

FRONT COVER:

Spring Farm, Coddendam

Silver birch trees employed to dramatic and enticing effect in the garden of Lord and Lady Stevenson at Coddendam – one of the many delights of the 2018 SGT garden party.

Thanks for all the photographs used including Dr Laura Mayer, Patience Shone, Peter Cunard, Sue Paul, Gail Baker Bates, John Dyter, Stephen Beaumont and Edward Martin, in particular for the cover image.

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NEWSLETTER • AUTUMN 2018

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Contributions to the Spring Newsletter should arrive no later than 1st February 2019
Please contact Barbara Segall (barbara@bsegall.plus.com) for details

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From the Vice-Chairman

I am writing this for our Chairman John Dyter who has been indisposed recently. I'm pleased to say he is making a good recovery.

What a summer we have had. I hope you all enjoyed many of the interesting garden visits arranged. The Garden Party with Lord and Lady Stevenson was very well attended and their generosity, allowing us to wander both in and out, made for a wonderful evening.

Some weeks back our local butcher told me we had had no local rain for 69 days – this continued for a further four days until normality returned. As I write this, some four weeks later, I am amazed how quickly the parched lawn has, mostly, returned to green; so much so that mowing has to be planned again.

We will have all watched while some of our favourite plants have withered, even with daily watering, while others that looked dead have returned. Of course there have been other hot summers but will all garden designers have to review their planting proposals for the future?

One element of our SGT enjoyment this summer that will not change is the landscape designs of Humphry Repton. Our visits to Tendring Hall (slight drizzle) and Henham (bright sunshine) showed us that such beauty will last for centuries yet, whatever the effect of global warming.

We have all had many different approaches this year to the new GDPR requirements. John and Sue have done very well in arranging this for SGT. If you have not yet completed the form, and most have, at least you will be aware of this requirement.

I hope to see you at one of the interesting Winter Lectures. ■ **SB**

WINTER LECTURES 2018

SATURDAY 16 February 10 for 10.30am start

The Woodbridge Community Centre IP12 4AG

The History of Westwood Garden, Walberswick

Nat le Roux

Westwood Garden sits on an unusual triangular site in the centre of Walberswick on the Suffolk coast. The garden was designed around 1910 by the young Arts and Crafts architect Algernon Winter Rose. The ground plan is largely unchanged today and many of the original features are still present. After a period of neglect during World War II, the garden was restored by the garden writer and biographer Mea Allen, who lived at Westwood for more than 30 years. By researching the parish records, she established that in the seventeenth century the site had been owned by cousins of John Tradescant, the important early plant collector and royal gardener. She believed that Tradescant's nursery in Lambeth was the likely source of rare plants still growing in the garden 300 years later.

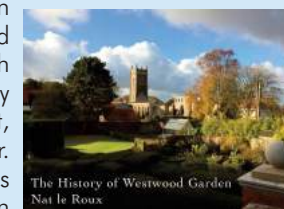


Photo: Nat Le Roux

Nat & Karen Le Roux are the current owners of Westwood and have reintroduced many of the plants that grew there in earlier eras

Cost: Members £6 Guests £9

SATURDAY 23 March 10 for 10.30am start

The Blackbourne Centre Elmswell IP30 9GY

Design and diversity at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden

Caroline Holmes

For over 160 years scientists and gardeners alike have been able to imbibe diversity in design and natural history. Native or exotic? One of Professor Henslow's founding principles was to study plants in their own right, starting with trees. Plant History is pressed and dried in the 1,000,000+ herbarium collection and is being made in modern times by the Gatsby Plant Science programme. Caroline Holmes is a garden historian of ancient, modern and contemporary places, people and plants who sifts humour from humus worldwide. She is also an international lecturer at home and abroad, leading groups through inspiring sites and gardens. As an author, broadcaster and consultant designer she digs and delves into the myriad ways people and plants have historically shaped landscapes and what we can learn from them.



Fountain at Cambridge University Botanic Garden
Photo: Caroline Holmes

Cost: Members £6 Guests £9

Directions: Exit A14 at Junction 47 (A1088). Take road to Elmswell. Uphill, past the church turn left – Blackbourne Community Centre. Follow signs over level crossing and turn right, through the housing estate to a large car park.

George Carter (with photography by Marianne Majerus), **Setting the Scene. A Garden Design Masterclass from Repton to the Modern Age**, Pimpernel Press Ltd, London 2018. Hardback, 208 pages, 978 1 91025 859 0, illustrated throughout in colour. £50. Reviewed by **Edward Martin**

George Carter is one of the most inspirational garden designers of today and in this book he pays tribute to the man who inspired him, the great Humphry Repton. Additionally he sets out to inspire us to consider doing our own garden designs by showing us how effects can be achieved, much as Repton did in his celebrated Red Books.

To illustrate his approach, Carter calls on his own work in gardens large and small over the past 30 years. Although he has worked all over the world, we are lucky that he is based here in East Anglia. His own garden at Silverstone Farm in Norfolk figures strongly, but Suffolk gardens are also well represented – Columbine Hall, Giffords Hall, Higham Place, Mill Farm and Somerleyton Hall all appear. The wonderful gardens at Tilbury Hall are credited to Suffolk, but, alas, they are just over the border in Essex.

The Repton influence is also shown in the chapter titles, which echo the sub-sections commonly found in the Red Books – Character, Situation, The Approach, Walks and Drives, The Flower Garden, The Pleasure Garden, Water in the Garden. But Carter also adds more of his own approach (with detailed practical advice included). But it is more than just designs as Carter goes into details of how a good choice of materials or paint colours can achieve particular effects.

The overall result is a masterclass in garden design – Repton may have been the starting inspiration, but Carter shows how his own inspirational approach can be applied to gardens and landscapes, large and small, rural and urban. Like Repton, Carter adds sketches to illustrate his ideas, but unlike Repton, he also has the great aid of wonderful photographs by Marianne Majerus – the result is a visually appealing book that has practical value and is definitely strong in inspiration.

Dr Laura Meyer, *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden*, Shire Books, Oxford 2016, paperback, 64 pages, 978 0 74781 049 0, £7.99 and **Humphry Repton**, Shire Books, Oxford 2014, paperback, 64 pages, 978 0 74781 294 4, £7.99. Reviewed by **Stephen Beaumont**.

Amplly illustrated with paintings, engravings and photographs they should probably be read consecutively to give a very good understanding of the changes in landscape design in Britain. These range from the seventeenth-century parterres adopted from the Franco-Dutch layouts all the way through to the nineteenth-century gardenesque parterres.

I am no garden historian but if you would like to understand the whys and wherefores that created the introduction of the Capability Brown landscapes we know, and which then evolved with his claimed successor Humphry Repton, I recommend these 120 pages to you. You will also find in these pages the “bitching” which led from his initial promotion of Brownian landscapes to “the expensive bourgeois clutter of a Repton landscape” and thus to the flower garden. Both books advise on which landscapes can be visited, as well as offer suggestions for further reading.

I tend to agree with Dr Meyer’s comment at our day that I would prefer to have spent time with Brown rather than Repton, but what a legacy they both left.

Nigel Surry

It is widely known that gardens were the focus of social events of many kinds before the coming of the ‘Garden Party’ – which like so many British traditions goes back to Victorian times – although its modern form originated in the late 1950s. Suffolk Gardens Trust, which has no claim to this antiquity, began to hold garden parties on an annual basis from 2001 onwards, generally in the months of July and August.

Anna, 9th Duchess of Bedford is widely credited with their origin, having begun the practice of offering tea and light refreshments to family and guests in the Blue Drawing Room at Woburn, at about 4pm, during the 1840s. The Duchess, who was Lady-in-Waiting to Victoria, reputedly influenced the Queen to introduce the practice, rather confusingly known as ‘breakfasts’, for courtiers and senior officials, which subsequently included the presentation of debutantes. This lasted until Queen Elizabeth II modernised the event to include members of the public awarded for charitable work or other achievements, the final debutante presentation having taken place by 1958.

The Trust’s earliest garden parties were organised by John Huntingford, with the first held at Helmingham Hall on 20 June 1997. Some of the spirit of the occasion may be gathered from John’s words, reported in our Newsletter that year:

“You will already have received your invitation and hopefully what should be a wonderful evening to delight the senses is already in your diaries and eagerly anticipated. Foreign influences will be evident (as in all English gardens), in the canapés and the music for string quartet, but the wine will be English, from the acclaimed Wyken Vineyard, the roses and the herbaceous borders are quintessentially English, all will be at their best (subject to the vagaries of the English weather!), and we are hopeful that the spectacle will be completed by those present, who are encouraged to wear their colourful hats, dresses, blazers and boaters. If you have not yet sent off your confirmation you are encouraged to do so, and do bring a party of friends. This is the first such event the Trust has organised and should prove a fitting way to celebrate three years of existence.”

On that occasion 150 members and guests attended, and the evening was rightly counted a success, despite torrential rainfall – an awful warning to all of us who plan or attend such occasions:

“Bravely, Lady Tollemache volunteered to lead a first sortie round the windswept garden. Those less hardened to the climate but more hardened to drink stayed behind (in the Coach House) for the time being and were amazed to find her outside later, coat absolutely sodden, but still smiling. The gardens looked absolutely ravishing in the rain, which later began to ease. As if to admit defeat, the sun finally and begrudgingly came out to give his blessing to the event as members prepared to leave. Empty cases of delicious Wyken Auxerrois and vacant trays of Catering Unlimited’s canapés testified to the success of the proceedings, and the quartet was soon playing to an empty Coach House.”

“Do go home, and thank you,” I said. “Do you mind if we just finish the movement,” came the reply, “We’re enjoying ourselves so much.”

There are no signs that the garden party for 1998 was any less enjoyable. The event took place on 26 June at Glemham Hall. No record of attendance has survived, but the account suggests it was well supported. Members were not only able to enjoy a stroll through the gardens accompanied by the music of a Caribbean band, but the presence of “our genial host” (Philip Hope Cobbold) to answer many of the inevitable questions about the house and gardens, and his help to decipher “the amusing rebus mounted on a garden wall, just beyond the house. This personal and idiosyncratic touch, which looked rather like one of the more interesting Turner Prize exhibits, illustrated that serious gardens are the better for a touch of whimsy. Members were also amused by the presence of a mechanical frog at the Conservatory door that croaked continuously and disconcertingly if one lingered there.”

The third of these events, masterminded by John Huntingford, took place at Battlies House, Rougham, hosted by John and Dee Barrell on 17 September 1999. Some 80 members and guests were present, the sun shone ... “the evening was glorious as we strolled around a delightful late summer garden, a glass of crisp Wyken wine in hand, a Catering Unlimited nibble in the other, in companionable and knowledgeable company, with the festive sounds of the Tim Collins Jazz Band floating from the terrace. It was all much too pleasant.”

Like all good things it had to come to an end, but did so, little knowing that a tradition had been established that has lasted to the present day.

Perhaps this is an appropriate time to thank all garden owners and those Trust members who have helped over the years to make these events possible. A further thought – do any of you possess photographs of these or other early garden parties that you would like to share with us?

If so, please contact the editor, Barbara Segall (barbara@bsegall.plus.com).



SGT Garden Party 2006 at Buxlow Manor.

Garden Tour to Lucca 2019

A tour of villas and gardens in and around Lucca is planned for mid-May. This will be similar to the wonderful trip we had to Fiesole and Florence in May 2017.

We intend to visit about 10-12 gardens including the Reale delle Marlia, Torrigiani, Mansi, Olivia, Grabau, Garzoni and the Pallazzo Pfanner. There will also be a day return to Florence to see two we missed last time. If you don't know it, Lucca is a gem in itself. Our guide will again be Dott. Lisa Corsi and we are planning to stay inside the city walls. Numbers limited to 12-14.

If you might be interested please contact Stephen Beaumont (stephenbinkybeaumont@gmail.com), telephone: 01728 833833 who will have more details, having just visited.

Paths round the pond lead to a productive kitchen garden, with vegetables grown in raised beds and containing a new Victorian-style greenhouse, and to other garden rooms, divided by hedges to provide shelter from the prevailing winds.

According to the Lamberts, their garden had suffered badly from this summer's drought, but this in no way detracted from our enjoyment of a garden which was both impressive and atmospheric yet had been created in a relatively short time. And the magnificent tea that rounded off the afternoon will be remembered for a long time.

The Garden Party

Our Garden Party was held this year at the home of Lord and Lady Stevenson in Coddendam. Their generosity not only extended to providing some wine, but also allowing us full access to their property – not just The Barn and its surrounding gardens and grounds but also to the splendid art they had collected.

Probably the best attended of our recent garden parties (but nothing like those originals Nigel Surry tells us about on Page 3), with well over 50 members and friends who appreciated the experience, the surroundings, the peace and quiet, and the food and wine provided by our members. The catering was beautifully co-ordinated by Sue Paul, Charlotte's cousin. ■ SB

News in BRIEF

CONGRATULATIONS...

to Fernatix of Stoke Ash and Harveys Garden Plants of Great Green, Bury St Edmunds, both of whom were awarded Gold Medals at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. The Trailfinders-sponsored show garden built by Stewart Landscape Constructions, Bures, gained a Silver Gilt Medal, as did Potash Nurseries, Bacton, well known for their fuchsia collection.

Suffolk also triumphed in the RHS Chelsea Product of the Year contest, launched in 2011, to recognise the best new garden products at the show. Mr Fothergill's Seeds of Kentford, Newmarket, and Robert Bosch Ltd, Stowmarket, were short-listed but it was Mr Fothergill's whose victory was announced in May, for a non-chemical seed priming treatment (to which only water and air have been applied), to guarantee faster germination and better results.

Volunteers WANTED...

Strong efforts are being made by local groups to restore Sudbury's Bellevue Park to its former glory, the park having suffered considerable neglect in recent times. On 31 May Sudbury in Bloom joined forces with several others, including Active Lives, the Sudbury Society and Green Sudbury, in the first of several planned volunteer days. More help would be appreciated, as the work is expected to take between two and three years. Should you be interested, please email: sudburyinbloom@gmail.com or tel: 07850 667 901.

Henstead Exotic Garden

Peter Cunard

Following the AGM in June, the members who made the effort to attend were given the opportunity to drop in afterwards to an 'Exotic Garden' in the next village of Henstead. Not quite certain of what to find, we were all somewhat surprised to find ourselves in a two-acre landscaped 'tropical paradise', known as Suffolk's secret garden with over 100 pretty special palms, banana trees and some 200 bamboo trees, some as high as 30 feet tall. Tucked away in the centre of this 'forest' was a Thai-style pavilion, which overlooked ponds and a waterfall.

Henstead Exotic Garden was created 12 years ago by owner Andrew Brogan from an abandoned nettle-strewn tip of a site that backed on to ancient woodland. Using 70 tons of rock, Indian sandstone paths, a great deal of creative effort and sheer hard work he has now turned this piece of land into something very special. The exhaustive list of plants that have grown since are impressive by any standard but even more so when you consider the force and destructive power of last year's 'Blast from the East' which tore into the sight, straight off the North sea, just two miles down the road.

Andrew Brogan also grows on a number of his exotics and operates a nursery from the site, so if you do visit, go prepared to inherit a jungle look for your own garden.

*The Exotic Garden can be found between Southwold and Beccles, 1 mile from the A12. It is open to the public in July and August (www.hensteadexoticgarden.co.uk or call 01502 743006).

Drinkstone Park

Gail Baker Bates

To visit Drinkstone Park today no-one would dream that when Michael and Christine Lambert bought it 15 years ago the garden was a sea of concrete. The original Drinkstone Park, built in 1763, had been the home of a United States tank regiment during the Second World War. In 1951 the house was demolished together with five properties built in its grounds, but the concrete remained. There also remained mature



One of ponds at Drinkstone Park. Photo: Edward Martin

and beautiful trees that give height and structure to the garden the Lamberts planned. Today, behind the modern house, there is a garden full of secret rooms, hidden vistas and charming buildings.

The terrace at the front is bordered by beds of herbaceous plants. From there a new pergola, unusually underplanted with ferns and hostas, leads to a formal koi pond with a central fountain, a focal point when looking at the garden from the house.

The David Marsh Study Day

John and Julie Scott

The day was very cold and the ground covered with snow and ice when we arrived at the Kesgrave Community Hall on 17 March, but nearly everyone who had booked arrived at this very accessible venue. David Marsh was our lecturer throughout the study day on *The Rise of Popular Gardening*. More details about David are on his website (gardenhistorytalks.com).

The first lecture, *The English Obsession with Gardening from the time of the Tudors and Stuarts*, offered an insight into the formal layout of royal palace gardens with their focus on poles carrying standards and coats of arms among the regimented plants, and the changes that began to occur with the start of Empire.

The second lecture about gardening in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries covered plant hunting, the spread of plant nurseries and their seed catalogues, and the development of professional gardening, assisted by the walled gardens of the stately homes around the country.

David was kept busy throughout the breaks with comments and questions arising from the talks. The afternoon began with his third lecture, *The Rise of the Amateur Gardener*, which dealt with the popularity of gardening magazines and the development of cottage gardens and other variations and styles of gardening up until the end of the nineteenth century.

After tea we gathered for the last lecture on *Popular gardening to the present day with gardening appealing to all*, which covered changes to popular gardening in the twentieth century up to the present-day with the first radio personalities, Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time*, the first TV gardening personalities. This became more of a question and answer session as to who remembered what from their youth!

David's slides were superb and the last lecture included some videos. He held our interest to the end and after that he stayed for an hour to chat while we cleared up.

He was generous in offering advice and support to one member who was planning to do a specialised course, because he is a real enthusiast for spreading horticultural expertise as far as he can.

Feedback of the day to us was very good and we considered ourselves lucky to have such a stimulating and interesting day.



David Marsh at Jardin de Plume, Rouen, France.

In Repton's Footsteps at Tendring Hall

Edward Martin

The SGT's commemoration of the bicentenary of the death of Humphry Repton kicked off on 28 April with a visit to the subject of one of his famous Red Books – Tendring Park in Stoke-by-Nayland. Situated in the Stour valley, this is a park with a very long history. A deer park, owned by Queen Margret, the second wife of King Edward I, is recorded there in 1300. It subsequently passed to the knightly Tendring family (from Tendring in Essex), who gave their name to it. It then passed by inheritance to the Howards, dukes of Norfolk, before being sold in Tudor times to the Revetts, from whom it was inherited by the lords Windsor.

In the mid-seventeenth century it was sold to Reginald Williams of London. His younger son, John, became a merchant in London and was regarded as “the head of the Turkey trade” and “the greatest exporter of cloth in England”. He was a director of the South Sea Company (1711-15), was knighted in 1713, became Master of the Mercers Company in 1723, and Lord Mayor of London 1735-6. His wealth enabled him to buy the Tendring estate from his older brother's heirs in 1718 and he “built here a noble Seat”. Sir John also commissioned a very informative volume of estate maps from Joseph Kendall in 1723. One map shows the original house site, with a little tower rising behind it. That house was demolished later that century but the tower, which is a brick structure of Tudor date, survived as a ornament in the later gardens, being described in the *Gardeners Chronicle* of 1879 as an ‘old Ivy-clad tower [that] constitutes an interesting relic of the former mansion’. It had become derelict but its excellent restoration had only just been completed when we visited.

Kendall's map also shows a double avenue of trees leading up to the front of the mansion and some venerable lime trees are still in the alignments shown on the map. Another survival from the time of the map is a long straight-edged pond near the Stoke road. This is a feature that was very fashionable in the 1720s and is better described as a ‘garden canal’. It was enhanced later in the eighteenth century by the addition of an elegant summerhouse called The Temple or The Fishing Temple at the west end of the canal. We were very fortunate to have the permission of the current tenant to see the wonderful canal (restored in 1992) and its temple at close quarters.

In 1750 Tendring was bought by Admiral Sir William Rowley and his family still own it. Sir William's son, Admiral Sir Joshua Rowley, 1st Bt., commissioned Sir John Soane to build a new Hall in 1784. He died in 1790 and a year later his son, Sir William, commissioned a Red Book from Humphry Repton. Repton's account book has a figure of £16 16s, including “expenses of Post Chaise &c”, for the three-day visit in October 1790.

Unfortunately for the family, one of Repton's opening remarks was: “The new house has been so recently built that I ought perhaps in justice to myself to record that neither its situation nor the stile of the building were suggested by me, on the contrary, had I been previously consulted the house would neither have been so lofty in its construction, nor so much exposed in its situation.” It lacked the “magnificence of extending a more considerable length of front, conferring a degree of importance on

Final Thoughts on our Repton Day

Stephen Beaumont

Patience Shone has admirably remembered so much of the content of that lovely day. Our concerns for the weather were misplaced, our worries that the catering might not be up to the Capability Brown Day last year were needless, thanks to Ben and his crew from Halesworth Golf Club and any anxieties about speakers not turning up were resolved early on.

Also the excellent stand with the Suffolk ‘Archive Ladies’ provided plenty to see and study in the breaks. Hektor Rous brought along his copy of the Repton Red Book for Henham Park and as I had visited the park a few times while setting up our day the ‘before’ and ‘after’ water colours were impressive.

The use of the magnificent barn was most generous, with the odd reminder of recent weddings – a tuft of confetti outside, a helium balloon or two floating high up in the ceiling – gave us a reminder about what a great venue it is for all sorts of social and business events.

And Hektor's open and amusing style in the Q & A session was eye-opening to those of us who do not have a Listed park to look after. Over 800 acres takes a lot of looking after when you are trying to preserve such a layout and design, such a tradition and present such a beautiful place for now and future generations.

There since 1790 the park does not provide much income from sheep and cattle grazing. Although not burdened, as so many are, with the money-draining mansion Hektor admitted that an alternative source of income was necessary for general management. Thus the annual festival, originally called Attitude that became Latitude was a great boon.

But did these thousands of visitors compacting the soil and tramping over the grass (not to mention the rubbish and waste) affect the park? No. Even after the wettest festival the ground was back to normal after two to three months.

Hektor also provided the history of the USAF memorial and the horrifying fact of two Liberator bombers colliding overhead with the loss of life amongst the firecrew sent being higher than the aircrew.

We then briefly discussed the difficult question of inheritance and IHT before he led us into the sunshine across the Latitude site and lake to the Obelisk – which some thought too small – where we could appreciate the large Repton-designed landscape all around us. How proud Humphry would have been to have provided so much joy. A perfect end to a good day.



Hektor Rous led a walk of Henham Park taking us to see the eighteenth-century obelisk.

rendered Repton redundant, as owners could carry out his improvements using their own, cheaper, garden workers. Thus, when he presented the Duke of Bedford with his Red Book for Endsleigh, Repton begged “that my plans will not (as I have too often experienced) be a waste of Time, Thought and Contrivance”. Although this rarely happened to Brown, he was stoutly undercut at Highclere Castle by Earl Carnarvon’s existing labourers, who then shirked their work and caused all manner of chaos.

Towards the end of his career Repton was forced to abandon the sweeping parks of the Georgian gentry and focus on the comparatively more modest homes of the rising middle classes. But if Brown had been a landscape minimalist, Repton was destined to become a maximalist. Or, as Professor Tom Williamson has quipped, “If Brown was a cosmetic surgeon, then Repton was a make-up artist”. Repton’s domestic, villa-layouts of the turn of the century were both useable and ornamental, in flagrant disregard of the conceptual, sublime landscapes revered by the Picturesque aesthetes.

The Picturesque Controversy came to a head in 1794 with the twin publications of Sir Uvedale Price’s *Essay on the Picturesque* and Richard Payne Knight’s poem *The Landscape*. United in their Romantic appreciation for rugged topography, Price and Knight equated the pastoral smoothness of the manicured park with “monotony”. Stung, Repton watched in horror as his former friends hounded and persecuted him for “standing forth the defender of Mr. Brown”. For true to Brown’s memory, his earliest commissions were laid out in the style of a landscape park – even at Garnons in Herefordshire, which was the estate provocatively next door to Price’s.

Eventually, following a visit to the Picturesque Downton Castle, an uncharacteristically contrite Repton wrote: “When I compare the picturesque scenery of Knight’s Vale with the meagre efforts of art which are attributed to the school of Brown, I cannot wonder at the enthusiastic abhorrence” which the Picturesque writers express for “modern gardening”. A taste for rugged Nature – the Sublime rather than the Beautiful – had supplanted the Brownian aesthetic in Repton’s mind, and he abandoned his hero. Free at last to come up with the compromise which would make his name, Repton’s “Ornamental” style was a prelude to the Victorian’s Gardenesque; a fussy, bourgeois style. Landscapes such as Ashridge in Hertfordshire celebrated both the individual beauty of exotic species, and a repertoire of man-made features from aviaries and basket work, to parterres, pergolas, terraces and trellises.

By the end of his career, Repton boasted that he had written “more than four hundred different reports” for his clients. Some of these were extra sketches and scribblings documenting repeat visits to the same site, in commissions that extended over several years, but the majority were for initial consultations. His was an individual contribution to the history of the English landscape garden which had nothing to do with his former hero, Brown, and which became increasingly popular as the new century advanced.



Pages from Repton's *Observations* (1803) showing the famous overlays in use.

a building which it can never possess if it stands on too small a base” and he looked “forward to a period when (by the addition of attached wings) the mansion may be made to correspond with the grounds”. The recommended wings were duly added 1809-11.

Repton was also critical of the siting of the house, and took pains to explain the difference between a prospect and a landscape. He wrote “as seen from the saloon, the point of sight is so high compared with the horizon that it is impossible to hope for any foreground of trees to rise above it, the ground under the eye is spread out as in a map, and all inequalities of surface are lost by looking over them, consequently the view must be considered as a **prospect**; yet in this instance the situation of the trees immediately beneath the house makes it in a great degree partake of the **landscape** by breaking the view into distinct parts ... but in reality these trees which are ranged in regular avenues unfortunately conceal the whole park and lead the eye to distant corn fields which should not form the principle object of a view from the house”.



Repton described this the canal as an “oblong square sided pond” which he thought could be improved.



The lonely portico is the sole remnant of the house that once crowned the hill overlooking the lake.

His accompanying map does indeed show tree alignments that seem to be remnants of a formal layout – a pond (which Repton describes as “the Octagon bason”) at the east end of the canal acts as a hub with the alignment of the canal to the east being continued by an avenue to the west which meets the avenue leading to the house at a right-angle, and another avenue runs northwards from the pond at a right-angle to the other alignment. Some surviving ancient trees seem to be part of this arrangement but, surprisingly, are not shown on the 1723 map as avenues but only as a field boundary. Repton didn’t like the canal, and referred to it as an “oblong square sided pond” which he thought could be improved by “swelling the side towards the wood, and turning the upper end near the building to meet the brook, if the stream of the brook be brought thro’ this pool it will make the water of better colour”. Luckily the owners ignored his suggestions!

Repton did suggest that the “quantity of water which flows in the rivulet would seem to justify an attempt to make an ample sheet of water along the meadow, but I fear it would be attended with a very heavy expence, because the banks are so far asunder that it would require a very long dam to confine the water supposing a Lake to be the object, and it would be equally expensive to dig it out as a river on account of the quick descent, besides from the lofty situation of the house it would be very difficult to conceal the mechanism of any artificial Water”. But he did not think the

Repton an the Regency Garden

Laura Mayer

This year marks the bicentenary of the death of the last great landscaper of the eighteenth century, Humphry Repton, and provides the perfect opportunity to celebrate his enduring influence on the English garden. The county of Suffolk where Repton was baptized in 1752 is particularly spoilt, with no less than 18 sites attributed to or associated with him.

Repton was 36 when he re-invented himself as a ‘landscape gardener’ – a term he personally coined. Boldly naming himself as Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown’s successor, Repton eventually developed a brilliant new aesthetic of his own. He termed this Regency style ‘Ornamental Gardening’, lacing his designs with flowers and decorating them with formal features.

In his *Memoirs* Repton concluded that: “In every place I was consulted I found that I was gifted with a peculiar facility for seeing almost immediately the way in which it might be improved”. Certainly throughout his career Repton was openly critical of those clients who failed to realise or maintain his design ideas as he had envisaged. A 1792 entry from John Byng’s *Torrington Diaries* starts: “At 10 o’clock I intended my ride ... but Mr. Repton – the now noted landscape designer – came in, and delay’d me for half an hour: he is a gentleman not easily shaken off; he asserts so much and assumes so much as to make me irritable, for he is one (of the many) who is never wrong; and therefore why debate with him!”

Whereas his predecessor, Capability Brown, paid fleeting visits to his patrons’ estates, Repton hung around uncomfortably, desperate for acceptance. “The chief benefit I have derived from it”, he famously wrote of his landscaping career, “has been the society of those to whose notice I could not otherwise have aspired”. Many patrons saw through him however: the Duke of Bedford believed him to be ostentatiously conceited and dubbed him a “coxcombe”, and George III dismissed his writings on landscape aesthetics as being nothing more than “coxcombery”. Repton’s dogged determination and blind optimism was ultimately immortalised by Jane Austen in her 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*, where the characters moral judgment – or lack thereof – is reflected in their attitudes to landscape improvement.

Lacking Brown’s working class nature, Repton nevertheless hit on a winning strategy of his own, which utilised his not inconsiderable skills as a water colourist: the famous Red Books. Named for the colour of their binding, these were detailed and persuasive contracts for improvement, illustrated with seductive ‘before’ and ‘after’ views of the estate in question. An overlay allowed the prospective client to picture immediately the possibilities lying dormant within his grounds, should he choose to employ Repton’s services.

When business was slow, Repton cannily reproduced these designs in albums, including in *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* published shortly before his death. Today, these numerous publications can give the impression of wider landscaping achievements than were ever truly realised. Charging for the Red Books, without necessarily overseeing the installation of their designs, also meant that commissions often went unexecuted. Even worse, their detailed written instructions often

difficulties were insurmountable and a small lake was indeed added in 1851 and it features in a painting by Sir Alfred Munnings. His view has the mansion crowning the hill overlooking the lake, but unfortunately the house was demolished in 1955, having been requisitioned for troops and prisoners of war for seven years during and after World War II. So the view is now only crowned by a lonely portico, which is all that remains of the house.

Plans were presented for a pleasure-ground, a part of which was entitled *Lady Rowley’s Flower Garden*. He provided sketches to show how the ‘Cowhouse’ which then stood in that area could be converted into what he termed a ‘Greenhouse’, but is shown as more of a grand orangery. Other suggestions were for walks and plantations, but only a few of his ideas seem to have been taken up, and, unfortunately, the orangery was not among them. The SGT visit did coincide with some damp and grey weather, but with the help of images from the Red Book we were able to visualise the landscape that he saw and to follow his reasonings for improvements – even if some were never actually carried out (Tendring is not unusual in showing a low take-up of landscaping suggestions contained in a Red Book).

Overall, the visit provided us with an excellent opportunity to consider the Repton approach to landscape improvements in this his anniversary year, and we are very grateful to the owner, Mrs Emily Holden, for not only allowing access to her park and letting us see images of her Red Book, but also for accompanying us on the visit.

High Octane Colour at Stody

John Dyer

First stop on our visit to Stody Lodge Gardens and Azalea Water Gardens in Holt, Norfolk, was the 2.5 acre Azalea Water Garden. This impressive area was originally planted by Ernest Horsfall (1885-1926), a tenant of the estate. En route we enjoyed the experience of walking through the half-mile drive lined with the just-opening hardy hybrid *Rhododendron* ‘Cynthia’. Raised before 1870, this variety has a dome-shaped habit and bears magnificent conical trusses of funnel-shaped, rose-crimson flowers, each with a narrow ray of blackish-crimson markings within.

To see and to be enclosed within a veritable sea of shoulder high azaleas was a very special experience, all enhanced by the informal paths and rills of slowly moving water line by mossy banks. All the usual words were used to describe the scene – spectacular, sensational, unique – and all were warranted.

The main borders by the house justified the same admiration. Huge banks of colour from a myriad of rhododendrons and azaleas merged



Deep borders awash with colour of azaleas and rhododendrons.

relevant they still are. Two examples are:

* **Character** included genius of the place but also the shape of the land and house, rank of the owner and size of the landholding. Different styles of architecture dictated different landscape styles, and vice-versa. Castle Gothic fitted picturesque, steep and rugged contours, and pine trees. Minor alterations to buildings such as the 'dressing' of cottages might be suggested. Palatial landscapes would be advocated for palaces. Just as Repton rediscovered seventeenth-century gardens and formality later in his career, and used trellising for foreground to the middle ground and distance, George used historically appropriate trellising for work at Giffords Hall.

* **Situation** tells what is possible to be done, such as the removal of field boundaries or the planting of repoussoir trees to frame and draw the eye. On an American estate George added foreground structures to divide up an overwhelmingly wide panorama, and elsewhere used foreground, such as pleached limes, and screening to focus the view, of a marsh or vineyard.

The day's indoor events concluded with **Stephen Beaumont** leading a question and answer session with **Hektor Rous**, who is in charge of the estate which is used for agriculture, including extensive sheep grazing, woodland and the annual *Latitude* Festival. It provided us with a fascinating insight into the management of this historic site. Hektor then walked us through the beautiful and remarkably unscarred parkland used annually for the festival, over the lake, and up to the modest eighteenth-century obelisk.



Stephen Beaumont with Laura Mayer.

For the **DIARY**

• **13 -14 October Walled Kitchen Gardens Network. The Forum in Northern Ireland** will be based at Clanboys, close to Mount Stewart Estate, whose walled garden 'very much a work in progress' will be the main focus of attention, the discussion led by Neil Porteous, head gardener (also regional head of National Trust Gardens in Northern Ireland). For further details, please contact the website: www.walledgardens.net

• **5 November The Garden Museum 5, Lambeth Palace Road, London E1 7LB. 'Discovering the Real Repton' – a joint event between the Garden Museum, the Garden Trusts, County Garden Trusts.** 10.30-5.30pm. 10 speakers will give short but in-depth talks on their research findings. The morning and afternoon sessions will be chaired by Professor Stephen Daniels and Professor Tom Williamson respectively. Cost: GT and CGT members £68, non-members £78. For further details and booking, please contact The Garden Museum: (gardenmuseum.org.uk) or tel: 020 7401 8865.

together to make the most harmonious planting. There were over 200 different varieties. Clipped yew hedges provide the structure together with impressive trees that tower above and over the garden providing much needed shelter. The gardens also feature many camellias and magnolias all under-planted with daffodils, bluebells and lily of the valley. Borders for summer interest run around the conspicuously white house.

It is a special garden, more often found in Surrey/Sussex//Devon and Cornwall than in north Norfolk: the keys to its success in this situation being water-abundance and shelter.

Polstead Mill

Gail Baker Bates

Garden owner, Lucinda Bartlett explained how the garden had evolved and the plantings before leaving us to wander by ourselves. Though planted little more than 15 years ago the garden impressed by its maturity. Entering through a small gate from the lane, the house was to our left, while to our right an open area of grass and trees with the mill pond at its heart, where damp-loving plants thrived. Several large trees had had to be felled recently, and replacements were yet to be planted but the air of seclusion and peace in this area was still very marked.

As we continued round the house, we came to the more formal part of the garden, designed with terraces and hard paving around a swimming pool, whose black lining gave the impression of a formal pond rather than a pool. Plantings of alliums, peonies, perennial wallflower, lavender and cardoons, offered foliage and colour accents in the borders near the pool. Numerous seats gave us the opportunity to sit and enjoy these calm surroundings.

Polstead Mill was built beside the River Box and a wooden bridge led over the river to the less formal parts of the garden and the walled kitchen garden. The bridge rails were planted with wisteria, a hugely effective touch. Once over the bridge was a wildflower meadow with mown paths, many leading to what can only be described as a chicken palace!

Here too was the walled kitchen garden. This is a more recent construction with brick paths connecting the formal beds growing every kind of vegetable, as ornamental as they were edible. At the back of the kitchen garden a stylish greenhouse was the powerhouse for propagation, growing tomatoes, peppers and for overwintering tender plants. Lucy served mint and other tea, coffee and her delicious cakes, which we all enjoyed sitting in the sunshine.



Erysimum 'Bowles' Mauve' alternated with lavender in season in a formal border alongside the lawn and pool.

Humphry Repton in Suffolk

Patience Shone

The *Bicentenary Celebration & Day Conference* was held on 6 June at Henham Park courtesy of Hektor Rous, son of the owner, the 6th Earl of Stradbroke. Seated in an eighteenth-century barn delicately adorned with dried flowers we were treated to a series of enjoyable and erudite presentations punctuated by a delicious lunch. The Suffolk Records Office had on display facsimiles of Humphry Repton's illustrated proposals, or 'Red Books' (so-called because most were bound in red Morocco leather) for Broke Hall, Livermere, Shrublands, Henham Park and Tendring Hall (see page 6). Also on display were proposals for 'The Hold', the new Suffolk Archives Service (www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/the_hold).

Edward Martin began by outlining Humphry Repton's life, using documentation to confirm and disprove some frequently touted biographical details. Humphry died on 24 March 1818, was probably born in May 1752, and was the fifth child of John Repton/Ripton, a collector. Baptised at St. Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds, we can rightly claim him for Suffolk, although he moved to Norwich aged three, undermining claims that he attended Bury St Edmunds Grammar School. In Norwich in 1773 he married Mary who bore him 12 children, few of whom survived.

Following various unsuccessful professional ventures, Humphry launched his career as a 'landscape gardener' and had many design commissions for Suffolk estates, mostly presented in 'Red Books' (see Edward Martin's article on page 7 of *SGT Spring 2018 Newsletter* on Repton's Suffolk work).

Edward outlined Repton's Suffolk commissions, where possible using his famous high quality 'before and after' watercolours. He was critical of existing houses and views, in order to propose 'improvements'. In 1791 Wherstead Hall was seen as 'too small', and suggestions included a rustic lodge and creation of surprise at the river view, one of many similar suggestions for approaches.

Suggestions for Broke Hall in 1792 typically used cutting and creation of woodland to frame and emphasise the river view while screening the larger neighbouring Orwell Park. Shrublands was to have pinnacles on its prospect or a water tower; Glemham Hall was one of many houses where the red brick should be rendered, as at Glevering, and the stables removed. This reminded us that many of Repton's suggestions were implemented later or not at all. At Henham, for example, the lake was dug by Hektor's father in 1991 to Humphry



The day's lectures took place in an eighteenth-century barn at Henham Park. Photo: Barbara Segal

Repton's specification. Henham has been the seat of the Rous family since the sixteenth-century. The last hall was built by Sir John Rous, later the 1st Earl of Stradbroke, in 1797 by James Wyatt, was enlarged in 1858 and demolished in 1953. Sir John commissioned Humphry Repton.

The Red Books often discussed more general ways of seeing, frequently reiterated in his other prolific publications. The Red Book for Tendring Hall discussed the somewhat elusive difference between "prospect" and "landscape": The "landscape" which would be seen from a proposed, lower new house, framed by a middle ground of trees was preferable to the "prospect" of the "mountains of Essex" from the too high position of the existing house (like so many, now demolished) which itself was criticised as "too square" and needing "wings". A lake he suggested was in fact implemented in 1851 but fortunately the early 18th-century canal that he wanted to make 'serpentine' was left alone. Repton's suggestion of the serpentine lake remaining at Livermere (the house was demolished in 1918) was unusually created by joining together existing bodies of water owned by different people. Humphry Repton frequently worked with both Samuel and James Wyatt, as at Culford where James designed the house and Samuel the cast iron bridge. The Red Book for Culford is owned by the Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum in the US, and Edward suggested a fund be put together to pay for facsimiles to be made.

Dr Laura Mayer gave a talk entitled *All Around is Fairy Ground: Repton & the Regency Garden*. This concentrated on the Picturesque controversy, Humphry Repton's ornamental gardening and the connection with Jane Austen (see page xx for Laura's article based on her paper).

Next up was George Carter whose talk – *Setting the Scene, A Continuing Inspiration* – drew on his new book reflecting on the influence of Humphry Repton on his own work over the last 30 years and putting Repton's ideas in a modern context



The lake at Henham was implemented by Hektor's father, the 6th Earl of Stradbroke in 1991 to Humphry Repton's specification.

since they are so adaptable to small-scale gardening. Famous in his own lifetime and boosted in 1840 by Loudon's publication of his complete works, his teachings influenced the development of American landscape gardening including Central Park. His highly stylised plan for Lady Salisbury in 1789 unusually used a scale. In 1805 he drew a plan for a pleasure garden at Woburn that is currently being reinstated. The paintings in the Red Books were visually more informative than just a plan or map. The books were important in codifying his suggestions and fixed principles, and were mostly divided into sections. Headings followed those used by Repton in his own writings and under each heading George outlined Repton's solutions and illustrated how these principles guide his own work, and how