

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

SPRING
NEWSLETTER 2017
AND
ANNUAL REPORT



From the President:

This is a big year for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust on many fronts. No sooner have we finished celebrating Capability Brown than we launch straight into learning about Repton!

There is a particularly interesting programme of visits and debates, not least a day at Hatfield discussing conservation with regard to housing projects. There is a visit to Panshanger to view the landscape which has been under such threat recently. One of the most exciting restoration developments in Hertfordshire is that at the Jellicoe Gardens in Hemel Hempstead and a visit has been arranged there. These three are just some of the outings which the HGT so ably organises.

The July AGM will mark a momentous moment for us all as we say goodbye to one Chairman and welcome to the next.

If anyone would enjoy putting something back into the Trust, whatever your expertise, please do contact our current chairman as she is looking for new members of the executive committee.

As you can see there is much activity in the HGT which continues to be a lively and constructive organisation.

Dione Vanlam.

Chairman's Report—Bella Stuart-Smith

The combination of CB300 and the 25th Anniversary year of HGT was the perfect vehicle to look back and remind us what had been achieved over time and to see how members with all their varied interests have driven this forward. The Reports in this newsletter give us a picture of what has been achieved in a year, and that too is exciting together with the events we have planned.

The plight of Panshanger Park was highlighted in the Autumn newsletter and it is great news to hear that the gravel extraction planned by Tarmac, which would have irretrievably damaged the Repton landscape, is no longer taking place. We hope Panshanger is now safe. Both HGT research and conservation, namely Anne and Kate, have been heavily involved and it is a tribute to their concern, hard work and doggedness that there has been a change of policy. Other organisations have also been involved and it is this collaboration, along with strategic interventions from all sorts of people that I am confident has made a difference. There is a visit to Panshanger in May and if you haven't already had a chance to visit please do go.

Collaboration is key, and it is with this in mind that we have organised the day in April at the Riding School at Hatfield. This day is topical and I know will be stimulating, and I hope that attendees will come away with a clearer view of how we should respond to the pressure for new housing in the most effective way that will protect our historic parks and gardens.

HGT is good at collaboration. Work is well underway on the Repton book, which has a good team behind it, and we can look forward to its publication and associated events in 2018. All our research work feeds into conservation and provides an invaluable resource. We are lucky to have so many active researchers.



*One of the illustrations from Humphry
Repton's Red Book for Ashridge*

*Reproduced by courtesy of
Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
(850834)*



Sonya and her team have organised a number of garden visits which are as popular as ever. We have an AGM planned at another lovely garden thanks to Sarah Bott.

Garratts Farm— Hosting the AGM for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust on 13th July

We have all enjoyed the various events and fundraisers that Annie has put together. It was rather wonderful to have a painter's perspective to round up our CB300 events, talking to a full house at Beechwood.

All this happens, thanks to the executive committee, another great collaboration and for a long time a very stable one. There are changes afoot, so I would be very grateful if you could consider whether you have a little time to spare. In particular, we are looking for people to help with the newsletter, which of course could be collaborative. Roger has done an amazing job and by producing such a great template the technology really is manageable. Fiona, our unsung hero and treasurer, is stepping down at the AGM. She has done a brilliant job and we are very grateful. She has simplified the accounts and we are financially very secure, so what a good position to be in. George Mitcheson is also resigning as a trustee and his invaluable advice and wisdom has sustained the Trust for 18 years which is a remarkable contribution. Whatever your skills or areas of interest we would love to hear from you. So please do give this some serious consideration before the next AGM.

This will be my last report as Chairman and I can hand over with great confidence to Roger who is going to take up the reins. He is hugely capable, has done a wonderful job with the newsletter amongst many other things, and is a very supportive vice chairman. I hope he really enjoys his term running HGT. Thank you to all who support the Trust so generously and make it the productive organisation it is.

Annual Schools Report—Bella Stuart-Smith

This year has been spent following up schools who received a Mrs Wheelbarrow Grant. Six schools were awarded a grant, five of these have been taken up and these have all now used their funds to improve or build a garden. The year started with workshops at Layston First School in Buntingford. Here the school had also received matched funding from the Groundwork Trust and had built a new allotment with raised beds, protected from marauding rabbits with a very sensible and robust fence. We have helped finance a shed and water butts. We had a great morning running workshops both inside and in the allotment; seeds were sown, in both newspaper pots and in the ground. We managed a large group of children, and the Year 4 teacher reported that the most useful element was bringing the allotment "to life".

Another sunny morning was spent at St Joseph's School in South Oxhey. Here the allotment has been reclaimed from very overgrown laurels, rebuilt and brought back to life. I had a good session in the classroom and left the teaching staff to continue making newspaper pots and planting seeds, while I was outside preparing the allotment, sowing and transplanting seedlings I had done earlier. The groundsman and staff were pleased with the result. The children were thrilled with the digging, and sowing. I have also taken a staff meeting at St Catherine's Hoddesdon, which was a really useful way of getting them to think about how best to use the new garden and how they can introduce gardening themes across the curriculum.



Tending the allotments at Layston First School, Buntingford, Hertfordshire

The final outing will be to The Grove Academy in Watford in March where we will manage 90 children inside and in a small area where they have built raised beds. As we did this at Layston I know it works, and it will be a fruitful way to make sure they get seeds sown, both in the ground and to grow on. I still have a number of loyal 'Mrs Wheelbarrows' who make this possible and I am very grateful to them.

The 'Mrs Wheelbarrow Grant' is a 2 year process. Whether we can run it again in 2017 remains to be seen; it is certainly filling a gap, providing expertise and incentive, and supporting and encouraging staff and children to enjoy the simple pleasure of growing and learning how to use their new resource. Please be in touch if you would like to be involved in any way.

Annual Research Report—Anne Rowe

2016 saw us celebrating a quarter of a century of research into the historic parks and gardens of Hertfordshire with a brief presentation of our achievements so far during the Research Group's Seminar and Soup day at Woolmer Green Village Hall on 2 March. The main topic for this year's Seminar was the map of Hertfordshire published by Andrew Dury and John Andrews in 1766. This is the earliest map of the county to show in detail its landscape of farmland, woods and commons, liberally dotted with towns, villages and country house estates and provides a wonderful record of many of our historic parks and gardens in the mid-18th century. But the map also contains some pitfalls for the unwary and Research Director Professor Tom Williamson started the day with an introduction to the map and an assessment of both its strengths and weaknesses. Three members of the Research Group then gave excellent short presentations on their own analysis of the Dury and Andrews map and how it compared with other evidence on the sites they had been researching:

- John Sloan talked about **High Canons** near Shenley
- Deborah Spring about **Hunsdon House**, and
- Alison Moller about **Bonningtons** near Stanstead Abbots

The morning ended with some very lively and entertaining discussions on the interpretation of the map evidence for these sites but, as ever, the highlight of the event was the sumptuous lunch provided by everyone attending. Satisfactorily replete, we then rounded off the day with a discussion about what the Research Group should do next. There were two main proposals:

- to start a new project examining the historic parks and gardens in the North Herts District Council area
- to write a book about the work of Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire for publication in 2018 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of his death

A preliminary list of about 25 sites worthy of research in North Herts has since been compiled and this includes a number of town gardens which are shown in great detail on large scale Ordnance Survey maps of Hitchin in the mid-19th century. Most members of the Group are currently busy working on sites in other parts of the county, but Hitchin historian Bridget Howlett (author of *Hitchin Priory Park: a landscape history*) has volunteered to help with the new project and has already started researching a house called **The Hermitage** in Hitchin.

An enthusiastic team of about a dozen volunteers also stepped forward to help with the compilation of a book about **Humphry Repton**, which you can read about in more detail elsewhere in this Newsletter (*page 19*). The team got together for a preliminary meeting in

May to discuss the feasibility and practicalities of the project – and then met again in December, together with the University of Hertfordshire Press who will be publishing the book, to discuss progress and agree some deadlines.

Four more completed research reports were deposited at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) at County Hall in July and these can be found in the collection of HGT site reports in the Garden History section of the bookshelves of the Local Studies Library:

Bonningtons, Stanstead Abbots by Alison Moller

Brookmans Park, North Mymms by Alison Robinson

Presdales, Ware by Tina Rowland

Skimpans, North Mymms by Rachel James & Anne Rowe

Site visits

In August I accompanied Fran Wallis on a site visit to **Lower Woodside**, home of HGT Vice-President Richard Walduck near Hatfield. We were treated to a guided tour of the gardens and surrounding landscape by Mr Walduck and learnt a great deal about the recent history of the site which features much ornamental stonework salvaged from a demolished London hotel.

John Sloan and I also made a return visit to **High Canons** in August in the company of Tom Williamson. We were fortunate that the dry summer had revealed some parchmarks which provided new evidence and helped with the interpretation of the history of this interesting site.



The Pulhamite grotto at Brickendonbury – perhaps part of the 1920s work.

At the beginning of October I accompanied Sue Friend on her initial visit to **Brickendonbury**, where we were warmly welcomed by the librarian of The Tun Abdul Razak Research Centre, Kristina Lawson. Kristina showed us their collection of old photographs of the gardens as they were a century ago and also some very interesting documents, including correspondence with the Pulham company about a second phase of artificial rockwork for the gardens in the 1920s. We were allowed to explore the grounds and we measured the girths of the largest trees – almost all Horse Chestnuts – examined water features surviving from the 18th century (or earlier) and took photographs of the splendid Pulhamite rockwork. Sue has since made a return visit to take a closer look at some of the documents.

An average of nine volunteer researchers attended the regular meetings organised at HALS, of which five were held this year. These meetings enable all of those who attend to benefit from the discoveries and experiences of other members of the Research Group and at most meetings we are joined by honorary HGT member and retired County Archivist Sue Flood who very kindly puts her extensive knowledge of the archives at our disposal. At our meeting in October we were also joined by two members of the Bedfordshire Gardens Trust who are in the process of building up their own research team and hoped to learn from our experiences.

If you would like to join us – and perhaps take on researching a site in north Hertfordshire – do get in touch with me via the Research page on the HGT website. You will be welcomed by a very friendly and enthusiastic bunch of people and will get as much support you want as you learn how to investigate Hertfordshire's unique heritage of parks and gardens.

From the Hon. Membership Secretary

To reduce our administrative costs, we would make a plea to those who pay their annual subscription by cheque to start paying by Standing Order. We would be most grateful if you would fill out the Standing Order form enclosed with this Newsletter and forward it to your bank. Subscriptions are £30 for joint membership and £20 for an individual.

The due date for subscriptions is the 1st of April, 2017. If paying by cheque (payable to 'Hertfordshire Gardens Trust'), please send your cheque to the Membership Secretary, Mead House, Bromley Lane, Wellpond Green, Ware, SG11 1NW. Subscriptions for members who joined after December 2016 are next due on the 1st April 2018.

Please send any new email addresses to membership@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Welcome to New Members, 2016/2017

Viscountess Boringdon
Mr Christopher Carnaghan
Lord Charles Cecil
Ms Shirley Christison
Mrs Linda Dunn
Ms Geraldine Fraser
Ms Heather Grose

Mrs Lynne Hall
Mrs Gill Hawkswell
Mrs Sue Hignett
Mr Robert Jones
Mrs N Jane Reid
Mr and Mrs Peter Sanford

Annual Conservation Report –Kate Harwood

This year, as well as vetting the many planning applications submitted to our nine Local Planning Authorities (District and Borough Councils), there has been a lot of work done on the Draft Local Plans which are coming forward. The many documents associated with these need to be studied for the protection the policies offer our historic parks and gardens and the site allocations for housing and other development. With some we have taken a more active role. There have been meetings with WellHat and East Herts Council; we have prepared a Local List of historic gardens for the WellHat Plan and we have been involved in the Central Herts Green Corridor Group which has been looking at a range of issues and constraints in the Green Belt across central Hertfordshire. More on this can be found at the Study Day at Hatfield House on April 22nd. We have also been active in advising Hertingfordbury Parish Council and Sele Ward, Hertford on their emerging Neighbourhood Plans and we have been active in the Friends Group looking after particular sites.

Panshanger has taken up much time this year with planning issues over the importation of inert material to fill the voids on the Capability Brown site at Cole Green. Planning permission has been granted subject to conditions contained in a Section 106. Much discussion and consideration has been given to these and many meetings with HCC and Tarmac. It is proposed that the restoration of the heritage of the Cole Green site is overseen by a specially constituted Heritage Committee or group and HGT has been asked to sit on this. A preliminary meeting has already been held.

Disaster loomed when we were told that the south bank of Repton's Lower Broadwater was to be breached as part of a gravel extraction project. In response, a remarkable campaign at grass roots level involving HGT and the Friends of Panshanger Park, as well as many local people, led to an approach to the national management at Tarmac and to Historic England (HE) by The Gardens Trust (TGT). A meeting of HE, HGT and Tarmac was convened, where it was announced that the banks would *not* after all be breached; in addition, consideration would be given to filling the lagoon to the south of the Lower Broadwater so that Repton's design could be properly appreciated again. A decisive document proved to be the notebook by the steward of the time, Thomas Pallett, which Anne Rowe had found in HALS. This provided evidence for Repton overseeing the construction of the Broadwater.

Another site where HGT intervention has produced positive results is Shendish Manor. A plan for building in the grounds – originally laid out by Edward Kemp (of Birkenhead Park and Central Park New York fame) - was opposed by HGT for the damage it did to the landscape. Visits by HGT, accompanied by Tom Williamson and John Catt, led to a better appreciation of the site by the owners. A much better plan, more sympathetically sited and designed, plus proposals for restoration of the garden, has been received by Dacorum and we have not raised any objections.

Hemel Water Gardens has had an exciting year with the dredging of the water, the clearing of the ground and replanting, and the craning in of the new bridges. Much new evidence of the original construction has been uncovered. The Friends will be having a joint day with HGT on the 9th June which will celebrate the opening and detail how the Friends have been involved.

HCC have started the long-overdue process of looking at the transport infrastructure in Hertfordshire and a Transport 2050 consultation was held. We sent in our comments but feel that, given the amount of new development proposed, the proposals are woefully inadequate.

Our greatest challenge over the next few years will be the enormous number of houses decided for our county by Whitehall dictat. In the spring of 2016 CPRE reported government plans for 41,000 houses in large (over 500 units) developments alone – with many smaller sites added on. Since then the government has announced its new ‘Garden Villages and Towns’. These are nothing of the kind – the Garden City principles set out by Howard in *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* are conspicuous by their absence. The worst example is the Gilston development, formerly known as Harlow North, where 10,000 houses are going to fill an area beloved by the Tudors – 9 parks alone there, including Briggens and Stanstead Bury. Another ‘garden suburb’ proposed is Birchall, between Welwyn Garden City and Panshanger, which would destroy a crucial piece of Green Belt, a very important ecological corridor and the setting for a large number of historic parks, including Hatfield (Grade I) and Panshanger (II*). This has been put forward locally and is included in the Draft Local Plans of East Herts and Welwyn/Hatfield. We have objected vigorously and in alliance with many other organisations.

Other towns are being swamped with development at the edges, including Tring, Hemel and Buntingford. We will continue to press for proper constraints analysis for all the sites, with particular regard to our historic parks and gardens and their settings.

Capability Brown and Humphry Repton

Brown is dead – long live Repton. The Brown tercentenary celebration produced some remarkable outcomes – not least in Hertfordshire where the exhibitions, walks leaflets, study day and talks have all led to a greater knowledge and appreciation of the Brownian style. Nationally the campaign is winding up and a group of us are thinking about what we can learn going forward to the Repton bicentenary in 2018. As usual HGT is ahead of the field with our Repton Book, but nationally we are looking at setting up some sort of information exchange to help researchers across the country.

AGM – 2017

This year's AGM will be held on Thursday, 13th July, 2017 at 'Garratt's Farm', Benington, by kind permission of Mrs Sarah Bott. The garden will be open from 6.00pm when a glass of wine will be served. The meeting will start at 7.00pm and members are invited to stay for picnics—please bring tables and chairs (and umbrellas if wet). A copy of the examined accounts will be published on the HGT website from the end of June, 2017.

Garratt's farm has a garden of about three quarters of an acre in open countryside created from nothing over the last 10 years—with weeding, bending and watering avoidance the priority. Shrubs, small ornamental trees, box and yew are planted in groups to lead the eye to specific points or to fill the space which is surrounded by a field hedge.



Location: Garratts Farm, Town Lane, Benington SG2 7LA

(Parking at Finches Farm in Town Lane, at the same post code. Park in the farmyard and walk 200 m down to Garratts Farm, following the HGT signs)

Garratts Farm, Benington

Agenda

1. *Welcome*
2. *Apologies for absence*
3. *To approve the Minutes of the AGM of 14th July , 2016*
4. *Matters arising from the Minutes*
5. *The Chairman's Report*
6. *The Hon. Treasurer's Report and approval of the Annual Accounts for 2016/2017*
7. *Election of Chairman and members of the Executive Committee*
8. *Any Other Business*

Events and Outings in 2017

Places are still available for the following events, for which full details were given in the Autumn Newsletter.

Please use the accompanying application form to add your name to the lists.

‘Not in my Back Yard?’

How a collaborative approach to development might be the most effective form of protection for Hertfordshire’s rural and urban environment

The Riding School, Hatfield House, AL95HX. Saturday, April 22nd, 2017. 10am—4.00pm

Programme

Kate Harwood (HGT): *‘The Threats to Hertfordshire’s Historic Parks and Gardens’*

Anthony Downs (Gascoyne Cecil Estates): *‘The Green Corridor Project’ - a collaborative model for sensitive planning and development in Hertfordshire*

Gary O’Leary (Chairman, Hertingfordbury Parish Council): *‘Neighbourhood Plans’ - sensitive planning to protect the environment*

After lunch at the Riding School, Head Gardener **Alastair Gunne** will lead a guided tour of the East and West Gardens of the House— by kind permission of Lady Salisbury

The cost of the day will be £45 per delegate

The following two events provide case studies of collaborative schemes for the conservation and protection of Hertfordshire’s historic landscape. The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust plays a significant role in bringing together local authorities and concerned members of the public in the form of ‘Friends’ organisations, working together to protect historic landscapes from degeneration.

Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017

A day with the Friends of Panshanger Park at Mayflower Place, Hertingfordbury, SG142LG

(10.30am—3.30pm, including a light lunch)

This historic Repton landscape has been subjected to 50 years of commercial gravel extraction. The recent history of the site will be discussed, together with the significance of the formation and work of the Friends.

(Please bring suitable footwear and outdoor clothing for a guided walk through the Park)

The cost of the day will be £25 per delegate

Friday, June 9th, 2017

An afternoon with the Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens at Hemel Hempstead (2.00pm—4.00pm)

A short history of the project to restore the Jellicoe Water Gardens and a presentation by the Friends will be followed by a tour of the newly restored and refurbished Water Gardens.

The cost of the day will be £10 per delegate.

Events and Outings in 2017

Garden Visit to Essex:

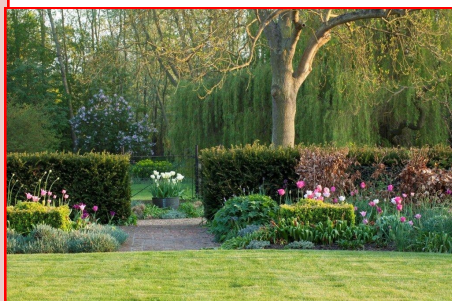
Wednesday 3rd May

£49

[Coach departs Stanborough Green, Welwyn Garden City at 9.15a.m.]

'Ulting Wick', Maldon, Essex: *Coffee and biscuits will be taken* before we view this beautiful, spring garden—especially significant for tulip lovers. The colourful arrangements stand out from a backdrop of listed, black barns. There are 8 acres of innovative plantings, plus a pond overhung with golden weeping willow trees. 'The English Garden' magazine listed 'Ulting Wick' as one of the 'Top Ten' spring gardens to visit.

'Kelvedon Hall': *We head on to Kelvedon for a light lunch at 'The George and Dragon',* before visiting 'Kelvedon Hall' with its 6 acre garden surrounding an attractive 18C farmhouse. This is another lovely spring garden comprising formal and informal areas: pleached hornbeam hedges, topiary, with walled gardens, ponds and sculpture. *We will enjoy tea and cake* before setting off on our return.



'Ulting Wick'



'Kelvedon Hall'

Garden Visit to Rutland and Leicestershire:

Tuesday 27th June

£49

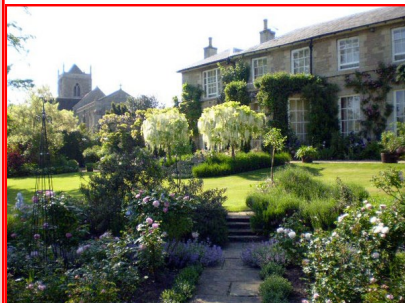
[Coach departs Stanborough Green, Welwyn Garden City at 9.00a.m.]

'The Old Vicarage', Whissendine: We head north to Whissendine, Rutland, where *after coffee and biscuits in the historic church* we visit The Old Vicarage, where Dr. Sarah Furness has filled her garden with unusual plants, shrubs and topiary. We will see the herbaceous borders, the rose-covered pergola, the hidden white walk, the terrace designed by Bunny Guinness with striking contemporary knots, the paved fountain garden and the Gothick orangery, housing tender scented plants. Recommended in the Good Gardens Guide.

Reservations for places on the garden visits should be made to Mrs Sonja Fillingham using the 'flyer' which accompanies this Newsletter.

Events and Outings in 2017

Westbrooke House, Market Harborough: Our second visit is to Market Harborough, *where after a buffet lunch at a nearby restaurant we go to Westbrooke House, Little Bowden, where Mrs. Joanne Drew has recreated a Victorian walled flower garden and a walled vegetable garden, opened for the NGS for the first time last year and featured in the Daily Telegraph. The 6 acres of grounds include a pond area, woodland paths, a wild flower garden and an avenue of mature limes and wellingtonias. We will take tea and cakes on the terrace before returning home.*



*'The Old
Vicarage'*



*'Westbrooke
House'*

7 Glorious East Anglian Gardens and 2 Nights by the Sea!

Tuesday, July 4th—Thursday, July 6th 2 Nights at the Blakeney Hotel, Norfolk
Cost per person £385

Sonja has used her wide experience to plan an ambitious programme of garden visits, based on two nights at the splendidly situated 4* Blakeney Hotel at Blakeney on the north Norfolk coast. The cost of a coach and driver would be prohibitive, and Sonja suggests using our own cars, doubling up where appropriate. The cost per person includes garden entry, and all food and accommodation throughout the stay. Bar bills and gratuities are not included in the price.

Numbers will be limited and those who register an interest will be given priority at booking. It would be much appreciated if HGT members who are interested would ring Sonja on 01582 831899 as soon as possible, and complete the accompanying 'flyer'. She will be able to answer your questions and provide further details of the itinerary and method of payment.

Reservations for places on all the garden visits should be made to Mrs Sonja Fillingham using the 'flyer' which accompanies this Newsletter.

Walks around Utopias

This autumn HGT are planning a series of walks around the local utopian cities and suburbs of the early 20th century.

- The first Garden City laid out according to Ebenezer Howard's principles was **Letchworth**. This walk will encompass the idea of neighbourhoods, village greens, Unwin's Gateways, co-operative housing, cocoa pubs and the grand centre.
- Ebenezer's second attempt, **Welwyn Garden City**, shows debts to the City Beautiful and the neo-Georgian aesthetic whilst still espousing the idea of Unwin's gateways, tree-lined avenues and plenty of green space.
- The third walk will look at Henrietta Barnett's **Hampstead Garden Suburb** – why it was built, and how it differs from the Garden Cities (start from Golders Green Tube station).

Each of the walks will be led by Kate Harwood and will take about 2 hours. The following article sets these walks in the context of urban planning and design during the past century. Walkers will make their own way to the start of each walk, which will be run (or ambled) if there is sufficient interest. Members who would like to receive further details of each of the walks, including dates and costs, should register their interest with Kate at: hertstalks@gmail.com

Southill Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 9LJ

Monday, 15th May

Self – Drive

£24

This joint visit, organised by Herts and Beds Gardens Trusts, to Southill Park, the Historic England Grade I listed home of the Whitbread family, includes a morning tour of the house, and a guided tour of the HE Grade II listed grounds, formally laid out early in the 18thC and remodelled by Capability Brown in 1777. This is a rare opportunity to see both House and Landscape and their setting and context.*

10.15am	Meet at the Shoot Room, Southill Park, SG18 9LJ
10.30am	House Tour with the archivist, James Collett-White, and the owner, Charles Whitbread
12.30pm	Lunch at one of the local pubs, or bring your own picnic to eat in the Shoot Room
2.30pm	Walk around the Capability Brown park, led by trained guides from BGT and HGT
4.30pm	Refreshments in the Shoot Room

Please contact Kate Harwood on hertstalks@gmail.com if you would like to book for this visit

Utopia to Dystopia: Planning in the 21st Century—Kate Harwood

In 1516, Thomas More penned *Utopia*, a two-part work. Firstly describing a perfect place and secondly about an island called *Utopia* (translated from the Greek as one-place or no-place), Within a century these 2 parts had become conflated and the word Utopian became shorthand for 'an impracticable scheme'

The idea of a green and verdant land ruled by reason and co-operation rather than a system of punishments, with collectivised homes (and children) was not attempted in reality until Robert Owen in 1800 when he took over the textile mills at New Lanark. His ideas were laid out in his *A New View of Society, or, Essays on the Principle of the Formation of the Human Character, and the Applications of the Principle to Practice*, published 1813-16 and dedicated to William Wilberforce. These he put into practice at New Lanark, building good



Letchworth—housing

housing, providing schools (and the first crèche), an institute for working men, dances and lectures on interesting topics, a shop and a system of rewards and encouragements, all within an outstanding landscape. Sadly his pleas to the government to widen this system fell on deaf ears: Lord Liverpool was too busy fighting Bonaparte. But Owen did take his ideas out – to Orbiston near Glasgow in 1825 and New Harmony in Indiana in 1826. However both failed – Owen had spread himself too thinly. Other schemes by philanthropic landowners, such as John Harford at Blaise Hamlet, John Blundell Maple at Childwick Bury and many more were complemented by the model towns of industrialists such as Saltaire, Ackroydon, Port Sunlight, Bournville, New Earswick &c. It was not till Ebenezer Howard formulated his idea in 1898 in *Tomorrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (revised and re-issued in 1902 as *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*) that the idea of a garden city for all – not just for employees or a particular minority- began to become a reality.

Howard's idea was for a self-contained community with zones for houses, work places (offices and factories), homes for the less fortunate (inebriates, the insane, waifs), plenty of open space within the town for forests and farms and good circular and cross-axis communication by rail, canal and road. The whole was to be surrounded by a belt of countryside and when the town was full up it was not to be extended but another town built elsewhere. And so Letchworth came to pass. Housing and road layout were entrusted to Raymond Parker and Barry Unwin who brought revolutionary ideas to street layouts and open spaces and a range of architects like Crickmer and Baillie Scott built houses designed for living in rather than showing off. Howard – the Garden City Geyser according to his friend GB Shaw of Ayot St Lawrence (because he couldn't stop spouting about his ideas) – looked at his creation and thought he could do better. So he built another one just to the east of Welwyn village on land bought from Lord Desborough's Panshanger estate in 1919.



Stevenage— New Town

Both these places with their mix of 'housing association' properties for rent, and privately-owned dwellings in well-designed green streets with local employment were, and are, popular places to live and immensely influential. CB Purdom took the idea and proposed a ring of such Garden Cities round London. Nothing really happened until Abercrombie's Greater London Plan of 1944 set the future towards a Green Belt (not even new in Howard's time: J C Loudon had proposed the idea in *Hints on Breathing Places for the Metropolis, and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed Principles* in 1829) and a ring of New Towns. These New Towns were designed to take those from London where slums were being cleared or where bomb damage, especially round the East End docks, had demolished many homes. Hertfordshire received more than its fair share: Hemel, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Stevenage, not to mention the overspill estates of Oxhey and Borehamwood which were built by the LCC in the later 1940s. Together with the development of Metroland in the south west of the county, this signalled the start of a trend to cover Hertfordshire in houses.

Many of these New Towns were laid out with an eye to communications; dual carriageways, cycle routes, even proposed heliports at Hemel. They also employed leading architects like Lionel Brett and Gordon Patterson and key landscape designers such as Sylvia Crowe and Geoffrey Jellicoe. Each neighbourhood was separated from others in the town by ample green space and neighbourhood centres established. Despite this, the post war push for Modernity and the lack of good quality materials meant that these towns did not have the longevity of the solidly-built Garden Cities. House prices indicate that these New Towns are not as sought-after as the older settlements and they are rapidly losing any garden city self-contained qualities as new estates on the edges push further and further out into the countryside.

However, central government has decided that Hertfordshire is the place to live and has sent out instructions for tens of thousands of new houses – totally ignoring the fact that there is no room and that the congestion and overcrowding of our towns will render it a much-less desirable place. The latest Dystopian initiative is the announcement of 14 new garden villages and towns, including a 10,000 unit extension to the New Town of Harlow, plonked in Hertfordshire's countryside. Together with the new-ish National Planning Policy Framework which promotes 'development' – albeit with the weasel word 'sustainable' this means that our local planning authorities are under enormous pressure to put in these houses. I have been told in the past by one authority that they only had conservation area, Green Belt, or flood plain (or a combination thereof) left for development. Many of our parks and gardens have been infilled and there will be more to come. The settings of these parks – so crucial to their significance - are also at risk from developments crowding in.

One wishes in vain for More's Utopian flight-of-fancy to percolate though to modern life: *though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties.* Until such time we should follow the advice of Voltaire at the end of *Candide* "we must cultivate our garden" for in More's words *Utopians cultivate their gardens with great care, so that they have both vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers in them; and all is so well ordered and so finely kept that I never saw gardens anywhere that were both so fruitful and so beautiful as theirs. And this humour of ordering their gardens so well is not only kept up by the pleasure they find in it, but also by an emulation between the inhabitants of the several streets, who vie with each other. And there is, indeed, nothing belonging to the whole town that is both more useful and more pleasant.*

And 'our garden' stretches beyond our fence to our countryside and our historic parks and gardens. We all need to care for them.

Presdales—My first research project

Tina Rowland

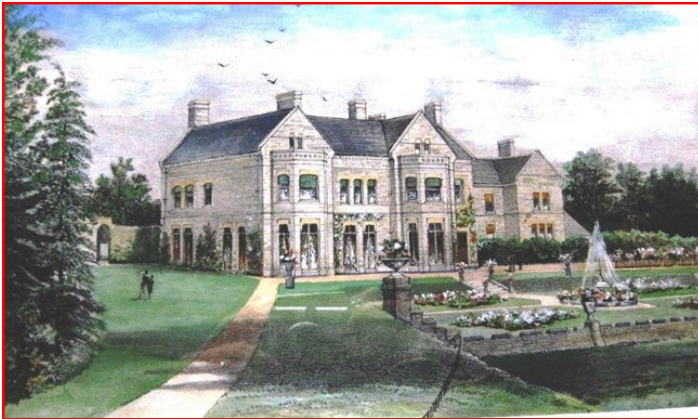
I joined the Research Group in September 2013 with very little knowledge of garden history! I met Anne Rowe at HALS and we agreed that Presdales (now an Academy school in Great Amwell, Ware) would be a suitable site for my first research project.

What fascinated you about Presdales?

Living in Ware, I was keen to undertake some local garden history research. I soon discovered that many garden features that had existed at Presdales had made way for new school buildings in 1963.

I was very fortunate to be introduced to Vanessa Spragg, the great granddaughter of Charles Cass. Charles, and his wife Maria Garland, commissioned the building of Presdales. The mansion was completed by 1864 and they surrounded it with fashionable gardens and ornamental parkland.

Vanessa has the original colour painting (reproduced below) of the black and white illustration in the 1879 sales particulars showing Presdales and its rear garden.



Presdales and its gardens started to fascinate me after seeing this painting and I could imagine people enjoying the grounds. The painting clearly shows the fountain and *tazze* (vases) that were possibly the work of Pulham and Son.

Vanessa kindly lent me her family research notes and personal papers about the Cass family of Great Amwell and Ware, who were originally bargemen, becoming wealthy malt-factors and bankers. Ware in the 19th century and the Cass family also fascinated me but I had to get back to researching the garden ...

What were the rewards of your research?

The greatest reward for me remains the excitement of discovery. Every visit to HALS, the Lowewood or Ware Museum, or Presdales' School Archive was like opening presents on Christmas Day.

Another reward came from my first site visit to Presdales with Anne Rowe where I met Kate Banister (a former Presdales' teacher). Kate showed me the artificial rockwork cascade that still exists and suggested that it might be the work of Pulham and Son.

In addition, we identified the surviving arts and crafts style garden, known as the "bothy" garden, described by Kate Harwood in *Hertfordshire Garden History Volume II*, Chapter 6 "Some Arts and Crafts Gardens in Hertfordshire". Kate Harwood very kindly lent me a CD containing some of her Presdales research which was very useful.



*Artificial rockwork cascade
(possibly by Pulham and Son)*



*Arts and Crafts style "bothy"
garden*

A personal reward from meeting Kate Banister (HGT's Pulham expert) has been my introduction to the work of the Pulham family of Broxbourne. Kate continues to be my Pulham mentor and guide and through her I have discovered the excellent collections and resources at the Lowewood Museum in Broxbourne where they hold some original Pulham catalogues. Kate also introduced me to the Presdales' Librarian who gave me encouragement and support as well as unlimited access to the school's small but comprehensive archive of photographs and documents. The Lowewood Museum and Kate continue to be of invaluable help with my current research into High Leigh in Hoddesdon.

What were the pitfalls or obstacles in your research?

One big obstacle was that I developed shingles in December 2014, which limited all of my activities for a while, but I recovered enough to attend the Research Group's Soup and Seminar event in February 2015. During this session we were introduced to the "Local List" and how to convert our research reports into a Local List entry. Dr Isobel Thompson explained how the Research Group's work feeds into the planning process.

One pitfall (that turned into a bonus) was that I could not find the source of an article in the Gerish collection at HALS. The article contained a wonderful description of the Presdales garden and three photographs – but no reference to its source!

The Lindley Library Enquiry Service confirmed that an article about Presdales had appeared in *Gardeners' Magazine* of December 11 1909. Sue Friend (a fellow Research Group member) and I visited the Lindley in July 2015. As well as finding the "mystery" article we also discovered an interesting garden connection. In c1882 Mr R Smith had been the gardener at Presdales and in 1900 he was in charge of the gardens at Brickendonbury (Sue's second research project).

What would I do differently next time?

I won't be so shy about asking for help in the future. In my experience, Anne Rowe, HALS staff, local librarians, other HGT members and researchers are always willing to help and offer suggestions.

Start to write up my research notes as a report sooner rather than later. Sometimes I could not read my scruffy notes when I eventually got round to typing them up some months later!

Ask the Lindley Library enquiry service to check their catalogues for any articles that have been published about the site. (Please note that Ray Desmond's *Bibliography of British Gardens* was updated and reprinted in 1998).

Email: library.london@rhs.org Telephone: 02078 213050

Try to use a writing style that's not too long-winded. "Keep it short and sweet" is my motto for the next report; my first report was too long and more like a book!

Try not to be too disappointed if I find out more information once my report has been printed! On the day my first report was printed, I discovered that "Presdales" means "a priest's valley".

In a Monastery Garden

Sally Pearson

At first sight, it may seem perverse to try and say anything meaningful about the gardens of the mediaeval abbey at St Albans. There is little enough surviving evidence of the monastery buildings themselves, almost all systematically destroyed at the dissolution in 1539, let alone the spaces in between. There are no contemporary pictures or plans, no account records, and the archaeological evidence is fragmentary at best. That it is still possible to catch glimpses of how the monastery garden areas evolved is due mainly to the survival of a remarkable manuscript, the *Gesta Abbatum*, recording the 'deeds of the abbots', in particular during the 300 years after the building of the Norman abbey in the eleventh century.

The Normans brought with them from the continent a standard pattern of Benedictine monastery building which had been established during the Carolingian empire in the ninth century. This required a range of garden areas for a monastery to function as a largely self-sufficient unit, typically: a kitchen garden to provide for the monks' mainly vegetarian diet; a herb garden attached to the infirmary for medicinal purposes; a lawned cloister area where the monks spent much time in reading and contemplation; a cemetery area planted with a variety of fruit trees.

There are certainly brief references in the *Gesta Abbatum* to areas of kitchen garden, orchard, vineyard, cloister and monks' cemetery within the monastery precincts at St Albans. As the Middle Ages progress, however, three additional garden areas are mentioned, which move away from this purely utilitarian model of earlier monastic life. These more recreational gardens are by no means unique to St Albans Abbey, and may be seen partly as a response to developments in the secular world beyond the precincts, where gardens became increasingly appreciated not just for their utilitarian benefits but also for their natural beauty and social uses.

*An artist's impression of the
pre-Reformation
Monastery and Abbey
buildings at St Albans.*

Artist: Joan Freeman



The earliest reference comes from the time of Abbot William of Trumpington (1214-35). It concerns a three-sided cloister he had built in the area between the kitchen and the guest house. The interior of the cloister was to be protected by a screen of wickerwork, 'to prevent free access to that area where there was a small grove of bushes (*virgultum*)'. Responsibility for this grove was given to the Guestmaster, which suggests that it was to be a place which the monastery's more important guests might use for refreshment and relaxation. *Virgultum* is a fairly specific term, and was described in an encyclopaedia written about 1240 as 'a green place and merry with green trees and herbs', implying somewhere which was aesthetically pleasing rather than purely functional.



*'Ye Olde Fighting Cocks' Inn, St
Albans.*

Photographed by Sally Pearson

During his long abbacy, Thomas de la Mare (1349-96) had to manage the escalation of a long and fractious struggle between the monastery and the townspeople of St Albans. One element of this was encroachment of the abbey's northern boundary wall by the tenants of properties on the town side. It is reported that 'some men with women, contrary to decent behaviour, presumed to enter the Sacrist's garden (*hortus*)'. Interestingly they did so in order to pray. It has been suggested that traditionally the Sacrist's garden in a monastery was used for growing the flowers used in various ceremonies in the church: lilies, for example, associated with the Virgin Mary, or red roses for martyred saints. In which case, plants grown in the Sacrist's garden may well have had a visual beauty and spiritual significance which could be used as a stimulus for meditation and prayer.

De la Mare's deputy was Prior John de la Moote, an ambitious man, who developed the Prior's lodging at the east end of the precinct. He added 'a summer drawing room or dining room there, which was lit towards the garden (*hortus*) with many windows, and a very fine pavement was laid outside', the overall effect perhaps not unlike a modern conservatory and patio. His wider garden area (*gardinum*) was extensive, and in it he built 'a large and elaborate pigeon house'. Pigeons were bred to eat, but dovecots were also a status symbol. The size of this particular one may be observed by any modern visitor to the Fighting Cocks pub in St Albans, because it is probable the wooden top structure was removed there in the seventeenth century. Another addition to the Prior's garden was a covered 'wall or promenade' between it and the Infirmary 'which was very useful for taking exercise when it was raining'. Overall, the Prior's developments demonstrate a trend towards more private gardens in the later Middle Ages, even for monks, despite ownership being forbidden.

Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire

Anne Rowe

It is now more than three years since the Trust's last book – *Hertfordshire Garden History vol. 2: Gardens pleasant, groves delicious* – was published by the University of Hertfordshire Press (UHP). So when last March Kate Harwood came up with the suggestion that we should write a book about the work of Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire it was greeted with great enthusiasm and a dozen members of the Research Group stepped forward to contribute to the research and writing required to compile the volume. Tom Williamson was keen to be involved and Sue Flood also offered her considerable experience as an editor.

It took until much later in the year for the final major elements of the project to fall into place, namely confirmation from the UHP that they could publish the book, having finally cleared their printing proposals through the University's administrative system. The UHP has built up an impressive reputation for the quality of its publications and, based largely on successful sales of our two *Hertfordshire Garden History* volumes, is keen to expand its garden history output. We are also very fortunate to have secured funding from the Gretna Trust and with donations from Joan Stuart-Smith's memorial service this will help pay the significant printing costs.



*One of the illustrations from
Humphry Repton's Red Book for New
Barnes, Sopwell,
by kind permission of the
Gorhambury Estate Company
Limited*

This next book will be taking a very different format from our previous books as we intend to reproduce all the illustrations from six of Repton's famous Red Books and these lend themselves to an A4 landscape format. The book will be a hardback and will have colour illustrations throughout, portraying to full effect Repton's paintings of Panshanger and Tewin Water in the Mimram valley, Wall Hall at Aldenham, Ashridge at Little Gaddesden, New Barnes at Sopwell and Wood Hill near Essendon. The paintings from the latter two have never been published before and his illustrations for Ashridge (which were never actually bound into a Red Book) have only been reproduced on a limited scale.

Repton is also linked with perhaps as many as thirteen other sites in Hertfordshire and Red Books are known to have been produced for Lamer near Wheathampstead and for Wyddial Hall near Buntingford but their current whereabouts are unknown – at least to us. We are following every possible lead to try to locate the Red Book for Lamer which is thought to have been sold through Sothebys in the early 1980s. The Wyddial Hall Red Book has



ROSARIUM

"This sketch of the interior of a Rose garden shows a lighter sort of Trellis than that of the flower garden, but to secure its durability the hoops may be formed of iron."

Humphry Repton

A painting by Repton for Ashridge, Hertfordshire. Reproduced by courtesy of the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (850834)

disappeared without trace. We would also love to re-photograph the Red Book for Wall Hall but have been unable to contact the owner. The evidence for Repton's involvement at Bedwell Park, Brookmans Park, Cashiobury, Digswell House, Haileybury, Little Court, Marchmont House, Offley, Organ Hall, Russells and The Grove is very variable both in quantity and quality but our team is doing its best to gather it all together. Those contributors working on sites with surviving Red Books have been busy transcribing all of Repton's hand-written text, as well as the text of every other documentary record relating to his work in the county.

Our aim is to present a comprehensive record of *all* the evidence for Humphry Repton's work in the county – as well as a beautifully illustrated book that would grace any coffee table. Our schedule is tight and by the time you read this we hope that Tom will be in possession of all our contributions to the book so that he can write the introductory chapter assessing the impact of this famous designer on the Hertfordshire landscape. If all goes to plan, publication will be early next year to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Repton's death in 1818. In the meantime, if you have any information which might help us to track down the Red Books for Lamer, Wall Hall or Wyddial do please let me know – *soon!*

[Anne can be contacted via the Research page on the HGT website or via the editor]

HGT Events in 2016

In April, a group visited the Royal Academy and attended a private lecture by the Head of Collections, on the origins and purpose of the Royal Academy, followed by a visit to the Library.

This was a rare opportunity to see a selection of captivating archive material, mainly relating to Hertfordshire gardens and landscapes, laid out for browsing and general discussion. Later an illustrated talk by Graham Greenfield, one of the Royal Academy 'educators', prepared the group extremely well for the visit to the exhibition, 'Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse'.

Starting with Monet, the exhibition examined the role gardens have played in the evolution of art from the early 1860s through to the 1920s, a period of great social change and innovation in the arts. Monet, arguably the most important painter of gardens in the history of art, was not alone in his fascination of the horticultural world and other exhibits included masterpieces by Renoir, Cezanne, Pissarro, Manet, Sargent, Kandinsky, Van Gogh, Matisse, Klimt and Klee. This visit was an exceptional event.

A lecture at one of Capability Brown's Hertfordshire landscapes, Beechwood Park, was held in October. Landscape artist, Tim Scott Bolton, entitled his illustrated talk 'Capability Brown from an Artist's Perspective', bringing to an end the Gardens Trust's year of celebration of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's tercentenary.

Recently, Tim spent a year travelling the country visiting and painting over 60 different Capability Brown landscapes for inclusion in his newly published book 'A Brush with Brown'. Slides of many of his paintings, in both oil and watercolours, ranged widely across the seasons, capturing the essential character of Brown's legacy. Tim often worked swiftly trying to capture an immediacy of the view, building up a variety of brushstrokes and marks at the time of painting.

A watercolour of St Wilfrid's Church, Kirkharle in Northumberland, where Lancelot Brown, the son of a local farmer, was christened in 1716, began Tim's 'journey' of Capability Brown's achievements. Tim chose only places where Brown's work still largely exists as he perceived it, each property having its own unique characteristic. He likened Brown's creations to landscape poetry; the full maturity of all his creations could only have been a vision at the time of their inception. Tim demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of and fascination for Capability Brown's work, as landscaper and engineer and brought alive the visions of these 18th century landscapes in his beautiful paintings and very entertaining lecture.

[Editor: This article supplements the record of HGT events in 2016, published in the Autumn Newsletter, 2016.]

The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust

President

The Countess of Verulam
Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire

Vice Presidents

Richard Walduck OBE, DL

Christopher Melluish

Chairman

The Hon. Lady Stuart-Smith

Vice-Chairman

Roger Gedye

Honorary Treasurer

Fiona Bancroft

Newsletter Editor

Roger Gedye

Research Group Co-ordinator

Anne Rowe

Conservation Team Co-ordinator

Kate Harwood

Schools Co-ordinator

The Hon. Lady Stuart-Smith

Honorary Secretary

Penny Figgis

Website Manager/Membership Secretary

John Craggs

Executive Committee

Fiona Bancroft

John Craggs

Penny Figgis

Sonja Fillingham

Roger Gedye

Kate Harwood

George Mitcheson

Annie Saner

Bella Stuart-Smith

Trust Patrons

Sir Simon Bowes Lyon KCVO

Mr Aubrey Barker

The Lord Cobbold

Mr Philip Harkness

The Rt. Hon. Sir Murray Stuart-Smith

Mr Tom Stuart-Smith

The Trust's Supporters

Ashridge

Worshipful Co of Gardeners

David and Mary Laing

Finnis Scott

The Gretna Trust

Fenwick Charitable Trust

Benington Lordship

The Ernest Cook Trust

Joseph Rochford Nurseries

**The Knebworth Conservation and
Education Trust**

The Robert Kiln Charitable Trust

Strutt and Parker

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS)



*Cover photograph: Hatfield House and Garden
Photograph by Anne Rowe*

*[www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk
registered charity no. 1010093]*