

## Spring Tour of Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire

### Arley Hall

**Richard Firmin**



Clear blue skies, hot sunshine and a pleached lime avenue combined to create an inviting introduction to Arley Hall, as well as providing a taste of the things to come, which made for a thoroughly memorable Spring Tour.

Condensing the highlights of any individual garden always involves missing some of the particulars. My lasting impression of this one

focuses on the hands-on involvement of both of the present incumbents – Viscount and Lady Ashbrook – and of their 8-strong gardening team, all of whom have a degree of autonomy to pursue their own special interests within the 24 acres which make up this beautiful place.

Lord Ashbrook's passion for rhododendrons is hard to conceal and his very enthusiastic and knowledgeable head gardener began our tour in part of the property known as The Grove. Here, since 1981, Lord Ashbrook has amassed rhododendrons and magnolias to great effect. Of the former genus a handful of hybrids caught my attention: *R.* 'Ightham Yellow', *R.* 'Lem's Cameo', *R.* 'Halfdan Lem'; the huge, blousy yellow blooms of *R.* 'Golden Star', pink *R.* 'Loderi Venus' and lemon-yellow *R.* 'Damaris Logan'; and the augustinii-blue *R.* 'St. Tudy'.

In extreme contrast, the formal garden, with its yew buttresses and flawless wooden lawn edging (a detail particularly noticeable to someone who has cut a lot of grass in his time) contains what is apparently the oldest herbaceous border in the country, dating



**Previous page: Arley Hall  
by John Roy**

**Left: The formal garden  
by Richard Firmin**

back to the period when the Egerton-Warburtons managed the estate. This is Lady Ashbrook's sphere of operations and here she manages 225 varieties of herbaceous plants.

Lady Ashbrook's garden, where shrub roses are now replacing hybrid teas; to an avenue of *Quercus ilex*, buzzing with St. Jacob's flies; to the fish garden, previously a bowling green, completely resoiled to remove marestail and planted by the gardening team with alpinas as their own pet project – though it should be pointed out that Lord Ashbrook has introduced a few dwarf rhododendrons.

We saw the Rootery, originally an alpine garden, now containing rhododendrons and azaleas and about to undergo a similarly radical makeover; the walled garden, ploughed up in WW2 to provide fruit and vegetables when The Hall was used as a hospital; and to Lady Ashbrook's tulip garden, used for wedding celebrations that provide an essential source of income.

Add the vegetable garden, the melon pit, the Grade 2 listed evaporation wall – and the impeccable standard of maintenance throughout all of this; and I was left feeling that this first garden of The Tour would prove hard to beat.



## Tatton Park

### John Roy

A large banner proclaiming 2014 Gold Winner Large Visitor Attraction was proudly displayed at the entrance to the garden at Tatton Park. A blackboard encouraged us some more with shrubs in flower to look out for.

A very productive walled garden has an orchard with fruit varieties from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a vegetable garden. Beehives ensured plentiful pollinators, with the promise of honey later in the season.

The rose garden was laid out in 1913 for Lady Egerton. Work had to be completed by 10am each day so she could enjoy the garden undisturbed. Today the garden contains varieties of “polyantha” rose, modern versions of old varieties, to provide the scent of the era.

Our first glimpse of rhododendrons was on the “broad walk” where there were also some impressively tall *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*. This led to a woodland with rhododendrons and a pinetum. Unfortunately the Japanese Garden was out of bounds for refurbishment. A pond encouraged moisture loving plants such as *Gunnera manicata*.



A very well restored conservatory was linked to a fernery. This contained many different tree ferns and their lower growing relatives.

**Opposite page: The “broad walk”**

**Left: The Fernery**

**Pictures by John Roy**

## Hare Hill

### Penny Murch

This garden was begun in the 1800s by the Brocklehurst family, when it was mainly planted with conifers and hollies interspersed with statues. The next generation, John built on this, but it was his son, Col. Charles Brocklehurst who put his heart and soul into the garden adding many rhododendrons and interesting trees. He handed the garden over to the National Trust in 1978.

Peter Moffat, one of the gardeners led us down the main carriageway planted with tall old hollies and rhododendrons. Peter was glad to have help with some identification. There was a tall overhanging *R. bureavii* and *R. augustinii*. Lower down a magnificent treelike *R. 'Boddaertianum'* was hung with its white flowers with a light speckled blotch.



Beside the walled garden were *Eucryphia* X 'Nymansensis' and two smaller leaved ones that we thought could be *E. lucida*. The walled garden was in the process of being developed with a white theme. There were two curious horse statues, put there by the colonel, one with a rider in memory of his twin brother who was killed in an accident.

**A large overhanging  
*Rhododendron bureavii***

The Colonel planted many plants and trees in twos to commemorate his brother.

**Picture by John Roy**

The woodland seemed crowded but contained many lovely species, a big *Cornus kousa* and a beautiful pure white mag-



nolia flowering above a *Rhododendron* 'Loderi King George'. Little glades had been cleared here and there and a pleasant pond at the top of the wood had been made where you had a clear view of the parkland and Greater Manchester beyond.

Recently, large areas of *Rhododendron ponticum* have been cleared but some beautiful plants may still spoil in their stretch for light. Lifting the tree canopy would help and further clearing of the understory is being considered. We enjoyed the enthusiasm of our guide and thanked him.

## Henbury Hall

**Colin Whitehead**

As we drove up the winding road through the sheep pastures, we could see outlined on the hill above a grandiose Italianate mansion, guarded by two alert stags above the entrance steps. We imagined the house to have a lengthy history, but were somewhat disillusioned to find it had been built in the 1980s after the previous mansion had been demolished because of extensive dry rot.



**The Present Hall**

The estate, near Macclesfield in Cheshire, has a long history. It is recorded in the Domesday Book and was described in 1649 as 'a very sumptuous house with courts, gardens, orchards well stocked with good fruits...' It has passed through a succession of owners, including the ancient Jodrell family (links to the radiotelescope). Later

on it was owned in the 1880s by the much travelled Thomas Brocklehurst. Many of the older rhododendrons in the garden came from China at that time. He also has the dubious distinction of having brought the grey squirrel from North America and releasing it to roam in the garden (and subsequently the country).

Sir Vincent de Ferranti (links to the defence electronics company) purchased the estate in 1957 and immediately started to restock the by then rather derelict gardens. On his death the estate passed to his son Vincent who built the new house in the Palladian style on a design based on that of the Villa Rotunda near Vicenza using French limestone from a quarry near Rheims. He also continued to improve the gardens.

On arriving at the estate office we were greeted by the head gardener, Sean Barton, who had owned a florists shop in his previous occupation. He had thoughtfully provided a golf buggy for the less mobile in our party. So we toured the gardens of 12 acres set in an undulating landscape surrounding two lakes. The main lake had a rather spectacular fountain and at the far end a slightly incongruous red Chinese bridge (perhaps recalling the link with Thomas Brocklehurst). The lake was surrounded by a wide range of trees and plants, including the white pearl bush (*Exochorda*), a white *Halesia monticola*, *Acer*, *Gunnera*, *Camellia*, *Magnolia* and, among the rhododendrons, *R. yakushimanum*, *R. 'Polar Bear'*, Waterer hybrids and a rather blasted *R. rex* ssp. *fictol-actum*. Above the lake there was a stand of large trees including Douglas fir, Atlantic cedar, Norwegian spruce together with a bank of spectacular *R. 'Loderi'*. Below this bank was an area cleared recently of *R. ponticum* beside which was a large number

of potted azaleas and other rhododendrons waiting to be planted. To the side of the lake was a huge area that had been cleared of *R. ponticum* and was now grassed over, with the sole adornment of a large



**The Pond**

**Pictures by Colin  
Whitehead**

*R. 'Loderi King George'* in the middle. Above the Chinese bridge over the outflow stream was a rather grand *R. 'Cynthia'* and below was an open meadow area with a profusion of Lady's Smock and some attendant Orange Tip butterflies. The paths around the garden followed through a mixture of trees (sweet chestnut, beech), rhododendrons, including *R. 'Loder's White'*, various *R. 'Loderi'*, *R. augustinii* Electra and *R. luteum*, interspersed with the occasional sculpted deer and boar.

The garden also contained other delights. There was a walled garden, laid out partly as ornamental, partly for vegetables. Colour was provided by cosmos and Venetian poles. Hopes for vegetables included rows of just-sprouting asparagus and melon plants on beds of manure in cold frames. Glass houses at one end of the walled garden held peaches, figs, apricots, grapes, orchids and ferns. An astonishing surprise outside the walled garden was a large ornate glasshouse that contained a heated pool, grotto, spa and changing rooms. A lovely place to relax on a cold winter's day! Further round the path was an ice house that in former times was used to store ice collected from the lake.

Our tour finished in the courtyard of the former stable block being served with a generous supply of tea and cakes outside the tearoom. Rhododendrons were there as well, in the form of a large potted *R. 'Fragrantissimum'* in full flower. Henbury Hall Gardens were not the largest we visited on our tour, but its diversity and surprises, together with the thoughtful treatment by our hosts, made it one of the most enjoyable.

## **Biddulph Grange**

### **Fiona Campbell**

On the second dry day of our trip the group from SRS arrived at Biddulph Grange, recognised as a Victorian masterpiece and a National Trust Garden since 1988. We could see at once from the terrace in front of the main building the secluded, sheltered nature of the gardens with tall trees surrounding the main planting areas.

Kathy Lawrence, one of the guide/volunteers met us there to tell the group about the history of Biddulph Grange which had been bought by James Bateman, a wealthy industrialist. His interest in geology and plants of the world led him to design and plant the gardens to show off his acquisitions. He enlisted the help of his friend, landscape



**Biddulph Grange**  
**by John Roy**

designer Edward Cook to help. They planted many hedges and trees for shelter from the wind and also brought in vast quantities of rock. This was used for rockworks and walls as well as tunnels. All of these formed the area into garden “rooms”. His creations formed the Italian Garden, American area, the

Egyptian Garden and the Chinese Gardens with their various design artefacts such as Sphinx statuary and Chinese Pagoda not to mention relevant plants; several exotics from plant hunters whom he sponsored. One of interest was a golden larch; a Robert Fortune original.

Mary, another volunteer, guided some of us round to point out plants of note and areas of interest. The lime avenue had some new planting of rhododendrons and azaleas to form a rainbow of colour. Further down were banks of *R. ponticum* and *R. ‘Cunningham’s White’* giving shelter on route to the tennis lawn and pond. The pinetum had mature conifers, many from USA planted by Mr. Bateman. He often planted them high on rock to show their root formations. There were also Scots pines, cedars, and a grove of monkey puzzles. The quoit area nearby had a large Montezuma pine, *Embothrium*, *Nothofagus*, and many shrubs, one of which *Poncirus trifoliata*, a hardy Citrus, caught the eye with its long thorns and white flower buds just opening.

A path wound its way through a large stumpery the oldest in Britain, planted up with geraniums, hellebores, *Arisarum*, anemones, bulbs and ferns. It was in need of some TLC and we were told plants coming from a display at Tatton Park will be added later on. Leading away from the Grange was ‘Wellingtonia Avenue’, which sadly a long time ago had the Wellingtonias cut down in error. The National Trust has since replaced them. It will be a long time till they rival Benmore. Nearer the Grange were many borders of colourful plants to attract the attention of visitors. Tulips nestled in



immaculately clipped yew hedges; later the tulips are replaced with dahlias.

There were rhododendron hybrids around the garden, many yet to flower but unfortunately the area which would have been of rhododendron interest - The Glen - was closed to the public. All we could see was *R. niveum* by the entrance, and a white specimen. Mary told us the rhododendrons at Biddulph are not well catalogued and we did not see many of interest. (Since returning home a week later, a gardener from Biddulph Grange contacted the Rhododendron Society keen to find out about identifying rhodies there. She couldn't have known of our visit that day. The head gardener, who just said "Hello" to the gathering, did know of our visit!!)

All in all a pleasant walk with many interesting and unusual features, but disappointing for rhododendron fans.

## **The Dorothy Clive Garden**

### **Katrina Clow**

In a tour of many excellent gardens, this was one of the highlights. We were privileged to arrive at 9 am before the garden opened to the general public and made the gentle ascent on the side path to the tea room where we were met by Magnus, the Curator and Manager of the Willoughbridge Garden Trust who conducted our tour of the quarry and woodland walk.

I remembered visiting this garden in the 1990s and even managed to find the guide book produced in 1991. The great attraction of the garden then, as it is today, was the woodland planting in the quarry above the tea room but there are wonderful shrub borders, herbaceous beds, rose and heather beds, a camellia walk and an alpine scree on the slope below, all interplanted with fine specimen trees. The circuit of the quarry garden is approached by a flight of steps, passing through beds of mixed shrub and herbaceous planting. One path continues upwards to the right giving wonderful views of the rhododendrons and azaleas blooming in the basin and ends at a young sculptured yew and a viewpoint over the quarry below. Continuing east, on the level, you reach the Belvedere, at the margin of the garden and then turn west to make a gentle descent along the spring walk to the other side of the quarry. This walk contains the most recent planting and both sides are filled with interesting shrubs and trees not seen elsewhere in the garden, including *Rhododendron* hybrids and species, azaleas, many recent introductions of *Magnolia* hybrids, species *Sorbus*, *Cotoneaster* and



*Betula.*

The descent on the west side passes a magnificent sculpture of a stag, passes the waterfall constructed in the 1990s to celebrate the garden's 50th year and ends in the basin of the quarry at the bole of a huge beech. This area of the garden, like many others suffered from an infestation of *Phytophthora ramorum* in 2012 and the drastic 'cut/fell and burn' remedy was used on

infected plants. Infected beech do not release the spores of *Phytophthora* and so the trunk and base of this specimen were spared and now support a vast *Clematis montana*. There have been no further outbreaks in the past 3 years and if the all clear is given, re planting can begin in 2017.

The garden is managed as naturally as possible. No insecticides or fungicides are used and herbicides used sparingly; however one of the seasonal beds had been entirely cleared and sprayed in order to clear a stubborn infestation of bindweed. Hopefully, after two years, it will be replanted as a 'hot bed', a la Christopher Lloyd. There was an excellent informative notice explaining the reason for the bare earth.

The garden was begun by Colonel Harry Clive and named in memory of his wife, Dorothy. They lived in a large house to the west of the site from where they could see the overgrown

**Top: Magnificent stag sculpture**

**Right and opposite page: The disused gravel quarry lends shelter and drainage**

**Pictures by John Roy**



oak wood, which had taken over the old disused gravel quarry. When his wife got bored walking around their own plot, Harry Clive and his gardener began carving out paths in the quarry undergrowth. A year later, this sheltered site, gently shaded by the oaks and with a deep layer of organic debris on top of the gravel scree proved an excellent home for rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and magnolias. Clive knew Frank Knight, the former director of RHS Wisley and he helped the Clives with selection and planting of the shrubs. Dorothy chose and planted the woodland plants that now cover the floor of the quarry garden.

Dorothy died in 1942 and in 1958, Clive sold the big house and built a double bungalow (now the tea room) where he lived until his death. His gardener, John Moore and wife occupied the other half. With great foresight, in the same year, Harry Clive secured an endowment and established a trust in order to preserve the garden in perpetuity for the benefit of the public.

Aged 80, Harry set about developing the sloping site below the bungalow, commencing with a collection of Exbury azaleas bred by Lionel de Rothschild and a pair of blue Atlas cedars which today have probably outgrown their space. There is a pretty gazebo at the top of the scree garden and an informal pool at the lower end filled with water lilies and surrounded by moisture loving plants: candelabra *Primula*, *Astilbe*, *Filipendula* and *Dierama* ('Angels Fishing Rods').

A series of excellent curators continued to develop the garden after Harry Clive's death and to the present day, the garden is managed by the Willoughbridge Trust. Entry fees cover general running costs of the garden but in order to establish new

projects, additional funding has to be sought. The success of The Trust and a committed Manager is very evident, as a brand new tropical house-almost completed on our visit and already nearly planted up with exotics has been erected in the old Orchard/Apiary. This can only add to the interest of a garden already overflowing with horticultural delights.



## Mount Pleasant, Kelsall

Ian Douglas



**Pastel shades and water features at Mount Pleasant  
by John Roy**

It is difficult to know where to start with this unusual garden. The owners Louise Worthington and Dave Darlington started twenty years ago by building their house, faced with local stone, which blends well with the surroundings.

The garden, of twelve acres, slopes steeply to the north west. A large part consists of a wild flower meadow – which may be a meadow in ten years time! – and a sculpture park. This contains a large

number of works by various modern sculptors, some outwith my aesthetic comfort zone and even more outwith my price range.

The main garden is a bit of a mixture, densely planted with shrubs, rhododendrons and herbaceous plants. One of the obvious features is the number of giant redwoods dotted around, part of the original planting and now about twenty-five feet high with trunks nine to twelve inches in diameter. When asked if there were not too many, Dave admitted that he occasionally took a chainsaw to one.

Two of the most interesting features were a grove of about fifteen chusan palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) and a grove of roughly the same number of tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) eight feet tall. Perhaps an indication of the amount of money spent developing the garden.

Throughout the main part of the garden were a number of large excellent wood carvings in oak, redwood and larch. A perched eagle was particularly good.



## The Citadel

**Barbara Anderson**

When the group arrived at the Citadel we noted the baronial 'folly' appearance to the front of the house. It was built in the early 1820's by Sir Rowland Hill for his mother and sister. Then, it consisted of three towers but one in the rear has been demolished since then.



We were met, by the current owner Beverley Griffiths who explained a little about the history of the house, the garden of between 3.5 acres to 4 acres and surrounding farm-land of 200 acres all of which he owns.

The Citadel and garden has been in his family ownership since 1953 when it was acquired by his father. Mr Griffiths explained he likes a very tidy garden without weeds and neat edges. The soil is acidic.



**Top: The Citadel facade**

**Left: Neat lawns and flower beds**

**Pictures by Barbara Anderson**

The paths were narrow initially between herbaceous borders and trees leading to wider paths through lawn areas. There were many herbaceous borders on raised beds, either earth banks or on top of stone built beds. The beds consisted of mixed hybrid rhododendrons, azaleas and hydrangias. Camellias, mature acers, long needle pines and magnolias were in tight growth proximity.

There were two areas of walled garden. In the first garden lawn covered the main area with *Magnolia grandiflora* and *Wisteria* climbing the wall. In the second there is an excellent example of a potager with ulips in beds, clematis, apple and fig trees in blossom on the wall, and land for vegetables, some already planted and ground prepared for others.

There was a lovely variegated *Liriodendron tulipifera* and a lovely mixed acer glade of medium height trees. Colours of flowers flowed eg pink to orange to yellow in further raised stonewall beds.

The core of the garden is a sandstone outcrop with sandstone paths, stone steps, grass borders and flowing banked flower beds. There was an oak tree clinging for life on top of the outcrop. On the far side of the garden is a thatched Victorian-style summerhouse.

Further through the garden bluebells and narcissi were growing through the grass lawn which was overlooked by cypress trees: very attractive. As we meandered around to our start area there was a magnificent relatively old copper beech at the entrance.



Our hosts provided cake and refreshments on the terracing which we appreciated. In conclusion a compact but interesting and well maintained garden.

**Variegated *Liriodendron*  
by John Roy**

## Hodnet Hall

### Wang Liston



On this Scottish Rhododendron Society spring tour to Cheshire and Shropshire we visited some amazing great houses and gardens, so much so that I was sometimes reminded of PG Wodehouse or even Evelyn Waugh. But of them all Hodnet Hall, home to Sir Algernon and Lady Heber-Percy, had perhaps the loveliest and most relaxing informal

gardens and well deserved its accolade of “Garden of the Year”. The top pool of a series of large ponds, which were joined by tumbling waterfalls, well deserved its name, “Paradise Pool”.

The trees and the water made the structure of the garden. The English oaks, some very old, were fantastic, clothed in new green and many with trailing yellow green catkins. But there were many other species of mature trees. *Davidia involucrata*, clothed in handkerchiefs, sweet chestnuts, acers, particularly *A. cappadocicum*, ever-green oaks, weeping willows, poplars, and Scots pines were especially noticeable. In among these wonderful trees were rhododendrons and azaleas of different species and a ground covering of *Primula pulverulenta*, yellow irises and white masses of wild garlic. Round the ponds were stands of *Gunnera*. Daffodils had obviously been everywhere.

We walked up and along, past the elegant herons, past the other ponds to Paradise Pool with its swans and ducks and scuttling coots, then back on the far side. We then left the water and visited the amazing tithe barn, viewed the very elegant doocot and





arrived at an enormous kitchen garden, overflowing with produce, asparagus, rhubarb, strawberries, etc. etc., all beautifully tended. There were special borders for cut flowers for the house, roses and peonies. These last were a particular favourite of the proprietors, and there were a large number of varieties, all meticulously staked and supported.

We had dallied so long that we had no time for tea in the tea room beside the slightly worrying stuffed lion and tiger or to be watched eating our scone by a great menagerie of animal heads on the wall. We did dash down the impressive magnolia avenue, but with no time to really appreciate it or to diagnose the various species. As usual we were last to leave the car park. We don't seem to have said much about rhododendrons, but there were lots!

**Previous page: Hodnet Hall**

**This page above: Water features strongly in this garden**

**Right: Moisture loving plants enjoy the waterside**

**Pictures by John Roy**





## Wollerton Old Hall

**Gretchen Henderson**



A sweeping driveway leads to a 16<sup>th</sup> century house with an old mulberry tree. The rest of the 4 acre garden has been created by Lesley and John Jenkins since 1983 to display to advantage the perennials they sell in their small nursery, especially salvias and clematis. They have 160 clematis in their collection. A formal arrangement of evergreen material gives the structural backbone to accentuate view

lines and delineate separate garden “rooms” differing in their planting material and colour themes. The tightness of this imposed grid does make the garden seem quite contrived but of course some such formality is part of Britain’s gardening history.

Particularly impressive are the large topiary yew pyramids, 10 in pairs lining a path and 14 elsewhere round a stone pool. Oak timber is used for some dividing fences with an acorn finial on each post, for a roofed arbour against a brick garden wall and for a pergola at a path cross-junction. Water features in some views as runnels or

**Above: 16th century house**

**Right: Our host describes the garden layout**

**Pictures by John Roy**



pools. The stones filling the pools underwater mean the garden is safe for children. There are old brick walls, hedges of clipped beech, fastigate hornbeams and a double line of pleached limes.

Deciduous trees include *Halesia monticola* and *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' in the white garden with tulips. Coloured forms of *Cordyline australis*, *Phormium tenax* and *Phormium cookianum* feature in the 'hot' garden of *Hemerocallis* and *Euphorbia*, and plants with gold variegation. *Sambucca nigra* 'Black Lace' combines nicely with a dark form of *Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum'.

A more casual planting style in the rear section of the garden includes some choice trees and shrubs including *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon' and the *R. bureavii* hybrid *R.* 'Teddy Bear', and also *Eucryphia* X *nymanensis* 'Nymansay'. The woodland groundcovers are dominated by *Anthriscus sylvestris* (Cow Parsley) giving a very natural effect linking back to the swathes lining the road verges near the entrance.

## Tirley Garth

### Peter Furneaux

The gardens of this beautiful Arts and Crafts house were designed by architect Mr C Mallows with later help from landscape gardener Thomas Mawson and are mainly contemporary with the house (early 20 C).

A large terrace with box-hedged parterre to the south of the house connects by a gentle flight of steps to lawns below and a wooded dell beyond. The entrance drive curves around





this lawn on which are banks of old hardy hybrid rhododendrons, not yet in bloom at the time of our visit, and two striking specimens of *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Brilliantissimum'. Some other trees noted by the group were *Pinus lambertiana* with its distinctive cones on the ground beneath, *Wollemia nobilis* which had been planted in 2007 and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* planted in 1965 and now an impressive size.

The garden also has fine statues and a pair of huge cast-iron urns together with formal and informal ponds. At the time of our visit the azalea walk was a riot of colour with (probably original) plantings of Ghent and Knaphill azaleas. Against a wall in a small garden to the east of the house a young *Emboth-*

*rium coccineum* was in full flower and the old walls had been colonised by *Asarina procumbens*.

Along the old drive to the north of the house were old plantings of hardy hybrid rhododendrons, a few of which were in flower, including *R.* 'Michael Waterer', *R.* 'Cynthia', and *R.* 'Pink Pearl'. The gardens were also open for the NGS and were attracting many visitors on this warm and sunny afternoon. We left after thanking the acting head gardener for his interesting comments on the history of the garden.

**Opposite page: Tirley Garth House**

**Above: Azaleas in full flower**

**Pictures by John Roy**

## Bolesworth Castle

### Grace Morris

Bolesworth Castle is a large country estate 2 miles south of the village of Tatttenhall and the house is a Grade 2 listed building. It is an impressive grey sandstone mansion sitting high on a bluff overlooking the vast surrounding plain. Bought and developed in 1856 by a Glasgow business man, Robert Barbour, whose family were cotton traders in Manchester, and has been in the family since. The estate was 6000 acres of grassland and lawns, which were remodelled in 1921 and changed to terraces. Electricity was also led into the house at this time.

The present owner moved into the house with her husband, Anthony Barbour in 1986. Anthony developed the estate as a centre for small businesses where there are now about 800 people employed. He also rented out 170 estate cottages and houses. His plans for a retirement community are also underway. He died unexpectedly in 2007, since when the estate has been administered by his wife, Diana, and daughter Nina.

Anthony was a keen gardener and wanted a summer garden without bedding plants which could be maintained by one gardener. He sought the advice of Dame Sylvia Clough, aged 90, a seasoned garden designer, who spent hours pacing it out. She recommended English lavender Hidcote along the front of the house to soften the rigid terrace borders. She unsuccessfully tried to remove the tennis court, which still survives on a lower terrace at the front of the house.



**Left: Terraces with many rhododendrons**

**Opposite page:  
Discussions looking out  
at the view**

**Pictures by John Roy**



A 25 year long planting scheme was developed for the rock walk above the castle which was originally planted with *Rhododendron ponticum* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were cut back and two levels of terracing were discovered. Rhododendron species and hybrids were sourced, along with camellias, magnolias and cherries for spring flowering. To extend the



flowering season Anthony put in *Acer*, *Sorbus* and other specimen trees, planting 550 special trees including 60 varieties of *Sorbus* and 40 varieties of *Acer*. As we waked around the rock walk terraces it was clear that much of the *R. ponticum* was still in active growth, causing an ongoing problem despite the elimination programme. Every winter more *R. ponticum* is cut back revealing yet more hidden plantings.

The rhododendrons planted by Anthony are now outgrowing their spaces and the intent is to replant some of them soon so they can grow on to attain their full size. As we walked along the extensive rock terraces we saw so many mature, lovely flowering rhododendrons both species and hybrids.

We then progressed to the Temple of Diana. Sylvia Clough placed it at the end of a lawn beyond a lily pond, where it could be seen from the drawing room windows. This area was planted with many specimen trees including an impressive *Davidia involucrata* in full bract, dancing in the breeze.

The ongoing work is a huge undertaking. Together with the recent and ongoing construction of an international equestrian centre, this estate is certainly becoming an economically viable property, hopefully enabling the restoration of the magnificent plantings by Anthony Barbour.

This was a special garden being raised like a Pheonix. The friendly hospitality was much appreciated.

## Cholmondeley Castle

**Jenny Millward**



The drive from the road leading to the castle passes through some elegant wrought-iron gates designed by Bakewell in 1722. These had been originally the entrance to the Old Cholmondeley Hall before being moved here.

The Cholmondeley family have lived here since 1200. The present castle being built by the 1st Marquis of Cholmondeley in the early

19th century and has been home to three successive generations.

The gardens we see today have been the life's work of Lady Lavinia Cholmondeley over 60 years since arriving here in the late 1940s. The acidic sandy soil is perfect for rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and camellias. From the car park a short walk up hill took us to the front of the castle to the terraces and lily pond

**Above: Cholmondeley Castle**

**Left: Graceful trees**

**Opposite page: Tranquil lake**

**Pictures by John Roy**



from where there are stunning views of the parkland and estate.

Steps lead to the Silver Garden, planted in a silver theme to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Mounds of silver foliage and a fine specimen of *Buddleja crispa* were displayed.

Dropping down from the terraces to the grass beds and mosaic are pampas grass and trees, namely *Parrotia persica*, *Acer* and *Sorbus*. The beautiful mosaic here is a memorial to George Hugh, the 6th Marquess, 1919-1990, featuring various aspects of his life including military drums and regimental insignia, horses, foxes, pheasants and cattle.

Through to a sheltered glade with an interesting selection of shrubs and trees, particularly fine *Davidia involucrata*, *Magnolia* 'Elizabeth' and *M.* 'Spectrum' under planted with *Narcissus poeticus* and drifts of other naturalised bulbs. A shelter belt of bamboo *Fargesia robusta* provided an excellent backdrop.

The Rose Garden was the first area to be designed by Lady Cholmondeley in the early 1950s with local sandstone. Two *Magnolia sieboldii* are planted at either end of the garden. A gravel path leads from here through the herbaceous borders to Lavinia Walk which is being redesigned as a future tribute to Lavinia, Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley who died in November, 1915.

Entering through a stone gatehouse we enter the delightful Temple Garden, a tran-

quil water garden. This is the piece de resistance of Cholmondeley with the main feature being the small lake and two islands, one having a statue of a gladiator in the centre. It is enclosed by fine specimen trees and many varieties of shrubs. The rockery by the lake is planted with dwarf rhododendrons, small shrubs and heathers.



A pathway leads to the Silver Wedding Arboretum, containing a number of trees presented by friends to mark Lord and Lady Cholmondeley's silver wedding anniversary. There are several rare specimens here including a fantastic *Nothofagus Antarctica*, next to it *Abies forrestii* var. *georgei*. A row of *Sorbus* 'John Mitchell' lines the road and other specimens include *Liquidambar*, *Sorbus sargentiana*, *Gleditsia* 'Sunburst' and *Acer platanoides* 'Goldsworth Purple'.

Passing a wildflower meadow we return to the main drive to ascend Tower Hill, a woodland walk through the wild garden, with a collection of *Camellia*, *Magnolia*, *Cornus* and of course *Rhododendron*.

The guided tour was taken by Spencer Davaney, a charming young man who was very knowledgeable and who very patiently answered all our questions.

## Dorfold Hall

### John Roy



Being the last garden on the list for the spring tour, member numbers had dwindled to a handful. That was a shame, both for Nigel the gardener who showed us round, and those that missed an interesting garden.

The Hall was constructed during the reign of King James VI & I. Greeting us at the front of the mansion was a statue of a bull mastiff with her puppies that came from the Paris exhibition of 1855. The Jacobean theme continued at the back of the Hall with a gateway flanked by busts of King James and Queen Anne.



A walled garden was being revamped to use for weddings. An orchard, and a summer border with *Ceanothus*, *Allium* and roses promised much to come later in the year.

An impressive Spanish chestnut with a girth of thirty feet is said to be over a thousand years old.

For me the exciting part of the garden was yet to come, as we strolled down into a hidden woodland known as The Dingle. This was created in 1906 as a rock garden but fell into disrepair during WWII when the house was used for the war effort, but was reconstructed in the 1980s. It now contains azaleas and rhododendrons, and a large *Prunus serrula*.



**Opposite page: Dorfold Hall and the Bull Mastiff statue**

**Above: The impressive Spanish Chestnut**

**Right: The Dingle**

**Pictures by John Roy**



# **Minutes of the Thirty Third Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society**

**Held in the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, Argyll on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 at 2.30pm**

President, John Hammond in the chair. 22 members in attendance.

The President welcomed members to the 33rd AGM of the Society. He noted that 2016, thus far, had not been a favourable year for rhododendron flowers with growth three weeks behind and little in bloom in his garden after the ravages of frost, hail and a 3 inch fall of snow over ice the day before the Show. As usual though, there were plenty of good exhibits on display from more sheltered gardens. The President recorded a second successful show in the new venue and particularly thanked Ian Sinclair, Mary Gray and Katrina Clow for organising, advertising and setting up the event. He also thanked both the Main Committee for their support and the Tours Committee, run by Gloria and David Starck, who have successfully taken over the reins of organising events.

## **Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Kessell, Marion Kinns, Carol Rowe, William Campbell, Peter Cox, Peter Fairley, Matt Heasman, Sir Peter Hutchison, Rick Potter, John Roy and Maurice Wilkins.

## **Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting:**

The Minutes of the Thirty-Second Annual General Meeting, held at The Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2015, (tabled and previously circulated in the 2015 summer "Review") were taken as read. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Mr Ian Sinclair, seconded by Dr David Chamberlain and their adoption unanimously agreed.

As an item of matters arising, the President reported that the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group, previously an arm of the RHS, now has individual charitable status and is undergoing a period of re-invigoration under the Chairmanship of David Millais. The Group is currently recording Rhododendron hybrids and Magnolias in English collections, and is aiming to record Rhododendron species at a later date.

President thanked Eric Annal, the Scottish Representative on R, C & M Group, who continues to maintain links between the two organisations.

**Hon. Secretary's Report:** (tabled)

Web site development: Katrina Clow had been charged with finding a professional to update the SRS website and reported that Alan Gillies of AA Web Solutions had almost completed the work and the site should be launched in May/June. We are awaiting necessary passwords to transfer information from the old site. Thanks to John Roy who provided the images for the home page and introduction.

Costs of work £450, of which the final £250 to be paid on completion. The Society will be provided with a disc with instructions on adding to and amending the site but we need a volunteer to manage the website and input from our members to keep the site up to date.

Gift Aid: The submission has proved very arduous as members who signed up in 2014 and 15 were not asked to sign a gift aid form. KC has written to all 2014 new members to request a GA signature and 85% have responded. GA form is now included in membership form and will be on joining page of website. The 2013/14 Accounts have been submitted to OSCR and accepted.

Shows: Our competitive show at Garelochhead is proving very successful in the new venue. Good publicity organised by Mary Gray and Philip Rankin brought in more visitors this year and generous donations to the raffle and plant stall should have increased our income in 2016. In the absence of Willie Campbell, Matt Heasman and John Roy, extra helpers were recruited and so warm thanks to Philip Rankin, Oliver Miller and Wang Liston. A proposal has been made that one or two new cups could be awarded to increase the scope for new entrants to the show; for example 'hybrids from 1980 onwards', as there are many new introductions available.

Gardening Scotland: Two new members recruited in 2015 and the SRS stand gained a Bronze Medal. The Society will host a stand again at Inglinton Show-3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> June, 2016

Committee: The Society records with regret the receipt of Rick Potter's resignation. He has been our contact with Arduaine Garden for many years.

Student Support- The Society had given a grant of £250 in 2015 to Hannah Wilson, an RBGE Student who has been involved with Society activities in the past year. Committee have discussed how our educational funding should be managed and whom to support in the future. Willie Campbell has agreed to set up a small Sub-committee to discuss.

### **Hon Treasurers Report:**

The accounts for October 2014 to September 2015 had been circulated and were tabled.

The Treasurer, Colin Whitehead presented the Year End Report:

General Account—Income £5776. Expenditure £5503. Excess of £273.

Opening Balance (30/09/14) £8523

Plus surplus £3141

Closing Balance (30/09/15) £11664

The Treasurer noted the slight increase in membership income, which was encouraging.

Increased electronic communication had reduced postage costs.

Income will be much healthier when Gift Aid for 2014 -15 had been reclaimed.

It was noted that the printer used by John Roy for producing Journals, Year Book, brochures and publicity photographs was almost moribund and it was agreed that Mr Roy should recommend a suitable replacement and purchase.

The Accounts had been audited and signed by Phillip Rankin. The Treasurer thanked our auditor and reported that Mr Rankin was happy to undertake the 2015-16 audit. The meeting very pleased to accept. The adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Dr Chamberlain and seconded by Gloria Starck and unanimously agreed.

### **Membership Report:**

Helen Kessell, Membership Secretary, apologised for her absence from the meeting. Her report was tabled. The Society currently has 167 members, had gained 9 new members since October 2015 with 3 resignations in the past year. Helen thanked the membership for payment and for alerting her when bank transfers occurred. She noted that Paypal levy a small surcharge on transactions and it has been agreed in Committee that this charge should be passed to members who pay by Paypal.

### **Election of Committee and Office Bearers:**

The following members of Committee had completed their 3 year term of Office at the 2016 AGM:-

John Hammond-President, Ian Sinclair-Vice President, David Starck-Past President and Tours Manager, Ian Douglas-Archivist, William Campbell-Seed Exchange and Rick Potter-Director.

Apart from Rick Potter, who has tendered his resignation, all of the above officers had indicated their willingness to continue for another term. The President proposed that they be re-elected en-bloc-Seconded by Grace Morris and Eric Annal and agreed by meeting.



There remain two vacancies on the committee for a Web Site Manager and a Technical Advisor.

As there were no recommendations from the meeting, it was agreed that a Web Site Manager should be sought through the Journal and that The President should approach Maurice Wilkins to act as Technical Director, as Maurice is most familiar with protocol on transporting plants from private to the public domain and advice is needed on plant material entered for show and the planting scheme for the Memorial Garden to Nigel Price at Crarae which has received many offers of plants from private sources.

### **Tours and Conferences Report (tabled):**

David Starck noted very positive comments about the tour to Cornwall, 18-26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015. He reported that the post show tour in 2015 (Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May) had been cancelled, due to adverse weather conditions. The Joint SRS/RSCG Autumn meeting in 2015, centred around Ardkinglas & Loch Fyne, had been a great success with over 50 delegates attending.

He reported a good response to the Fife Gardens post show day tour next day, in spite of the distance from Garelochhead and on a Bank Holiday on May 2

David Starck proposed a 2017 Spring Tour of gardens of Scotland's Northwest Coast to follow on after the National Rhododendron Show as members from the South would already be in the West of Scotland and could continue on the tour, saving a return journey. It was agreed that the Show would be staged on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and tour to commence following week.

24 delegates have booked for the Spring 2016 Tour of Gardens in Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire (12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> May) and all arrangements are in place.

The President reported on arrangements and the programme for the joint meeting of SRS and RSCG to be held at Ingliston on October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> (Details and Booking tabled)

The themes of future Joint Meetings were discussed as the two groups have different agendas though many delegates are members of both societies. It may be necessary to produce a programme of practical subjects-propagation, identification, disease, etc., of more general interest.

### **Editors Report:**

John Roy apologised for his absence. He reported a busy year and as always, requested copy from members for both the Review and the Yearbook.

He also reported that the SRS printer was moribund and recommended obtaining a new model, as the cost of parts was exorbitant. (See Secretaries notes)

### **Publications Manager's Report:**

Matt Heasman reported that the publications were now available on-line to all members. Postage costs have been reduced as overseas members receive copy electronically.

### **Seed Exchange:**

Willie Campbell's summary of seed sales was tabled in his absence.

He reported that most seed supplied had been taken up resulting in increased sales totalling £493 + \$20. He thanked members for donations of seed. The problem of wild collected seed donations was discussed again and it was suggested that joint projects with source countries could satisfy Nagoya Protocol and balance any possible tiny profit made from seed sales.

### **Technical Report:**

Nothing to report as post was still vacant, but President to approach Maurice Wilkins.

### **Arduaine Garden:**

It was recorded that Maurice Wilkins had left Arduaine on 29<sup>th</sup> February and thus far no replacement for his post has been found by NTS. Maurice has been the SRS link with Arduaine for many years and concern was raised that this formal link may cease with his departure and the resignation of Rick Potter. It was reported that the new NTS Garden Manager at Crarae is to spend one day a week at Arduaine. Members expressed their fears about the maintenance of the garden as this level of management seems inadequate for such an important garden. It was agreed that the President would write to the Chairman of NTS expressing our concern.

### **A.O.B.:**

#### **Student Support**

Willie Campbell had agreed to form a small committee to discuss our student grant and the best way to support a candidate in horticulture and nurture their interest in Rhododendrons.

The next Annual General Meeting was scheduled to be held at the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2017

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.30pm with thanks to the Chair.

## Committee Members

### **Our Office Bearers are:**

**President: John Hammond**

**Vice President: Ian Sinclair**

**Hon. Vice Presidents: George Argent, Sir Ilay Campbell, David Chamberlain, Peter Cox**

**Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow**

**Treasurer: Colin Whitehead**

**Tours & Visits Manager: David Starck**

### **Other Committee Members:**

**Past President: David Starck**

**Hon. Publications Editor: John Roy**

**Publications Manager: Matt Heasman**

**Shows Manager: Ian Sinclair**

**Membership Secretary: Helen Kessell**

**Tours & Meetings Co-ordinator: Gloria Starck**

**Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin**

### **Directors:**

**Ian Douglas**

**William Campbell**

**President: John Hammond, The Three Chimneys, 12 Cockey Moor Road, Starling, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 2HB.**

**Tel: 0161 764 1116**

**Email: [hammondsrhodies@supanet.com](mailto:hammondsrhodies@supanet.com)**

**Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow, Townend of Kirkwood, Stewarton, Ayrshire, KA3 3EW.**

**Tel: 01560 483926**

**Email: [katrina@kclow.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:katrina@kclow.fsnet.co.uk)**

**Treasurer: Colin Whitehead, 21 Laverockdale Park, Edinburgh, EH13 0QE.**

**Tel: 0131 4415036**

**Email: [colin.whitehead21@gmail.com](mailto:colin.whitehead21@gmail.com)**

**Hon. Publications Editor: John Roy, Brecklet House, Ballachulish, Argyll, PH49 4JG.**

**Tel: 01855 811465**

**Email: [john.roy2@btopenworld.com](mailto:john.roy2@btopenworld.com)**

**Publications Manager: Matt Heasman, 9 Dunbeath Grove, Blantyre, G72 0GL.**

**Tel: 01698 711089**

**Email: [matthew.heasman@virgin.net](mailto:matthew.heasman@virgin.net)**

**Tours & Visits Manager: David Starck, Ordha Coille, Kilberry, Argyll, PA29 6YD.**

**Tel: 01880 770257**

**Email: [david@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk](mailto:david@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk)**

**Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin, 7 Hillview Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 8RA.**

**Tel: 0131 334 4213**

**Email: [philiprankin@hotmail.com](mailto:philiprankin@hotmail.com)**

**The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the SRS committee. The committee, however, support the right to freedom of speech.**

**© SRS 2016**





Above: *Rhododendron* 'Vanessa Pastel'  
Left: *Rhododendron* 'Horizon Monarch'  
Below: *Rhododendron* 'Vintage Rose'

Pictures by Jim Beatson



