



Hellebores Galore!



Friends enjoy a tour of the greenhouses, on our winter visit to Ashwood Nurseries and John's Garden, Kingswinford, West Midlands

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Chairman's Notes

Welcome to the Twentieth Anniversary of the LRGT and it does not seem that long since I was writing about the 10th Anniversary. It must be a sign of my increasing age that the years are passing faster. Once again we are holding a special event to mark the occasion, this time, a lunch at Hoby village hall.

I hope to see as many of you as possible on the 14th July, when we can celebrate the achievements of the past 20 years and look forward to the future of the Trust. Most importantly, we will come together as friends with a shared interest and enjoyment of gardens and landscapes.

Until then I wish you all the best for the summer which has got off to a promising start.

Stephen Barker

**Have you booked your place?
14th JULY 2018,
CELEBRATORY LUNCH
FOR LRGT's 20th ANNIVERSARY**

Events

I must start off by saying that although my role is described as being Events Organizer, I could not do this without Debbie, who designs the flyers, and Floss who helps me with the administration making life so much easier for me.

The **Friends Evening** in November was an interesting mix of Ralph, more bees, Judith in Iceland, looking very competent at the wheel of a yacht, and Steven on Repton, in anticipation of his bicentenary in

2018, (Repton's not Stephen's). A good evening, but there are thoughts for this year's to become more social by having something like a 'bring and share' supper, to which we could all contribute with food and drink. I will be interested to hear what you think about that.

The snow showed perfect timing on January 21st, the day of the **Winter Lunch**. It arrived just as we were all preparing to drive to The Neville Arms in Medbourne. It was quite heavy, fairly localised and the roads soon became tricky, which, not surprisingly meant several of The Friends could not get there. About 18 of us arrived, some resorting to a taxi. The Neville Arms were very generous in not charging the non-attenders. As a gesture of good will we will go back there in 2019. The snow, very kindly, did not last long and the roads were fine when it came to going home.

In total contrast the weather on our winter visit to **Ashwood Nurseries** in Kings Swinford could not have been better. It was a cold bright winter's day unlike the previous day's pouring rain. These nurseries have customers all over the world and when you go into the propagation house you can see why. There are just rows and rows of hellebores in the process of being developed, some become new strains whilst others are deemed unfit and discarded. Seeing the numbers I thought computers must be a godsend here, but no, the person responsible is computer illiterate and must do it all by pen and paper. In the glasshouses there were more rows and rows of hellebores, in mouth-wateringly marvellous colours and forms, quite beautiful and all for sale between £5 and £50.

It really is worth a visit, as the nursery also has an interesting variety of plants, all of which looked healthy and well cared for. The café is also good value as the food looked fresh and too inviting, particularly the cakes. The Cornish pasties I am told were very tasty. Coming in from the cold, the open fire was a welcome sight. In the afternoon we visited John's garden, which abuts the nursery and has been created

by John Massey VMH (the nursery owner), plant breeder, plant collector and passionate gardener over the last 20 years. Surprisingly, up until then he had shown no interest in gardening. It is a remarkable feat, with an amazing variety of winter planting. This was an excellent visit in what has turned out to be a dreadful winter; I just wish it was not on the other side of Birmingham. I also got a mug as tour leader!



Twigs Way made a return visit to Leicester to give **The Spring Lecture**. She told us the story of Ernest “Chinese“ Wilson, the Edwardian plant hunter who was responsible for introducing about fifteen hundred plant varieties into our gardens. From fairly modest beginnings he rose to importance and ended up attached to the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University. He was first sent to China by Veitch Nurseries to find and collect seeds from what we know as the Handkerchief Tree, *Davidia Involucrata*. Thus began many of his plant collecting adventures. He was given a very vague map as to where one could be found and eventually, after many trials and tribulations, reached the spot only to find the stump. He had been told to concentrate on only finding the *Davidia* and not be sidetracked by other varieties. He did of course ignore that advice and, with many other varieties, eventually brought the seeds of *Davidia* back to this country; initially they did not germinate and were put on one side. However, a couple of years later after a very cold winter, there were green shoots. The seeds needed to be very cold to germinate. He returned to China, Japan and Australia on other expeditions but, as time went by he became rather reluctant about leaving his quieter desk job, his wife and child.

There are just too many plant introductions to include here, just give him a thought when you see *Wilsonii* after a plant name, remember the trials and tribulations involved in plant collecting and just think how much we have to thank him for. His untimely death, together with that of his wife, was the result of a car accident returning from his daughter's wedding. There could not have been all that many cars on American roads in 1930, how unfortunate after all his more hazardous adventures.

A splendid story well told by Twigs.

The April **Sunday afternoon Talk and Tea in Hoby** is always very popular; this year was no exception, with 90 people turning up to hear Tim Richardson speak about Oxford College Gardens and enjoy afternoon tea. Interest was slow initially, but in the last couple of weeks there was a flurry of interest, which meant extra trips to order yet more sandwiches. It was interesting that about half the attendees were guests, ten of whom joined The Trust. I had heard Tim before at Cottesbrook, talking about American Gardens, and since then I had wanted an opportunity to fit him into our programme. He was such a relaxed and informative speaker.

There are 38 colleges in Oxford, over 30 of them having gardens, which Tim describes in his book. Many are private but there are ones which can be visited by the general public, details of which can be found on line. He began his talk in the 13th Century. Contrary to general belief, colleges were not monastic in origin but medieval student lodgings, which then developed into courts with passages linking them to the street, not dissimilar to a cloister. There are Fellows' gardens, Masters' gardens, ponds, lakes, walls, deer parks, leading up to modernist 20th Century gardens at Wolfson and St Catherine's Colleges. There were interesting insights, such as, all the gardens have Head Gardeners with at least one under gardener, although at Pembroke and Corpus Christi the head gardeners prefer to work alone. The college fellow with responsibility for the finance

of the garden is the “Garden Master” and those responsible for the quad lawns are “Quad Men”. Andrew Lawson is responsible for the photography in the book, which is breath-taking. For example, Magdalene Meadow brimming with fritillaries and longhorn cattle gently grazing in Christ Church Meadow. Tim was excellent (he did say that having done this talk on other occasions we were the most receptive audience yet) and he will most certainly be invited back.

Serving a full afternoon tea for 90 people after a lecture is no mean feat. Happily, we have Steve and Diane Horsfield who are very familiar with the hall and they deserve our particular thanks for making the organization as simple as possible. Also, our thanks go to all those who helped on the day with serving tea making cakes, arranging flowers and washing up. I was impressed by the way some of the audience stayed and helped put chairs and tables away; the whole afternoon was a very creditable team effort by the Trust.

After tea there was the opportunity to visit Steve and Diane’s garden which in spite of the appalling late winter weather looked lovely as ever and on that day it stayed dry.

We are now looking at **2019** and in recognition of our 20th anniversary we are revisiting some of the gardens which we particularly enjoyed, for example Boughton House restored park in Northamptonshire, Stockton Bury, which some of us visited on holiday in Herefordshire and Braham Park in Yorkshire. We had hoped to visit Castle Howard but tours and entry proved far too expensive. We are also returning to Kent for the holiday, but this again has been a bit of a problem, as prices for hotels have increased considerably over the last year and Kent is not as reasonable as Northumberland and West Wales. However, our very hard working Jackie from Success Tours made a special trip to Eastbourne, in her own time, to check out a hotel there, it seems fine, so Kent it will be. She did find a highly suitable, old style hotel in Wells, near the

cathedral, which she has claimed for us, if we would like it, in 2020. I think it could be rather nice.

If we are to continue with our visits as we have done in the past, we do have to recognize that coaches, entrances, guided tours, lunches and coffees have become more expensive. I do like it that we can enjoy eating together on our visits and would not want that to stop. It is the cost of the coach which drives the prices up and if we could have a regular 42/46 for these trips it would not be a problem. We are all only too happy to have guests, so encourage your families and friends to join us and advertise our visits in your local clubs etc.

I hope you enjoy this year's programme, particularly the Anniversary Lunch, which is mainly to thank you for your loyal support over the years.

Elizabeth Bacon

Membership

Our membership has remained fairly stable, as I reported at our AGM. However, on 22nd April 2018, after an excellent lecture and splendid tea in Hoby Village Hall, we added 9 new members to the Gardens Trust. This gives us a total membership of 150 at present, which includes 13 new members and 2 rejoined members.

We welcome all our new members and hope they will enjoy the coming events with us all.

As I have remarked on other occasions all new members that have joined us are friends of Friends, so thank you all, especially all those involved in working so hard for the event in Hoby.

Please continue to tell your friends about us.

Irene Jones

Research Group

The number of sites that we have identified continues to increase and now stands at 84, of which we have researched a quarter. We complete, on average, about 4 projects a year. The South East Group holds the record for “most sites researched” with 8 sites completely researched, written up and published on the website. However, it is not a competition and we all do it because we enjoy hunting around, both in the archives and in often derelict gardens as well as unravelling mysteries. (But congratulations to the South East Group all the same!)

A new site, which has been identified as a result of giving the walled kitchen talk to a local history group, is Ratcliffe Hall at Ratcliffe on the Wreake. This was missed when we did a “desk top survey”, looking at old Ordnance Survey maps, because it is such a strange shape with partially curved walls. We have contacted the owner and hope that we will be able to visit, even though very little survives.

Over the winter, we have published our research on two more sites: Rothley Court and Burley on the Hill. Burley has coincided very well with the Repton Bicentenary this year. Keith Aldridge, who researches Rutland sites, discovered that the owner had ignored Repton’s advice regarding the position of the walled kitchen garden. But he did manage to sneak in a favourite design idea of a crinkle-crankle wall. The research for Skeffington Hall, which was lost as a result of a computer crash, has been rewritten and is now with the owners for approval.

The West Group, who are currently researching Whatton House, north of Loughborough, has discovered a fine



example of a heated wall. As it is partly derelict, it is possible to see the brickwork of the ducting that carried the heat round the walls.

Most importantly, we have been contacted by a team at Glenfield Hospital regarding their project which they are calling: “The Secret Garden Project”. This is to create a therapeutic garden in the former walled kitchen garden of Leicester Frith. This Victorian house on the hospital site became part of Mental Health Services. The garden was used for patient rehabilitation from its early days as a hospital for “shell-shocked” soldiers from the First World War right through to the 1990’s. It was earmarked to become a car park but has been taken on by a team who have applied for a lottery grant. They have strong backing from the NHS Board. We will be working with them to provide a “statement of significance” to help support their application.

Sue Blaxland

Interested in poetry?

Rowan Roenisch would be interested in forming a small poetry circle, meeting monthly. If you would be interested please contact Rowan at rowan.roenisch@ntworld.com

Rainbows Hospice Garden

Karen Gimson, a Friend of the Trust, has designed a Rainbows Hospice Garden for the Belvoir Flower and Garden Festival 14/15th July 2018, along with David Greaves Ltd

The Rainbows Hospice garden features two areas, one for parents and one for children. Karen says "There are two gardens because I wanted to highlight the fact that Rainbows isn't just for children, it's for the parents too...

I wanted to somehow encapsulate the work of Rainbows in a garden. So the seating area represents the shape of open arms, an embrace, a hug, if you like - something that I have seen works magic...



The garden has a path through to a children's plot which is a mini-potted version of the garden at Rainbows. I thought it would be good for anyone who hasn't visited on the open days to have a taste of what's there. So we have a bird watching corner, music therapy corner, a rest and relaxation seating area, bug and wildlife area, and in the centre there's a raised bed which is similar to the veg plot at the hospice. "

Karen will be growing plants with the children and young people at the hospice over coming months.

Almost all the elements of the garden have been donated by local and national companies as there is no budget. David Greaves is giving his time free of charge to build the garden over five days. Karen and a team of volunteers, which includes students from Brooksby College, will be planting the garden.

Remembering 20 years of the LRGT

My favourite visit

The visit that has stayed in my memory is our trip to **Hemingford Grey in the summer of 2013**. We approached the Manor House with a walk along the tow path by the River Ouse and then the idyllic view of the medieval Manor - one of the oldest inhabited houses in the country, came into view. The path that led up to the house from the river was edged with massive topiary shapes at either side - as I recall they were clipped box. They had been planted to commemorate the Coronation and included rather wonky crowns. The house was made famous by Lucy Boston, who wrote a series of children's books: "The Children of Green Knowe" about fictional children from the past who had lived in the house. I had never read these books in childhood, so bought and very much enjoyed the entire set.



Our visit included a tour of the house. Lucy Boston had made exquisite patchwork quilts and these were shown to us. In the upstairs hall, we sat and were told about the wartime gramophone recitals that were given twice a week to RAF servicemen during the 2nd World War. We listened, on a 1929 gramophone, to a recording: "Oh Peaceful England" - so moving and evocative.

The four acre garden which surrounds the Manor House is renowned for a collection of over 200 old roses. There were irises, foxgloves and just about all the flowers that you associate with an English country garden in high summer. The scents, the hidden corners, the



cottage garden style of planting all came together to create a totally memorable experience.

Sue Blaxland

Brockhampton Cottage Remembered

Despite the cloudy greyness of early morning, we realised instantly on arrival that this visit was all about landscape. The house, hardly a cottage, was set back on a large site, well up the side of a lovely Herefordshire valley. We approached along the contour line with a wide view on our left and the house ahead of us on the right. The two fitted together perfectly. It was June 2013.

We were met by our host, Peter Clay who had fallen in love with the view from the house when, as a five year old he had been looking from his bedroom window in his grandfather's house. He inherited the house and all its land 13 years ago. The memory of his infant view remained waiting to be restored



to its former glory. This desire was the driving force behind the creation of this magnificent natural looking scene.

This garden, begun in 1999 was also a product of friendship. Over a curry Peter Clay discussed with his friend, Mark Fane, the problem

and so a plan began to be formed. There was now a landowner, a garden designer, who had contributed garden designs at Chelsea Flower Show, and a wife, Ravidia Clay, with an amazing sense of colour. So many plants would be needed, they might as well start a nursery and so a new landscaping and nursery business was formed and called Crocus. Others would need high quality products and they would be their market. Tom Stuart Smith provided a long list of desirable plants. Another friend was to play the final essential part. When the garden was completed and its owner peered at his long remembered view. He was shocked to see that the lake and the valley floor were still not visible. Fortunately, the friend had access to motorway type earth-movers and the hillside was altered to reveal the view.

The first task had been to remove conifers hedges, including high thuja ones round the house, and open up the garden to the become part of the valley again. The natural look of a billowing more romantic landscape with clumps of coverts scattered throughout brought the garden landscape to life again. A wildflower meadow alongside the stream flowing into a lake, and arboretum and a perry pear orchard added to the enchantment.

Close to the house is a large stone paved terrace. A wide herbaceous border runs alongside a supporting wall which satisfies the soul. Purple, blue and dark pink are the dominating shades. Hellebores, delphiniums, white willow herb, salvias, verbascums and clumps of splurge paint the picture. Behind the house is an area for relaxing and entertaining friends where we enjoyed elderflower cordial and home- made biscuits while admiring the covering vine, pots of lilies, clinging clematis and roses. The



Mediterranean sunshine needed to complete the picture eluded us but I was a happy and contented person in this nourishing setting.

Irene Jones

Useful Contact Numbers

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LRGT Events 2018

Monday 18th June	4 night 5 day holiday to SW Wales
Saturday 14th July	20 year Celebration Lunch – Hoby Village Hall
Thurs. 23rd August	Coach trip: Arley Hall and Gardens, Northwich, Cheshire
Thurs. 13th September	Celebrity Lecture: Speaker Nigel Dunnett, Prof. of Planting Design and Urban Horticulture, University of Sheffield
Thurs. 20th September	Coach trip: Woburn Abbey
Thurs. 25th October	Autumn Lecture: Margaret Willes ‘The Gardens of the British Working Class’
Thurs. 15th November	Friends Evening

The Gardens Trust Annual Conference- *Birmingham’s leafy suburbs*

This year the Annual Conference will be in **Birmingham**, based at the University of Birmingham and Highbury Hall on **Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd September 2018**

For further details see the Gardens Trust website

www.thegardenstrust.org

I remember it well...

On our Scottish holiday, we arrived rather late at the **Garden of Cosmic Speculation**. We were met by the Head Gardener, Andrew Clark. As we walked down the drive I said in a very chatty way, “you must feel very lucky to work for Charles Jenks” he replied, putting me in my place, “no Charles is very lucky to have me.”

On our second visit to **Rousham**, it was an overcast May afternoon, I was on my own by the river in Venus Vale when, the sun suddenly came out from under the clouds, lighting up the meadow and river, I then understood William Kent.

On arriving at our first garden on our first holiday, I presented myself at the entrance announcing myself as “Elizabeth Bacon from Travel Editions” and thought “What the ???? am I doing?”

Elizabeth

Do you have a special memory from a visit?

If so, please let me, or Elizabeth, have them in a few words, so they can be shared in the Autumn Newsletter.

Thanks Deb

A sea of lilac, the magnificent nepeta borders at **Wollerton Old Hall**, Shropshire (2011)

White birches against a vivid blue sky at **Anglesey Abbey** (Winter 2009)

Exploring the Landform sculptures by Charles Jenks at **The Garden of Cosmic Speculation** and Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (Scotland 2006), getting to the top of **Northumberlandia** (2017) and by Kim Wilkie at Great Fosters (2010), Orpheus at **Boughton House**, Northampton shire (2009)

Deb