonda in Vicenza with its sunken Italian garden. It is good to see coverage of small private gardens such as artist-potter Gordon Cooke's wonderful garden in Sale with a stunning colour photograph. This garden can be visited under the National Gardens Scheme. The industrialist, William Hesketh Lever was an important patron of Thomas Mawson who designed his garden at Thornton Manor on the Wirral, Tirley Garth and the amazing housing scheme at Port Sunlight complete with gardens and allotments.

Looking at the eighteenth century William Emes (1729-1803) and his pupil John Webb (c.1754-1828) worked respectively at Arley Hall, Crewe Hall, Eaton Hall, Oulton Park, Peover Hall (Emes), and Cholmondeley Castle, Crewe Hall, Eaton Hall, Oulton Park, Rode Hall and Tabley House (Webb). The Rococo wilderness at Adlington Hall has been known locally for many years when it was sadly neglected. It is not a new discovery as claimed by Mowl, but Mowl has unearthed documentation in the Adlington archives detailing accounts for the creation of the wilderness in 1747. The Leghs have started a scheme to restore this unique landscape and its numerous Georgian buildings.

Mowl is to be commended for his detective work, enthusiasm, scholarship and dedication to the mammoth task he has set himself. The new series offers so much more with its colour plates. One small niggle, however, is the choice of Styal Mill for the front cover, an image which features the Mill itself rather than the Mill garden currently being restored by the National Trust. Does this choice belie Mowl, the Architectural Historian? A superb colour image of the herbaceous borders at Arley or the Japanese garden at Tatton would have epitomised Cheshire gardens more appropriately.

Go out and buy it and decide for yourself. It's a jolly good read! **Gaye Smith**
(*Staffordshire, also available now, £19.95*)

Son and Servant of Shropshire: the Life of Archdeacon Joseph (Plymley) Corbett, 1759-1838, published by Logaston Press, £18.50

A book that will engage the rapt attention of anyone with an interest in Shropshire and its history. The title scarcely does justice to the range of material and subject matter contained in this volume, deriving not only from the records and diaries of the Archdeacon but also from the 150 notebooks left by his sister, Katherine Plymley. The Archdeacon, who became the tenant of Longnor Hall in 1804 and later the owner, had interests which stretched far beyond Shropshire.

Given such a wealth of material, the author has identified separate themes for each chapter. Aside from the events of his life in Shropshire, his subject's long and close engagement with the Anti-slave trade campaign provides the most striking element, with both Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce becoming friends and admirers of the Archdeacon.

The remarkable energy and reflection which he brought to this campaign is also displayed in the variety and depth of his involvement in county matters. Appointed Archdeacon for South Shropshire at the young age of 33, he set himself the task of recording its 168 parishes, leaving detailed notes and watercolours of each church and community. His engagement in rural affairs resulted in him being asked to provide a Report on Shropshire Agriculture for the newly formed Board of Agriculture, which he completed in 1801. The selection of crops, stock breeding, crop rotation, and mechanisation were all subjected to his scrutiny and thoroughly researched within the county and beyond.

Even whilst undertaking this review, in 1798 he also took on the role of Justice of the Peace for the hundred of Conover. As well as the work of the magistracy including dealing with Poor Relief and licensing, he became involved with the Gaol, turnpike trusts and county bridges, and with Shrewsbury School,

was also for several years a Director of the Salop Infirmary. As President of the Shropshire Auxiliary Bible Society he became involved in an evangelical movement distributing the Bible worldwide, and a source of particular pride was a young Longnor tenant who went on to translate the Bible into several languages, including Arabic and Syriac

The account of these many interests and duties is conveyed throughout in the context of the Archdeacon's daily life, illustrated with domestic and local detail of an expanding family, chilly churches and both efficient and wayward priests, much of it provided by his sister's more informative diaries. No doubt more could be gleaned from these sources to illustrate the fashion and condition of Shropshire's buildings, gardens and landscapes at the time, but that would be a different book altogether. Here is a captivating account of a significant period in English and Shropshire history, with at its centre a portrait of a most remarkable man.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

These events are free to Members and guests are welcome – tickets £3

Talks take place at 7.30pm at the Shire Hall in Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury.

Thursday, 21st January

'The University of Oxford Botanic Garden – the first 389 years' by Timothy Walker

Thursday, 18th February

'A Volcano, an Orchid and Me: a Conservation Expedition with Kew Gardens' by Miranda Jones

Thursday, 18th March

6.30pm AGM
followed by refreshments and a talk at 7.30pm *'Downton Vale – the Wildest of Gardens!'* by Tom Wall

Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust

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