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## Spring is on the way!



The Winter Garden at Dunham Massey, our visit in February this year

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## **Chairman's Notes**

The recent AGM of the Trust once again emphasized its strength and continuing success. As was stated at the AGM the Trust will be shortly celebrating its twentieth anniversary. The first meetings to discuss the formation of the Trust were held in 1997 with the first public meeting in the spring of 1998. Since then the Trust has come a long way. We now have a successful Education Programme and Research Group, as well as our regular talks and visits. We will be looking to mark this anniversary with a special event next year.

We have recently been contacted by Twigs Way, from the Cambridgeshire Garden Trust, regarding a research project she is starting on Tea Gardens. She is hoping to compile a national index of such sites, and where available, to find postcards and photographs. In the Trust's collection we have postcards of The Japanese Tea Garden at Aylestone, which was a popular destination between the wars and was often referred to as "Going to the Japs" and of Burleigh Brook Park near Loughborough. The latter was also known by locals as Tickle-Belly Park, a name disliked by its founder Mr George Adcock, who was organist at Loughborough Baptist Church. If anyone in the Trust knows of any other former tea gardens in Leicestershire and Rutland could they let me or Sue Blaxland know and we will pass the details on to Twigs Way. Members may

remember that we have had a talk from Twigs Way on the subject of Allotments; it would be a pleasure to assist her with her research.

*Stephen Barker*

## **Events**

Well I think we can safely say that, as far as The Trust is concerned, 2017 started very buoyantly. Although, the winter lunch was slightly less well attended than usual, Friends sounded as if they were enjoying themselves. The winter garden trip, in February, to Dunham Massey, was a bit of a gamble as it is just within the bounds of a reasonable coach journey, unknown to me and other people I mentioned it to. I have to thank The National Trust's list of ten best winter gardens for taking us there. At that time of year the weather can also be a problem, but all was very well. The garden contained nearly every winter flowering shrub and plant you could wish to see within a walking distance. The weather was kind, (not freezing cold, when, we can't wait to get inside, have tea and get warm) with a beautiful pale winter sky acting as a perfect back drop to the garden. What's more, we had a very nearly full coach - one of the best attended trips in our history.

The Spring Lecture "*Technological Development of Great Houses and their Estates in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*" also was a first, as about 60 people attended, the most for that particular event. The lecture was outstanding. Marilyn Palmer had tailored it to our particular needs in regard to walled kitchen gardens; it was hugely informative and stimulating. For example, why had I never considered the fact that while pineapples, grapes and apricots for example, were given cosy glass houses and heated walls, the wealthy owners were shivering in their magnificent houses whilst poor little chambermaids were running hither and thither with buckets of coal trying to keep their masters warm and comfortable? Mad, when you think about it. It was one of those lectures where you want to listen to it again,

immediately the speaker has finished. I was also amused to hear that when the laundry room was put outside: the house keepers were worried that the laundry maids were in too close proximity to the stable boys. Below stairs was an unenviable life.

Keeping my fingers crossed, that our next events will be as successful, I look forward to seeing you at Hoby and other venues.

*Elizabeth Bacon*

## **Research Group**

In the last year, research on three walled kitchen sites has been added to our online Register. There are a further four sites which have been written up and are either awaiting approval from the owners or are with our copy editor. A further four are being written up and five are currently being researched. So the project is making steady progress. Two new sites have been identified, bringing the total to 84.

The talk on walled kitchen gardens has now been given on three separate occasions and there are more bookings in the pipeline, mainly to local U3A gardening and local history groups. It has been well received and, from it, we have learnt of one new site and recruited one new member to the Gardens Trust. All fees received go to the Education Fund.

We continue to be fascinated by the stories and facts that we are uncovering about this largely unrecorded part of our social history. If any Trust members are interested in getting involved with this project, we would be delighted to welcome them to the Group.

*Sue Blaxland*

## A Tale of Two Kitchen Gardens

Rutland is fortunate to have several landscaped gardens centred on country estates and grand houses. Perhaps the two largest still intact are at **Exton Park** and **Burley on the Hill**. Both were, in their way, influenced by the great landscape designers of the day, Brown and Repton.

In the case of Exton, there is no evidence that the great “Capability” Brown ever visited but the massive shelter belts, sweeping parkland vistas and serpentine-esque lake clearly bear his influence, as does the location of the walled kitchen garden, tucked away a good 600m from the house.

At Burley, there are detailed records of Humphry Repton’s visits and indeed of his trademark “red book” for the grounds. The huge south terrace with its magnificent views across the Vale of Catmose is his main contribution to the landscape but the location of the kitchen garden became a bone of contention to his submitted improvements.

In the grand scheme of things, such great landscapes were designed around the owner’s mansion, which was usually there before the estate around it was enlarged. Watercourses were diverted, buildings (sometimes whole villages) were moved, and access roads rerouted, but the focus was the house. Other essential services, such as stables, kitchen gardens and dog kennels were of secondary importance to the designer but of crucial interest to the owner.

The walled kitchen gardens we can now see in England emerged in the 19C principally to grow fruit and had three basic requirements: alignment, walls and water. Alignment should be east-west with a long south-facing wall, walls needed to be up to 12 feet high to accommodate cordon training and warmed brickwork (and eventually glasshouses) and all this intensive growing required plenty of watering so a pond or well was needed.

At **Exton** Park the original mansion was badly damaged by a fire in 1810 and the owner Gerard Noel retreated to his London home whilst pondering a new Exton Hall. His financial situation being rather serious at the time, the new Exton residence became a nearby Tudor farmhouse (later redeveloped as the New Hall) and as the old kitchen garden was located here a new one was needed to allow new house gardens to be developed.

Gerard escaped from his financial problems and became increasingly involved in agricultural improvements, finding an able lieutenant in Richard Westbrook Baker, his steward from 1828-1861. Baker helped found the Rutland Horticultural Society and invented the “Rutland Plough” (as well as building the original Ruddles Brewery at Langham). We do not know for certain but it is most likely that the Exton Park walled kitchen garden was another of Baker’s projects. Adhering to the Brownsian rule of keeping the garden far away from the new hall and its vistas, a seven acre site was found with the correct alignment, protected by a long shelter belt and with good access to water - right next to a large fish pond. Using the pond side as the southern boundary - with a semi-circular flight of steps for dipping purposes – allowed more bricks to be used to sustain 12 foot high walls on the other three sides for fruit growing. In 1872 a visitor described it as “one of the best kitchen gardens in England” producing plums, cherries, figs, peaches, nectarines, melons, cucumbers and pineapples as well as soft fruit and vegetables.





A landscaped path through woodland from the house was later created with a splendid set of wrought-iron gates at the garden entrance, suggesting that the owners were proud of their kitchen garden. They showed it off to their guests and the long walk from the house became a feature.

At **Burley on the Hill**, the main house – a grade I listed Palladian mansion - had been rebuilt around 1700/1705 and the pleasure grounds extensively landscaped before Repton was commissioned by George Finch, the ninth Earl of Winchelsea, in 1795.

Prior to Repton’s grand terrace – 256m long by 30m deep – there was a “melon ground” and a small orchard below the house and his red book contained suggestions for a replacement kitchen garden. It is clear from his notes, however, that he disagreed with Mr. Finch about the kitchen garden requirements. His views on location were different to “Capability” Brown’s and he favoured positioning it close to the house, but out of site, and as close to the stables as possible – which were an obvious source of manure and focused the labour for outdoor manual tasks in one place.

His chosen position at Burley was a plot of level ground to the side of the house curtilage, behind the stables but Finch, also a man of strong convictions, was not so sure. Repton, having been employed to make recommendations, duly made them, marking four possible positions A-D on a scale plan and explaining the virtues of each in his “red book”. Position A (Finch’s favourite) was described as “too much exposed to west winds” and he then noted that “I am convinced that the best place is the spot marked D”(his favourite).

Finch duly ignored him and sited the new walled kitchen garden where it now stands – on a patch of sloping ground to the west of the house at spot A. Here, rather shaded by sheltering trees, it is set below the line of sight, with a small pond above, a south-facing crinkle-crinkle fruit wall, a Messenger vinery, a hothouse and a mushroom house.



Crinkle-crinkle walls in Rutland & Leicestershire are very unusual but much more common in Suffolk, where Repton was working in the 1790s on at least two gardens that had one. Finch – as owners do – clearly won the argument but perhaps Repton had the last word.

*Keith Aldridge*

**Crossword Answers**

**Across:** 1. Hardwick 2. Warrens 6. Record Office 8. Charnwood 9. Brown  
10. Oudolf 11. Trentham 14. Oakham

**Down:** 1. Humberstone 3. Renishaw 4. Abbotsbury 5. Grainger 7. Crome Park  
12. Stowe 13. Heath



## Education: 'Schools into Gardening'

### The Official Opening of the Woodland Sensory Garden Croft C of E Primary School 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017

From the approach to the school, an array of brightly coloured balloons, bobbing about on the top of the new garden's see-through fencing, attracted our eyes. It felt like a party. The sun was shining and the daffodils were nodding. It was going to be a good day.

Soon lines of children appeared, their bright red tops adding even more colour to the occasion. They lined up neatly on the paved centre of the garden. Clearly the whole of this small school was present, and the garden could be used for big events and individual experiences.



The mayor was invited to step forward and cut the ribbon across the entrance. The garden was declared open.

“All things bright and beautiful” sang out clearly, followed by a small choir that sang a “Thank You” to all the sponsors of the garden who stood before them. They were backed on guitar by a pensioner member of the community who also attends on of the clubs in the school for local people. A board had been placed by the entrance listing the contributors and we were pleased to see *Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust – in memory of Shirley Stubbings*, acknowledging the source of our donation.

All of us enjoyed singing “Morning has broken” on this bright day. Then the Head read out the list of sponsors and, one by one, we stepped forward to receive a thank you card, made by one of the pupils, with a coloured picture of the garden and equally embellished envelope. The pupil politely shook hands with us.

Coffee and little buns were prepared for us in the school hall on small tables. We were escorted there and we were served by a solemn boy called Matt. His concentration in carrying rather full cups from the kitchen I shall remember for some time.



Hilary Knight who had made the donation to us, her friend and ex-colleague Elizabeth Bacon and Mary Dunford, who was kind enough to take photographs for us, along with myself were your representatives. A governor of the school said “You must come back in a year when the plants

will be larger.” I think we will!

*Irene Jones*

## **Two Quotations**

The following quotations have been chosen by Ann Baer. Many of you will remember Ann from holidays and as a contributor to our newsletter.

*“Gardeners get a double supply of pleasure for always, as they are enjoying the actuality of the present and its blossoming, in imagination, they enjoy in their planning, the future of flowering plants.”*

From “Four Hedges”: Claire Leighton

*My garden, too will not be abnormal  
Not yet Italian, and prim and formal:  
A garden formed on a proper plan  
Shows Nature obeying the Hand of Man,  
Not Artifice flaunting in Nature's dress  
Nor Man subduing the Wilderness.  
So I'll have a parterre, and a fountain-jet  
Lavender, roses and mignonette;  
A wild place under the apple glades  
With cowslips springing between the blades  
And honeysuckle and clematis bowers  
And sops-in-wine and gilly-flowers  
And London Pride and Love-lies-bleeding  
(And a hireling knave to do the weeding.)  
And in the gloaming time, when nightingales sing  
As soon as my apple trees allow  
I'll doze in the dusk in a hammock of string  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.*

From "When my ship comes in" in "Some Verse" by F.S. published in 1915 (F.S. was Ann Baer's father, Frank Sidgwick)

## **Book Review**

### ***A Short History of Gardens by Gordon Campbell***

As you all probably know, Gordon Campbell is Fellow in Renaissance Studies at the University of Leicester, a fellow of the British Academy and among many other things a Friend of Leicestershire and Rutland Garden Trust. He has written many books including "*The Hermit in the Garden, from Imperial Rome to Ornamental Garden Gnome*"

*A Short History of Gardens* is one of his more recent publications and in this, Gordon manages to include all aspects of gardens, literary, philosophical, horticultural, artistic and religious., The first figure in the book is a relief in the British Museum from Nineveh, known as Garden Party, dated (c. 640BC) showing a King and Queen relaxing in a garden under a trellis in much the same way as we all do in our gardens now, although I don't think we would have the head of a dead rival hanging from a tree. (? Dead heading)

From there, the scope is worldwide, including the Ancient and Medieval Garden, The Islamic Garden, The Eastern Asian Garden, through Europe to Africa, America and Australia. The closing chapter is described as a postscript, where he looks at recent fashions and necessary changes in gardening techniques, for example the rise in Organic Gardening that followed the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring*, with the subsequent reluctance to use chemicals in the garden. He also looks at changes resulting from loss of bio diversity and climate change.

This is a beautifully presented little book, which would be particularly appropriate for someone who has been cultivating and enjoying their garden, but who wishes to widen their interest and know something of Garden History. It's all here in this pocket sized volume, just the job for reading on the train and taking on garden visits and holidays.

I do recommend it.

Oxford University Press ISBN 201-0-19 - 878461-6

*Elizabeth Bacon*

## **Obituary**

### **Nanette Aris**

Sadly after a short illness, Nanette Aris died in January 2017 at the age of 92 years. She joined the Gardens Trust in 2007, although she had attended meetings before that with Bob and Helen Long. She had enjoyed the outings and the Celebrity Lectures. Her most recent attendance was at the Autumn Lecture on Bradgate Park, at the Leicester Bowling Club.

Nanette was born in Ireland but moved with her family to Cheshire at the age of 17 years after her father, a solicitor, died. Her brother attended Uppingham School where her aunt lived, so she got to know Rutland and Leicestershire very well.

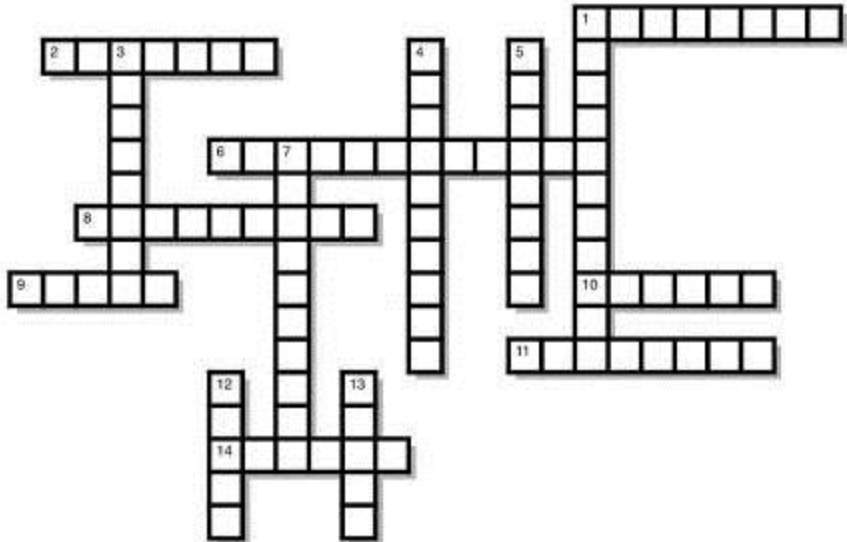
At the outbreak of World War II her plans to become a journalist were spoiled and she trained as a nurse, eventually taking up a position at Fielding Johnson Hospital as a Staff Nurse, for the next 30-40 years.

Nanette married and attended St Stephens Church, New Walk with her husband. She made many friends and enjoyed rambles, outings, History classes, National Trust meetings and Dr McKay's Literature at Lunchtime lectures,

She was an elegant, active lady who will be greatly missed by her friends.

*Helen Long*

## Do you remember 2016?



### ACROSS

- 1 A brilliant Elizabeth created this wonderful house (8)
- 2 These tunnels were home to a rich source of food and warmth (7)
- 6 Rice cored off becomes starting point for research (6,6)
- 8 David Attenborough's playground (9)
- 9 A reliable sort of chap (5)
- 10 It sounds like truncated title of Christmas song (6)
- 11 Where do Lancelot, Piet, Charles, Nigel and Tom meet? (8)
- 14 Many royal horses have passed through here (6)

## DOWN

- 1 Chairman revealed this garden suburb (11)
- 3 The owners of this house have a lot of sensible chairs (8)
- 4 Swans and the church have connections with this tropical paradise (10)
- 5 English composer whose work would be at home in villages such as Hoby (8)
- 7 This eye-catching landscape is the first of many (6,4)
- 12 I hear this house needs to be put away (5)
- 13 Erica could thrive here (5)

**The answers can be found on page 8**

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## Coming Events

**London Open Squares Weekend 17-18 June 2017**

Details at [www.opensquares.org](http://www.opensquares.org)

**The Gardens Trust Annual Conference**

**31st August-3rd September 2017**

**Plymouth University**

Details at [www.thegardenstrust.org](http://www.thegardenstrust.org)

## LRGT Events 2017

<b>Thursday 11th May</b>	Coach trip to Chatsworth
<b>Thursday 8th June</b>	Evening picnic at Sulby Gardens, Northamptonshire
<b>12th-16th June</b>	LRGT 4-day holiday to Northumberland Gardens
<b>Monday 26th June</b>	Three Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens
<b>Thursday 13th July</b>	Coach trip to Spetchley Park Gardens
<b>Sun. 20th August</b>	Town walk in Market Harborough
<b>Wed. 6th September</b>	‘Brown the Builder’ Guided Tours of Burghley House State Rooms and Garden
<b>Thurs. 14th September</b>	Annual Lecture: Troy Scott Smith, Head Gardener at Sissinghurst
<b>Thursday 19th October</b>	Autumn Lecture - Speaker: David Kestevon, Head Gardener at Renishaw
<b>Thurs. 16th November</b>	Friends Evening