



### Call for New Committee Members

The next AGM will be held in February 2017; the date and venue will be confirmed in due course. Some members of the BGHG committee are due to retire at the AGM and we need to fill their places in order to carry on our work. The BGHG committee is made up of twelve members and meets six times a year. If you are interested, or know someone who would consider joining the committee, do please get in touch. You would be most welcome and we do need your help in supporting BGHG activities. This year we are particularly looking for someone who can keep accounts and act as our Treasurer. More information and nomination forms can be obtained by contacting Joan Pateman, joan.pateman@zen.co.uk or Barbara Deason, barbaradeason@lante.plus.com.

### Stancombe Park and Westonbirt

*BGHG Visit 18 July*

Our July visit took us to two outstanding Cotswold gardens, Stancombe Park and Westonbirt in Gloucestershire. At Stancombe, the house lies at the head of a narrow valley rising around three lakes. The upper gardens surrounding the house, built in 1880 to replace an earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century house destroyed by fire, are the creation of the present owner, Mrs Gerda Barlow. They feature a double row of intricate geometric beds and a terrace overlooking classic Cotswolds views.

From the upper gardens, we take a descending path lined with massive topiary animals. Narrow steps lead to a second hidden 'Folly Garden', laid out at the end of the valley around the largest of the lakes. We enter a complex network of dark narrow tunnels and dimly lit grottoes emerging onto the lakeside perimeter walk, where all is green and golden. Surprise after surprise. This magical extravaganza dates from the 1840s but records are lost and local tradition tends to the colourful.

Whatever its origin, the charms of the garden are enhanced by the buildings, statuary and curiosities added over time, several by the present owner. Antiquarian, Classical, Gothic and Egyptian tastes are evoked, with the lakeside Doric Temple lending an Arcadian note. Cerberus guards the entrance to the Underworld, Nefertiti sits in her own grotto, a wild boar emerges from shrubbery ... But perhaps most exciting to the garden historian is the rare 18<sup>th</sup> century lead 'Little Drummer Boy'.



*The Temple at Stancombe Park*

The Westonbirt estate, a school since 1928, was created by several generations of the Holford family but chiefly by Robert Holford (1808-92) who inherited in 1839. The estate – arboretum, park, farm and gardens – was conceived as a unified grand design. Led by our President, Michael Symes, we are visiting the gardens, formal and informal, now in the care of the Holford Trust.

Features of the informal landscape garden suggest an 18<sup>th</sup> century taste on the part of Robert Holford: the removal of the village from the site; careful 'concealment of bounds'; specimen trees and clumps; ha-ha; and serpentine lake. But the trees, for which Westonbirt is justly renowned, testify to Holford's standing among the foremost collectors and planters of his day. There are many survivals of the numerous species planted, as records confirm, within a short period of their introduction, including cypresses, monkey puzzles, spruces, thujas and Westonbirt's famous cedars.

Beyond this arboreal paradise lies the High Victorian grandeur of the formal garden, laid out on a series of terraces below the house, ornamented by pavilions, arches, seats and water features. At its heart is the Italian Garden where lavish herbaceous planting is based on contemporary records. Unsurprisingly, much of the stonework is in need of repair, but a programme of restoration is in progress as funds permit. Recent achievements include the restoration of the fernery, the ingenious glass-sided double pool and the Camelia House, last survivor of an extensive range of glasshouses. After tea in the Camelia House, we conclude our visit to a 'Victorian Elysium', as Michael Symes has so aptly described these magnificent gardens.

**Margaret Scholes**

## Ashridge and Ascott Park

*BGHG Visit 10 August*

Our first stop was Ashridge in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, a grand and ancient estate with a long history from mediaeval monastery to its current incarnation as a business school. The imposing mansion was rebuilt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Gothic revival style by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bridgewater and it was here that we met the long-serving Gardens Manager Mick Thompson who gave us an illustrated talk on the history of the estate. Archaeology has revealed some of the early monastic layout and Tudor gardens. The first major development was 'Capability' Brown's landscaping of the surrounding park and creation of the Golden Valley (a river of grass with no stream or lake) now owned by the National Trust.

The Earl, having inherited a vast fortune amassed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke from canal building, commissioned Humphry Repton to design the garden and he presented his *Red Book* in 1813. His designs showed fifteen different garden areas and they were largely executed, with some amendments, by Sir Jeffry Wyattville. They included a Rosary, Monk's Garden, Grotto and Fernery located in an area Repton designed as a flower stove or heated greenhouse. Further developments were added by Lady Marian Alford in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Italian Garden and sunken skating pond, now made into a grass labyrinth.

Mick then led us on a walk through the gardens starting from the terrace with clipped box and yew and bright planting. There were sweeping lawns and many fine trees in the arboretum including a Wellingtonia Avenue with sight lines to the house. The Rhododendron Walk has recently been cut back to improve the view back to the house. Our walk took us past the Bible Circle, an unusual planting of 28 incense cedars in a tight circle.

After lunch we travelled to Ascott in Buckinghamshire, the country residence of the Rothschild family donated to the National Trust in 1949. The area in front of the house has clipped topiary and grass lawns whilst the formal gardens are set on the south side of the house where there are fine views of the Dunstable Downs and Vale of Aylesbury. The gardens include a large sundial made out of low hedges and the magnificent Madeira Walk, hidden in the slope of the hill. There is a modern slate sculpture by Richard Long, set off by some of the immaculate topiarised hedging which characterises the estate, and two fountain gardens. The Venus fountain is currently surrounded by red, yellow and orange planting and the Eros fountain in the Dutch Garden by cooler shades. To the north-west of the house are the Lynn Garden and Lily Pond, again hidden behind tall hedges. The modern Lynn Garden by Jacques and Peter Wirtz is based on circles and grassy mounds and leads to the large Lily Pond. A lovely garden on a lovely day.

**Theresa Quinn**

## St Leonards and Hastings

*BGHG Visit 8 September*

The road signs welcomed us to '1066 country' as we arrived in St Leonards, East Sussex, to a beautiful view of the sun glinting on the sea on a warm sunny day. St Leonards was developed as a spa town for the prosperous by James Burton and his son Decimus Burton, the architect. We were welcomed by Virginia Hinze to the South Lodge, home to the Burtons' St Leonards Society, after which we embarked upon our tour starting on the sea front with our guide Christine French from the Society.

Passing the Royal Victoria Hotel and the Assembly Rooms, we came to the imposing Marine Court built in 1938 to resemble an ocean liner in the art deco style; at the time it was the tallest residential building in the country. Returning to the South Lodge, we went through the arched entrance to Burtons' St Leonards Gardens built for the pleasure of the residents of the surrounding villas. The lovely spring-fed pond with kingfishers is beautifully contoured in the shape of a water lily. The gardens are terraced and are surrounded on all sides by properties of unusual design, some of them being double villas. Mature trees add to the grandeur.

Unlike the restoration of St Leonards Gardens, Bohemia House, built around 1818 in a Jacobean style, was the subject of 'an orgy of the most incredible municipal vandalism' and demolished in 1971. However, the object of our visit was the magnificent brick-walled garden built in sections between 1830 and 1840. The garden is 234 feet long by 84 feet wide and the walls are 12 feet high and 14 inches thick without buttresses. We took the woodland walk via a mock Roman Bath (circa 1900) probably built to take advantage of the natural spring – dappled shade past a babbling brook. The original walled garden was closer to the main house and contained only fruit trees. The separate entrances for the gentry and the staff can still be seen. One of the original features is the abundance of eyelets in the brickwork used to support climbers, typically fruit. There is an old pond, possibly a former spring. Until 2009 the garden was a complete wilderness but it has been restored by volunteers as a horticultural centre with allotments. Further restoration work on the walls is planned during 2017. Built on a hillside, the plots are gently terraced. One of the garden's focal points is a dehydrating lavatory. The circulation of air over the waste turns it into an odourless product which can be used as fertilizer.



*Mock Roman Bath at Bohemia*

Our visit ended in the fascinating Hastings Museum with its diverse collection of exhibits.

**Marian Hardy**

## Gardens in Wales

BGHG Visit 20, 21 September

Over the two day trip to Carmarthenshire we visited three gardens with recently rescued ruined houses and overgrown estates.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales is located on the Middleton Hall estate, which, for 150 years, belonged to the Middleton family. In 1776 Middleton Hall was sold, to pay debts, to Sir William Paxton, a merchant banker with East India Company connections. Paxton employed architect Samuel Pepys Cockerell to replace Middleton Hall with a splendid neoclassical mansion, and an unusual double Walled Garden, Peach House, Ice House and Stable Block. Paxton also engaged surveyor Samuel Lapidge, who had worked with 'Capability' Brown, and engineer James Grier to design a 'necklace' system of interconnecting lakes, ponds and streams linked by a network of dams, sluices, bridges and cascades.

After a short introduction from Rob Thomas, Head of Development, Project Manager Helen John and volunteer archeologist Nigel Bailey took us on a fascinating two-hour walk along the original carriageway mostly through woods, illustrating the Picturesque views by photocopies of Thomas Hornor's 1815 watercolours. These paintings are the only record of the estate, since all others were lost in the fire of 1931. We saw how the breached dams had been inappropriately repaired in the 1980s and heard how trees will be felled to provide views to the sympathetically restored Picturesque water landscape, with a large re-flooded lake and Georgian stone bridges across waterfalls and drama-centric cascades. The park is now part nature reserve, home to bats, badgers, otters, fish and hazel dormice and part an organic farm, with Welsh black cows and Lleyn sheep.

Only the servants' quarters survived the devastating fire in 1931; the mansion is gone. Near the site on the hilltop stands Foster's Great Glasshouse, with its collections of plants from California, Western and South Australia, Central Chile, the Western Cape of South Africa, the Mediterranean and Canaries, under the largest single span glass roof in the world.

On the next day we travelled first to Aberglasney. Joseph Akin, Head Gardener and Director at Aberglasney, showed us round his 'Heritage Garden of Excellence'. One highlight, among several, was the Jacobean Cloister Garden and Parapet Walk, a completely overgrown mass of brambles and ivy in 1995 and now restored and planted with grassy parterres and wide paths forming the shape of a Celtic cross. When Penelope Hobhouse developed the Upper Walled Garden, she echoed the shape in the layout of beds and paths. The Lower Walled Garden is now the kitchen garden. Unconventionally, flowers and vegetables grow randomly together organically, with good companion planting against pests and diseases. Thirty varieties of apple and twenty varieties of pear grow on 'Belgian fences' on the walls.



Aberglasney Cloister Garden

Joseph gardens 'in the spirit of the heritage' propagating his own plants such as white skunk cabbage and virus-free *Lilium speciosum* var. *album* from seed and grafting *Wisteria floribunda* 'Macrobotrys' onto old root stock. When he came to renovate the ancient yew walk, he earned the name 'The Butcher of Aberglasney' as he cut back the 250-year-old yew and bent over and fused the branches to form a tunnel. We were told that Welsh gardens are best seen from April to June. At Aberglasney, three essential spring bulbs are *Camassia* (which flower for eight or nine weeks), allium (mostly 'Purple Sensation') and 100 types of tulip. Plantings in the autumn of 2016 included aconites, dahlias, rudbeckias, Japanese anemones, *Eupatorium*, *Itea* and verbena.

Joseph then urged us to visit Bishop Rudd's Walk, the Asiatic Garden and the 21<sup>st</sup> century Sunken Garden. In a reversal, the restored Aviary now serves to protect the soft fruit planted inside from the birds outside. The Ninfarium built inside the ruined part of the mansion is sublime magic!

At Gellideg, Colonel Atkinson and his wife Mary guided us through their walled garden with its roses and lily pond, past the 1821 stable block with a carriage washing pond, to the romantic ruins of the 18<sup>th</sup> century mansion around which was built the 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion, whose campanile reflects the Italianate style pioneered by architect John Nash and popularised by Osborne House.

The Atkinsons explained how they had cleared *R. ponticum* and laurel, ash trees and a yew hedge to reveal the 1960s planting by Margaret Jennings, wife of the previous owner, and Trevor Crosby, curator of Leeds University Botanic Garden. They found *Echium*, *Pittosporum*, *Crinodendron*, Chilean firebush, skimmia, Pagoda bush, rare roses, magnolias and rhododendrons. The Atkinsons are planting a hydrangea walk. We were welcomed to tea in their 20<sup>th</sup> century house, which incorporates the 1820 belvedere, with a splendid view to Carmarthen Bay and the Gwendreath Fach valley. Gellideg, appropriately, means 'Fair Grove'.

Mary Sewell

## Around the Embankment in London

BGHG Visit 13 October

We met our guide, Dominic Cole OBE, landscape architect and President of The Gardens Trust, to explore the land around the Strand and Embankment. Starting in Northumberland Avenue, we compared the site today with that in a painting of Northumberland House, the London residence of the Dukes of Northumberland, built 1605 – 1612 and demolished in 1874. The painting by Canaletto was one of many interesting old paintings Dominic was to show us during the walk.

Dominic explained that his emphasis would be on topography and landscape, and the changes resulting from the embankment of the Thames. Our next stop was at the York Water Gate, built around 1626 in the Italianate court style of Charles I, now situated in the Victoria Embankment Gardens. It was interesting to realize that as we stood in the gardens, opened in 1865 after the Embankment was built, we were actually standing on what would have been the river. We followed the Embankment to the Adelphi and on to the site of the Savoy Palace, viewing the only remaining relic, the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy, in Savoy Hill. We then reached Somerset House, designed by Sir William Chambers in 1776; here Dominic pointed out that the arches of the river gate would have been at the river's edge.

After a quick visit to the site of the so-called Roman Baths hidden off Strand Lane and now believed to be a 17<sup>th</sup> century remnant from Arundel House, we climbed the steps onto the roof of Temple station, again land reclaimed from the river, and viewed the site of the controversial proposed Garden Bridge. Dominic pointed out that the Thames had been reduced in width by two-thirds by the embankments on both sides.

In the gardens of the Middle Temple, Dominic noted the slope down to what had been the river's edge at one point and then the large expanse of ground added by the Embankment. Here we had a peep into the private garden of the Master's House and stood outside Middle Temple Hall, begun in 1562 and probably the finest example of an Elizabethan Hall in London. We were led on through the back streets to St Bride's Church, Fleet Street; in the crypt there is a section of tessellated Roman paving.

We eventually found ourselves on New Bridge Street, standing at the site where the river Fleet meets the Thames. We thanked Dominic for a most interesting journey into the history of just a small but very significant area of London.

**Christine Bird**

## News

### BGHG Proposed Visit to Yorkshire

The BGHG committee are proposing to organise a visit to Yorkshire next September. We would travel by train, spend two nights in York and visit five gardens by coach over the three days. The gardens currently under consideration are Scampston Walled Garden, Rievaulx Terrace, Newby Hall, Parcevall Hall and York Gate. There is a possibility of a visit to Mount St John as well, a Tom Stuart-Smith garden.

Scampston has a spectacular modern garden designed by Piet Oudolf and a 'Capability' Brown park. Rievaulx Terrace, the only National Trust property on the list, is a fine 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape garden with two temples and wonderful vistas. Newby Hall is extensive with a huge herbaceous border, water garden and many others. It was created in the 1920s and has been evolving since. Parcevall Hall comprises 24 acres of formal and woodland gardens, rising up a hillside. Well known as the garden for the horticultural charity Perennial, York Gate is a garden of great style and craftsmanship, all in just one acre.

The plan is that individuals would book their train and hotel rooms themselves and then form a group to travel by coach to the gardens each day. Members will be able to bring a guest. If you are interested in such a trip, please contact Barbara Deason, [barbaradeason@lante.plus.com](mailto:barbaradeason@lante.plus.com) by the end of January 2017. If sufficient members are interested, the trip will be planned in more detail and a schedule and costings worked out. It would be helpful if you could indicate whether there are other gardens in North Yorkshire you are particularly keen to visit.

### BGHG Website

The BGHG website announced in the Spring Newsletter (No 42) continues to be developed and updated. A new page on garden history publications which includes a list of new books of interest to garden historians has been added and the pages on garden history courses expanded, in addition to updated news items on the first page. The page on BGHG future events will be updated with the programme for 2017 as soon as the details are finalised. Do take a look at <https://birkbeckgardenhistorygroup.wordpress.com>.

### RHS Library Research Guides

The RHS Lindley Libraries are producing a new series of Research Guides, all related to garden history, to help users explore their collections. Four guides have been issued so far: *History of Plants; Gardeners, Plant breeders, Nurserymen and Botanists; Gardens and Parks* and *Checklist of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gardening Periodicals in the Collection*. These short guides are available from the RHS libraries; they should become available to download from the RHS Libraries web site <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs/collections> in the near future.

## Events

### BGHG Programme 2016/17

<b>29 November</b>	Annual Lecture <i>Joseph Hooker and the Making of Botany</i> by James Endersby
<b>2017</b>	
<b>20 February (tbc)</b>	AGM and lecture by Clare Hickman
<b>11 March</b>	Study Day
<b>April</b>	Stonor Park, Oxfordshire and Manor House, Bucks
<b>16 May</b>	Bowood House and Corsham Court, Wiltshire
<b>6 June</b>	Sezincote and Upton Wold, Gloucestershire
<b>29 June</b>	London Barbican Landscapes and Nomura Roof Garden
<b>12 July</b>	Otley Hall and Helmingham Hall, Suffolk
<b>8 August</b>	Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire
<b>September</b>	Heale Gardens and Wilton House, Hampshire
<b>September</b>	Possible Yorkshire Gardens trip
<b>October</b>	Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London
<b>November</b>	Annual Lecture

### RHS Lindley Library London Exhibition

**3 November – 20 December** *The City Gardener*. 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE, Tel: 020 7821 3050, Email: library.london@rhs.org.uk, www.rhs.org.uk/libraries.

### London Parks & Gardens Trust Winter Lectures

**Monday 12 December** Steffie Shields *Capital Capability: Lancelot Brown's Work in London*.  
**Monday 9 January 2017** Ken Worpole *New Jerusalem: The Good City and the Good Society*.  
**Monday 13 February** Roger Bowdler *Post War Sculpture: Splendours at Risk*. All lectures are from 6.30 – 8.00 pm in the Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ, www.londongardenstrust.org, Email: office@londongardenstrust.org.

### The Gardens Trust Winter Lectures 2017

**Wednesday 25 January** Paula Henderson *The Gardens and Park of Bramshill, Hampshire*.  
**Wednesday 8 February** Brian Dix *Awakening from Slumber: Recent archaeology and restoration at Boughton House Gardens, Northamptonshire*.  
**Wednesday 8 March** Kate Felus *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden*.  
**Wednesday 22 March** Paul Howarth *The Diverse Heritage of Medway Parks and Gardens*. All lectures are from 6.30 – 8.00 pm in the Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ, www.thegardenstrust.org. Look for Events in the menu lines at the top right of the page. Email: sally.jeffery1@btinternet.com.

### Oxford Botanic Garden Winter Lectures 2017

**Thursday 26 January** 8.00 pm Mary Keen *Paradise and Plenty – the How and Wow of Lord Rothschild's private garden on the Waddesdon Estate*.

**Thursday 9 February** 8.00 pm Mark Johnson *Trees in Towns and Cities: A History of British Urban Arboriculture*. Nelson Mandela Lecture Theatre, Saïd Business School, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP, Tel: 01865 286690, www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk.

### City Lit

**Wednesdays 11 January – 29 March** 10.15 am – 12.15 pm *Plants, politics and philosophy: English gardens from the age of Elizabeth to the Restoration*. Keeley Street, London WC2B 4BA, Further information Tel: 020 7492 2652, Email: humanities@citylit.ac.uk, Enrolment Tel: 020 7831 7831, www.citylit.ac.uk.

### South London Botanical Institute Lecture

**Saturday 4 February** 1.30 – 4.30 pm Letta Jones *Gertrude Jekyll*. 323 Norwood Road, London SE24 9AQ, Tel: 020 8674 5787, Email: info@slbi.org.uk, www.slbi.org.uk.

### Denman College Course

**8 – 10 May** Letta Jones *Hampton Court Gardens*. Marcham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6NW, Tel: 01865 391991, Email: info@denman.org.uk, www.denman.org.uk.

### The Gardens Trust with Oxford University Department for Continuing Education

**2 – 4 June** *Medieval and Tudor Gardens*. Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA, Tel: 01865 270380, Email: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk, www.conted.ox.ac.uk.

### Oxford University Department for Continuing Education Course

**Saturday 17 June 9.30 am – 4.30 pm** Patrick Harding *The Plant Hunters*. Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA, Tel: 01865 270368, Email: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk, www.conted.ox.ac.uk.

### Compton Verney Exhibition

**18 March – 18 June** *Creating the Countryside 1600 – 2017*. Compton Verney, Warwickshire CV35 9HZ, Tel: 01926 645500, www.comptonverney.org.uk, Email: info@comptonverney.org.uk.

### Gardens of Loire Valley Study Tour

**4 – 14 September** Letta Jones and David Marsh. Contact ACE Cultural Tours Tel: 01223 841055, Email: gill@aceculturaltours.co.uk. Information meeting **Saturday 28 January**.

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