

Birkbeck Garden History Group Newsletter



Spring 2018 No 48

Sixteenth Annual General Meeting

The BGHG Annual General Meeting was held on 21 February with 35 members present. The Annual Report and the Financial Report and Annual Accounts had been circulated to all members in advance. The group organised eight visits in 2017 plus a three-day trip to Yorkshire which was deemed a great success. The Study Day on *Gardens and the Far East* was well attended and well received. We also celebrated our fifteenth anniversary with the unveiling of a plaque next to the *Davidia involucrata* tree we had planted outside Birkbeck College, followed by a reception in University of London Senate House.

The membership secretary reported that the group is growing and now has 189 members. Renewals of membership for 2018 are due now; see payment details under News. The group is in a strong financial position and is looking at ways we could disburse funds for the benefit of members or for the wider promotion of garden history. To that end, it has been agreed to make a donation to the London Parks & Gardens Trust to support the publication of their book *Repton in London*. We also supported an Introduction to Garden History one-day event run by the Garden History Grapevine in January 2017 and plan to repeat this in September 2018.

The new committee was duly elected at the AGM. Thanks were given to Elizabeth Allen who has served her five years on the committee most ably and has had to step down. The BGHG committee for 2018 consists of Joan Pateman (Chair), Susan Jellis (Vice Chair), Barbara Deason (Treasurer), Francine Gee (Secretary), Margaret Scholes (Membership Secretary), Joan Pateman (Newsletter Editor), Lucy Baron, Carmela Bromhead Jones, Ruth Brownlow, Sue Coulbeck and Margie Hoffnung. Carmela Bromhead Jones was welcomed as a new member of the committee. The meeting agreed a special dispensation to allow Joan Pateman to continue as Newsletter Editor for a sixth year, no other nominations for the post having been received. Following the AGM, the committee decided to invite Elizabeth Allen as a co-opted member for 2018, as she is willing to help with our activities.

The AGM was followed by a fascinating lecture on *John Hay (1758-1836).... 'the eminent garden architect who has contributed much to the improvement of walled gardens and hothouses in Scotland'* (quote by J. C. Loudon) given by Doreen Wilson. Last year Doreen completed a Master's degree in Garden and Landscape History, the subject of her dissertation being John Hay.

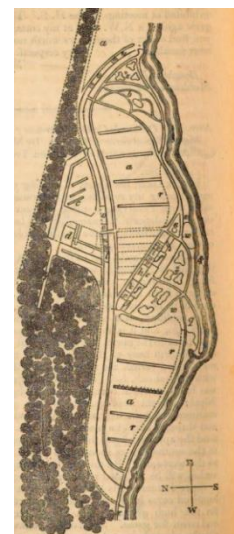
John Hay (1758-1836), Scottish Horticultural Architect

Whilst Doreen Wilson was looking for a subject for her MA dissertation, Christopher Dingwall, Scottish Garden Historian, sent her a plan of the Balnagown estate walled garden executed by John Hay in 1814. Her curiosity aroused, this became the starting point of a painstaking piece of research but her early enquiries revealed little. She found a reference to him by J. C. Loudon as 'the most eminent horticultural architect Scotland has ever produced' but 20th and 21st century books on Scottish gardens made no, or inaccurate, mention of him.

The National Records of Scotland revealed that John Hay was born in the village of Linton, East Lothian on 9 December 1758. He married Janet Turner in Haddington in 1791, had eleven children registered in Lothian and in 1810 he had a son born in Edinburgh. He died in Edinburgh in 1836. During the earlier part of his career he worked at Preston Hall and, although he was not directly involved with the design, he wrote regarding a later project of 'the origin of the idea which first occurred to me about the year 1794 when employed in erecting the glasshouses at Preston Hall'.

Doreen found evidence of his working on hothouses at Archerfield in East Lothian and designing other kitchen gardens whilst there. An article in Loudon's *Gardener's Magazine* in 1826 refers to Dalhousie Gardens (now sadly derelict but once highly regarded) where the plan by John Hay for the walled garden in 1806 'is certainly very different from, and in effect far surpasses the ordinary mode of enclosing gardens by straight walls', instead setting out walls 'built in a curved and winding direction'. This bears similarities to the plan that first inspired her project, for Balnagown, which also shows the enclosed garden with a curved wall. Hay surveyed the estates and drew up plans for the walled garden at Saltoun Hall, East Lothian, as well as for many other estates.

From an advertisement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* August 1812 by John Hay we learn that, as well as seeking work designing 'Hot-houses, Greenhouses and Conservatories,' together with 'Parks, and ...Plantations, Shrubberies ...etc.', he also had



Dalhousie Garden 1806

a shop where he kept 'every article good in the Seed line, Garden Tool, Watering Engines....all articles necessary for gardens, furnishing for hot-houses.'

The Caledonian Horticultural Society Minute Book 1810 shows John Hay as one of the founder members; he was on the committee which dealt with the problems of potato curl and gooseberry caterpillars. In 1817 he accompanied Patrick Neill, Secretary, to report on the state of horticulture in Northern Europe and whilst in France took an 'eye sketch' of the glasshouses at Malmaison. The Memoirs of the Caledonian Horticultural Society included an 'Account of a Mode of producing a steady and uniform bottom heat in Pineapple or Melon Pits, or in Stoves for Exotic Plants by means of Steam introduced into a close Chamber filled with Water-worn Stones.' In 1825 he drew up a plan for an 'Experimental' Garden for the Caledonian Horticultural Society in Edinburgh.

Doreen pointed out that one reason John Hay never gained the fame of some of his contemporaries could be that he tended to work in places where the others involved have become more renowned and have taken the credit. Starting with a blank canvas, she discovered a man of many interests and abilities related to garden design, horticulture and heat engineering, who made an important contribution to gardens, especially in Scotland. Her enthusiasm shone through in the whole of this lecture and should be a great encouragement and inspiration to any BGHG member wanting to embark on his/her own research project.

Ruth Brownlow

Painshill Reborn

The BGHG 15th Annual Lecture, titled *Painshill Reborn*, was delivered by Cherrill Sands, a freelance garden historian, lecturer and consultant. Cherrill works in the archives at Painshill, and is a Representative Member of Painshill Park Trust.

In the course of the lecture, Cherrill outlined the importance of Painshill in landscape history, described the remarkable restoration project and showed us what Painshill looks like today. Painshill, on the River Mole in Surrey, was the creation of the Hon. Charles Hamilton (1704-86), incorporating ideas he obtained from two Grand Tours. Starting in 1738, Hamilton spent 35 years designing the garden. At a time when formal gardens were the fashion, nature controlled by man, he created instead a masterpiece of the naturalistic English Landscape style. There was a 14-acre lake as a focal point with parkland, follies, eye-catching vistas, pleasure ground and even a vineyard which survived for 40 years. It was a garden of mood, meant to stimulate the senses; it was meant to take the visitor on a journey of exploration, following a circuit walk.

Sadly, Painshill was sold off and split up at the end of World War II. In 1964 the local historian David C. Taylor started the 'Save Painshill' campaign and the project to rescue Painshill began in earnest in 1981. To save money, Hamilton had built in non-durable materials, using wood instead of stone and even plaster and papier maché for the Temple of Bacchus for example. By the 1980s, the land was overgrown and all of the buildings and features were ruined or in serious decay. At the time, Painshill was in the forefront of combining archival and archaeological research for restoration. Surveys were undertaken, archaeological digs commissioned and contemporary paintings and plans studied to try to establish how to restore the site. Just to recover the vineyard took serious land clearance and renovation of the soil. Slowly over the years features such as the Gothic Temple,



The Grotto, Painshill in 2016

Ruined Abbey, Amphitheatre, Chinese Bridge, Turkish Tent and Hermitage were rebuilt, this time made of stone and fibreglass. The Turkish Tent was first restored in 1995; the Temple of Bacchus begun in 2016. The Temple was surrounded by flowers to make it a kind of paradise and the area has been replanted with plants that had their origin in the 18th century. The statue of Bacchus had disappeared but was rediscovered in the grounds of Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire; a plaster cast of the original has been made for the Temple at Painshill. As for the Hermitage, Hamilton advertised for a real hermit at the time it was built; it was rebuilt in 2004 and housed a new hermit for two weeks, 9-6 pm! Restoration of the Grotto was one of the longest running projects. By this time almost completely ruined, it was famous in its time and, fortunately for the restorers, appeared in many paintings and plans, including the original design by Fredrik Magnus

Piper in 1779. Still its reconstruction was an amazing, and costly, achievement, well worth seeing. The Five Arch Bridge is also fully restored in Portland stone, but discussions continue about the restoration of the Mausoleum. Today the historic route through the landscape and planting has been restored as Hamilton meant it to be.

The restoration of Painshill has attracted many awards, including the Europa Nostra Award in 1998 and the Hudson's Heritage Award in 2016. After years of dedication, research and sheer hard work, it is without doubt a heroic and triumphant achievement

Trijntje Ytsma

Cambridgeshire Winter Gardens

BGHG Visit 22 February

We arrived at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden in hopes of a good show of snowdrops and were not disappointed, finding *Galanthus nivalis* lining every path and carpeting the wider, skeletal landscape. There are many areas of seasonal interest to enjoy but the highlight of our visit was the Winter Garden. Here winter flowering shrubs, decorative stems and bark, grasses and herbaceous perennials are combined with horticultural skill and an artist's eye to create an extravaganza of colour, texture and form. The site, laid out in 1979, has been contoured to form a shallow valley enclosing the scent rising from many varieties of winter-flowering honeysuckles, daphne and viburnum. The Garden is oriented to the south to maximise light and sun. At the entrance was a striking ensemble of *Galanthus* 'S Armott' growing through the glossy leaves of *Bergenia* 'Bressingham Ruby' (picture right), backed by *Daphne bholua* 'Jaqueline Postill' in full and fragrant bloom and scented *Lonicera x purpusii*. Within, among the decorative stems, were the brilliant *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire', the twisted *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' and the tangled *Rubus thibetanus* 'Silver Fern'. The polished bark of the Tibetan Cherry, *Prunus serrula* and the flaking bark of *Acer griseum* caught the eye. Taller subjects were underplanted with a dense groundcover of bergenia, hederas, hellebores, winter aconites and, of course, more snowdrops.



Full of admiration, we were eager to see the Winter Garden at Anglesey Abbey, an addition for the 21st century by the National Trust to the gardens of Huttleston Broughton, 1st Lord Fairhaven. Designed by John Sales and (then) Head Gardener Richard Ayres, the Winter Garden takes the form of a 450m long serpentine walk, the curving bays taking advantage of the winter sun (which happily emerged for us) and offering the surprise of a different tapestry at each turn. At the midpoint lies a small garden of rest and reflection, commemorating the planting of the Garden in 1998, the centenary year of Lord Fairhaven's birth. A garden for all seasons, this, enclosed in a circular hedge of *Elaeagnus x Ebbingei* and planted with grasses and grey-leaved lavender. On to the grand finale, a grove of that most dazzling of silver birches *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*, underplanted with hardworking *Bergenia* 'Bressingham Ruby'.

Two other walks remained to be enjoyed, the tranquil Riverside Walk, with sightings of early spring bulbs, and the Woodland Path. This wound through a shelter belt of mixed deciduous trees and unclipped box, planted in 2004, at this season a showcase for more of Anglesey Abbey's collection of snowdrops in clumps and drifts. And everywhere we caught glimpses of the sleeping formal gardens – the fine tilth of beds and borders, deserted avenues and cocooned statues. A cold winter's day had been full of rich impressions, a cheerful prelude to our 2018 programme.

Margaret Scholes

News

BGHG Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2018 are now due. The subscription of £10 can be paid by BACS or cheque (payable to Birkbeck Garden History Group) to BGHG Membership Secretary, 9 Walcot Square, London SE11 4UB. This year you could set up a Standing Order with your bank to pay your subscriptions; the form and payment details were sent to you by email on 6 February. A copy of the Standing Order form can also be found on the BGHG website under BGHG Membership. See <https://birkbeckgardenhistorygroup.wordpress.com/join-us/>

Professional Gardeners' Trust

The Professional Gardeners' Trust was established in 2004 to fund training and study for working gardeners in the UK and Ireland. It provides gardeners with the opportunity to acquire skills and gain qualifications through part-time courses and work placements. The Trust, chaired by Jeremy Garnett, is funded by donations from horticultural trusts and organisations, private individuals and subscription contributions from Professional Gardeners' Guild members. Last year, the Trust approached the BGHG to ask if we would be willing to support their activities. After some discussion, the BGHG committee have agreed to make a donation to the Trust of £1000 a year for three years to fund training of professional gardeners in garden history. The awards would be in our

name with the specific purpose of furthering knowledge of garden history. Further details about the Trust and its awards can be found at <http://pgtrust.org>.

Editor Wanted for BGHG Project

BGHG have produced two collections of postgraduate research papers based on dissertations and other work by MA students of Garden History. The first, *Grand Gardens and Green Spaces*, was published in 2006 and the second, *Fantasy, Form and Function*, in 2010. We are planning to publish another edited selection of eight recent MA dissertations in Garden History which have been undertaken at the Institute of Historical Research. We are looking for an experienced editor to manage this project through to publication in (provisionally) February 2019 and are offering an honorarium of £500 for the task. You would liaise with the academic editor and printer and advise on layout as well as checking the copy against guidelines. The softback book would be up to 96 pages long and include illustrations. We expect the work to start in early summer. If you are interested, or can recommend someone who might be, please contact Susan Jellis on bghginfo@gmail.com by 20 April 2018.

LPGT Book Offer

The new book on *Repton in London* being published by the London Parks & Gardens Trust (LPGT) is due to come out in April. LPGT are offering BGHG members the opportunity to buy the book at a 10% discount in advance of publication. If you are a member of LPGT or The Gardens Trust you can order online at <http://londongardenstrust.org/publications/repton.php>. BGHG members who do not belong to either LPGT or The Gardens Trust may order by post. Full details of the pre-publication offer, and of the contents of the book, were sent to you by email on 19 March 2018.

LPGT Post Vacant

BGHG members will often have enjoyed the series of lectures put on by the London Parks & Gardens Trust and now have an opportunity to help them happen. Katherine Myers, who has been running the lectures for a long time, is stepping down in the spring and LPGT is looking for a volunteer to organise and run the annual lecture programme in consultation with their Activities Working Group. For more information about the role please see www.londongardenstrust.org/lectures/volunteer.docx. Closing date for expressions of interest is 16 April 2018.

Turner's Garden, Twickenham

The garden at Sandycombe Lodge, Twickenham, has recently been restored and will be officially opened this spring. The artist J. M. W. Turner designed the house and garden in Twickenham in 1813 and lived there until 1826. Apparently his design was influenced by John Soane's country villa of Pitzhanger Manor. A drawing which was used in the restoration was made by William Havell in 1814 shortly after the house was built, showing an informal scheme of cottage garden plants close to the house, with a sunlit lawn sloping eastwards. Turner's own sketches of the site are in the Tate Britain collection. With the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and private donations, the house has also been painstakingly restored to Turner's original design. The Trustees took the brave decision to remove the later additions to the building and to remove the stucco front. The garden restoration project was undertaken by Historic Environment Associates, particularly Sarah Couch and Paul and Ellen Bramhill.

The Folly Fellowship

In March 2011, Andrew Plumridge, RIBA, gave a lecture to the BGHG on *Follies, Emblems of Foolish Luxury* which may be the first occasion many of us had heard of the Folly Fellowship. However, the Folly Fellowship has been around since 1988 when it was set up to preserve, protect and promote follies, grottoes and garden buildings; Andrew Plumridge is a founding member. The Fellowship produces three magazines and a Journal each year. It also organizes visits and other events and is planning a trip to Ireland at the end of April. It has an informative website, <http://follies.org.uk>, which includes a map and database listing about 1700 follies in the UK and Ireland, many with pictures. The website includes a list of follies available for holiday let.

RHS Lindley Library Events

After the current exhibition in the Lindley Library on *Handling with Care*, the next exhibition, *Rethinking Repton*, will provide a fresh take on Repton's Red Books. The library has collaborated with students from the Writtle University College to study Repton's gardening principles. The students have explored Repton's ideas on boundaries and views, on the picturesque and on working with and presenting to clients. The exhibition will display the students' project designs, each presented through the student's own take on Repton's 'before and after' approach. There will be a Curator's Tour of the exhibition and library on Monday 4 June.

On Friday 4 May, the Lindley Library is running a Study Day on glasshouses. Three speakers will explore the architectural, horticultural and social history of glasshouses. Following the talks, there will be an opportunity to study original material on glasshouses, including rare books, catalogues and artwork, from the library collections. For booking details, see the Events page.

Events

BGHG Programme 2018

19 April	Painshill, Surrey
22 May	Canterbury Cathedral Precinct Gardens, Kent
12 June	Highdown Gardens and Arundel Castle Gardens, West Sussex
29 June	Barbican Landscapes, London (repeat of 2017 visit)
11 July	Jellicoe Water Gardens, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire and Luton Hoo Walled Garden, Bedfordshire
16 August	Hestercombe Gardens, Somerset
14 September	Bridge End Garden and Audley End, Essex
October	to be confirmed
November	Annual Lecture

RHS Lindley Library London Events

12 March – 20 April *Exhibition – Handle with Care.*
3 May – 22 June *Exhibition – Rethinking Repton.*
Friday 4 May 10.30 am – 4.30 pm *Study Day – A World under Glass.* Booking for Study Day is essential. 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE, Tel: 020 3176 5830, www.rhs.org.uk/libraries, Email: library.london@rhs.org.uk

Borde Hill Garden Events

Sunday 25 March 11.00 am – 12.00 pm and 3.00 – 4.00 pm Nick Schroder, *Camellia Heritage Tour.*
Wednesday 16 May 10.30 am – 1.30 pm Caroline Holmes, *The Edwardian Garden – golden and delicious.* Borde Hill Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 1XP, Tel: 01444 450326, Email: info@bordehill.co.uk, www.bordehill.co.uk

Bishopsgate Institute Cultural Event

Wednesday 18 April 7.00 pm Travis Elborough, *A History of London's Parks.* 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH, Tel: 020 7392 9200, www.bishopsgate.org.uk

Institute of Historical Research Seminars

Thursday 26 April 6.00 pm Brent Elliott, *Origins of the Royal Horticultural Society.* Ground floor G35.

Thursday 10 May 6.00 pm Paula Riddy, *The Representation of Country Houses and Gardens 1720-1845.* Wolfson Room.

Thursday 24 May 2.00 pm Dave Gibbons *Visit to Kenwood House, Hampstead.* Kenwood House. Lectures in North Block Senate House, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. See website for the rest of the series.

Email: ihrghardenhistory@gmail.com, <http://www.history.ac.uk/events/seminar/history-gardens-landscapes>

Garden Museum Exhibition

18 April – 22 July *Cedric Morris: Artist Plantsman.* Lambeth Palace Road, London, SE1 7LB, Tel: 020 7401 8865, Email: events@gardenmuseum.org.uk, www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

Garden History Grapevine Tuesdays in the Park

Tuesday 8 May 10.30 am *Ashridge.*

Tuesday 22 May 10.30 am *Chelsea Physic Garden.*

Tuesday 5 June 10.30 am *Crystal Palace.* Lectures and tours with Letta Jones and others. Institute of Historical Research, North Block Senate House, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. Book via Eventbrite, www.eventbrite.com, search for Grapevine.

Cambridge University Botanic Garden Lectures

Friday 11 May 10.00 am – 1.00 pm Twigs Way, *The Flowering of the Regency Garden.*

Friday 8 June 10.00 am – 1.00 pm Twigs Way, *Painting the Regency Garden.* 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE, Tel: 01223 331875, Email: education@botanic.cam.ac.uk, www.botanic.cam.ac.uk

Queen's House Greenwich Lecture Series

Thursdays 24 May – 14 June 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

A four part series of lectures. Speakers include Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and David Marsh.

Royal Museums Greenwich, London SE10 9NF, Tel: 020 8312 6608, Email: bookings@rmg.co.uk, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/see-do/exhibitions-events/cultivating-taste-art-english-garden-greenwich-and-beyond>

Penshurst Place Tour

Sunday 3 June 11.00 am or 2.00 pm Tony Wiseman, *Head Gardener's Tour and Tea.* Penshurst, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 8DG, Tel: 01892 870307, Email: contactus@penshurstplace.com, www.penshurstplace.com

Folly Fellowship Event

Saturday 9 June Visit to Blaise Castle, (a Repton landscape), Bristol, and Kings Weston, near Bristol.

Sunday 10 June Visit to Warmley Grotto and Gardens, Bristol. Travel by car. Tel: 0117 9087375, Email: pfgodfrey@gmail.com, <http://follies.org.uk>

Ashridge House Garden History Conference

10 – 11 August *The Life and Work of Humphry Repton.* Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1NS, Tel: 01442 841028, www.ashridgehouse.org.uk Email: sally.rouse@ashridge.hult.edu

Celebrating Humphry Repton 2018

A list of the Repton 200 events can be found at <http://thegardenstrust.org/events-archive/tags/repton/>

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