

SHROPSHIRE  
PARKS &  
GARDENS  
TRUST

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# Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust

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## Letter from the Chair

With so much on hold in our lives, I am delighted that we are able to bring you the second edition of our new Magazine to remind us of the enduring nature of our parks and gardens. The contents cover a wide range of subjects. Professor Rotherham’s article expands on the talk he gave us last year and the new research that reveals both that landscapes may have changed more than we realise, and that they contain surviving evidence of greater age than we always appreciate, such as the very ancient oak trees in Attingham Park. We have reminders of our visit to Linley Hall, a wonderful end to last year’s Summer programme, and of our Winter lectures. An article on the Quarry Park in Shrewsbury shows how much a landscape can change in a short period of time. Who looking at it now would be immediately aware of the extent of the 20th century replanting revealed in the photographs? The book reviews reveal a selection of books to provide food for thought during the lockdown and the Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Worcestershire gives us something to aim for when we can resume our research into the parks and gardens of Shropshire. David Lambert’s article on Conservation and the Climate Emergency reminds us that it is not just the Coronavirus that threatens our future. The lockdown has shown how quickly skies can clear and pollution fall with reductions in vehicle use and carbon emissions. Can we use this pause in our normal lives to develop a new blueprint for the future? Finally we can reflect upon the Garden with Andrew Marvell until our visits can start again.

*Mary King*

**SPGT Research Group: please don't lose your enthusiasm for the Parks and Gardens research project!** You will be contacted post CV when we have a new date for the Induction to Shropshire Archives and project briefing. Any queries , please do contact me on [harrietdevlin1@gmail.com](mailto:harrietdevlin1@gmail.com)

## **The ideas of Frans Vera in a context of the history, development, & ecology of deer parks**

This follows on from the talk given to the Trust by Professor Ian Rotherham on 21 February 2019

### **An introduction to the ideas of Frans Vera & their relevance**

The publication in 2000 of the book by Frans Vera, *Grazing Ecology and Forest History* (Vera, 2000; see Rotherham, 2013b) was instrumental in triggering a debate which still resonates through conservation today. Essentially, the ideas of Vera followed from earlier work by researchers such as especially Oliver Rackham (eg Rackham, 1986), and George Peterken (eg Peterken, 1996). The idea of open, savanna-like landscapes widespread in 'primeval' Europe and the herbivore-driven dynamics behind them proved both contentious and controversial. Nevertheless, discussions between Rackham, Vera, and Peterken that I facilitated at meetings in Sheffield, led to a consensus of opinion that the open areas were indeed present as were the close-canopy forests. It was decided that the key question was not presence or absence of open spaces,

but the relative sizes of the patches and their spatial location. Furthermore however, and this is a part of the controversy of the 'Vera vision', Frans suggested and argued that the large numbers of big grazing mammals he postulated to inhabit early, pre-human dominated, European landscapes, were the driving force behind the landscape processes and ecological successions. Much of the early genesis of the Vera ideas was based on close observation of modern landscape dynamics in the restored / created site in Holland, Oostvaardersplassen. Other relevant work has been on the history of woodland landscape by a range of authors such as in Peter Quelch in Scotland (Quelch, 2001), in England Della Hooke (eg Hooke, 1989), and by Peterken (2013, 2017).

### **Shadow woods & the medieval countryside**

However, in the context of this now long-running debate, I have undertaken long-term, cross-disciplinary research across Europe but with a focus on England, and this has led to the emerging concept of 'Shadow Woods' as 'Domesday survivals' within the modern-day landscape (Rotherham, 2017a). Furthermore, I argue that the evidence for extensive open land in a mosaic complex of pre-cultural countryside

is incontrovertible. It may be that we have been asking the wrong questions or perhaps the right questions but at the wrong time (Rotherham, 2014, 2017a). This argument has been developed in the context of north-west Europe including Great Britain. It emerges from research on medieval deer-parks, on medieval common-land, and the impacts of drainage and improvement in the fenlands and bogs, and in the wider landscape too. The catastrophic loss and removal of heaths, commons, fens, bogs, woods, chases, forests, and similar 'unimproved' countryside has so utterly changed our environment that we no longer have an awareness of where we have come from. This is in essence what Vera describes as the 'shifting baseline' of environmental perception, awareness, and expectation, whereby each generation begins from its own starting point and accepts that as the 'norm'. Yet my own research suggests that British and European countryside has been transformed by long-term human utilisation (creating cultural and eco-cultural landscapes), by the shift to feudalism and the medieval landscape post-1066, and then by parliamentary enclosures and subsequent 'improvement' to the modern-day (Rotherham, 2014, 2017a). However, (and often overlooked by ecologists engaging in the discussions), the Domesday account of 1086 provides a unique glimpse into the pre-feudal countryside and a view back into an extensive, fluid, 'Vera-esque' landscape. A major thrust of my argument is that post-Domesday we see the fixing of the landscape into a feudal, 'top-down' system whereby at

the manorial level the countryside is mapped out, accounted for, and fixed in place with boundaries and names. From this we have the emergence of the medieval countryside which over centuries morphs into the modern landscape of today. The changes are to some extent 'captured' in the watershed moment of the 'Act of Commons' or 'Statute of Merton' which sets down the rights of the manorial lord and of the others in a largely rural community. This act doesn't make the changes happen but merely records and rationalises what is happening to the English countryside at that time.

### **Forests, chases & parks**

One of the major shifts in countryside evolution in the medieval period was the emergence of royal forests, of hunting chases, and deer parks (see Rotherham, 2007a for example). This is a huge topic and space here precludes more than a cursory discussion. However, it seems that in the post-Domesday fixing of the landscape there was a massive emergence of royal forests, hunting chases, and deer parks; and of course these were enclosed and fixed from the wider landscape of unenclosed wood-pastures. Along with these



*Ancient oak at Attingham*



*Ancient oaks in the landscape at Attingham*

obvious enclosures were the setting aside of extensive commons of heaths, bogs, fens and wooded commons. Indeed, I argue that many of these landscapes, some of which persist today as extensive upland moors and fragmented lowland heaths, were largely some form of 'wooded common'. Over centuries of heavy exploitation since the early medieval, the heaths and moors have become more 'heathy' and 'less woody'. Nevertheless, within this broad spectrum of countryside areas even today, we see a strong influence of the Vera ecology. Furthermore, in the parks of counties such as Shropshire and nearby Herefordshire for example, large areas of 'pre-improvement' ecology have been preserved, albeit in a radically modified form. Sites like the wonderful Moccas Park for instance, took in large tracts of unimproved countryside including what are now the great oak trees,

and to a large extent protected them from otherwise adverse impacts of agricultural intensification. Most such areas were subsequently at least modified by evolution into ornamental 'landscape parks' during the 1700s and 1800s, and many were unenclosed or disparked to farming use. Parks such as Berrington (Herefordshire) were influenced by Capability Brown, and Attingham Park (Shropshire) by Repton. Some of these impacts and influences are discussed in Rotherham (2007b) and in the multi-authored volume on Brown (Rotherham, & Handley, 2017); the latter being one of the few accounts to consider Brown's influence on ecology.

In order to understand the often-complex ecologies of the individual sites it is essential to develop detailed historical time-lines and these require meticulous archival, map-based, and ecological research. Attingham Park for example, is a relatively late creation

but one which takes in extensive ancient common and old lanes. It is from these features that the veteran trees occur as 'shadow woods' in the eighteenth-century park. In order to better understand the ecology today it is important to recognise how species have descended to our modern landscape from the medieval and indeed from Vera's primeval. I liken these to 'ecological time-travellers' and 'time-capsules' (see Rotherham, 2017a) as species move through time and space within their own unique ecological envelopes of niche-space. Leaving aside non-native, invasive species as a whole different discussion, all our species today were somewhere in the past and the question is where. I have developed this argument to help demonstrate that Vera's open spaces must be there in Europe's primeval. His herbivores are there too and whilst they do help power and drive the ecological successional processes, they are not the only important influences. Natural instability through landslips, wildfires, flooding, and pests and diseases, must also have had major influences. Above all, and forgotten by many researchers, (see Rotherham, 2013c), the landscape before the 1600s drainage was far wetter; and the European primeval was wetter still. In this wet, pre-hunting landscape with extensive floodplains and natural valley-bottom meadows, huge numbers of wild geese created nutrient-rich, short-grass swards and these would draw, like a magnet, Vera's herbivores (red deer, aurochs, bison, roe deer, wild boar and others).

## Deer parks & the future

There are major issues of the often troublesome economics of deer-park development and maintenance. Their important ecology is generally associated with continuity and antiquity, and is now, having been largely eradicated from the wider countryside, almost unique. The relationships of medieval deer parks to later landscape parks and to the wider 'commons' are also interesting and relevant to future conservation efforts. However, a major complication is that none of us has ever experienced a 'working' deer park as it might have been in the medieval period. With a process described as 'cultural severance' (Rotherham, 2008, 2011a, 2013a) these are no longer primarily 'working' countryside but 'leisurely landscapes' in which we (the public) now recreate. The great trees grew up as working trees in busy landscapes but are now long-since retired veterans. Furthermore, the eco-cultural processes which generated the successions of working trees ended with the 'landscape parks' and with the modern countryside. There now remain big questions about successions and replacements. Furthermore, the landscapes of the past which we now treasure so dearly were working lands that paid their way. Replicating all these factors is perhaps the great challenge for future heritage landscape conservation. But first of all, we need a much clearer understanding of our landscape evolution and of our potential future countryside too.

*Ian Rotherham, Professor of Environmental History and Reader in Tourism and Environmental Change at Sheffield Hallam University*

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*Ancient oak at Attingham*

## Talks

Here are reminders of the first and the last (due to Coronavirus) talks of the winter season, followed by fuller accounts of the other two.



Left: *Dinefwr Park and Castle*

Below: *A street scene (taken in the 1970s) of Pontygwaith, Rhondda*



The first, ***Landscape changes in Wales over the past 250 years***, by **Richard Keen** who worked for the National Trust in Wales for many years and has served *inter alia* on the Historic Buildings Council for Wales (including as Chair), and the Heritage Lottery Fund (Wales). Richard showed us striking images of seascapes, townscapes, mountains, mines, parks, gardens and ironworks, illustrating the words of Owen Morgan Edwards (1858-1920): 'our land is a living thing not a grave of forgetfulness under our feet. Every hill has its history, every locality its romance, every part of the landscape wears its particular glory'. Richard was tempted, as was his audience, to go along with the saying 'God made Wales first and with what little beauty he had left, he made the rest of the world'.



*High Glanau Manor, the Arts & Crafts Garden where the gardens have been restored to their former glory can be visited:*

*01600 860 005*

### ***The Life and Legacy of H Avray Tipping***, by **Helena Gerrish**

Helena, who over the last 17 years has been working to restore High Glanau Manor near Monmouth, gave us a most fascinating talk on the garden's restoration and on its creator Avray Tipping (1855-1933). This French-born British writer on country houses and gardens was a garden designer and Architectural Editor of *Country Life* magazine for 17 years. He worked alongside Gertrude Jekyll designing, amongst others, the gardens at Chequers.



## The Sun King of Cheshire-Philanthropy and Patronage

### Marion Mako

Port Sunlight and other landscaped gardens of Cheshire were the subject of Marion Mako's talk for the SPGT November meeting. Marion is a garden designer and researcher as well as co-authoring several county garden books with Timothy Mowl.

Marion started by describing some of the early public parks in Cheshire. In recognition of the overcrowding of the new industrial towns and the general health of the factory works, public parks were seen as a way of improving the physical health and the morals of the local population. Birkenhead which opened in April 1847, was designed by Joseph Paxton who had previously worked at Chatsworth. It is generally acknowledged as the first publicly funded civic park in the world. The park was designated a conservation area in 1977 and declared a Grade I listed landscape by English Heritage in 1995. Ideas such as the boating pavilion and the design of the entrance gates influenced Olmstead in his layout of Central Park in New York.

Marion went on to describe West Park near Macclesfield, which was laid out and opened to the public in 1854. This urban park now features a large sunken bowling green, various park shelters, and a pavilion. It also has ornamental gardens and recreational facilities such as tennis courts and a skate-boarding area.

Other parks in Cheshire were described including Chester Park, paid



*Roman pavilion and boathouse at Birkenhead Park*

for by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Westminster and designed by Kempe with axial walks and many bedding plants, and Queens Park in Crewe, which was paid for by the London and North West railway, designed by FW Webb and opened in 1887.

Marion then concentrated on the philanthropy of William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925). The production of soap at his first factory site at Warrington was so successful that he needed to expand and moved to Port Sunlight where building began in 1888 on a site of 56 acres – 24 for the factory and 26 for the workers' village. Such was the demand for soap and other chemicals that the site grew to over 200 acres. Following the example of the Cadburys at Bournville which commenced in 1879, Lord Lever was very involved with the designs for the workers' houses with William Owen as architect, but was as concerned with the layout of the allotments, gardens and recreation space with the garden designer Thomas Mawson. Between 1899 and 1914, 800 houses were built to house a population of 3,500. The garden village had allotments and public buildings including the Lady Lever Art Gallery, a cottage hospital,

schools, a concert hall, open-air swimming pool, church, and a temperance hotel.

Lever's aims were 'to socialise and Christianise business relations and get back to that close family brotherhood that existed in the good old days of hand labour'. He claimed that Port Sunlight was an exercise in profit sharing, but rather than share profits directly, he invested them in the village. He said, 'It would not do you much good if you send it down your throats in the form of bottles of whisky, bags of sweets, or fat geese at Christmas. On the other hand, if you leave the money with me, I shall use it to provide for you everything that makes life pleasant – nice houses, comfortable homes, and healthy recreation'.

The historical significance of Port Sunlight lies in its combination of model industrial housing, providing materially decent conditions for working people, with the architectural and landscape values of the garden suburb, influenced by the ideas of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement.

In addition, Lord Lever had several houses in Cheshire including Thornton Huff on the Wirral, where Thomas Mawson was again employed to design the village gardens as well as the gardens of the big house at Thornton Manor which is now used as a wedding venue and conference centre. What riches can be created by a simple bar of soap!

*Harriet Devlin*



*Port Sunlight aerial views*



*Lady Lever Art Gallery – Port Sunlight*

## The Beautiful Burial Ground

### Harriet Carty

Harriet Carty was the January 2020 speaker for the SPGT winter lecture series, talking about the history and current work of Caring for God's Acre. This ambitious and unusual group started in 2000 as a project within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Sue Cooper. It became registered as a charity and now employs 6 people with Harriet as current director.

It aims to protect wildlife, promote biodiversity, preserve heritage – both built and natural – and involve people. Harriet began by naming the legacy of ancient yew trees within graveyards – some at least 800 years old, of which Shropshire has some outstanding examples – at Hope Bagot, Whitton, Hyssington, Norbury and Church Preen to name a few. She went on to describe the natural habitat provided by the graveyard wall – often dry-stone – for mosses, ferns, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. There are about 2,000 species of lichen in Britain of which 75% are to be found in churchyards, either on walls or tombs and gravestones.

Though many graveyards are now tranquil places, they may hold as many as 10,000 bodies – and were once centres of activity and were used for village wrestling, archery and ale brewing. Much more significantly, as Britain has recently lost up to 75% of its species-rich grassland, historic graveyards are fantastically important for biodiversity, as some have been managed for hay crops

and later grazed for hundreds of years. Therefore, they can contain many species of wild flowers, grasses and fungi as well as be host to many hedgehogs, birds, butterflies, snakes, slow-worms, amphibians and insects. So with over 20,000 burial grounds in England this is a hugely important resource and must be managed to preserve and promote biodiversity.



Caring for Gods Acre sends staff and volunteers out to graveyards in Shropshire to work with local groups and to show them how to sustainably manage their graveyard by teaching them to scythe the grass and rake it up, to stop close grass cutting, as well as teaching them to monitor and record species. As well as tending graveyards in Shropshire, Caring for God's Acre is running a 4-year National Lottery Heritage Fund-supported project called the Beautiful Burial Ground which aims to undertake biological recording through outreach to families, people with learning difficulties or mobility issues, and to address ethnic diversity by engaging with volunteers and connecting them with their local graveyard. The biological data recorded will add to a new portal within the National Biodiversity Atlas.



Each group is given a series of written resources and a handbook to help them look after their graveyard and the CfGA team are willing to come out as a flying squad to give assistance. Harriet's talk was inspirational and very well illustrated with some stunning slides of graveyard flora and fauna. The group is financially sustained through some grants and membership and if you want to know more or to become a member to help with this valuable work, do look at the

website: [www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk)

*Harriet Devlin*

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## **'Only connect': Limes, Rooks and the Quarry**

I know quite a bit about birds, a little about garden history and next to nothing about botany. The first means I am a member of the Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS), the second that I am a member of the Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust and have a copy of Paul Stamper's excellent *Historic Parks and Gardens of Shropshire* (1996), and the third that, in the vain hope of educating myself, I am a member of the Shropshire Botanical Society. All three interests came together recently when I was walking along the avenues of Limes in the Quarry in Shrewsbury.

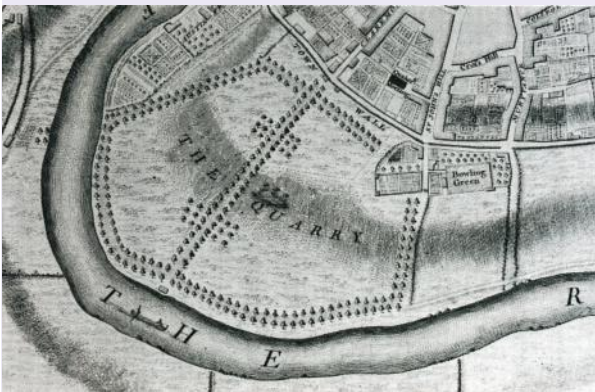
Courtesy of the Bot Soc I had read an article by John Handley entitled 'Tilia in Shropshire' in the society's newsletter of Spring 1919. It told the story of the planting of the avenues in 1719 taken from *Shropshire Folk-lore: a sheaf of gleanings* (1883), edited by Charlotte Sophia Burne from the collections of Georgina F Jackson:

'Thomas Wright was a famous nurseryman in old days. He had made a large fortune by his trade, and wished to spend some of it in benefiting the town of Shrewsbury. He therefore proposed to plant the Quarry with trees, but the Mayor and Corporation were old-fashioned people, and refused to allow any change to be made. But Wright would not be gainsaid. He was a man who knew more than most people, and understood a good deal about conjuring and that sort of thing. He was determined that the Quarry should be planted, and by means of his magic he managed, with only two men to help him, to plant all the trees in a single night, and when the Mayor got up in the morning, the thing was done. But even he was obliged to own that the work was a great improvement, and it was therefore allowed to remain.'

Looking at the Limes in 2019, it was clear that they were too young to have been the ones planted by Thomas Wright three hundred years earlier. At the same time, I recalled having read an account entitled 'The History of Shrewsbury's Rookeries' by John Tucker in the SOS's *Shropshire Bird Report 2018*. John wrote that in the nineteenth century there were over 100 nests



*The Quarry c1700 before the Lime avenues were planted.*  
Courtesy Shropshire Archives, PR/4/1



*The Quarry as shown on a plan of 1746.* Courtesy Paul Stamper



*The Quarry c1947 with felling in progress.* Photo from the Wellington Journal, courtesy Shropshire Archives, PH/S/13/Q/1/16

concentrated at the east end of the avenue of Limes along the Severn. H E Forrest, then the historian of Shropshire's birds, recalled that in the 1860s and '70s the birds were so numerous that from time to time some were shot to keep their numbers 'within bounds' and it was regarded by some to be 'dangerous' to walk beneath them for fear presumably of being splattered with droppings or hit by falling twigs. At one stage, a storm blew down some of the favoured trees and subsequently most nests were built towards the western end of the Quarry, while birds began nesting at St Mary's, behind the Free Library and at Abbey Foregate (today the only rookeries are on the periphery of the town at Bowbrook, the Crematorium and Weir Hill Farm).

That some of the Limes at the Quarry had blown down was indicative of what might have happened next, and unsurprisingly Paul Stamper provided me with a complete account. By the 1940s, Thomas Wright's Limes had become a liability, shedding limbs and getting uprooted in stormy weather. It was a problem that had to be addressed in 1946 by

the newly-appointed Parks Superintendent, Percy Thrower. Despite widespread opposition in the town, all the trees were felled between 1946 and 1952, but Percy Thrower's proposal to replant with clumps was rejected and the avenues were re-established. Today we enjoy them at their peak.

*Tom Wall*

## Visit to Linley Hall, 20 September 2019



*Tea at the west side of Linley Hall with the stable block in the background.*

A series of exceptionally interesting and contrasting summer events ended on a sunny high with our visit to Linley Hall, courtesy of James and Diana Moores, owners since 2016 of the former home of the late Sir Jasper and Lady Clare More. The visit was too late to figure in the last magazine but should not go un-reported.

We found Linley Hall, just as described in the preparatory notes, sitting comfortably in the tranquil valley of the West Onny River, backed by Black Rhadley, Heath Mynd and Cefn Gunthly, outliers of The Stiperstones. Built in the 1740s, the Hall (listed Grade I) is of compact Palladian design, five bays wide, the left and right bays projecting slightly

and crowned with pediments. It is almost outdone by the adjacent quadrangular stables block of similar date with its pedimented centre and cupola; it comes close at Grade II\*. It was here that we were treated to a typically fluent and erudite introduction from Paul Stamper who has advised the Moores on subtle changes to the garden. In a previous role, he wrote the description for the *Register of Parks and Gardens* where it is listed as Grade II (a text from which your reporter has cribbed extensively and shamelessly).

Following this introduction, we sallied forth on revelatory self-guided tours, which in varying order took in the principal features.

Adjacent to the stable block there were swans on the 250-metre-long pool with, on a promontory, a small temple-like building which in the 1950s was contrived, it is said, from an earlier icehouse as a changing room for bathers. Paul had primed us to appreciate what had from its conception been the deliberately open aspect of parkland to the south of the house, the smoothness and simplicity of which has been enhanced by recent alterations. We found formality in the rose garden and informality in the drifts of autumn crocuses flowering exuberantly under trees and beside tracks. Eventually all paths and all parties converged on the kitchen garden to which we progressed along a stately avenue of mature oaks and chestnuts (see cover picture).

The avenue (it, or a predecessor, was already present by c1780) runs for 300 metres – a long walk from the kitchen for the bunch of carrots or sprig of herbs forgotten in a too-hasty raid on the garden earlier in the day. The walk culminates in a substantial spread on surprisingly steeply sloping, south-facing ground. Espaliers

loaded with apples and pears were a temptation resisted by would be scrumpers, although I did witness the surreptitious tasting of a windfall or two rescued from the wasps. At the top of the slope we found Justine Gallaccio whose task it is to bring the kitchen garden back into cultivation, a task which she talked us through and which she has clearly taken on with much enthusiasm and gusto.

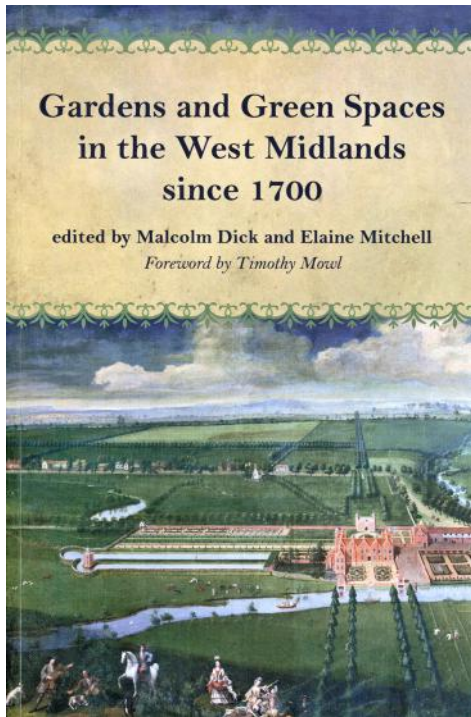
But will she have time to attend to the glasshouses which stand in a very extensive lean-to range at the top of the slope? On their own they could in season keep much of South Shropshire in grapes. The glass houses were reinstated to an exemplary standard during the ownership of Justin Coldwell, cousin and godson of Lady Clare, who inherited Linley on her death in 1994.

And what was there to round-off a glorious afternoon? Tea and cake in the sun on the terrace with James and Diana, served by their obliging cake-makers and helpers. It was, like the whole visit, a real treat!

*Tom Wall*



## Book Reviews



In his foreword to this collection of conference papers, Tim Mowl – the Pevsner of England’s historic designed landscapes – speaks of the gentle transition towards the ‘new garden history’. Arguably this has been in process since Chris Taylor accidentally invented garden archaeology in the 1970s, and Mowl suggests that practitioners of what is now a true multi-disciplinary subject must be polymathic, embracing ‘landscape, garden, architectural, art and botanical history, not to mention aesthetics, iconography and hydraulics...’. This is an ambitious aspiration – in reality most site studies are team efforts – but I’m absolutely with him in believing that a full understanding

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of any type of landscape can only be achieved by close site investigation alongside the use of all possible primary and secondary documentary sources.

That said, in reality, few parks or gardens will require the deployment of all those skills – not all landscapes have buildings, or water systems, or iconographic sub-texts. But what this collection of nine shortish papers does show is the use of approaches and sources appropriate to particular places. Several of them are well known, such as Hagley, Herefordshire’s picturesque landscapes and the Shropshire sites noted below, and new discoveries and thinking are modest (and the index pretty woeful), but nevertheless this an attractive collection offering accessible and well-illustrated introductions to a rich variety of site types.

The first of the Shropshire sites – or perhaps rather landscapes – is Coalbrookdale, where Harriet Devlin revisits how in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the dramatic contrasts between the natural, picturesque, beauty of the wider Ironbridge Gorge and the industrial enterprises within it, both excited comment and encouraged schemes the better to allow their appreciation. This is well-trodden territory (one thinks especially of Barrie Trinder’s *The Most Extraordinary District in the World*, 1977) but the publication of a new description is always welcome. In this case the visitor, in 1790, was Samuel More, secretary of the Society of Arts and a



friend of John Wilkinson. Memorably characterising Coalbrookdale as 'this Land of Fire and Smoke' he contrasted it with what he found at one of the Darby's houses, Sunnyside. Here the gardens were all 'Elegance and taste', with grottoes formed of 'Moss[,] Iron slags etc the Trees growing luxuriantly and Yielding Fruit in Abundance'. The 'Novelty of the Scene', and the contrast with the industrial activity, seemed to More as if he had been 'transported by Magick to Some other Climate'.

Devlin also discusses the Sabbath (or Workers') Walks, laid out around Lincoln Hill by Richard Reynolds in the 1780s, at least partly a philanthropic exercise to provide a place of sober amusement and enlightenment for industrial workers. These are deservedly well known, and were but one element of Reynolds's practical care for his employees and their families which also included schools, decent housing and allotment gardens. Devlin shows how the scheme for the Walks probably drew directly on what Reynolds had experienced at places of 'picturesque beauty' such as Stowe and Hagley Hall, and in Shropshire at Hawkstone and Badger Dingle. One particularly influential landscape, according to a letter of 1767 cited by Devlin, was the Leasowes, near Halesowen. Then in Shropshire, this was perhaps England's best-known *ferme ornée* (ornamental farm), with walks set out through it by its owner, the poet William Shenstone, to allow its natural attractions (and his additions, such as ruins and inscribed urns) to be fully appreciated by its many visitors. John Hemingway, who undertook the archaeological survey of the landscape's largely fragile traces

in the 1990s, gives a summary of its geography and features, with a useful emphasis on the slight traces of structures – much here was ephemeral – discovered by archaeological excavations. What the essay lacks is an introductory paragraph discussing Shenstone's influences, and why he set about creating this landscape. The editors also failed to ask the author to make clear the date when creation of The Leasowes began: the early 1740s.

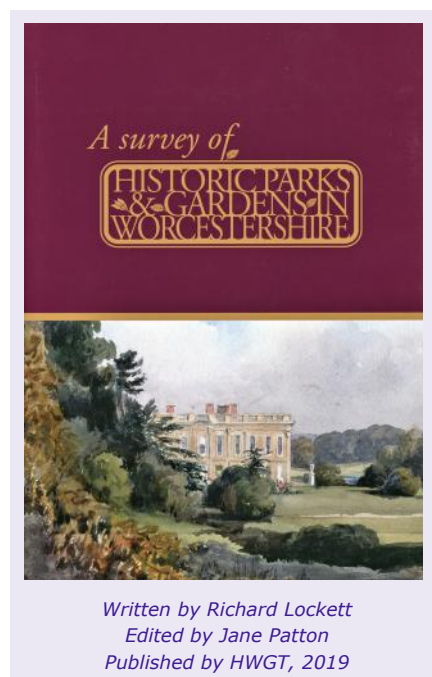
David Whitehead has done much to promote understanding of Herefordshire's central place in the Picturesque Movement of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Here, in a masterly chapter, he looks back in time, to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when men like John Beale (1606-83) and William Hartlibb (c1600-70), recognising the county's agricultural fecundity, promoted improvements including water meadows and orchards. They were alert to the natural beauties of the country, as was John Kyrle (1637-1724), the 'man of Ross' who laid out walks and plantings at the Wye-side town. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the county's *literati* emphasised Herefordshire's separate identity and character through adoption of the term Siluria/Silurian, and from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century tourists and artists began to arrive in greater numbers, with Gainsborough painting at Foxley c1760, and Thomas Hearne at Downton Gorge in 1784 and at Moccas in 1789. After its promotion by the Revd William Gilpin in 1782, the River Wye became the principal focus for tourists, especially after the outbreak of war with France in 1793. Turning to private landscapes, Whitehead shows how Herefordshire, in part because it lacked extensive

open-field land which could be imparked at enclosure, gained few landscapes by Capability Brown or later 'mechanic improvers' (such as Repton). However, there were enough, or the threat of them, to spur Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight into an offensive in print in 1794 – precipitating the Picturesque Controversy – spurred on by what they saw as the way in which the Brownian style eroded local distinctiveness: a remarkably modern concern.

Of the other papers, two treat Birmingham: one its Vauxhall Gardens, opened c1740, and the other the landscaping of three city-edge estates. The remaining essays discuss therapeutic school and hospital landscapes around early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Bromsgrove; the use of industrial products (cast iron for bandstands and bridges, for instance) and municipal parks; women nurserymen; and how research informed the restoration of Hagley Park in Worcestershire.

*Paul Stamper*

*This review first appeared in the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society; we thank the Society and the reviewer for permission to reproduce it here. Published in 2018 by West Midlands Publications, an imprint of University of Herefordshire Press; paperback, 212 pages; £16.99.*



As a county, Worcestershire stretches from the dramatic Malvern Hills, through the Severn Valley, to the fringes of the Cotswolds, with a tapestry of rich landscapes in between. It is a county of firsts, from Croome Court, where the great eighteenth-century landscape gardener Lancelot 'Capability' Brown famously cut his teeth, to Arley Arboretum, one of the oldest and most spectacular arboreta in Britain.

Richly illustrated with maps, plans, engravings and photographs in both black and white and colour, this new book represents an extraordinary accomplishment by Art Historian Richard Lockett and Landscape Architect Jane Patton. Supported by the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust, it is the culmination of 230 individual site visits and many years of avid, meticulous research.

County guides can be accused of being too circumscribed, yet the benefit of a book constrained by such geographical boundaries is, of course, its detailed site-

specific investigations. From the romantic medieval water gardens of Hartlebury Castle to the immaculately restored Hagley Hall, one of the eighteenth-century's most influential landscape parks, no stone is left unturned in the quest to uncover all that the area has to offer. The modest water gardens at Overbury Court are not forgotten in favour of Witley Court's flamboyant rejoinder to Versailles. Instead, Lockett and Patton collate and analyse all the surviving

documents relevant to the county's historic parks and gardens, some of which are rarely seen. These include the beautifully detailed, eighteenth-century Dougharty maps, commissioned by such influential clients as Lord Foley, the Earl of Coventry and the Bishop of Worcester.

In short, this book is a remarkable achievement, in that it invites a wide range of uses for the garden historian, local historian, owner and garden visitor alike, keen to learn more about the county's sites. Hopefully, this scholarly but accessible book will inspire other counties to follow suit, documenting their individual contributions to the history of designed landscape, whilst drawing our attention to those parks and gardens which desperately need our help to survive.

*This review by Laura Mayer, garden historian and researcher, first appeared in the Newsletter of the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Trust. We thank Laura Mayer and the HWGT for permission to reproduce it here.*

This survey (360 pages, hardback) is available from [hwgt.org.uk](http://hwgt.org.uk) at £29 inc p&p. It is a companion to *A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire* by David Whitehead, published by HWGT in 2001.

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## Conservation and the Climate Emergency

This article first appeared in the autumn 2019 issue of *Gardens Trust News* (the magazine of The Gardens Trust of which SPGT is a member). We thank the author and editor for permission to reprint it here.

In 2002 Richard Bisgrove, for many years a member of the Council and the Conservation Committee of the Garden History Society (GHS), co-authored a study for the National Trust (NT) and Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) entitled *Gardening in the Global Greenhouse*. It had a foreword by the Prince of Wales, who warned that increasing extreme weather events and changes in seasonal temperatures and rainfall would have major implications for all our gardens, adding, that 'important though they are, a great deal more than our gardens is at stake.'

Nearly a generation on, the Prince is less moderate in his language: earlier this year, he said, 'Climate change is now a very real existential threat to our whole civilisation... I am firmly of the view that the next 18 months will decide our ability to keep climate change to survivable levels and to restore nature to the equilibrium we need for our survival.' In 2016, when the RHS revisited the subject in *Gardening in a Changing Climate*, it commented that in 2002 the prospect of climate change having a real influence on people's lives and how they gardened was not really considered; many people still looked forward to the opportunities of a warmer climate without considering the risks.

In May 2019, Parliament declared a climate emergency. The phrase burst onto the scene with the actions of Extinction Rebellion in London the month before, and it replaces those familiar ideas of global warming and climate change – two quite comfortable nouns – with a far more alarming one. Extreme weather events, notably flooding and storms, are increasing in frequency and are becoming a significant consideration in the management of gardens. The

hurricanes of 1987 and 1990 now look less like a once-in-a-century act of god than a taste of things to come; the series of storms, floods and tidal surges of winter 2013-14, the wettest on record, were unprecedented according to the Environment Agency, until the storms of 2015-16 which broke the record again for intensity of rainfall. The rivers that run through gardens such as Bodnant or Studley Royal are flooding with increasing frequency and violence; lake-dams in landscape parks are having to be reinforced to cope with flood risk; the Sea Plantation at Mount Stewart, which protects the seaward boundary of the garden from the salt-winds is increasingly at risk from storm surges which overwhelm the tidal defences and flood the plantation.

In addition, the past twenty years have seen warmer winters which have encouraged new pests and diseases and drier summers which have caused water shortages and drought. Both trends are having a major impact on decisions about long-term planting. The outlook for southern England is one of increasing levels of aridity. At Nymans, in response to acute problems with dry conditions, the NT doubled its water-storage capacity in 2007 from 40,000 to 80,000 litres; in 2015 the system ran dry. The 2016 RHS report remarks that 'even if greenhouse gas emissions are reduced today, the climate will continue to change rapidly over the coming decades due to historic emissions. Consequently, gardeners should be mindful that trees planted now might not be suited to the climate in 2050, for example'.

Thirty years' time: that is an extraordinary statement. A swathe of the most familiar parkland trees

is now becoming unsustainable for planting. Ray Hawes, head of forestry at the NT, has commented that 'over the last few decades, Dutch elm disease, *Phytophthora* on larch, red band needle blight on pine and ash dieback have devastated at least four species of significance and have also effectively removed these from the already limited palette of trees we can use in any new plantings'. Add to that the effect of *Massaria* on London planes, bleeding canker on horse chestnuts, and the increasing vulnerability of shallow-rooted beech to the dry conditions in the south of England and you are facing a major change in how we plan the future of historic planting.

The landscape park does not exist in isolation from agricultural practices both within the park and in its borders. Isabella Tree has given an eloquent perspective on the sterility of modern agricultural management of parkland in *Wilding*, the story of the Repton landscape at Knepp Castle in West Sussex. Meanwhile, many of the arable fields around landscape parks have become ecological death zones – from the disappearance of mycorrhizae, fungi and invertebrates in the soil, to the loss of seed-bearing weed species around the margins (1% per annum since the 1940s) and the grubbing up of their hedgerows, they are now effectively deserts and the consequence has been a terrible loss of wildlife. The situation is much the same in urban parks, with their acres of 'amenity grassland' effectively no more than green concrete in terms of their value to life.

Extinction is not a polite topic of conversation but like the climate emergency it has come into sharp focus

over the past year. As a conservationist and a lover of nature, I have for years read with dismay the figures on the drastic decline of some of my favourite bird species; the large scale loss of insect-life and the scouring out of sea-life around the UK. But I thought a subscription to Greenpeace and the prudence of our governments would take care of the threats which had been so clearly identified.

Then in September last year, I went to a talk which described what is going on as the 6<sup>th</sup> Mass Extinction event in the history of the planet. Worse, the speaker explained how this extinction has been caused by human activity – not just fossil fuels but intensive agriculture – in what has been named the Anthropocene, destined to be the shortest of all the geological eras.

What has extinction got to do with me? The biggest shock in the last year has been to recognise that it has everything to do with me. Years of picturesque viewing had encouraged me to feel, at some level, a spectator of nature and natural processes. We visit natural beauty spots, then we leave them and go back to our cars and our indoor lives. But we are all part of a single system; the extinction of 'other' life forms prefigures our own; worse, at this scale, it assures our own.

Nor will we in the UK remain spectators to the 'hothouse earth' now being created with accelerating speed. Seventeen of the eighteen hottest years ever recorded have occurred since the year 2000. While the Amazon, California, Greece and Spain catch the headlines with terrible stories, here in the UK, 2018 saw unprecedented levels of wildfires. July 2019 was the hottest

ever globally and it also saw the hottest UK temperature ever recorded (38.7°C) recorded in Cambridge Botanic Garden. The chief executive of the Environment Agency warned in June that unless we take action to change things, by 2040 we will not have enough water in the UK to supply our needs – he called that date 'the jaws of death'.

While erratic rainfall is a chronic challenge for gardeners, for farmers it is acute. A single flood event, or a sustained drought can ruin a harvest and in the past three or four years, there have been some major failures in European harvests, resulting in reduced yields of grain and vegetable of up to 30% and more in several sectors. In the UK not only does our agriculture remain largely rain-fed and so vulnerable to floods and droughts, we are also heavily dependent on imports from countries far more vulnerable to extreme climate.

This generation of children, who will live to the end of this century, face what Prince Charles has called 'a nightmare on the horizon'; they may not survive 'the collapse of civilisation' which David Attenborough predicts if we do not tackle the collapse of the ecosystem. It may not be extinction at that date, but the impact of 4 or 5 degrees of global warming on human life and society will be terrible and we will reach that stage by 2100 if we continue on our present course. Carbon emissions are still rising; incredibly, oil producers have plans to raise oil production by 35% by 2030; the same time frame as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said we must reduce emissions by 45% if we are to keep

global temperature rises at a level above which we are facing hundreds of millions of deaths.

The UN has said limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels 'would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society... land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities'. One might add global finance and the debt economy to that list. There is no sign of the government grasping the enormity of the challenge or the imperative for drastic action.

Like every other western country, the UK government is on track to miss the targets it agreed to at the Paris talks in 2016; it cannot bring itself to halt HS2 or the Heathrow expansion; it has cut incentives for solar energy development; it has effectively banned the development of onshore wind turbines; it continues to subsidise fossil fuel exploration and exclude international aviation from its carbon emissions calculations. The Environment Bill brought forward over the summer has precisely no targets; there has been no climate emergency budget.

The government not only will not act; it will not tell the truth about the scale of the emergency. Given this double failure to either protect or inform, you could reasonably turn to Locke - 'When a Government fails to protect the lives and livelihoods of its citizens the people have a right to rebel.' This might seem extreme, but, don't take my word for it: everyone should read up on the climate facts and think about how to respond. All other avenues for demanding change having failed over the last forty years, it is no more extreme than the threats facing us.

So I have joined Extinction Rebellion: it seems to me to offer the only rational response to this catastrophe. Since last September, I have learnt to break the law, while meeting some genuinely sympathetic, and fearful, police officers; I have been caught red-handed with spray cans and pleaded not guilty to criminal damage; I have blocked roads and apologised to hundreds of drivers and commuters; I have camped on the streets of Bristol and London; marched with grandparents and school children; I have glued myself to the concourse at City Airport and to Jeremy Corbyn's front gate; I have been arrested three times and become familiar with the inside of a police cell; I have come to terms with the idea of prison as well as the idea of extinction - the former is easy compared to the latter.

But that is not all by any means. I have walked from Stroud to London in the early spring and saw my year's first swallows over the Windrush at Burford; I spent a week on Waterloo Bridge when it was transformed into a garden; I have learnt to sing and weep with strangers. If I have seen how toxic modern life has become, I have also seen how good it could be; I have learnt how grief for what we are losing is the same as love, and have learnt to open my heart to that love. Facing extinction makes life infinitely more precious - the 'blossomiest blossom', Dennis Potter wrote, was that on the tree waving outside his sickroom in the last weeks before he died.

*David Lambert, formerly Conservation Officer of the GHS, he is now a Board Member of The Gardens Trust*

*This magazine is being prepared at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. Many are turning to poetry as a diversion and consolation. Here we offer you a celebrated poem by Andrew Marvell (1621-1678).*

## The Garden

How vainly men themselves amaze  
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,  
And their uncessant labours see  
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,  
Whose short and narrow verged shade  
Does prudently their toils upbraid;  
While all flow'rs and all trees do close  
To weave the garlands of repose.

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,  
And Innocence, thy sister dear!  
Mistaken long, I sought you then  
In busy companies of men;  
Your sacred plants, if here below,  
Only among the plants will grow.  
Society is all but rude,  
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen  
So am'rous as this lovely green.  
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,  
Cut in these trees their mistress' name;  
Little, alas, they know or heed  
How far these beauties hers exceed!  
Fair trees! Wheres'e'er your barks I wound,  
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passion's heat,  
Love hither makes his best retreat.  
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,  
Still in a tree did end their race:  
Apollo hunted Daphne so,  
Only that she might laurel grow;  
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,  
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wond'rous life in this I lead!  
Ripe apples drop about my head;  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;  
The nectarine and curious peach

Into my hands themselves do reach;  
Stumbling on melons as I pass,  
Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,  
Withdraws into its happiness;  
The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find,  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas;  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,  
Or at some fruit tree's mossy root,  
Casting the body's vest aside,  
My soul into the boughs does glide;  
There like a bird it sits and sings,  
Then whets, and combs its silver wings;  
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,  
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,  
While man there walk'd without a mate;  
After a place so pure and sweet,  
What other help could yet be meet!  
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share  
To wander solitary there:  
Two paradises 'twere in one  
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skillful gard'ner drew  
Of flow'rs and herbs this dial new,  
Where from above the milder sun  
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;  
And as it works, th' industrious bee  
Computes its time as well as we.  
How could such sweet and wholesome hours  
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs!

*The Garden is one of the most famous English poems of the seventeenth century. It was first published in Miscellaneous Poems in 1681. The link below provides some useful interpretation: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Garden\\_\(poem\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_(poem))*

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*Please note that the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of Shropshire Parks & Gardens Trust or the production team.*

**Front cover picture:** The avenue leading to the walled garden at Linley Hall

**Back cover picture:** Under the trees by the avenue, Linley, September 2019