



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## NEWSLETTER No. 29 OCTOBER 2010

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

This year has seen the opening of the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden which has been the culmination of over ten years' work and support from the Trust. When I think back over several years, what stands out more than anything is the length of time it took us to achieve our aims. One must never forget the very slow response from Cambridgeshire County Council regarding obtaining a lease which at times seemed an unassailable achievement. In fact we decided to produce our own lease. At the very beginning Dr Jill Cremer, one of our members, had, after discovering the garden, informed the Trust and from then on it became our major restoration project. Jill has kindly recorded her early visits to the garden in this newsletter.

I include a list of the various undertakings which both our Trust and the newly formed Trust had to deal with to enable a formal opening to take place this year:-

'Carrying out research, surveying, meetings with head teachers and various members of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and District Councils, obtaining a 25 years' lease for a pepper-corn rent to restore the garden and badgering the Councils regarding access and repairs to walls, turning up on Saturday mornings with a team of volunteers clearing the debris in the garden, producing two detailed reports of the project, holding social evenings to raise funds to pay for insurances, providing plants for sale, applying successfully for funds from the Local Heritage Initiative Fund, obtaining architectural drawings, successfully obtaining plants to demonstrate the horticultural achievements in Cambridgeshire, establishing relations with Young Offenders - the list could go on for another page.'

As with other projects each has its own stages and it has been of interest in this example to see how surveyors have given way to site clearers who, in their turn, have given way to those wishing to grow vegetables and fruit. Each group in

turn has had their ups and downs but all have provided a firm foundation on which to support a solid future for the garden.

The members of the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden Trust have gallantly steered the project recently with a dedicated volunteer team, drawn from the town of Ramsey and must be thanked for all the effort they have put into the project. Jane Sills, their treasurer, has also written in this newsletter covering the many aspects which I have omitted in this short letter. To date over 650 visitors have come to see the garden, and after such a dry summer produce is selling well. What is more encouraging is that new volunteers are wanting to come and help.

I must repeat David Yardley's (Chairman of the Charitable Trust for the garden) excellent welcoming words to over one hundred and fifty people who attended the opening :- 'Without 150 friends' various support over the last ten years the garden would never have succeeded.' Finally I would also like to thank the team who arranged the Opening Ceremony which created such a relaxing and enjoyable afternoon and provided such delicious cakes.

If you have not yet visited the garden in Ramsey, do try to make an effort next year, when it will look even better. In every respect what has been done has been an amazing achievement and the garden's future now looks very promising too. My sincere thanks to all who have supported both Trusts.

I would like to thank Mrs Alison Gould who has decided to stand down after having looked after our membership since the start of the Trust, also Dr Bill Emerson who wishes to also stand down from the committee this autumn. Miss Jean Kearney recently took over the role as Treasurer and has asked if someone could take over this role for the Trust. **If you are able to help the Trust by becoming our treasurer do please contact any of the existing committee members.**

In the last Newsletter I advised that I did not wish to be in charge of the Newsletter, having prepared it for the last 12 years. As no one on the committee offered to take the Newsletter over I have been forced to prepare this edition, which I advise now will be my last. So if no one comes forward there will not be a future Newsletter.

I do hope that someone will come to the aid of the committee.

*John Drake, Chairman*

*Wood and Ingram. A Huntingdonshire Nursery. 1742–1950*

The book is available to members of the CGT at £10.00 + £2.00 postage and packing, and can be obtained from Alan Brown, Foxhollow, 239 High Street, Offord Cluny, St Neots, Cambs. PE19 5RT (tel: 01480 811947); please make your cheque payable to 'Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust'. It also can be ordered from our website – [www.cambsgardens.org.uk](http://www.cambsgardens.org.uk)

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## Early visits to Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden

“Sunday, 5th November, 1995

Frost, still bright, crisp weather. Decided to visit Ramsey Abbey. Great success because a lovely eccentric lady showed me around her ‘secret’ Elizabethan garden, and then the main House and gardens with designs by Soane. She had taught maths at Barrington before the war.”

This was my diary entry for the day I ‘found’ Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden.

Recently retired I had moved to Cambridge and joined, the then, very small band of volunteer gardeners at Wimpole Hall. Also, I was attending a series of lectures on Monasteries in the Fens under the tutelage of Dr Evelyn Lord. Filled with enthusiasm from both sources I was acquainting myself with sites of historical interest around the county. So it was that, on a particularly chilly morning in November 1995, I was standing in the churchyard at Ramsey, notebook in hand, recording the fine memorials to the De Ramsey family. From the other side of the churchyard wall a penetrating gaze was coming from the face of a lady swathed in a variety of woollen scarves. She lingered, so I asked whether it would be alright to enter the grounds of the large house to look around. A broad, welcoming smile appeared beneath the scarves and off we went together.

We hadn’t gone far when I was asked “Would you like to see a secret Elizabethan garden?” My eyes lit up. A pretty, but very rusty, iron gate was unlocked and we entered an enthralling, overgrown, spasmodically cultivated crumbling walled-garden.

On my next volunteer gardening day at Wimpole I described my discovery to Philip Whaites, the head gardener. He was fascinated. Under the National Trust, in addition to Wimpole, he was responsible for the grounds around the Gate-House at Ramsey Abbey, but was unaware of the garden I described. He would like to see it. I had not asked the lady her name, nor she mine, but Philip and I set out on the off-chance as my second diary entry shows:

“Thursday, 7th December 1995

Drove Philip to Ramsey to find the Elizabethan garden. A remarkable visit. We had a good look round the school. Into town for a coffee then found Mrs Swales at home. Spent ages with her. Standard lamp fell on her. Achieved our mission”.

These cryptic entries merit explanation. Through a

neighbour living in the converted stables we learned the lady’s name was Mrs Swales and she would be home later. At that point I noticed that in the back window of a small caravan parked in the stable yard was an heraldic shield bearing the name SWALES. It was around this time that the public had become aware of the lady-in-the-van living in Alan Bennett’s London garden. I thought, oh my goodness, Mrs Swales is another one! But with relief we found out later that the caravan was only to house her dried flowers and an overflow of various what-nots.

After introducing Philip, he and I were warmly welcomed by Mrs Swales and her rather overweight Springer spaniel. She put the kettle on, set out china, coffee and a tin of biscuits then led me to the sitting room leaving Philip to make the coffee and carry everything in which he duly did. The room was eccentrically over-filled as one could have predicted. The “mission” of my diary entry was to try and find out who owned the walled-garden and whether Mrs Swales would agree to meeting someone from the embryonic Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust with a view to putting the garden on record as one of historic interest and worthy of preservation.

Mrs Swales explained to us that for many years she and her husband had had exclusive use of the garden. They had run it as a small market-garden but since widowhood she had continued on a much more modest scale. Ownership or terms of an official lease remained vague despite some gentle probing by us. Suddenly, we thought any further discussion had been brought to an abrupt ending. The lid of the biscuit tin had been taken off for a second hand-round; simultaneously, the spaniel did a lunging leap towards the tin hitting the standard lamp, the frilled shade of which also leapt into the air and landed over the head of Mrs Swales leaving her limp body prostrate in her arm-chair. Her cup-and-saucer fell from her hand as Philip and I looked on in horror. After what seemed an age a voice said “I am all right”. We removed the lamp-shade and Mrs Swales continued with her story. After a further hour of fascinating conversation we established that we could bring the garden to the attention of the Gardens Trust and Mrs Swales would meet anyone interested.

What happened over the following 15 years I leave others to relate.

*Jill Cremer July 2010*

# RAMSEY ABBEY WALLED KITCHEN GARDEN

After many long years of work by a dedicated team of volunteers, the Ramsey Walled Kitchen Garden, was officially opened by Lord Fairhaven on 18th May 2010, an event attended by many Garden Trust members.

The restoration was initiated by the Gardens Trust after the garden was 'discovered' by a Trust member in 1996.

## History

The walled garden is sited within the boundaries of the medieval Ramsey Abbey, although the garden itself is much later. Little now remains of the Abbey and we do not know where the monks' gardens were.

On the dissolution of the monasteries, the site was granted, in 1540, to Sir Richard Cromwell. He converted a six bayed ecclesiastical structure into a summer residence. His descendants sold a much reduced estate to a Colonel Titus who was an MP for Huntingdon. He lived in Ramsey during the summer and Bushey Park in the winter. In 1791, the estate was mortgaged to Sir John Fellowes who probably intended to acquire the estate. He was unable to do so but his nephew, Coulson, of Egglesford in Devon, purchased the estate in 1737.



*Lord Fairhaven cutting the tape to open the walled garden with David Yardley and John Drake.*

The Walled Garden is situated to the north of the school grounds and is bounded to the west by the former gardener's cottage and to the east by a school playing field. The south wall has three gates. The central one, built of Ketton stone, is the main entrance to the garden designed, we think, by Edward Blore in 1842. A sketch of this gate is used as the logo of the Gardens Trust. Parts of the south wall have been lowered to allow light for the school buildings. The remaining walls are 10' to 15' high and there were glasshouses along the northern wall. The 1887 ordnance survey map shows the existing walled garden with paths, three glasshouses and two pumps.

For more than 100 years, the garden produced vegetables, fruit and cut flowers for the house all year round. These were sent by rail to London when the family was 'in town'. Exotic fruits and flowers grew in the glasshouses. The high part of the north wall suggests a central display house as there is at Wimpole Hall. Remains of arches in base of the greenhouse walls suggest vines were grown with their roots outside and the fruit ripening under glass.

Photographs dating from around 1904 show the final approach flanked by herbaceous borders backed by a clipped yew hedge up to the main gate. Remains of these yews, now overgrown trees, remain.

There is little documentary evidence for the 19th century. We have recently been contacted by a Mr Coleman from Australia who believes an ancestor, John Howlett, worked in the garden during the 1850s-1860s. A John Hopkins (then aged 61) lived in the Gardener's House in 1891. In the first part of twentieth century the head gardener was Mr Coombes with Sam Hopkins as foreman. The garden was still in use in the 1920's with strawberry plants being ordered from Fred Chillery & Son in Fenstanton and 'an esteemed order' with Dicksons of Chester.

In 1931, trustees of the 3rd Lord De Ramsey moved the

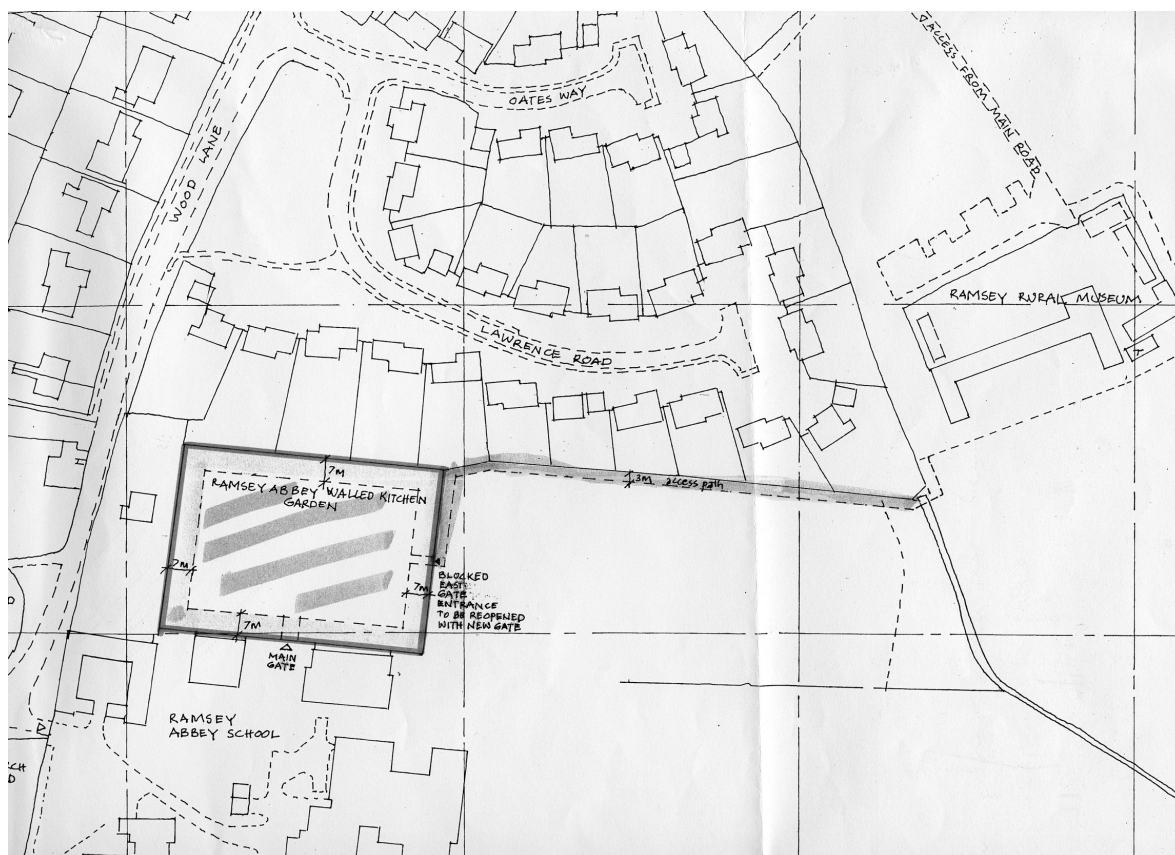


*David Yardley (Chairman of the RAWKG Trust) greeting guests to the opening ceremony.*

A survey in 1737 refers to "The Kitching Garden" of 4 acres 1 rood although it is not clear precisely where this was. A Terrier records "The Garden Ground or Wall Garden" near Ramsey Church. Further Terriers of 1809 and 1812 show a Gabriel Rose occupying a plot of three acres. The walled garden lies within this plot.

The estate passed to the Fellowes family in 1804 and the architect Sir John Soane was commissioned to modernise the old house, including the construction of a new garden. In 1837, the estate passed to Sir Edward Fellowes, later created Baron De Ramsey. He commissioned Edward Blore (later the architect of Buckingham Palace) to make further improvements.





Location map showing access from Rural Museum to the walled kitchen garden.

family residence to Abbots Ripton and Ramsey Abbey was sold to Diana Broughton (his sister and mother of the present day Lord Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey). Diana died in 1937 at the early age of 29 but had expressed a wish that the Ramsey Grammar School should relocate to the Abbey. In 1938 the property was leased to the governors for ninety nine years at a nominal annual rent.

During the 1950's the walled garden was used as a market garden by E.H.C. Jones (Carly Jones), who lived in the gardener's house. Les Complin, who worked in the garden as a boy, remembered what it was like. It was his first job on leaving school at fourteen. He saw a sign advertising for a gardener, went in and got the job. His first week's wage in 1956 was £5 7s 6d.

The garden was mainly used for the commercial growing of flowers and the main growing area, three of the four quarters in rotation, was given over to growing scabious which were taken to the L.N.E.R station in Ramsey for sale in Leeds market. The glass houses were intact with one glass house given over to arum lilies, one to freesias and one at the western end to tomatoes, which were misted daily and flooded once a week.

The old bothies and sheds on the north side of the north wall were in use with a flower packing shed, tool shed etc. The old boiler house was present but not usable.

Vegetables were grown outside the walls in beds to the north of the garden, currently the gardens of houses in Lawrence Road. There was an asparagus bed and, immediately to the north of the well, a patch of Christmas Roses for the winter flower market. In the field to the east of the garden, currently the school playing field, there was an orchard with a variety of tree fruit and a row of blackberries.

Box hedges surrounded three sides of each of the four quadrants and all the edge beds. Les remembers keeping the

box hedges neat and trim as a bit of a chore. He also had to make sure the blue edging bricks were all the same height and 'just so'. The apple tunnel was still standing but was made of wood. He remembers that the apple trees along the central axis were not very productive, even then.

An aerial photograph of 1963 shows the garden was tidy but not cultivated and the glasshouses were still present along the north wall.

Subsequently, the garden was used in a rather piecemeal way and fell into decline and the glasshouses were taken down, probably in the late 1970's, although the foundations still remain. Two quarters were cultivated by Mrs Swales and others and a row of cordoned apples and pears were planted.



The plaque to be mounted inside the wall of the walled kitchen garden.

In 1996 a member of the newly formed Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust "discovered" the walled garden. It was so overgrown that it was difficult to get in through the gate.

### The restoration

The Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust undertook a survey of the garden during 1996 and 1997. This survey revealed the main gates, bricked up gates in the east and west walls, evidence for the glasshouses such as brick arches forming the base of a vine house, tiled flooring, remains of windows and slate slabs. Box hedging, much of it now trees, surrounded most of the central quarters and the edge beds. The east-west axis showed the remains of an apple tunnel which was lined with blue rope-top edging. The apple trees were shown to be diseased and/or returned to root stock and replanting was recommended. A large overgrown black Mulberry covered much of the north-east quadrant. The walls were peppered with nails indicating the former presence of tree fruit.

The Trust took the decision to restore the garden and work started with volunteers beginning to clear the site. At



*The herb garden with sundial in the walled kitchen garden.*

the same time, negotiations began to secure a lease. These negotiations were extremely protracted with a twenty five year lease eventually being signed in August 2007, ten years after the decision to go ahead with the restoration was taken. As part of the agreement, the County Council agreed to repair and maintain the walls. Coping stones were replaced, walls repointed, buttresses built to support the high portion of the north wall, sycamore trees cut down and ivy removed.

It was decided that the actual restoration and management of the garden did not fall under the remit of the Gardens Trust and would be better undertaken by a locally based group. Thus, the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden Trust was established in 2004 with two trustees being on the Board of the Gardens Trust and two trustees local to Ramsey.

Access to the garden was another issue to be resolved. The main entrance gate to the garden is in the grounds of the school (now Abbey College) and for security reasons this could not be used for public access. Agreement was reached with the landowners for a flat access path to be created from Ramsey Rural Museum where there is parking, toilets and a cafeteria. The lease included a three metre wide strip along the edge of the playing field for the path.

Whilst these negotiations were taking place, clearing continued with a group of volunteers attending once a fortnight. The box hedges were cut right back and regenerated. The limbs of the mulberry tree, which were growing several metres along the ground, were cut back and the tree now fruits prolifically. Decaying fruit trees and self sown saplings were removed with a continual cutting back of brambles, buddleias and other shrubs.

Meanwhile, the Trust was successful in its application to the Local Heritage Initiative (part of the Heritage Lottery Fund) for a grant of almost £25,000 to help fund the legal

fees, open up the gate in the east wall, make a new gate, create the access path with a bridge over a ditch, recreate the apple tunnel and finance leaflets and display panels. A grant from the Red Tile Wind Farm Trust enabled the water supply to be restored. No more bringing in water in milk cartons from home.

Clearing continued. After the removal of brambles and shrubs, weeds such as thistles, nettles and bindweed began to appear. Cleared areas were carpeted with old carpets donated by Gammons in Ramsey. Although intended to be very short term, parts of the garden were carpeted for five years before they were finally removed early in 2010.

### Cambridgeshire plants

One of the aims of the Trust is to plant varieties of fruit, vegetables and flowers which illustrate the history of horticulture in the County. To date we have planted the apple tunnel with 20 pairs of apple trees bred in Cambridgeshire. These were grafted by the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale in Kent and include varieties such as Huntingdon Codlin, Histon Favourite, Chivers Delight and Lord Peckover. We have planted Cambridge strawberries and Cambridge gages and plums, including Willingham Gage and Wallis's Wonder, recently bred by Mr Wallis of Bluntisham. All the Maris varieties of potato were bred in Cambridge and King Edward potatoes were first grown commercially by Jabez Papworth, known locally as the Potato King, in Ramsey Heights. Unwins, formerly of Histon, bred many varieties of sweet pea and we will grow sweet peas to illustrate their history.

The apple tunnel is being underplanted with aquilegias and in time we hope to build up a large collection.

### This year, 2010

2010 is a landmark year for the dedicated team of volunteers who have stayed with the project, some for over ten years, when at times it looked as if we would never succeed.

We decided to start opening the garden to the public on Sunday afternoons. However, much of the garden was still carpeted and the paths unmade. We were fortunate to secure funding for the paths to be laid with hoggin. We have also been working with Community Payback (run by Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon Probation Service) who came initially weekly and now fortnightly to work in the garden. They have dug over most of the garden and cleared the carpet and other rubbish, filling five skips. Without their work, the garden would not be where it is today.

A herb garden, with raised beds, was built during the early part of 2010, partly in response to many questions from visitors who were interested in a herb garden. Although this garden has no links to the medieval abbey, we felt that herbs (which would have been grown in a Victorian garden)



showed a connection. A handsome sundial donated by Ramsey WI forms the centre piece of the herb garden.

Much of the garden is now under cultivation. One quarter is for fruit with strawberries, currants, gooseberries and raspberries. A fruit cage ensured our visitor (and volunteers) could eat the fruit. The other two quarters grow vegetables. Marshalls kindly donated asparagus, potatoes and other seeds. The central north-south path will be flanked by herbaceous borders, but this year we have grown annuals and sweet peas.

To date, (mid-September) we have had over 800 visitors to the garden. Visitors have the chance to buy the produce we grow.

### Future plans

We plan to bring the garden into full production and reduce the number of weeds! Much of the garden has been resting for forty years or more with countless weed seeds building up in the soil.

Now that we have achieved our original goal of opening

the garden, we have recently discussed our future priorities and development plan through a series of meetings with a facilitator funded by Cambridgeshire ACRE and are now in the process of writing our development plan. A number of areas are being explored such as the best ways of selling or distributing the produce, how to engage with local schools and colleges to deliver on our educational aims, how to recruit more volunteers and more research on Cambridgeshire varieties and how to source them. In the medium term we hope to install glasshouses.

Although the development of Ramsey Walled Kitchen Garden has been very long and drawn out, the Trustees, committee members and volunteers feel proud of what has been achieved and look forward to a prosperous future when the garden can be of real benefit to Ramsey and the local area.

Jane Sills

All photos by David Chittim

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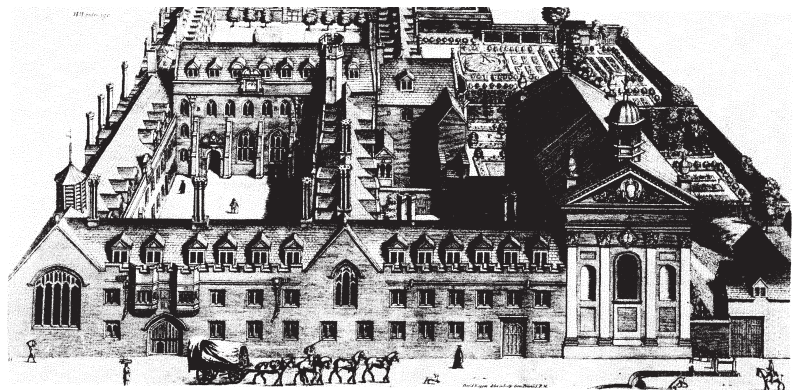
## A VISIT TO THE GARDENS OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE on 17 August 2010

### The Foundation

On Christmas Eve 1347 King Edward III granted a licence to Mary de St Pol, daughter of Guy de Chatillon and widow of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, to found a hall of residence for scholars and a few Bible clerks. Initially they were to use St Botolph's Church for worship, but a Papal Bull of 1366 gave permission for the building of a chapel. The residence was called the Hall of Valence Marie or Pembroke Hall. In 1342 the widowed Countess had taken over the existing Denny Abbey for the Franciscan Order of Minors; she had a domestic dwelling there and on her death was buried there. Before obtaining the royal licence she had purchased a house on the corner of Plot and Nuts Lane (the present Pembroke St) from Hervey de Stanton, rector of Elm in 1346. By 1351 the Countess had acquired two further tenements adjacent to the present College gate: from the University, the Hospitium Universitatis Cantabrigie or University Hostel and on lease from St John's Hospital, St Thomas's Hostel. Each of these hostels possessed crofts.

### The Site

Today the College is bounded to the west by Trumpington St, to the north by Pembroke St, to the east by Tennis Court Road and to the south by Tennis Court Terrace and by the gardens of the Master's Lodge of Peterhouse. Historically de Stanton's property, immediately to the south of the mediaeval Trumpington Gate, was within the parish of St Botolph and the remainder was in the parish of St Peter-outside-the-Gates (now St Mary-the-Less). Behind the tenements and small crofts acquired by the Countess was a spacious open site on the southern perimeter of the town and bounded to the

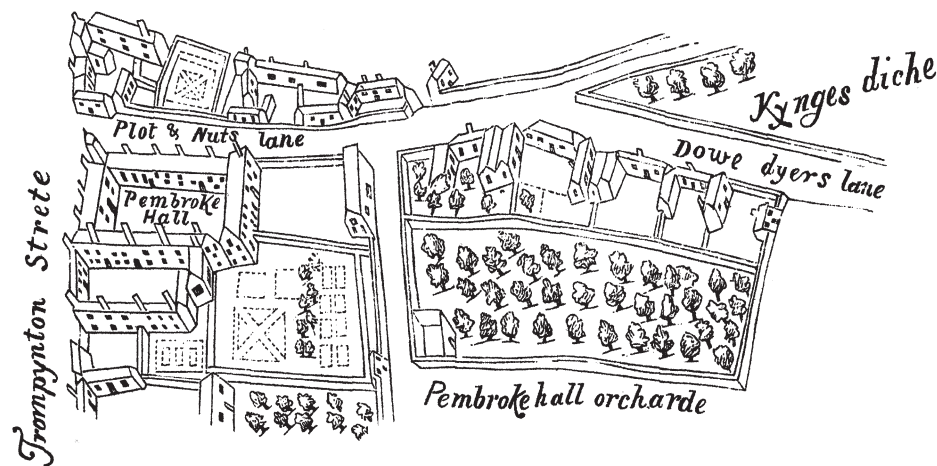


north by the King's Ditch. In 1389, 1414 and 1549 areas of meadow land known as Pascal Close, St Thomas Leys and part of Swynecroft to the east and south were acquired. Apart from peripheral buildings, these lands have continued as a most pleasant open area for a bowling green, orchard and gardens. Fuller in his *History of the University of Cambridge* wrote "where now the orchard of the Master of Pembroke Hall and where the neighbouring Leas retain their name: formerly the Campus Martius of the scholars here exercising themselves, sometimes too violently; lately disused, either because young scholars now have less valour, or more civility." Today, tranquillity and civility prevail.

### The Gatehouse and Old Court

The College is entered through a small archway from Trumpington Street and this simple gatehouse has two 14th century oriel windows facing the street. In this century formidable gatehouses were not yet fashionable. Pembroke, the third oldest college, owns the first college chapel. The Old Court begun in the late 1340's but not fully completed until 1460's, was the earliest enclosed court to include all of

the buildings required for college life: the gatehouse and old chapel (in 1690 the library) are the oldest survivals of the Foundress in the NW corner and there were living quarters, a hall and buttery and the Master's Lodge. Loggan's etching, 1690, shows the original Hall with Library above as the eastern range, with the Buttery to the north and Master's Lodge to the south. It also shows the Renaissance doorway to the Hall, which today has been moved to Ivy Court and is the



entrance to the garden. The original court had the small dimensions of 90' by 50'. Initially of brick, this court and the college frontage was ashlar faced with Ketton stone, 1712–17.

### The First Court

Today there is no longer an enclosed court. In 1874–5 the Fellows permitted the demolition of the S and E ranges of the Old Court to make way for Alfred Waterhouse's new Hall as the E range with his new Master's Lodge on the NE side of Ivy Court. This court is now open as far as Wren's Chapel to the south and has standard fuschias and geraniums along its walkways. Pembroke continues the old Cambridge tradition of placing an ornamental tree in front courts; in 1982 a walnut tree was planted, the gift of three science Fellows to celebrate their election 20 years earlier. Across the large central lawn is Sir Christopher Wren's Chapel, 1663–5, his first completed work and Cambridgeshire's earliest Classical building. In the 19th century George Gilbert Scott extended it by one bay. The chapel was the gift of Wren's uncle Matthew, Bishop of Ely and Fellow of the college, 1638–67. (He had spent 17 years in the Tower during the Civil War.) It is connected to the Old Court by a colonnaded range with chambers above, Hitcham's Cloister, 1664.

### The Red Buildings and Croquet Lawn

Beyond the chapel to the south, Waterhouse built a range of buildings, 1871–2, along Trumpington St in dark red brick with a steep French pavilion roof. This building, together with the wall of the Peterhouse Lodge and the west end of Waterhouses's new library encloses a croquet lawn – the only grass on which undergraduates may walk. A variety of shrubs provide a surround.

### Library Court

This court is part enclosed by the E end of the chapel, the S end of Waterhouse's hall, the attractive red brick Sir Robert Hitcham building, 1659, and Waterhouse's library to the

south. In front of the library is a fine statue of the Younger Pitt. Again there is a large central lawn flanked by formal layouts of low shrubs and perennials. Near the rear of the chapel is a Japanese cherry *Shimidsu sackura* (its blossoms thick as white fur in May) and near Pitt's statue are *Actinidia dolomite* with particoloured leaves and *Actinidia polygama*. This court also contains a *Catalpa bignonioides* and a *Photinia frazeri*, Red Robin. Formerly this court was a Fellows' garden

with the Master's Lodge adjacent. In 1753 Carter wrote of the Master Roger Long, a great mechanic – "its chief beauty is the gardens and the waterworks which supplies a beautiful and large basin wherein he often diverts himself in a machine (pedal boat) of his own contrivance, to go with the foot as he rides therein".

### Ivy Court

In effect the second court, it is approached either from First Court or by a small passage from the Library lawn, which is the remaining part of a mediaeval public lane. To the east the court is enclosed by the garden wall, which extends across the whole of Pembroke's site and marks the mediaeval boundary of the college. David Loggan's map of 1688 suggests that Hobson's Conduit was routed around the south side of the mediaeval college and then north and south by 17th century brick buildings. Hitcham's Building contains the Senior Parlour and Thomas Gray's room above. Gray, one of Pembroke's many poets including Edmund Spenser and Ted Hughes, took care that his window should be always full of mignonette, or some other sweetly scented plant – an early vogue of window gardening? Passing from this court through the 17th century Renaissance gateway (shown in Loggan's etching 1690 as the entrance to the Hall from Old Court and moved in 1863), the main gardens are entered – the area of the mediaeval Pascal Close, the Leys and Swynecroft, which composed Pembroke Piece. The pillars of this gateway are covered by Virginia creeper and it is flanked by a golden and an Irish yew. Beyond are the bowling green, gardens and orchard shown in Loggan's map, 1688 and in a 1592 map of the College.

### Fellows' planting in front of the George Gilbert Scott buildings, leading to New Court

The gateway from Ivy Court leads to Waterhouse's Master's Lodge in the 1870's on the line of Pembroke Street and then to the buildings of Scott, 1880–83 with its mixed 16th and 18th century styling of Dutch gables, pediments and Arts and Crafts details. The borders and gardens along this formal walk are the preserve of the Fellows. In the 18th century Carter noted that Fellows were active gardeners in the area of the present Library lawn. "There are besides other gardens belonging to the apartments of particular Fellows, in one of which is another, small and simple yet well-contrived waterwork which is continually supplying a large old bath with fresh water, the overplus of which runs through the second court and so into the King's Ditch." This legacy of Fellows' planting continues today and there is a tradition of asking Fellows to choose trees for planting.

There is a rockery adjacent to the former Victorian Lodge (now the JCR) with plantings by several Fellows since the 1920's, especially the Rev Meredith Dewey. Near the building a long pile of Cumberland stone is planted with a profusion of ferns and a sunken rock garden is densely crowded with a collection of conifers mixing bright blue spruce with white broom. An underground pipe from the lily pond connects to a small pool in this garden and to the luxuriant *Gunnera manicata* nearby. Dewey used to plant and weed here, chatting to passers-by and indulging his delight in the striking and unusual.

Along the frontage of Scott's building are formal Fellows' borders and the York stone pathway of Ridley's Walk. The gardens are regulated by a Fellows Garden Committee and these borders are tended by the Fellows. Ray Dolby has given splendid *Magnolia Grandiflora*. Ridley's Walk connects the formal courts with the eastern half of the college. Master in 1540, Bishop Ridley sent a last message to his old college before his martyrdom at Oxford under Queen Mary. "*Farewell, Pembroke Hall & in thy Orchard (the walls, butts and trees if they could speake, would beare me witnes) I learned without booke (by heart) almost all Paules epistles.*" – in Greek, of course.

### The Bowling Green, Orchard and Lily pond

The bowling green, believed to be one of the oldest in Europe and still used by Fellows on balmy summers evenings, is bounded by Ridley's Walk and to the east by the Neo-Georgian Orchard building, 1956, along the boundary of Tennis Court Road. There are new Garden Gates on this road, a memorial to Sir Montagu Butler, Governor of the Central Provinces of India and father of RA Butler. From these gates a new walk across Pembroke Piece leads to the remains of the Orchard depicted by Loggan. There is a fine row of plane trees along the south of this path planted in mid 19th century. At the college end are the remains of the orchard, no longer laid out in parallel lines. Today it is a semi-natural

area with some surviving pears and a mound for Spenser's mulberry tree, which as Dewey said, "*Long lopped and propped, tied and trussed*", died in 1977. A root-cutting from this tree now grows on the mound. In spring a variety of bulbs flower in the rough grass and autumn colchicums flourish in this woodland site. Nearby is the Lily pond ingeniously converted from a static water tank built for fire-fighting in WWII and fed from Hobson Conduit.

### The new buildings and gardens on the E and S boundaries of Pembroke Piece

The area to the south of the central avenue was private with only Webb's new Master's Lodge and garden, 1932-3 built on land purchased from Peterhouse in the 1850's. It was demolished to make way for a new Lodge and new undergraduate rooms in the stone building with large glass windows forming Foundress Court, 1997, to mark the 650th anniversary of the College. Between this building and Tennis Court Road is a small enclosed and gated Japanese garden, the gift of Nihon University and acknowledging the College's strong links with Japan. The new Lodge at the west end of this building has a formal garden bordered by a new, small Fellows garden. A centrepiece is a flaming urn in stone preserved from Wren's chapel and there are other fragments of discarded mediaeval masonry. Continuing Pembroke's tradition, there is a Blue Cedar planted at the suggestion of Professor Basil Willey and other choices by Fellows: a Honey Locust, a variegated Incense Cedar and the salmon-pink blossoming *Acer pseudo-platanus*, *Brilliantissimum*. There is also a *Betula albosinensis* transplanted from Dewey's garden in Millington Road.

Much of Pembroke Piece survives, uncultivated, open and spacious as it has been since the college's foundation and in earlier centuries.

Charles Malyon

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## A VISIT TO TWO VICTORIAN GARDENS IN WISBECH of 11th May 2010

On a sunny day in May, nine members and their guests visited Elgoods Brewery and garden and Peckover House and garden, both on the North Brink.

Firstly the Brewery, where we were made very welcome. There was a short film on its history and then a tour of the brewing process. The Brewery was established in 1795 as an ongoing concern. It changed hands several times until 1877 when it was purchased by John Elgood and George Harrison for £38,965. The partnership was short lived and a year later George Harrison sold his share to John Elgood who continued brewing until his death in 1890. The Elgood family continued to run it and in 1933 a nephew took over as Managing Director. It is still a family run business, the daughters taking on management roles. One daughter is a landscape designer and is responsible for the re-landscaping of the brewery gardens as they now are.

The 200 year old brewery is interesting in itself. It has a



splendid Georgian façade without visible down pipes – the water from the roof being channelled internally through pipes to the rear of the building. Standing on the North Brink next to the River Nene, it uses water from the river in the cooling process of the beer-making. The brewery has adapted to its needs and provides three types of beer. The beer is casked and sent to a firm in Stockport, to be bottled and returned. (No cans, please note.) We were all presented





with a glass of our choice to enjoy.

We then moved to the garden; a four acre site used during the War to grow vegetables. Afterwards it was put back to grass.

Using pre-war photographs, it has been skilfully re-landscaped. Lost areas have been recreated, with new ones to complement them. The framework of the garden is based on spectacular 200 year old specimen trees provided by the Peckover family. These include a ginkgo, a Tree of Heaven, a tulip tree, a monkey puzzle tree and a weeping holly. These mature trees provide an air of permanence and tranquillity. It was very pleasant just to wander and enjoy – a maze planted with thuya and laurel in 1992–3, a wisteria arbour, a laburnum walk (too early for our visit), hop arbours, a pond of crested newts, a lake of carp and water features with a surround of grasses and bamboo. The spring planting colours were quite spectacular: white tulips contrasting with gold, black, mauve and reds. Elgoods has won Best Planting for the last three years, which they richly deserve.

In the afternoon we visited Peckover House, a short walk from Elgoods along the North Brink towards the bridge. This elegant Georgian house built c1727, was known initially as The Bank House, the first in Wisbech. The Peckover family owned the house from the second half of the 18th century for 150 years until it was given to the National Trust in 1948

by Alexandria Peckover. They were Quakers and bankers: compassionate, generous, artistic and curious about the world. They travelled extensively, collecting seedlings and plants for their own and neighbouring gardens.

The house is much as it was but for some restorative work to the plaster ceilings. There are rounded cupboard doors to fit the curves of the sitting room and an early low Venetian blind to provide privacy from the street. In the library there is a display of photographs of the Victorian garden. Visitors are invited to play the Bechstein piano. Below stairs, the Servants hall and kitchen has a butler's sink and a selection of cooking utensils of the Victorian era. A large dresser with many drawers, and an invitation to open produced many unusual items. In one large drawer there were stone hot-water bottles.

Peckover garden is equally as splendid as Elgoods – a two acre plantsman's dream with hidden corners, paths, colour designated borders, a cutting border, autumn border, a wilderness walk alongside a croquet lawn (croquet is still played), an orangery with 300 year old orange trees, a rose garden, a Victorian summerhouse and a pool garden, all maintained to a very high standard. The specimen trees of ginkgo and tulip, palm and quince, together with topiary peacocks, add to its charm – a lovely garden. The old Reed Barn has been converted and offers refreshments. Quite spacious, it is used for parties, conferences and functions. We all felt on leaving Wisbech that it had been a really good garden day.

JMK

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## Visit to Frogmore House and Garden, Windsor, Berkshire, and the Savill Garden, Surrey – Saturday 26th September 2010

### FROGMORE HOUSE AND GARDEN

Our early departure gave members a chance to make a quick sortie into Windsor, enjoying a brilliant cloudless sky above, but with a keen north wind at ground level. Some watched the Changing of the Guard, others witnessed the local Morris Dancers performing near the bridge over the River Thames where many swans were basking in the sun.

Visiting the private residence of Her Majesty The Queen at Frogmore necessitated our punctual arrival, ten minutes too early would have meant we would be sent away and told to come back at the time stated. Leaving Windsor and driving across the Great Avenue from the Castle which leads to the equestrian statue on a hill in the distance; we soon skirted the Frogmore Estate with its double holly and hawthorn boundary hedge, and entered through an unpretentious gateway with a Victorian Lodge and brick kiosk guarded by a small stone garden gnome (Chelsea Flower Show judges look out!). To our right were the glasshouses and walled gardens (these



*The main entrance to Frogmore House*



*The garden elevation, Frogmore House.*

contain plants for cutting and sending to Covent Garden market) and fields with herds of Jersey cows grazing. At a junction before the extensive model dairy we turned sharp left and immediately entered the extensive grounds around Frogmore House which lie within a mile of Windsor Castle.

'A field near Frogmore' is included in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.



*View of Queen Charlotte's garden from Frogmore House.*

Queen Charlotte (1744–1818), consort of George III (1738–1820), completed the acquisitions of the Frogmore estate in 1792, and arranged for an existing house to be altered and extended. She later spent most mornings in the house before returning later in the day to the Castle before dinner. She employed the architect James Wyatt (1746–1813) to convert the house to a royal residence similar to The *Tranion* at Versailles. The Queen was adept at painting, drawing, japanning and above all 'botanising'. Botanizing for her became an all-consuming pursuit filling what would have been long empty days. It also brought her friendships in particular the Dowager Duchess of Portland who was a patroness of the natural sciences, Georg Dionysius Ehret one of the most outstanding botanical artists of the century and Mary Delany then in her mid-seventies who delineated some thousand flowers at the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew.

According to the *London Magazine*, George and Charlotte had inherited Kew earlier in 1772 but had not set out to change the layout of the gardens there, with the exception of the addition of a two storey rustic thatched cottage designed by Charlotte and inspired by the French so-called *ferme ornee* still standing today in a field of bluebells. A friend of even longer standing was Sir Joseph Banks who made sure Charlotte had her own vineyard, pinery, peach and cherry house.

Charlotte's passion for botany had an enormous influence on upper-class taste and set the seal of the role of women in the garden. It was also a passion which increased as her husband's illness progressed in the late 1780s. She created her avant-garde picturesque garden at Frogmore in the 1790s as a place of solace from the progressive illness affecting the King. Its composition, in terms of the Romantic age, was an enchanted glade in the midst of an ancient forest with winding paths evoking a series of changing moods. Wyatt designed a gothic ruin clad in ivy to provide the Queen and her daughters an experience what we now associate with fashionable novels of the day. The ruin is covered with wisteria today which does not give the same atmosphere.

Queen Charlotte's interest in plants is reflected throughout the house, culminating in her Botanical Library which has now been converted into The Britannia Room. Here she amassed 5,000 volumes which were sold shortly after her death at Christie's. The sale took 23 days. Throughout our smoothly run visit of the interior by three well-informed guides we saw many examples of Queen Charlotte and her children's interest in plants. She commissioned Mary Moser (1744–1819), a flower artist and a founder member of the Royal Academy, to decorate one room in the Lodge with an arbour with flowers for which the Queen paid her £900 in the mid-1770s. Mary Moser's room is reached by a lengthy room known as The Colonnade which had been formed by glazing the openings formed earlier by Wyatt. This room offers tantalising views to the lake which had been formed by draining the marshy land into a picturesque landscape.

The revised landscape of 1792 changed an earlier stream leading to a canal stretching to the south-west of the house into a picturesque composition. Within an extensive triangular site the stream was re-routed to form an island, now hidden from the house by mature trees. Various garden buildings were added later to the layout, including The Royal



*A granite drinking fountain in memory of John Brown.*



Mausoleum (1862) designed by Ludwig Gruner. Both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert decided to make plans for their own place of burial, abandoning the tradition of Westminster Abbey or St George's Chapel, Windsor and within a few days of Prince Albert's death in December 1862 this site was chosen by Her Majesty and for many years the grounds of Frogmore became sacred for Queen Victoria



*Queen Victoria's tea house.*

Other buildings in the garden are a Gothic Ruin, Queen Victoria's Tea house – a picturesque building consisting of two adjoining octagonal buildings with Elizabethan Chimneys similar to those at Hampton Court Palace which survives unchanged, and opposite is a low granite drinking fountain in memory of John Brown, and an Indian Kiosk of white marble presented to Queen Victoria by Lord Canning after the battle of Lucknow in 1858. The mature trees in the grounds have recently been checked for safety. Upon the receipt today of all rare trees, Her Majesty continues to plant these at Frogmore to improve her existing collection.

One departed from Frogmore House and Garden feeling that one had been permitted to visit a Royal Residence which was and still is used by Her Majesty; where collections made by earlier members of the family had furnished their private home so delightfully. One really expected to see H.R.H. Queen Elizabeth strolling through her garden to take tea in the Tea House with the window blinds now open. It was a rare treat for all those members of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust who experienced Frogmore's magic spell.

#### Further reading

J. Cornforth, 'Frogmore House, Berkshire', *Country Life*, August 16th and 23rd 1990.

O. Hedley, *Queen Charlotte*, 1975.

R. Strong, *Royal Gardens*, 1992.

### THE SAVILL GARDEN

The Savill Garden is 35 acres in size, also within a triangular site within Windsor Great Park (4500 acres) and just within the county boundary of Surrey. Its main interest is the woodland planted with rhododendrons which require dark glasses when visiting the garden in late spring. Mr Eric Savill (a great horticulturalist and landscaper) arrived on site in

1932 as deputy surveyor (rather like Paxton arriving at Chatsworth) and immediately set about creating glades and vistas throughout the woodland and planted meadows of flowers. He widened the stream and created both Upper and Lower Ponds. As a tribute to his achievement King George VI declared, in 1951, that the gardens should be named after him.

His interests are still to be seen today; of which many are now accredited National Plant Collections – magnolias, hollies, dwarf conifers, rhododendron species, pieris, mahonia and hardy ferns.

Although the acid woodland soil is ideal for growing rhododendrons, the low annual rainfall of 22ins. means that all plants require further watering. The three storey regime of planting greatly helps the survival of many rare plants. The magnificent tall trees (this is a garden when one's neck soon starts to ache) which form the top storey have been thinned to provide perfect shade conditions for the plants below. The middle layer is formed by the dramatic arrangements of finest flowering and foliage shrubs – Japanese maples, camellias, magnolias, azaleas and rhododendrons. The lowest storey consists of ground cover plants such as hostas, ferns and pulmonarias.



*The new visitor centre at The Savill Gardens.*

There is much to admire and copy here and although the garden suffered in the October gales of 1987, the damage was quickly dealt with and extensively replanted. During recent years the herbaceous borders have become a source of new planting combinations and we saw bold clumps of grasses backed by tall purple eupatoriums.

The recent Golden Jubilee Garden still looked fresh on a cloudy September afternoon.

Whilst one may quibble about the lack of labels on shrubs etc in parts of the garden, one cannot but admire the new visitor centre's timber roof which seems to float above the restaurants and shop. Only recently designed by engineers in Bath, this structure is well worth visiting, representing a superb example of architecture which this country can produce. One wonders what Queen Charlotte might have thought of it!

Our thanks to Alan Brown who had so successfully arranged this special visit.

*John Drake*

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