



Twenty-first Annual General Meeting

The BGHG Annual General Meeting was held on 28 February 2023 at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in London with 37 members in attendance. The annual report, financial report and annual accounts had been circulated to all members in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that the year had included a full programme of trips and lectures plus the celebration of BGHG's 20th anniversary with a party held in the British Medical Association building and garden and a special anniversary newsletter issued in September 2022. It had not proved possible to plan a full in-person Study Day but a Spring Lecture on *Art and the Engineering of Water in the 17th century* presented at the end of February over Zoom had attracted 70 participants and been well received. Analysis of attendance on trips showed that a total of 75 different members had participated in all of the trips in 2022 with several attending more than one trip. The revised BGHG website, launched at the start of 2022, was attracting more visitors and BGHG member Carrie Cowan had joined the team to help update the calendar of online lectures.

The major item of expenditure in 2022 was the cost of setting up and developing the website, although the overall reserves remain healthy. BGHG continued to support the Professional Gardeners' Trust and the Institute of Historical Research history of garden and landscape research seminars, plus a further donation to the Gardens Trust towards the 50th anniversary special issue of the *Garden History* journal. The membership numbers were stable at 175 with 14 new members joining during the year. The annual membership fee remains at £10.

The Committee for 2023 was elected. Susan Pettit and Helena Poldervaart were welcomed as new members and the following members were re-elected: Carmela Bromhead-Jones, Ruth Brownlow, Sue Coulbeck, Barbara Deason, Patricia Maitland, Joan Pateman, Sandra Pullen, Margaret Scholes, Pippa Temple and Linda Wade. Margie Hoffnung continues as a co-opted member and liaison with the Gardens Trust. Both Susan Jellis and Caroline Foley were retiring this year and were warmly thanked for their many contributions to BGHG activities.

Following the AGM, Antonia Couling gave a very informative and timely lecture investigating the origins of London's green spaces and possible links to the British transatlantic slave trade, based on the extensive research for her MA in garden and landscape history at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London. Antonia is a qualified garden designer, horticulturist and garden historian.

The AGM Lecture

London's Green Spaces and Contested Heritage by Antonia Couling

In this lecture Antonia summarised her research into London parks and gardens and their links to the transatlantic slave trade. There has been growing need to understand how the wealth gained from the slave trade contributed to Britain's history and a concern that this contribution was being 'airbrushed out of our history'. Protests against the way history was being portrayed erupted in England in June 2020 when the statue of slave trader Edward Colston (1636–1721) was thrown into the Bristol Channel. This protest led to the government introducing the 'Retain and Explain' law and policy not to destroy Britain's history but to re-interpret and explain it.

Although the initial public focus was on memorials and buildings, Antonia wanted to investigate the background of parks and gardens, specifically London's parks and gardens, and whether they also were connected to the transatlantic slave trade. She compiled a list of 1850 green spaces across London's 33 boroughs plus the City of London Corporation and constructed a large database of information to identify their association with the slave trade according to various categories. She demonstrated the database by showing examples from the boroughs of Merton and Ealing. Her research included a questionnaire to the boroughs and exploration of their websites looking for indications of their investigations into the history of their green spaces. In all, it was an impressive collection of data, compiled in an amazingly short space of time.



The Ship, Drum and Anchor artwork in Gladstone Park
Photo: Caleb Morrison

The analysis of the results was equally interesting. Of the 1850 sites, Antonia found that 53, or about 3%, had definite evidence of a contested heritage, while a further 427 raised questions worthy of further investigation. Four councils were found to have task forces engaged in the 'Retain and Explain' action for parks and gardens. One outcome in Hackney related to Cassland Road Gardens, originally named after Sir John Cass, a director of the Royal African Company which had a monopoly of the English market of African slaves. The park was renamed Kit Crowley Park in July 2021 to commemorate a local teacher described by her supporters 'as a model for children of the Windrush generation growing up in the area'. Brent Council had undertaken a public consultation with a view to changing the name of Gladstone Park, called after Prime Minister William Gladstone, an abolitionist himself but whose father Sir John (1764–1851) was one of Britain's largest slave owners. Following the consultation, they decided instead to apply the 'Retain and Explain' policy by providing more explanatory notices and a history trail in the park. They also installed a horticultural artwork, designed by Harum Morrison and Antonia Couling, to celebrate the achievements of people of Black heritage and to acknowledge the park's contested history.

Antonia's talk, meticulously illustrated, was a fine example of excellence in research and a wake-up call on this contentious subject. She concluded that it was important for the various organisations involved, from Historic England to local councils, to collaborate, and that more work and visibility of information and goals were needed.

Caroline Foley

The Winter Lecture

23 November 2022

The BGHG Winter Lecture was given over Zoom by Kate Harwood, Conservation and Planning Officer for Hertfordshire Gardens Trust. Kate served for many years on the Conservation Committees of the Association of Gardens Trust and Gardens Trust. She writes and lectures widely on garden history and has taught at Birkbeck, Capel Manor, the City Lit and Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education.

Percy Cane and the Yule Family at Hanstead House

In 2012 Kate Harwood was informed of a threat from development to the garden of Hanstead House, Brickett Wood, near Radlett in Hertfordshire. She discovered that the garden had been laid out by Percy Cane (1881–1976), a distinguished but somewhat forgotten designer. She also became interested in the colourful Yule family, who had rebuilt Hanstead House and lived there from 1925 to 1957. Fortunately, the developer agreed to co-operate in producing a design sensitive to the estate's past. Kate's lecture fell into three parts: a review of Percy Cane's career, the story of the Yule family, and an account of Cane's design for Hanstead and the present development plans.

Kate showed how Cane's native Essex had shaped him as a designer. He started his working life at the Crittall metal frame company, where he stayed until 1908, after which he studied art at Chelmsford College, and subsequently architecture at the Architectural Association. A visit to the garden created by Harold Peto at nearby Easton Lodge, however, inspired him to turn his attention to garden design. Kate showed how the Lodge's prominent features, namely an Arts and Crafts architectural structure contrasting with generous planting and an informal grassy glade, stayed with Cane throughout his career, as did an interest in its Japanese garden. Cane was also aware, however, of the continental modernism of Gropius and Le Corbusier, which found expression in the Essex industrial estates of Crittall and the Czech shoe company Bata. Their pared-down surfaces combined with Japanese elegance modified the Arts and Crafts influence to coalesce into Cane's highly personal style. Kate traced its development through his many publications and garden designs, including those for Hascombe Court, Godalming (1928–1929), the British Pavilion at the New York World's Fair (1939), and Dartington Hall, Devon (started 1945).

The Yule family were traders in Indian jute, but Sir David Yule expanded the business into other areas to make it the most important in India. In 1925 he bought Hanstead House, which he pulled down and rebuilt before dying only three years later. His immensely wealthy widow owned a villa in the south of France, where she met Percy Cane and invited him to lay out her garden at Hanstead. The garden he designed for her included lawns, long borders, a pergola, rose garden, rock garden and Japanese garden, and a balustraded wall with bastion overlooking the parkland.



Hanstead House garden today Photo: courtesy Griggs Homes

By 2012, after several owners, the whole estate was sold to developers and Kate was alerted to their plans. Kate, with the support of the local planning department, was able to persuade the developer of the house and garden to save a considerable part of the formal garden and restore the pergola, part of this area originally fated to become the car park for the apartments in the house. The new design will preserve enough of Cane's original for that to be fully restored should the opportunity arise. We are grateful to Kate for both saving a garden and reminding us of its remarkable designer.

Katy Myers

RHS Hyde Hall

BGHG Visit 19 January

On arrival at Hyde Hall in Essex, the first novel feature some of us noticed was the rain chains draining the roof of the 2017 Welcome Building in place of plastic downpipes (see photo left). The Birch Grove was next with its gleaming slender trunks in white and bronze.



Our two guides, Amy Gill and Andy Tebbutt, took us on tours leading across the valley to the Winter Garden. This is filled with plants selected for their appearance and scent in the winter months – trees with glorious bark, shrubs such as *Viburnum* and *Callicarpa*, plants with sculptural seedheads, and bulbs. Some 19,000 tons of soil, left over from other building projects, were transported to create the mounds which shelter the plants from wind and add critical undulation to the otherwise flat landscape – another innovative feature. It was a sunny day and the colours positively glowed in the bright light. The whole effect was of a clever balance of height, structure, texture and colour. The clay soil is suitable for willows (*Salix*) and dogwood (*Cornus*) and there have been *Cornus* trials here since 2018 with the best cultivars given the RHS Award of Garden Merit (AGM). The living willow sculptures are an annual highlight of the Winter Garden; the willow branches are shaped and bound together each year in November and cut and pollarded in March. In addition, three metal sculptures by David Watkinson of a decaying leaf at different stages are sited through the garden. Amy's Winter Garden tour finished at one of Hyde Hall's most beautiful trees, *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood', whose autumn leaves are deep red.

There is much more to see at Hyde Hall. It is a huge site of 365 acres, of which about one-third is tenant-farmed, in a splendid setting with grand views over the countryside. The curator, Robert Brett, told us about the history and development of Hyde Hall over the last 30 years. Part of the plan has been an ongoing project to plant trees and hedgerows around the periphery. Of note was the recent planting of 5000 small trees (whips) around the periphery which has already changed the biodiversity of the garden.

It was a splendid day. The only disappointment was that none of Amy's favourite orange *Cornus sanguinea* – 'Anny's Winter Orange', 'Midwinter Fire' and 'Magic Flame' – were available in the shop, having sold out before Christmas. This suggests another visit, to buy plants and to enjoy the autumn colour.

Mary Sewell



Living willow sculpture in the Winter Garden

Photo: Mary Sewell

Biodiversity Heritage Library: Collections

The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL), described in Newsletter No. 60, Spring 2022, is an online resource for publications dating from the 15th century onwards (<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>). While its main focus is

biodiversity, many of the books relate to plant collectors, gardens and gardening. For example, the search term 'Garden design' brings up more than 50,000 items, the earliest a French book of parterre designs dated 1630 (<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/77861#page/5/mode/1up>).

In addition to the main catalogue, BHL has now created some 60 Collections curated around particular themes, ranging from 'A history of cats' to 'Carnivorous plants', the 'Language of flowers' (19th century floral illustrations and poetry) and 'Seed & nursery catalogs'. As we celebrated International Women's Day last month, it seemed appropriate to take a brief look at two of these Collections that are concerned with female authors.



'Early Women in Science' contains 58 publications by women working before 1922. There are two books here dating from the early 1700s by the German entomologist Maria Sibylla Merian who worked for two years in Suriname. These Dutch editions¹ are not written in English but they are still well worth examining for the beautiful illustrations of Surinamese plants and invertebrates. Maria Sibylla Merian was the subject of the BGHG winter lecture in 2019; see Newsletter No. 54, Spring 2020.



Mary Treat was a self-taught biologist and writer working in New Jersey in the second half of the 19th century. She supported herself by publishing magazine articles describing and illustrating her detailed observations in her own garden and the nearby New Jersey Pine Barrens. Three of her books which bring together these articles are included in the Collection. The best known is *Home studies in nature*.² She also published in scientific journals and her skills gained her great respect. Mary corresponded with Charles Darwin over a five-year period in the 1870s when he was working on his book on carnivorous plants and she also carried out experiments for him.³



Gertrude Jekyll, who was involved in the creation of some 400 gardens, is renowned for her books and articles on all aspects of garden design and planting. So it is no surprise to find early editions of seven of her publications in this Collection, including the delightful *Children and gardens*.⁴ Read her reminiscences of childhood days in the garden and guidance on how to design gardens where children can both play and garden. Jekyll is also listed in the 'Women in Natural History' Collection (see below) where all 12 of her books appear.



Marie Stopes is better known to us nowadays for her work on birth control but she started her scientific career as a palaeobotanist, gaining a PhD in palaeobotany from the University of Munich in 1904. She undertook research at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and elsewhere around the world, including Canada and Japan. She gets two mentions here, the more important being *Botany: or, the modern study of plants*, published in 1912.⁵

'Women in Natural History' is a much larger Collection that salutes women who have made remarkable contributions to biodiversity research. Two British authors in particular catch the eye. The first, Elizabeth Blackwell, produced a herbal of 500 plants, initially issued in weekly parts between 1737 and 1739, each with four plates and a page of text. Blackwell drew, engraved and coloured all the illustrations herself, drawing plants from life using specimens from Chelsea Physic Garden. These were later published in two volumes.⁶ The British Library (BL) website also features this work and here you can flick through the pages with ease.⁷ The BL biography of Blackwell⁸ notes that she started the herbal to raise the money to release her husband from debtors' prison and that while in prison he helped her identify the plants from her drawings. She succeeded in obtaining his release but he was soon back in trouble again and ultimately left her to go to Sweden where he was finally hanged for treason! The second author is the well-known Jane Loudon who wrote and illustrated gardening books in the mid 19th century aimed at encouraging women to take up gardening. There are 16 of these in the Collection. A further four books written jointly with her husband John Loudon are also included.

There is much to enjoy across the Biodiversity Heritage Library and these Collections are a welcome addition.

Sheila Poole

Image credits: Maria Sibylla Merian, painting by Jacob Marrel, 1679, Kunstmuseum, Basel, Wikimedia Commons; Mary Treat, Wikimedia Commons; Gertrude Jekyll, painting by William Nicholson, 1920, National Portrait Gallery, Public Domain; Marie Stopes, 1904, Wikimedia Commons.

¹<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/129308#page/7/mode/1up> and

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/138924#page/7/mode/1up>

²<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/116895#page/9/mode/1up>

³<https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/search?keyword=Mary+Treat>

⁴<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/90239#page/5/mode/1up>

⁵<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/56869#page/7/mode/1up>

⁶<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/10361#page/20/mode/thumb> and

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/10362#page/9/mode/thumb>

⁷<https://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=635a7cc0-a675-11db-a027-0050c2490048&type=book>

⁸<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/a-curious-herbal-dandelion>

News

Chelsea Physic Garden anniversary

This year marks the 350th anniversary of the founding of the Chelsea Physic Garden in London. BGHG visited the garden in August last year as reported in the last Newsletter No. 62, Autumn/Winter 2022. Now there will be more to see and learn as this anniversary year unfolds. Events are planned throughout the year to celebrate the role of plants and their benefits to humans, to share stories about the plant collections and history of the garden and to highlight the ongoing importance of plant science. By September 2023 the remaining Victorian glasshouses will reopen, painstakingly restored, replanted and furnished with more information boards. On our visit, only the restored Cool Fernery was open; it will be time to think about a return visit.

Alexander Pope's garden reconstructed

In October, the BGHG plan to visit Pope's Grotto as part of a visit to Twickenham, the grotto being all that is left of the villa and garden that Alexander Pope built on the Thames. The five-acre garden was designed in a naturalistic style and is considered to have had an important influence on the development of the English Landscape Garden.

The Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust has commissioned an interactive digital reconstruction of the villa and garden together with the Thames and buildings along it, using video game technology. In a historically-rigorous 3D model, viewers can guide themselves through the garden and examine features close up. To give some sense of the interactive video game experience, the Trust has made two videos as though you were using the game. These videos are available online (<https://popesgrotto.org.uk/arcadia/>), and follow the video on the introduction. The first video in *A Virtual Arcadia* series (the river scene) starts with the visitor in a wherry being rowed up the Thames to disembark on the lawn in front of the villa and in the second video (the garden scene) you walk through the grotto into the garden and then explore the garden. You can see the shell temple, the spiral mound, the kitchen garden, the pineapple house, the quincunxes, the vineyard, Pope's obelisk to his mother and many other features. As you approach the garden's various features, you will hear appropriate quotations from Pope. The videos are very impressive.

The Garden Historians: short courses

The Garden Historians, Deborah Trentham and Malcolm Hadley, are offering two short courses starting in April 2023 online over Zoom. One course is on the Medici villas and gardens of the Renaissance. The other course is on English gardens of the 19th century exploring the industry and imagination of the gardeners creating them. The 19th-century English garden can be full of surprises, as will be discovered on this course.

Each course is given one hour a week for four weeks. However the course can be taken or viewed again at any time in the following month. To book on either course, visit <https://www.thegardenhistorians.co.uk/short-courses>.

Mapping natural history collections

Scientists from the Natural History Museum, London, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington DC, and the American Museum of Natural History, New York are collaborating in a study to determine the nature and distribution of collections held in natural history museums across the globe. So far they have looked at 73 museums in 28 countries and discovered that these institutions hold more than a billion different objects. This valuable resource includes, of course, the many herbarium collections that are so important for our study of wild and cultivated plants and can guide decisions that are relevant to the future of biodiversity and food security in the face of climate change. For further information see the following news item: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2023/march/natural-history-museums-contain-over-1-1-billion-objects.html>.

New book *Georgian Arcadia: Architecture for the park and garden* by Roger White

One of the leading authorities on Georgian landscape architecture, Roger White explores a genre in which some of the era's greatest architects experimented with different forms, styles, and new technology. Covering not just the obvious adornments of parks and gardens such as temples, summerhouses, grottoes and follies, the book also explores structures with predominantly practical functions including mausolea, boathouses, dovecotes, stables, kennels and barns, all of which could be dressed up to make an architectural impact. It provides a richly illustrated account of a period of innovative and diverse garden building. (Yale University Press, March 2023)

Andrew Lawson archive at the Garden Museum

Andrew Lawson (b. 1945) is one of the world's leading garden photographers. He gained recognition in the late 1980s promoting British gardens to the public through books and magazines; he has written and contributed to over 70 books and received several awards. The Garden Museum holds Lawson's collection of 20,000 slides and transparencies with his correspondence and records in their archives. In addition there is a short film about him and his work, produced by Thomas Piper, in their film library. This 20-minute film is a delightful and beautiful insight into Lawson's work, and includes some magical scenes from Rousham among many others. The film is well worth watching. See <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/film-library/andrew-lawson-a-portrait/>

Events

BGHG Programme 2023

19 January	RHS Hyde Hall, Essex
28 February	AGM and Lecture, London
25 March	Study Day on Czech Gardens, London
12 April	Gatton Park and Ramster Hall Garden, Surrey
18 May	Easton Walled Garden and Belton House, Lincolnshire
22-25 May	Gardens in Cumbria Study Tour
29 June	Compton Beauchamp and Buscot Park, Oxfordshire
12 July	Sissinghurst, Balmoral Cottage and Hole Park, Kent
10 August	Holdenby House and Cottesbrooke Hall, Northants
September	to be confirmed
12 October	Beale Arboretum, Enfield
25 October	Marble Hill, Pope's Grotto and Radnor Gardens, Twickenham
November	Winter Lecture

Surrey Plant Heritage Lecture

Thursday 13 April 7.30–9.30 pm Online or in person *George Forrest and Ernest Wilson: In Search of Special Plants*, Matthew Biggs. St Andrew's Church Hall, Downside Road, Cobham, Surrey KT11 3EJ or via Zoom. Email: surreyph@gmail.com, Tel: 07879 443606, <https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/surrey/george-forrest-and-ernest-wilson-in-search-of-special-plants-by-matthew-biggs/>

Cardiff University Course Online

Wednesdays 19 April to 21 June 10.00 am–12.00 pm *Women Gardeners from the 17th century*, Stephen Parker. Email: learn@cardiff.ac.uk, Tel: 029 2087 0000, <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/part-time-courses-for-adults/courses/view/women-gardeners2>

Garden Museum Exhibition

24 March–4 June 10.00 am–5.00 pm, *Finding the Modern British Garden*, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB, Tel: 020 7401 8865, Email: info@gardenmuseum.org.uk, <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/private-and-public-finding-the-modern-british-garden/>

Denman Lecture Online

Wednesday 31 May 7.30–8.30 pm, *London's Green Open Spaces*, Peter Lawrence. Email: info@denman.org.uk, <https://www.denman.org.uk/at-home/courses/online-course-peters-talk-on-londons-green-open-spaces-2023-05-31-193000/>

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Surrey Gardens Trust Talk and Tour

Tuesday 9 May 10.00 am–4.00 pm, *RHS Wisley Hilltop Talk and Tour*, Alistair Griffiths. RHS Wisley, Woking, GU23 6QB, Email: eventssgt@gmail.com, <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/rhs-wisley-hilltop-talk-tour-with-professor-alistair-griffiths-tickets-547787115007>

Oxford Botanic Garden Tour

Tuesday 9 May 10.30 am–12.00 pm, Repeated Thursday 20 July. *Insight Tour with the Curator.* Rose Lane, Oxford, OX1 4AZ, Email: admin@obg.ox.ac.uk, Tel: 01865 610300, <https://tickets.ox.ac.uk/webstore/shop/viewItems.aspx?cg=bga&c=Walks>

City Lit Course

Saturday 13 May 11.00 am–4.00 pm. *Archaeology of London Gardens*, Jill Hummerstone. Keeley Street, London, WC2B 4BA, Email: humanities@citylit.ac.uk, Tel: 020 4582 0414, <https://www.citylit.ac.uk/courses/archaeology-of-london-gardens/hlw223-2223>

Bishopsgate Institute Lecture

Wednesday 31 May 6.30–8.30 pm, *The Language of Gardening*, Julian Walker. 230 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 4QH, Tel: 020 7392 9200, Email: enquiries@bishopsgate.org.uk, <https://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/whats-on/activity/230531-the-language-of-gardening#overview>

Linnean Society Lecture Online or in person

Thursday 20 July 6.00–8.00 pm, *Thomas Birch Freeman: Victorian Missionary and Botanist*, Advolly Richmond. Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BF, Email: info@linnean.org, Tel: 020 7434 4479, <https://members.linnean.org/events/6407031b4d9ee3000730f414/description>

Cambridge University Botanic Garden Course

Thursdays 7 September–19 October, 10.00 am–1.00 pm Online *Researching garden history: an introduction to sources and methods*, Twigs Way. Email: enquiries@botanic.cam.ac.uk, Tel: 01223 336265, <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/education-learning/courses/online-course-researching-garden-history-an-introduction-to-sources-and-methods/>

Kent Gardens Trust Autumn Lecture

Sunday 10 September 2.30 pm *Queen Caroline and the Invention of the Landscape Garden*, Michael Charlesworth. Millennium Village Hall, Egerton, Kent, TN27 9DS, Tel: 01622 861313, Email: info@kentgardenstrust.org.uk, https://www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk/events/future_events/