



CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

WELCOME TO THE May 2025 Newsletter. We are in the midst of a glorious spring, with ever lengthening days of sunshine and a wonderful succession of spring flowers that has now reached its culmination, with fruit trees, late ornamental cherries, lilacs and tulips flowering everywhere. For me, the climax has been the carpets of bluebells, which have been spectacular this year.

I have a great sadness to report. Our long-serving Council of Management member, Sarah Hundleby, died after a short illness in February. We are all extremely saddened by this and she will be very much missed. Her dedication and contribution to the Trust was great and she was a much appreciated colleague. Her funeral took place in the lovely setting of Binham Priory in Norfolk, and our Secretary, Mark Wilkinson, very kindly attended on behalf of the Trust.

This winter's talks were excellent and well attended. The first was the much anticipated talk by Steve Coghill, Head Gardener of King's College. In a very lively and stimulating talk he told us all about the history of the college's gardens up to the creation of the flowering meadow outside the chapel. We were promised a tour of the gardens at some point in the summer. I for one can't wait.

Our next talk was held in Coton Village Hall, a first for the Trust, but I'm sure not the last as it was a bright, modern, well-equipped venue. Professor John Parker, former Director of

Cambridge University Botanic Garden, gave an inspiring talk about trees, present, past and future. We had examples of extremely old trees, particularly Bristlecone pines in America, which can reach ages of around 5,000 years. We were treated to fascinating examples, for instance the trunk of a fossilised tree (*Sigillaria*) from the Carboniferous period, about 300 million years ago, stands in the churchyard at Stanhope, Co. Durham. This tree was an early ancestor of club mosses and would have stood about 30 m high. At the end Professor Parker emphasized the decline of trees on the planet, problems faced by them and what the future might hold. We were all gripped.

The third talk was given on-line by Dr Louise Crawley, who

led us through the development of the park at Raynham Hall, Norfolk. This was so interesting that it made one want to visit but sadly Raynham Hall is only very occasionally open to the public.

Our Small Grants Scheme continues to support a wide range of local garden initiatives. This winter it was the turn of the Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School Gardening Club. The school asked for support for their project to foster 'a love for gardening and environmental stewardship among young people'. We have awarded them £500 and wish them every

success with this excellent project. We would like to widen our support of community garden schemes. To this end, tentative feelers have been put out to encourage garden projects within prisons to apply for our grants.



Glorious apple blossom heralds the spring.

Our events team, to whom many thanks for all their hard work, is lining up a full programme of visits for the summer and details can be found on the website. The first will be on 21st May, to Holywell Hall, Lincolnshire. This is a well-preserved, 18C landscape park with outstanding neo-classical features. Tea is included. On 19th June there is a visit to Bourn Mill and garden. The mill is the oldest windmill in the country. Surrounding it are six acres (2.4 ha) of meadows and gardens. Again, tea is included.

Further into the summer, on 12th July, there will be a Study Day at Bourn Hall, near Cambourne, built initially in the 16C, now an IVF clinic. Talks and a guided tour will take us through the site's long history, from the mediaeval period onwards.

Finally, I must draw your attention to developments at our umbrella organisation, The Gardens Trust. The first is some good news in that, following the departure of Peter Hughes KC as Chair of the Trustees, an extraordinary general meeting held on 31 March confirmed the appointment of John Watkins as the new Gardens Trust chairman. John is a professional horticulturist with some 47 years' experience, and was awarded the RHS Associate of Honour in 2016. He was a Senior Lecturer at Hadlow College in Kent and worked at the Royal

Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh and Kew, the National Trust for Scotland and the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley and Hyde Hall. I'm sure John will make a very good job of being chairman.

Secondly, anyone watching the press, or even our website, will probably have noticed that the government is conducting a review into the status of the Gardens Trust (and, by extension, the county Gardens Trusts) as statutory consultees on planning applications. Essentially this means that if this status is revoked, there will be no independent voice to speak up for heritage landscapes that may be impacted by future development. The Gardens Trust is conducting a campaign to persuade government that such a function is both important and constructive. GT receives some 1800 planning application consultations each year, and provides local authorities with constructive advice to support positive change. Around 80% of comments form advice in support of planning approval, with only 20% expressing serious reservations about proposals. We wish them every success in their endeavours.

Elisabeth Whittle
Chairman, Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust

CONCLUDING 'A POINT OF VIEW: BEING FEMALE CONFINES YOU TO THE FOOTNOTES OF BOTH GARDEN HISTORY AND PRACTICAL HORTICULTURE' FROM ISSUES 49, 53, 55 & 57.

THIS LISTING CONCLUDES the subjective, informative and, we hope, entertaining bio-notes of women in gardening and garden history, put together by CGT 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

As with the previous articles, this is neither complete nor scholarly - it is merely a directory to introduce readers to women who were connected to gardens or gardening, mainly in the UK. Gin's sources include the Gardens Trust lectures, 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' output. To aid that, the entries in these articles will be merged on the CGT website in due course.

DIRECTORY OF PEOPLE

Jane Swindale (dates unknown): in 1921 Jane Swindale, aged 52, was appointed by Girton College as the first Garden Steward to oversee seven gardeners and 18.4 ha (46 acres). The same year she wrote to Gertrude Jekyll thanking her for her planting plans for Cloister Court with drifts of silvers, greys, blues and soft pinks. In 1923 another design by Jekyll was

presented for Emily Davies Court using drifts of stachys, bergenias, paeonies and mallows. Although Jekyll submitted many planting plans it is unknown if any were carried out. Swindale was Chrystabel Procter's predecessor at Girton College and advised her: 'Don't waste your time trying to grow flowers. All the Fellows had the right to pick flowers for themselves for their rooms whenever they wanted to and almost wherever they wanted to [and] even breaking branches off the flowering and other trees was permissible and commonly done by certain Fellows!' Where this could be done had previously been limited, but gradually spread to almost everywhere except the borders in the front drive. 'I couldn't bear it', Swindale added, 'and now the Research Fellows are doing it too.'

Dora Stafford (active 1930-1939): plant hunter and expert high altitude mountain climber. Worked in Peru 1930-39 collecting over 1000 species and many colour photographs for Kew and the Sterns at Highdown.

Mary Stout (active 20C): writer; coauthor with Madeline Agar of *A Book of Gardening for the Sub-Tropics, with a calendar for Cairo* (1921), and, solo, *Gardening for Egypt and Allied Climates* (1935). American living in Ma'adi, a district of Cairo. A key principle was, 'Do not forget that the house and garden belong to each other, and that the garden is mostly seen from certain fixed points within the house.' Her list of 'do nots' could be summarised with three words: 'Utility, Proportion, Unity.' She continually recommended designing a garden that ties flowery aesthetics to social uses.

Catherine Talbot (1721-70): a Bluestocking, watercolourist, poet, 'foster daughter' of Thomas Secker who took in her and her widowed mother, because her deceased father, Edward Talbot, son of a Bishop of Durham, had helped Secker's career as a protégé. Secker became Archbishop of Canterbury: she acted as his almoner and took an interest in the gardens at Lambeth Palace, her then home.



Portrait of Catherine Talbot (1721-1770) by Christian Friedrich Zincke.

Miss JS (HG?) Turner FRHS (dates unknown): garden practitioner and instructor. Superintendent at Glynde School prior to 1907, at which time she collaborated with Alicia Amherst, aka Mrs Evelyn Cecil, who asserted, 'one of the great wants of our colonies was well-trained, lady-like girls who would make good wives.' Miss Turner's 'idea of a way out of the difficulty was to establish a training school where ladies could be made familiar with the old-fashioned farmhouse life.' She thereby established Arlesey House Country and Colonial Training School for Ladies in 1907 and became its Principal. The usual course was two years long, and very practical, making the young ladies self-sufficient: 'The girls wear the most business-like garb. In the garden they may be seen in very short skirts, shirts with the sleeves rolled up to above the elbow, and the thickest of garden boots, each carrying on her own special work for the day with youthful vigour and enthusiasm, quite delightful to see.'

Rosemary Verey (1918-2001; née Sandilands): garden designer lecturer and writer, working in UK and US who championed the Country House Style in the 1980s. She designed a significant garden at Barnsley House, a Grade II* listed 17C house near Cirencester in Gloucestershire. Her laburnum tunnels were the equivalent of Harold Peto's wisteria ones. She helped to plant and develop the gardens of Woodside, Elton John's estate in Berkshire, as well as (then Prince) Charles' Highgrove House, and gardens for Princess Michael of Kent, the Marquess of Bute, and the New York Botanical Garden. Verey was awarded the OBE and, in 1999, the Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH) from the Royal Horticultural Society.

Constance Villiers-Stuart (1876-1966 née Fielden): water colourist, garden historian and coauthor of *Gardens of the Great Mughals* (1913), being resident in India for her husband's job as a soldier in the Royal Fusiliers. Her research and ideas impressed both Lutyens and the Viceroy of India, Lord Charles Hardinge, and influenced their designs of both New Delhi and the Viceroy's palace. The result was the famous Mughal Garden

of what is now Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India.

Priscilla Wakefield (1751-1832; née Bell): illustrator, writer, Quaker philanthropist (e.g. initiator of England's first Savings Bank and the Lying-in Charity for Women), feminist and educator of girls (founded Tottenham Green Coat school in 1792). Aunt to Elizabeth Fry. Books include *An Introduction to Botany* (1796 and 11 editions over 40 years) and *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex; with Suggestions for Its Improvement* (1798) and many travel books based more on research than personal experience. She introduced John Constable to Joseph Farington at the Royal Academy, helping him to move from Ipswich to London.



*Stipple engraving of Patricia Wakefield, 1818.
© National Portrait Gallery, London.*

Anna Maria Walker (1778-1852 née Patton): Scottish botanical artist, married to an Army man whose postings took them to what was then Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). She contacted Hooker at Glasgow and Graham at RBGE to ask if there was anything useful she could do in Ceylon. Images of orchids were her speciality: she also kept a journal of her travels.

Frances Evelyn 'Daisy' Greville, Lady Warwick (1861-1938; née Maynard): socialite, socialist (stood for Parliament for the Independent Labour Party in 1923), philanthropist and founder of Lady Warwick's School of Gardening, Agriculture and Horticulture in Reading in 1897. It moved to Studley in 1908. Also founded a needlework school. Her spending and donations exhausted her fortune, so she tried to sell love letters from the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII). She was paid the equivalent of over £7m for them by a diplomatic industrialist who wanted - and got - a baronetcy in 1916. But in 1928 she was facing imprisonment in Holloway for debt and threatening to release her memoirs. A censored version was eventually published as *Life's Ebb and Flow* and was described by her daughter as 'muck'. Daisy was President of the National Chrysanthemum Society and improved the gardens at Warwick Castle. She commissioned Harold Peto to create an Italianate garden on 10 acres (4 ha) of parkland at her family home, Easton Lodge in Essex. The resulting sunken garden, lily canal, and rose arbour were built by men from the Salvation Army Colony at Hadleigh. She kept a menagerie of birds and animals at Easton, and a set of former circus ponies at Warwick Castle.

Charlotte Isabel, Lady Wheeler-Cuffe (1867-1967; née Williams, nickname Shadow): artist, plant hunter, Botanic Garden founder (Pyin Oo Lwin, near Mandalay) and creator of

several gardens using only indigenous plants in Burma (Myanmar), collecting them on 'jungling' trips initially with her husband, Otway (civil engineer responsible for building roads and public buildings), and later solo with local employees). In England in 1902, she took her orchid paintings to Kew for identification. Kew asked her to collect and send them herbarium specimens including *Vanda coerulescens* and *Dendrobium crepidatum*. In 1911-12, she and Winifred McNabb found *Rhododendron cufeanum* (but featured in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* in 1917) and what was later called *Rhododendron burmanicum* on Nat Ma Taung (aka Mount Victoria). They later met George Forrest who was also unable to identify *R. burmanicum*: it was named this after Frank Kingdon-Ward reintroduced it to Europe in the 1950s. Biography: *Shadow among Splendours*, by Charles Nelson.

Ellen Ann Willmott, FLS VMH (1858-1934): well-funded gardener (her godmother, Countess Helen Tasker, was fabulously rich and generous to her) and photographer. For her 21st birthday her father gave her permission to create an alpine garden with gorge and rockery at the family's 33-acre (13-ha) estate at Warley Place in Essex; she inherited the whole estate on the death of her father in 1892. She later added Tresserve near Aix-les-Bains and the Villa Boccanegra in Menton (both France), and bred or bought thousands of prize-winning plants including roses, daffodils, crocuses, ivies, sempervivums and cacti. She funded plant hunters, particularly Ernest Wilson and persuaded Sir Gerald Hanbury to buy Wisley and give it to the RHS. Had a complex relationship with Gertrude Jekyll. More widely, she bought herself a string quartet's worth of Amati instruments, rare books and autograph manuscripts (including Purcell's violin sonata in G), Old Masters, jewellery, textiles and embroideries, antiques, microscopes, telescopes, and stereoscopic cameras. Her (damaged) archive has recently come to light at her married sister's home at Spetchley Park, Worcestershire, and is being salvaged and studied.

Augusta Hanna Elizabeth Innes Withers (1792-1877; née Baker): botanical illustrator and member of the Society of Female Artists working in the 1830s specialising in new imported exotic plants. She was appointed 'Flower Painter in Ordinary' to Queen Adelaide and later to Queen Victoria.

Frances Garnet Wolseley, Viscountess Wolseley (1872-1936): writer, owner and Principal of Glynde College of Lady Gardeners (1902-18). Employed Mrs Coldham as a tutor. Trevor Lawrence (Louisa's son) gave £500 for 5.5 acres (2.2 ha) of bare chalk soil land and a cottage for the school not long after the Archbishop of York had blessed it in 1905. Books included: *Gardening for Women* 1908, *In a College Garden* 1916, and *Gardens, their Form and Design*, illustrated by Mary Campion, 1919. *Gardening for Women* advised on what to wear whilst gardening in the colonies, what to do with drunken under-gardeners and why women make good gardeners. The aim of *In a College Garden* was stated as, 'We want to banish once and for all the inferior, rule-of-thumb, slow-thinking, inartistic man-gardener, whom we have tolerated for so long, and in his place require intelligent, educated ladies, who will direct and supervise as ably and, in some cases, even better than the very best type of male gardener.' In 1910 organised a conference of women gardeners at the Anglo-Japanese exhibition; in 1912 wrote *What to be? A gardener! Teaching the young gardening ideas.* In 1913 designed an Elizabethan garden for the Ideal Home exhibition. Involved in both the 1914 Women's National Land Service Corps and what became the Women's Land Army, then the Women's Farm and Garden Union. Period as War Agricultural Inspector, then after 1925, she and her friend, or lover, Molly Musgrave (qv) had adjacent houses in Ardingly (FW at Culpepers [Arts and Crafts] and MM at Upper Lodge Cottage). Wrote about local history, landscape, architecture and houses including *Some Sussex Byways* (illustrated by her second cousin, Garnet Ruskin Wolseley) and *Myths and Memories* (illustrated by Molly Musgrave). Muscular wasting put her in a wheelchair in 1935 and she died on Christmas Eve, 1936. Her funeral was attended by Molly Musgrave, Mary Campion and Mrs Trevor Lawrence. She donated her archive to the Corporation of Hove, with funds to keep it for educational purposes. She requested that it be edited by Chrystabel Procter (qv) of 144, Adelaide Road, Hampstead [why not Girton College?]. Acquaintance and collaborator of Gertrude Jekyll, friends with Dorothy Nevill (qv) and William Robinson, making many visits to Gravetye Manor.

Gin Warren, September 2024

STUDY DAY 12 JULY 2025 AT BOURN HALL

Our Study Day offers a rare opportunity to visit the relatively little-known Grade II* Bourn Hall (right) with its Grade II Park. The Hall, built in 1602, occupies the site of the 11C castle of Picot de Cambridge, the first Norman sheriff of the county. Its earthworks and moat are still visible. In the 1950s the Hall narrowly escaped demolition before the site became the home of the Steptoe and Edwards pioneering fertility clinic. Now the clinic faces the challenge of the upkeep of listed premises while its competitors enjoy the benefits of modern purpose-built facilities. There is little recent research on the site but, as the location of our Study Day, it offers the exciting possibility of exploring the grounds on foot (led by Angus Wainwright, NT regional archaeologist) and reimagining not only the late Elizabethan garden but also the 19C modifications to the house and estate as executed by Humphry Repton and his son John Adey Repton in 1815 and again in 1836. Keep the date and join us for our summer '25 Study Day: full details to follow shortly.



A RENAISSANCE GARDEN IN BASSINGBOURN, CAMBRIDGESHIRE?

CGT Patron, Prof. Susan Oosthuizen delivered the AGM Lecture, All Souls Day, 2024. Two members took such excellent, complementary notes that we offer both summaries below for information and enjoyment.

AT THE 2024 AGM Professor Susan Oosthuizen, Professor of Mediaeval Archaeology at the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, gave an enthralling introduction to a remarkable 15C archaeological site known as 'John O'Gaunt's House', just north of the village of Bassingbourn.

Susan's teaching and research focus are on rights of common, and the development of the mediaeval English landscape. In the late 1990s she worked with Christopher Taylor, CGT founder member and landscape archaeologist, to understand intriguing aerial photographs that gave the appearance of an ornate house and garden. Christopher, as former Head of Archaeological Survey for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England, had expertise in methods for analysing 'humps and bumps' that marked the prior existence of structural features in the landscape and had identified new techniques for their interpretation so was an ideal collaborator (see his obituary in CGT Newsletter 51, November 2021).

The site was interesting from many perspectives and had been well-recorded since the 19C. Earlier analysis indicated a late 12C moated manor but the unusual and complex outlines of features in the aerial photographs suggested there could be a different interpretation. Susan could not confirm that what she presented was a true story – it was, however, the best fit to explain the evidence identified. She laid out her case by examining: the site; the phases of development; the potential owner and creator; his aims for the site; and her conclusions.

THE SITE

There is an abundance of evidence about the site of John O'Gaunt's House from the early 19C including maps, surveys, published accounts and photographs. An enclosure map of 1806



Figure 1. Detail from 1885 OS 25" map showing the site, remaining moats and the avenue towards North End. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland licence [CC-BY](#).

and an OS map of 1885 (Fig. 1) show the site as being 25 m above sea level, lying on a slight rise between two streams, with two ridges of hills running east-west that lie to the north and south of the site, separated by a plain about 10 km wide. To the north the hills rise to 80 m and to the south they rise to 125 m: both are clearly visible from the site. The area has been ploughed for many years, causing some structural damage, but the site had not been significantly damaged by local quarrying as was previously claimed.

Aerial photographs from 1975 indicate a rectangular moat, originally some 20 m across, set asymmetrically within a complex series of enclosures that had wide and precisely cut ditches (Fig. 2). These ditches appeared to have light-coloured edging. By walking the site Susan and Christopher identified that the ditches could have been revetted with stone and that the likely material was clunch, a chalky limestone. The nearest quarry for this material is now 2 km away. The extant remains of the clunch are rather sparse and it is likely that much may have been removed in the 19C.

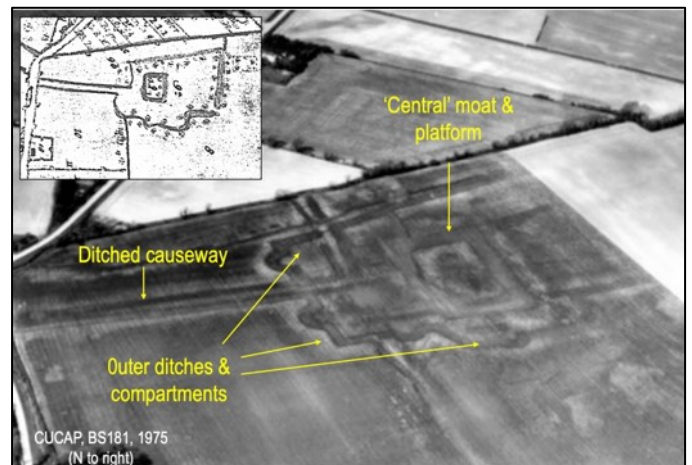


Figure 2. Oblique aerial photo revealing clear cropmarks interpreted by Susan. North is to the right. Inserted top-left is the 1806 enclosure map. © Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography, reproduced under licence [CC-BY-NC](#).

Other features identified include: an abutment for a bridge on the south side of the moat; a central island with a mound or platform that indicated a base for a house, now standing about 1 m high (said to have been 3-4 m high in the 19C, but this is doubtful), and a raised terrace surrounding the mound covered with river gravel. The gravel is lighter-coloured material than the surrounding areas and would have been transported from outside the site. A causeway entered the site from the south that was ditched and lined with trees. The coppiced hazels and willows that existed until the 1950s are now no longer present: these were identified before removal as being white willows (*Salix alba* var. *alba*), the common hazel (*Corylus avellana*), and the Turkish hazel (*Corylus maxima*) that is not naturally found in England. The coppiced stools of the hazel were massive – an indication that they could have been planted in the

15C. The causeway was oriented to the centre of the main moated site, not the outer enclosure, indicating an early feature. Two rather dramatic curved ditches about the raised causeway with similar features on the north and east sides of the site – all projecting forward like bastions. There is evidence of a connection between the ditches and the streams that could have provided the water to the site.

PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Susan concludes that there were two phases of development. The first phase comprised a 12C, moated site where the manor of the de Bassingbourns stood. Documentary evidence shows that the family was granted a licence to crenellate in 1266. Archaeological evidence for occupation of the site is provided by finds in the moat of pottery from the late 12C to the 14C, but nothing later. The last of the de Bassingbourns died in 1420 and the estate was sold.

The second phase of development in the 15C probably included the recutting of the outer moated enclosures and revetting them with clunch (a building material that is easy to cut to form rounded shapes and its light colour would stand out from a distance); the creation of the bastions as places to sit and look out over the surrounding area; formation of a high platform as the base for a building – remains of roof tiles have been found. The terrace around the platform was laid with gravel as were paths throughout the outer enclosures. All these remains provide evidence of an ornate garden layout that reflected Renaissance ideas of garden and architectural design. The site with its white clunch-faced terraces and ditches would have been visible from a distance; the terraces and bastions would enable the occupants to enjoy views of the surrounding land, and the enclosures surrounded by water provided peaceful areas for contemplation and discussion of new ideas with learned friends.

THE OWNER AND CREATOR

But who was the person that could have created this site? In 1428, following the demise of the de Bassingbourns, the owner of the manor was John, Lord Tiptoft (d.1443) whose father, Sir Payne (d. 1427), had previously expanded the family estates in Cambridgeshire. The manor at Bassingbourn and the rest of the family estates were inherited by John Tiptoft's son – also named John (1427-1470), who was subsequently created the 1st Earl of Worcester. He was one of the richest and most influential men in the country, connected by his first marriage to the powerful Neville family, remaining a staunch Yorkist during the time of the Wars of the Roses. He held important positions and was sent on many diplomatic missions leading to contacts throughout Europe. During a time of turbulence, he also earned a reputation for extreme violence in the manner that he condemned to death people accused of high treason. When the Lancastrian Henry VI was reinstated Tiptoft's fortunes changed, he was taken prisoner and in October 1470 was executed – he pleaded for his head to be cut off in three strokes (honouring the Trinity) as a mark of his faith. His effigy can be seen in the south aisle of Ely Cathedral, set between two of his wives (Fig. 3).

Tiptoft was also known for his learning: he spoke many languages including Latin and Greek, had a library of c.5000 books, was expert in Roman Law and familiar with Renaissance



Figure 3. Effigy of Sir John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, which lies between those of his first two wives in Ely cathedral.

developments in Europe. He left the country for Venice in 1458, travelling on to Palestine, before enrolling at the University of Padua where he was said to be one of the most distinguished students. During his time in Italy, he was in contact with the scholars and aristocrats, such as Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici, who were at the forefront of the development of Renaissance ideas and would have known about the theories of Leon Battista Alberti who compiled a treatise setting out how an ideal villa and garden should be designed to enable a good life to be lived. Alberti proposed that villas should be set high to enable views of the landscape, surrounded by flowery meadows, lawns, cool shady groves and loggias, with long avenues disappearing into the distance. Susan illustrated her talk with wonderful frescos including those by Benozzo Gozzoli from the Magi Chapel of the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence (painted 1459) that depict idealised Renaissance landscapes showing white buildings set high on flowery mounds (Fig. 5).

CONCLUSIONS

Because of his direct contact with, and understanding of, the Italian Renaissance it is possible that this John Tiptoft was the creator of the manor and landscape around Bassingbourn. His time in Italy would have enabled him to visit new gardens designed in line with Renaissance ideals, such as the Delizia di Belriguardo at Ferrara, commissioned by Niccolò III d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara, and Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici's villa at Fiesole, which was constructed 1458-62, with its long views, terraces and cypress walks. Records show that in 1461 Cosimo wrote to Tiptoft, inviting him to visit.

Tiptoft could have sited his Renaissance house and garden in many places where he owned land, but the main family estates were concentrated in Cambridgeshire and Bassingbourn was an opportune site.

Susan cited other maisons de plaisance that had been designed to reflect Renaissance ideals, such as the Nonsuch Palace Banqueting House (constructed 1538-1546), Chatsworth Hunting Tower (completed 1582) and Kirtling Towers (constructed from 1540) with its raised platform for a house, surrounded by terraces overlooking a moat - but these were created much later. She speculated whether the tree-lined causeway approaching John O’Gaunt’s House could have been planted with Turkish hazels that he had brought back from his travels to Palestine.

There are no easy parallels with which to compare John O’Gaunt’s House. It is not even possible to know if construction was ever completed and the property occupied. The evidence of it being of an early Renaissance design was a ‘best fit’.

What happened to the property? After John Tiptoft died his estates were inherited by his young son and then when he died, aged fifteen, the lands were split between his sisters. Afterwards the site was sold and then abandoned and left to decay.

Many questions remain about John O’Gaunt’s House and Susan is keen to see the site protected from development or damage. The moated inner area is listed as a scheduled monument, but the wider site is not covered by this listing. Something for CGT’s listings group to pursue!

Carol Meads, December 2024

TRIGGER WARNING: if you prefer your garden history confined to a mixture of botany and topography, don’t read on here, read Prof. Oosthuizen’s 2000 article: she has kindly made the pdf available to CGT. This discussion summarises her lecture and sets it in context. In doing so, it deals with politics, religion, extreme violence, and a posh holiday ‘cottage’, as well as landscape design.

Susan Oosthuizen is a skilled and experienced lecturer who treated us to a wonderful session which was at once educational and entertaining, spiced with interesting images. If you missed it, to get the flavour of it there are two things you need to do. One is to brush up your knowledge of the Italian Renaissance gardens, in particular those around Florence owned by the Medici family. Secondly, you need to contemplate what was happening in Britain and continental Europe in the middle of the 15C, this context being that the swingeing outbreak of the Black Death had happened a century previously, and, in religious matters, the anchorite Julian of Norwich had died in 1416. The publication of *The Canterbury Tales*, *Piers Plowman* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* were well in the past, with Middle English thus established as a language suitable for literature, but the major sacred and secular composer John Dunstable was still enriching people’s musical lives until his death on Christmas Eve 1453. Our focus was on the years 1458-61, and those immediately afterwards, so if you like to measure time by the foundation dates of Cambridge colleges, that’s between the first and second foundations of Queens’ College. In 1448 Henry VI’s queen Margaret of Anjou had matched her Lancastrian husband’s foundation of King’s College, and in 1465 Yorkist Edward IV’s queen Elizabeth Woodville had reaffirmed the college’s existence - so we’re concerned with

roughly the time their scholars were to be seen heaving the apostrophe over the s.



Figure 4. The arms of Sir John Tiptoft, 1st Earl of Worcester. Image by R S Nourse, own work, licence [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

And that burst of royal, political and military history is key to the best explanation of what some lumps in a field in Bassingbourn mean. The political machinations of the Wars of the Roses were complex and dangerous, a ‘game’ that John Tiptoft (or Tibetot), who had been born in 1427 in Great Eversden, initially played very well. He inherited land and wealth from both parents, and married advantageously from the point of view of acquiring seriously aristocratic Yorkist relatives. He was created Earl of Worcester in 1449, and was Lord High Treasurer of England by 1452. While fate was advancing him, his first two wives (one Cecily, Dowager Duchess of Warwick, the other Elizabeth, widow Baynham) were dying in childbirth. Ely Cathedral has a monument to the three of them, which Susan suggested was commissioned by him shortly after the death of Elizabeth, the love of his life. His third wife, also Elizabeth, the widowed Lady Corbet, survived him by twenty-eight years, having borne him a son who lived to seventeen. Tiptoft was buried by his sister in St Stephen Walbrook, after his execution. It had all gone wrong for him in 1470; the proximate cause of his arrest, while hiding up a tree in Weybridge Forest in Huntingdonshire, being having equipped the person buying food for him with a coin of excessive value. Stay safe: eschew £50 notes! Weybridge Forest, by the way, was between Brampton, Ellington and Alconbury. Brampton Wood, according to its Wikipedia page, has some major oaks, and three wild service trees, the berries of which (called chequers) flavoured beer before hops came into use. It is not clear that the wood is a survival from the forest; there is still a Weybridge Farm due north of the wood.

There’s no obligation to shed a tear for him though - his Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) entry reports a contemporary chronicler describing him as: ‘that fierce executioner and horrible beheader of men’; that he had children tortured and eventually killed as their parents were executed; and that later Tudor propagandists dubbed him ‘the Butcher of England’ for his interpretation of his role as Lord High Constable of England with powers to try treason cases without

indictment or jury. Oosthuizen emphasised that he was also a deeply religious man, and asked his executioner to use three axe chops to symbolise the Holy Trinity. Benjamin Kohl in the DNB notes that he was a passionate codex collector, and ends the DNB entry by writing that ‘Tiptoft may thus be justly called the first Italianate Englishman in two different respects. He brought the texts of the “new learning” of the University of Padua, Guarino’s school in Ferrara, and Medicean Florence back to English libraries, and he applied the harsh lessons of Italian politics to the service of his sovereign, Edward IV, in ways that in the end were to cost him his life.’

Oosthuizen’s and colleagues’ archaeological and historical work on Bassingbourn strongly suggests that there is a third way in which we should regard him as ‘the first Italianate Englishman’. Travelling to and around Italy and the Holy Land between 1458 and 1461 as an incredibly well-bred and connected man, he made the acquaintance of a breathtaking collection of owners of splendid Renaissance palaces and their gardens, including the Medicis. Tiptoft is believed to have visited a number of their villas including Cafaggiolo (Fig. 5) and Careggi. Both are mentioned in the beautifully and generously illustrated 1990 book *The Italian Renaissance Garden* by Claudia Lazzaro.



Figure 5. The Medici villa at Cafaggiolo; detail from Gozzoli’s fresco in the Magi chapel, c.1459. On a central platform, with decorative machicolations and crenellations, the tower’s large windows look out on a green, pleasant, productive landscape.

Tiptoft’s cultural and academic life (humanism, including the study of Roman law) in Italy is reflected by his codex-buying spree, from which the Bodleian, amongst other libraries, benefitted. The archaeology at Bassingbourn points to a building and garden that would have been fashionable in Florence in the 1460s and was a hundred years ahead of its time in Cambridgeshire - or, indeed, anywhere in England.

The house was on a platform such as the ones still apparent at Kirtling Tower and Lyveden New Bield, and built of bright, white clunch so it would have gleamed out across the landscape (think how the internal use of clunch contributes to the brightness, lightness and airiness of St Mary’s Burwell, for instance). The effect would have been emphasised by the same stone being used for the revetments of the moats, terracing with balustraded walls, and water features. The ‘casino’ was probably a forerunner of the Banqueting House at Henry VIII’s Nonsuch Palace and the Chatsworth Hunting Tower of 1582.

The former was later given by Charles II to one of his mistresses so she could have it demolished to sell the features and materials piecemeal to pay off her gambling debts, according to the course notes for the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Garden History diploma course a few years back. The latter has been maintained, and you can rent it for holidays.

The site is in the flat bottom of the mature valley of the Rhee: tributary streams flow northwards to the river past it and delivered a sufficient volume to make water features feasible. Remember, we all well know what can be achieved with one puny stream coming into the Rhee from the other side: we’ve seen Brown’s lake at Wimpole Hall.

Wimpole Hall also copied Bassingbourn in being easily accessible from Ermine Street, and so London, and from the Roman road to Cambridge. More specifically, there was an avenue running southwards to North End, Bassingbourn, which



Figure 6. The common hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Photo by Gin Warren.

is clear on the mid-1880s Series 1 OS maps (Fig. 1), on which the site is called John O’Gaunt’s house. This comprised pollarded white willows and was in place until the 1950s. To the south, there were two species of hazel: *C. maxima* (Turkish hazels - the sort preferred for culinary use) and *C. avellana* (native ones, Fig. 6) the stumps of which Oliver Rackham and colleagues felt showed them to be 15C plantings. Between the moats there were high quality river-gravel paths, the uniform-sized granules all being less than 1cm in diameter. Bastions and a mound facilitated views out, and looking in.

Gin Warren, December 2024

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VISIT TO IMPINGTON MILL GARDEN

C GT MEMBERS WERE BLESSED with a glorious, cloudless spring day for their first garden visit of the season. Eighteen members and five guests arrived at The Windmill in Impington to be shown around the gardens by Pippa and Steve Temple and their team of guides. This enabled us to be divided into small groups to explore the intimate gardens and others to be shown the mill in detail. Over mugs of coffee and plates of delicious home-made biscuits, Pippa gave us some background context to what we were going to see.



Figure 1. Impington windmill, restored by Pippa and Steve, watches over the resurrected garden and orchard.

When the Temples bought the property some 25 years ago they were attracted by the delightful cottage, now extended, and the ruined Tudor mill, now nearly completely restored. On moving in, one third of the garden was impenetrable, over 40 trees were in the process of falling down, (a touch of a thumb was sufficient to fell a 30' (9.1 m) Larch on the first day) and the most floriferous plant was cow parsley! But soon they discovered some pro's - including beautifully draining, neutral-to-slightly-alkaline soil, which fitted Pippa's favourite plants and, somewhere, an underground water source. Twenty-five years on they have replaced a large number of the trees, planted nigh on 50,000 bulbs, created two water features, and developed a 4-year programme for bringing each area of garden back to life. The fact that the extensive garden was a sea of fallen trees, brambles, ivy and nettles was not part of the attraction but both Pippa and Steve felt equal to the challenge and set about making a garden from scratch.

The house and garden had been well cared for until the 1930's but very neglected for many years after that so, although there was a framework of some fine trees, it was not even possible to find the boundaries to the 1.5 acre (0.6 ha) site. The property was sold to them as only being one acre! The tangled undergrowth was so dense that there was no indication of these, so Pippa and Steve started from the immediate environs of the house and mill and worked outwards until they reached old fencing or dead hedges which indicated the extent of the property. It took 18 months to find the boundaries. The last corner of the garden is still in the process of being cleared and is destined to be a Japanese garden. It has been an immense



Figure 2. The shady stumpery is a work in progress.

undertaking and the duo have calculated that it takes four years to complete each new area.

One of the unexpected bonuses of needing to penetrate the overgrown boundaries has meant that Pippa and Steve now have a secret path all the way round the perimeter of the garden enabling one to explore the shady green tunnels (Fig. 3) before emerging into yet another area of the garden; perhaps a nod to the Brownian carriage drive, but on a scale appropriate to a sit-on strimmer. This is an unexpected feature in a garden of this size but it allows each individual section to be appreciated.



Figure 3. The boundary walk takes off from a grassed path separating the paved patio and a narcissus border. Photo Judy Rossiter.

The design of the garden emerged to meet the needs of the mill. This necessitated some large areas of lawn on which to lay out the sails, plenty of handy shed space, and apple trees for the hard wood required for pegs and joints. Hence the historic orchard was a great asset as well as being a charming feature. Any big garden also requires behind-the-scenes features such as a greenhouse and an attendant potting and tool shed, which Pippa insists should be near the house to facilitate her goal of filling 82 pots with new plants. All these features are neatly screened and help to divide the garden into a variety of different areas. The essential composting area is extensive and comprises

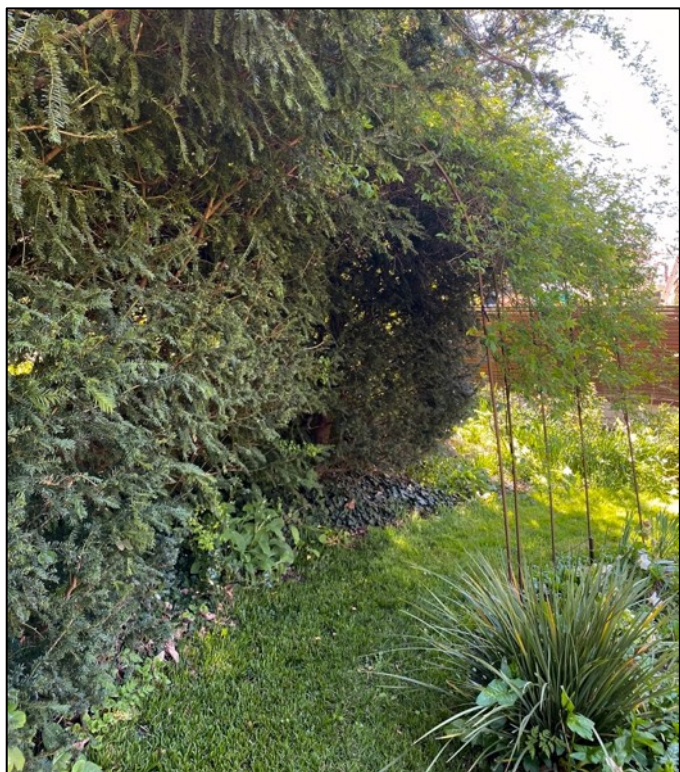


Figure 4. Waterfall rose arch. Photo Judy Rossiter.

a unique series of bins, designed (and ought to be patented) by Steve, to enable the compost to be easily turned regularly, thus speeding up the rotting process.

Leading from the main drive is a coppiced nut walk which leads to a Spring garden via a cleverly constructed rose arch (Fig. 4) which holds the tumbling trails of the Himalayan Musk Rose over the pathway as it emerges from the dense planting which screens the garden from the road in this area. The mainly white daffodils in this area (Thalia, Mount Hood and Truro May) contrasted with some deep coloured hellebores which had all seeded profusely.

The winding path then led us to the White Bed where there was less to see at this time of year but would soon be displaying dahlias together with other summer highlights.

Our path then rose to a slight ridge to the Winter Garden through an area with magnificent trees which separated an old pond, now a bog garden, from a border planted with shade-tolerant plants, on the edge of which were a group of well established Edgeworthia showing off in the sunshine. Behind this was another charming seating area from which to enjoy the views, whilst enjoying the sound of Tree God - a fountain.

From here we were led to Pippa's 'smouldering' garden (Fig. 5), created after she had taken a course on Hot Gardening. Indeed, the colours around this seating area were all of a bright and colourful hue, a mixture of all the warm tones. The largest

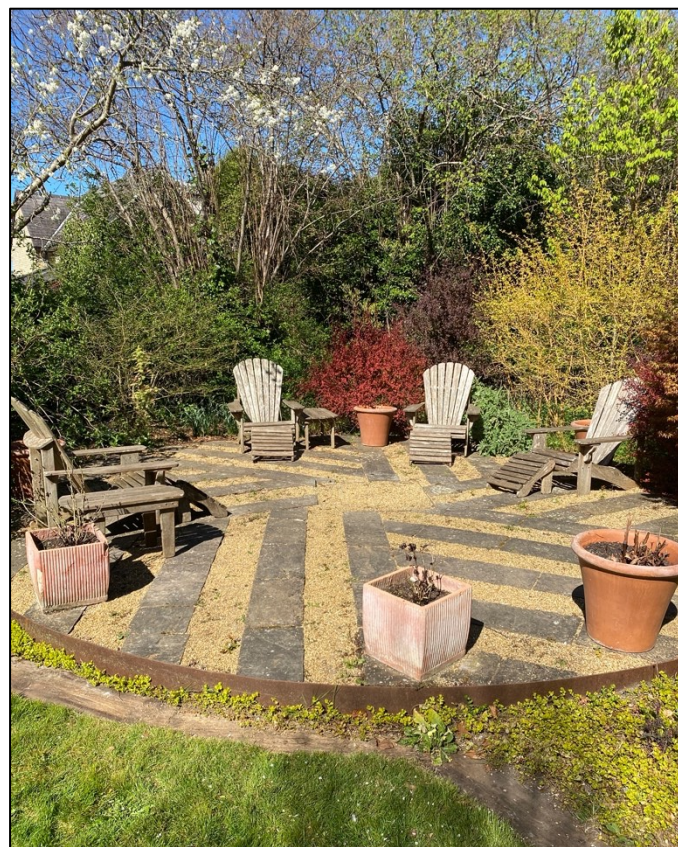


Figure 5. Hot colours complement the thematic millstone landscaping in the 'smouldering' garden and its delightful seating area. Photo Judy Rossiter.



Figure 6. The timber pergola supports a sturdy rose, rapidly greening up in the strong spring sunshine.

seating and eating area was linked to the house by a lovely rose pergola (Fig. 6) adjacent to a deep border thickly planted with roses and perennials to be enjoyed while eating outside. I did wonder when Pippa and Steve ever had time to enjoy all the different seating areas in their garden. In fact, Pippa had assured us that, by design, the three pergolas lead you from one aspect of the garden to another and thence to three seating areas, one for coffee, one for meals and one for evening drinks, which help to soothe the aching muscles at the end of a hard day's gardening.

It really was a fascinating morning enjoyed by all who went. All fees are passed onto the NGS, who last year raised over £3 million, supporting nursing charities and being the largest supporter of MacMillan Nurses. What an achievement!

Judy Rossiter, April 2025

1441 AND ALL THAT: A POTTED HISTORY OF LANDSCAPES AND GARDENS OF KING'S COLLEGE, FROM HENRY VI TO CHARLES III

Stephen Coghill, Head Gardener at King's College, gave the Trust's Christmas Lecture in the Keynes Lecture Theatre on 3rd December 2024 to a large audience of over 50 members.

WE KNEW THAT we were in for an entertaining talk from Steve's choice of title, referencing one of his favourite books – *1066 and All That* – and we were not disappointed. Steve illustrated his talk with a fascinating range of old maps, paintings, prints and photographs that showed, over the centuries, how the grounds at King's College had evolved. Despite these plentiful archival resources still many questions remain about different garden features and Steve plans to spend his eventual retirement carrying out more research.

It all began in 1441 when King Henry VI decided to found a college as a means of saving his soul from damnation. But why did he choose Cambridge rather than Oxford? At that time Oxford was considered to be tainted by a 'whiff of heresy' and Cambridge was seen as a safer bet. The original modest plans for Henry's college involved clearing an important central Cambridge site, including the University-owned Crouched Hostel, to create housing for 12 scholars in a building to the north of the current Chapel. Possibly intending to surpass William of Wykeham's earlier twin foundations of Winchester College and New College, Oxford, the 1445 Founder's Will set out the much more ambitious intention of enlarging the site and providing for 70 scholars, which would be funded by allocating tithes from many estates, including several in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Following Wykeham's example, Henry linked his new college with his previous foundation at Eton (1440), from where members of King's College would be recruited. By 1447 an enclosed courtyard and cloister had been built.

After Henry's defeat at the Battle of Towton in 1461 chapel workers literally downed tools, leaving one stone half-sawn through, and the Yorkist Edward IV had no interest in continuing the development of the college. It took the next hundred years for the famous chapel to be completed according to the specifications in Henry's will. At this stage, 16C maps show glimpses of how the grounds were laid out, with a wooden belfry on the area which is now the Great Lawn, and, by the river, a series of small, enclosed gardens and a bowling green, which can still be seen in Loggan's map of 1688 (Fig. 1). Old college accounts, written in Latin, show entries for clearing nettles and rubbish from the Chappel Yard and even a sum for the services of a 'talpicide', or mole killer, who obliged with the removal of 6 moles.

By the 17C, a high wall had been built along the riverside and many trees had been planted on the Chappel Yard and what is now the Back Lawn, west of the chapel in Loggan's map. By the bowling green, a bridge led west across the Cam to a tree-lined walkway, flanked by ditches and giving access to more treed meadows on the north and an area labelled King's Grove to the south, also planted up with trees and including a moated island (Fig. 1). In Hamond's map of 1592, the area to the west



Figure 1. Detail from Loggan's 1688 map showing the belfry just to the E of the chapel (N is to the right). The chapel yard is bordered by trees, as are the N-S avenue and the western avenue leading to the bowling green, a building alongside the river and enclosures that may include a Fellows' Garden. Image reproduced by kind permission of King's College.

of the Cam was marked as King's College Back Sides. Steve commented that the ditches have caused problems as they cannot be cleared out due to contamination with heavy metals after centuries of scientific experimentation.

An early 18C plan by Nicholas Hawksmoor, endorsed by Sir Christopher Wren, for development of the college and its land was rejected, while James Gibbs' plan to build eastern and southern ranges around the Chappel Yard did not materialise because of lack of funds. However, Gibbs was engaged to build the western range of his design and construction of the Fellows' Building began in 1724, incorporating in its foundation the half-sawn stone from 1461. Interestingly, the wooden belfry was demolished in 1739, as it had become unsafe. The bells were sold as scrap metal in 1754, raising £5633.10s.3d, which helped to pay off the debt incurred by the college to fund the new building.



Figure 2. The south front of King's College Chapel with Gibbs' Fellows' Building to the left and Wilkins' screen to the right. The centre of Front Court has the 1874 Founder's Fountain by Armstead. Photo by Dmitry Tonkonog - Own work, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

Gibbs' Fellows' Building separated the Chappel Yard from the western meadows that became the Back Lawn, and enabled a Front Court to be considered. Despite interest in more natural garden layouts in the 18C, designs proposed by Charles Bridgeman (working with James Gibbs) to create vistas to the river from the Fellows' Building were only partly taken up. Other unimplemented proposals included those by James Essex in his 1741 engraving *Prospect of King's College* to cut a symmetrical basin on the west side of the river with a circular temple eye-catcher, and 'Capability' Brown's 1779 scheme for a unified park along the Backs with the Gibbs Building as its focus. Instead, by 1798 the Back Lawn had been cleared of trees and laid to ornamental grass with gravelled perimeter walks, a state destined to last until the creation of King's wildflower meadow in 2020.

In 1819, William Wilkins built a new bridge to the south of the 1627 bridge. At the same time King's Grove and Meadow to the west of the Cam were converted to the single meadow of the present Scholar's Piece. The sinuous, tree-lined path that leads across the piece to Wilkins' bridge affords surprise views of King's Chapel and lawn, Gibbs' Building and Clare College, that nod towards Brown's influence. In 1824, Wilkins also formed Front Court by fully enclosing the old Chappel Yard with a range of buildings on the south and on the east by a screen separating the court from King's Parade. The space between the screen and the road was cleared.

In 1836 it was decided to create a Fellows' Garden in the nearest field on the west side of Queen's Road, an area of land that had been granted to King's by the Enclosure Award of 1804 and had been used as paddock for the Provost's horses. The garden, laid out in 1851, has a boundary path through evergreens and two large island plantings of specimen trees, which include a Wellingtonia, a Chinese Thuya and a fine Golden Rain tree. A further island bed of herbaceous perennials successfully maintains its Victorian atmosphere. The style of the Fellows' Garden is reminiscent of John Claudius Loudon but there is no archival evidence that he was involved in the design.

The current Provost's Garden lies south of Wilkins' Provost's Lodge which forms the south range of Back Lawn. It is accessed from the west-facing front of the current Provost's Lodge which forms its east boundary. The garden is enclosed on the west by the east range of Bodley's Court and to the south by the boundary wall with Queens' College. According to Willis & Clark (1866), the land had been purchased in 1535 from the Carmelites, whose monastery was later suppressed by Henry VIII. It is laid largely to lawn, with a grass terrace along the east side and a low stone wall with central steps down to the main lawn, largely surrounded by shrubs.

Aerial pictures in the early 20C show the College grounds much as we know them today with immaculate lawns (cut by horse-drawn lawnmowers). Some images shown by Steve looked rather jarring: climbers on the back of the Gibbs Building in the 1930s and later window boxes! By the 1950s the Great Lawn was striped when a motor mower was purchased.

Today as King's looks to address environmental issues some of the old practices have returned – shire horses now mow the wildflower meadow planted on the Back Lawn. The plans to introduce heat source pumps, which require a lot of digging, will prove a challenge for Steve and the gardeners but we wish them every success in the project. We also look forward to exploring the grounds ourselves as Steve has offered to take us on a guided tour some time in the future.

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Carol Meads, December 2024

MEETING REPORT FROM THE JOURNAL DISCUSSION GROUP

Gin Warren's Journal Discussion Group met in January 2025 to discuss Michael Gilson's book 'Behind the Privet Hedge: Richard Sudell, the Suburban Garden and the Beautification of Britain'.

REVIEWERS FROM *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times* and the *Quaker Socialist** had all liked this recently published book, so the Journal Group set off in the autumn to read it with high hopes of education and enjoyment from a well-written page-turner. Ho-hum. For something written by someone who is a journalist, editor and associate fellow of the School of Media, Arts and Humanities at the University of Sussex, it was poorly structured: it was neither chronological nor clearly themed. The result was confusing and repetitive. If readers were told once that Sudell had left school at fourteen we were told a dozen times, and if we had a pound for every time crazy-paving was mentioned, the group would be able to buy the mulled wine for the Trust's next Christmas Lecture! Equally annoying was the confident assertion of medical 'facts' which were unsupported by evidence. Gilson cannot know, only suppose, that it was in Salisbury Street that Joyce Salter caught the bout of scarlet fever which apparently killed her (p84): similarly, no epidemiological or clinical research is cited to support the confident attribution (p80) of changes in incidence and prevalence of TB in Bermondsey in the 1920s to the municipal solarium. Many other factors were in play: the context was the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act. Sadly, Gilson weakened our confidence in what he wrote about Sudell and landscape architecture by including this inaccurate and irrelevant material. All this is strange, because Carol Meads had resourcefully found Gilson's MA dissertation about Sudell and his work as a landscape architect and gardening writer in the first two-thirds of the 20C in England. In contrast to the book, the dissertation is informative and a pleasure to read. So if you are interested, don't buy the book or ask Cambridgeshire Libraries to use their funds on it, ask Carol for the pdf of the dissertation. Incidentally, the book's index is another weakness.



Figure 1. An example of crazy paving. Image by Bumper12 - Own work, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

We realised that our overwhelming sensation was one of failing to get to know the man, which is an odd consequence of reading a biography. A summary combination of the book, the

Dictionary of National Biography entry by Annabel Downs, and some background knowledge gives this picture: Sudell was a north Lancastrian, born in 1892 to Annie, née Sattersthwaite (an authentic Lake District surname), and her husband George a hay and straw dealer; apprenticed in a large local garden from his mid-teens; did a brief spell at Kew; was imprisoned as the most rigorous sort of conscientious objector in World War I having been arrested in a Quaker college; was released on a parole-like arrangement to facilitate food production by amateur gardeners on waste land as food shortages bit; was fully released in peacetime, married (1920) Emily Williams, née James, and made a home on the new Roehampton Estate in London where he led others in gardening their bare plots; he was involved over decades in a complex panoply of organisations in the hinterland between horticulture and architecture with a tendency to be at the losing end of Machiavellian plots by posher practitioners of one or other of these crafts (the Jellicoes don't emerge covered in glory).

Readers were unprepared to learn of his divorce and remarriage in short order (1931) to a rich German doctor, Ida Schlittler, with whom he had three daughters. But there was no reflection on the cause and context of this apparently un-Quaker-like behaviour. At the end of the book we read that Ida had believed him to be homosexual, but it was their affair that caused Emily to petition for divorce: so bisexual? He subsequently had a tolerably successful two-fold career with a design specialism in sports grounds and their pavilions, large employers' leisure facilities for their workers generally, crematoria gardens of remembrance, and roof gardens, and a journalistic specialism in newspaper articles and books for people beginning to garden. This charming, calm and kind man who was passionate about bringing ordinary people to the enjoyment of their own gardens in peace and quiet, died in Kuwait 'on his way to Pakistan trying to find work on a low-cost housing project' (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography). He had been en route to see a, by then adult, daughter in Australia for Christmas 1968. After the divorce, Emily, who had worked alongside Richard, reverted to her maiden name and carried on writing on gardening for adults and children as Marguerite James. Some of her titles are available secondhand on Abe Books†.

Sites of Sudell's works which have pretty much survived include the garden at Dolphin Square in London (which is in effect a roof garden, being above extensive underground facilities 'cellars' for the flats), Oxford Crematorium garden of remembrance, and Merton College sports ground with pavilion (Fig. 2) complementing nearby St Catherine's College, which was designed by Arne Jacobsen. There are also innumerable suburban house gardens based on his guidance which you will start spotting - some of them only as ghosts - once you get your

* <https://quakersocialists.org.uk/2024/06/28/behind-the-privet-hedge/>

† [https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?cm_sp=SearchF-_topnav-_Results&ds=20&kn=Marguerite James garden*&sts=t](https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?cm_sp=SearchF-_topnav-_Results&ds=20&kn=Marguerite+James+garden*&sts=t) accessed 9 January 2025



Figure 2. External view from the SE of the Grade II sports pavilion at Merton College, designed in 1966 by Michael G D Dixey of Richard Sudell and Partners. The image dates from 1969 and is reproduced by kind permission of The Warden and Fellows of Merton College Oxford.

eye in! His books are similarly available on Abe Books secondhand.* There are a few illustrations of some characteristic low-maintenance-have-time-to-enjoy-your-garden plans in the book which would help with Sudell garden spotting - essentially one needs to be alert to some or all of straight, wide crazy-paving paths with washing line above one side, lawn with a rose bed, privet hedge with possible flower border adjacent, and a small vegetable plot with a Morello cherry.

Sudell recommended rose beds with hybrid teas as they were tall enough to be enjoyed by passers-by despite the privacy-giving privet hedge round the front garden. Gilson tells us that by the early 1950s there were seven hundred varieties, mentioning 'Mrs Sam McGredy' and 'Peace' particularly. In a chapter which starts 'Can a rose be political?' he missed out on, or rejected, the political and symbolic reason that the French rose breeder Meilland's 1935 rose seed 3-35-40 came to be called 'Peace' (Fig. 3) because it was launched on the market in the US on the day Berlin fell to the Allies, the young plants having crossed the Atlantic in a diplomatic bag. The Meillands had named it 'Madame Antoine Meilland' (in memory of Claudia Meilland neé Dubreuil); the Italian nursery to which



Figure 3. Rosa 'Peace'. Image by Roozita - Own work, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/).

specimens had been sent when France was invaded had named it 'Gioia' and the German colleagues had called it 'Gloria Dei'. 'Peace' was the name that stuck.

To be fair, there was interesting material reflecting on the attitudes and tactics of various relevant professional groups from 1956 onwards when there was political will to make Britain (feel) a more modern country by having a motorway. The southern part of the M1 is said to demonstrate the woeful lack of input from landscape architects in the way it completely ignores topography, missed the opportunity to have beautiful bridges and has unimaginative planting. Similarly, there is a guide to the lead-up to the Green Belt Act of 1938 which is potentially useful in the light of current deliberations about planning law.

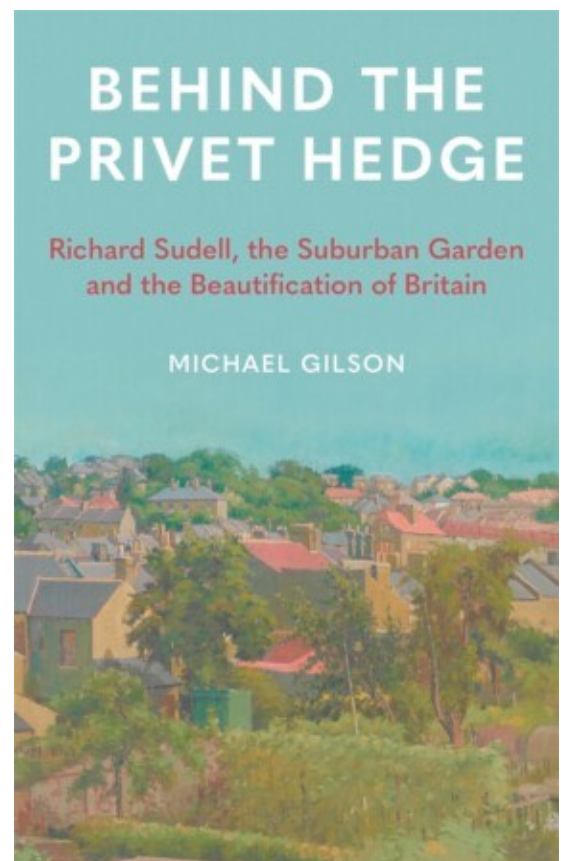
We chewed over why Sudell has been so completely forgotten, given his long, tenacious career in which he collaborated with colleagues who were not blinkered by social class (Marjory Allen on Selfridges roof garden for instance) and mentored younger generations apparently with generosity and enthusiasm. Was it because his mass communication was only as a writer: he never did radio or TV work?

Go on then: order yourself a new 'Peace'! You know you want to. Glare at the people who tell you it's a naff, suburban-garden rose. Think of the scent and its supreme visual performance not only in the garden, but also as a cut flower. Well nourished soil and six hours a day of direct sunlight in summer, and whoosh!

Gin Warren, January 2025

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‘TREES TODAY: INCREASING DELIGHT, INCREASING DESPAIR’

On 13 February 2025, Professor John Parker delighted an audience of some 40 CGT members and guests at Coton Village Hall with a thought-provoking talk on his passion for trees.

PROFESSOR JOHN PARKER is well-known to members of CGT, both for his academic achievements in the world of plant science, as Director of Cambridge Botanic Garden 1996-2010, and as a long-standing member and patron of CGT. His love for trees is evident – a personal as well as professional passion. His father prompted his interest in trees as a child by introducing him to the giant redwoods (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) at Bodnant Garden, near Colwyn Bay in Wales, and telling him to punch the trunk of one: the spongy fibrous bark (a protective ‘fire blanket’) caused no harm to his young fist and was so unusual that he was hooked. In his talk John reviewed the role of trees and assessed their future in a world that breached the 1.5°C global warming target in 2024.

John wanted us to understand why trees are so amazing and delved into how their biology provides them with mechanisms which make them capable of living, in principle, forever; or at least for a very long time. His hero, John Stevens Henslow, founder of the new Cambridge University Botanic Garden in 1846 and mentor of Charles Darwin, understood the significance of trees and aimed to plant, ‘... all the trees that could be grown in Cambridge,’ and we now have over 1,000 woody species. A particular feature of their resilience is the ability to reproduce vegetatively when changing climatic conditions make it impossible to set seed. The 100 m tall giant redwoods are a good candidate for immortality: in California, on the edge of desert, suckers from the parent tree spread and enable new trunks to form, creating a forest (Fig. 1). Redwoods have not seeded in California for over 10,000 years.



Figure 1. Root suckers of *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

One of the world’s largest and oldest living organisms is Pando, a stand of quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) in Utah (Fig. 2). Pando (Latin for ‘I spread’) consists of c.50,000 individual trunks, each genetically identical and connected by an extensive root system covering 43 ha. It is thought to be between 16,000 and 80,000 years old.

In response to evolutionary competition, trees started to rise above the ground from about 300 Ma (million years) ago. John described four types of tree trunk structure that evolved to provide support for high leaf canopies: the tree horsetail, now

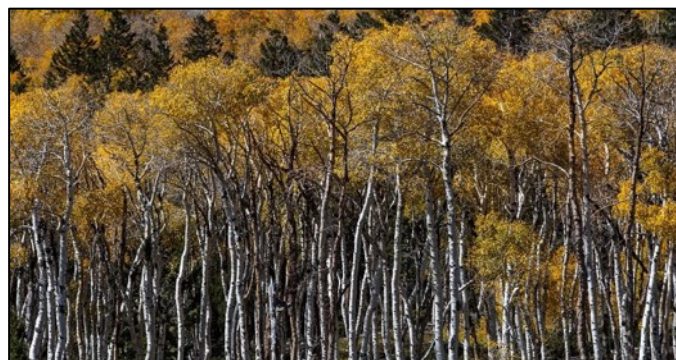


Figure 2. Part of the stand of quaking aspen in Utah, named Pando (Latin - ‘I spread’), because each trunk is genetically identical and connected to a common root system.

extinct, had a hollow trunk; the tree clubmoss, also extinct, had a tough outer cylinder containing a soft interior; the tree fern had (and has) a fibrous composite trunk from clumped leaf-bases, while the dense, vascular tissue at the heart of the trunks of modern trees developed later, from around 280 Ma ago. Horsetails, clubmosses and tree ferns were the first primitive tree-like plants. During the moist Carboniferous period (345 Ma – 280 Ma), these formed tall and huge primaevial forests that became the source of coal deposits. The tree horsetails and clubmosses could reach impressive heights, but today’s relatives stay closer to ground level. A fossil of a mighty, primitive clubmoss tree – *Sigillaria* – can be found in Stanhope, County Durham (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Fossil tree of the genus *Sigillaria*, a Carboniferous ancestor of modern clubmosses that could grow as high as 30 m. Photo © [Andrew Curtis](#) (cc-by-sa/2.0).

John illustrated how modern trees took a different evolutionary route and developed a vascular cambium – the outer, growing part of the tree – which divides into the phloem, where nutrients are transported, and the xylem which carries water and dissolved minerals. After time the oldest cells of the xylem get encrusted and that makes the heartwood. The growth process lays down xylem rings of a radial thickness which

varies with the season and the amount of nutrients and water available to the tree (Fig. 4).

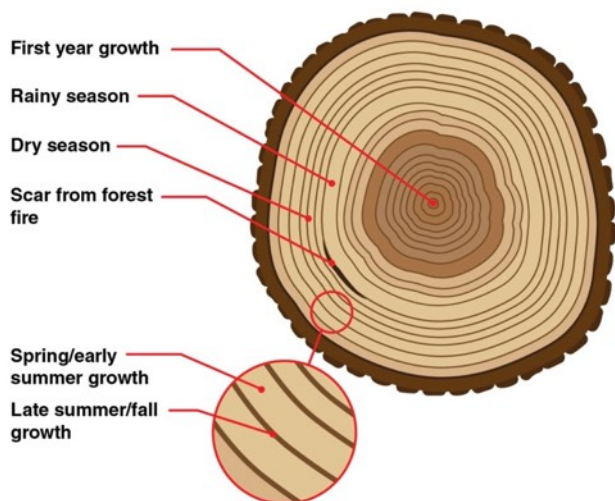


Figure 4. Annual tree ring thickness reflects seasonal variations and similar annual patterns, found across populations of trees, enable a chronology to be established. Figure courtesy of NASA Global Climate Change.

The growth rings provide an accurate and invaluable way of understanding how the climate has changed and enables the dating of wood by comparing the pattern of growth rings with patterns of other trees where dating is known. This science of dendrochronology originated in 1929/1930 when Andrew E. Douglass (1867-1962), an astronomer and physicist working in the USA, discovered a correlation between sunspot cycles and the pattern of tree growth rings. The long-lived bristlecone pine (*Pinus longaeva*; Fig. 5), growing in the White Mountains of California near where Douglass worked, provided evidence of tree-ring patterns going back thousands of years, enabling a dating timeline to be developed.

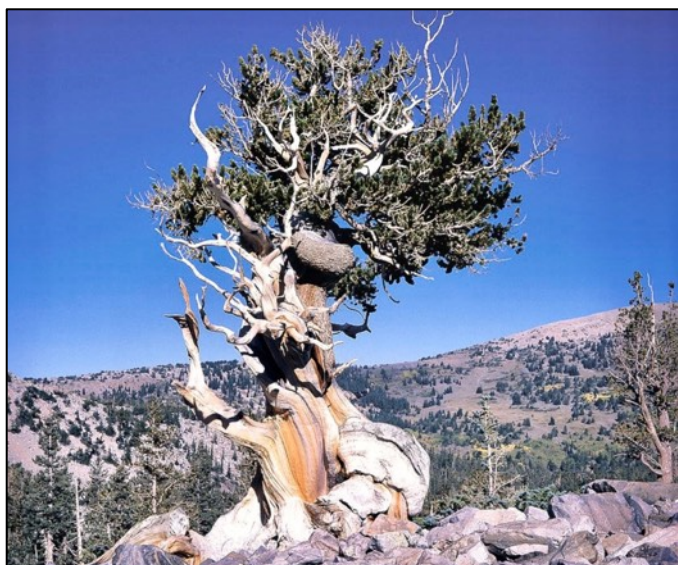


Figure 5. A bristlecone pine: the oldest known example, named Methuselah, has a verified age of 4,856 years.

Cross-matching ring patterns and comparing them to known felling dates (Fig. 6) enables an absolute dating system to be created with an accuracy down to a single year over intervals as long as 13,900 years in some parts of the world. Dendrochronology is particularly useful in accurately dating wood from structures built by ancient, prehistoric civilisations such as the timber piles of crannogs and wood from dwellings

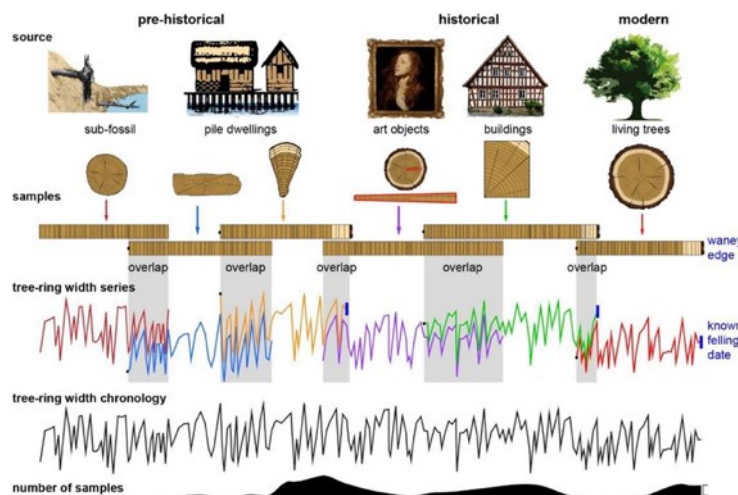


Figure 6. Cross-matching ring patterns from different samples and using known felling dates enables a long chronology to be developed in which each ring can be given an absolute date.

in ancient villages. For example, dendrochronology has enabled a vivid picture to be pieced together of how life changed for the people living in the area of the Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, SW USA. This showed how climate change affected their ways of life. Between 800-c.1100 there were both wet and dry periods but during the wet periods archaeological remains showed a huge amount of activity, with cultivation and a settled life. A severe drought from 1125, seen in the tree rings, led to abandonment after 1150, and the people became wandering nomads. Some probably migrated north to the Mesa Verde Canyon from where it seems that people returned to farm in Chaco Canyon when wetter weather returned. However, the onset of another drought in 1250 affecting both canyons led to abandonment again in c.1275. In Mesa Verde, there are remains of settlements with storage areas for crops. The combination of archaeology and dendrochronology that dated the wooden structures has enabled a fuller and more accurate picture to be developed.

The impact of modern humans on trees has been profound and not to the good. John cited the example of the fire regimes in California where, between 1600 and 1776, indigenous peoples had a sustainable approach which involved burning areas of scrub from time to time that prevented the spread of fire. Mission settlers between 1776 and 1865 stopped people burning and there was a consequent massive build-up of dry vegetation and many devastating fires. The period of the Gold Rush, 1865-1904, saw extensive logging of trees for mining props and there was nothing much to burn, so few wildfires. In 1904, President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt set up the National Forest Service, with the mascot 'Smokey Bear', to identify and rapidly extinguish forest fires. Although this was effective, and was helped by building lookout towers in forested areas, it did not manage the day-to-day need for clearing dry vegetation and increased vulnerability. The devastating fires in Los Angeles this year follow decades of unsustainable land management policy combined with climate change.

Climate change and its impact is also evidenced by the damage to tree rings. In 536 AD, during the reign of Emperor Justinian, tree ring growth was stunted and this pointed to a period of intense cold and could be connected to a large group of volcanic eruptions in Iceland in 535 AD, when thick cloud cover would have blanketed the northern hemisphere, reducing

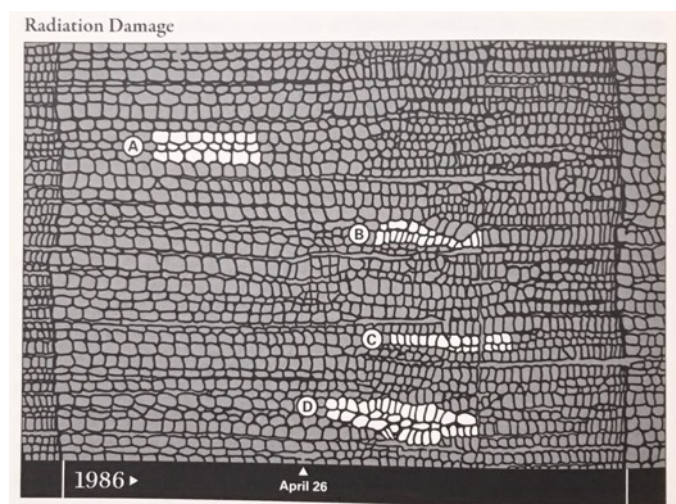


Figure 7. Radiation damage to tree ring cells from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster on 26 April 1986.

temperatures significantly and causing a volcanic winter. The event has been termed the Late Antique Little Ice Age, which might even have facilitated the outbreak and spread of Justinian's Plague in 641. Other cataclysmic events also leave their trace. When the Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident happened in 1986 it caused mutations to the pattern of tree growth (Fig. 7).

Trees are majestic above the ground but their life below ground level is even more amazing. The roots of trees are connected to huge networks of beneficial mycorrhizal fungi either through the thread-like strands of their mycelia coating the roots, or by the mycelia invading the roots. This interaction is absolutely necessary for life as the mycelia provide the tree, or any green plant, with nutrients from the soil such as phosphate, needed for the formation of DNA, which trees cannot absorb directly. In return, the trees produce carbon compounds such as sugars that are needed by the fungi, creating a beneficial, symbiotic relationship.

This underground interconnectivity has prompted ideas of communication between trees, and the concept became known as the Wood-Wide Web. Some researchers, such as Suzanne Simard, Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of British Columbia, in her 2022 book, assert that trees are able to detect and recognise their offspring. Peter Wohlleben, a German forester and author, proposes in his 2017 book that trees have a social network and that their behaviour can be considered as human-like. John suggested that the evidence in these books is somewhat anecdotal and more speculative than proven; he claimed that the best exploration of these ideas is in a book by Merlin Sheldrake (2020), *Entangled life: how fungi make our worlds, change our minds and shape our futures*, and he recommends that we all read it. The 'wonderful, illuminating' book is, coincidentally, by one of his students. John anecdotally recounted that Merlin is a bit of a cider buff and had produced a limited quantity of cider from the fruit of Isaac Newton's apple tree, which Merlin named 'Gravity'. He produced another called 'Evolution' using apples gathered from Darwin's orchard at Down House.

John was explicit in demonstrating the threats trees face through climate change that limit the areas where they can grow. Climate patterns indicate that the weather conditions of the Sahara desert will reach Madrid by 2100; a bleak prospect. Global warming enables trees to grow ever higher up mountain

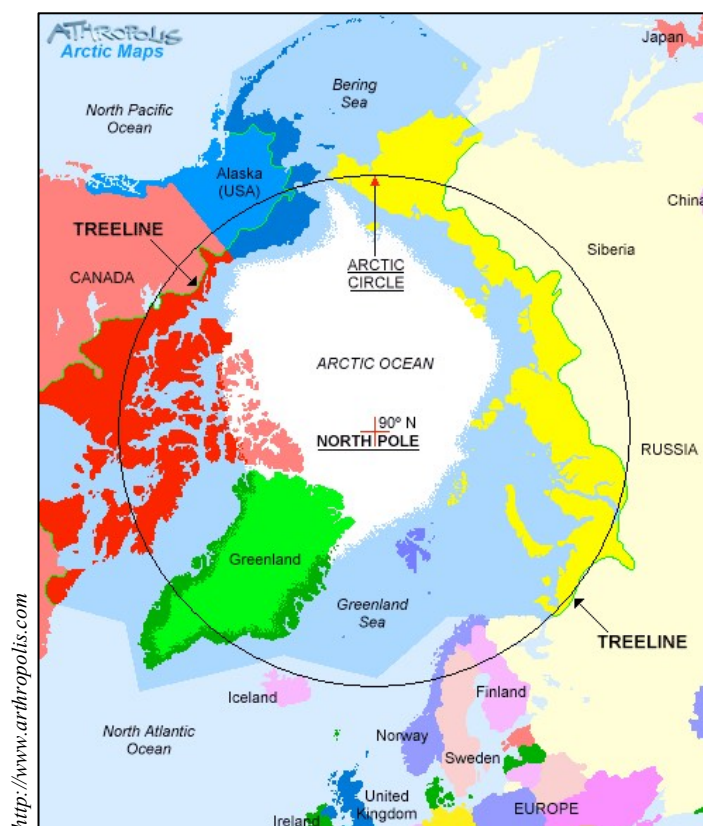


Figure 8. The tree line is now north of the Arctic Circle. Graphic © Arthropolis Productions Ltd.

slopes and the northernward shift of the treeline to within the geographical Arctic Circle is also evident (Fig. 8). Of itself, more trees in the north could be seen as positive, but it comes as the permafrost in the tundra melts, releasing large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄), both potent greenhouse gases. In Siberia, Alaska and northern Canada, methane released by defrosting tundra peat has ignited causing underground fires which are very difficult to extinguish.

The direct impact of humans through agriculture is without question a threat to trees. By replacing natural forest with monocultures, the ecology of the area changes and this leads to the introduction of pests and diseases that can only be suppressed by chemical treatments. The commercial success of the oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*; Fig. 9), required for the stabilisation of ultra-processed foods and many other products that we use, is particularly destructive as it has resulted in a huge loss of native trees and their diverse habitats. In Indonesia, which is the world's largest producer with over half of global production, the oil palm is grown in extensive plantations over



Figure 9. *Elaeis guineensis*, or oil palm, on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. Photo by Marco Schmit.

12 m ha (30 m acres) with a great loss in diversity. If there is one thing that we can do to protect trees, John recommended avoiding products containing palm oil at all costs!

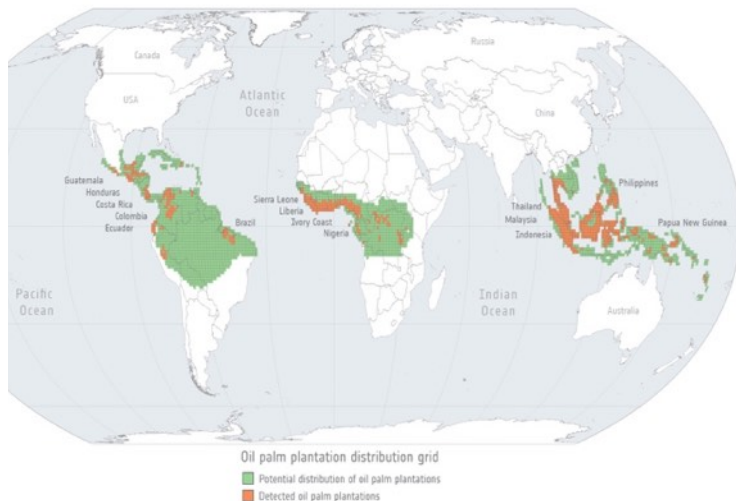


Figure 10. Actual (brown) and potential (green) distribution of oil palm plantations. Courtesy global oil palm map (GOMP) © European Space Agency (ESA).

After this grim picture John ended his lecture on a lighter note by describing the extra special trees he has seen – his delights. First up was the silver tree (*Leucadendron argenteum*: Fig. 11) with its wonderful silvery leaves and flowers which he saw at Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden in South Africa.



Figure 11. Male inflorescences of Silver Tree at Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden in South Africa. Photo John Parker.

The quiver tree from the Namaqualand region of South Africa was another favourite (*Aloidendron dichotomum*). Indigenous people use its short branches for quivers, hollowing out the central pith. The casing for the quiver comes from the scrotum of the eland that they hunt, and the wooden quiver is placed within the fresh skin! An ‘experience of a lifetime’ was seeing a Welwitschia (Fig. 13) in the Namib Desert. This ancient tree, a type of gymnosperm, has an underground trunk and foliage grows from its top producing small clusters of cones.

A final warning: 10,000 years ago, there were about 4 million humans and 6 trillion trees: today there are 7.5 billion



Figure 12. Quiver trees in the Karoo near Nieuwoudtville in South Africa.



Figure 13. A ‘forest’ of Welwitschia mirabilis in the Namib desert, near Swakopmund. Photo John Parker.

humans and only 3 trillion trees. ‘Guard your trees – we need them’.

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- Sheldrake, M. 2020. *Entangled life: how fungi make our worlds, change our minds and shape our futures*. London, Bodley Head, 368pp. ISBN: 9781847925190 hardback.
- Simard, S. 2022 *Finding the mother tree: uncovering the wisdom and intelligence of the forest*. London, Penguin Books, 368pp. ISBN: 9780141990286 paperback.
- Wohlleben, P. 2017. *The hidden life of trees: what they feel, how they communicate*. London: William Collins, 288pp. ISBN: 9780008218430 paperback.

Carol Meads, August 2024

NEWS OF THE SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

WE ARE NOW IN ROUND 8 of CGT's Small Grants Scheme: this is one of the ways whereby the Trust fulfills 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. If members know of a local group or organisation which could benefit from a grant of up to £500, we would be delighted to hear about 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.

ALLOTMENT BEDS AT ABBOTS RIPTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Abbots Ripton Church of England Primary School were lucky enough to receive a £500 grant from CGT in the summer of 2023. The funds were used to create some allotment beds for the front of the school on an unused area of the playing fields



Figure 1. Abbots Ripton C of E school and the site chosen for the new allotment beds.

(Fig. 1) and which would be looked after by the Environment Club, which meets once a week during the lunch break. Over the following months the detailed plans were developed and refined with the help of a few of the PTA Support Team for Abbots Ripton School (STARS).

In the spring of 2024, the materials for the raised beds were purchased and the allotment beds were built by a child's father, resulting in four large and four smaller beds (Fig. 2). Word went round about the allotment beds and offers of topsoil and plants came in. Then the STARS team became stars again by moving and re-flooring an unused shed from the school to the allotment area. This is now very conveniently sited for storing the gardening equipment (Fig. 2).

By late spring the beds were built and the Environment Club children filled them, learning about the use of cardboard as weed suppressant at the base of the beds, which would then also rot down over time, improving the soil. Next, they added straw, left over from last year's summer fair, and compost made at the school, before finally adding the topsoil. The Environment Club children planted tomatoes, cabbages, celeriac, courgettes, strawberries and pumpkins, which they had been given (Fig 3), and also sowed seeds of beetroot, salad leaves and chard.



Figure 2. The eight beds, topsoil and the relocated shed.



Figure 3. Some of the produce from the raised beds.



Figure 4. Harvested chard and tomatoes on their way home.

Sunflowers in the bed closest to the school's entrance looked very pretty and helped the pollinators.

After the summer holidays the Environment Club harvested the tomatoes and pumpkins, which the school cook prepared for the children's lunches. They also took home some chard (Fig. 4).

The Environment Club is looking forward to planning what to grow in the allotment beds for themselves in 2025 and for the school cook to use for lunches. They have already been given some vegetable and flower seeds which they can start sowing in the new year.

Linda Nixon, Office Manager, Abbots Ripton C of E Primary School, November 2024

PROGRAMME OF VISITS AND EVENTS 2025

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 Raynham Hall in Norfolk, the Gibberd Garden, Bluntisham Heath Fruit Farm and Luton Hoo Walled Garden, among others. If members would like to suggest visit locations, please do contact via the admin email below.

MAY	21 Wed	2:00pm	Visit: to the gardens of the Grade II* Holywell Hall in Lincs. (Holywell, Stamford PE9 4DT). Well-preserved 18C landscape park with outstanding neo-Classical features. The gardens and park have been carefully renovated in recent years. Introductory talk by Steffie Shields, expert in 18C landscape design, and the Head Gardener will talk about the gardens today. The visit will finish with afternoon tea. Members £18, guests £20.
JUNE	8 Sun	12:00pm – 5:00pm	Open Gardens: a Plant Heritage Group open day, as part of the NGS scheme, to view the National Plant Collection of Yuccas. ‘Spring View’ Burwell CB25 0HF will be open as one of several Burwell Village Gardens. Plant sales at some locations and home-made teas at Isaacson’s. Home-made cakes include gluten- and nut-free options. Adults £8, children free. See CGT website for booking details.
JUNE	19 Thurs	2:00pm	Visit: to the oldest windmill in the country and the private gardens of CGT member, Kate Armstrong at The Mill Cottage, Caxton Road, Bourn CB23 2SU. Kate and Bill took on the cottage, gardens and 6 acres of meadows 35 years ago. Kate also volunteers with the Bourn Windmill team. Meet at 2.00pm for cold drinks, then split into garden tours led by horticulturalist and garden designer Rovena Postol, and mill tours led by experienced guides, before enjoying a relaxing afternoon tea in private gardens overlooking the mill. Members £12, guests £14. See website for further information and logistics.
JULY	12 Sat	10:00am – 3:30pm	Study Day: at Bourn Hall CB23 2TN, world-leading IVF clinic in the grounds of 11C castle, housed in hall dating from 16C and with later links to Reptons. A group of leading experts will explore the site’s characteristics, including a guided tour of the grounds, and consider the challenges facing the clinic, its fabric and its environment in 21C. Please keep the date for now; full details to follow on the website.
AUGUST	5 Tues	TBC	Visit: to King’s College gardens with Steve Coghill. Details to be confirmed.
SEPTEMBER	2 Tues	TBC	Guided tour: of Girton orchard and gardens. Full details to follow.
OCTOBER	10 Sat	2:00pm for 2:30pm	Talk: hosted by the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collin Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. Kim O’Brien, a flower grower and floral designer at a top studio in Cambridge, will present <i>Dahlia: Tuber to Vase</i> . Entry £5 to include tea/coffee.
OCTOBER	16 Thurs	TBC	Visit: to the Gibberd Garden, near Harlow, Essex; to be confirmed.
NOVEMBER	8 Sat	2:00pm for 2:30pm	Max Walters Memorial Lecture: hosted by the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collin Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. Raymond Evison, foremost grower of Clematis, will recount the history of this fascinating genus. Full details to follow.
NOVEMBER	15 Sat	TBC	AGM & Lecture: to be given by Liz Lake. Please keep the date for now.
DECEMBER	12 Sat	2:00pm for 2:30pm	Talk: hosted by the Cambridgeshire Plant Heritage Group at the William Collin Centre, Girton CB3 0GP. Spicesotica - specialist orchid nursery growers. Full details to follow.
DECEMBER	2 Tues	Doors open 11:15am	Christmas Lecture: in Coton Village Hall by ‘Muddy Archaeologist’, Gillian Hovell, who will talk about Roman viticulture. Booking details to follow.

(For up-to-date details please go to <https://cambridgeshiregardentrust.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@cambridgeshiregardentrust.org.uk. Cheques, payable to **Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust**, to Judith Christie, Teal Cottage, Fen Drayton CB24 4SH. 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@cambridgeshiregardentrust.org.uk as early as possible.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust

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