



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## NEWSLETTER No. 57 November 2024

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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**W**ELCOME TO THE November 2024 Newsletter. The summer, as I'm sure you'll agree, was a bit of a wash-out, with only a few sunny interludes in what turned out to be a mostly wet and windy season. Happily, most of our visits coincided with some of the best sunshine.

First, I would like to keep you up-to-date on some sadnesses and some comings and goings. First, one of our longest-standing Patrons, Daphne Astor, sadly died this summer, bringing to an end a long and fruitful partnership between herself and the Trust. She was a founder member and helped to set up the Trust; she made regular donations and was always mindful of its welfare. She will be missed.

On the comings and goings, we will greatly miss Jane Sills, who steps down as our long-standing Treasurer at the AGM on 2nd November. Jane has devotedly kept the Trust's finances in good order over many years. The treasurer's job is a responsible one, with a significant level of dedication, and we are hugely grateful to Jane for her excellent service to the Trust over so many years. Thank you Jane. We are investigating the possibility of hiring a professional book-keeper in the interim and I'm delighted to say that Mark Wilkinson has kindly agreed to step into the role of Honorary Treasurer on the Council.

We also have to thank Jane Bhagat and Gin Warren, who have stepped down from the Council of Management during

this period. Both made valuable contributions to the Trust, Jane through organising visits, Gin by sharing her researches, leading the Journal Discussion Group, and her IT contributions. We hope that she will continue to enlighten us, through her talks, on topics such as historic cemeteries and John Claudius Loudon. Judith Christie will be swapping her role as leader of the Events Group, a position which she has moulded with huge success and has brought so much pleasure to Trust members, for Membership Secretary. Given the state of flux within the CoM, I have agreed to stay on as Chairman for a while.

Our summer visits have been a great success and some of them are written up in this Newsletter. A breakthrough innovation on these tours has been the acquisition of audio receivers. Once 'plugged in', tour members can hear the guides clearly wherever they are, within a range of up to 50 metres.

A particular highlight was our annual summer social event at Abbots Ripton Hall, home of our patrons Lord and Lady De Ramsey. The sun shone! We were shown the gardens by the long-standing head gardener, Gavin Smith. They were superb and full of horticultural interest. The extensive, closely cut lawns, of which Gavin was very proud,

were beautiful and the long borders magnificent. What a fine setting for our picnic. Gavin used the audio system for the tour and was so impressed that the estate plans to acquire their own. Other visits, to Wisbech, Trumpington Hall, Darwin College



*Members enjoy the summer picnic at Abbots Ripton Hall.*

and the Bridge End Gardens in Saffron Walden, were also very successful. A particular highlight of the visit to Trumpington Hall, again in glorious sunshine, was the unusual and well preserved ‘crinkle-crankle’ kitchen garden wall.

Our Small Grants Scheme continues to attract applicants and is now in Round 7 of applications. In Round 6, we approved an award to the Friends of Holt Island Campaign (St Ives) to create a boardwalk access. They requested a contribution towards a total cost of £85,000. We have agreed to commit £500, payable when it has been confirmed that the work will go ahead or has been completed. The deadline for the current round of grants is 31st December 2024, and we welcome new applications from members or their friends and associates.

The Listings sub-committee has had its second meeting, again in Mark’s glorious garden (this is becoming a very pleasant habit!). We continue to make progress towards submitting reports to Historic England on existing listed

gardens, where entries need to be brought up to date. I had a very enjoyable day visiting Chippenham Park and Dullingham House with committee member and patron Lady Lavinia Nourse. One – Chippenham – is a positive story of gardens added in the 20th century. The other – Dullingham – is a less happy story of parkland degraded by stud (horses) buildings and new drives. King’s College has new additions for its listing, particularly the Chinese garden. Speaking of King’s, we will be treated to a talk by their Head Gardener, Steve Coghill, who will deliver our Christmas Lecture in King’s on 3rd December.

For the future, our excellent events team is putting together a fascinating programme of talks over the autumn and winter and is working on what promises to be a full and very interesting programme of visits for the spring and summer. There is a lot to look forward to.

*Elisabeth Whittle*  
*Chairman, Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust*

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## A VISIT TO TWO HISTORIC FENLAND GARDENS IN WISBECH

*On 1 August 22 CGT members travelled to Wisbech to explore and compare the beautiful gardens of Elgood’s Brewery and Peckover House.*

ONCE AGAIN, THE TRUST WAS LUCKY with the weather for the visits to Elgood’s Brewery and Peckover House as the threatened thunder over Wisbech did not spoil our enjoyment of these lovely gardens. Both are sited along the North Brink of the river Nene, called by Pevsner ‘one of the most perfect Georgian streets of England’. Our guide to the Brewery garden, Jayne, outlined the historic connection between this garden and the nearby ones of Peckover House and Sibald’s Holme (also owned by a Peckover), explaining that the duplication in some species originated in the neighbours’ sharing of plant material, and the eventful takeover of some Peckover land, further from the house, by the Brewery in the latter part of the 19C.

Both gardens had exceptionally big Ginko and Tulip trees in addition to other unusual species and it was the magnificent collection of trees at Elgood’s that stole the show in that garden, matched by equally fine ones at Peckover.

### PART 1: ELGOOD’S BREWERY

The Brewery was established in 1795 – one of the first to be built outside London – and in 1878 it came under the control of the Elgood family. Its four-acre (1.6 ha) gardens thrived until the Second World War when the land was turned over to productive use, growing vegetables for the war effort. The gardens as we see them today were recreated in the 1990s following a discovery of some early photographs of the pre-war garden which prompted a decision to bring the lost parts of the gardens back to life and enhance them with new garden areas.

The gardens are a wonderful combination of maturity, with the magnificent specimen trees and high brick walls, excitement from exuberant planting, and calming areas of wide lawns and water. There was no ‘approved route’ round the garden, so we were encouraged to explore the various elements which unfold into different vistas and then to enclosed areas as



*Figure 1. Mellow brick walls are punctuated by inviting archways. Photo by Carol Meads.*

one walks through arches in the brick walls (Fig. 1) or round screening hedges. Jayne pointed out that some of the distinctively shaped yew hedges had in fact been trimmed by a family of deer that lurk in the gardens.

A Japanese garden, planted with grasses and irises around a water feature, provides a peaceful, contemplative area close to the Brewery buildings. A modern design using water in another part of the garden creates a very different atmosphere: planting of grasses, evergreens and bamboo provides shade that





Figure 2. The lake with its majestic willow. Photo by Janet Probyn.

contrasts with the polished steel water features of different sizes. The lake (Fig. 2), with its waterlilies and backdrop of a large willow and old Brewery buildings, gives a sense of a traditional Victorian garden. Other features make reference to the Brewery's business: the original below-ground cold store for the beer has been gently shaped into a grassy mound (Fig. 3), and a herb garden that has arbours with plantings of Fuggles and Challenger hops – varieties that are used in Elgood's beer (Fig. 4).



Figure 3. The grassy mound covering the original cold store for the beer at Elgood's Brewery. Photo by Janet Probyn.

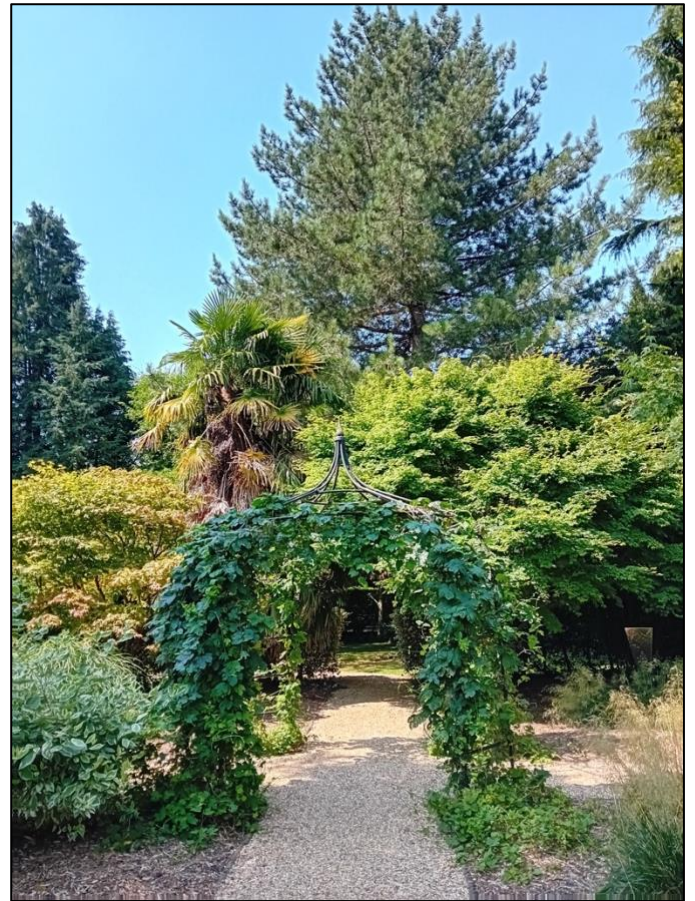


Figure 4. One of the hop arbours. Photo by Janet Probyn.

Rich and colourful perennial planting abounds. Climbing roses, trained up ropes, give height to the planting and standard roses march along a border giving structure. A laburnum walk, with the trees trained over a pergola, would be a feature of the garden in spring.

As mentioned earlier, the mature trees at Elgood's are a striking feature of the gardens: many of them are recognised as County Champion trees (individual trees that are important examples of their species because of their enormous size, great age, rarity or historical significance). Jayne mentioned that one oak tree was 307 years old – it had lost a limb recently due to the very wet weather but was still in good heart. A Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra* subsp. *pallasiana*) at 26 m high and with a girth of 391 cm is the largest specimen in Cambridgeshire. A recently planted handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*) was a mere stripling at only about 12 years old but already looked mature – benefiting from the rich Fenland soil. Other handkerchief trees had produced an abundance of fruits, not often seen.

Sadly, not all the trees in the garden have fared so well. An arson attack in 2022 damaged a maze planted with thuja and laurel. Elgood's was hoping that the blackened skeletons of the thuja would regrow, but they were looking very sad and the Brewery now intends to do some renovation work.

The gardens continue to be developed and one new area (Fig. 5), completed in 2022, has been designed by Nick Bailey, the well-known plantsman and garden designer who also presents on BBC Gardeners' World. Nick started his career in Wisbech. This garden provides a striking view from the events marquee, with a formal design of blocks of silver birches, glowing white and illuminated at night, set within massed





*Figure 5. New garden area designed by Nick Bailey. Photo by Carol Meads.*

plantings of *Rosa Chandos Beauty*, with its very fragrant, pale peachy-apricot blooms with flushes of pale pink.

Our visit gave us an opportunity to see how a historic garden has evolved to meet the requirements of Elgood's business, while retaining the spirit of the original.

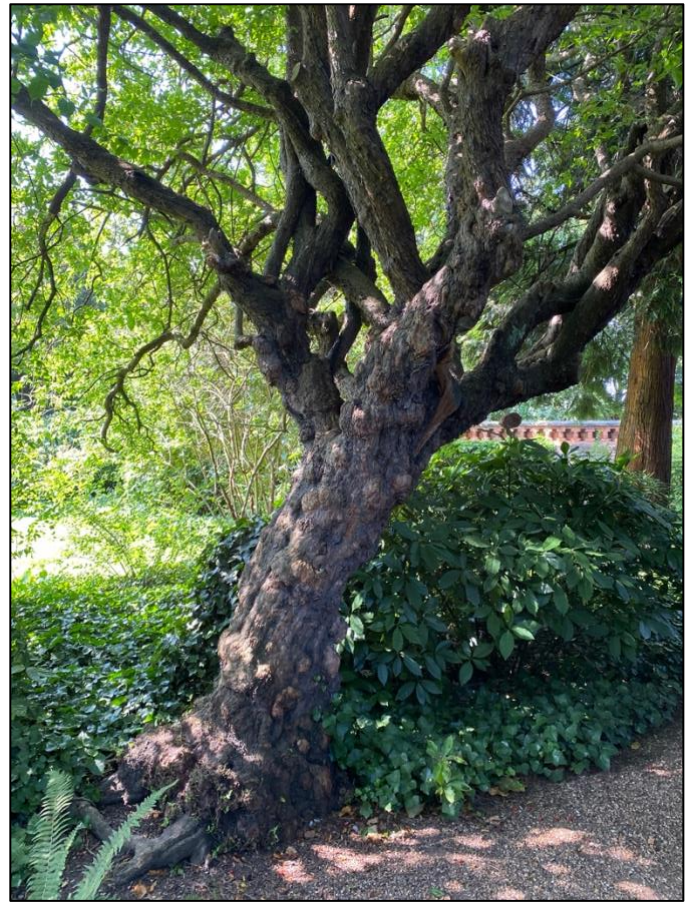
*Carol Meads, August 2024*

## **PART 2: PECKOVER HOUSE**

Peckover House has a history that predates the illustrious family with whom it became synonymous. The elegant house, then known as Bank House, was built in 1722, complete with exceptionally fine interiors, but very few records remain prior to its acquisition by the Quaker family in the 1790s and, even then, very little until the 1830s. There are no early plans of parterres in the garden although there is an embroidered fire screen in the house showing a house very much like Peckover, with symmetrical beds laid out behind the house, but there is no evidence to authenticate it.

The garden at Peckover has grown in a rather piecemeal manner as and when adjacent pockets of land were acquired behind the grand houses that were built along the prosperous North Brink waterfront. The earliest member of the Wisbech dynasty was Jonathan Peckover (1755-1833), who founded the Wisbech and Lincolnshire Bank in 1782 and moved into Peckover House with his wife, Susanna Payne, in 1794. Jonathan passed the house and the bank to two of his children, William (1790-1877) and Algernon (1803-1893), on his death in 1833. They continued to add to the garden in the so-called Gardenesque style. It was William's name that kept cropping up on our guided tour and I suspect the better documentation at this time stems from his enthusiasm for the garden.

William, a bachelor, was a keen plant collector and there are records of his widespread travels. The tradition of sharing plant material with friends and neighbours accounts for some of the duplication between the Elgood's and Peckovers' gardens. Perhaps his interest in unusual trees was sparked by inheriting a magnificent Tulip tree adjacent to a wilderness walk and since this is estimated to be over three hundred years old it must have been planted when the house was first built, having been introduced to this country in 1688. This tree is no longer in the best of health so a replacement was planted close by in the 1980s and is now nearly as tall. We were shown another huge



*Figure 6. A massive Cornus mas. Photo by Judy Rossiter.*

specimen a little further along the shady walkway, a *Cornus mas*, so big it had become a tree (Fig. 6).

This walk bounded the eastern side of the garden, screening the large lawn from the boundary wall, of which there were



*Figure 7. Dark red-brown brick walls and the Summer House. Photo by Judy Rossiter.*



many in and around the site, all of a rich red-brown colour, a flattering background to plants (Fig. 7).



Figure 8. Elegant steps lead from the house to the croquet lawn. Photo by Janet Probyn.

A large lawn lies at the foot of the elegant steps down from the house (Fig. 8); old photographs showing this to be used for croquet and badminton, a tradition continued by the National Trust. Some old family photographs are reproduced on display boards at appropriate positions in the garden to highlight the connection between past and present. There are some magnificent specimens of trees and shrubs skirting the lawn, a huge *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana* lit up the lawn at the far end as did an enormous *Clerodendrum trichotomum* var. *fargesii*, soon to be followed by an equally impressive *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*. These beautiful flowering shrubs, allowed to grow to their full potential, provided contrast to the Victorian legacy of laurels which were enlivened in places by the hard to grow *Kirengeshoma palmata*.

The view from the magnificent early-18C library, looking at the very Victorian garden beyond, does feel rather anachronistic but our guide, the delightful Head Gardener Louise, told us there are no plans to redress this. Indeed, there are moves afoot to return the house to a closer approximation of the way it would have appeared to its restrained Quaker inhabitants. There is the same aim for the garden and, over the past sixty years, progress has been made to return the garden to a semblance of its Victorian heyday, without resorting to the labour-intensive schemes.

Peckover was acquired by the National Trust in 1943 from Alexandrine Peckover who lived in the house until her death in 1948. It came with very few original contents. Furnishings to suit the house were acquired through auctions and from other Trust houses but these are now thought to be of a much grander

style for the Peckovers' more simple taste. Following years of war with almost no labour available for decorative gardening, the Peckover gardens were very much neglected.

The National Trust's garden advisor at this time was the redoubtable rosarian Graham Stuart Thomas (1909-2003) and his contribution to the garden exemplifies the journey garden history has taken during the past seventy-five years. After the austerity of the Second World War there was a longing to restore gardens to being beautiful again, many having being dug up for food production, as happened at Peckover, and there was not the time or resources to research old maps and plans. Remnants can be seen of the early-19C and Victorian gardens, also shown in family photographs, however there appeared to be no wish to reinstate these labour-intensive designs.



Figure 9. New climate-friendly border. Photo by Janet Probyn.

It seems that GST had a freer hand to redesign the gardens and this is a trend that continues today in order to better marry contemporary considerations with available resources, although always with reference to the Gardenesque style. Historically there had been a large glasshouse along a boundary wall, with vines, stone fruits, etc. but this was derelict by the 1920s and dismantled. A rockery had been built in its place, to showcase the mountain flora collected on European tours and displayed amongst salvaged architectural stones. This was found to be too labour-intensive to retain and was replaced under another NT garden advisor, John Sales, by featuring a Victorian ribbon garden. This in turn was found to be equally demanding with two changes of plants each year and the need for constant watering of young plants so, after thirty years or so, this has in turn been replaced by the so called 'Peace' border of drought-resistant perennials (Fig. 9), all insect-friendly, providing pollen for the beehives at one end. The pastel tones echoed those of the dainty mountain species, and are backed by



high walls still bearing the GST choice of roses, Rambling Rector, Paul's Himalayan Musk and Félicité et Perpétué.

The style hints were subtle but enough to recreate the Victorian vibe but with a much wider plant palette. Roses trained over arbours (Fig. 10), border edgings of a continuous species, in several places very luxuriant *Liriope*. CGT readers will be familiar with the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England and can read the features of special note to the Peckover gardens but these reports cannot capture the atmosphere of a garden.

Less was known about a large area of garden towards the ancient thatched barn but it was referred to as the orchard and is now planted with fruit: espaliered apples and pears, mulberry, medlar, quince and crab apples for colour, which was also provided by the rosy red apples on the Lord Peckover tree, apparently not a very tasty apple to eat but very decorative!

A previous head gardener, Glyn Jones, established the precursor of Hidcote's famous red borders while he was working at Peckover before moving on and establishing one in the Cotswold setting. At right angles to this was another magnificent double herbaceous border of semi tender plants, dahlias, cannas, gladioli, agapanthus, together with macleayas, *Verbena bonariensis* and grasses, to name a few. Louisa leaves them all to over-winter *in situ* on the grounds that some are lost through lifting and replanting and a few losses, if left in place, are offset by the reduction in work involved. There were more wonderful exotics in the Orangery where three permanent glazed-tile-clad planters held orange trees dating back three hundred years. (The garden writer and broadcaster, Monty Don, has said that the first citrus he owned came from a cutting taken over 30 years ago from one of the Peckover House orange trees, which was reputedly the oldest surviving orange tree in the UK.) All looked wonderfully healthy as did the various box plants around the garden and Louise credits the rich bird life in

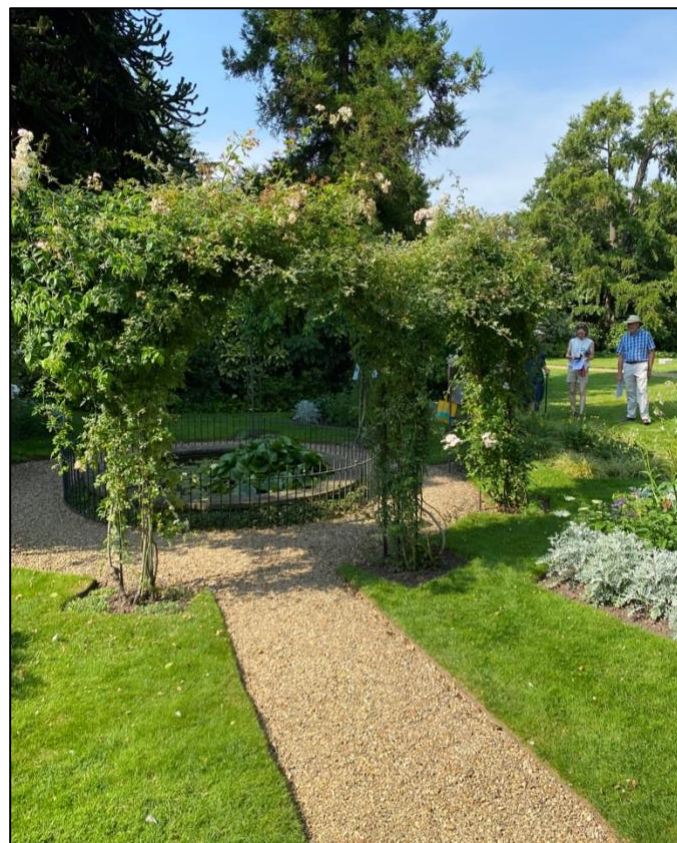


Figure 10. Replanted rose arbour. Photo by Judy Rossiter.

the garden with keeping down the insect pests. Insects are attracted to the pollinating plants grown near the Orangery and then birds tackle the caterpillars. It's a very happy balance that seems to be working at Peckover. It was impressive to think that so much could be achieved by only two full-time gardeners and volunteer help equivalent to a third gardener.

Judy Rossiter, August 2024

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## UPDATING 'A POINT OF VIEW: BEING FEMALE CONFINES YOU TO THE FOOTNOTES OF BOTH GARDEN HISTORY AND PRACTICAL HORTICULTURE' FROM ISSUES 49, 53 & 55.

**T**HIS ARTICLE CONTINUES the subjective, informative and, we hope, entertaining bio-notes of women in gardening and garden history, put together by Council Member Gin Warren. Originally motivated by the series of lectures on *Forgotten Women Gardeners*, organised by Twigs Way for the Gardens Trust, Gin acknowledges contributions from Twigs, Sophie Piebenga, Deborah Reid, Catherine Horwood and Sandra Lawrence. If you have your own favourite female gardener, please do not hesitate to drop an email to Gin at her address: [gin-warren@ntlworld.com](mailto:gin-warren@ntlworld.com)

As with the previous 'Point of View' articles, this is not intended as a complete or scholarly work - it is simply a directory to introduce CGT members to women who were connected to gardens or gardening, mainly in the UK. Gin's sources include the Gardens Trust lectures, various books and blogs, Twitter feeds, Wikipedia and various websites. The hope

is to stimulate members to find out more about these women and to cite them as much as their male counterparts in members' writings and presentations. To aid that, the entries in these articles will be merged on the CGT website for easy access.

### DIRECTORY OF PEOPLE

**Maria van Oosterwijk** (1630–1693): a painter from the Dutch Golden Age who was introduced by her father, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, to the highly acclaimed, still-life painter Jan Davidszoon de Heem. Under de Heem's influence, Oosterwijk developed her own talent and interest in floral painting which, unusually for the time, she pursued not simply as a pastime but as a professional career. As well as a talented painter, she was a successful businesswoman, selling her creations to the royal houses in France, Poland, England and the Holy Roman Emperor. Despite being refused membership of



*Maria van Oosterwijck, floral artist from the Dutch Golden Age, painted by Wallerant Vaillant in 1671. Image public domain.*

the painters' guild because she was a woman, Oosterwijck remained successfully independent and unmarried, although she did raise an orphaned nephew in her household. As a tribute, fellow artist Wallerant Vaillant painted her portrait, holding a palette and a bible.

**Eleanor Anne Ormerod** (1828-1901): a pioneering English entomologist, who focused on identifying insects that were useful to agriculture and those that were pests. From a family of landed gentry, she never received payment for her work but achieved significant recognition as an honorary consulting entomologist for the Royal Agricultural Society of England. Ormerod may have been influenced by Mary and Jane Loudon's 1840 translation of Vincent Kollar's *Treatise on Insects Injurious to Gardeners, Foresters and Farmers* and she published extensively in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* and the *Agricultural Gazette*. Her work was recognised internationally although she caused controversy by advocating the introduction of a powerful insecticide, the arsenic-derived Paris Green, and the extermination of the house sparrow.

**Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, Duchess of Portland** (1715-1785): landowner, naturalist, collector and Bluestocking, friend of Mary Delany (qv). The richest woman in Great Britain at the time, she employed Thomas Lightfoot and Daniel Solander (apostle of Linnaeus) to curate her natural history collection at Bulstrode Hall, Berkshire. Bentinck grew up at Wimpole Hall and also became the owner of Welbeck Abbey. She briefly owned The Portland Vase, having arranged to buy it from Sir William Hamilton who had bought it, via James Byres, from

Cordelia Barberini-Colonna, Princess of Palestrina, and brought it to England. Margaret died a year after the sale was completed in 1784, and her son, William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland bought it at auction before lending it firstly to Josiah Wedgwood then to the British Museum, who finally bought the vase in 1945.

**Chrystabel Prudence Goldsmith Procter** (1894-1982): Professional gardener and educationalist. Educated at St Paul's Girls' School in chemistry and botany and deaf from her mid-teens from a hereditary condition, Procter trained at Glynde College for Lady Gardeners which ran from 1900-18. She was Garden Steward at Girton College from 1933-45, where she was responsible for the management of the college gardens, grounds, and grounds staff, and created autumnal displays to 'shout a welcome to Freshers on the day they arrive'. On taking office, she had a problem with fellows helping themselves to flowers and greenery for their rooms, a practice that had defeated Procter's predecessor, Miss Swindale. Procter took a firmer line with the college and insisted that, 'scissors must be used; as few leaves as possible should be gathered. The Committee would be very grateful if Fellows would abstain from picking from any tree, shrub or shrubby creeper.' She was interested in people growing their own crops and education for women, and edited Frances Wolseley's archive at her posthumous request.

**Phyllis Reiss** (1886-1961; née **Lucas**): Garden owner and designer. Famous for, and influential because of, her elegant and year-round planting at Tintinhull House in Somerset (Grade II listed, now with the National Trust) where she lived and worked from 1933 onwards. Reiss's carefree planting influenced the work of Dame Sylvia Crowe and garden designer Lanning Roper.

**Eleanor Sophie Sinclair Rohde** (1881-1950): gardener, garden designer (especially the herb garden at Lullingstone Castle, Kent) and prolific writer on gardens and gardening. Born in Alleppey, India, and educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College, her books include *A Garden of Herbs* (1921), *Old English Herbals* (1922), *Old English Gardens* (1924), *The Scented Garden* (1931), *The Story of the Garden* (1932), *Rose Recipes from Olden Times* (1939), *The Gardener's Week-End Book* (1939), *The Wartime Vegetable Garden* (1940 reprinted 1941 & 1942) and *Unusual Vegetables* (1943). Unusual amongst gardening women in being an Oxford graduate (from St Hilda's).

**Alice Charlotte von Rothschild** (1847-1922): born into the Austrian branch of the Rothschild banking family, Alice was a major landowner (Eythrope near Aylesbury; Villa Victoria near Grasse; later Waddesdon Manor), a practical gardener and a 'natural style' designer. She was said to 'manage personally every aspect of the gardens, glasshouses and farm'. Friend and hostess of Queen Victoria, for whose donkey cart Alice had the paths at Villa Victoria widened. Correspondent of Ellen Willmott. She was demanding and autocratic, and had a demanding, autocratic head gardener, George Frederick Johnson, whom she moved from Grasse to Waddesdon.

Sadly, the Newsletter page count requires that we must leave the listings for now and return to Gin's fascinating bio-notes in a subsequent issue.

*Gin Warren, September 2024 (to be continued/concluded)*



*The Portland Vase made in Rome c.1C AD and acquired by the Dowager Duchess of Portland in 1784. Photo © Trustees of the British Museum*



# AN APPRECIATION OF PATRON DAPHNE ASTOR, 1949-2024

**M**OST MEMBERS WILL BE AWARE by now of the passing of Daphne Warburg Astor, who died of cancer on 14 July 2024. Daphne had been a founding member of Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust, a member of the first Steering Committee, chaired (of course) by John Drake, and a member of the group of Patrons who oversaw the launch of the Trust some 27 years ago. She remained a Patron until the end, so such an unstinting period of service to the Trust warranted at least a modest note in the annals of the Newsletter.

Daphne was born in New York on 22 December 1949, to Edward and Mary Warburg. As well as being extremely wealthy, her father was a philanthropist, a collector and a patron of the arts, donating many items to the New York Museum of Modern Art. Her mother's family had migrated by wagon from Virginia to New Mexico and Texas, and had been accustomed to defending their ranch against cattle and sheep raiders with shotguns, if necessary. Consequently, it was hardly surprising that Daphne would grow up to become a self-described 'farmer' with a very independent mind, a patron of many artistic organisations, an artist, a writer and a conservationist.

Educated at Brearly School in New York and an exclusive girls' boarding school, Foxcroft, in Virginia, Daphne became an accomplished horserider and spent weekends and holidays at her older step-brother's farm, which happened to be close to her school. When her step-brother and his wife were killed in an air-crash in 1967, Daphne set out to travel, joining the Peace Corps in Ghana, where she was seriously ill, and visiting Mexico, where she bumped into Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor following a mugging. Against her parents wishes, Daphne funded herself part-way through film school, where she overlapped with Martin Scorsese, the artist Philip Guston and sculptor Louise Nevelson, before leaving for a spell in the Catskill Mountains.

The wanderlust continued and, as a photographer for Newsweek, the New York Times and National Geographic, Daphne saw travel across the USA. She briefly married Charlie Baum, whose father, Joe, was a restaurateur involved in restoring the Rainbow Room in New York's Rockefeller Center. After divorce, Daphne resumed her travels, spending time in Australia, Japan, the Far East and India, where she met the Dalai Lama. In 1979, Daphne married Michael (Micky) Astor and moved to the family estate at Hatley Park in

Bedfordshire. She became deeply involved in the running of the 1,800-acre (730 ha) estate, feeling absolutely at home in gum boots, and eventually took full British citizenship. Her energy, commitment and engagement were manifest, not just in the adoption of three children but also in her involvement in arts organisations across the UK and Ireland. Daphne has been an artist in residence and chair of the Centre for Recent Drawing in London, artist in residence at Cill Rialaig Arts Centre, Co Kerry Eire, and deputy chair of a major development project at Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. She founded and was chairperson for the American board of Fauna and Flora International, the Cambridge-headquartered nature conservation charity.

Daphne also had impact in the world of poetry, having trained at the Faber Academy. She wrote poetry and founded both an online poetry magazine and an eco-friendly publisher called Hazel Press, specialising in natural environment themes.

Daphne helped to create Poetry in Aldeburgh, of which she was curator during 2016 and 2017. She took a number of courses at the Poetry School in London and was a Patron of the Ginkgo Prize for Ecopoetry, facilitated by the Poetry School.

An interest in horticulture prompted Daphne to enroll in the English Gardening School in 1996. She also took a course in botanical illustration at Madingley Hall in 1997 and did an MA at the City and Guilds art school in London in 2004. This period saw the establishment of the county Gardens Trusts as a way to rediscover the history of our landscape heritage, and Daphne's aptitude for learning

and endeavour bore fruit for the Trust as she became a much-valued founder and Patron of CGT. She was also a highly practical problem-solver. I recall an event in Cambridge when John Drake had been scheduled to give a talk and, unfortunately for him, his laptop fundamentally refused to cooperate. As it happened, I had my laptop to hand, so I offered assistance to John to try and get his laptop to respond or to transfer his presentation to my own. Before I could get any life out of John's computer, Daphne had been to Kettle's Yard to collect a replacement laptop and with a few deft clicks had rescued John's talk.

Daphne is survived by her husband Micky, their three children, her brother David and a powerful legacy of contributions to artistic and cultural life.



*The late Daphne Astor.*

*Photo courtesy of Micky Astor*

*Phil Christie, September 2024*



# THE CGT SUMMER EVENT AT ABBOTS RIPTON HALL

*On 10 July some 35 members and guests enjoyed a guided tour of the gardens of Lord and Lady De Ramsey.*

THE CGT SUMMER SOCIAL EVENT took place in the lovely grounds of Abbots Ripton Hall, at the kind invitation of Lord and Lady De Ramsey. The Trust is fortunate to count Lord De Ramsey as one of its Patrons and he ‘volunteered’ the services of his Head Gardener, Gavin Smith, to guide us around the gardens, which looked glorious in the summer evening light.

Abbots Ripton Hall gardens are recognised as one of the greatest of Cambridgeshire’s modern gardens by Timothy Mowl and Laura Mayer in their book, *Historic Gardens of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely*, and our visit gave us the opportunity to appreciate how different elements of the gardens are combined to form a ‘modern Arcadia’.

The Hall and its estate have been in the family since 1737; the present house being a late-18C/early-19C building remodelled in the 1860s by the architect Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) and surrounded by eight acres (3.2 ha) of gardens and extensive parkland. In the 1880s, landscape painter and garden designer Alfred Parsons (1847-1920) created a garden containing many fine trees. The garden in its present form was remodelled by Lord De Ramsey’s parents, who moved to Abbots Ripton Hall in 1937, and needed to rescue gardens that had become derelict after World War II. The artist and garden designer Humphrey Waterfield (1908-1971) – famous for creating the much-admired garden Le Clos de Peyronnet at Menton – developed new areas of the gardens but also, by creating vistas between discrete areas, enabled the gardens to flow and feel integrated. Further developments in planting and the creation of new features were masterminded by the American landscape architect Lanning Roper (1912-1983).

The gardens are renowned for extensive plantings of roses, rare trees – including rare specimen oak trees – garden follies designed by Peter Foster (1919-2010), architect and Surveyor of Westminster Abbey, and a spectacular 150-yard long walk with a double herbaceous border flanked by substantial yew cylinders. Lord and Lady De Ramsey continue to develop and enhance the planting and decorative features of the garden.

Our visit began by entering the gardens through an arch cut in a high hedge that revealed a sweep of lawn surrounding the garden front of the house, with a massive London plane tree standing sentinel (Fig. 1). An ambigram carved into a piece of slate embedded in the path under the arch read ‘Ambiguity’ – the lettering reads the same when entering or leaving the gardens – and gave us a hint that the gardens could be appreciated on many different levels. Another cryptic ambigram reads ‘Relative’ (Fig. 2).

Our tour started with a welcome by Head Gardener Gavin Smith who has worked at Abbots Ripton for 33 years and was a fount of knowledge on all aspects of the garden and its management. From the lawn we looked out over a wide, calm canal, formed from the Abbots Ripton brook, that divides the garden into two. We crossed the brook by one of the three bridges – this was installed about twenty years ago, replacing a previous one that had collapsed. It is designed in a style redolent of Monet’s bridges at Giverny, and was clothed in Chinese and Japanese



Figure 1. Members and guests picnic on the lawn with the London plane on the right. Photo by Carol Meads.



Figure 2. An ambigram bearing the lettering ‘Relative’, readable in both directions.

wisterias. Gavin explained that the estate is lucky enough to have access to a good supply of water from springs and a reservoir that enable the level of the canal to be maintained and give provision for watering. The water is also useful for keeping mature silver birches in excellent condition – their trunks are regularly washed in the natural water supply and glow wonderfully white, contrasting with the dark yew hedges behind (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Gavin Smith and his scrubbed silver birch.





Figure 4. The long border takes the eye almost to infinity.

A focal point of the gardens is the long walk with deep herbaceous borders (Fig. 4), set on a central axis from the house. The planting is in a profuse cottage garden style that is intended to look good until September, with masses of soft colours that were accentuated by the strong, late-afternoon sun.



Figure 5. Foster's Gothick Trellis, half-way down the border.

Halfway down the border, within a rondel of yew hedging, is a spectacular Gothick Trellis (Fig. 5) surmounted by fibreglass finials designed by Foster. The walk terminates with a pair of decorative metal gates leading out to an avenue of paired horse chestnuts. On the two gate pillars are fibreglass urns (Fig. 6) in



Figure 6. An urn styled after the Ramsey Abbey incense boat.



Figure 7. The rose pergola with high summer colour.

a design that references the 14C Ramsey Abbey incense boat, discovered in Whittlesea Mere in 1850.

To the west of the long walk is a green corridor with contemporary fluid sculptures leading to a sequence of gardens with different themes including: an area (previously the kitchen



Figure 8. A lone swan navigates the carp pond.

garden) planted with endangered oak trees from around the world that Gavin has grown from acorns; a 'friends' wall planted with gifts to the De Ramseys; a rose pergola (Fig. 7) leading to a grey border; and finally a garden with monastic themes of carp pond (Fig. 8) and mount that reflect Abbots Ripton's history as a site of rest for pilgrims on their way to Ramsey Abbey.

As well as guiding us around the gardens Gavin was a treasure trove of fascinating detail pointing out: the mistletoe that was established from a Burghley House plant; a mulberry tree whose fruit has been raided by ducklings over many years; and an ancient rambling rose, similar to *Rosa moschata*, that Gavin would like to think 'may' have been brought back from the Crusades.

We had time to see only a portion of the gardens – Gavin said he can spend up to three hours describing the gardens to visitors – but we ended our visit enjoying the unaccustomed sunshine with a picnic on the lawn together with Gavin and his wife. A perfect summer event.

Carol Meads, July 2024



# A QUAKER HERITAGE GARDEN IN SAFFRON WALDEN

*Over 20 members took part in a guided tour of Bridge End Garden on 15 May 2024.*

THE FINAL DROPS OF RAIN cleared away as a score of CGT members and guests assembled in Close Garden, at the southwest end of St Mary's Churchyard, off the busy High Street in Saffron Walden. We had come to be guided on a tour of Bridge End Garden at Saffron Walden by CGT member Liz Lake. Liz is a Trustee of the Friends of Bridge End Gardens, a charitable organisation which works with the garden's leaseholder, Saffron Walden Town Council, to help support its restoration, management and sustainable future development. Liz also happens to be the founder of Liz Lake Associates (LLA), a successful practice of landscape architects, designers and gardeners who had employed our late Chairman, Julia Weaver, during Julia's tenure with CGT. At the start of the tour Liz movingly remembered Julia and dedicated the tour to her.

## HISTORY

In 1789, the dowry brought by Elizabeth Wyatt to her marriage with Atkinson Francis Gibson included the Bridge End homestead and surrounding fields on the edge of Saffron Walden. Close Garden was the site of the Gibsons' home and had only a small garden, so they began to lay out a larger garden at Bridge End. His son, Francis Gibson, who inherited in 1829, appreciated landscape architecture and aesthetics so, in 1838, he laid out a new garden at the Bridge End site, without an associated house, possibly in collaboration with William Chater, a local nurseryman and garden designer. When Francis died in 1858 he was succeeded by his son, Francis Edward Gibson, who died, unmarried, in 1862. The property then passed to Francis's sister Elizabeth Pease Gibson, who was married to the Quaker philanthropist Lewis Fry, but lived in Bristol. An agent managed the gardens and, by 1902, Lewis Fry had opened them to the public as a pleasure ground. In 1918 he

leased the garden to the local council whose successor conducted an ambitious and comprehensive restoration project between 2003 and 2008. LLA were engaged by the District Council and English Heritage to draw up a full Historic Landscape Survey and a costed Conservation Management Plan in 1999. The document was based on an 1877 plan of the garden and formed part of a submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which was awarded £387k, supplemented by £150k from other bodies. LLA subsequently submitted a further CMP for the re-establishment of the Victorian Walled Garden. The gardens, registered as Grade II\* by Historic England, are now leased and managed by Saffron Walden Town Council.

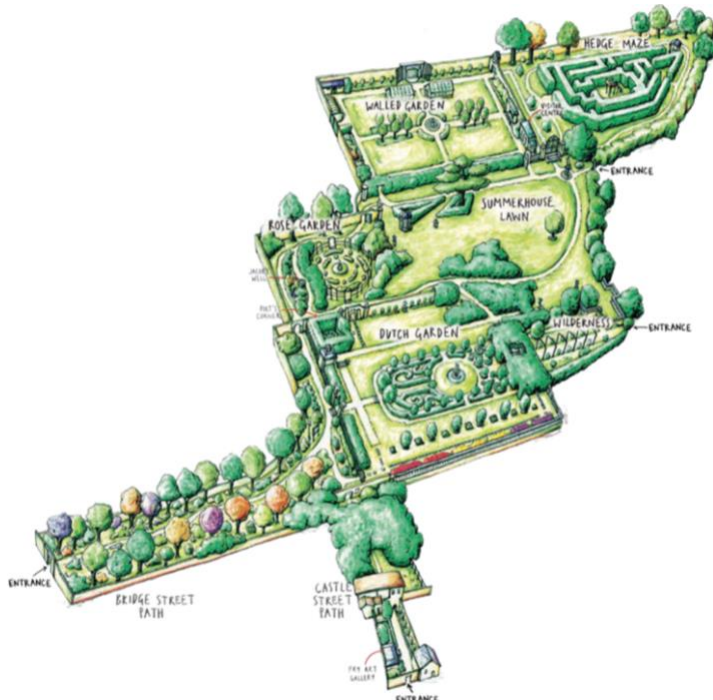


*Figure 2. View from Borough Meadow across the wall towards the Dutch Garden and the Summerhouse beyond.*

From the gathering point in Close Garden, Liz led us to Borough Meadow, an important open space lying between Bridge End Garden and properties on Castle Street. The ground gently falls away to the northwest towards the Madgate Slade stream and affords lovely views across the haha and the low, partly balustraded brick wall towards the Dutch Garden and the summerhouse beyond (Fig. 2).

## DUTCH GARDEN AND POET'S CORNER

From the Meadow we made our way towards a large London plane, marking the junction of the paths from Bridge Street and



*Figure 1. Bridge End Garden, © [Fraser Parry Photography](#)*



*Figure 3. Ornamental brick gates with a pair of eagles, made from Coade stone.*





*Figure 4. Boundary wall and pathside planting along the southeast border of the Dutch garden.*

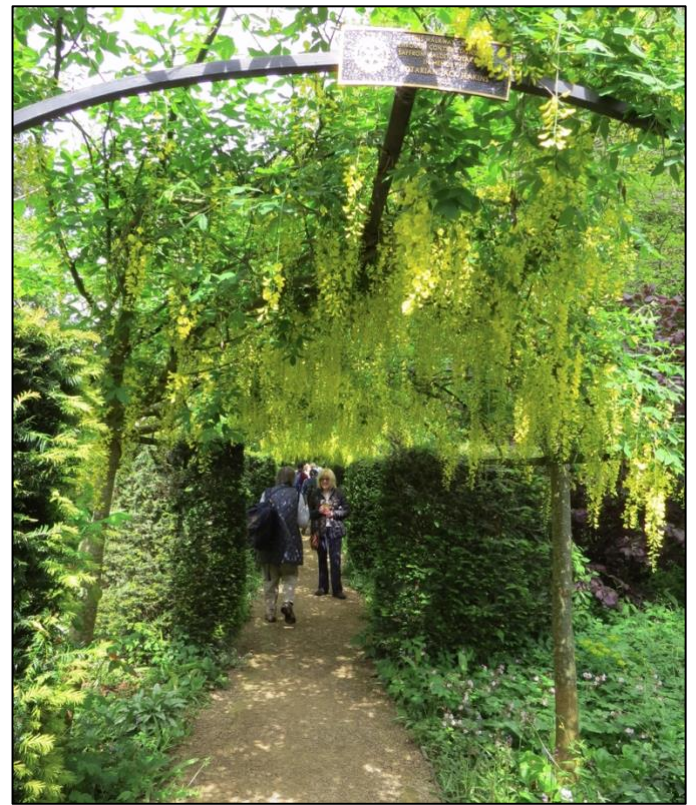
Castle Street (Fig. 1) which meet in front of a pair of splendid ornamental iron gates (Grade II; Fig. 3), set on square, red-brick piers and surmounted by Coade-stone eagles. Here we slightly retraced our steps before heading northeast to follow the culverted Madgate Slade brook and the boundary wall backing the long border inside the Dutch Garden (Fig. 1). The pathside planting here comprises beds of salvias alternating with wisterias planted as standard trees (Fig. 4). While the sage was in high flower, the wisteria had little bloom and not much leaf, given the time of the year. Liz felt that the cold, damp spring may have had a hand in it, as there is little frost protection for the free-standing wisteria.



*Figure 5. View southwest towards the eagle gate from the elevated platform inside the Dutch garden. The Pavilion can be seen at the end of the path to the right of the image.*

The Dutch Garden was probably first laid out around 1840. It is formally ornate, with symmetric curves of box and closely clipped yew forming a sunken parterre focussed on a central fountain. It is best seen from an iron viewing platform (Fig. 5) surrounded by yew. On the northeast side of the platform, on a continuation of the main axis from the Dutch Garden, lies the Wilderness, a shady grove with a central archway of hoops planted with trained laburnums that were in flower at the time of our visit (Fig. 6). The replanting of the Dutch Garden parterre was guided by a design sketched by Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) when she visited in 1912.

In the west corner of the garden is the listed square brick Pavilion (c.1845; Fig. 5), at the end of the elevated Pavilion Path from which the views across the parterre and over Borough Meadow to St Mary's Church are particularly fine (Fig. 7). Next



*Figure 6. Trained laburnums in the Wilderness.*



*Figure 7. View of St Mary's Church across the Dutch Garden.*



*Figure 8. Poet's Corner is a small parterre enclosed by yew.*

to the Pavilion on its north side is Poet's Corner (Fig. 1), a small intimate space enclosed by tall yew hedging, with its own parterre (Fig. 8).





Figure 9. Carved keystone in brick archway to Rose Garden.

### ROSE GARDEN AND SUMMERHOUSE LAWN

On leaving the Poet's Corner, the northwest wall of the Dutch Garden is pierced by an arched gateway with carved keystone (Fig. 9) giving access to the Rose Garden and Summerhouse Lawn (Fig. 1). The Rose Garden is encircled by a yew hedge and bordered by rose hoops (Fig 10). It is planted with Victorian varieties; May was a little too early to see them in bloom but one can easily imagine a riot of colour in season, with climbers



Figure 10. Eastward view over Rose Garden to the wall of the Dutch Garden and St Mary's Church.

on the hooped arches providing a fragrant white circle. Set beside a circular path on the southwest boundary lies Jacob's Well, a structure which is thought to be the original cistern that provided water for the fountain in the centre of the Dutch



Figure 11. The octagonal Summerhouse.

Garden. To the northeast of the Rose Garden lies the octagonal summerhouse (c.1840; Fig. 11) from which the lawn derives its name. Nearby is a mature Cedar of Lebanon which provides shade for picnickers on the lawn in summertime.

At the northern tip of the Summerhouse Lawn, steps and a gateway lead to the yew hedge maze, one of the highlights of Bridge End Garden for younger visitors (Fig. 1). The maze was replanted in 1984 with 1,100 yews. It has 600 m of pathways and a viewing platform in the centre. A sinuous circular walk surrounds it, bordered by native and ornamental trees.

### KITCHEN GARDEN

The walled Kitchen Garden can be entered from either the maze or behind the Summerhouse. It lies on ground rising to the northwest and has a traditional, four-quadrant plan, with a dipping pond (Fig. 12), brick walls on three sides and a yew hedge on the fourth side. It was restored as a Victorian fruit garden with soft fruits, trained fruit trees and two glasshouses. The paths are edged with espalier fruit trees and the walls feature a variety of ways of training apples, pears and plums in a limited space.



Figure 12. The Kitchen Garden with glasshouse and dipping pond, looking north towards the maze gateway.

Liz had really pulled out the stops to give us a super tour of Bridge End Garden, and she fully deserved her vote of thanks for arranging the sunny intervals to send us off with a warm cosy glow! The gardens are open to the public every day except Christmas Day.

*Phil Christie, September 2024*



Figure 13. Rhubarb and forcing pots in the Kitchen Garden.



# A MIDSUMMER VISIT TO TRUMPINGTON HALL GARDENS

*Around 40 members gathered on 24 June and enjoyed exploring the formal gardens and parkland.*

IT WAS A PERFECT JUNE DAY on which to visit the splendid gardens of CGT member Victoria Pemberton and her husband Antony. The Hall is not open to the public and so the kind invitation from the Pembertons made this a very special occasion for those fortunate enough to take the tour. The intensity of the sunlight made the planting and architectural features of the Hall really stand out. Antony gave us a potted history of his family's connection to the Trumpington estate which started in 1675 when his ancestor, Sir Francis Pemberton, was knighted and purchased the 1000-acre estate for the sum of 1000 guineas in gold, paid in two instalments on 1 and 8 April 1675, according to a receipt in the family archive. He would have known the area, having studied at Emmanuel College and Peterhouse. Sir Francis' son – also called Francis and a lawyer like his father – built the present Hall in 1710, incorporating the remains of an earlier house. Extensive alterations to the Hall were made in 1810 and at that stage the gardens were developed.

The Pembertons' family archive is extensive, comprising 17 deed boxes of documents going back generations to 1328, and it would have been fascinating to hear more about their history, but we were here to see the gardens. Our first stop was the kitchen garden with its pre-1830 crinkle-crankle wall built on two sides of the plot that would have given plants, probably fruit trees, protection from the elements. Antony explained that the deep serpentine curves – which he called crinkum-crankum – enabled the wall to be constructed with only one thickness of brick without the need for strengthening buttresses (Fig. 1). The kitchen garden still retains an ancient quince tree that fruits heavily and an old bay tree.

Victoria was our guide for the subsequent walk round the gardens. The impressive formal entrance to the Hall was the forecourt, with wrought-iron gates attached to tall gate piers (Fig. 2). The encircling brick walls were buttressed and planting between the buttresses provided structure and blocks of colour. Perhaps the most interesting feature was the use of spring-flowering Judas trees (*Cercis siliquastrum*) which were clipped



*Figure 1. The sinuous crinkle-crankle (or crinkum-crankum) wall at Trumpington Hall.*

and trained up the front of the Hall. These were accompanied by a large wisteria that Victoria said refused to extend beyond the right-hand side of the Hall.

Formal gardens, enclosed by well-clipped box hedging, surrounded the west and north sides of the Hall, with infills of lavender, as well as roses and herbaceous planting. The colours of the planting, as well as the climbing plants clothing the Hall, complemented the purplish red of the old bricks and demonstrated a very good eye for effective colour combinations. Pleached lime trees and other clipped mature trees provided height and contrast.

The Pembertons have introduced changes to the gardens over the years but it was interesting to hear from Antony that steps they have created from the pool garden to the upper gardens actually replicated a similar set of steps that had existed in the 1920s; shown in a contemporary photograph of his father and uncle sitting on the top of them.

It was hard to believe that the busy urban areas of Cambridge are so close to the Hall, with its peaceful rural vistas to the west towards Grantchester Meadows and to the north over the backs of the colleges. The formal gardens lead out towards the parkland with an avenue of clipped yews framing a view over a wide rectangular area of water – canalised from three former fishponds – to a summerhouse. Mature trees dot the landscape and further reaches of the gardens are managed in a sustainable way with areas of long grass and wildflowers, recently mown. One sad loss, much regretted by the Pembertons, was a magnificent cedar planted in 1825. This had to be removed as it was deteriorating. The cedar had been celebrated in several country diary pieces in local newspapers: in 1986, one writer mentions visiting Trumpington Hall and seeing the cedar in the middle of an immaculate lawn. It became his favourite type of tree.

We ended the afternoon sipping refreshments in the garden pavilion enjoying the views and the company of fellow garden enthusiasts.

*Carol Meads, June 2024*



*Licensed under Creative Commons (CC-BY-SA 2.0)*

*Figure 2. The impressive gateway to Trumpington Hall.*

*Photo © copyright [Marathon](#).*



# EXPLORING THE TRANQUIL AND INFORMAL GARDENS OF DARWIN COLLEGE

*Darwin College's Head Gardener, Derrienne Bell, gave 25 members a fascinating tour of the college grounds and gardens on 5 September 2024.*

FOLLOWING CHARLES MALYON'S informative and interesting article on *The gardens of Sir George Darwin and of the Hermitage*, covering the history and an appreciation of the College grounds (CGT Newsletter 56, May 2024), it was timely to have the opportunity to see how the gardens had developed over the years. Charles joined us as guest of honour on the visit and spoke of meeting the artist Gwen Raverat (daughter of Sir George Darwin) in the 1950s when he and other students from Queens' Fisher building would help push the ailing Raverat in her wheelchair to a favourite painting spot. Raverat wrote and illustrated a delightful account of growing up in the buildings and gardens that now form Darwin College in *Period Piece: a Cambridge Childhood*, published in 1952.

Darwin College has recently celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of its foundation as the University of Cambridge's first graduate college and the College's crest, featuring three escallops (emblems used by the Darwin family since the 18C), could be seen in the bunting decorating the gardens and the floor covering at the entrance (Fig. 1).

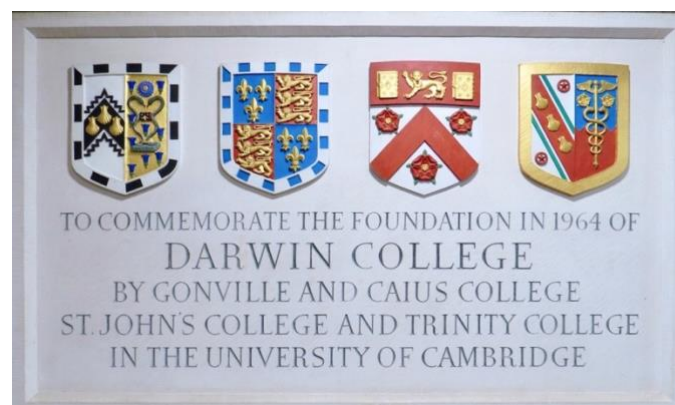


Figure 1. Crests of Darwin College (right) and its founders.

Derrienne Bell (known as Derry), the College's gardener since March 2023, described how the gardens had been developed both to reflect the history of the site but also to provide a relaxed, informal space for students to enjoy. Throughout the year many events are held in the grounds which need to accommodate large numbers of people (the College has now c.800 students) as well as barbecues, picnics and meetings.

This presents some challenges to a gardener who has to balance the practical domestic requirements against the urge to create beautiful planting. Another factor that now influences the design and maintenance of the gardens is the need to respect the environment and to create gardens that can sustain biodiversity; no chemicals are used. One exception was made to treat the devastating attacks of box moth caterpillar and Derry had resorted to some spraying with Topbuxus XenTari, a biological insecticide containing a strain of the natural micro-organism *Bacillus thuringiensis*. It is highly specific, potent, of natural origin and does not harm important beneficial insects, humans, wildlife, or the environment.

Derry mentioned her own and the College's debt to the former gardeners Rod Ailes and Ros Keep who had worked on and developed the Darwin gardens since January 1993. They had transformed the gardens, linking different outdoor spaces belonging to previously separate properties, now acquired by Darwin College, into a series of connected gardens that each have different botanical and atmospheric identities.



Figure 2. Aerial view of Darwin College.

Imagery ©2024 Google. Imagery ©2024 Airbus. Map data ©2024.





Figure 3. Darwin's waterfront and bridge to First Island.

Part of the fascination of the gardens is the unique riverside space (Fig. 2). The gardens run alongside the River Cam and extend to two small islands connected to the main college grounds and each other by rustic wooden bridges. The extensive river frontage enables the College to provide punt moorings for other colleges that do not have access to the river (Fig. 3).

We first wended our way along one of the narrower parts of the gardens between the Rayne Building (built in the 1960s and listed Grade II), Newnham Grange, one of the original buildings, and the river (Fig. 1). This area has been developed as a wild garden with plantings that add height and movement such as evening primrose, teasels, *Verbena bonariensis* and *Phlomis russeliana* with a lower storey including hellebores and everlasting pea. The stump of a dead but still majestic copper beech tree, planted over 200 years ago, looked almost



Figure 4. The beech stump with bench and armillary sphere.

sculptural in the middle of the planting (Fig. 4). The move to a wilder style of planting had not been to everybody's taste and Derry said that she would make some changes next year.

Along the rear of Newnham Grange and its eastern extension were several interesting plants including: a pre-phylloxera grape vine said to have been planted by George Darwin (but now not in the best of health) and an *Acacia pravissima* with its unusual small triangular leaves, called phyllodes, which produces an abundance of small yellow flowers in spring. The College grounds nearest to the city centre have been re-developed in recent years – this area is now called the John Bradfield Court (Fig. 5) and consists of the renovated Old Granary building with attached Gallery (Fig. 6) that looks



Figure 5. The Bradfield Building and the Old Granary.



Figure 6. The Gallery attached to the Old Granary, formerly used for viewing tennis matches in the court of George Darwin's home.

out over the River Cam and into the courtyard. A new, dark grey, freestanding pavilion (Fig. 5), that is reminiscent of an oast house, is used for meetings and sits in the middle of the redeveloped courtyard. Sustainability is enhanced with heat recovery and ground-source heat pump. Plantings around it include grasses and *Verbena bonariensis* which soften the architecture. Derry's collection of pelargoniums is massed in pots around the courtyard.

We ventured over to the islands, crossing the picturesque wooden bridge (Fig. 3). Both islands have dense plantings of trees making them feel protected from the noise and bustle of the city and are heavily used by students to relax and have barbecues. Some trees are over 200 years old, including an oriental plane tree. Seasonal interest in spring comes from the many flowering bulbs and in the autumn the yellow, red and purple leaves of *Parrotia persica* and hips of species roses provide bursts of colour. Crossing another bridge takes us to the Second Island (Fig. 2) with a central glade where fruit trees are planted and the students' bee hives live. It also features what Derry says is the world's biggest compost heap. We learned that the type of planting and the focus on environmentally friendly management had encouraged a wide range of birds (this had been corroborated by Dr Michael Rands, Master of Darwin College and formerly Chief Executive of BirdLife International). Darwin College's resident heron could be seen on the riverbank (Fig. 7).





Figure 7. The College's resident heron.

Crossing back over the bridges we explored the more southerly parts of the grounds that comprise the original back gardens of Newnham Terrace. Over the years the College had purchased adjacent properties in the Terrace, taking down parts of the perimeter walls to form a series of connected but individually planted spaces. One area was called the 'Jurassic Garden' (Fig. 8), with plants that preceded flowering angiosperms, such as the Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*).



Figure 8. The Jurassic Garden behind Newnham Terrace with a sad-looking Wollemi pine on the left edge of the image.

Although this area has a protected microclimate Derry said that it had been hit hard by the very cold weather of 2022 and the pine almost died but, happily, new shoots are emerging. Other planting included *Pseudopanax* and the white-flowered *Heptacodium miconioides* (Fig. 9). Throughout this area of the gardens there are a number of very large, old fruit trees



Figure 9. Guest of honour Charles Malyon takes notes in front of *Heptacodium miconioides*.



Figure 10. The students' productive beds.

including apples, pears and crab apples. The final area of the gardens that we visited was the student garden (Fig. 10) where a range of vegetables was grown.



Figure 11. Derry leads the group behind Newnham Terrace.

Managing and developing the gardens is a massive task – not to mention the need to refresh some of the older plantings that have outgrown their space. Derry has advice and support from the Gardening Fellow, the College's Green Officer, the students' gardening society and others. It seems impossible that one person can care for such a complex and large garden and Derry has been offered some additional gardening help; it is just a case of deciding when and how this would fit in to what Derry and the garden both need. The continuing development of the gardens will be informed by environmental concerns. One significant change will result from a project to introduce a river-source heat network that will require digging up part of the students' garden to install the necessary technology and connect it to the College buildings.

Despite the unusually cool and grey weather, it had been a fascinating visit and we were delighted to be invited to visit again in the spring to see the flowering bulbs or in May to view the roses at their peak. Derry has been given a year's membership of the Trust and we hope to see her at some of our future events.

Carol Meads, September 2024

## Reference

Raverat, G. 1952. *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood*. Faber & Faber, 290pp, ISBN 0 571 06742 5.



# NEWS OF THE SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

**T**HE TRUST'S SMALL GRANT SCHEME has become established and is now in its seventh round. The scheme enables the Trust to fulfill its charitable objects by making awards to fund projects, by groups or individuals, that are consistent with Trust goals. The application process is 'light-touch' and full details may be found on the CGT website, including a simple application form and guidance notes on completing it. A summary of award winners and their projects can be found on the website, and we feature notes on selected projects in the Newsletter from time to time.

## THE FRIENDS OF ST PETER'S CHURCH, OFFORD DARCY

St Peter's Church, Offord Darcy, is a Grade 1 Listed Building which used to be the parish church of Offord Darcy. Dating back to Norman times, it displays the four styles of English church architecture and houses notable monuments and brasses. The church was made redundant in 1978, and its care vested in the Churches Conservation Trust. The Friends of St Peter's (FOSP) was formed in 2007, after a couple of successful Art and Music festivals in the church, and intent to use it for community events, concerts, exhibitions, craft fairs and open days. St Peter's remains a consecrated building with occasional services and while the churchyard is closed to new burials, it is open to the public, and is a place of peace and tranquillity, forming a safe refuge for wildlife and plant life.

FOSP is a voluntary group with the object to preserve the historical, architectural, archaeological and environmental heritage in and around the building. They have taken on the challenge to manage the churchyard in a way that encourages wildflowers and grasses and benefits wildlife, whilst being sensitive to visitors' needs. CGT member, Janet Bedingfield, and Julie Angell made an application on behalf of FOSP to the Scheme in December 2023 and were successful in winning the maximum £500 grant for the installation of signage most welcome to go along and (Fig. 1), bird boxes (Fig. 2), seeds,



Figure 1. St Peter's Church with new display boards.



Figure 2. One of the new display bird boxes.

bulbs and plants, and support for an Open Day, which took place on 29 June 2024.

Since winning the grant, FOSP have been busy in the churchyard. Winter allowed them to see what was actually present, i.e. the bare bones of the structure and planting. The north boundary had log piles from tree felling some years ago; these made a great habitat for insects, thereby attracting birds. The team lifted the canopy of the mature trees on the north perimeter placing the branches and cuttings alongside the boundary fence to establish a 'dead hedge', creating another wildlife habitat. The churchyard is blessed with many snowdrops (Fig. 3), so these were split and distributed. FOSP also bought and planted some Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) seeds and plugs, wild daffodil bulbs and aconites.

Three new signs and some wildlife rubbings were purchased for the open day, which encouraged the children of the Offords to attend with lots of activities and competitions. These included a wildlife-themed art competition for Pre-school to Upper Junior years and a flower arranging competition. All entries were displayed inside the church and prizes, sponsored by village businesses, were awarded by a local artist. The photos here were taken by Janet in early spring but readers are most welcome to visit at any time of the year and see the great progress being made by the Friends.

Janet Bedingfield, May 2024



Figure 3. A carpet of snowdrops in the churchyard.



# A MEETING OF THE JOURNAL DISCUSSION GROUP

*Gin Warren's new Journal Discussion Group met in May 2024.*

THE JOURNAL DISCUSSION GROUP enjoyed discussing Toby Parker and Mark Laird's recent paper on vistas in mid-18C Oxford (see reference). There were seven of us arm-chair travellers in time and space and our appreciation of the piece was enhanced by the fact that this article straddled the borders between garden history and art history. It was generously illustrated with images of gardens, buildings, and landscape in a range of different artistic styles. And there was one superficially incongruous image of a bloke in a stonking waistcoat of which he was clearly very proud (Fig. 1). Merton College was in the background, so that was his justification for gracing our afternoon.

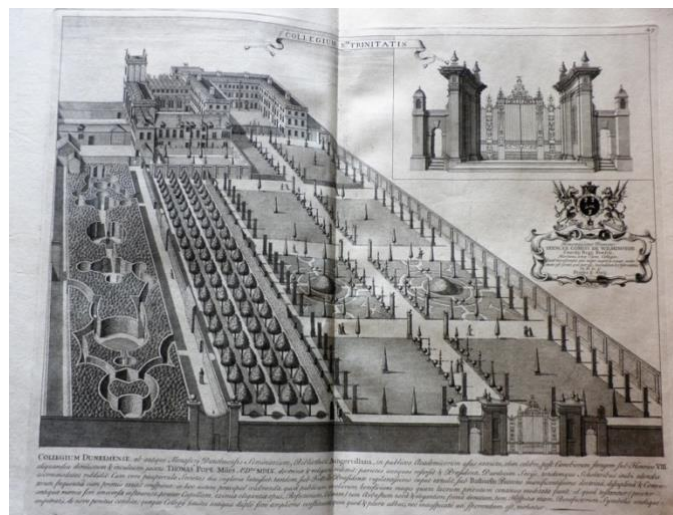


Figure 1. *A Graduate of Merton College, Oxford* (c. 1754-1755) by George Knapton (English, 1698 - 1778). Knapton was an original member of the Society of Dilettanti (see issue 54, p21) and their first portrait artist. Public domain image.

The article ambled around the High Street, Merton Street, Radcliffe Square, the north side of the Broad, and the west of Parks Road, doubling back on itself and weaving about in a manner which tended to confuse those who didn't know Oxford, and irritate those who did. (Morse would not have been amused.) The former would have appreciated a sketch map, but group member Richard Andrewes very clearly explained what was going on and what you'd expect to be visible from where.

While Queen's College was mentioned as a new build in the period covered by the article (1739-82), it seemed odd that the authors had not troubled to go further west and examine Worcester College's approach, given that it was a largely knock-down and start again re-foundation of Gloucester Hall

spanning their time period of interest. That College's approach to the 'viewing in' and 'looking out' of its gardens might have been worth examining. Similarly, it seems a bit odd that the attitude of the University Botanic Garden to 'viewing in' and 'looking out' was not mentioned, especially as we were told that a high wall of another University institution (the University Church) had been demolished to open up the south side of Radcliffe Square in the year after the Camera had been built.



*Trinity College, from Williams' Oxonia Depicta, 1733, also features in Parker & Laird (2023). Public domain image.*

We had an elliptical conversation at this point on body-snatching, this being around the time of the Murder Act of 1752 and obviously before the Anatomy Act of 1832 (see issue 53, p17 and Gin's [webpage](#) on the Bicycle Boys' visit to Emmanuel College). In theory, only the bodies of convicted, executed murderers could be used for dissection, but how much easier to spirit a virtuous corpse across to the Anatomy School in the Bodleian quadrangle if the churchyard was not bordered by a high wall! Didn't make much difference if your destination was the smart new Anatomy School at Christ Church.

The main thrust of the article was that Oxford has been thought of as isolated and old-fashioned from the point of view of garden and landscape design in this period. The authors put forward a case that this was not true, and garden historians should revise their collective opinion. The context of private gardens and parks was alluded to, but it seemed an omission that more direct comparisons were not made with the landscapes of Cambridge colleges and the Inns of Court. There was a tantalising suggestion that there might be a follow-on article, so we resolved to keep an eye on *Garden History*. And we'll be doing that anyway, to select the next article for discussion when the next issue comes out. Do join us!

*Gin Warren, June 2024*

## Reference

Parker, T. & Laird, M. 2023. 'Collegiate Prospects': the University of Oxford's experiments in the 'natural' taste, 1739-82. *Garden History*, **51**(2), 167-182.



# PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND EVENTS 2024-25

We invite members to evaluate prevailing covid advice and to consider whether participation in an event is appropriate for them. Locations under discussion for future visits include Holywell Hall near Stamford, Raynham Hall in Norfolk, the Gibberd Garden, Bluntisham Heath Fruit Farm and Luton Hoo Walled Garden, among others. If members have locations they'd like to suggest for visits, please do get in touch via the admin email address below.

NOVEMBER 2024	2 Sat	11:30am	<b>AGM:</b> in Hilton Village Hall, Grove End PE28 9PF starting at 11:30am, followed by a talk, <i>A Renaissance Garden in Bassingbourn, Cambs.</i> by our new Patron, Prof. Susan Oosthuizen, at about 12:00 noon. AGM papers will be sent out prior to the event. The AGM is free and the cost for the talk, including a light lunch is £13/person.
NOVEMBER 2024	9 Sat	2:30pm	<b>Max Walters Memorial Lecture:</b> hosted by the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collyn Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. Bunny Guinness, landscape architect, broadcaster and GQT panellist, will present <i>Plants in my Best Garden Designs</i> . Entry £12 for CGT members, £17 for guests. See CGT website for booking details.
DECEMBER 2024	3 Tues	11:00am	<b>Christmas Lecture:</b> <i>1441 and all that, a potted history of the landscapes and gardens of Kings College, from Henry VI to Charles III</i> will be delivered by King's College Head Gardener, Steve Coghill and will take place in the Keynes Lecture Theatre at King's, starting at 11:00am. Full details to follow on the website.
DECEMBER 2024	14 Sat	2:00pm for 2:30pm	<b>Christmas Social with Games:</b> hosted by the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collyn Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. Full details to follow.
JANUARY 2025	Week of 6th Jan.	pm TBC	<b>Journal Discussion Group:</b> will discuss <i>Behind the Privet Hedge: Richard Sudell, the Suburban Garden and the Beautification of Britain</i> by Michael Gilson on an afternoon during the week of 6 January. This recently published book (Reaktion Books, £14.40 on Blackwell's website) might make a timely Christmas present!
JANUARY 2025	11 Sat	2:00pm	<b>Annual General Meeting:</b> of the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collyn Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. AGM starts at 2:00pm and followed, at 2.30pm, by Gwen Hines, the new Plant Heritage CEO, and Lucy Pitman, Plant Conservation Advisor, who will give an overview on recent developments, shows and updates on the conservation work. Entry £5, payable at the door, includes tea/coffee on arrival.

(For up-to-date details please go to <https://cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk>)

Our preferred method of booking is by BACS transfer to **our new account** Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust (sort code 30-99-50, account number 80635768) using your name as reference; please confirm payment by email to [admin@cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk). Cheques, **payable to Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust**, to Jane Sills, The Willows, Ramsey Road, Ramsey Forty Foot PE26 2XN. To avoid disappointment (some venues limit numbers), please book at least 2 weeks before the visit, where possible. Should you need to cancel a booking, please advise [admin@cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:admin@cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk) as early as possible.

## CHRISTMAS LECTURE

At the time of writing, the Christmas Lecture is in final planning, but we have a speaker, a location and a date, all of which add up to a special Christmas treat. The date is Tuesday 3 December, and our speaker will be the Head Gardener of King's College, Steve Coghill, who has kindly arranged for his talk, *1441 and all that, a potted history of the landscapes and gardens of Kings College, from Henry VI to Charles III*, to be delivered in Keynes Lecture Theatre at King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST.

Full details of the talk and how to book will be posted on the CGT website as soon as we have them.

*Photo courtesy Geoff Moggridge*



Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust

The Willows, Ramsey Road, Ramsey Forty Foot, Cambs. PE26 2XN. Tel: 01487 813054

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