

OXFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER 35 Winter 2022



St Timothee garden (Felix Lam)

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This edition covers our events since the start of 2022. Our online lecture series began in February with Naoke Abe's talk on 'Cherry' Ingram, followed in April by Annabel Downs's talk on the Landscape Institute Archive. Our summer visits have been to Little Peacocks in Filkins in April, the grounds of Faringdon House in May, the St Timothee garden in July and to the Lyde Garden and Bledlow Manor in September. However the highlight of the summer was our 20th anniversary party at Rycote in June.

In October we held our AGM. In summary, all those proposed for election were elected. Our trustees and directors (now one and the same) were confirmed as Max Askew, Felix Lam and Will Holborow. Several members have expressed the desire to return to 'in-person' lectures, now that the novelty of Zoom events has rather worn off. The Events Committee is investigating potential venues for 2023/24.

The final visit of the year was to the Japanese garden at the New House in Shipton-under Wychwood. The autumn/winter season of talks began with J C Niala's talk on urban gardening. Reports on all of these events are included in this newsletter. The remaining events in this year's programme, including Hal Moggridge's talk, will be covered in the next newsletter. Plans for the 2023 programme are already well advanced, and details will be circulated as usual in January.

Members who have followed Stephen Wass's archaeological investigations may be interested to know that his book about Hanwell Castle has now been published: Seventeenth-century Water Gardens and the Birth of Modern Scientific thought in Oxford: The Case of Hanwell Castle (available from Amazon).

COLLINGWOOD 'CHERRY' INGRAM AND THE JAPANESE CHERRY TREE

Naoko Abe, the author of this book on 'Cherry' Ingram, is a former journalist who has lived in London since 2001. She gave us a truly fascinating talk about Collingwood Ingram who was born into a wealthy family in 1880 and became known as 'Cherry' Ingram for his defining obsession. He had visited Japan in 1902 and again in 1907 for his honeymoon and travelled throughout the country admiring the beauty and variety of their cherry trees. In 1919 he moved his family to The Grange, a large house in Benenden in Kent. In the garden were two large ornamental cherry trees. One was later confirmed as Taihaku, the Great White Cherry.

When visiting Japan in 1926 Ingram was horrified to find that the country was beginning to be covered with a blanket of a cloned cherry called Somei-yoshino. All other species were forgotten and allowed to become extinct. Rebuilding was taking place following an earthquake in 1923 and this variety was planted en masse in Tokyo and Yokohama to give much needed colour to the devastated areas. Whilst he was there Ingram was shown a painting of Taihaku, the species most beloved by the Japanese that had become extinct in Japan. On his return to England he tried many ways to send scions (cuttings) to the great grandson of the artist to propagate but they died en route from the heat. In 1932 he eventually succeeded by embedding them in potatoes and sending them on their way via the Trans-Siberian Railway.



The Japanese government saw the new cloned cherry (Somei-yoshino) as a convenient symbol of a new era for Japan. Every time there was something to celebrate - winning a war against China or enthroning a new emperor - further huge swathes of the country were planted with these trees. During the Second World War pink cherry blossoms on white backgrounds were painted on the fuselage of many kamikaze planes and their bombs were sometimes called 'cherry bombs'.

However, in the countryside, there were sakuramori ('cherry blossom keepers') who had been doing everything they could in their individual villages to preserve traditional cherry trees. Ingram had met many of these, often elderly gentlemen, on his earlier visits to Japan and kept in touch with them. They were able to guide him to find many rare species. In this way he saved hundreds of unique and rare varieties from extinction and is highly honoured in Japan today.

Ann Lloyd

PLANTING PLANS TO POWER STATIONS: THE LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE ARCHIVE

This lecture by Annabel Downs, chair of the Friends of Landscape Archive at Reading (FOLAR), described the evolution of the Landscape Institute archive from the Institute's foundation in 1930 to 2013 when the library and archive were relocated to The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at the University of Reading. It holds an unrivalled collection of publications, images, drawings and digital material relating to the design of landscapes across the UK, as well as the corporate records of the Institute. Thus it holds the corporate memory and intellectual capital of the landscape profession. The Archive holds collections from the offices of distinguished landscape architects including Michael Brown, Brenda Colvin, Sylvia Crowe, Preben Jakobsen, Peter Shepheard and Geoffrey Jellicoe. Annabel illustrated her talk with examples of drawings and designs, some of them - such as Geoffrey Jellicoe's - especially fine. The collection is an important resource for anyone researching twentieth-century landscapes, and this talk has whetted our interest in making an 'in-person' visit. For further details, visit the website: https://merl.reading.ac.uk/collections/landscape-institute/

Annabel also mentioned the vulnerability of the landscapes created during the past century; of the 20 post-war sites added to the Historic England register in 2020, half were in poor condition. A further concern is that garden history courses have been closing and landscape history is not being taught in landscape architecture courses.

VISIT TO LITTLE PEACOCKS AT FILKINS

On a beautiful early spring day, twenty of us went to Colvin & Moggridge's garden, Little Peacocks, once Brenda Colvin's garden, and later the location of the Colvin & Moggridge practice. Sadly, Mr Moggridge was unable to join us because of Covid, and so Chris Carter and his wife, Stephanie, gave us a lively introduction to the garden, the landscape practice and its history.

Chris explained that he worked for Colvin & Moggridge for many years, first arriving as a student in 1965; he later became a partner and is now a consultant (as is Hal), with a new practice team taking the firm into the future. Brenda Colvin had set up her company in 1922, the first commission being for a Mr Gladstone at Lulworth Cove, another early work being at Stowe School. In 1929 she was one of the founders of the Institute of Landscape Architecture (she became President in 1951), later to become the Landscape Institute. An early advocate of the value of the environment and sustainability, she wrote the influential books Land and Landscape and Trees for Town and Country (both 1947).

After the war this led to significant commissions as part of the post-war reconstruction, including public parks, a power station in Yorkshire and East Kilbride New Town. She had been sharing a London office with Sylvia Crowe, but in 1955 she bought Little Peacocks, first as a weekend house, then moved her office to a 'temporary' shed in the garden in 1964. The important introduction to Hal Moggridge came via Geoffrey Jellicoe. They shared a vision for what landscape architecture could and should be and in 1969 the practice became Colvin & Moggridge.





Top: Brenda Colvin (© Museum of English Rural Life)
Bottom: Rosa Brenda Colvin (Wiki Commons)

Brenda Colvin began creating the garden at Little Peacocks in 1956, and since her death in 1981, it has been kept close to the original design, with a large chestnut and a variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants. These include a large new variety of rose, which now rambles over the wooden shed, and which Graham Stuart Thomas named R. Brenda Colvin. The gardener at Little Peacocks was Louise Smith until 1941, thereafter the garden was more or less maintained by the staff. Gradually Stephanie became more involved and today she manages the garden.

It is a very dry garden, she told us, on Cotswold limestone, with underneath the soil the base of the old farmyard. There was an early discussion on the approach to the garden, and for the first twenty years nothing much changed. The planting is densely packed. Brenda composted using straw bales edging and they continue to do so. Some trees and roses have of course been lost to harsh weather or old age, and the chestnut now throws a large pool of shade. New pests, climate change with scorching in summer have also had an effect. Guided by what they feel Brenda Colvin might have done, there has been both some replanting and new introductions, with an eye to colour and structure. There is



Garden at Little Peacocks (Felix Lam)

also increasing ground cover, partly as a result of self-seeding (which Brenda Colvin favoured) among larger more dramatic plants. There are verbascum, giant thistle, and at one time giant hogweed (now removed), and large drifts of bulbs including cyclamen colchicum, anemone, lily of the valley and native bluebells.

After our visit to Little Peacocks, Chris and Stephanie kindly invited members to see their own, very different garden nearby. It was delightful, a wild meadow garden with mown paths, apple trees in blossom, a productive veg patch, all looking out onto fields beyond.

On Thursday 17 November, Hal gave a fascinating talk to OGT on 'Historic Landscape - A Restoration and New Insertions', including his role in restoration planting at Blenheim, his later work for the Royal Parks in London, the creation of the National Botanic Garden of Wales in 1995-2000 and, in 1979, the garden for Stevens Close for Jesus College, Oxford. We plan to make a return visit to Little Peacocks in 2023.

Jaqueline Mitchell



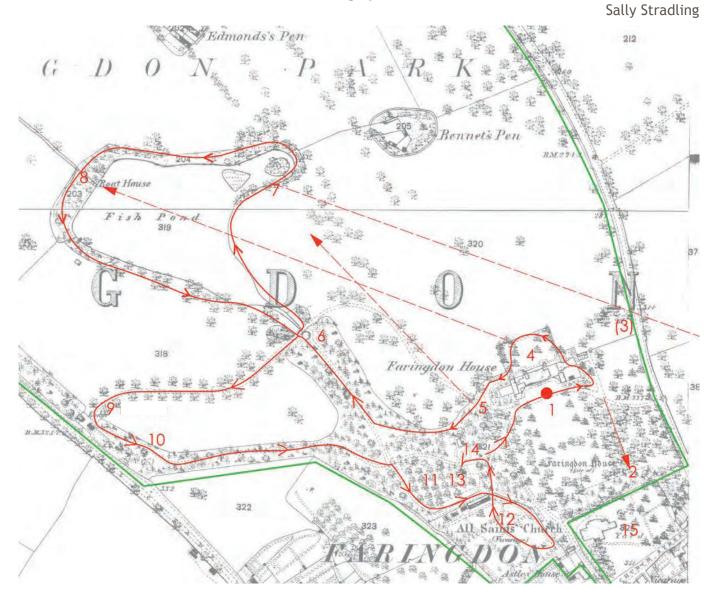
Garden at Little Peacocks (Colvin & Moggridge)

VISIT TO THE PARK AND GARDENS SURROUNDING FARINGDON HOUSE

On 21 May, OGT members were privileged to have a private tour of the gardens and landscape, which are not normally open to the public, led by Sarah Couch who had carried out a Landscape Statement for the site.

Faringdon House, listed Grade I, was constructed in 1770-1785 for Sir Henry Pye, Poet Laureate. It was occupied from 1918 by the eccentric writer, composer and musician Lord Berners who lived openly there with his lover Robert Heber Percy. The landscape is not on the national Register of Parks and Gardens but includes elements from the Tudor period as well as landscaping from the 18th and 19th centuries, including garden terraces, parkland with circuit rides and walks, a walled kitchen garden, woodland, an orangery and a 20th-century swimming pool.

Our tour began at the south front of the house from where we were able to see the site of the earlier Elizabethan House on a raised bank near the church of which the garden terracing survives as well as various decorative stonework re-used in the west courtyard and roof of the present mansion. We then passed the stables and 20th century motor house and from the garden terrace on the north looked outwards across the parkland, fittingly populated with grazing cattle, to the lake to the north west. The terrace has a new planting scheme with tall pleached enclosure and large terracotta urns by landscape architect Justin Spinks. The main part of the tour followed woodland paths across a bridge and around the lake to a boat house with pauses to look at the views back towards the mansion. The return path followed a circuit walk alongside the Lechlade Road, past a couple of lodges. We then looked at the walled garden and flamboyantly designed swimming pool complete with stone wyverns. The tour concluded with refreshments in the orangery.



First Edition OS map showing in red the route of the guided tour (Sarah Couch)

OGT'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY VISIT TO RYCOTE PARK ON 11 JUNE 2022

On a beautiful sunny evening, 54 members and guests visited Rycote Park for the 20th anniversary social event. The house and park are owned by OGT's patrons Sarah and Bernard Taylor who welcomed us for this celebration.

We began in the large and elegant timber barn with a talk by Sarah Taylor who described the long and complex history of the estate and its inheritance. The original Tudor mansion was fire-damaged in 1745, restored, but then demolished in 1807 except for part of the main façade and stable block. Thereafter it became a farm until 1911 when it was adapted to become a family country house. All that is visible today of the Tudor mansion is part of the south-west tower and the stable block. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was employed in 1760-75 to remove the formal Tudor gardens, to landscape the grounds and to create a lake. The Taylors bought the estate in 2000 and began renovations of the house and grounds.

Following Sarah's introduction, we divided into three groups for tours of the formal gardens, the landscaped gardens, and the chapel. Sarah guided us around the reinstated formal gardens close to the house including the East Terrace which displayed a colourful rose and herbaceous garden. The front of the house is now on the west side, approached through a modern carriage arch. It has been recreated as a Georgian courtyard, with a Tudor-style fragrant herb garden and a box knot garden by the front door.

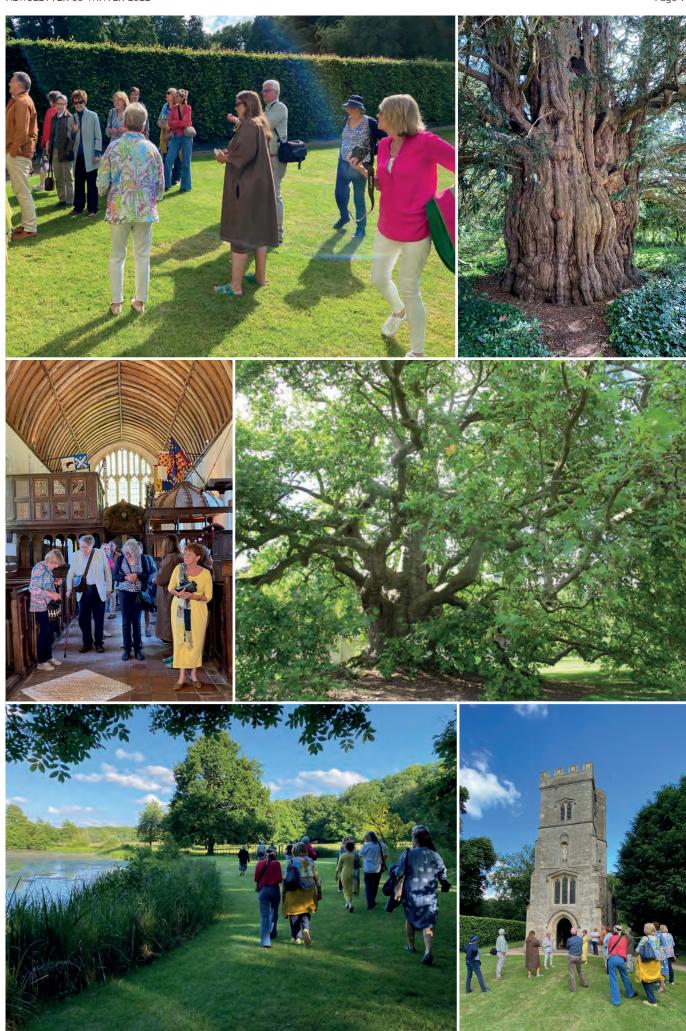
The landscaped gardens were guided by Siriol Lewis, head gardener at Rycote. We were shown the early orchard, the restored Edwardian walled kitchen garden and parts of the Capability Brown landscaped grounds. The serpentine lake to the north-east of the estate was formed from prior medieval fish ponds and is fed only by springs. The lake was dredged in 2001-2 and is now being managed to improve its chemistry. Returning from the lake, we could see the location of the original Tudor mansion now visible as raised lawn immediately to the north-east of the present house. Nearby is the massive Oriental Plane tree, which may date to 1680 or 1720.

The chapel predates the Tudor mansion and was consecrated in 1449. Of particular importance are the internal wooden fittings including the original pews and the base of the rood-screen, plus the two box pews c. 1610. Just south of the entrance is an ancient yew tree that was allegedly planted in 1135. Nearby is the 18th century ice-house, which was restored in 2016.

Following our tours, we reconvened in the barn for the evening's social events enhanced with wines (kindly supplied by the Taylors) and a selection of canapés. An amusing brief history of the trust was presented by Richard Mawrey, first Chair of OGT. Sally Stradling gave thanks to the Taylors. Meanwhile we were entertained by a photo-loop of past OGT events created by Will Holborow and Sean Vassen. The evening was a most successful and enjoyable celebration of 20 years of the Trust and now we look forward to many more years ahead.

Vanessa Fell





VISIT TO ST TIMOTHEE GARDEN

St Timothee is a beautiful garden tucked away in the Bedfordshire countryside 70 metres above sea level, subject to cold winters and on a clay soil. At our visit on 28th July, it was delightful to meet Sara Pajwani and listen to her talk about the development of the site and then spend time exploring and admiring it.

In 2006 Sara and husband Sal bought St Timothee - a 1930s T-shaped house with a 2-acre garden and a collection of out-buildings. What the estate agent described as a garden was little more than a field with a small pond, five pampas grasses, a couple of old fruit trees that may have been in situ before the house was built and a selection of mature trees (a red oak, a silver birch and a white poplar). The out-buildings seemed to have no connection to the house - the oldest, pre-dating the house, was in a terrible state of repair. Critically there was an enormous number of bunnies!

Sarah, not a gardener, with two small children and a part-time job, had an exciting and daunting project on her hands. But she and her husband looked at the essentials first - the purchase of a large ride-on lawnmower (equal in size to their car) and erection of fencing to keep the bunnies out. Next they engaged professional help. The skeleton of Sara's brief was to give a sense of connection between the house and the buildings; to create a natural feel to the garden and to make it easy to manage. The landscaping company presented a design with open sweeping borders, a formal parterre between two of the outbuildings and a rectangular pond. The only thing that Sarah modified was the pond as she desired to have something more organically shaped and to encourage wildlife.

Once the fences were completed the first hedges followed and then the first border - an enormous long curving 7m wide space. Sarah developed an organised approach and first looked carefully at colour, followed by background, year-round structure, repetition, infill and then finally spring bulbs. Within one year her first border was transformed from sparse planting to luxuriant and colourful growth.

As Sarah's confidence grew she was able to implement her own ideas. She created a cohesion between borders enabling them to flow one into another through colour or species repetition. The eye is guided from one colour/

planting palette to another. She created her Fire Borders and the Quieter areas, not only for a relaxing space for the gardener but for a transition from one zone to another.

Among Sara's planting were Althea cannabina, Stipa gigantica, Echinops 'Veitcha's Blue, Veronica crastrum for height and structure; Cornus 'Mid Winter Fire' for background; Catmint, Echinacea, Dahlias, Eringium and Gaura linheimeri for mid-height and repetition and Lychnis coronaria, Stachys byzantina and 'Big Ears' for front of border filling. Absolutely no annuals.

One member of the group always judges the success of a garden visit by the number of plants she has noted down as interesting and has since purchased two species she noted - Salvia amistad and Cotinus golden spirit. She came away from one famous garden with a blank page but from this garden with a page full! This was a highly successful visit.

Felix Lam



Parterre and shed (Felix Lam)



Across the border, old shed and sun beds (Felix Lam)

VISIT TO BLEDLOW MANOR HOUSE GARDEN AND THE LYDE

On the 2nd September we visited the Manor House Garden and Lyde Garden in Bledlow, Buckinghamshire. Upon arrival we were greeted by Lord Carrington, current owner who gave us an introduction to the gardens. He recounted that the Manor House had its origins in the 17th century and did not have a garden to speak of. However, when a large 15th century tithe barn burnt down in 1967, leaving the new farm buildings visible from the House, his parents commissioned Robert Adams to create one. Since then, the structure of the garden has remained largely unchanged, although in 2019, a local plantsman and designer, Sean Walter, was approached for advice on re-planting and rejuvenation.

The Manor House Garden is principally made up of a series of themed spaces divided by yew and beech hedges, reminiscent of the 'rooms' at Hidcote Manor. The repeat planting of shrubs and herbaceous perennials such as roses, lavender, catmint, box, and peonies is interspersed with specimens such the Cork Oak (Quercus suber), Viburnum carlesii, and the semi-evergreen Turner's Oak (Quercus turneri).

The group was then taken on a guided tour of the 12-acre garden by Lord Carrington. This commenced with a stroll through the traditional walled and Croquet Lawn gardens, leading into the Snail Garden, created in memory of the owner's late mother and which included her favourite flowers and shrubs and a sculpted snail by Michael Cooper. The tour continued through the Coracle Garden, with its coracle shaped fountain by William Pye and into St Peter's Garden. We then entered a small topiary garden with a bronze Armillary at the centre which led to the North Garden, situated in front of the house with an expanse of lawn, two sunken pools and dominated by a several hundred-year-old Yew tree. A number of other gardens followed including a gently undulating $2\frac{1}{2}$ acre Sculpture Garden, created in 1991, where trees and shrubs were used as backdrops for a number of sculptures by contemporary artists such as Peter Randall Page, Alistair Lambert and Barry Mason. The South Garden with its row of standard Viburnum carlesii, a sunken pool with fountain overlooked by an 18th century granary on staddle stones and modern sculpture by Matt Maddocks. We ended in the Turntable Garden with its display of alpines, including Edelweiss, planted between the paving stones.

The tour then took us across the village road to the Lyde Garden which was designed by Robert Adams in 1981. It is part of the Carrington Estate and accessible to the public. The Lyde Garden is an exotic sunken valley garden with a tributary of the Thames flowing through it. It was created to replace three watercress beds after they had ceased production. The dense planting around us included varieties of ferns, all set amongst some spectacular trees such as Metasequoia glyptostroboides, Liquidambar styraciflua and Aesculus california. The overall effect created was that of a secret almost tropical garden.

The Gardens at Bledlow are a delightful example of what can be achieved over fifty years by one designer's vision and one family's enthusiasm. How old and new, modern, and traditional can co-exist, how statuary can be used to great effect throughout a garden and how an exotic and remarkable space, such as the Lyde Garden, can exist in rural Buckinghamshire. (Open to visitors by appointment enquiries@carington.co.uk)





Coracle garden at Bledlow Manor (Felix Lam)



The Lyde Garden at Bledlow (Wiki Commons)

LECTURE BY J C NIALA: URBAN GARDENING

JC Niala ('JC') has carried out doctoral research at the University of Oxford focused on gardeners and urban gardening in the city of Oxford. During the Covid epidemic (2020-21) she set up the 1918 Allotment project on the Elder Stubbs Charity Allotment site in East Oxford, using contemporary plants and horticultural practices - apart from the use of pesticides. She began her talk on the 29th September by asking everyone what their interests were in the topic and what they were hoping to learn from it.

Allotments are often associated with the drive for greater self-sufficiency during the First and Second World Wars, however they have historical antecedents in the demands for land by the 'diggers' in the mid-seventeenth century, led by Gerrard Winstanley, and the Chartist movement in the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1960s allotments were falling into disuse and recommendations to reform them, contained in The Thorpe Report (1969) came to nothing. In recent decades there has been a great resurgence of interest in allotments, with many sites having long waiting lists. There is still a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide allotments if there is demand from six or more local residents from separate households.

JC's particular focus is on the human and community values of allotments including the benefits of giving and sharing produce - vegetables, fruit and flowers. She explained the distinction between community gardens, 'guerilla' gardens and allotments, and how the latter allow the 'allotmenteers' to work alone, yet together. The 'old boys' have been the mainstays over the generations, but nowadays there is increasing diversity amongst allotmenteers, and a faster turnover of tenants in some sites. JC's research has shown that there is greater diversity on allotments than in the surrounding urban areas, for example the Nepalese community and other ethnic groups are well-represented in the Lenthall Road Rose Hill Allotments.

JC's perspective on allotments combines horticulture, history and human values - a refreshing and distinctive view of a familiar topic. Her debut nature writing book *A Loveliness of Ladybirds* is an account of community renewal in a Kenyan slum, through gardening and farming. It is due to be published by Little Toller in Spring 2023.

Will Holborow



Elder Stubbs Charity Allotments, east Oxford (J C Niala)

OGT AT OXFORDSHIRE PAST, BANBURY MUSEUM, 9 JULY

Organised by the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society and partnering this year with Banbury Museum and Gallery and Banbury Historical Society, the short talks included: the Portable Antiquities Scheme; Victoria County History update; recent archaeological work in Oxford City; Oxfordshire Buildings Record activity in 2021; and excavations at Drayton Lodge Farm. The day ended with a tour of the museum by its Director, Simon Townsend. This was beautifully organised by a very welcoming group, who were keen to make more concrete link-ups with OGT, particularly if there were group outings. It was a great day out, with good interest in our literature and leaflets, hopefully resulting in a few new members.

Joanna Gilmour

RESEARCH NEWS

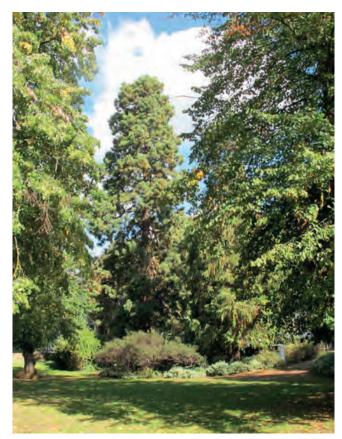
First, news about the current Recreational Parks Research Project. The summary for Garth Park in Bicester is now available on the OGT website and the detailed report will follow. There are two recently initiated projects - The Paddocks in Watlington and Wellington Square, Oxford.

'The Paddocks' is a small (just under an acre) charming, carefully landscaped community garden and recreational space in the heart of Watlington. The space has been transformed over 800 years from animal enclosure and pasture for the high number of animals (cattle, sheep, horses) brought by drovers until the mid-19th century, to a school recreational ground and now an important community area. It is said that Watlington was the only place with large enough facilities for Cromwell to muster his army before the siege of Oxford 1644-46.



The Paddocks Watllington (Felix Lam)

Wellington Square Gardens lie in the centre of the square named after the Duke of Wellington. The gardens are small (0.5 acre) and are mainly set to lawn but contain mixed herbaceous beds and several mature trees including a Wellingtonia. Interestingly, at the time of the civil war, the area of the square comprised earthwork defences and was nicknamed 'Rats and Mice Hill'. Subsequently the land became the site of a workhouse occupied 1775 -1865, which eventually moved to a larger site on Cowley Road. The site was sold to the university and the square was laid out by the city architect.



Wellington Square (Vanessa Fell)

A different type of project, now complete and presented on the OGT website, is a report of 'The Bicycle Boys' exploration of Oxfordshire gardens 96 years ago. This has been researched alongside the RHS Lindley Library's online exhibition, link on OGT website above.



Sam Brewster with bikes taken by Loyal Johnson, 1928. Credit: RHS Lindley Collections

Lastly we are starting a new project recording the 11 gardens of Friends Meeting Houses in Oxfordshire. Most of these buildings have a long history (7 of the 11 are listed) and the gardens would initially have been burial grounds. Now they are used variously as places for contemplation, meetings, parties, play and remembrance. If you would like to be involved, please contact Felix at felix.lam45@gmail.com

JAPANESE GARDEN AT NEW HOUSE, SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD

Our final visit of the year on the 29th October was to this Grade II listed house and Japanese garden. We were escorted by the head gardener and were very fortunate that the owner, Milton Grundy, was in residence to answer questions. He commissioned the house in 1964, inspired by a trip to Japan, and each of the simple rooms has views to different parts of the garden, its stream and pools and many species of moss. The building has a hidden private entrance, so that when you arrive through a doorway in a wall, you are struck by the peace and calm of the house within its setting.

It was designed as a weekend house by Roy Stout and Patrick Litchfield, as their first commission. It was originally refused planning permission and only got consent after a public inquiry with Nikolaus Pevsner as expert witness. In the first edition of Oxfordshire in the Buildings of England series, Pevsner called it 'one of the most outstanding modern private houses in the country'.

The garden is a careful balance of Japanese ideas and plants, below a canopy of mature firs, cedars, oaks and a large horse chestnut. The house appears to grow out the pool, with a raked gravel garden inspired by the Ryoan-Ji temple, mosses and a stream. It was laid out in 1964-5 by a small team of gardeners from Japan, led by a Japanese designer, Mr Kasamoto, and the modern abstract painter Viacheslav Atroshenko (1935-1994). Astroshenko's brother, Paul created a mural along the western wall in 1971, but this has now faded.

Jane Carlton Smith



Japanese garden at New House (Felix Lam)

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust

Committee: Jane Carlton Smith (Secretary), Vanessa Fell (Membership), Will Holborow (Treasurer), Sally Stradling (Events)

Membership applications to: Vanessa Fell, c/o 30 West Street, Chipping Norton, Oxon, OX7 5ER membership@ogt.org.uk

Patrons: Charles and Angela Cottrell-Dormer, Lord and Lady Saye and Sele, Lady Camoys,
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