

The Bucks Gardener

Issue 6

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Annual Report/ Summer 1999

From The Chair

Our first AGM was held at Waddesdon Manor last month. We were lucky with the weather, and after Michael Walker had shown us the latest developments there, we had refreshments on the terrace. You will find most of this issue given over to the reports. Also, as a result, it has been decided to hold an EGM after the first of our Winter Talks to help formalise our Trust's structures. If you would be interested in taking part in a more direct way in our activities you are welcome to join one of the groups we will be setting up. There will be groups for Schools, Research and Planning. The hope is that these will be small but active groups, allowing a variety of ideas to take root. Although we do obviously have some ideas already, we hope the Trust will keep its current lively form, allowing us to proceed as our members interests suggest.

You will notice that Patricia Liechti has included details of the last years events in her report. This is very useful as it helps pick up on the variety and range of our activities. There is so much to see in even such a relatively small county as ours that we feel we can continue to find interesting places to visit 'in county' for the foreseeable future. You will of course notice our next visit is to Ashridge Park and Gardens, which is only partially in the historic county. Such is the cussedness of the broader geography.

We have included part of the Memorandum of Association which we will use as we proceed to full Charitable status (as a company limited by guarantee), a course many of the other County Gardens trusts have gone down. The Articles of Association are also available, but the Memorandum, subject to its acceptance, gives a fair summary of our potential fields of activity. Copies will be available at the EGM.

We hope to see as many members as possible at Ashridge. It will be a full day with a good lunch, and tea. We are being shown around the greater estate by Richard Wheeler of the National Trust. Mick Thompson, currently overseeing their restoration, will then show us around the gardens (details on back cover). Bring your walking boots, its a big place.

Charles Boot

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Minutes of the 1st Annual General Meeting held at the Power House, Waddesdon on Wednesday 28th July 1999.

Present: Carolyn Adams, Gary Bell, Charles Boot (Chairman), John & Kathie Chapman, Pauline Ellison, Cdr & Mrs P Everett, Kate Felus, Candida Godber, Nigel Halse, David Hillier, Mr & Mrs G Huntingford, Stephanie Lawrence, Patricia Liechti, John Rotheroe, Sarah Rutherford, Mary Sarre, Michael Walker and Richard Wheeler.

Apologies: were received from Clive Bostle, Penny Frost and Suzanne Millard.

Financial Report: The Honorary Treasurer presented his report which was accepted subject to Members Subscriptions being split between Life and Annual Members. A revised copy of the accounts is attached herewith.

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Gary Bell (HT).

Events: Patricia Liechti gave a very comprehensive report of the Trust's events since the inaugural meeting in September 1997. A copy is attached herewith.

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Patricia for all the hard work she had done to supervise such an interesting and varied programme.

Chairman's Report: Charles Boot gave a report covering all the activities of the Trust. A copy is attached.

Sarah Rutherford proposed a vote of thanks to Charles for the incredible amount of time and effort he had expended on the Trust's behalf, particularly with the Newsletters.

Membership: It was reported that the Trust now had 77 members*.

Any Other Business: Stephanie Lawrence felt we needed to define the differences between the BGT and the Garden History Society (see Memorandum).

Richard Wheeler suggested that we should offer a reduced rate of Membership for people working in horticulture. It was agreed

Contents

Minutes of AGM	...1
Accounts, 1997- 1999	...2
Event Secretary's report	...3
Chair's report	...5
Schools report	...6
Ashridge visit	...8

to discuss this at the next meeting of the Steering Group.

Kathie Chapman felt we should have more communication with other related bodies ie NCCPG and Hardy Plant Society.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Michael Walker

for the use of the Power House.

* It should be noted that this is the figure for people who have rejoined, we were up to 120 members at the end of the year.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GARDENS TRUST	
ACCOUNTS: 1/11/97-31/3/99	
INCOME	
Membership Subscriptions: Life	1600.00
Membership Subscriptions: Annual	1185.00
Garden Visits/Lectures	998.00
Book Sales	31.83
Bank Interest	54.22
Income- Sub-total	<u>3869.05</u>
Stowe Conference	<u>4350.00</u>
INCOME - TOTAL	<u>8219.05</u>
EXPENDITURE	
Hall Barn Launch	433.00
AGT: Membership	50.00
Liability Insurance	64.00
Printing, Postage & Stationary	271.40
Telephone	499.10
Advertising	125.00
Facilities Hire	243.80
Speakers' Honorariums/Expenses	311.00
Sundry Expenses (Committee Members)	45.88
Expenditure - Sub-Total	<u>2043.18</u>
Stowe Conference:	
National Trust Enterprises	1912.01
Stowe School	1332.17
Sundry/ Admin Expenses	266.44
Coach Hire	120.00
Refunds	170.00
Expenditure- Conference Sub-Total	<u>3800.62</u>
EXPENDITURE- TOTAL	<u>5483.80</u>
Balance in Account at 31.3.99	
(Income - Expenditure)	<u>2375.25</u>

EVENTS SECRETARY'S REPORT

In April 1997 a meeting to discuss the formation of a Gardens Trust for Buckinghamshire was held in the Buttery at Waddesdon Manor. A Steering Group was formed and in October the formal launch took place at Hall Barn, Beaconsfield. An exhibition showed the work of Gardens Trusts. A talk on the garden and a tour of the grounds was followed by a brief talk by Gilly Drummond, President of the Association of County Gardens Trusts. The seventy people present then enjoyed a splendid tea.

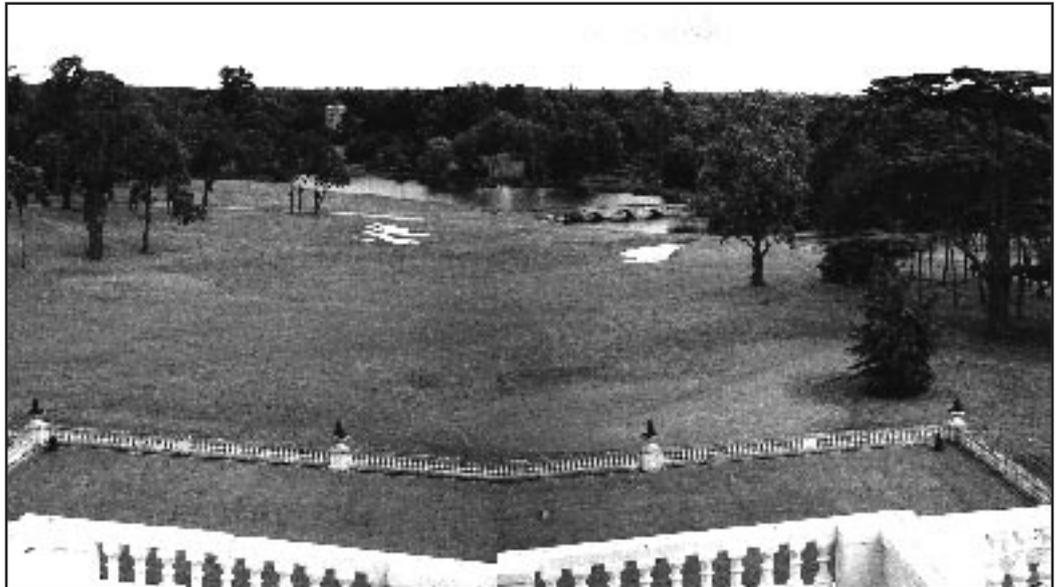
A series of Spring Talks was held at the County Museum, Aylesbury early in 1998. In February Richard Bisgrove, Senior Lecturer in Horticulture and Landscape at Reading University, and the author of several books, spoke most entertainingly on *Some Buckinghamshire Gardens*. In March Michael Walker, the Gardens Manager at Waddesdon Manor, spoke on his gardens, and the ongoing restoration and replanting programmes in an informative and amusing manner. It seems that Michael is in the enviable position of having limitless funds at his disposal, together with his regular staff, a team of volunteer workers and the services of the RAF on occasion, notably when 60,000 crocus bulbs needed to be planted in the grounds. Lucky man! In April Richard Wheeler, who is Regional Land Agent of the Thames and Chilterns Region of the National Trust, gave us a polished, well researched and well illustrated talk called *Paradise and Parody; Stowe and West Wycombe*.

In May 1998 the first of our Summer Walks took place at Cliveden, starting with a visit to the Cliveden Conservation Workshop, originally set up by the National Trust it has been independent since 1990. The Workshop offers conservation services to all those responsible for the care and preservation of statuary, masonry, wall paintings, mosaics and the decorative arts. Our party was given a fascinating account of the restoration techniques and they were most impressed. Later a tour of the garden with Philip Cotton, the Head Gardener, followed his account of the history of the estate and the present day management programme.

One afternoon in June members assembled at Hartwell House where we had a fascinating account of the house and historic grounds given by Eric Throssell, the architect who restored the

house, built the superb dining room, and has done extensive research on the grounds. In the 1730s James Gibbs designed a grand classical landscape, which was subsequently remodelled in part by several hands, including James Wyatt and latterly by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, although much of his plan remains unexecuted. We were led by Michael Walker through the private Eythrop estate to Waddesdon Manor for tea and a walk through the gardens, followed by a tour of the recently restored water gardens and the splendid Pulhamite rock garden. We finished in the early evening with wine in The Dairy, which is now a magnificent venue for entertaining.

In July we visited Stoke Park, Stoke Poges. The present house, which looks not unlike a large wedding cake, was built between 1789 and 1797. Capability Brown and Humphry Repton advised on the grounds, and Repton's three arched bridge, hopefully soon to be restored, still crosses the lake. The house, which is as beautiful inside as out, has been extensively restored. We were able to go into the rotunda on the roof and see the whole estate,



Stoke park, view from the roof showing the tree arch bridge and church beyond

with Windsor Castle in the distance. The owners of Stoke Park have started an ambitious programme of restoration in the park and spent most of the afternoon showing us round, after we had seen a display of maps, plans and photographic records, and heard a short talk.

The Stowe Symposium on Conservation Plans in Action took place over a weekend in November, at Stowe School. This was organised jointly by the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust and the National Trust. The focus was on Stowe and other gardens with conservation planning underway at present. There was a full programme of lectures and case studies and subject orientated walks around the gardens at Stowe and Wotton. The weekend

was a resounding success.

In early Spring **1999** there were three lectures at the County Museum. In January Richard Wheeler spoke on *The Political Temples at Stowe*, describing how the underlying meanings of the garden buildings and statues, which are still to be seen today, were a means for the Temple family to make a political statement to their contemporaries. In February, John Bond spoke on *The Gardens in the Great Park at Windsor*, which, until his recent retirement, had been his responsibility for over 25 years. The park includes the well known Savill and Valley gardens, the private royal grounds of Frogmore and the Queen Mother's 30 acre garden at Royal Lodge. Mr Bond spoke and answered questions for nearly two hours and it is a pity that more people were not there to hear him.

In March Susan Campbell spoke on *Historic Aspects of Kitchen Gardens*; a fascinating talk by the leading authority, who has written several books on the subject.

In April this year a return visit was made to Wotton, which must be regarded as one of the most exciting garden rediscoveries of recent times. An account of the extensive network



The 'sentry box', replacement for the Chinese Temple which stood here for 200 years (about). It is now, of course, back at Stowe.

of lakes, temples and views can be found in issue 3 of our newsletter, *The Bucks Gardener*. This spectacular landscape is being restored under its present manager, Michael Harrison, who accompanied our party around the park and explained the designs. We will return...

On a morning in May our party met at Campbell Park at the offices of the Milton Keynes Parks Trust, where we had an introductory talk followed by a tour of the park. This is the work of several architects and includes a cricket pitch with graded bank terracing, an events plateau, a belvedere with a beacon, a water garden, open air theatre, meadows grazed by sheep, shrub banks and woodland. The park extends outwards from the centre of the town. We then visited Great Linford Manor, an attractive 18th century house, which is now run as a recording studio. The owner gave us a brief history of the site from Domesday to the present, showed us the grounds and described the restoration plans for the garden and park.



Box hedging in the walled garden at Great Linford Manor.

After lunch we proceeded to Chicheley Hall, an early 18th century house with fine brickwork, plaster work and panelling. After a conducted tour of the house, and tea, the owner, Lady Nutting, took us into the garden and described the original work of London and Wise and her own additions to this essentially 18th century garden.

In June a large party of our members visited the Manor House, Bledlow, the home of Lord and Lady Carrington. The formal area around the house extends to a magnificent walled fruit and vegetable garden. In recent years a modern sculpture garden has been developed and has now matured well. Across the road is the Lyde Garden, completely different in character, a valley garden with water and profuse planting of trees and shrubs. An excellent tea provided by the WI was enjoyed at the village hall.

In July we visited Tyringham, where the grounds originally contained work by Repton. The gardens were later formalised, with terraces, pergola and rose garden, and later still Lutyens created two long pools, a round pool and two domed pavilions. We were very impressed by the amount of work which has taken place here recently, and which is continuing.

Future events.

On Saturday 16th October a visit to Ashridge is planned as an all day event, to include lunch. Further information, including a booking form, appear at the back of the newsletter.

Our Winter Talks this season will take place before Christmas in the Power House at Waddesdon Manor, and features two excellent speakers. These talks will be open to the public. The shops and restaurant will be open and Santa will be in his Grotto!

On Saturday 20th November at 2.30pm Dr Keith Goodway, a former chairman of the Garden History Society, will have travelled from Staffordshire to talk on *The Victorian Gardener; Life in the Bothy*. This will be an account of the life of the workforce behind gardens such as Waddesdon in their heyday.

On Saturday 18th December, at 2.30pm Dr Brent Elliott, the Lindley Librarian of the Royal Horticultural Society, will talk on *The High Victorian Garden in Buckinghamshire*. He will describe the range of such gardens in our county and highlight the magnificent style of Victorian gardening carried on here.

I have by no means organised all these events myself. We are immensely grateful to those members of the Steering Group who have organised most of the walks. On behalf of all our members, thank you.

Please note that suggestions for future walks and talks from any of our members will be most welcome.

Patricia Liechti

PRUNE UPDATE

We have now had an initial distribution of Prune suckers to members; some of these suckers are in fact quite substantial trees. We hope that these are the first step in the revival of the fortunes of the Aylesbury Prune.

Checking for further information I came across the following reference in *Flora Britannica* by Richard Mabey. Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996.

‘Wild plums, *P. domestica* agg. (VN: Bully tree, Crixies, Winter crack). It is possible that the tree known as the bullace (*P. domestica* ssp. *insititia*), with large, sloe-like fruits, is native in woodlands in Britain. But its fruits are barely distinguishable from naturalised, dark-fruited damsons. And the many varieties of relict or bird-sown gages, ‘prunes’ and damsons that are found growing in the wild form such a continuous spectrum that they are best all treated generically as ‘wild plums’. Many are the outcome of ancient crosses (accidental in some cases) between the blackthorn and various sweeter-fruited plum species introduced from Asia, in a lineage of Byzantine complexity. With such an ancestry it is no real wonder that feral plums are one of the best wild foods (many being edible straight off the tree, unlike sloes) and represent a huge genetic reservoir.

Most are to be found in hedges. They are sometimes deliberately planted, as windbreaks, pollinators or linear orchards. Some spring from bird-sown stones or discarded human picnics. Whatever their origins, they frequently spread by suckers.

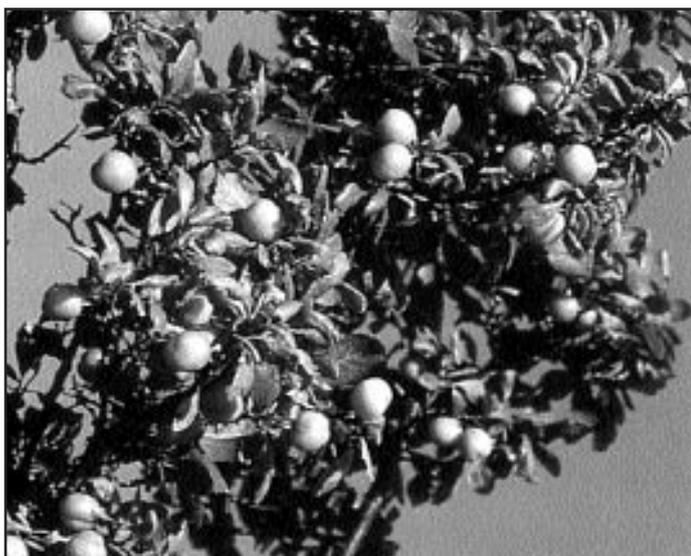
‘Plum appears to be one of the more persistent relic species which remain on the sites of long-deserted habitations. ... ‘In Suffolk, many old cottages have disappeared during agricultural development, or under wartime airfields. These old sites are often marked in the remaining hedgerows by cherry plum and bullace.’

... At Edlesborough and Weston Turville, near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, two highly local varieties were used both for eating and for dye-making: “Edlesborough Prunes” were once prized in our parish for jam-making and for fresh fruit. During the Second World War they were sent to Covent Garden in crateloads. They provided the Parish with prosperity and ran alongside our Straw Plait industry. The Prune provided dye for the Luton hat trade. There are still old trees in the hedges, but they are falling down.’ (Ann Proctor)

‘The “Aylesbury Prune” is almost unique to Weston Turville, and I am told the fruit was used to produce an indigo dye for the colouring of the “pearl” pattern of straw plaiting which was a cottage industry here until the late nineteenth century.’ (Hamish Eaton)

'After the opening of the railway large quantities of fruit [Aylesbury Prunes] were sent all over the country and during the Second World War much jam was made for the men at Halton Camp, but the trade virtually ceased after the war.' (Sue Benwell)

... wild plums are not usually that sour. They can be used instead of cultivated damsons and greengages in pies and jams, or as sweeter substitutes for sloes in alcoholic cordials. An old recipe is for damson cheese, a thick, sugary jelly made from strained damson pulp, which was served as a condiment with cold meats. When the King of Nepal was on a state visit to Britain in the 1980s, he ordered a large quantity of damson cheese to accompany the roast lamb banquet he was throwing at London's Guildhall. And an edible oddity I discovered one autumn in a hedge outside an orchard at Bourne End, Hertfordshire, was naturally sun-dried damsons. The hedge had been cut in late summer with the first plums already formed, and the trimmings lay beneath, covered with dry, wrinkled fruits that tasted exactly like thin fleshed prunes.



A prune in full fruit

We are currently working on a project to bring Aylesbury Prunes to schools along the Chiltern scarp, the intention being to have a rolling project that will initially provide a range of habitats for this now rare variety. It is hoped that schools will receive one or more rooted suckers, as well as a panel describing the location of the schools plants. This will serve as a reminder of why the school has the prune, and will detail the history and uses of the prune. It is hoped that gradually a substantial body of prune facts and figures will be built up and that the prune will gradually move outward from the schools and into surrounding gardens. If you have come across any information about the Aylesbury Prune, its uses and history please send the information on to the Prune co-ordinator, Sarah Rutherford, her details

are on the back of the *Bucks Gardener*.

As a further part of the story Sarah has organised a picnic at Pitstone Farm museum, see front cover for details.

ON THE SPRING; Thomas Gray

*Lo ! where the rosy-bosom'd hours,
Fair Venus' train, appear,
Disclose the long-expecting flowers,
And wake the purple year!
The attic warbler pours her throat,
Responsive to the cuckoo's note,
The untaught harmony of spring:
While whisp'ring pleasure as they fly,
Cool zephyrs through the clear blue sky
Their gather'd fragrance fling.*

*Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader browner shade ;
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er-canopies the glade,
Beside some water's rushy brink
With me the Muse shall sit, and think
(At ease reclin'd in rustic state)
How vain the ardour of the crowd,
How low, how little are the proud,
How indigent the great!*

*Still is the toiling hand of Care:
The panting herds repose:
Yet hark, how through the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied spring,
And float amid the liquid noon :
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some shew their gaily-gilded trim
Quick-glancing to the sun.*

*To Contemplation's sober eye
Such is the race of man:
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay
But flutter through life's little day,
In fortune's varying colours drest:
Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.*

*Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist I and what art thou ?
A solitary fly!
Thy joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone
We frolic, while 'tis May.*

HISTORIC CEMETERIES ASSESSMENT PROJECT

English Heritage is embarking on a two-year project aimed at assessing surviving historic cemeteries in England, and adding those of sufficient historic interest in the national context to the Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. At present there are 26 such sites on the Register, including two twentieth-century memorial gardens, and it is estimated that there may be up to a further 100 similar sites which are important enough to be added to the Register. It is also intended to assess ornamental crematorium landscapes where appropriate, but not churchyard or burial ground sites associated directly with parish churches.

EH have a countrywide list of likely sites for assessment, which has been drawn up using information supplied over the last eight years or so, largely from the desk-based Stage One Register Review exercise. However, EH recognise that this list is unlikely to be entirely comprehensive in terms of historic cemetery sites, and that they do not at present have a systematic, countrywide knowledge of likely nationally important historic cemeteries. In order to provide an accurate picture of such cemetery sites, English Heritage hopes to locate further cemeteries which retain much of their original structure and are of historic importance in the national context.

EH has asked us to seek the help of Gardens Trust members, with their extensive local knowledge, and to ask whether the BGT has further suggestions of cemeteries in the county which retain sufficient quality to merit further investigation by English Heritage? Currently the only such site in Bucks is the Stoke Poges Garden of Remembrance, listed Grade II (I hope to include an article on this in the next Bucks Gardener, *CB*). If you have any further suggestions, bearing in mind the conditions for inclusion above, your response ideally by 1st June would be very helpful, as we hope to programme site visits to be carried out by staff and consultants after this date. If, however, the time-scale is too short, we would be pleased to have your recommendations as soon as possible after this date.

Please contact Sarah Rutherford, Acting Head of Register, English Heritage, 23 Saville Row, London W1X 1AB, or call her at 0207 973 3561.

A THERAPEUTIC BUCKS LANDSCAPE

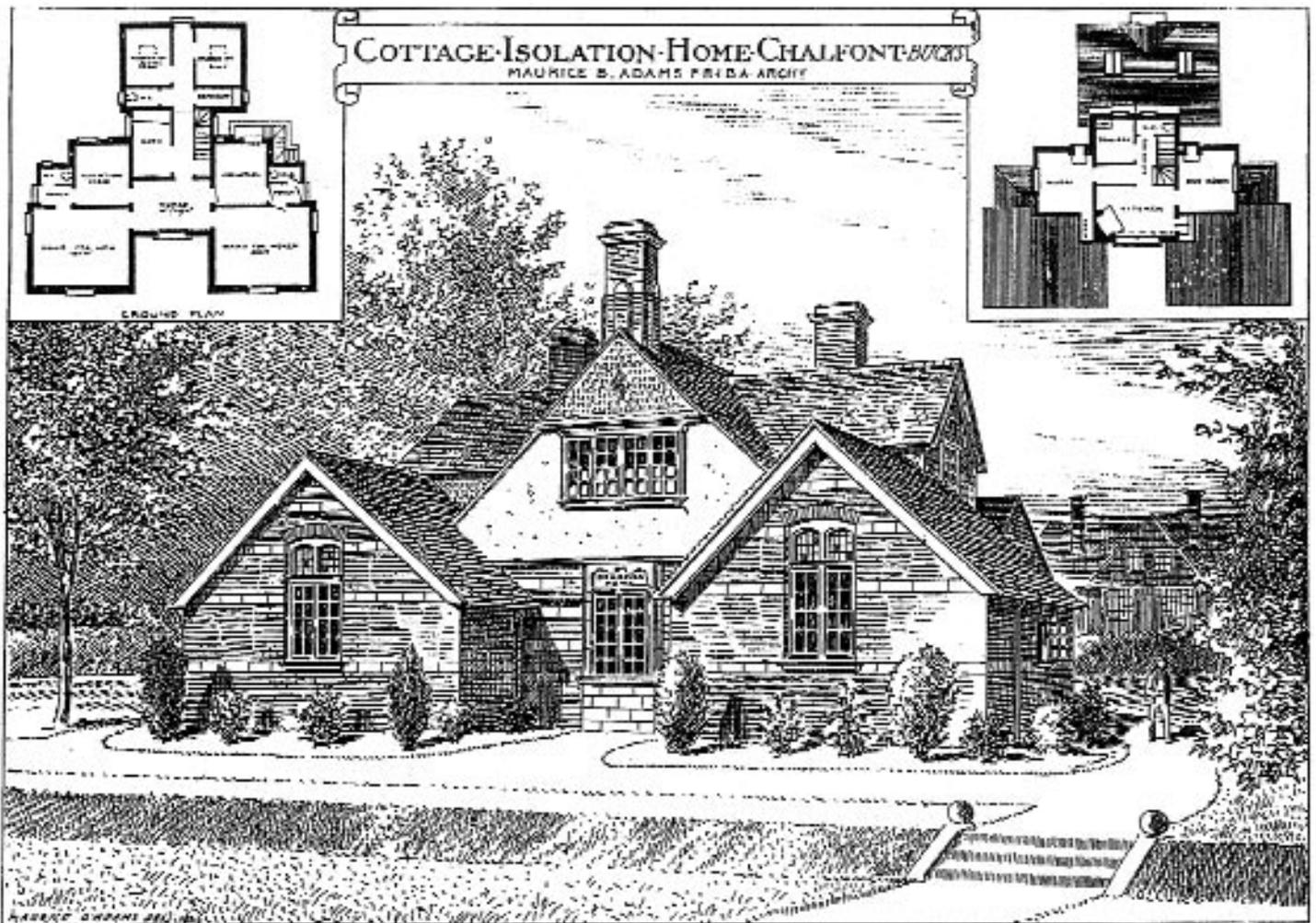
Sarah Rutherford examines the history of a lesser-known, but still thriving, therapeutic landscape.

Few people know that the Chalfont Centre, Chalfont St Peter, was the first residential centre in England specifically designed for epileptics to live and work in a safe environment. Not only were there individual villas homes and workshops, purpose-built for epileptics, but these were placed within a landscape laid out to provide an attractive therapeutic environment for work and recreation.

Until the late nineteenth century epileptics who required care had been routinely kept in lunatic asylums, but by the 1890s it was at last becoming acknowledged that this was not an appropriate environment for epileptics. The National Society for the Employment of Epileptics was founded in 1892, with the innovative intention to found safe 'colonies' where epileptics could live and work in more appropriate supervised accommodation, removed from the lunatic asylum environment.

In 1893 the Society paid £3,900 for Skippings Farm on Chalfont Common, near Chalfont St Peter on the east side of Bucks, with the intention of founding a more or less self-contained epileptic colony there. The farm covered 135 acres and was, 'charmingly situated at a height of nearly 400 feet above the sea, amidst surroundings full of natural beauty and historic associations.' Although it was hoped that wealthy paying patients would fill part of the establishment, it was recognised that, as epilepsy and destitution were often inextricably linked, many paupers would also need to be accommodated. It was anticipated that patients would benefit greatly from outdoor work in clear unpolluted country air and attractive surroundings, as well as from carrying on trades in workshops.

In November 1893 Mr Dowsett and Professor A.H. Bond from the Royal Horticultural College at Swanley advised on cultivating the land, which was to be a significant activity for the colonists (as the first inhabitants liked to call themselves) in the operation of the establishment. The land was thought to be ideal for market gardening and fruit growing, as it was loamy, with gravel and chalk subsoil; it was light and quick-drying and very suitable for spade husbandry. The proximity of the farm to London ensured a ready market for the fruits of such labours. Meanwhile, a gang of labourers was employed to trench the ground for fruit trees, and Wellington apple trees and Prince Albert pears were bought.



The first building, the temporary and eponymous Iron Home, was erected and opened for male colonists in August in 1894, and again labourers were employed, to clear the ground in front in advance of making roads and paths. By October strawberry plants were bought for one rood of land, together with 200 cabbage plants. Workmen and colonists erected a 20 ft x 8 ft greenhouse and a large building to act as a potting shed, storeroom and temporary workshop. Those not building planted hazel and cherry trees, raspberry canes, gooseberry and current bushes, and evergreens around the Iron Home.

At the beginning of 1895 the Colony consisted of the temporary Iron Home for 18 men and a half-built permanent villa, and was cultivating four of the 135 acres. By 1900 it had taken over the rest of the 135 acres for cultivation, had 134 colonists (90 men and 44 women) in seven permanent villa homes, with workshops, a recreation hall and a laundry. The 25" OS map surveyed in 1897 shows the first three villas clustered together: Alpha House (the Iron Home), Victoria House and Passmore Edwards House (later known as Susan Edwards House, and now demolished) stood not far from the farm buildings towards the north end of the site, and a fourth villa, Eleanor House, the first for women, was strategically placed at some distance to the south. The *Journal of Mental Science* (amongst others) reported

that the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George V and Queen Mary) visited Chalfont St Peter on 23 June 1899 to open four more villas, providing accommodation for 100 more people.

Gradually over the following years further detached villas were constructed in groups for men, women and children, set back from the road along either side of the serpentine main drive. The villas were built in Arts and Crafts style at a scale which was deliberately domestic, for which several notable architects were employed, including Maurice B Adams and Robert Weir Schultz.

The roadside boundary was planted with a broken belt of trees and shrubs, partly screening the interior of the estate from the inquisitive passer-by, and the drive was flanked by further scattered trees, including many pines. Each villa was set a little way back from the drive, from which it had its own short approach, providing access to the formal front door and the service entrance at the back. The women's villas were clustered at the south corner, in a group around the laundry building, where some of them worked, with the children's villas to the east and the men's villas to the north. The surrounding open areas of lawn were scattered with clumps of trees, and singles, and extensive orchards were planted on the far side of the estate

from the road. The colonists laid out flower gardens, shrubberies and pathways, and tennis, croquet and bowling lawns were provided, together with cricket, athletics and football facilities. The men's recreation ground was to the north of their villas, along with the farm buildings and workshops, and the children's recreation ground was to the south of their villas.

For the occupation of male colonists, carpentry, basketwork, and, for the majority, work outdoors on the farm or in the grounds were available. Women in the early days were only allowed to work in the laundry or at sewing, although they did help with fruit picking and haymaking in the summer.

The Kyrle Society, set up by Miranda and Octavia Hill to encourage a sense of beauty among the poor, provided some plant material, including 4,800 bulbs. The majority of the villas did not have individual garden enclosures, rather they sat within the landscape of the estate. Apparently the area around each villa was initially kept up by the residents, but by 1900 the women were thought to have too much work to continue this, and the Bailiff and his men (colonists) took over all gardening work. In the early 1900s the grounds were improved under the supervision of Mrs Ferrier, Miss Chadwick and Miss L.A. Dunnington, a qualified landscape gardener. Many of the trees date from this period. Miss Dunnington planned and planted a circular rose bed in front of the administrative house to break the view from the road along the drive (unfortunately this was lost when the area was repaved).

Following the example of the charitably funded Chalfont 'colony', other similar establishments for epileptics were erected, notably St Ebba's Hospital, Epsom, Surrey (qv) set up by London County Council. The manner of scattering villas in a picturesque landscape was also taken up, particularly for institutions which took patients with learning difficulties.

Today the colony, now called the Chalfont Centre, still thrives on its estate on Chalfont Common, run on charitable lines by the National Society for Epilepsy. The mature grounds continue to provide an attractive environment for residents, staff and visitors, although in the later twentieth century various buildings have been scattered rather unthinkingly on parts of the formerly open grounds. This detracts somewhat from the original concept of groups of villas set in

sweeping, landscaped open spaces. The character of the estate is still evident though, as is the careful thought which went into laying it out. Epilepsy can now be effectively treated using drugs in many cases, though there is still a need for long term accommodation in certain cases, and the Centre has a role to play in short term treatment. A few residents still help to maintain the grounds, but the farm has been tenanted for some time. The Chalfont Centre continues its tradition as a therapeutic centre with a restorative landscape, and it seems to have an assured future.

People are welcome to walk through the site at any reasonable time. The Centre sells pot plants during office hours, and has a high quality book binding service provided by residents. Events open to the public, such as antiques fairs, are held in the recreation hall. Contact the National Society for Epilepsy, Chesham Lane, Chalfont St Peter LS9 0RJ, tel 01494 601300.

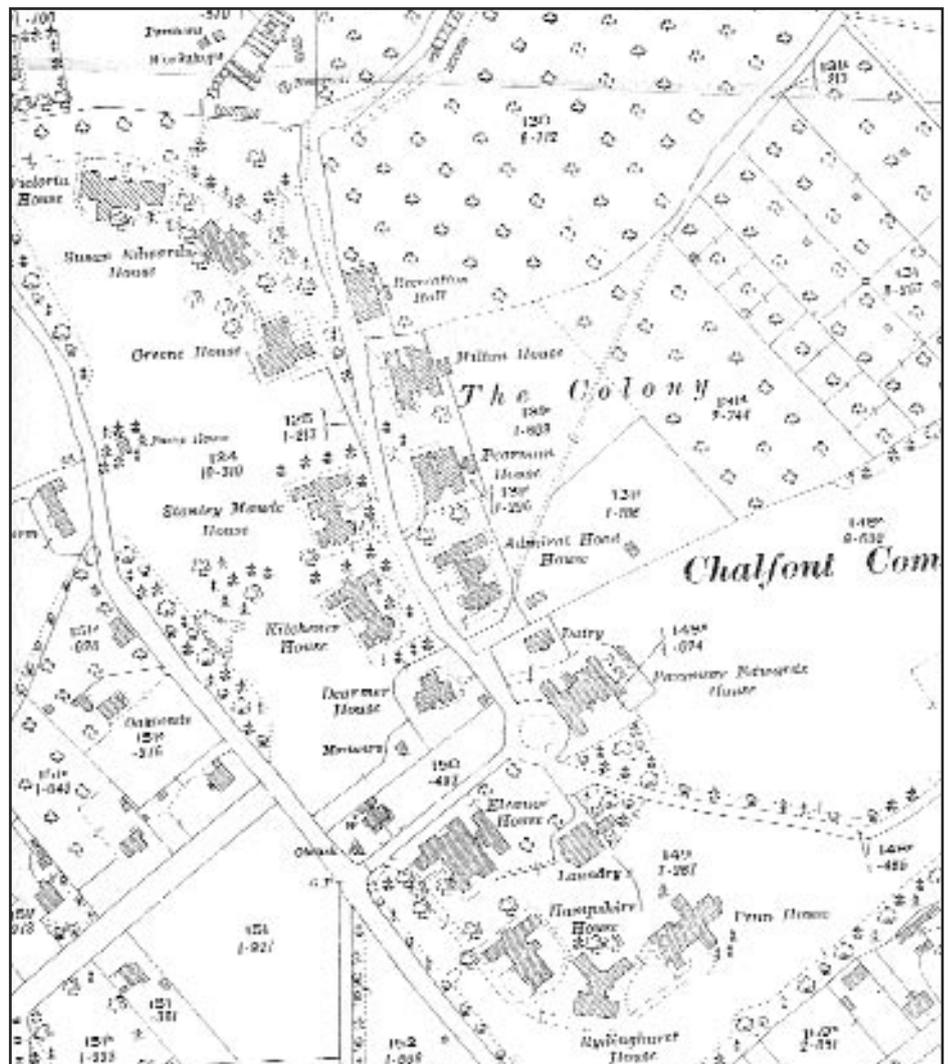
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J. Barclay. A Caring Community: A Centenary History of the National Society for Epilepsy and Chalfont Centre, (1992)



DINTON CASTLE

From: Men and Gardens by Nan Fairbrother.

The Hogarth press, 1956, p197–99.

Once during the war I rode from Aylesbury to Oxford on the top of a bus. Chattering to each other in the seat in front of me sat two small boys, sent into the country from London (so I made out) because their home had been bombed. They looked idly out of the window from time to time, and suddenly their very half-hearted interest in the countryside was jerked wide-awake by a ruined castle at the side of the road. "It was a bomb like ours", said one of them happily, feeling unexpectedly at home in the desert of winter fields. "No", said the other one gloomily after a careful inspection. "It's only an old ruin", and they discussed



A view of Dinton Castle taken in the 1940s

with enthusiasm, and quite horrifying knowledge, the contrasting effects of ancient time and new destruction.

But both of them were wrong, for Dinton Castle was built as a ruin, as an 'eye-catcher' for the house below. The cracks were there from the start and there never was a roof. Small wonder that it should puzzle children brought up to consider adults as sensible creatures. For the eighteenth century loved ruins, and if there were none in their parks then they built them, for they were not only Picturesque but an unsurpassed aid to melancholy. "At the sight of a ruin, reflections on the change, the decay, and the desolation before us naturally occur; and they introduce a long succession of others, all tinged with that melancholy which these have inspired." I wonder if the eighteenth century, would have appreciated our unprecedented wealth of ruins? or whether such an *embarras de richesses* would have sent them back, even more thoughtful, to their well-built houses?

The Chinese put ruins in their Autumn gardens to suit the fading season, but the landscape gardeners put them everywhere.

Walpole, of course, was a connoisseur, for were they not in his favourite Gothick style? His friend Selwyn, he says approvingly, "begged ... a pretty old gateway" from a ruined priory "to erect on the top of his mountain, and it will have a charming effect". In another castle he admired, "the stairs are gone, but it is now a most beautiful Ivy-mantled tower. The last Lord added a ruin round tower that has a good effect." One German enthusiast even considered adding a derelict wing to his mansion, and so many new ruins were set up that Whately gives us rules for building them. "They are a class by themselves," he says, "beautiful as objects, expressive as characters, and peculiarly calculated to connect with their appendages into elegant groups." (Now I come to think of it, Dinton Castle is remarkably elegant.) The original plan of the building must be clear, he goes on, "straggling ruins have a bad effect", and a confused chaos of stones has not the necessary air of the genuine, it will "raise doubts about the existence of the ancient structure; whereas the mind must be hurried away from examining into the reality, by the exactness and the force of the resemblance". It would be hard to choose between Mr Whately and Doctor Gilpin for sustained absurdity.

A new cottage built within an "old" ruin he recommends as a convincing trick, or a "ruined" stone bridge restored with a few planks "will take off the idea of a childish conceit". But we must be careful to suit our ruins to the scenery, he warns us. "Open and polished scenes will generally be given to the Arcadian shepherd; and those in a lower degree of cultivation will be thought more conformable to the manners of the ancient British yeomanry." A cross, or an ancient church, or even a maypole would be fitting, he thinks, half-hidden in the "British" woods. But why be limited to ruins? he asks, "a hackneyed device immediately detected, unless their style be singular, or their dimensions extraordinary". Why not set up a Stonehenge? It could be done "with little trouble, and great success; the materials might be brick or even timber plastered over, if stone could not easily be procured". But we must be careful not to introduce any other buildings in the same scene, "no Grecian temples, no Turkish mosques, no Egyptian obelisks or pyramids".

This extract throws up several points. Firstly it is from a very respectable book from the early days of Garden History. It shows us how we can look at and misunderstand even the most straightforward of buildings. I drive past Dinton quite regularly and have been quietly intrigued by it for many years without having looked into the story further. It is now looking very battered and rather more distressed than in any of the photos on the Bucks County Website. CB

THE GREAT GARDENS SHOW

Buckinghamshire County Museum

April 7th –September 9th.

Paintings and prints of the spectacular 18th century gardens of Hartwell House, Winchenden House and the grounds, temples and follies of Stowe are at the core of this year's main exhibition in the Art Gallery at the Museum. The three estates formed a part of the pleasure grounds of the Buckinghamshire Whig landowners at the time.

Eric Throssell MBE (and a member of the BGT), has spent the last 15 years working with Historic House Hotels to return Hartwell House to its former glory. He has done ground breaking work in researching the form of the original gardens from the 1730s, parts of which he explained to us on our visit in 1998. By working backwards from the paintings of Balthasar Nebot, he has been able to calculate the exact position from which each view was painted, and how each painting links together. As a result of this work Richard Broyd, the chairman of Historic House Hotels, has commissioned a special model to recreate in three dimensions the gardens as Nebot would have seen them. The paintings are be strategically placed so that visitors can look through the model to see aspects of the garden as it appeared in its heyday.

Until now garden historians had largely dismissed the Nebot paintings as 'pure fantasy' (a more generous assessment of opinion may be 'unproven' ed). Eric has shown this to be wrong. As the architect who converted Hartwell House into a hotel he has been painstakingly researching the house, grounds and lost gardens since 1986. Using a combination of on the spot surveying, an archaeological quest for surviving details and by photographically enlarging details of the Nebot paintings to reveal minute details which are easily missed by the human eye, Eric has been able to reveal the house and gardens as they looked in those times. A selection of his reconstructional drawings and paintings that explain this research are on show. They give a powerful impression of what the detail of the landscape must have been like. Drawings of the individual buildings again based on the paintings and some archaeology, draw us right in. Geoff Huntingford, another member of the BGT, has been commissioned to paint a large view of Hartwell House as it looked at that time, based on all Eric's research.

Nebot's paintings are hung on panels surrounding the model, behind which are displayed 18th century costumes and artefacts, to further put the pictures in context. Putting on the exhibition has enabled the Museum to re-glaze the Nebot pictures, allowing us to see them much more clearly, and bringing out much more of the detail. Family heirlooms of the Hampden family are

displayed to link with the bust of John Hampden, a Whig hero, in one of the paintings. More paintings as well as china, glass and other decorative pieces from the Museum's collections are a useful reminder of the depth of the museum's holdings.



A detail showing the House and a corner of the Canal at Hartwell, which clearly shows the extraordinary arcaded topiary.

The Nebot paintings were given to the Bucks Archaeological Society by Ernest Cook the owner of Hartwell House in 1955 and have hung in the Museum since the mid 1960s. Mr Cook, grandson of Thomas Cook founder of the famous travel agents, was a noted conservationist. He acquired The Bath Assembly Rooms, Montacute House, Buscot Park, Boarstall Tower, Bradenham and the Coleshill estates and gave them all, in his lifetime, to the National Trust. Hartwell was his favourite house and he intended to live there when World War II, ended but in the event felt too frail to move from Bath. Having no heir, he established the Ernest Cook Trust which now leases the house to the Historic House Hotel Group (see BG Issue 4).

The painting of Winchendon House and its formal Dutch gardens painted by Peter Tillermans, c1720, was acquired by the Museum in 1993. Winchendon marches with Hartwell and it is possible the two garden designs were related. Eric Throssell is currently researching the connection, and his plans of this intimate Dutch style formal garden with its beautifully cut topiary are a revelation for those of us who have only seen this picture in reproduction.

The magnificent grounds of Stowe, with its arches, temples, bridges, Rotunda and other buildings by Vanbrugh, Gibbs and Kent, have been the subject of a great deal of restoration by the National Trust in recent years, with support from the Heritage

Lottery Fund. The Museum has a substantial archive on Stowe in the Art Collections, in particular the landscape designs by Charles Bridgeman for Lord Cobham. Although Stowe is currently closed (watch the press for details of reopening), work continues on buildings in the gardens. The Fane of Pastoral Poetry and Lord Cobham's Column are due to reopen this summer. In fact, Kate Felus says Lord C is just about to resume his perch on top of the column. Several of the splendid prints of Jacques Rigaud's 1739 drawings of the landscape are on display, and indeed can still be bought at the Stowe School shop, though curiously not in the NT shop.

Sarah Gray, the Collections Manager, has chosen to feature John Piper's strikingly atmospheric watercolours done for his book on Stowe in 1983, as well as the finished product, a magnificent complement to the Rigaud pictures. She has jointly curated the exhibition with David Erskine, the Education Manager for the Museum. The Piper paintings are hung in the Viney Room together with a display of contemporary garden design to bring gardening into the present day.

As we have come to expect at Aylesbury Museum the exhibition works on many levels. The Nebot pictures have a panel underneath designed for children of all ages to pull you further into the painted landscape. The final gallery also includes a chance to display your talents and make a record of your own garden to go on a wall display. Here also are garden creatures and the work of two contemporary artists, photographs and woodcuts, which are for sale.

I heartily recommend this exhibition, and hope you will all go to see it. Our congratulations to all involved.

We are in the course of arranging a gallery talk with Eric to be held towards the end of the exhibition.

Please note unannounced visits to Hartwell House are not permitted. However, anyone using the services available at Hartwell (they do a very good afternoon tea) is welcome to explore the beautiful site in its entirety. For more information please contact Hartwell House direct on 01296 747444.

The exhibition is at: Bucks County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 2QP.

Public Contact Number: 01296 331441.

Open: Mon to Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 2–5pm.

Entry: Adults £1.50, children Free.

SPRING PLANT FAIR AT HUGHENDEN MANOR

On Sunday 13th May, between 11am and 4pm, Hughenden Manor will be holding their sixth Spring Plant Fair. This annual event, which is organized and run by National Trust volunteers, is an enjoyable day out for both plant enthusiasts and the whole

family. Many of the plants for sale are grown voluntarily by amateur gardeners, and include Annuals, Perennials, Shrubs, Herbs, Grasses and some rare and unusual plants. The fair is also very well supported by a number of local professional growers and the Women's Institute, who offer a very wide range of plants and other produce at very competitive prices.



The 'Messenger' greenhouses in situ at Chenies Manor

Spring Plant Fairs at Hughenden Manor are not only a great day out for the family but are also charity fund-raising events. The proceeds are always used to improve the gardens and seasonal parterre displays for the benefit of visitors. For the past two years Hughenden Manor has been raising funds to re-construct a generously donated 'Messenger' Victorian Vine & Propagating House on the site of an original Victorian Vine House in the Walled Cherry Orchard. The new Vine House will provide a much needed additional glasshouse in which to grow plants for the formal Victorian gardens and should be finished by the end of August this year. The proceeds from this year's Spring Plant Fair will also go towards the cost of this project.

So if you would like to support this important work, or you and your family just wish to enjoy a day out, why not go along to Hughenden Manor on 13th May.

NEW YEAR FLOWER COUNT 2001

Sadly we had just two responses to the New Year's day flower count this year;

From Stephanie Lawrence, Beachampton.

Winter jasmine

Yellow rose

Viburnum tinus

White polyanthus

Christmas rose (hellebore)

Mahonia x media 'Charity'

Crimson Antirrhinum

From Candy Godber, Little Linford.

Clematis cirrhosa

Helleborus ericsmithii

H foetidus

H x sternii

H niger

Jasminium nudiflorum

Lonicera fragrantissima

Mahonia x media 'Charity'

M lomariifolia

Pansy

Pieris japonica

Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis'

Rosa 'Memory Lane'

Sarcococca

Skimmia japonica

S japonica rubella

Viburnum tinus 'Gwenllian'

V fragrans

V 'Willowwood'

Aconite

Candy comments, 'this is very low compared to 1999 when I counted 29 species (in 2000 I had bronchitis). Severe frost and snow last week killed off lots of little flowers in our exposed garden!'

PAINSHILL PARK, STUDY DAYS

A full programme of talks has been laid on once again at Painshill, Cobham, Surrey. If you are travelling to Wisley why not visit these gardens a short distance on the other side of the M25. Full details and booking form available from Painshill Park Education Department: 01932 866 743

A morning with Horace Walpole

Wednesday 9th May 10am–3pm

The last in a series of popular lectures on the history of English architecture. This talk focuses on the influential work of Horace Walpole; the role of Gothick, Rococo and Chinoiserie in the furniture and decorative arts of the mid 18th century. With particular reference to Strawberry Hill and Claydon House. A guided tour in the afternoon will show how the styles discussed in this and the previous talks influenced Charles Hamilton's Painshill. *Tutor: Erica Wilkinson BA Hons (Freelance University lecturer and Post-Graduate researcher in the History of Architecture and Garden Design)*

Cost: £19 (including tour)

£ 15 (lecture only: 10am–12noon)

A morning with Pugin and Ruskin:

The 19th century Gothic Revival

Wednesday 6th June: 10am–12noon

The Gothic Revival 'officially' began in England with the publication of Pugin's Contrasts in 1836 and was very different from the Gothic of the 18th Century. More serious in approach, this movement saw a revival of interests in all the decorative arts, finding a link between architecture, design and society. With particular reference to Pugin's own homes and interiors, his churches, Ruskin's Stones of Venice and The 7 Lamps of Architecture and The Natural History Museum at Oxford.

Tutor; Erica Wilkinson BA Hons (see above).

Cost: £15

The Painted Garden

Saturday 9th June 10am–3pm

This fascinating talk traces the development of gardening styles and fashions through history as seen in works of fine art. A wide range of pictures will be discussed which illustrate trends in garden history, religious symbolism and social development. After lunch there will be guided tour of Painshill with one of our senior guides.

Tutor; Russell Bowes (Freelance lecturer)

Cost: £19 (including tour)

£15 (lecture only: 10am–12noon)

The Botanic Garden

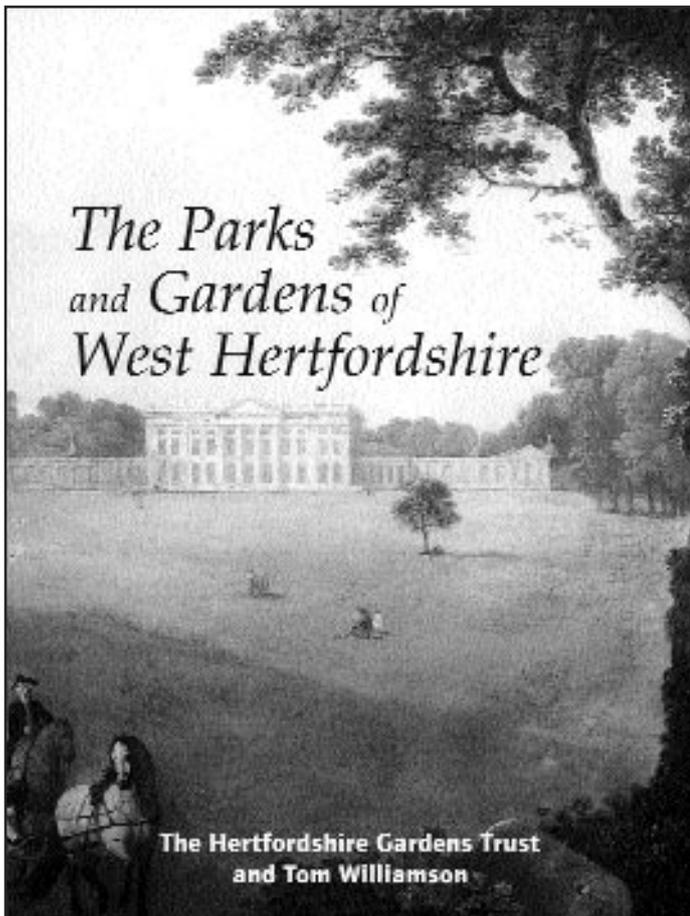
Saturday 30th June 10am–3pm

This lecture will look at the rise of the botanic gardens from those in 16th Italy to those in England, France, Holland and others to the present time. Their purpose to study and classify plants, to investigate their economic value for food, medicines and industry will be discussed as well as the development and importance of the Greenhouse. Featuring the Chelsea Physic Garden, Padua, Kew, the Oxford Botanic Garden, the Jardin des Plantes and the new National Botanic Garden of Wales. The afternoon tour will link together some of the special plants at Painshill referred to during the morning.

Tutor: Bill Tomlins (Tutor with Surrey University, senior guide with the National Trust and Painshill)

Cost: £19 (including tour)

£15 (lecture only: 10am–12 noon)



The Parks and Gardens of West Hertfordshire.
 Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and Tom Williamson.
 £18.50 plus p&p £1.50 (pbk).

*Please write to Mrs Chris James, Hon. Secretary HGT, 56
 Back Street, Ashwell, Herts SG7 5PE.*

Oh what a difference a few years make. The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust has been established for some time, and with the production of this book makes a major contribution to garden history in the area. By dividing the county into smaller areas, the task of research has been made more manageable with a clear end product to aim for. Exemplary use has been made of the archives and libraries consulted and the wealth of old maps, etc, is handsomely complemented by photographs and line drawings used in the book. Tom Williamson (author of *Polite Landscapes* and himself born in Hertfordshire) has taken the researches of the Herts Gardens Trust and of the Berkhamsted Local History Society, and made them into a very readable history of garden making, focusing on the area immediately to the east of our county. It includes the major gardens at Tring, Cashiobury, Ashridge, and Moor Park, as well as many lesser known sites. Setting the scenes with a survey of the historic nature of the landscape and its use, and abuse, we gain a strong understanding of the forces, geographical and social, that make up the development of the area, one that has many similarities to its

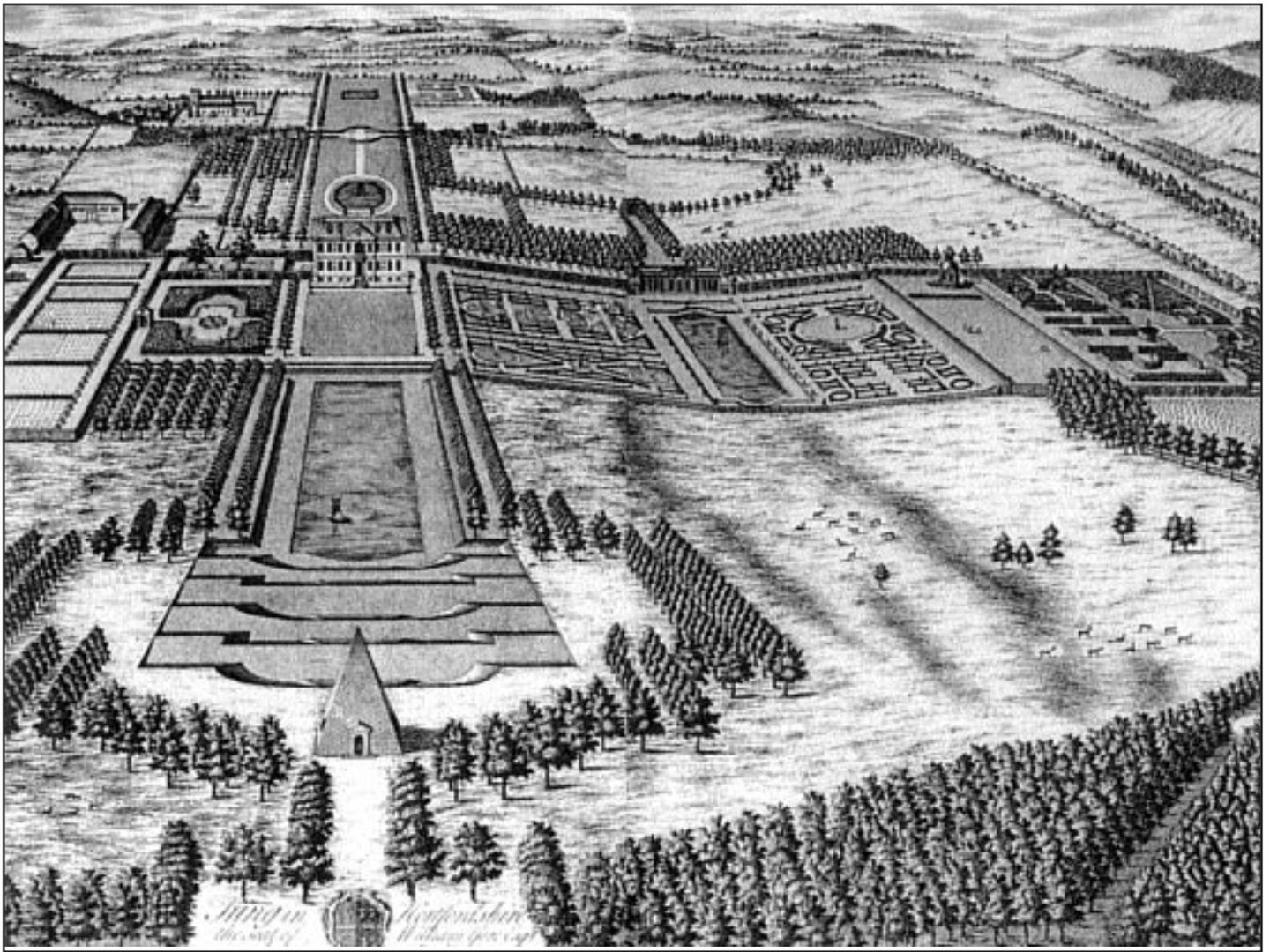
counterpart in Bucks. The fate of many of the gardens discussed has been perhaps less good than those over here, with the greater pressures of development in south Hertfordshire, and there are lessons to be learnt.

The chronological approach demonstrates the development of gardens clearly and concisely starting with the earliest of gardens, such as the moated garden of Archbishop Nevel and later Cardinal Wolsey at The More, near present day Moor Park. Perhaps not surprisingly few traces of such gardens remain, our visits to Wing and Quarrendon were supposed to demonstrate this, but sadly they have had to be postponed. As we enter the more familiar territory of the seventeenth century, using maps, drawings, account books and contemporary accounts a very full picture of the early formal gardens is built up. Here indeed there are many resonances with the gardens of south Bucks, with the names of families and designers recurring. Here are layouts by Bridgeman, buildings by Wren and Gibbs, and records of them made by the ubiquitous Kip and Kniff. The early formal layouts of Cashiobury, Tring and Moor Park along with Bushey Hall are fully rounded out.

As we progress into the C18th, Bridgeman continues his work, providing a magnificent landscape at Moor Park, Tring and Beechwood, at Flamstead, continue in the geometric tradition. The range of designers continues to develop as fashion changes. 'Smaller' gardens are not ignored, and indeed this is one of the strengths of the book, that it considers the more modest manors and parsonages where often more innovative, or perhaps more intriguing ideas can be carried through. Taking as an example the Golden Parsonage at Gaddesdon, the author explores a perhaps more sophisticated, if smaller scale, landscape. As the C18th continues we are brought into contact with the work of 'Capability' Brown and the less familiar Nathaniel Richmond, a colleague and follower, who set up in his own right. Perhaps the most important landscape surviving today enters the story with Ashridge and the development of the Golden Valley. In the south of the county a whole cluster of new parks developed around Cashiobury, reflecting the fact that as the country became wealthier so the desire for country estates near London grew.

The author leads us through the perhaps familiar tale, of the development of the landscape park, the *ferme ornée*, the picturesque and gardenesque of Repton notably at Ashridge, where the restoration programme continues. He follows through the story to the present day, examining the fate of the parks and gardens, and emphasising the importance of the tremendous work of research undertaken by volunteers in piecing together this richly woven tapestry of the past.

Where Tom Williamson stands out from other writers is the



Tring Park, from Vitruvius Britannicus, showing the layout in c.1739. This garden was laid out for Sir William Gore who bought the house in 1705. A visitor in 1724 commented: 'There are 20 acres of gardens all full of fine slopes, with a canal between and a Green House of 11 windows to front it; the House is in the midst of the Park which is full of easy hills covered with Beach and Oak trees in which a canal of 110 feet broad is going to be made to front the House and the Park has 300 head of deer and the Gardens are so rich that there are always 9 men and often 4 boys more to keep them.'

way he draws in the other lives and history surrounding the privileged lives being lived in the great houses of the day. He picks up the importance of tree planting and how it ties into the great demand for timber in the C18th. He explains how the underlying geology of the county precluded the development of the vast lakes we see elsewhere, and how a similar effect might be gained by lawns or woods. He explains why the growth of the vast agricultural holdings of the estates initially allowed the development of these parks and later led to their downfall as a recession set in and farm revenues dropped dramatically possibly to be replaced by those from industry and finance, a story all too familiar today. He shows how boundaries between garden and park were blurred with ornamental planting expanding out into the wider landscape, often inhabiting field boundaries, and surviving in remnants in field hedges even today. All these factors are taken into account and expand the story and our under-

standing of how and why these perhaps intimidating landscapes are important parts of our history and continue to effect the way we live and the land is used today.

The wealth of resources consulted, be it maps manuscripts, estate agents descriptions travellers accounts, diaries is truly staggering and Hertfordshire Gardens Trust deserves our congratulations on seeing this project through. The quality of the production is very good, and sits well on the shelf with other such books being produced by other Gardens Trusts. As an inspiration to us in Bucks, it shows how the story can be pulled together connections made. We have a similar wealth of material in the county just waiting to be looked into. Do try to get a copy of this book and perhaps it will lead to us producing one of our own in the not too distant future.

RESEARCH GROUP

It is good to know that Stephanie Lawrence has re-launched the Research group. This is a potentially very exciting project. There is a wealth of information on gardens in various archives in the county and elsewhere which should allow a fuller picture of the history of gardening in the county to be built up. There are various worthwhile projects to be undertaken. In due course we hope to expand into on the spot recording, as access permits. So if you have a favourite place that you would like to know more about then please get in touch. We have the county's list of garden sites some 500 but I am sure there are more waiting to be discovered out there.

Taking as an example the many books that are beginning to flow from the longer established Gardens Trusts, we have a definite need for something similar in this county, and we can only produce something similar having done the research. In the meantime it is our intention to publish the results of research as articles in the Bucks Gardener.

Eric Throssell's fine work has come to fruition in the exhibition at Aylesbury museum of which details elsewhere. It was a great joy for me earlier this month to see both the probable Bridgeman map/survey of Shardeloes and Humphry Repton's 'Red Book' works that will be going into an expanded display at Amersham Museum opening later in the year.

If you would be interested in joining in this project please contact Stephanie Lawrence on 01908 562 182, but not until May, please.

SLIDES APPEAL

We are increasingly being asked to give slide talks on the Parks and Gardens of Bucks. We have managed to put together a collection of slides to complement these talks, but are very interested in building this up. In the course of this summer it would be marvellous if you could keep us in mind.

Richard Bisgrove, who wrote the Batsford guide to The Gardens of Britain; 3, Berks, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Beds and Herts, 1978, has offered us the slides he took then, so we have a collection to build on. If you have suitable offerings both old and new we would love to have as broad a selection as possible. Make sure you label them with the date they were taken and the location, or name, of the garden. If you have older slides, but wish to keep them, it should be possible to have copies made of any suitable slide. We are looking for pictures of gardens old and new, and if you have comments to make on them, please feel free to attach them in suitable form.

Please contact the honorary secretary John Chapman at the address below.

LIBRARY

We are beginning to build up a library of books and journals on the Parks and Gardens of Bucks and related matters. If you have anything suitable that you would be able to let us have, again please contact John Chapman. We have already been given a run of *Garden History*, the journal of the Garden History Society.

Perhaps one of the most valuable sources of information even if it is not entirely reliable is newspaper or magazine cuttings. If you have such a collection, which you would be willing to pass onto us, again please let us know.

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