CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 11 October 2001

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

You may be surprised at the length of this our eleventh Newsletter. But when you stop to think about it you'll realise that the Trust has now been up and running for 5 years. So this newsletter is produced as a celebration and in several respects covers the work which the Trust has achieved.

This summer has seen progress by the Trust on two gardens – the Walled Kitchen Garden at Ramsey Abbey School and the Grounds together with Queen Catherine's Garden at Buckden Towers.

The Trust's President and Patrons met during the summer and have looked in greater detail at our request for a lease for the Walled Kitchen Garden at Ramsey Abbey School. There is now a very positive proposal which has been worked out by our Patrons which supplements the proposals which the Trust had prepared in 1998.

This has resulted because of the need to encourage more visitors to the garden throughout the year. 12 members of the Trust met at the Walled Garden on a very rainy Monday morning in August and as a result of this cross-fertilisation of ideas a plan of action was implemented. I would like to thank all those who attended this meeting and made such valuable proposals to enable the project to go forward.

We have decided to keep to our original aim to restore the garden to a period of 1850–1900. The garden will be an educational resource for all residents in Cambridgeshire.

The walls will be surveyed and the loose coping stones will be stabilised. We will plant the garden with soft fruit, hard fruit, vegetables and herbaceous flowers which were available during the period. As the garden clearers have found snowdrops growing along the apple tunnel, Richard Ayres and myself will give a collection of snowdrops to be grown along the whole length of the apple tunnel. Some strawberry plants have also been found and it has been agreed that the garden will contain a National Collection of Strawberries. Perhaps the snowdrops will become a National Collection as well.

The apple tunnel will be re-created with apple trees of the period and we will keep an example of one apple tree which has grown on to the park railing which was lent against it several years ago. We have already liaised with Unwins of Histon who are very keen to help us grow early introductions of vegetables and also Sweet Peas.

We wish to encourage all those who are interested to come and assess the strawberries, soft fruit, salads and hard fruit for their taste. We are also liaising with members of the Basket Weavers Association of East Anglia in order to arrange study days regarding the history and the practical making of skips, baskets etc which was so important to the orchard growers in this area between the wars. We need supports for the sweet peas and broad beans and what better than to use willows, etc. We will renew the glasshouses, in part, and set up a small room for teaching etc.

Some of you will recall that in our Gazetteer we wrote about Unwins Seed Trial Grounds. Around 1902 William Unwin and a colleague, who happened to be a geneticist at the university, noticed an attractive sweet pea flowering in one of his fields along Impington Lane. He was able to instruct William how to propagate this flower, which soon became a must amongst a rapidly growing circle of sweet pea fanciers. This would make an interesting historical and botanical story to tell. It would be very good for conservation if we could find both these sweet peas, and the sweet peas which were grown before the propagation by William Unwin, and have a display in the garden and allow gardeners to come and compare the differences between them.

A small committee has been formed to address the problem of the actual proposals for the Walled Garden and to investigate the possibility of funding this project. In the near future the Trust will formerly negotiate a lease for 25 years to allow us to remove the most pernicious weeds and commence the restoration work which will require serious clearing. Sadly the mulberry tree collapsed some time ago but the main branches are still alive, so I feel that gives us a great hope to now commence this work which we have been working towards over the last four years.

To Buckden Towers where one of the Trust's members Pat Huff (who lives at Castle House, Leighton Bromswold) has agreed to take over the organisation of the volunteers to progress the restoration work in the garden which was started by William Dawson. William Dawson gave an excellent lecture to members at a recent AGM at Buckden.

Pat asked for the Trust to be involved in some way and at a recent meeting at The Towers, our Treasurer and myself spoke in

some depth of the need to have a management plan for the future maintenance of the garden and grounds. This would be achieved by looking at the history of the site and recording the existing features and plants. Those members who attended that AGM were most impressed by what had been achieved and it was agreed that the Trust would start in the year 2002 to produce a survey of the site visiting the grounds once a month during the year. This site is of great importance in the county and we will need members to assist in producing the survey and management plan.

Pat and her dedicated team have several problems which need resolving in Queen Catherine's Garden so I arranged that David Beaumont, the head gardener at Hatfield House, came and looked at the plants and made some suggestions about maintenance of complicated knot gardens. So the volunteers have been spurred into action. You will read Pat Huff's article elsewhere in this newsletter. So if you do have some spare time and would like to help please let me know.

I look forward to meeting as many of you who are able to come to our AGM at Buckden Village Hall. This reminds me to ask if any of you would like to join our Council of Management which is a smart term for The Committee – can you please fill in the form which accompanies this Newsletter. We meet about three times a year and get through our business in a relatively short time. But new ideas, directions and proposals are always welcome as the Trust is established to promote the awareness of Parks and Gardens in the County. Some of you may be horrified at the number of houses which have to be built in Cambridgeshire each year and the implications of the new road proposals to 'improve the A14' as it passes through the County. The Trust has a Planning Sub-Committee which would be only too pleased to hear any comment or advance news if a Park or Garden was under threat. The sooner the Trust is made aware of such cases the sooner it can act. By the time a planning application is presented to the relevant committee it is too late.

As you will see from this newsletter the Trust has been very active and it has been so rewarding to receive positive comments about the visits and tours we have arranged. But ideas for future suggestions would be gratefully received.

We need more help for our next area of research which is the West Cambridge Gardens Project. Jane Brown has agreed to edit our research when complete and put it all together. We are so grateful for her giving up so much of her time for the Trust and walking along the streets and roads of West Cambridge encouraging us all with her wealth of knowledge.

This also gives me an opportunity to thank all those who have helped on the various committees this year: without their support our progress would have been much slower and less fruitful. But please remember that we can only carry out all this excellent work with the support of you, a member. If you could encourage a friend to join us we would be most grateful. Please don't forget that your annual subscriptions are now due and should be forwarded to Alison Gould at The Grange, Easton, Huntingdon. Please note that we have not raised the subscriptions during the last 5 years.

John Drake. Chairman

VISIT TO MOGGERHANGER HOUSE AND PARK, BEDFORDSHIRE

Our garden visits this year started with a visit to Moggerhanger House and Park which is situated to the west of Sandy in Bedfordshire. Originally a farmhouse, Moggerhanger Lodge was situated in the southeast corner of the present building. It consisted of a double fronted villa about the size of a vicarage of the mid 18th century.

The main entrance faced south, with a pedimented doorcase and a gothic fanlight.

In 1777 Robert Thornton inherited Moggerhanger and in 1784 he sold the estate to his brother, Godfrey Thornton, who purchased it as his 'country residence'. The Thorntons were members of the Clapham Sect and great friends of William Wilberforce. Godfrey was appointed Deputy Governor of the Bank of England in 1791 and Governor in 1793 until 1795. It was during this time that he asked Sir John Soane, who had recently redesigned the Bank of England, to work on Moggerhanger House.

Soane's alterations in 1791 moved the entrance to the east side of the house and added a new hall and drawing room to the property. The new entrance was protected by a single storey rectangular Ionic portico, the roof of which formed a balcony outside the window of the new boudoir on the first floor.

The prominent landscaper, Humphry Repton was first introduced to Moggerhanger through Godfrey Thornton's friend and neighbour, Francis Pym. In 1790 Repton had worked on an extension of the park of Francis Pym's house, The Hazells, which is situated on the ridge overlooking the Bedfordshire plain near Sandy. In 1791 Repton viewed Soane's work at Moggerhanger, commenting from the Drawing Room in his Red Book:

"There is a difficulty in the management of this view, from the drawing-room window being placed so near to the door of the house; because it is almost impossible to preserve an air of neatness under the windows of a drawing room (especially when they are so very low) while the hall door requires an expanse of gravel for coaches to turn upon, and is exposed to the occasional defilement of horses waiting at the door; and immediately under the windows. I am aware that this disposition of the rooms was not a matter of choice at Moggerhanger, such inconveniences being often unavoidable where Genius is confined to the altering of an old house, instead of having latitude to plan a new one; but it is necessary for me to explain the difficulty, and point out the manner in which we may best obviate the inconveniences arising from the proximity of the drawing room and the entrance. I propose that the road shall pass in the form of a neat gravel walk under the drawing room window to the door, and return by a sweep at some distance behind a shrubbery."

Repton's concerns did not result in any immediate revisions to the house, but the scheme for the gravel walk was certainly realised.

Soane designed the handsome two-storey stable block for Godfrey Thornton in 1792. He also produced plans for further extending Moggerhanger in 1797, with a single storey pavilion at the west end of the building to provide a larger eating room. This was not implemented but the house was re-decorated by John Crace, working under Soane, in 1798.

Stephen Thornton inherited Moggerhanger on the death of his father in 1805 and minor alterations were carried out by Soane in the following year. Major changes by Soane were carried out in 1811 when Repton was asked to come once again and advise as the entrance was re-positioned on the north side of the house.

In 1909 the house and estate were sold to Mrs Fayne and in 1916 a severe storm uprooted many trees in Moggerhanger Park. In 1920 the house was sold to the Health Authority and in 1938 the house became a Sanatorium established by Bedfordshire County Council. The Sanatorium was closed in 1987 and in 1997 Moggerhanger House Preservation Trust was established to restore the house and park and give access to the public. A team

of architectural advisors headed by Peter Inskip have carried out detailed research into the fabric of the house and John Phibbs has produced a detailed report tracing the work to the parkland as the Thornton family improved the existing landscape.

Members arrived on a somewhat unsettled afternoon with the threat of heavy rain. So the programme was changed to allow everyone to see inside the house and then walk round the garden, walled gardens and garden wood, then to have tea and then listen to Peter Inskip's lecture on the development of the house. This worked well as by the time the lecture took place everyone knew what was being discussed. Many thought this was building archaeology when analysis of paint samples of internal spaces were discussed and openings around the internal landing were compared with similar features in the house. But house interiors change as many times as does the layout of the garden. Moggerhanger drives were altered three times as Soane changed the main entrance to the house.

Moggerhanger Park is situated on a slight rise in the landscape looking to the north over the Bedfordshire Plain. There are fine views to the sandy ridge to the east and one can even see the hills between Royston and Baldock to the south-east. Much of the surrounding parkland is owned by the Shuttleworth Estate and the County Council, who have sub-let the fields to local farmers. The farmers grow Brussel sprouts and new reservoirs have been constructed in the fields to water the crops. The Preservation Trust owns the parkland immediately around the house and the garden immediately to the south. The Trust has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the house and convert it into a residential conference centre to promote further understanding between those with different religious beliefs. The park and garden will be restored with support from the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission and with the help of the Local Horticultural College and volunteers.

The building is like an exquisite jewel box both outside and inside. By subtle changes to the existing state of the grounds and garden the house will soon stand in a fine landscape setting. The Gardens Trust wished to come back in two years time to see the progress.

John Drake

VISIT TO WISBECH

On Wednesday, 9th May 2001, a group of Trust members had a most interesting and varied day in Wisbech visiting three gardens, a park, a museum, a cemetery and going on a tour of a brewery!

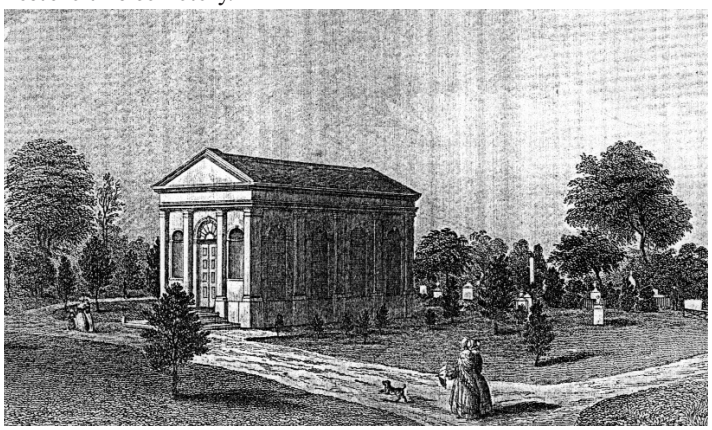
We started at the garden of The Castle, an early Victorian house built by Joseph Medworth on the site of an earlier house and a Norman castle and surrounded by two fine Georgian housing crescents. The garden is divided into three parts; the lower garden is laid to lawn, backed by trees and shrubs and still contains the old coach house and Victorian outbuilding. The upper terrace contains the remains of a large fountain flanked by fine Chusan palms. Underneath this terrace is an extensive labyrinth of tunnels, possibly the cellars of the earlier house. The far end of the garden had been sold to create a public open space around the war memorial. This has been planted with Chusan palms, conifers, holm oaks and rose beds.

The Park, to the east of the church, had been created in 1870 at the suggestion of Octavia Hill and others to encourage people to enjoy the fresh air. The park is extensive and is divided into two halves, one for recreational sports and the other as an arboretum containing many fine trees, a bandstand and a large memorial to Richard Young, shipowner and benefactor to the town *(see photograph)*. The bandstand needed some repairs and it would make sense if a collection, held during the musical concerts in this Park, help to restore this fine structure.

Wisbech – the park. *Photo: Audrey Osborne*

We had an unexpected bonus of being allowed into the Library of the Museum to see an exhibition showing the aspects of the cholera outbreak in Wisbech in the 19th century. This fine library houses approx 10,000 books of the 18th and 19th century and belonged originally to the Wisbech Literary Society, and includes the manuscript of Charles Dickens's 'Great Expectations'.

After lunch our next stop was the Leverington Road cemetery. Its ruined classical chapel can just be seen tucked away behind a hideous new bungalow and wood yard which have been built over what was once the entrance of the cemetery. Whoever allowed this monstrous planning? The 3.5 acre cemetery was laid out in 1835 and contains the resting place of many of Wisbech's worthies, including the photographer Samuel Smith. Earlier in the museum we had been shown the fine print of the cemetery showing flower-beds and the chapel standing in the centre. However it is a sad sight now, completely overgrown, roof missing from the chapel, tombstones wrecked, and original paths lost beneath brambles. One of our members suggested that the adjacent supermarket should donate some of their profits to restore this cemetery.



Leverington Road Cemetery, Wisbech

Elgood's Brewery was our next port of call. This fine Georgian brewery has been in continuous existence for more than 200 years and in the Elgood family for over 100 years. We had a tour of the brewery and sampled some of their excellent beers, and then wandered round the extensive and beautiful 4 acre gardens which have recently been improved by Mr Elgood's daughter, a landscape architect. There was much to admire:- the fine trees, a rockery, a long pool (a mini canal?), formal herb garden, rose and herbaceous borders and a recently established laurel and Cupressus leylandii maze.

Leaving the best until last we finally came to the glorious garden at Peckover House; two acres full of rare plants, including several fine trees and many fruiting orange trees reputed to be over 300 years old. The garden was enlarged by taking in other

adjoining rear gardens of houses along The North Brink. The divisions are still retained and each is complemented by an interesting garden structure. We were all very glad to take advantage of the tea and cakes available in the restored reed barn, and decided that the day had been well spent!

Audrey Osborne

A VISIT TO DRAYTON HOUSE, LOWICK, near KETTERING on 12th JULY 2001

Instructions: to rendezvous in front of the house at 2.30 pm. Cars to be parked in the gravel court.

We approached Drayton House from the centre of the village of Lowick by a mile-long straight drive with sheep grazing and mature, parkland trees on either side. Suddenly, on the right the crenellated walls and rising towers of this remarkable old stone house could be glimpsed.

A sharp turn, a slight decline and the drive passes through an imperious but most beautiful gateway. The niche stone piers bear coats-of-arms and are surmounted by a large pair of finely carved birds-of-prey. The ironwork is of exceptional quality being attributed to Jean Tijou who was working on the royal palaces for William and Mary. Drayton's owner at the end of the 17th century was Sir John Germain, said to be an illegitimate half-brother of William of Orange. Sir John's wife, Mary Mordaunt, had divorced the 12th Duke of Norfolk but had not relinquished her duchess's coronet which was used liberally as a decorative device around Drayton and is atop the entrance gates.

Trust members and friends gathered in the extensive forecourt and were transported back to medieval and Elizabethan times. Mansel Spratling succinctly described how the house had never been sold but had passed down from Simon de Drayton in the 13th century to the present owner, Lionel Stopford Sackville, whose ancestors at one time divided their time between Knowle and Drayton.

Our guides for the afternoon were Bruce Bailey, librarian and archivist at Drayton, and Jenny Burt, Chairman of the Northamptonshire Gardens Trust. Jenny has devoted many hours to researching the grounds of Drayton. As part of her talk at our Trust's AGM, she showed slides of the gardens and copies of early estate maps. Inspirational was the fact that so much was still to be seen from Elizabethan times at Drayton, including two banqueting houses of about 1580! We just had to arrange a visit.

Whilst still in the forecourt we were led to a small entrance in the east wall with more exquisite decorative ironwork, expertly restored and through which could be seen some of the Elizabethan walled enclosures.

Entrance to the inner courtyard is through a rounded, classical arch, probably designed by Inigo Jones's pupil, John Webb, inserted into the medieval crenellated wall in the 1650s, its symmetry now enhanced by the planting of paired Magnolia grandiflora.

Once outside the courtyard the visitor is faced with another architectural phenomenon. A complete 7-bay Baroque façade designed by William Talman, a contemporary of Wren. Built between 1702 and 1704 it is of Ketton stone with every conceivable Baroque detail. The central steps and doorway do not, however, lead into a grand hall because Sir John Germain and his duchess wife had their accomplished architect hide from view all signs of the medieval house to which the façade is attached. Visitors slip in under a side colonnade immediately finding themselves in an undercroft of the 13th century. Displayed on the walls are several photographs and drawings of Drayton. One shows an elaborate Victorian parterre created by Nesfield, mercifully no longer there. There is a design for a conservatory by Clarke, but it was never built.

From here we went on a tour of the house and enjoyed the pleasure of being in rooms used by the family with freedom to move around unrestricted by rope cordons. All the rooms contained very fine furniture and paintings, mostly portraits. For example, the Drawing Room with its Palmyra ceiling was re-decorated for Lord George Sackville, son of the 1st Duke of Dorset, in the 1770s and has sofas and chairs made for the room by Chisholm. Among the portraits are those of the 1st Duke and of Lord George by Reynolds, another of Lord George by Romney and one of his daughter, Diana, by Nathaniel Dance. Upstairs in what is known as the King's Drawing Room following a visit of James I, and is now a gallery, are displayed three remarkable tables with designs of birds and flowers in pewter, probably from the workshop of Gerrit Jensen, the royal cabinet maker. Henry Mordaunt, 2nd Earl of Peterborough, had been Ambassador at Modena and a close friend of James II. Drayton House seems to have benefited greatly from this royal patronage and much of what is seen in the rooms today is from this period.

A rare spiral, cantilevered staircase of oak and walnut descends into a small hallway and garden passage. From here we stepped out into the garden and were in the Elizabethan walled enclosures with views to the surrounding parkland beyond. In fact, in this part of the garden a formal parterre in the Dutch style had been laid out in the early 1700s. The gardener was Tilleman Bobart who also worked at Hampton Court and Blenheim. There is beautiful statuary and urns, bought from a shop at Hyde Park Corner, all part of the original layout.

Just as our party were imbibing the serene beauty, as if on cue, a red kite was seen slowly circling above us. Mr Bailey thought a pair were nesting. (By coincidence, on the day of our visit I received an action update from the RSPB with the item 'Red kites fly high' – a survey recorded 131 pairs in England. How percipient of one pair to discover Drayton.)

As well as the two Banqueting Houses, probably rebuilt in the 1650s to the design of John Webb, there is a modest red brick Orangery built in the early 1700s. The present owners are establishing a new garden adjacent to the Elizabethan tower end of the house, essentially with box, lavender, roses, alliums, echinops blend of plants. Looking out from there across the parkland are some enormously tall lime trees. Jenny Burt thought they were originally a pleached-lime walk but had grown for centuries, most probably from a planting of Henry Wise, royal gardener in the early 1700s. There is also a very extensive avenue of old oaks providing a vista through to the village church.

Our walk continued around the house, past the early 18th century kitchens area and out through the central archway in the stable block which led back into the gravel forecourt where we had fore-gathered earlier.

This very special afternoon ended with a convivial tea served by local ladies in the village hall, the proceeds going to Lowick church. We were all immensely grateful to both our guides for sharing with us their expertise, and to the present owner for allowing us to visit Drayton House.

Jill Cremer

EXPLORING THE GROUNDS AROUND KIMBOLTON CASTLE

When one looks back on our summer one hardly remembers the magnificent warm sunny afternoon when members of the Trust were welcomed in the shade beneath the Gatehouse of Kimbolton Castle by Beth Davies and Philip Burkitt. Philip, a retired history teacher at the school, was standing in for John Stratford who had recently undergone surgery. The actual purpose of the visit was to search out the remains of the earlier moat, gardens, garden buildings and canal of what was once an extensive garden laid out by the Dukes of Manchester, which had been lost at the turn of the last century. The grounds around the Castle are now laid primarily for the sporting activities of the school.

But with Mr Burkitt we were led on a tour of the Castle, both outside and inside. The building conceals a fine central courtyard with extravagant lead down pipes. I was already armed with two long copper rods, and was summoned by Mr Burkitt to use them on the stone path that lead up to the Painted Hall. To the amazement of interior decorators as I walked across the path, the rods moved, crossing each other with much energy. I halted and was told I was standing over one of the wells in this courtyard.

But before I concentrate on the explorations in the grounds, a brief word on the fine interior of the Castle that has been recently restored, including the wall paintings, following a fire which had damaged the roof. Sadly some rooms were closed as that afternoon the school's 'A' level results had been received and the Headmaster was in school checking his lists. We were shown the early walls of a Tudor building in the south basement, the chapel and the main staircase with walls decorated with frescoes depicting Members of the Manchester family dressed as Roman emperors. High at the top of this staircase was a delightful painting of a servant dressed as a young Turk.

The classroom on the second floor in the central bay of the south façade gives extensive views across the playing fields to the south and the Great Park rising in the distance beyond. In this classroom Beth Davies reminded everyone of the history of the gardens and how they had changed, with reference to the fine maps that are available in the Record Office. Beth then explained her theory of dowsing, and suggested that we may all like to retrace our steps and then leave the Castle and walk across the lawns to the south.

At a particular point Beth showed everyone her small wire dowsing rods and explained that she would now ask the rods to show her where the foundations of a garden building had once been. Everyone watched carefully and all of a sudden the rods she held in each hand crossed as she walked towards us. "This is where one of the walls was", Beth said and went on to explain that one rod did not move so much but this pointed to the line of the foundation. Beth proceeded to walk in that direction and then suddenly the rod pointed in a different direction. "This is where the foundation changes direction", Beth explained to startled and slightly disbelieving members. "Why don't you now try it for yourself." So with our dowsing rods we all lined up in the same place where Beth had started from and muttered the question and proceeded to walk forward.

For this first attempt not everyone was successful, some held their rods too tight, or not parallel to the ground, or walked too quickly, or were too tense, or never thought it was going to work. But trying the procedure again some were more successful and found the foundation of the wall and then went on to trace the outline of what was once a square building.

With some confidence Beth asked us to find the edge of the canal which was near an existing pond. This we had more fun with, shouting to one another "I think I've got it". By then, those who were successful were helping those not quite so lucky. It was amusing to watch people walking off at tangents across the lawn for several yards without having any reaction with their dowsing rods. But if you don't at first succeed, you try, try again; and so the process was repeated.

To make things more complicated, Beth announced that next we were going to find where three parallel rows of trees were planted. If you were doing this seriously, you would take with you some canes and mark the ground every time your dowsing rods moved. But to everyone's surprise Beth asked "Show me where the trees were planted" and slowly walked across the lawn. At every 4 metres the dowsing rods crossed as she proceeded to walk in a straight line away from where we had located the canal. As a check to this you would need to stake the position of the tree and then walk at right-angles to the line to establish the grid the trees would have been planted at. You can imagine the chaos which followed when everyone had a try, walking at different directions towards one another.

Our afternoon ended when we all lined up facing the west wall of the Castle. We were told by Beth that before we reached the Castle wall we should find the line of the original moat around the castle. This must have looked very strange from afar. Any passer-by would have stopped and thought "Whatever was going on?". But by that time some of us had got the idea of how to relax and let the rods move at their own will in our hands. Obviously with more time and patience, everyone that day would be able to go home and trace the route of drains around their house. Beth finally explained how she could find by dowsing the actual location of a door and windows of a building whose foundations she had plotted. Then you could find out the height of the door and then the height of the room, and so it goes on!

So don't be surprised if you see members of the Trust walking across gardens and fields, not with metal detectors, but with dowsing rods. Better still, why not try it yourselves. Our grateful thanks to Beth Davies and Mr Burkitt for such an interesting afternoon.

John Drake

"THE OLD CODGER WHO DESIGNED THOSE LOVELY GARDENS FOR CLARE COLLEGE"*

In April 2001 an obituary appeared in The Times of Professor Nevill Willmer who died aged 98. What caught my eye was the accompanying colour photograph of the Fellows' Garden at Clare College. This photograph, taken by one of our members Howard Rice, showed the yellow and blue herbaceous border in that garden.

Nevill Willmer was educated at Oxford where he read chemistry, later changing to zoology in which he obtained a first. His professional career as a physiologist and his work on colour vision together with his interest in landscape painting later led to his ideas on garden design. His great grandfather was a professional gardener and an expert on tulips and carnations and Potamogenton cooperi was named after his grandfather. His father brought land on a Welsh hillside and built his home from local granite.

When a student, he wrote about the retina of the eye and became intrigued by the then current theories related to colour vision. He saw their relevance to colour in the garden and during his designs of gardens he developed the illusion of distance if large deep yellow flowers are planted in the foreground with smaller pastel-coloured flowers behind. Colour values change

with distance as in landscape paintings the distance is often depicted with hazily blue tones. These theories were admirably proved correct in his colour planting schemes for Clare Fellows' Garden.

Professor Willmer's first house in Cambridge for his family was in Barrow Road where he lived for almost twenty years. The house had been built just before the Second World War at one end of a rectangular plot. It was surrounded by open fields. The garden was designed with a large lawn with raised beds to each side, a central gap in a yew hedge and beyond, a central low rockery. Paved paths led by stepping stones and curving flights of steps across, up and along the banks of a little stream. The plants for the banks and borders around the little stream had all year interest.

A similar garden designed by Willmer is still to be found at No 197 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge which is still well maintained by its owners. The lawn backed with yew hedges with a central gap leading to an enclosed garden at a lower level is almost a repeat of the formula but this time without the stream. The same idea is worked into the Fellows' Garden at Clare where a gap in a yew hedge leads to a sunken pool edged with small plants. But at Clare the importance of perspective and vistas combined with careful colour choice come into its own.

Willmer once wrote "remember our British climate, have the main view from the house, since for most of us more time is spent indoors than out. Essentially this means two things. The design of the garden should depend on features that maintain their form and composition in the winter and on ensuring that winter or spring blooming plants can be seen from inside. Clumps of cyclamen or aconites are very attractive under apple or cherry trees, but if those trees are at the far end of the garden, they won't be enjoyed as much as by being seen from the comfort of a living room."

**a quote from Professor Nevill Willmer's autobiography "Waen and the Willmers"*

John Drake, with thanks to Jill Cremer and Agnes Gabriel

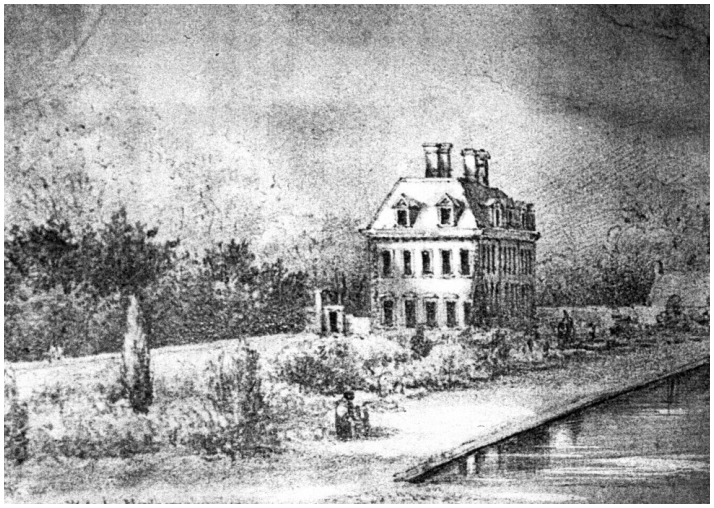
Walcot Hall

Members will remember a very sunny afternoon last year when we were welcomed by Mr and Mrs Derby Dennis and shown round the extensive grounds at Walcot Hall. At the end of the afternoon, whilst enjoying home-made cakes and tea, Mr Derby Dennis explained that although there was a brief history of the garden and house for visitors, he would like to find out more about the history of the garden. "Please could the Trust help" was mentioned when we departed.

So earlier this year with the help of Jenny Burt, Northamptonshire Gardens Trust, and the staff of the Northamptonshire Record Office, Audrey Osborne and myself spent a successful afternoon checking references to Walcot Hall and its fine garden. This turned out to be a very fruitful afternoon and we came away with photocopies of early maps, drawings, photographs and sale particulars.

Earlier this year at one of our lectures at Buckden I spoke at length of what might have happened at Walcot Hall; listening in the audience was Christopher Taylor, whose detective interest was soon aroused. He started asking questions about why was such a feature where it was, and when the stone buildings were brought to the garden, etc.

Armed with the research documents I contacted Mr and Mrs Derby Dennis who invited Christopher to come and look at the grounds. They have also given permission for the Trust to print here Christopher's analysis of what may have happened to the grounds around the House. Members should note Christopher's approach to garden historical phases.



Sketch – Walcot Hall 1843. By kind permission of Northamptonshire Record Office.

Possible Phases of Development at Walcot Hall Grounds by Christopher Taylor:-

Phase 1 Pre 1670s. Completely unknown but presumably knot gardens arranged around an earlier manor house owned by the Browne family.

Phase 2 1678 Possibly a 'Cheveley' – type garden to go with the new house belonging to Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, if there was time before he sold it. That is, a series of compartments to the west, north and south of the house with the major approach from the west from the Roman Road, probably then the principal road from Peterborough to Stamford. The compartment in front of the house may not then have been a turning carriage area – the carriages must have stopped at the outer gate as at Cheveley and as at many other contemporary houses. How much of the underlying form of the compartments to the south and west are of this period?

Phase 3 1680s. A small walled park/outer garden created to the west. The double lime avenue and the north and south vistas/avenues planted. Are any of the original trees still there? The double avenue became the formal entrance drive across the outer garden/park to the house. Thus the cambered track down the avenue belongs to this period. Still compartments to the north, south and west of the house but these would have been larger and more open. The canal and associated terraces constructed? All by Sidney Wortley Montague who is said to have 'made the garden' here between the 1680s and 1700 (Bridges, History of Northamptonshire vol 11, 1791 pp497-8).

Phase 4 Various later alterations in the later 18th or early 19th centuries, all very difficult to date, but some may be contemporary with the 1767 alterations of the house which Nicholas Pevsner (1968) noted. They included planting some more native trees, presumably the creation of the open 'lawns' at the west end of the lime avenue, as shown on the 1843 Enclosure Map (very likely 1767) and the opening up and the formalising of the compartments to the south of the house to make pleasure grounds (possibly 1767 – or later). Some of this may have been carried out by Thomas Noel (1704-88).

Phase 5 Mid to late 19th century. Possibly more than one phase but included the extensive planting of exotic trees around the house, the abandonment of the main west drive and its replacement by the sinuous north drive and the creation of informal shrubberies on both sides of the latter. Also, presumably, carpet bedding in the area on the west side of the

house, together with the ha-ha on its west side.

Phase 6 Between ?1900 and 1942 the modelling of the garden is in an Italian Style by J G Dearden, whose father was a cotton mill owner from Rochdale Hall in Lancashire.

This work involved much earth moving, new waterworks and the introduction or moving about of older stone doorcases, gate piers and niches. Not all of one period. The basic framework is said to be ?1920s but could be earlier and with additions up to the 1940s.

Phase 7 1942-1960s Abandonment of gardens during occupation by USAF (1942-5). Extensive temporary buildings in woodland, either side of lime avenue. ?Minor reclamation after 1945 including the removal of wartime buildings.

Phase 8 1960s onwards. Restoration by the Dennis Family.

Christopher points out this is very tentative and subject to further revision: until all the owners, their status and dates are sorted out, it is difficult to assign individuals and periods to all of the changes.

But what remains is an extremely interesting garden in the county. The Deardens obviously didn't realise they had bought a garden that had been laid out from 1678 and set about making it appear to look much older, such was the fashion in the early part of the last century. The Trust would like to thank Audrey Osborne for her research and also Christopher Taylor for his interpretation of what he noticed on the ground.

John Drake

WEST CAMBRIDGE GARDENS PROJECT

The AREA OF STUDY is Cambridge, west of Queen's Road, bounded on the south by the River Cam/Grantchester Meadows/Grantchester Road, on the west by Gough Way/ Clerk Maxwell Road/Conduit Head Road and All Saints Cemetery, and on the north by the Huntingdon Road.

Until the later 19th century this land was almost entirely rural, the westward approaches largely owned by the colleges ranged along The Backs, and kept by them for recreational purposes. My researches into the history of Trinity College gardens have shown that from medieval times the colleges gradually absorbed territories first of all to the river, then to what became Queen's Road. As the colleges grew their increasingly crowded living spaces demanded more space for 'walks' – the walk to Coton was a daily ritual in the age of Tennyson and Wordsworth, to Madingley in the days of E.M.Forster, and everyone walked to Grantchester.

In 1882 Charles Darwin died, and his widow Emma came to live at The Grove in Huntingdon Road to be amongst her large family: this event coincided with the abolition of the university 'Tests' which allowed Fellows to marry and retain their college posts. The consequence demand for houses and gardens spurred the development of west Cambridge, which in turn was encouraged by the Arts and Crafts Movement in architecture and the belief that houses and gardens should be designed 'all of a piece' – demonstrated most notably in Cambridge by the architects H G Hughes and M H Baillie Scott.

The Arts and Crafts period ended with the 1914-18 war; development continued during the 1920s and during the 'thirties' Cambridge was pioneering modernism in houses and gardens.

The DATES OF OUR STUDY are thus from 1880 to 1940. After the Second World War, the direction changed once more, as the colleges and the university began to claw back areas of larger gardens, in some cases demolishing the houses, for their expansion. This has continued at such a pace that many distinctive gardens and vital green spaces are disappearing; our study will also record these changes.

We are also particularly interested in:-

- nurseries, community spaces, leisure gardens, graveyards that existed before or during our development period
- the Darwin family houses and gardens and connections e.g. Nora Barlow
- the distinguished and well-known Cambridge people who were gardeners
- the development of the Storey's Charity land
- the work of M H Baillie Scott of which there are about eight examples
- particularly good trees, collections of trees and shrubs
- particularly good architectural or garden features e.g. water features
- the modern movement gardens from Conduit Head Road to Victor Rothschild

This is a large area of research encompassing many lines of investigation. To date we have amassed files for over 100 properties worthy of comment and are looking at many more. We urgently need more help with this exciting project and information from members on any of the above areas. Please can you phone me on 01832 280665 if you would like to join our team. It is really amazing what we have discovered already with the help of Mansell Spratling's lists of University Architectural Students' Theses and both Lady Adrian's and Lady Keynes's comments about the first owners of some of these houses.

Jane Brown.

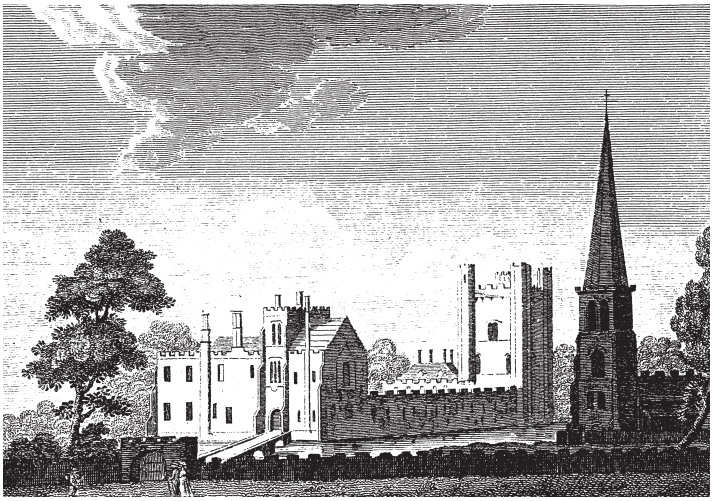
BUCKDEN TOWERS

A couple of months ago, after mass one Sunday, one of the priests at Buckden Towers in Cambridgeshire asked me if I could hang on for a moment or two so that he might have a word. I immediately began examining my conscience (always such an unpleasant task), but he insisted that he was on the scrounge, and had a favour to ask. CGT members will remember William Dawson's fascinating talk on the grounds at Buckden at our AGM a couple of years ago. William had designed and nurtured the knot garden at Buckden but was no longer able to give it as much time as it needed. Would I take on the task of co-ordinating the volunteers and getting it in hand?

To paraphrase Clint Eastwood in Dirty Harry, it's a wise woman who knows her limitations. I told Father Paul that of course I would do what I could, but this was an extremely sensitive site: it was already a manor of the Bishops of Lincoln when it was mentioned in Domesday. I know nothing of garden design, and less than nothing of garden history . . . but I know a man who does. I thought it absolutely essential that John Drake and the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust should be involved from the very beginning. I rang John the next day although I knew that the initial meeting had been scheduled for a time when he would be in the middle of a fortnight's sculpture exhibition at Hardwicke House. With characteristic generosity, he nevertheless immediately agreed to come.

John was, as always, wonderful in the meeting, which was attended by Terry Hayward, the CGT's Treasurer; Mr and Mrs Butler, who had provided much of the initial finance for the garden in memory of their son; Anne Nicholi of the Friends of Buckden Tower, and the most green-fingered of her colleagues. Although our original brief had been to do something with the knot garden, John suggested that we widen our remit to include a survey of the entire site. We would start in January, and take a year, so we could see what comes up at every season.

In the meantime, of course, we would be getting on with the knot garden. That evening we spent an hour or so there, looking at the problems and discussing the possible solutions. The garden has been planted up for five to six years, and many of the Mediterranean subshrubs forming the design would be coming to the end of their lives in any case. The cold and extremely wet winter previous had merely hastened their demise: the santolina in particular was looking very seedy, with great dead patches.



Buckden Palace

In order to focus our minds, John said that he would ask his friend David Beaumont, the Head Gardener at Hatfield House and custodian of one of the most famous knot gardens in the country, to come along and give his ideas as to what to do next. William Dawson came down from Lincolnshire for the meeting, and it was fascinating to listen to the exchange of ideas between them. William, for example, believed in letting the hyssop and teucrium flower so that people could get an idea of what Tudor strewing herbs looked like. David, on the other hand, thought that the line was kept much crisper and cleaner, and the plants themselves much healthier, by keeping it all clipped hard.

There will be two facets to the work at Buckden, related of course, but quite distinct in emphasis. The garden history aspect will be the year-long survey of the site. John and the CGT are immensely knowledgeable about this sort of exercise. I have walked round neglected gardens in Istanbul and uncompromising fields in Cambridgeshire with John, and he has opened my eyes; I am hopeless at mental reconstruction – at Verulamium, for example, I always have to rely on the drawing since the holes in the ground never look to me like the governor's house or the oil-press – but John really can make you see. Buckden has such a long history, from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century, and John Drake will be the perfect guide to the process of deciphering the various layers in this fascinating horticultural palimpsest.

The other aspect is the work in the knot garden and other parts of the grounds. This is straightforward horticulture: weeding, strimming, clipping, planting, tying-in. There has been a concerted effort to have the knot garden looking at its best for the 30th of September this year, when the Bishop was coming to perform an ordination. The church itself couldn't accommodate even half the expected congregation, so it was hoped to hold the ceremony in the garden. The weather put paid to that idea, but the intensity of the lead-up brought the problems of the garden very sharply into focus. One or two things didn't work, and will be scrapped altogether and others will be modified in the light of what has been learnt over the past few years. One of the knots will have to be replanted altogether, using William's original plan, but much in the others can be restored.

As a late twentieth-century reproduction, the knot garden is in some ways the least interesting area of the site from a garden history point of view. The entire area is, however, substantial and should produce evidence to give a buzz to the most ardent horticultural archaeologist. The Bishops of Lincoln and their successors have, after all, been gardening at Buckden Towers for the best part of a Millennium. The knot garden itself actually occupies an area that was formerly kitchen gardens for the Towers. The surrounding walls show where fruit trees had been trained, although the mighty range of glasshouses producing out-of-season delicacies to tempt the episcopal palate are all now swept away. If your inclination runs to horticulture, it's a sun-trap and a very pleasant area to spend an hour's gentle gardening. We need volunteers to survey and to weed – get in touch with John or me if you'd like to help.

Pat Huff (The Castle House, Leighton Bromswold, Huntingdon)

Report on Progress at the Walled Garden, Ramsey Abbey School

Every second Saturday, a small, but dedicated group of volunteers meet in the wall garden at Ramsey Abbey School. Armed with secateurs and hoes, loppers and rakes, coffee and biscuits, we face the 'jungle' of a neglected garden. Having cleared the garden once already, we are tackling it a second time. This is because of the length of time responses about the lease seem to take, and also because we are not yet permitted to dig the soil and remove roots of woody weeds etc. It is amazing how quickly nature fills a vacuum. The bare soil is rapidly covered by a riot of weeds which have lain dormant for many years, which have simply been waiting for the opportunity to burst into life. Brambles, cut down to ground level, shoot up and grow three feet in just a few weeks. Things have improved recently though. By hiring a generator, we can use electric hedge trimmers and strimmers to speed the work along. One of our volunteers has managed to borrow a scythe and uses it to great effect. As a result, two of the four quadrants are once more looking as if we are in control.

In places the box hedging had grown above head height. Early during the year it was cut down to 12" and the rejuvenation has been wonderful. Growth in places is quite lush and now we just need to keep it trimmed and weed free. Many of the old apple trees have been heavily laden with fruit. There are damsons, as well as slowly ripening grapes along the west facing wall. The dead and damaged branches of the mulberry tree have been removed and the remaining branches are thriving. At least 900 hours have been put in to this project so far, but with autumn and winter approaching, the weather may prevent us working so often. Nevertheless we will continue as often as possible.

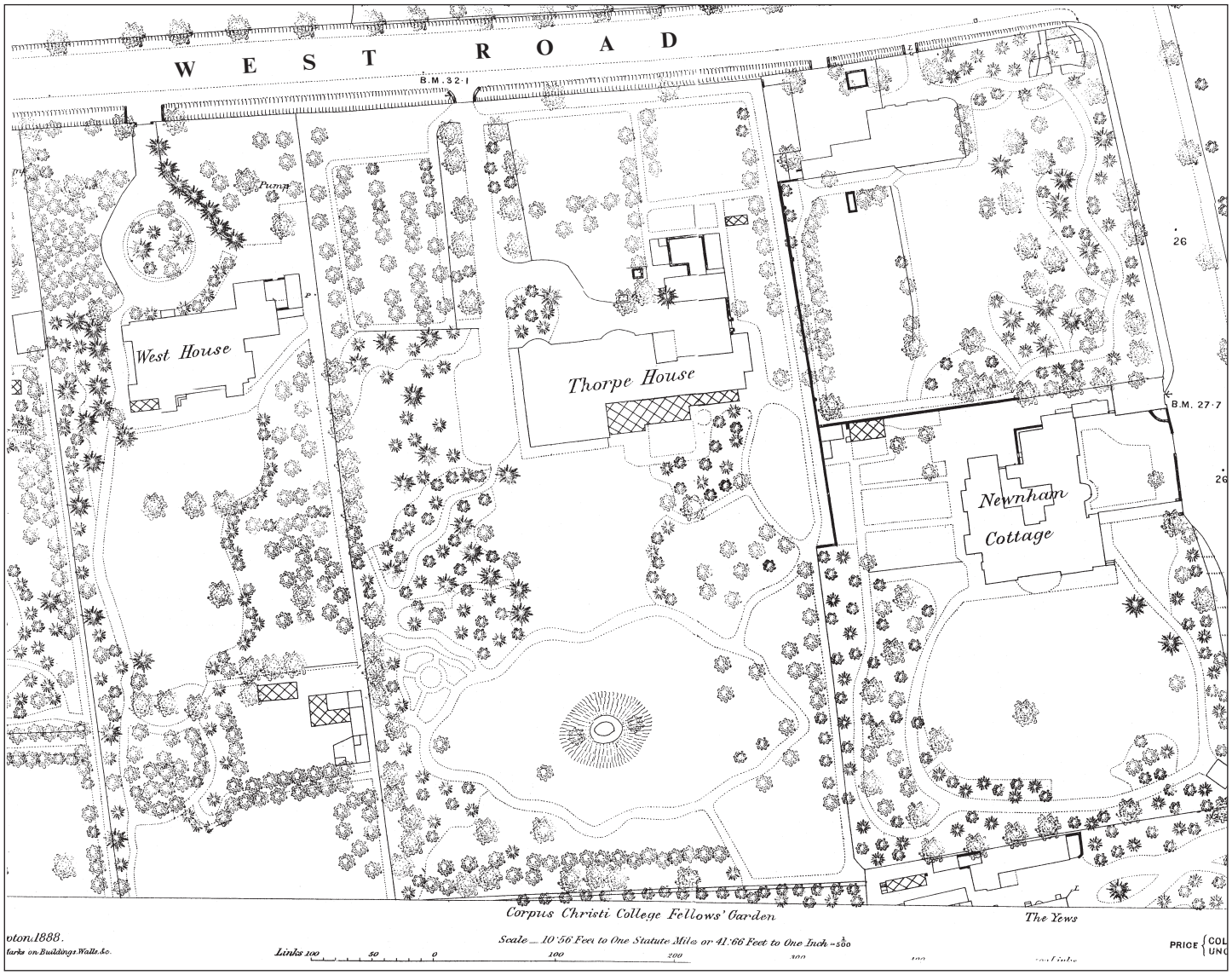
During September we paid a visit to the recently restored walled kitchen garden at Thornham Magna in Suffolk. Here the glasshouses had been restored with the help of a Heritage Lottery Bid. The glasshouses looked superb although there was little growing in them, and we were disappointed that only fruit trees were planted in the garden and no vegetables. The garden was very difficult to find and is situated in dense woodland in a large estate. But the garden was well maintained and we reckoned we could achieve a similar standard. We came away thinking this would be a great asset to the school grounds and the town of Ramsey.

Jean Chittim

A TOUR OF THE HOUSES AND HOSTELS BELONGING TO GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE ON 25TH JULY AT 11am.

Included were Harvey Court West Road, No 1 West Road, Newnham Cottage and Finella along Queen's Road, and The Fellows' Garden all belonging to Gonville and Caius College.

The College now owns a substantial site, extending from the western boundary of Harvey Court and bounded by West Road and Queen's Road and, to the south, by Sidgwick Avenue. Extending southwards from this avenue is the College's Fellows' Garden, bounded by Newnham Road to the east, Ridley Hall Road to the west and Maltings Lane on its south perimeter. Within the main site are the surviving gardens of Harvey Court, 1 West Road, Newnham Cottage and 'Finella'. (There are also two private properties, one of which is 'Springfield', former home of the Jebbs, who were relatives of the Darwins.) West of Harvey Court are the University buildings of the Sidgwick site.



The area to the west of Queen's Road and Newnham Road historically was part of the west fields of Cambridge until Parliamentary enclosure in the early 19th century. The site described above was Caius land and part of Butcher's Close. At the time of the Inclosure award map of 1804 there were a few large houses and a few cottages in Malting Lane, all within the parish of St Giles. In 1799 William Wilkins senior (1751-1815), father of the famous architect, took a building lease from Caius College of about 1 acre of the southern part of Butcher's Close and he had a house built there: Newnham Cottage.

The 1856 Harwood Surveyor Map (Caius) shows this site and beyond to be Caius property and Sidgwick Avenue just a footpath leading to the Corpus Christi land allotment. (Was this Leckhampton?) Florence Keynes at Newnham College in 1878 recalled a lane leading through the college's grounds. In 1889 Dr Sidgwick, a faithful supporter of Newnham and of higher education for women, wrote "Newnham College has been trying to get leave to close a path that runs through it: and this has got mixed up with the making of a road which is to take a slice off (other people's) gardens: hence tears and wrath and long letters in the Cambridge papers, and in short, a first class row, in which I had to be the Protagonist for Newnham". The path was closed in 1892 and Sidgwick Avenue was constructed.

It was not until the last two decades of the C19 that housing development on this site and beyond began in earnest. The new University Statutes of 1882 allowed Fellows to retain their Fellowships after marriage and Newnham became residentially desirable for senior members of colleges, with houses large enough for the family and its domestic servants and gardens or 'pleasure grounds' large enough for leisure pursuits, but also offering status and seclusion. Access to Cambridge by means of the Small Bridges – Silver Street route had recently been improved and the Western land was of dry river terrace gravel raised slightly above the marsh flood plain. The New Cambridge Guide, 1804, described Cambridge streets as narrow and winding and with houses in general ill built and crowded closely together.

In the 1880s married fellows had quite different aspirations, as had some of the wealthier professional and businessmen of the Town.

Our Tour began at Harvey Court, designed 1960-2 by Sir Leslie Martin and Colin St John Wilson. It was the most sensational new building in Cambridge since the War and marked the beginning of a new burst of building expansion, comparable to that of the 1880s in West, Grange, Cranmer and Hershal Roads, and Selwyn Gardens. This new expansion was often on land belonging to these earlier houses. Sometimes it involved demolition of buildings and the losses of gardens but on this site Caius have kept such destruction to a minimum. Their example was followed by Robinson College in the area west of Grange Road and visited by the Trust on 14th September 2000.

In the 1880s Caius had leased land to the Eaden Lilley Family. William Eaden Lilley in 1844 was described as a draper, carpet warehouseman, paper merchant and seller of oils, colours and brushes. He left his shop in Market Street to build a Thorpe House in West Road. Caius bought the property back from his successors, the Misses Lilley, pulled down his house but preserved his garden.

Harvey Court is a brick square with minimum windows and turning inwards on three of its four sides. It opens outwards only on the south with glass and airy rooms in stepped tiers and with terraces in front all overlooking Lilley's garden. The College founded in 1348, though wealthy, occupies a cramped site in the historic centre of Cambridge and needed more residence for undergraduates and graduates. Harvey Court and the adoption of houses on this site satisfied its need. It has provided for the residents, by the new Harvey Court and the preservation of numerous mature trees, the same seclusion and privacy which was sought after by the residents of the 1880s. Beyond the new court to the south is a large lawn, now terraced to reflect the wide flight of steps of the building, but Lilley's lily pond has survived – no longer filled with water. The indentation remains in the centre of the lawn, with three flower beds on the inner rim. There are substantial herbaceous borders around this lawn and the perimeter has trees and shrubs offering privacy and quiet.

The three houses within this Caius site, all rather Italianate in design, continue to reflect the substance, status and seclusion of their original owners. Their gardens are bounded by the trees and shrubs that deaden all noise from the adjacent traffic of Queen's Road. Each of the houses faces to the south, with a raised lawn probably used for croquet. These lawns were the major features of gardens that were designed primarily for leisure and pleasure. Paths and herbaceous borders are consigned to the perimeters of the lawns, but in each garden there are fine specimen trees and areas of rough grass.

Newnham Cottage is the oldest of this group and one of the oldest buildings in West Cambridge or Newnham. It was built some 87 yards south of West Road, is of 2 storeys in gault brick and with a slate roof. It was advertised for sale in the Cambridge Chronicle both in 1818 and 1836 described as 'erected about 30 years since by the late Wm Wilkins Sn. Its south front has five French windows on the ground floor, that in the centre an insertion and one now blocked. There is a mid 19th century glazed, cast iron verandah. Another later addition is a covered way of timber balustrading and supports with slate roof, leading to the ornate brick recessed entrance on Queen's Road with 'Newnham Cottage' inscribed. This covered way is open on the garden side.' The 1816 advert (Cambs Chronicle 5th Jan) states 'erected under the immediate direction of Mr Wilkins for his own residence, whose task and judgement in architecture have made it combine all the conveniences and advantages to be expected from the possession of such abilities'. He had provided his house with two water closets!

Adjacent to Newnham Cottage and south towards Sidgwick Avenue is 'Finella', once the home of Peter Bicknell, of Hughes and Bicknell, architects whose office was located in Trumpington Street. Built in the 1880s its exterior is particularly reminiscent of an Italian villa. Salmon pink washed bricks below a frieze are covered with open wooden trellis of a diagonal design; this same design is used for mock shutters on the first storey windows. (A glance into the interior revealed a room of astonishing 1920s interior design.) Again there is a raised lawn, specimen trees and a barrier of trees and shrubs deadening the noise of traffic.

On the corner site of West and Queen's Road is No 1 West Road – another house of the 1880s with similarities to 'Finella' and Newnham Cottage in design and materials (gault brick and slate). It has an interesting ironwork and copper covered verandah. The garden faces south with a raised lawn and an area of rough grass. The property is bounded by yews and shrubs producing the required privacy and quiet.

Leaving this part of the site through the private property of Springfield (a site on the corner of Queen's Road and Sidgwick Avenue) is Caius Fellows' Garden. It is approached by crossing the avenue and then through a small side gate in Ridley Hall Road. It was a rare privilege to visit such a secluded and almost secret garden. Hidden behind the giant cut-leaved plane tree on the corner, the garden is L-shaped with boundaries onto Newnham Grange and Malting Lane. Just inside the garden is a summer house and a detailed chart listing the names of the 200 roses planted in the garden. The circular rose garden has concentric beds divided by grass paths and outlined with high 'fencing' of rustic poles. The croquet lawn, parallel to Ridley Hall Road, is on the highest ground, above the rose garden. In the far south eastern corner is a secluded hard tennis court – leisure and pleasure continue to be requirements of these gardens.

So, in the first year of the 21st century Caius College continues to provide for its undergraduates, graduates (some married) and Fellows an environment strongly reminiscent of that created by College Fellows and Town businessmen for themselves in the 1880s.

Charles H Malyon

RAMSEY ABBEY

During this summer one of our members, David Cozens, organised two study days about the history of Ramsey Abbey: the first was held in Cambridge and the second in Ramsey. These seminars were supported by The Centre for Regional Studies, Anglia Polytechnic University, The Ailwyn Community School, and Huntingdon Local History Society. Both were well attended. At the same time David arranged for a fascinating exhibition about the Abbey to be held at Ramsey Rural Museum. I have included in this newsletter brief reports, for members' information, on the subjects covered.

A CENTRE OF RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL EXCELLENCE

Ramsey Abbey, besides being the earliest, was the most important religious house in the country. From Dr Cyril Hart, who gave the opening lecture in the first of two one-day seminars on Ramsey Abbey, we learnt that Ailwyn, who had founded a chapel in 969 in Ramsey invited Oswald of Worcester to establish a Benedictine Monastery there. Oswald brought 12 monks from Westbury and in 974 the abbey church was dedicated to St Mary, St Benedict and All Virgins. Oswald, drawing on his contacts in Fleury-sur-Loire, brought over the noted scholar Abbo, who immediately set up a centre of learning and so secured the future of the Abbey. In the 11th century Byrhtferth, a brilliant pupil of Abbo, wrote his

'Manual', the most important scientific treatise since the time of Bede.

Nigel Ramsay in his lecture gave us a picture of the vast library and archives that accumulated over the following centuries which included books, charters, account rolls, manorial rolls and catalogues. The books were arranged in a unique way; not chronologically or by subject or by shelf, but by the name of the donor. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries many of the books ended up in eminent museums and libraries, and also in private collections.

The Ramsey Psalter, in the lecture by Lucy Freeman-Sandler, dates from c1305. It was commissioned by William of Grafham, cellarer of the Abbey, as a present for his Abbot, John of Sawtry, and is considered one of the finest of the Fenland group of illustrated manuscripts. The Psalter includes pages showing the liturgical calendar for each month and on other pages are illustrations of the foundation of Ramsey Abbey often including the ram and bull, symbols of the Abbey. The original Psalter left Ramsey sometime in the 15th century only to turn up in the diocese of Constance in southern Germany. The majority of the Psalter is now in the Benedictine Abbey of St Paul in Lavatthal in the Austrian province of Carinthia. But the finest illuminated pages are to be found in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

Susan Edgington, in her lecture, stressed the importance of relics to an Abbey. Relics helped to make a place holy, they added prestige and authority to a church and they also attracted pilgrims. They could be obtained by purchase, by gift, by fraud or by theft. In Ramsey Abbey there were relics of St Ivo, St Felix, St Edwin of Worcester and two Kentish princes.

Edwin DeWindt was the last speaker of the first day. With a light hearted manner he spoke about the life of the inhabitants in late medieval Ramsey which he had discovered in Court Rolls. The inhabitants were blighted by illness, accidents, fire, plague, physical violence to each other, housebreaking and theft. There was no Police Force as we know it today, but 'hue and cry' was a means of harnessing public outrage at some of these goings on. The population was constantly shifting as new names occurred frequently in the proceedings while other names ceased to appear.

A copy of the Ramsey Psalter can be seen in the Treasury of Peterborough Cathedral.

Audrey Osborne.

VISIT TO CHILDERLEY HALL

Childerley Hall, comprising a house and chapel, is set in parkland between the sites of the two former villages of Great and Little Childerley. The site was described by Cole as 'one of the most absolute and compleate seats if not the best of the whole shire'. The medieval parishes of Great and Little Childerley, not differentiated at Domesday, were united about 1489. Their combined area of 1069 acres is smaller than all but three parishes in West Cambridge. Little Childerley may well have decayed before the end of the 15th century and was situated where later Grove Park is noted to the west of the house. Great Childerley was depopulated by the 5th Sir John Cutt, during the reign of Charles I, in order to enlarge his deer park, known as Great Park, which lies to the south-east of the house.

The property was acquired by Sir John Cutt in the reign of Henry VII. His descendants, who bore the same name and title for the next five generations, continued to own it and reside there, especially after the sale of their other seat, Horsham Hall in Essex. Charles I was confined by Cromwell at Childerley Hall one night in June 1647; the principal room on the upper floor, which he is said to have occupied, is named after him.

Our visit to the garden at Childerley Hall coincided with a warm June evening and we were welcomed by Mrs Jenkins who has brilliantly incorporated the historic site, to the south of the house with its raised walks and circular prospect mounds, into the finest rose garden in the county. But whilst we were waiting for latecomers to arrive, Mrs Jenkins had a surprise for us. A tractor and long trailer appeared from behind the great barn to take us on a tour of the estate. The tractor was ably driven by Ian Slatter, Childerley Estates Farm Manager. He drove east between fields of ridge and furrow and explained the conservation work to trees and hedgerows that the Estate was committed to. From our high vantage point we were able to see over newly planted hedges and enjoy the vast landscape with views towards Ely. Everyone was reminded of harvest time in the late 1940s when the farm workers were all brought back after a long day in the cornfields.

We were then invited to inspect the Great Barn which is situated behind the Victorian brick farm buildings. This timber structure almost 100 yards long will soon not be suitable for storing corn gathered from the estate. EEC regulations do not permit corn to be stored in buildings which are not air-tight. But Mrs Jenkins has recently arranged for concerts and opera to be held in the barn to raise funds for charitable causes.

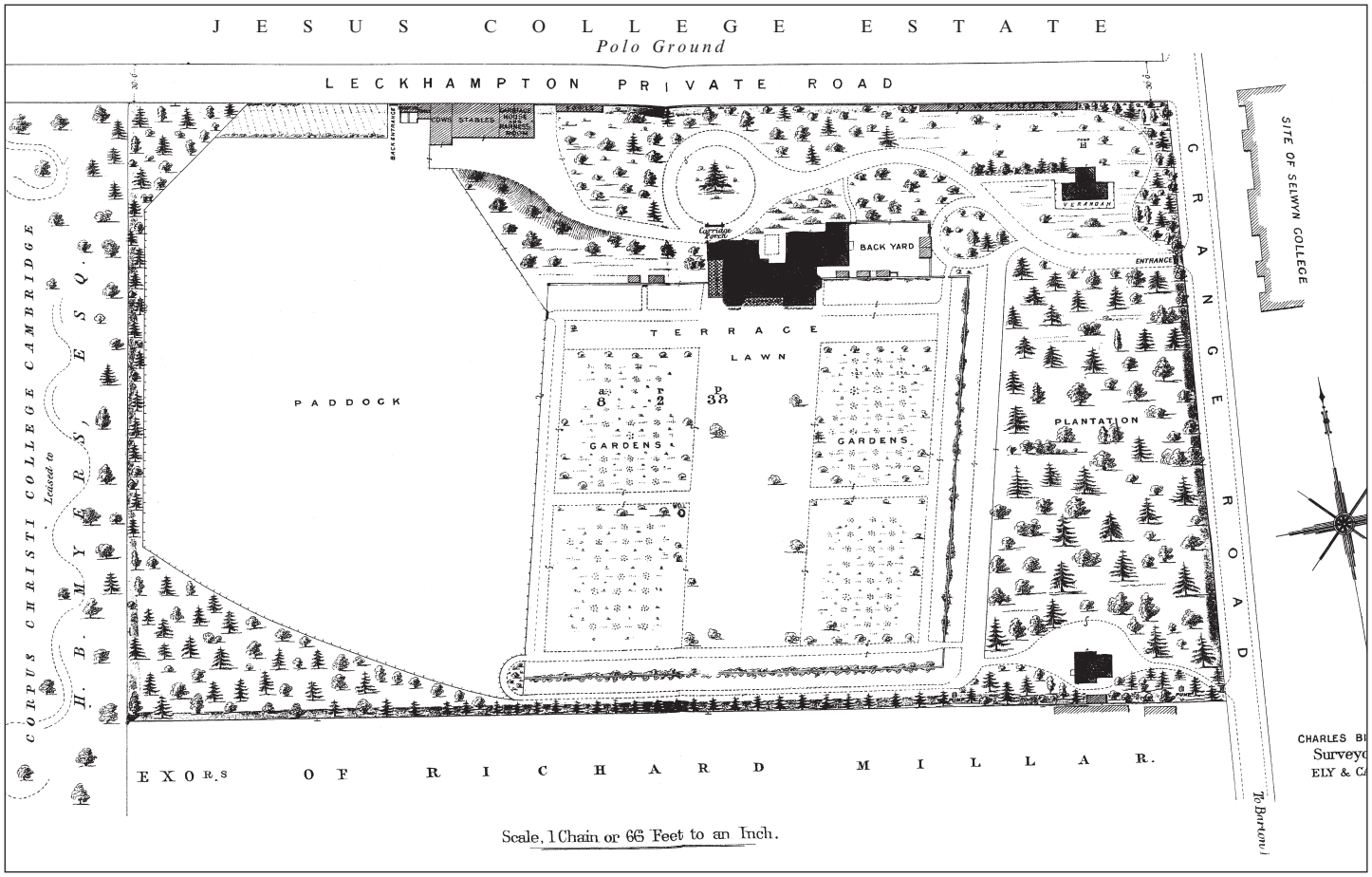
Then to the fine garden to the south of the house. Nothing can really prepare you for the fine collection of roses which grow in this garden. First a long narrow terrace with a central bed of roses all edged with white dianthus. A flight of steps with deep herbaceous borders either side, leads to a large lawn. To the west is a paradise of roses through which you walk along narrow winding paths. The formal beds of modern roses to the east balance the raised box smaller terraces. The whole is enclosed by a high hedge with tantalising views of groups of trees leading to the raised walks of the perimeter. Roses grow through mature trees, against walls, scramble over shrubs – all producing the most amazing scents on this perfect of all June evenings. Members explored further to the kitchen yard with the herb troughs and into the kitchen garden which is now planted with more roses. To the west is a large lake surrounded by young trees shimmering in the evening light and backed by a yew hedge with topiary birds.

Mrs Jenkins invited everyone who was able, to see the room in the house where Charles I was confined by Cromwell. This room is called 'King Charles's Chamber' by Cole, and the walls are covered by panels in sombre tones which feature symmetrical compositions of dogs and monkeys against a free arabesque of flowers, foliage and fruit. The borders are festooned with fruit, similar to the main panels, between narrow borders of geometrical ornament. The frieze has continuous strapwork relieved by terminal and other figures and interspersed by birds, beasts and foliage. The repainted coats of arms over the fireplace and in the frieze at either end of the room include allusions to the fourth Sir John Cutts and Margaret Brockett his second wife.

We then made our way to the chapel, situated at the west end of the terrace where we enjoyed the wine and light refreshments kindly provided by Mrs Jenkins. This was a most enjoyable evening. Members saw the fine collection of roses which Mrs Jenkins has collected over several years, all growing well in a beautiful setting, which encouraged the plants to produce strong scents on this warm evening. Our very grateful thanks to Mrs Jenkins and Mr Slatter who made our visit so memorable.

John Drake

Photograph of garden at 65 Grange Road, Cambridge
Sale particulars 1938



Plan of 'Grata Quies' (now PINEHURST), Grange Road, Cambridge
Sale particulars 1882

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