

Staffordshire Gardens & Parks Trust

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“The Arboretum is a celebration of life lived”

(David Childs, Founder and first Director)

The National Memorial Arboretum was the brainchild of Commander David Childs, CBE, who believed that there was a need for a location at the centre of the country for national remembrance and commemoration. He had conceived the idea in 1988 following a visit to the Arlington National Cemetery, the US military cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, and the National Arboretum, in Washington D. C..

The project was enthusiastically supported by the then Prime Minister, John Major, who launched a public appeal, which was given much-needed publicity by both the Daily Telegraph and The Daily Mail.

David Childs had been inspired by his friend Leonard Cheshire VC, the wartime bomber pilot, who had founded the Cheshire Homes for the sick and disabled as a practical memorial both to those who had died in the Second World War and for those who had returned home injured in mind and body.

More ambitiously, Cheshire went on to found The World Memorial Fund for Disaster Relief which would fund relief operations anywhere in the world. He hoped to raise money for the fund partly by appealing to people to make donations in memory of lives lost in the two great wars which had blighted the century, the slogan, “Remember a Life to Save a Life”, bringing together the two ideas of remembering the dead by relieving the suffering of the living.

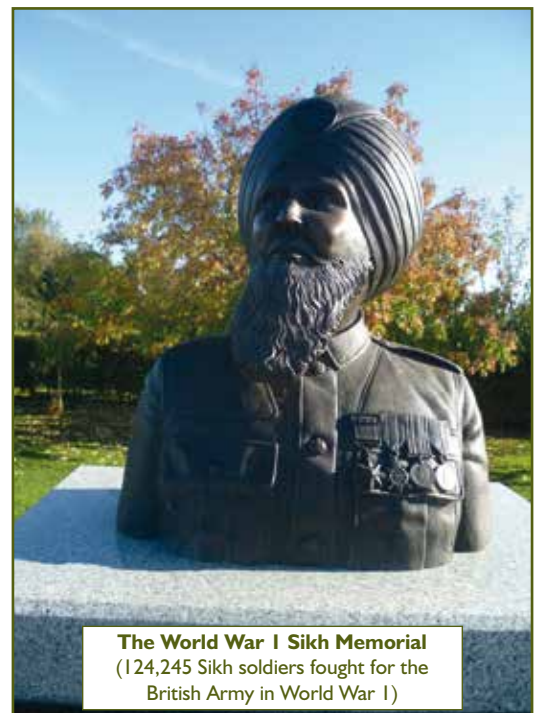
Sadly, the project failed, but David, whose work in his role as a serving officer in the Royal Navy had centred on the possible contribution of the Armed Forces in disaster relief, and who had been seconded to the WMFDR, saw an

opportunity to divert the goodwill which the Fund had created to the project which he had been considering, namely, a National Memorial Arboretum which would both commemorate the sacrifices already made and celebrate the organisations and individuals who continued to serve the community.

He began by writing to the hundreds of people who had responded to Leonard Cheshire’s appeal asking them if they would be prepared to sponsor a tree in memory of a loved one. He also wrote to the Heads of the three Armed Services, who in turn filtered the appeal down to the individual regiments and squadrons and their Veterans’ Associations.

By this means sufficient donations were received to add to a grant from The Millennium Fund to allow the project to get under way. However, until a suitable site had been identified, detailed planning could not begin, although a master plan was never envisaged, as it was expected that the Arboretum would grow organically.

With insufficient funds to buy prime agricultural land, David, who had had to resist a Government suggestion that the Arboretum might be sited in one of



The World War I Sikh Memorial
(124,245 Sikh soldiers fought for the
British Army in World War I)

London’s parks, sought the help of The National Forest Company in finding a site. The Company, who were engaged in laying down a forest across three Midlands counties, including Staffordshire, saw that the Arboretum could form an integral part of its project and donated ten thousand trees.

Eventually, Larfarge Aggregates, who had



The Auxiliary Territorial Service Statue

30,000 trees. The monuments take many forms – sculptures in both metal and stone, memorial stones, plaques, pavilions. Two-thirds are military in character; the remaining third non-military, commemorating the service and sacrifice of civilian organisations such as the Fire, Rescue and Ambulance Service and the Police Force. Women's groups such as the Trefoil Guild, the Inner Wheel and the Soroptomists are also represented. As a registered charity the Arboretum is not able to fund the memorials that are housed on its site; only the Armed Forces Memorial is centrally funded, all the monies raised for the installation, dedication and maintenance coming from the organisations (and families) themselves. Even then, strict control is exercised over their design.

In their design some of the monuments show a high degree of imagination; for example, the Naval Service Memorial is comprised of thirteen tall glass panels which depict the colours of the five oceans and which, at a certain time of the day, together cast a shadow depicting the outline of a frigate.

Trees play a symbolic role in the design of some memorials. The trees first planted to form the avenue of the Beat, the memorial to those who serve and have served in the country's police forces, sometimes at the cost of their lives, were chestnuts, from whose wood the first truncheons were made, but are now gradually being replaced by Plane trees as the original trees die.

The trees which make up The Merchant Navy Convoy Wood originally numbered 2,535, one for each vessel lost. Oak was chosen as the wood which was once used to build Britain's navy.

These are typical examples of the thought which has gone into the selection of trees appropriate to the monuments.

More symbolism is to be found in the Garden of the Innocents, which commemorates children whose lives have been blighted by war and terrorism. Here, the raised beds are in the shape of jigsaw pieces, which do not fit, a way of

symbolising the confusion experienced by such children.

At the centre of the Garden is an elder tree, planted in memory of Anne Frank, which is not allowed to blossom as a way of reminding visitors that Anne's precocious talent, revealed in her Diary, was brutally prevented from developing. This garden is not the only one which commemorates the premature ending of young lives. The Stillborn and Neonatal Death Memorial Garden is an enclosed garden at the centre of which is the figure of a curled-up baby carved from stone and mounted on a low plinth, its entrance lined with coloured stones each representing a lost child.

Close to the River Tame is the Children's Woodland. The ages of the children remembered range from stillbirth to eighteen, and the messages are poignant reminders of the lingering pain such loss inflicts: "Fly with the angels, little one"; "Sleep tight, our star"; "Never in our arms, forever in our hearts".

Apart from the four Discovery shelters and the Far Eastern Prisoner of War Museum, the only other buildings are the Remembrance Centre, which was officially opened by the Duke of Cambridge in March 2017, and which houses exhibition galleries, a meeting room, a large restaurant and shop, and a separate coffee shop; Aspects, the newly-opened events and conference centre; and the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness, where an Act of Remembrance is held each day at 11.00 a.m.

The design of the Chapel is based on a classical Greek Temple and it is supported by twelve pillars of Douglas Fir, one for each of the Twelve Apostles. (Douglas Fir was chosen to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of David Douglas, the Scottish botanist, who introduced the species to this country from North America).

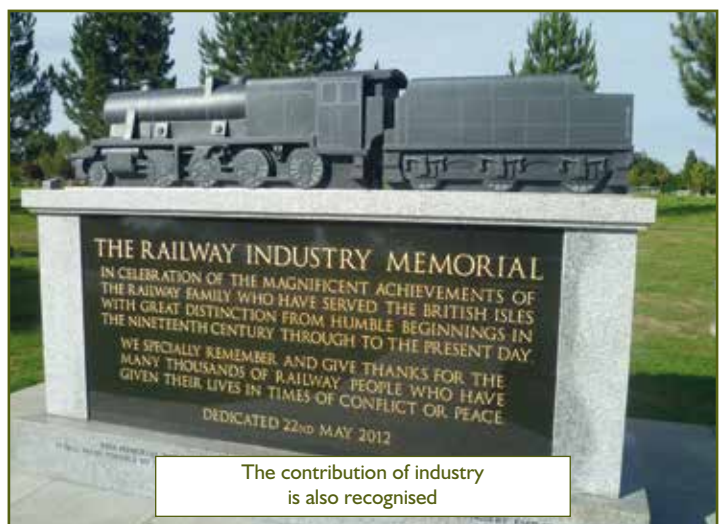


The Women's Land Army and Timber Corp Monument

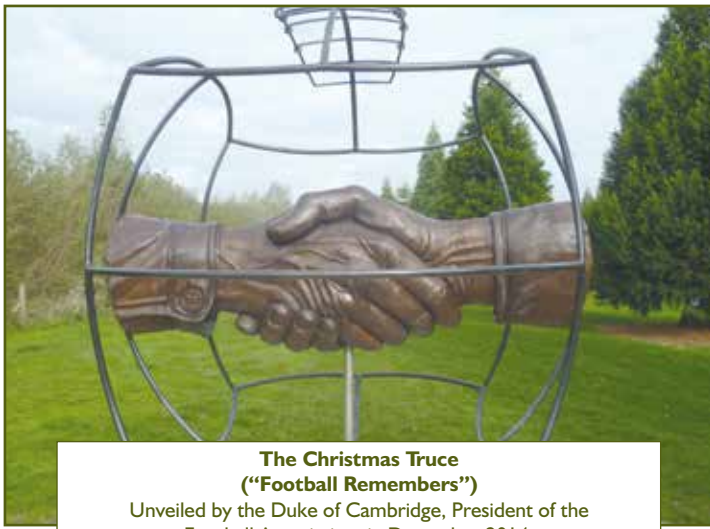
been mining in the area, came forward with the offer of reclaimed land on the east bank of the River Trent, at Alrewas. However, this was found to be unsuitable because it was criss-crossed by a network of underground cables, and, as an alternative, eighty-two acres of reclaimed land on the west side of the river were chosen.

Though even this land was not entirely ideal, the site being open and wind-swept and prone to flooding from the two nearby rivers, the Trent and the Tame, and the reclaimed soil poor and not especially receptive to tree-planting, a 999-year lease at a peppercorn rent of £1 a year was agreed and, by 1993, the project could at last be realised.

The Arboretum now covers 150 acres and contains over 330 monuments and



The contribution of industry is also recognised



**The Christmas Truce
("Football Remembers")**
Unveiled by the Duke of Cambridge, President of the
Football Association, in December 2014.

Silbury Hill, it is comprised of a pair of curved facing walls forty-three metres in diameter; these are based on the whispering wall at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Inside, there are two straight walls on which the names of sixteen thousand individuals have been inscribed, leaving, as a chilling reminder of the sacrifice one's country will continue

to make on its citizens, room for fifteen thousand more.

Named the Millennium Chapel to mark the fact that it was dedicated in 2000, it is in character an Anglican chapel but is open to, and used for reflection and prayer, by all faiths and, for that reason, it is not dedicated to a Christian saint. It is the only place of worship in the country where, at eleven o'clock each morning, a short service of remembrance is held.

There was a recent reminder that these are not just a series of letters carved on a wall. An engraver reported that an elderly couple, the parents of a soldier killed in action, sat watching him while he engraved their son's name on the wall; for them it brought some degree of comfort and consolation.

At the centre of the Memorial is an altar on which lies a bronze wreath. A gap in one of the walls allows a shaft of sunshine to fall on the altar on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year.

Two groups of figures stand one on either side of the Memorial; the one depicts a stretcher party bearing aloft a recumbent figure, like the Greek warrior Patroclus laid out on his shield after his death in the Trojan Wars, while a woman and a child crouch grieving below; the other shows a Gurkha and a nurse preparing a dead soldier for burial. Together, these figures represent the pity and pain of war.



The unique Showman's Guild of
Great Britain Memorial

Though there are fears that, as time passes and memories of the two world conflicts will fade into oblivion as the last veterans die, that words like "Gallipoli" and "Tobruk" will no longer resonate with future generations, this Memorial, together with the Basra Wall Memorial, brought back from Iraq, and the Camp Bastion Memorial, brought back from Afghanistan, are fresh reminders that sacrifices are still being made.

There is a small but pertinent illustration that future generations are prepared to preserve and nourish the memory of past sacrifices that have preserved the way of life they so enjoy; when concern was

expressed by one organisation that the dwindling number of their veterans and their growing disabilities were making it impossible to maintain their garden, members of the Lichfield Scouts Group stepped forward to fill the gap!

Grant-in-aid from the Government has allowed the abolition of the entry charge, which, while initially an important source of income, was also a source of considerable irritation on the part of visitors who did not expect to be charged to see the memorial to which they had contributed, and the Arboretum, which is now part of The Royal British Legion, costs more than £4,000 each day to run. Though it is free to enter the site, donations are appreciated, and are used to develop the Arboretum.

David Childs, his vision realised, moved on, to become Director of the Mary Rose Trust.

Our tour, which took place on a very hot day, was the third of the three visits made this year to sites which are unique to Staffordshire.

Members may now be aware of a link which the Trust has with the Arboretum; Giffard Avenue is named after the Trust's first President, Peter Giffard, owner of Chillington Hall, who, in the 1980s, was National President of the County Landowners' Association as well as being a supporter of many local charities, while our present President, Charles Bagot-Jewitt, was for more than six years the Arboretum's Chief Executive.

Additional Notes from a Landscape Perspective (contributed by **Charles Bagot Jewitt**)

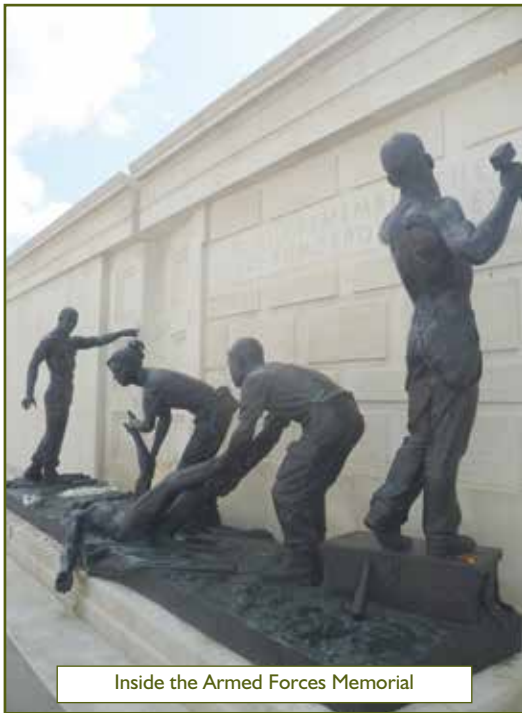
Although the NMA was broadly laid out into areas reflecting the three services, by the time of my arrival in 2007 this plan had been eroded in order to accommodate requests for gardens for specific organisations and requests from other organisations (who brought an element of funding and capital investment with them) for memorial sites that were not originally envisaged. Paul Walshe, our landscape architect, Paul Kennedy, the Arboretum Curator (formerly of Staffordshire County Council) and myself were therefore keen to bring back an element of 'legibility' to the site. Once the Armed Forces Memorial was completed in 2007, we also wished to raise the quality of the overall experience of the Arboretum, its memorials and visitor facilities for what had become a very high profile national site. Visitor numbers had quickly grown from 60,000 to 300,000 visitors per annum, and the site was attended by the Royal Family



The Armed Forces Memorial

and numerous other national and international visitors on a regular basis. Indeed, I was rather disappointed that the NMA was just beaten by Mercedes World in 2008 as the UK visitor attraction that showed greatest visitor growth!

Through creating a memorial committee, originally chaired



Inside the Armed Forces Memorial

by Paul Walshe and then by Colonel Mike Beatty, the then Vice Lord Lieutenant, we were able to encourage organisations coming to us with memorial designs to be more innovative and to produce or upgrade existing memorials so that they were substantial and enduring. We worked hard on two master-plans and to fund raise for them. The building master-plan has all but been realised in the development of the current visitor centre, which still incorporates elements of the original centre erected in David Childs' time, and the separate functions pavilion is now just about completed. We worked very hard to define Remembrance and its societal impact with a group of academics and other advisors, and this led to the book "Lest We Forget" and laid the foundation for the permanent exhibition that is now in the Visitors Centre.

More challenging (and of interest to SGPT members) were our attempts to develop a landscape master-plan. We held initial conversations with a number of people for ideas, including Mike Walker, of Trentham Gardens, and through him the award-winning designer Tom Stuart-Smith. Eventually, we settled on working with a Birmingham firm of landscape architects, Fira, led by Jane Findlay, who came up with a fine landscape master-plan to give us the focus to develop the site over the next twenty to thirty years (when designing landscape, think long term).

A number of key issues confronted us, principally around emotion. Moving a memorial is emotive, but try felling a tree which has been personally dedicated, even if that tree is not thriving or needs to be thinned out to allow its neighbours to prosper. Given that the NMA was planted to dense National Forest planting standards and is now twenty-five years old, the scale of the issue can be imagined. However, over time, the NMA has developed approaches and protocols to allow progress to be made, including a rule that no dedication will be lost, even if the original dedicated tree is felled. Hopefully, the NMA will continue to develop into something truly magnificent and worthy of so many who have gone before us and given so much.



The Royal British Legion's Centenary Field of Thanks

(Editor's note: This article is based on the commentary given to the group by Sue, a volunteer who led the tour. It has been expanded with details taken from David Childs's account of the early history of the Arboretum, "Growing Remembrance". This book is highly recommended reading for members wishing to learn more about the challenges faced and overcome by one man's vision and drive. Copies may be obtained from the Arboretum, priced £12.99. The writer also acknowledges with real gratitude the invaluable assistance given by Faye Brant, the Arboretum's Group Sales & Bookings Co-ordinator, and Lianne Joynson, its Marketing Officer, in the preparation of the article).

WARLEY WOODS: “The People’s Park”

The beginnings

The history of Warley Woods goes back to the time of the Norman Conquest, though the Warley Hall estate dates from the Dissolution of the Monasteries, at which time it was being administered by Halesowen Abbey.

Enter the Galtons

In 1792 the estate was purchased by Samuel Galton, jnr, who had made his fortune in the family gun-making business, the largest in Birmingham, in spite of being Quakers. Unlike his father, he refused to retire from the business and was dismissed from the Brotherhood, though he did later leave the business to become a banker after marrying into the Barclay family, fellow Quakers and founders of Barclays Bank.

He had a keen interest in science and became a member of The Lunar Society, which numbered Matthew Boulton, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood amongst its members. He was also elected to the Royal Society.

Samuel Galton never lived on the estate, which he seems to have bought as an investment. Nonetheless, in 1794 he commissioned Humphry Repton, the celebrated late eighteenth -early nineteenth century landscape designer, who is generally regarded - and, indeed, regarded himself - as successor to ‘Capability’ Brown, to turn part of the estate, largely given over to farming, into an ornamental park more suitable as a setting worthy of the new house that Galton was at first proposing to build, but which he never had built, preferring to remain living in nearby Great Barr and then moving to the family home at Duddeston.

Repton was firmly of the view that, aesthetically, park and farm could never co-exist, the ideas of a farm and park being so incongruous, he declared, as not to admit of any union, but at the expense of beauty or profit.

According to Repton, a pastoral scene which shows animals enjoying rest after fatigue... “must be more in harmony with the



Before ...



... After

(All traces of agricultural labour have been removed and replaced by “cattle enlivening the scene by their peaceful attitudes”,
The house was never built)

residence of elegance and comfort... that we never see a park ploughed up but we always attribute it to poverty, either in the soil, or in its possessor”. We may have pleasure in looking on a distant prospect of richly cultivated Country, “but we are disgusted

by the nearer view of the same objects from the windows of a mansion”. Or, in the words of the poet Thomas Campbell, Repton’s near contemporary, “’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view”!

He was highly critical of the new fashion for the ferme ornée, which he dismissed as “an attempt to unite two objects so incompatible as ornament and profit”, which was likely to incur “the sneer of the great man at the magnificence of his attempt and the ridicule of the farmer at the misapplication of his pastoral acres...”

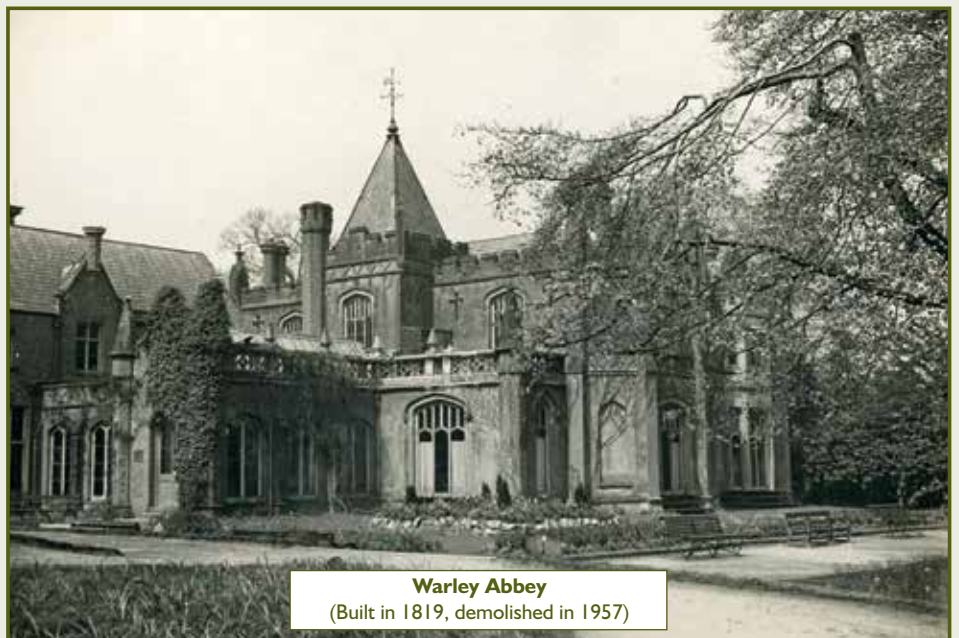
He goes on to set out his view unequivocally; “it has always appeared to me subservience to all order and ranks in society to confound the Gentleman with the farmer. The enlarged ideas and liberal principles of the Gentleman can never stoop to the contracted habits of low cunning so generally visible in the mere farmer.”

“The chief excellence and beauty of a park,” he argues, “consists in uniform verdure, undulating lines contrasting with each other in variety of forms, trees so grouped as to produce light and shade to display the uneven surface of the ground, and an undivided range of pasture fed by animals which may appear natural and free from confinement, at liberty to collect their food from the rich herbage of the valley and afterwards to ruminate, or sportively exercise their limbs”, whereas “the farm is forever changing the colour of its surface in motley and discordant hues, it is subordinated in straight lines.” In addition, “instead of cattle enlivening the scene by their peaceful attitudes or sportive gambols, we see here miserable animals bending beneath the yoke, or closely confined to fatten within the narrow inclosure, like the devoted victims of the farmer’s avarice, and not there free subjects to a liberal master”.

Repton’s Proposal

Repton realigned the main road further from the house and created a main carriage drive which passed through woods before opening up the view of the house. He screened adjoining farm buildings behind bands of trees (all manifestations of agriculture, necessary even to a Country house “such as the stable yard, pig yard, poultry yard, rick yard, wood yard, linen yard, which are all indispensable, are nuisances and as such should be concealed”), and he also created panoramic views across the park by removing the hedges which had been dividing the park into a series of fields. The removal or concealment of fences and boundaries “is of equal importance, every piece within such a distance of the household should appear to belong to it not only to give the importance of undivided property but because, without Unity no composition can be pleasing”.

Hedges may be appropriate to farming, but the principal elements of a park are lawn, wood and water; in the latter case, Repton proposed introducing a pool to encourage water fowl to the park (to add to the beauty of the park, not for sport), and old postcards show that the pool did



at one time exist, but since the water table dropped it has not been sustainable, only appearing after a heavy downpour and then usually disappearing within twenty-four hours!

Near to the house Repton planned a winter garden planted with scented shrubs whose aromas would waft into the house he proposed building.

The Building of Warley Abbey

However, his design for a new house, which would have given its occupants a panoramic view over the park, was rejected, so, instead, he proposed that a nearby two-storey banqueting-house known as Warley Tor (Tower), previously built on a nearby hill to give sweeping views across the landscape, should be enlarged.

In turn, this plan was abandoned, probably as not being adequate for Hubert’s growing family, and, instead, Warley Hall, as it was then known, was built in the gothic style by Robert Lugar, an architect who produced designs for smaller houses “within the reach of moderate fortunes”.

It was Hubert who adopted the name “Warley Abbey”, though there is no evidence that an abbey ever stood anywhere on the estate.

After being vacated as a private dwelling, the house in turn served as the club house for the golf course, the residence of the park superintendent, the tearoom, a haven for Belgian refugees in the First World War, and a base for the Home Guard and the WVRS and an observation post for the ARP in the Second (when Midland Red buses sheltered under the park’s trees to escape the attention of the Luftwaffe!) Sadly, it was allowed to fall into such a state of dereliction

by Birmingham City Council that, unprotected by any preservation order, it was demolished in 1957.

Nor was it the only feature of the park lost to neglect or that fell victim to the high cost of maintenance that a cash-strapped Council was no longer able to afford; glass-houses, in which flowers were grown for Birmingham’s parks and hospitals, have gone, as has the rose garden, still remembered for the fragrance of the roses grown there, and the original octagonal and flower-bedecked bandstand.

The Doric Pavilion, also known as the Doric Temple, was a folly set in a bay cut into the woodland on the hill opposite the house, which Repton designed to draw the eye away from the farm house and barn on a nearby hill which could not be concealed by a careful planting of trees between house and farm. It was demolished as early as 1906 after a tree fell on it. However, the fountain, erected in 1907, has been recently restored.

Hubert inherited the estate on the death of his father in 1843, but, following the deaths of three of his four children, he left for Bath, and his sole surviving child, Mary, eventually inherited the house and estate. Like her father she became an absentee landlord. and, following her death, the estate was inherited by two brothers, Hubert and Leonard Galton, who began the process of selling off parcels of the estate for housing.

After the Galtons

This process was continued by subsequent owners of the estate till by 1905 there was local concern that the entire estate would be lost to housing development, the demand for land becoming more and more voracious. Consequently, a committee was set up,

under the chairmanship of Alexander Chance, scion of the Midlands glass-manufacturing family responsible for providing the glass for the Crystal Palace and the Great Conservatory at Chatsworth House as well as lenses for lighthouses.

There could have been no better choice for Chairman; Alexander Chance had earlier headed a committee which had saved nearby Lightwoods House and Park from being lost to housing development and, having raised the money, largely from public subscription, to enable house and park to be purchased from the would-be developers, had seen its transformation into a public park.

Finally, the negotiations for the purchase of Warley Park were completed, the money was raised by public subscription and by a grant from Birmingham City Council, who became its owner as part of the deal to provide the balance needed to purchase the site.

It opened as a public park in 1906, and was seen as one of Birmingham's premier parks. It was well maintained until the 1970s, but in the ensuing years suffered from neglect until local concern led first to the responsibility for maintaining it being eventually handed over by Birmingham City Council to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council on completion of negotiations in 2004.

A community trust was set up in 1997, and is now officially known as the Warley Woods Community Trust. The Trust is part-funded by Sandwell MBC; part-funded by the green fees it collects from members of Warley Woods Golf Club, which has a nine-hole golf course at the park, golf being a feature of the park from 1896; and part-funded by its own money-raising activities, which include renting the tea room to an independent operator, and from sales in the shop.

Maintenance costs are high (it costs £5000 a year just to empty the dog waste bins). Management is in the hands of just seven professional staff, three of whom maintain the thirty-four acres of the golf course.

Their work is greatly assisted by more than two hundred volunteers, who carry out such mundane but essential tasks as collecting litter, patrolling the woods, cleaning and painting the park furniture and maintaining and keeping up to date the park's notice-boards, organising events, managing the park's tree nursery and leading themed walks round the park.



The Standing Stones mark the site of the Rose Garden

Like Walsall Arboretum, visited by the Trust last year, local residents have adopted a benevolently proprietary attitude to "their" park, and consequently it suffers from very little vandalism or graffiti.

Older residents, for whom the park was the playground of their childhood days ("*the woods were my back garden*", said one) and who can recall the years of neglect the park endured, appreciate the work which the Trust has done, clearing fallen trees, surfacing once-muddy footpaths with tarmac; and the park has once again become the centre of the community, popular with dog walkers and running groups, and hosting other group activities.

The park is unique in being run by a Trust, and it is also one of the few Repton landscapes freely open to the public. The Trust has set itself the ambitious task of restoring as much of Repton's design as far as is feasible. Warley Wood People's Park is English Heritage Listed and has been awarded Green Flag Status. Though, as noted, few of its historic features, including the house, survive, Repton's park can still be identified with the aid of a copy of his Red Book which the Trust possesses and is available to any visitor to study on request. The original is in the safe keeping of Smethwick Metropolitan Borough Council.



The Fountain (erected in 1907, restored in 2009)

(The illustrations from Repton's Red Book and the picture of Warley Abbey are reproduced by kind permission of Sandwell Community History & Archives Services. The writer acknowledges with very real gratitude the invaluable assistance given to him in the preparation of the article by Maureen Waldron and Ian Gray, Borough archivists, and by Kate Slade, Trustee of the Warley Woods Community Trust).

BODENHAM ARBORETUM

“A wonderful way to spend the day”

The Trust visited Bodenham Arboretum in October, its last visit of 2018.

The Arboretum, situated on a 134-acre site in the village of Wolverley, five miles north of Kidderminster, was begun by David and Jennifer Binnian in 1973 as a hobby, but is now run as a family venture. It was opened to the public in 1998.

Situated in a sheltered double valley, it enjoys a mild climate, and is virtually frost-free. It also enjoys the added advantage of being in an area of outstanding beauty, and, at its highest point, offers visitors outstanding views across the Worcestershire countryside, including the Clent Hills.

It contains no fewer than three thousand species of trees and shrubs, and two chains of pools and lakes, the biggest of which is The Big Pool, a dominant and impressive feature which catches the eye of the visitor immediately he or she enters the Arboretum. It holds approximately five metres of water and involved the removal of twelve thousand tons of earth in its construction.

The first trees were planted in the autumn of 1973, and planting continues to this day. Their variety ensures that

there is colour throughout the different seasons; azaleas and rhododendrons are amongst the blossoms which dazzle the visitor in Spring, and the laburnum tunnel enchants the visitor in late May and June. Bodenham is an arboretum in the truest sense, each tree being scientifically labelled. Many of the rarer trees were given to the Arboretum by Kew Gardens.

A working farm covers eighty acres of the Arboretum, and its livestock, which includes some unusual breeds of chickens, are an additional attraction, particularly to



Looking across the Big Pool to the Visitor's Centre

the Arboretum's younger visits, though its inquisitive donkeys sometimes alarm the more nervous!

The lakeside Earth Visitors' Centre, which won the CLA Award for the best rural building in England and Wales in 1999, contains a shop, toilets and restaurant offering a range of refreshments from full carvery to homemade cakes. The Arboretum itself was granted National Heritage Status in 1995.

The Arboretum has proved an ideal location for hosting Forest School, which offers a variety of outdoor activities for all ages, including den building, open-air cooking, pond dipping and mini-beats hunts. It also offers families a series of attractions throughout they year – Easter Egg hunts, pumpkin trails, fairy walks, poetry and watercolour workshops, drumming workshops and, at this time of the year, a Christmas Nativity Trail.

The Trust was joined on this visit by members of the Warwickshire Gardens Trust, and it is hoped that this collaboration will continue in 2019.

Such are the multiple attractions of the Arboretum that a second visit, this time in the Spring, is being considered for inclusion in a later programme of visits.



Autumn Colours



The Pine Grove

(a reminder that the Arboretum once supplied Bryant & Mays with wood for its matches)



Not all colour is to be found on foliage

“Beautiful in design and range”

the gardens of Lake Como and Lake Maggiore

The year’s programme ended with a talk on the gardens of Lake Como and Lake Maggiore given by Michael Faarup, who, with his wife Diane, had visited the gardens in May 2016.

Michael illustrated his talk with a series of stunning illustrations which showed the main features of these gardens.

Laid out between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, their designers made full use of the lakeside setting which afforded magnificent panoramic views across the lakes to the mountains beyond. While they have many stylistic features in common – colonnades, loggias and pergolas, classical statuary, fountains, avenues of pines trees, topiary (some of which illustrate this article) - each has a distinct individuality; while the garden at Villa Balbianello is laid out along a promontory projecting into the lake, which encompasses it on three sides. Villa Carlotta is noted for its botanic garden,

Villa Meltzi for its collection of sculptures and its English-style parkland, and Villa Mozzoni for its spectacular double water-staircase flanked by cypresses.

Unique among these gardens must surely be Isola Bella, situated on a small island in Lake Maggiore and noted for its Baroque palace and ten terraces.

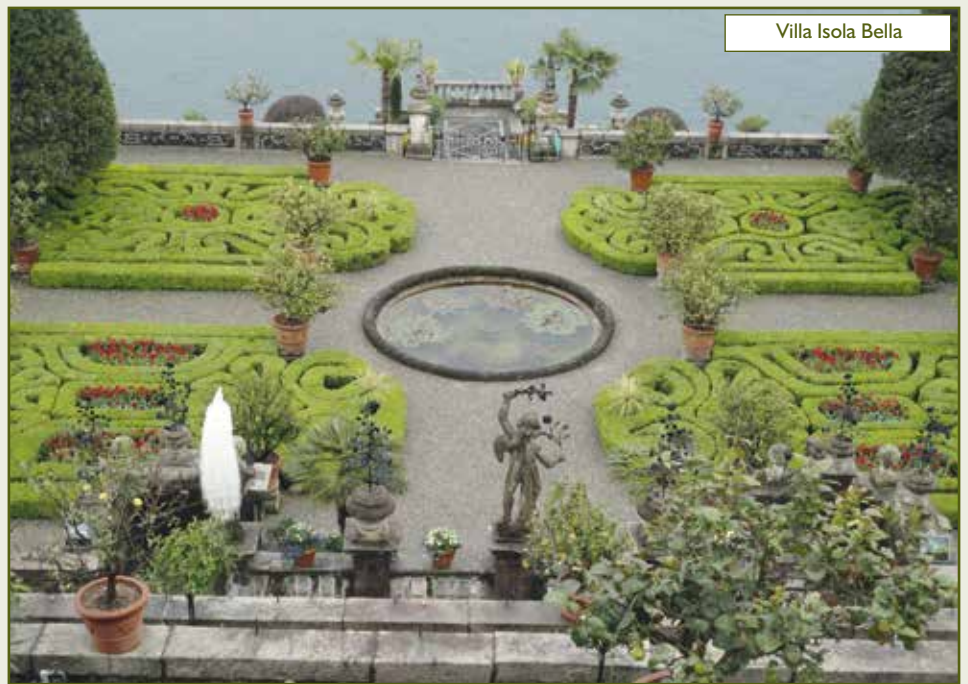
Moving inland, Michael and Diane’s itinerary included the garden at Villa Bagatti, hewn out of the steep and stony hillside, its terraces lined with colourful flowerbeds. The party also visited Villa Cicogna Mozzoni to see its spectacular double water-staircase lined with cypresses.



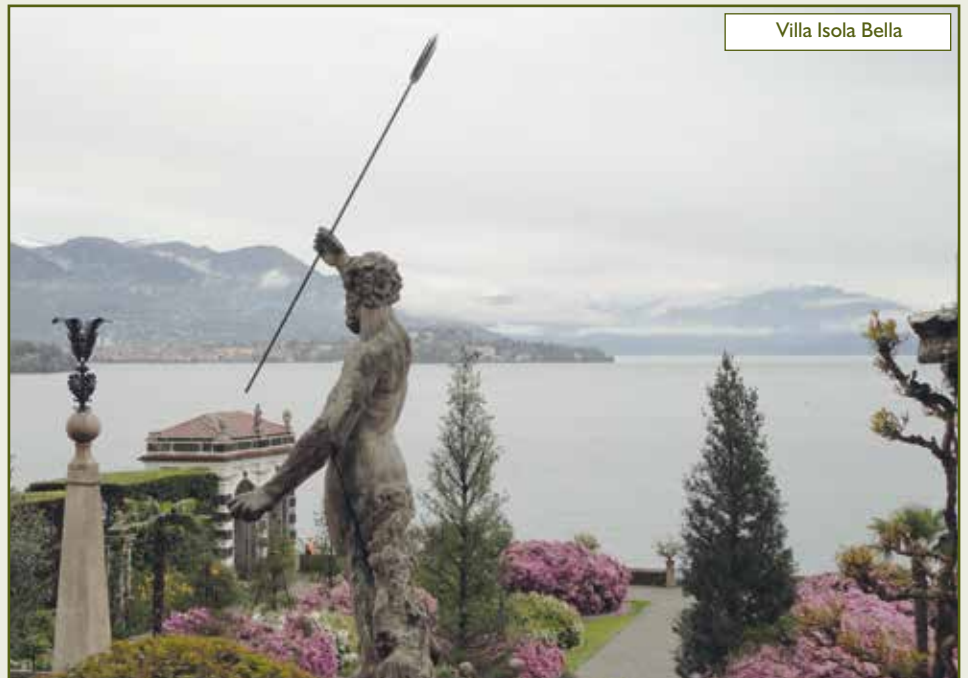
Villa Cicogna Mozzoni

Italian-style gardens soon became popular in England as garden designers turned away from Brownian landscapes and introduced features such as terraces and formal flower beds in front of the house. Notable examples in Staffordshire can be seen at Weston Park, Trentham Gardens, where Barry's Italianate Garden has been recreated, and at Patshull Hall, where Brown's parkland can now be viewed from the terraces of the Italianate garden created in the mid nineteenth century, and not only from the principal rooms of the house.

Italy's gardens are regarded as amongst the most beautiful in Europe, and Michael's photographs allowed members to appreciate, if vicariously, the beauty for which they are so justly renowned and which a selection of Michael's photographs accompanying this article so clearly illustrate.



Villa Isola Bella



Villa Isola Bella



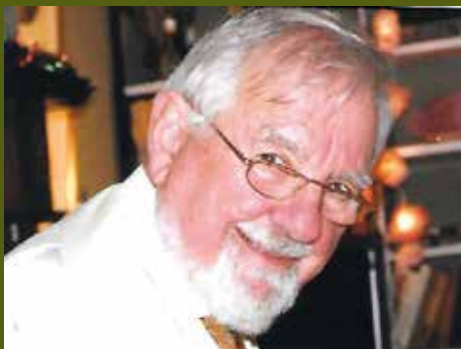
Villa Melzi



Villa Isola Bella

JIM EARLE 1930-2018

The Trust has learned with great sadness of the death of Jim Earle, our first Treasurer. Jim died peacefully in his sleep at home in Pattingham on 26 October.



When Jim became Treasurer of the Trust shortly after its foundation in 1992, he was a Director of Tarmac plc based at their then headquarters in Hilton Hall near Wolverhampton. He held his post with the Trust until 2012 standing down only because of hearing difficulties. Over the intervening twenty years he maintained the Trust's accounts with meticulous attention to detail in a series of neatly written ledgers and gave shrewd advice on keeping its affairs on a financially sound basis. It was often thought this aptitude for book-keeping stemmed from a business background as an accountant but in reality he was an graduate in English from Oxford and was responsible for procurement in his work.

Jim was a man of many interests, as was evident to those of us who visited his home and saw the varied range of titles in his library. As well as interests in literature and garden history he had a keen love of music, supporting many musical charities and played a significant part in the English Haydn festival at Bridgnorth. He wrote poetry and was a proficient artist: some of us were fortunate to receive his beautifully hand drawn Christmas cards. For many years he was an active member of NADFAS (National Association of Design and Fine Arts Societies - now the The Art Society) engaged in recording art works in country houses and churches. His Christian faith was important to him and he had a strong interest in theology. Jim was a keen gardener: his three daughters commented on how he had lived a happy and fulfilled life in his long-time home (his wife had pre-deceased him), enjoying as ever his music, books and garden.

Jim will be remembered in the Trust for his wise counsel, quietly delivered, but often with a twinkle of the eye revealing a wry sense of humour and all the more respected for that, for his long and valued contribution as our Treasurer. His funeral took place on 15 November: Bryan Sullivan represented the Trust and conveyed our condolences to his family.

Alan Taylor

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2019

The programme of events in the spring and summer of 2019 is currently being finalised and full details will be available to members early in the New Year.

Dates are as follows:

Saturday, April 13th: HODNET HALL, NEAR MARKET DRAYTON

This sixty-acre garden is noted for its beautiful flowers, rare trees and its chain of lakes and pools.

Saturday, May 11th: SPETCHLEY PARK, NEAR WORCESTER

Described as "A Plantsman's Paradise", Spetchley Park Gardens offers visitors a wide collection of rare plants, shrubs and trees, lakes and fountains, and a deer park with views as far as the Malvern Hills.

An eminent horticulturist, Ellen Wilmott (1854-1935), who assisted in the design of the gardens, is said to have cultivated more than 100,000 plants and cultivars, and used her great wealth to sponsor plant-hunting expeditions.

Saturday, May 23rd: ENVILLE HALL

William Shenstone had a hand in the design of its landscape park, which, with Hagley Hall and Shenstone's The Leasowes, was one of a trio of Midlands gardens that were on eighteenth-century garden visitors' list of 'must see' gardens.

Though many of its architectural features are no longer there – the Chinese House, the magnificent Sea Horse Fountain, the giant Conservatory – some still remain, and from the highest point visitors have a view across three counties and can even see as far as the Wrekin and The Black Mountains.

Saturday, June 1st: INGESTRE ORANGERY AND GARDENS

This visit will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting, which will be held in the Orangery, designed by Samuel and Joseph Wyatt after James ("Athenian") Stuart and built in the late 1760s.

This will be the inaugural event on the Orangery following the restoration, which cost over £1m.

Aaron Chetwynd, who is an architect and a descendant of the Chetwynd Talbot family, who owned Ingestre, and who was the driving force behind the restoration, will give a talk on the restoration.

It is hoped to arrange a walk round the parks and gardens of Lichfield, including Monks Walk, the garden currently being restored by volunteers, and a visit to Highbury Hall, in Birmingham, at one time the home of the Liberal politician, Joseph Chamberlain.

The hall, which is in Moseley, South Birmingham, was built in 1880 in the Venetian Gothic style, and the grounds were landscaped by Edward Milner, who worked for Joseph Paxton on a number of commissions, including at Chatsworth and the Crystal Palace. Joseph Chamberlain was known for his love of orchids, which he grew in an extensive range of glasshouses, now demolished.

A lottery bid has been submitted which will, if granted, allow a major restoration of house and gardens.

OFFICERS OF THE TRUST (2018/19)

President: Charles Bagot-Jewitt

Chairman: Alan Taylor
Treasurer: Michael Faarup
Membership Secretary: Michael Faarup
Web Managers: Julie Hall
Newsletter: Bryan Sullivan
Company Secretary: Catherine Thorpe

Council of Management
Michael Faarup
Julie Hall
John Hyde
Bryan Sullivan
Alan Taylor
Catherine Thorpe

Visit the Trust's website address www.sgpt.org.uk for information about the aims of the Trust, its activities and publications, including past issues.