

Staffordshire Gardens & Parks Trust

News Letter

Summer 2021 - ISSUE No. 63



*Blithfield Hall—A view from The Grove
The Orangery can be seen on the left*

The Trust's Covid-compliant Annual General Meeting took place in an open-fronted Orangery at Blithfield Hall, the home of the Trust's President, Commander Charles and Mrs. Cosy Bagot-Jewitt on Saturday, May 22nd, attended by twenty-six members

The Chairman's Report

Presenting his annual report for 2020, the Trust's Chairman, Alan Taylor, remarked that the unprecedented circumstances of the times had resulted in a very quiet year in which only one visit – to Alton Towers - had taken place. Consequently, the Trust had waived its annual subscription, but the generosity of members who made a donation in lieu of a subscription had minimised the impact this would otherwise have made on the Trust's financial position.

This, as the Treasurer's report had shown, remained healthy, and he thanked John Hyde, who had taken over the management of the Trust's finance from Michael Faarup earlier in the year, and Francis Colella, the current Treasurer.

Because of Covid restrictions, the Council of Management had been unable to meet face-to-face, but had continued its meetings on-line, when, amongst other business, it had commented on a number of planning applications affecting historic parks in the county. He thanked his fellow-Council members for their support during a difficult year.

In the absence of visits, members had been given the opportunity to take part in a number of on-line talks organised by fellow-Trusts, an arrangement which, it was hoped, would continue and in which the Trust would become involved. There

had, so far, been a low take-up by members, and the Chairman strongly recommended members to take advantage of this opportunity to enjoy these high-quality talks by highly-regarded speakers.

Following the conclusion of the AGM, members were treated to three short talks on Blithfield Hall, past and present, the first by Barbara Hyde on its history.

Blithfield Hall: its history

Blithfield is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, when it was recorded as having a church and priest; a well is also mentioned, and today's occupants are still using that well as an ecological source of heating. The position chosen for the settlement is also much appreciated, as it lies sheltered by the ridge which separates the river Blythe from the Trent.

The Hall itself dates from the late fourteenth century, since when it has been the home of the Bagot family. Initially, the manor consisted of a moated Great Hall and a separate kitchen, with a yard to the south



The ha-ha after restoration



Bluebells in the Grove

beyond the moat and the service buildings, such as the brewery and the stables to the east. The road ran directly in front of the manor, as, at this time, it was important to be seen.

A small area to the north of the hall was mostly occupied by raised beds for culinary and medicinal purposes, but of great value as an area of privacy away from the communal living in the hall.

In the later 1400as, the Bagots married the de Blithfields, and the Great Chamber was added as an upper floor above the parlour. The garden was then viewed from above, and it is likely that a knot garden was developed, with arbours. The gardens became a place of pleasure for the first time. The lodgings for the retainers and guests were joined around an inner courtyard. By 1676, we can see, in a drawing by Dr. Plot's Natural History of Staffordshire, the demesne separated from the road by a wall, a terrace at the west end of the house and a planting described as a wilderness. It incorporated a plat alongside the Great Hall with a hedge on the far side that most likely separated an orchard.

By the early eighteenth century the baronet sought help to improve the garden. A 1742 plan shows the demesne extended into an area near to the churchyard with an arrangement of paths and a belvedere in the south-west corner (which was later given a Gothic dressing and served as a water tower). This extension involved exchanging the glebe land and newly-renovated medieval rectory for an area further south on the ridge. Sir Walter Wagstaffe Bagot built a new rectory there in the Queen Anne style.

Meanwhile, his heir, William, had embarked on The Grand Tour and returned fixated on all things Classical. He created a Classical room high enough for the paintings he had brought back (still known as The New Drawing Room) and, with the architect 'Athenian' Stuart, built the Orangery to the north of the Great Hall. Becoming the first Lord Bagot, he began upgrading the house further with crenellations and designing an extended demesne, planning a long drive, lodges, paths and planting specimen trees, as they arrived in the country. The desire for privacy increased throughout the Georgian period and reflected status.

It fell to his son to carry out many of his ideas. A further rectory was built in the Georgian style nearer to the church, the previous rectory being demolished and glebe land being exchanged in order for an archery to be built for entertaining. The area on the ridge became known as "The Grove" and provided walks through the maintained woodland.

The road between Admaston and Newton which once ran past the Hall was diverted to a new lane. Further building work was done in the Gothic style, to which the second Lord was partial after his time at Oxford. Two large walled vegetable gardens with extensive glasshouses were built to the east of the Hall beyond an area developed as the pleasure gardens, and a replacement wilderness was created further down the valley.

By Victorian times there was a large number of gardeners supplying produce for the house, including

rare fruits and vegetables. It became competitive amongst the gardeners of the local estates. In addition, the gardens were used for entertaining, leisure and sport. Following the drop in agricultural rents, the two World Wars and the repayment of debts, the layout of the demesne remained unchanged and went into decline.

Barbara's talk was followed by a talk by the President, who focussed on the history of the Bagot family, who were, in the 1080s, settled in Bagots Bromley. The de Blithfield family were to marry into the Bagot family after the second visitation of the Black Death, thus combining two estates.

As a consequence, the wealth and importance of the family, derived from farming, grew, so much so that, in the sixteenth century, Richard Bagot was entrusted with the responsibility of guarding Mary, Queen of Scots, at nearby Checkley Castle, but, in the next century, the family sided with the



North view of Hall, in 1823

losing side in the English Civil Wars, and, as a consequence, their estates were sequestered and they were obliged to pay a heavy fine.

However, a later marriage united the family with the Salisbury family, who owned seventeen thousand acres of land in Wales, which, combined with the ten thousand acres already owned in Staffordshire by the Bagots, restored the family's fortune.

The highest point in the family's fortunes was reached when, in 1780, the son of Sir William Bagot, also named William, was made first Lord Bagot, the family having been elevated to the baronetcy in 1591. Bagots held seats in Parliament for 120 years, and also held high office in the Anglican Church, including that of the Bishop of Oxford.

Already referred to by the previous speaker, the Orangery was commissioned by Sir William Bagot, sixth baronet and first baron, in 1769. Complete with its own heating system, which consumed vast quantities of fuel, it grew, amongst other fruits, pineapples, at an estimated cost of £1000 each, in an ostentatious display of the family's wealth.

When the Welsh estate was sold in 1920, it marked the beginning of the end for the family. Blithfield Hall declined into dereliction and ruin until, finally, it was put up for sale by the fifth baron, who, by that time, had withdrawn into a corner of the house.

In 1939, Gerald Lord Bagot agreed to sell the house and 3,000 acres of the estate was sold to the South Staffordshire Water Company, who had plans to create the vast reservoir in the valley below the house, though, because of World War Two, the sale was not completed until 1947.

Opened in October 1953 by Elizabeth the Queen Mother, it now serves the neighbouring towns of Walsall and Cannock. 790 acres in extent, it is also a haven for wildlife, especially birds.

In 1948 Caryl, the sixth Lord Bagot, and his wife Lady Nancy Bagot, bought back the house and thirty acres, and, aided by the Government, began the daunting task of restoring the house, which had by then fallen into a ruinous state.

The restored house and grounds were opened to the public in 1953, only to be closed again in 1972, when, once again, it fell into decline

Blithfield Hall – the present

Caryl, Lord Bagot died in 1961, and in 1986 the Hall was divided into four separate residences, since reduced to two. The part which includes the Great Hall, currently occupied by Commander and Mrs. Bagot-Jewitt and their family, is now owned by the Bagot-Jewitt Trust.

One of the properties – Cloister House – was bought by our third speaker, John Hyde, who described how, while looking for a house in a rural setting, by chance came across an advertisement in a copy of "Country Life", a magazine which he otherwise never read, in which he noticed that two wings of the Hall were for sale. He and Barbara visited Blithfield Hall and, immediately struck by the peaceful atmosphere, decided to purchase one of them, now known as "Cloister House".

They took possession in June 1988 and were immediately confronted by the need to carry out substantial renovation. For a start, the house was without electricity, heating and plumbing, a bathroom floor was missing, the tower was loose

enough to be moved with one hand, the gravelled area in front of the house was a quagmire. Restoration of the property took three months of intensive building work.

John then turned his attention to the grounds. In 2000, following the retirement of Josef Pawlowski, her long-serving gardener and handyman, Nancy Lady Bagot, who still owned the park, had given him permission to take over the management of the area known as “The Grove”, which had become overgrown with holly, elder, brambles, willow herb and bracken (up till then, maintenance – which had amounted to little more than mowing the grass and removing fallen trees - had been carried out by Josef, who had gradually slowed with age.

In addition, structures in the park – The Water Tower, The Old Well and the Church Wall – were in a delapidated condition.

In 2012, when Lady Bagot felt she needed money for old age, she sold the Grove and the park in front of the house to the Hydes, who went on to buy the East Wing and then the West Wing, thereby extinguishing the obligation to preserve The Grove in its 1988 condition. In the years that followed, work on the Water Tower and the Old Well, the church wall and the ha-ha at the front of the house, built in the 1740s to restrict the movement of the deer which once ornamented the park, and more than a kilometre of drains in The Grove, as well as much tree-work, has been carried out.



Looking into The Grove

The ice house requires attention to the brickwork and to re-laying the turf which covers the roof after it had been caused to slip by cattle rampaging over the roof,

Compared with the Bagot family, who have lived in Blithfield Hall for seven hundred years, the Hydes still regard themselves as newcomers, having lived at Blithfield for just thirty-three years! John confessed, however, that during that time, they had become almost obsessed by Blithfield's history, having bought every book they could find in which Blithfield is mentioned, including one of the forty copies of the second Lord Bagot's 1823 "Memorials of the Bagot Family", which they have had restored.

Following the conclusion of his talk, John took members on a guided tour of the park, and it became increasingly apparent to the party that renewing parkland is an ongoing task; John has identified between thirty and forty trees that were approaching the end of life.

Members would have left Blithfield aware of the commitment of time, energy and resources to maintaining both Hall and parkland above and below ground (drainage in both needing regular inspection), which their visit so clearly demonstrated, and will agree that both families deserve the highest praise for embracing such a great responsibility.



“A beautiful historic building in a charming setting” *

On a Thursday afternoon in late June, fifteen members travelled down into Worcestershire to visit Hartlebury Castle, for a not-quite unbroken sequence of twelve and a half centuries the home of the Bishops of Worcester. Here, we were welcomed by three members of the current owners of the Castle, the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust – Robert, Stephen and Jane.

The Castle’s long history

In an introductory talk on the history of the Castle, Robert, the Trust Chairman, took us back to the mid ninth century when the estate was given to Bishop Ealun, by Burhed, King of Mercia, one of the seven kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England, which covered modern Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, the northern West Midlands and Warwickshire.

At one time, the Bishop held no fewer than ten manors, so that the Bishop and his retinue (which included a hundred men-at-arms, the Bishop in those days being entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the King’s peace in the region) stayed for no more than a month at Hartlebury at any one time.

Not all Bishops resided at Hartlebury; from 1497 to 1538 a succession of 4 Italian bishops was appointed, none of whom ever saw Hartlebury. One, Guilio de Guililano de’ Medici, became Pope Clement VII, who is remembered for refusing Henry VIII the annulment to his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, thus leading to the creation of the Church of England.

The Castle as seen today only began to emerge in the early thirteenth century, when a hall and solar were built, together with kitchens and a chapel. The building was later fortified and surrounded by a moat, part of which survives.

All this was brought to a halt by the English Civil Wars, during which the Castle was garrisoned by a Royalist force and besieged by the Parliamentarians, to whom it was surrendered after only two days. Before leaving, the Parliamentarians ‘slighted’ the castle, that is, pulled parts of it down so that it could no longer serve as a fortification: from 1647 to 1665 the site was in private ownership.

Rebuilding followed as successive Bishops then continued its expansion: the North Wing (which now houses the County Museum) was added, the Great Hall was enlarged, the roof of the chapel lifted, and the roof line crenellated and the windows Gothicised.

* Lyn Sheppard, visitor



A view of the Castle showing the reed-clogged moat

The Hurd Library

Most striking of all, the Hurd Library was added in 1782, its five thousand books housed in recessed bookcases in a specially-built first floor room above the Long Gallery in 1782. 120 feet in length and twelve feet wide, its impressive appearance is in no way diminished by knowing that the pillars are constructed of wood coated to look like marble or that the intricate plasterwork of the ceiling is constructed out of plaster-of-Paris!

Richard Hurd became Bishop of Worcester in 1781. A bibliophile from an early age, he was for ten years the Librarian at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, before leaving academia to pursue a career in the Church.

A protégé of William Warburton, who was to become Bishop of Gloucester in 1759, his preaching attracted the attention

of the King, George III, to two of whose nine sons, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, he became tutor. The King subsequently appointed him Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, from where, after seven years, he was translated to the see of Worcester, bringing with him a substantial library to which he had added the books which had belonged to William Warburton and which he had purchased on his friend's death

Amongst the Library's five thousand books, one hundred of which were donated by the King, there are a number which had once belonged to Alexander Pope, John Dryden and Ralph Allen, of Priors Park, Bath, who quarried the unique Bath stone which nowadays beautifies the city. What makes these books especially valued are the hand-written comments written in their margins by their previous owners.

The oldest dates from 1476, and the collection includes volumes on medicine, botany, travel and ornithology, as well as a copy of the Breeches Bible, dated 1599, in which Adam and Eve are described as hiding their nakedness with fig tree leaves sewn together to make breeches (later translated as 'aprons!').

Amongst the volumes laid out for our inspection was a rare copy of "Flora Londonensis: Plates and Descriptions of such plants as grow wild in the environs of London". Published towards the end of the eighteenth century, this copy is rare because the engraved plates which illustrate the text have been removed from other copies for sale on E-bay.

Bishop Hurd donated his library to his successors in perpetuity, and it remains the only example of an Anglican bishop's library still on its original shelves in a room specially built for it.



The Hurd Library

The Tour Begins

Following the talk, the party was divided into two groups, the one to be shown round the Castle by volunteers, while the other was led on a tour of the gardens by the Head Gardener, Jane Finch,



The group first to enter the house were, through the wonders of modern technology, welcomed by Mary Pepys, wife of the mid Victorian Bishop, Henry Pepys (who, unlike his distant cousin Samuel pronounced his name 'Peppis).

Their precocious ten-year-old daughter Emily left a diary covering just seven months of her young life (July 1844 to January 1845) which gives the modern reader insights into the life of a mid-nineteenth century prelate who discharged his none-too-arduous duties conscientiously and who otherwise enjoyed a comfortable social life, in which visits to and from members of two extended families, his own and his wife's, occurred frequently.

When at home, Mary Peppis numbered gardening amongst her activities: Emily records helping her mother peg out a new flower bed in the garden,.

Not unexpectedly, dances played a prominent part in the family's social calendar; Papa cannot give dances, Emily tells us, because he is a Bishop, but this does not prevent the family from attending dances given by neighbouring families, although "Mama does not like us (that is, her two daughters) to dance the Polka with gentlemen other than brothers and cousins". Required to attend two services at the local church each Sunday, she is writing as a ten-year-old rather than a Bishop's daughter when she confides to her diary, "Somehow I always dislike going to church and am always glad to get off it if I can"!

Inside the Castle

In addition to the Hurd Library, the group were also shown the Great Hall, which once housed 100 men-at-arms tasked with defending the Castle. Hanging on its walls are portraits of past Bishops. That of Bishop Philip Goodrich (1982-96) was painted by Maggie Hambling and took so long to complete that the Head Gardener was called in to model for the body of the Bishop!

The group was also taken into the magnificent Chapel, dating, like the Great Hall, from the fourteenth century, but re-roofed about 1750 and given its fan vaulting.

What was not open to visitors, however, was the Prince Regent's Room, specially furnished in preparation for his visit in 1807, including a canopied four-poster bed, which the Prince did not sleep in, however, since he did not stay the night, leaving the Castle after only three-quarters of an hour!

A tour of the grounds

The tour of the grounds began in the Sunken Garden, once part of the moat. It was drained in the early eighteenth century to form a pleasure garden and is now laid down to lawn. From there we proceeded to the top of the dam and saw the ornamental bastion, stone ramparts and ha-ha ditch created at the same time by Bishop Hough to enhance its appearance as a castle. The tour continued along the Orchard Walk, planted with apple trees and a 280-year-old mulberry. It was here that, in 1788, George III, Queen Charlotte and several members of their family promenaded under the gaze, it is said, of eight thousand of their admiring subjects!

Another Royal visitor was Queen Elizabeth I, whose visit involved the Bishop in great expense, as her visits invariably did, and for whom he created the Queen Elizabeth Walk. Unfortunately for the Bishop, in spite of all his efforts, the Queen left the Castle unimpressed!

Less demanding was Queen Elizabethan II, who, in 1980, was entertained to lunch after distributing Maundy Pence at Worcester Cathedral that year. Before leaving, she marked the occasion by planting a magnolia.

The walk took the party along a pathway which gave a perfect view across the remaining part of the moat to the South Front of the Castle standing high on a ridge above the parkland which fell away below it. From here, visitors could understand why the site was seen as suitable for siting a castle. Approaching from the opposite direction along an avenue of 300-year-old lime trees and arriving at what now has the appearance of an extended manor-house fronted by a large circular lawn around which a coach-and-six could sweep, conveys a very different impression of the site.

End of an Era – and a new beginning

The Church of England vacated the Palace in 2007, when the Bishop moved to a house adjacent to the Cathedral, citing proximity and economy as reasons for the move. The Castle, including the North Wing, which was tenanted by the Worcestershire County Museum, was put up for sale. A group of local residents, fearful for the future of a much-loved historic landmark, in 2009 set up the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust with the aim of acquiring ownership.

After several years of fund-raising the Trust secured a Heritage Lottery grant of £2½m. (it is said that, on the announcement of the award, the portraits of all the Bishops in the Great Hall smiled!). This enabled the purchase of the Castle, which opened to the public in 2018.

Finding the money needed to maintain the Castle and the surrounding 43-acre estate places a heavy burden on the Trust, which relies for income on visitors' entrance fees and expenditure in shop and tearoom, as well as weddings and donations. A registered charity run by a Board of Trustees, it relies on volunteers both inside and outside the Castle to keep its doors open to the public, as they have been since 2018.

The cost of maintaining the estate remains a constant challenge to the Trust; a small but hard-working band of volunteers carry out much of the maintenance, but some tasks, such as treework, require the expertise of professionals. This alone costs £8,000 a year, and to clear the remaining section of the reed-clogged moat below the South front of the castle would cost £30,000 (Boating on this stretch of water had been a favourite pastime of the Pepys children, whose father had built the boathouse).



The Great Hall

Covid-19 forced the closure of the Castle to the public in March 2020. Fortunately, the Trust was able to draw on the Cultural Heritage Recovery Fund for support. The Castle has now re-opened to the public, and our visit was the first to take place since its enforced closure.

Members, who had been warmly welcomed by a band of volunteers ready

to share their knowledge of a landmark that was close to their hearts, would have left the Castle impressed not only by many of its features but also the commitment of its Trustees, staff and volunteers, determined to ensure that this most historic part of Worcestershire's heritage remains accessible to the County's residents and the wider public.



A garden to tingle the senses" (anon)

On the recommendation of one of our members, Mary Brass (see Newsletter No. 62 – “Memorable Gardens”), a visit to Wollerton Old Hall Garden, in North Shropshire, was included in the Trust’s 2021 programme of visits. It took place one morning in early July, when members had the added privilege of being taken round the garden by the Head Gardener, Alex Law.

From the very beginning a surprise awaits visitors as they walk down a curving driveway flanked on either side by trees. When they eventually see the house they find themselves facing a sixteenth-century timber-framed manor house fronted by an array of tubs brimming with hydrangeas, salvias, roses and dahlias, a fitting introduction to what awaits them beyond the house.

In fact, as we were soon to discover, Wollerton Old Hall Garden is not just one garden but sixteen, being divided into ‘rooms’ by axes, three running north-south and three east-west. Each room is separated from the others by a wall or a hedge, each distinctive in its layout and planting.

However, the development of the garden, the brainchild of John and Lesley Jenkins, was a slow process. They had bought the house in 1982 after a fortunate detour had taken Lesley, who taught fine arts at a school in Shrewsbury, past the entrance to the house she had lived in as a child, which had been put up for sale.

When John and Lesley took possession, the garden was, in fact, an open field. John saw this as an

opportunity to lay down a cricket field, but Lesley's more artistic vision saw it as a canvas on which she could paint with flowers.

Initially, planting took place in a series of isolated island beds, but Lesley felt that this was not in keeping with formal design of the house, which was characterised by vertical and horizontal straight lines, and concluded that this formality of design should be reflected in the garden, hence its present appearance.

The aim was to create a garden which blended features of the earlier 'English Garden' style of design, favoured by Gertrude Jekyll, notably perennials and annuals planted densely in drifts of colour – "Lesley does not like to see bare soil", we were told - with those of an Arts-and-Crafts garden to be found at Hidcote and Sissinghurst, – formal in structure, divided into 'rooms', with topiary, pools and rills, pergolas and summerhouses, all of which are to be found in Wollerton Old Hall Garden.

Led by Alex, we threaded our way through a series of garden 'rooms', ever conscious of their variety in size and style, each self-contained but offering tantalising views of what awaited us in the garden beyond.

The largest of these 'rooms' (and in some ways the most arresting) was the Llanhydrock Garden. Named

after the National Trust garden in Cornwall which provided the initial inspiration for its planting, it is also known as the 'Hot' Garden because, in summer, it is bright with reds, oranges and yellows, though the blue and purple of the veronicas, agapanthus, salvias and asters are intended to provide a 'cooling' effect.

The Sundial Garden, which takes its name from the sundial which stands at the centre of a circular lawn at the centre of the garden, is flanked by deep borders planted in the summer with phlox, delphiniums, hollyhocks and roses.

The geometric design of the garden allows for striking vistas running the

The Sundial Garden



length or width of the garden, a good example of which is provided by this garden, from which, in one direction, the visitor can see the hall and Old Garden, once the site of a Tudor knot garden, and in another glimpse first the Lime Alley and beyond the Main Perennial Border.

The Lime Allée is flanked by ten limes, five on either side, backed by beech hedges. Here, the poor quality of the soil makes underplanting problematic, but first muscari and then heliotrope have been tried, with some success.

The Yew Walk is another area of the garden in which a single species of tree dominates, though white, peach and red David Austin roses provide an eye-catching display beneath.

Providing a contrast to the mass planting of other 'rooms', the Font

Garden, designed to suggest a monastic cloister, is principally a lawned area, its space broken by a square central bed and a border which runs down one side of the garden and is closely planted with lilies whose heavy scent fill the air. At one end a loggia is festooned with the small, pink and white, apple blossom-like flowers of the rose 'Francis C. Lester', though the eye might first be attracted to several box balls which stand in front of the loggia.

At the furthest distance from the house the garden becomes less formal. From The Croft Garden – dominated by two large maples and planted not with massed perennials but with flowering shrubs and carpeted with primroses, snowdrops and cowslips in the spring - the visitor is led into The Croft itself,

*Heavily scented
lillies regale
the Font Garden*



The Lower Rill Garden



separated by a substantial box hedge. Filled with snowdrops, primroses and bluebells which are replaced by cow parsley as spring gives way to summer, it has been found to be a favourite part of the garden by many visitors, for whom its meandering path and woodland appearance no doubt provide a contrast with the formality of the rest of the garden.

Water is an important presence in any garden, both for its ornamental and its life-enhancing qualities. Wollerton Old Hall Garden stands on sand and even a short dry spell will require the use of sprinklers. The Well Garden is one source of water which brings the refreshing sound of running water into the garden, but water is present in a much more conspicuous

form in the Upper and Lower Rills. The Lower Rill is sunken and paved with York stone, while the canal-like Upper Rill is contained within hedges and lined each side with festigate hornbeams in front of which squat a row of box domes.

An account of a visit to Wollerton Old Hall Garden can only give the

The Font Garden





"Leslie's favourite colour is BLUE"

"It's all about playing with colour to try and achieve a satisfying picture..."
Leslie and John Jenkins



reader a taste of the delights which await its visitors and will fall far short of conveying the full menu. It must be stressed, too, that a single visit in early July gives visitors just a snapshot of the garden, which, while retaining its basic structure, adapts in response to the changing seasons year on year.

If the over-used word 'awesome' retains any of its original meaning, it would be the most appropriate word to describe the achievement of Lesley and John Jenkins in creating such a magnificent garden, well deserving of

the many accolades which have been heaped on it.

The Trust must also thank Alex Law, our guide, who, during the course of the tour, demonstrated a degree of knowledge and expertise – and affection for the garden -which belied the few months in which he had been in post.

Nor must we forget to thank Mary, whose choice of Wollerton Old Hall Garden as her "Memorable Garden" resulted in a visit which was both memorable and enjoyable – in spite of the rain!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday, September 23rd

A day visit to two Cotswold gardens

The gardens the Trust will be visiting are at Kiftsgate Court, near Chipping Norton, and Broughton House, near Moreton-in-the-Marsh. The former, which dates from the 1920s, are the work of three generations of women gardeners, and are noted for their roses, especially the Kiftsgate Rose, a scented climbing rose, while the latter are famous for their “luxuriant terraces and wide herbaceous borders”, their topiary and their parterre. Both are memorable for their display of colour in later September and early October.

Places are still available on this visit and can be booked by contacting its organiser on michael.faarup@btopenworld.com

Wednesday, October 6th

Visit to Hanley Park, Stoke-on-Trent

This visit, which starts at 2pm, is a follow-up on the talk given to Trust members in November 2019 by Claire Studman, one of the Park’s liaison officers, who will take members on a guided tour of the Park.

Designed by Thomas Mawson and opened in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Park has recently undergone extensive restoration, funded by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Community Lottery Fund and the City Council.

The focus of the visit will be on the renovation work, including the

extended public leisure activities, and, at the end of the visit, members will be able to refresh themselves in the café in the newly re-instated pavilion.

Wednesday, November 24th

Talk on the restoration of Victoria Park, Stafford

Situated on the banks of the river Sow and opened in 1908, the Park has since been extended twice, in 1911 and 1930, but retains its historic core, Under restoration since 2009, which should be completed by the end of the year, it should be in first-class condition when the Trust visits it.

Its attractions include an aviary, a sensory garden, riverside walk and a play area. The County War Memorial, unveiled in 1923, stands within its grounds.

The talk, which is an evening event, will be given by a member of the Park’s support team, and is expected to take place at The Haling Dene Centre, Penkridge.

Detailed times and joining instructions for the second and third of these events will be sent out nearer the time of the event.



*Wollerton Old Hall
The Font Garden, showing the
box balls and the rose-draped loggia*

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**non-member?*

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

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