



[www.lrgt.org](http://www.lrgt.org)

# Newsletter

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## Spring is in the air



Let's hope come summer we'll be able to meet up again.

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### Chairman's Notes

It is now a year since Covid-19 become part of life, leading to a complete transformation of our lives and activities. This time last year, we were hoping the impact of Covid-19 would be limited and we would be able to resume the Trust's activities after a few months. As we all now know, this was not to be. Now the vaccination programme is in full swing the prospects for this year are looking more promising. In a few weeks, following the government's announcement on coming out of the lockdown, we will be in a better position to understand when the Trust will be able to undertake its activities.

I am pleased to say that the speakers we had booked for last year have expressed their willingness to come and speak to us this year. This means we will not lose any of the interesting talks that had been planned.

If you have not looked at the Trust's website recently, I strongly recommend you do so, as it has been updated. Our thanks go to Steve Horsfield, Sue Blaxland and Fliss Hector for their work in refurbishing the website. Your feedback on the website will be appreciated. I should also mention The Gardens Trust site that has links to on-line talks and information related to gardens and landscapes.

The committee has expressed its willingness to continue for the forthcoming year, but we are looking for members to join the committee. It must be accepted that the current committee have been in post for many years now and, for the health of the Trust, it would be advisable for new members to be appointed.

I would like to thank all members for your patience and support during this difficult period and I look forward to when we will all be able to meet again.

*Stephen Barker*

## **New LRGT website**

### ***We have been using this lock down to build a new web site for the Leicestershire & Rutland Gardens Trust***

#### **What's new.**

The old website was developed about 14 years ago and was looking tired and did not work well with smart phones. The new web site has the following new features:

- Works well on smart phones.
- A Parks & Gardens section under Research which covers many of our significant parks and gardens as well as all the Walled Kitchen Gardens that have been researched.
- The postcard database of 560 postcards (including 60 new) now has an excellent search facility which can display large images of the postcards.
- All the publications and newsletters are now available for download.
- Under events you will find posts on previous events with lots of photographs.
- We now have a News section where you will find news items related to the Trust.
- And much more.....

#### **How to log on.**

The website address remains the same [www.lrgt.org](http://www.lrgt.org).

Please add it to your favourites. If you have any items of news please contact me and I will add them to the News section. If you find any errors, then let me know so we can get them corrected.

Most importantly I would like to thank Sue Blaxland and Fliss Hector for hours of work checking and inputting data to the new site.

Lastly please enjoy looking through the information we have on the site.

*Steve Horsfield*

#### **Also worth a look – The Gardens Trust website**

<https://thegardenstrust.org>

This has links to all local Gardens Trusts and details of events. For example, the Gardens Trust and The London Gardens Trust have jointly organised an online series of lectures, 2 of which remain:

8 March: Dinosaurs, Italian Terraces and Future Sustainability: Crystal Palace Park – Kathryn Whitmore, Associate Landscape Architect, AECOM and others tbc

22 March: What is Wild? – Dr Kim Wilkie, Landscape Architect

All lectures and booking online. Individual lectures: £4 for Gardens Trust/all County Gardens Trusts members, £6 for non-member

I have attended and enjoyed Gardens Trust lectures in the past and am looking forward to Dr Tim Wilkie's lecture in March.

*Deb Martin*

## Events or non-Events 2021

Well, as we are coming to the anniversary of the last trip we had for the LRGT, our winter visit to Chippenham Park, it seems a little sad to be unsure as to what will happen this coming year. Many of you, who will have looked at our splendid new website will see that we do have definite dates for a few events in the coming months, in the hope that they might happen. The vaccination programme seems to be going well, but on the other hand the variants are worrying. It is difficult to imagine being able to be on a coach, in a restaurant or hotel after almost twelve months of lockdown. I think we all feel that we do not want it to end prematurely and then be back where we started.

This all sounds rather pessimistic, but I prefer to be realistic, having endured these last difficult months, we want to feel more or less secure when we go back to more normal lifestyle. On a more optimistic note we do have events arranged which I hope we can look forward to, if all goes well. One of these is the Norfolk holiday, I expect the brochure in the very near future. This year, because of the virus it will be sent on line, fingers crossed. I am exploring the possibility of an online lecture, early stages yet, just look out further details on the web site.

I hope we will all meet in the not too distant future.

I don't know about all of you, but I expect you are doing the daily walk. I found that the park and local roads getting rather busy, so I recommend Welford Road Cemetery, hard surface, very few people and interesting reading matter. Other cemeteries are available I believe!

*Elizabeth Bacon*

## Research Group

I have written in detail about our research at Leicester Frith (Glenfield Hospital) for the AGM Report. I mentioned that Elizabeth and I visited last summer and were delighted to see the walled kitchen garden which is being reborn for "The Secret Garden Project". The four TV Show Gardens in the centre of the site were being well used by hospital staff taking a well-earned break and there were two patients in wheelchairs. We spoke to one, who said that it was the first time he had been out of the hospital for nine weeks!

We agreed that it would be a lovely gesture for the Trust to donate two relaxing garden chairs to the project and, with the agreement of the Committee, we found suitable chairs and ordered them. They have now been delivered to the local stockist and Elizabeth and I plan to go back to the garden in early May to hand them over. We are sure that they will be well-used.

On a completely different subject, we understand that the First European Symposium on Kitchen Gardens took place last autumn. It should have been held at the Chateau de Chambord but, of course, ended up



as a virtual event on Zoom. However, there are further online events this year and, hopefully, the final day will take place at the Chateau in the “real world”. The Forum is organised by the Friends of the Potager du Roi (at Versailles) and the Walled Kitchen Garden Network.

I was delighted to see on their website that there was a link to the Introduction to the Symposium by Susan Campbell. You may remember that Susan came to talk to the Trust some years ago about walled kitchen gardens and it was this which inspired our research project.

Here is the You Tube link: <https://youtu.be/WX75AkQeFwU>

The clip is about 12 minutes long and is quite delightful.

*Sue Blaxland*

### **Education Group**

Unfortunately, because of lockdown we have not been able to engage in our usual activities with schools.

In 2020 we were unable to make our annual visit to Kelmarsh because of the lockdown we were placed in.

In the autumn of 2019 we did do our usual distribution of daffodil bulbs to schools. The schools we gave bulbs to were:

St Lukes C of E

Ferndale Primary

Riverside Primary

Highcliffe Primary

Ashford Hill Primary

Frisby C of E Primary

Loughborough Inclusive Partnership

Swallowdale Primary. This school is using the daffodils we gave them as a starting point for a growing project.

Church Hill Junior

Millgate School

Keyham Lodge School Humberstone Infants

English Martyrs School Anstey was allocated £70 for materials to create raised beds.

There is money allocated for Education and we hope to be able to resume our activities with schools later in the year.

*Judith Hibbert*

## My father, Paul Roenisch, and his Gardening Career



*Paul Roenisch gardening at Fulwell Park*

My father, Paul Harton Roenisch (1912-1991), was an estate gardener who became a well-known panel judge of the Middlesex Guild of Horticultural Judges, and life member of the Harrow Horticultural and Rose Society.

Paul Roenisch was born 1912 in Twickenham, London, the second child of Otto Roenisch and Mabel Rawley. Otto was of German descent, a hairdresser and wig maker. Paul's English mother

was trained in 'silver service'. At the outbreak of the First World War the family was split when Otto was first interned as an enemy alien at Stratford Internment Camp and then in 1919 repatriated back to Germany leaving his family behind.

As a boy, Paul learnt to swim in the Thames and camped every weekend in a tent made by his mother. His passion for sports and physical fitness led the army P.E. instructor in 1940 to confess that Paul Roenisch was better qualified than he. The following is his gardening career at a series of distinguished English estates:

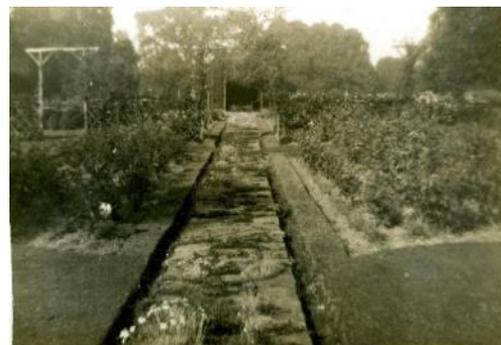
### Journeyman Gardener

#### Fulwell Park 1930-3

He began as a journeyman gardener, aged eighteen and living in the bothy. His first garden was that of Her Majesty Queen Augusta of Portugal at Fulwell Park, Twickenham.



*Fulwell Park*



*Formal gardens at Fulwell Park*

Although named Fulwell Lodge when built in 1623, Sir Charles Freake renamed it Fulwell Park when he acquired the estate in 1871. Count Reginald Henshaw Ward, an English-born, American millionaire banker known as 'The Copper King', lived here from 1903.

Then, from 1913 it was owned and inhabited, until his death in 1932, by the exiled King Manoel II of Portugal and his wife, the German Princess, Victoria Augusta of Hohenzolern. The estate consisted of fifty acres with its own golf course, fishing and boating waters and

pleasure grounds. It was sold in 1934 and the house later demolished to make way for suburban housing.

### **Sutton Place 1933-1935**

Paul's second employment was with His Grace the Duke of Sutherland at Sutton Place, Guildford.

This was built c1525 by Sir Richard Weston and retains some early Renaissance interiors. It remained with the Weston family and their relations until 1918. Between 1918 and 1959



*Sutton Place, Surrey, Grade 1 listed*

Sutton Place and the surrounding 700-acre estate were owned by George Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, 5th Duke of Sutherland (d. 1963) who modernised the interior. (After my father's time there as gardener, it was bought by the oil billionaire John Paul Getty in 1959 for \$840,000 (equivalent to about \$7m) who filled it with his art collection. Getty lived there in high-security seclusion for the last 25 years of his life before it was sold, after his death in 1976. It was in 1986 that Jefferey Jellicoe redesigned the garden.)

### **Early Work References**

Paul Roenisch's early references indicate he was hard working and willingly undertook duties in every branch of gardening. Queen Augusta's Head Gardener described him as 'tall, strong and of good appearance' adding 'his general character is excellent'. The Duke's Head Gardener spoke of him as 'a first-class man' and 'having a splendid knowledge of gardening'

### **Foxwarren Park 1935-7**

Paul Roenisch then worked at Foxwarren Park, Cobham, Surrey, owned by Alfred Ezra.

It was built in 1860 by the architect Frederick Barnes, in High Victorian Gothic style, for brewing magnate and MP, Charles Buxton.

From 1919 to 1955, Foxwarren Park was owned by Alfred Ezra, who had been born in India; his mother being a member of the Sassoon family.

He came to Europe in 1912 having travelled

overland through Turkestan and the Pamirs in Tajikistan hunting rare animals. He was President of the Avicultural Society and assembled a collection of rare birds and animals on the estate. Between 1920 and 1940, his collection of birds was reputedly the finest



*Foxwarren Park Grade II\* listed*

assembled anywhere or at any time — in 1939 it housed the last known *pink-headed ducks* in the world. He was unpretentious, generous, and well known in ornithological circles in England, in India, and indeed throughout the world. He wrote many articles in the *Avicultural Magazine* and other journals full of observations on the numerous rare species which lived and were bred in his aviaries. Besides the annual garden party given for members of the Avicultural Society, every English congress and meeting of ornithological or zoological groups was entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Ezra. From 1915 he was also a member of the Council of the London Zoological Society and one of the Zoo's most generous benefactors.

(The estate was subsequently owned by Hannah Weinstein and chosen for films and television series including *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Ernest H. Shepard, the illustrator of Kenneth Grahame's children's classic *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), argued that he modelled Toad Hall on "a house near Cobham" which was 'a mock Gothic Victorian house'. Although his illustration of Toad Hall only bears a general resemblance to the main house, the gate of one of the former lodges is carefully copied).

### **Marriage and a new home Ayot Place, Ayot St Peter, Hertfordshire 1937-1947**

My parents were married 21<sup>st</sup> August 1937. Hilda, my mother, had been in service in a house called Brendon, Woodland Grove, Weybridge – about five miles from Cobham, but they had known one another from childhood. Although my father's address on the marriage certificate was The Gardens, Fox Warren Park, Cobham it is likely that Paul had to look for a new job because he now required married accommodation.

The last two years, prior to the Second World War, Paul Roenisch worked as Second Gardener for Henry Willis at Ayot Place, Ayot St Peter, Hertfordshire.

Ayot Place was probably originally built by Sir George Perient, lord of the manor, as it bears his arms and date 1615. Built of timber and plaster, now partly cased with brick, it was much repaired in the 19th century. The building was restored and extended in the early C20 and c1930 to form a Tudor style mansion. Henry and Gladys Willis were in occupation from 27 October 1927 until 1947. I have been unable to find anything about them and, in recent years, Ayot Place has been renamed by its wealthy owner, Ayot Montfichet. Whilst there, my parents lived at The Lodge, Ayot Place, Ayot St Peter, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 9BH.



*Ayot Place today*



*Paul and Hilda Roenisch standing at The Lodge door*

## The Mount Park Estate, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, 1947-1975

After six years 'exemplary' army service in France and Belgium, and the birth of two children, in 1947 my father's gardening career culminated at the Mount Park Estate on the southern slopes of Harrow-on-the -Hill.

Early in the nineteenth century the southern slopes of Harrow-on the Hill comprised 'Mount Farm', 'Prings Farm' and 'The Park' (the latter now forms a substantial part of Mount Park Estate Conservation Area). Plots of land were sold in stages at auction during the latter half of the 19th century. The sale particulars of the 22nd May 1885 promoted the land as, 'offering choice sites for the erection of a superior class of residence... occupying one of the finest positions in the county of Middlesex and commanding exquisite panoramic views extending into eight counties, and charmingly studded with finely grown Chestnuts, Oak, Elm and Pine'.



*Oakhurst, Mount Park Road, road frontage*



*Garden Front of Oakhurst*



*Mr Arthur and Miss Mary Gardner c. 1960s*

The Mount Park Estate was owned by the Gardners, a brother and sister, whose forebears had reputedly made money on the stock exchange. Arthur Gardner, MA, FSA, Hon FRBS was a photographer and author of Minor English Wood Sculpture, 1400-1550, Tiranti, 1958. The estate included Oakhurst (the main house with large conservatory); two separate sets of coach houses and stables; Orley Farm Prep School and a music school; a small farm with cart horse, milking cows and poultry including guinea fowl; and several hay fields. Adjacent to the main house were pleasure gardens, conservatory and orchard. Elsewhere there were two large kitchen gardens, hot, temperate and cold greenhouses. The estate straddled a T-shaped

main road, which was gated to retain privacy. Lining the estate road were many large private houses and gardens built in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. In 1989 the area was designated a Conservation Area.

## The Family Home

Initially living in a small, terraced house in Alma Road, South Harrow, our family soon moved to Broomhill, Mount Park Road, an estate cottage formerly a coach house. This was adjacent to former stables and walled yard converted to a double garage for the Gardners' shooting brake and Roll Royce cars.



*Broomhill, Mount Park Road today*

## Estate Produce

Dad was soon appointed Head Gardener. Usually up to four gardeners were employed on the estate and they grew a wide range of fruit, vegetables and flowers providing year-round fresh produce for the Gardners and the Preparatory School. Special favourites were hot house melons, grapes, strawberries, cucumbers and asparagus. Every year apples and pears from the orchard were stored in a special thatched building for winter consumption. As well as ensuring flowers year-round in the estate conservatory, Paul also supplied flowers to a local shop, The Flower Basket, off Northolt Road and every month provided and arranged the flowers for St Mary's Church, Harrow-on-the-Hill. The surplus products of the estate were then sold to lucky locals. The 'perks' for our family were the tied cottage, daily skimmed milk from the small farm, and an allotment on the estate where dad could grow produce for his own family's consumption.



*Mount Park Estate potting shed, hot & temperate greenhouses*

## Horticultural prowess

For many years Paul Roenisch, on behalf of Mr and Miss Gardner, held a monopoly of prizes in the shows of the Harrow Horticultural and Rose Society. The estate potting shed (heated by the boiler for the adjacent greenhouses) was papered over many times with the certificates won at local and national horticultural shows and our home boasted a table inlaid with just a few of the numerous bronze and silver medals won by my father and his team of gardeners. Many local Harrow people were probably very pleased when, on retirement, he stopped exhibiting.

From 1965 up until the autumn of 1991 Paul judged all classes of exhibits at the shows of many groups affiliated to the Middlesex Federation of Horticultural Societies – such as Hayes, Wood End, Alperton and District, Belmont, Wembley Park, London Transport, Harrow District Land Registry and Metal Box Company.



*Roses exhibited at a Flower Show by Paul Roenisch*

## Redundancy and Retirement

On the 27th June 1972 Paul Roenisch applied for a formal Craft Certificate of horticultural proficiency from the Agricultural Wages Board, which was set up by the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwickshire. He was probably aware of the insecurity of his position given the great age of his employers and within three years, 25th July 1975, both his aged employers had died. He was declared redundant and evicted from the tied cottage. Following the Friday of his redundancy, immediately on the Monday he was working as a night watchman at Brent Council Offices. I never understood how a man used to a lifetime of daily outdoor physical labour could so readily take on such a vastly different job without complaint. In retirement he would boast that he had never had a day's unemployment since leaving school.

He retired aged 65 years but continued to undertake part-time jobs at a local men's outfitters in Pinner where he and my mother finally had been settled by Harrow Borough Council in a council flat. He died in 1991.

*Rowan Roenisch January 2021*

Sources:

Heritage England Listed Buildings

<https://www.hertfordshiremercury.co.uk/news/hertfordshire-news/ayot-st-lawrence-life-inside-4693534>

Personal documents belonging to my late father

Website: alto-live.s3.amazonaws.com › Brochure

Wikipedia

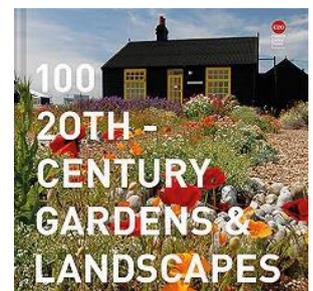
## 100 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gardens and Landscapes: Book Review

Published by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society

I was interested when I read a review of this book, which was published early last year, and delighted when I was given it for my birthday.

The 100 gardens and landscapes in the book take us from Vita Sackville-West and Gertrude Jekyll to Derek Jarman and Piet Oudolf at the Hauser Wirt gallery in Somerset, created in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The entries are presented in chronological order, documenting changes in styles and techniques. New ideas in planting and layout were tried out in private gardens whilst landscapes were developed for motorways, universities, public parks, new towns, industrial sites and public buildings. For example, we have a section on the growth of seaside gardens



in the twenties with their carpet bedding, putting greens and various sheltering buildings for the holiday makers.

I was interested in the growth of much needed housing at the end of World War II and in two entries in particular, of which I knew. The first being Gleadless Valley in Sheffield, very near to where my mother lived and the second Cumbernauld, where friends of mine were architects and planners working on the development of the town. Although the latter was some time ago, I do remember their enthusiasm. They truly believed that they could improve people's lives by building better homes and towns. Gleadless Valley, a rather controversial site, as it had been a popular with ramblers, was developed as Sheffield was short of land. The council produced plans for housing, using the contours of the site, so living rooms could be on upper floors to use the view and the pathways were angled to avoid gradients.

Private gardens included, range from Sissinghurst, Great Dixter and Tintinhull of the thirties to Turn End in the sixties and of course Charles Jenks and the garden of Cosmic Speculation created in the eighties. I wonder what Vita would have made of the latter.

The entries are interspersed with essays on *The Private Garden in the 20th Century* by Barbara Simms, *Landscaping to the Horizon* by Elain Harwood, *Recognising the Value of Modern Urban Landscape* by Johanna Gibbons and last, but certainly not least, *Jellicoe and the Landscape Profession* by Alan Powers. It is edited by Susannah Charlton and Elain Harwood. The latter was due to speak at our Rutland Water Study day last summer and is due to attend this summer, virus permitting.

This is a wonderful book for those interested in the development our gardens and landscapes in the 20th century, particularly as more and more land will be required for housing, (hopefully not roads) in the 21st century. It is very well presented and readable, documenting as it does the garden and landscape history of the 20th century. I highly recommend it.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society exists to protect all aspects of design, including landscapes as well as buildings. It has been campaigning with the Gardens Trust for more statutory protection to be given to landscapes and gardens. Buying this book will support that campaign.

*Elizabeth Bacon*

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