

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST



AUTUMN
NEWSLETTER
2013

The Chairman's Report—Bella Stuart-Smith



On a warm July evening, members and guests gathered for the AGM at Furneaux Pelham thanks to the kind invitation of Tina and Adrian Brunner.

If anything could soften the blow that Christopher Melliush after 17 years as Chairman of the Trust was resigning, it was the sight of their lovely borders and lake bathed in evening sunlight.

His qualities as Chairman are many, in particular his tact, his appreciation of others, his wonderful laugh, his charm, his hard work and his decisiveness. He has led superbly in his wise, gentle, warm and generous way. He has built an organisation which has national respect, which is on a sound economic footing and which has a new constitution adopted at the AGM and available to view on the website. I know he will be around to support us for a good time longer, but I would like to thank him and Susie for all they have done over the years.

So as the new chairman, I can say that we are well placed to look forward with confidence to the future, building on all the good work of the past. Very sadly Michael Goulding OBE, one of our patrons, died in the summer. I am delighted to report that Philip Harkness has agreed to become a patron following his family's long association with the Trust.

There has been lots going on as always and you will read about it in this newsletter. A memorable lecture from Dr Tim Butler about medicinal plants left us all wishing we could remember the name of the plant that will help the onset of Alzheimer. Kate Harwood led a course on 18th century gardens. Outings were full, and there are exciting plans for next year. Members helped in Hemel at a Water Gardens Information Day. Co author Anne Rowe published "Hertfordshire, a landscape history" with Tom Williamson. Schools ran Wheelbarrow workshops in the spring and summer and we are helping many schools to create and expand gardens with our awards.

There is much to talk about in conservation, and how we continue to respond to planners across the county. There is a study day on Bridgeman and Tring Park coming up and preparations already in hand for Capability Brown's tercentenary. There is a bridge day and a chance to learn from one of our patrons, Aubrey Barker, about propagation. Education is branching out to run a development day for teachers and we look forward to welcoming some new Mrs Wheelbarrows to help inspire primary



*Christopher Melliush—retiring
Chairman*

school children. As new chairman, I hope to attend as much as I can, to get to know as many members as possible and hear your views. I am lucky to be well supported by an outstanding executive committee who work so hard to ensure we are involved and active in so many of the issues that affect the Hertfordshire countryside.

HGT Events – 2013 – Garden Visits

Roy and Ellie Johnson led the April outing to Essex, fortunate to choose a warm and sunny day for our visit. After the long, cold winter the late start to the 2013 season meant the best of the spring flowers and shrubs was yet to come at *Olivers*, where morning coffee was enjoyed on the terrace. On to *Beeleigh Abbey*, the home of the Foyle family of bookshop fame, for lunch followed by a tour of the renovated Abbey building (which was freezing!) We were glad of the hot sun for a walk around the well-kept garden and a leisurely cup of tea on the lawn.



Image by Gray&Osbourne

Sonja Fillingham chose three perfect English country gardens for her visit in May. First to the *Manor House* at Ayot St Laurence, a garden undergoing continuous refurbishment with some wonderful plants and ideas; on to Bedfordshire, to *Tofte Manor*, a Jacobean house whose garden featured a grass labyrinth inspired by Chartres Cathedral; and finally, in a downpour, to *Glebe House*. Here, the garden which has been designed by Tom Stuart-Smith, featuring a series of vistas radiating from the house, has been sympathetically planted by the owners. The weather gods were kind and the visit ended in sunshine.

The June outing to three fascinating gardens in Northamptonshire was led by Trevor Beale. Lady Connell greeted the visitors at *Steane Park* and led them around her extensive garden. Mediaeval stew ponds and a 17thC church with rose-clad walls enhanced the feeling of history within a garden which includes wild flower meadows and woodland, with architectural features and many specimen trees. After lunch the group visited the delightful cottage garden at *Tilehouse Farm* and the spectacular *Hill Grounds*, where a yew hedge sheltered the garden to make an ideal climate for a wide variety of plants, many of them rare specimens.

(The covers show a collage of photographs by John Craggs from these visits.)

AGM at Furneaux Pelham Hall — Anne Rowe

Members who gathered for the 2013 AGM enjoyed a perfect summer evening in the delightful gardens of Furneaux Pelham Hall, a wonderful old house built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which looks as if it has changed little since. A memorable highlight which followed the formal meeting was a brief talk by Sue Flood, newly-retired County Archivist, who entertained us with a few of her memories from her time in the Archives. Sue explained that record keeping has a long history in Hertfordshire: the County Council formed a Records Committee in 1895 and an office was opened in Hertford in 1907. As early as 1939, when the Record Office moved to County Hall, some of the major collections of estate papers had already started to come in – including those for Gorhambury, Ashridge and Knebworth and those from the Halsey and Abel Smith families. These were joined after the Second World War by collections from the Delme Radcliffe family and the Panshanger estate. As many members will know, these estate records are invaluable mines of information for anyone researching the development of the parks and gardens on those estates.



Christopher Melliish presents Sue Flood with the HGT crystal vase at Furneaux Pelham Hall.

Sue joined the Hertfordshire Record Office as an assistant archivist in 1978 when it occupied an upstairs room with two tables for researchers and not a computer in sight! Visitor numbers in 1981 totalled about 2,000. Much has changed since then: a new, much larger, search room opened downstairs in about 1995 and the name changed to Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies following the merger with the Local Studies Library in 1997. Sue became County Archivist in 2001 and in 2011 visitor numbers topped 12,000.

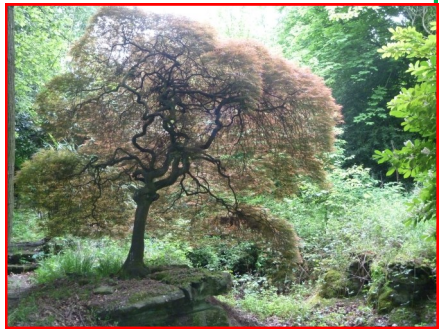
The long association between HALS and HGT is a matter of special pride for Sue: she has always taken an interest in the research of HGT volunteers – often taking a quick peek at the lovely old maps that we frequently request from the basement – and has given her full support to all that we do. In recognition of her personal contribution to the research efforts of the HGT over many years, Sue has been made an honorary member of the Trust and was presented with the HGT crystal vase by Christopher.

The history of the gardens at the Hall was researched by HGT volunteers Harold and Margaret Smith in 2007/8 and, if you want to read their report, it can be found in the Local Studies Library at HALS.

The Japanese-style Garden in England—Lottie Clarke

On April 19th garden historians and lovers of all things Japanese met for a study day at Felden Lodge, near Hemel Hempstead. Some had travelled from as far afield as Cornwall and Scotland, but they didn't hear about Japanese gardens. As two of the speakers explained, the only Japanese gardens are in Japan. So instead they enjoyed a day learning that 'the disposition of a few typical ornaments, of a bronze stork here and a stone lantern there, does not make a Japanese garden, it only makes an English garden speak with a Japanese voice'.

Jill Raggett set the scene for the origins of Japanese gardens in England. Until the middle of the 19th century western travellers were forbidden in the closed society of Japan. Gradually diplomatic missions were given access to the country, and travellers returned with descriptions of gardens, and *objets d'art*. Gardeners began to aspire to a new informal aesthetic, very different from the formal symmetry of Victorian bedding schemes. As plant hunters returned with maples, wisteria, bamboo and irises - Japanese species - so gardeners



Felden Lodge—Acer and (empty) pool.

believed they would be able to have a Japanese garden. The owners had rarely visited Japan themselves, so were requesting English designers to create fantasies which copied the illustrations they had seen in fashionable books and magazines. Bridges, lanterns, statues, even tea houses, and pagodas were shipped over from Japan and put into British settings. As always, landowners wanted to display their wealth and *avant garde* credentials, so they added a Japanese garden or, more correctly, a Japanese-style garden, to their estate.

Sarah Rutherford gave a detailed description of the history and on-going restoration of the superb gardens at Fanhams Hall, surely whetting the appetite of every garden visitor to go and see Mount Fuji, the tea house, lakes and wisteria pergolas for themselves..

Kate Harwood outlined what little is known of the origins of the Japanese garden at Felden Lodge, before the group went out to see for themselves what remains of it. A large pool with rock stepping stones, sadly now lined with turquoise fibreglass, is surrounded by meandering paths and the remnants of Japanese planting, including a maple trained to grow in an intricate sculptural shape. Bamboos now compete with laurel and holly, but the former charm of the garden can be imagined. It is hoped that it might, one day, be restored.

Some 18th Century Gardens in Context — Roger Gedye

The advance publicity in the Spring Newsletter promised, '*A short series of walks and talks by Kate Harwood, Anne Rowe and Alison Moller – three landscapes, many famous designers and a puzzle or two.*' My curiosity had been piqued by a damp but stimulating visit to Wrest Park during the so-called summer of 2012, during which Kate Harwood peeled back three centuries of changing garden design to reveal the glories of an aristocratic pleasure ground, now splendidly restored by English Heritage. Historical gardens research and the conservation of sites of historically significant parks and gardens may seem dry and specialised fields, inaccessible to the layman; but when such themes are unravelled by accomplished academic story tellers, describing the rise and fall of ambitious, fashion conscious and ultimately fallible human beings, the past assumes a remarkably accessible and contemporary feel.

This course was based on three of the greatest 18th Century gardens in England: Audley End (an English Heritage showpiece), Wimpole Hall (a jewel in the crown of the National Trust) and Gobions Wood (better known in its heyday as "Gubbins"). You would be forgiven for asking '*where?*' with respect to Gobions Wood, but for the article by Jenny Milledge on p7 of the HGT Spring Newsletter for 2013, which tells the remarkable story of the re-discovery of this once noble garden; of Anne Rowe's *Eureka!* moment in the Bodleian Library when she recognised a falsely catalogued map as a rare source of information on Bridgeman's design; and of the efforts of the HGT team of garden historians, led by Anne Rowe and Tom Williamson, to reveal Bridgeman's garden beneath the trees of the Brookman's Park wood that submerge it today.

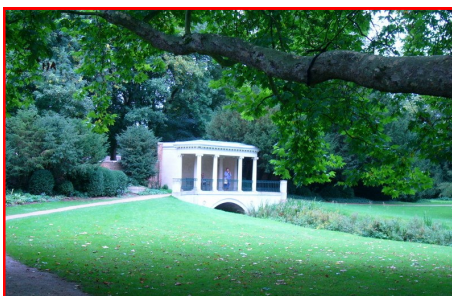


Gobions Wood—Folly Arch

There was a sense of *déjà vu* as I drove through mist and drizzling rain towards Audley End for Kate Harwood's introduction to our walks and talks - could the summer of 2013 really be as bad as 2012? The mist lifted enough to reveal the naturalised landscape of 'Capability' Brown, who was dismissed in 1766 by owner Sir John Griffin Griffin after only two years of work 'for failing to bend the lake around the right way', and the artfully placed constructions of Robert Adam, including his pillar commemorating Griffin's benefactor, the Countess of Portsmouth, and his Temple of Concorde, celebrating the recovery from madness of George III. Little is left of the late 18th C Elysian Garden, variously attributed to Richard Woods and to the Italian designer Columbani: the Cascade and Adam's Tea House Bridge remain, but

nothing of the Turkish Tent, the Temple, the Rustic Gate or the flower beds.

The talks prepared course members for their associated visits, providing the information, the stories and the colour needed to fill the inevitable gaps that remain in the 21st century landscape. Garden fashions change: 'Capability' Brown was more inclined to sweep away the efforts of his predecessors than to conserve them; Charles Bridgeman broke away from the geometric designs of the 17th Century to pave the way for the more radical naturalisation of the landscape practised by Brown and others.



Audley End—Adam's Tea House Bridge

Garden design, then as now, was an expression of wealth and power. The 'City Boys' of the 18thC included the nabobs of the East India Company and the favourites of the Georgian court. Fortunes were won and lost. Those in favour employed the most fashionable designers to provide the latest in garden style, just as the 'Best in Show' designers of today are called in to create gardens for our own pop singers, soccer stars and bankers. Alison Moller used the 18thC history of Wimpole Hall to illustrate this theme. The great formal gardens of the 2nd Earl of Radnor led to his bankruptcy and were swept away by Lord Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford, who employed Bridgeman to create a less formal design, including great tree-lined avenues reaching to the extremes of the parkland. Harley's fortunes declined with the shift in 18thC political influence from Tories to Whigs. Wimpole was acquired by the more politically favoured Earls of Hardwicke, who brought in 'Capability' Brown to replace the earlier garden designs and to create much of the landscape that visitors see today, including Sanderson Miller's gothic folly and Brown's ornamental lake.



Wimpole Hall—'Capability' Brown's lake and the Gothic Tower

This short series of walks and talks on the 18thC garden has been fascinating. HGT members are fortunate that Anne and Kate have been hatching plans for 2014. A day has been planned to study the 18thC influence on the park and gardens at Tring Park, and there are rumours of walks and talks around some significant Tudor gardens.

Book early!

Bush Hall, Hatfield — John Sloan

For the historical researcher the archive at Hatfield House provides a wonderful storehouse of information reaching back to medieval times. This is particularly so for anyone writing the history of the park and gardens at Bush Hall, the history of which is strangely absent from such standard histories of the county as Pevsner, Cussans and the Victoria County History.

Though most of the materials for the history of Bush Hall are at Hatfield House in the form of deeds, letters, plans, photographs and insurance documents, much of this information concerns the people who lived at Bush Hall rather than the history of the park and gardens. As a result, this history has to be pieced together from sources found elsewhere, sources which include tithe records, directories and maps found at HALS, including the happy discovery of the Reverend Faithfull's map of 1824, as well as items such as newspapers, journals, and census details.

Bush Hall lies beside the River Lea, about a mile north of Hatfield House, whose closeness is a possible reason why the property has been overlooked by historians. The building, known as Bush Hall by 1732, was erected on a field called Bushey Close in the late seventeenth century, probably by William Looker. William was gardener at Hatfield House, and was the brother of Roger Looker of Brompton Park fame. In 1661, Samuel Pepys described in his diary how a 'Mr. Looker' the gardener had shown him around the gardens at Hatfield.



Bush Hall, Hatfield

The house was added to in the eighteenth century. It is unclear precisely when and by whom the gardens and park were laid out, though Dury and Andrew's map of 1766 shows a garden to the west side of Bush Hall. By the 1790s, Bush Hall had a kitchen garden, melon ground, orchard, greenhouse, orange and lemon trees, dairy, and parkland producing timber and hay.

Typical of the type of person who owned or occupied Bush Hall at different times were Joseph Huntman, a tallow chandler and freeman of the City of London, Richard Samborne, a lawyer, Augusta Gray, a fundholder, and Arthur Stride, a railway company director. Sir Robert Chester, owner of the park from 1808 to 1836, tidied up and improved the run-down grounds, and converted all the remaining arable to pasture despite the high price of grain during the Napoleonic wars. He then sold the land to Lord Salisbury, the current owner.

Bush Hall's appeal to purchasers was as a country home within easy reach of London, an attraction enhanced in 1850 by the opening of a railway station in Hatfield. A newspaper advertisement in 1866 described Bush Hall as a 'gentleman's establishment', surrounded by a 'richly timbered park and elegantly disposed pleasure grounds', with good fishing in the River Lea. The 'lawns, vineries, orchard-house, hot and forcing-houses, very productive garden, orchard, newly-erected and compact farm homestead, with park-like meadow land' all added to the appeal of the property.

One well-known occupier of Bush Hall was Beatrix Potter. Beatrix spent the summer of 1884 at Bush Hall, and noted in her journal that Mr. Kendall, the landlord, had stripped the garden of its produce. After its use as a hospital during the Second World War, and later as a private school, Bush Hall was converted into a hotel. The property is now subject to a planning permission to expand the capacity of the hotel, and to restore the old walled garden behind the house.

HGT Schools Initiative



Retired, but still involved:

Christopher Melliush presents Schools Garden Awards to children and staff at Broom Barns Primary School, Stevenage.

(photo by courtesy of 'The Comet')

Al fresco classroom:

Trudie Taylor (alias 'Mrs Wheelbarrow') takes advantage of the vintage summer of 2013 to conduct an open air 'Wheelbarrow Workshop'.



The Friends of Panshanger Park



Panshanger Park

Thirty years ago permission was given to extract gravel from this important Capability Brown & Humphry Repton site, one of the conditions being that the site should be restored and the area opened as a country park. Although there are some paths across the site, there is still no country park. The Friends have been formed by a number of local societies to work with the owners and the council towards bringing this into existence. There are representatives from local communities, wildlife groups, rambles, cyclists and not least, HGT. It is early days, but we have already had meetings with local bodies, councillors and the owners and have prepared maps showing our ideas for ways to enhance and protect the historic landscape and make it accessible to all. For more information email:

conservation@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

An International Link—Bushey Rose Garden and the Peace Palace.

Bushey Rose Garden is not the only Thomas Mawson garden celebrating its centenary this year. In April I was invited to the Peace Palace in The Hague (International Courts of Justice) for their own celebration. A new *Thomas Mawson* daffodil had been bred for the occasion and was duly christened by Thomas Mawson's grandson. Back at Bushey there was a big party in the garden in the summer and the gardeners from The Palace visited BRG in October bearing a lovely gift – a large box of the daffodils which will be blooming at Bushey next Spring. Celebrations continue with our Art Competition. HGT is sponsoring a number of prizes for Schools and pupils who use the garden, for original art works inspired by the garden or by von Herkomer, the owner who commissioned Mawson to lay it out in 1913. Judges will include our President, Lady Verulam.

*Thomas Mawson Jnr. christens
Narcissus 'Thomas Mawson' at
The Peace Palace.*



Dates for your Diary

Wednesday, 2nd April, 2014: 'Practical Propagation with Cuttings from the Garden' by Aubrey Barker.

How many members of HGT have plants growing in their garden sourced from Hopleys of Much Hadham? Founded in the 1970s by David and Barbara Barker, their son Aubrey became director in 1980 and runs the nursery today. Most of the thousands of varieties of garden plant in the Hopleys catalogue are propagated at the nursery. This is a great opportunity to learn about plant propagation from a master of the art.

Please use the accompanying 'flyer' for further details and to reserve your place.

Thursday, May 29, 2014: 'A day to mark the restoration of Charles Bridgeman's great forest garden at Tring Park' led by Tom Williamson and Francesca Greenoak.

Tring Park Mansion (Tring Park School for the Performing Arts) will be the setting for a fascinating day which will begin with a tour of the mansion, begun by Christopher Wren and much altered by the Rothschilds. Talks on the importance and development of the park and garden will be followed by a sandwich lunch. The afternoon will be devoted to guided tours and exploration of the surrounding landscape.



**More information from Kate Harwood at
conservation@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk**

and in the Spring Newsletter.

Tring Park Mansion

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.hertfordshiregardenstrust.org.uk

Or, contact the Hon. Membership Secretary:

Email—p.d.figgis@talktalk.net or telephone: 01707 261400



'Olivers'



'Tofte Manor'



'Hill Grounds'



'Glebe House'



'The Manor' at Ayot St Lawrence