

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2017



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Chairman's Report – Autumn Newsletter, 2017



It is an honour to take the chair of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, so ably led for the past four years by Bella Stuart-Smith, whose infectious enthusiasm and capacity to find time to provide strong leadership for the Trust have been inspiring. The splendid team of volunteers, led by Anne Rowe and Kate Harwood, make us a highly effective and respected organisation in terms of researching and conserving our historic landscape. I shall do my best to support them. The Trust also has an important educational role: our work with primary schools, which will be carried forward by Bella; courses in garden and landscape history; study days; and a wide variety of talks and guided walks.

I owe pretty much all I know about the history of parks and gardens to these lively and stimulating events. I was first attracted to the HGT as a social member, a hands-on gardener who enjoyed the excellent garden visits and talks. Editing the Newsletter led me to a greater understanding of the wider work and activities of the Trust. I look forward to meeting more of our members through our many activities.

HGT Members have enjoyed a full programme of events over the past year, recorded in the articles that follow. Garratt's Farm was the perfect setting for our AGM in July, when Bella Stuart-Smith paid particular tributes to retiring committee members: Fiona Bancroft, replaced by Sally Pool as Treasurer, George Mitcheson, whose role as trustee is taken by Anne Mitcheson, and Annie Saner, who was presented with the Bunty Oakley vase in recognition of her many years organising popular and successful social and fundraising events for the Trust. I would be very pleased to hear from any members who would like to help with the organisation of our future events.

Behind the scenes, John Craggs has worked hard to bring the HGT website up to date. The main pages have been simplified, with links to a rich archive of detailed data. Do pay the site a visit at www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk. The Newsletter has a new editor: I am delighted that Deborah Spring has agreed to take this on. My own role will be that of 'desk-top publisher'.

This year the winter months, sometimes a fallow period for members of the HGT, will be enlivened with Winter Talks; you will find full details in this newsletter and on the website. The first will highlight the work of twentieth-century garden designer Rosemary Verey. The second focuses on late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century landscape gardener, Humphry Repton. Next year, two hundred years on from his death in 1818, HGT will publish 'Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire', a book drawing on members' research on sites across the county. There will be a series of events linked to the launch of the book, with details to follow in the Spring Newsletter.

To help me build a profile of our members' interests I have written a short questionnaire, which will accompany this newsletter. I should be most grateful if you would complete and return it to me - there is space to add your own comments, which I shall do my best to address.

'Not in My back Yard?' A Collaborative Approach to Development

Alison Moller

On April 22nd in the spacious surroundings of the Hatfield House Riding School, 44 delegates heard talks on three very different aspects of conservation and development.

Kate Harwood's first slide (Figure 1) was a shocking collage of some of the many Hertfordshire houses that have been demolished - the trend, which was nationwide by the 1950s, started as early as the 1930s in Hertfordshire. She pointed out that the house was in reality just the biggest 'garden building': once it disappears then the setting often does too.



Figure 1. Some of the lost Hertfordshire houses

Threats come in many different forms, and for a variety of reasons. Ignorance can result in misguided restoration, such as at Panshanger. The back-filling of the gravel extraction pits bears no relation to what was intended by Repton, and a huge fence with slots for bird watchers totally obscures one of the most important views. Lack of money and/or care is a problem, along with relaxed planning laws allowing massive extensions to garden buildings, such as The Lodge at Julien's. The major roads needed to move our increasing population often split estates. Kate cited the A10 at Youngsbury, the A41 at Tring and the A414 at Panshanger. Other threats examined

were the massive house building programme, golf courses, fields of solar panels and inappropriately sited wind farms.

On the positive side, Kate highlighted the work of the HGT mobilising the Woodland Trust to restore the dramatic views and *rond points* at Tring Park; persuading the Local Authority to take responsibility for restoring the Flint Fishing Lodge at Brocket Park and, by education and persuasion of the multiple owners, preserving the Bridgeman landscape at Sacombe Park. Heritage assets are irreplaceable and the work of groups such as the HGT and various Friends organisation are vital to balance the power of rich developers by ensuring that Sustainable Development principles are followed.

Anthony Downs, who heads the Planning and Development side of the Hatfield House estates, (Gascoyne Cecil Estates) presented a persuasive case for a Green Corridor running between Hertford in the east to St Albans in the west, created from woodland, grassland, arable land, golf courses, orchards and wildlife reserves. (Figure 2)

Not only would this assure the free movement of wildlife but by joining existing access with new footpaths, bridleways and cycle tracks the area would also become an important civic amenity allowing easy east/west movement. Anthony pointed out, however, that the proposal for Birchall, which has a central green space on land historically used as a dump for London's rubbish, would block this corridor as the houses and roads are around the outside.

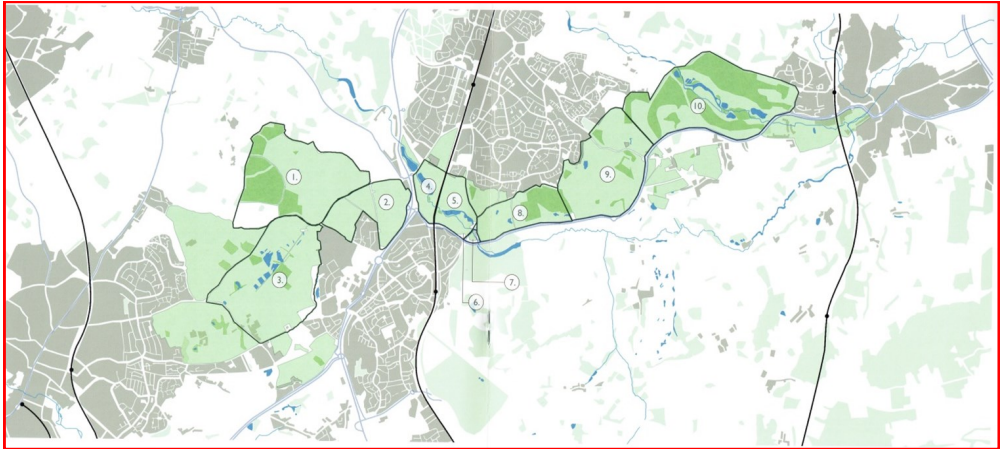


Figure 2. The Green Corridor from *A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Central Hertfordshire*. pp. 16 - 17.

As in the post-war era, new houses are needed in Hertfordshire. Two sites for development have been proposed. The Symondshyde development would use the principles of the Garden City movement to create an estate village with high quality housing, shops, a pub and a primary school. Since it would be developed by a single owner, who lives locally, clear design guidelines would be followed. In answer to a question, Anthony contrasted this to a hypothetical situation in which the Cecils sold the land to developers to make a 'quick buck' and housing was erected with no thought for anything but the bottom line.

There would be a 1km protected gap between the new village and the proposed extension at Stanboroughbury, which would help make it feel part of Hatfield and not just another urban sprawl. The clear aspiration is to show it is possible to build something of beauty today.

The Danesbury Fernery project is a shining example of what can be achieved with no money but a great deal of determination and enthusiasm. John Roper, who is leader of the Friends of Danesbury Park Volunteers, gave a beautifully illustrated talk on what had been achieved since September 2015 to restore what was described in 1881 as 'the best fernery to be found in the Home Counties'. For full details of the great progress being made at Danesbury, see John's article at page 15 of this Newsletter.

The four speakers then answered questions, and after a delicious lunch, we were treated to a sunlit tour of the Hatfield House gardens with the new Head Gardener, Andrew Turvey. He had only been in post for nine weeks but has already achieved significant changes. This has been possible because the garden is privately owned - so decisions for major changes can happen over lunchtime rather than the weeks or months of due process needed for English Heritage, for whom Andrew previously worked. The late Dowager Marchioness focused on the formal gardens near the house, but the present Lady Salisbury is developing the informal, more distant gardens.



Kate Harwood, John Roper and Anthony Downs

It was interesting to listen to Andrew's vision for the development in the garden, which ranged from the small - gravelling unsustainable grass, through the medium-sized - planting a hornbeam avenue - to the large scale. One example of the latter was the conversion of a swimming pool to a reflective lily pond. Andrew is a very hands-on Head Gardener and gave a most amusing account of his underwater tree felling activities to clear the island in the Lake! A great deal of manpower at this season is devoted to rose pruning and box hedge clipping, which makes his accomplishments in such a short time all the more impressive.

The Friends of Panshanger Park—Liz Carlin

The Panshanger Friends were formed to campaign for the preservation of Greater Panshanger Park, which includes Repton's design for the landscape laid out from 1799, and part of the earlier Cole Green Capability Brown landscape of 1756. An enthusiastic group assembled at a study day in Hertingfordbury on May 2nd to trace the involvement of the Friends in the conservation and restoration of this section of the Mimram Valley and adjacent plateaux following extensive gravel extraction. Our HGT chair, Bella Stuart-Smith, introduced Gary O'Leary, chair of the Friends, who explained how much this committed group has achieved in a relatively short time.

Much of the park has been worked for mineral and gravel extraction since the early 1980s. Permission was granted on the understanding that the area would be returned to the community as a country park in 1989. Unfortunately, a full Country Park Management Plan was never agreed, despite several reviews and requests.

The Park lost its Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status in 1980, but in 1987 the hugely important decision to list the site as Grade II* was made. The Park was already being used as a wildlife conservation area by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. Following repeated delays to the introduction of the country park, the Panshanger Friends was launched in 2013. Soon after this, the first stage of the country park opened to the public. In 2017, there is still no agreed Management Plan, but the site's important heritage is finally on the map. The plan to ruin Repton's Broadwater was halted through a massive protest orchestrated by the Friends. A Draft Management Plan, which the Friends do not consider as fit for purpose, is now before the planners.

The objectives of the Friends are to preserve and enhance the heritage and ecology of the park, and the environment in which it is situated. They wish to gain full access to maintain its features and restore listed buildings. Campaigning, raising awareness in the local community and liaising between interested groups is crucial, as there are potential clashes of interest. As well as 1,250 members, the Friends have access to the 8,000 members of 22 other groups who are working with them. Much of what the Friends set out as their vision in 2013 has been incorporated into the draft Management Plan. More of the park was opened in 2015, giving access to the Great Oak. With a massive girth of 7.60m, this mighty tree is the largest maiden, or clear-stemmed, oak in the country, believed to have been planted in the sixteenth century. Gary made it clear that more of the Park could - and should - be open now. The Friends are now part of the Hertfordshire County Council Strategic Advisory Group, and working to ensure that when extraction is finished at the end of 2017, the whole park will be open.



Gary O'Leary addresses the group

After we had heard from Gary, there were short presentations by members of the Friends. Kate Harwood spoke about the heritage of Panshanger, Rab Harley about the volunteering programmes at the Park, Geoff Cordingly on the heritage walks and talks, and Lynn Myland about multi-access use to the Park.

Gary closed the session by emphasising that this formidable group of skilled and committed people would continue working over a large range of issues. They hope to engage with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to achieve full opening of the Park, as well as continue to work with organisations like the Green Corridor Project to maintain the setting on which its listed status depends.

After lunch, the group moved into the Park itself where the afternoon was spent looking at the heritage aspects of the site. Expertly led by Kate Harwood, we walked along the Broadwater, noting the carefully planned and sculpted Repton vistas before walking up to see the Great Oak. We admired the derelict industrial hydraulics as well as the site of the house, reached through its neglected and overgrown formal gardens. The group split into longer and shorter walks at the Riverside Cottage.

There is, with the support of Tarmac, a 5k weekly run through the Park, which has attracted 15,000 participants. Heritage walks, talks and events are held throughout the year. However, only one-third of the Park is currently accessible, and then only to a limited extent for cyclists, horses, and the disabled. There is very poor access from the west and north. Significant harm has been done to buildings and the site, making a travesty of the original pledges.

After 34 years of asking, Tarmac has submitted a Draft Country Park Management Plan. The volunteers have achieved an enormous amount, against the odds, but much remains to be to be done to make the restoration of Panshanger effective, and to honour and respond to



Panshanger: The Orangery

the heritage of this important site. In August this year an independent government inspector was appointed to conduct an Examination in Public (EiP) of East Herts Council District Plan, which is the next important stage towards final adoption. The current timetable sees the EiP starting in early October. From November 6th, specific sites will be looked at in detail. Representations made during the consultation will be looked at. Then a report will be written which the Council hopes to receive by the end of the year. More information can be found at

www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplanexamination.

Interpreting the Account Book of Capability Brown Jenny Milledge

Last year, as part of the Capability Brown tercentenary celebrations, the RHS Lindley Library offered a workshop to Gardens Trust members to enable them to examine and discuss Brown's Account Book. I felt I had a working knowledge of Brown and I had been researching his work for the walks leaflets, so the opportunity to examine this unique book encouraged me to sign up for the workshop. I was not disappointed.

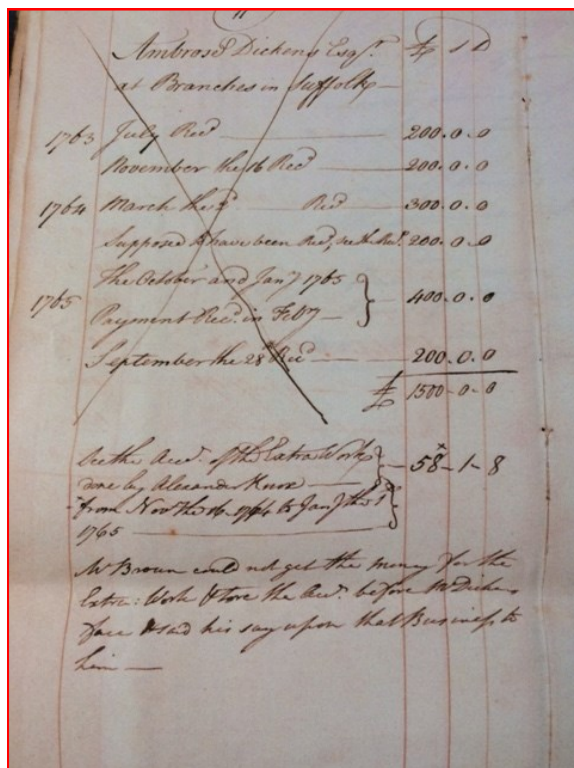
The Lindley Library is on five sites, with branches at the RHS gardens at Wisley, Harlow Carr (Harrogate), Hyde Hall and Rosemoor, but for this special day I went to the main library in Vincent Square in London, which is a ten-minute walk from Victoria station or St James' Park tube.

After a welcome and introduction by Fiona Davison, Head of Libraries and Exhibitions, we were ready for a talk by Peter Foden, a paleographer, who introduced the techniques used to identify and read letterforms. Fortunately, the English round hand of the eighteenth century means that Brown's writing is fairly easy to read. His hand was particularly neat and

regular. Most helpfully, Peter identified commonly used linguistic forms to help us unravel meaning. During the afternoon we divided into small groups for a practical session, transcribing different pages of Brown's accounts. It became clear that the book was one of several (though this is the only account book known to have survived). We discovered how the way entries were systematically scored out showed Brown's methodical record-keeping. Indeed, the account book reveals Brown the man as well as 'Brown the Businessman'.

... Using a double entry book-keeping system, Brown allocated each client a separate ledger page. When the account has been paid the details are crossed through ...

The entry for Ambrose Dickens Esq. of Branches in Suffolk, reveals that he had agreed with Brown a fixed price of £1500 for work which began on March 25th 1763. Dickens duly paid the account approximately every six months in £200 instalments and the entries are crossed through after September 1765 when £1500 had been paid. However, Brown issued an additional account of £58-1s-8d for extra work carried out by Alexander Knox between November 1764 and January 1765 and the comment underneath reads:



'Mr Brown could not get the money for the Extra : Work and tore the account before Mr Dickens face and said his say upon the Business to him —'

Clearly Dickens refused to pay the additional expenses above the original price quoted and Brown vented his frustration by tearing up the bill! It would be interesting to know who wrote this comment.

I found the day both informative and useful - Peter gave us practical experience and was on hand to help us understand some of the idiosyncrasies of eighteenth-century terminology, as well as useful sources to increase our knowledge of paleography.

The libraries hold the largest collection of horticultural books in the world, and are open to all. There are books to interest all gardening enthusiasts. The Lindley Library in London specialises in botanical art and garden history, as well as gardening and garden design, history of plants and plant discovery, and the history of nurseries and nursery trades. Open Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays), it holds unique collections of early printed books on gardening, botanical art and photographs. The collection of journals on all things horticultural is unsurpassed. It also holds the archives of the RHS and personal archives of notable gardeners and garden designers. If you have never visited the library I can recommend it. I have found it an invaluable resource when researching gardens; the staff are very helpful and have a wealth of knowledge.

Recently refurbished and organised on two floors, the library has an Upper Reading Room with an open access lending library and exhibition space, while you can find the heritage collections in the Research Room downstairs (do remember to book a desk in advance, which can be done online).

More information is available on the website: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs> and information to help you reserve a desk is available at www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs/library-services/researching

Brickendonbury: The Avenue Puzzle — Sue Friend

I discovered Brickendonbury when we were flooded out of our house in 2014 and stayed in a holiday cottage on the estate. I jumped at the chance to go round the house and gardens later in the year on a Heritage Open day. The property has been home to the Tun Abdul Razak Research Centre since 1971 and the buildings have been converted into offices and laboratories for work related to rubber research. Many features of the garden created by the Pearson family between 1893 and 1925 remain, as well as a moat that may date back to medieval or even Roman times.

Esther Gatland started to research the garden at Brickendonbury before her death, and commented on the very complex history of this landscape. Definitely occupied since Saxon times, there was possibly an earlier Roman settlement: a hoard of Roman coins was



Brickendonbury: house and moat

uncovered in 1895 when the sunken garden was constructed.

Esther referred to an 'Avenue Puzzle', relating to her investigations into the origins of the garden as shown on the Dury and Andrews map of 1766, where the house is depicted at the centre of many avenues to the north and south. 'This may be reckon'd one of the delightful seats of this neighbourhood, having to the front a dry pleasant soil towards Hertford, and on the contrary view woods a half mile distance with vistas all pointing to the house,' wrote Salmon, in his 1728 history of Hertfordshire, when the owner was Sir Thomas Clarke, son of a successful London merchant and Lord Mayor of London who bought the estate in 1682. The impressive avenues and gardens were probably part of the refurbishment of the estate undertaken by these prosperous owners.

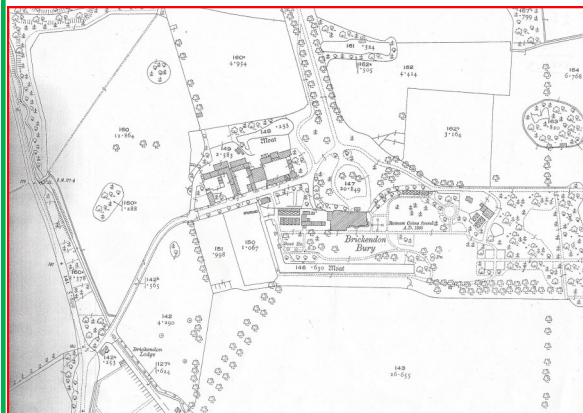


Brickendonbury—Parish Map circa 1770

A parish map circa 1770 shows two ornamental ponds situated to the front of the house: one octagonal, the other rectangular with a wider central part. The avenue extending from the front of the house to the north has semi-circular planting features along its length, like small *rond-points*.

Other research group members commented that many of the garden features were typical of Charles Bridgeman's designs. Bridgeman, who was the Royal gardener between 1728-38, is known to have worked on a number of gardens in Hertfordshire. He had a cousin, confusingly of the same name, who was the mayor of Hertford and a close neighbour of Sir Thomas Clarke. Perhaps Charles Bridgeman the gardener was introduced to Sir Thomas by his cousin and asked to design a new garden. While none of the unidentified plans attributed to Bridgeman match the garden at Brickendonbury, the garden does display features similar to those in his plans for nearby Sacombe. Bridgeman's biographer, Peter Willis, writes that the grounds at Sacombe 'demonstrate Bridgeman's typical axuality and his use of dense woodland, rectilinear canals, a rectangular kitchen garden, an amphitheatre and an octagonal basin', and notes the use of avenues, some with semi-circles, and an octagonal pond at Wanstead. I like to think that Charles Bridgeman is the solution to Esther's avenue puzzle.

The estate passed to Sir Thomas's niece Jane and her husband Thomas Morgan. The long drive from the house down an avenue of trees that linked the house to Hertford, shown on the parish map, still exists and is known as Morgan's Walk. Other features of the map still visible include a pond on the site of the rectangular pond, the moat or canal to the south of the house, and an avenue through Light Wood. The gardens today reflect the renovations that were begun by George Pearson, a wealthy businessman, in 1893 and continued by his son Sir Edward Pearson, into the 1920s.



Brickendonbury—1923 OS map

Brickendonbury—sunken flower bed east of mansion



The 1923 OS map shows the two rose gardens, one circular, the other with four square beds; the sunken garden to the east of the house; the moat with a boat house; and a Dutch garden. At the eastern end of the moat was a Pulhamite rock feature. Many specimen trees were planted to commemorate family occasions. This period is well documented through an album of photos taken in 1904, and detailed descriptions in garden magazines of the time.

I hope that my full report on this fascinating garden will soon be available for those who wish to know more.

Four Years On—Bella Stuart-Smith

July 2013, and the day dawns when Christopher Melluish relinquishes his position as Chairman of HGT, a day no one can actually imagine, as he has steered the charity for some seventeen years and built it into a nationally acclaimed trust, part of the Association of Gardens Trusts. In my speech to thank him I listed all his qualities, in particular those I would never be able to emulate. Foremost amongst them was being quick on the telephone, a quality that seems to belong to the dark ages now that we all rely on email.

Four years on, and how did I follow in those footsteps? Mostly, I am glad to say, by realising very quickly that it is our active members who make HGT special. It is their collective passion that drives us to learn about Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, and walk his estates with the most splendid leaflets in our hands to guide us. It is how we can achieve something positive at a historic site, or at the very least make enough noise to make people sit up and do it for us. Then, very occasionally, we can enable something wonderful.

I think back to the excitement of seeing the *rond point* at Tring Park, as that part of Bridgman's plan was newly revealed after so many years. There was the proud moment of the reprieve at Panshanger, and the Broadwater, arguably Repton's finest work in Hertfordshire, was saved. Finally, Hemel Water Gardens and Jellicoe's serpentine design live on in a new and restored form. These achievements have been the icing on the cake.

Our work is enabled by thoughtful and dogged research. I have peeked in on researchers sharing their trials and tribulations, and learnt with them as we trundled over lumps and bumps in the landscape, waiting with bated breath as Tom Williamson unpicked layer upon layer of historical interest. Anne Rowe and Kate Harwood have challenged us to think and look at different and wonderfully rich seams of Hertfordshire's landscape history. I look forward to revelling in the new Repton book, to be published for his anniversary year in 2018.

There is work going on behind the scenes and collaboration on all sorts of levels. I was pleased when the Association of Garden Trusts amalgamated with the Garden History Society to become the Gardens Trust, which now speaks with one voice across the country on historical landscape. This involves more than just cost-cutting and shared resources. It has meant a drive to encourage volunteers at local level to become more involved with conservation work. This remains a challenge, but I hope we have inched closer to encouraging researchers to include statements of significance and write summary reports of their research.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter, which is underpinned by hours of thought and forward planning. The same goes for all the events. I have learnt a huge amount from erudite lecturers, tours and study days that have challenged and entertained in equal measure. I like gardening, as most of you probably know, and have relished getting on a bus for a day out with a great group of likeminded enthusiasts, to ooh and aah over other people's immaculate borders, and dissect them over indulgent lunches. As I write it all sounds pretty idyllic. Have four years just passed in a haze of golden memories? Of course, it isn't always

glamorous, particularly when post bridge fundraiser the boiler breaks and we end by washing 70 plates in cold water. An inventive committee keeps the show on the road with much good humour and comradeship.

The new website has been a collaborative, marathon piece of work. It really does tell a great story of HGT and what is happening in the organisation, with resources for the inquisitive, the amateur and the more professional landscape historian. I hope it will attract new members, as it describes our work in much tighter terms and looks appealing. Please spread the word about

www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk .

Where garden history research has led me—Deborah Spring

A short module in a planting design course at Capel Manor first opened my eyes to garden history. I studied for a part-time MA in the subject at Birkbeck, while still working as an academic publisher nearby, and wrote my dissertation on the sixteenth-century gardens of the Inns of Court in London.

While doing further research, including compiling a report on Hunsdon House for the HGT research group, and writing the chapter on early Hertfordshire gardens for the second HGT book, I was often fatally diverted from the task at hand by stories of the people behind the houses and gardens. A long detour through the diaries of Mrs Calvert, political wife and glamorous mistress of Hunsdon in the early nineteenth century, yielded plenty of gossip but not a single mention of gardens, as she couldn't stand the countryside and only longed to be partying in London and Brighton. Two years ago, I embarked on a second MA, this time in biography and non-fiction writing, at the University of East Anglia. Mrs Calvert featured in one of my essays.

While researching the gardens of Francis Bacon (the first Viscount St Albans, he lived at Gorhambury, wrote a famous essay on gardens, and laid out the Walks at Gray's Inn), I caught a glimpse of his mother, Lady Anne Bacon, whose letters to her sons were forthright and vivid. A woman of fierce intellect and drive, a translator and active supporter of religious reform, she ran the Gorhambury estate alone for the thirty years of her widowhood, and sheltered dissident puritan priests there. I wrote my UEA dissertation about this formidable woman, and my research into her life continues. Garden history has led me to a fascinating subject. Archive research training and practical experience, gained through the Garden History MA and the inspirational HGT research group, are invaluable for background sleuthing about the sites of houses Lady Bacon lived in, and the landscapes in which they are set - from her childhood in Essex, to early married life in Suffolk, and her ultimate home, like me, in Hertfordshire.

Deborah has joined Roger to help compile and edit the HGT Newsletters.

Recovering a Victorian Fernery — John Roper

'The best to be found in the Home Counties'

Requisitioned during both World Wars, and subsequently a hospital for long-stay patients, Danesbury House was developed as private apartments in the 1990s. Large areas of the estate came into the possession of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in 1985. In 1998 the estate was designated a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), covering an area of some 25 hectares (65 acres).

In 1859 the owner of Danesbury House, William John Blake, asked his gardener Anthony Parsons to construct a Fernery in an old chalk pit. Parsons, a fern cultivator of some renown, completed the work in 1860. About 500 yards east of the House, the Fernery was in what is now one of the pastures forming the LNR. However, by 1881, when the RHS journal *Garden Memoranda* referred to it as 'the best fernery to be found in the Home Counties', its decline was imminent. It is doubtful that the fernery was actively managed after the change of ownership that followed the death of William John Blake (1875) and Anthony Parsons's death five years later. It was remote from the House, and the Victorian fad for ferns was over.

Apart from the famed collection of rare ferns it once contained, the feature of principal interest in the fernery was the artificial rockwork known as Pulhamite, constructed *in situ* by James Pulham the Second, of Broxbourne. The Pulham family was famed for building natural-looking stone for great houses and country estates, including Buckingham Palace and Sandringham. Pulham's design at Danesbury included 'a dropping well, a grotto, a pass, and a rustic bridge over a gorge'. Unfortunately, no original plans exist, and we do not yet know what is meant by 'a pass' in this context.

Under the direction of the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, a small group of volunteers (the Friends) began clearing paths and scrub on the Nature Reserve in the 1990s. In September 2015, they ventured onto the derelict site of the Fernery, written off by Pulhamite experts as 'beyond redemption'. The hazardous old chalk pit was full of nettles, elder, thistles, litter and rubble. While the Pulhamite rock work was still there, it lay behind a near-impenetrable tangle of ivy and tree roots.

The Council's Landscape and Ecology Department offered the Friends the encouragement and practical support they would need to clear and maintain the site. By June 2016 they had cleared all the nettles, elder and scrub, poisoned invasive tree roots and sown grass to make the site look less derelict. Once the 'scrub-bashing' phase was over, by November 2016, the Borough Council provided specialist contractors who began carefully excavating the original pathways.

By March 2017, with many tons of spoil still to move, it was recognised that it could take the Friends years to make further serious inroads. The contractors came back on site for another short period of intense and skilled activity. Some massive discoveries were made:



Before ...

a sudden stop before the 'gorge'. This might have been the point where the Victorians crossed to the other side over a 'rustic bridge'. To our amazement, in mid-May 2017 a water pipe was uncovered adjacent to the Dropping Well, with a built in key/tap to control the water flow. The Council has agreed to replace a couple of large Pulhamite stones that fell many years ago from the top of the grotto.

We estimate that it will be three years before the restoration is complete. There are tons more soil to excavate before we will completely uncover all the rockwork and restore the original topography of the Fernery. We have to work out how the



... during ...

Victorians got water to the site and pumped it around. We need to cost the repair/ replacement of the perimeter iron fencing, and the ironwork that originally formed a 'grotesque' entrance. At some stage we might need a technical survey of the Pulhamite rockwork. We have purchased and planted specimen ferns thanks to a generous gift from members of the local Gardening Club. We are



the Welwyn Wailers and plants donated by now setting up a group of Saturday Fernery Friends to help plant up and maintain all parts of the Fernery as excavations proceed. Their central aim will be to restore the Danesbury Fernery to be - once again - the best in the Home Counties.

... and after.

Access to the site, which is permanently open, is via North Ride, Welwyn, Herts, AL6 9RD.

www.danesburyfernery.org.uk



Seven Glorious East Anglian Gardens – and two Nights by the Sea!

Roger Gedye

The expectations generated by these words were more than fulfilled by the reality of Sonja Fillingham's expedition in July to The Blakeney Hotel and seven of Norfolk's finest gardens. The sun shone throughout, the gardens reflected a wide range of contrasting styles, and their owners could not have been more generous in giving of their time, their expertise and the fruits of their larders.



Fish and lily pond at Cobbs Hall

Dr and Mrs Soper at Cobbs Hall have converted a farmyard with its horse trough into a model country garden. The horse trough has been replaced by a large fish and lily pond and the farmyard has given way to spreading lawns, with a finely planted herbaceous border and an enclosing boundary wall. Over the years Dr Soper has put his practical skills to use creating features that include a walled vegetable garden, a contemporary-styled rose garden and a 'ruined

priory' folly. *En route* to Blakeney we visited the walled gardens at Thorpland Hall, where Arne Maynard designed the planting. Arne and the gardens team have refreshed the original scheme over the past three years. The result is a plantsman's master-class, with strategically placed photographic representations of the varieties to assist the ordinary gardening mortal.



Section of the walled garden at Thorpland Hall



*Sonja Fillingham and Mr Watts at
Dale farm*



...the perfect English garden ...

for a blaze of colour. Closer inspection showed that the dictum 'right plant in the right place' had been followed to perfection. From damp lakeside to arid gravel drive the plants were flourishing and abundant – and a generous selection was available in pots for enthusiasts to carry away for themselves.

Three generations of the Savory family have created the perfect English garden around their Elizabethan mansion, Thorpland Hall. It has a walled garden, billowing with roses; an immaculate lawn surrounded by classic herbaceous borders leading to a wilderness surrounding a lake, and an invitingly placed

At Blakeney the tide was in, the food was excellent and the beds were soft: suitably refreshed, we were ready for three more contrasting gardens on our second day. An unassuming entrance from a Dereham street was the unexpected portal to the most romantic of garden plantings. Dale Farm garden has been created in retirement by Mr and Mrs Watts. Trained as a parks gardens apprentice, and later by Kew, Mr Watts has created a garden paradise around an extensive lake, studded with water lilies. The rebuilt Tudor farmhouse provides an attractive backdrop



Pre-lunch drinks at Thorpland Hall



... green and formal ...

shepherd's hut providing the perfect setting for the bucolic scene of a herd of cows grazing the field beyond.

The third and final visit for the day provided a contemplative, scholarly contrast to the earlier romantic effusions of colour. At Silverstone Farm, George Carter, noted designer of formal gardens inspired by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, has created his own green and formal masterpiece. Unsurprisingly, William

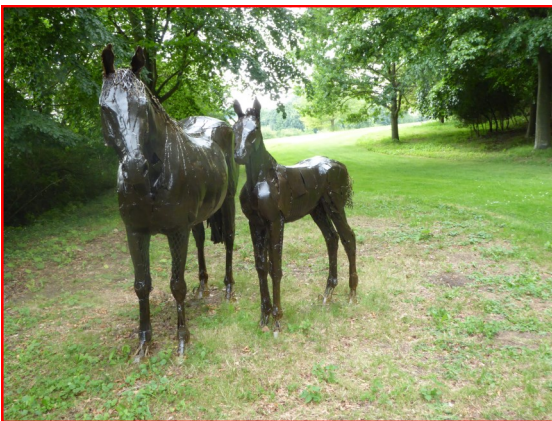


Kettle Hill, a wonderfully romantic garden ...

herbaceous borders and opulent roses, Mrs Winch has consulted her good friend, George Carter. His influence can be seen in the small courtyard entrance garden, with its grey foliage, neat symmetry and intricate 'window' giving a glimpse of the adjacent 'secret garden'.

At Ousden House the sheer extent of the achievement – ten acres of formal and informal gardens formed around a redbrick coach house and an Elizabethan clock-tower in less than 20 years - is breathtaking. It was a perfect finale for an inspiring three days.

Members are advised to look out for and to book early on Sonja's next gardening expedition.



*Equine statuary at Ousden House—
fabricated from recycled motor cars!*

Kent is an inspiration and Rousham is among George's favourite English gardens. His garden calmed the spirit and sent us on our way more aware of another gardening dictum, 'that less may often prove to be more'.

And so to our final day and two more glorious gardens: Kettle Hill, another professional plantsman's garden, and Ousden House, the work of Mr and Mrs Alistair Robinson, a classical English garden created from very little in a single generation. It is interesting that at Kettle Hill, a wonderfully romantic garden of



*Ousden House, red brick coach-house and
Elizabethan clock-tower ...*

HGT Events and Outings during 2017

Roger Gedye

The HGT year of 2017 falls between formal commemorations for two of Britain's greatest 18th century landscape gardeners: 'Capability Brown' (b. 1716) and Humphry Repton (whose death in 1818 will be commemorated next year). Classical landscapes were duly celebrated in the Newsletter for 2016 and will feature strongly in the edition to follow in the spring. This year the focus has been on the conservation and preservation of our contemporary landscape. A significant event organised at the Riding School, Hatfield House in April is reported by Alison Moller (pages 4—6) and associated articles by Liz Carlin (pages 6—8) and John Roper (pages 15—16) describe the important contributions of Friends' Groups to the preservation of Hertfordshire's landscape heritage.



Pulhamite cave and rockwork at High Leigh

An article by Tina Rowlands on her research at 'High Leigh', Hoddesden (Autumn Newsletter, 2016), was illustrated by a stimulating walk around the site for a small group of HGT members, led by Tina, in June. As the photographs suggest, High Leigh retains some of the most impressive artificial rockwork created in Hertfordshire by the Broxbourne firm of James Pulham and Son. Tina described the development of the estate by its 19th century owners, culminating in the gift of a significant section of the park to the citizens of Hoddesden, now named Barclay Park in memory of the benefactor, Robert Barclay of the banking family.



Earlier in the year, in a joint enterprise with Bedfordshire GT, Kate Harwood led two groups to Southill Park, the 18th century family home of the Whitbread family. Mr and Mrs Charles Whitbread, together with the estate archivist, welcomed each group and gave an informative tour of the house.

HGT members explore the grounds at Southill Park

After a picnic lunch in the 'shoot room', a tour of the park and lake, which had been 'improved' by Brown in 1777 from an earlier 18th century more formal layout, was led by Kate and a colleague from BGT. Tea and cake in the 'shoot room' concluded these most interesting days.

Year on year, Sonja Fillingham's experienced and knowledgeable team provide our members with a mouth-watering selection of private gardens



Tulips at Ulting Wick



Umbrellas at Kelvedon Hall

Trevor and Susan Beale led the second visit in June to two contrasting Midlands gardens. At The Old Vicarage at Whissendine, Dr Sarah Furness led us through the paved fountain garden to the terrace designed by Bunny Guinness, where a geometric topiary knot design bordered stone steps up to the lawn, surrounded by unusual herbaceous plants, such as the red-stemmed *Beschoneria septentrionalis*. The second visit was to Westbrooke House at Little Bowden, co-

to visit. Sonja's own contribution is described in a separate article, 'Seven Glorious East Anglian Gardens' (pages 17–19). In early May, Ellie and Roy Johnson chose to visit two outstanding Essex gardens noted for their spring displays: 'Ulting Wick' at Malden and Kelvedon Hall; as the photographs show, the weather could not match the magnificence of the flowers.



The terrace at Whissendine

incidentally the family home of newly elected HGT trustee, Anne Mitcheson. Here Mrs. Joanne Drew showed us, among many of the features she has introduced, the Victorian walled flower garden which she had created around a central arbour, with square beds filled with cottage garden plants.



Walled garden at Westbrooke House

After many years, during which she has organised so many successful social and fund-raising events, Annie Saner has retired from the HGT committee. Her final event, in March, was a relaxed and enjoyable Bridge Day at Annable's Farm near Harpenden. With its superb location, its views of the Ver Valley and the distant Hertfordshire Show Ground, the farm provided a perfect setting for a full-house of 68 guests. As usual, lunch was provided by the ladies of the committee, while the gentlemen served the drinks. Annie possesses the knack of ensuring her volunteers have as much fun as the participants, seems to be enjoying herself as much as anyone, while disguising the fact that her immaculate preparation and hard work ensures the success of the event. She will be greatly missed – perhaps she can be coaxed from retirement from time to time on a consultancy basis!



Hampstead Garden Suburb—house first occupied by the founder, Henrietta Barnett

In September and October three autumnal walks were led by Kate Harwood, around 20th century Garden City 'Utopias': Letchworth, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Welwyn Garden City. Background to the walks was given by Kate's article in the HGT Spring Newsletter, 2016, 'Utopia to Dystopia – Planning in the 21st century'. One hundred years later these visionary designs for urban living retain their attraction as gracious and comfortable locations to live; but affordability, an essential consideration for their founders, is now way beyond the pocket of the workers for whom at least a proportion of the accommodation in the Garden Cities was intended.

The order of the walks was chosen to reflect the chronological order of the three 'Garden City' inspired communities. Architectural detail had clearly evolved: the influence of the Arts and Crafts style so characteristic of Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb had given way to a distinctively Neo-Georgian look for Welwyn Garden City. The principal buildings at each location were clearly the inspiration of different leading architects. It is the landscape that creates a common feeling of space and harmony to the whole. The carefully planned vistas were created as a feature of the master plans for each of the Garden Cities, exemplified by the approach to Central Square from the Heath at Hampstead Garden Suburb, and the fine views along Parkway at Welwyn Garden City, where the gardens were laid out before building commenced.



Welwyn Garden City—plaque commemorating the 'Garden Cities' founder: Ebenezer Howard

The landscaping of the residential streets: houses set back from tree lined roads behind leafy hedges with intersections designed to permit diagonal vistas in addition to right-angled turns, creates a strong connection between the three communities.

These walks have been much enjoyed, and it is to be hoped that Kate can be encouraged to offer more of the same in future years.

‘Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire: Documents and landscapes’ Sue Flood

In March 2016, at their annual ‘seminar and soup’, the HGT Research Group discussed the idea of producing a book in celebration of Humphry Repton’s Hertfordshire commissions to mark the bicentenary of his death. Things moved quickly, and we soon reached an agreement with the University of Hertfordshire Press to publish a fully illustrated, hardback volume. Some research had already been completed for sites such as Offley and Lamer, and written up as full HGT reports. We decided to compile a shorter report for each site, discussing the evidence for Repton’s work, and whether any of it can still be seen today. We would present the whole as a gazetteer, with an Introduction by Tom Williamson assessing the importance of Repton’s work in Hertfordshire and its place in the national context.

We then believed that there were 17 sites in Hertfordshire where Repton was known to have worked, with the possible addition of Digswell House. During our research another site came to light: this was Hilfield Castle or Lodge, in the parish of Aldenham, newly built from 1798. So we now have evidence for 19 sites in Hertfordshire, more than any other county of a similar size. Most of us knew of Repton’s work at Ashridge and Panshanger, major commissions for titled estate owners. We now know that Repton worked for a larger number of newly rich purchasers of ‘villa’ properties within commuting distance of the capital, mostly situated in the southern half of the county, with the parish of Aldenham containing three of them.

The book will include estate maps and drawings, all the paintings from the extant Red Books as well as their full texts, and transcripts of letters and accounts. Red Books were made for Ashridge, Lamer, New Barnes, Panshanger, Tewin Water, Wall Hall, Wood Hill and Wyddial, of which six survive. Wyddial is known only because Repton quotes from it in his Red Books for other sites outside Hertfordshire. Haileybury was one of Repton’s few corporate commissions. While his full report does not survive, a great deal of evidence lies in the letters and papers of the East India Company, held by the British Library.

This project has been exciting, and great fun. My thanks go out to all the Research Group members who have contributed chapters to the book for their unfailing help and patience. Our work is on track to be published in the spring of 2018. There will be an exhibition, and talk by Tom Williamson, at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies at County Hall in April or May. More details will appear in the next newsletter.

Historic Orchards in the East of England—Project Launch

Kate Harwood

Little is known about our historic orchards, although there is much anecdotal evidence for decline and neglect. This new project, based at the University of East Anglia, aims to survey each county and research their history. Plenty of volunteers are needed, which is where the county gardens trusts come in. The programme of training for volunteers ranges from simple surveys to workshops on managing orchards and trees. The survey data will be used to record our orchards' significance as habitats for biodiversity and wildlife.



The CGTs' expertise in archival research on historic gardens will be crucial to tracing the history of the orchards. This will help us understand what was grown locally, how orchards were managed, and their importance to the local community and its economy. In Hertfordshire's case what, if any, effects did the London market have on our orchard provision? We know we had some star players such as Lane's of Berkhamsted and Rivers of Sawbridgeworth, but there are many little local orchards unrecorded and perhaps uncared for.

Launching the Orchards East Project

Orchards East was launched in Hertfordshire in September 9th. Other counties in the East of England will follow, extending initiatives already developed by partner organisations: the Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group, and the East of England Apples and Orchards Project. Each county will spearhead its own research. HGT is working with others, and we hope that CGTs in Bedfordshire, Cambridge, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk will be similarly involved. Not only might we discover wonders we didn't know of locally, but also the regional context, similarities and differences will deepen our understanding.

The day in Tewin Village Memorial Hall included splendid talks from Tom Williamson, Paul Read (of Suffolk), Martin Hicks (of HCC), Rachel Savage of UEA, Maria Waechter of the HERC, and an introduction to Tewin Orchard.

Mike Clarke leads the tour of Tewin Orchard



Fruit gins and vodkas available for free sampling enlivened our DIY lunch, and we then trooped off to Tewin Orchard for an eye-opening tour by Mike Clarke. Several HGT members came along.

There is little statutory protection for historic orchards. Sadly, another local historic orchard, The Node, has just had its hedges ripped out, trees felled, and its specially designed apple store demolished. HGT hopes this project will raise awareness amongst local people, and lead to historic orchards being included on Local Lists and given the consideration they deserve.

On the positive side, historic orchards of the future – community orchards, often growing local varieties – are springing up on patches of ground around the region. Orchards East can offer help and support to get such a project off the ground if you don't have a local orchard – or want another one.

Tewin Orchard



Further information, please contact rachel.savage@uea.ac.uk or visit the website www.orchardseast.org.uk or for Hertfordshire contact me on conservation@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Not an HGT member yet?

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

www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Or contact :

HGT Membership Secretary, Mead House, Bromley Lane, Wellpond Green,
Standon, SG11 1NW

Email: **membership@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk**

Dates for your Diary

HGT Winter Talks—2017/2018

A series of talks for HGT members, to be held on Monday afternoons at The Village Hall, Hall Lane, Woolmer Green, SG3 6XA (near Knebworth). There is ample parking at the Hall. Tea/coffee will be served from 2.45pm and the talks will start at 3.00pm.

Monday, December 4th, 2017

£5.00

***‘Rosemary Verey: her contribution and legacy to 20thC gardening’
Margie Hoffnung***

Margie Hoffnung is the Conservation Officer with the Gardens Trust. As a horticultural student at Writtle College, Margie was given a work placement with Rosemary Verey and following qualification continued to work for her on a part-time basis until Verey’s death in 2001. Margie’s friendship with Rosemary Verey and her close association with Verey’s professional life form the basis of this talk.

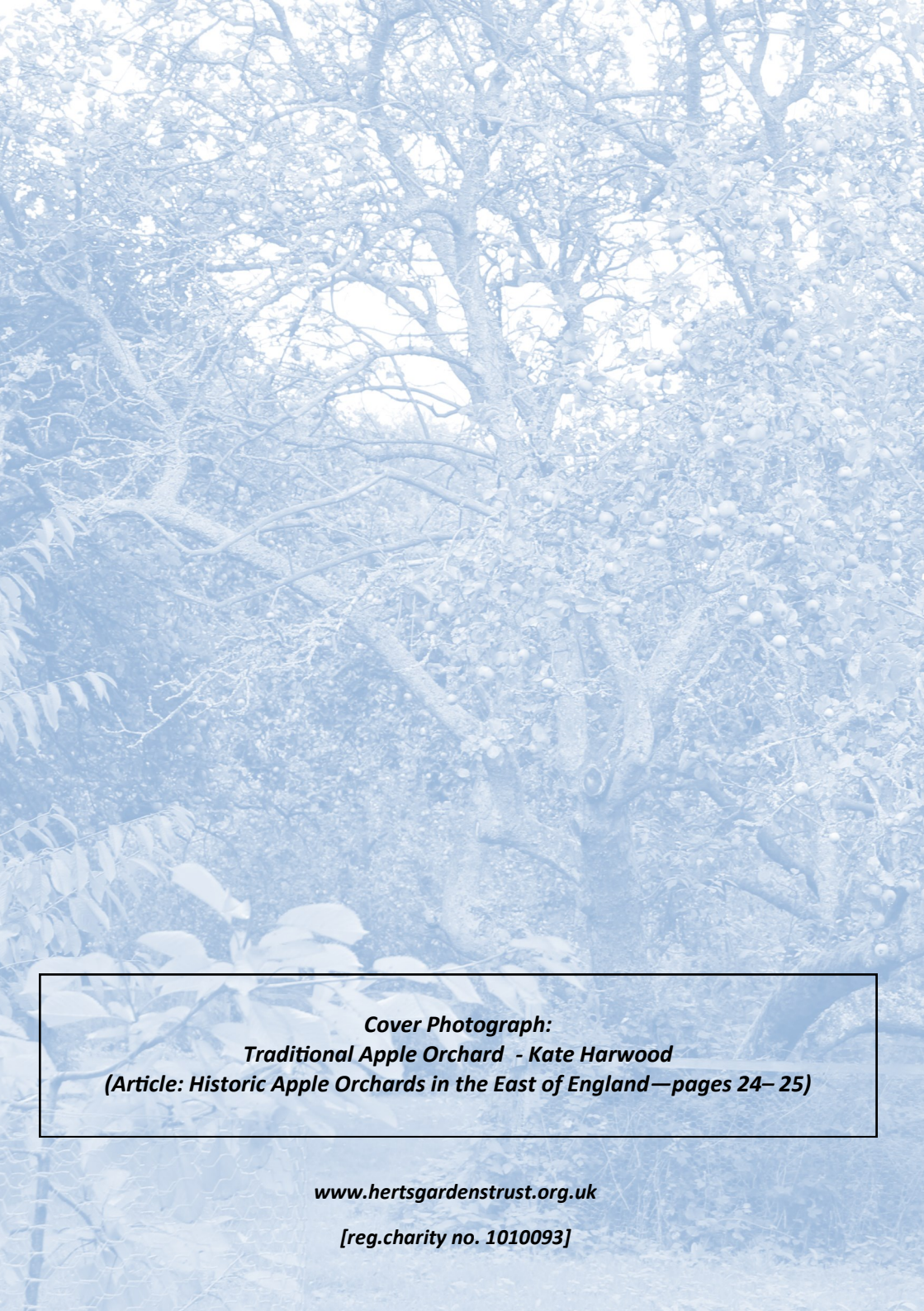
Monday, January 29th, 2018

£5.00

‘Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire’ – Anne Rowe

Anne Rowe is a landscape historian and co-ordinates the research work of the HGT. To commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of Humphry Repton in 1818, Anne and a team of HGT researchers have reviewed every site with which Humphry Repton was associated in Hertfordshire, revealing a number of new perspectives along the way. A new HGT publication, *‘Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire: Documents and Landscapes’*, will be published in 2018. Anne’s talk on Repton and his work in the county will be an ideal opportunity to learn more about the life and work of Britain’s first ‘landscape gardener’.

Reservations for places at the talks should be made to Roger Gedye using the ‘flyer’ which accompanies this Newsletter.



***Cover Photograph:
Traditional Apple Orchard - Kate Harwood
(Article: Historic Apple Orchards in the East of England—pages 24– 25)***

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