

The Bucks Gardener

Issue 1

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Spring 1998

The story so far

The idea for a Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust was first mooted some years ago, and we must thank Gilly Drummond for pushing us over the edge. Nine months on from our initial meeting at The Buttery, Waddesdon Manor, we are already organising our first events, and have begun the in-depth recording of the County's Historic Parks and Gardens.

Since our launch at Hall Barn things have really begun to happen. We are now up to 80 members and hope to recruit many more in the coming year. We have had several substantial donations, notably from Shire Publications.

We are particularly pleased to have Richard Bisgrove addressing a wider audience, his initial talk opened our eyes to the richness and variety of the County's gardens, large and small. Michael Walker and Richard Wheeler should throw new light onto the restoration and continuing care of our more famous gardens.

Our intended visits to Cliveden and other gardens in the County should demonstrate still more aspects of the County's legacy. We hope to finish the year with a Conference at Stowe, bringing together the many different aspects of Conservation Plans and their execution.

We have been warmly welcomed by various of the County's older conservation groups, and the various Councils. With the arrival of the draft copy of the County's *Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review*, we have been challenged to record the history of our gardens. In all it has picked up over 450 sites, so there is a lot to do, particularly with the renewed threat to the Green Belt. Being asked to comment on this document, it was felt that we had already begun to make an impression, we have to live up to this.

We hope to help bring colour and delight to the County's schools, working with them to bring growing things into their playing grounds, and widen their links with the greater environment.

The challenge has been laid down. I think, with your help, we can meet it

Charles Boot, Chair.

STOWE, THE PURSUIT OF LIBERTY

When in 1733 Lord Cobham parted company with the Whig government of Sir Robert Walpole, the gardens at Stowe underwent a radical transformation, and the new Eastern garden took on the character of a political statement. Whilst in overall iconography, they were following the allegory depicted in the painting by Poussin of The Judgement of Hercules choosing between the Paths of Vice and Virtue, the Eastern gardens of Elysian Fields, Hawkwell Field and Grecian Valley, took the exemplification of Virtue to be the true ideals of the Whig party, so shamelessly abused by Sir Robert. The Elysian Fields have been properly described by George Clarke as a representation in landscape and buildings of Addison's moral essay on Virtue published in the *Tatler* in 1709, but what of the remainder of these new gardens?

Poets were regular visitors to Stowe, and their work intermingled with that of the politicians. James Thompson of 'Rule Britannia' fame was one such, and had written an epic poem on the progress of Liberty from her beginnings in the Ancient World to her final and true home, in the Britain of the eighteenth century. Whether his poem was influenced by the iconographic programme at Stowe, or vice versa can never be known, but the similarity between the themes is quite apparent.

Thompson tells us that Liberty had her first awakenings in Egypt and the Middle East, so this was represented at Stowe by that icon of Egypt, the Obelisk. Situated in the Fallow Deer Park, it formed the apex of a great triangle with its base upon the gardens' earlier boundary, shown on Sarah Bridgeman's 1739 plan of Stowe.

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Egypt, however, was not somewhere for Liberty to linger. Thompson tells us:

'For Greece my sons of Egypt I forsook'

and so the next station on the progress was a Grecian Valley and Temple:

...before me lay

*The promised land of arts, and urged my flight,
Hail nature's utmost boast! Unrival'd Greece!*

The Grecian Temple, later rededicated by Earl Temple to Concord and Victory, was an attempt by Lord Cobham to recreate a temple of the Ancient World, set in its Attic landscape:

*In Attic bounds hence heroes, sages, wits,
Shone thick as stars, the Milky Way of Greece!*

From this Grecian Valley, though, Liberty fled, after the final defeat of the Greeks by Philip of Macedon at the Battle of Cheronaea:

*Thus tame submitted to the victor's yoke
Greece, once the gay, the turbulent, the bold...*

Thompson's synopsis (or 'argument') for the next chapter describes how the 'spirit of Liberty' finds its place in Rome via the Grecian colonies of southern Italy, the consequent petty republics, and finally the great Roman Republic:

*Amid these small republics one arose,
On yellow Tiber's bank, almighty Rome,
Fated for me. A nobler spirit warm'd
Her sons; and, roused by tyrants, nobler still
It burn'd in Brutus; the proud Tarquins chased
With all their crimes; bade radiant eras rise,
And the long honours of the consul line.*

At Stowe, we are told by Lady Newdigate, visiting in 1748, that Rome was to be represented by an amphitheatre replicating that at Verona, a triumphal arch, and a column in imitation of that of the Emperor Trajan. Sadly the proposed amphitheatre was never to be, although its site was probably to have been at the end of the Grecian valley, and the idea of the Triumphal Arch was taken by Cobham's nephew and heir, Earl Temple, to the South Vista as the Corinthian Arch. However, the imitation of Trajan's Column was erected, on the Grecian Diagonal, designed by James Gibbs, and built with modifications by the Head Gardener and Clerk of Works, Lancelot Brown. Looking very little like its supposed model, it was commissioned by Lady Cobham in honour of her husband.

So Lord Cobham's place at the head of this libertarian crusade was secured by the erection of his statue, in the guise of a Roman Emperor, at the top of this column. The inscription, now superseded, was the (misquoted) line from that greatest of Roman republicans, Cicero:

*'Quatemus nobis denegatur diu vivere,
Relinquamus aliquid,
Quo nos vixisse testemur.
[As we cannot live long
Let us leave something behind us
To shew that we have lived.]*

And from his lofty vantage point, Cobham was able to look down the Grecian diagonal to the Grecian Temple, and down the Gothic Walk to Gibbs' Gothic Temple.

If we return though, to Thompson's poem, of course Liberty in Rome was doomed by the death of Brutus, and rule by a series of despotic emperors:

*And from Philippi's field, from where in dust,
The last of Romans, matchless Brutus lay,
.....I beheld,
The imperial monsters all.- A race on earth
Vindictive, sent the scourge of humankind!*

Not all the Emperors suffered at Thompson's pen; Trajan, Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius were spared:

*Trajan and he, with mild sire and son,
His son of virtue! Eased awhile mankind;
And arts revived beneath their gentle beam.
Then was their last effort: what sculpture raised
To Trajan's glory, following triumphs stole;
And mixed with Gothic forms (the chisel's shame)
On that Triumphal Arch, the forms of Greece.*

And at Stowe, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and here, Vespasian, find a place in the Imperial Closet, with their figures painted by Francesco Slater. The 1744 edition of the guide book describes them:

'Imp. Titus Caes. Vespasian.

With this saying over his head,

Diem perdit [I have lost a day.]

Imp. N. Trajan. Caes. Au.

With this saying,

Pro me: si merear, in me.

[For me: but, if I deserve it, against me.]

Imp. Marcus Aurelius

Caesar Antoninus.

With this saying,

Ita regnes imperator, ut privatus rei te velis.

[So govern, when an Emperor, as, if a private person, you would desire to be governed.]

Meanwhile Thompson tells us that, 'From Rome the Goddess of Liberty goes among the northern nations; where, by infusing into them her spirit and general principles, she lays the groundwork of her future establishments; sends them in vengeance on

the Roman Empire, now totally enslaved; and then, with the arts and the sciences in her train, quits earth during the dark ages.’

The fourth part of Thompson’s poem then rehearses the progress of Liberty through British history, from the defeat of Caractacus and Boadicea by the Romans, the departure of the legions in 426, and through successive invasions by Saxons, Danes and finally the tyrannic rule of the Normans:

*The haughty Norman seized at once an isle,
For which, through many a century, in vain,
The Roman, Saxon, Dane, had toiled and bled.
Of Gothic nations this the final burst;
And, mix’d the genius of those people all,
Their virtues mix’d in one exalted stream,
Here the rich tide of English blood grew full.*

Two buildings at Stowe commemorate those Gothic nations, with their love of Liberty. The first, the Gothic Temple, an ironstone building set on the edge of the Hawkwell Field, and surrounded by wild, uncultivated (and therefore libertarian landscape) is described in the early guidebooks as dedicated to ‘The Liberty of our Ancestors’. Approached by the Thanet Walk, it reminds us that our liberties stem from our Gothic ancestors, those freedom loving tribes of Northern Europe, who landed on the island of Thanet, bringing our ‘Old Gothic Constitution’ to Britain. Lord Cobham himself traced his descent from the Saxon Earls of Mercia, hence the ceiling of the Gothic Temple is decorated with the armorial shields shewing this pedigree, and makes the point that the great Whig families were the rightful defenders of Liberty. The point is accentuated by the inscription from Corneille’s Horace over the door (then):

*Je rends graces aux Dieux de nestre pas Romain.
[I thank God for not being a Roman.]*

And around the Temple were placed the seven deities of the Saxon world which gave their names to the days of the week; thus Sunna, Mona, Tiw, Woden, Thuna, Frigga and Seater.

The second was a circular building in the form of a medieval Tower house. Set outside the gardens as an eyecatcher, it did double duty as the lodge for the keeper of the deer in the Park (and was rededicated in the 19th century as the Bourbon Tower).

Thompson had no higher opinion of the Normans than he had of the Roman emperors, and compares them unfavourably with the last Saxon king before Harold’s defeat at Hastings:

*Instead of Edward’s equal gentle laws,
The furious victor’s partial will prevailed.
All prostrate lay; and in the secret shade,
Deep stung but fearful indignation gnash’d
His teeth....*

It was not until the time of King John that the Barons formed, ‘the first confederacy...in defence of the nation’s interest against the King’:

*The Barons next a nobler league began,
Both those of English and of Norman race
In one fraternal nation blended now,
The nation of the free!*

James Gibbs designed the third, then, of his buildings of Liberty, Stowe Castle. Built as a great curtain wall hiding a farmhouse, set on the horizon a mile from the gardens, it provides the most spectacular of the eyecatchers at Stowe.

Meanwhile inside the gardens, looking up the Hawkwell Field, is Gibbs’ Temple of Friendship. Filled with the busts of those defenders of Liberty, the Prince of Wales, Lord Cobham and their political allies, the ceiling was decorated with murals showing Britannia receiving homage from Edward III and Queen Elizabeth, but turning away from one unnamed sovereign.

Thompson helps with the explanation:

*But when an Edward or a Henry breathed,
.....
Fond where they led, victorious armies rush’d;
And Cressy, Poitiers, Agincourt proclaim,
What kings supported by almighty love,
And people fired with liberty can do.*

And:

*.....Eliza then...
...dash’d the pride of Spain around their isle.
...Meantime, peace, plenty, justice, science, arts,
With softer laurels crown’d her happy reign.*

Thompson had little love for either Charles II or James II, but it seems most likely that Britannia is turning away from James:

*The bigot king...
His measures immature...*

Unsurprisingly his greatest accolades were reserved for William of Orange whose supposed ideals formed the basis of Patriotic Whiggery in the 18th century. He had landed in England in 1688 ‘carrying a flag with English colours, and their Highnesses’ arms surrounded with this motto, - “The Protestant Religion and the Liberties of England”:

*To save Britannia, lo! My darling son,
Than hero more! The patriot of mankind!
Immortal Nassau came.*

Sadly this final expression of Grand Whiggery was never fulfilled at Stowe. Whether it was Cobham’s idea, or his nephew Temple’s, the intention was to crown the South Front of the house with William riding in his triumphal chariot. The Seeley guidebook of 1788 describes this intention; ‘there will be placed

over the pediment a triumphal Car with four horses; in the Car will be the statue of William III with this motto,

Libertatis & Religionis Vindex, 1688.

The Assertor of Liberty and Religion.'

But it was not to be; with both Cobham and Temple dead, the vision had faded.

However, the other pivotal point of this libertarian landscape, Lord Cobham's Monument, is soon to be restored, and Lord Cobham can return, triumphant, to his place at the top of his column. He will then, once more, look one way to the restored Temple of Concord and Victory, that Grecian Temple where Liberty had her genesis, and the other to the Gothic Temple, her final home in this Land of the Free.

Richard Wheeler

Note: This article is a shortened version of a more detailed exposition of the subject; individual references have therefore been omitted. The main sources however are the Seeley guide books of 1744 and 1783, the 1851 complete edition of the poems and plays of James Thompson, and Lady Newdigate's Journal, reproduced in George Clarke's 'Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe 1700-1750.'

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Spring Talks at the County Museum,

Church Street, Aylesbury.

Saturday 21st February 1998 at 2.15 pm

Richard Bisgrove

'Some Buckinghamshire gardens'

Richard Bisgrove is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Horticulture and Landscape at Reading University. A member of Council of the Garden History Society, he has lectured and written on many aspects of gardens, and his numerous books include 'The gardens of Gertrude Jekyll' & 'The gardens of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire' in the Batsford Gardens of Britain series.

Saturday 21st March 1998 at 2.15 pm

Michael Walker

'The Gardens of Waddesdon Manor'

Michael Walker has been the National Trust's Gardens Manager at Waddesdon Manor for several years and is overseeing the ongoing restoration and replanting programmes.

Saturday 25th April 1998 at 2.15 pm

Richard Wheeler

'Paradise and Parody; Stowe and West Wycombe'

Richard Wheeler is Regional Land Agent of the Thames and Chilterns Region of the National Trust. He has been involved with the restorations of West Wycombe, Basildon, Chastleton and Stowe.

Cost; £4.00 for members, £5.00 for non-members.

Please book in advance if possible, using the enclosed booking form.

Make cheques payable to 'The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust'

Send together with a small SAE for return of tickets, to:

Mrs P.A.Liechti, 51 Clifton Road, Chesham Bois, Amersham, HP6 5PN

Tickets will also be available on the door.

Doors open 2.00 PM. Talks start 2.15 PM.

Tea and homemade cakes will be available.

SUMMER WALKS

Thursday 14 May 1998, 11.00am.

'Cliveden, the Conservation Workshop, Park and Gardens'

Cliveden is set with in an 18th century landscape, the rides, avenues and viewpoints taking advantage of the bold setting above the River Thames. Within that framework, many phases of development have given us examples of styles of gardening from the late 1600s to the present day.

The influence of Charles Bridgeman is seen in the little grass Amphitheatre, and in the Ilex Grove, bounded by his 'Great Lines'. Some of the earliest design was made more 'naturalistic' at the suggestion of 'Capability' Brown.

The parterre was famous in the 1850s for the experimental bedding schemes of John Fleming. Norah Lindsay laid out a Flower Garden in the Long Garden, which also features Topiary from that time.

The Rose Garden was laid out in 1959, as a 'Glade Garden' by the late Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, whilst the Herbaceous borders nearby are the designs of Graham Stuart Thomas, inspired by the work of Gertrude Jekyll.

More recent developments have enlarged the Water garden, a creation of the Astor family in an Eastern Style.

I look forward to showing you all these aspects of garden design in our tour of the grounds, and to explain how the National Trust cares for them and plan for their future

Philip A.Cotton

The conservation workshop at Cliveden, is one of the leading centres of statuary conservation. It was set up in 1982 by the National Trust, to conserve and advise on its own collection of statuary, from over 200 properties. It went independent in 1990, becoming the Cliveden Conservation Workshop. It retains its role working with the NT, offering conservation services to all those responsible for the care and preservation of statuary, masonry, wall paintings and the decorative arts. It is still based at Cliveden, with a new carving centre at Bristol. Perhaps we will find out what has happened to the missing statuary in the Park. Incidentally if you would be prepared for some practical conservation work in the Park, Philip Cotton is looking for volunteers, to help clean the remaining statuary.

The programme for the day will be;

11.00am: meet in walled car park, assemble at information hut.

11.00am-1.00 pm: tour of Gardens with Philip Cotton.

1.00- 2.00 pm: lunch, picnic (bring your own) or lunch in the NT restaurant (not included).

2.00pm: drive to North Paddock, walk to Sutherland Statue (which should be being cleaned).

2.30pm: walk back to Conservation Workshop.

3.00-4.00pm: tour of Workshop.

4.00pm: free to wander.

The cost will be £8.00 to members, £10.00 non-members.

Please book in advance, using the enclosed booking form.

Send with an SAE, and a cheque made payable to 'The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust' to;

Mrs P.A.Liechti, 51 Clifton Road, Chesham Bois, Amersham, HP6 5PN.

Hartwell House & the Dairy, Waddeson Manor

Probably 26 June, details to be announced

We are also arranging another walk for later in the summer; details to be announced

Stowe Conference, Conservation plans in action

17-18th Oct; details to be announced

OTHER ORGANISATION'S EVENTS

Arabella Lennox-Boyd, Ascott House

Landscape designer and writer, Arabella Lennox-Boyd will be talking about Ascott House, Bucks to the Garden History Society, in its "Great gardens and their makers series". This

lecture will be held on 18th February, 6.00 PM, at the Scientific Societies Lecture Hall, New Burlington Place, London W1 (off Saville Row; Underground; Oxford Circus). Tickets £7.00, available from The Garden History Society, 'Winter Lectures', 77 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BP.

THE GARDEN TRIUMPHANT:

Waddesdon Manor Gardens' Restoration

The Waddesdon Estate, in the vale of Aylesbury, was bought by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in 1874. He devoted his life to creating a French style chateau designed by Destailleur, mirrored by 165 acres of gardens, typically flamboyant of the Victorian era. The gardens were laid out by the Baron and the French garden designer Elie Laine.

The centrepiece of the garden is the South Parterre, an elaborate terrace planted in the raised ribbon bedding style, using 60,000 tender plants. Interesting plans are in discussion for this area. In addition to the fountain by Mozani (17th century), the terrace is flanked by vases and statues dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Trees are an important component of the garden, planted in large groups, many with an emphasis on leaf colour. Shrubs, planted in large drifts, complimented the boldness of the garden design.

Carpet bedding was widely used, often in the shapes of birds, crowns and baskets, and mounds of tropical bedding were an additional feature. The Aviary stood in an elaborate garden, similar in style to the parterre. Animal enclosures housed deer, llamas and Barbary sheep. The Dairy housed the Baron's prize collection of cows and the Water Garden that surrounded it led to the extensive glasshouse range, herbaceous walks and vegetable gardens that supplied the Manor. Baron Ferdinand's sister, Miss Alice de Rothschild, inherited the property in 1910, and the gardens flourished under her and her head Gardener Mr. Johnson. She added many features, such as the Rose Garden, and Waddesdon became internationally renowned for its high horticultural standards.

Miss Alice left Waddesdon to her nephew, James de Rothschild, who gave it to the National Trust in 1957, with the understanding that the Rothschild family would continue to run it; a task carried out by his wife Dorothy until 1990, when the present Lord Rothschild took over. In 1989 restoration was begun, under the auspices of the family and the National Trust. A five year restoration plan was written, outlining works to be undertaken in order of priority, many of which will continue into the next century. The first of these tasks was the restoration of the tree population, both shelter belts and specimens, followed by the repair of carriageways and garden paths. A new entrance route

to the Manor has been created and extensive shrub planting carried out. The South Parterre has undergone a complete restoration to return it to its former glory: the beds realigned and Victorian displays of bedding reinstated, the yew hedges and topiary reduced, hoggin paths replaced, an automatic irrigation system installed and the fountain repaired.

Beds have been replaced on the North Avenue around the urns and the shrubberies surrounding the Manor, as well as those around the North Fountain Circle replanted with shrubs dating from the Victorian era. A new landscaped car park has been laid out to relieve the North Front of cars. The reinstatement of a Box Walk is currently under way, replacing a lost feature. Wild flowers are being introduced to compliment the bulb display in Daffodil Valley. New grass cutting regimes have been implemented to allow the naturalisation of bulbs and herbaceous plants. Plans for the future include the reinstatement of the Rose Garden, an Autumn Glade, a Bulb Garden, a Woodland Walk, a Cherry Wood, a Children's Garden with an educational emphasis and Visitor Centre in the stables.

Beth Tomassini

The gardens are open Wednesday-Sunday, from March until 20 December, 11am-5pm (6pm when house open). Further details telephone: 01296 651211

MADINGLEY HALL; AGT STUDY DAY

One of the two main fields of activity for Gardens Trusts is researching their County's Garden History. We are in the course of setting up a Recording Group, and welcome, indeed need, as many volunteers as possible. To this end we asked Pauline Ellison, Stephanie Lawrence and Margaret Riley to attend a two day workshop, organised by The Association of Gardens Trusts, at Madingley Hall, Cambridge, and Kimbolton Castle to give them some idea of what was involved.

Madingley Hall was the venue of Day 1, and packed full of information. John Drake (Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust), on maps, Jenny Burt (Northamptonshire Gardens Trust) on published sources and John Popham on recording, interpreting and conserving landscapes. All three speakers were most informative and very enthusiastic about their topics, and made everything sound fascinating. After lunch, Dr Evelyn Lord, Madingley Hall's archivist, took us through the archives and showed us how to use them. Richard Grant, the head gardener, and John Drake then took us around the 7.5 acres of gardens. This was the practical approach, the visible and invisible, that lost, overgrown and altered by time and wear, and its use by the

College today.

Following tea, a discussion was held on the type of 'form' to be used at Stage 1 to be completed from documentation, and Stage 2 following a site visit, where permitted by owners.

Day 2 was held at Kimbolton Castle. John Stratford told us of the development of the Estate up to 1800, he is writing a history of the site. This was followed by a brief talk on the Estate in the 19th century and its management today, within a school environment. We were then shown the vistas, from the East, South and West of the Castle and given a whistle stop tour of the major rooms and historic features of the building.

The afternoon was spent in the Records Office, Huntingdon, especially opened for us. A display of many maps, books and ledgers, letters, plans of the garden (many not implemented) and other items appertaining to the Manchester Estate (Kimbolton Castle) were laid out for our perusal.

Hazel Fryer led a discussion on an update to the 'form' and Jenny Burt had updated hers from the previous week. Various aspects were talked about and hopefully everyone will agree in the end.

Stephanie Lawrence

THE DRAFT COUNTY HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS REVIEW, & THE RECORDING GROUP

The draft copy of Buckinghamshire's Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review arrived just before Christmas, with an invitation for us to comment on it. We were very pleased that we were one of the bodies to be consulted, and at such an early stage in our development. In all Nicola Smith and her team at the Buckinghamshire County Museum had identified about 460 sites, ranging from full scale Landscape Parks through to more humble Town Gardens and Cemeteries. We duly came up with a very swift response, suggesting that four sites should be moved up from Appendix 2, sites of lesser interest (about 380), to Appendix 1, those for further consideration (about 50). We can only assume most of these would be at best Grade II*, but they are all of County interest. The document comes with maps (and references) and with a cursory trawl of documentary references, it will save a lot of the early slog the Recording Group would otherwise have to do. We expressed our gratitude for that, and are now ready to begin our own much more extensive researches into the County's Gardens.

Initially this will be desk bound work, only proceeding to fieldwork when, and if, it is possible so to do. A small group has already been around the County Record Office, and we would like to run another group very soon, to be shown how to use the

catalogues, machines, maps and archives. We will record the data we find, maps and plans, descriptions, from books, magazines or unpublished papers etc. It is intended, probably, to act in pairs, meeting up as a team as appropriate, concentrating on the Appendix 1 sites at first, and continuing on with others. By picking a site near to your home, it will soon come alive through those dusty documents.

To what purpose? Initially it is to help in the identification of important sites for English Heritage, and as a resource for the National Database in York, of great use to people researching the history of gardening in this Country. It will also be of great help as a tool in the planning process providing valuable information to aid in the continuing development of Local Plans, the key to protecting our open countryside. Eventually it might be our aim to produce a comprehensive guidebook to the counties legacy of gardens.

The thing about gardens is their constantly changing nature. We do not seek to fossilise them, but, by researching their history, to discover what succeeding generations have done to alter, and adapt, a site to their needs, and in pursuit of their dreams.

BRADENHAM MANOR

The National Trust are just beginning to write the Conservation Plan for Bradenham Manor, with the intention of restoring the gardens in the near future. They are seeking evidence of previous layouts, particularly in the form of old photos, or plans! If you can help please contact Kate Felus;

The Estate Office, Stowe, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire, MK18 5EH. Tel: 01280 822 850

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

We are hoping to get this important side of the Trust's work going later in the year. In many trusts it is the most important part of their work and certainly in terms of new work being done it is our greatest opportunity for helping in the creation of new green space. We hope to arrange a meeting to bring all interested parties together later in the year. This will probably involve Learning Through Landscapes, Common Ground, The Association of Gardens Trusts, representatives from our Local Schools and Education Authorities, The BTCV and anyone else working in this field. This would lead into setting up an education group within the Trust.

Whilst the first act of such a group may be in helping schools improve their own grounds, both with learning areas such as dipping ponds, vegetable plots and flower gardens, and the more

tricky problem of improving the children's play and recreation areas, there is no reason why we should not help schools break out from their playgrounds and into the surrounding area. In cooperation with other bodies, we should be working to help our children understand and care for our gardens, parks and landscape. One thing that the AGT has learnt is that encouraging a love of growing things is a sure stimulus to protecting your environment, thus ensuring its future stewardship. With the coming threat of massive development, the famous 4.5 million new houses to be built, it would be sad indeed if we had not stressed the vital part that well thought out school grounds have to play in children's growth. With the Draft Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review we might consider adding school grounds, although the threat of selling them off seems to have receded. It would be good to help in their improvement thus encouraging the next generation to value their local landscape.

The Herb Society, with Learning through Landscape have proposed a plan to provide every Primary School in the Country with a Herb Garden, in time for the Millennium. Perhaps we could be of help there.

Another Millennium plan is to give every community a young yew tree, to be planted in a public space. The parent trees are themselves 2000 years old, which puts things in perspective. This is being organised by The Conservation Foundation. Again we might help in this one, an ideal opportunity to involve schools.

If you would be interested in helping with work of this nature please contact us via the office, with the aim of setting up an Education Group.

HALL BARN: THE LAUNCH

The Launch of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust on Saturday, 25 October, 1997, was held at Hall Barn, Beaconsfield, in glorious autumnal sunshine. The afternoon opened with an inspiring talk by Mrs Gilly Drummond, DL, President of the Association of Garden Trusts, on the aims and objectives of a Gardens Trust. She was, as we were, delighted to see so many in attendance (about 70 in all) with a good collection of Mayors and County dignitaries. Michael Cousins, Honorary Librarian of the Folly Fellowship, followed with a very informative talk on the gardens at Hall Barn before taking us on a guided tour. A most enjoyable tea followed. The Steering Group felt that it was a successful start for The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust and are grateful to the Hon. Mrs Farncombe for allowing it to take place at Hall Barn.

The Steering Group

The steering group consists of those who initially stepped forward to help in the setting up of the trust. Already it has demonstrated the need for our existence, as we have seen key council employees in the conservation field, who were part of the group, disappear before our very eyes. How much more difficult it would have been without them, and our thanks go to them. Lets hope we still have a Record Office to go to, or we really will be stuck. This is not altogether a groundless worry.

Currently we meet every 4-6 weeks and already we are feeling the need to set up individuals and small groups to handle in more detail parts of our activities. We are also looking for a new central location to hold our meetings in, preferably close to Aylesbury.

We welcome anyone to join but are now beginning to settle into the hard slog. I would particularly welcome someone prepared to take minutes which would allow meetings to run faster.

The Office

Our office is a reality. Until now it has been not a lot more than a disembodied phone and a letter box. Initially it will be a desk, phone with answering machine, filing cabinet and computer, and shelf space. We will be able to store the results of the Recording Group's researches here, and hopefully do much of the basic administration of the growing trust. We would like to be able to staff it on Monday and Friday, so if you are based near Beaconsfield, could you contact John Chapman. Initially there will not be a lot to do, but I've little doubt it will build up as our

presence becomes noticed. Our thanks once again to Gary Bell for putting a roof over our heads

Hall Place, Beaconsfield Old Town, Buckinghamshire, HP9 1NB. Tel: 01494 674 100

Please help us

As we stated in the membership leaflet, we intend to be an active society. If you can be of help please let us know. At this stage we particularly need help with obtaining our charitable status. We are applying for this with documentation provided by another trust but would be reassured if we had a legal brain on board and would very much like to recruit a gardening solicitor to the steering group. If you are that person or know them, please get in touch.

As noted elsewhere, our recording group is now getting started and will be busy for some time to come. If you want to help with this contact Pauline Ellison or Stephanie Lawrence.

We particularly need to get the schools side of things going, again please make contact if you are the person for this.

Indeed if you have any ideas of how we should develop we will gladly take them on board.

PS

We are trying to get a couple more events organised and will be giving details of these in the next newsletter to be sent out probably at the beginning of May. If you have any suggestions please let us know as soon as possible.

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If you have material for the next Newsletter, please contact me at the Address above. This includes letters to the editor.

You can also contact us at our office: Hall Place, Beaconsfield Old Town, HP9 1NB. T; 01494 674 100