



Chairman's Introduction

The Summer is well established and we are looking forward to the Autumn and our AGM. This will be held on the 8th October at Purley Barn, Beech Road, Purley-on-Thames. We have used this venue several times and it is accessible with good parking and a good hall.

As last year we will follow the AGM with our Autumn lecture. Those who attended the Spring lecture may remember that I said that we would be hearing Ben Viljoen on the subject of Capability Brown, whose tri-centenary falls next year. For reasons relating to copyright in some of the images Ben intends to use, we have had to postpone this lecture until next Spring. In place of Ben we have Michael Symes, who will be introducing us to Rousham, Oxfordshire. This property, just off the junction of the A 34/M 40, offers a garden started by Charles Bridgeman, extended by Kent, with further modern gardens. I visited in June and it was looking splendid.

At the AGM we will be presenting Awards to under our public garden scheme. We have just been judging them and there will be a display of some fine photos of the places we visited. Attendance at the AGM is free, but tickets are required for the lecture and refreshments.

Next summer there will an exhibition and walks round some of Brown's work in Berkshire, dates

and details to follow. We will also arrange a visit to Rousham; depending on numbers and interest we could also visit the house, which is only open to groups, as well as Eton College Gardens.

This year's visits include West Green House garden, about which there is a full account of our visit in this Newsletter. It was a lovely afternoon and we were indebted to Marilyn Abbott for showing us around and explaining the plan of the garden and how it was built. We had a good tea too! Many thanks to our Secretary Fiona Hope for arranging this.

Two years ago we visited Folly Farm. We were restricted to 12 people and we gave priority to those working on research. We promised to try to arrange another visit, and this year we were able to do so. All those who applied were able to go, led by Trustee Richard Griffith-Jones. We chose the hottest day of the year, but the trip was very enjoyable. We are grateful to the owners for allowing us to visit again and to the Head Gardener and his deputy for showing us around.

Charles Elly

West Green Gardens Visit, 8th June 2015

Our visit to West Green was blessed with dry weather. Having been welcomed by Pip Heaton, we were then in for a real treat in the form of Marilyn Abbott, the garden designer and owner, giving us a very personalised tour. The various types of peonies, lupins and roses were all looking wonderful, with the productive areas of the garden not only decoratively planted but full of promising produce.

It was a real bonus to hear Marilyn explain the rationale behind some of the designs which she had introduced, including a grand water staircase created as the focal point leading to the impressive Nymphaeum fountain designed by Quinlan Terry when Lord McAlpine, a member of Mrs. Thatcher's government, lived there.

Highlights for me were the dramatic new Paradise water garden with its (apparently) simply placed small water fountains, which we were told was

introduced partly to provide an interesting feature for those attending open air events unable to see the view down to the lake and surrounding woodland garden. Similarly, the Garden of the Five Bridges, providing drainage from the grazed fields above and prevent flooding within the garden, makes a virtue out of necessity with its wonderful blue Iris-filled rill feature.



Blue irises – looking across to Five Bridges area



Marilyn Abbott talking to BGT members

The visit concluded with refreshments in the red and white-dominated walled garden near the shop and cafe with its *Alice in Wonderland* inspired clipped topiary characters.

Fiona Hope

Peter Thorn reviews BGT's 2015 Spring Lecture Gardens of the Tudor and Stuart Period: The Start of the Renaissance Garden in England?

Shaw House, Newbury was an appropriate setting for the Berkshire Gardens Trust Spring lecture. BGT is very grateful to the West Berkshire Council team at Shaw House for facilitating and supporting our visit with canapés and drinks and also providing an introduction that placed our venue into the context of the evening's talk.

An appreciative audience was ably guided through 100 years of formative garden design and taste by Kate Harwood, an experienced Garden History lecturer from Hertfordshire Gardens Trust whose research enables an interesting in depth insight into these period gardens and the drivers for change to garden displays, which were so important to the 'power brokers' of the period.

Shaw House itself is a product of the period, a Grade 1 listed Elizabethan house built in 1581 by Thomas Dolman, wealthy cloth merchant. It was subsequently owned by his heirs, the Duke of Chandos and the Farquar family and retains many original features. It has recently undergone a £6m restoration to today provide an important venue for the community of Newbury, able to host a variety of meetings and activities as well as being an historic attraction in its own right. Unfortunately all trace of Thomas Dolman's formal Tudor garden has disappeared, possibly partly due to defences that can still be seen

thrown up by a Royalist garrison at the time of the second battle of Newbury during the Civil War.

The middle Tudor period, the 1540's, through to the time of the first Stuart kings was the heyday of the English Renaissance garden. Garden design was heavily influenced upon the 'Italian style'; the formal and geometric division of space to create compartments, which has come to epitomise the 'classic' garden style. Symmetry and form are key, although they do not preclude variety in content and form within each compartment. Enclosures with fruit trees maintained the need for a productive area for the house possibly retaining a tunnel arbour, legacy of medieval design, a 'bosco' or wooded compartment for shade and the 'Orto', a geometric flower and herb garden often adjacent to the house to enable its geometric pattern to be admired. To this end, renaissance design featured terraces and walks so that compartments could be seen from either a height or new angle, with ingenious ways of achieving this later in the period.

Kate illustrated developments and features of the period through examples as we know of them (there are none extant), of the records of gardens created by Influential men such as Elizabeth's long standing mentor and adviser Cecil, Lord

Burleigh. At *Theobalds*, Burleigh created his home, a 'Great Garden', 'Privy Garden' and 'Fruit Garden' that amply displayed his status and wealth to visitors. There was much to see and admire in addition to the formal patterns of the Great Garden; water gardens, layered galleries or raised walks for changing perspective, sculptures of Roman Emperors to lend an imperial tone, the ever favourite maze and an astronomers' walk on the roof, ensured that everyone knew that this was certainly the household of a learned man.

Burleigh's son further developed his father's creation into a complex pleasure park; water features with a lake furnished with islands for picnics, a 'snail mount' – a typical Elizabethan feature to view the park and deer and heron areas. By the time we reach the era of the first Stuart king, there was also a hunting ground and stables complete with camel and elephant. The whole clearly demonstrated the wealth and influence of the owner and his family.

Similar extrovert confections were created at *Hatfield*, where 'Parterres' ordered from pattern books created the formality of the Renaissance garden. Squares inset with diamond patterns were the theme complimented by water features and a dell garden. A statement as to the intellectual status of the owner could be expressed through the addition of statues and symbols set within the formal design. Hatfield boasted giant sculptures, whilst at *Raglan* maybe to reinforce the power and influence of the Somerset/Herbert family, there were statues of Roman Emperors; in both cases the garden being a symbol and clear statement about you and your position in society.

For relaxation summer houses and bowling greens became popular. Those whose wealth enabled more extravagance built a Banqueting house within the garden which enabled your guests to admire their surroundings whilst enjoying a meal; *Hampton Court* retains its fine example set within the small formal Tudor garden area. Gardens were intended to be used; after Elizabeth's reign society became increasingly cosmopolitan with balls and masques, theatre and musical soirees using the formal garden as a setting. It was also in this period that the early commercial 'Pleasure Grounds' began to become popular in London.

Whilst society might have become cosmopolitan, it remained dangerous to be of the 'wrong' political and religious persuasion as gardens with meanings could be discerned by the knowing. Features might be innocent and virtuous as at *Edzell Castle* where moral virtues and planetary deities were illustrated in a series of reliefs.

However it was equally possible to build in features and signs that indicated for example the owners' support for the Catholic faith.

As the Stuart period progressed, whilst the Renaissance style was retained in all its formality, more elaborate features were being created, decorated grottoes, possibly with ensconced hermit, elaborate and mechanically driven water features, raised walls to strengthen the traditional medieval feel of compartments. However Kate reminded us that not all gardens adhered to this ultra-formal concept. Many gardens in more ordinary settings, whilst embracing the Renaissance sense of order and strict formality, were able to retain the feel of enclosure through detailed, varied planting within compartments, and grass and trees softening the overall design and rounding severe edges.

Leading Tudor and Stuart gardens had been strongly influenced by Italian Renaissance ideas, concepts which were changing Northern Europe from a Medieval to an early modern society in very many ways. The shock of the civil war in the mid-century brought the creation and continuity of these great gardens to an end. The Commonwealth did not foster such extravagance and by the Restoration and its aftermath the world was a different place. As Kate says 'gardens changed again' and along came the Baroque.



Kate Harwood being presented with flowers after the talk

Kate ably developed her theme of the garden as a statement of wealth, authority and as a place for relaxation and pleasure throughout a tumultuous period of our history. Although regrettably little remains of these gardens, we were able to visualise their form and gained an insight into the reasons for their creation through this erudite, interesting presentation.

The Gazetteer Project: Ben Viljoen Reports on Progress

The objective of the gazetteer project is to record formally the garden heritage of Berkshire. This is an ambitious project and will take many years to complete. This report deals with the progress that has been made and the next steps that will have to be taken.

My first task was to scour published material and list any references to Berkshire parks and gardens. Members of the committee and others were then asked to examine the list and to add any gardens of interest that they knew about and were not already listed. At this stage we were not concerned with either the quality of a garden or, in the case of historical references, what remains today – if it was mentioned anywhere, it was included. In parallel with this Fiona Hope, Bettina Kirkham and I set out in tabular form the information that should be collected when a property is researched and the format that will be used to describe a property on completion of the research.

The next phase was to assess each property on the list, establish which may be duplicates and to locate the properties using Google maps. These maps gave us a visual impression of the property which could then be considered with any other information that may be recorded on the internet and using this information, to place the property into one of eight categories.

This assessment phase was carried out by the executive committee with help from a few other members and has now been completed. The categories and the number of properties in each are shown below:-

Designated

English Heritage (*) designated park and /or garden 36

Historic

Appears to have an older garden and/or set in parkland 50

Modern

Appears to have a 'modern' garden 33

Municipal Park

Municipal park but not designated 23

Pending

Not enough information to place into a category 43

Rejected

Does not appear to have a garden or parkland of interest 52

Yellow Book

In Yellow Book but not in one of the above categories 73

Zapped

A duplicate or was included in error 15

Total

325

() – now Historic England*

Assessing 325 in some cases vague literary references, establishing their geographical locations and judging the quality of the information on the internet has been a time consuming and at times frustrating task and I would like to thank the assessors for the hours spent in front of their computers carrying out this task. This phase has given us a useful overview of the parks and gardens in Berkshire and it is worth recording that, thanks to the willingness of members to give up their time, it has been achieved without any monetary cost to the Trust.

The next phase will require in-depth research of properties and consideration will have to be given to which of the above categories should be given priority. There is information already available on the designated properties albeit these descriptions, which were written by English Heritage, are now somewhat dated. The municipal parks are mainly the responsibility of the local authorities in which they are located. In time both the designated properties and the municipal parks should be researched but it will be more productive to concentrate initially on the properties that we have classified as having historic parks and gardens or modern gardens. There are 83 such properties although this number will increase when more information becomes available on the 43 properties that are in the pending category.

In-depth research can be summarised as gathering the information that there may be about a property in libraries and archives, doing an on-site survey of the property and writing up the results in a predefined format. A vital step in this process is to establish who owns the property and persuading the owner to allow access to the property for the on-site survey.

Some of this work can be done by the Trust. However, our resources and expertise are limited so it will be necessary to employ researchers to carry out much of the in-depth research and this will be expensive. The money that we received from English Heritage when the Trust was set up was intended in particular for this sort of work but more will have to be raised to complete the project. The in-depth research will reveal the

quality of Berkshire's garden heritage, giving the Trust a firmer basis on which to challenge any development applications that may have an impact on this heritage and in time, enable

publication of a gazetteer of Berkshire's exceptional parks and garden.

The Gardens Trust has arrived!

At their recent AGMs during a weekend conference in Newcastle, both the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society agreed to merge to form a new organisation. A board has been elected with representatives from both these organisations and work is already starting to ensure it is a robust champion of the

various designed historic landscapes, liaising with government and other bodies throughout the country. BGT welcomes the news and looks forward to a robust, professional approach, appropriate for the challenging climate within which The Gardens Trust (TGT) will operate.

Watlington House

BGT members, who have been kept in touch with developments over the past few years, were invited to celebrate the launch of the recreated gardens at Watlington House on Friday 31st July; and they will now be open to the public to use.

BGT has been contributing to the clearance and planting work in the gardens as well as donating

a bench. Hopefully this is the start of the next phase of work both in the gardens and at the house, which needs restoration work to conserve it.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Gaila Adair via:
gaila@designerlandscapes.wanadoo.co.uk



BGT members in the gardens at the launch



The Saltire bed in the gardens

Capability Brown's Tercentenary: An Update by Ben Viljoen

We do not know when Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was born, only that he was baptised on Sunday 30th August 1716 but as it was usual to baptise babies shortly after their birth, we can be certain that 1716 was the year of his birth. During the course of the 18th century this talented man was to transform the landscape of England. Next year, which is the 300th anniversary of his birth, we shall be celebrating what he did in Berkshire.

Fiona Hope, Bettina Kirkham and I have been working on the programme for next year. In spring I shall be giving a talk entitled *Brown in Berkshire* in which I will deal with the six Berkshire properties where we know he did some

work – Basildon Park, Benham Valence, Caversham Park, Ditton Park, Maiden Erleigh and Sandford Priory and a property where he may have done some work, Woodside in Windsor Great Park. The history of landscape design in the 18th century tends to be dominated by men, but in the case of Brown there are also some intriguing relationships with women that I shall be exploring.

During the year BGT will also be staging exhibitions at various public locations, some of these synchronised with Brown properties that we plan to visit. These properties are all privately owned so these events will be ticketed and

numbers will be limited. Do book early once we have more details about the locations and dates. Meanwhile, you may also be interested in the September study day being organised by the

Avon Gardens Trust, which will focus on Brown's work at Weston House near Bristol (see below under Forthcoming BGT Events).

Members' News

Earlier this year, BGT heard the sad news about the death of Sue Balchin, MBE, following a brain haemorrhage. A longstanding member of Wokingham Lions and tireless, enthusiastic community volunteer, Sue brought a cheerful personality to her role as membership secretary

and organising catering at BGT's events, despite suffering from ill health. Hugh Simon, our Treasurer, represented the Trust at her funeral in Wokingham.

And now for something completely different (as they say)

Long-standing BGT member Andrew Radgick, has a keen interest in local history and is the History Officer of The Bracknell Forest Society. Having lived in Bracknell for 40 years, he has now published the details of all the men named on the First World War memorials in Bracknell Forest. Every entry has been identified and researched, starting from their date and place of birth, family background, and work experience before the conflict, their fighting unit and war experiences, and the circumstances of their death. Letters and eye-witness accounts, as well as photos, bring the

stories to life, showing the thoughts, hopes and fears of the time.

The work is published in three volumes: Volume I covers Bracknell and Easthampstead; Volume II covers Binfield, Cranbourne, Warfield and Winkfield; and Volume III covers Crowthorne and Sandhurst.

Each volume costs £20 and is available from Andrew, who can be contacted at: tbfs.ww1@gmail.com or on 01344 862683.

Forthcoming BGT Events

BGT's AGM and Autumn Lecture

Thursday, 8th October 2015

Rousham: The Birth of the Pictorial Circuit Garden

Invitations will be issued soon for the AGM and for booking to hear Michael Symes' lecture. We will also announce the biennial Awards, introduced by Christina Hill Williams in 2011.

The evening event is at the Purley Barn in Purley-on-Thames. Refreshments will also be available.

BGT's Spring Lecture 2016

Ben Viljoen's lecture on Capability Brown will precede various events planned to celebrate the tercentenary of Capability Brown.

Further information about these will be issued as soon as details are finalised.

BGT Spring and Summer Visits in 2016

In addition to CB300, we are planning a visit to Eton College Gardens, near Windsor, as well as to Rousham. Further information will be issued in due course.

Other Events

If you are free on **Sunday 6th September**, check out the free exhibition on the *Magna Carta and William Marshal, Lord of Caversham Manor*, in Caversham Court's 17th century gazebo.

In Pursuit of Paradise:* **at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace*

This exhibition brings together paintings, botanical studies, drawings, books, manuscripts and decorative arts owned by the Queen illustrating the changing character of the garden from the 16th to the early 20th century.

It includes works by Leonardo da Vinci, Maria Sibylla Merian and Carl Fabergé, with some of the earliest and rarest surviving depictions of gardens and plants.

The exhibition continues until 11th October. More information via www.royalcollection.org.uk.

BGT members are always welcome at study days in other areas. These two are not far away!

***Capability Brown at Weston House, Bristol:
Tuesday 22nd September 2015***

This event provides an opportunity to explore the influence of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown as on a country estate situated on the outskirts of Bristol, as part of the celebration of the Tercentenary of his birth. Kings Weston has a long and complex history and the grounds have been variously associated with John Evelyn, Robert Mylne, Thomas Wright and Lancelot Brown, but lack of funding meant the estate had been neglected for too many years. This situation changed in 2011 when the Kings Weston Action Group was founded to protect the estate to fight for its future and protect its past.

Today's house was designed in 1712 by Sir John Vanbrugh for Edward Southwell. Vanbrugh also designed other buildings on the estate that still exist although the massive terrace overlooking the River Severn was removed later in the 18th century when the formal gardens were swept away and replaced with the more naturalistic style of landscape design associated with Brown.

Subscription Renewal Reminder

For those members who have not yet paid their subscription for 2015/2016, it is now overdue. Please renew in the near future to receive further Newsletters and members-only information.

Three guest speakers will explore the Southwell family and the Kings Weston estate, Brown's importance in the British landscape movement and a re-assessment of his influence at Kings Weston in the light of current research.

The day runs from 9.30 am to 3.45 pm and costs £50, which includes morning coffee/tea and refreshments on arrival, tour of the house, lectures, lunch in the Oak Room and tour of the grounds. To make a reservation please email Teresa, AGT Co-ordinator at: gardenstrusts@agt.org.uk or ring 020 7251 2610.

***Public Parks – Arcadias for All:
Thursday, 15th October 2015***

This Hampshire Gardens Trust Study Day will explore the origins, development, heyday, decline, revival and future of public parks. The event is being held between 10 am and 3.30 pm at Old Alresford Place, Old Alresford, Hampshire SO24 9DH.

The cost of the Study Day is £45, including coffee, tea and lunch. For more information and a booking form please go to the HGT website: www.hgt.org.uk or contact Sheila Carey-Thomas on 01420 82195.

Who's Who and Contact Information

President: Lady Wroughton

Vice- President: Dr Christina Hill Williams, DL

Chairman

Charles Elly, DL

Executive Secretary

Fiona Hope
0118 984 3504

Treasurer

Hugh Simon

Membership Secretary

Kaye Warner
0118 969 5260

Planning Issues

Bettina Kirkham

Research Coordination

Ben Viljoen
0118 984 3170

Committee Members

Gaila Adair
Richard Griffith-Jones, DL
Peter Thorn
Indra Townsend

Postal address: 23 St James Close, Pangbourne, Berkshire, RG8 7AP

Email: *berks-gardens-trust@live.com*

Website: *www.berks-gardens-trust.org.uk*

Editor: *Fiona Hope*

Designer: *Kaye Warner*

