



Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Celebrating 25 Years

1997-2022

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Autumn 2022



'Orpheus' at Boughton House, Northants. A modern feature by Kim Wilkie complementing the eighteenth-century designed landscape

Recollection and Reflection, or Reminiscences and Ramblings

What do I think of when I hear the name **Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust**? Happy memories stir within me of distant, dark, winter evenings spent in committee meetings at Waddesdon, grappling with ideas for talks and walks, day-conferences and publications, initiatives to involve schools, responding to research and planning issues, and much else besides.

I have had the good fortune to be involved with most of these things, both passively and directly as an occasional speaker, writing for the newsletter, and sometimes guiding a garden-walk.

In addition to visiting local sites there have been forays into adjacent counties, including my native Northamptonshire; also venturing further afield to such places as Munstead Wood and in 2017 even to Muskau on the border between Germany and Poland.

This last was simply magical. I will never forget the horse-drawn exploration of some of the paths

and other byways in the magnificent park which Prince Pückler created in the early nineteenth century, or indeed drinking homemade pineapple liqueur for 'elevenses' whilst awaiting a specially arranged train on the railway that runs through a separate area. Later, at Branitz – the ancestral home to which the Prince retired when the money at Muskau ran out – we steered a leisurely course in a large gondola around his pyramid tomb in the middle of a lake.



The Lake Pyramid at Branitz in Germany

I wasn't sure if my idea for undertaking such an adventurous trip would be taken up but I'm pleased that it was.



Fuchsia Bridge in the Muskauer Park in the German- Polish border

For several years I have been the regular 'entertainment' at the annual Christmas lunch; and given a free hand to talk upon any subject of my choosing – although the organisers hope never for too long. Topics have ranged from the festive and light-hearted to more serious polemics.



Christmas Lunch at The New Inn, Stowe 2021

I am proud to have helped to initiate the current Research and Recording Project. Its success is envied by other county gardens trusts and provides an exemplar for them to follow. The results are an important addition to Buckinghamshire's history as well as for appreciation of its landscape.

The value of such work is recognised nationally as well as locally through a slew of safeguarding

measures, though not all are as effective as might be hoped for and levels of protection vary.

Continuing to comment upon conservation and planning issues remains vital and it is a credit to the past and present planning team that so much of their wise counsel and advice is taken notice of. The work is entirely voluntary but, like everything the Trust does, carried out to a high professional standard.

The challenge now is to build upon all these successes. More must be done to engage the different user groups who are involved in our parks and gardens, especially schoolchildren and other young people.

Success will rely upon our ability to share experiences through effective public communication. This might include wider use of digital technologies to attract a new generation of members.

In a political climate of shrinking budgets it is important to encourage greater use of local, freely available resources. These include historic parks and gardens as well as other open spaces and countryside that are so important for well-being. Opportunities for exploration and exciting research should be part of new educational offers.

We will only secure the long-term upkeep of these places by stimulating interest among impressionable youth. In time, they too may come to appreciate the camaraderie, extended friendships, and enjoyment which our shared sense of purpose brings.

Brian Dix

Brian Dix BA FSA was a founding member of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust who has been an inspiration and friend to the Trust. He is a specialist in the archaeology of historic parks and gardens and has a wealth of experience and knowledge.

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Chair's Letter



Doric Seat

CdC

Dear Members

I hope that you are all surviving the extreme weather we have been experiencing during July and August – it has been a terrible time for gardeners with the lack of rain. I have visited a few gardens recently and most are already past their best with the gardeners struggling to keep vulnerable plants watered. The trees however have been more or less left to fend for themselves, and there are likely to be some casualties; if this is climate change then we are going to have to think very carefully about what we plant in our parks and gardens in the future.

Our AGM happened to fall on one of the hottest days of the year and thank you to the Council and our members who braved the weather and travelled to Great Linford Manor. Our planned walk had to be abandoned; however, Ellie Broad of the Parks Trust and BGT Social Media officer presented an excellent talk about the Heritage Lottery funded restoration of the site.

The dredging, removal of saplings and repairs to the Georgian walls of the ponds have been carried out to a very high standard and the site has been transformed. Some of you may remember that there was once a Doric Seat complete with roof, which for some years had been used as a cattle shelter. The footprint is now marked by new stone walls and the Doric columns and part of the portico have been reinstated with the most beautiful ironwork pillars. We shall certainly rearrange our walk for a later date, by which time it should be completely finished.



We have plenty of exciting things to look forward to in 2023. With another full programme of talks and visits including to Hall Barn in Beaconsfield, Batsford Arboretum to see the cherry trees in bloom, Bekonscot, and a talk followed by a visit to the restored Church Gardens, Harefield. The programme will be finalised in the Autumn and will include, following last year's successful event, our Christmas party at Stowe on Saturday 3rd December.

Our most exciting new initiative is the setting up of a Gardeners Network Group. The first meeting will be in October, and we hope to create a social network which will include talks and visits for all the head gardeners or their representatives across the county. If you know of any gardeners who might be interested in joining, please let me know. We will keep you updated on progress.

Just a quick reminder that there are still tickets left for our party at Hampden House on 13 October, from <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/buckinghamshire-gardens-trust>

Claire de Carle

Profile of Ellie Broad – Social Media Officer Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust



My interest in historic gardens stems from a love of both history and the great outdoors. As a child I have fond memories of visiting special gardens across the country on family holidays, accompanied by my mum, who is a keen gardener. Now a home-owner, I have enjoyed getting to grips with my own garden, taking pride in bringing life back to our old pear tree, which has started growing fruit again for the first time in many years.

I was fortunate to read Archaeology with Forensic Science at Exeter University, which enabled me pursue both history and the natural environment amongst a small cohort of enthusiastic individuals from many walks of life. Exeter University's campus encompasses Reed Hall, the home to the Veitch family nursery in the 19th century. In 2015 I took part in an extra-curricular project with Devon Gardens Trust to engage members of the university community with Reed Hall gardens, which offered a

secluded and restful part of the campus grounds. During this project I remember discovering that Reed Hall once had a large glasshouse and that one of its windows had been resituated in our favourite Wetherspoons pub, the Imperial, where we used to go to celebrate submitting assignments and finishing exams! Seeing the imprint of past human activity on our environment is what drew me to archaeology in the first place and it was wonderful to see this happening so locally.

When I graduated I worked first for an archaeological travel company, helping to design holidays for people who wanted to see archaeological sites around the world with expert guides. It was wonderful to see my enthusiasm for the past shared by so many people of different nationalities. My fondest memory is travelling to Egypt as a member of the tour staff and seeing all of my planning come together in the trip of a lifetime.

In 2017 I was appointed Archaeology Curator at Southend Museums in Essex, where I had grown up. It was a privilege to take care of the collections, which spanned thousands of years, and to curate exhibitions such as *The London Shipwreck: A Sunken Story* and *Wild Estuaries* as well as working on a redisplay of our permanent collections, including *The Prittlewell Princely Burial*. With many unique experiences and incredible memories, in 2019 I decided it was time to step out of the stores and into the great outdoors, where I found The Parks Trust.

I relocated to Milton Keynes in late 2019 and joined The Parks Trust shortly afterwards. I had been drawn to the Great Linford Manor Park restoration project as it offered a chance to share my enthusiasm for history in an outdoor setting. The Parks Trust have received a £3.6m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to 'Reveal, Revive and Restore' the Manor Park to its 18th century English Landscape Pleasure Garden. I didn't know much about garden history, but soon after joining the Trust I participated in a Gardens Trust Introduction to Garden History course, which gave me a good base knowledge to share with the community through events and activities. We are now nearing completion on the Great Linford Project, which it has been wonderful to be a part of. I have loved seeing the Georgian landscape come back to life and to see the wonder in local people's faces as they realise that Milton Keynes does have some history after all!

Through my work at The Parks Trust I came across the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust who have helped us to understand the Great Linford Manor Park landscape. In 2021 I applied to be the BGT social media officer after seeing an advert in the newsletter. I wanted to learn more about gardens across the county and I felt I could share some digital expertise. I have enjoyed being a part of the BGT family, contributing where I can, and I feel very supported and connected to other garden enthusiasts in the county.

Ellie Broad

25th Anniversary Events: Reviews from our Roving Reporters

Tree Walk: Langley Park led by Michael Hunt on 22nd May 2022



Langley Park owes its beginnings in the early 17th Century to Sir John Kederminster whose house was replaced by Charles Spencer (later 3rd Duke of Marlborough) c.1755-8 who moved here after a row with his grandmother Sarah (1st Duchess). The Park was landscaped by 'Capability' Brown 1763-4. Letters to his wife from campaigns demonstrate the Duke's great interest in the Park and its trees. Later, Langley Park was occupied by five generations of the Harvey family.

18 members and guests joined Michael Hunt at a busy Langley Park on a warm sunny morning on 22 May for his second Tree Walk as part of the Trust's 25th Anniversary Events. Michael explained that he is a passionate self-taught man regarding trees and the natural world, who would travel for hours to see a particular specimen and revisit the same location in all seasons and sometimes every month to experience the changes wrought by the passage of time.

We first dived in a sort of a conga into the Temple Gardens with their wealth of Rhododendrons in full bloom, following Michael who picked his way unerringly through this astonishing maze of colour, picking out the particular tree specimens emerging from the technicolour understorey that had caught his eye. We marvelled at his ability to bring out their Latin names and their more 'common' names without a trace of hesitation.



A typical view in the Temple Garden

After a short diversion to the probable site of the Temple with its distant prospect of Windsor Castle, we skirted the children's play area with its fine cedars and walked down the side of the prospect view into the Arboretum (first developed as a Pinetum in the 1860s by the Harvey family) where we were introduced by Michael to a diverse range of interesting trees. Whilst we enjoyed spring colouring, we were strongly recommended to return later in the year for spectacular autumn colour. One of the most memorable items was the American Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*) a 'County Champion' (ie the finest example of this in Bucks). Langley has seven other County Champions which we were shown.



Michael (flat cap) with the group in the Temple Gardens. With thanks to Michael for his expert guidance, we made our way back to the small café which was coping bravely with the crowds enjoying the park in the warm May sunshine.



Roving Reporter: Geoff Huntingford

Garden Visit: The Walled Garden, Wormsley, Stokenchurch on Friday 27th May

What a glorious sunny day we had for the Bucks Gardens Trust visit to the Wormsley Estate Walled Garden in the heart of the Chilterns. As a prelude to the Walled Garden itself we enjoyed a mile long drive through the beautiful wooded estate, passing the cricket ground and the Garsington opera before arriving at the Walled Garden.

Head Gardener Charlotte gave us an introductory talk on the Walled Garden which was originally designed by Richard Woods in the mid-18th century. It is situated about a mile from the main house, probably because it had a good water supply, good soil and the best light. Sir Paul Getty bought the estate in the 1980s and the Walled Garden was then in a weedy, derelict state.

Penelope Hobhouse was employed in 1991 to oversee the restoration of the Walled Garden which took two years to complete. Sir Paul Getty wanted the Garden to be a place to walk and contemplate as well as being a productive garden.



Entrance to garden and brick central path (Julie Reid)

The Walled Garden is divided into four garden rooms. The first room contains shrubs and flowers for cutting. It was in full bloom with iris, euphorbia, roses, veronicastrum, thalictrum, salvia and eryngium. Some of the beds are currently being replanted with a more prairie style of planting to reduce watering.



Eremurus and alliums (Julie Reid)

The second garden room consists of a croquet lawn, flanked by wildlife areas which provides a contrast to the formality of the croquet lawn.



Croquet lawn (Ann Birch)

The third room houses the productive garden. In the original design of the garden this area was hidden but in recent years it has been opened up so that visitors can enjoy and appreciate the range of produce grown in the garden.



Glasshouses (Julie Reid)



The vegetable garden (Ann Birch)

The final room is a green theatre with a raised grass area forming the stage, a line of box balls the footlights and rectangular blocks of yew the wings. It is still used for performances.



Green theatre (Julie Reid)

Outside the walls is an orchard with old and new varieties of fruit with a wildflower meadow beneath the trees.



Orchard (Ann Birch)

The Walled Garden hosts numerous functions throughout the year and provides food and flowers for shooting, cricket and opera parties so the Garden – and the gardening team – have to work hard.

We were then invited to explore the gardens in our own time fortified with tea, coffee and delicious cake.



Delicious refreshments served in the central courtyard

Roving Reporter: Ann Birch

Garden Visit: Turn End, Haddenham on Wednesday 8th June

I have visited Turn End twice before, in late Summer and Autumn, but was excited to see it in its full summer splendour. I have been collaborating with Jackie Hunt, the gardener at Turn End, during the last year, having produced a podcast and shown the Turn End film as a prelude to the BGT visit.



We all assembled in the courtyard/drive of the three houses (The Turn, Middle Turn and Turn End) for an introductory talk and were delighted when Peter Aldington, the architect who still lives on site, also joined us. The site, which is approximately 1 acre, was created in the 1960s and the garden started to take shape straight away; Peter says, 'it is still not finished!'



The site was once the walled garden of a nearby Victorian house and several mature trees were in situ, including a large walnut which Peter managed to move to the front and now shades the drive. There is also a sizeable Sequoia which dates from 1910. The soil is rather poor and very free-draining so vast amounts of organic material have been and continue



to be added; there is a 6-bay compost area. A large tank which draws water from a borehole provides water for the irrigation system. Some of the surrounding walls are of the local 'witchert' construction, being made from mud which is rendered and capped.



The garden is divided into different areas, including small courtyards, the newest of which is the dry garden which has year-round interest, the daisy garden adjacent to the wonderful old coach house, which is a late season garden, and the office garden with its pool and seating area, where we enjoyed a cup of tea! The main lawned part of the garden is bursting with shrubs and perennials including alliums, irises, foxgloves, and wonderful climbing roses which were just coming into bloom.

We were very fortunate that the showers that were forecast held off until later and everyone enjoyed a most pleasant afternoon in this most relaxing oasis tucked away in Haddenham.

One of Buckinghamshire's 'Unforgettable Gardens'. A huge thank you to our hosts Peter and Jackie.



Roving Reporter: Claire de Carle

(all images C. de Carle)

Tree Walk: Tomkins Arboretum, Winslow on Tuesday 14th June

Just off the historic High Street of Winslow (A413) is Tomkins Park and Arboretum, a five-and-a-half-acre gem hidden in the middle of the historic town with its present entrance through a council car park. Our guide for this walk was Michael Hunt who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the park and arboretum and who was responsible for the informative booklet, *Tree Information: A guide to the more unusual trees*, copies of which we were given.

The Park and Arboretum were originally part of the pleasure garden of Winslow Hall, a Grade I listed building constructed c.1698-1702 by William Lowndes who was responsible for the original planting of the estate with London and Wise as suppliers. During 250 years the estate had a number of owners, but in 1959 Sir Edward and Lady Tomkins purchased the Hall and saved it from demolition. The house was restored and the garden and the park improved with now mature specimen trees and shrubs.

The present Park and Arboretum was purchased in 2013 by Winslow Town Council from Julian Tomkins as a community asset for Winslow, reflecting the strong connection of the family with the town; it was opened to the public in November 2016. Within the boundary of the arboretum can be found the Winslow Bowls Club (1980), crossing footpaths to the entrances, picnic tables and benches. The Winslow Public Hall, toilets and Greyhound Lane car parking area are situated between the High Street and the arboretum's perimeter of trees.

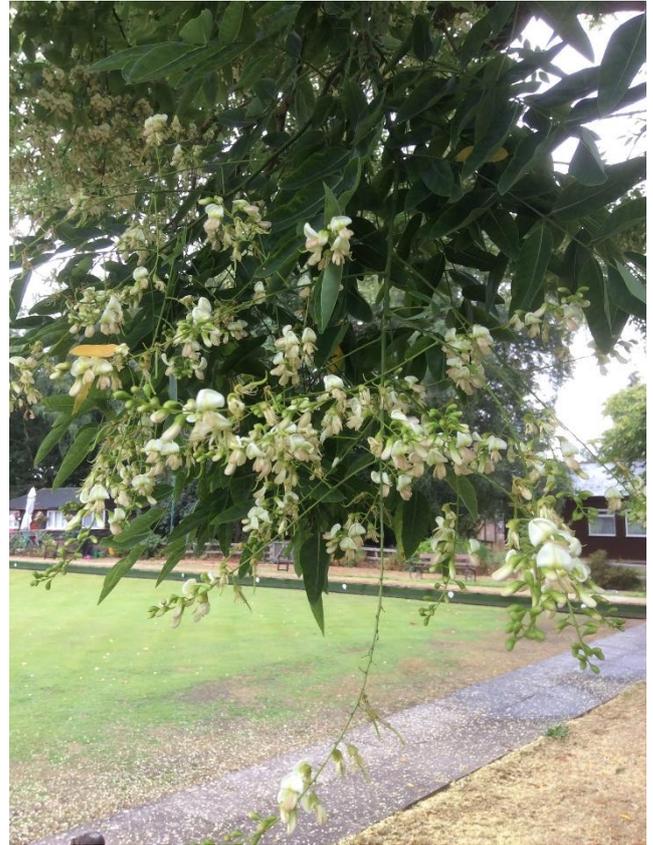
As it was an extremely hot day our group of 14 met Michael under a canopy of trees at the Greyhound Lane car park entrance to the park. The shade also provided the opportunity to reveal some of the new



New tree: *Cryptomeria japonica* Sekken-Sugi, Japanese cedar

planting that has taken place in the park and to check its health; despite the long grass the Japanese Japonica “Suzie” and Douglas Fir were thriving. In an anti-clockwise progression we admired the first of

a number of specimen trees, a Black Locust *Robinia pseudoacacia* (very toxic) introduced c.1630 to England from the USA and a Cedar of Lebanon *Cedrus libani*. At this point a high linked wire fence and thick brambles separate the garden of the house from the pleasure garden and park, but “borrowed from next door” we could see an Acer, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, (tulip tree) and *Ailanthus altissima*, the tree of heaven, also “football shirts on a washing line” as Michael called the *Davidia involucrata*. This is Winslow's own “Secret Garden” with a tantalising glimpse of the house beyond.



Styphnolobium japonicum: Japanese Pagoda Tree

MH

As we continued the walk Michael pointed out the explanatory signs that have been installed close to most of the specimen trees, so identification was relatively easy and we could spot the Swamp Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and the Laurel Leafed Oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), a Champion tree said to be the only mature specimen in Buckinghamshire. Other distinctive trees include a Japanese Pagoda Tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*), several London planes (*Platanus x hispanica*), a Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica glauca*), a Hungarian Oak (*Quercus frainetto*), a Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), a Brewers Weeping Spruce (*Picea breweriana*) a Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) and many others.

A number of the mature trees form part of the outline of the 17th and 18th century boundary/perimeter, including the Champion tree Laurel leafed oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). With a view to the future replacement, planting is taking place

**Garden Visit: to Dorneywood, Slough
Thursday 14th July**



Quercus laurifolia: laurel leafed oak MH

but, as we saw whilst we were there, the gang mower is not always a friend; some trees are struggling or had disappeared!

Trees are such an important part of our landscape and many of the species found in the Tomkins Arboretum and Park were introduced into this country by the 17th and 18th century's intrepid plant hunters. To ensure continuity, and for the future, it is essential to manage what is probably the fourth generation of trees on this site. Michael is hoping that a "Friends of Tomkins Park" group might be the way forward to care for the young trees.



Quercus frainetto, Hungarian Oak MH

A most enjoyable afternoon in Winslow's "hidden gem". Thank you Michael Hunt for your enthusiasm and knowledge.

Roving Reporter: Gwen Miles



Gemma Kirk-Stretton: Dorneywood Trust

A country residence of British politicians since 1955, Dorneywood was previously the home of the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Lord Courtauld Thompson, who purchased the property from the Parker family in 1919. Originally a farmhouse with several timber framed outbuildings, the house was rebuilt in 1920 after being severely damaged in a fire, and is mainly Edwardian in style. It is surrounded by 6 acres of gardens and sits within a 280-acre estate of arable land.

With no heirs to succeed him, Courtauld Thompson offered the property to the National Trust in 1942. A key condition of his bequest - that Dorneywood be held as a ministerial residence - was agreed with Winston Churchill, Prime Minister. When Courtauld Thompson died in 1954 and the estate passed to the National Trust, the first ministerial occupant of the house was Anthony Eden (then Foreign Secretary). A number of subsequent Foreign and Home Secretaries were granted use of the house until the 1990s, when it first became the official country home of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a tradition that now seems established.



Today, the house is run by the Dorneywood Trust (under a National Trust tenancy) and we were given a very entertaining and warm welcome by Sue Saville, Secretary, along with Carole Ambrose (above), the

housekeeper. We visited four main rooms on the ground floor – the spacious old entrance hall (which today serves as the dining room), the drawing room, the study and the music room (a single-storey extension to the house constructed after the fire). These rooms were furnished in a traditional country-house style, with fine antique furniture from Lord Courtauld Thompson's time, his books, tapestries, porcelain and art, including a *View from the Terrace* by Rex Whistler. There were some later additions of furniture from the National Trust's own collections and paintings from the Government Art Collection.



Once outside again, we were given a tour of the gardens by Sean Walter from the Plant Specialist Nursery (Great Missenden). With only one long-standing permanent gardener on the payroll (Andrew), Sean oversees some of the planting and maintenance of the gardens today with the help of a number of volunteers. The gardens have a strong framework which is maintained as it was in Lord Courtauld Thompson's time, but the planting has been adapted to suit drier conditions and to provide year-round interest.

We entered the gardens through 'The Street', wide planted borders on either side of a brick path leading away from two old cottages, a short distance from the front door of the house. Next came 'The Lily Pond', introduced about 20 years ago, near a modern greenhouse filled with fan-trained nectarines and apricots. Here, the hard lines were softened by planting *Hackonechloa* grasses.



Passing an old rustic wooden shed which was the apple store, we moved on to 'The Orchard' where, in a wildflower meadow with fruit trees there were also a number of beehives. Turning a corner, we came to 'The Dell' where we admired a magnificent and exceptionally large *Genista* in bloom. Once an old clay pit, this low-lying area afforded wonderful views back up to the house. Passing through 'The Old Rose Garden' where the roses have now been replaced with shrubs in various shades of yellow and orange, we completed the loop to the front lawn of the house in time for tea with delicious home-made cakes.

We conveyed our thanks to all the staff at Dorneywood for a wonderful and memorable visit.

Roving Reporter: Jeri Bapasola

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust – 20th Anniversary Celebrations



While we have been preoccupied with our 25th Anniversary celebrations, our neighbours in Oxfordshire have been marking their 20th anniversary, with a visit and drinks reception at Rycote near Thame. Oxfordshire was one of the last counties to form a trust, amazing as they have more registered parks and gardens than any other county!

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust visited Rycote Park back in 2014, and in the last eight years the gardens, which were relatively new then, have matured nicely.



The Chapel at Rycote

The historically important chapel has undergone further renovation and close by is a wonderful Capability Brown icehouse (similar to the one he had installed at Croome). The icehouse was previously still being restored and was not finished until 2016; the work is of a very high standard as are the buildings throughout the park.



Ice House

Unfortunately, Brown's Lake has not fared so well: there is now an ongoing effort to address the management of the water, which has an algae problem. We also visited the Edwardian Kitchen Garden and the formal gardens around the house. The tours of the garden were preceded by an introductory talk on the history of Rycote from the current owner



Herb Garden

Sarah Taylor. The evening was rounded off with drinks, canapés and speeches, from Sally Stradling and Richard Mawrey.

I hope that BGT will visit this amazing garden soon, possibly in 2024, 10 years after our last visit!

Claire de Carle

**Our Work: Research and Recording
Lord's Wood - then and now 'An Outpost of Old
Bloomsbury in the Marlow Woods' (Frances
Partridge, Diary 1958)**



Mary and her daughter Alix Strachey circa 1940 at Lord's Wood (NPG)

Lord's Wood (Grade II) was built between 1899 and 1900. It is located to the west of Marlow Common and is accessed by a track known as Frieth Road. Marlow Common was already the site of an artists' colony, led by the sculptor and art potter Conrad Dressler who lived at Monks Corner. He was the director of the Medmenham Pottery, founded and funded by the soap manufacturer Robert Hudson, the Sunlight soap tycoon.

The interior of the house was designed to have bare brick walls, no doors and no plumbing: all 'night soil' was used in the vegetable garden. The architect was Granville Streatfield. He built the 'Queen Anne/Lutyens style' house using local bricks and Westmorland roofing slates, while Mary Sargent Florence supervised all phases of the building. The family did not show any particular interest in the garden, apart from growing vegetables; the gardens comprised of lawns and trees, some of which predated the house. Mary lived at Lord's Wood until 1940 when she passed the property on to her daughter Alix and son-in-law James Strachey.



Mary's former studio, 2022 (C de Carle)



Parterre adjacent to the Studio (C de Carle)

In the early days, the Stracheys used the garden to entertain members of the Bloomsbury Group and later their psychoanalyst friends. In later life Alix became increasingly reclusive and eccentric; she died in 1973 and the house was sold.

The 0.8-hectare garden (total site 14 hectares) at Lord's Wood is primarily the work of art dealers David and Millie Messum. When they purchased the house in 1974 the gardens were a wilderness, today they have been redesigned and form the backdrop to the art gallery's sculpture display (Messums blog).



Today (2022) the gardens are managed by head gardener James Piercey and Ryan Belton who have overseen further improvements, including the creation of three ponds, the long border on the north lawn and the herb garden.



Mary Sargent was born in London in 1857, the third of eight children. They were an artistic middle-class family. Her father, Henry was a barrister and her brother Charles a judge. Her sister Ethel became a botanist, Walter a headmaster and Francis a sculptor. She studied at the Slade under Alfonse Legros and in Paris under Luc-Olivier Merson. She was a painter of figure subjects, mural decorations in fresco and occasional landscapes in watercolour and pastel (Wikipedia).

In 1887 she married Henry Florence, an American music student, and in an unusual move for the time she kept her maiden name. They lived in Nutley, New Jersey in a carriage house (nearby was the Enclosure district which was popular with artists and magazine editors), which later became a studio used by other local artists. Following her husband's tragic death by drowning in their pond in 1891 Florence returned to England with her two young children in 1899.



I was able to visit Lord's Wood back in June this year when it was opened for the NGS. It is currently on the market, so the future is uncertain and under new ownership it may not be open to the public. <https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/properties/residential/for-sale/marlow-common-marlow-buckinghamshire-sl7/hot180195>

The full report about Mary Sargent Florence will be posted on the 'Artists and their Gardens' section of our website <https://bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/artists-gardens-reports/> *Claire de Carle August 2022*

Our Work: Research and Recording Denham Mount

Denham Mount offers an oasis of relative calm in the busy congested part of the extreme south east of the county close to Uxbridge. (The elegant house itself is only less than 1km from the centre of the junction between the M40 and the M25.) The Trust was alerted to a potential threat to Denham Mount and it was decided to make a priority study within the Research and Recording Project. Access to the house and grounds has not yet been granted. The following is the result of desktop study of its history including a visit to the Buckinghamshire archives made by Kathy Jackson.

The land associated with the Mount occupies a triangular plot measuring approx. 16ha between three lanes south of the A40. Both Rocque in 1760 and Jefferys in 1777 indicate some buildings on this site.

More detail comes from the Parish Map of 1783. A house called 'Whealers' and garden stood around 70m north of the current house, judging by its location relative to bends in Hollybush Lane to the west. There is no indication of a lake at this time. The current house followed in the early 1800s and was designed for Nathaniel Snell by Robert Lugar (1773–1855).



Denham Mount, Country Life 2020. Copyright Strutt & Parker

Lugar was a prolific architect of houses with a particular concentration of finished commissions in mid-Wales and Scotland, but nothing more of note in Buckinghamshire. He was born in Colchester and became County Surveyor of Essex in 1816. His works are generally either 'cottage ornée' style (bijou) or in castellated Gothic or Tudor style (gargantuan): he is credited with introducing the asymmetrical castellated style to Scotland with two castles in Dumbartonshire).

By the time of the draft survey for the Ordnance Survey (c.1810) the current layout of the house with its park is fully in evidence, comprising: the house, occupying a central position between the three lanes; perimeter planting to the south and east of the designed landscape; a lodge at the north-east corner; an approach road from this lodge curving towards the house from the north; a lake extending eastwards from the house towards the east boundary; a detached building to the north west of the house (presumably the former stables); and a rectangular walled enclosure to the west of the house (this is the only original feature that has not survived). Bryant (1824) also shows the house and grounds in this completed state.

Sale particulars for auction on 20 May 1843 list the house in the centre of an estate of 40 acres and 16 perches (16.23 ha) of 'Chiefly Park-like Meadow, Arable and Wood Lands' and including: a farm yard; a grapery and a conservatory; an ornamental pavilion and 'a fine piece of water'.

This layout has seen relatively little alteration since it was laid out. An extension noted on the Tithe Map of 1843 produced two extra rooms next the entrance porch. A new conservatory was added on the south side of the house in the early C20 (1923 OS). The house was used in 1945 as the location for the

filming of Noël Coward's 'Blithe Spirit' (starring Rex Harrison and Kay Hammond, directed by David Lean). The pleasure grounds were extended eastwards into the park towards the lake (also 1923 OS).

The gardens to the south of the house have been altered several times in accordance with contemporary taste (OS mapping and aerial photographs).

Around 1975 the area of the former walled garden to the west of the house became the 'Green Tiles Garden Centre'.

The rear extension has been replaced (consents in 2009). In 2014 permission was granted to fell several trees with Preservation Orders ('TPO's) on the eastern boundary to Froggy Lane because of waterlogging by the lake, poor form and the risk of falling timber. The garden centre was completely cleared by 2019 and access from Hollybush Lane to most of the various detached buildings to the north west of the house had been rationalised in a comprehensive scheme (2019 Aerial Photo). Soon after, the house was on the market (Country Life February 11, 2020). Denham Mount was apparently sold in October 2020

(<https://www.thedecamillo.com/house/denham-mount>) and an application was submitted in September 2021 for change of use to hotel (seven rooms in the house and nine more in the various detached buildings). The application site included all the land within the three lanes. This application was withdrawn in January 2021.

The most attractive feature of the house and its designed setting remains the relationship between a bow-fronted principal reception room with its curved timber trellis veranda and the lake below.

The House is listed Grade II. The stables (now reduced in size and converted to residential use) are also listed Grade II.

Geoff Huntingford

The Ian Hamilton Finlay Improvement Garden at Stockwood Park

During the lockdown the Bucks Gardens Trust were treated to a Zoom talk on the Improvement Garden by Kate Harwood who has spent a considerable time researching the garden and making sure it is protected by its inclusion on the Historic England Register of parks and gardens, at Grade II*.



The Errata of Ovid (inspired by the Temple of Worthies at Stowe)

Unfortunately, the gardens at Stockwood were closed throughout the pandemic and have only recently reopened, leaving the gardeners, all one and three-quarters of them, the Herculean task of bringing back the gardens to their former standard, after two years of neglect. Not a good move by Luton Borough Council, which took the government's offer of furloughing staff to mean that it was acceptable to mothball the garden at a time when it was most needed.



The double tree column base, inscribed *BETULA PENDULA* and *SILVER BIRCH*

Since the reopening, the head gardener has worked tirelessly to tidy up the Improvement Garden and it did not disappoint. It was a beautiful June day for my visit with a group of fellow garden historians: the sunshine filtered through the trees, creating a relaxing atmosphere despite the low-flying planes from Luton and the nearby M1 motorway.

The garden, which contains six sculptures by Ian Hamilton Finlay, opened in 1991. Finlay produced a master plan for the sculptures in 1986 and Bob Burgoyne, the then master gardener at Luton



Borough Council, planned the planting scheme with Sue Finlay and executed the design along with his team (how times have changed – I don't think there are many master gardeners employed by

Councils in 2022). Finlay never actually visited his creation, preferring to stay up in Scotland at his home Little Sparta, as he suffered from agoraphobia.

Unfortunately, the first sculpture, a tree plaque which reads: 'I sing for myself and the Muses' is no longer in situ, the ash tree that it was attached to having now died. It is hoped that a new tree will soon be planted in its place and the plaque restored to its rightful position.

For more information on the sculptures go the

Historic England list entry:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1468798>

Claire de Carle

(photographs by the author)

Apples and Pears

No, I am not speaking in Cockney rhyming slang, I am an Orchard Volunteer at Stowe Landscape Gardens.

Now, I realise that orchards, and indeed fruit trees, are not the first thing that people associate with Stowe; although some people may have admired the almond trees in the court yard near the café that look so lovely in the Spring and a group of Japanese visitors had obviously made a special trip to see the flowering cherries near to the Doric Arch when I was there earlier in the year.



However, fruit trees, particularly apple trees, of which there are over 100, are an important and historic part of the Stowe landscape. Of course they are the source of the apples at the annual Harvest event in the Autumn, when you can see apple pressing and juicing as well as finding out about and tasting the heritage varieties grown at Stowe and, perhaps, take some home. Last year they were also wassailed in traditional fashion and some of the fruit finds its way into the café. I recommend the hot, spiced apple juice.

So, what does an Orchard Volunteer do and where are the orchards at Stowe? The Orchard Volunteers Group is a new one and we are there to help the trees stay healthy and fruitful, to identify the trees already at Stowe, propagate the unusual varieties and plant more for the future.

Young trees are staked and protected from the ravages of the deer and rabbits; who view their bark

as a tasty winter snack, and we weed and mulch around them as well. Watering is done by a different team, who look after all the newly planted trees around Stowe.

Both young and mature trees are pruned in the winter, between November and February when the trees are dormant and, the team prune the water shoots off during the summer so the energy goes back into the fruit, ensuring the fruit has more light and air to ripen: this happens from late June to mid-August. Then of course there is fruit to be picked. There is something to do every month of the year. Probably the largest 'orchard' is the overflow car park, where rows of apples, pears and other fruit trees have been planted, but there are more in and about the main car park, particularly the area set aside for coaches, and around the New Inn.



There are also several in the Farmhouse Garden. Some of the oldest 'veteran' trees can be found in the parkland; these are approaching the end of their productive lives but are becoming an important wildlife habitat and are so treasured that they are the subject of specialist attention. However, my favourite orchard is tucked away between the Grecian Valley and the Stowe School athletics track.

Visitors who venture to this spot will find the remains of a small walled garden. The wall would have stood about 8ft high, now they are only a foot or so high at the most, fortunately they were not further reduced in height when a large tree nearby was blown down during the storms last winter.

Within this area are a number of very old apple trees, several of them are now horizontal rather than vertical but are still producing both fruit and blossom and new trees are gradually being added. It is a peaceful spot to sit and listen to the bees and birds on sunny day.

So next time you are at Stowe, particularly if you are there in 'apple blossom time' go and have a look at some of the fruit trees, you may even be able to identify a few of them for us.

P.S. We also look after a small orchard at the Boarstall Duck Decoy, which is another place that is worth a visit.

With acknowledgment to Sophie Thomas, the Orchard Volunteer Group Co-ordinator.

Gill Grocott

Her Majesty's Trees at Buckingham Palace



With Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations still fresh in our minds and in particular the Jubilee Green Canopy project, we are reminded of the fact that Queen Elizabeth II has a great knowledge of trees and has planted some 1500 during her reign. She has always enjoyed being involved with the selection and planting of trees in the grounds of the palaces and their great estates and parklands. Buckingham Palace, one of the finest estates, holds a wealth of amazing trees from all over the world.

The royal collection includes the following Champion trees registered in *The Tree Register of Britain and Ireland*.

30 *Quercus* (oaks), many being American species which seem to thrive in the heavy soils and the warm microclimate of the city

6 species of *Tilia* (limes)

A fine *Gymnocladus dioica*, the Kentucky Coffee Tree

Itoa orientalis, from Myanmar (formerly Burma)

Arbutus reyorum (Strawberry Tree)

3 species of *Carya* (Hickories): *Carya hunanensis* from China and *Carya illinoensis* and *texana* from the USA

Magnolia delavayi Delavay's Magnolia from China

Liquidambar orientalis, the Oriental Sweet Gum from S/W Turkey (below)



Phellodendron chinense, Chinese Cork Tree from Central China

Prunus nipponica “Kurilensis” (Kurile Cherry): this is from the Kuriles, Sakhalin and the mountainous regions Hokkaido and Honshu in Japan

Ptelea trifoliata, the Hop Tree from East North America

Cinnamomum camphora, the Camphor Tree from Tropical Asia

Casuarina cunninghamiana (she-oak) from Eastern Australia, the first to have been grown successfully to a tree size in Northwest Europe. Its name is derived from a comparison of the timber quality with English Oak. It looks nothing like oaks that we know and has equisetoid or drooping evergreen twigs and foliage, equisetoid meaning looking like the “Horsetails” (equisetum) like the plant we know in damp areas in our countryside. Casuarina can fix Nitrogen through nodes on its roots that contain Frankia, a bacterium. The Hill Tribes in New Guinea utilised this plant in crop rotation to restore nitrogen in the soil.

Disease Resistant Elms



I particularly like the fact that these are represented in the collection.

Ulmus “New Horizon” and *Ulmus rebona* from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation in the USA (see above)

Ulmus lutece “Nanguen” from the Dorschkamp Research Institute, Wageningen, Netherlands

Ulmus uyematsui “Hayata” which is endemic to Central Taiwan and very rare in cultivation outside Taiwan, introduced to commerce in the Netherlands in 2011

And a resistant but not immune dwarf variety *Ulmus parvifolia*

“Yatsubusa”, a Chinese Elm cultivar

Trees with Royal Names

Acer campestre (Field Maple) “Queen Elizabeth” (R)(Evelyn) this is a selection from a native Field

Maple originating in Oregon, named by J Frank Schmidt and Son and gifted to Her Majesty.

Three fine examples of a Golden Leaved Norway Maple “Golden Jubilee”

Magnolia campbellii “Queen Caroline”, this form from a 1904 introduction of seed from India
Liquidambar styraciflua (sweet gum) “Royal Lodge” which was named by John Anderson, the keeper of the gardens at Windsor. This from a specimen situated in front of Royal Lodge. It is not yet commercially available, but a scion was planted at All Saints Chapel by Princess Beatrice on the occasion of her wedding in 2020.

Michael Hunt

News

Autumn Events: the Bank Holiday (Sunday 28th August) e-bulletin sent to all registered members has a list of events for the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust, the Gardens Trust and for the London Gardens Trust so do book now. Details also on Bucks GT website.

Bucks GT Events Reminder:

Thursday 13th October 12.00 noon: Celebratory Lunch at Hampden House, Great Hampden for the 25th Anniversary

Sunday 23rd October at 14.30: Tree Walk at Priestfield Arboretum, Little Kingshill

Saturday 12th November at 2.30-4.00: “In Search of Artists Gardens in Buckinghamshire” at the Museum of Discovery, Aylesbury. £10.00 to include tea and cake.

Saturday 3rd December 12 noon – 4 pm.

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Christmas Event. The New Inn, Stowe. £20.00 includes buffet lunch and liquid refreshment.

Bookings should be made through:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/buckinghamshire-gardens-trust

You can book all your events with a ‘shopping basket’ and then pay online by card.

If you are having problems then contact Rosemary Jury via email enquiries@bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

Members: Welcome to New Members:

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust is delighted to welcome the following new members: Sheila Borwick, Francis Thomas and Anthony Young.

Farewell: Martin and Vivienne Humphrey have moved to Chichester and plan to join the Sussex GT. Thank you for your support.

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Gwen Miles – Editor

Clare Butler – Vice Editor

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