



## ***Chairman's Introduction***



Tea at Eton College July 2016

It has been many months since the last Newsletter. It is a symptom of our lack of active membership involvement, and the need to concentrate on other activities. However, we now have the time to update all our readers with what has been happening and what is planned for the next few months.

First the sad news that our Vice-Chairman Richard Griffith-Jones DL died in July. Richard had been a committed supporter and stalwart Trustee. His battle with leukaemia led him to resign in May 2018. He will be remembered for his cheerful manning of the bar at our Lectures, and by his fellow Trustees for his wise advice. Several members and guests enjoyed a visit to Eton College Gardens in July 2016, which he led as an OE, and for his personal guidance

during an unscheduled visit to the College Chapel.

We also lost three other Trustees during the past year. Gaila Adair decided not to seek re-election at the last AGM. Gaila's contribution to the work of the BGT took a very practical turn when she undertook the design and reconstruction of the garden at Watlington House, where she is also a Trustee. With a little help from other members, and a lot of help from her partner and the Payback Scheme, she created a garden which has the spirit of the William and Mary period when the original garden was made. She has also been involved in the Ribbon of Green, about which more in a later Newsletter.

Peter Thorn decided in April 2017 that he could not continue due to pressure of being a Governor of two special schools. But he does continue as Minutes Secretary.

The other Trustee to retire was Kaye Warner, our membership secretary, who was the main contact between the Trust and members. She had been involved in the Reading Group of National Trust members for many years and has taken up a new role there.

It is always sad to say goodbye, even though all three remain members and active supporters of the Trust. But on the brighter side, the letter I wrote to all members led to interest in the post of membership secretary by Janet Fuller. Apart from work on updating the renewal of membership and for the events, Janet and Fiona have been preparing a Presentation which we can give to other interested groups. We need to work closely with all who are interested in conservation of our historic assets, even though our particular interest lies in historic parks and gardens.

The Presentation is to be trialled before an invited audience on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, sponsored by our President. We are considering whether to show it more generally at the AGM. We are looking for opportunities to show it to other groups, so please make suggestions as to whom we may contact.

We have been fortunate that Janet has now been elected Vice-Chairman to succeed Richard Griffith-Jones. She will continue her role as Membership Secretary, although it would be wonderful if another member would like to offer assistance, and work with her, at least initially.

With the help of our President we have been trying to identify new Trustees. We have been fortunate to be able to appoint Ellen Crumly as a Trustee to the next AGM. She will then be eligible to serve a full three-year term if elected by the members. Ellen is the former Mayor of Thatcham and brings a wide range of experience of the working of Councils and of the planning process.

Ellen brings the number of Trustees to 7, with a permitted maximum of 12. If any members wish to offer themselves or nominate another, please let me know so they can be proposed at the AGM.

The good news is that those Trustees whose term expires at this year's AGM have all offered themselves for re-election.

After nearly 10 years as our President Lady Wroughton decided that the time had come to retire. We are very grateful to her and Sir Philip for all the support they have given us. After completing his term as Lord Lieutenant, they might have been hoping for a quieter life, but they have both continued to support clubs and societies in Berkshire. Our President has been a great support to me, and I will miss her wise guidance.

The Trustees were delighted that our Vice-President and founder Chairman, Dr Christina Hill-Williams DL, was prepared to take on the President's role. Christina together with Fiona Hope, Ben Viljoen and Liz Ware founded the Trust, having just completed her year as High Sheriff of the Royal County. She is also a Deputy Lieutenant and is well known for her work with the CPRE and other conservation groups.

We hope that her association with the BGT in her new role is a long and happy one. It certainly looks as if we will be keeping her busy!

After five years as Chairman, I had decided that it was time for a change. Unfortunately, no-one has yet come forward to offer to take over. Therefore, the Trustees decided at our last Meeting to elect me as Chairman for another year. However, if we can find a new Chairman able to take over mid-year then I will stand down. My preference is to see a new Chairman in post by the end of our financial year, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

At the same Meeting we were delighted to elect Janet Fuller as our Vice-Chairman and we are delighted that Hugh Simon continues as Treasurer.

**Charles Elly**

## Events since our last Newsletter

### AGM 2016

There were two big "Thank Yous" at the 2016 AGM. Lady Wroughton and Charles Elly both paid tribute to Kaye Warner, retiring Membership Secretary for her sterling work in this role with her invaluable support in booking arrangements for and help at BGT events and Newsletter design. Ben Viljoen was also thanked for leading Berkshire's Gardens Trust's contribution to the Tercentenary of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, with his *Brown in Berkshire* lectures, the guided walks which he co-ordinated at Caversham Park and the mini-exhibition he prepared for display at Caversham Court in April, Newbury Library in December and the Berkshire Record Office, Spring 2017.

Attention was also drawn to the amount of planning responses the Trust has undertaken and the need to encourage others to help with this and associated research activity which needs to underpin this work. The Trustees' Report and the Directors' Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2016 were adopted by all members present with thanks to Hugh Simon and the external examiner, Brian Tubman. In addition, Richard Griffith-Jones, Vice-Chairman, was re-elected for a further 3 years.

Formal AGM minutes are available on our website [berkshiregardenstrust.org](http://berkshiregardenstrust.org).

Following a break for refreshments, the Autumn Lecture was given by Timothy Walker.

### Autumn Lecture 2016 on Harcourt Arboretum

Timothy Walker is the former Director of the Oxford Botanic Garden and the Harcourt Arboretum. *Peter Thorn writes:* We are all familiar with national arboreta such as Kew and Westonbirt with their sweeping acres of sylvan magnificence. Close to Berkshire we are fortunate to have another smaller but equally fascinating arboretum to visit, Harcourt Arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay in South Oxfordshire, which is compact yet full of interest for both the gardener and keen horticulturalist.



Harcourt Arboretum in Spring

The evening speaker at BGT's autumn lecture, Timothy Walker, was both entertaining and informative. Tim knows Harcourt like the back of his hand and his engaging talk was an ideal precursor to our Spring 2017 visit, providing us with an insight into the Arboretum's origins and how it is managed, with some wonderful pictorial highlights of what to see depending on the season of one's visit, from bluebells and ferns to camellia and acer glades.

The Arboretum is situated in part of what was previously the Harcourt family's country estate, where late 18<sup>th</sup> century pleasure gardens were originally laid out around the family Palladian villa by William Mason. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was also involved, mainly with the wider parkland landscape and is reputed to have judged that the estate 'has got it all already'.

However, in the 1830s Archbishop Vernon Harcourt judged that there were 'not enough trees in Oxfordshire' and commissioned William Sawrey Gilpin, an artist and landscape designer to reshape the parkland as an arboretum or pinetum. The backbone to his new scheme for his client was a sinuous snake-shaped ride to create glades and planting as part of the estate's landscaped setting. Newly arriving species from the Americas took pride of place, particularly Pines and some of the first Redwoods from recently opened up California were secured; a 'must' for early Victorian estate owners to show off.

Harcourt Arboretum is integral to the Oxford Botanic Garden, who directly manage its grade 1 parkland features with its carefully grazed

arable pastures and clumps of trees reminders of its historic past, as well as the wild flower meadows. Today through Harcourt Arboretum's links with the Oxford botanic garden, the oldest in the country, we 'locals' thus have access to one of the best living and dynamic plant collections in the country. Thanks to Tim for this fast paced and lively precursor to our Spring visit.

### **Visit to Harcourt Arboretum**

Enthused by Tim's Lecture we organised a visit to the Arboretum on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017, when it was judged the rhododendrons would be at their best.

After lunch at the Seven Stars Public House, we were met at the Arboretum by the Curator who then guided us around the Arboretum. We saw the massive redwoods and the rhododendrons at their best. The walks provided spacious vistas through the woodland.



Visit to Harcourt Arboretum

As we returned our past Chairman, Christina Hill-Williams and other members of the party were startled by the noise of a falling tree. Luckily no injury was caused!

The Arboretum is open to visitors most days and a visit gives one a sense of the grandeur perceived by our ancestors, yet also the intimacy of losing oneself in the glades.

### **Spring Lecture 2017**

We were very fortunate to have a talk by Andy Williams, the Park Manager of Kensington Gardens, one of the Royal Parks, and Brompton Cemetery, which is Government owned and administered by the Royal Parks.

There are nine Parks and the Cemetery, all in and around London, ranging from the largest Bushey Park, a site of Special Scientific Interest to the smallest Victoria Gardens next to the Palace of Westminster in Millbank.

Andy focussed on the two Parks under his management, Kensington Gardens and the Brompton Cemetery. The Gardens are adjacent to Kensington Palace and the formal William and Mary Dutch-inspired layout around the Palace. They include the wonderful tree avenues planned by Capability Brown and the 1875 Albert Memorial designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott with its 868 brick buttresses in its undercroft.

The Park includes the formality of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Charles Bridgeman designed Broad Walk between Bayswater and Knightsbridge and the 21<sup>st</sup> century Diana Playground with its pirate ship and many other attractions for children, much enjoyed by the Chairman's grandchildren.

The Brompton Cemetery was laid out in the early Victorian era when legislation permitted cemeteries to be commercially owned. They were to relieve the pressure on the inner London Churchyards. It was laid out adjacent to what is now the District line between South Kensington and West Brompton, on the site of brickworks. Stamford Bridge Football Ground is now adjacent to the Cemetery.

It is still open for burials, with about 60 a year. It was not a commercial success and the owners took advantage of a clause in the Act which allowed them to force the Government to purchase it from them. Needless to say the Act was swiftly changed to prevent any other cemetery owner taking advantage of public largesse!

There is a basilica Chapel, said to be inspired by St Peter's in Rome and with a Great Circle in front of the East End wall, modelled on the Piazza in Rome. There is a central ceremonial way with Grade II\* listed catacombs. The cemetery houses the remains of some famous people, including the suffragette Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and a Sioux Indian Chief.

The Cemetery needs attention after years of neglect. The Royal Parks are applying for Heritage Lottery Grants for a visitor centre at the Grade II\* listed North Lodge and to



restore some of the features of the Cemetery, including the catacombs damaged in World War II bombing.

### **Visit to the Brompton Cemetery and the Garden History Museum**

Inspired by Andy's Lecture, a group of us visited the Brompton Cemetery on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and combined it with a visit to the newly restored Garden Museum in the afternoon. We were met at the North Gate, then under renovation and construction of the Visitor Centre, and one of the volunteers from the Friends of Brompton Cemetery, who was our guide.

We looked at a number of memorials, some of them still in private ownership and in various states of repair depending on the pocket of the current descendants. The grounds too are variously left to grow wild and other parts cultivated. That is part policy to preserve the habitat for the birds and animals which have made their home there, partly it is a question of cost.

However, we were left with the clear impression that under its present Manager, the Cemetery would be restored as far as funds would allow, but that, apart from some tidying the balance would be retained.

As we walked through the Cemetery we saw Mrs Pankhurst's grave and others of men and women famous in their day but now largely forgotten. But the variety of memorials made for an interesting experience, enhanced by our guides and the bright Autumn day.

We were also allowed to visit one of the catacombs. A somewhat morbid atmosphere enhanced by candlelight when the electric light was extinguished. Sadly, work on the Chapel prevented us going inside. We had a welcome cup of coffee before leaving for lunch and the Garden Museum.

At the Garden Museum we were met by the Curator Christopher Woodward, who gave us a conducted tour of this small Museum and suggested areas we might wish to explore further. The Museum housed in the former Church, St Mary's Lambeth, is adjacent to Lambeth Palace.

It has recently reopened following extensive work financed by a Heritage Lottery Grant. We visited an exhibition of garden tools, and a special exhibition about the Tradescants, father and son, furnished with artefacts loaned by the Ashmolean Museum.

The Tradescants' tomb is in the garden, which is the former Churchyard. Alongside is the imposing tomb of Captain Bligh of the Bounty. The garden has been remodelled by Dan Pearson as part of the renovation.

### **AGM and Lecture 2017**

The AGM started on a sad note recording the recent death of our Treasurer's wife, Rosemary Simon - a woman loved by all who knew her and a stalwart supporter of the BGT.

The President, Lady Wroughton thanked Gaila Adair for her work as a Trustee, as she was not seeking re-election. She also thanked Peter Thorn for his work as a Trustee up to his resignation in April 2017. She also mentioned the huge contribution Ben Viljoen had made to the Capability Brown tercentenary, both as Lecturer and leading three groups around Caversham Park. The President wished us well but indicated that she thought the time had come for her to step down as President.

The Chairman endorsed her remarks about Gaila, Peter and Ben and thanked her for all her support, particularly to him personally during her term of office.

The formal business of the AGM is all recorded in our Minutes which may be found on the new website: **[berkshiregardenstrust.org](http://berkshiregardenstrust.org)**, under Governance. The Chairman's Report and the Treasurer's Report and audited Accounts may also be found there.

## William Robinson, the Wild Gardener



*Borders on the main terrace at Gravetye by Beatrice Parsons*

We were very fortunate to be addressed by Richard Bisgrove on the subject of William Robinson, the Victorian gardener, who was a pioneer of the Wild Garden, using native species rather than imports.

Richard is the retired Course Director in Landscape Management at the University of Reading, author of several books on garden design and garden history including the recent publication on William Robinson, and a long-standing BGT member.

The outstanding example of Robinson's gardens may be found at Gravetye, his home in Sussex. Unfortunately, the house is now an hotel and the gardens are no longer opened to the public, although guests at the hotel and restaurant may visit them.

We are very grateful to Richard for sharing his expertise with us.

### Spring Lecture 2018

This year marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Humphrey Repton. Almost to the day we had a talk by one of our founders, Ben Viljoen. The level of Ben's expertise and scholarship ensure that his lectures are very popular, and so it proved again.

Ben's inaugural Lecture for the BGT was on Repton in Berkshire. This time he talked about the Purley Red Book. Anthony Morris Storer acquired Purley Park and engaged Repton to redesign the grounds. Repton produced one of his famous Red Books

showing the before and after in its illustrations.

The Purley Red Book is in a remarkable state of preservation and Ben has been allowed to produce a reproduction of it, together with his commentary on the three days in 1793 when Repton and Storer visited Purley and discussed the possibilities. Repton's Red Book was produced within three weeks, a remarkable time scale considering the amount of work Repton had in hand at the time.

Repton and Storer had disagreed about the siting of the Manor House, with Repton preferring a riverside site and Storer insisting on the House being built on the hillside. Fortunately, Storer insisted, as a few years later there was extensive flooding of Repton's choice.

Ben was able to research Storer and his insight into the man and his relationships added to the liveliness of his talk.

Members at the Lecture had the opportunity to be original subscribers to the book, an offer of which many of us took advantage.

We were, as ever, enlightened and entertained by Ben's talk, and very grateful to him for giving it.

### Visit to Rooksnest Garden



We visited Rooksnest Garden near Lambourn West Berkshire on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018. On one of the glorious summer days we have enjoyed this year, a party enjoyed a guided tour of the garden followed by tea. Although a comparatively modern garden largely designed

by Arabella Lennox-Boyd, it follows a traditional English design.

*Janet Fuller writes:*

Head Gardener, Kevin, gave us a brief overview of the garden along with a map, and encouraged us to wander through the garden at our own pace.

While the whole garden was wonderful, my personal favourite was the Rose Garden. This was completely redesigned and replanted in 2017. Despite being only a year old, the roses looked well-established and were blooming profusely, and they were interplanted with perennials and *Stipa gigantea*. With its palette of mostly white and various shades of red and pink, the whole effect was romantic, blousy and very lovely.

The care and attention of the gardening team is evident throughout the gardens. No weeds, every grass edged clipped, discrete and careful staking – even the greenhouses were immaculate!

### Buscot Park



The second Garden Visit was on the 15<sup>th</sup> August to Buscot Park a National Trust property occupied and maintained by the Faringdon family. We had a guided tour by Roger Vlitos, the Curator, of the walled garden and the opportunity to visit the House and other parts of the grounds, which combine Italianate formality within an English landscape. The water garden was designed by Harold Peto.

Buscot Park is quite different from Rooksnest. The latter is a modern garden with lots of colourful, herbaceous planting. Buscot Park is a historical landscape with layers of changes

made over the last 200 years with an emphasis on expertly-clipped hedges and trees, long views and water. BGT's two summer visits provided a really interesting contrast!

### Forthcoming Events

**Our AGM** is to be held at Purley Barn on the **12<sup>th</sup> October** at 7 pm. There will be light refreshments and drinks afterwards for those members and guests who wish to stay for the Lecture, which will start at 8 pm. The Lecturer is Simon Goodenough, Head Gardener at Folly Farm and has an interesting career. A flyer about this Lecture will be circulated with this Newsletter.



By kind permission of Folly Farm

Members are entitled to attend the AGM free of charge. The charge covers the refreshments and the Lecture.

The formal Notice of the AGM will also be circulated with this Newsletter and are also available on our website:

**[berkshiregardenstrust.org](http://berkshiregardenstrust.org).**

**Our Spring Lecture 2019** will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March at Purley Barn at 7.30, for refreshments, Lecture at 8 pm. The Speaker is David Marsh and his topic, provisionally, is John Evelyn and the Art of Deception in 17<sup>th</sup> century gardens.

We are planning **Garden Visits** for the Summer 2019, details in due course will be posted on our website as above.

## **Website**

We are very grateful to John Salmon, husband of one of our members and a professional web designer for undertaking a new website for us.

Please go online and look at it and use it for information about forthcoming events.

The address is: **[www.berkshiregardenstrust.org](http://www.berkshiregardenstrust.org)**

## ***Who's Who and Contact Information***

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