



CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 16 MAY 2004

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I would like to express both mine and the Management Committee's thanks to Mrs Audrey Osborne and Mr Mansel Spratling, who have resigned from the Trust, for all the support they have given to the Trust over the past years. I am sure all our members will concur with this. At our Annual General Meeting last November Mr Alan Brown and Mr Charles Malyon were elected to help the committee and we welcome their support in the running of the Trust.

One of the pleasant things about the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust is how we have been able to give assistance to others. Recently I have been working with members of a newly formed NADFAS Gardens Recording Group in St Ives, and we have looked at the gardens at Thorpe Hall, near Peterborough and at Harcourt in Hemingford Grey, and a method of researching and recording gardens in their area has been set up. Mr Peter Foster, the owner of Harcourt, has generously donated the Trust copies of all the garden follies and other buildings he has designed during his career, including an incredible water tower for Madingley Hall.

One of our committee returning from the theatre in London on the train happened to speak to the new owner of Woodcroft Castle. This moated property and garden was recently for sale and I had been trying to visit the property but with no luck. A phone call occurred and a group of us went to meet the owners and explored the grounds which lie to the north of Marham, near Peterborough.

By chance the conference organiser at Holmwood Hall, again near Peterborough, contacted the Trust seeking help with a history of the house and grounds she was working on. A small group made contact and after some delay we eventually visited the Hall and were given copies of their research concerning the late owner, who gave generously to the armed forces during the Second World War. We explored the Georgian stable buildings and we would like members to return later this year to help plot where the trees marked on the 1st Edition OS map were in the grounds. Please contact us if you would like to help.

The Countess of Erroll at Woodbury Hall, Everton, near Sandy decided it was time to start a Bedfordshire Gardens Trust and I was very pleased to see that she had invited several members of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust to support the neighbouring Gardens Trust first meeting. Gilly Drummond, the President of the Association of gardens Trusts gave an inspiring talk emphasising the need to involve local communities and children. (A plea here for the President to have a suitable projector which will take glass mounted

slides). We send our best wishes to the new Trust and we have offered to help in any way we can.

During our continued research into Wood & Ingram we have been sending photocopies of early tree and seed orders to various owners whose properties are mentioned in the ledgers and have received kind letters of appreciation in return. We have been greatly helped in our research by various local people who have produced the most amazing information about the firm. Members will have to wait patiently whilst we catalogue this for inclusion in the book we are writing about this nursery firm.

I have attended a meeting at Headquarters to discuss the urgent need to gather all our research together from the various counties. The files covering our Trust's work are held in over 400 files and I can imagine that other Trusts may have a lot more. Headquarters is now approaching the HLF for assistance in bringing all this work together and making it available in an agreed format.

The Trust is also very grateful for a recent generous donation from a local Trust which will be used towards the publishing of our book on Wood & Ingram and also the establishment of the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden. The volunteers who have been fighting the rampant weeds for several years now at Ramsey were photographed for an article in The English Garden which appeared on the shelves in February this spring. One of the volunteers remarked: 'We're not only doing something worthwhile, we have a really good time doing it'.

Members may have time when receiving this newsletter to pay a visit to the Rural Museum in Wood Lane, Ramsey to see the Garden Heritage Exhibition which has been assembled by the volunteers of the Walled Garden. The exhibition will cover the history of the Ramsey Horticultural Society, one of the oldest in the county; the history of Wood & Ingram one of the longest running nurseries in the county; establishing the Walled Garden at Ramsey; and historical illustrations of parks and gardens in the county.

The exhibition is open during May on Thursdays from 10am-5pm, and on Sundays and Bank Holiday from 2pm-5pm. There is ample free parking and a friendly Tea Room. Entry to the Museum and Exhibition is £2. If you have never been to the Ramsey Rural Museum, I urge you to go and have a look.

Our Social Evening this year will be held at Croxton Park by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Alan Bowkett on Saturday 19th June 2004 at 6.00pm. Please can you apply for tickets

(£10 per member, £12 for non-members) as soon as possible from Daphne Pearce (tel. no 01767 650527).

Recently the park and gardens at Croxton Park have been upgraded by English Heritage to Grade II*. The proceeds will as previously mentioned go towards the Walled Garden at Ramsey.

This newsletter comprises three articles: a reminder of one of last year's warm summer afternoons, for those who enjoyed the gardens and house at Southill in Bedfordshire, by Jeanette Fage, one of our members who lives in Hertfordshire and enjoys coming to all our events.

This is followed by a long extract from Jane Brown and Audrey Osborne's article about Pleasure Gardens in West Cambridge. The complete article is to be published in the Garden History Society Journal. Having typed the full article once, all nineteen pages of it, and then informed that the editor (who really didn't know what the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust was involved in and wanted an article about similar gardens throughout the whole of the city) wanted it rewritten. This was almost too much for Jane Brown, who had spent a considerable time writing the article.

JOHN DRAKE Chairman

VISIT TO SOUTHILL PARK 29th May 2003

Our first view of the grounds of Southill Park was spectacular. We looked down from the terrace in front of the house onto an idyllic pastoral landscape, with a lake flanked on one side by a dark band of woodland, and on the other by meadows. Capability Brown redesigned the grounds for a previous owner, Lord Torrington, in the 1770s. Some elements of Brown's work are retained here and we were privileged to be shown round the grounds and the house by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Whitbread.

Samuel Whitbread I, the founder of Whitbread Brewery, bought Southill in 1795. His son Samuel Whitbread II engaged the architect Henry Holland to rebuild the house on a more functional plan, and to redesign the grounds including formal gardens and ornamental grounds to the south of the house. Holland designed the Fishing Temple at the north end of the lake, and added the balustraded terrace on the north side of the house.

A main feature of the grounds beyond the lawns to the rear of the house was a vista down an avenue running south. This is lined with lead statues of mythological figures by Henry Cheere. We enjoyed the variety of colours of the rhododendrons fringing the avenue, ranging from white and pale pink, through lilac and cerise, to dark crimson. This avenue is aligned to a larger avenue which begins ½km further south.

On the day of our visit Mark Todd-Hunter was putting finishing touches to the current garden make-over. A large circular bed set in lawn between the house and the avenue had been planted in a pattern of segments spiralling towards the centre. In the spirit of innovation typical of present day garden design, Mr Todd-Hunter had chosen species of sufficient height and mass to break the line of the vista from the house down the avenue, and partially block the view of the house from the garden. The Hellebore and Digitalis featured by current television gardening experts were set alongside traditional favourites, such as Iris, in a marvellous range of warm rust and bronze. A more idiosyncratic choice was silvery banks of sea kale.

The area beyond the formal gardens has been the subject of a series of changes over the years. The ornamental grounds have been extended beyond the ha-ha, which was designed to keep out deer. The ha-ha has ingeniously been turned into a sunken pathway.

It was then decided to withdraw the article completely. It is amazing what reaction this causes – an editor almost pleading for the article. The Trust hopes to be able to publish the whole article in full at a later date for members who are not members of the Garden History Society.

Finally an in-depth report on the garden restoration at Bridge End Garden in Saffron Walden by Charles Malyon who has captured the essence of this project in full, and lists the problems and successes which the Uttlesford District Council has had to deal with. Mr John Bosworth, the council's project manager actually produces a weekly report on the progress of the work in this garden which should be well worth visiting during the summer next year.

At last November's Annual General Meeting I urged members to encourage friends to become members of the Trust. I hope everyone has taken this seriously as we need more help on some of our projects, which keep popping up again and again.

Around almost every corner a surprise awaited us: a sunken garden with two curving flights of steps; a bog garden recently created by Mark Todd-Hunter in a spot liable to flooding; and an amazing ancient layered beech. A whole circle of new trees had rooted from the branches of the parent tree which spread at ground level.

Walking back towards the house, we admired the pergola evocative of the 1930s. Mrs Whitbread has recently had this restored. The original columns of curved bricks remain, but the crumbling brick steps have been grassed over, and new beds created. Appropriately a traditional variety of scented pink button rose, "Pompoms de Paris", covers the wall behind. Next we were shown the spacious Victorian conservatory, with its pool and water spouts and brightly coloured original ceramic jardinières.

Our final treat was the visit to the house. The Whitbreads have successfully met the challenge of combining the sensitive and accurate restoration of a Regency interior with the atmosphere of a lived-in home. We came in through the stunning Edwardian marbled rear porch and went upstairs to the library designed by Holland. Above the recessed shelves are classical friezes based on drawings by Charles Heathcote Tatham. In the course of the restoration in the 1990s the cornices and architraves of the room were just cleaned rather than painted to avoid blurring the fine details.

Work by the artist George Garrard, a protégé of Samuel Whitbread II, features in the decoration of the house. He specialised in the portrayal of animals. We were shown a collection of plaster cattle commissioned by the Board of Agriculture in 1801, and also portrait busts of Samuel Whitbread I and II, both of whom held the post of M.P. for Buckingham.

In the neighbouring ante-room we admired the bright crimson silk wall-covering. This replica of the original was commissioned from the last English silk mill, which was still in production near Braintree until a few years ago.

Finally after tea in the dining room, we had the opportunity to buy wine from Warden Abbey Vineyard, which the Whitbreads replanted in 1986 on the site of the medieval Cistercian Abbey's vineyards.

Jeanette Fage

‘WE SHALL HAVE VERY GREAT PLEASURE’¹

Nineteenth century detached leisure gardens in West Cambridge.

This paper details the existence of seven sets of detached leisure gardens in Cambridge, one hundred and ten gardens in all, which were in use between approximately 1830 until 1925. The remaining evidence for the gardens was located on the ground by a group of Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust’s researchers, aiming for a larger and ongoing project, the study of the domestic development of West Cambridge between the years 1880 to 1940. Six of the seven sites of detached gardens were previously unrecognised, and the discovery of so many within a comparatively small area suggests that the leisure garden phenomenon has yet to be fully acknowledged by garden historians. The context of Cambridge adds piquancy to the discoveries, as the gardeners are known to have spanned the social spectrum from college servants to senior academics.

As a research group our primary interest was in the West Fields. University expansion brought reforms, most notably the abolition of the ‘Tests’ in 1882 which allowed Fellows to be married: the consequent demand for family houses with gardens coincided with the decline in farm rents due to the agricultural depression of the 1880s, and these two factors brought about the development of West Cambridge. This development, in Late Victorian Gothic and Arts & Crafts Styles, mainly built before the 1914-18 War, represents a vintage period of English Domestic design.¹⁵ Furthermore the gardens were made for and by a stream of botanists and other earth scientists, as well as ‘gardeners’ distinguished in other academic disciplines, which makes them worthy of record. Now, with the University’s ever greater expansion into the 21st century, the circle is closing and many of these once large and lovely gardens are being claimed for building sites.

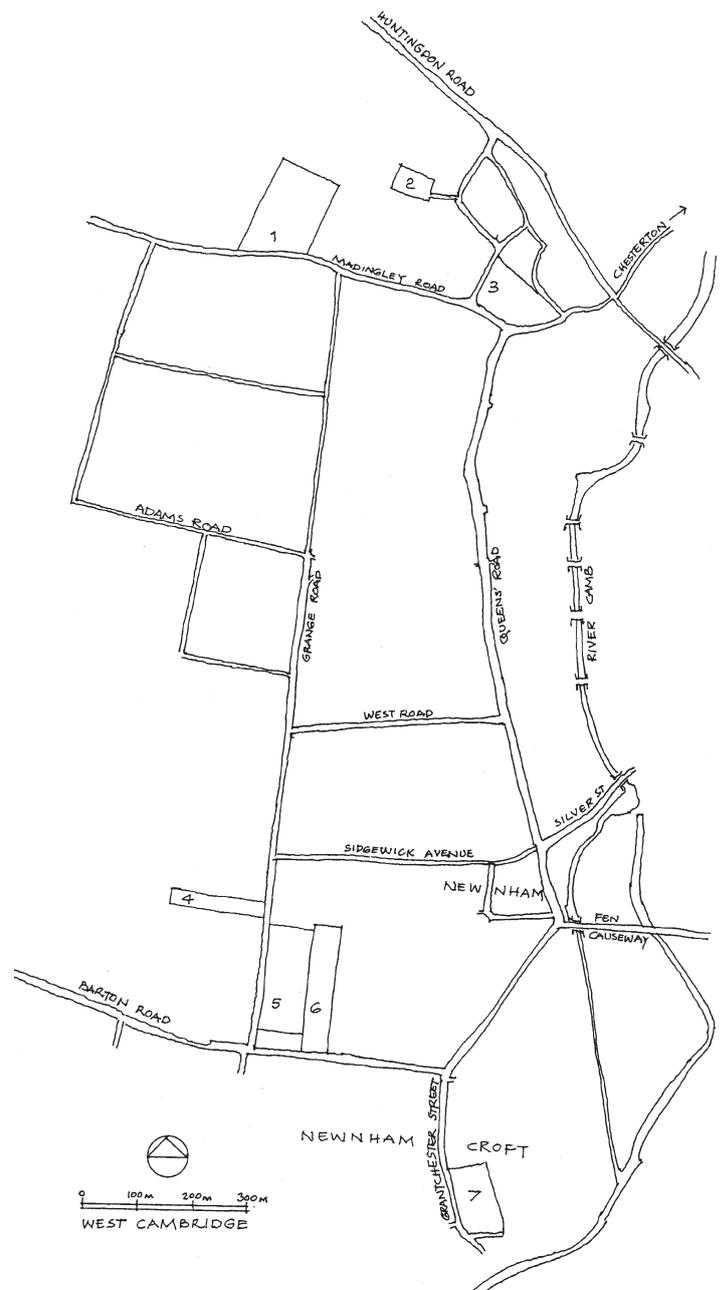
Our methodology was to begin on the ground, walking our defined area, west of the Backs to the Huntingdon Road in the north and Newnham in the south. We walked in a group, discussing and questioning the dating of the houses, paying special attention to old boundaries and other landscape and garden features that appeared to have been undisturbed for a long time, and checking our findings on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. Our on-site findings yielded the first clues to the existence of the leisure gardens in almost all the cases and obviously the surviving garden buildings on the Grange Road Gardens site were particularly interesting.

The second phase was local archive research in published and unpublished material, much of this carried out by Audrey Osborne. Besides the local library and local authority sources, Cambridge has the University Library (with a unique collection of maps for a well-mapped city) and the College archives: St John’s College, which turned out to be the major corporate owner, were extremely interested and supportive of our project. All references are included in the following notes.

In researching these seven sets of gardens, the earliest date we can establish for the start of this ‘leisure gardening’ is c.1830, when there was a flurry of horticultural activity which included the founding of the Cambridge Florists’ Society.¹⁶ With the exception of the twelve Grange Road Gardens (fig 4 on key plan) which survived until 1925, they were all taken for development by the turn of the twentieth century, or very soon afterwards. However, the revelation of these gardens, tenanted by a complete spectrum of ‘town and gown’ society, does suggest a new perspective on the growth and development of Cambridge, and on the lives behind the facades of the famous College courts and gardens.

Madingley Road Pleasure Gardens (no 1 on key plan)

The Madingley Road Pleasure Gardens were situated on the north side of the ditch-lined road to St Neots on a gently



Street plan of west Cambridge, with site numbers as given in the text.

Drawing: John Drake.

curving bend just opposite the present junction with Grange Road. On Baker’s 1830 Map the site stands out as orchard and garden plots in a predominately agricultural landscape, and the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1886, published 1888, illustrates in detail the tree rows each containing five well established gardens, reached by two pathways from the road.¹⁷

Nine of the fifteen gardens have especially elaborate layouts indicating formal and ornamental beds and lawns and shrubberies and all of the plots are particularly well planted; given the limitations of mapping convention, it is possible to identify hedges and tree lines and even avenues. Five of the gardens have small glasshouses and each has a garden house of brick construction. The gardens had a water supply from pumps conveniently placed on the site; a conduit supply ran along the southern edge of the gardens¹⁸ and there was a five foot ditch along the northern boundary. East of the gardens

was Mount Pleasant Nursery, with a vinery, and growing forest trees, ornamental, decorative and estate trees, fruit trees, roses and supplying all manner of garden sundries.¹⁹

The gardens were maintained by prosperous tenants of St John's College; established tradesmen or senior college servants, who prized their gardens as refuges from the cramped, narrow streets of Cambridge. The end of the Madingley Road Pleasure Gardens was instigated by a newly married don, Thomas Thornley, Fellow of Trinity Hall, who applied to St John's for a long lease on three plots in order to build himself a house, which he called Elterholm.²⁶ The tenants of the remaining plots offered to pay more rent if they too could have a lease (tenure of the gardens was therefore unprotected), but this appears not to be forthcoming. Today the old access path to the gardens remains, and in the garden of Elterholm, amongst the Wellingtonias and other Victorian exotics, the wizened fruit trees of the former pleasure garden are still there.

Drake's Spring Gardens (no 2)

The Drake's Spring, or Drake's Hole, gardens were immediately north of Mount Pleasant Nursery. The site took its name from a spring of water dating from medieval times which arose in gently sloping ground between the present Huntingdon and Madingley roads, west of Castle Hill. The rectangular piece of land with two cottages in the north-east corner was allotted to William Stanley at the Enclosure of 1802, and one Sidney Stanley, presumably son or grandson, sold the land in 1889.²⁸ As with the Madingley Road gardens, these six gardens at Drake's Hole/Spring are well established on the 1888 OS map; all the gardens are rectangular though at Drake's Hole the layouts are very simple – four plots have just a central straight dividing path, one has a square path leaving side borders as in traditional walled gardens, and the other is divided into three. Each plot has a summer house, though as these were excluded in the sale of 1889 they were perhaps of timber rather than more permanent brick. At the time of the sale the annual rent was £25. 16s 0d between the six tenants, considerably cheaper than Madingley Road, and the tenants were less prosperous – one George Ogle was a shoemaker and another Joseph Baldry, a gardener at the Mount Pleasant nursery. New houses were built as a university hostel for men of small means. This was superseded in 1896 by the Catholic foundation, St Edmund's House, which occupies the site today.

Old Grange Farm (no 3)

This ancient and well documented site is occupied by Westminster College and was "a major concentration of farm buildings" from the middle of the thirteenth century belonging to the Hospital of St John's, later St John's College. By 1803 the Grange was "very inconveniently situated" and too close to the town; the site was redundant after the college built New Grange.

The story of the gardens begins in 1841, when William Whewell became Master of Trinity College, and bought his new wife, Cordelia, to the lodge:

'... Mrs Whewell was constantly occupied with various kindly arrangements for the welfare of the dependants and servants of the College. One (out of several) cherished plans for their benefit deserves a passing notice. There was a large piece of ground, forming a farmyard, at the back of the colleges, at the junction of the roads to Madingley and St Giles, which had long been lying waste and profitless. This plot was now secured on lease for the benefit of the College servants, where they might have healthy exercise in cultivating their several allotments, and have an object of interest for the employment of their disengaged hours. Prizes were given to the best cultivators, and very gratifying it was to witness the special pleasure which the Master and Mrs Whewell took in their frequent visits to these gardens, bestowing kind words of

commendation and conferring rewards upon successful competitors'.³⁵

These Servants' Gardens on the Old Grange Farm site were efficiently established during the 1840s, to similar proportions and patterns as the gardens of the Madingley Road and Drake's Spring sites. That 'prizes were given to the best cultivators' and the frequency of the Whewells' visits implies flower and fruit gardens rather than rows of vegetables and, though we have no names for the Old Grange Farm gardeners, several College Servants were members of the Cambridge Florists' Society in the early 1840s. It would have been in character for Cordelia Whewell to encourage 'her' gardeners to show at the great Horticultural Fête in the grounds of Downing College, part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's visit for the Prince Consort's installation as Chancellor on 5th July 1847.

The Grange Farm gardens were in the gift of the Master of Trinity, and the tenants remained until his death in 1866. The surest sign of the popularity of the Trinity Servants' Gardens was that within a few months some College Servants at St John's (who after all owned the land) requested tenancy of the gardens, and the Trinity Servants were ousted. The Trinity men petitioned 'We the undersigned College Servants of Trinity College occupying ground called as the Grange farm having received notice to quit the above land on the 29th day of September next ensuing beg most respectfully that you will recall the above notice, as we shall have very great pleasure in still occupying the above land'.³⁷ It was to no avail.

The St John's tenants agreed 'to cultivate the lands comprising the said gardens as gardens in a good husbandlike manner'.³⁸ One of them, James Bright, of 4 Magdalene Street, had a new summerhouse built by James Tompkins & Son, from 1,150 bricks, 6 floor bricks and slating at a cost of £6. 5s 7d., and completed on 8th August 1872.³⁹ After some twenty-two years of his garden tenancy, Bright now aged fifty and no longer a servant of St John's sold everything he had, for what reason we do not know.⁴¹ The contents of his garden were valued by Walter Parish at £3. 17s. 6d., and the summerhouse at £4. 0s. 0d. An inventory of his garden stock lists 136 gooseberry and currant bushes, 1 dwarf Blenheim Orange apple tree, 1 Victoria Plum, 1 Standard Apple (Cox's Orange Pippin), 1 large Blue Diamond Plum, 1 Large Greengage Plum, 2 Box trees cut into shape and about 60 yards of box edging. After his household furniture, effects and garden tools were auctioned at his home on 29th August 1888 no further trace of James Bright can be found.⁴²

Today the remains of a yew and holly hedge which divided the Nursery from the Servants' Gardens can still be seen, together with some very ancient apple trees, in the grounds of the College.

Grange Road Gardens (no 4)

Grange Road Gardens occupy a two-acre site considerably to the south of the sites previously discussed, and west of the grounds of Newnham College. The pleasure gardens date from the 1850s. They were 12 in number, entered through a gate off Grange Road and laid out either side of a 9ft central pathway, with a double plot at the far (west) end. The layout is shown on the 1st Edition OS map (surveyed 1886) and subsequent editions, up to and including 1927 and though coniferous and deciduous trees are marked, there is a water supply pump on the central path and all the gardens have a building of some kind, no indication of any designed pathways or beds is ever shown. The buildings are noticeably all sited on the rear boundary fences, suggesting conditions on the tenancies that prevented any development that might prejudice the future use of a site. The gardens existed for over 70 years; they were auctioned as building plots on 23rd October 1925 and it is from these auction details that some of the tenants can be identified.⁴⁷

In contrast to the College Servants at Old Grange Farm, and the tenants at Madingley Road, these Grange Road Gardens were tenanted by academics. The distinguished physiologist Joseph Barcroft,⁴⁸ lived at 13 Grange Road and tenanted the left plot of the entrance gate, which was beside his house. Opposite, on the right of the gate, and with the potentially



Summerhouse at Grange Road Gardens.

valuable 75ft frontage to Grange Road was Miss William's garden, with a Victorian brick two storey summerhouse with a slate roof, a large greenhouse attached, with another building and greenhouse nearby.⁴⁹ Walter Nalder Williams, Fellow and classics Lecturer

at Selwyn College from 1905-31, who lived in Millington Road,⁵⁰ and TFC Huddleston MA of Selwyn Gardens,⁵¹ were also tenants. Mr Huddleston's summerhouse survives (*illus*) – a single storey brick building with central wooden doors, with a triangular glazed fanlight over, and gothic windows with diamond paned glass and a decorative bargeboard tucked under a slate roof. Inside there is an open fireplace.

The most celebrated tenant at Grange Road Gardens was Blanche Athena Clough, the daughter of the poet Arthur Hugh Clough and niece of the first Principal of Newnham College, Anne Jemima Clough. Blanche Athena spent a large part of her life at Newnham from her arrival as a student in 1884 until she retired as Principal in 1923. She took charge of the College gardens in 1892 and, with the Garden Committee, she was responsible for their supervision for twenty two years, including the part-implementation of Gertrude Jekyll's designs of 1911.⁵²



Miss B. A. Clough

At a Memorial Meeting after her death Mrs C D Rackham threw some light on her pleasure garden:

'B.A. loved the Newnham garden; she knew every corner of it and nothing pleased her more than when the students showed her their appreciation. Some innocents were heard to wonder that, as she spent so much time in the college garden, she also rented a garden of her own close to the College, but outside the precincts. Others knew well why this was. There was a legend that Miss Clough, having noticed the aroma of tobacco smoking in her Hall and having traced it to its source and reprimanded the culprits, would then go straight away to her garden where she could enjoy her cigarette in complete privacy'.⁵³

Miss Clough's brick garden house also survives (*illus*). It was entered up a small flight of steps through French doors into a room with a bay window and a fireplace. There is a cellar, and from the main room a narrow, curved stair leads to an upper room, also with a fireplace. Outside was an earth closet. It is possible that this garden house was designed and built for Miss Clough by her brother Arthur, a talented amateur architect, who had designed and built their family homes at Burley in the New Forest, as well as other houses and cottages

in that village.⁵⁴

After the sale of the land in 1925 the Grange Road Gardens gradually gave way to houses, though both the name and the layout have survived, and one plot remains as a small grassy wilderness: old fruit trees and a general air of seclusion give some idea of the atmosphere of the past.

Holy Sepulchre and Barton Road Gardens (nos 5 & 6)

At the south end of Grange Road, at the corner of Barton Road, a plot of glebe land of just over five acres was administered as pleasure gardens by the 12th century Church of the Holy Sepulchre, more usually known as the Round Church in Bridge Street. The land allotted in lieu of tithes in 1802 to James Fawcett, Norissian Professor of divinity and Vicar of Holy Sepulchre, Baker's 1830 Map shows no activity on the site, but in 1885 the Revd Stewart Gordon Ponsonby, who had recently taken over the parish was noted as responsible for overseeing the gardens.⁵⁵ The following year, on 2nd June 1886 Revd Ponsonby wrote to Mrs Hancock, who had a dairy in Barton Road and was presumably the rent collector for the Holy Sepulchre gardens, that he was 'compelled' to increase the rents;⁵⁶ Mrs Hancock eventually replied saying that she could not 'collect' the increased rents, i.e. meaning that the tenants would not agree, and so they were given notice to quit at the end of December 1887.⁵⁷

By this time the gardens had been surveyed for the O.S. 1st edition of 1888 where 24 plots are shown with trees and garden buildings, but the Parochial Church Council⁵⁸ had already approved a general leasing scheme for the gardens with a clear preference for ground rents for housing. Gradually the gardens were built over, and by the 1903 2nd edition OS housing had taken their place.

Just east of the Holy Sepulchre gardens were another set of 18 gardens leading off a central pathway on the north side of Barton Road; this site of just over three acres belonged to St Botolph's Church in Trumpington Street, then as now under the patronage of Queens' College.⁵⁹ Hancock's Dairy occupied part of the site closest to the Barton Road. The 1888 O.S. map shows these gardens to have been well set out, with formal and more romantic layouts, greenhouses and garden houses, and all of a similar size and style as the Madingley Road and Old Grange Farm sites.

In 1902 the land was sold to Newnham College, but the 1927 O.S. map shows some of the gardens remaining though Hancock's Dairy had increased in size; the northern part of the site is now playing fields, with blocks of flats (St Mark's Court) on the Barton Road frontage.

Paradise Gardens (no 7)

The final set of gardens to be discussed are the oldest, and the most romantically named. Grantchester Street (formerly Gravel Pit Lane) leaves the Barton Road and runs south, ending in the marshy land beside the Granta or Cam, at a 19th century (or earlier) house called 'Paradise'. Just to the north of this house, and marked clearly on Baker's 1830 Map are 'Paradise Gardens' – a close of three and a half acres of former pasture belonging to Sidney Sussex College, subject to tenancies throughout the 18th century.⁶⁰ A Memorandum of 18th January 1856⁶¹ reveals that the College Gardener, Samuel



View from a window in the garden house at Grange Road Gardens.

Butler, had been the tenant of 'a Garden & premises in the Parish of Grantchester' but now wished to give this up.

The development of Newnham Croft, the community around Grantchester Street, began in the 1850s with small and tightly packed houses, many without gardens; the 'Paradise Gardens' would have afforded a welcome relief to these tenants, and once again the well-organized gardens are shown on the 1888 O.S. as two sets of gardens with central paths, trees and garden buildings. The gardens were enclosed, private and reasonably secure, and they backed on to a substantial house and garden called Owlstone Croft. By the turn of the century they had become well-established – 'some owners kept chickens and pigs, some had greenhouses, and they were often used as the main garden in fine weather'⁶² – but at the end of 1900, or about that time, the tenants were given six months' notice to vacate them for the building of Owlstone Road. Within three years the gardens had disappeared and the new housing in Owlstone Road was completed.⁶³

Some Conclusions

The immediate conclusion must be that these seven sites are so variable in almost everything that is known about them, that they have only their location, west Cambridge, in common: the first three, Madingley Road, Drake's Spring and Old Grange Farm are within five minutes walk of each other, the Grange Road Gardens would have been noted by every passer-by and the Holy Sepulchre and Barton Road Gardens would have met the same person's gaze at the end of Grange Road. Only 'Paradise' was a little tucked away.

Rather sadly it must be concluded that the gardens were a transitional feature, an opportunistic use of land that would one day be built upon. But what fired the opportunism, why were they laid out? Old Grange Farm (3) offers the most certain answer in Cordelia Whewell's philanthropy in persuading her husband, the Master of Trinity, to lease the land from St John's College in 1841. The tenants had few rights, only duties to care for and care for their plots under their employer's watchful eyes and when Master Whewell died in 1886 these duties, pleasurable as they were, died with him.⁶⁴ St John's College displayed a natural preference in renewing the lease to their own college employees, knowing that a polite notice would be clear enough to clear the land when it became necessary, when the benefactors of Westminster College came along in 1893.

Similarly the churches, Holy Sepulchre and St Botolph's that patronised the Barton Road sites in the 1880s were confident that the land could be reclaimed. On Madingley Road the inspiration may have been more horticultural; these gardens were established on Lowry's 1863 map of Cambridge, and several of the tradesmen tenant's names that we know (Flack, Hutt or Hatt, Pigott) are prominent in the surviving Florists' Society Minute Book of 1831-43,⁶⁵ and so the gardens date from that time. Many of the gardens had glasshouses or frames, necessary for the florists' favourite pinks, picotees and dahlia cultivars. Some of the answers must lie in the close knit tradesmen's community in Cambridge (which Josiah Chater witnesses in his diary)⁶⁶ – men who worshipped and drank together (we have suggested they met in the Hoop Hotel) and whom were trusted by the college authorities because of their mutual dependence.

The Madingley Road Gardens might well have been let on unwritten 'gentleman's agreement' basis to which the Bursar of St John's gave tacit approval – and only when the married Fellow of Trinity Hall, who wanted part of the gardens for the site of his new house, came along, did the tradesmen realise they had no lease. The Liverpool architects Grayson and Ould designed Thomas Thornley's house 'Elterholm' in 1888, and Thornley subsequently built a second house, now 10 Madingley Road, on more of the gardens and the adjacent

Mount Pleasant Nursery site. In the way of land rights in Cambridge – where individuals are only ever transitory and the colleges are immutable, Thornley's houses have reverted to St John's as student accommodation and the college maintains the garden.⁶⁷

The known dates of demise of the gardens have a certain consistency – Madingley Road 1888, Drake's Spring 1889, Old Grange Farm and Holy Sepulchre early 1890s, and Barton Road and Paradise Gardens in about 1900 – suggesting, apart from the increasing need for housing, that the Allotments Act of 1887 and the accompanying political furore advocating the rights of allotment holders, was something of a deterrent for landlords. Certainly, with the exception of the more obscure Drake's Spring and Paradise Gardens, these Cambridge gardens were for flowers and fruit, and stylish and rather formal design, rather than the untidy and haphazard appearance traditionally associated with vegetable allotments. Grange Road Gardens typified a certain kind of Cambridge life, which Gwen Raverat evokes in her 'Period Piece',⁶⁸ they were academic groves in miniature, and accepted by their tenants as temporary retreats, they outlasted all the other gardens, remaining until 1925.

Jane Brown and Audrey Osborne

NOTES

1. *The words of the Trinity College Servants in their petition to keep their gardens addressed to the Bursar of St John's from Mrs Stonebridge and others*, 1866, St John's College Archives.
15. *Notably several house and gardens by M H Baillie Scott, Diane Haig, Baillie Scott The Artistic House*, 1995. (London, Academy Editions, 1995).
16. *Florists' Society, Cambridge, Rules and Classes at Shows and other records c. 1830s*, The Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library, ref C22.8/C43.
17. *Harding & Taigel, Air of Detachment* p 241, fig 3.
18. *Information from Cambridgeshire Local History Council Bulletin no 4*, 1953.
19. *Mount Pleasant Nursery trade card*, St John's College Archives.
26. *St John's Coll. Archives, 1886 correspondence between Thomas Thornley and R F Scott, Bursar for lease on nearly 3 acres on a 99 year lease let on Lady Day 1886, rent £42. 10s 0d for the first 3 years, £85 per annum thereafter.*
28. *Sale Particulars of Drake's Hole etc., Messrs Bidwell, 25th October 1889 in the University Library.*
35. *Mrs Stair Douglas The Life and Selections from the correspondence of William Whewell DD, late Master of Trinity, Cambridge, London, 1881.*
37. *St John's College Archives*
38. *Tenancy agreement, William Chapman and others and the Senior Bursar, St John's College, 10th September 1866 St John's Coll. Archives.*
39. *Tompkin's account for summerhouse, St John's Coll. Archives.*
41. *Sale of Bright's chattels, Cambridge Chronicle & University Journal, 24th August 1888.*
42. *Valuation etc Dated 15th September 1888, St John's Coll. Archives.*
47. *Sale Particulars, J Carter Jonas & Sons, 23rd October 1925, University Library.*
48. *Joseph Barcroft (1872-c1940), Cambridge University Alumni Cantabrigienses, 1940, 1987 ed., p147.*
49. *Miss Williams, most probably Mabel Williams, headmistress Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton, see A History of St Mark's Church, Cambridge, part 2 by M F Ingham, Cambridge 1985.*
50. *Walter Nalder Williams in Who's Who in Cambridgeshire, ed H Cox, 1912.*
51. *T F C Huddleston (1848-1936) in Who's Who in Cambridge, p65*
52. *Jane Brown, Newnham College, Cambridge, The making of the Gardens, Newnham College 1988.*
53. *Newnham College Roll Letter 1961, In Memoriam, Miss Blanche Athena Clough, memoir by C D Rackham, pp 39-41.*
54. *Brown, The Making of the Gardens, p 10.*

- 55 *Leases, corres. Etc., Cambs. County Record office, P21/3/13, P21/3/12.*
- 56 *Notebooks of Vestry Minutes, rents, conditions of tenancy etc., c.1900, CRO ref P/21/3/15.*
- 57 *Vestry Minute Book, 26th May 1887. Note: Some of the individual sales were recorded, notably a lease for 98 years to the Misses E M and H M Arnold of 95 Chesterton Road, who commissioned H M Baillie Scott to build 4 Grange Road and design the garden.*
- 58 *Vestry Minute Book, 26th May 1887 as above.*
- 59 *A W Goodman, A little History of St Botolph's, Cambridge, 1992, and Victoria County History, Cambs., vol. 3, 1959.*
- 60 *Sidney Sussex College Archives, leases dated 9 February 1761 (Charles Wheeler), 1781 (John Anderson), 20th February 1801 (Richard Rowe).*
- 61 *Sidney Sussex Archives, 18th January 1856, between Joseph Wentworth the Elder and Samuel Butler of Newnham. A subsequent lease dated 6th February 1856 details letting by Wentworth & Son (agents for the college) to Richard Litton of Grantchester, gardener at £24 per annum. Litton was to cultivate manure and till 'in a good order and husbandlike manner'.*
- 62 *J A Gray ed, Newnham (A History), 1977, chapter 2 Newnham Croft by Tony Dathan, pp25-7.*
- 63 *2nd Edit O. S. 1903. The name 'Paradise' has been perpetuated in the nature reserve that is now part of the riverside walk to Grantchester.*
- 64 *Cordelia Whewell pre-deceased her husband and no record of her life, apart from the quotation given, see note 28 above, has survived at Trinity College. For further context see Jane Brown, Trinity College, A Garden History, Trinity College, Cambridge, 2002.*
- 65 *Minute Book in the Cambridgeshire Collection.*
- 66 *Enid Porter, Josiah Chater's Diaries, p.XV and chapter one 'Apprenticeship'.*
- 67 *Cambs. Gardens Trust, The Gardens of Cambridgeshire Gazetteer, CGT, The Grange, Easton, Huntingdon PE18 0TU, 2000, p39.*
- 68 *Gwen Raverat, Period Piece, A Cambridge Childhood, 1952*

A VISIT TO BRIDGE END GARDEN, SAFFRON WALDEN

The visit, south eastwards along the Cam valley and through the chalk escarpment to Saffron Walden, proved most instructive and illustrative of the problems and issues facing any person or group wishing to restore a major garden.

Bridge End Gardens, just across the Cambridgeshire border and in Essex, was the creation of Francis Gibson and his successors in the early 19th century. Unusually the gardens are not linked to a house but, nevertheless, they proclaimed the status and symbolized the importance of the Gibson family: bankers, brewers, Quakers and prominent members of the community of Saffron Walden. The Gibsons had a Town house in what was a small market town with a population of 3,181 persons in 1801. Today the Friends School is evidence of a continuing Quaker connection.

In the 18th century Italy and the Grand Tour were part of the education of aristocratic collectors and dilettanti. It is characteristic of the Victorian Age that the two great interpreters of Italy were Ruskin, son of a sherry merchant, and Robert Browning, son of a clerk in the Bank of England. Francis Gibson, with banking and brewing connections, encouraged his son Francis Edward to complete the Grand Tour and features of the Bridge End Gardens, like the sculpture and the Dutch Garden, appear to reflect this experience. Sadly Francis Edward, whose initials FEG are carved in the brickwork of the gateway leading to the maze, was to die in Florence. England's aristocracy absorbed new blood and new money into its ranks; money enabled eccentricity to flourish and the grander you were the more you were expected to flaunt it.

The Gibsons in this small Essex market town had the leisure, confidence, experience and expertise needed to create these gardens which, in turn, reflected their social advancement, self indulgence and conspicuous consumption. In one of the domed summer-houses the Gibson coat of arms still proclaims their pedigree. But towards the end of the Victorian Age the last of the Gibsons, daughter Elizabeth, married into the Fry family of Bristol, chocolate makers. By 1919 the gardens were in decline and their care was passed initially to Saffron Walden Borough Council and now to Uttlesford District Council. Problems of maintenance continued. Today Tony Fry owns the gardens which are leased to the District Council until 2036. The present programme of restoration is one final opportunity to restore them to their final status.

The District Council and Friends of the Gardens secured a Heritage Lottery Grant of £550,000 to finance a two year programme of restoration under strict controls. The administrator, John Bosworth, described this as a 'shoestring' budget and is aware of the needs to meet a series of dead-lines. The initial problems of negotiation and securing finance have been completed and a smaller grant from the British Council of £30,000 to restore broken sculpture and to purchase suitable replacements has been received. There are also problems of research and security, the discovery and purchase of traditional plants and suitable materials for the replacement of walls and boundaries, the provision of necessary labour both skilled and voluntary and the issue of future maintenance and use.

Difficulties in this public, urban garden were very soon experienced: alcoholism, the use of drugs and vandalism would undermine work very quickly. The first of a number of compromises was the installation of expensive but unobtrusive CCTV's, which have largely cured these problems. So the gardens will remain open to all for 364 days of the year. This solution is surely preferable to that of the London rich in Victorian England, who gated Piccadilly, Belgrave and other squares, and other quite bourgeois streets barring them against proletarian ingress.

Research posed further difficulties and need for compromises. This is a task of restoration involving great care and a determined effort not to fantasize when hard information is lacking. Unfortunately and rather surprisingly, the Gibson family and heirs possess few photographs of the Victorian gardens and no drawings, descriptions or even orders of plants. Use is being made of the 1887 OS Map and drawings made by Gertrude Jekyll on her visit to the gardens in 1912. Even in the latter case there are doubts concerning the accuracy of the plan in 1912. There also survive boundary walls, hedges and internal gates to a series of gardens which are like smaller, functional rooms. It is possible to trace the geometry and symmetry of the gardens based on a series of vistas conveyed by paths and open spaces aligning permanent sculptures or their footings to the two surviving and listed summer-houses. Another issue is folk memory and the extent of its reliability.

This first year site clearance, the revival of a clear plan, the repair of sculptures, walls and gates and the discovery of suitable materials have taken priority. It has been important to involve the local community and to secure volunteer labour in

support of two full-time gardeners and the administrator, himself hands on and a half-time gardener. There have been schemes to employ young, unemployed people, to employ contractors for JCB clearance and for the repair of the walls by skilled craftsmen using hand-made bricks at £6 each. This will be continued in the following year with rotovation and preparation of the soil for planting, with the purchase of plants, which would have been available in the mid-nineteenth century, and with a plan for the future maintenance of the gardens. Already there has been much expense establishing the stream at the south of the gardens and restoring culverts under the Dutch Garden with the intention of reducing future risk of flooding, which has already caused much damage to some bordering properties.

Bridge End Gardens consists of four acres divided into six smaller gardens. The main domed restored summer-house with tiled floor contains the painted Gibson coat of arms. It is to be the home of a permanent exhibition about the gardens and to be the focal point of a grassed area which could be the venue for plays and concerts. From it, through a vista of sculptures, is a restored stonewall with balusters above the Wilderness. Through brick pillared, wrought iron gates is a path to the Maze. The stone sculptures, mythological, Classical and Romantic will be either repaired originals or recent purchases from Sotherby's.

The Maze, originally laid out with yews in 1840, was restored in 1986. It needs further attention and at its centre are a new viewing platform, sculptures and a modern seat. From the maze there is a path giving a view of the Dutch Garden, which leads to the Wilderness. The Wilderness, below the balustraded wall, has been planted with young yew with the intention of restoring a tunnel. This is typical of the garden with areas of dark and shade mixed with open areas of light throughout.

From the Wilderness is the Dutch Garden; Italianate and inspired by the Gibsons' travels, its Irish yews have survived. They and the original box bushes have been recently heavily pruned and may continue to provide the garden with its structure and patterned order. The stream flows beneath this garden through culverts and beyond is a meadow and a view of the church. At the west end of this symmetrical, lower garden and its central fountain is a small, red brick wall and a path through wrought iron gates with eagles surmounting its brick pillars. The fountain is of recent construction but is 19th century in design.

From these gates is a plot with a wide variety of roses which were likely to be grown in the mid 19th century; many nurseries were searched for suitable plants. The present intention is to use only traditional plants; later generations of gardeners may decide to innovate. Once again there is movement from light to shade and entry to the Poets' Corner, an enclosed area for contemplation. This walled area with overhanging bushes will have a statue either of a poet or philosopher as its central feature. Folklore refers to Jacob's well; still surviving it is not a well, but probably a dipping well providing water for the gardeners. In this area, as in the Dutch Garden, there survive Jekyll designs of 1912. The jury is still out deciding whether to use them or to revert to an earlier half-known design.

So by Summer 2005 a hidden, urban gem of a garden will have been restored. It may be approached by a walled path alongside the Eight Bells public house in Bridge Street or by a path leading from Castle Street. Along the latter path to the gardens is the Fry Art gallery, designed to house

Francis Gibson's collection of paintings. It houses a collection of work by Lewis George Fry, Gibson's grandson and a landscape painter of repute, and other works by Roger and Anthony Fry. The Fry family have leased the gallery to the Fry Art Gallery Society, who house some 1200 items of the North West Essex Collection; artists in the Great Bradfield area and Saffron Walden. For all lovers of fine gardens and fine art, Bridge end should prove to be an exciting venue in the Summer of 2005. Victorian capitalism may have created relentless machines and wage-slaves but the era of the nouveau-riche business man also created a fantasy world of social change and leisure. In the 21st century this is being restored for all to enjoy.

Charles Malyon

The Trust has just received a copy of the Bridge End Garden Weekly Newsletter No 53. It contains a short item headed 'Vandalism':-

"The very temporary repairs to the Maze gate were breached and the chained lock is missing. We have very clear images of young persons climbing through last Sunday at 1.50pm which have been saved, printed and passed to the police who I understand are seeking to establish their identities via the schools in the town. Thank you local police force for your continued assistance in this matter. Thank you for your patrols, I am sure they are helping".

8th September 2003

Jan Woudstra
Department of Landscape
The University of Sheffield
Floor 3, Arts Tower Sheffield S10 2TN

Dear Jan,

GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY; CAMBRIDGE LEISURE
GARDENS

Jane Brown has asked me to sort out the requests you made in your letter 29th July 2003. I therefore enclose a disc with the order typed as you require etc. I've had to work through the night as I only received the discs from her last week. Please do not send anything back to me as I am in eastern Turkey having a well earned rest. I do not intend to type out the captions of the illustrations as I do not have them, I think you do.

Very best wishes from an exhausted,

John Drake.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust

The Grange, Easton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 0TU Tel: 01480 891043

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