



S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 7

Editor—Terry Collins

July 2013

THE LOST GARDENS OF HERTFORDSHIRE

Our June speaker Anne Rowe, from The Hertfordshire Garden Trust, began with a picture of Hamels, near Broughing from 1722, where she now lives. It shows a number of formal gardens which by 1780 had gone, the site is now part of East Herts Golf Club. In 1987 during a drought she found a dark line running across the grass, on investigation this turned to be the line of an old wall, and it was this that started her interest in lost gardens.

She pointed out that locally we have Stanstead Bury which has its own story of a missing garden. A map from 1832 shows a pond and signs of trees. A plan from the same era

highlights earthworks, a raised bank and a large kitchen garden. Yew trees planted at the ends of sunken rows show that the garden had been in existence for centuries.

Anne took as her first example Roxford House near Hertingfordbury which had an 18th Century garden. A map from 1766 came to light in 1966 found in the pages of an old book and showed details of the property belonging to Nathaniel Bracy. It showed an unusual shaped garden together with more formal designs more common at the time. These papers were part of a journal belonging to Mr. Richard Dick. By the 19th Century however these gardens

had vanished and the area was known as Grotto Wood, (below left) as shown on an OS map from 1884. An archeological survey of the site, conducted by Dr Christopher Curries, revealed lots of evidence that this had been a garden.

Richard Dick described part of it as follows, "leading through the gate along the side of the garden one comes to a statue on a pedestal, then up a hill along a circular path to a summer house lined with paintings and from there into a cave, outside there were two aviaries with singing Canary birds, in front of this mound was a large rectangular fish pond. Beyond the pond there was a large basin with more than one hundred fountains, in the centre of which was a statue of Neptune with his head upon a dolphin. From here into a large depression at the end of which there was a grotto, with walls lined with shells and small pieces of flint, there was a large basin and when the tapcock was turned on there were fountains playing all around. On the outside there were statues all around" Between 1765 and 1785 all this had been destroyed by the 2nd Nathaniel Bracy, the reasons being unknown. By 1881 the manor had been sold but the estate map from that year still shows the outline of the gardens, and just to the north of the wood, in an area called Hilton Pond Field there



Grotto Wood, Roxford as it looks now

Continued on page 2

The Lost Gardens of Hertfordshire

Continued from page 1

were signs of a large pond that may have supplied water to fill the garden ponds. There are some very old Yew trees in Grotto Wood together with an old woodman's hut. Grotto Wood is a site of Natural Importance, listed by English Heritage although there is a public footpath through the wood.

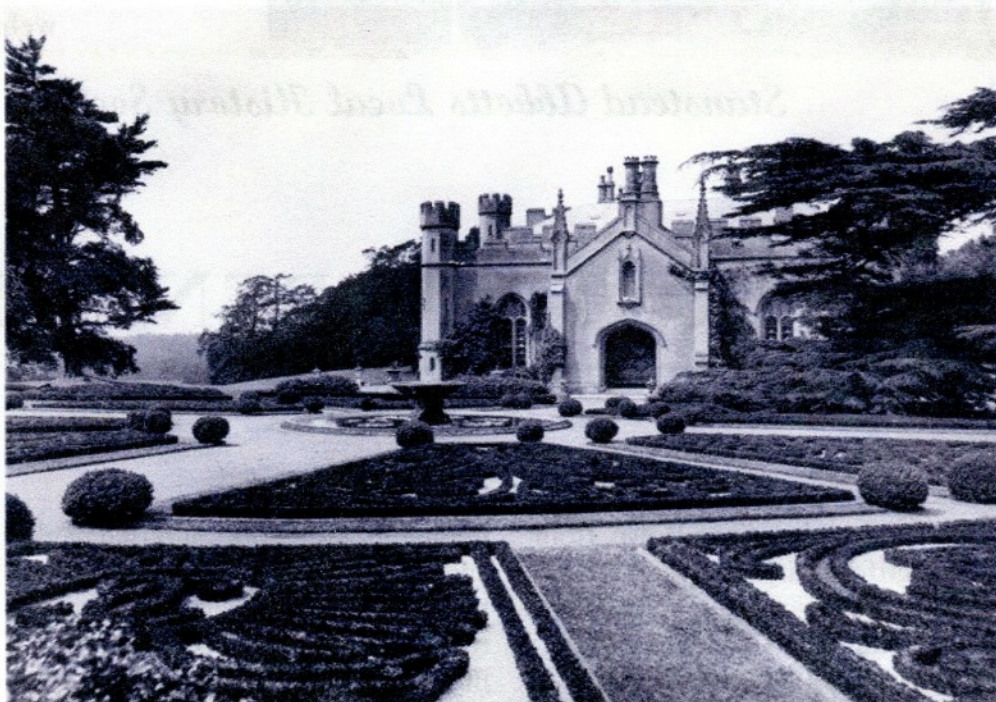
The second lost garden that Anne spoke about was that of Panshanger House near Welwyn Garden City, best known for its 19th Century layout. The estate was owned by the Cowper family, (pronounced Cooper) and was the family home after the 5th Earl moved from his house in Cole Green, to this new location south of the river Mimram at Panshanger.

One of the leading 18th century garden designers Humphrey Repton laid out the new park, during the course of which the Earl closed all the public roads and paths through the estate.

Repton made two significant recommendations, to plant hundreds of trees, which they did, and to dam the river to create the Broad Water lake. This had an island in the middle which was connected to the park by two bridges thus creating a circular walk around the park. There was a second island lower down the river also connected by a bridge with a weir behind it.

The house was completed by 1818, in the Gothic style from concrete bricks made on site, but by 1863 there had been extensions built to the house on both the East and West sides, and there were deer roaming the park and not cattle.

From the mid 19th century at the South front of the house there were sunken formal gardens with statues of lions on pedestals. In the same area there was a large conservatory/orangery, the remains of which still stand, inside of which there were fountains playing. Fronting the orangery were geometrically designed formal gardens, and the area



The Box Garden at Panshanger House

was known as the Dairy Garden, as it did contain a dairy, but purely for ornamental reasons.

To the West of the house was the box garden, so called as it contained hundreds of small box hedges, with a small fountain in the centre. (See above) By 1899 there was also a Rose garden but its whereabouts are now unknown. In the same area there were two small stone ponds and seating.

In 1905 Earl Cowper died and the estate passed to his niece, Ethel Fane as the Earl had no children. Ethel (or Ettie) was later to become Lady Desborough after her marriage.

Her family had little need for Panshanger and used it basically as a holiday home. By this time the estate measured about 650 acres with thousands more nearby. In 1913 she sold almost 1500 acres by auction to Ebenezer Howard, the founder of Welwyn Garden City for £51,000. The estate was due to pass to one of Lady Desborough's three sons, however it was not to be as two of them were

killed in the First World War and the third died in a car accident leaving no heir to the estate.

Following Lady Desborough's death in 1952 the sale of the estate began and Panshanger House was sold with 89 acres of the park to a demolition contractor for £17,750 in 1953.

Apart from the remains of the conservatory little else remains, except the weir and an old water wheel used to pump water to the gardens. The 1855 conservatory is now a listed building and the stable block is being used as an office building by Lefarge Aggregates, who extract sand and gravel from the land.

Aerial photographs still show the foot print of the house and gardens. However the view from the river towards the house lives up to the expectations that Humphrey Repton had. It is now intended to create a public park in the area.

Mrs Rowe was profusely thanked by Bob Hunt for a most interesting and informative talk and presentation.

Easneye: Mansion and College

On Monday July 15th a group of about 30 SALHS members went to Easneye college, where they were conducted on a guided tour of the building by former student and staff member, Bob Hunt. Bob was a student there in 1964 and a staff member from 1973 until 2006 when he retired.

In his introduction on the lawn in front of the house, he explained that the house was built for the Buxton family in 1868. Thomas Fowell Buxton, (1821-1908) was from a very influential family, his father, also Thomas Fowell Buxton, was a brewery owner, social reformer and a prominent anti-slavery campaigner. His aunt was Elizabeth Fry, and his uncles were MP's.

The Quaker architect Alfred Waterhouse, who had previously designed the Natural History Museum in Kensington, designed the house. Building was completed in 1868 and the family moved from Leytonstone to Stanstead Abbots in 1869. The building was designed in Gothic style using patterned red brick and terracotta where appropriate, with steeped gables and tiled roofs. The chimneys are especially noticeable and attractive. There was also a gatekeepers lodge at the entrance to the estate drive, which is still there, and a number estate workers cottages

which were designed on traditional Hertfordshire lines and are comparatively large. At the time the estate covered 3000 acres, including a number of farms. There was a separate stable block and carriage house, now student accommodation, and a house for 6 washerwomen who were in full time employment looking after the linen for the family and guests.

In the main hall there is a beautiful floor to ceiling fireplace incorporating the Buxton family coat of arms and their motto, 'Do it with thy Might.' On the family crest incorporated into the fireplace is the head of an African boy, referring back to the family involvement in the abolition of the slave trade. Family prayers were held in this hall, including the servants, every morning. In the windows of the main hall there are 4 pictures showing the day from dawn to dusk, and in some of the other windows a beer barrel appears as a motif. From the main hall we moved into a lovely oak panelled dining room which had the original oak doors still really well preserved. Also downstairs we were taken into the room which had been Bob's office during part of his time at the College, this had originally been the study that was used by Andrew Buxton, Thomas's son who was killed in the First World War.

Moving upstairs it was noticeable that the servants rooms seemed very large and airy, quite unusual for servants quarters.

During his life at Easneye, Thomas Buxton showed a lot of interest in the village; being involved in the opening of the elementary school, commissioning the building of the new church, St Andrews, in Cappell Lane, building the Parish Room next to the school, and providing drinking troughs for horses, cattle and dogs.

When he died in 1908, aged 86, five years after his wife, his estate was valued at £390,496 worth today more than £25million. His son John Henry, who had been living in Hunsdon Bury moved in. He had already been involved in the estate having planted a row of Poplar trees marking the line of the Meridian through the Estate. Sadly only three of them remain the others having been blown down in the storm of 1987. He also provided four so called Wilberforce cottages on the estate for retired workers.

The last member of the Buxton family to live at the house was Henry Fowell Buxton who moved in with his wife and son in 1934 but his wife became increasingly ill and had to move out. In 1940 the house was requisitioned by the London County Council as a nursery for children evacuated from London. Henry continued to live in the house throughout the War until his death in 1949. His son John Fowell Buxton inherited the house but did not live in it and it remained a children's home used by the LCC until 1963 when it closed. Barclay Godfrey Buxton, Henry Fowell Buxton's cousin, who had been unable to fulfil his ambition to become a missionary due to wounds received in the First World War, began to help in training those who could work as overseas missionaries.



Easneye in the early 20th Century

Continued on page 4

Notes From The Past Part 3

William Clift lived throughout the First World War in his cottage and in his note books he would often make comments on the news. Here are a few of them:

August 4th 1914- War declared on Germany.

May 8th 1915- Lusitania sunk by murderers. 1449 lives lost.

May 10th 1915- Bombs dropped by Murderous Germany on Southend.

September 7th 1915- Air raid on Cheshunt.

October 3rd 1915- Air raid on Hertford. Mr. Gregory and others killed.

*December 7th 1915- Percy Scrivener killed in Action.
Error not killed but taken prisoner.*

March 16 1916- Sent parcel to Percy Scrivener prisoner of Bulgaria

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member, This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

Forthcoming Events

Sunday August 15th Members only BBQ at 90 Cappell Lane- 2.30pm Cost £5 per person. Limited to 30 persons, please contact Ray Dixon on 01920 871153.

Friday September 13th The Nursery Industry in St Margarets

Friday October 11th Quiz Night Further details to follow.

Friday November 8th The Black Death & Peasants Revolt.

Friday December 13th Members only Xmas Social Evening.

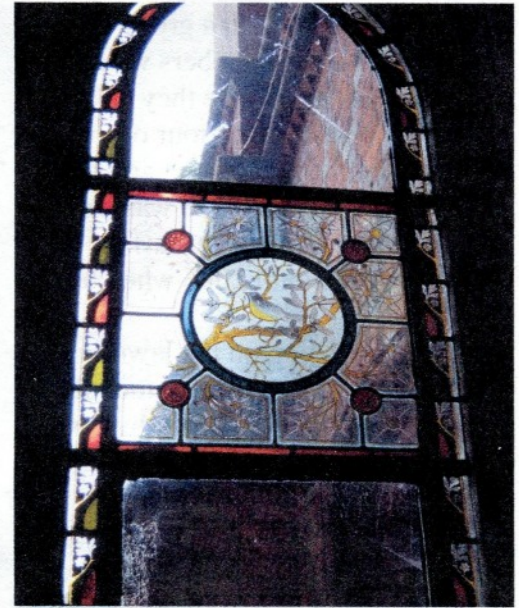
Unless stated otherwise all meetings are at the Parish Hall at 7.30pm
Members Free. Non Members £2 Tea, Coffee and biscuits included

Easneye: Mansion and College

Continued from page 3

He founded the Missionary Training Colony, based in Upper Norwood, in 1923 and in 1964 after they had merged with the All Nations Bible College, he suggested they move to Easneye, after it closed as a children's home. After another merger it became the All Nations Christian College.

There have been a number of alterations and additions to the original building since the college purchased the building in 1971 from the current owner Henry Buxton. A new accommodation block, Oak House was built and in the same year a new academic block was also opened with two lecture halls and staff offices. There are currently about 100 students of about 20 different nationalities, but for a number of reasons numbers are decreasing. There are a number of courses offered to students, from a one term course entitled 'on Route', to BA and MA Degree courses. Most of the students already have a 1st Degree, but Bob told us that some of the most gifted students have little formal educational qualifications. Most students are in there late 20's and the gender ratio is two thirds female to one third male. There are about 16 full



Window detail Easneye

members of staff and the college is the largest missionary training college in Europe

After Bob had finished his enthralling talk there was a question and answer session, he was thanked by SALHS chairman Ian White for a most interesting evening. To round things off we all adjourned to the main hall for refreshments.

The SALHS Committee May 2013

Chairman	Ian White
Secretary	Lynne Heraud
Treasurer	Glenis Collins
Website	Brian Johnson
Archivists/Historian	Ray Dixon
Archivist/Facebook	Andrea Coppen
Public Relations	Bob Hunt
School Liaison/ Programme Organiser	Janet Dance
Newsletter	Terry Collins
Membership Sec.	Jane Free
Parish Council Rep	Julia Davies
Committee Members	Pam Harris
Co-opted Member	Jenny Johnson

General enquiries email
admin@salhs.org.uk