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Letter from the Chair

Welcome to your new full-colour magazine, which has been put together by our new Editorial Team. Our thanks go to Hugh Devlin for bringing the contents together and Gisèle and Tom Wall for design and production. We love it and hope you do too!

In the last few years we have celebrated centenaries of both Capability Brown and Humphry Repton, who between them fundamentally changed the appearance of the landscape of our country houses during the 18th and early 19th centuries. A surprising amount of what we consider to be part of the quintessential English landscape owes its appearance to the hand of one or both of them. Research commissioned during their centenary years has brought a fresh understanding of their work, and we featured an article on Brown in our Spring 2017 Newsletter. Two fascinating articles in this Magazine now bring new insight into the work of Humphry Repton at Ferne Hall, near Ludlow, and Attingham, near Shrewsbury.

As winter approaches, articles on last summer's visits provide a happy reminder of warmer weather for those who went on them, or a chance to catch up on what you missed if you couldn't. Next year's visits are already being planned, but for now we are into our winter lecture season. There is something very comforting about coming together with old friends in the familiar, warm surroundings of the Wildlife Trust's lecture room as the nights get dark and cold again. We have a varied and thought-provoking programme to keep you interested, so do come and join us. There's tea and biscuits too!

We welcome feedback on our new magazine, and we welcome contributions to future editions, which are already being prepared. We need volunteers to write about our visits and photographs to illustrate them, and we need articles that will add to our understanding of parks and gardens in general and those in Shropshire in particular. Don't feel you have to wait to be asked to contribute, if you have something to say, we'd like to hear it. Please contact Hugh Devlin, whose details are given on page 24 of this Magazine to let us know what you think of the new magazine or for further information about contributing.

I look forward to seeing you all over the coming months.

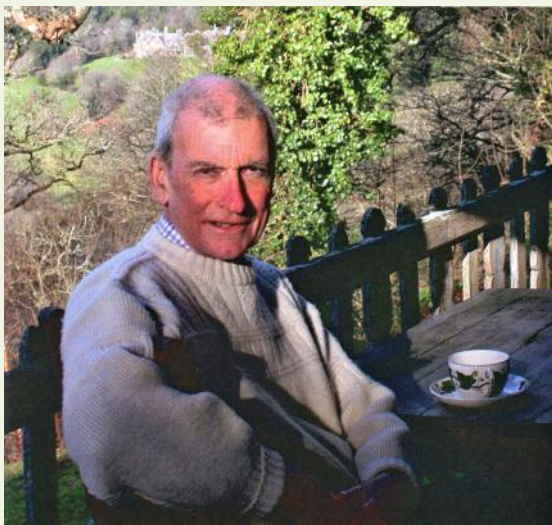
Mary King

Tony Herbert 1942–2018

Last year we lost our great friend Tony Herbert, who was Chairman of Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust from 2009 to 2016. Tony did so much to take the Trust forward, developing our work and strengthening contacts with the national Gardens Trust, local Gardens Trusts in the Midlands and with local organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and the CPRE.

Tony, and his wife Kathy, were first invited to join the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Committee as the Trust became established during the early years of the millennium. Kathy rapidly became established as Events organiser and Tony soon became Chairman. Under Tony's Chairmanship, SPGT made a substantial leap forward. We developed a new Website, relaunched our Student Bursary and substantially strengthened our response to Planning Applications affecting parks and gardens throughout Shropshire. We were even represented at a Public Inquiry into development affecting the lovely garden of Golding Hall. In 2015 the Trust hosted the second Regional Forum bringing together Gardens Trusts from the West Midlands and across the border into Wales, with the support of the Gardens Trust's Historic Landscapes Project.

Tony took an active role in all the Trust's activities and in steering its work. He had the knack of running Committee meetings so that everyone had their say, but without running over time. As with everything he became involved in during his life, he left the Trust better than he found it. Tony's wide knowledge



Tony sitting on the veranda of the Swiss Cottage at Endsleigh, near Tavistock. January 2017. Endsleigh House, the Duke of Bedford's Cottage Orné overlooking the River Tamar, can be glimpsed in the background.

and enthusiasms covered much more than just parks and gardens, of course. Throughout his life he brought his skills to bear over a wide variety of areas of work, combining erudite scholarship with boundless curiosity and the ability to bring people together and subjects alive. He was a natural teacher who loved sharing his interest in the world around him.

After graduating with a degree in Botany from Bristol University in 1962, and a Diploma in Conservation from University College London, Tony joined the Nature Conservancy in 1964, as Education Officer managing their liaison with schools throughout the whole of England and Scotland. In 1970, as part of the NC's work to promote European Conservation Year, he became the link

between Shell and the schools taking part in their 'Better Britain' Competition. Typical of his approach to his work was the way in which he formed contacts both with those at high level, such as Inspectors of Schools and Advisors in Local Education Authorities, who had influence over policy, and with those actually organising field study courses on the ground. He soon realised that those organising the courses had little contact with each other, so he organised conferences to bring them together, out of which grew the National Association of Field Studies Officers.

He left what was by then the Nature Conservancy Council in 1977, when the office moved to Huntingdon, and then made the huge career change that resulted in his becoming an expert in ceramic tiles at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. He described it as switching his attention from looking at the works of God to those of man.

He started simply as a volunteer, helping to rescue the thousands of tiles from outside Maws factory that now form the basis of the Tile Museum's collection. He became Chairman of the Friends of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, but resigned the Chair in 1977 when he joined the Museum staff as their Special Projects Officer. His particular interest in the Jackfield tile industry continued and ultimately he and Kathy, who joined the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in 1979, led the team that developed and opened the Jackfield Tile Museum.

He was a founding member of the Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society, editing their Magazine and Journal with academic skill and becoming Chairman of the Society in 1987. He and Kathy also wrote a major book on the history of tiles, *The Decorative Tile*

in Architecture and Interiors, published by Phaidon in 1995, which became the standard book on the subject.

After leaving the Museum in 1985, Tony used his knowledge as an authority on decorative tiles to develop a further career as a freelance tile consultant and teacher. He began by lecturing extramurally and writing for a number of publications, before joining the staff of the School of Art at Wolverhampton University, where he taught undergraduate Arts students and supervised PhD students. Then, from 2001, he taught post graduate students at the Ironbridge Institute for the University of Birmingham. As a teacher, he proved to be in his element, inspiring students with his enthusiasm and knowledge and with his ability to make them see things afresh.

He always had something interesting to say, whether talking about tiles, or wider aspects of architecture and design, or using his original qualification in Botany to help identify the many plants we were looking at on one of our Parks and Gardens visits. He took an endless interest in what he was looking at and was always happy to pass on what he knew.

SPGT was lucky to benefit from Tony's experience and skills as a Chairman, and he left the Trust in a much better position than it was in when he took over the Chair. We will all miss him for his extensive knowledge and guidance, and for the tireless work he did for the Trust, but most of all we will miss him simply for being himself and for being such good company. He was such a good, kind friend to us all. Our thoughts are with his wife, Kathy, who supported him in all he did, as well as organising all our Events over the years, as she continues to do.

Mary King

Ferney Hall, near Ludlow

In 1789 Repton was working at Holkham Hall, in his native county of Norfolk, when he was called away by Samuel Phipps, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn to develop a scheme for his recently purchased estate at Ferney in south Shropshire. This was Repton's first commission in the West Midlands. At Holkham, where he was following in the footsteps of William Emes, Repton was working on a small-scale project, providing woodland walks around a small lake. The walks were for the ladies of the household, for whom he also provided a ferry, worked by a winch, so they could cross the water with ease. He also proposed a cottage for a boat keeper, and perhaps, a tea room, and adapted a quarry to form a cavern; all of which considerably enhanced the simple experience of walking by a lake. A Red Book for Holkham had been produced in 1788 and his new proposals simply added some detail.¹

Ferney was visited over three days in September 1789 and the Red Book was produced the following month at home, Hare Street in Romford, Essex. It was a small estate and the product of 'new money', about which, in private, Repton was fairly contemptuous but increasingly these projects became his bread and butter. Like Holkham, Ferney also involved the creation of woodland walks focussing upon an old quarry, which Repton marked on his sketch plan with perhaps, rather child-like enthusiasm, the 'Enchanted Ground'. Otherwise the work he proposed was fairly conventional involving the eradication of an earlier, much degraded formal garden, and replacing it with something that reflected Brownian aesthetics.²

The Arrival of Samuel Phipps

Late Georgian England enjoyed a period of sustained prosperity with London as its hub. Income generated in the city by a multitude of commercial and professional activities was invested in the countryside, either by newcomers, like Samuel Phipps, or by younger sons of established families. In neighbouring Herefordshire in this period it would be difficult to find a family without close connections with the city. Population growth, which accompanied the new prosperity, made it economical for the agricultural produce of the Welsh Border for the first time to find distant markets in the Home Counties, London and the Midlands. New turnpike roads – frequently associated with Repton's improvements – and the Wye Navigation facilitated the export of corn products, cider, leather, hops and timber. The many advertisements for Herefordshire estates found in London papers to be sold by metropolitan estate agents suggest that Phipps was not alone in scanning the press for a 'hobby-farm' in the Welsh Border, an area which was already being found by tourists exploring the Upper, as well as Gilpin's Lower, Wye Valley.³

The double-page perspective view produced by Repton, looking east from the front of the house, which can be replicated today, leaves us in no doubt that one of the principal reasons Phipps bought the Ferney estate was to own 'the beautiful prospect'. With Clee Hill to the north-east and Ludlow nestling on the Teme to the south-east – Repton depicts the tower of St Laurence's Church as well as the castle – this was

a prospect hunter's dream. Moreover, Ludlow had never lost its polish as the capital of the Marches in the 15th and 16th centuries and thus offered many attractions for those seeking polite entertainment and the company it attracted.⁴ The town certainly had more of a season than say, Leominster or Hereford, although it did not shine so brightly as Shrewsbury or Worcester. No doubt these considerations helped persuade Mr. Phipps - 'a barrister of the highest character', according to the status conscious Repton - to take up residence at Ferney.⁵

Ferney was sold in September 1786 by the executors of Frederick Walker Cornwall, MP for Ludlow, and the eldest son of a national hero, the one-armed Captain Frederick Cornwall (1706-88) of Delbury Hall, Diddlebury, a few miles to the north-east of Ferney [see page 19]. The Delbury Cornwalls were descended from Robert Cornwall (1647-1705) of Berrington, and therefore cousins of the Cornwalls of Moccas, who were also soon to be patrons of Repton. Captain Frederick had been left Ferney by Francis Walker, and it provided a useful base for his son and namesake, the MP of Ludlow, the town he could see from his drawing room window.⁶ The Cornwalls were arguably one of the most prominent and influential families in the southern marches. Ferney was part of the manor of Shelderton, in the parish of Clungunford, which included the common of Mogtree (vestiges of the medieval royal forest of Mocktree). This rose to a summit of nearly 300 metres, where Repton recommended that Mr Phipps should build a 'Shepherd's Lodge built like a tower' where 'a most extensive prospect of Wales and England' might be enjoyed from its

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upper chamber. At the centre of the estate of 525 acres was the small brick modern-built mansion house, called Ferney Hall. It had a large garden 'walled in', a barn, stables, coach house, dove house, fish pools and sundry freehold woods, farms and tenements.⁷



Fig 1. The house as found by Repton at Ferney; he disliked red brick and generally recommended the use of stucco (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxtton).

Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price

It should have come as no surprise to Mr Phipps and his landscaper, Repton, that the proceedings at Ferney were the talk of the neighbourhood. The new MP for Ludlow, Richard Payne Knight of Downton Castle, a mere three miles from Ferney, had a particular interest in this 'small but romantic place', which not so long ago had belonged to the Walkers who had earlier owned the ironworks in the Downton Gorge. As far as we know, Knight had no previous knowledge of Repton and no doubt encountered him in September 1789 whilst he was doing his survey. Dorothy Stroud suggests that Knight may have offered hospitality to Repton, since he subsequently reduced his travel expenses for Phipps.⁸ He was clearly in communication with his new neighbour at Ferney, since he records that he was highly satisfied with Repton, after his unfortunate experience with

Woodward, the nurseryman. Knight was also impressed by Repton and found him articulate and familiar with the 'great landscape painters' who, of course, underpinned picturesque theory. Indeed, his jaundiced view of professional improvers – 'mere gardeners, nurserymen and mechanics' – was corrected by Repton's gallant defence of the 'present system of rural decoration'. Knight rushed off with excitement to his friend Uvedale Price, and others, to relay the news that he had found a 'landscape gardener' interested in 'picturesque beauty'.⁹

'Picturesque' was a term that had been regularly used throughout the 18th century, albeit in a rather loose way, just as it is today. For the *cognoscenti* it meant in the manner of a select group of mid-17th century Italianate painters, eg Claude of Lorraine, Nicholas Poussin, Salvator Rosa. In general these scenes were set in a wide landscape in which the 'picaresque' action took place in the foreground. The background, perhaps a vast seascape with mountains and hill-top castles, might have been described as 'sublime' – a term that was given definition by Edmund Burke in 1756 – but the foreground, rich in detail such as ruins, rocks and vegetation could hardly be described as 'beautiful', Burke's antithesis of the sublime.¹⁰ It was left to William Gilpin, who found similar irregular scenery on his Wye tour in 1770, to add the modifying adjective 'picturesque' to beauty. In 1789 it seems Knight was prepared to accept this combination, although by 1794, in *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem*, he was well on the way to defining 'the Picturesque' as a category quite distinct from both sublime and beautiful, but he left it to his friend Uvedale Price to provide the definitive account in the first

Essay on the Picturesque, also published in 1794. These two publications brought the debate with Repton to public notice and resulted in Repton responding with *Sketches and Hints* (1795) and Knight issuing a second edition of *The Landscape* (1795), where the Ferney encounter is described, and Price writing further essays, together with his correspondence with Repton published in three volumes in 1810.¹¹

Repton's career had developed quietly until 1789, untouched by public controversy. He was just another regional landscape improver, filling the gap left by Brown. When he sat at home in Hare Street, near Romford, Essex in October producing the Ferney Red Book, he could not have anticipated that he was on the road to infamy as well as fame. He presumably sent the Red Book, or a draft of it, to his client, who showed it to Knight, who 'communicated in writing [his] disapprobation in plain terms'. During December 1789 Repton was at Holkham staking out his walks etc and produced another Red Book for Brandsbury, Middlesex, early in 1790 and returned to Ferney, having apparently accepted Knight's criticisms without offence and invited him to suggest a plan 'more suitable to [Ferney's] natural character'.

The Drive, the Terraces and the Walled Garden

'Plans, Sketches and Hints for the improvement of Fernie [sic] Hall, in the Countie of Salop' sets the pattern for many subsequent Red Books. It flatters the estate, listing the areas of potential improvement whilst assuring its owner that any misgivings he might have in terms of expense were 'mere buffles' and could be spread over many years by employing a few labourers. Repton's predecessor, Woodward, had already

laid out the route of a new drive from the north, which Repton simplified into a single curve, taking in *en route* a 'majestic lime tree' and preserving all other trees. He has little to say about the house, which appears to be a mid-Georgian five bay building. However, it looked out eastwards across a terrace, sheltered on either side by high brick walls, terminating in two garden pavilions on either side. The south pavilion and the wall are condemned because they hid a 'magnificent wood'. The terrace was also to be foreshortened, leaving just enough space to turn a carriage upon. Repton reveals his priggishness by referring to his distaste for turning circles with a 'grass plat', which are likely to be found in a 'citizens garden' looking like a 'green dish' and were a test for the skill of coach drivers. He notes that the entrance front reflects 'the extravagant false taste of former times' and 'disfigures the beautiful prospect before us'. He proposes to return the ground to its original form and assures his client that this will be inexpensive, since no rock will need to be removed, only soil. Repton's account book indicates that earlier in 1789 he had bought a theodolite and a level, which are here put to use in a full page diagram of the terraces at Ferney.¹² It appears there had probably been two terraces, but the lower one had been removed and was now a slope. Where the ground levelled

out, Repton suggested a mowed lawn to be separated by a sunk fence from an area of pasture beyond.

Repton's object was 'to give the ground near the house an appearance of dress and appropriate it to the mansion'. With this in mind he hoped that the common land beyond the pasture, 'where cattle may enliven the lawn from the windows' of the house, might be annexed, and a 'swelling knowl' planted with a few trees. Some trees along the boundary fence – including yews and evergreens – are also to be left to become standards. Where the south pavilion has been demolished, he identified another 'gentle knowl', on which under the shade of a horse chestnut tree a seat could be placed to enjoy the 'pleasing prospect of the deep wooded glen'. The north summer house had been reprieved along with the adjoining walled garden, presumably by Mr Phipps, as Repton writes 'it sometimes happens that an old kitchen garden is placed to obstruct all plans of improvement [and] it is lately the fashion to move it to the most inconveniently distant spot'. Repton was quite capable of following this fashion, eg at Prestwood, Staffordshire, but here he re-named the kitchen garden as the 'fruit garden' and identified a putative new kitchen garden near the stables, to the north of the house. He felt that the existing



Fig 2. The terrace as Repton found it – distant views of Clee Hill with Ludlow Castle and St Lawrence's Church to the right (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxton).



Fig 3. The Ferney terrace improved, with the sloping garden connecting with the appropriated landscape beyond (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxton).

enclosure was too small for a kitchen garden and so it was planted around with a shrubbery to hide the walls. Fenced paths were threaded through the new shrubberies, which were to be kept neat and trimmed 'as ladies satin shoes may require'.

In Defence of Ancient Formality

Knight was presumably shown these proposals and wrote to Repton expressing his 'disapprobation ... in as plain terms as common civility would admit'.¹³ The picturesque, as represented in Knight's 'great artists' included ancient formality. Of course, in Britain, 18th century neglect had added a rich patina of senescence to gardens like Ferney, probably created in the late 17th century. Knight, we learn from Price, had prevented Lord Powis from blowing up the terraces of Powys Castle, on the recommendation of William Emes, and at Ferney, Repton was committing the same solecism because he was a 'mechanic improver' and did not know how to employ terraces, mounds, avenues and other features.¹⁴ As Knight saw it, the problem was that like Brown, Repton paid no attention to 'artificial character' which produced the 'style of a place'. He destroyed the features like walls, pavilions and changing levels that produced a picturesque effect and adopted Brown's solution of creating 'a little lawn' below the house, separated from the countryside by a sunk fence. In Knight's view Repton had abandoned the 'school of the painter' for the gardener, 'subject to pressure from Mr Phipps'. As a result, what would have pleased a landscape painter did not impress his client; Mr Phipps had employed an improver 'to be like the rest of the world'.¹⁵ Repton records in his *Memoir* that Phipps was very impressed by his skill, admiring the 'feelings' expressed

in the drawings and the 'powers of fascination' they produced.¹⁶

Knight's connoisseurship and unfashionable approach to earlier formality must have shocked Repton. A whole generation of improvers since the 1760s, led by Brown, had been sweeping away the crumbling remains of earlier gardens. This was a campaign carried forward without any second thoughts by both patron and artificier, and it is likely that Mr Phipps would have sacked Repton on the spot had he had second thoughts about eradicating the terraces and enclosing walls. Phipps had paid Repton for his first visit in September 1789 and following another visit in 1790 he accrued another debt of 14 guineas.¹⁷

The encounter at Ferney is revisited in the correspondence between Repton and Uvedale Price in 1794-5, which was published by the latter. At this time, Knight recorded his version of the events in 1789-90 in the second edition of *The Landscape* (1795). Price, it seems, came onto the scene quite late, since in a letter to Lord Abercorn, dated July 1792, he recounts having 'lately had an opportunity of seeing a good deal of Mr Repton', either at the houses 'of some gentlemen in my neighbourhood' where Repton was employed, or on an undated trip down the Wye. Price was quite impressed by Repton's performance on that occasion. He showed 'some respect for picturesque beauty... admired the banks [of the river] in their natural state and did not desire to turf them or remove the large stones'.¹⁸

The 'Rocky Dell'

Price believed in 1794 when he drafted his reply to Repton's letter, that it was the treatment of the 'rocky dell' at Ferney that had led to the final breach

between Repton and Knight. Repton had asked Knight to help him since, as Price pointed out, he was 'conversant... in that style of scenery' having spent much time in bringing out the picturesque qualities of the Teme Gorge at Downton. His ambition was to encourage Repton to 'fix on better principles' derived from the 'higher artists'.¹⁹ The 'rocky dell' appears in the early pages of the Red Book when, having removed the south wall of the garden enclosure, together with the summerhouse, Repton reveals 'the most majestic object in nature... a venerable wood hanging down on a steep bank'. To catch a glimpse of this, Repton also had to remove a section of hedgerow, some branches from overhanging trees and an old orchard on the north side of the house. At the bottom of the valley there was a pool of 'dark still water' which, required a white object to create a reflection. A 'small bath house' would do the trick, to be erected at the narrow (west) end of the pool. Repton accepted that a 'fishing bench' might be satisfactory but some earth might need to be removed to achieve a meaningful reflection. For the 'trifling expense' a bath house would be preferable. Repton admitted that his recommendations for the valley were based upon the view he obtained from using a telescope to look through the hole he made, which he suggested should be made much larger, albeit designed to look accidental.

Much of this paragraph Knight would have found toe curling. It was full of false contrivances at the expense of the real landscape. An orchard, perhaps venerable, was to be sacrificed; an unnecessary bath house was to be erected simply because it was a striking white building – presumably stuccoed. Price was to rail against the fashion for stuccoed buildings in the countryside,

usually erected on prominent hills by vulgar 'prospect hunters'.²⁰ The cutting of an 'accidental' hole in the hedge was another deception and, to make things worse, the whole fraud was invented by using a telescope. For Price and Knight this sort of flimflammy epitomised a superficial and unprincipled approach to the landscape. Just what might be expected from one of Brown's heirs?



Fig 4. The valley on the north side of the house as revealed with the destruction of the garden wall (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxtan).



Fig 5. The woodland cleared to produce a view of a bath house-cum-boat house in the valley (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxtan).

The Walks and 'the Enchanted Ground'

The final section of the Red Book concerns the walks, some of which were woven around the principal features, including the 'home dress ground' near the house, but also those in the valley, approached via a wicket gate at the south end of the house where the 'gloomy orchard' had once stood. Here, in the valley below, was an upper

bridge over the feeder to the pool which Repton believed would look better if it crossed clear water. This entailed raising the height of the pool by building a new and higher dam below the old one. This was to have water escaping either side, to create the impression of an island. The new dam would also give the lake a better shape and visitors might mistake it for one of those pools 'common in hilly counties' from whence 'mighty rivers sometimes owe their source'. The valley could also be approached lower down via another gate from the pleasure grounds, which crossed the stream well below the dam. This entered an 'awful scene of scattered rocks where, the vestiges of some great convulsion of Nature, arrests the attention with wondrous but delightful horror'. Clearly Repton, the author of gothic plays performed at the Theatre Royal, Norwich, had taken control of the Red Book and was shamelessly exaggerating the remains of a long abandoned quarry, probably used to provide stone for Ludlow Castle. Indeed, Repton was soon comparing it to the 'shattered walls of some ruined castle' set in a 'magic chasm', which on his plan is referred to as 'the enchanted ground'.

To reinforce this fantasy he provides a tinted oval vignette in a rococo style, showing how it could be improved. 'A romantic bridge is thrown dreadfully across the chasm', where two children lean over the fragile balustrade addressing a third child below. Piled informally around the rocky outcrop, the text informs us are 'some chosen fragments of fossil shells placed conspicuously; the attention is called to the origin of all these wonders'. To crown the fantasy on the highest cliff, through the trees, a megalithic structure is drawn, which is clearly a not-so-subtle

compliment to Knight who had used a pair of monoliths to mark the entrance to his Roman Baths in the Downton Gorge.²¹ Presumably, Knight had already given up on Repton by this point in the Red Book.

It is possible that Repton realised he had been carried away by his febrile



Fig 7. The vignette of the rock dell – a rococo fantasy – too much for Richard Payne Knight (Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York, Derek Foxton).

imagination in the Ferney Red Book. He certainly ended up with egg on his face. As Price noted in his letter of 1792, Repton was a 'coxcomb' and it is difficult to imagine that Samuel Phipps would have taken any of this seriously. Fortunately perhaps for Repton, his erstwhile patron died, but the bad publicity he received from Price and Knight in 1794-5, may well have affected his career and his commissions certainly declined after this date.²²

David Whitehead

Reprinted with the author's kind permission from *'In the Enemy's Quarters': Humphry Repton in the West Midlands* by David Whitehead and Jane Bradney, published in 2018 by the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust and the Woolhope Club.

Notes

- 1 Stephen Daniels, *Humphry Repton* (New Haven & London, 1999), 81-4.
- 2 www.themorgan.org/collection/Humphry-Repton-Red-Books accessed 18th April 2018.
- 3 John Clark, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hereford* (London, 1794); John Duncumb, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hereford* (London, 1802); E.L. Jones, 'Agricultural Conditions and Changes in Herefordshire, 1660-1760' in *Trans. Woolhope Natur.Fld. Club* (1961), 32-55.
- 4 David Whitehead, 'Symbolism and Assimilation' in R Shoesmith & Andy Johnson (eds.), *Ludlow Castle* (Logaston, 2000), 34; S.J. Wright, 'Sojourners and Lodgers in a Provincial Town' in *Urban History Year Book* 17 (1990), 14-38.
- 5 Ann Gore & George Carter (eds), *Humphry Repton's Memoirs* (Norwich, 2005), 28.
- 6 Compton Reade, *The House of Cornwall* (Hereford, 1908), 124-136.
- 7 *Hereford Journal*, 7 September 1786.
- 8 Dorothy Stroud, *Humphry Repton* (London, 1972), 42.
- 9 R.P. Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (London, 2nd Edition, 1795), 98-9.
- 10 Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927), 18-82.
- 11 Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* III (London, 1810), 1-180.
- 12 Stroud, *Repton*, 39.
- 13 Knight, *Landscape* (1795), 99.
- 14 Price, *Essays* III, 87-88.
- 15 Knight, *Landscape*, 99-103.
- 16 Ann Gore & George Carter (eds), *Humphry Repton's Memoirs* (2005), 28-9.
- 17 Stroud, *Repton*, 42.
- 18 Charles Watkins & Ben Cowell (eds), *The Letters of Uvedale Price* (Walpole Society, 68, 2006), 79; Price, *Essays* III, 45.
- 19 Knight, *Landscape*, 99; Price, *Essays* III, 90.
- 20 Price, *Essays* I, 165-6.
- 21 Barney Rolfe-Smith, *Downton Gorge: Richard Payne Knight's Secret Garden* (Leominster, 2016), 30, William Owen, 'The Cold Bath' c.1780.
- 22 Daniels, *Repton*, 40, diagram

Humphry Repton (1752-1818) and Attingham's Red Book (1798)

Construction of Attingham and the start of Repton's career

Attingham Park is situated a few miles east of Shrewsbury in Shropshire. The neo-classical house overlooks Watling Street, the main road from London to North Wales. The house and stables were designed by George Steuart in 1782 and the new home was occupied by Noel Hill, 1st Baron Berwick and his family in 1785. In the 1770s the grounds had been landscaped by Thomas Leggett but in 1797 Humphry Repton made the first of two visits to Attingham at the request of Thomas Hill, 2nd Baron Berwick.

With the death of 'Capability' Brown in 1783, the path was clear for Repton to make his mark on the homes of English noblemen and new wealthy landowner industrialists. He was the first person to use the term 'landscape gardener'. He was part way into his career when he produced his Red Book for Attingham following his second visit in 1798.

The Red Books

An ingenious marketing tool, Repton's Red Books provided a handy *aide-mémoire* after discussion between Repton and his client. The competent watercolours often used flaps to show 'before' and 'after' views of Repton's proposals. These scenographic transformations can be viewed in the context of Repton's love of theatre and peepshow devices. The Red Books gave Repton an opportunity to postulate his theories on landscape design. The Attingham Red Book is important for its theories on the Picturesque, being created at the height of the Picturesque debate.



Repton's plan for Attingham Park.

The Red Books were so called because of their red morocco bindings, usually in landscape format. Clients enjoyed displaying them on their library tables and showing them proudly to their friends. Repton was adept at flattering his clients in his dedications. He employed a standard format for his Red Book texts: dedication, character, situation, approaches, views from the house, pleasure grounds and walks, and areas specific to the site such as water.

Unlike 'Capability' Brown, who project-managed his landscapes, Repton did not carry out the practicalities. Therefore many of his 400 odd schemes were incomplete. At Attingham, for example, Repton's suggestion to add an 'eye catcher' spire to Wroxeter church and to improve the Tern Bridge by adding an arch to form a walkway underneath were never carried out.

A forte of Repton was his skill in planning approaches, drives and carriageways with views. At Attingham a drive through the eastern plantation on the hills with views from the high ground towards Shrewsbury and the Wrekin carried towards the Severn. After views along the edge of the Severn towards a 'fishing room' the drive was planned to return with a fine view of the house

from under the bridge. This view is the final plate in his Red Book (see the final image in this text).

Making a dramatic entrance

Repton was faced with a challenge at Attingham in that the parkland was flat and the trees planted by Leggett were still young in the 1790s. Repton aimed to make the most of the natural features (the River Tern and the Wrekin hill) and the man-made features (Tern Bridge and buildings in the landscape). As at many of his sites, Repton made sweeping carriage drives to offer the visitor glimpses of the house through trees and extend the journey through the park for pleasure. Animals were included in his watercolours to 'enliven' the landscape.

Lord Berwick had recently purchased land to the east of the house (where the deer park is located today) and this gave Repton the opportunity to design a new secondary entrance to Attingham for those travelling from London. In his design, the entrance from the East crosses the River Tern via a new bridge of wood or cast iron. This second bridge was only in existence for a short space of time or may never have been built.

To increase the grandeur of Lord Berwick's grounds, Repton designed two lodges by the east entrance and positioned them so that it would appear that the park continued on both sides of the road and that one was passing through the grounds rather than driving to one side of it. Lord Berwick only owned land on one side of the road by the eastern entrance and only one lodge was ever built.

The park boundary

Repton believed that a park did not have to be large as long as the boundary surrounding the park was

concealed. He comments that the 'flaming' colour of the brick wall will lessen with age or could be faded out with a wash and that lime trees could be used to hide the wall.

In his Red Book for Attingham he states:

'... it is impossible to annex ideas of grandeur and magnificence to a mansion which appears to have little extent of park belonging to it.'

To rectify the problem of the flat lawn between the house and the road, Repton aims to use the laws of perspective to give a sense of distance. He writes that natural features, such as the confluence of the River Tern and River Severn, should be highlighted to draw the eye beyond the road and to link the two sides of the park. Adding a spire to Wroxeter Church would add further interest to the view.



The River Tern with weir before alteration.

Changes to the River Tern

Attingham enabled Repton to plan exciting creations for the River Tern to make the most of the natural feature. He tried to solve the problem of the river which dried up in times of low rainfall and flooded during high rainfall. He suggested that Lord Berwick needed to:

'... secure a constant and permanent effect of water, which may be seen at a distance and add brilliancy and

grandeur to the scenery.'

He wanted to create the effect of 'not an occasional meandering brook' but 'an ample river, majestically flowing thro' the park, and spreading cheerfulness on all around it'.

In his watercolours he straightened out the meandering banks making the river navigable for barges. He made the view of the River Tern more picturesque by cutting a channel for the river so that the water could be seen from the house. He writes that cattle grazing by the river would enhance this scene of beauty and roughen the edges of the riverbank.



River Tern with Repton's proposals for a cascade.

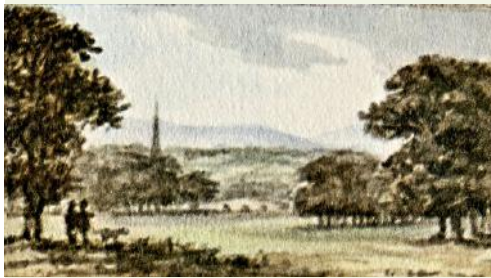
In his 'View from the East front' he changes the flow of water by narrowing the channel of the weir attempting to make it flow more fiercely and noisily thus inspiring a sublime feeling of fear and awe. Repton believed that there was 'nothing more pleasing than the lively motion of water agitated to froth and foam', so he planned a cascade to replace the weir for viewing from the east front of the house. Another strategy to make it more pleasing to the eye was to remove the ruined mill building from close proximity to the house.

Picturesque controversy

The Picturesque controversy between Repton, Uvedale Price of Foxley and



Richard Payne Knight of Downton was at its height when Repton was designing Attingham. In 1794 Knight published *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* in which he referred to Repton as 'a haggard fiend' and 'a thin meagre genius of the bare and bald'. Price's *Essays on the Picturesque* (1794) also attacked Repton. In a supplement to his book *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795), Repton responds by criticising their 'new theory on Landscape Gardening though it ought to be called Picture Gardening'.



Top and above: Repton's theories of the Picturesque as discussed in his 'Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening'.

The Attingham Red Book gave him the opportunity to counter Knight and Price's theories on the Picturesque. He devotes a whole section entitled 'Of landscape painting' to the futility of Mr Price's idea that all improvement of scenery should be derived from the works of the great painters. He states that the pictures of Claude of Lorraine 'seldom consist of more than one fifth of the field of vision' and this is admirably demonstrated in Repton's visual comparison of a landscape painting and a fold-out landscape panorama. He writes:

'I shall never be brought to believe, as Mr Price asserts, that the best landscape painter would make the best landscape-gardener any more than that the best dancing master should be the most perfect Gentleman, because the art of dancing is one of the parts of a Gentleman's education.'

Repton believed the treatment of the foreground in a landscape painting was totally alien to landscape gardening. A landscape gardener surveys his scenery whilst in motion. This is very different from each window of a house. Light in a picture was fixed whereas light in the actual landscape illuminates on every object in nature. Repton was very keen on the effect of light reflecting on and in between the trunks of a group of trees. Repton looked at a painting by Claude, at the time in Lord Berwick's collection, to counter Price's principles. Although the Claude painting was 5ft long, in order to plant the park to enhance the views from the breakfast room windows, it would be necessary to 'divide the whole field of vision into separate landscapes putting five or six pictures by Claude into one big frame'. The vitriolic nature of the controversy was so great that the poet Shelley in a letter to Thomas Love Peacock in 1821 referred to them as like 'two ill-trained beagles snarling at each other when they could not catch a hare'.

John Nash

Another stormy relationship which Repton had to endure was his partnership with John Nash. Repton first met Nash at Stoke Edith in

Herefordshire in 1793 where both had been commissioned to do work. Around 1796 Repton entered a formal partnership with Nash hoping to integrate the architectural and landscape elements of consultancy. The plan was that Repton would increase his income and Nash would benefit from Repton's large circle of contacts.

The partnership was to last until around 1800 when Nash no longer needed the support of his partner. Repton did not receive the financial benefit he was expecting. Nash, the stronger character (Repton did not like confrontation), appears manipulative and greedy. Perhaps this was the influence of his bankruptcy. This grievance remained with Repton for the rest of his life, for in his *Memoirs*, he refers to the lack of payment he was expecting from Nash, to which Nash replies that the cost of boarding his son, John Adey Repton, whilst working in Nash's office outweighed the amount he was owed. In *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1818, Repton wrote:

'It is... to the assistance of Mr John Adey Repton that I am indebted for many valuable ornaments in this volume. His name has hitherto been little known as an architect, because it was suppressed in many works begun in that of another person, to whom I freely, unreservedly and confidentially gave my advice and assistance, while my son aided with architectural knowledge and his pencil, to form plans and designs, from which we have derived neither fame nor profit'.

Such injustice is remarkable after Repton had introduced Nash to the Prince of Wales, suggesting him for the design of a conservatory for Brighton Pavilion. Nash was given the whole 16

project at the expense of Repton who had carried out many designs for a Red Book for which he was never paid.

Disagreements over the projects on which they worked together meant that Nash often won his case. This happened at nearby Longner, adjacent to Attingham, where Repton did not think a newly sited house was needed. Nash replaced the existing moated house with a Tudor Gothic mansion.

Conclusion

Attingham shows Repton as the experienced landscape gardener putting into practice many of his previously held theories. It was also an important opportunity for him to counter the Picturesque theories of Price and Knight. He concludes the Red Book with the statement:

'In spite of the wild theories of picturesque gardeners, Attingham will be a lasting monument to Lord Berwick's taste in having committed its improvement to the rational plans of a landscape gardener.'



View from the Tern Bridge.

Repton's Red Book and his landscape remain today at Attingham Park and are enjoyed daily by visitors from the local area and further afield. *Gaye Smith*

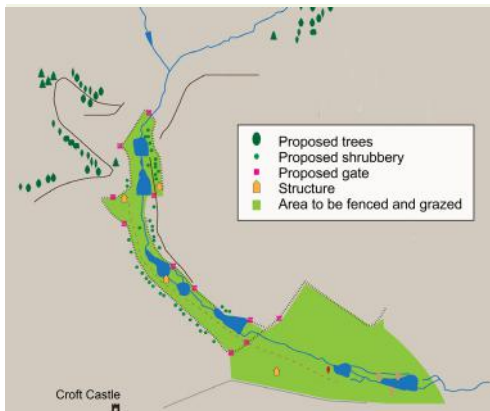
With thanks to Sarah Kay, Curator, Shropshire and Staffordshire National Trust; to Saraid Jones of Attingham Park, National Trust; and to Jeremy Parrett of Manchester Metropolitan University Library.

Visits

Fishpool Valley, Croft Castle

On 18th May a group from SPGT visited the 'Picturesque' Landscape of the Fishpool Valley at Croft Castle in Herefordshire. This deep valley, to the north of the main entrance avenue, is currently undergoing an impressive five-year restoration under the Project Managership of Imogen Sambrook for the National Trust. It was especially fascinating to see a project during its process and thus appreciate the enormous amount of work that needs to be planned and undertaken in order to realise the ultimate objectives of the scheme.

We were guided through the valley by John Parsons who has been a volunteer ranger at Croft for nine years. He has worked not only on the valley but also in the wider Parkland, the Iron Age Hill Fort, and the restoration of ancient meadows. His hands-on experience and enthusiasm was infectious.



Plan of Fishpool Valley with proposed alterations.

Early human history in the valley pre-dates the 'Picturesque' landscape, with the fish pools mentioned in the

1200s as Fishpool Dingle, presumably developed for food production. The woodlands supported industry, including charcoal burning, necessary oak coppicing, lime production, and the pools and streams would have supported a milling industry.



Lime kiln (right) and limestone quarry-face

This restoration by the National Trust is a complex project, mediating through the objectives and constraints requires skilful management, and is evolving as further archaeological finds are unearthed. The valley project was spurred on by a flood in 2012, this highlighted the poor state that the dams had fallen into and the damage that could occur downstream if work was not undertaken. Thus flooding, and the subsequent engineering of dams and spillways, is a key design driver. Perhaps of more importance is the fundamental objective of the opening of views and drives, subtle re-building of dams and spillways, and restoration of integral architectural features in order to restore the 'picturesque' landscape quality of the valley. This late 18th century style strove to create a

more 'natural' landscape with intricacy, roughness, variety and surprise and was created here at Croft by the Johnes family.



The Gothic Pumphouse that used to pump water up to the house, and the grotto folly.

Fundamental to this objective of restoring the 'Picturesque' is the on-going careful removal of tree growth to open up views. This will allow for long vistas from upper view points down the length of the valley with its necklace of pools and streams framed by trees. More subtle unfolding views appear from the rides and pathways criss-crossing the valley and following the contours of the landscape.

The ongoing tree removal was apparent from our guided walk with John. The work also needs to be managed for its effect on the wildlife and ecology and is therefore being done incrementally over the five-year period to minimise impact and to allow the process to evolve as discoveries are made. Thus, more light is allowed to penetrate the pools and woodland floor in order to increase diverse habitat



Views opened up across the valley.

opportunities. The resulting understorey will also need to be managed and some trial sheep will soon be introduced as part of this regime.

We concluded our walk of the valley at the restored Dam Number One. The work here has been completed, the earth dam complete, stone spillways working, bridge built, and the pool cleared and re-filled. An illustration of how the entire valley will appear after the next phases of work.

Climbing from the seclusion and tranquility of the Fishpool Valley, up the steep valley sides the path emerges in the parkland with its magnificent old Spanish Chestnut trees. An intriguing Croft story, some say that these trees came over on the ships of the Armada in 1588 and that the avenues at Croft represent the Armada Battle Plan...

More information on Croft Castle is available on: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croft-castle-and-parkland. *Liz Handley*



Daphne Capps supervises Nicky Lipscombe as she clears a spillway.

Delbury Hall Walled Garden - Mynd Hardy Plants



What a treat this visit of 18 June was! Guests of Trust members Richard and Jill Rallings, to whom we owe grateful thanks, we wandered at will through the two-acre walled garden of about 1850, which they have leased for the last five years from the owners of the adjacent Delbury Hall. Following two dire weeks of cold and rain, it was getting warmer, and the falling droplets were only occasional, almost apologetic, as we admired Richard and Jill's generous and colourful borders and the Daylilies and Beardtongues which are amongst their specialities.

After his informative introduction, Richard led our 30-strong party, half at a time, on a mystery tour: we passed an ancient propped apple, the square stone dovecote of 1770, the stables converted to serve as a prestige wedding venue, and a formal ornamental canal. To the front of the Hall swans and cygnets graced an informal landscaped lake and we turned to admire what Pevsner describes as 'a delectable mid-Georgian mansion, entirely of warm red brick'; it was built in the 1750s for Frederick Cornewall [see page 6]. Richard's entertaining commentary embraced history and



anecdote as he led us to the old mill, and to viewpoints looking across some 80 acres of parkland and extensive fishing lakes.

And then it was time for tea and a range of scrumptious cakes provided by Jill, and the opportunity to acquire plants, as well as wine from the Morville St Gregory Vineyard, which Richard established in 2001 and owned until 2018. Few, if any of us, left empty-handed.

Tom Wall

By the by: From Delbury Hall to The Mount, Shrewsbury

'In certain years the doctor [Dr Robert Waring Darwin (1766-1848), father of Charles Darwin] and Susan [(1803-66), Charles's unmarried sister] recorded the total number of asparagus spears, or as they called them, "heads", cut per season... In 1842 there were "2,000 head cut" and in 1843 "2,853 cut all together". The score... rose to a magnificent 3,145 heads in 1850. On 4 April 1849, a first cut of 70 heads was made for a dinner party with "Young Potatoes".'

From 'The Darwins family's kitchen garden at The Mount, Shrewsbury, 1838-65', by Susan Campbell in 'Garden History' 47 : 1 (2019).

Summer Party, Golding Hall



You can see Golding Hall for miles. It sits high on a hill, commanding views across the valley below, as befits its status as a former Manor House. But hidden behind it is a secret, sunken garden which you can only see if the owners, Richard and Sue Hartley, are kind enough to let you in.

We were lucky enough to be invited to hold our Summer Party here this year and be able to explore the beautiful gardens on a warm summer evening, glass in hand, in the company of our best friends, before heading up into the former Tack Room to be served with dinner.

The Hall dates from the 17th and 18th centuries, and was built on the mediaeval foundations of an earlier house. The terraced garden, formed by massive excavations to the rear of the Hall, is an unusual example of a 17th century gentleman's garden.

We felt very privileged to be able to wander around it as we pleased, enjoy the views from the terraces over the garden itself and out into the countryside around it, and to explore all the nooks and corners within it. The gorgeous planting is a mixture of exotic plants and old favourites, all benefitting from the shelter of the walls and terraces. It was a truly magical

experience and we are very grateful to Richard and Sue for allowing us to enjoy it.
Mary King



The sunken garden.



A border near the house.



The Tack Room where dinner was served.

Warley Woods, The People's Park, B67 5ED

On a breezy Saturday afternoon in August 2019, members of the SPGT had a fascinating visit to Warley Woods in Smethwick. It is currently a 100 acre park and golf course run by an extraordinary Community Trust, but it was designed as a private park by Humphry Repton in 1794 for Samuel Galton, the Quaker industrialist and gun maker. Warley Woods is now a Site of Important Nature Conservation and a Site of Local Importance to Nature Conservation and is registered grade 2 by English Heritage. It was saved from being developed for housing by public subscription led by Alexander Chance (the Quaker glassmaker), was opened in 1906, and became known as 'The People's Park'.

The Warley Woods Community Trust was formed in 1997 to restore and manage Warley Woods Park as an asset for the local community, and they have run the site since 2004. It is the first urban park in the UK to be run by a community trust. The Trust took over a site which had had no investment for many years. There were no paths, no bins, just two benches. There was no fencing, gates or play area and the drinking fountain just looked like a lump of concrete amongst nettles. Warley Woods is now an award winning, welcoming, safe, thriving community space. It has 1,000 plus members, hundreds of volunteers and has raised £4.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and many other Trusts and local supporters, all spent on making Warley Woods a special place for everyone who visits.

Warley Woods was unusual as a commission for Humphry Repton (1752-

1818) in that he was asked to lay out a 'new' landscape, rather than improve an existing one, and the ground was still divided into fields when he arrived. His recommendations included the extent and choice of the style of design, the siting of the house, plantations, approaches, walks and rides, a pond formed from the stream through the valley bottom, and a temple. His proposals were largely carried out but none of the buildings designed by Repton remain.



Our visit was led by Kate Slade and Chris Ashford, both Trustees, and started with a talk about Repton's designs for Warley, including a look at a copy of the Red Book. Chris and Kate led us on a walk around the immaculate woodlands and park looking at Repton's images as we watched happy families at play and a birthday party in full swing. Chris filled us in with some extraordinary facts and figures, also



available in their admirable collection of leaflets :

There are over 4,000 trees in Warley Woods which shed over 450 million leaves each autumn.

Each week over 1 tonne of dog poo is deposited on the site, costing the trust £8,000 per annum to remove it (perhaps something dog owners don't think about!).

Volunteers give over 5,000 hours of help each year which would cost tens of thousands of pounds if they were paid. There is virtually no graffiti or antisocial behaviour in the park, which is remarkable. The local community self-police it through social media and the robust use of Facebook and Twitter, shaming any miscreants including travellers who tried to invade the park.

The park has been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award for the last 11 years.



It was a fabulous trip and we were so full of admiration for the Trust and their tireless campaigns to make Warley Woods a 'local paradise' (in the words of one child visitor). Look at their website <https://www.warleywoods.org.uk/>, go and visit and perhaps donate towards their next appeal to build a new visitor centre and café, as the Pavilion dates from 1957 and is looking its age!

Harriet Devlin

Report for the award of a bursary for an online Garden History course

We have received the following report from Stuart Francis recipient of a bursary from SPGT:

I have been a self-employed sole gardener in Shropshire for 10 years, with 12 regular clients. Previously I was a member of the Royal Navy. I am a full member of the Professional Gardeners Guild (PGG). I also belong to the Society of Garden Designers and SPGT.

In 2018 I became involved with the development and restoration of the garden of Pitchford Hall.

I received an award for £270 from the Birkbeck Garden History Group (BGHG) with an additional award from the SPGT for reading material (£270). This enabled me to attend a course on garden history.

The course was a 10-week online course provided by the University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education, on English Landscape Gardens 1650 to the Present day.

I have had an interest in the history of gardens for a number of years, and with the knowledge I have gained through this course, I now have a much better understanding of the underlying history, even if it has been covered by later landscape designers.

The knowledge I have gained from this course will be used in the development of Pitchford Hall, in the short term and in the long term, I will use this as the start of gaining more knowledge in garden history as I develop my business towards consultancy and management.

Our thanks to Stuart for his full report, of which the above is a summary, and best wishes for his future career.

Planning Matters

As with previous years, 2019 has seen a number of small applications relating to private homes or other buildings in Shropshire that have the potential to affect the Setting of a Registered Park & Garden. Often these involve alterations to existing fabric such as home extensions, which have limited potential for wider visual impact, but sometimes the scale of the proposed alterations are substantial and it is clear that they would have a negative impact. We always try to work with owners and with Shropshire Council's planning officers to have such proposals amended, but are not always successful in this respect.

Now and again however, we do have more success, as was the case with an application potentially affecting both the fabric and Setting of the Grade II Registered Park & Garden at Ludstone Hall, Claverley. The application was for 11 'Log Cabins' within historic woodland overlooking the park at Ludstone, together with vehicular access, car parking area and septic tank installation. Apparently innocuous at first glance, on closer inspection it became clear that the proposed development would also have affected the Setting of the Grade I Listed Ludstone Hall to the north and a number of other Listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument within the site. Following a detailed written response, the application was withdrawn, much to the relief of local residents within Claverley village, including SPGT members.

Our continued responses to these applications over a number of years has gradually enhanced our profile within Shropshire Council planning department and we are now regularly consulted directly regarding such proposals. The challenge then is to respond within the allotted time-frame, but usually we manage to put together an appropriate response.

Christopher Gallagher

Diary dates

Thurs 17 October:

Winter Lectures

Landscape Changes in Wales over the past 250 years
Richard Keen

Thurs 21 November:

The Sun King of Cheshire - Philanthropy and Patronage
Marion Mako

Thurs 16 January 2020:

The Beautiful Burial Ground
Harriet Carty

Thurs 20 February:

The Life and Legacy of H Avray Tipping
Helena Gerrish

Thurs 19 March:

6.30pm: AGM, to be followed by refreshments
7.30pm lecture: *London, the World's first National Park City* - Judy Ling Wong

Guests welcome to join any lecture - tickets: £5 at the door

Contact: Kathryn Herbert, 01743 236127 or email kathy.m.herbert@gmail.com

Front cover picture: *May (Hawthorn) in full blow on the occasion of our visit to the Fishpool Valley at Croft Castle, 18 May 2019.*

Back cover picture: *Delbury Hall, 18 June.*

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