

# Staffordshire Gardens & Parks Trust

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# News LETTER

## Introducing the WFGA and WRAGS

**My name is Deborah Jackson, and I am the Regional Co-ordinator for Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire WRAGS, a horticultural training scheme run by the WFGA. I am grateful to the Trust Council for giving me the opportunity to introduce this Association and its scheme to you.**

The Women's Farm and Garden Association (WFGA) is a national charity that was founded in 1899 to provide training, employment and advancement opportunities for women in agriculture and horticulture. During the First World War, it launched a very successful Women's National Land Service Corps, which was taken over by the government to become the well-known Women's Land Army.

Over the years since then, the WFGA has continued to work to similar objectives and in 1933 launched the 'Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme' (WRAGS), having identified the lack of practical horticulture training available for more mature students who wanted to transform their passion for gardening into a profession.

WRAGS has over 100 gardens in the UK on its training register; the majority at present in the South and East of the country. Trainees come from a wide variety of previous careers including the police force, nursing, civil service, finance, dentistry and parenting – and now some men as well as women, of course! The students are in their mid-thirties onwards and very enthusiastic, with some existing gardening knowledge and keen to gain more. They are self-motivated and capable of working with minimal supervision.

The Scheme is designed to provide them with part-time practical training in public, private, or estate gardens for a period of one working year, preferably fairly close to their home location; the latter aspect increasingly important as we all look to

reduce our carbon footprints.

There are trainees awaiting placements in all three counties for which I am responsible, having taken on the role of Regional Co-ordinator in December 2007, and I am seeking to increase the number of gardens on the WRAGS register in this area.

I recently placed my first trainee in Cheshire, and at the time of writing I am setting up interviews for candidates with two private Staffordshire gardens. If these conclude successfully I will still be seeking a placement to the southwest of Stafford, and I am also keen to make contact with garden owners who might like to consider joining the register in the future, as new potential trainees regularly join the Scheme.

Suitable gardens need to have sufficient variety to enable a wide range of skills to be acquired over the course of one working year. The approach is flexible, taking into consideration the requirements of both parties. Whilst this training is a commitment of time and resources, owners and head gardeners already involved in the Scheme assure us that they enjoy mentoring their trainee and enabling them to have the confidence to tackle the wider world of horticulture. The WRAGS Co-ordinator sets up interviews with prospective trainees but the decision regarding suitability remains that of the Owner or Head Gardener. The trainee works for 15 hours per week over two days, and there is a probation period of 30 hours before the Co-ordinator checks that both parties are happy with the placement before confirming.

The Scheme is self-funding, and a weekly training allowance of £58.80 is paid by the garden owner to the trainee to cover travel expenses and equipment, books etc. Registration fees of £100 from the garden owner and £300 from the trainee are payable to the WFGA on satisfactory completion of the probation period to cover the costs of setting up and overseeing the placements. The trainee submits monthly assessment sheets to the Co-ordinator, who also visits them in the garden, usually twice during the year. In return for the great support that the Scheme receives from owners and their gardening staff, the WFGA also offers the opportunity to plan workdays throughout the year, where a team of trainees is organised to tackle a seasonal task, at no cost to the garden. This can take the form of pruning, pleaching, division of herbaceous borders, planting bulbs, clearing and replanting ponds etc. The WFGA organises the workday, and all the garden has to provide are the tasks and some cups of tea!

We realise that some gardens will not be in a position to cover all the practical skills, and, as our remit is to prepare our trainees for all aspects of gardening, we also run a programme of workshops. Throughout the year there are courses on topics such as Winter & Summer Pruning, Propagation and Basic Landscaping. The programme offers over 50 activities, and we now include some rural skills such as Dry Stone Walling. If you would like to discuss the scheme in more detail, please contact me directly on 01543-307132. If you would prefer an information pack on this unique training scheme please telephone our Cirencester office on 01285-658339, email on or visit our website [www.wfga.org.uk](http://www.wfga.org.uk)

**Deborah Jackson WRAGS  
Co-ordinator Staffordshire,  
Shropshire, Cheshire**

# “Welshmen Beware”

## A visit to Arley Arboretum and Gardens (and other interesting places)

This year's well-attended Annual General Meeting took place on April 26th at Arley House, near Bewdley, in Worcestershire, the home of Nigel Goodman, a personal friend of our President, Sir Patrick Cormack, through whose good offices the meeting was arranged.

After warmly welcoming the Trust, our host gave a short introductory talk on the history of the estate before members were taken on a guided tour of the gardens and arboretum by the Head Gardener, Michael Darvill.

Arley was in the county of Staffordshire until 1895, when it became part of Worcestershire. Once the possession of the Kings of England, it was, for 150 years, owned by the Mortimer family before passing to the Lyttelton family, who also owned Hagley and Enville, though, for a period of fifty years during the seventeenth century, Arley was their principal residence, valued as “a rural retreat from the Bustle of Society”.

The Lord of the Manor of Arley still has the right to execute Welshmen living on the opposite side of the river Severn, which borders the estate, though Mr. Goodman did not say when this right was last exercised!

George Annesley, since 1816 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Mountnorris, inherited the estate in 1779 when only nine years of age. Once of age, he carried out extensive alterations, creating what is acknowledged to be one of the earliest arboreta in the country and replacing the Elizabethan manor house with a Gothic castle in keeping with the fashion of the times. This was replaced in the 1960s by the present house, and now only the barbican remains.

A brilliant botanist, he was elected to the Royal Society while still in his early twenties, and he was also a Fellow of The Linnaeus Society. Keen to collect plants from abroad, he went on a plant-hunting expedition lasting four years, during which he visited South Africa, India, Egypt and Ethiopia and sent back plants and seeds to Sir Joseph Banks at Kew Gardens.

By 1840, the monumental gardens were being described as “amongst the first in the country with a collection of rare and exotic plants unequalled in England”.

Today, the collection contains numerous specimens of rhododendron, azaleas, camellias and magnolias.

From the 1790s Lord Mountnorris began building up the collection of trees to which later owners added and for which Arley is now justly famed. The trees he planted have now come into maturity and include the eight tallest species in the United Kingdom, including a Cedar of Lebanon 120 feet high.

The Arboretum contains six hundred species of trees, including pines, cedars and Wellingtonias.

After a period of gradual decline following World War I, the estate was purchased in 1959 by Roger Turner, a Birmingham business-man, who employed six gardeners over the next forty years to restore the neglected gardens. On his death in 1999, ownership of the gardens, including the Arboretum, was transferred to the R. D. Turner Charitable Trust, and they were opened to the public in 2002.

Arley is a very special place, standing in a

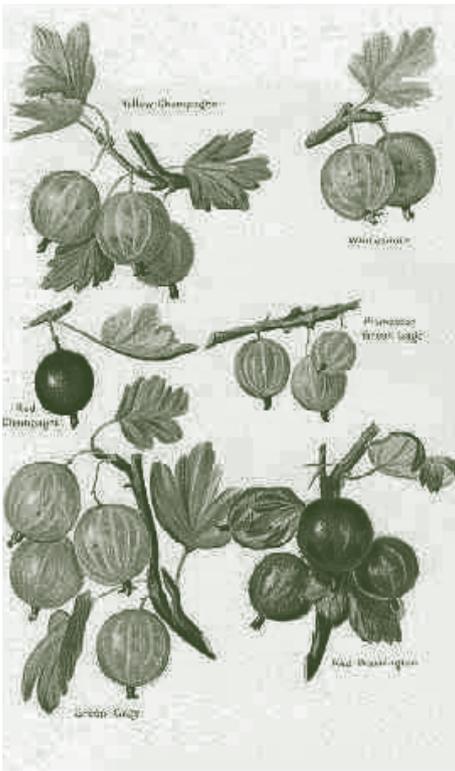
peaceful and secluded setting alongside the River Severn not far from Bewdley, and the Trust was privileged to be allowed to hold its Annual General Meeting there and to benefit from the detailed knowledge and general expertise of Nigel Goodman and Michael Darvill.

The Trust made three other visits during the summer – to Biddulph Grange, Shugborough and The Leasowes. All of these are open to the public, but, in each case, the visits were led by someone deeply knowledgeable about the site and closely involved in its management and development.

In May, guided by Paul Baker, the Administrator, a party of members were taken round Biddulph Grange Gardens, following a circuitous and sometimes secluded route which took them in the space of an afternoon through China, Egypt and Scotland! For some, the journey might have been familiar, but none had previously visited James Bateman's Geological Gallery currently under renewal, in which a series of stone plaques recorded the Six Days of the Creation in a parallel sequence of embedded fossils illustrating the



Shugborough Walled Garden: Costumed gardeners at work



Knowl Wall were dilapidated with leaking roofs, six cottages to one privy (instead of three), the privies entered an open ditch, and piggeries adjoined the houses.

In the country as a whole, the increasing use of farm machinery, bad housing conditions and a succession of poor harvests led to riots and forced many agricultural labourers to move to industrial areas in search of work where they found they had exchanged one type of squalor and privation for another, in slums with little, if any, sanitation and whole families sharing one room and a yard. Efforts were made by Victorian philanthropists and political activists, like William Cobbett, worried about the riots and the mass exodus to towns, to improve the living conditions for agricultural labourers by providing the materials to repair their cottages and better cultivate their gardens.

In Shropshire, worthy tenants of the Duke of Sutherland were allowed materials to repair their cottages as long as they did the work themselves. In 1830, the Duke's agent was instructed that "if an old cottage is pulled down, give the materials as a present to the most deserving near it, for use in additions, also when an old tree is cut down. Always make it a reward for good conduct". A little later he was asked to think of the best way of "giving little pieces of land (gardens of various sizes) to the several cottagers,

differing according to the situation, circumstances and wishes of each family".

In Staffordshire the Rev. Butt, the clergyman at Lane End (Longton), wrote in 1834 that "A committee had been formed to procure ground for gardens to be allotted to the poor". This pre-empted the General Enclosure Act of 1845 which provided for land to be set aside for allotment use. This Act required that the Commissioners should make provision for the landless poor in the form of "field gardens" limited to a quarter of an acre. The effects were meant to improve their health by better diet and cleanliness, encourage them to remain in the countryside, keep them out of the beer houses and make them less likely to riot. Its success, however, depended on the willingness of landowners to set the land aside. It was more successful in the south of England than elsewhere, though it was often a condition that a man must give up his allotment if he sought parish relief. The law was strengthened in 1887 and again in 1908, making it mandatory for local authorities to provide allotment land.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, as a further inducement to them, special categories began to be included in the schedules of local horticultural shows, previously the province of the professional gardener and nurseryman. Prizes awarded were usually for fruit and vegetables, but eventually pots or bunches of flowers were also included. In 1858, in Stoke at the three exhibitions of the North Staffordshire Floral and Horticultural Association that year, the cottagers' schedule included "collections of three or six window plants, collection of three or six calceolarias and a bouquet of wild flowers".

Prizes were from 2/6d (slightly more than a day's wages for a labourer) to 7/6d. In addition, the sponsors offered prizes for the best cultivated cottage gardens in the parish of Stoke-on-Trent and within half a mile from Hartshill Church. The schedule also included a class for professional gardeners and prizes for the heaviest gooseberry, but the working class in the north of England had had their own competitions for this fruit since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and

Staffordshire.

The gooseberry, a native plant, had been grown for culinary use since medieval times. By 1707, six types were recorded, but this number rose rapidly due to the gooseberry clubs, so that by 1831 there were seven hundred varieties in red, green, yellow, white, blue and even striped sorts. Until 1901, an annual competition was held at The Falcon Inn, Stone. The carts were cleared out of the yard and trestle tables set up with white cloths and wine glasses containing sugar solution. The gooseberry stalks were tied with worsted thread, the other end of which was placed in the sugar water to feed the berry. Much care was needed because too much feed might cause the berry to burst, which would disqualify the entrant. The fruit were weighed on special scales and measured by pennyweights and grains. The record for the heaviest berry was held (for just over a hundred years) by a Stone man, John Flower. His berry weighed 37 pennyweights and 7 grains. The record is now held by Kelvin Archer, gardener at Rode Hall, in Cheshire, at 39 pennyweights and 19 grains, which is the equivalent of 2.18 oz, the weight of an average hen's egg.

In Victorian times, whilst labourers were struggling to survive on crops raised on whatever land was available to them, the upper classes had romantic ideas of maintaining the rural idyll against the rising tide of industrialisation by building country retreats. These were usually large houses, but were called "cottages" and were surrounded with expensive flowers such as dahlias, tulips and China roses grown by their gardeners. Many artists of the day, such as Helen Allingham, Miles Birkett Foster and Alfred Parsons, further maintained this idealised image of the countryside by depicting the gardens of the wealthy, extravagantly planted, adjacent to a perfectly-maintained labourer's cottage with his clean, thriving children. The crowded informal planting style, however, was that which, of necessity, had evolved since Tusser's time in order not to waste the precious space needed for food crops, should the cottager not have the luxury of an allotment.

Sue Gregory: July 2008

# The Cottager's Plot

*“In March & in April from morning to night  
In sowing & setting good huswives delight  
To have in a garden or other like plot  
To trim up their house & to furnish their pot”*

In the Middle Ages, the poor lived on pottage made from dried legumes with whatever fresh vegetables were available, mainly cabbage, kale, leeks, onions and parsnips. These they cultivated on their strips on the common land, where they also grew wheat for bread, and grazed their animals. In 1573, Thomas Tusser published his “500 Points of Good Husbandry”, which was entirely written in verse. Tusser studied music at Cambridge and spent ten years in the household of William Paget, of Beaudesert in Staffordshire, as a musician, after which he married and became a farmer in Suffolk.

Although principally writing about farming, Tusser also wrote instructions on the maintenance of gardens and gave lists of vegetables and fruit grown: beet, cabbage, colewort, leek, onion, spinach, bean, carrot, parsnip, pumpkin, swede, turnip, pea, strawberry, raspberry, gooseberry and barberry. He lists flowers under the heading “For Windows and Pots”; they should not occupy precious space in the plot.

Flowering plants named are: campion, carnation, columbine, cowslip, daffodils, rose, feverfew, marigold, hollyhock, iris, larkspur, lavender, lily,

love-lies-bleeding, nigella, pansy, pinks, snapdragon, stock, sweet rocket, Sweet William, violet and wallflower. Seeds might be obtained from a local market or pedlar, but Tusser advised:

These were more affluent times, but they would soon end, when, starting in the sixteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth, the common lands were enclosed. The Enclosure Acts redistributed three and a half million acres amongst the nobility and gentry, and cottagers were deprived of their strips and grazing rights. They were forced to live on what they could grow in the small area around their cottages and whatever their meagre wages could buy.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, landowners had their grounds and parks laid out in the new natural style, often sweeping away rights of way and even whole villages. Ironically, some of them then had model villages and lodges constructed to act as ornaments to their estates and give the impression to visitors that their tenants lived in idyllic conditions. This was far from true, as by the end of the eighteenth century, wages were low and prices high. The 1804 Corn Laws which banned imports of grain forced a massive increase in the price of bread, resulting in much hardship.

*“Good huswives in summer will save their own seeds  
Against the next year as occasion needs  
One seed for another to make an exchange  
With fellowly neighbourhood seemeth not strange”*



In Trentham and Lilleshall, tenants were specially selected for those estate cottages which were closest to the mansion for their cleanliness, character and behaviour. The remaining cottages, out of sight, were frequently squalid and often in danger of collapse. In 1846, on being challenged about a press report of a cottage roof falling in at Longton, the land agent at Trentham remarked merely that it was a pity the paper's editor had not stated that “it was a mere mud hut for which only 15/- rent per year was paid”. Conditions in 1878 had not improved, despite legislation, as reports by the Sanitary Inspector stated that cottages at Normacott, Hanford and



Shugborough Walled Garden: The Head Gardener's House

successive geological eras which, Bateman believed, confirmed the accuracy of the Biblical account. (Bateman, an evangelical Christian, rejected Darwinism and saw the hybridisation of plants as interference with the work of God. Indeed, Brent Elliot, author of "Victorian Gardens", has gone so far as to argue that, in creating the gardens at Biddulph, Bateman was, by recalling past civilisations such as Ancient Egypt and China, affirming his belief that the Millennium was approaching). In June, members were taken on a guided tour of the gardens and grounds of Shugborough by Joe Hawkins, the Head Gardener and, like Paul Baker, a member of the Trust. The tour started at the Walled Garden, which, now reduced to less than half its size, once produced food not only for the family but for 120 staff as well. Restricted to using gardening methods followed in the 1700s, the gardening staff, many of them volunteers, use soapy water to get rid of black fly and rely on ladybirds to eliminate aphids, though they themselves are attacked by ants! Mare's Tail, a fossil plant once used for scouring, has roots that can penetrate the soil to a depth of three metres and must be dug out and burnt. Lottery funding will allow the glasshouses to be replaced and the pineapple pits to be reclaimed.

Plans for the future include thinning out what was in 1805 open farmland but is now semi-wooded, though here there may be a problem in that some of the trees were donated. It is neither possible nor desirable to take the landscape back to the mid-eighteenth century; instead, the aim will be to create the simple elegance of places like Studley Royal and Rousham by opening out sight-lines and vistas.

Sadly, a succession of wet summers and winters and the absence of deep frost has allowed phytophthora ramorum - 'Oak Disease' - to establish itself in the park. A water-borne fungal infection which also affects other trees and shrubs such as beech and rhododendron, its elimination offers a considerable challenge, since it must be literally eradicated and burnt. To combat the invasion, a whole shrubbery of rhododendron will have to be uprooted. Our fourth and final visit of the summer was to The Leasowes, in Halesowen, where we were met by Rupert Dugdale, Head of Economic Regeneration, who gave us a power-point presentation illustrating its early history and the proposals for its future development before taking us on a tour in which we were also accompanied by Helen Edwards, one of the Park Wardens. It was at The Leasowes that William Shenstone created an early example of the 'ferme ornee', literally an ornamented farm which combined

practicality with aesthetic appeal. At the heart of The Leasowes was worked farmland (though Shenstone was only ever a half-hearted and therefore unsuccessful farmer) which was surrounded by woods enhanced with newly-planted trees and shrubs and enclosing a circuit walk. Its position along two deeply-incised wooded valleys also meant that 'brawling rivulets', 'bubbling streams', 'romantic falls of water' and pools were prominent features, and the visitor was never out of the sight and sound of water. Convinced that he had a vocation to be a poet, a conviction which few have since shared, Shenstone embellished this walk with carefully-placed seats, urns, statues and poetic inscriptions - some taken from classical poets, some written by Shenstone himself - whose purpose was to encourage an appropriate mood, usually one of melancholy, in his visitors as they walked along a carefully-controlled route (To enter from the wrong direction was to incur Shenstone's wrath!). Shenstone listed forty viewing points, both distant and to hand, but the most complete description of his creation was provided by Robert Dodsley, who, a year after Shenstone's death in 1763, published a guide called "A Description of the Leasowes" which follows Shenstone's circuit walk, drawing attention to the many felicities which Shenstone had provided.



The Leasowe-Priory Pool

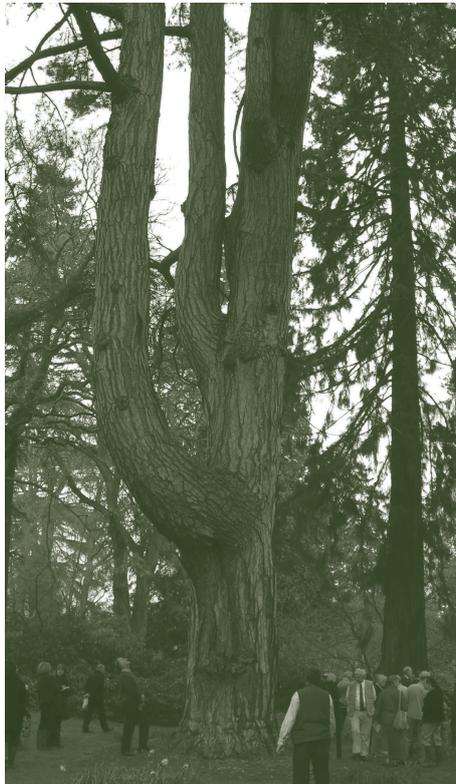
In rejecting the rigid and formal which had dictated the design of gardens for centuries, it appealed to the changing taste of the time, attracting visitors from far and wide. It became one of a trio of Midlands gardens, the others being Hagley and Enville, where landscape was also allowed to dominate and which all serious garden tourists simply had to visit.

Most of Shenstone's ornamental features were, owing to the material from which they were made, temporary and no longer survive, and the site itself is now a public park managed by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, though much of the open farmland is now taken up by a golf course.

The importance of The Leasowes in the history of garden design is recognised by its inclusion, as a Grade I listing, in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has embarked on a programme of restoration, part-funded by a substantial grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund, and already there has been a complete restoration of Beechwater, the header pool which supplies water for the cascade and lower pools, as well as an extensive archaeological survey, the introduction of a woodland management plan and the establishment of a warden service. Work is also in hand in re-building the Lower Cascade.

In the next phase, the focus will be on Virgil's Grove, Shenstone's 'rude sequestered vale' which was at the heart of his original design. Here, paths will be re-instated, and there will be extensive planting which will put back species

which Shenstone himself had planted. Led by people closely involved in the development and continuing well-being of these sites, members have surely gained an appreciation of what makes them such an important part of our national and regional heritage and an understanding of how much their survival depends on the vision, the depth of historical knowledge and creative imagination and the professional and personal commitment of those tasked to ensure that they survive.



Members inspecting the UK's tallest Corsican Pine at Arley Arboretum following the AGM

# JOHN WEBB who's he?

Part I: Travels of a Georgian Landscape Gardener

To some of you the name might ring a bell when linked to that of William Emes or with the gardens at Shugborough, near Stafford, which is where I first came across the name. I wondered about who he was and what he had done for sometime; the names of Brown and Repton were familiar but who was John Webb? Studying at Bristol was the opportunity to find out more about Webb and in this first of a series of articles I hope to shed some light on a man who has been described both as a 'shadowy figure' and as 'the Staffordshire Repton' with a look at the extent of his practice.

As an architect as well as a landscape gardener, John Webb (1754-1828) merits an entry in Howard Colvin's *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*. It identifies 28 locations around the country where he was consulted or commissioned to work on the house or grounds. These range from Sandon, Shugborough and Weston in Staffordshire through Cheshire and Warwickshire to virtually the four corners of England: Lowther Castle in Westmorland, Holkham Hall in Norfolk, Warleigh House in Somerset and Wanstead Grove in Essex. As Colvin records, a practice that was 'all over England'

Initially working for William Emes, Webb implemented the works at Badger Dingle, Shropshire (1782-5) and Locko Park, Derbyshire (1792-5) before working in partnership with him at Dodington Park, Gloucestershire, and Brockenhurst Place (both 1793). At about the same time Webb started to work on his own account, one of the first commissions being to lay out the grounds of Willersley Castle near Matlock for Sir Richard Arkwright (1792) and the 'new river' at Shugborough after the 1795 floods had destroyed the pagoda and other features.



# Marigolds - not just for washing up

Summer bedding, either municipal or at home, often contains patches of bright orange and yellow created by the ubiquitous marigold, the shorter French marigold (*Tagetes patula*) edging the border and the taller African marigold (*T. erecta*) in the bed. Many people are also familiar with the pot marigold, *Calendula officinalis*, also available in the same bright colours.

How much do you know about these regular summer favourites? How long have they graced our gardens? Where do they come from? What is the marigold of Peru?

The African and French marigolds are both natives of Mexico, arriving in England in the sixteenth century. The family was named after Tages, a demi-god celebrated for his beauty. He was grandson of Jupiter, who sprang from the ploughed earth and is said to have taught the Etruscans the art of divination.

The African marigold was first brought to Spain and became popular in southern Europe under the name of Rose of the Indies. It became naturalised along the Algerian coast and was re-introduced to Europe by the Corsairs as *Flos Africanus* in 1535 in honour of the victory of Emperor Charles V over the Moors at Tunis. The plants were featured in herbals from 1542, and both Gerard and Parkinson had them in their gardens. The name of the African marigold in Mexico is bound up with the blood spilt during the Spanish Conquest, where they are known as 'Deathflowers'.

Tradition has it that the French marigold

was brought to this country by the Huguenot refugees after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572. It was first viewed with suspicion because of its unpleasant smell, which led many of the early writers to believe that it was poisonous and 'should not be touched or smelled, much less used in meat or medicine'. However, it did become popular, and many varieties were developed, brown and orange miniature ones being mentioned in 1865.

The Pot marigold is a native of southern Europe and seems to have been in widespread medical and culinary use; it appears in Alexander Neckham's plant list of 1199. The name comes from the Latin *calendae*, the first day of the month, and refers to the long flowering period. Calendulas were used by the Romans for decoration, as a dye and as an infusion to be drunk to relieve sleeplessness and nervous tension. Petals were sprinkled into pottage and broth to add a touch of sharpness and also used in egg dishes; it helped to retain the colour of butter and cheeses. More useful from a Northampton Natural Trust Volunteers point of view is the medicinal attributes; it is said that the pain of a wasp or bee sting can be alleviated by rubbing with the flower, and using the juice from the leaves offers better relief from stinging nettles than rubbing the affected area with a dock leaf.

So that leaves the "marigold" of Peru, a plant found from western North America down to Peru and described by Gerard in his *Herbal* of 1597 – you

probably know it better as the sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*. It was held in great esteem in Peru, where it was used as the emblem of the Sun God and was often carved on Inca temples, or worn, worked in gold, by the Priests and Virgins of the Sun. It was given its name because, like the marigold, it was supposed always to turn towards the sun. Growing the tallest sunflower is not a new competition; Gerard boasted of one fourteen feet tall in his garden, a flower of 3lb. 2oz. and one of sixteen inches in diameter. At around the same time one was allegedly recorded at twenty-four feet in Madrid and another at forty feet in Italy.

The flower petals were used by the Indians to produce a yellow dye. The pith of the stalks is said to be the lightest substance known and has been used for lifebelts. The leaves are excellent for feeding geese and other livestock, and the ash of the plant, when burnt, contains a high percentage of potash. The most valuable product, however, is the seed (2362 have been counted in a single head), which is rich in protein, calcium and edible oil (used for margarine). There are about eighty varieties of sunflower, and Van Gogh painted several of them in a total of thirteen sunflower pictures, six of them completed in Arles in August 1888.

Main source:  
*Flowers and their Histories*,  
by Alice M. Coats

Ann Brookman

## Still to come....

### **Friday, September 5<sup>th</sup>:**

Reception at Chillington Hall, Brewood (by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. John Giffard) from 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Between five and six o'clock there will be an opportunity to tour part of the park and grounds, followed, at six o'clock, by drinks in the Hall and brief presentations on the Chillington estate by John Giffard and on the work of the Trust by the Trust's President, Sir Patrick Cormack, FSA, MP. Admission is by ticket, priced at £12.50

### **Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>:**

Talk by Julian Ranson, Garden Centre Manager at Nottcutt's Garden Centre, Shirley, entitled "From Nursery to Garden Centre": St. Mary's Centre, Market Place, Lichfield, commencing at 7.30 p.m. Admission is free.

The rise of the garden centre from simply a place to go to buy plants and receive expert horticultural advice to somewhere where you could take the whole family for an afternoon of various social and commercial activities is a phenomenon which must surely be closely associated with the increasing affluence of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly the growth in home ownership. Nottcutt's Garden Centres have been established for a hundred years and have been at the forefront of this development.

Mr. Ranson's talk will be of interest not just to horny-handed gardeners but to any one interested in the social and horticultural changes which have taken place in our time.

### **November:**

To be announced. Discussions are under way to arrange a final event in 2008. Members will receive notice of this event in due course under separate cover.