# CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## NEWSLETTER No. 18 MAY 2005



## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

At our AGM last November our treasurer for several years asked to be allowed to stand down. Terry Hayward had joined the Trust at the very beginning and agreed under some pressure to keep a record of our finances. Recently he obtained a substantial sum due to the Trust from members Gift Aiding their annual subscriptions. For all his support we are most grateful and I am sure you will join with me in thanking him for all the hard work he has done for the Trust. It is most reassuring that we are in a very healthy financial situation.

I would like to thank both The Dovehouse Trust and Christopher Vane Percy for both kindly sending cheques to the Trust. These unexpected donations are greatly appreciated and permit us to carry out our work. I feel we will soon be asked by The Association of Gardens Trusts to help them carry out the work of standardising etc all the research which the Garden Trusts have carried out to date in order to establish a national database for Garden Records. At least we have published a Gazetteer about Cambridgeshire Gardens as a result of our research, but several counties have not published anything.

A team of researchers has undertaken to provide the history of Leckhampton House garden, Grange Road, Cambridge for Corpus Christi College. The site was included in our gazetteer but further documents have come to light and this work has turned into a major project, which we hope will set a standard for all our future research. It is hoped that we will include the results of this in a future newsletter.

I do hope as many of you as possible will come to see the amount of progress which has taken place at the Walled Kitchen Garden at Ramsey Abbey School on our Social Evening on Saturday 18th June. After years of clearing the 9ft high thick forest of brambles that had overtaken the whole site and strangled the existing fruit trees, a complete transformation has recently taken place. Each time I go to help with the clearance, the garden gets larger and larger. Only recently a large group of sycamores has been removed and all the ivy has been removed from the walls, so all the various gateways can be appreciated.

40 apple trees have now been obtained and have been planted awaiting the arrival of their supporting tunnel. They have all grown well and survived the winter. ACRE, a group of local business men, has agreed to obtain and grow in the garden a range of strawberry plants which have historical associations with Cambridgeshire. To these are added two important other strawberries: plants of the original strawberry which was introduced into this country from Mexico and requires both male and female plants to produce good fruit, and the Tradescant Strawberry which produces fruit with leaves growing from them. Unwins have donated a range of historic sweet peas from their collection which have now been germinated and these will soon be planted in the garden.

The apples will be assessed for their taste as will the strawberries at the appropriate time of the year. If you would like to take part in the trial of sweet peas to assess the quality of their scent please contact the Trust. ACRE are hoping that when the strawberry trial is completed there will be sufficient remaining to enable the school cooks to produce a mouth-watering dessert for the pupils at the school. We shall see; I wonder if the teachers will want to try them first.

This time last year several snowdrops were flowering in the walled garden. These were lifted and lined out for future planting. This spring these had multiplied and they have been replanted to flower beneath the apple tunnel. An on going task which will occur annually is to provide wide drifts both sides of the east-west path. All the above has been achieved by a stalwart team of volunteers over several years and at last the 'fruits' of their labours are to be appreciated.

I do hope that all members will be able to attend to give their support.

*John Drake*
*Chairman.*

# PETERBOROUGH MINSTER PRECINCTS

Recently, after much pressure from one or two members, English Heritage has at last added to their Register of Parks and Gardens, Peterborough Minster Precincts, Cambridgeshire. Some of you who have been members from the foundation of the Trust will remember that Jane Brown kindly produced an historical account of the above site for one of our early newsletters. Recently she was sent a draft copy of the entry and advised that some omissions should be included. For those of you who have only recently joined the Trust we record below the entry in full for your information. We would point out that the entry is the first time that the historic precincts of a Minster or cathedral have been included in English Heritage's Register. Jane's perseverance over several years has achieved this listing, which we hope will halt further deterioration.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE PETERBOROUGH MINSTER PRECINCTS
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A series of garden spaces dating form the C12, now of mainly C19 character, surrounding the Cathedral Minster Precinct buildings.

**Historic Development**

Roman remains occur on the site of the Minster *Precincts* at Peterborough and Bede's *History of the English Church* records Saxulf, made Bishop of Mercia in c.674, as the constructor of the first monastery. It was refounded in the C10 as a defended settlement named Burh which was fortified by the Normans; Tout Hill, a mount which survives in the Deanery Garden, survives from this period (Mackreth 1994). During the C13 the church was doubled in size and became an abbey and by 1539 a Benedictine monastery had developed around it, containing buildings, productive gardens, orchards, vineyards, cemeteries, and a herbarium. The layout is still reflected in the plan of the Precincts today. Extensive grounds were laid out around the Lodgings (later the Bishop's Palace) and the great Norman Gate was created. To the north of the abbey the Prior's Lodgings were developed (later to become the Deanery). Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the new Diocesan order came into being, the Bishop took over the Lodgings (the grounds of which were substantially reduced) and the Dean was installed in the Prior's Lodgings. The remaining monastic buildings became six Prebendal Houses and the occupation of the buildings and their gardens was ensured. At the beginning of the C19 a further phase of garden development took place as the Lay Folks' Cemetery was restored and given a picturesque quality under the direction of Dean Monk. Also during this period the gardens of the Bishop's Palace, The Deanery, and The Vinery were the subject of major developments, while all the Prebendal Houses were given Victorian gardens. At the beginning of the C20 the architect Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) was commissioned to extend the Bishop's Palace, which he orientated on the existing refectory garden. During the C20 the layout of some of the garden spaces has been simplified but the general pattern and structure of the landscape retains its medieval origins, overlain by a Victorian character. The site remains (2002) in divided ownership, partly the responsibility of the Dean and Chapter and partly owned by the Church Commissioners.

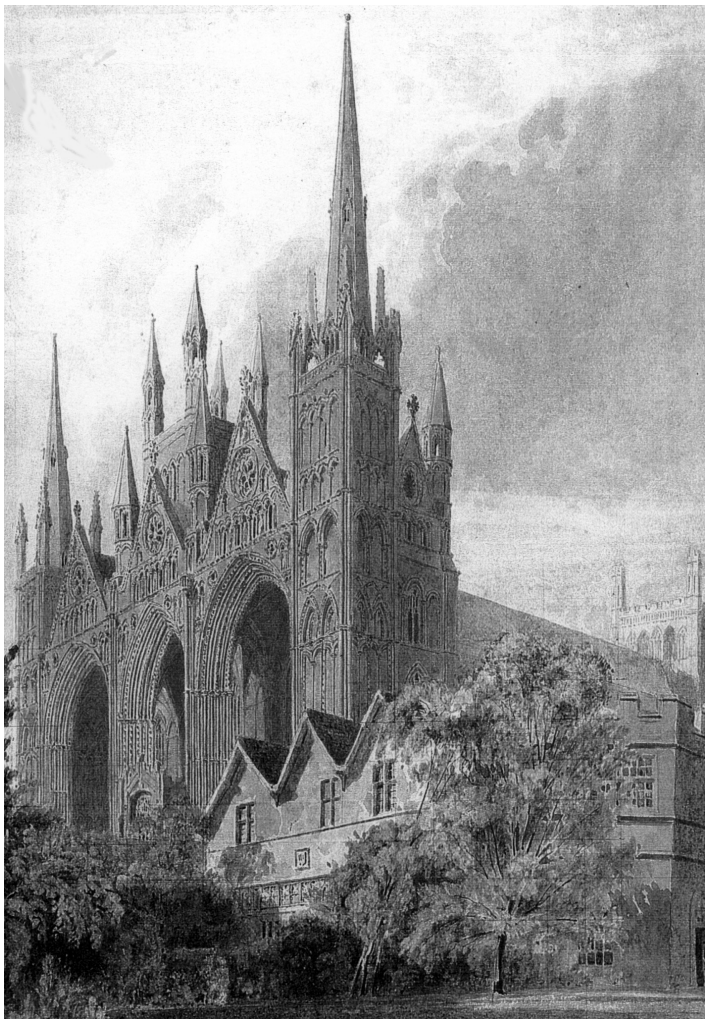


*Illustration of The West Front from Bishop's Garden, c.1820. Richard Cattermole (1795–1858)*

**Description**

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

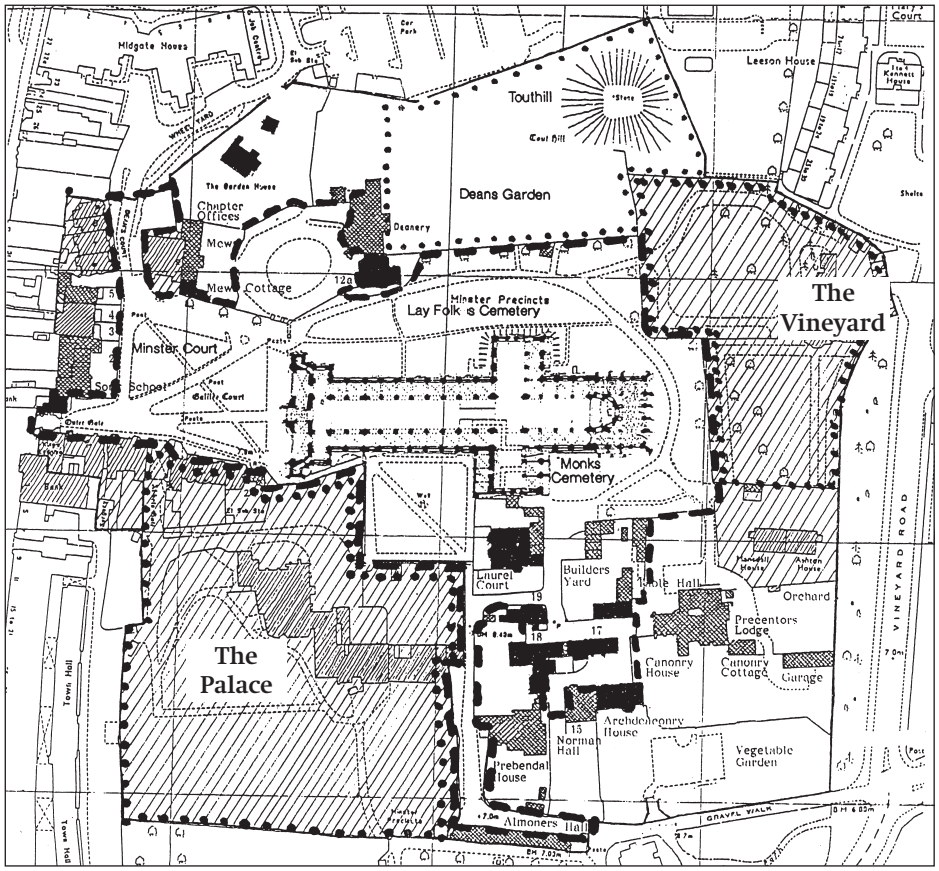
The Minster Precincts lie in the centre of the city of Peterborough. The c.9.5ha site is bounded to the east by Vineyard Road, to the south by Gravel Walk and a car park, to the west by the Market Place and Causeway, and to the north by Wheel Yard and buildings running up to City Road. The generally level site is enclosed by walls and/or buildings which divide it from the city, the main view across its surroundings being afforded from a mount located in the Deanery garden.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

There are several vehicular and pedestrian entrances into the Minster Precincts. The main pedestrian entrance comes from the Market place on the western boundary, through an arched gateway known as the Norman Gate into the Minster Court lying below the west front of the cathedral. Vehicular access is also afforded by the Wheel Yard entrance off Midgate in the north-west corner of the site, with further pedestrian route entering the site off Bishop's Road in the south-east corner.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING**

Peterborough Cathedral stands at he centre of the site, surrounded by a collection of other historic buildings within the Minster Precinct wall. These include the Bishop's palace, The Deanery, The Vineyard, Canonry House, Archdeanery, and the Infirmary. The structures and their interconnecting spaces span a period of over 1300 years of ecclesiastical use and




*Map by John Dejardin Design 1999*

together with the walls and monuments contain sixty-two listed structures, including nineteen listed as grade I and six listed as grade II*.

**THE GROUNDS**

The whole of the Precinct area is enclosed by either the Precinct buildings or a boundary wall. There have been few losses to the medieval wall which remains largely intact. Internally the grounds surrounding the Minster buildings are divided by walls into a series of discrete garden areas relating each to the various buildings and their uses. From the main gate off Market Place the path leads into the Minster Court which is enclosed by the Precinct walls and is laid to grass, cut with paths. In 1718 this area was laid to gardens and orchards which by 1800 had become the garden for the Master of King's School. During the C19 the present character of grass areas set with paths was laid out and by 1886 (OS) the present (2002) straight path had been determined.

Immediately surrounding the cathedral building to north, east, and south are three cemetery areas. These include the Lay Folks' Cemetery (founded in the C7, remodelled by Dean Monk in 1822), and the Canons' Cemetery. A perimeter carriage drive runs alongside boundary borders which are filled with mixed planting and some mature trees. The area within the drive comprises grass lawns set with flower and rose borders in a layout which changed little between 1718 and 1822. Alterations in the 1920s included the simplification of the planting, the removal of several mature trees, the relocation of headstones, and the redirection of the carriage drive, resulting in the character which survives today (2002). In 1828 Britton noted that:

*In manner of laying out and embellishing the old Churchyard the Dean and Chapter have initiated one of the best practices of the Parisians. Here, as in Pere La Chaise cemetery in Paris, the graces are planted and embellished with willows, laurels, pines and various trees; shrubs and flowers.*

To the north of the cathedral and Lay Folks' Cemetery stands the Deanery set in its own walled garden, Mainly laid down to lawn with specimen trees, the garden is surrounded by a perimeter path running alongside mixed borders of Victorian character, containing a high proportion of evergreen shrubs on the south side and herbaceous planting on the north side. To the north-west lies the Dean's Entrance and vegetable garden. In the north-east corner of the garden stands an C11 mound with a serpentine path running to its summit, and shrubs and evergreens planted on its slopes. From here there are views out over the city. During the C11, Tout Hill, as the mound was known, was part of the motte and bailey defence of Peterborough Castle and in 1718 the Eayre map records it standing in the deer park attached to The Deanery, the grounds of which contained fishponds and orchards. In 1825 Dean Monk filled in the fishponds and began to develop the gardens, the mount being brought into the grounds at the end of the C19 when the deer park was lost to city developments. At this time Dean Barlow gave the gardens their present character.

Beyond the cathedral along the eastern boundary stands The Vineyard and its grounds. A vineyard was planted in 1174 but by 1718 the area had become a lawned garden to accompany the house. The lawns, dotted with trees and enclosed by a perimeter path alongside borders of mixed evergreen shrubs and herbaceous planting, were laid out in C19 and have changed little since that time, apart from the southern end of the grounds where two small C20 houses have been erected.

On the south-west corner of the cathedral is a small cloister, laid to grass with a cross path set beside a wellhead. This area formed the C12 cloister for the Benedictine monastery. It was destroyed in 1643 and then let to John Glover for use as a nursery garden on condition he supplied laurel leaves to the cathedral. In 1686 the diagonal path was laid in the grass and the area has changed little since that time. Beyond the cloister, in the south-west corner of the Precinct, is the Bishop's palace, set in its own expansive garden which comprises lawns, a woodland garden, and a large kitchen garden. The kitchen garden is divided by box hedging which was planted after the Second World War when the area ceased to be used for growing vegetables. In 1302 Abbot Godfrey de Crowland's famed gardens stretched as far as the River Nene and were doubly moated (see plan in Harvey 1981) . The Derby Yard, named as a corruption of 'herber', is now a city car park, but other sites identified by Harvey from 1302, persisting through Eayre's map of 1718, remain as garden areas. Bishop Hinchcliffe created a model farm here in 1769 which remained into the C20, but the main character of the gardens was determined in the C19 and much of this survives. In 1900 Edwin Lutyens designed a new service wing for the Palace which was orientated to fit with the existing layout of the garden.

The south-east corner of the site is dominated by a collection of Precinct buildings including the Prebendal Hall, Norman Hall, Almoners Hall, Infirmary, and Canonry House.

The medieval spaces surrounding these buildings were given a C19 garden character, which has subsequently been altered by C20 uses. The kitchen garden associated with Canonry House survives in part in the far south-east corner of the Precinct area, divided into two compartments by two rows of mature yews. The western half is now (2002) a car park, the eastern half partly laid to grass and partly cultivated for vegetables. The perimeter path surrounding the cultivated areas, shown in this position on the 1886 OS map, survives in this section of the garden.

**References**


S Gunton, *The history of the church of Peterborough* (1686, reprinted 1990, edited by Peter Clay)

J Britton, *History and Antiquities of the Abbey and Cathedral Church of Peterborough* (1812) (copy in Cathedral Library)

*The Story of Peterborough Cathedral* (1932) (copy in Cathedral Library)

J Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (1981), pp 16,85

D Mackreth, *Peterborough History and Guide* (1994), p3

Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Plan, (Dejardin Design 1999)


**Maps**


T Eayre, *Map of Peterborough*, c 1718 (BM Add Ms 32467 folio)

Map of the precincts of the Cathedral Church of Peterborough, 1822 (Cathedral Library)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1886


**Archival items**

Many of the papers relating to the cathedral and its precincts are held in the Cathedral Library.

Description written: May 2002
Amended: September 2002
Register Inspector: EMP
Edited: November 2002

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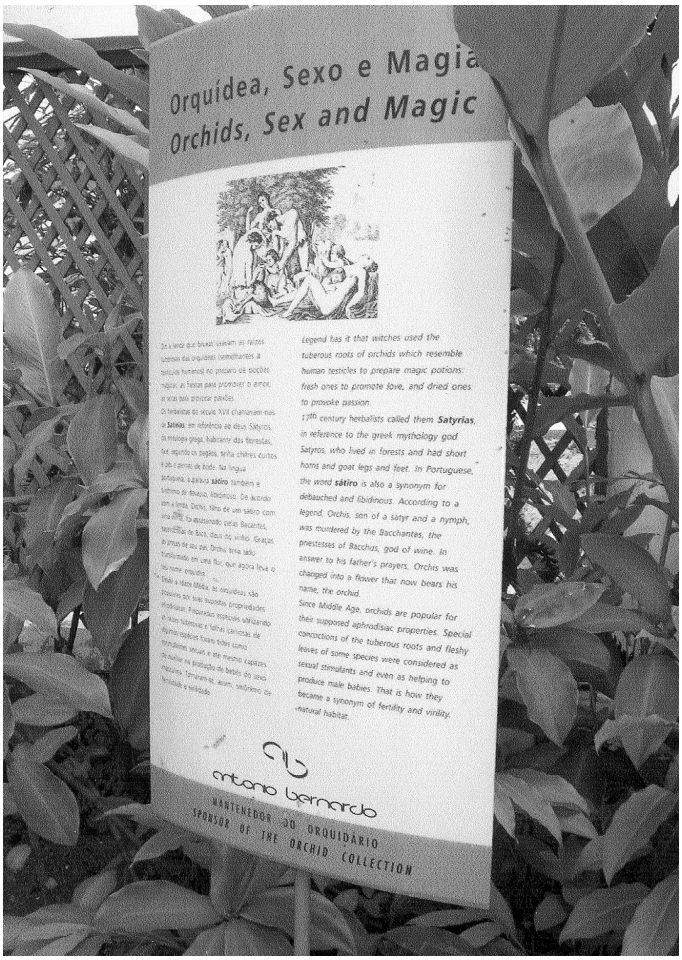
# TWO ORCHID HOUSES THOUSANDS OF MILES APART RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, AND KIMBOLTON, HUNTINGDONSHIRE

While visiting the Jardim Botanico in Rio de Janeiro in 2004 I came across an exquisitely designed orchid house on c1930 but constructed in a Victorian style. It was shaded by tall exotic palms and ancient trees beyond the giant water lily pond. The gardens were created by the Portuguese prince regent Dom Joao VI in 1808 in the grounds where gunpowder was once manufactured and stored outside Rio. Initially, the gardens were used to hold plants from other parts of the world, particularly those that had some commercial interest including tea, cloves, cinnamon and pineapple.

The gardens are now famous for their avenues of royal palms that are over 160 years old, and over 8,000 different species of plants. The notice near the orchid house gives the following information,

'During Dr Barbosa Rodrigue's administration which started in 1890, the first greenhouse was built in Rio de Janeiro's botanic garden. It had an octagonal shape, and was made of wood. It housed then the 'Decoration Plants', while the recently formed orchid collection was kept in the supplementary greenhouse next door. In the 30s the great greenhouse was rebuilt, this time in iron and glass copying the English models. In the 1950s the lath house was built where the orchids are now grown. The greenhouse and the lattice house currently hold 2,140 orchids in pots, tree fern plaques or attached to trees. This living collection has 338 different species of Brazilian and exotic orchids. All plants are numbered, and information regarding their origin, flowering season etc. is digitalised and available to visitors. The research room can be also used for bibliographic consultations'.

I wondered if there were orchid houses similar to this in England, 'the English model', and while browsing through a number of sources I came across a reference to a large orchid collection owned by the Reverend John Huntley of Kimbolton in the 1830s. The 1885 Ordnance Survey map of Kimbolton does indeed show a long glasshouse in the grounds of the vicarage. From further enquiries I learned that this had survived, though derelict, until the 1980s when Rev Roy Meadows who was vicar partly demolished it. Dawn Gooderham, who lived in the house next to the vicarage as a little girl, remembers seeing grapes hanging from a vine in




the greenhouse. I wondered if the vine had been used as a shade plant for the orchids.

I visited the vicarage garden in February this year, and found that the north wall of the glasshouse was still there; it is built in garden wall bond and stands 15 feet high. It was built against and around an earlier gable wall of a stable in the corner of which there was a stoke hole for a furnace or stove and above this a tall chimney. The whole building was 45 feet

long and 18 feet wide though only 33 feet of wall length had been enclosed on the south side. The glasshouse had been divided into two compartments perhaps for differing temperature: there is wall plaster at the western end and a straight joint suggesting this. Against the wall are regularly spaced vertical timbers for training plants.

The entrance at the east end was through a four foot wide doorway. Some remains of the staging for the plant containers also survives, the one along the north wall being about two feet six inches high and built in brick. It has a brick channel for ducted warm air which is slightly blackened, and another cavity behind it; the channel was covered by a large tile, one foot blackened, and another cavity behind it; the channel was covered by a large tile, one foot square, and others could be seen lying on the ground nearby. The bricks of the north wall are similar to those of the extension to the vicarage and the gated entrance to the property and are clearly later than the original house which was refaced in the 18th century.

The alterations to the vicarage and the building of the glasshouse coincide with the time of the commutation of the tithes in the early 19th century. Could the awards made at that time have funded the new building programme? The glasshouse may have been used as Huntley's orchid house but there may have been other similar buildings on the vicarage site that he used or he may have used his vicarage. The glasshouse is similar to one described by Jennifer Davies in The Victorian Flower Garden as the Flowering Corridor especially in its dimensions.

The Reverend John Huntley was vicar of Kimbolton from 1819 to 1845; he was a leading collector of orchids during the time that orchids were being avidly collected; new species were being discovered in the wild and huge quantities of orchids were being shipped back to this country for sale by specialist nurserymen. The nobility vied with one another to raise the most exotic plants. John Huntley was involved in advising the 6th Duke of Devonshire in the 1830s by letter on the propagation of Amherstia nobilis an epiphytic orchid found in an orchid-rich area of Assam, India, which was considered the most exotic of all. Huntley was a close friend of James Bateman who was the owner of the finest collection of orchidaceous plants in England. (James Bateman had published The Orchidacaea of Guatemala and Mexico in a large folio illustrated by the renowned Mrs Withers and Agnes Drake Huntley.) Huntley had been collecting orchids since his arrival at Kimbolton in 1819 but had to sell his collection in 1840. The fate of the Huntley collection is described in Kate Colquhoun's biography of Joseph Paxton: A Thing in Disguise The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton and by Peter Hayden in his excellent book on Biddulph Grange, A Victorian Garden Discovered.

When John Huntley was forced to sell his collection because of his impoverishment and also for other 'political' reasons, his friend James Bateman was happy to advise him. Huntley was very keen to see that it was not dispersed after the sale particularly by a nurseryman such as Loddiges of Hackney – one of the best at that time. He also wanted to prevent the collection going to anyone who might try to hybridise his specimens; he shared with James Bateman strong anti-Darwinian views, and believed that man should not interfere with the purity of God's domain. He therefore looked for a private buyer and was grateful to James Bateman for writing to the Duke of Devonshire in February 1840. The Duke was clearly very interested and Joseph Paxton, who was at that time landscaping the grounds at Chatsworth, was dispatched to Kimbolton to inspect the collection of 284 plants and the 50 specimens that Bateman had said were not in the Duke's collection. A sum of £500 was finally agreed for the purchase of the whole collection of orchids and a collection of cacti when the Duke met John Huntley at Chiswick House.

The discovery of this famous orchid collector poses some questions that will lead on to further research. Is there a full record of the plants that were sold to the 6th Duke? Miss Agnes Drake, one of the illustrators of Bateman's Orchidacaea, was later to take the name Huntley, and was this just a coincidence? Was there a family connection between John Huntley and the Marchioness of Huntley who was also a great collector of native plants in

Huntingdonshire in the 1850s, and who was the founder member of the Royal Horticultural Society? I would welcome any response to these questions and at the same time would highly recommend to everyone the orchid house and its collection in the Jardim Botanico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Beth Davies

Colquhoun, K. The Thing in Disquise The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton, 2003
Davies, J. The Victorian Flower Garden, 1991
Hayden, P. Biddulph Grange, Staffordshire, 1989

Ray Desmond's Book Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists 1977 offers the following:-

James Bateman (1811-1897) b. Redivals, Bury Lancs 18 July 1811 d. Worthing, Sussex 27 Nov 1897.
BA Oxon 1834, MA 1845, FRS 1838, FLS 1833. Cultivated tropical plants, especially orchids. Employed T Colley to collect orchids in British Guiana, President, North Staffordshire Field Club, 1865-70. Wrote: *Orchidacaea of Mexico and Guatemala 1837-43. Guide to Cool Orchid Growing 1864. Monograph of Odontoglossum 1864-74. Second century of Orchidaceous Plants 1867.*
William George Spencer Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858) b. Paris 21 May 1790 d. Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire 17 January 1858.

BA Cantab 1811. LLB 1812. President Horticultural Society of London, 1838-58. Employed Joseph Paxton to manage his celebrated gardens at Chatsworth, Derbyshire. Played a major role in the establishment of Kew as a national botanic garden. "The greatest encourager of gardening in England at the present time".

Miss Drake (fl. 1830s –1840s)

"Miss Drake, whose name appears as the artist in all of Lindley's plates almost, was present (at Lindley's home) and is, I judge, a member of his family, and perhaps a relative of Mrs Lindley" (A Gray *Letters v.1, 1893, 131*)

Contributed plates to J Lindley's *Sertum Orchidaceum 1838*, J Bateman's *Orchidacaea of Mexico and Guatemala 1837*, and over 1,100 plates to Botanic Register.

Mrs Augusta Innes Withers (nee Baker) (C 1793–1860s)

Of Lisson Grove, London. Appointed painter of flowers to Queen Adelaide, 1830. Flower and Fruit Painter in Ordinary to Queen Victoria, 1864. Drew plants for *Trans. Hort. Soc. London, Bot. Mag., Floral Cabinet*, J Bateman's *Orchidacaea of Mexico*, R Thompson's *Gdnrs Assistant*, etc.

Rev J T Huntley (fl 1820)

Of Kimbolton, Hunts. Had garden of rare plants, especially orchids.

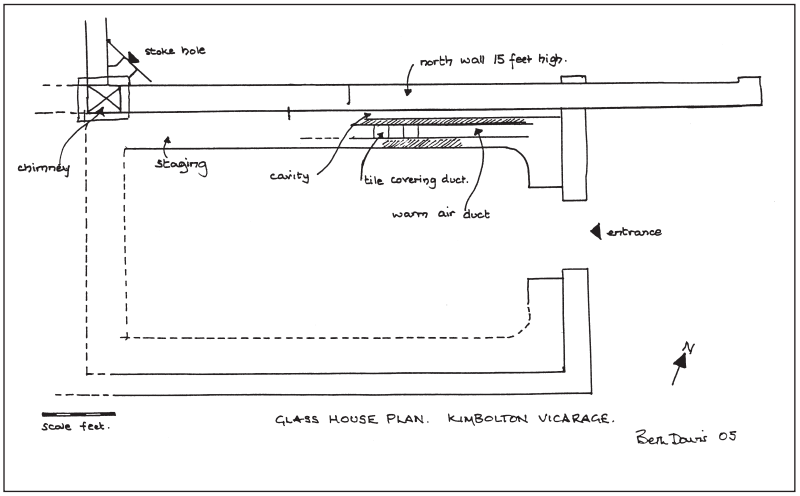
Orchid *Huntleya* named after him.

Conrad Loddiges (c.1739–1826) b. Herzberg? c.1739 d. Hackney 13 March 1826.

Came to England as a gardener c.1761. In 1771 took over nursery in Hackney founded by J. Busch. Introduced plants from Michaux and Bartram. Nursery taken over by his son George (1784–1846).

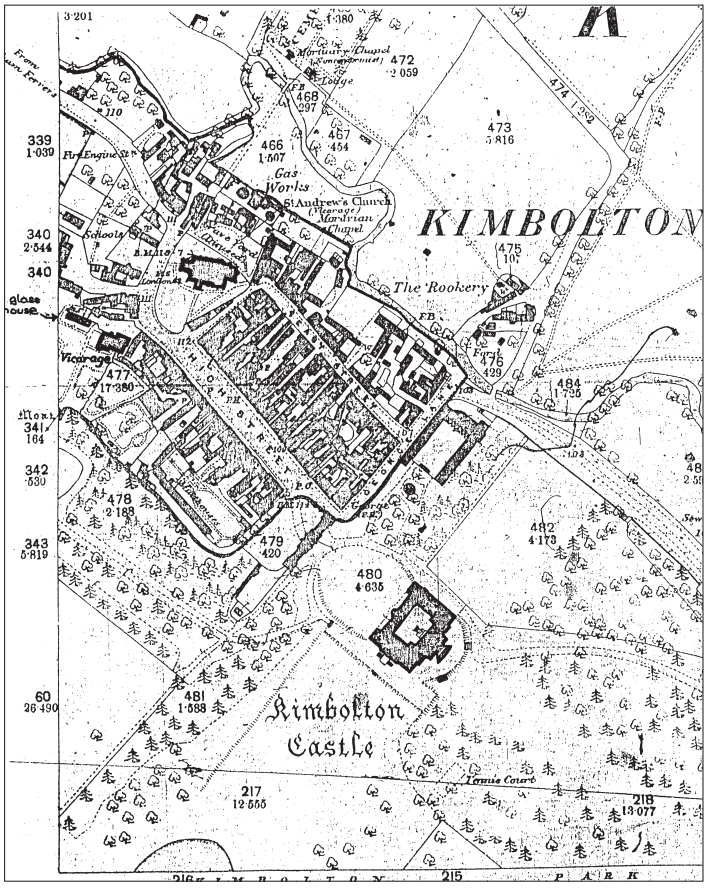
J T Huntley was recognised as an owner of rare and interesting plants, two examples illustrate this – in the Botanic Magazine is a fine coloured plate of a rare black flowered climber from Mexico which he had obtained and grew successfully, and in the Botanical Register of 1837 is an illustration of the orchid named after Huntley. Further information about *Huntleya maleagris Lindl*. can be found in Venuzuelan Orchids Volume 3, 1965 p147.

In the Botanic Magazine of 1828 is an illustration and description of *Gonolobus niger*. The black-flowered Gonobolus was raised from seeds sent from Mexico to the Rev J T Huntley of Kimbolton, a gentleman, whose collection of living plants promises to rank amongst the most valuable in the kingdom for rare and beautiful individuals. The seed vessels, Mr Huntley remarks, were larger than an apple: but in the stove, where the plant is cultivated, and where it bears its numerous singularly-coloured blossoms in the month of October, these



flowers fall away without producing fructification.

*Huntleya meleagris*, illustrated by Miss Drake in the Botanic Register, is so called by Mr Bateman, in compliment to the Rev J T Huntley, a zealous collector of rare plants. Its flower according to M Descourtilz's account of the plant is large, having five petals, broad at the base, with a white claw, and a claret-coloured grounds on the inside which is sometimes speckled with greenish pink, and always marked by longitudinal lines connected by transverse ones, which thus form numerous elevations, and make the flower look like a draughtboard. It thrives well in orchid houses where the atmosphere is kept saturated with moisture and the temperature is in winter from 60 to 70°F, and in summer from 70 to 90°. It is scentless and flowers in June.

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# Visit to RYSTON HALL, DOWNHAM MARKET, NORFOLK 17th March 2005: a Study of Estate Management over a period of 500 years.

Ryston Hall and its estate of 3,330 acres is adjacent to the estate of the Hare family at Stow Bardolph to the north and is conveniently situated just to the east of the A10 en route from Cambridge to Downham. To the south is the New Cut of the River Ouse and the River Wissey. The estate has been owned and managed by the Pratt family for some 500 years and a conducted visit with explanations by Piers Pratt the owner and his head gardener Gavin Staffon Lawrence offered an opportunity to consider the continuity and change in Estate Management over a long period.

Geologically the estate lies within a belt of blue sand stretching from Downham, which provides slightly acidic soil and a high water table to the west adjacent to the house and the A10. Historically the worst land was always reserved for the construction of the house and its outbuildings; so it is at Ryston with the Hall situated in formal gardens where the water table is high.

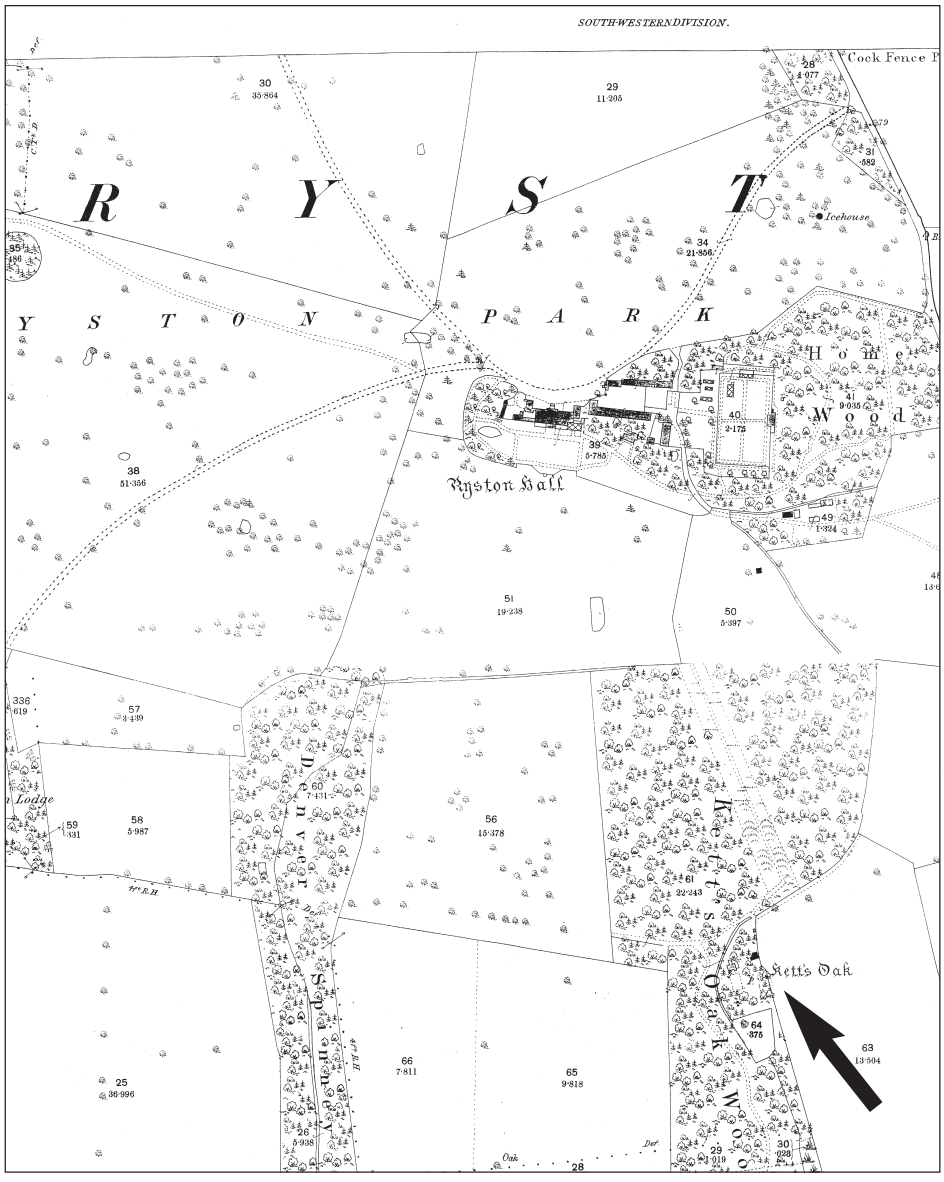
In the early 16th century a member of the Pratt family and bailiff of a nearby estate appreciated that the presence of unmarried daughters and heiresses at Ryston increased his prospects of becoming a landowner. A judicious marriage was made, beginning the lengthy period of continuous ownership by one family. Estate ownership and management over such a length of time have encountered numerous and continuing problems. The family has provided essential continuity but wisely adapted to changes required by political situations, economic needs together with social and cultural fashions. Piers Pratt continues this process of successful change today.

Much of East Anglia was open fields in the 16th century but already at Ryston and in parts of North Norfolk there were small hedged pastures, which many smaller landowners and villagers believed to infringe their common rights. In 1549, during the Duke of Somerset's regency for the young Edward VI, there were uprisings in many counties: some religious in origin, but many as in Norfolk in opposition to enclosures and the changes to land made by enterprising landowners. The rebels from Lynn and Downham met with others at an oak tree on the Ryston estate. Robert Kett was a lesser landowner and the leader, and the band marched on to Norwich encamping with some 16,000 men on Mousehold Heath. Here they issued demands to the Mayor of Norwich and heard sermons from new reforming preachers. Eventually put down by the troops of the Earl of Warwick, Kett was hanged and a proclamation pardoned the 'great number of rude and ignorant people' who had 'riotously assembled themselves, plucked down men's hedges and 'disparked their parks'. BUT the Pratt family had experienced the effects of political disturbance. Within the estate grows an ancient oak, Kett's

Oak or the Oak of Reformation, and at its base is a stone plaque, 1896, carved with:

'Mr Pratt your shepe are very fat
And we thank you for that.
We have left you the skins
To buy your lady pins
And you may thank us for that'.

Already the vicissitudes of estate management were apparent. Further difficulties were experienced during the mid-17th century Civil Wars when Roger Pratt, a Royalist in the Parliamentary held county, took refuge at Rome with his friend, John Evelyn. By the 18th century a need to preserve social status required a remodelling of the house and emparkment in accord with cultural fashion. From then on the family used their ingenuity and readiness to adapt in order to survive the years of depression following 1873 when




travel by steamship and refrigeration allowed produce from the USA to damage England's farmers. During the last 50 years a series of government orders, EU directives and Health and Safety Regulations have demanded further changes.

In the 16th century Pratt, the bailiff, acquired a moated manor house on the site of the present Hall. An Estate Map of 1635 shows the surviving church of St Michael in the north-west corner of the estate and in this area strips of land worked by the inhabitants of Ryston Village, which has not survived. The map shows numerous small, hedged pastures, no doubt suitable for sheep. At this time there were no trees on the estate. The church, largely built of local carstone, has a Norman tower arch and numerous Pratt family monuments, especially one for Sir Roger Pratt, described by Pevsner as "one of the most important post Reformation architects in England". Returning from exile and aided by his patron, Lord Clarendon, an important Councillor for Charles II, Roger Pratt persuaded his cousin Sir George to re-build Coleshill, his seat in Berkshire, to Roger's design. Roger was also responsible for Clarendon House, Piccadilly (demolished 1683 but described by Pevsner as "very influential"); for Lord Arlington's house at Horseheath in south Cambridgeshire also demolished and for a rebuilt Ryston Hall, which he inherited in 1667. Sir Roger Pratt had been invited to help with the replanning of London after the Great Fire, but his patron, Lord Clarendon, fell from favour. The cost of the new Hall at Ryston was £2,8820 7s 7d of which £80 7s 7d was reckoned to be the cost of trees for the garden. There is a fine painting of Roger's house and formal gardens in the Great hall of the house. By the 18th century, a century of great change, the family needed to preserve and enhance their status. A surviving map shows continuing strip farming but new developments in parkland and a rabbit warren. Today parkland survives affording fine views of the Hall from both north and south. By 1775 many trees were planted, especially Home Wood of mixed oak woodland.

The hall was extended and remodelled with outer bays to match the centre by Sir John Soane in 1786, when the formal walled garden of the painting was removed in favour of a park with ha-ha, ice-house and dove house, surrounded by woods. The boundaries of the present formal gardens are shown on an 1820 plan, but the Victorian walls of re-used brick followed later. The Hall's mansard roof was added by Piers' grandfather in 1913. Beyond the Hall to the east is a stable yard with stables of garreted carstone and brick dressing. Opposite the stable block is a dairy, the oldest surviving building, with a string course above the windows, and further east a fine, freestanding cowshed. At this time dairy farming was profitable and the ha-ha offered protection from the cattle in the park. Adjacent to the stable block is a surviving orangery converted from another farm building: Classical in design, pedimented and with Ionic columns, it has a wooden fascia over brick.

Unfortunately no drawings of the garden or the estate survive after Soane, though Piers has a fine collection of photographs dating from the 1870's. The present formal gardens date from Victorian times with special contributions by Piers' grandparents. They had a conservatory built on the south east wing of the Hall; it decayed and collapsed in the 1950's. There were waterfalls on the surviving rocks and today remnants of tiled floors surround Magnolia grandiflora. There are no plans to restore the conservatory.

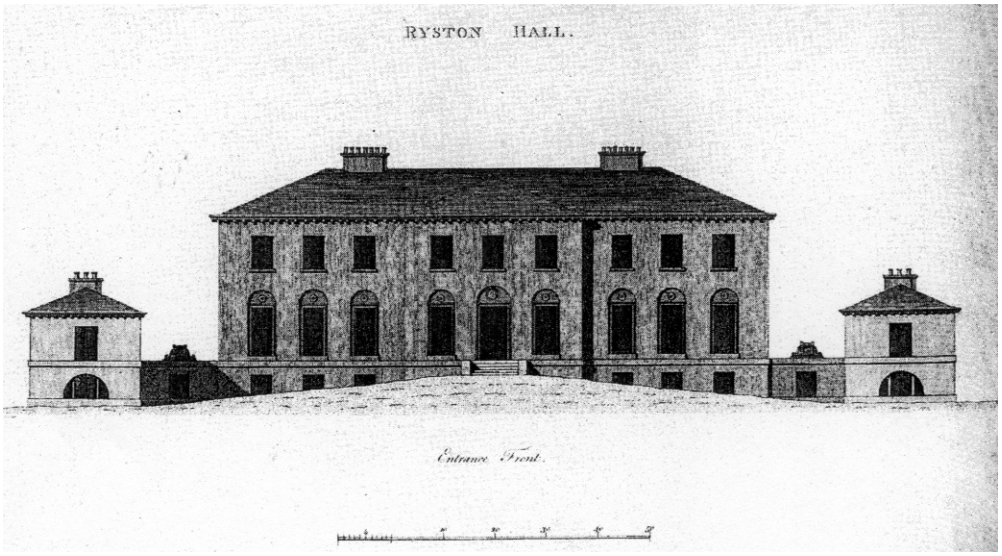
Further east is another display of Victorian taste for rock gardens and flowing water. The present rockery or 'stonery' is a formal garden with small ponds utilizing the carstone from the surrounding fields. Few of the original alpines and

heathers survive as the high water table in this part of the estate makes the soil unsuitable. The red brick wall at one part of this garden is all that remains of a Real Tennis court, which was dismantled in the 1960s. Problems with water have also been experienced in the small rose garden facing the Orangery, which is to be replaced by a paved area with a stone feature and central urn. Many estates since World War II have needed to diversify. Piers opens his gardens to visitors on selected days and Gavin hopes that profits and sales of vegetables from the restored Kitchen Garden will provide an income to restore the Orangery, converting it to a tearoom with tables on the paved area in front.

The Kitchen Garden, with late 18th century walls in the distinctive style of Soane, was constructed soon after the remodelling of the Hall. There are no surviving plans, but some interesting anecdotal evidence. Peter Cox, Head Gardener for many years, began work at Ryston aged 14 and is still working today aged 74 years. Originally there were two families with four adults and children occupying the three-roomed cottage on the east wall. The gardeners were paid according to the produce grown for sale, so their aim was for maximum production. There had been Morello cherries on the north wall and a boy rose at 4.30 am to chase off blackbirds during the ripening season. In winter a contract team of seven diggers was given 7-10 days work to prepare the ground. There was a vine house on the west wall, but the boiler broke down after World War II leading to gradual decay. It was also the place where women made posies of snowdrops tied with ivy for commercial sale by rail to the London market. Recently this house has been dismantled leaving its foundation wall and a brick path. There is a surviving apple store, cool and dark.Gavin has begun a major revival in the last three years. There is a new gravel pathway and evergreen borders of box and yew for the vegetable beds, which benefit from the high water table. These replace the original rope edging. There are plans for trained fruit trees along the walls. Advice was taken from Wimpole Hall and a team of volunteers gives welcome help every Tuesday. So a Victorian Kitchen Garden is being restored as part of essential estate management. This garden may be approached from a smaller enclosure of lower walls, formerly known as 'the Pleasure Grounds' and now containing shrubs and a drift of bamboo.

From these gardens overgrown shrubberies have been tamed using rhododendrons and azaleas to replace laurels and to hide the rock garden. These thrive in the slightly acidic soil and receive a regular mulch of leaf-mould from the woodland. To the south west are the formal gardens facing the south front of the Hall, largely the work of Piers' grandparents. A knot garden has been replaced by a fine lawn, which is easier for Gavin and his two part-time helpers to manage. Until World War II Piers believes that there were flower beds on the front lawn. In Victorian times mowing was difficult and Piers still possesses a set of donkey's shoes. From the present lawn there is a fine aspect and superb tree line. In the late 18th century and Victorian times an arboretum was planted with fine specimen trees, each given sufficient room as they reach maturity today.

A lower area and pond to the west are approached by stone steps, flanked by two carved stone retrievers. (Ponds were of historical importance when large houses were susceptible to serious fire. The 'spoils' from this pond explain the large mound in the northern parkland.) There are three London planes, a swamp cypress with aerial roots (the tallest in the country before storm damage), a mid- 19th century sequoia, a Douglas fir and a number of cedars. Eastwards towards the park is a true bred Atlas cedar which has excited horticultural interest. The other cedars are crosses with deodora. In its heyday in the late 18th century the arboretum was reputed to be one of the best in the country; land-owning families were always aware of the importance of social status. There are still collections of alders, maples, limes, some ginkgos and a cut-leaf beech.

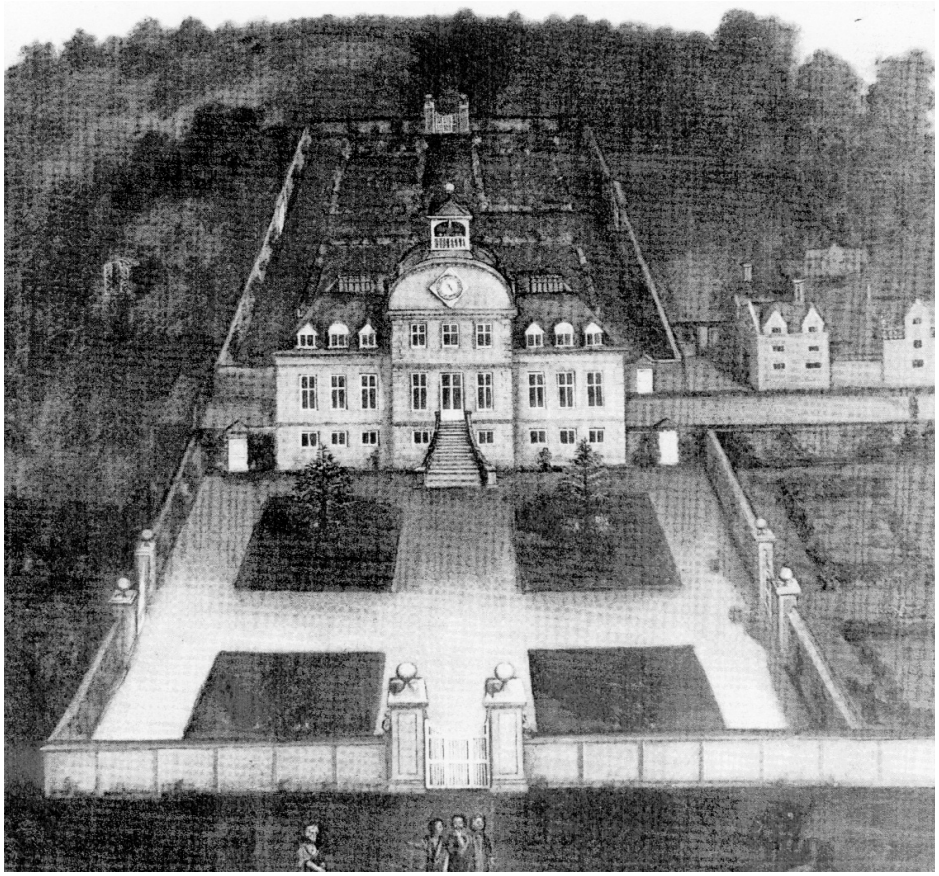



*Print of Ryston Hall by Soane.*

Beyond the southern parkland and to the east are the best, most fertile lands of the estate, traditionally reserved for arable farming. These lands are drier and not far below the surface is clay. Today the main crop is sugar-beet easily transported to the nearby Wissey factory, the largest in Europe. Recent threats to its production may cause alarm. Beans are a crop used to restore nitrogen to the soil, but there has been no replanting of oil-seed rape. There are no longer cattle grazing on the parkland but it is tenanted to a shepherd who keeps a flock of some 300-400 sheep of three different breeds, both for wool and for meat.

Approximately one eighth of the acreage is woodland, carefully and commercially managed. Planted on somewhat less fertile land, from the late 18th century it has been an important source of income. The path to Kett's Oak moves southwards from Home Wood 1775, replanted in 1977 with oak, beech and ash. This wood, with its floor of snowdrops, today is an attractive venue for visitors. Posies for the London market are no longer commercial, but an income is derived from the sale of bulbs.

The path leads through poplar woodland, flanked on the outside by sequoia and thuja which offer containment, protection and warmth to the growing younger trees. This is properly managed woodland; recently an area of poplar 'sticks' has been felled and it will be replanted. These sticks once were used for 'Bryant and May' matches but the growth of Scandinavian trees ended that market. Poplars are water loving and fast growing. Today they are sold for pallets, fruit boxes and for thin veneers. Until 1980s the estate owned a wood yard, but under new Health and Safety regulations, the cost of replacement of old machinery was prohibitive. So the woodland continues to be adapted in order to survive. To the west from Kett's Oak and to the south of the Hall and parkland is Denver's Spinney, encouraging visitors to follow a circular



*Print of painting of Ryston Hall, undated c.1680.*

woodland and parkland walk back to the Hall and affording splendid floor coverings of snowdrops and daffodils in early spring. The daffodils, of an old variety and not hybridized, multiply naturally but there is no commercial market for them. In this spinney is a pheasant-rearing pen. The estate offers shooting and there is some breeding, but today the income is derived more from the sale of eggs and the 'buying in' of young birds.

Throughout the estate wild life flourishes: there is a wide variety of garden birds together with woodpeckers and sparrow hawks; in the park are pink-foot geese, migrant Egyptian geese and French partridges; a former managed herd of fallow deer is no more, but there are muntjac and occasional red deer.

So after 500 years of careful, adaptable management this substantial Norfolk estate survives. Continuity of ownership in one family has been important, as has its willingness and ability to adapt and change in the face of problems and a changing social and economic environment. Once the estate provided employment for substantial numbers and pleasure for the privileged few. Today farming is highly mechanized, gardening is carried out with diminished manpower but visitors are welcome and provide a boost to the continuing demands of estate management. We are very grateful to Piers Pratt for his hospitality, explanations and making available the estate maps, photographs and fine painting. Equally we are indebted to Gavin for a relaxed, interesting and informative walk much enjoyed in idyllic spring weather. The Real Tennis court is no more, Piers' estate cricket pitch on the north grassland is no longer viable, but Gavin coaches the young cricketers of Denver and the estate gives pleasure to all who visit.

Charles Malyon

# WRAGS

Recently I helped raise some money for a new garden in Ely by agreeing to be a member of a Gardeners' Question Time panel. One always approaches these evenings with trepidation trying to guess the questions in advance. What soils do hydrangeas require, why do I always loose my rows of peas, can you identify this dead plant etc., etc? At the end I mentioned that one never received a question concerning gardeners and how you went about finding a suitable one. A month before this event I was at a garden in West Cambridge and spoke to the owners (members I might add of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust) about this problem as when one gets older one's joints stiffen up and things take much longer than they did twenty years ago. The owners were employing a lady gardener via the WRAGS scheme who had proved a success. You must have heard of this organisation, but it is surprising how many garden owners who have not.

**'Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme'** was introduced in 1933 by the Women's Farm and Garden Association. How it came into being started much earlier as around the turn of the century a change of attitudes became apparent among women, particularly those of the privileged classes. Women, who were becoming aware of the social constrictions and injustices of their times, were bending their energies, wealth and influence to improve opportunities and conditions for themselves and other less fortunate women. In 1899 an **'International Congress of Women Workers'** was held in London and in October of the same year, 22 women who had attended and enjoyed the conference, agreed to form a society and the 'Women's Farm and Garden Association', as it is called today, was formed. The founder members were mainly of the employer class but specialists in their own field – farmers, land and estate owners, an agricultural journalist and a landscape architect. From the outset the Society offered its members the services of an Employment Department – a bold and innovative step, at that time when it was considered a daring experiment to employ a woman gardener.

By 1910 an education committee had been established and practical examinations in gardening and poultry management were conducted and certificates awarded.

The Impact of War: in anticipation of the threat to a trading nation's food supply and the loss of agricultural workers to the Services, all the resources of this your Association were utilized into forming a Women's National Land Service Corps, a concept which was met with much opposition. By 1917 it had become too large to handle by a small voluntary organisation and the Board of Agriculture took over to form the first **Womens' Land Army**. This was the first in a long history of pioneering, on a small scale, valuable schemes or reforms which were then taken up a few years later, usually with no acknowledgement, and developed by government departments or organisations with more financial resources. In 1920 the Association purchased 98

acres of land in Lingfield, Surrey and divided it into small holdings which members could rent, to gain practical experience of commercial growing. This was another example of an opportunity provided for women, well in advance of the later Government scheme, the Land Settlement Association, which was just as well as women did not qualify.

Throughout the 20s, staff within the Employment Service worked hard at raising the profile of women gardeners, giving advice on wages, ensuring standards remained high and with the Colleges discouraged the practice of employers engaging gardeners to perform other tasks, such as housework, a practice which sadly lingers today. In 1921 the Association started up an **Outfit Department**, purchasing wholesale from the Golden Anchor Clothing Company in Gloucester, boots, shoes, brown denim coats, overalls and breeches to sell to a membership of women who could not purchase suitable clothing in smaller sizes elsewhere.

A **Garden Apprenticeship Scheme** was introduced in 1940, which gave school leavers six months' practical training in approved gardens. This was later reconstituted to become a pre-college training scheme, a prerequisite for a College placement. The Association recognised the changes in society after the impact of two wars. Within the organisation, these changes were reflected in the management structure, younger professional women were replacing older women who had held office over many years and came from the employer classes. Regional schemes were introduced for members, conditions of pay and work, smallholders' prospects and employment opportunities in public parks and botanical gardens were targeted.

With the labour shortages in the 1950s and mass immigration, many small voluntary organisations folded at this time. During the 1960s, the industry lost outstanding practical and academic teaching standards, built up over 70 years with the closure of a college like Studley. The Association concentrated its efforts on education and a booklet 'Careers in Agriculture and Horticulture' was published for school leavers.

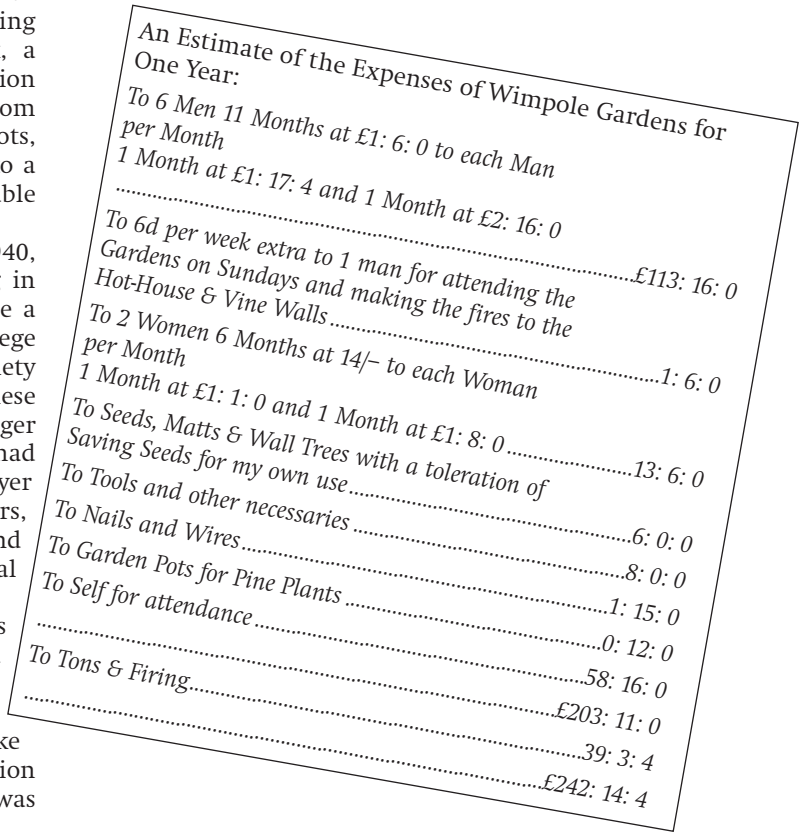
The Association, with many others, campaigned and worked over many years for parity for women and success came in 1975 when the long awaited and fought for principle of equal pay and opportunity was implemented. Now in the 21st century, our commitment to education is as solid as ever, career information, and annual Travel Bursary, a programme of practical workshops, garden tours, trade shows, the launch of the **'Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme'** in 1993, providing training in practical horticulture within private gardens, that recognises the changes in women's lifestyles and commitments.

Now firmly established as one of the leading training available in practical horticulture, the Scheme boasts 128 training gardens in all counties of England and Wales, with over 100 trainees in placements. Trainees come from a wide variety of previous careers: the police, ballet, school teaching, nursing, legal profession, civil servants, journalism, retail, finance, armed forces, dentistry and parenting. Our gardens range from small private gardens with an experienced gardener to large estate or public gardens, with a head gardener and gardening team. All gardens must be working environments with horticultural variety, a good range of equipment and experienced tuition to enable the trainee to cover as many skills as possible during the year. The gardens differ from the Natural History Museum, Abbey gate College, Belvoir Castle, Dartington Hall and Edwardes Square.

The BBC Gardener of the Year Award has just been presented to one of our private garden owners, Diana Guy, who not only has one of our trainees but teaches our members in her garden under our Workshop programme. A self-help booklet for women in farming partnerships has been written and a similar booklet for self-employed women in both gardening and farming is planned. Also under development is a programme of workshops for rural skills.

**'You Supply the Garden, We Supply the Trainee':**

This scheme is designed to provide women with practical gardening skills in private gardens, for a period of one year, training over 15 hours per week within their home location. These women will be in their mid thirties onward, enthusiastic, with some knowledge and keen to gain more, fit, as they are expected to tackle most tasks and require little supervision.



*An Estimate of the Expenses of Wimpole Gardens for One Year:*

*To 6 Men 11 Months at £1: 6: 0 to each Man per Month*
*1 Month at £1: 17: 4 and 1 Month at £2: 16: 0*
*.....£113: 16: 0*

*To 6d per week extra to 1 man for attending the Gardens on Sundays and making the fires to the Hot-House & Vine Walls.....1: 6: 0*

*To 2 Women 6 Months at 14/– to each Woman per Month*
*1 Month at £1: 1: 0 and 1 Month at £1: 8: 0.....13: 6: 0*

*To Seeds, Matts & Wall Trees with a toleration of Saving Seeds for my own use.....6: 0: 0*

*To Tools and other necessaries .....8: 0: 0*

*To Nails and Wires.....1: 15: 0*

*To Garden Pots for Pine Plants .....0: 12: 0*

*To Self for attendance .....58: 16: 0*
*.....£203: 11: 0*

*To Tons & Firing.....39: 3: 4*
*.....£242: 14: 4*

The approach to training is flexible, taking into consideration the requirements of both parties. Gardens are sourced and inspected, we are looking for variety to enable a range of gardening skills to be acquired, and interviews are set up by our team of Wrags Co-ordinators who oversee the Scheme. The selection of the trainee is made by the Owner or Head Gardener, a start date agreed and a probation period of 30 hours is completed before the placement is confirmed by both parties and the Co-ordinator. A weekly training allowance of £58.80 is paid by the Garden Owner to the Trainee, and a registration fee of £100 is paid by the garden Owner and £225 for the trainee is payable to the Association.

Further details can be obtained from:

Women's Farm and Garden Association
175 Gloucester Street, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 2DP
tel no: 01285 658339

Recently some of our members visited the Hertfordshire Record Office to check if there were any records of the payments to Capability Brown or orders for Wood & Ingram for the large quantity of trees required for his scheme for the 2nd Duke of Hardwicke at Wimpole. We did however find an account from the gardener listing payments to his staff and we thought it of interest that women were already employed before 1800 as gardeners although they received only half the wages paid to male gardeners.

John Drake

# Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust

Please note the following events which did not appear in last year's autumn newsletter have now been finalised for inclusion in our programme of this year's events –

1. Visit to grounds of **Farm Hall Godmanchester** on **Thursday 9th June 2005 at 2.30pm**, originally laid out by Colonel Clarke who obtained trees and shrubs from Wood & Ingram in 1760, by kind permission of Professor and Mrs M Echenique. Followed by Visit to the garden at **Offord Cluny**, laid out by award winning Chelsea Flower Show garden designer for Mr & Mrs A Brown, Tea at Offord Cluny. Ticket £6.00.

2. Visit to garden at **Guanock House, near Sutton St Edmund, north of Guyhirn** on **Wednesday 22nd June 2005 at 3.00pm**, by kind permission of Arne Maynard who is an international garden designer and won a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2000. The house is a fenland farmhouse built by the Dutch in 1520s, saved by Arne and surrounded by a series of garden rooms. Roses. Tour by gardener. Tea. Ticket £8.00.

   This house is over 3 miles from the nearest road and those coming should meet 15 minutes beforehand at the junction clearly marked on the map provided by the Trust.

3. Please note that this year's **Annual General Meeting** will take place on **Saturday 29th October 2005 at 11.15am** at **Holmewood Hall, Holme** which is to the south of Yaxley. At last year's AGM it was proposed that the Trust organise the AGM to be more of a social event and your committee has booked this venue. The AGM will take place after lunch. There will be two lectures and a tour of the grounds. Lunch will be provided. The Trust will pay for the hire of the hall for the day and members are asked to pay £7.50 for their lunch. Non-members who wish to attend will be asked to pay £15. It is hoped that we will have further information about the grounds and a summary of the research at Leckhampton House garden in Cambridge.

4. Please note that since our last Newsletter the dates have changed for two gardens which open under the National Gardens Scheme:–

   **Abbots Ripton Hall** garden will open on Sunday 22nd May from 2.00pm – 5.00pm

   **The Willows, Ramsey Forty Foot** garden will open on Sunday 10th June 2.00 – 6.00pm.
   A percentage of the monies raised will be donated to the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden restoration project.

   Tickets for 1, 2 and 3 are available for the above events from Mrs Daphne Pearce, 17 Maltings Place, The Maltings, Gamlingay, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 3JN. Please enclose a cheque made out to 'Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust' with a stamped addressed envelope. Maps will be sent with your tickets. Non-members are charged an extra £3 for each ticket for event 1 and 2. Thank you so much for your support.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust
The Grange, Easton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 0TU Tel: 01480 891043
Registered Charity no. 1064795

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