

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Front Cover: Digswell—Capability Brown’s Valley

HGT—The First 25 Years

Bella Stuart-Smith



I like the fact that CB300 has coincided neatly with our 25th Anniversary. I am not going to claim that we have changed the face of the historic landscape in Hertfordshire in quite the same way as he did. But I think we have, over 25 years, definitely made a big difference. If we take the walks leaflets as one example from this year, they will have a lasting impact outside of HGT. They are brilliant walking guides with a good story. They required a huge amount of work and I would like

to thank the CB300 committee for all they did and hope that the award of the Bunty Oakley Vase to Alison and Tosh Moller recognised all they did as a committee.

Bunty Oakley was a key founder member and with Joan Stuart-Smith did a great job in recruiting loyal members. After a quarter of century of support, it makes sense to review what we have achieved. A pattern of excellence and high productivity was quickly established with our research team. It started along Ermine Street, identifying 109 sites and researching from 1993 to 1996. This led to our first publication in 1996. Next came the Mid Herts project from 2001 to 2005, 24 reports were compiled, some spin off publications and then in 2007, Hertfordshire Garden History, a miscellany was published.

By this time we were reaping the benefit of some very expert advisers: Dr Tom Williamson, now Professor, and Anne Rowe who have guided us ever since. The East Herts project resulted in 21 completed reports, a Garden History symposium in 2011, followed in 2012 by the publication of Hertfordshire Gardens History volume 2 subtitled 'Gardens Pleasant and Groves Delicious'. When the latest area Welwyn/Hatfield is complete another 16 reports will be lodged in The Hertfordshire Archives for planners and future historians to consult. We have discovered and recorded a huge amount of information about the historic parks and gardens in the country, and the publications have made a wider audience aware of the value of our landscape heritage.

Along the way there have been discoveries:

- Earthworks at Grotto Wood, Standon Lordship and Benington Park.
- Ornamental canals at Blakesware, High Canons, Boningtons and Skimpans.
- The Lost Bridgeman rond points and forest paths in Tring Park, and his plan for Gobions.
- A17century pond in Theobalds Park, a Pulham rock garden at Presdales, earthworks of a spectacular water garden in the woods in the former Popes Park and Repton's Red Book for Woodhill.

This represents a huge number of volunteer hours and we owe all those researchers a debt of gratitude for giving us a clearer understanding of the rich landscape of the county.

This research has led directly to fruitful conservation and we have collaborated in the restoration of the Rond point at Tring Park, as well as Bushey Rose Garden and the ongoing work at Hemel Water Gardens.

In the early years our conservation was a little more physical. There are some marvellous photographs of members replanting Jeykell roses at Putteridge and Temple Dinsley, and of our president wielding loppers demolishing overgrown shrubs in her wake. Since then, Kate Harwood has single-handedly taken up the conservation mantle. She does an enormous amount, working with Friends' groups across the county, at Panshanger Park as she continues to press for reinstatement, and as a member of the newly formed Green Corridor Group. She monitors planning applications on a weekly basis and comments where necessary particularly on Local Plans. She tries to work with developers, and owners to ensure they develop sympathetic plans before they get to application stage. She is working on local lists of historic landscapes at district level, initially an English Heritage funded initiative, and here we hope researchers will combine by completing statements of significance for their completed research project. It is incredible who she knows and what she achieves, and we are really grateful to her.

Her work affects us all. We live in the overpopulated South East where the need for housing is greatest. What should our response be at HGT? We are not a group of 'nimbys' but we do want to protect our historic landscapes and exert expert pressure where needed. With this in mind we are having for a Study Day at Hatfield next year on 22nd April to look at some of these issues, both current and historic. Please come. As members of HGT it is important to have an informed view and know how to respond as and when we need to.

This brings me to the last strand of HGT's work, namely education. Thanks to the combined expertise of Kate and Anne and all those who have shared their research with us, we have learned a lot. For the last 5 years the Study Days, informed by our latest research and reaching a wider national group of landscape historians, have looked at Jellicoe and his work at Hemel. This had a significant impact and ultimately led to the current restoration work there. We hosted the Herts Association Local History symposium in 2011, looked at Japanese gardens at Felden Lodge, Bridgeman at Tring, Repton at Haileybury and of course Brown this year at Woodhall. Then we have put on courses – on garden history in general, followed by the 18th century in context, Tudors and Stuarts, the role of Trees and Treemongers. We are already looking ahead to 2018 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Repton's death with a new publication planned.

We have also worked in schools. From the outset the Trust acknowledged that a younger generation were missing out on outdoor education and all of its obvious benefits. They set about putting this right, working to improve the grounds, sponsoring gardens and organising competitions. Schools at all levels participated.

A video explaining why gardening in schools was a good thing was produced – we had support from HCC (those were the days when there was actually an education budget to tap into). Companies sponsored us. Our President, in her High Sheriff year, spread the news far and wide and every school she visited received a copy of the video. We ran inset days for staff and it was from these that we began to realise that the staff had no idea how to garden. No point in having gardens without teacher knowledge or confidence to use them. It was here that ‘Mrs Wheelbarrow’ came in, and the workshops were as much to teach the teachers as to allow the children to have fun and learn. 174 schools, 510 workshops and approximately 15,000 children later the workshops have moved on to combine with the Award. This gives enough money to build and equip a small garden and ongoing expertise to site it properly and use it effectively. We are working with 6 this year.

We have also had a lot of fun. Members have visited countless gardens, bought plants, played bridge, listened to music, had special access to London galleries, attended brilliant lectures, and even gone on mini breaks.

In 25 years HGT has achieved a huge amount, made possible by loyal members, patrons, the president and her vice presidents, and the trusts and companies who have given us financial support. Christopher Melliush, who ran the trust for 17 years, brought us into the 21st century, with a website and a new look newsletter so we are kept informed. The trustees who run the committee have ensured we are in a good position to face the next twenty five years and to continue to research and protect our historic landscape and make sure people know about it.

Editorial—Roger Gedye

Recent editions of the HGT Newsletter have highlighted the activities of our excellent historical research team. 2016 has been a ‘Brownian’ year: a ‘CB Festival’ edition of the newsletter, walks around Hertfordshire’s ‘Brownian’ parks, our AGM held in Brown’s setting of Youngsbury Park, and an excellent study day on ‘The Capability Men’ at Woodhall.

By contrast, 2017 will see a shift of focus to more contemporary concerns. Hertfordshire’s landscape is constantly evolving as the pressure mounts from the development of roads, for industrial development, and above all, for housing. A special ‘Study day’, to be held at The Riding School at Hatfield House on April 22nd, 2017, has been designed to highlight and inform all our members of the potential threats to our local landscape and to understand some of the collaborative ways in which planners, developers and local interest groups, including HGT, can work together to preserve our historic environment. Two related visits, to Panshanger Park and to the Jellicoe Water Gardens at Hemel Hempstead, will show how individual members of the public are working together to preserve their particular historic landscape through the formation of groups of ‘Friends’ and through the development of ‘Neighbourhood Plans’. Do give these events your support.

Full details and application forms for these events are included in this newsletter.

‘Thundridge House’

Roger Gedye with Christopher Melliush

This is the third article in the occasional series: ‘Members’ Gardens with a Story to Tell’. Thundridge House, overlooking the valley of the River Rib, has been the family home of Christopher and Susie Melliush since 1982. A 20thC garden surrounding a handsome house, formerly a farmhouse, dating back to the early 18thC and originally a property of the Youngsbury estate on the northern flank of the valley. It is appropriate, in the year that the Garden Trusts are celebrating the 300th birthday of Capability Brown, that a few 18thC features have been incorporated into the design of the garden which overlooks the least spoiled Brownian landscape in Hertfordshire. Brown’s plans for Youngsbury remain in the mansion; his observation, ‘that nature had done so much that little was wanting but enlarging the river’, remains true of the valley to this day.

A courtyard garden has been created from the original farmyard, with the house to the south, a converted range of cowsheds to the west, and a magnificent timber and tiled barn to the north. A circular gravel drive, surrounding a stately weeping willow tree, enters the courtyard from the east, giving access to the front door of the house via an elegant set of steps, flanked by shrubs and climbing roses.



‘A courtyard garden ...’



‘... hedge of mixed beech and hornbeam ...’

At one time the main entrance to the house was to the south; the change allowed an unbroken sweep of lawn and beds to be created around this sunnier aspect of the house.



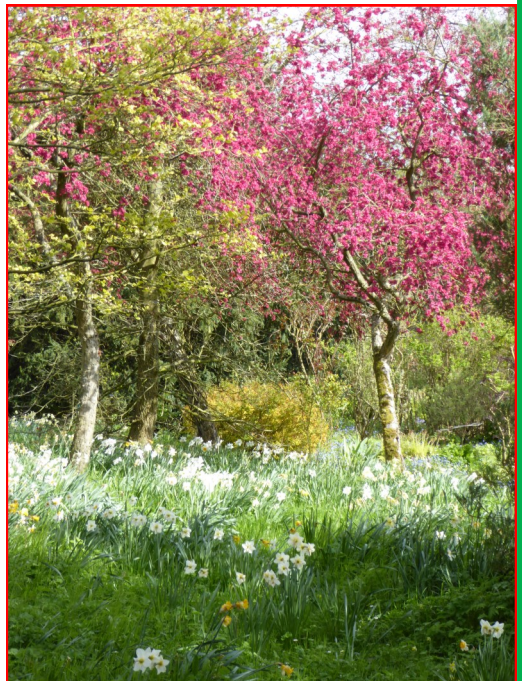
'The lawn sweeps away ...'

Christopher is the 'hands-on' gardener with Susie his principal adviser. Strolling around this lovely garden with Christopher reveals his enthusiasm and knowledge: of trees and shrubs, roses and perennials, and the earthier joys and frustrations of the fruit and vegetable garden. To the south the house and garden are screened from the lane by a strip of ornamental woodland and a formal hedge of mixed beech and

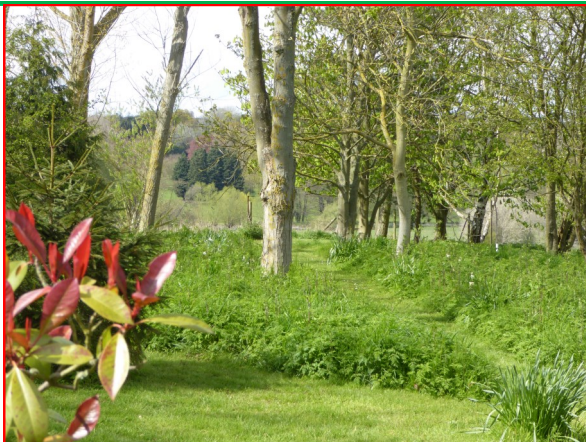
hornbeam. The gentle curve of the hedge is broken by two apsidal enclosures to create an 'exedra' with two clipped variegated holly trees taking the place of classical statuary. The formality of this section of the lawn is enhanced by two clipped weeping pears, *Pyrus salcifolia*, and a fine specimen of *Magnolia grandiflora* growing against the wall of the house. Christopher's study contains a set of water-colour drawings and plans, drawn up for the previous owner by the garden designer, Addington. These show the hedge reduced to a set of 'clumps' and, fortunately were never realised!

The lawn sweeps away to less formal curving borders, with a backdrop of ornamental shrubs and trees and a glimpse of a round pond and pasture beyond. Christopher's fruit and vegetables are hidden away behind a screen of venerable laurels. A shady bed with hellebores and witch hazel leads to a pink and blue border, where some formality has been retained with a row of clipped Portuguese laurels set against climbing roses. Across the lawn is a yellow border and a wilder area of ornamental trees, rich with blossom and under-planted with white narcissi when I visited on a sunny day in late April.

'A wilder area ...'



A set of shallow brick steps leads down to the entrance drive and the round pond, created from a boggy patch of pasture and divided from the livestock by a ha-ha. Here the ponies are kept out of the pond by the ha-ha, whereas Brown was more inclined to use the device to view the water from the garden. The garden gives up its secrets reluctantly. Behind the imposing bulk of the barn the land drops away to the north towards the river and the wider valley of the Rib.



'A grassy path ...'

The most rewarding approach is through a small copse along a grassy

path mown through a carpet of Queen Anne's Lace, *Anthriscus sylvestris*. The view is stunning. In the middle ground is an eye-catcher, the tower of a ruined church used by Brown as a feature in his design for Youngsbury Park, laid out on the far bank. This is a Brownian 'looking-glass world' - his wider clumps and belts of trees set out against the wider arable landscape beyond.

Spaced out around the garden are trees planted by Christopher and Susie to mark family events, and gifts from grateful friends and clients, which reflect love of family and Christopher's generous sense of duty. Thundridge House has been opened for the National Garden Scheme for many years, for five of which Christopher served as their treasurer. In the mid-nineties, as a relatively new member of HGT, Christopher was singled out by the Trust's chairman, Joan Stuart-Smith, as her ideal successor. Refusal was not an option, and

her wisdom and powers of persuasion led to a marathon and very successful tour of duty as our chairman.

A healthy young specimen of *Circis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' marks our grateful thanks for his friendship and exceptional leadership, as well as a feature of this very special garden.



'The hands-on gardener with his principal adviser ...'

Woodhall Park Study Day - 'The Capability Men'

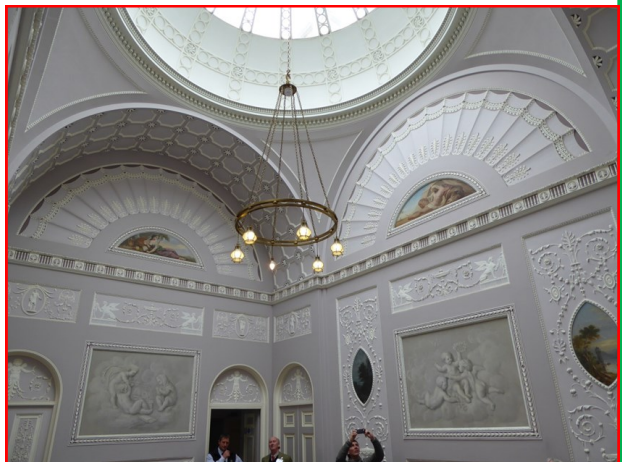
Alison Moller

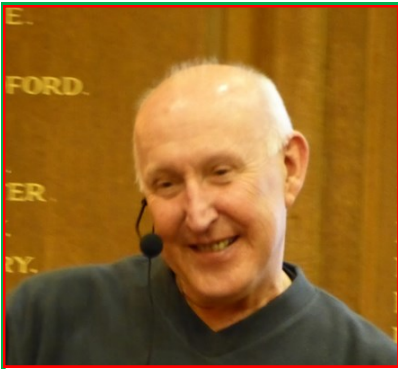
Jenny Milledge and Kate Harwood organised a memorable Study Day in the elegant surroundings of Woodhall Park as part of the CB300 celebrations and at the invitation of the current owner of Woodhall, Mr Ralph Abel Smith. In devising the programme, the organisers intended this Study Day to set the work of Lancelot Brown in the context of the contributions of his many contemporaries, hence the title 'The Capability Men' and the choice of the garden history speakers, co-authors of the eponymous book.

The deer park at Woodhall, first recorded in 1583 and shown on the Norden map of 1598, was extended to 355 acres and a formal avenue planted by 1720. After a fire damaged an earlier courtyard house, Thomas Leverton designed the present mansion in 1777 for the estate's new owner, Thomas Rumbold. The mansion was built on higher ground nearby, and a magnificent new stable block replaced the courtyard house. Rumbold further extended the park to the west and in the period 1782-1783 had the River Bean widened to form the Broadwater, employing William Malcolm & Son of Stockwell 'Surveyors, Nursery and Seedsman', who would also have supplied the material for extensive new planting. By 1801 when Samuel Smith bought the estate, this planting had matured with serpentine walks threading through the shrubbery, pleasure ground and plantations, and a substantial walled kitchen garden supplied the house with ordinary as well as luxury produce. The turnpike road was moved in the period 1838-1843 by Smith's son Abel Smith in order to extend the deer park eastwards. The park was enclosed by a brick wall and held deer until the Second World War. Since 1934 the mansion has been leased to Heath Mount School.

The day started with a welcome by Ralph Abel Smith, and an interesting backdrop account of how the role and fortunes of the landowner have changed over the centuries. He gave a forthright insight into the financial challenges of balancing income and expenditure on the estate and hinted at future plans to illustrate how the estate must evolve in order to survive.

*Woodhall
The Mansion is leased to
Heath Mount School*





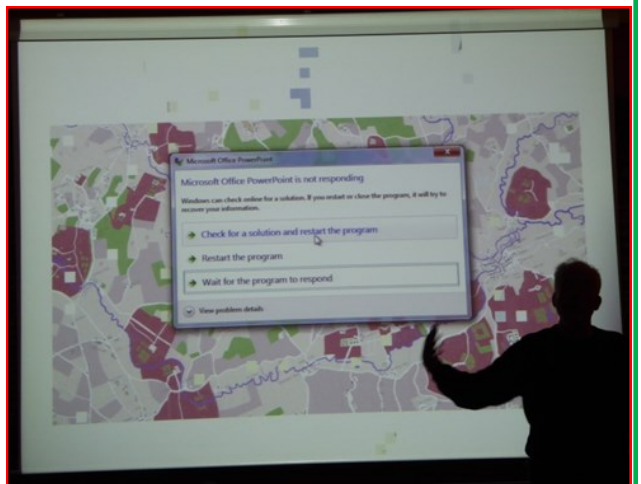
David Brown

David Brown developed a compelling argument for viewing the people who implemented the landscape style as the 'Gentlemen Improvers'. This term encapsulates two preoccupations of 18th Century society - social status and improvement of the land. The men were gentlemen in that they sprang from the middle ranks and were educated, thanks to the teachings of John Locke, in useful skills such as survey drawing and accounting, as well as the classics. The term was first applied to Nathaniel Richmond whose career David examined in some detail. Richmond worked for Brown, appearing in his account books in

the period 1754-59, and is a good example of how Brown employed assistants who were already good at their job and soon left to set up on their own. By the mid-18th Century there were about 100 Improvers and David concluded that Brown was perhaps 'the best of the best', but that his nickname (derived from land being 'capable' of improvement) had been around long before he arrived on the scene.

Tom Williamson followed with a detailed presentation showing that Brown had been very much of his time - neither ahead nor behind the curve. By the late 1760s, the archetypical formula had become established, with a 'polite' lawn near the house, a lake in the middle ground taking the dangerous dampness away from the house, and a circuit drive. The circuit drive mirrored changes in society, which had become more relaxed. However, Tom pointed out using many examples that Brown did what he was asked, and so could and did supply Kitchen Gardens, Pleasure Grounds, Flower Gardens, and various buildings. Tom's presentation was bedevilled towards the end by a contrary computer, but completely unfazed, he hilariously mimed his way through the last few slides and by common consent got his message across more efficiently than would any Powerpoint aid

Tom Williamson—in full flow!



During the break for a delicious lunch organised by Nikki Slowey and Alison Bowden of Heath Mount School, and prepared by chef Ben Willis, delegates were able to explore the beautiful interiors of the mansion and marvel at the Print Room . In the afternoon, we explored the park, going into areas not normally accessible to the public. The stars of the eastern park for most people were the surviving 'champion' oak trees in the former deer park , but it was interesting to see how each generation of the family had left a mark in the landscape in the form of tree planting. Ralph Abel Smith with advice from John Phibbs the Brown expert, had planted trees on the valley sides which descended in 'teardrops' but left the valley bottom clear in a manner Brown would have recognised. In the western park, which is even more Brownian, the Broadwater had been breached by the recent floods allowing a fascinating view of the engineering work involved and highlighting the fact that landscaping requires constant maintenance.

Hot drinks and 'Capabili-Tea Brownian' goodies baked by some of the HGT members from recipes supplied by CBF (plus some from Hannah Glass) - rounded off a successful Study Day.

Champion oak tree in the Park



Woodhall Park – An English Estate

An edited version of the talk given by Mr Ralph Abel Smith during his welcome to delegates at the HGT Study Day on 16th April 2016.

Although we are here today to focus on Capability Brown, we cannot see his works in isolation but rather within the context of the traditional private estate in its holistic form. There are eight aspects of running an estate like this, namely the main house, the park, the environment and the biodiversity; then there is the farming, the woodlands, the residential and the commercial property. The last four in this group are income producing and the first four are cash consuming and I am going to try to show how the management of each can be worked in with each other to create a coherent whole.

What sets the English country house and the parkland apart from other forms of art? The answer must be that they did cost a lot to create and do cost a lot to maintain. So what motivated the owners/patrons of these two forms of art? I suggest it was the wish to make their mark by creating a fine house and parkland for themselves to enjoy, leaving something of beauty and aesthetic merit for succeeding generations; and that they had the means to do so.

So where did those means come from? Different people made their money in different ways but I am going to suggest six:

- i. Those who acquired land when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries.
- ii. Some found they had coal beneath their land.
- iii. Some made their fortune through sugar in the West Indies.
- iv. Some made money in India (nabobs)
- v. Bankers: I have to say our family were bankers and of course the ownership of land was a route into Parliament.
- vi. Industrialists.



Mr Ralph Abel Smith

Where were the means for ongoing management and subsequent enhancement of the land? It was through agricultural prosperity which can be traced back to the first half of the 18th Century. George III took a keen interest in agricultural development and acquired the nickname of Farmer George, and there was also Coke of Holkham, Norfolk, who introduced rotational cropping. There can be no doubt that the greatest periods of input into the land and its infrastructure coincided with periods of agricultural prosperity and vice versa. Following the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, England enjoyed about 100 years of unfettered free trade, during which time the Industrial Revolution went from strength to strength. Landowners were able to build houses

and develop their parklands with confidence, planting trees, etc, for the long term future, each generation developing their own styles according to the tastes of the time.

However, from about 1875 with the advent of railways and ironclad shipping, the importation of grain from North America brought about a sea change. The price of wheat dropped from the equivalent of £600 per ton to £330 per ton overnight and beef was imported from South America. This was followed by lamb from New Zealand and wool from Australia, enabled through the building of the Suez Canal.

This all heralded the beginning of the end for many rural estates and the problems were then compounded by the introduction of Death Duties, followed by World War I, followed by the Depression and uncertainties of the 1920s and '30s, and then the Second World War. Many landowners sold their land and those who had made their money in the Industrial Revolution were keen purchasers. However, some sold out to their farm tenants (known as sitting tenants). It is interesting to note that the ratio of in-hand land to tenanted land circa 1890 was 10:90 and in the last 100+ years it has virtually reversed to 90:10.

The turning point came with the 1947 Agricultural Act, brought in by the then Labour Government. This created agricultural support for farmers, providing solid foundations for the farming economy and leading to a cheap food policy for the housewife. The Act also stimulated agricultural education and research by the formation of agricultural colleges and experimental husbandry farms. Gradually the lot of the farmer improved and with it the renaissance of the traditional private estate. It is perhaps ironic that it was an Act brought in by a left-wing Labour Government that was intended to support farmers and housewives that actually led to the renaissance of the private rural estate and the revival of the English Country House and its Parkland – perhaps an unintended consequence, but a good one at that.

Many estates, if not all, found themselves with a huge backlog of repair works and modernisation; the benefit from the Agriculture Act was supported by some tax concessions. However, farmers and landowners were not to rest on their laurels by depending upon these two outside factors; entrepreneurial enterprises were initiated to reduce the dependence upon farming income and promote greater cash flow benefit into their estates – what we would now call diversification. We here have concentrated our time and efforts into improving and modernising houses and cottages, and finding new uses for redundant farm buildings which has had the effect of reducing our dependence on income from farming. To bear this out, in 1991 our income from agriculture and residential/commercial rents as a percentage of turnover, was about even, whereas in 2015 the ratio was approximately 20:80. Our son, Thomas has many ideas and initiatives for diversification projects in the future.

So, if you take the eight different ingredients of private estate management that I mentioned earlier and run them all to their full potential, it is then that the necessary cross-funding becomes possible. If you take the house and the Park as the “heart and soul” and the wider estate as the “body”, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts and that is what provides financial stability and long term sustainability.

Not an HGT member yet?

Full details of the benefits of membership, together with a membership application form, may be obtained from the website:

www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Or, contact the Membership Secretary by email:

info@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Two Formidable Women

Liz Moynihan

When, as a young wife, Phyllis Fordham moved into Ashwell Bury she decided to renovate the rather gloomy garden. Who better to approach than Gertrude Jekyll, the most famous garden designer, plants-woman and garden writer of her era. Jekyll was some thirty years older than Mrs Fordham, but this in no way intimidated this forceful young woman. Thus, in 1908 she wrote a letter to Jekyll (the only letter from Mrs Fordham in the archive). The correspondence which followed resulted in thirty three letters or cards from Jekyll, which reflect the endless queries and demands from the younger woman about the design of the garden. These sometimes daily enquiries resulted in Jekyll finally losing patience. In a letter dated 21st October 1909 she wrote ***'My eyes are getting so bad that after this season I have, to my infinite regret, to give up my garden design work – and the large amount of correspondence that it necessarily entails.'*** Only one or two terse missives follow this announcement, but we know that far from giving up her garden designs, Jekyll went on to work on another two hundred commissions, including at least one garden design in 1932, the year of her death.



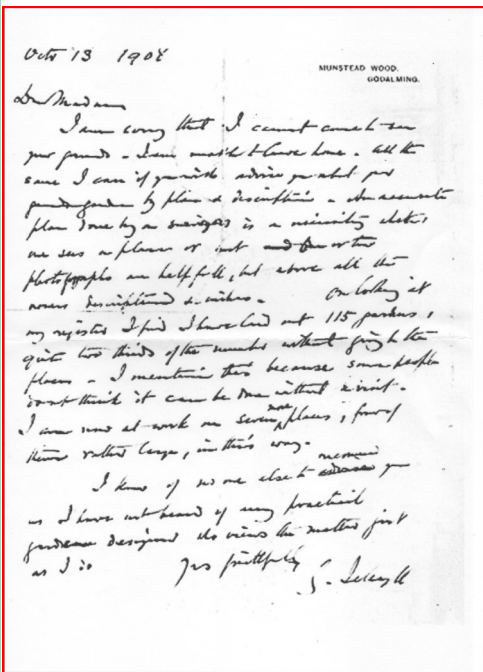
Gertrude Jekyll



Phyllis Fordham

The letters are in the Bury archive, but the plans of the Jekyll designed garden are deposited at the University of California. They include a surveyor's plan sent by Mrs. Fordham (Jekyll never visited the site – in similar fashion to many other of her garden designs she relied on a surveyor's plan, photographs of the site and an account of the owner's wishes which she often ignored!) There is little hard landscaping in Mrs Fordham's garden, and indeed Lutyens, Jekyll's brilliant collaborator on many important gardens, only came to the Bury twelve years later to renovate the house.

In one of her letters to Mrs Fordham, Jekyll says with breath taking arrogance, **'...you ought to rebuild the house which will now be quite unworthy of this garden.'**! Lutyens' involvement came to an abrupt end when Mrs Fordham refused to cut down a mulberry tree which stood in the way of his symmetrical design for improving the front elevation of the house.



The flat clay fields surrounding the Bury did not appeal to Jekyll, who loved the wooded, sandy slopes of Surrey, and she had some rude comments to make about Mrs Fordham's existing garden. She did however approve of the huge stands of elms which she wove into her garden plans (though sadly the elms all died in the sixties). Despite all this, a wonderful plan for the garden evolved, with detailed designs for evergreen features, herbaceous beds, a pool garden backed by wild planting and a formal rose garden. Jekyll prepared detailed planting plans which were backed up by plant lists from her original notebooks, which are now housed at Godalming Museum. During the first World War, when the Bury was used as a convalescent home, the garden gave much pleasure to the inmates. Later, in 1947, the garden had the accolade of being featured in Country Life magazine. Surprisingly, some of the Jekyll garden still exists, mainly in the form of the yew and box features, hedges and some individual trees, as well as the pool.

The grassy paths and complex borders and beds have long gone, though they are discernible as parch marks in the grass.

The important legacy of The Bury garden, though, is the almost unique combination of plans and letters. These contribute enormously to our understanding of the evolution of a Jekyll garden and the tensions between designer and client revealed therein. From them we glean Jekyll's mastery of colour, her reliance on certain plants (often quite ordinary), her interest in patterns and vistas, her strong ideas on how steps should be built and views incorporated, as well as tips on how and what to plant. While working on plans for Ashwell Bury, she was also working on the much more important garden at Hestercombe, which had the huge advantage of Lutyens' incomparable stone architectural features – walls, walkways, pools, fountains, rills and steps. Ashwell Bury was small beer in comparison to Hestercombe, but the special bonus of the letters gives this relatively unimportant garden huge significance in understanding the work of Gertrude Jekyll.

A sample from the correspondence between Gertrude Jekyll and Mrs Fordham.

Garden History Book Group

Jane Dixon

Here in the east of Hertfordshire we have a thriving book group. We meet about every two months, taking it in turns to play host to fellow members. Books chosen include diverse topics such as 'Heligan', 'The Gardens of William and Mary', 'Plants that Changed the World' and 'First Ladies of Gardening'. Discussion (usually 1.5 to 2 hrs) is followed by tea and cake. Members take it in turn to choose the next book.

Books read have stimulated us to visit various places - not only day trips to Rosemary Verey's 'Barnsley House' and Beth Chatto's garden, but also 4 day trips to Cornwall (Heligan, Trelissick and Trewithen) and The Cotswolds (Hidcote, Kiftsgate, Seizencote and Bourton House). The days were spent talking plants, design and history as we wandered through these glorious gardens. Convivial evenings were spent around the dinner table. What could be nicer for garden history lovers?



*Garden Book Group members
Jane, Helen, Jill and Vee at Heligan*

Why not start your own group? We can supply you with a list of the 18 books we have read so far. It's a great way to make new friends.

*Editor's note: I can forward emails from interested members to Jane
roger.gedye@btinternet.com*

HGT Events and Outings during 2016

Roger Gedye

For the Garden Trusts 2016 has been dominated by CB300, 'The Capability Brown Festival'. The HGT Spring Newsletter was dedicated to the work of Brown in Hertfordshire and a highly successful series of events has encouraged HGT members discover and explore the 18thC landscape created by Brown and his contemporaries (the 'Brownians') throughout the county. Relatively little of Brown's work in Hertfordshire survives in its original form – arguably the best examples of surviving 18thC landscapes are by others. The Trust held its 25th anniversary AGM in Youngsbury Park at Wadesmill, which is a Brown landscape. Fifty members enjoyed the first really warm evening of the summer on the lawns of Youngsbury House with glass of wine in hand, listening to our Chairman describing some of the highlights of our first 25 years, before picnicking to the strains of a saxophone quartet.



AGM at Youngsbury House

In April, an excellent Study Day, 'The Capability Men', was organised at Woodhall, the family home of Ralph Abel Smith, who welcomed the Trust to the Mansion (Heath Mount School) at the centre of this flourishing and beautifully preserved estate. Full details of the day are to be found in the article by Alison Moller. The series of walks around 'Brownian Landscapes' have proved very popular; six guided walks, led by knowledgeable HGT historians, have been fully subscribed and much enjoyed. The walk around Digswell highlights the association of an 18thC landscape with a 20thC urban development, and was the theme of Kate Harwood's article, 'Stone Age to Suburbia', in the Spring Newsletter. To launch 'CB300' in Hertfordshire, Kate developed her theme to create a series of poster boards and mount an exhibition at the New Maynard Gallery at Campus West in Welwyn. The exhibition has attracted considerable attention and has since been used to create enthusiasm for the history curriculum in a number of schools.

As usual, our HGT team organised visits to three outstanding groups of contrasting gardens. The season opened in early June with a journey to Rutland.



Rutland—walled garden at Burley



The 'Old Vicarage' garden at Burley

The 'Old Hall' at Market Overton

walled fruit and vegetable garden. The planting has matured to match the stonework. Following an excellent lunch we made our way to the sweeping lawns and extensive views of the Old Hall at Market Overton. Here a more relaxed and laid back atmosphere suited a gentle stroll and a relaxing afternoon tea on the terrace.

Later in June the destination was Cambridgeshire and the horse-racing country around Newmarket. Dullingham House is set in extensive grounds overlooking a park designed by Humphry Repton. Extensive lawns lead gently up



Dullingham House and garden



Paeonies at Kirtling Tower

and away from a flagstone terrace behind the house to a venerable stone wall sheltering south-facing borders on either side of an ornamental central gateway. These borders with their wide variety of herbaceous plants, flowering shrubs and climbers are a magnet for plant lovers. After an excellent lunch at a nearby gastro-pub we spent the afternoon at

Kirtling Tower. Once an extensive medieval moated castle, much of the moat and the gateway remain, with relatively modern flanking wings providing accommodation for the current owners, Lord and Lady Fairhaven.



Border in the walled garden at Kirtling Tower

After a delicious lunch we were free to wander or to go with Sir Nicholas to see his new stumpery, fascinating and still under development. Reluctantly we left for tea and scones at the Angel at Lavenham and the journey home, made even longer and slower as the coach developed overheating problems!

The 'Stumpery' at Raveningham Hall



Sir Nicholas Bacon and Sonja Fillingham at Raveningham Hall

In addition to these garden visits, the Trust organised a special visit to the Royal Academy in April to view the 'Painting the Modern Garden' exhibition. Before their tour members received an introduction to the exhibition by one of the Academy's curators, and a rare opportunity to visit the library to see a selection of horticultural manuscripts and books that are not generally accessible to the general public.

Parks in Crisis

Kate Harwood

- Do you know that local authorities have NO statutory duty to maintain town parks?
- Do you know that much of the money for the Environmental Stewardship Scheme for restoration of rural parkland is from the EU and that post-Brexit, the future is uncertain?
- Both our urban and our country parks face an uncertain future.

We have been here before. **Indignation!** was a campaign launched in 2000 to save our parks – both urban and rural which were then threatened. The warnings were not heeded and in 2014 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) published a report stating that 86% of parks managers had seen cuts to their budgets since 2010, a trend they expected to continue over the next three years. In addition, four-fifths (81%) of council parks departments had lost skilled management staff since 2010 and almost as many (77%) had lost frontline staff.

Another recent report from the HLF stated that our parks risked falling into disrepair and neglect due to budget cuts. On the 30th September this year the Guardian reported that over 180,000 people had responded to the government consultation on public parks, calling for legal protection for our parks. A petition has also been launched for legal protection, and a survey organised.

Although several of our parks: Cassiobury, Howards and Broadway (Letchworth), Bushey Rose Garden and the Jellicoe Water Gardens, have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we need to ensure that all our parks and gardens are cared for in the future – not just for us but for those who follow us.



Gary O'Leary, chairman of the Friends of Panshanger Park, leads walkers through the Park

What can we do?

We can make our views known nationally.

The government consultation on parks is now over and the petition attracted hundreds of thousand of signature before closing. But we can still write to our local MPs and councils. There are local campaigns too such at the current one for Panshanger set up by a 12 year old upset by the threatened destruction of his favourite landscape. You can find out more about it by 'googling': '*Stop Tarmac destroying Repton's Broadwater*'

But one of the best ways is through the various Friends Groups for parks and gardens across the county.

Some were set up in response to threats to parks: Friends of Panshanger Park (FPP) and Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens (FOTJWG) spring to mind. Some to press for restoration or recreation such as Friends of Frogmore House (Watford) and the Bushey Rose Gardens. HLF submissions require evidence of local public support for restoration of parks and here Friends are very useful, not only in demonstrating this support but coming up with ideas, research, events and so on.

What do Friends do?

- They campaign. Issues are raised and pressure is put on owners or managers to consider the heritage value of the park as well as the health and ecological benefits. This often includes informing a wider audience of the significance of the park and raising wider support. With any luck, this will lead to ideas for restoration or for modifying disastrous plans.
- Events are organised and run, not only to raise awareness but also to raise money, to help bring people together, to enjoy the gardens, and maybe other related sites. FOTJWG have visited Jellicoe's Cliveden Rose Garden and the Triangle Garden in Hitchin. FPP have visited Painshill Park and Tring Park.
- Some Friends are involved in wildlife and conservation on their patch: the Friends of Cassiobury Park, Pishiobury Park and Gadebridge Park are examples. And they are there to ensure the appropriate provision of care by their owners or managers.
- Another way to help save our urban parks and rural parkland is to become involved in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for your parish. This process lets local people have a say in how they would like to see their area managed and used. More information about this very local opportunity is at:

<http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/>

Details of Friends Groups may be found by 'googling' their websites, including:

- Friends of Panshanger Park
- Friends of the Water Gardens
- Friends of Bushey Rose Garden
- Friends of Pishuobury Park
- Friends of Cassiobury Park, and many more ...

High Leigh - How a 'Friends Group' could help in its Conservation

Tina Rowlands

Hoddesdon, in the Borough of Broxbourne, is situated in the Lea Valley in SE Hertfordshire on the 18th century coaching route between Cambridge and London. The adapted mansion of the High Leigh Estate, with 40 acres of garden and grounds, is located at the top of the hill of Lord Street, Hoddesdon.

'High Leigh' was known as 'High Wyches' in 1403 and as 'High Grounds' from 1677 until 1871. Charles Webb, a wealthy lace maker, bought the property c1850 and turned it into something much grander than the former farmstead. A sales map confirms the garden was established by 1859 with a parterre on the south front. One surviving feature may be the 'mermaid fountain', believed to be the work of James Pulham. Following Charles Webb's death in 1862, the estate was sold to Duncan Kay. An article from 1865 includes a description of the surviving rocky archway as "an entrance to a sunk cave or grotto, built by Mr Pulham and being deliciously cool" (*see photograph*).



Surviving rocky archway—May 2016

Robert Barclay (of the banking family) acquired the estate in 1871 and renamed it 'High Leigh'. His improvements to the estate included a Pulham rockwork feature to the south west of the parterre, with a grotto, cave, cascades and a path across the water, plus the addition of a sunken well and donkey track with walls and an arch of Pulhamite that is Grade II listed. Barclay transformed arable land to parkland, creating a lake and bridges across the Spitalbrook, a carriage drive and lodge, now restored as features of Barclay Park.

After Robert Barclay's death in 1921 the mansion and 40 acres were sold to First Conference Estate which provides affordable conference facilities for missionary and other Christian societies. The Barclay family later gave areas of the parkland to the town as an amenity space, named Barclay Park, it opened in 1937. Smaller areas of land were conveyed in 1954 giving a park area of about 18 acres. Public access to the park is gained from Cock Lane or Park View. There is a public footpath entrance to the park approximately 100m to the east of the High Leigh Conference Centre.

One of the attractions of the location of the estate for Robert Barclay may have been its proximity to the railway station. A map of 1859 shows a 'proposed private road' on the line of the carriage drive he constructed c1880. According to one of his sons' memoirs, Mr Barclay used to walk to the station (approximately 1.5 miles) for a train to London and his

bank in Lombard Street: “he said he needed to walk 6 miles a day to keep fit”. It is still possible to walk along part of the original carriage drive that fell out of use once cars replaced horse-drawn vehicles.

Barclay Park has an active Friends’ group with Volunteers undertaking tasks in the park every month. They have just received a second HLF grant of £84,300 for sustainable improvements in the Park. These include the cleaning and restoration of the two Pulham bridges and more work on the land and woodland areas.

The owners of High Leigh, a registered charity, want to find out more about restoring and conserving their surviving Pulham features, and to consider HLF funding in support of this



Pulham rockwork and cave c1870



Pulham rockwork and cave May 2016

work. The Pulham features are in a sad state as shown in the pictures and need expert assessment and conservation plus ongoing skilled maintenance and management. Creation of a ‘Friends of High Leigh’ group of volunteers would be an essential element to count towards volunteer hours in a bid for HLF lottery funding.

High Leigh’s management are keen to raise the profile of the site, making more use of the garden and grounds for their conference delegates, and possibly providing greater public access in the future. Promotional suggestions include Open Days with talks on the history of the estate, guided tours and Victorian themed teas. There could also be educational sessions for children such as an RSPB bird count or bat watch. These events would help raise funds for specialist conservation and management of the Pulham features and stimulate the interest of a group of Friends and volunteers.

Once formed, a ‘Friends of High Leigh’ group could become involved in these activities, including the opportunity to learn new skills in connection with the conservation and management of the original Pulham features. High Leigh and Barclay Park share a common history and there would be great potential for the two Friends’ groups to forge links and share information, knowledge and expertise, making a lasting difference to the local community and its heritage.

Panshanger Park needs YOU!

Anne Rowe

Humphry Repton advised the 5th Earl Cowper on the design of his new Panshanger Park in 1799. The tree-covered valley sides and the sinuous Broadwater that winds its way through the western end of today's park are the result of Repton's vision for the park, set out in his Red Book for Panshanger which is now in the Hertfordshire Archives at County Hall. His plan (*below*) shows how the little river Mimram was to be diverted to the north side of the valley below the house and in the autumn of 1799 sixty labourers were hard at work digging out the base of the new Broadwater to create a much wider river meandering through the meadow on the valley floor.

Immediately below Panshanger House (the red square marked C on his plan) Repton planned an island to hide the weir which separated the upper and lower reaches of his Broadwater. The island and weir are still there today. Repton described the view to the East with 'the water going off in a long strait reach to a considerable distance, which is contrasted by the view towards the West where the great bend of the water is the leading feature'.



This next painting is Repton's vision of the view across the 'great bend of the water' from the south side of the valley towards his proposed new mansion.

Tarmac and its predecessors have been extracting gravel from Panshanger Park for many years with permissions granted initially in the 1960s, then updated in the 1980s and, most recently, in 2003. The importance of the park as a beautiful landscape designed by Humphry Repton was recognised by English Heritage (now Historic England) in 1987 who awarded it Grade II* status for its 'exceptional national historic interest'. This should have led to greater protection of the Repton design, but shamefully it did not.

This aerial photograph (below) shows the large expanses of water that have been created in the valley as gravel has been extracted over recent years. Repton's Broadwater at the western end of the park (bottom of photo) has been retained more or less intact; but now Tarmac proposes to destroy the lower Broadwater by breaching the narrow strip of land between it and the lagoon they have already created to the south.

Is it really worth destroying part of our national heritage in order to extract a few more tons of gravel? The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust thinks not and is campaigning hard to protect what remains of Repton's vision. Please join us and send your views to the Tarmac Estates Manager at mike.pendock@tarmac.com



This photo is supplied to the HGT for the sole purpose of showing the effect of further proposed extraction in the area of the Broadwater. It is not to be used for any other purposes, or by any other parties, without specific written consent.

Events in 2017

Saturday, April 22nd, 2017

At the Riding School, Hatfield House, AL9 5HX

'Not in my Back Yard?'

Hertfordshire is under intense pressure to accommodate a large number of new houses. How can the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust use its influence and expertise to conserve and protect the county's historic landscape from uncontrolled development? The 'Green Corridor' is a major collaborative independent project, led by the Gascoyne Cecil Estates, working with local organisations including HGT, to provide a strategic green corridor of rural landscape linking Hertford, Hatfield, Welwyn GC and St Albans. It could provide a model for sensitive planning and development in other regions of the county, with informed input from local residents and organisations that place value on the conservation of their green environment.

The aims of this conference are to show that a collaborative approach to development now can be the most effective form of protection for the rural and urban environment of the future; and to suggest ways in which members of the public can influence planning decisions through their support for a local 'Friends' group and the development of a well researched 'Neighbourhood Plan'.

Programme

10.00am	Tea and Coffee/ Registration at the Riding School
10.30am	<i>'The Threats to Hertfordshire's Historic Parks and Gardens'</i> Kate Harwood: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust – Conservation Team Co-ordinator
10.45am	<i>'The Green Corridor Project'</i> Anthony Downs: Head of Planning and Development for Gascoyne Cecil Estates.
11.45am	Break for coffee/tea/biscuits
12.15pm	<i>'Neighbourhood Plans'</i> Gary O'Leary: Chairman of Hertingfordbury Parish Council and Leader of the emerging Hertingfordbury Neighbourhood Plan
12.45pm	Discussion
1.30pm	Buffet lunch
2.30pm	By kind permission of Lady Salisbury, members are invited to join
- 4.00pm	Head Gardener Alastair Gunne for a tour of the Hatfield House gardens.

The cost of the day will be £45.00 per delegate

An application form for places is enclosed with this copy of the newsletter

Tuesday, May 2nd, 2017
A Study Day at Mayflower Place, Hertingfordbury, SG14 2LG
with the Friends of Panshanger Park
(10.30am - 3.30pm, including a light lunch)

Panshanger Park is a Grade II* HE listed landscape and lies within the area of the Green Corridor. This event will trace the involvement of the Friends in the conservation and restoration of this section of the Mimram valley following extensive gravel extraction. The day will end with a guided walk through Humphry Repton's historic landscape to appreciate the beauty of the site and the ongoing problems associated with its restoration.

10.30am	Registration
11.00am	Recent history, development and restoration of the site Kate Harwood
11.45 am	Coffee break
12.00 noon	The significance of the work of the Friends of Panshanger Park Gary O'Leary (Chairman) and Friends
12.45pm	Lunch
1.30pm—3.30pm	Guided Walk through Panshanger Park

The cost of the day will be £25.00 per delegate
(Please bring suitable footwear and outdoor clothing for the walk through the Park)

Friday, June 9th, 2017
An afternoon with the Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens
at the Carey Baptist Church Hall, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1LD
(2.00pm - 4.00pm)

HGT, with Dacorum Borough Council, has been instrumental in securing the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the restoration of these famous Water Gardens. The Friends of the Water Gardens will help to maintain them to a high standard in the future. This event will begin at 2.00pm in the Carey Baptist Church Hall with a short history of the project to restore the Water Gardens, and a presentation by the Friends. This will be followed by a tour of the Water Gardens led by the Friends, and the tour will end with a cup of tea in their HQ, the refurbished Gardens shed.

The cost of the day will be £10.00 per delegate

To reserve your place on either of these visits, please use the application form enclosed with this copy of the newsletter

www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

[reg.charity no. 1010093]