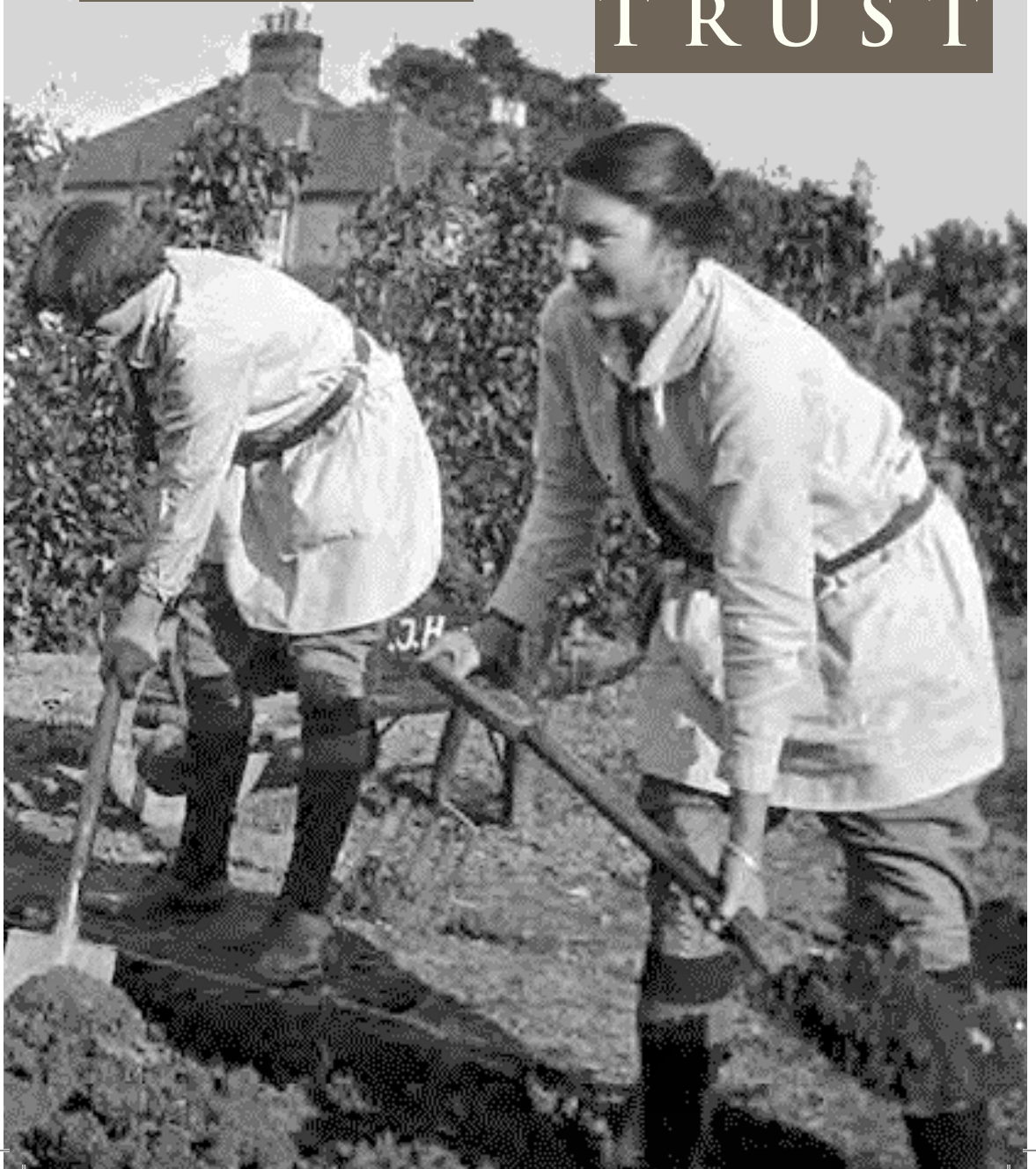


MAGAZINE NO 4
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SHROPSHIRE PARKS & GARDENS TRUST





Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust

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Letter from the Chair

Sound the fanfares and throw your hats in the air! Our Summer Garden Visits are back, and so is the Summer Party. The programme is given below and the **Booking Form for our first visit, to Bridgnorth, is enclosed with this magazine.** Numbers are limited, so you will need to book now if you want to join the walk around Bridgnorth and peek into lovely gardens not normally open to the public. Booking forms for the other events will be posted out shortly but put the dates in your diaries now so that you don't miss out.

This year's visits have been made possible by members of your Committee volunteering to organise events in addition to their usual duties, but we do need more volunteers if we are to have visits next year. Ideally, we need a new Programme Coordinator to take overall charge, and volunteers to organise individual events. It is a lovely way to get to know other Trust members and owners of gardens in Shropshire. Please give me a call if you would like to know more. If you could help organise even one event it would be a great help!

Mary King 01743 271824

Upcoming events - see further details page 26

1. **Gardens of High Town, Bridgnorth, Thursday 17 June**
2. **Summer Party at Walcot Hall, Thursday 8 July, 11.00am**
3. **Hodnet Hall, Wednesday 11 August 2021 from 11.00am**
4. **Heath House, near Clungunford Saturday 18 September**

All events will be organised in accordance with Covid-19 restrictions

Growing gardeners: garden training through the ages

A Garden Training Strategy for the National Trust! Aren't all our gardeners fully trained already?'

This was one of the responses I received when I took up my secondment as National Specialist for Garden Training with the National Trust in 2015. The general assumption is that gardeners are born with green fingers primed for propagation, pruning and identification of all the 30,000 plants known in cultivation – not to mention garden design, soil preparation and machinery maintenance. Having switched careers from radio production to horticulture a mere 20 years ago, I am only too aware that gaining the skills, knowledge and experience to manage a complex garden is both hard-won and never actually completed. In horticulture there is always something more to learn.

Outside the Trust, sadly, training opportunities for gardeners are shrinking fast. Colleges in Shropshire – home to Attingham Park, the property where I used to garden – no longer offer career-based professional horticultural training. Elsewhere, too, land-based skills seem to have mysteriously metamorphosed into hairdressing or sports studies. We see the effects of this decline when we try to recruit new gardeners from a smaller and smaller pool. So, wearing the research hat of my previous career, I decided to find out how gardeners have been trained in the past, and whether that history offers any lessons we can learn for the future.

A potted history of garden training

From the late eighteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War, horticulture enjoyed enormous growth and development in Britain. As a way of displaying the wealth of aristocrats and *nouveaux riches* alike, country estates and their increasingly elaborate gardens blossomed. Head gardeners, charged with 'nurturing such displays of one-upmanship',¹ were in great demand, and their numbers grew from just over 1,000 in 1867 to over 4,000 in 1914. How were so many trained in less than half a century?

A system of educating likely school leavers from the age of 12 as 'garden boys' – they were invariably male at this time – or apprentices, evolved in the early nineteenth century as demand grew. John Claudius Loudon, an influential garden writer who produced some six million words in his lifetime, started a lively debate in the first issue of *The Gardener's Magazine* in 1826 about how this training should be delivered:

There is one subject which, more than everything else, will tend to improve gardening and agriculture, – the better education of gardeners... As gardening has advanced, as its production and province have extended, the situation of head gardener has become more and more important... The knowledge of the management of a garden... is only to be acquired by the utmost perseverance and the most

*unremitting industry, and by reducing the principles of theory to the certain and infallible test of practice.*¹

The firm principle of practical training was established, underpinned by a good level of general education before the apprentice left school: writing, arithmetic, geometry, drawing and some rudiments of Latin were all expected. Once the apprentice began in the garden – with his first year spent washing pots and stoking boilers from 6 o'clock in the morning to 6 o'clock at night – he was expected to continue his education in the evening by studying horticultural tomes and attending classes or 'Gardeners Improvement Societies', the precursors of our local horticultural societies. The topics they discussed were more



Digging over the walled garden at Attingham, the young apprentice in the foreground (date unknown). © Unknown



Trainee women gardeners from Swanley College in 1926. © Unknown

varied and erudite than we tend to find these days: 'Eradication of Garden Insects; Protection of Wall Fruits; Formation of Character; Certain Trades and Professions as Causes of Disease; Cultivation of the Cyclamen; Cultivation of the Azalea; Progress in Australia; The Pansy; Cultivation of the Strawberry; The Conservatory; Temperance; Forcing of the Fig; Government by Party...'¹

The second year of a typical apprenticeship took the young gardener into the kitchen garden, where he picked up heavy work such as shifting manure, as well as the finer skills of pruning and propagation. Year Three finally let him loose in the flower garden, when learning to identify plants became a huge task. In 1821, Andrew Turnbull, an 18-year-old 'Journeyman Gardener' – the grade up from apprentice – stayed late after work to take advantage of 'the excellent collection of herbaceous plants' at Dalkeith Park near Edinburgh and undertook to learn 50 plant names a night!¹

That makes the 10–20 names a week required by Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Level 3 students today seem positively lackadaisical in comparison. Indeed, just a few years after young Turnbull's exertions, the RHS started to standardise the curriculum of garden training. But it took them another 30 years before they arrived at a two-tier level of examinations 'to provide a more efficient and widespread means of bringing out the theoretical talent in the rising generation of gardeners'.¹

Not that take-up was very swift to start with. Head gardeners were sceptical that employees already

working a 60-hour week would have the time to study for such exams. It was also recognised, even in those days, that financial incentives to study horticulture were meagre. In the 1860s, a trained gardener could expect to earn between £50 and £100 per year, whilst those in 'trade' could earn several times that amount with far less investment in training. The placing of horticulture firmly in the social shackles of 'service' clearly has repercussions to this day.

On-the-job training remained the norm for most gardeners well into the twentieth century. Arthur Hooper's entertaining memoir, 'Life in the Gardeners' Bothy', describes a three-year apprenticeship under his head gardener father in the 1920s. At 18,



Attingham's head gardener, Mr Carter, and his apprentice in the 1930s. © Unknown

he left home to become a journeyman gardener on a nearby Wiltshire estate. There he describes life in the bothy with his fellow gardeners, all adhering to a strict hierarchy according to their length of service. Self-improvement, however, seemed rather less in evidence than in the previous century. There was a 'fair collection of books in one corner of the room, mainly gardening books, a few novels and a pile of *The Gardeners' Chronicle*,² but Arthur's evenings (when he was not on glasshouse duty) were spent mainly playing cribbage or walking the two miles to the King's Head. Still, the principle of learning from a wide range of gardens remained as the trainee 'journeyed' around the country. Gardeners were still as well-travelled, if not as well-read, as their nineteenth-century forebears.

A woman's place too

This ordered life was rarely disturbed by any female incursions, unless it was 'Mum' who prepared the trainees' meals. But elsewhere, women were beginning to make some inroads into what many hoped might become the profession of horticulture, and a viable means of earning a living for respectable young ladies. At the turn of the last century, there were three newly created colleges for female farmers and gardeners: Swanley in Kent, Waterperry in Oxfordshire and Studley in Warwickshire. The First World War is often thought to have sounded the death knell for high horticulture, but in fact it opened many doors for women gardeners. The Women's Farm and Garden Union – soon to become the Women's Farm and Garden Association, which to this

day runs the WRAG Scheme³ – set up a training scheme as food shortages began to threaten the Home Front in 1916. The National Women’s Land Work Corps was formed, later renamed the Women’s Land Army, and was responsible for training over 200,000 land girls in 1917.

After the war ended, most women returned to the home, while the young men who returned from the front were often less likely to accept the strictures of poorly paid work in the garden. A recruitment crisis similar to today’s ensued, triggering an expansion of new horticultural and agricultural colleges. On-the-job training declined as students studied botany in the classroom rather than out in the field. Work placements got shorter and shorter, although this was often compensated for by the splendid gardens run by students in college grounds. In something of a historical irony, the very country piles that were no longer economically viable in the twentieth century became the training grounds for a new generation of gardeners – yet even as the vocation became more professional over the following decades, with horticulture degrees replacing apprenticeships, the status of gardeners declined and numbers of both students and courses declined accordingly.

Areas for growth

The one growing field in horticultural education is that aimed at the ‘amateur’ or ‘hobby’ gardener – a cohort that has kept the three-tiered RHS system of garden courses and examinations afloat. The age of such students is necessarily greater than their eighteenth- and nineteenth-

century forebears, as they have acquired the collateral of their own garden and the leisure time in which to develop it. Alongside this ageing population of students, the gender discrepancy has been totally reversed. Most trainee gardeners are now female, a trend that is now manifest among trained professional gardeners: in London and the South East, women make up 60 per cent of Trust garden staff.

How, then, should we adapt to this social phenomenon? Overt prejudice against women gardeners has (mostly) disappeared but there is still some reluctance to take second-career gardeners seriously. While their horticultural skills might be more theoretical – increasingly based on distance learning – the skills they bring from a previous career often more than compensate.

After escaping high-powered careers in the financial, educational, health or service sectors, many new garden staff can deliver management and people skills with ease. What is often needed are the more practical skills – summer pruning, soil cultivation, plant health and machinery maintenance – to ensure that high horticultural standards can be maintained.

We also need to persuade school leavers that horticulture is a rewarding career. I certainly wish my Careers Officer had offered me advice of that nature 40 years ago. But with salaries for trained gardeners still so much lower than almost every other graduate career, we are likely to see increasing numbers of mature trainees applying for any schemes we offer. That is why, if the industry is



The 2015 batch of NT trainee gardeners (top) on the Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme scheme at Chelsea compared to 2018 Gardening Apprentices being inducted at Heelis. The reintroduction of the term 'apprentice' seems to have attracted a more balanced gender mix. © National Trust

to grow its own future gardeners, it must arrange for the practical skills of experienced gardeners to be handed down before retirement. Whether it be through informal master-classes or highly structured schemes such as the Horticultural Operative Apprenticeship (as it is so attractively named), head gardeners must be allowed out of the office and back into the garden to hand on their skills – before it is too late.

*Kate Nicoll, Garden Training Specialist
First published in National Trust's
'Views', Issue 53, Autumn 2016*

References

1. Toby Musgrave, 'The Head Gardeners' (London: Aurum Press, 2007).
 2. Arthur Hooper, 'Life in the Gardeners' Bothy' (Suffolk: Malt House Press, 2000), p.11.
 3. 'Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme', previously known as the Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme.
- Also: Peter King, 'Women Rule the Plot' (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1999), p.91.

Tree planting

The birch tree I planted for the millennium is now higher than the house, and the squirrels chase each other round it and use it as a launchpad onto the bird feeder. The crab apple I planted for my 50th still flowers for my birthday in May, while the Magnolia given to my husband for his 65th always opens on his birthday in March (well almost always, it was a day late after the winter of 2011, when temperatures reached minus 20!)

I planted two more trees this spring, which means I have planted ten since I came here 20 years ago. All have survived except the *Gleditsia*, and I have no idea what I did wrong with that. This year I planted a white winter cherry in memory of my mother and a rowan for the birds.



Amelanchier

The rowan is an addition to the old hedge along the side of my garden, a former field boundary that I like to think was a former cottagers' 'productive hedge' with hazels, blackberries, hips, elderberries and sloes, all much appreciated by the wildlife, although this cottager rarely gets a look in.

My winter flowering cherry flowered in January, and made a second show in March. Meanwhile my Japanese cherry is covered in tiny, deep-pink flowers despite the biting cold winds. Nothing stops it, not even the bullfinches.

Whenever I plant trees, I think of my Great Aunt Bessie, who claimed she was not well enough to clean the house (dusting made her dizzy) but was always able to garden. She was planting trees into her 90s with great optimism. Sadly, as she grew older, she had to sell her orchard to fund her retirement. I remember making jam from her last crop of Victoria plums and feeling the desecration, even as a child. I hope I can keep planting trees for as long as she did.

My garden is full of memories, I use my grandfather's spade, my mother's border fork, the rake I was given as a child: even as I sit here enjoying the sunshine, I can hear my mother's voice reminding me that "gardens are not made by singing 'Oh how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade." Yes mum, I know: more digging needed!

Mary King

A new Shropshire garden

Close to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust premises, where SPGT will, we trust, be able to hold its meetings once again ere too long, stands the Dun Cow pub on Abbey Foregate, and behind that lies a new apartment block – Stiperstones Court. It is a McCarthy and Stone Retirement development containing 52 apartments and it opened in 2017. Standing well back from the road, it is easy not to notice even its front façade, and certainly the passer-by can have no idea of the garden that lies behind it.

The development stands on the top of a short but steep drop down to the Rea Brook. The land lies almost at the end of a wide, flat expanse running to the south-east, which is the flood plain

for the brook. The part of this flood plain directly below the development is managed on a long lease by McCarthy and Stone, and the company employed a firm of garden landscapers to plant the formal part of the garden lying between the wings of the building, and also to plant shrubberies in the area which drops down to the brook (see Figure 1).

The formal part of the garden has been planted with a care for symmetry, with a central lawn flanked by narrow beds. Height is provided here by ten *Sorbus alnifolia* trees which flower in May and give good leaf colour in October. The paved path is much used by residents and, against the walls of the wings



Figure 1

there are yuccas and hydrangeas, with roses, box, sedum, geraniums, hellebores and smaller border plants including geraniums 'Rozanne' which bear purple/blue flowers for months on end. The varieties of shades of green provide much visual interest. In some parts of the garden residents are planting spring bulbs, snowdrops and daffodils, hyacinths and *Polyanthus*, to provide colour in Spring before the summer flowering. In the beds beyond the lawn there are many *Alchemilla* and *Skimmia* providing ground cover. Also planted here are Japanese anemones, and there are two *salix* trees, balanced by two at the other end of the lawn.

The most remarkable part of the garden is the area beyond the fence on the drop down to the brook. It is part of the flood plain, and while in 2019 there was no evidence of this, in 2020 and 2021 the flooding of the

Severn, causing the Rea Brook to back up, created a dramatic effect (see Figure 2). As can be seen, the flat area running eastwards into the distance becomes a lake, and the shrubberies planted in 2016 are submerged. This inundation seems to have no adverse effects, and the area becomes a lovely wild flower meadow in summer. There is a mown path so that residents can walk down to enjoy the view which, in summer, when the trees are in full leaf, gives no hint of buildings and feels like the country (see Figure 3).

In August 2018, when the shrubberies were between one and two years old, the designers reported, following a garden handover inspection, that the shrubberies required maintenance to ensure successful plant establishment and that this would entail removing undesirable plants by hand. I spent many happy afternoon hours in one



Figure 2
February 2020



Figure 3
April 2020

of the shrubberies carrying out these instructions in the autumn of 2018, and by the end of 2019 it was evident that the shrubs had grown markedly in the intervening time. The result has been that the shrubs now cast more shade over the ground, and this prevents the grass beneath them from growing too tall.

March 2020 saw the introduction of the first lockdown. Once again, I found solace in removing more large and undesirable weeds from one of the other shrubberies. The work afforded me exercise in the fresh air, and a useful purpose without being near anyone! During the following two lockdowns I have been able to work in both remaining shrubberies, and trust that by the end of the coming summer 2021, the shrubs will have prospered and grown because they have been freed from too many weeds. There is a place for vetch, willow herb,

buttercups, dandelions, knapweed, convolvulus, thistles and so on, but if these wrap themselves around every shrub the latter cannot thrive as they should. Docks are not welcome. They are unattractive and can spread with amazing speed and density; nettles likewise.

Varieties of trees and shrubs in this area of the garden include *Alnus glutinosa*, *Viburnum opulus*, *Cornus sanguinea*, *Euonymus aurea* and *Sambucus aurea* amongst others. Some bear flowers, others are evergreen, producing berries in autumn and winter. Below these shrubberies lies the bank of the Rea Brook, happily lined with dogroses. In May, these produce hundreds of flowers, hanging like a curtain from the trees along the bank.

Gardens are still being created in Shropshire!

Richard Hayes

Climate Change and parks and gardens

The National Trust recently shone the spotlight on evidence from atmospheric monitoring that proves we are currently following the highest possible predicted trajectory for increased carbon emissions (known as RCP 8.5). This is a world where, by 2100, we will experience a climate that is $\sim 3^{\circ}\text{C}$ warmer than at the turn of the 21st century.

While we are all doing our best to reduce these emissions and work has commenced across the public, private and third sector to sequester carbon with a lot more people working to plant trees and restore blanket bog (peatland) habitats, we are going to be faced with some interesting and sometimes difficult conservation decisions about heritage and natural environment.

This, in my view, never means having to choose the natural or historic environment significance of one place above another: it is about recognising that conservation means managing change, and that the change is now taking the form of climate hazard events. Whether you believe in the science or not, the increasing frequency and intensity of storms, flooding, coastal erosion, landslides, subsidence and heat are impacting upon our parks and gardens in ways unprecedented since their design and inception.

These hazards, for parks and gardens, mean looking at different ways of managing the significance of such sites, particularly to avoid throwing good money after bad. That doesn't mean giving up on our



gardens, it just means that, if they keep getting flooded and the planting in certain beds needs ripping out and replanting for the umpteenth time just to keep it in line with the conservation management plan from 30 odd years ago, then perhaps a re-think is in order.

The sector needs a better understanding of the problem in order to adapt to these hazards. I am currently working on adaptation guidance and this work is in its infancy, looking at existing approaches and theory, but also trying to gather examples of impacts and understanding the need for change.

I'm currently looking for examples of where the climate hazards mentioned above have impacted, or are, or may be, impacting on our lovely parks or gardens in Shropshire. Such examples could help the National Trust look at how and whether we should be adapting these special places in ways we might not previously have thought to try... to delve into the options for more sustainable conservation.

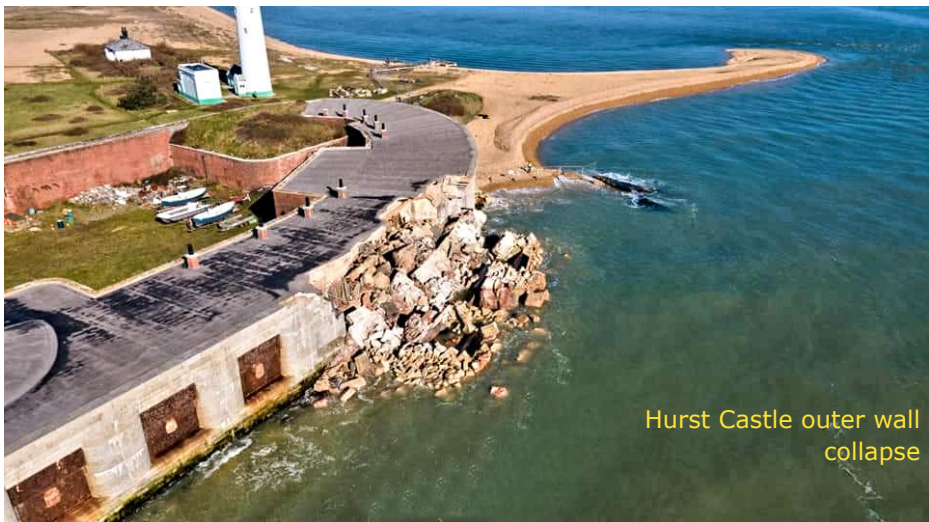
If you're happy to get in touch and let me know of any places you've spotted that might be experiencing a climate/weather related problem happening in the here and now, particularly where this has been getting worse over the years, I would love to hear from you.

Many of you will have seen a chunk of Hurst Castle (fantastic English Heritage Property on the south coast) fall into the sea at the beginning of March, well it's happening to our beloved parks and gardens too; sites are being submerged, water tables are higher (affecting plant growth, walled gardens and their stability), pests and disease are on the increase and habitats are changing. If you've any examples that we can learn from in the effort to adapt to climate change, please get in touch at

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March 2021

*Imogen Sambrook, MSc MCIfA IHBC,
Heritage and Climate Consultant
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Hurst Castle outer wall collapse

Mynd Hardy Plants at Delbury Hall Walled Garden

Part 2 of a Covid Chronicle

As you know from our article in the last magazine, life at the Walled Garden and plant nursery last season was a bit bumpy, but we survived; in fact we had a very good season and had planned and organised for the closed season:

Plan 1 ~ To end the year by a well-earned, long, exciting and adventurous holiday in the sunshine with friends, eating, drinking and exploring Namibia. Covid restrictions put paid to this (and we cannot see it happening this year). So...

Plan 2 ~ We would get ahead of ourselves and do all the cutting back, tidying up, propagating, finish the new paths and other developments planned for the garden, but the prolonged and inclement weather rather than Covid restrictions hindered us. So...

Plan 3 ~ For those of you who came on the visit to Delbury Hall in June 2019, you will know that my passion is Walled Kitchen Gardens. I would spend the winter months visiting walled gardens around the country. It is a fabulous time of the year to visit, often quiet, you can see detail and unearth those unusual features, but Covid restrictions put paid to this. So...

Plan 4 ~ I would continue my rather ambitious research, albeit online only at this stage, on the History of English Walled Gardens. My initial enthusiasm was ignited by (the late) Fiona Grant and Susan Campbell; the leading authorities on the subject as well as by our involvement with The

Walled Kitchen Garden Network (a forum open to everyone interested in the subject whether or not you own a Walled Kitchen Garden). I am delving deeper into the subject, starting from a geographical perspective, which I am finding fascinating and totally absorbing. It is a long-term project.



For those members who may wish to improve their knowledge of the subject I can recommend the following books:

Walled Kitchen Gardens by Susan Campbell. This is a Shire Library publication and is both inexpensive and informative with a gazetteer of Walled Kitchen Gardens which are open to the public.

Walled Gardens by Jules Hudson. Jules may be familiar to you as one of the presenters on 'Escape to the Country'. His National Trust publication provides a well-illustrated modern approach in a more 'coffee-table' style.

The Country House Kitchen Garden: 1600 - 1950 edited by Anne Wilson. This book features a number of different authors covering a diverse range of topics, from the supply of seeds, plants and trees, through to glasshouses and frames.

A History of Kitchen Gardening by Susan Campbell. This is the most authoritative book on the subject with a detailed analysis of all the different aspects of both the location, the physical structures and the fruit and vegetables grown within the garden.

Charleston Kidding by Susan Campbell. This book is best read in conjunction with *A History of Kitchen Gardens*. Charleston Kidding represents an imaginary, yet typical, large English country house, in part seen through the character of the head gardener, showing how the garden operated on a day-to-day basis.

Other books and booklets have been written on the walled gardens of different counties, including an excellent publication by Fiona Grant and Jane Patton on *The Walled Gardens of Herefordshire*.

This winter the internet has been the basis of my research and I list below a number of the sites which I have used which may be familiar to many of you.

National Heritage List for England: National Register of designated sites including Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens (produced by Historic England).

Parks & Gardens: a website with a searchable database of people and places.

National Library of Scotland maps: this website has particularly useful historic 6 inch and 25 inch Ordnance Survey maps.

British History Online

Heritage Gateway: this site contains searchable datasets from over 60 resources offering local and national information on archaeological sites and historic buildings as well as historic images. Includes Historic Environment Record data.

Archsearch Catalogue on the Archaeology Data Service: this provides an online catalogue and UK historic environment inventories and ADS collections.

English Short Title Catalogue, British Library: this website lists early books, serials and newspapers printed before 1801.

The Internet Archive: this provides free access to thousands of digitised historic books and journals. It is an incredibly useful site and has saved me a small fortune on buying books!

Shropshire Archives: a major information source for the county, as well as providing research services.



There are many other online resources such as the National Archives; Archives hub and ArtUK which I have still to explore.

I have joined a number of other Parks and Gardens Trusts. Some of their newsletters and research are freely available online, whilst some can only be accessed as a member. It is both informative from an academic viewpoint, and of interest, to see how other Trusts are organised in terms of research, visits and meetings.

Anybody who has any information on Walled Gardens in Shropshire which they are able to share, or who have a Walled Garden which I might visit (whatever the size or condition), I would be very happy to hear from you.

I can be contacted on 01584 841021 (evenings) or by e-mail richardrallings@valentinecottage.co.uk

So, here we are ready for the new season. Under the current Government guidelines we have been able to open our doors. Spring is in the air with the weather showing signs of improvement, a little warmth in the sunshine, and the horizon looks a little clearer for us all. No plans, just going with the flow!!

Richard Rallings



Shropshire Historic Environment Record & Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust parkland building recording project

The Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust was asked by Giles Carey of the Shropshire Historic Environment Record if we could help enhance the data about gardens, garden structures and parks for the county records.

The Shropshire Historic Environment Record is a continuously expanding database of the historic environment of the county. It holds core information concerning over 37,000 archaeological sites, finds and features, historic buildings, structures and landscapes in the historic county of Shropshire, all linked to computerised mapping. It is also the key repository for all reports on archaeological work and historic building recording carried out in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. This resource is available to a wide range of researchers, individuals, archaeologists, land managers and students. The historic environment of Shropshire is varied - and the diversity of the records it holds reflects this. These include:

- Sites known only from aerial photography
- Sites where earthworks, 'lumps and bumps' in pasture fields provide clues as to what lies beneath
- Full records on archaeological fieldwork carried out in the county
- Standing building complexes, both listed and unlisted, that attest to the historic development of many of our towns, villages, estates and designed landscapes

- It also holds the results of thematic surveys of different types of monument carried out across the county over the past 40 years. The collections include recent work undertaken on the historic landscape of Shropshire, as well as its farmsteads.

Shropshire Historic Environment Record currently holds 310 records of parks and gardens which were collated by Paul Stamper in the 1990s in the 1993 Gazetteer - short entries relating to 286 sites, and the 1994-6 Compendium- which has greater detail on 55 of these entries. In the county there are:

- 35 solely medieval parks based on manuscript evidence
- 36 registered (protected) parks, 1 at Grade 1, 6 Grade II* and 29 Grade II
- And many other estates, parks and gardens

When Paul Stamper was compiling both his Gazetteer and Compendium of historic parks and gardens in Shropshire, his attention was focused on establishing the basic chronological overview of the development of the park. In doing so, he often drew attention to parkland structures and buildings, with brief notes, but didn't have the time to devote further research to these buildings, particularly when they weren't listed.

The extent of all parks and gardens identified by Paul were

added to the Historic Environment Record (HER), but information related to individual structures and buildings, although contained within these records, has not been individually itemised. This makes the identification of individual structures difficult for both researchers using the HER, as well as presenting the information in an accessible way when providing information related to planning proposals etc.

Giles Carey of the Shropshire Historic Environment Record asked if SPGT volunteers would like to enhance these lists giving greater detail on the exact location of parkland buildings and structures with accurate 10 figure grid references. Currently a small number of volunteers are working through Stamper's Gazetteer and Compendium with historic mapping and other online sources to try and locate structures and buildings and to complete new proformas for each site. From the early Ordnance Survey maps online, we have already located numerous gate lodges, icehouses, dovecots, gazebos, boathouses and many other features. This data is being integrated with the HER so that it can be used as a platform for further research when we are able to access the Archives.

An example: Burwarton Hall, near Cleobury North

A Grade II Registered Park and Garden (NHLE 1001116), the formal gardens and landscape park were laid out around what remains of Burwarton Hall, a country house built in 1876/7, essentially rebuilt in the 1950s. Descriptions from Pevsner, the Registered Park and Garden entry, and the description in Paul Stamper's Gazetteer, below, give a hint of the parkland structures which survive:

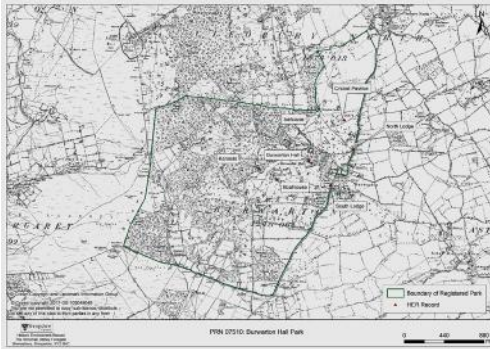
Burwarton Hall had a park by 1827 (C. and J. Greenwood, *Map of Shropshire* (1827)), extending north from shrubberies around the house. The Hall was remodelled 1876 by Salvin in the Italianate style (N. Pevsner, *Shropshire* (1958), 92), and by 1883 the park was more than twice the size it had been in 1827 through the imparkment of land south of the Hall, as far as Wallemoore Brook (O.S.6", LXV.SE (1891)). It had two pools, Old Pool (now gone) and The Slade to the south-west and another, Bridge Pool, to the north-west with an ice-house nearby (*Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in England: Shropshire* (1986), G44). From the mid 19th century commentators praised the quality of the park, and especially its trees (S. Bagshaw, *Directory of Shropshire* (1851), 634; F. Leach, *The County Seats of Shropshire* (1891), 225-8; S. Leighton, *Shropshire Houses* (1901), 41; N. Pevsner, *Shropshire* (1958), 92). Notable trees extant in 1986 included beech and sycamore, a fine deodar, and rare individual conifers (*Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in England: Shropshire* (1986), G44).

19th-century formal gardens extend south and south-west of Burwarton House with stages terraces, steps, and formal bedding; a late 19th-century conservatory to the east has been demolished. The terrace scheme was extended to c.120m in the 1920s by Brenda Colvin with extensive lawns and with rhododendrons along the middle terrace. A rose garden was laid out within yew hedges at the lowest level (now replaced by tennis courts within the yew enclosures). (*Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in England: Shropshire* (1986), G44).

The house was partly demolished and the remainder remodelled 1956-7 (*Register of Historic Parks and Gardens in England: Shropshire* (1986), G44).

Careful analysis by volunteers has accurately identified the locations of a number of parkland structures. These have been mapped, and added to the HER:

My 'lockdown' garden history research



The result is that outline records have been created of all these structures, individually, in the HER. At a later stage further research can be added to these records to augment the core information that the HER holds.

Giles Carey and Harriet Devlin



A view of Burwarton Hall showing the formal bedding south of the Hall and the parkland in the foreground (artsandculture.goggle.com).

References

- 1) SSA10241 The Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Shropshire - the Gazetteer
- 2) SSA10287 Historic Parks and Gardens in Shropshire - The Compendium

Having heeded the call for contributions to the last Magazine, I wrote about my impending move from Essex to Shropshire under the title *Essex Girl to Shropshire Lass*. Since then my husband and I have moved to Church Stretton, and by the time you read this, we should have moved into our permanent home.

By autumn last year, I'd lost interest in my Essex garden – as I'd already started dreaming of a new garden. It gave me the time to finally take the plunge and start my own website, my aim being to share my passion for garden history by blogging about various topics, mostly relating to the late Victorian/Edwardian periods. Short versions of some of my blogs have already been published on the Essex Gardens Trust website, but having my own website leaves me free from word and image limitations so I can present a fuller story. My blogs are often inspired by items of interest I've come across in the contemporary horticultural press – a much overlooked garden history resource I might add. Volumes of *The Garden*, *The Gardener's Magazine*, *The Gardeners' Chronicle* and many others are available on-line at www.biodiversitylibrary.org, often up to the early 1920s.

The main focus of my garden history research is, however, an Edwardian Essex horticulturist, Miss Ellen Willmott (1858-1934) of Warley Place in Essex – who many of you may not have heard of. She was, however, just as

famous in her day as her friend and contemporary Gertrude Jekyll, and it was Jekyll herself who described Ellen Willmott as 'the greatest of living women-gardeners' (in *Children and Gardens*, published 1908), while their friend William Robinson (writing in 1907), described her as 'foremost among women in practical horticulture' and a 'conscientious and painstaking botanist'.

Miss Willmott's achievements as a horticulturist are impressive, and her garden at Warley Place was justly famous as a garden of innovation and excellence. She won many prestigious RHS awards for her plants and was recognised for her skill in nurturing new plants, often from the plant-hunter, Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson – perhaps the most famous being *Ceratostigma willmottianum* (photograph of it below, flowering in my Essex garden in September 2018).



In 1897, Willmott, along with Jekyll, became one of the original recipients of the RHS Victoria Medal of Honour. She became a Trustee of the new RHS garden at Wisley, and, in 1904, became one of the first female Fellows of the Linnean Society. By 1907, Willmott was one of the most famous horticulturists and gardening personalities in the country, and both *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* and *The Garden* magazine dedicated their volumes for that year to her.

Over the years, Miss Willmott famously spent vast amounts of money on developing Warley Place and her two other properties, Tresserve in south-eastern France and Boccanegra on the Italian Riviera – which gave her the opportunity to experiment with growing plants in different climates. While at Warley Place, Miss Willmott embraced her friend William Robinson's ideas on more natural planting, using herbaceous plants (that had fallen from favour during the fashion for 'carpet bedding') as well as rare and exotic species. She also became extremely knowledgeable about roses, and her unique collections at Warley and Tresserve led to the publication of her book, *The Genus Rosa*, in two volumes (1910 and 1914) illustrated by the well-known water-colourist, Alfred Parsons.

Unlike Jekyll and Robinson, Miss Willmott published little about her own garden and after her death the house at Warley Place was demolished, and the choicer plant specimens taken by her sister's family to Spetchley Park in Worcestershire. What was left of the once glorious garden quickly went to rack and ruin. Fortunately, the remains



Warley Place by Alfred Parsons c1906

were saved in the 1970s when the Essex Wildlife Trust took it on as a nature reserve, and they still maintain the remnants of the garden. At Warley Place meadows full of Miss Willmott's famous daffodils still survive, and every spring the wonderful show brings in many visitors.

I continue to research Miss Willmott, and have written a blog about the most famous plant named for her, *Eryngium giganteum* 'Miss Willmott's Ghost' (website address is www.gardenhistorygirl.co.uk). I also manage a private Facebook group for a group of people who research Miss Willmott. Facebook is probably old hat for anyone under 30, but I find it a great way to share interests and events, be it via a public or a private group. The Gardens Trust, other county trusts, and many horticultural

institutions have their own Facebook pages, and there are also a vast array of gardening or gardens-related Facebook groups.

As a PS: Spetchley Park Gardens recently posted on Facebook that they have received funding to try to save some recently discovered Willmott-related archive material from a damp cellar in the house. I also understand that a gardening magazine will be carrying an article about Miss Willmott in the next month or so.

Paula Sewell

pcsgarden@hotmail.co.uk
www.gardenhistorygirl.co.uk

The evolution of a garden (Part 1)

A lifetime of gardening has brought joy to many millions. In this first part of three, James Monger describes how his enthusiasm for gardening developed in childhood and beyond. Parts two and three will explore the evolution of his garden in retirement.

By the time I moved into my little Belle Vue cottage in Shrewsbury in the summer of 2018 I already had a pretty clear idea of how I wanted my garden to look. In fact, having purchased the property a year earlier whilst still working in London, I had spent a fortnight over Easter 2018 starting to mark out and dig up some of the borders I had planned. The previous autumn I had contracted someone to remove about a dozen large and rather boring shrubs to make way for my plans, albeit with some guilt, as I knew the local birdlife liked the wildness of these.

Having been given my first little plot by my father when aged around 8, and made very little of it, I first acquired the gardening bug properly some two or three years later, in 1966, when my father sold off his orchard and acquired a derelict piece of land in front of our house, thus providing a more regular shape to our estate. My brother and I cleared this and sowed grass, but there remained a steep bank bordering the drive. This I turned into my first rockery. I built a dry stone retaining wall all along its length, some 25 feet, using Somerset stone discarded by road builders who had recently completed a new cutting beside our old main road, thus leaving

us in a cul-de-sac. I wheeled barrow load after barrow load from the verges of the road and taught myself how to build a dry stone wall, choosing each piece of stone for each position. As it was a bank, it wasn't free-standing but retained the soil at the foot of my rockery. Above the wall, I used the biggest and best pieces of stone to create my rockery, with pockets for plants and rocky outcrops in the style I had read about in *Popular Gardening* magazine, edited by Fred Whitsey. The rockery was filled with *Aubrieta*, *Arabis*, *Alyssum saxatile*, *Campanula poscharskyana*, *Saponaria*, miniature *Narcissi* and different saxifrages. The planting was not sophisticated but, as I look back, nothing I have created since has ever been so colourful.

I had learned most of what I then knew from *Popular Gardening*, a long-since, sadly defunct title. Most of all I enjoyed articles by people like Margery Fish, Christopher Lloyd and Beverley Nichols. I read avidly, starting with my favourite columnists, then reading the other main items, finishing up



A rockery, but not young James's!

with the articles about veg growing, which I wasn't really interested in, and working my way through all the adverts. I have never read anything so thoroughly since.

Over the years since that first rockery, I have created gardens wherever I moved, as well as a few for friends, but I suffered long periods without a garden when work or other circumstances did not permit it. I felt the loss keenly. Prior to my retirement to Shrewsbury, my last garden had been in Eastbourne, created between 1999 and 2005. Six inches down, the subsoil was solid chalk but, with lovely old brick walls surrounding it, I wanted to grow rambling roses. I rang Peter Beales Roses and said: "I'm sure what I'm asking for is an impossibility. I want a list of rambling roses in the pink to purple colour range, either remontant or continuous flowering, with scent, good hips in the autumn and that will survive on chalk." To which, the reply - music to my ears - was: "Oh, yes, I can think of quite a few!" The team member reeled off a list from which I chose and, sure enough, they all did well, and through them I planted a range of clematis.

But in 2005 I returned to London and a rented situation. I created a garden there and enjoyed it, but knowing it wasn't mine meant it was never the same, and although I ended up being in that property for 13 years, and maintained the garden well, I slowly lost interest, longing for the day when I'd truly have my own garden again.

James Monger

Read about the development of James's Shrewsbury garden in the next issue.

Here we go again, lockdown 3!

The sun is shining and a new spring begins as the promise of freedom is making us giddy with excitement.

We have tucked in a variety of jobs to keep us content at home this winter, as we usually escape to the warmth of Spain where walking and bird watching fill our time. This year has been very different, we've walked and we've watched birds, but in muddy, cold and sometimes miserable conditions; a goldcrest (not a goldfinch) sitting in the bird bath was our best sighting!

Vaccination day was a highlight, when the option of going to Ludlow race course won hands down. Wearing our vaccination badge with pride we somehow failed to turn right to go home to Shrewsbury and took an easier left to Ludlow where we had coffee and buns hot from the oven at The Green Café down by the Dinham Bridge. We climbed up to the castle and explored a very peaceful Ludlow, much the best way to see it!

We enjoyed our illegal picnic below the castle walls before heading home through Mortimer Forest. We stopped for the 11th century church at Pipe Aston, with a wonderful carved tympanum above the front door. We wandered around Elton church and finally visited St Bartholomew's in Richard's Castle where the surrounding grounds were swathed in snowdrops; the tower was undergoing major repairs but the church was open. I am already booked in to Ludlow racecourse for my second job!

Now for some of the lowlights, working from the attic down. This is

now boarded out, making it easier of access and therefore to see between the gaps in the original 1930s clay tiles, which let wasps in! A guest room is decorated and guests booked in, days after we move up to Step 3 (if they can get out of Wales!).

Outside work has been much more interesting... We moved the *Sorbus* we planted to commemorate Covid 19 to the back of a border, for obvious reasons, and a quince tree has replaced it. We've planted 600 snowdrops (wonderful quality bulbs in flower from an advert in the RHS magazine) and plan to do the same again next year. The greenhouse is full, and the unsightly polytunnel (sorry Daphne, it will blow down one day!) is already working hard and ready for tomatoes etc.

New painted railings leading up the steps to the front door have



Plas Brondanw

been made by a local blacksmith, unashamedly copied from railings at Plas Brondanw near Portmeirion and I have spent happy hours trying to track down the exact aquamarine paint that personifies Clough William Ellis at Portmeirion. The colour is a well kept secret but I am hoping that Farrow & Ball Arsenic is a close match!

Between the highs and lows there has been lot of to-ing and fro-ing of paperwork and emails regarding the Gardens Open programme for the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust... and all is now finalised!

Twenty Gardens and Garden trails will be open this year for the first time; Seven Gardens are also opening for SHCT Private Visits (see overleaf), our own included.

Under the disguise of 'going to work' I was able to visit Eyton Hall in early March to assess the amount of snowdrops there for a Snowdrop and Winter Walk next year. I needn't have worried, but I think Attingham Hall might need to! All booked up for February 20th 2022, and I left with a bucket of snowdrops too, thank you Kathy and Mark!

We will be changing our advertising this year (only) as we plan to plaster the county with thousands of bright green Posters instead of the usual Leaflets. Last year 28,000 leaflets lingered in closed churches, garden centres, cafés, etc, and when we were unlocked, leaflets were refused; we can't take that risk again. Our website has all the details you need, so please check out: www.shropshirehct.org.uk

Back to the garden!

Angela Hughes

gardens OPEN

Shropshire Historic Churches Trust Gardens 2021

PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE
FOR GARDEN DESCRIPTIONS & DIRECTIONS
www.shropshirehct.org.uk

May

- 19th **THE CITADEL** Weston-under-Redcastle, SY4 5JY
NB. Wednesday! 2-5pm.
☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5
- 23rd **THE HURST** Clunton. SY7 0JA
2.30-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5

June

- 6th **CRESSAGE GARDEN TRAIL**
12-5pm. ☛ WC. £5
- 6th **WESTWOOD HOUSE**, Oldbury. WV16 5LP
2-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5
- 6th **STOKESAY COURT** Onibury. SY7 9BD
2-5pm. ☛ ♿ (partial). £5
- 9th **BROADWARD HALL** Clungunford. SY7 0QA
NB. Wednesday! 2-5pm.
☛ WC ♿ (partial). £6
- 13th **BISHOPS CASTLE TRAIL**
2-6pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5.
Tickets at St. John the Baptist church. Dogs
allowed in some gardens
- 20th **TUGFORD GARDENS** Tugford.
2-5pm. ☛ ♿ (partial). Tickets at car park. £5
- 27th **HARLEY GARDEN TRAIL**
11-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5
- 27th **CULMINGTON VILLAGE GARDENS**
2-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5

July

- 4th **CLEE ST. MARGARET TRAIL**
1-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial).
Tickets at Village Hall. £5
- 11th **BITTERLEY COURT** Bitterley. SY8 3HL.
10-5pm. ☛ (light lunches) ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £6
- 18th **NEW EYTON HALL**
Eyton upon the Weald Moors. TF6 6ET.
1-5pm. ☛ WC. £6
- 25th **SAMBROOK MANOR** Sambrook. TF10 8AL.
11-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5

August

- 8th **CARDINGTON GARDEN TRAIL** SY6 7JZ
12-6pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial).
Tickets at village hall car park. £6

September

- 12th **MORVILLE HALL GARDENS**
nr. Bridgnorth. WV16 5NB
2-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5

- 18th **NASH COURT** Nash, Ludlow SY8 3DQ.
NB. Saturday! 2-5pm.
☛ WC ♿ (partial). £6
- 19th **SAMBROOK MANOR** Sambrook TF10 8AL
11-5pm. ☛ WC ♿ (partial). £5
- 26th **GREDDINGTON** Hanmer. SY13 3DQ
12-5pm. ☛ WC. £6

October

- 17th **CHERRY TREE ARBORETUM** *NB. Friday!*
Pre-booked cars only (30 max) see details below

SHCT Private Visits

BITTERLEY COURT Details above, (also open 11th July.)
May-September. £6.
email: katharinewheeler99@gmail.com

BROADWARD HALL Details above, (also open 9th June)
Mid June-August. Groups of 20+. £10 includes Tea &
Cake. email: caro.wheretheartis@gmail.com

CHERRY TREE ARBORETUM Pre Booked cars only on
October 17th. Woore CW3 9SR. *Bring a picnic* 1-5pm
(30 cars max) WC. £7.50 pp. **Book your car:**
email a.dhughes@btinternet.co

NEW DARWIN GARDENS Shrewsbury. May-July, Sept-
October. ♿ (partial). £7.50 includes Tea & Cake.
email: a.dhughes@btinternet.com

NEW EYTON HALL Details above, also open 18th July.
Small groups (10-20) July-August. £10 includes Tea &
Cake. email: moynes@me.com

HOMELEIGH Chirbury. May-September £7.50 includes
Tea & Cake. email: slowik.caroline@gmail.com
WC ♿ (partial)

SAMBROOK MANOR June-August. £7.50 includes Tea &
Cake. (Also open 25th July and 19th Sept) details above.
Ring Mrs Mitchell 07944 756611 / 01952 550256

NEW A WELLINGTON GARDEN April-September. £6
includes Tea & Cake or Afternoon Tea £10.
email: s.james311@btinternet.com
☛ WC

- ☛ TEAS
- ☛ NO DOGS (EXCEPT GUIDE DOGS) If not stated,
dogs allowed on lead
- WC TOILET
- ♿ PARTS SUITABLE FOR WHEELCHAIRS
- NEW** NEW GARDENS TO THE LIST



STOP PRESS: DIARY DATE FOR 2022!

SNOWDROP AND WINTER WALK
FEBRUARY 20TH, 1-4pm
Eyton Hall, Eyton upon the Weald Moors. TF6 6ET
£5. Light refreshments available.
☛ WC ♿ (no wheelchair access)

Please check the SHCT website for any last minute
garden cancellations and Government Guidelines
regarding national garden closures www.gov.uk



Online May Lecture Series 'Unforgettable Gardens'



The London Gardens Trust is organising a series of four online talks on Wednesdays in May in collaboration with The Gardens Trust. These are part of their series on 'Unforgettable Gardens' and will highlight the diverse range of gardens in London from historic squares, a public common and cemetery to working community gardens.

Wednesday, 12th May 6pm -

The Wandsworth (un)Common Story:

Celebrating 150 Years of an unforgettable place for people and nature

Julia Bott, Co-Chair, Friends of Wandsworth Common & Anne Lambert,
Wandsworth Common – Heritage Group

The Common's story will be re-told, primarily through its natural features of grassland, ponds and lakes, woodland and trees but also through structures and buildings of historic importance over the last 150 years.

Wednesday, 19th May 6pm

Brompton - A Garden Cemetery Re-born

Wesley Kerr OBE, Broadcaster, Writer, Historian, Horticulturist and Trustee,
Royal Parks & Andy Williams, Park Manager

Kensington Gardens & Brompton Cemetery Brompton Cemetery is one of Britain's oldest and most distinguished garden cemeteries. This talk will explore how The Royal Parks conserve and enhance this magnificent working cemetery for people, heritage and nature.

Wednesday, 26th May 6pm

Plants, People and Transformation – Stories from Community Gardens

Sarah Gregory, Co-Director, May Project Hip Hop Garden on reconnecting and transforming the lives of marginalised groups through nature. Other community gardens to be confirmed.

Lectures and bookings online. Tickets: £5 each via London Gardens Trust <https://londongardenstrust.org> or The Gardens Trust <http://thegardenstrust.org>

Thursday, 13th May 2021 6-7pm

Tree Identification Talk

Greg Packman – Arboriculturalist

Greg will present tips and tricks for identifying trees in leaf; look at leaf shape and structures, flowers, fruits and bark. The presentation will cover commonly found species in UK parks and gardens, including native and introduced species.

Lecture and booking online. Tickets: £4 for members of London Gardens Trust; £6 for non-members via London Gardens Trust website <https://londongardenstrust.org>

SPGT upcoming events

1. Gardens of High Town, Bridgnorth, Thursday 17 June

Caroline Howard will lead a tour of some gardens of High Town, Bridgnorth. Meet outside St Mary's Church, at 6.15 for an hour and a half's visit to unknown and well loved green spaces and places. Due to current Covid restrictions the numbers will be limited to 20 on a first come first served basis. **Please book by returning the form enclosed with this magazine.**

Booking forms for the following events will be posted out in the next few weeks.

2. Summer Party at Walcot Hall, Lydbury North, SY7 8AZ Thursday 8 July, 11.00am

Join us to explore the beautiful 18th century gardens and arboretum of Walcot Hall with our hostess Lucinda Parrish. Bring a picnic to eat on the lawn while you enjoy live music.



3. Hodnet Hall, Hodnet TF9 3NN, Wednesday 11 August 2021 from 11.00am

Visit the beautiful gardens at Hodnet Hall at the invitation of our President, Sir Algernon Heber-Percy. You will be free to arrive from 11.00am, stroll around the Water Gardens at your leisure and take afternoon tea in the garden.

4. Heath House, Clungunford, SY7 0QB, Saturday 18 September

Heath House is a large Queen Anne style house near Clungunford. The 14 acres of unique privately owned gardens include large flower borders, walled kitchen garden and glass house, pools, rose garden and maze.

Officers and Committee

President:	Sir Algernon Heber-Percy, KCVO, LL
Chairman:	Mary King
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Charity Registration Number: 1089258
The Trust is a member of The Gardens Trust:
www.gardenstrust.org.uk

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.

