

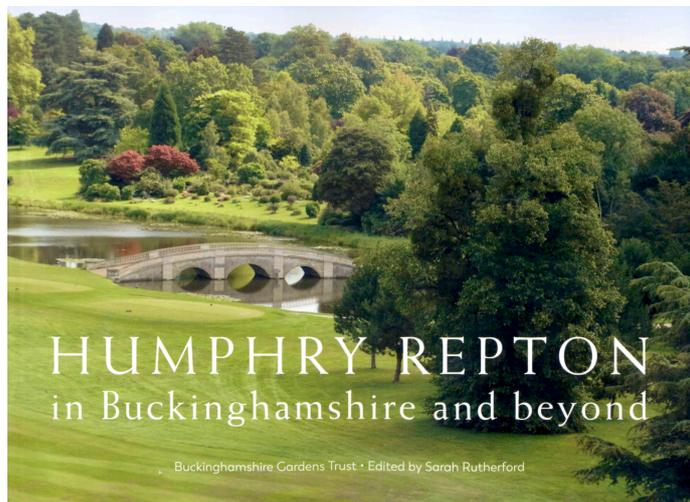
The Bucks Gardener

Issue 35

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Autumn 2018

From the Chair



Cover image by Mary Buckle

Welcome to our Autumn 2018 newsletter.

It is hard to believe that summer has whizzed by already. We celebrated in August the launch of our first book: *Humphry Repton in Buckinghamshire and Beyond* at the Repton conference, Ashridge House. We hope that you already have your copy (£20 + £3 postage, from Rosemary Jury).



The Repton bicentenary has produced publications and conferences culminating with the **Repton Discoveries Symposium** at the Garden Museum, Lambeth, on the 5 November at which members will be attending and lecturing.

As part of the excellent summer programme Rosemary continued the Repton theme with well attended summer visits to Moggerhanger Park, Ashridge Gardens, Woburn Abbey and in November we have a lecture by **Edward Copisarow** on *The History of Shardeloes*. We hope that you will be able to attend the autumn and spring programme of talks. We are always delighted to welcome guests and new members.

Wotton House and its 'Capability' Brown landscape was the venue for the August AGM, by kind permission of our patron, David Gladstone CMG. The meeting was completed in record time and we took advantage of the wonderful weather, eating our picnics whilst surveying the views. This was followed by a walk around the park conducted by Michael Harrison the GardenManager and guru.

We are delighted that The Roland Callingham Foundation (Bekonscot Model Village) has awarded a £1000 grant to support the Research and Recording work which continues apace, including a dossier on Bekonscot itself. If you know of any trusts that award grants to similar projects or if you are interested in making a financial contribution, please get in touch.

Calling All National Trust Members

At the recent AGM of our umbrella group, The Gardens Trust, we were alerted to the possibility of The Gardens Trust not being represented on the board of The National Trust by Dr James Bartos, the Chair of The Garden Trust. In its review of nominating bodies to their Council, the National Trust has advised that the Gardens Trust will appear on the ballot paper but will not be a 'recommended' organisation to remain on the Council. If the Gardens Trust is not re-elected the Gardens Trust, as the Government's Statutory Consultee, will no longer have a voice within the National Trust regarding over its holding of 250 historic landscapes.

The National Trust's AGM will be held on Saturday 20 October 2018 in Swindon. Details have now been sent to all NT members and are available on the website and you can vote on-line (NT membership number required). The deadline is 11.59pm on Friday 12 October 2018. Do consider voting FOR the Gardens Trust to continue to have a representative on Council. We believe it is important to be represented.

*Dr Sarah Rutherford
Chair of BucksGT*



Photo by John Lovelock

BucksGT members at the 'Turkey Kiosk', Wotton

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Planning co-ordinator consultations

At the end of my first year in post, I can say that it has been both fascinating and challenging! Every week, a list of planning applications is collated by the excellent team at The Gardens Trust. In the last year, we have reviewed 18 applications and submitted objections to six and either made no objection or offered comments on the remainder. Of the applications we objected to two have been refused planning consent (the same site), two have been withdrawn with one of these keen to work with us to find a solution, one was approved (which we expected - Stowe) and one is not yet decided (large planning development near Stone).

Other areas where BucksGT is being involved is RAF Halton and we will be meeting with the landscape design team later this year. Sarah and I have also submitted comments to Historic England's review of its 'Conservation Principles' document and to adding Wavendon House to the *Register of Parks and Garden*.

The Gardens Trust continues to update County Planning Coordinators. We attended a refresher course on the role of garden trusts in planning and a very thought-provoking day about the risk to our public parks and gardens. Both were superb and provided a great opportunity to get to know the team at The Gardens Trust and representatives from other county gardens trust.

Joanne Mirzoeff

The continuing return of statues to Stowe

Very few of the original statues that were at Stowe survived the two 1920's sales. Since 2015 the early years of restoration has been accelerated by the National Trust with the five year Landscape Programme starting with 54 tasks to reinstate many of the temples and monuments that 'dressed' the gardens.



Photo by John Walton

The Grecian Valley, in the Western Garden has seen the 'The Circle of the Dancing Faun' completed in 2016. There is a new seven sided altar surmounted by

a new Faun in the centre. Three new colourful figures dance to the Faun's music, joining the original shepherd and shepherdess donated by the late Barbara Edmondson (Bucks GT member), complete the circle.

The heroic theme of the Grecian valley has been partially re-created by the addition of three of the six or seven statues that graced the valley. These are 'Samson and the Philistine', 'The Gladiator' and 'Hercules and Antaeus'. This year 'The Wrestlers' has been placed in the restored 'Labyrinth', on the other side of the garden.

The placement of the muse 'Thalia' which had stood near the 'Fane of Pastoral Poetry' is where I became involved. There was no definite evidence of the size of the statue or its plinth and I was asked to make a plywood cut out of her which could be placed on what was thought to be the right location to assess the scale and impact upon the landscape. Unfortunately, strong winds blew her down twice but her purpose had been served.



Photo by John Walton

Making this mock-up was my downfall as I was then asked to make five of the ten statues that would comprise 'Apollo and the Nine Muses'. This took most of the winter. These are now in place at the Doric Arch with five white posts to show all ten positions.

The whereabouts of the original Muses is not known so other statues are going to be used as models. During recent restoration of the Grenville Column, it was decided to make a mould of Calliope the muse on the top. The main body shape could be used with different arm positions and items to create nine different muses.

As part of the five year programme work is progressing to make a copy of the First Marquess' Urn which originally stood near Thanet Walk east of Shell Bridge. The original is now in Walpole Court. Finally, Stowe House Preservation Trust have restored four statues to the South Front of the house including Cybele & Juno in the niches on the back wall.

John Walton

BucksGT Member & Stowe Volunteer

Compiling the Record: Post-1945 designed landscapes listing project

It is now over a year since the announcement at The Garden Museum of an exciting new national project 'Compiling the Record' at a joint conference of The Gardens Trust and Historic England. The conference highlighted the vulnerability and lack of knowledge and understanding of 'post-1945 designed landscapes'. County Gardens Trusts and other interested parties were asked to submit nominations via the Gardens Trust website.

A total of 112 nominations were submitted with six in historic Buckinghamshire: Central Milton Keynes (Civic Spaces), Campbell Park MK (Parks), Chilterns Crematorium (Cemeteries), Bledlow Manor & The Lyde (Garden), High & Over, Amersham (Garden), and Bekonscot Model Village (Garden). All of our sites have dossiers researched by the BGT research and recording volunteers (see BGT website). Bekonscot will be added shortly.

The Gardens Trust commissioned Karen Fitzsimon (Osmunda projects) to carry out further research and prepare information to enable Historic England's panel to make a decision on a site's eligibility for designation and inclusion on the National Heritage List for England. The panel's decision will, hopefully, be made public by the end of the year. So let's keep everything crossed that at least one Bucks site or more will make it onto the Register.

Claire De Carle

Moggerhanger Park: a visit report

Moggerhanger Park first came to my attention in the planning press in the mid 1990s when it was something of a restoration cause célèbre: could this important Soane house be saved? The house has been saved and another delight, a completed Repton landscape. After lunch in the Park's own pretty cafeteria (an isolation ward when the house was a hospital and sanatorium 1919–87) we joined Tim Kirk, the head gardener, for a tour of the grounds.

Godfrey Thornton as an up-and-coming merchant and banker had bought Moggerhanger in 1784 and became a director of the Bank of England. Thornton had met Soane in 1789 as a member of the Bank's building committee and engaged him in 1790 to suggest improvements to the house. In 1791 Thornton was appointed deputy-governor of the Bank of England. The estate would have now appeared insufficient as a country estate compatible with his position in society, with a modest house, open fields to the north, a couple of mature trees and a small area of

grazing. The grandest feature seemed to be a small avenue leading from the village past Park Farm. Soane commenced work early in 1792 and added short wings to one side and to the rear, turning the house to face east with a new entrance between matching gables.

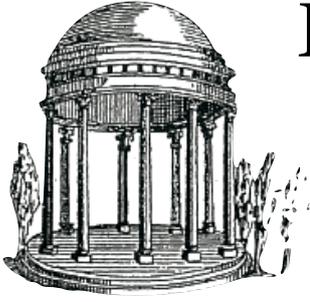


Photo by Geoff Huntingford

Repton had made an impression on Thornton, with his work at the nearby Hazells estate for Francis Pym. Repton visited Moggerhanger in May 1792 and presented his 'Red Book' containing his suggestions the following August. One of Repton's Red Book drawings interestingly captured the appearance of the Soane's revised east elevation. Repton was rather perplexed in coming forward with recommendations, finding the house 'too small and humble for a country-seat' deciding to regard it as 'an occasional sporting-seat' and presciently ensuring that his suggestions did not interfere with any future additions to the house. Indeed Soane was called in by Godfrey's eldest son Stephen in 1806: his second campaign at Moggerhanger produced a new lodge and eventually the remarkable enlarged house that we have today, with the entrance turned once more to face north.

Tim explained to us the effects of the alterations to the entrance arrangements and described the broad sweep of Repton's design, using the plan from the Red Book. He took us past the extensive walled garden into a belt of trees intended by Repton to screen the kitchen garden area from his curving entrance drive bypassing Park Farm, screened 'but still a desirable neighbour'. We walked on through a pre-existing wood supplied by Repton with routes and locations with attractive views outwards (the first of which now includes the airship hangers at Cardington). We emerged at the kitchen garden area where Tim is trying to re-establish an orchard where noted by Repton. He took us into the poultry yard where flowers are cultivated for sale or use. A rare soil steriliser survives against a wall in this yard. Next door we viewed the walled garden where volunteers were busy in the borders – the centre is kept as grass for functions. Tim told us





Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

*To record and conserve the gardens and parks of historic Buckinghamshire
To aid in the creation and restoration of gardens, parks and green spaces
within the historic county*

Patron: David Gladstone, Wotton House, Wotton Underwood, Buckinghamshire

that the walled garden used to be even more impressive. A huge storm in the 18th century had laid waste to the glasshouses, after which the surrounding walls were reduced in height.

The group proceeded to the lawns on the south side of the house with its curved ha-ha and specimen trees. Repton advised Mr Thornton to acquire the land beyond this to control the views: the wisdom of this is now clear with a huge spoil heap (from the digging of a water feature for fishing, apparently abetted by the Council) in plain view.

After tea, with a wonderful selection of cakes, a tour of the house with a volunteer guide revealed much that reminded me of Wotton Underwood: particularly Soane's brilliant creation of exciting internal spaces, the brown graining in the entrance hall (apparently originally carried out by the same man as at Wotton) and the long straight corridor to the side articulated by occasional round arches.

Geoff Huntingford

Review: *Humphry Repton in Buckinghamshire and beyond*, edited by Sarah Rutherford



Sarah Rutherford and the Buckinghamshire Garden Trust are to be congratulated on this anniversary publication which does indeed go beyond the local remit of cataloguing Humphry Repton's work in the county to a broader consideration of his contribution to garden history.

The value of this publication is, therefore, several-fold. The gazetteer section summarising the evidence of Repton's 'presence' in Bucks on a site-by-site basis will undoubtedly serve as a key reference point for researchers in the future. In this, the standard format by which information has been collated, including assessment of what of Repton's advice was implemented as well as surveys of what survives, might serve as an exemplar to other county specific surveys.

This technical information is balanced by several essays which situate Repton in his political, social and cultural environment. Not only do we hear about Humphry Repton the man, but also his methods of working and, less well known, his influence on the German aristocrat, Hermann, Prince Pückler-

Muskau. As becomes clear, Repton positioned himself as a designer of gardens rather than a builder of them. Thus, whilst he avoided the snags of protracted contractual obligations he had also to maintain a higher rate of commissions – these coming as much from an expanded middle-class clientele as from the landed gentry. Repton's business model involved a light touch; less wholesale (and costly) redevelopment of landscapes and more focus on picturesque additions and the sculpting of mature plantings. Repton's USP, his 'Red Book' format served this model well – his site proposals were morocco bound for posterity if not always for immediate implementation.

All this background makes for lively reading. There are some super photographs of Repton's landscapes as they exist now – for example Shardeloes. These have a sense of Repton's own hand-drawn visualisations which he concealed under flaps in his Red Books. The allusion to practice is similarly reflected in the publication's landscape presentation which appears as a deft homage to the man's signature format. In conclusion, the analysis of Repton is judicious as it is entertaining. Whilst acknowledging his limitations (he was not a horticulturist, nor was he strong on plant knowledge), Repton is appropriately celebrated for his local contribution to sites such as Bulstrode, Stoke Park and Ashridge. More broadly Repton may be said to have led the trend for the ornamental treatment of space around the house and the use of planting to soften the transition to the rest of the landscape; and this, it might be argued, is his legacy to garden design.

*Louise Moss,
Independent Art Historian, Manchester*

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