

in the garden, this resulted in over 100 guide books sold. This pleased Gavin who remarked that on normal open days few guides are sold. Perhaps this may be a record. Even on that cloudy day there was much to enjoy; the swags of roses, the herbaceous planting in the long borders, the grey border plants spilling over the paving. The fine East Anglian Elms and many other trees which provided mature settings and backdrops for Peter Foster's garden buildings. Some members may have seen the Anglia TV programme in August about the Garden at Abbots Ripton Hall. Lady De Ramsey explained the history of the garden, Peter Foster talked about the garden buildings and bridge he designed and Gavin Smith pointed out special plants in the herbaceous borders.

Before I conclude I must thank all those who helped at Abbots Ripton Hall to make the afternoon such a success. £1,200 was raised for the work required in the walled garden at Ramsey Abbey School.

Progress with the lease for the walled garden at Ramsey Abbey School has been slow. The Trust was informed by the County Council that a lease was being prepared in February this year. But after a letter to the Chief Executive about a four year delay and meetings with the Headmaster, the Legal Department the Property Department and the Education Department the scenario still drags on. What does not stop is the growth of the weeds. We thought we had cleared one quadrant in the garden only to come back the next fortnight to see the grass, brambles and weeds three feet high. But the interest shown by the team who battle through the undergrowth is heartening. We have been joined by one of the gardeners who now works in the vegetable area of the late Geoff Hamilton's garden. So our range of knowledge has been broadened. The apples, blackberries and the mulberries are ripening and we have delivered a collection of these fruits to the headmaster who has maintained all along that he should always have the right to the first picking.

Although you are probably fed up hearing about the Millennium, I feel we have come of age this year with our successful publication, our range of lectures and our events and visits to gardens in the county, some of which are written up in this newsletter.

Please note that our AGM is to be held on Saturday 18th November at the new Village Hall at Buckden at 2.30pm. Jenny Burt who is the chairman of the Northamptonshire Gardens Trust will give a talk about "Gardens in Northamptonshire". Members found that this was an ideal location with adjacent easy parking and access. The committee think that this will be where future AGMs will be held, it being so central for the county.

It would help if members could renew their membership at the AGM or as soon as possible. This keeps our administration cost down so that we can produce interesting Newsletters for members. Thank you for your co-operation.

John Drake. Chairman.

VISIT to KIRTLING TOWER in May led by LORD FAIRHAVEN, PRESIDENT of the TRUST

Kirtling Tower stands on raised ground overlooking the rolling countryside of East Cambridgeshire. The first Lord North built a house here in 1530. Of this only the towering castellated brick gatehouse remains, its entrance guarded by two griffins which feature in the North family coat of arms. The main house was demolished in 1801. A new wing was added to the gatehouse, designed by Hanson, an architect whose name is better known for the Hansom cab. The house was occupied by a tenant in the period proceeding the 1980s and the gardens were rather neglected. Since then Lord

Fairhaven has recreated the gardens which he described as he showed us round.

Kirtling Towers is a place of contrasts. While the moated area surrounding the house is a Scheduled Monument, where even the smallest change is subject to English Heritage, the gardens beyond are being made out afresh. The origins of the estate go back to Saxon times, but Lord Fairhaven spoke of his plans for the future.

The only planting permitted within the Scheduled Monument is of species known to have been in England before 1600. Clusters of scented golden tulips grow in grass under a huge beech tree. These are *Tulipa sylvestris*, believed to have been imported by the Romans. Lord Fairhaven gave an amusing account of the authorisation of the planting of philadelphus. The visiting official, with clipboard, insisted that the philadelphus selected must be the particular plant grown in England before 160, asked to be reminded of the colour of a philadelphus flower.

Within the moated area is a tiny Roman Catholic chapel, designed by Buckler in 1877 for a Lady North. The choice of building in the Gothic Revival style, reminiscent of the medieval period, with flint walls, an apse and lancet windows, was appropriate to this moated site. Part of the moat is filled with water, functioning as an ornamental lake with golden carp and mandarin ducks. The northern section is dry with steeply sloping grassy sides. Beyond the moat on this side a new plantation of trees and shrubs screens the estate from the road.

Also to the south, trees have been planted recently as a future landscape feature. An avenue of 80 year old walnut trees is continued further south by an avenue of limes. The walnut trees have now been interplanted with young lime trees, which will eventually provide a replacement for them. Lord Fairhaven showed us a conifer, given by a friend 5 years ago, which will eventually block an unwanted view of slate-roofed cottages.

The gardens outside the restrictions of the Scheduled Monument are being restructured. There is a series of separate areas in contrasting styles, enclosed by walls or hedges, or in courtyards between buildings, reminiscent of the "compartmental garden" advocated by Blomfield in "The Formal Garden in England" (1892). In the original walled kitchen garden hard bases were being laid for gravel paths and water pipes for fountains. An enclosed garden originally designed by Penelope Hobhouse was undergoing a few changes, and some plants which had grown too large were being replaced by varieties which might prove better suited to the context. The ice plants (Sedums) had been clipped into dumplings and were a particularly attractive feature of this garden.

Round every turn of the path we were greeted by another surprise. A field gate led to the "secret garden" of predominantly white shrubs, and beyond that the "spring garden" a grassy area planted with bulbs. We much appreciated Lord Fairhaven giving his time to show us his garden at Kirtling Tower where much foresight will reap fine rewards. It was so good that Richard Ayres, his gardener was able to join us.

After leaving Kirtling Tower we visited All Saints Church, which lies near the boundary of the estate. The church tower may date back to Saxon times, like the origins of the estate. An awesome carving of Christ in majesty is set at the top of the Romanesque doorway. The most unusual feature of the church is the large Tudor style brick South East chapel adjoining the chancel, built by the first Lord North, the builder of the original house. In the chapel is a large free standing pillared memorial to him of black marble, surmounted by the familiar pair of griffins. An inscription traces his successful career in politics and diplomacy from Knight and member of the House of Commons to peerage and the posts of Master of the Royal Household and Keeper of Royal Parks under Queen Elizabeth I.

JEANETTE FAGE

VISIT TO WALCOT HALL GARDEN,

JUNE 22nd 2000

Photos by David Bond



Garden Loggia overlooking short canal and bridge.

For several years I had written to Mr and Mrs Derby Dennis asking for permission for members of the Trust to visit the garden at Walcot Hall. Those members who came that sunny afternoon were well rewarded. Mr and Mrs Derby Dennis spent all the afternoon showing us their garden and answered many questions. Their garden is large with fine vistas leading the eye to the surrounding landscape framed by mature planting of limes and exotic conifers. Within the tree boundary planting is a garden which was noted by historians in 1720. But in the mid 19th century many exotic tree introductions to this country were planted by the enthusiastic owner. So the garden contains an extensive arboretum, with a canal as the trees centrepiece. During this century it is possible that Harold Peto may have suggested new stone classical temples and a hermitage to give the garden a sense of being much older. The dog grave is a stone monument of the scale which one would expect to see in the landscape at Castle Howard. Here it is the focal point at the end of a mature lime avenue.

This all might appear confused so I will reprint the information given by Mr Derby Dennis, so that members who were unable to attend may get a clearer picture:-

“ Walcot Hall is listed Grade 1 and is one of the finest examples of a Carolean House in the country. It was designed by John Webb, who is considered to have been a great Classical Architect having benefited from a long apprenticeship under Inigo Jones. In the 1630's assisted Inigo Jones on the repair of St Paul's Cathedral and made drawings of Whitehall Palace. When Jones died in 1652, Webb was without rival and worked for important people including the Earl of Rutland at Belvoir, the Earl of Peterborough at Drayton, Lord Dacre at Chevening in Kent and Sir Justinian Isham at Lamport in

New avenue leading towards Garden Pavilion.

Corinthian rotunda and original canal.

Northamptonshire. He set his sights on becoming 'Surveyor Of His Majesty's Works', but was passed over in favour of Denham in 1660. In 1663, however, he was recalled in order to design the King Charles Block at Greenwich Palace and to superintend the fortification of Woolwich Dockyard.

Webb's achievements as an architect were curtailed by war and misfortune. Many of the buildings he designed never materialised, but Walcot Hall displays the wonderful elegance for which he was so renowned.

Stone terrace with balustrades and stone gate pier near Hall.

The Hall was built for Sir Hugh Cholmondley in 1678 of local limestone under a Collyweston slate roof and comprises 9x5 bays being of two storied construction with a full width basement floor. It enjoys an outstanding site, sitting on a fine terrace overlooking beautiful and mature grounds of over 20 acres. The West front looks over a most impressive avenue of lime trees through the wooded parkland which extend to around 121 acres.

The Gainsboroughs lived here between 1700 and 1720 and then the Nevilles until 1891. The House was then bought by the Deardens who owned it until 1963 when it was purchased by the Dennis family.

During the last war Walcot Hall housed the operations room of the United States Eighth Army Air Force, 67th Fighter Wing, controlling six groups, from where many of the great 'Flying Fortress' daylight raids on Germany were planned and directed.

The original gardens were a simple design consisting of a canal, a long rectangular piece of water, and lawns with various trees.

The layout of the garden was changed considerably by the Dearden family in the early 1900s. Mr Dearden re-designed the garden, building a number of follies and planting many rare trees. Unfortunately, when a number of the trees should have been thinned the Second World War prevented work from being carried out.

When Mr Dearden returned to the House after the war, having lost his son in action, his interest understandably waned, and therefore a lot of the work he had planned did not materialise. Since the Dennis family arrived in 1962 their policy has been to simplify the garden based on the concept of lawn and trees. Over the years they have thinned and planted where necessary, very much aware that the days of numerous gardeners are over!

The canal was dredged during early 1990s and shows off the magnificent rotunda with Corinthian capitals which stands at the far end. A new rose garden has also been planted and is now beginning to take shape. This was designed by Bunny Guinness, winner of many awards at the Chelsea Flower Shows”

Members were invited to have tea in the Hall and were shown Teniel’s drawing of the Hall dated 1721. Whilst enjoying the excellent tea and home made cakes Mr Derby Dennis spoke about the lack of historical information the family had about the park and garden.

The Trust undertook to carry out further research for the owners. It is hoped that we will be able to find more information in the coming winter months when record offices are well heated. I have since come up with a reference to Walcot Hall, Barnack in a book written by J. Morton in 1712 titled the Natural History of Northamptonshire. He writes “Walcot Hall, a seat of the Honourable John Noel, a regular, commodious and handsome structure, is of particular Fame for its Fruit Gardens. The delicate Canal at Walcot is also worth mentioning, as being a great Curiosity in that Stoney Country.” We hope to find more.

JOHN DRAKE

BLOOMSBURY IN THE FENS

A CAMBRIDGE WALK WITH JANE BROWN, 20th JULY 2000

Jane Brown has kindly allowed the Trust to copy the information she provided for the members who attended her walk in North-West Cambridge.

Introduction

The Bloomsbury Group -”founded” in 1904 when the orphaned Stephens, Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia and Adrian settled at 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury - was an almost exclusively Cambridge-educated society (no one of consequence went to Oxford!).

They came as undergraduates in two waves, mostly to King’s or Trinity: Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, E M Forster, John Maynard Keynes, Thoby Stephen, G E Moore, all in the late 1890s, many lingering and returning - especially as members of The Apostles, the Cambridge Conversazione Society, well into the Edwardian years. Thus they met the younger generation led by Rupert Brooke (1906) - Geoffrey Keynes, Jacques Raverat, Hugh Dalton, George Mallory, Katherine, Marjory and Daphne Olivier, Amber Reeves and Francis and Gwen Darwin. The Keynes brothers lived at 6 Harvey Road** (off Hills Road, near Fenner’s) - recently restored by Gonville and Caius College keeping the heavy mahogany interiors: the garden a long lawn and flower beds, with an additional kitchen garden at the end, beloved of Mrs Florence Keynes who lived to a great age, was where JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES learnt his love of routine tasks - he later weeded paths with an old knife at Charleston farmhouse, as he cogitated on national economics. The Keynes garden is beautifully kept by the College caretakers who live in the garden flat.

VIRGINIA STEPHEN (married Leonard Woolf, also of the first wave, in 1912) was so highly born into the “intellectual aristocracy” that she did not need a women’s college but was tutored in Latin at King’s: she stayed with her aunt, Miss Caroline Emelia Stephen, a nun, at an ugly grey Victorian house, The Porch, at the corner of Grantchester and Merton streets in Newnham. (I understand the owners do not like being regarded as a literary landmark, and I haven’t seen the garden). Her feminist polemic “A Room of One’s Own” - papers given at Girton** and Newnham** in 1928, was important, but rather out of date: the all-male Cambridge she so mocked.....

“...I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man’s figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct, rather than reason, came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf, there was the path...Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me”.

.....this all male bastion was falling (and in a fair way to ruin by 1928). The first Bloomsbury wave were the last dinosaurs - E M FORSTER’S first novel, THE LONGEST JOURNEY, beautifully captures this world - and Brooke, Keeling and Dalton’s Fabian Society was the first to admit women as equal members. Virginia stayed at Grantchester with Brooke in the August of 1911. Clearly this introduction has gone on too long, but it will come as little surprise to hear that GARDENS - in my interest and estimation - were a key part of this change - a neutral ground where meetings could take place on equal terms, and with Girton and Newnham’s gardens (so different from the men’s colleges) both a refuge (from undergraduate japes and cruelties) and an expression of an educated, cultural, liberated, lifestyle.

The Gardens Trust has copies of my “The making of the gardens at NEWNHAM” and GIRTON’S “A Garden of Our Own”, which can be borrowed. Copies can also be bought at the relevant college, Girton is £5, Newnham’s something less.

TODAY’S WALK

can therefore cover only a fraction of the city, but makes an appropriate beginning in the “city of the Darwins” - all impeccably entwined with Stephens, Stracheys, Forsters etc in Clapham Sect connections.

THE GROVE ** (now part of Fitzwilliam College) was the house that Charles Darwin’s widow, Emma (Wedgwood) bought in 1882 so that she might spend the winters in Cambridge with her sons and their families - the world so famously chronicled by GWEN (Darwin married to Jacques) RAVERAT in PERIOD PIECE (1952).

(The Darwin connection with Cambridge goes back to the 17th century and the BOTANIC GARDEN** is part of their story, told by RICHARD KEYNES, The Darwins in Cambridge, in CAMBRIDGE MINDS ed Richard Mason, C U Press 1994.)

THE GROVE’S garden has much Victorian character, and this we were shown by Mr Nicholls. It looks superb and has been successfully incorporated as part of Fitzwilliam College (architect: Denys Lasdun) setting with modern gardens by ANDREW PETERS.

THE GROVE’S acreage was substantial (laid out like a small town park) filling the space between Huntingdon Road and Storey’s Way. The yews along the Huntingdon Road and other mature trees remain. The rather sad little LODGE remains in front of NEW HALL** (architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon). New Hall has gobbled up THE ORCHARD, the home of Horace and Ida Darwin: E M Forster’s mother was companion to Ida Darwin when she was still Ida Farrer of Abinger Hall in Surrey, and these Darwins were king to Forster whilst he was an undergraduate: Ida Darwin is remembered in the wing of Fulbourn Hospital** which bears her name. Horace and Ida’s daughter Nora, married Sir Alan Barlow, and the lovely pink and green hybrid *Aquilegia vulgaris* bears her name.

Beyond Fitzwilliam, the third Darwin house, WYCHFIELD ** and the remnants of its garden remain among Trinity Hall Buildings. Wychfield was built in 1883 for Francis Darwin, whose daughter Frances, was one of Rupert Brooke's truest friends. Frances' mother was Ellen Crofts, Wordsworth's great niece, lecturer in English at Newnham. Frances was educated at home, but her cousin Gwen, daughter of George and Maud Darwin at Newnham Grange, went to Newnham. Frances married Francis Cornford, brilliant professor of Ancient Philosophy, in 1909, and they moved to a house built for them in Conduit Head Road, far out on the Madingley Road, the site of the water supply for Trinity College fountain.

FRANCES CORNFORD, 1886-1960, published several volumes of poems, many of them about Cambridge, and the open air-garden life that she- and that younger generation whom Virginia Woolf called the Neo-Pagans, believed in. Like all Darwins she was prone to deep depressions: she suffered terribly from Brooke's death and more from the making of his legend, rather regretting her apt summing-up of...

“ A young Apollo, golden-haired,
Stands dreaming on the verge of strife
Magnificently unprepared
For the long littleness of life”.

At the very end of PERIOD PIECE, Gwen and Frances arranged a picnic for their parents, aunts and uncles: it is June but in the way of England and especially East Anglia, a day of chill wind and the oldies are muffed and furred, convinced they are going to catch their death of cold as they rowed upriver to a meadow beside Grantchester Mill. There they contended with ants, cowpats, and nettles in misery, enduring tepid sweet tea from flannel-clad bottles - Gwen Raverat portrays a picture of misery - they are all huddled in a row beside a fence, and in the background the trees that shelter Byron's Pool. The picnic was June 1909, and the generational void yawns from this sketch: two summers later Virginia Stephen and Rupert bathed naked in the pool, the symbol of “modern” young men and women.

NOTE; CAMBRIDGE WOMEN ed by Edward Shils and Carmen Blacker, C U Press 1996, includes an essay on Frances Cornford by Helen Fowler. Also Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick of Newnham, by Helen Fowler; and Mary Paley Marshall by J M Keynes. Mary Paley was brought up at Ufford cum Bainton rectory**, north of Peterborough and her memoir WHAT I REMEMBER (1947) describes her life there. She was an early Newnhamite, and married her tutor, Alfred Marshall, the economist who taught J M Keynes. The Marshalls** house Balliol Croft (by J J Stevenson, architect of Newnham Grange and Munstead House, Gertrude Jekyll's mother's house) is the first house on the right in Madingley Road, now part of Lucy Cavendish College**, was open to all the undergraduates, and the Marshall's were keen on 'natural' gardens, orchard trees and wild flowers.

From THE GROVE, the symbol of the intellectual aristocracy, we walk into Storey's Way, the epitome of early 20th century Cambridge and the arts and crafts lifestyle.

Here are a remarkable collection of houses by M H BAILLIE SCOTT, an architect of the Lutyens generation with a keen interest in gardens and a Silver Medal from the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester to back this up. Baillie Scott had definite ideas about gardens being useful AND beautiful, and in HOUSES AND GARDENS (1906) he set out his theories and many examples. We are able to visit **48, STOREY'S WAY****. The house and garden have recently been restored by the Cambridge architect Diane Haigh, for Churchill College (who are now selling the property). “The true inventiveness of Baillie Scott's garden designs” writes Diane Haigh, “rests not so much in their elements, which were to be found in many...works of the period, but in their intimate scale and unity with the house” Baillie Scott, *The Artistic House* by Diane Haigh 1995. He meant his clients to be gardeners too: No 48 represents the ideal house for Newnham and Girton graduates, who had been instilled

with Gertrude Jekyll-like philosophies. If Rupert Brooke had lived I feel he might well have been found residing in Storey's Way.

On the way we shall pass: Squerres, no 56 for G E T Wilson (1923) with typical yews flanking the footgate; no 54, Lennel for C Wright (1922) in neo-Georgian with pantiles; no 48 was built just before the war 1912-13, for H A Roberts, secretary to the University Appointments Board; no 30, pink house with blue windows on the outside of the bend is Gyrt-Howe, 1914, by Baillie Scott for J M Edwards. Also no 29, 1922 for Rev Dr Askwith, but I think this may be now no 27.

Around the corner, off the Huntingdon Road, is the hidden garden **CEMETERY of Ascension Parish, St Giles and St Peters****, not only interesting for its layout, but surely one of the most remarkable repositories for distinguished bones in Britain.

Some of the notable graves are marked on the plan fixed to the Chapel: they include Arthur Heffer, founder of the bookshop, the atomic scientist Sir John Cockcroft, Frazer of THE GOLDEN BOUGH, G E Moore, apostle and philosopher, author of PRINCIPIA ETHICA (1903) which gave the Bloomsbury Group their emphasis on “the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects”

Plot 1 H 1. Horace and Ida Darwin are 2 C 27. Francis Darwin 1848-1925 and his daughter Frances Cornford 1886-1960 are at 2 D 34 *(note: the lettering is not by Eric Gill who d.1940 but probably one of his pupils). Ludwig Wittgenstein, Professor of Philosophy 1939-47, died 1951 is plot 5 D 31. (on the walk we noted the 2p coins on his grave stone, one at each corner; and a small vase of flowers)

OTHER CONNECTED PLACES:

In West Road, King's College Hostel by Geddes Hyslop has decorations by Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. The late Dr Rylands' room in King's still have their doors, fireplaces and decorations by Carrington.

Newnham Grange and the gardens of Period Piece- where Margaret Darwin (later married to Geoffrey Keynes) planted nasturtiums along the river walls and tended wild gardens on the islands, are all now Darwin College**. *See, Margaret Keynes, *A House by the River*, for the full story.

From Newnham the “Grantchester Grind” is the footpath to Grantchester, beside the river where Rupert Brooke rowed his friends out to the Old Vicarage**. This has been for many years the home of Geoffrey and Mary Archer. The old garden is kept as Brooke knew it, but Dr Archer is making a new garden with sculpture, which can be glimpsed from THE ORCHARD next door. THE ORCHARD was Brooke's favourite haunt and where - on a green deckchair under the apple blossom, eating scrumptious chocolate cake - his happy ghost is most likely to be met. THE ORCHARD has the new Rupert Brooke Society museum and all his Bloomsbury friends: it is open every day and a cause greatly worth supporting - super sandwiches, wonderful soups. Also Mary Archer's book about THE OLD VICARAGE is on sale there.

Do go, if you have not been, and walk to Byron's Pool, where Virginia bathed au naturel. And do read Frances Cornford....

“Milton and Chaucer, Herbert, Herrick, Gray,
Rupert, and you forgotten others, say -
Are there slow rivers and bridges where you have gone away?
What has your spirit found?
What wider lot?
Some days in spring do you come back at will,
And tread with weightless feet the ancient ground?
O say, if not, Why is this air so sacred and so still?”
“In the Backs” from *Travelling Home* (1948)

JANE BROWN 17 July 2000



Wothorpe Towers

VISIT TO WOTHORPE TOWERS AND WASHINGLEY, AUGUST 12TH 2000

Photos by Audrey Osborne

Some twenty members spent a very happy and sunny day exploring two historic sites in the North West of the County. Both now have only faint traces of what were once major gardens but it was shown with the use of maps, engravings, documents and fieldwork it is still possible to reconstruct much of the story of the sites.



Wothorpe Towers - view from stone gateway

Wothorpe lies by Stamford and after the dissolution of the Monasteries belonged to the Cecil family. Their principal dwelling was Burghley House, two or three miles to the East but in the early 17th century they built a large house at Wothorpe. Tradition says that the family used the house when Burghley was being spring-cleaned. More plausibly it was sometimes used as a dower house and sometimes leased to other families. The house is now a ruin having been dismantled in the 18th century. Possibly some of the stone may



Wothorpe Towers - gateway with recessed seating either side

have been used by Capability Brown when he built new stables at Burghley. It is also possible that some material went into the "Bottle Lodges" which make up the main entrance to Burghley from Stamford. Although the house is now a ruin there are drawings of the house as it was, and we were kindly shown engravings of these by a local resident.

The ruins of the house can be seen from the Stamford By-pass, but the actual approach is through by-ways. The Burghley House Trust made us very welcome, Mr Philip Ling the Estate Manager had arranged us free access to the whole site (the animals had been moved a week before) and information and maps were distributed to members. Thus we were able to explore the layout of the former gardens. Certain features were very clear - there was obvious evidence of terracing and on these terraces the remains of walls that surrounded and compartmentalised the gardens. One of these walls had matching Summer Houses at either end. Another had a pair of niches similar to, but predating those at Thorpe Hall.



Washingley Hall - members locating foundations of wall through scorch marks on the lawn.

An early map enabled us to discuss the nature of water works crossing the garden. However the complexity of the site soon became obvious and we realised again how difficult it can be to sort out earthworks from different periods. Part of the site is occupied by the deserted medieval village of Wothorpe and the water works include a mill pond which probably had been made a garden feature and then turned into a reservoir when the site became little more than a farm. Our visit concluded by viewing remains that were probably once a cockpit but which are now largely given over to other forms of natural life!



Washingley Hall - lake at edge of park.

From Wothorpe we moved south towards Washingley, near Stilton. This is another deserted medieval village site and one that probably has a small Motte and Bailey Castle. The last big house here was dismantled in the 1950's and the site is now grassed over. However because the weather was so dry the foundations of the house could clearly be seen as parch marks in the grass.

It was fascinating to be able to trace its layout exactly. Behind this lay the remains of outhouses and the walls of a large kitchen garden. From this we turned to the gardens. Again the features from different centuries were jumbled together. The presumed moat of the Castle survived as a recognisable feature. This was incorporated into the gardens although any formal garden had gone by 1853. The whole area is now largely one of grass and trees. This is surrounded by former parkland. This is now used for pasture but once had trees. It contains ridge and furrow so once had been arable.

A short walk across this brought us to two more features in a small wood. One was a set of well preserved fishponds. These were possibly Medieval in origin. Above them the second feature was a lake with seven small islands. This was landscaped in the natural style and was presumably part of the Park. It is now used for angling and it certainly is a beautiful spot on a hot summer's day. Once again we were made very welcome, this time by Mr and Mrs Castle who live on the site and look after it so well. All in all, the group had a fascinating and very enjoyable day and we all appreciated the hard work by Audrey and John in organising the visit.

DAVID BOND

VISIT TO THE GARDENS OF ROBINSON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE **on 14th SEPTEMBER 2000**

It had been intended that the College's Head gardener, Desmond O'Grady, would conduct a tour of the grounds developed in the last 25 years. Unfortunately he was ill, but the group, showing resource and ingenuity, and aided by the College's plan of its gardens and by the Trust's Gazetteer of The Gardens of Cambridgeshire, proceeded on a trip of discovery.

The College occupies a rectangular site of several acres in West Cambridge and is bordered by Grange road, Herschal Road, Sylvester Road and Adams Road. It is North/South in orientation, with the main buildings of the College facing Grange Road. Now the College owns the whole site except for a large area in the corner bounded by Herschal and Sylvester Roads (formerly belonging to Sir Michael Postain and now the Needham Research Institute**) and a smaller rectangular area, No 3 Adams Road, owned by a Trinity graduate. The College, together with Corpus Christi College founded in 1352 by the Cambridge Guilds of Corpus Christi and St Mary, are the only foundations by Cambridge townsmen. David Robinson, a former pupil of Cambridgeshire High School for Boys and a local businessman profiting from the construction of bicycles and later from television rentals, was the founder. Since 1974 the College has brought further houses, extending its property within the regular site and also *Sellinger* No 3 Sylvester Road ** on the other side of that road.

Few Cambridge Colleges, with the exception of Downing, Selwyn and Churchill, have been built upon 'green field' sites. Some like Queens' on the site of a Carmelite Friary, Emmanuel on a Dominican site, Jesus on the site of the Benedictine Nunnery of St Radegund and Sidney Sussex on a Franciscan site had to adopt monastic buildings and gardens. Little remains except a Carmelite wall in Queens' and the nuns' church, the Prioress's room and part of the cloister all at Jesus. The sites of Corpus Christi, King's, St John's and Trinity involved major demolition of the town's house. The guildsmen at Corpus demolished the medieval Luthburgh Lane; King Henry VI and Henry VIII demolished large parts of Milne Street (small survivals in Queen's Lane and the lane fronting Clare and Trinity Hall); at St John's a large part of Bridge Street and St John's hospital were demolished. In these days before planning regulations, no sensitivity was shown towards the existing buildings. In the ensuing centuries the colleges have sensitively developed buildings around courts and have employed landscape gardeners.

In contrast, the college developers since 1970 have appreciated existing buildings and have often allowed their gardens to create a structure around which new college buildings have been constructed. After 1871 dons were allowed to marry and they required town houses for their families. The colleges owned much land off West Cambridge and released land in the area of Sidgewick Avenue, West Road, Grange Road, Huntingdon Road and Storey's Way and the roads abutting the Robinson site for private building. Many fine private houses and gardens were developed in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras and, in turn, since 1970 many owners have sold their gardens and sometimes their house for the use of the University and colleges. The University's Arts Faculties on the Sidgewick site, the University Music School and the colleges' extensions in this area have given attention to landscaping and gardens. Corpus Christi at Leckhampton, St Catherine's at St Chads and Trinity at Burrells Field, all bordering Grange Road, enhanced existing landscapes. Fitzwilliam allowed Mrs Charles Darwin's house, *The Grove*, and its garden to provide a major focus for its new site, as did Trinity Hall with *Wychefield* the home of Frank Darwin, for its new extension.

Robinson College had added a new dimension to the construction of a college and its garden. Like those earlier builders there was some demolition and four houses were lost to make way for the main building. The loss of trees was kept to a minimum and the College's architects and gardeners allowed the medieval Bin Brook, the Victorian house *Thornycreek*, with its central position, and the mature trees and the Victorian planting of this house and of the adjacent properties to dictate the landscaping and structure of the site. Instead of demolition, new courts and new landscaping Robinson College reflects a sympathetic gardening philosophy. The College has allowed the gardens and house to retain their individual identity and, through careful linking paths, one can progress through a largely unspoiled site the houses and gardens providing a pleasing substitute and alternative to the formal building and courts normally associated with Cambridge Colleges.

The group followed a clockwise route through the site which is bisected diagonally by the Bin Brook. The landscape architect, J.S. Bodfan Gruffyd, had created an elevated causeway connecting the main college with *Thornycreek*, built in 1885 for Mr Parker, manager of St Martin's Bank in Benet Street. To the west of the causeway is the architect's 'wild wooded area', a flood pond to buffer any rising level of the brook and a lawn between the brook and the house with its walnut tree planted in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The terraced house retains its hollies, acubas, box and philadelphus and the group remarked upon the weeping Wellintonia. Most branches drooped, but one errant branch swept upwards. Beyond the house and its croquet lawn we progressed to No 1 Sylvester road, the home of Professor Sciana until 1982. A new Graduate Centre has been built in its garden, which retains its beech hedges and mulberry trees. Across the road is Sellinger, No 3 and the former house of Lady Nora Barlow, cousin of Gwen Raverat and last surviving grandchild of Charles Darwin. Born in *The Orchard*, now New Hall, she was an amateur botanist. Her garden with its framework of Yorkstone paving and her choice of planting has survived. The vegetable garden, enclosed by conifers and a beech hedge beyond the house, is now a wild flower garden.

Retracing our steps to the corner site, 6 Adams Road**, purchased by Sir George Thompson and his sister, Mrs Charnock, as a dowry house for their mother, widow of the discoverer of the electron. On selling the house in 1986 Mrs Charnock stipulated that her planting of *Cyclamen hederifolium* beneath a large copper beech should not be lost. We were fortunate to see them in full bloom beneath a carpet of ivy and protected by a low rail. Next door at No 5** we were too late in the year to see Mr Rottenburg's collection of alliums and tulip. Beyond at No 4** is the former house of Dr Shillington-Scales, pioneer of X-ray techniques, and the garden retains its listed x-ray garage, site of the early x-rays. There is a rose parterre filled with the single red *Rosa 'Trumpeter'* which was in full view in early autumn. The yew hedges, with recessed openings and pairs of globes, are well

maintained. A path beyond the private garden of No 3 allows continuing access to No 2 Adams Road**, former home of Lord Kaldor, who offered hospitality to Hungarian refugees after the 1956 uprising. Each of these houses has an individual history and their gardens are allowed to reflect the owner's individuality.

So in the late 20th century the College found a new way of re-creating courts associated with Cambridge's older colleges. Its architects offer a fine model for any developers acquiring a large site which includes beautiful houses and well-planned gardens.

CHARLES MALYON

** These gardens are described in THE GARDENS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE, the Trust's Gazetteer of 400 Gardens in Cambridgeshire.

VISIT TO HERTFORDSHIRE WITH MEMBERS OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST, TUESDAY 10th OCTOBER

On a dull cold morning members of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust made their way towards Ware to visit two privately owned parks. The day had been organised by Christopher Melliush, Chairman of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, who had arranged for members to visit Youngsbury Park in the morning, which was laid out by Capability Brown and now owned by the Saville family. Members were shown the original Brown drawing inside the house before walking round the park. Brown had suggested clumps of trees immediately at the entrance to the park and proposed that the River Rib in the valley be widened. Sheep were grazing in the park as we walked to see the Ice House situated some way from the house. There was new plantings of trees in copses and along the boundaries to the west. We were told that a proposed By-pass was soon to be built around Wadesmill and lorry traffic would be visible from the house. Along the river valley were fine examples of plane, beech and chestnut possibly survivors of Browns planting. To the east of the house Brown had proposed the pleasure garden leading to two Roman tumuli. This led in turn to further Victorian boundary planting and we were shown remains of a formal garden now lost, but flights of brick steps and circular beds could be made out beneath giant redwoods.

Retracing our steps we reached the first of the two walled gardens. In 1840 the owners maintained a large collection of roses, and the first octagonal walled garden was where they may have been grown. Today this garden contains two fine trimmed yews, a timber summerhouse and rows of shrubs leading to a central fountain, the ground being given over to lawn. Immediately behind this walled garden is the second walled garden. It is boomerang in shape wrapping round two sides of the first one. This was a vegetable garden with some remaining fruit trees. Of particular interest were the lengths of wall constructed with local interlocking large bricks. In one corner was a curved reinforced concrete glasshouse possibly pre-war. Nearby was a fine stable block range with central arch adjacent to a small fish pond.

Members were welcomed at Thundridge Hill House by Mr and Mrs Melliush, who had heated their medieval timber barn so that we could comfortably enjoy our picnics in the dry. Following Lunch we were shown slides of nearby Sacombe Park. This site has been researched by the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and an extensive landscape proposal shown on a map of Sacombe in the Bodleian Library Oxford, has now been attributed to Bridgeman. On the south axis from the house is a raised walkway leading to a canal culminating in a large octagonal basin. In the woods to the east was an oval pond with a tiered amphitheatre. To the north an extensive walled garden with buildings at the four corners. Following the slide show Charles Malyon spoke about the importance of the owners of Youngsbury and Woodhall Park (to be seen after lunch) who established village schools in the 19th century for local children. He then produced a letter from the owner of Youngsbury in the 1920s asking his mother to attend an interview for the position of teacher in the school at High Cross.

After lunch we drove in convoy past Sacombe Park to the walled park at Woodhall near Watton at Stone. I don't think any of us knew what we were about to be shown by the owner Mr Ralph Abel Smith. Entering the 400 acre park by a picturesque lodge we drove through the park and crossed by a brick bridge at the end of the lake and made our way the model farm buildings. Here we were greeted by the owner and invited to look at plans of the park in a converted building whilst the owner explained the development of the park from a medieval one around an Elizabethan House (now removed) to a new landscaped adjacent park centred on the magnificent new house built on the high ground. Mr Abel Smith had two plans for touring the park, but as the sun had broken through the overcast sky, plan A was adopted. This involved the use of two estate tractors and trailers with bails of straw for members to sit on.

Thus we were driven in convoy, past the lake where cricket bat willows were being felled and then slowly climbing up hill to the main house through parkland, then to the main entrance of the House, which is now rented as a school. Inside we were shown the recently restored print room, which took our breath away. All the prints had recently been removed, cleaned of varnish, mounted on a rare Japanese paper and then put back in their original position. The two windows afforded fine views across the park and were to be framed by new tree planting in the distance.

Remounting our transport we were driven through the Victorian tree panting around the House, past the extensive 5 acre walled garden and into the medieval park passing the stable block, built on the site of the Elizabethan house. The stable block is now the home of Mr Abel Smith. From here a long avenue cuts through the park, affording views to water meadows, higher ground with old oaks and hornbeams, and the walled garden. The avenue is of interest as it is not of one species but many. But because of its length this mixture does not offend the eye. Returning to the model farm we were treated to an excellent tea. We record our thanks to Mr Abel Smith and Christopher for organising such an excellent day.

If that was not sufficient Christopher Melliush showed some of us the track that led to the remains of the Bridgeman landscape at Sacombe Park, where we walked through wet woods and were rewarded by discovering the oval pool and the raised terrace/walkway leading to the canal. Some members commented that this had been the most successful visit to date and how were we to better this? Any suggestions would be most welcome.

JOHN DRAKE

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