



**Gardens *now* ...**

**Gardens *then*...**

**The Journal of Essex Gardens Trust**

**February 2018**

## The Repton Edition



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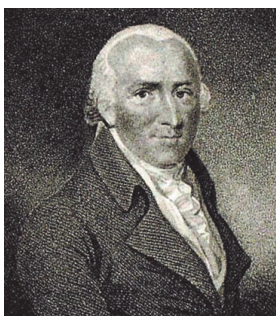
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### *Humphry Repton*

**21 April 1752 – 24 March 1818**



Norfolk Museums Service (Norwich  
Castle Museum & Art Gallery)

Humphry Repton was a leading landscape designer during the latter years of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth centuries and 24 March 2018 marks the bicentenary of his death. Repton was born in Bury St Edmunds and after several unsuccessful business ventures moved in 1788 to a rented cottage in Hare Street, Gidea Park and embarked on his landscape design career. Repton was a highly proficient watercolour artist and many of his commissions were accompanied by sketches of his suggested improvements: these sketches were included in his famous 'Red Books'.

## EVENTS: Talks, Trips and Study Day 2018

### TALKS

#### **Saturday 24 February Hatfield Forest through the centuries.**



Simon Cramner, Operations Manager, National Trust Hatfield Forest will talk to us about the fascinating history of this SSSI and National Nature Reserve at the heart of our county, including the latest discoveries of its association with Lancelot Capability Brown. Simon will

also provide an insight into how the NT meets the challenges of managing this precious, but much visited site, and the lessons that they are providing to other ancient forests around the world.

#### **Saturday 24 March Copped Hall, bringing the gardens back to life.**



Alan Cox, Chairman and co-founder of the Copped Hall Trust, will enlighten us about the history of the gardens, their destruction and the bringing back to life of the many aspects of the Grade II\* listed landscape, including the Orchard House and the Walled Kitchen Garden.

All talks will be given at 2.30pm in Room UO6, Writtle University College, Main Building, Lordship Lane, Writtle, Essex, CM1 3RR  
Members £5.00. Guests £7.50 (including refreshments and free parking). Follow the signs to the room.

### TRIPS

#### **Tuesday 24 April 10am National Trust Hatfield Forest, Essex**

Join us for a morning guided walk into the forest to look at this magnificent woodland, its flora and fauna, and find out about how it is managed in the 21st century. Members £5.00, guests £7.50 inc. refreshments on arrival. NT car park charge applies (free to NT members.)

## **Tuesday 19 June Painshill Park, Surrey**

### **Coach trip**

The itinerary for the day is being finalised. If you are interested in joining us, please email [events@essexgardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:events@essexgardenstrust.org.uk).

## **Thursday 12 July 6.30pm RHS Garden Hyde Hall**

An evening guided tour of the gardens with Curator Robert Brett and hear about the latest developments within the gardens and wider estate. Members £5.00, guests £7.50 inc. refreshments.



## **EXTRA TRIP TO**

### **Helmingham Hall, Suffolk**

information about our visit will be available in Spring 2018.

PLEASE SEE THE WEBSITE [www.essexgardenstrust.org](http://www.essexgardenstrust.org)

OR go to: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/essexgardenstrust/>

## **Friday May 18th, Study Day**

### **Garden History Training Workshop**

**led by Dr Twigs Way**

**Morning: workshop on how to research garden history followed by a visit to the Gardens of Easton Lodge in the afternoon, plus tea and cake.**

**Cost: £6.50: full details on website**



EGT's Garden History team has been one of the cornerstones of the charity since its founding in 1996. The research the team generates is essential in enabling EGT Conservation to comment promptly, professionally and confidently in the essential process of Planning and Development in Essex. The Garden History team has already achieved a great deal and in no small part this is due to its leadership by Jill Plater.

Continued...

Following ten years as leader of EGT Garden History, Jill is stepping back to dedicate more time to her family. The EGT Board has consequently decided to organise a Garden History training workshop in order to recruit new researchers to the Garden History team, and to find a replacement for Jill.

For this workshop, we are proud and delighted that nationally renowned garden historian, Dr Twigs Way, will lead the event. Those of you familiar with Twigs will know how great she is at bringing history alive, and the day promises to be hugely enjoyable.

We'll spend the morning gaining a background into garden history, before experiencing a live site visit at the beautiful and evocative Gardens of Easton Lodge, with tea and cake provided!

The day promises to be very special, and we need your help in finding enthusiastic attendees for the event. Do you have any friends or colleagues who would be interested in actively carrying out research for EGT? Or do you know of any special-interest groups or organisations which you think we should contact? This might include local, social, art or architectural historians, or perhaps people volunteering at any of Essex's wonderful historic properties. If you have suggestions please email them to: [jillplater@hotmail.com](mailto:jillplater@hotmail.com).

We know we can rely on EGT members to put us in contact with exactly the right people! And, of course, if you would like to start actively researching for EGT yourself, we would love to have you there too. The EGT Board is proud to be sponsoring this event financially, and is asking only for £6.50 per attendee; all of which will be given to the Gardens of Easton Lodge Preservation Trust, to help them continue their essential work in protecting and conserving the Harold Peto gardens for the future. There can't be many better value or more enjoyable events in which people can learn new skills to put to immediate use for the benefit of EGT and gardens all around Essex. We very much look forward to hearing your suggestions.

We honour Brian Creasey, who discovered and restored the Gardens of Easton Lodge over 30 years, with a Tribute on page 35.



## Tribute: Gareth Gunning, 23rd July 2017

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Essex County Council Planning Department pioneered new approaches to the conservation of the natural, historic and built environment through the several strands of its Environmental Services Branch. This was led by John Hunter, one of whose particular concerns was the understanding and protection of the Essex landscape. In this he was supported by Gareth Gunning who managed the landscape section of Environmental Services. Born in Letchworth, Gareth moved at an early age to Chelmsford where his father was an architect with Essex County Council. Gareth studied geography at Bristol University and then joined Essex County Council in the 1960s as a minerals planner. He later became Landscape Officer in the County's Landscape Conservation Programme. As a manager in Environmental Services, he was responsible for general landscape conservation and such things as roadside planting, new highway bridges, tree planting schemes including the Thames Chase Forest, and was involved in the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. In the 1990s, he was one of the group which set up the Essex Gardens Trust, becoming its conservation officer in 1998. As its chairman from 2012-15, he steered the Trust through a challenging time in partnership with the late Michael Meads. He was also active in the Chelmsford Art Fund. Gareth was highly organised, meticulous, encyclopaedic in his knowledge of Essex, unfailingly courteous, and slightly surprising in his love of sports cars. He was a true friend of the county's landscape and heritage.

*David Andrews*

*Gareth's car, which he loved.*

*Thanks to Rosalind Gunning for the photographs*



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## CRESSING TEMPLE LOTTERY BID



The Friends of Cressing Temple are applying to the Heritage Lottery for an Our Heritage grant to pay for the restoration, or replacement, of the

arbour and enhanced interpretation of the garden. Pergolas or arbours were a feature of Tudor gardens, and one was therefore incorporated in the new garden design. It forms a walkway aligned from the main entrance to the viewing platform on the other side of the garden. Climbing roses and hops grow over it. After 20 years, some of the timbers and joints connecting them are beginning to fail. In the interests of health and safety, it is planned to replace it with a new one to the same design, but with more robust detailing which should ensure greater durability and longevity. Associated necessary repairs are the brick paving within the arbour which needs repointing, and the boards of the viewing platform which need replacing.

This restoration project would be accompanied by enhanced interpretation of the arbour and garden, and training in carpentry and timber construction. In the garden itself, there would be new and improved signage explaining the different compartments into which it is divided, their function and the types of plant in them. An existing exhibition in the wellhouse next to the walled garden, which was done on a budget in the 1990s, will be totally renewed with better displays and explanation. This project would be important for the continuing maintenance

and development of the Tudor Garden, and for enabling the public to appreciate and understand it.

Cressing Temple is a historic manor owned in the Middle Ages by the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. It preserves two 13th century timber barns, the oldest and best preserved of their kind in Europe. It was to save these barns that Essex County Council bought the site when it was put up for sale in 1987.

The County has since developed Cressing Temple as a heritage site representative of a medieval and Tudor manor and a traditional farmstead. As well as restoring the buildings, amongst the measures put in place to present the site to the public was the creation in 1996 of a Tudor garden in the walled garden. This was originally associated with a large Tudor brick house pulled down in the 18th century. In the absence of any specific knowledge of this garden, apart from it having had a raised brick terrace, a new garden was created, based on an accurate study of gardens of the period, and including no plants introduced after 1600.

The garden is maintained with the support of a group of volunteers and the Friends of Cressing Gardens.

Cressing is a location for the Women's Farm and Garden Association 'Work & Retrain as a Gardener' Scheme. Please see an article by a participant on page 14.

Photographs by Alison Airey



## VULNERABILITY BROWN



The Gardens Trust\* successfully launched their new report 'Vulnerability Brown: Capability Brown Landscapes at risk' at the Landscape Institute AGM, Bristol on the 2nd November 2017. The report is a follow up to the CB300 tercentenary celebrations held last year which was project managed, supported and coordinated by the Landscape Institute. The report is intended to draw public and professional attention to the ongoing threats to Brown landscapes across the country.

*\* The Gardens Trust is the national organisation of which Essex Gardens Trust is a member, and will be generally referred to in full., or as EGT. There follows events organised by The Gardens Trust in which you may be interested.*

**Danish Landscapes and Gardens Study Tour** Monday 4 to Sunday 10 June. Further information. **Contact** : Robert Peel, [rma.peel@btopenworld.com](mailto:rma.peel@btopenworld.com)

**The Gardens Trust AGM 2018 and New Research Symposium Weekend** in Birmingham Saturday 1 & Sunday 2 September. Details available in spring 2018 on [www.thegardenstrust.org/](http://www.thegardenstrust.org/)

## THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK'S TREEHOUSE RECREATED IN EASTON LODGE GARDENS

Jill Goldsmith, Treasurer, Gardens of Easton Lodge



June 2017 saw the realisation of a long-held ambition to replace the Countess's treehouse in the Gardens, to give back to visitors the opportunity to enjoy tree high views of the Gardens and surrounding countryside. The Countess commissioned Harold Peto to design the treehouse, to bring to Essex her own version of the very fashionable treehouse restaurants in 19th century Paris. Hers was known as "Le Robinson", because the Parisian trend

was about enjoying life in the style of Robinson Crusoe. The treehouse was one of the Countess's favourite places and she was fond of asking her friends to take tea with her in the 'crows' nest'.

Many locals remember playing in the treehouse in their youth, but by the 1990s there were few timbers left and the tree was declared dead.

Brian and Diana Creasey, who were instrumental in saving the Countess's gardens, always aimed to restore the treehouse, as did the Trust, which they set up to continue their work to maintain and further restore the gardens for the enjoyment of the public. In 2015, the current Trustees took over the baton and soon realised that restoration was not an option, so switched to seeing it as a reconstruction project, which they have dedicated to the memory of Jim Boutwood, a historical architect and one of the first Trustees for the Gardens.

The treehouse was funded through the hard work of volunteers and Trustees: welcoming visitors to the Gardens on Open Days and for Group visits; giving talks about the Gardens; holding quiz nights and much more. Funding was also obtained from grants from Essex County Council, Tesco and Waitrose; and from generous individual donors and local companies supplying raffle prizes.

Through research and tendering, the Trustees found Highlife Treehouses, a specialist treehouse company, to take on the reconstruction. For Highlife it was a new challenge to work to and, as far as possible, to match the old design, snugly fitting the treehouse around the original old oak without resting upon it. The original thatch was not possible within the budget for the project, but the shingle tiles make a beautiful alternative: new, they gleam in the sunshine and, like thatch, they will soften and blend into the lime wood as they age.



#### **OPEN DAYS 2018 11.30 to 4.00pm**

Snowdrops:	February 18th , 25th
April 22nd	May 20th June 24th
July 22nd	August 19th
September 16th	October 14th



## NEW HOSPITAL GARDEN AT BROOMFIELD

Many hospitals and hospices are at last recognising that gardens are essential to patient recovery and well-being, Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford is no exception. It is adding to its collection of small courtyards a garden especially designed for people with dementia by



Tamae Isomura, a Masters graduate of Writtle University College. After a major fundraising drive by the hospital's charity, the 'Live-Well Garden' was opened on 18 November.

*Photograph MEHT*

“The design is a 'woodland memory garden'. The idea was for it to be part of reminiscence therapy for people with dementia, providing comfort by reminding them of their experience of woodland, particularly in childhood. It features a circular route and has a wheelchair and walking frame-friendly surface and different areas for quiet sitting, activities or socialising” says Tamae. ‘The woodland planting suits the shady and dry courtyard with the muted colours having a calming effect on people with dementia, who may sometimes feel agitated. This is complemented by vibrantly coloured planting, which will be planted through horticultural activities with patients.” Tamae worked with Mid Essex Hospitals NHS Trust as a Sustainability Project Co-ordinator, delivering community garden projects, a woodland conservation project, and other healing garden projects in the hospital grounds. Now working as a Landscape Architect for another organisation, she helped with the implementation of the garden project on a voluntary basis.

*Historical note:* therapeutic gardens were commonly to be found at 19th and 20th century asylums and hospitals. They have often been casualties and overlooked when these sites have been redeveloped. Examples are Severalls at Colchester, and the William Julien Courtauld Cottage Hospital at Braintree.



## LOTTERY GRANT FOR ORCHARDS EAST

The Landscape Group of the School of History at the University of East Anglia (spearheaded by Professor Tom Williamson) has been awarded £477,700 in Heritage Lottery Funding for a three year project to look at the region's surviving orchards. These are now seen as a significant landscape feature, as well as being of importance for biodiversity and the local environment. The project will survey and record traditional orchards in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. It will research the history of fruit growing in these areas, and has plans to restore important old orchards and create new ones. Volunteers are essential for this, and will receive appropriate training to conduct surveys, or to learn the skills of traditional orchard management. The project was launched at Horringer in Suffolk in July.

The old estate maps show that Essex towns and villages possessed numerous small orchards in the seventeenth century. John Evelyn urged planting fruit trees almost as a patriotic duty, and cider was regarded as the English drink in contrast to what he regarded as the effete imported European wines. This was replaced by the nineteenth century by numerous orchards planted by commercial fruit growers for markets in London and elsewhere. Essex was once noted for growing cherries and quinces, though apples and pears were planted through the nineteenth century and by 1902 the county had over 2500 acres of



orchard, as well as about 2000 acres of 'small fruit'. The last commercial apple orchard in the Ongar area, (Cox's Orange Pippin (left) with its attendant 'nurse' trees) came under the axe in the 1980s. A relic of this former Essex industry (albeit principally devoted to small fruit for jam making) survives as the Wilkins business at Tiptree, established in 1864. More information: [www.uea.ac.uk/orchards-east](http://www.uea.ac.uk/orchards-east) Photo Alamy



The Essex Gardens Trust has offered grants to:  
The Beth Chatto Education Trust  
RHS Hyde Hall towards transport for schools

## Beth Chatto Education Trust

# L E A R N I N G

Beth Chatto Education Trust became a registered charity in June 2015, with the aim of providing Inspiration, Education and Enjoyment for all through gardens and gardening. This aim encompasses many elements and future plans! The Trust initially took under its umbrella the adult courses that the garden were already running, introduced a school visit programme and informal events for children in the holidays.

Over the last two years the events offered at the Trust have improved and diversified into a wide programme. Adult courses include long term RHS level 2&3 qualifications, a 30 week gardening course, day courses in horticulture, photography, willow weaving, art courses, floristry, essential oils, homeopathy and wellbeing to name a few! The children's courses have been a great success too including Garden Activity Days, Mornings and Afternoons concerned with all sorts of activities associated with gardens and garden wildlife, from pond dipping to potting. The Trust also supports

students whose studies further the core values of the charity and works in conjunction with the garden on the work experience programme for secondary school children. A further aim of The Trust is to form partnerships and beneficial projects within our wider community. This



has included supporting a local community gardening group from an extremely deprived area, securing funds to offer free school visits to those that would otherwise not be able to access them and applying for funds to start up projects to tackle issues such as social isolation. In Summer 2017 a long term plan of The Trust and The Gardens became a reality with the addition of a building to use for all our events. The building is a wonderful resource, now housing all the courses, school visits and wider projects enabling The Trust to move on leaps and bounds with what we provide already and all our ideas for in the future, we are very proud of it! Each year The Trust has been able to build and offer more despite being a very new concern. It is an exciting time to be involved in Beth Chatto Education Trust as it becomes more established and moves from strength to strength. For more information email [karalyn@bethchatto.co.uk](mailto:karalyn@bethchatto.co.uk). Education Trust Manager.

## RHS Garden Hyde Hall New Learning Centre

Since 1993, when Helen and Dick Robinson gave their Garden to the RHS, it has grown and expanded to accommodate ever-increasing visitor numbers. The charity is currently building a brand new Learning Centre, together with a new restaurant and activity barn to improve the hilltop area of the garden, as part of a Society-wide strategic investment programme.

Construction of the Learning Centre and its Teaching Garden started in spring, together with the groundwork for the construction of the new restaurant and activity barn, which faces the existing Dry Garden.



*Photograph RHS*

The Learning Centre, above, has been designed with flexible environments enabling multiple uses and layouts,



Photo © BDR

which will allow variable learning environments for different groups who will use the space. The Garden will be able to double the number of visits by schools, with capacity going from 4,500 school children a year to over 9,000. Children benefit from on-site learning developing horticultural skills and learning about teamwork. The RHS offers educational trips to the Garden to local schools in the Essex area, free of charge. Tel: 0207 821 3125

[developmentoffice@rhs.org.uk](mailto:developmentoffice@rhs.org.uk)

## **‘Work & Retrain as a Gardener’ Women’s Farm and Garden Association Scheme by Alison Airey**

In 2017 I accepted an offer to spend a year working and learning at the historic Cressing Gardens near Braintree. My one-year training placement was organised by the Women’s Farm and Garden Association whose ‘Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme’ provides trainees with a year’s basic practical experience in a good garden under the guidance of a knowledgeable owner/head



gardener. Having studied historic garden restoration and conservation as part of my Writtle College degree and after many happy years of visiting historic gardens, I felt it was finally time to roll up my sleeves and find out if gardening within an historic setting really was the job for me.

The Cressing gardens include a 20<sup>th</sup> century garden, a community fruit and vegetable garden and a delightful Tudor walled garden, showcasing features and plants from

late Medieval and early Tudor times. Along with 2 handsome 13<sup>th</sup> century barns, the gardens are open to the public free of charge on a daily basis. Essex County Council own the site; Rebecca Ashbey is the horticulturist in charge, supported by a Friends group and a cheerful band of volunteers.

Ten months into my placement, I can certainly say that I have experienced a lot of horticulture! My time at Cressing has been largely divided between the Tudor Walled Garden and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Garden. I've carefully pruned, mowed, edged, dug, weeded, watered, planted and tidied my way through spring, summer and autumn into winter. At the end of each month, I complete a Monthly Assessment Form for the WFGA Regional Manager detailing the previous 4 weeks' activities so that my tasks can be measured against the WFGA syllabus. Alongside the opportunity to gain practical horticultural experience, my time at Cressing has given me a fantastic insight into the realities of running an historic garden. As well as the challenges of identifying, sourcing and growing period correct plants in period correct ways, information about the plants and their history needs to be conveyed to garden visitors. Health and safety considerations are vital and as repair work becomes necessary, this needs to be authorised by the relevant historic bodies and funding obtained. Where additional funds need to be raised, at Cressing this is done through a combination of grant applications, plant sales and events such as Apple Day, held annually in October. Last but by no means least are the Volunteers. As with any team, members need to be recruited, trained, motivated and rewarded. In the last year there has been a summer BBQ, Christmas get-together and garden visits.

As my year at Cressing draws to a close, I realised I have gained not only practical experience but a real appreciation and understanding of a horticulturist's role in the twenty-first century. Like other visitors to Cressing, I hope, I will walk away feeling enriched by, and thankful for, the time I have spent in the gardens.



## ***Observations on the Theory and Practice of Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener***

***On the bicentenary of his death:  
March 24th 1818***

### **Claybury and Hill Hall by Jill Plater**

*Excerpts from 'Repton in Essex', the 2000 Essex Gardens Trust publication*

Repton was born in Bury St Edmunds and after several unsuccessful business ventures moved in 1788 to a rented cottage in Hare Street, Gidea Park and embarked on his landscape design career. Repton was a highly proficient watercolour artist and many of his commissions were accompanied by sketches of the existing site and his suggested improvements, these shown on a flap which, when lifted, showed his ideas. These sketches were included in his famous 'Red Books'.

#### **The Essex Red Books.**

There are six Red books surviving for Essex (Claybury, Stansted Hall and Hill Hall in 1791; Highams in 1793; Stubbers in 1796; and Woodford Hall in 1801). Another eight are thought to have been made but are missing (Hylands, Langleys, Rivenhall, Saling Grove, Suttons, Wallwood House, Little Warley, and Puller's house in Woodford). The pages produced about Wanstead were bound together after Repton died and came to light in 2002.



## CLAYBURY HALL, Barking

Claybury Hall was bought in 1786 by James Hatch who demolished the old house and built a new one. The Hall sits in an elevated position and retains wonderful views over park and woodland. The mental hospital, built on the edge of the park c1888, was sold in 1998 for a housing development known as Repton Park. However, what remains of the Repton landscape (68 hectares) is known as Claybury Park and is a public open space managed for the London Borough of Redbridge by Vision RCL nature conservation ranger team.

### History of site and family

Claybury is marked on Chapman and André's 1777 map of Essex with a respectably-sized formal garden attached. The estate was bought in 1786 from Montague Burgoyne by James Hatch, a malt distiller from Bromley-by-Bow, who had made a considerable fortune. By 1791, when Repton was called in, the old gabled house had been demolished and a new building probably nearly finished. James Hatch had no male heir, and Claybury was inherited by his daughter, wife of John Rutherford Abdy of Albyns. On her death without issue in 1838, the Hatch estates passed to her nephew James Mills, and then in 1884 to William John Rous. He sold the Claybury estate in 1887 to the Justices of the County of Middlesex to build a lunatic asylum in the grounds, retaining Claybury Hall as an annexe (Victoria County History Vol.V).

*Claybury, the existing site, showing the direct line of the road to the house.*

Reproduced by  
courtesy of the Essex  
Record Office'



## Resumé of Repton's suggestions

Claybury's elevated position would reduce to the status of 'a mere hedge' a unifying belt planted round the whole property; instead, the view from the house would be improved by irregularly placed plantations, while retaining some useful hedges. The entrance front should be moved to the north façade of the house for greater



Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office'

convenience and a more graceful line to the approach (see illustrations). Description of a way of disguising a very acute angle between fences etc. Advice on walks to and in Hainault Forest: whereas the path leading to the forest '*may be decorated with the choicest flowers and shrubs*', once the wood has been entered there should no interference with natural beauty other than making '*a dry walk of communication*'. The wide grass walks should be grazed by a small flock of sheep, which will '*keep the turf more beautiful than the scythe*', and the narrow gravel walks should be sprinkled only with old gravel '*which is not too glowing a colour*'.

## Implementation of Repton's suggestions

The survey of 1772 shows a still-formal layout round the house, although a park had been formed since the seventeenth century out of fields to the south, and '*brick clamp field*' to the north with the avenue running through it had been opened up. The Tithe Map of 1845, although giving only meagre detail, shows that the straight avenue had been replaced by a curving drive, and the house backed by a plantation. This is the only suggestion of possible advice by Repton. It may be significant that John Rutherforth Ady, who inherited the estate in 1798, had married the daughter of James Hatch of Claybury, for whom Repton prepared a Red Book in 1791.

### HILL HALL, Theydon Mount, Epping

Hill Hall was built by Sir Thomas Smyth between 1569 and 1575 and remained in the hands of the Smyths until the early twentieth century. The Hall was gutted by fire in 1969 and the Department of the Environment (now English Heritage) took responsibility for the shell in 1980 and restored the exterior of the house. It was sold in 1998 and was converted into private apartments but the large hall and painted rooms are open to the public for tours by prior arrangement. Hill Hall has two sets of sixteenth century wall paintings of mythical and Biblical studies.

### History of the site and family

Sir Thomas Smith or Smyth, builder of the present Hill Hall and creator of the early gardens, was a courtier and Classical scholar of great ability. He was twice in the 1560s appointed ambassador to France, where he absorbed ideas on ancient Roman architecture and Renaissance buildings. Smith's biographer (John Strype, 1820) gives a little information on Smith's garden creation, but an estate map of 1657 is the earliest record of the whole layout. The house was altered in 1714, and a more extensive formal garden probably made at this time. After Repton's suggestions for Sir William Smyth for the improvement of the grounds, which were largely implemented, further

work was undertaken by Reginald Blomfield between 1900 and 1912 for Mrs. Charles Hunter, who had recently bought Hill Hall, and then by Philip Tilden in 1927/8 for Lady Robert Hudson. During World War II the house was used by the RAF, suffered mine damage and was progressively neglected. It eventually became a women's prison in 1952, but was gutted by fire in 1969.



*Hill Hall: the then existing site*

Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office'

### **Resumé of Repton's suggestions**

The moving of the kitchen garden away from the garden front of the house to open up the view towards the church; changing the route of the approach from the old straight avenue to a drive entering the park from the south-east corner; painting out the white window surrounds and spire on the church; integrating the parsonage garden into the landscape by moving the fence below the brow of the hill; transforming the distant pavilion by adding a projecting roof supported by columns; various plantations to screen undesirable objects, provide shelter or enhance the view.

### **Implementation of Repton's suggestions**

As Repton mentions in the opening page of his Red Book, the grounds at Hill Hall had been '*half modernised*' before he was called in, but still obviously retained some features of the seventeenth-century garden. The kitchen garden is a problem: Repton was '*forcibly struck with the necessity of removing the Kitchen Garden*', and





Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office'

illustrated one of its walls which obscured the view from the side of the house. The view he paints is unmistakably that from the east front, and he also indirectly refers to the orientation, yet there is no evidence from maps or archaeology that there ever was a kitchen garden there. However, an engraving included in Muilman's *New and Complete History of Essex* in 1770 does show such an arrangement of walls, and the text states that the owner of the time, Sir Charles Smith, had recently undertaken '*great alterations*'. It looks from Chapman and André (although it is not entirely clear) that the kitchen garden may have been near the south-west corner of the house, in the area later landscaped by Blomfield. This would be consistent with the position of '*Kitchen Feild*' on the 1657 map. For the moment, the final answer to the question is missing, but wherever the kitchen garden was at Repton's visit, it was certainly located fairly near to his suggested position by 1838.

The other proposals in the Red Book were partly implemented. Although the north avenue continued to be, and remains, the principal entrance route, the '*present crooked direction*' of the public road had been moved by 1838 to a line east of the church as on Repton's sketch map. However, the approach from the south was not made to curl below the house, but continued roughly parallel to the highroad until it crossed the avenue north of the house to gain the offices. Planting in the south of the park was undertaken in a generally Reptonian spirit, and although the Tithe Map by no means replicates

Repton's sketch, it shows a park considerably improved under his influence.

## Repton's Hare Street Cottage

by Jill Plater

In 1786 Humphry Repton (1752-1818), mainly due to financial reasons, moved to Hare Street, Romford from Sustead, Norfolk. In Romford Repton initially hoped to establish himself with his literary writings. He published a collection of essays and a comedy in 1788 and wrote a guide for an exhibition at the Royal Academy. However, in the same year he decided to become a 'landscape gardener':



*Romford. as it appeared in 1786. Sketch by Repton*

notified his friends of this new undertaking and had printed a supply of business cards. By the following year Repton had already embarked on his new profession.

Romford proved to be an excellent base with good road links to London and other counties and Repton achieved about a dozen commissions in 1789. Repton drew *Romford* as it appeared in 1786 which depicts a prosperous village on a busy road lined with businesses and public houses. However, in Repton's last publication



*Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816) he shows that he wasn't so keen on the close proximity to the passing public and he gained permission to enclose the twenty yards of common land beyond his garden, to '*make a frame to his landscape*' and created an elaborate garden with a lawn, raised beds, roses, and planted shrubs and evergreens to '*hide the dirt of the road*' without concealing '*the cheerful village, the high road, and ...constant moving scene*'. The total frontage of the cottage to the road was 165 feet.

Repton modernised the front of the early eighteenth century cottage with a veranda of trellis and striped canvas awnings and a domed central canopy was erected over the central porch. The substantial wooden trellis was still in position in 1900 when A B Bamford drew the cottage. The interior was of a modest size with a dining room with tiled stove and casement opening into the garden, a drawing room with register stove, a cloakroom, and large kitchen. Upstairs there were four bedrooms, one with oak panelled walls and a fine old carved mantelpiece, and two attic bedrooms. The outbuildings comprised a wash house, a coach house, a stable, and a fodder place.

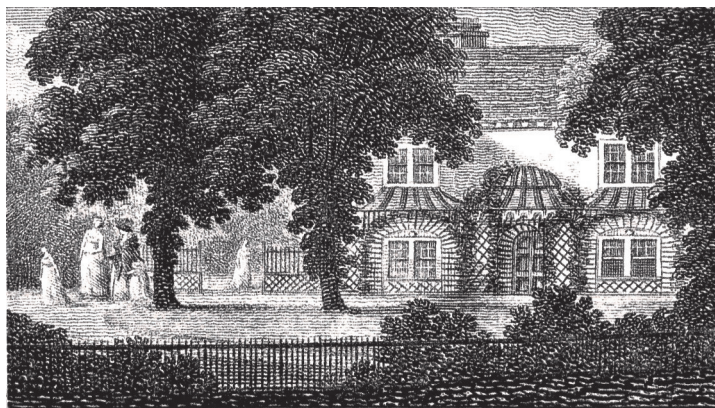
Repton lived in his cottage in Hare Street as a tenant on the Gidea Hall estate and had a good relationship with his landlord, Richard Benyon. However Benyon sold Gidea Hall in 1802 and the new owner, Alexander Black, a government contractor for military supplies, proved to be a very difficult landlord for Repton. Black increased the rents on his farms and cottages and threatened to evict Repton over details of his lease.

*A Plan of the Parish of Hornchurch with part of the Parish of Romford in the County of Essex*, dated 1812, shows Repton's cottage on the corner of Hare Street with a large amount of garden behind it running parallel to the main road. This is entitled '*garden*' on the plan with Alexander Black of Gidea Hall as the owner but there is no evidence that Repton used or landscaped it. The 1807 *Plan of Gidea Hall Park*

shows Repton's cottage with a small amount of garden to the rear but the long strip of ground running parallel to the main road is labelled 'nursery ground'. One sketch Repton made of his garden shows a far more park like scene than that to the front of the house, and on the reverse of this sketch he wrote '*Hare Street is our garden!*' and signed it H. Repton.

Repton continued to live at the cottage until his death in 1818: his wife, Mary, continued to live in the cottage until her death a few years later. Repton's children moved to Chelmsford: they had sixteen, seven of whom lived to adulthood. By 1849 the Hornchurch Parish tithe map shows Repton's cottage with some garden around it, mostly to the front, but the long expanse to the rear had been sold off and developed.

Sales particulars for 1904 describe the cottage as a '*charming old-fashioned house*' and refer to it as '*Repton Cottage*'. The Garden is described as '*tastefully arranged, was originally laid out by Repton the great Landscape Gardener, and is well stocked with Trees and Shrubs*'. The house at this time had been tenanted for many years by the Peacock family. The cottage continued to carry the name of its famed resident until it was finally demolished in 1927. The site is currently home to a branch of Lloyds Bank and nothing of Repton's garden remains.



*Sketch of  
Repton's  
Cottage, 1800*

*From  
The Polite  
Repository*

*The COTTAGE, of H. Repton Esq. HARE-STREET, ESSEX.*



Picture courtesy of The  
Gardens Trust

*His garden, sketch by Repton, undated.*

'My cottage could not be supposed to rival the magnificence of Gidea Hall nor the elegance of Hare Hall and yet the inhabitants of each shewed us every kindly attention in our new home.' Humphry Repton <sup>1</sup>



'Many friendly people met at our house who had not known each other before and this gradually led to a more extended degree of sociability. which was greatly enhanced by my proposal that about half a dozen families should join in a monthly meeting at the village Inn in a room that was large enough to contain 20 couples of dancers and two card tables for those who did not dance...Happy days and happy nights!' Humphry Repton <sup>2</sup>

Humphry Repton, *Memoir*, 1 p..07 2 p. 108, quoted in Stephens Daniels, *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* p.60

## **AUCTION of REPTON PAINTING of RIFFHAMS, DANBURY**

Essex Gardens Trust, joined the Friends of Historic Essex and private individuals, in a bid at auction for an original Repton watercolour sketch of the panoramic views from the proposed new house at Riffhams, Danbury. The sketch was signed by both Humphry and John Adey Repton, John Adey being responsible for the architectural side of his father's practice. Unfortunately, they could not keep up with the bidding which rose to £4,400.

Michael Leach

## Fragmentary Thoughts on Repton: in relation to Jane Austen and the Picturesque

by Bella D'Arcy Reed

Any reader of Jane Austen reading the Repton quote on the preceding page will immediately be transported to her stories of “two or three families in a country village”, and their balls and card parties perhaps the house mentioned to the one in *Mansfield Park* where Mr Rushworth is discussing improvements: *"Your best friend upon such an occasion," said Miss Bertram calmly, "would be Mr Repton, I imagine."* Mr Rushworth decides: *"Smith's place is the admiration of all the country; and it was a mere nothing before Repton took it in hand. I think I shall have Repton."* Even at “five guineas a day”...

*Mansfield Park* was published in 1814, by which time Repton had completed most of his major designs and had published three of his four books. He, as the ‘top’ landscaper, was discussed and admired by society, whose members often commissioned a landscape plan from him simply to have it on the table in their living room. Hardly surprising, as his technique of flaps painted with the existing landscape which were raised to show the new ideas, was charming for its theatrical ‘reveal’. Written details surrounded the drawings should the client decide to go ahead with the scheme. These ‘Red Books’ demonstrated that the client had the money to improve his estate, to impress his friends, to raise his status and to enchant visitors in an age when grand house and garden visiting was an essential part of holidays.

Humphry Repton’s clients were largely gentlemen of means rather than Lords, families like those of Darcy and Bingley. He himself was born into ‘trade’, his father was a tax collector, so he had to build up his client list through talent and sheer hard work. His association with Uvedale Price had brought him into the debate on the picturesque, another subject of which Austen was fully aware. Henry Austen, in his *Biographical Notice of the Author* supplied for *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, writes that his sister Jane, ‘was a warm and

*judicious admirer of landscape, both in nature and on canvas. At a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin on the Picturesque; and she seldom changed her opinions either on books or men.'* In *Northanger Abbey*, Henry Tilney views the country with an eye 'accustomed to drawing,' talks of 'foregrounds, distances, and second distances – side-screens and perspectives – lights and shades', until Catherine is ready to reject the whole city of Bath as 'unworthy to make part of a landscape'. And is it not the view of Pemberley and its grounds that makes Miss Elizabeth Bennet see Mr Darcy in a much more favourable light?

Ref: Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, Chapter Six.

William Gilpin: *'Two cows will hardly combine, three make a good group – either united – or when one is a little removed from the other two. If you increase the group beyond three, one or more, in proportion, must be a little detached . This detachment prevents heaviness, and adds variety.'*<sup>1</sup>

Jane Austen: *'you are charmingly grouped and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth'.*

Humphry Repton,  
detail from *Sketches  
and Hints on  
Landscape  
Gardening* 1794,  
Plate XII



<sup>1</sup> *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the mountains, and lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (1786) <sup>2</sup> *Pride and Prejudice*, Chapter 10

The books of Humphry Repton can be accessed via **Digital Library for the Decorative Arts and Material Culture** The above picture had been included under its 'Fair Use' purview.

★ For a brilliant bit of Red Book digitising, do take a look at:  
<http://dxlab.sl.nsw.gov.au/repton-flip-book-2/>



# The Social Awareness of Humphry Repton

by Bella D'Arcy Reed

Required by my art history MA course to write on an aspect of 18<sup>th</sup> century art, I decided it was time to come out of my Renaissance/Edwardian cocoon and see what all the fuss was about re: Humphry Repton. I was astonished, not by the beautiful Red Books, but by his acute awareness of Society, and his empathy for working people and the poor.

Why do labourers feature in some drawings? His clients rarely thought about the people who did their work (the only mention of a servant in Jane Austen is Hill, the Bennet's housekeeper) or were concerned about the poor, even if their wives and daughters went visiting their villagers with baskets of food. His writing contains comments, often acerbic, on the difference between rich and poor.

He was particularly angry about the enclosure of land. He cites a



Fig.1 Fragments (see References)



Fig.2 as above

beautiful rural scene (fig. 1) which he had drawn ten years previous to a visit which showed him the result of an enclosure (fig. 2):

*'(a) lofty close paling not to confine the deer in fact to exclude mankind... the ladder-stile was changed to a (board with) a caution against mantraps and spring-guns.'*<sup>1</sup>

An old man told him he was

*'forced to walk a mile farther... after a hard day's work'*<sup>2</sup> whereas before he could cut through the woods. Repton adds;

*'This is a common consequence of all enclosures: and we may ask to whom are they a benefit?'*



*“adding to Riches an increased Store, and making poorer those who are already poor”*<sup>3</sup> Interestingly this passage was quoted in the *Civil Engineer and Architects Journal*, February 1840, as one with which ‘we cordially agree’.

At the request of his son, the Rev. Edward Repton, he agreed to make a design for a new workhouse for his son’s parish. He found a derelict building in marshland, damp and unhealthy. He advised another location, a ‘*wholesome spot on a dry soil*’, and advocated teaching children the ‘*wholesome and useful labour of gardening*’ as well as reading, writing and soldiering. The drawing is an idealist’s view of a poorhouse, a ‘toy town’ vision: we do not know whether Repton was being fanciful as an artist or truly wanted the poor to have as nice as home as the better-off, but the fact of the drawing itself leads one to think it was the latter. The idea was accepted, however ‘*the leading persons in the Parish*,’ who had first approved the plan, realised it would be more profitable to build private houses,

*‘therefore... the Poor for the present continue in their former unwholesome abode; but, as a late Orator observed of Negro slaves, compared with eels flayed alive, ‘they are used to it.’*”<sup>4</sup>

Repton uses architecture as a reflection on his clients:

*‘I would rather wish to mark the importance of a mansion...(which allows for) proper provision for its poor dependents’ and ‘the necessity, not to say the humanity, of providing comfortable and convenient residences for those who may have employment about the grounds.’*<sup>5</sup>

He must have known of the poem *The Deserted Village* by Oliver Goldsmith, published in 1770, which is thought to have referred to the demolition of a village and removal of farms by Simon, the 1st Earl Harcourt in the 1760s to complete the landscape garden around his new Palladian mansion. (A garden which was worked on by Lancelot Brown in the late 1770s: we do not know Brown’s personal thoughts on his client’s earlier decision.) It is possible that Repton shared Goldsmith’s political ideas, he was certainly sad at those who had: ‘*the power of refusing that others should share their pleasure, and*

however painful the reflection, this propensity is a part of human nature'.<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 3. Courtesy of the National Trust

In his Red Book for Sheringham, there are the usual before and after paintings. The 'before' (fig.3) has three labourers or farm workers, one of whom is using a mattock as the ground is presumably hard to dig. The others have spades, there is a wheelbarrow full of - turnips? There is no necessity in the purpose of the design, to show the topography, for these men to be here; Repton could simply have painted a field of leaves in rows to demonstrate a field of vegetables.



Fig. 4. Sheringham Red Book



Fig. 5. Felbrigg Hall

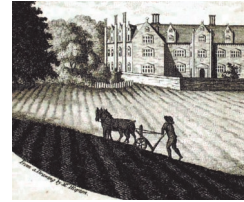


Fig. 6. Irmingland Hall

4: Courtesy of The National Trust. 5&6: Courtesy of Norfolk Museums Service (Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery)

The only reason for it, surely, was to show those who worked the land as contrast with the gentry shown in the 'after' picture (fig.4.), showing the field cut away with gentry in a carriage. A pair enjoying the view (unlike the labourers) with one man at the side of the road, actually Repton himself, sketching. One engraving after Repton (fig. 5.) shows gardeners planting trees, while yet another (fig.6.) shows a ploughman. There is no necessity for these workers in a view, but they are there, surely, because Repton thought they were important. The same answer must be given for the person in the painting of his own garden in Hare Street fig.7). At the fence, holding his cap over it,



Fig. 7. Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

is an old soldier with one eye, one arm and one leg. As Stephen Daniels points out in his book on Repton, this man is a parallel in the hanging joints of meat in the butcher's shop across the road. The 'after' painting (Fig. 8) has shrubs to cover the butcher, but the fence is still available to old soldiers, in any case, the soldier could move. A first thought might be that Repton's small shrubs will grow so he can no longer see any beggars, but he wrote :

*'I have rarely met with those who agreed with me in preferring the sight of mankind to that of herds of cattle, or the moving objects in a public road to the dull monotony of lawns and woods.'*<sup>7</sup>

Was he tired of landscaping acres at this point of his life? So why the beggar/soldier? Another comment on poverty? Stephen Daniels comments that the painting is from one fixed spot and that by moving around the garden the butchers shop is in view. Perhaps he has missed the point that Repton in his last years was unable to walk, so he would always sit in a fixed spot in his garden to watch the people on the road? Perhaps Repton simply has sympathy for the soldier.



Fig. 8 Reproduced by courtesy of the Essex Record Office

References: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/DLDecArts.ReptonFragments> and Google Books for JC Loudon.

<sup>1</sup> Humphry Repton, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816) page 193

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. <sup>3</sup> Ibid., pages 193/194

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., page 230, footnote.

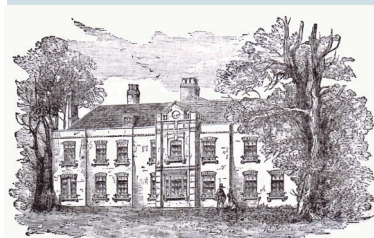
<sup>5</sup> J.C. Loudon, *The landscape gardening and landscape architecture of the late Humphry Repton*, esq. page 248

<sup>6</sup> *Fragments etc.* Page 233

<sup>7</sup> J.C. Loudon, page 602

## Another possible Repton site in Essex?

by Michael Leach



GREENSTED HALL.  
East Front, (Rebuilt 1875)

**Essex Record Office** possesses three copies of Nathaniel Salmon's *History of Essex*, issued in parts between 1740 and 1741. One of these has been bound with numerous additional manuscript notes, compiled by the antiquary Craven Ord

(1756-1832) who inherited, through his wife, the house and estate of Greensted Hall near Ongar in 1798.

A number of drawings, watercolours and engravings are amongst these additions. One, a sketch of a doorway at South Weald church is undated but signed IAR. Another, a highly detailed watercolour of the church door at Willingale Doe is also undated, but identifies this artist as J A Repton. This can only be John Adey Repton, son of Humphrey, who briefly worked for the architect John Nash before joining his father in 1800 to assist with the architectural side of the landscape designer's work.

This raises the question of how did two of John Adey's sketches come into the possession of Craven Ord, and whether there might have been a client relationship between the two? Both men had strong antiquarian interests. Ord visited numerous churches in search of monumental brasses which he copied using a messy process involving printer's ink, damp paper and copious quantities of rags. John Adey was also a visitor of old churches, but his interests were architectural and making accurate drawings of Gothic details and mouldings. It was John Nash's failure to acknowledge John Adey's contributions to his Gothic revival designs that led to the latter's resignation. Greensted Hall is a timber framed house of late seventeenth century construction, much altered and enlarged in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Little is known about its grounds, though Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 shows an avenue, about a mile in length, connecting the house to the town of Chipping Ongar. This never appears to have been metalled so it must have been principally ornamental, though doubtless could have been used by carriages in dry weather. This impressive avenue (which survived till its destruction by Dutch elm disease in the 1970s) never seems to have been matched by the gardens which lay to the north of the hall and were very modest in scale. There are two possible explanations for the link between Ord and John Adey. The first is that Ord had asked the Reptons to make some suggestions for improvements to the house and its surrounding landscape, though if anything was done it was almost certainly swept away by the extensive alterations of the later nineteenth century.

The second possibility is that the link between the two men was purely antiquarian, that they had been church visiting together and that John Adey presented Ord with a couple of his sketches (one of which was a properly worked-up studio image). The latter explanation is probably more likely, but the first possibility is offered in the hope that more evidence may come to light.

#### Sources:

Budworth, P, 1876 *Memorials of the Parishes of Greensted Budworth. Chipping Ongar & High Laver*

Powell. R (ed) 1956 *Victoria County History of Essex*, volume iv

Salmon, N, 1740-1 *History of Essex* (grangerized copy in ERO)



## **Celebrating Humphry Repton Ashridge House, Hertfordshire**

**Friday 10 and Saturday 11 August**

A two-day conference based at Ashridge, Hertfordshire to cast new light on the life and works of Humphry Repton and consider his legacy in landscape design. Professor Tom Williamson, Professor Stephen Daniels, Dr Jonathan Finch, Dr Sarah Rutherford, Dr Jane Bradney, Michael Symes, Dr Kate Felus, John Phibbs and Keir Davidson.





## Repton Events in / near Essex

*Friday 1 & Saturday 2 June 2018* **The Prophet in his own Country: Three Repton Gardens In Norfolk.**

Norfolk Gardens Trust in association with The Gardens Trust is offering a two-day conference focused on Sheringham Hall and Park, Barningham Hall and Honing Hall. **Contact** Karen Moore, Norfolk Gardens Trust Organiser, Point House, Back Street, Litcham, Norfolk PE32 2PA  
moore.karen@icloud.com 01328 700 313

*5<sup>th</sup> June 2018* **Braxted Park, Gt Braxted.** A Repton designed garden opens for the NGS with celebrated garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith giving a talk supporting Horatio's Garden charity at 12.00pm. Entrance fee to NGS,\* talk £20, to book please visit [www.horatiogarden.org.uk/Braxted](http://www.horatiogarden.org.uk/Braxted) Tel: 01722326 834.

*Friday 27th April 2018* **Repton in Bedfordshire: A Study Day at Moggerhanger Park.** An overview of Repton as a landscape artist by Kate Harwood, a lecturer and writer on garden history plus details about the Repton sites in the county researched and collated by volunteers from Bedfordshire Gardens Trust, and guided tours of the landscape with reference to the Repton proposals. Enquiries: [treasurer@bedsgardenstrust.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@bedsgardenstrust.org.uk) [www.bedsgardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.bedsgardenstrust.org.uk)



\*NGS, the National Garden Scheme, was founded in 1927 to help fund the essential work of district nurses. Ninety years on NGS volunteers have raised £50 million for a group of national charities including Macmillan Cancer Support. Visiting Essex gardens helps support these charities. The season begins in February with a snowdrop display at Horksley Hall, Colchester and later with Tulips at Ulting Wick, Maldon featured in *The English Garden* as one of the 50 "must see" Spring Gardens. To view the gardens open for NGS Essex, go to [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk), or pick up a leaflet in garden and information centres. If you would like to open your Essex garden for the National Garden Scheme tel. 01799 550553 or email [susan.copeland@ngs.org.uk](mailto:susan.copeland@ngs.org.uk).

## TRIBUTE to Brian and Diana Creasey



Brian and Diana

Photo Jim Gillies

*The Gardens of Easton Lodge are featured in this edition, and are the venue for the Study Day. It is worth remembering who found and recovered the gardens and founded the Trust to ensure we can all share them*

In 1971, the Creasey family came to look at the only remaining wing of Easton Lodge, the house that once belonged to the Countess of Warwick. Enchanted by the front door, which was off its hinges, and a jungle of a garden which delighted their children, they decided to buy it and restore it. In the Mid-summer of that year, they first slept in a house with no running water, no electricity and bats in their bedroom. His first steps in the discovery of the garden were to buy 4.5 acres of land to add to the original 1.5 acres, finding the original balustrades that were at the front of the house and being able to delineate the shape of the house. He researched the Countess, affectionately well-known as Daisy, and the estate. Brian reported seeing lorries come onto the land next to theirs to take away stone from the Italian garden which they then had no idea existed. In 2000, Brian rented another 17 acres to find the rest of the garden.

The hard work of clearing the trees, shrubs and other vegetation clogging up the Italian garden was done with the help of friends and volunteers (encouraged by the provision of picnics and wine). They found the remains of the tree house, the Shelley pavilion, and the Japanese garden. The shape of the design by Harold Peto had come to light. The 'Peto' Pavilion was re-created when the couple first opened the garden to the public.

Brian and his project, or 'obsession' as he called it, were highly respected throughout the Essex gardens community. When Chair of the Preservation Trust ten years ago, I had many spirited discussions, with Brian but together we wrote a book about his experiences,

because I did not want him, or his and Diana's, story to be forgotten. The Gardens of Easton Lodge you see now reflects the combined visions of Daisy, Harold Peto, Maynard Greville, (Daisy's son, an arborist, who planted trees everywhere), and the Creasey's intervention and care over 39 years. Brian, who died in June 2016, would be so pleased to see it continued through the work of the present Preservation Trust.

*Bella D'Arcy Reed*

## Kings Seeds Visit, 2017

### Penny Keys & Michele Freeman



*Photo Kings Seeds*

Kings Seeds supplies flower, herb (through sister company Suffolk Herbs') and vegetable seeds to both retail, wholesale and commercial customers.

The company has been based at Monks Farm since 1913. Our host, Peter Miller, Purchasing Manager, has worked for the company for more than fifty years and is the grandson of George Cuckow, one of the original directors. He explained that Ernest William King established the company in 1888, in neighbouring Coggeshall, when he was just eighteen years of age as his jealous half-brothers Herbert and Leonard, who were running his grandfather's seed business JF King, (founded in 1793), refused him employment. The two businesses ran separately until 1920, when JF King began to experience difficulties and Ernest took over the running of the firm and amalgamated them. On his death in 1930, he passed the company to his two godsons, who sold the firm in 1931 to Francis J. Nichols. The name of E.W. King & Co. Ltd was retained and ownership to this day is largely with the local descendants of those directors.

Today, Kings Seeds farm 130 hectares, (325 acres) locally and employs thirty-four permanent and up to fifteen seasonal staff. It continues to specialise in growing sweet peas, a particular interest of Ernest. In the fields adjacent to the farm buildings we could see young plants, planted the previous November, growing on strongly. As the season progresses, rogue flowers (flowers not true to type),

will be removed before the seed pods set. When they are ripe, the seed pods are picked, processed and the mother seeds, having been tested for vigour, purity and germination, are then supplied to specially selected independent growers throughout the world to produce bulk seed stock exclusively for the company; the need for quality seed each year must be spread globally to avoid the vagaries of our climate and the potential for pest damage.

On our visit, modern technology was in evidence: seed sorting in sealed cabinets, batch testing of seeds for vigour, purity and germination in the laboratory, (every batch of seeds sold by Kings is tested), seeds in the cold store where samples of all seeds including those no longer available in their catalogue are retained - a few brave souls ventured into the chill - and the packaging department where state of the art machines fill seed packets. However, it was the innovations of an earlier time that caught the attention of our group, as the old seed sorting machines, most of which are over fifty years old, were set to work by Peter.



A fascinating visit and we are very grateful to Kings Seeds and especially to Peter Miller, whose expertise really made the business of seed production come to life for our members.

Kings Seeds available to order: [www.kingsseeds.com](http://www.kingsseeds.com)

Further information about the seed companies of Essex can be obtained from: Roper, Elinor M.C., 'Seedtime, the History of Essex Seeds'. Phillimore, 1989

## East Ruston, a magical highlight of one of the 2017 tours



Photos  Patricia Sinclair and  
East Ruston Gardens 

## WHO'S WHO at ESSEX GARDENS TRUST



**Chairman: Thadian Pillai** is a landscape designer with professional experience in the visual arts. He has exhibited nationally with a range of organisations including the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Southbank Centre, London; and has won an award for sustainable design from Arts Council England. He has been involved in several projects featured in the former EGT Newsletter, and is currently researching Hutton Hall for EGT's forthcoming inventory of Brentwood. Thadian lectures internationally. His research interests include the garden as an agent of cultural transformation, and the re-appropriation of beauty. Of his election as EGT Chair, Thadian says: *"The time for 'the garden' is yet ahead of us; still too often it is considered merely passive and benign. I wish to lead the EGT Board in supporting more people to make their own meaningful connections with the natural world, so that they are able to enrich and enhance their own lives."*



**Treasurer: Stephen Ogle** is a retired chartered accountant. His career included periods in auditing and management consultancy and finished as finance director in the electricity industry. Since retiring he was until recently the honorary accountant to a small international development charity. He and his wife, Mary, lived the first part of their married life in Writtle and after a spell of ten years in Gloucestershire moved to Felsted. Neither claim to be expert gardeners but Mary looks after the garden giving it a wildlife friendly angle while Stephen has an allotment. He also volunteers at the Essex Wildlife Trust's Phyllis Currie Reserve.



**Conservation: David Andrews** worked as an archaeologist and conservation officer with Essex County Council, and now does part time consultancy. As conservation officer for the Essex Gardens Trust, he monitors planning applications that might affect historic designed landscapes and makes representations on behalf of the Gardens Trust.



### **Programme and Events booking: Michele Freeman.**

Following a twenty year career in the commercial world, Michele retrained at Writtle College and obtained the BSc Horticulture in 2009, the same year as she joined Essex Gardens Trust. Almost immediately she joined the Programme and Planning group providing administrative support and continues to do so today.



**Membership: Patricia Sinclair** began gardening at the age of 8 when her mother, with some misgivings, agreed to give her a tiny plot at the back of the family garden. She remembers bicycling to a local shop, in great excitement, to buy packets of seeds at 3d each. This little plot also provided the first of many hard lessons in horticulture when a blackbird beat her to



harvesting a particularly large and luscious strawberry. Some years later, Patricia (now married) and her husband, Ian, moved to Gt. Leighs and acquired a larger garden which requires a lot of their time. She joined the Essex Gardens Trust in 2010 and became Membership Secretary.

**Board Member: Tricia Moxey**, joined the Essex Gardens Trust as a member of the research team and contributed a paper on the husbandry of bees in *The Living Landscape* published by the EGT in 2010. Tricia is an environmentalist and communicator with many years of practical experience and is keen to share her passion for and knowledge of the natural world with others, combining her interest in historical research with an understanding of the current demands on our productive landscapes for recreational spaces, agriculture, widespread tree cover and flood mitigation. She champions the vital link between gardens and human health and well being. She is currently Vice Chairman of CPRE Essex and serves as a Trustee on the boards of the Friends of Wanstead Parklands and The Hundred Parishes Society.



**Research: Jill Plater** attended the inaugural meeting of the Essex Gardens Trust in 1996 and promptly joined. Although working full time as a senior manager in an adult education college she joined the newly formed garden research group under Fiona Cowell, leading to many years of working with a the group to record many Essex gardens. She is a member of a specialist group working at the Warley Place Essex Wildlife Trust reserve, overseeing the care of special plants and trees She has been a lifelong athlete competing in most events from the sprints to the London Marathon and despite advancing old age still manages a weekly run.



**Editor, Journal & Newsletters: Bella D'Arcy Reed**. After 25 years in the arts and 12 as a garden designer/historian, She now concentrates on fiction writing. She has both a music and a Writtle garden design degree and an MA in Art History. Her garden designs and short stories have won awards, and she has published two books on Italian Renaissance and Edwardian gardens. She is finishing a novel set in 16th century Rome. [bella@darcyreed.uk](mailto:bella@darcyreed.uk) [www.darcyreed.uk](http://www.darcyreed.uk)



**Editor, Facebook & Website: Jane Palmer**. A child of botanists, Jane was interested in gardening from a young age. Her first degree was in Theology & she trained as a humanities teacher. After having her daughter she gave up teaching to concentrate on her garden and volunteered at Marks Hall Arboretum. She achieved a first-class degree in Horticulture at Writtle, and a prize from the Chartered Institute of Horticulture for her dissertation. She is a Trustee with the Friends of Cressing. Over the past few years she has been a carer for her daughter and a manager for the Women's Farm and Gardens Association, monitoring horticultural training in several different gardens over three counties.



# 125 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

Writtle University College will be  
celebrating 125 years in 2018.

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T: 01245 424200

E: [admissions@writtle.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@writtle.ac.uk)

W: [writtle.ac.uk](http://writtle.ac.uk)



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