



2006 FORUM – HELIGAN

Over 70 delegates convened at Polgooth Village Hall, for the fifth annual WKGN Forum organized jointly between the Network and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. It was wonderful to see a mix of old friends and supporters, alongside those new to the Network, particularly from the South West. Gardeners, private owners, and professionals alike shared a common interest: a keen enthusiasm for walled gardens and for their conservation.

The Welcome Address included a brief announcement from Kim Auston, Landscape Architect for English Heritage, of a proposal for an English Heritage publication on guidelines for the conservation of walled kitchen gardens. Intended primarily as advice for County Councils and the like in dealing with planning applications for development in walled kitchen gardens, it is a welcome recognition of the plight of many of these gardens, which are so vulnerable to this particular threat.

First to speak was Tom Petherick, a member of the Heligan team involved in the early part of the restoration and now well known for his writing and promotion of organic gardening. His talk: 'Sustaining Walled Gardens the Organic Way' demonstrated his passionate commitment to organic gardening, with plenty of good advice based on his wide experience in horticulture with many of the slides from Heligan demonstrating the high standards that are possible with organic gardening. Susan Campbell spoke next, taking the theme 'Nine Reasons to restore Walled Kitchen Gardens'. Her talk covered the past 20 years of her involvement with

these gardens and demonstrated the gradual change in attitudes towards them. The nine reasons ranged from aesthetics and heritage to new potential roles such as education, community projects and horticultural therapy.

These themes linked with the next speaker, Dr Karen Liebreich, Project Co-ordinator of the Chiswick House Kitchen Garden Association. She impressed us all with her account of their educational project involving local schoolchildren, young people and residents, which has been running in the neglected 17th century walled garden lying within the grounds of Chiswick House. Since January 2005 they have had over 1500 visits from children aged between 4 and 17. Currently the project is entirely volunteer-led, but under the regeneration opportunity created by a major Heritage Lottery Fund award, there will be new challenges to face.

This was followed by a brief presentation by Chris Sawyer from Alitex. Alitex has always been supportive of the Network and this year they made a small donation towards the Forum costs.

After coffee Peter Thoday, well known for his presentation of the BBC's Victorian Kitchen Garden programmes in 1987, and Philip McMillan Browse, the original consultant for Heligan, put on a great 'double act'. Seated and relaxed, they took it in turn to discuss various aspects of history, horticulture, and of course walled gardens, without the use of visual aids save for a few carefully chosen props from the gardens. Peter maintained that, apart from new varieties and hybridization, horticulture had not really changed that much since Roman times. Philip continued this theme, saying that there was much that we could learn from the past, which he demonstrated by bringing along part of his collection of old gardening books!

We then returned to Heligan where we had a delicious buffet lunch in the Countryside Barn. There was also an opportunity to stock up on seeds from Thomas Etty Esq, and browse the book-stall set up by the Heligan team.

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THE POTTING SHED

 WALLED KITCHEN GARDEN *network*

WKGn FORUM- Heligan (cont. from page one)

After lunch we all set off to Flora's Green, pausing to admire the impressive display of vegetables on the way, for the traditional photograph of all the delegates. We then divided up into four groups for the garden tours: Philip McMillan Browse led on restoration, Tom Petherick on organic gardening, Peter Thoday on structures and Sylvia Travers, the Productive Garden's Manager, on the present horticultural arrangement of the gardens.

The Forum was once again blessed with fine weather and the tours took place in warm sunshine; the gardens looked superb thanks to the hard work of Sylvia and her team. Afterwards we returned to the Countryside Barn for tea, and a last chance to catch up with friends old and new, before setting off home or taking the opportunity to explore the rest of the gardens.



Head Gardener Sylvia Travers with pumpkin display

Fulham Palace a heaven-sent opportunity?

by Bob Sherman

Director of Gardens & Gardening,
Garden Organic

There has been a settlement on the site of Fulham Palace since at least 700AD, when the area was deep in the country and travel was by the river not the tube. From that time on it was lived in by a succession of bishops but didn't become the main residence of the Bishops of London until the 18th Century.



It remained such until 1973, by which time half the original estate had gone and a large area had been given over to allotments. This thriving allotment site is in full use today. What remains of

the Palace grounds is still precious and the landscape reflects the horticultural passions of some of the incumbents through time. Of particular importance is Bishop Compton, a great plant collector of the 17th Century, who planted many newly introduced trees, a number of which survive to this day.

Also important was Bishop Terrick, who in 1780 built a walled kitchen garden of over an acre in size, which remained in productive use until the 1960s. This walled area is now in a sad state of decay. The unusual glasshouse built against a curving south-facing wall is a complete ruin (above picture) and the bothy and back buildings rest quietly in peace in the deep shade of probably self-sown trees. The walls are relatively sound and a fine Tudor gateway greets the view from the Palace windows (pictured left). Otherwise the original paths and borders are indistinct and

the interior has been planted in an ad hoc fashion to try, with little reference to history, to provide some interest for casual visitors.

In 2004 Garden Organic was invited to enter into discussions with the Fulham Palace Project Director to prepare a plan for the restoration and subsequent management of the walled garden. In spring this year the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham accepted our proposal, which was by then in competition with another bid.

Restoration of the Palace itself has already begun as a result of a successful bid by the project to the Heritage Lottery Fund. In the gardens, however, there is little visible progress, as we need some time yet to raise funds for this second phase of bringing this wonderful garden back to life. We hope to save as many of the outbuildings and structures as we can, including what remains of the cold frames. By 2010 we hope to be able to show you just how this garden might once have looked.

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FEATURE

HUGHENDEN MANOR WALLED KITCHEN GARDEN

by K Broadey

HISTORY

The Hughenden Estate, in the Hundreds of Desborough and set in the chalk Chiltern Hills, is now on the northern outskirts of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The house is famous as the country home of the most unlikely Victorian Prime Minister – Benjamin Disraeli. Ownership of the estate can be traced to Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor and sister of Harold Godwin, Earl of Wessex and King Harold 1 of England. The estate was opened to the public by the National Trust in 1947.

The Manor Estate contains a brick and flint walled garden of just over one acre, the garden probably dates from the 1740s, which links with the date of 1749 on the sundial on the wall outside the main entrance (fig:1). At around this time the house was converted from a farmhouse to a gentleman's residence, and the estate owner became resident. The classic evidence for a pre 19th century walled garden is nail-holes in the bricks and lime mortar and this is present at Hughenden.

There was certainly an enclosure present in 1818, though the map is not well detailed.

The 1851 Tithe Map [1:250 and 10 feet wide] clearly shows the walls in their present layout and the paths in the main garden. The walls adjoining the stables were changed in the 20th century. There is archaeological evidence that the walls were increased in height and that the ground levels have been altered. A doorway from the outer garden to the road has been bricked up and the levels changed. Accesses have been changed: the 'Golden Gates' which were once at the main [southern] entrance to the estate are now the entrance gates to the 'Cherry Garden' – the glass house area.

PRODUCTIVE USE

The garden provided a range of fruit and vegetables for the house and linked to farm buildings to the north east of the walled areas. These and the adjacent stables were the sources of vital manure.

The 1847 sale contents schedule lists - 'A Walled Kitchen Garden containing a Vinery and Melon Pits, ...detached Stabling, Ice House, Carpenter's Tool House, Root House, Farm Yard with Sheds, Piggeries, Barn, Cow House, Hen House etc. Area 1 acre, 0 roods, 22 perches.

The Particulars of Letting in 1881 identify – 'Adjoining the stables are the Kitchen Gardens entirely surrounded and divided into two portions by high walls. These gardens are productive and in good cultivation. They contain a range of Potting Sheds, Octagonal Conservatory, Vinery and a range of Forcing Pits'.

Maurice Sellwood, a garden boy at Hughendon 1942 – 44 wrote his recollections: 'Fruit, vegetables and flowers were cultivated. Peaches were planted in the first lean to,the second was a vinery and the grapes were a real luxury during the war. Black Hamburg and Muscat of Alexandria, there were 7 vines in all. Bedding plants, tomatoes and cucumbers were grown in the span house, ... figs, plums, morello cherries and red currants on the walls.'

DECLINE

The garden went out of full productive use in the late 1940s and 50s. At one point it was used to grow Christmas trees for the staff. The garden continued to provide cut flowers for the Manor, as it does today. It is possible that the topsoil was removed for use elsewhere. The soil is barely a spade deep and contains large flints. The topsoil in a 200 plus old kitchen garden should be 2 spades deep, even on the Chiltern chalk.



REGENERATION

This will not be a reconstruction, but will use the superb legacy of the walled garden to create spaces for learning, recreation and contemplation. Fifty-seven varieties of heritage apples were planted in 1989 and were the beginning of the regeneration process. Two 'quarters', the fruit trees and bushes and the north-facing border will be used as a teaching resource for Buckinghamshire Adult Learning horticultural courses using organic methods and heritage varieties wherever possible. They also use the adjacent glasshouses and are building new cold frames that will have restored Victorian 'lights'.

The northeast quarter is being developed with containers and raised beds for visitors, children and other groups to sow, plant and harvest vegetables.

The southeast quarter is to be for wild flowers and areas for exploration [a willow maze] and story telling.

The flinty soil in the east [cut flowers] and south borders is being replaced using silt from Hughenden stream [no longer flowing – Disraeli once caught a 4½ pound trout in it].

This is all work in progress. It is hoped that visitors will enjoy this special 'secret place', its history, current beauty and its developing and productive future.

**'How fair is a garden amid the
toils and passions of existence'**

Benjamin Disraeli – 'Coningsby'

The list of walled gardens to visit is now up on the website on the 'Garden Finder' page. There are over 90 entries, however we do not claim that this is a complete list, so if you know of any gardens that you think should be included (they should be accessible to the public) please let us know.

'Rootle' online

A new website called 'Rootle' is about to be launched consisting of a search facility for apple varieties. It will assist all those growers, garden designers, suppliers and institutions with an interest in the design of orchards, in apple variety research and in the maintenance of historic gardens.

The user decides on a number of dessert and/or culinary varieties and chooses from among 33 preferences (time of origin, place of origin, whether recognized with an RHS Award etc.). Varieties are then selected from a database of over 500 varieties.

Varieties are selected on a 'best-bet' basis according to a 'fuzzy' or 'intelligent' procedure so that, if you ask for 12 varieties, that's the number selected. Any variety with an outlying flowering time is highlighted and can be substituted easily.

There is an index entry for each variety with a Crown copyright identification image (for most varieties) and descriptive notes, including flavour category, and each step of the way has authoritative background information.

At present, Rootle is in prototype form. Following some market research in early 2007 it will be revised then launched commercially, initially as a free-standing subscription service. For more information: office@rootle.info

It's all in the name

Ray Warner –Chief Clerk, Thomas ETTY Esq
www.thomasetty.co.uk

One of the real pleasures of researching heritage seed varieties is discovering the names passed down with them. Whilst modern vegetables have somewhat bland names, Victorian vegetable breeders were rather more imaginative, if not entirely 'PC'.

I touched on the "Fat Lazy Blonde" in the last article, but should also mention her "sister" the "Drunken Woman" lettuce. Despite my best efforts I have not been able to establish exactly how this lettuce moved from being Rossa di Trento, through Ubricon Frastagliata to earn its current name. My best guess is that the crinkly leaves, copiously veined with red, bear a passing resemblance to the face of someone a bit too familiar with the "falling down" water.

It's the same with the Spread-eagle or Dove bean. Originally called St Espirit ou a la religieuse, the English names derive from markings on the bean hilum which actually do resemble Eagles or Doves in flight; why then has it evolved to being called, rather cheekily, the Nun's Belly-button bean.

Finally to complete this trinity I turn to the Lazy Housewife bean, which started life as White Cherry, or Canterbury, and is known in France as Coco Blanc. This one is perhaps easier to explain. Prior to its arrival, it was necessary for bean plants to be "picked over" every day. However beans could be left on this plant for 3 or 4 days without becoming too stringy. A "housewife" could therefore become "lazy" in picking her beans.

One thing is obvious, vegetable names were obviously given by men; I have yet to meet a Fat, Drunk, or Lazy man (or Monk). However, some ladies of my acquaintance have pointed out that the Hollow Crown (parsnip) and Toad (Crapaudine) beetroot were clearly named after men!

MYSTERY OBJECT

Each issue we will feature an image of a 'mystery object' – such as an old garden tool or similar – for you to identify. Answers will be posted on our message board: 'The Grapevine':

An easy one to start with:

- What is the object in the picture?
- Why was it used in Country House gardens?
- What is it made from traditionally?
- Where and how in the garden was it placed?

Check for the correct answer on 'The Grapevine'

Image and questions supplied by www.oldgardentools.co.uk

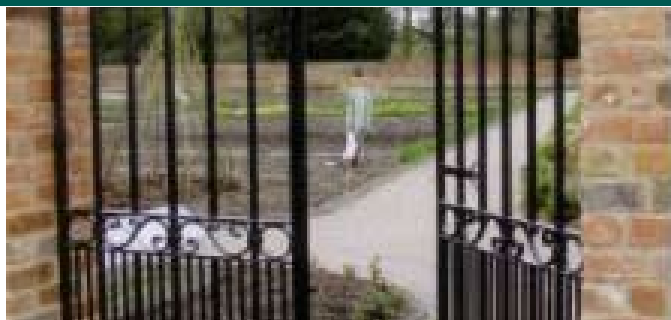


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 WALLED KITCHEN GARDEN *network*

FEATURE

TATTON TALK by Marion Prescott A VOLUNTEER'S VIEW



'Your mission is to 'squish the loopers', said the gaffer. Right boss. What a mission: in fact it took several weeks to closely inspect all the fruit trees in our five year old orchard, as two acres holds a lot of trees – running into three figures. Now you might think it boring inspecting every leaf on every tree for the tell-tale signs of holes and 'sewn together' leaves made by the little green looping caterpillars (I think they only have two pairs of legs which is why they loop), but actually it is fascinating discovering all the other wildlife which inhabits the leaf canopy. It also gives one thinking time; for example, did the Victorians use greasebands to prevent the winter moth and the sawfly females from climbing up the trunks to lay their eggs? We would need a large number here, but they would look unsightly, and then there is the labour of putting them on and taking them off, etc., so it is a far better use of time having a willing volunteer on patrol (who gladly misses out on double digging). After that mission was complete, it was on to tying in the espaliers and cordons which had worked loose in the high winds. Volunteering is varied and not just about weeding.

In June this year, five volunteers (two from the Japanese Garden) received their bronze five year service medal from the National Trust and a letter of thanks from the Head of Operations at Tatton Park. We wouldn't turn up each week if we didn't enjoy what we do, but it is nice to be appreciated.

Every week we notice the kitchen garden plantings getting taller and lusher. This of course means the weeds are doing likewise, normally. However, July was extremely hot and dry, so the gardeners were hard pressed to keep crops watered. It was sad to see seedlings burning to a crisp, but that is the nature of things. I am trying to be philosophical about the fact that most of the 3,000 cuttings of Box I rooted and then potted up last year are now crisps, together with 900 strawberry plants, in spite of best watering efforts by the gardeners. Fortunately there is plenty of material to take more cuttings; it just means a delay in the planting programme for Box hedging around the orchard and kitchen garden beds.

'It was sad to see seedlings burning to a crisp, but that is the nature of things.'

August sees us hard pressed to gather all the crops for sale in the garden shop and for use in the restaurant at the optimum time, such is the bounteous nature of a kitchen garden in full production; the hard work of the past few years is definitely worth it.

All the crops for the kitchen garden start off as (usually) tiny seed, and the miracle of germination and growing of plants from such a tiny speck never fails to amaze me, six decades on from when I planted my first seeds as a toddler. So, to ensure continuity of production, I have been busy growing winter brassicas from seed, and looking after them until they are

ready to plant out in September and October. Other crops are sown direct whilst the soil is still warm. We try to keep the kitchen garden productive all the year round, as it would have been in Victorian/Edwardian times. I imagine the gardeners then had less subtle methods of dealing with moles, voles, mice and wood pigeons that still think the kitchen garden is there for their benefit. The wood pigeons coo "go home, I want food" from the woodland behind the east wall, just waiting to dine on the brassicas when the last gardener has left. The Head Gardener has a licensed gun: Anyone for pigeon pie?



The wood pigeons coo "go home, I want food" from the woodland...