



# Staffordshire Gardens & Parks Trust

# News LETTER

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## “William Emes: a layer out of landscapes and pleasure gardens”

**An account of the Study Day at Keele on 10 June**

**As the tercentenary of Capability Brown’s birth came to an end late in 2016 Council of the Trust were looking for ways to build on the interest in garden history which had developed over the year. It was decided to focus on the work of William Emes (1729-1803), a near contemporary of Brown who had designed in a broadly similar style, but about whom relatively little had been written. The focus on Emes had a particular resonance for the Trust, partly because he had practised extensively in Staffordshire and the Midlands; partly because its first Chairman, the late Keith Goodway, had conducted extensive**

**research into Emes but had died before he could publish his findings. The Trust had received a generous donation from Keith’s family and felt that a study day on Emes would make an appropriate commemoration of Keith’s scholarship and could act as a first step towards bringing his researches to publication.**



Waterfall  
Badger Dingle

The Study Day, attended by a capacity audience of forty received two presentations. The first was from Rev Dr David Chatford Clark, an American archaeologist based in Cambridge who had known Keith for many years and who had been asked by his family to catalogue his papers on Emes. The second was by Prue Keely Davies, who has recently completed a dissertation on Emes for her M.A..

Dr. Clark entertainingly wove details of Keith’s life around the development of his interest in Emes. Born in Essex in 1930, Keith had been an only child who discovered the joy of reading and developed the skill

of remembering facts from an encyclopaedia. When the family were evacuated at the outbreak of World War II, he was befriended by an elderly clergyman who took him on long country walks during which he shared with Keith a love of botany.

After Cambridge Keith took up a teaching appointment at Keele University. In time he was appointed Chairman of the Grounds Committee and discovered that the grounds had been laid out by one William Emes, an eighteenth-century landscape designer about whom very little was known. Thus began a lifetime’s mission...!

continued overleaf



Emes first comes to the attention of historians when he is appointed head gardener at Kedleston Hall in 1756, which has led to the surmise that he was born in nearby Derby (indeed, he was known as “William Emes of Derby”). However, Prue pointed out that it was recorded that he arrived in Derby on the London coach with a box, which suggested that he might instead have been born in one of the Home Counties. David added that, shortly before Keith’s death, they were investigating the possibility that Emes had been born in Wiltshire. They found reference to a Thomas Emes in parish records at the County’s Record Office, possibly William Emes’ younger brother, but no reference to Emes himself nor to his parents.

When Sir Nathaniel Curzon appointed Emes as Head Gardener at Kedleston he was only twenty six. This suggests he had already developed a reputation as a designer. He was charged with demolishing the old Hall and laying the foundations for its replacement. He also carried out extensive work in the grounds, including making a new lake, and was at one stage in charge of no fewer than seventy men.

In 1759 Emes left Kedleston and went freelance. One reason suggested for his departure was that he had fallen out with Robert Adam, whom Curzon had brought to the estate in 1758 “to take in hand the deer park and pleasure grounds”.

Nonetheless Emes continued working at Kedleston for almost two years following Adam’s arrival: Prue also pointed out that the pair were working at opposite ends of the park! In any case, Emes moved only as far as Mackworth just a mile and a half away, on the outskirts of Derby, where he lived for the next thirty years!

Emes worked largely in the North Midlands, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and also in Wales, parts of which were enjoying a boom associated with the development of mining and smelting. He worked at Chirk Castle between 1764 and 1775, where he landscaped the gardens and parkland. At Erddig Hall outside Wrexham, where he worked between 1768 and 1780, he was tasked with solving the problem of flooding caused by the nearby river, which was sweeping away fertile soil and reducing the agricultural value of the land. At Powis Castle, however, his grand plans to sweep away the formal gardens and leave the castle standing dominant on a vast expanse of grass was rejected, it is said, because of the objections of Richard Payne Knight, a leading advocate of the Picturesque Movement which was by then becoming increasingly fashionable. As a result, Powis Castle survives as an outstanding example of a Baroque garden.

Over forty years, Emes succeeded in building up a substantial practice, during which he received ninety commissions,

of which plans for thirty-seven survive. His clientele were drawn mainly from the gentry rather than the great oligarchs who tended to patronise Capability Brown and, based as he was close to the geographical heart of the Industrial Revolution, the coal-mining aristocracy. A measure of the satisfaction he gave was that his commissions seemed to come from client-recommendation, as illustrated in the cluster of commissions in North Wales which were in close proximity to each other – Erddig, Powis and Chirk. Moreover, his fees were markedly lower than Brown’s! Some clients retained his services over a number of years; for example, he worked at Erddig for twelve years and at Chirk over a period of twenty-five years.

In style, Emes’ designs closely resembled those of Brown, inasmuch as he swept away formal gardens, created lakes, planted trees in belts, clumps and individually, and laid out winding drives which gave tantalising glimpses of the house to approaching guests. This has encouraged the belief that he may initially have been Brown’s pupil, but no documentary evidence has been found to confirm this. In any case, though his designs may seem similar, they were no slavish imitations; for example, his lakes were more varied in shape than Brown’s. There were even cases, where Emes was called in to correct what Brown had done!

Erdigg  
The Cup and Saucer



He drew his early inspiration from the poem "Needwood Forest", by Francis Mundy, like Pope's "Windsor Forest" and John Denham's Cooper's Hill", a topographical poem which focuses on a specific location rather relying on the more generalised imagery of the classical pastoral. In it Mundy attacked "Ye sage Professors of design whom system's stubborn rules enforce"; and according to Anna Seward, the celebrated 'Swan of Lichfield', "Mr. Emes took hints from the scenes of Needwood when he laid out Beau Desart", the seat of the Marquis of Anglesey, close to Lichfield.

Emes could be said to have anticipated the Gardenesque by creating flower beds immediately outside the house, as at Sandon Hall, near Stafford, where, in addition to laying out a 400-acre park, he laid out a long flower bed at the end of the house.

Contemporaries noted that "Mr. Emes excels in the laying out of water": the evidence is that Emes was above all the man landowners turned to for the management of water. At Tixall Hall, Thomas Clifford, gave permission for the Stafford and Worcester Canal to pass through his land provided it was made wide enough to look like a lake from his house - Emes met this demand by creating

what is now known as the Tixall Wide. At Badger Hall, near Wolverhampton, the home of an industrialist, Isaac Browne Hawkins, he created Badger Dingle, two miles of walks alongside a brook running through a steep valley, punctuated by a series of cascades, thus creating one of the earliest examples of a Picturesque landscape. At Erdigg, he resolved the flooding problem by devising a cylindrical waterfall within a stone basin (known as "The Cup and Saucer") which carried the water downwards and through a tunnel to the river further downstream.

Unlike Brown, Emes had no contractual disagreements with any of his clients, and he died a wealthy man. Prue argued that he was in his lifetime something of an aesthete, who used his wealth to accumulate a significant amount of artwork. Both she and David referred to the beauty of the plans he drew up for his clients, David drawing the conclusion that, so attractive were they, they must have been intended for display in the clients' libraries. Prue, on the other hand, pointed out that some had been folded and inscribed with Emes' notes, from which she concluded that they were in fact working documents whose quality simply illustrated Emes' love of beautiful things.

Emes, who moved to London after the death of his wife, was buried in the churchyard of St. Giles Cripplegate. Guttled by German firebombs during World War II, it was subsequently restored, but is now dominated by the Barbican. David recalled visiting the church with Keith, who was determined to locate Emes' grave, which he found in a state of neglect. Sadly, no monument to Emes' memory exists inside the church, which instead displays a bust of John Milton, also buried in the churchyard, and a memorial tablet to Daniel Defoe!

At the beginning of her talk, Prue described Emes as "a somewhat mysterious gardener". By the end of the afternoon much of the mystery which may have surrounded Emes had been dispersed by two highly informative presentations.

*POSTSCRIPT: The Trust intends to work further with Dr Chatford Clark to see how Keith's papers and researches on Emes can be brought to a wider audience when they have been catalogued – possibly through publication. Further information on this project will be announced in future issues of this Newsletter and on the Trust's website.*

**WBS/AGT**

# WALSALL ARBORETUM

## *“The Jewel in Walsall’s Crown”*

In July, a small group of members visited Walsall Arboretum, where we were taken on a guided tour of the park by two members of the Arboretum’s User Group, Jackie Cocken, the Group’s Chair, and Jo Lester, its Head of Projects.

It is hard to believe that the land on which Walsall Arboretum stands was once at the southern most boundary of Cannock Forest, in medieval times a royal hunting ground, but now just a short walk from the town centre. In the words of one visitor, “You’d never think you were in the centre of Walsall”.

Later, part of a private estate, it was mined for limestone, but, when mining work stopped in the mid 1830s, it became an unofficial park, the flooded pits being used for fishing, boating and swimming, and, in the winter months, for skating. The depth of these lakes made them particularly dangerous, and in 1845 Hatherton Lake claimed the life of the then Mayor of Walsall, John Hervey, who drowned while taking an evening swim.

Eventually, the proposal was put

forward to turn the site into a park, and, in 1871, the Walsall Arboretum and Lake Company was formed. A lease was drawn up between the Company and the landowner, Lord Hatherton, and a park was laid out around two lakes, offering features which included a tree-lined promenade, a bandstand, several summer houses, a croquet lawn and a cricket pitch.

Officially opened in 1874, the Arboretum was soon criticised for what it did NOT offer, including refreshment facilities and children’s activities! To add to the Company’s woes, heavy rain caused the lakes to flood!

The Company went into liquidation in 1877, and the management of the Arboretum was taken over by a group of local businessmen, but four years later, bowing to public pressure,

Walsall Corporation took over the park, and the entry charge, which not everyone had been able or willing to pay, was abolished. Finally, in 1884, the Corporation purchased the site from the owner, Lord Hatherton, whose name has been given to the large lake which is a dominating feature of the historic centre of the park, and in the July of that year, the Arboretum was officially opened as the town’s first “people’s park”.

Subsequent years saw the park extended incrementally as neighbouring plots of land were donated or purchased (it now covers over 170 acres), and it now includes an area of open parkland which provides the venue for larger events such as funfairs, circuses and classic car rallies. Adjacent to the Victorian park, the Walsall Country Park occupies land once used as a golf course, and over the past few years



Hatherton Lake

trees have been planted to create a new woodland.

The facilities provided in the historic part of the Arboretum were gradually improved; these included a pavilion from which refreshments were provided (which became "The Joseph Leckie Sons of Rest" for retired men, named after a local business man, politician and philanthropist, and is now a senior citizens' club run by Social Services), a fountain, a clock tower, greenhouses (where pupils from the Technical School once 'could sketch from nature' but which have now been replaced by a modern visitors' centre and café), tennis courts, a lido (which now has now been replaced by a water feature which includes a Splash Pad, water jets and sprinklers at a cost of £250,000), a putting green, an aviary (subsequently removed) and a bandstand, recently refurbished.

What was noticeable during our visit was that there had been a determined effort to cater for the needs of the younger generation. The Water Splash was evidence of this policy, as were a skate-board track, archery butts, gymnastic bars - and a chess board (a niche activity, perhaps!). I particularly liked the comments of one visitor who remarked on the tranquillity of the park - "except around the children's play area"!

The visitor cannot but be impressed by the determination to engage the interest of younger residents in and further their knowledge of the natural world with which they would otherwise not have contact in their daily lives. To that end, The Woodland Wildlife Learning Centre was set up in 2006 on the site of an abandoned storage yard.

The Garden is divided into sections - herbaceous border, bog garden, pebble puddle garden, nectar bar, stumpery, tree nursery, and so on -, each with its own specific educational purpose. Here, children can get their hands dirty - and have indeed done so, planting three thousand spring bulbs. Children have also helped to plant the Arboretum Orchard.

A bird hide with apertures at various heights allows the children to bird-watch, and an illustrated chart tells them what birds they have seen.

Undoubtedly, for some children the learning curve will be steep - Jo recalled being approached by one young visitor holding a worm and asking her, "What's this, Miss?", while another thought a stone was a potato!

A light touch is provided by brightly-coloured scarecrows, and the Garden is the venue for exciting activities like an annual Easter Egg Hunt.

As Jackie said, providing young people with activities which they could take part in and enjoy played a part in reducing incident of vandalism. Improved lighting and leaving the park open for early dog walkers while closing it overnight to vehicles had, Jackie believed, also played a part. Local residents felt that they 'owned' the park and were ready to report any incidents of wrongdoing which they came across.

Certainly, there is clear evidence that the Arboretum is greatly valued by local residents, some of whom, now mature in years, fondly remember being brought to the park as children - and perched on top of the glacial bolder known as "The Devil's Toe", one of the park's more surprising features!

As it grew in popularity, the Arboretum became the venue for sports days, fêtes and hot-air balloon

events, and in 1911 was illuminated for the first time to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII. The 'Walsall Illuminations' for which the Arboretum were once celebrated were introduced in 1951 as the town's contribution to The Festival of Britain but were discontinued in 2008. However, boating has been brought back to the lake, not this time in the form of rowing boats but as swan-shaped pedaloos.

The nature of the events may have changed, but the Arboretum remains the venue for a richly varied programme of events which included open-air theatre performances, poetry reading and a concert by a popular local group. Band concerts are given during the summer months from the 1920s bandstand.

The Arboretum has in recent years undergone a major restoration, thanks to grants totalling £7.6m., the bulk of which came in the form of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. In addition to the Visitors' Centre already mentioned, this had enabled the Council to improve the lighting, refurbish the bandstand, boat-house and tennis courts, re-surface the footpaths, and lay out a viewing platform from which to feed the water fowl in Hatherton Lake.



The group in reflective mood (CJB)



A poignant addition to the park's features is The Seat for Reflection, an enclosed garden laid out in memory of Corporal Jonathan Home, of the Second Rifles Regiment, a local lad killed while on active service in Afghanistan. Paid for by his family, it was designed by Jo; surrounded by a low circular wall, it is planted so as to provide colour throughout the seasons. It offers visitors the opportunity to pause for rest and reflection during their walk around the park

The other form of commemoration to be found in the park, as in many other parks, is a number of benches donated in memory of departed loved ones. While by this allows the Council to provide seating at no charge to itself, the practice has its downside; from time to time bouquets and potted plants are left on a bench (there was even one instance when a bench was wrapped in Christmas tinsel), thus deterring members of the public from taking a rest on the seats provided for that very purpose!

Walsall Council's recognition of the important part the Arboretum plays in the life of its residents and, consequently, its commitment

to maintaining the Arboretum to the highest standard has been acknowledged with the award in 1995 and again in 1999 of a Charter Mark for the excellence and diversity of the services it offers to the public, and in its endeavours it is assisted by a very active group of volunteers, The Walsall Arboretum User Group, some of whom are also Tree Wardens. Our two guides, to whom we are indebted for a fascinating introduction to the Arboretum, are exemplars of the kind of enthusiasm and commitment such enterprises increasingly rely on.

While not in the strictest sense of the scientific term an arboretum – "It's just a park!" was the comment of one apparently disappointed visitor – it does contain some unusual and exotic trees, not least a plane tree around which Jackie insisted we all stood holding hands, eyes closed, while we made a wish. I know what mine was – that we return (in greater numbers?) for a guided tour of the extended park, too extensive for us to cover in two hours. The invitation stands!

### *Postscript*

*Following our tour of the Arboretum, we drove the short distance to St. Matthew's Church, where John Pryce-Jones, until recently a church warden at St. Matthew's, was waiting to take us round the Church Hill Memorial Garden.*

*Here, members were able to savour the peace and tranquillity which it was the purpose of Geoffrey Jellicoe's design to create. Now kept permanently locked because of its history of vandalism and maintained at a basic level by the Council, it cries out for the involvement of a group of volunteers similar to those who help to maintain the Walsall Arboretum.*

*The Garden is a registered war memorial (though it lacks a focal point) and listed by English Heritage, and such a group might well enable the garden to be open to the public (whose local taxes fund its maintenance) under supervision and even contribute to its upkeep. Dare one dream?*

*The afternoon ended with a guided tour of the historic church, including the oldest part of the building, the medieval crypt.*

**WBS.**

# Elford's Secret Garden

**“This unique project is an example of just what can be achieved when extremely dedicated individuals pull together a community or volunteer group...The scale and range of achievements...simply defies belief” (Royal Horticultural Society).**

On a hot afternoon in June a small group of members and friends visited the Walled Garden in the village of Elford, between Lichfield and Tamworth.

At the heart of the Elford Estate, which dates from Anglo-Saxon times, once stood the eighteenth-century Elford Hall, which was gifted, together with six hundred acres of farmland and a number of village properties, to Birmingham Corporation by Francis Howard Paget, the last Squire of Elford.

He was responding to an appeal to land-owners by the then Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, to give land to the people as a token of their gratitude for the reign of King George V, whose Silver Jubilee was being celebrated that year, that is, 1935.

He was also fulfilling a pledge made to “the Almighty Architect of the Universe” that he would serve Him better than he had done if he came out of the war still able to see, a pledge made when a comrade was blinded by a grenade as they went ‘over the top’ in the First World War.

It was Howard Paget’s intention that the land should be available for “the fulfilment of promoting the healthful recreation of the inhabitants of the City of Birmingham”. Birmingham Corporation never matched Paget’s generosity; no doubt, the distance between city and village, twenty miles apart, would have made the proposition highly impracticable, but,



Herbaceous Border  
with Pump House in Background

in any case, within three years World War Two and consequent travel restrictions would have prevented his wish from being fulfilled. Instead, the Hall was used to store exhibits from the City’s museums, safe from the threat of German bombs, having first been used, in 1938, to house child refugees from the Spanish Civil War. In the following years Birmingham Corporation sold off nearly all the

estate, while at the same time the Hall fell into disrepair until, in 1964, it was deemed unsafe and demolished.

The Walled Garden, which remained in the ownership of the Corporation, was marked out for housing development, but, following local agitation, a Protection Order was placed on the walls of the garden, which are now Grade 2 Listed. The



Corporation then agreed to allow a group of volunteers to explore the possibility of developing it as a public amenity, thus honouring the spirit of Francis Paget's original gift.

As a consequence, the Elford Garden Project was formed in 2009 and set about obtaining the necessary funding, part of which came in the form of £248,000 from the English Heritage Lottery Fund. Further financial support was obtained from local organisations, businesses and private individuals.

Over the past eight years, a team of dedicated volunteers have transformed what was once an overgrown garden surrounded by a crumbling ten-foot-high wall three hundred feet in length into a vibrant community asset, which, amongst its attractions, offers local residents allotments (which recalls the original purpose of the Garden of supplying

the Hall with vegetables and fruit), a boules court (a practical alternative to a bowling green, which would have required much more space and a high degree of maintenance) and a rose garden. Outside the walled garden are a fruit orchard, replanted in line with surviving records, a long herbaceous border and a children's play area.

Also outside the walled garden, the Garden is a haven of wildlife; bird boxes have been erected, and there is even a badger sett, its occupant welcome provided it remains outside the walls which, in fulfilment of their original purpose, screen the allotments from unwelcome visitors, human or otherwise!

A particularly striking feature is the Giant's Garden, a sensory garden inspired by Oscar Wilde's children's story, "The Selfish Giant", about a giant who refuses to allow children to play in his garden but relents when

the garden is deserted by the birds and small creatures and it remains locked in an eternal winter.

It is divided into compartments - the Giant's Flower Garden, his Vegetable Patch, his Insect Friendly Garden, his Bog Garden - all linked by a narrow winding path. As young visitors pass through the garden they are reminded that this is a giant's garden by the tall plants and by two giant birds that stand almost menacingly on either side of the path.

This garden is a good illustration of both the creative imagination brought to the enormous task of bringing back to life this historic garden and the determination that it should appeal to the entire community, young and old, able-bodied and disabled.

In the same spirit, the pupils of the Howard School, the village's primary school, have planted spring bulbs



and look after a vegetable patch – when the imperious demands of the National Curriculum allows them the time!

Historic buildings have been restored: the gardener's house is now divided into offices, meeting rooms and classrooms; a fishing pavilion which stands on the banks of the River Tame has been brought back into use as a bird hide (from which the patient visitor can spot kingfishers); and the pump house which once provided the Hall with water now supplies water to stand pipes in the walled garden from a three thousand litre tank. (Once, this was a task carried out manually, probably by apprentice gardeners, but now it is done mechanically).

How water was brought to the garden remains a mystery; no central

pool, common to most other walled gardens, has been found.

A melon house and a vine house await restoration, but these are projects which it is hoped will be undertaken by the next generation of volunteers.

The Garden provides an events area which hosts events such as real ale festivals and bonfire nights and is a popular venue for garden parties and, being close to St. Peter's Parish Church, for wedding parties as well.

The achievements of this inspirational group of volunteers, fifty per cent of whom now come from outside the village, one from as far as Ashby-de-la-Zouch, have received public recognition by the bestowing of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2012, a succession of

Royal Horticultural Society Awards and a British Empire Medal awarded to the Project's Chairman, and this visit gave members the opportunity to appreciate what local pride can achieve, when coupled with enthusiasm and commitment, allied to a remarkable range of skills.

The Garden is open every day, but if any casual visitor would like to talk to any of the volunteers, they should choose to visit on a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday, when the team will be carrying out essential maintenance work but will not be too busy to share their enthusiasm with you.

Our own visit ended with a sumptuous tea of scone, cakes and tea, and our guides, Sue, Angela, Dave and Jim, cannot be thanked enough for the warmth of their hospitality.

**WBS**



The Giant's Garden with story-teller's chair on right

VISITING

# “Mr. Vernon’s Grand Designs”

AT HANBURY HALL

**For many visitors, the most impressive feature at Hanbury Hall will most likely be the huge wall paintings which dominate The Great Staircase, for which Hanbury Hall is probably best known; the work of Sir James Thornhill, the only native-born artist of large-scale paintings, who went on to paint the cupola at St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Painted Hall at Greenwich, they depict the story of the Greek hero, Achilles.**

However, it was not Thornhill’s paintings nor the family portraits (which include the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Godfrey Kneller), nor yet the rich furnishings, but the restored gardens, especially the Sunken Parterre, which eighteen of our members had come to see, guided by Neil Cook, the Outdoor and Garden Manager at Hanbury for the past quarter of a century.

Having inherited the estate purchased by his grandfather

Edward in 1631, Thomas Vernon, whose practice as a lawyer brought him considerable wealth, in 1701 commissioned the building of the early eighteenth-century Hall; it was designed in what is now known as the William and Mary or Dutch style by, it is believed, William Rudhall, who came from Henley-in-Arden, in neighbouring Warwickshire and whose design has been shown to bear some similarities to Thoresby Hall, in Northamptonshire, and Ragley Hall, in his native county.

Once completed, Vernon decided to complement the house with a garden in keeping with its status, turning to the leading garden designer of the age, George London. The garden London designed had all the features of a late seventeenth-early / eighteenth century pleasure garden, including (most notably) a parterre with four geometrically corresponding flower beds separated by gravel paths, a grove, a wilderness and a bowling green.



George London’s Cedar of Lebanon

But before the century had ended all this had been swept away, as formality gave way to the naturalistic style popularised by “Capability” Brown and London’s garden was replaced by a landscaped park.

And thus it remained until in 1993, when The National Trust, which, in 1953, had been bequeathed Hanbury Hall by Sir George Vernon, the last in the line of baronets, took the bold decision to re-instate the original London garden guided by London’s original plans and a detailed plan by Joseph Dougharty dating from around 1732 just thirty years after the gardens had been laid out. It has resulted in a “far more visitor-friendly garden full of features to interest even the most casual visitor”\*.

The project was supervised from the start by Neil, who firmly believed that the interest that it subsequently generated saved Hanbury Hall from being closed. The house, part of which was tenanted, had been attracting no more than 20,000 visitors a year, and it was felt that it could no longer be kept open as a public attraction. As a measure of how inspirational the decision to recreate London’s garden was, the number of visitors last year had been 186,000! Neil thought that, situated as close to the West Midlands conurbation as Hanbury Hall was, there was no reason why this number should not increase further.

Our circular tour of gardens and grounds began in the Victorian forecourt, the most notable features of which were the twin gazebos with Moorish elements in its design and the herbaceous borders (“The Victorians brought horticulture back to gardens”, Neil commented).

From there we went into the Sunken Parterre, where Neil explained the philosophy behind the design. In



The Hall and Sunken Parterre

reaction to the chaos and confusion of the Civil War, which had divided nation and families, the formality of late seventeenth/early eighteenth century garden design imposed control and order, a style with which the returning Court was already familiar as the result of its decades-long exile in France.

Of the Parterre itself Neil said that the present planting was a bit conjectural, but he was clear that coloured gravel had never been used, though there could have been grass. Originally, the box hedges had been cut to a height of just three-quarters of an inch, but nowadays there were allowed to grow to a height of eight inches.

Twin pavilions overlook the Parterre; they occupy the footprints of the original stone pavilions, which were uncovered during an archaeological survey which also revealed that the garden sloped from end to end by two and a half feet! Too expensive to recreate in stone, they are constructed in wood and are painted – one might say appropriately – in Cook’s Blue!

The Fruit Garden, which can also be viewed from the pavilions, has been described as “the second garden”. It is not known which fruits were

originally planted there, but they were likely to include pears, but no cherries.

To one side of the Parterre stands the Wilderness, a space intended for solitude, relaxation and reflection. While, to the modern mind, the term “Wilderness” conjures up visions of unrestrained Nature, as interpreted by eighteenth-century garden designers, it was an area where rigid formality could be relaxed. In a Wilderness, “various kinds of trees” should be planted “promiscuously without order”, and in Hanbury’s Wilderness no two trees of the same species have been planted side by side.

However, at the heart of the Wilderness is a formal feature, a patte d’oie, or goose-foot, so-called because it is composed of three avenues of trees, the outer avenues radiating outwards like the toes of a goose.

We went on to explore other features of the garden: the Grove, where the niches carved into the hedges once housed statuary; the Bowling Green, a status symbol because of the high cost of maintaining it, an important social feature and an activity made popular by the King, Charles II. It is the National Trust’s only bowling

green, and bowling enthusiasts are welcome to make use of it!

The Cedar Walk, along which we walked, is the sole surviving feature of George London's garden and includes a three-hundred-year-old Cedar of Lebanon planted as part of London's original plan. For some reason, which Neil could not explain, the practice arose of hammering coins into its bark, and a notice next to the tree now appeals to visitors to desist from a practice which expose the tree to the risk of infection.

From the Cedar Walk we looked across what was once, until the 1920s, the Deer Park, but on which cattle and sheep now graze. Neil pointed out a tree even older than London's Cedar of Lebanon, an oak believed to be at least five hundred years old, a reminder that the history of Hanbury did not begin with the building of the present Hall (just as the Mirror Pond, believed to be part of an earlier water barrier, serves as a similar reminder).

Towards the end of the walk we paused outside the Orangery, not part of London's design, but built in the mid 1750s. Expensive to maintain, the Orangery further displayed the considerable wealth of the family,



as well as adding to the comfortable lifestyle the family enjoyed.

"How do you manage to maintain the gardens to such a high level?" Neil was asked. "Well," said Neil, "while there are just one full-time gardener – me! – and two seasonal gardeners, plus one weekend gardener, but there are eighty dedicated volunteers who give their time as and when they can!" We saw some of these volunteers at work, pruning and weeding, and could only admire their commitment and diligence.

Our visit to the eighteenth century ended, as all good visits end, in a

tearoom, where members refreshed themselves over a cup of tea and, no doubt, with one of those delicious cakes for which the National Trust is so well known!

"Gorgeous gardens, handsome house" wrote one entranced visitor on Trip Advisor, and I believe that none of our members who took part in this visit would challenge his judgement!

- Timothy Mowl, "Historic Gardens of Worcestershire"

WBS

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