



Epsom Garden Society: September 2023

Newsletter: Margaret Haslam 07761 976764, 3 Elm Grove Epsom KT18 7LZ
Membership Secretary and Newsletter Distribution: Steve Roebuck 0208 394 2168
Show Secretary: Cathy Flitter 07821 277708

Dear Member, if you have any news or garden related small ads that you would like to be included in the Newsletter, please phone me, 01372 724138, or email me, margarethaslam6@gmail.com

Garden and Craft Show on 2nd September! Entries to catherine.flitter2@ntlworld.com before 8pm Thursday August 31st please. Schedule on website or contact **Cathy** for a copy. Helpers urgently needed for teas & also to set-up at 5pm on the Friday. Any raffle prizes are also welcome.

Cherrill Sands visited us again on Wednesday August 16th to talk about *Painshill Landscape Garden*, where she has been heavily involved in the research and restoration. She first visited on a tour in 1993 and was really interested after seeing the first building, and volunteered for the rest of the summer. She now has a post as a historical consultant. This sounds grand, but means she is a bit of a dogsbody really and does lots of things that need doing while hunting for old documents. **Charles Hamilton**, the founder of the garden, was the ninth son of eighteen children, so never had much money. He made two good friends at school and Oxford University, **Henry Fox**, and **Henry Hall**, who went on to design *Stourhead*. He had enough money to build in stone, so the buildings have lasted, whereas **Charles** could only afford wood. However, all three went on a Grand Tour of Europe, and were inspired by the landscape paintings they saw. The fashion in England at the time was for tightly clipped topiary and controlled flower beds, like the restored garden by the river at Hampton Court.

By the 1730's **Hamilton** had borrowed from his friends and put all his money into the garden at *Painshill*. There was a small house too with a large room at the back to keep his collection of paintings and statues bought on the Grand Tour. Before he built anything at all he was busy planting seeds and gathering cuttings from friends to start the garden. There was an American Heritage seed collector called **John Bartram** at the time, who sold boxes of tree seeds for £5 each, So **Charles** and his friends swapped Acers and Magnolias between themselves and built up fine collections. Luckily the River Mole winds round the south of the garden and **Charles** built a water pump to alter the height of the water and create a lake and a cascade. There is an island in the centre where there was originally a hill, so **Charles** built a beautiful grotto on this, reached by a twisting path and a little bridge. After the garden fell into disrepair, this caused a lot of complicated restoration. There were two paintings of how it used to look, at evening and morning, which have been very helpful. It is open now, and everything is back as it used to be, even the water tank in the roof to provide the trickling sound of water. Unfortunately, the stalactites are inclined to fall off, and the grotto is closed on Mondays to allow for repair work sticking them back on.

When you walk round, the first thing you come to is a huge statue called *'The Rape of the Sabine Women'* with a couple and some snakes writhing about. Many years ago *Epsom Garden Society* went to visit the garden one evening, and we all stood gazing at this statue, when suddenly the wife of our Treasurer, both in their nineties, piped up 'Oh look, David, just like us in our youth!' We all got the giggles, and really enjoyed the rest of the evening. This statue used to be a lead copy of an original in Rome as marble was too expensive, but then lead prices rose and the statue was sold. Nowadays the one that we see is made of bronze and insured against theft by helicopter!

As you come to each building you catch sight of the next one to head towards. People who had been shown round by **Charles Hamilton** all describe the same route, so it was evidently designed to be walked in the same direction. Money was always tight, so **Charles** tried various money-making enterprises. One was planting grape vines on the south slope to make wine. Some years successful, others not. This has failed since Covid as badgers have moved in and keep eating the grapes. There used to be sheep who would keep the grass short and improve the soil, but these had to go in the foot and mouth epidemic.

There are many follies and buildings to discover on your walk round, many carefully restored now. The workmen mending the *Gothic Temple* were sure there must be a lake nearby as they could hear quacking, and sure enough, once some overgrown trees were removed, there it was! I think we have seen this view in one of the *'Pride and Prejudice'* films where Darcy proposes and is rebuffed. Lots of other films have been made at Painshill too, some fans of *'Bridgerton'* make special trips to see the famous bridge where

lots of the action takes place. This has been re-made in Portland Stone after the fund-raising efforts of an efficient lady who used to work for the Trust. The *Bridge to the Grotto Island* is now made of steel, but painted to look like the original one. Restorations have been going on for 42 years now, in fact some original restorations now need re-doing. The *Chinese Bridge* is next for attention, divers have been checking the state of the timber underwater. The wooden *Hermitage* lasted until the 20th century, and was then rebuilt with wood from the estate. **Charles Hamilton** had employed a **Mr Remington** to be the hermit and live here under strict conditions, he was not to cut his hair or fingernails, or talk to anyone, and had just a Bible for company. At the end of ten years he was to receive 700 guineas. Unfortunately **Mr Remington** didn't make it, and was found in the local pub a week later and got the sack. A few years ago this lovely story was re-enacted, but for health and safety reasons the hermit wasn't allowed to sleep there. So he was there from 10-6pm for two weeks, produced sketch books of views from his windows, and finished up in the pub to follow tradition.

I was pleased to hear that during explorations lately a pineapple pit has been discovered!

The statue of *Bacchus* that **Charles** bought on his Grand Tour and was so proud of, was found in *Anglesey Abbey*, but the National Trust didn't want to return it and had a copy made. Interestingly they discovered that the head was an original Roman statue, but of a lady, with holes in her ears for ear-rings, and the body had all been made in the 18th century and cleverly assembled for sale to a tourist.

The last stop on the route round is the *Turkish Tent*. This used to stand on the land that had been sold to the Girl Guides, so it has been moved forward fifty yards, and the canvas tent is now replaced with fibreglass. The canvas had rotted quickly, and a kind man, with Turkish ancestors, paid for the whole thing to be renovated to celebrate Turkey helping Jews from Spain when they needed it.

Cherrill advises buying tickets on-line as that is cheaper, painshill.co.uk, and says there is an accessible route around the lake for wheelchairs and buggies, which you can hire there, check when you buy your tickets. Thanks to **Cherrill** for this lovely talk.

Our meeting in October will be a relaxed presentation/Q&A from Margaret Arnott and her husband Terry Bartholomew. They have a stunning plantspersons garden in Cobham, that we are planning to visit next year, with beautiful water features, an immaculate lawn, terraced beds and one of the best greenhouses I've ever seen! Terry is a talented metal worker and his plant supports and sculptures are works of art.

He is also something of an expert on lawncare. The garden has featured in a number of TV programmes including BBC's Garden of the Year competition and the garden has been open through the yellow book for a number of years. They are both extremely knowledgeable on plants and will be happy to answer any questions you might have. The meeting will be at Epsom Sports Club 10.15 for a 10.30 start. Plenty of parking, refreshments and a plant sale to enjoy. Do come and support if you possibly can.

Sue Glover kindly organised a visit to **Keith and Elizabeth Lewis's** garden in Tadworth and **Sue** writes: About twenty members visited the garden on 11th August. This was a thoroughly pleasant afternoon with lots of interesting plants to look at as well as generous amounts of home-made cakes and tea. There were opportunities to socialise and discuss horticultural issues with **Keith**, especially the challenge of gardening on chalk. Thanks to **Keith and Elizabeth** for hosting this event.

The Committee have agreed to slightly change the scope of the *Open Gardens Group*. Currently this is a group of members who open their own garden to other EGS members. Separately to this **Marian** has been organising outside visits. From now on the *Open Gardens Group* will be known as *The Outings and Open Gardens Group*. Next year **Sue Glover** will arrange some visits to NGS gardens in addition to our members' gardens. Anyone who would like to join these trips please fill in the form below, keep a copy, and send the completed form to **Sue Glover** at sue.192@live.co.uk, or fill in a paper copy at a meeting and give to a member of the committee. Members with email will receive details of outings in advance with the schedule of EGS open gardens.

Confirmation of attendance is not needed for visiting our own gardens but if it is a NGS one **Sue** will need to be told because they will want to know numbers. If you are currently listed as a member of the previous *Open Garden Group* and you are only going to visit members' gardens you don't need to fill in the form. If anyone has any ideas of visits that they would like **Sue** to organise, please let her know.

Name.....Contact phone number/s.....
Email address.....
Emergency contact name and phone number

I am able to drive to the meeting point: Yes.....No..... I can offer a lift to others: Yes.....No *Please tick*
I need help with transport : Yes..... No *Please send to Sue.192@live.co.uk* *Best wishes Margaret*