



Dahlias at Dunsborough Park

## Gardens in and around the Surrey Hills

In this issue we look at some of our favourites

In addition to Surrey being the most wooded county in England, the Surrey Hills are also home to a vast number of wonderful gardens. They range from those owned by the National Trust such as Clandon, Hatchlands and Polesden Lacey, through to far smaller hidden gems, some of which take part in the National Gardens Scheme. Surrey Hills Society members have enjoyed private visits to some of the lesser-known gardens over the past few years, avoiding the crowds, and with the owner often giving us a personal tour.

To the east of Surrey we especially enjoyed three gardens: Tollsworth Manor near Chaldon traces its history back to being a monastic farm with links to Merton Abbey. Its gardens are particularly splendid during the summer, with glorious herbaceous borders of old-fashioned roses, peonies and delphiniums. In Caxton House Gardens at Reigate, spring rather than summer is



Tollsworth Manor

a highlight, with hundreds of daffodils and tulips mingling with masses of spring blossom. Although, as the season progresses there is still plenty of interest from the rose gardens and wildflower meadows through to autumn colours.

Gasston Park, near Reigate, is another garden which is very popular with Society members. (See pages 4-5)

Towards the west of the county near Godalming are two stunning gardens: Vann House Garden, a 5 acre, 2\* English Heritage registered garden, home of the Caroe family since the early 1900s. Spectacular in spring when snowdrops and hellebores abound, Vann is perhaps best known for the Gertrude Jekyll water garden. Ramster Garden is equally special for somewhat different reasons. (See page 6).

A garden known primarily for just one plant species is Dunsborough Park, a short distance from the Surrey Hills in Ripley. This hundred acre estate is renowned for its magnificent display of some 20,000 tulips, which the Society visited in 2021. It was however equally enjoyed by Society members the previous year for its dazzling display of dahlias.

While some gardens are known for a particular designer, style or plant, others have a somewhat quirkier interest. Spurfold Garden



Caxton Garden, Reigate

in Peaslake, is such a garden with its unique collection of elephants and objets d'art, including a Cambodian Buddah Head, scattered among the herbaceous borders and winding paths. Meanwhile the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden, just to the south of the Surrey Hills near Ockley, combines dramatic planting of architectural plants and trees with a constantly changing exhibition of contemporary sculpture, illustrating the harmony between art and nature.

During our visits we have noted that a number of these owners have become increasingly environmentally aware and are making changes to their planting. Ockham Mill, near Ripley is a particularly good example, where the two-acre gardens now provide a haven for wildlife.

The gardens above just scratch the surface of what is on offer. Our Society members are likely to have their own favourites to add.

Susie Turner





## Chairman's Views

As Chairman of the Surrey Hills Society, I travel far and wide around the National Landscape and am constantly discovering new areas of interest, but I also regularly visit some old favourites. One such site is Newlands Corner where we organised a litter pick recently for HM King Charles' Big Help Out (See page 7).

Over the winter we worked with Surrey Choices Growth Team, which helps to improve the life skills of adults with learning difficulties, by carrying out a range of conservation activity. This amazing team spent a total of 14 days clearing bramble and scrub to help restore the rare chalk downland habitat and improve the fabulous views that Newlands Corner enjoys.

Our Society stall was at the Newlands Corner Christmas pop-up event and we recruited a number of new volunteers whilst also handing out a large quantity of free walk leaflets. The Tillingbourne Tales Trails and our Rail to Ramble leaflets, which detail a wide variety of circular and station to station walks in the Surrey Hills, are popular favourites. The Society has recently been involved in helping to develop Explore Surrey Walks for Surrey County Council. These include the easy access 'Acorn Trail' and the longer 'Deer Trail' both starting from Newlands Corner.



Surrey County Council have worked hard to renovate the Discovery Centre at Newlands Corner and we worked with them and the children's author, Lucy Reynolds, to put on two well-attended Hedgehog Easter Holiday Workshops. Lucy read her book, 'Hedgehogs Don't Live in the City' to the enthusiastic young audience in the Centre and we demonstrated our hedgehog survey tunnels and helped the children make little clay hedgehogs with sticks collected on site.

At about the same time we were also working with Surrey Choices and Rob Fairbanks, the Surrey Hills AONB Director, to assist with the planning of the new 'Yew Tree Boardwalk', that has now been created a few hundred yards behind the Newlands Corner café. Some of the yew trees at Newlands Corner are thought

to be over 1000 years old and are of national importance. Expert tree specialists advised that the trees were thought to be suffering from root compaction and they were keen to introduce protection. The boardwalk, with its excellent interpretive displays, now enables the public to see some of the yews up close, whilst dead hedging is being built by Surrey Choices to protect the site. The Society intends to work alongside them during the summer, providing volunteer days for corporates and other interested groups.

A huge thank you to everyone, who has supported all the work, ensuring that Newlands Corner continues to enjoy its reputation as an iconic site in the Surrey Hills.

*Gordon Jackson*

## New Independent Chair of Surrey Hills AONB Board

### Kathy Atkinson outlines her aims

I never intended to become the Independent Chair of the Surrey Hills AONB Board; it happened really by happy accident when I found myself sitting in front of the recruitment panel for the role last autumn.

I come from a campaigning background and spent many years working in the National Parks world, so I am used to working with conservation bodies and with fabulous,

committed volunteers. National Parks are quite different from AONBs because they have a special form of local authority and access management that just doesn't exist in the more complicated AONB setting. Managing the Surrey Hills is what you might call a "coalition of the willing" – a coming together of all of the interested parties – councils, landowners, conservation bodies and special interest groups.

Bringing together such disparate interests is not easy, but the core idea, linking all of us, is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Surrey Hills. If all else fails (and it rarely does!) that is our shared goal. It is brought to life in the Management Plan for the AONB, a strategy that is renewed every five years. The current plan runs to 2025 so we will soon be starting to put together a new Management Plan for the Surrey Hills and seeking wide public input to that plan.

I believe that this new plan needs to have climate change and nature recovery at its front and centre, with a call to action that is impossible to ignore for any of the

responsible bodies and organisations operating within the Surrey Hills. We know that the public is often running ahead of our elected representatives in being prepared to make fairly radical changes to protect our environment. We know that residents and visitors to the Surrey Hills cherish this landscape and are more than willing to give their time and energy to protect it. You only have to look at the achievements of Surrey Hills Society volunteers (working with so many partner organisations) to see that.

We are moving away from referring to AONBs and beginning to use the term "National Landscape" to reflect the national importance of the designated areas.

So, I am not relinquishing my campaigning hat just yet; in fact, I want to put it to good use in the three years of my tenure, and I'd like to issue an open invitation to all Surrey Hills Society members to join me in helping to protect this gorgeous area. Let's make some noise!

*Kathy Atkinson*



# 'Bumps' and 'Ned'

## A very special partnership

The biggest influence on houses and gardens in Surrey was undoubtedly the partnership between the architect, Edwin Lutyens, and the garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll, which resulted in the creation of over 100 houses and gardens, many of which were in Surrey. "A Lutyens house with a Jekyll garden" was an Edwardian catch-phrase denoting the excellence of their work. Gertrude Jekyll's influence on garden design has been pervasive to this day and can be attributed to the firm principles she laid down regarding design and planting schemes.



Gertrude Jekyll

Gertrude (Miss Jekyll) was 46 and Lutyens was only 19 when they first met at the house of a friend in Thursley, for whom Lutyens had been appointed to design a cottage (his first commission). Gertrude was born in London in 1843 into an upper middle-class family before moving to Surrey to a house called

Bramley Park. It was thought that country life would suit the family better. Later, Gertrude moved to Munstead Wood near Godalming. Her many accomplishments included photography and carving, painting, embroidery and gardening. Sadly, Gertrude had always suffered from short sight, which deteriorated so much that she had to give up these activities and turned to garden design instead. This became her passion and so her fame spread for her colourful cottage garden planting and huge herbaceous borders, reflecting her love of beauty in the natural landscape.

**The popular image of her is of a short and stumpy woman wearing a large felt hat and steel rimmed glasses (hence the name 'Bumps' given to her by Lutyens, who was himself known as 'Ned').**

In the words of Lutyens's daughter Mary "she knew very little about architecture and he knew even less about gardening, but his houses needed gardens and her gardens needed houses, so that each found in the other the perfect complement." Lutyens too had been born in London but had spent his childhood in Surrey, where he roamed the countryside sketching prolifically and noting every detail of buildings, so that it was natural that he should later become an architect. Whilst

Gertrude designed gardens mainly in southern England, Lutyens travelled widely abroad designing buildings as far away as Delhi and Johannesburg.

The most famous example of this association in Surrey is Munstead Wood,



Sir Edwin Lutyens



'Munstead Wood' in 'Gardens for Small Country Houses' (1913)



Vann Water Garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll

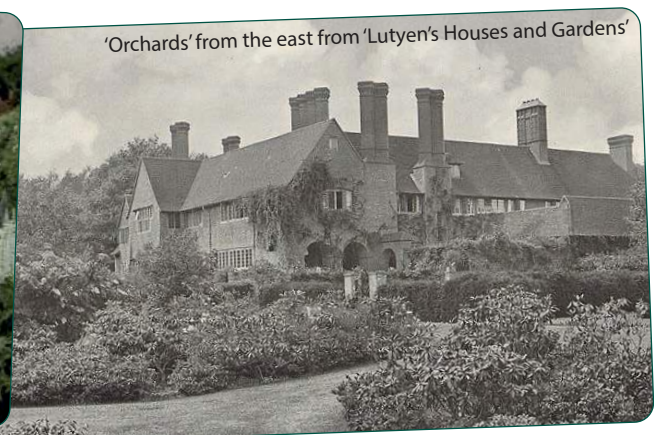


'Goddards' designed by Lutyens between 1898 – 1900

which illustrates both Gertrude's ability to showcase plants to their best advantage by colour, texture and shape according to the season, whilst Lutyens used features such as local bargate stone, oak timbers, gables and square chimneys in the construction of this property and his other houses. In April this year the National Trust acquired Munstead Wood for the enjoyment of all and has begun fundraising to support the restoration and reimagining of the garden and house.

Among the various gardens and houses designed by this eccentric pair are Orchards at Godalming, Millmead and Chinthurst Hill in Bramley, Goddards at Abinger and Vann House, as well as numerous smaller gardens not all open to the public. Importantly, Gertrude influenced many of today's garden designers, including Piet Oudolf in his work at RHS Wisley.

*Mark and Virginia Turner*



'Orchards' from the east from 'Lutyens Houses and Gardens'



# Gatton Park, Reigate

**Paul Harvey, Events and Marketing Officer of the Gatton Trust, describes this historic gem of the Surrey Hills.**

For hundreds of years Gatton Park was shaped by ambitious individuals with deep pockets, determined to create a landscape in keeping with the fashions of their day. From the 'Capability' Brown parkland to the Japanese and rock gardens, the story of Gatton Park has been one of transformation – a desire to blend natural beauty with a vision of the English country estate.

But perhaps one of the more remarkable chapters in Gatton Park's history covers the last thirty years. After falling into disrepair, and with the gardens all but lost to nature, the park has been restored – not by wealthy men this time, but through the vision of a few individuals and the graft of an army of dedicated volunteers.







View from the Hall



Volunteers building the bee fence

## 'Capability' Brown Parkland

There has been a park at Gatton since the mid-15th Century, but the landscape you see today dates from the 1760s when Sir George Colebrooke employed the foremost landscape architect of his day to transform the estate. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown swept away the formal elements of the landscape and replaced them with his famous 'naturalistic' plantings, a series of lakes and his trademark Serpentine canal. Brown was paid in excess of £3,055, placing Gatton Park in the top 25% of all his commissions.

## Japanese Garden

The Japanese garden was constructed in 1909 to satisfy mustard magnate Sir Jeremiah Colman's fascination with all things Eastern, but by the 1990s it had all but disappeared. After years of research and groundwork, and with the help of Monty Don and the Channel 4 TV series 'Lost Gardens', it has been restored. The results are striking, with a Minka-style tea house, lush plantings, stone lanterns and a beautiful oriental bridge. Recent works have included the planting of 100 Sakura cherry trees donated through the Japanese embassy and new paths formed from huge blocks of Purbeck stone.

The rock garden in spring



## Rock and Water Garden

This was Sir Jeremiah Colman's other great contribution to Gatton Park. He commissioned J Pulham & Sons to build him a rock and water garden with the main pond made of an artificial rock known as Pulhamite. Queen Mary, the wife of George V, is said to have been particularly fond of sitting on a bench at the base of the waterfall. In the past year the garden has undergone extensive renovation with the Pulhamite pond repaired and the waterfall reopened.

## Gatton Hall and Parterre

The mansion you see today was built in the 1930s, after the original, including the Italian-style Marble Hall commissioned by the 5th Lord Monson, was engulfed by fire. To the south is the Parterre, the centrepiece of the pleasure gardens laid out by HE Milner and with stunning views over the 'Capability' Brown landscape. It was restored to its former glory in 2010, which involved removing unsightly tennis courts that had been built in the 1950s.



The Parterre

## The Gatton Trust and volunteers

The majority of Gatton's historic features were lost during years of neglect between 1950 and 1996. They've been lovingly brought back to life by Gatton Trust staff and volunteers. Around 100 volunteers work in the parkland and gardens, on a host of innovative educational projects and on open days when visitors come to marvel at the beauty of the estate. The Gatton Trust is committed to carrying out quality restoration and to develop the estate as a 'landscape for learning'. Our ambition matches that of some of Gatton's most transformative owners, with one of our latest projects being to restore the historic Old World Garden.

## Visit Gatton Park

Gatton Park is open on the first Sunday of every month from February to November from 12-5pm. We also run special events, private tours, workshops and children's activities throughout the year. To learn more about Gatton Park and what we offer, visit [gattonpark.co.uk](http://gattonpark.co.uk)

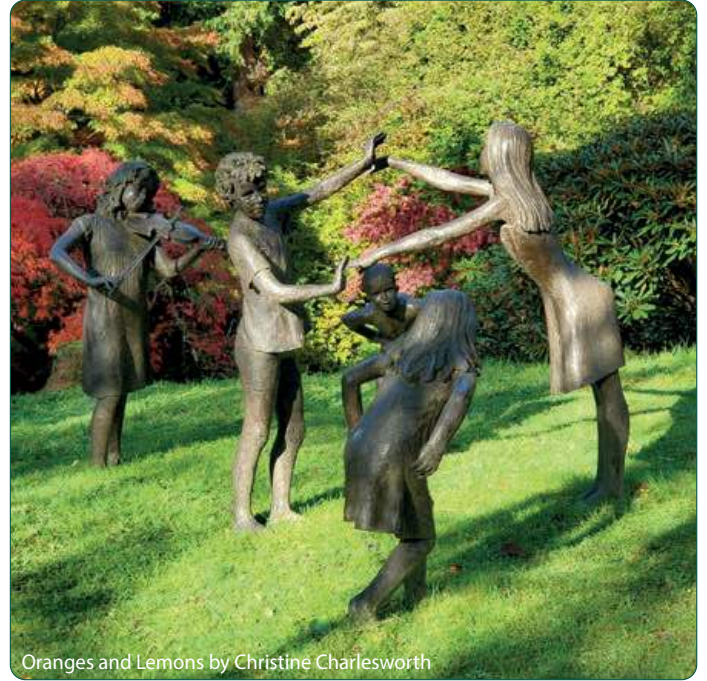


The stunning Japanese garden





The garden in May



Oranges and Lemons by Christine Charlesworth

## Ramster Gardens

**Sall Baring visits the Surrey Sculpture Society Exhibition at Ramster Gardens, near Chiddingfold in the Surrey Hills.**

The house was initially built in the early 17th century by a wealthy glass maker as Chiddingfold was at the heart of the glass making industry in England.

Sir Harry Waechter bought the property in 1900 and started the long process of turning the gardens from an oak woodland into the garden it is today. 'Gauntletts' of Chiddingfold was a nursery that was situated next to the gardens and they were instructed to design the gardens. They had a very keen interest in Japanese planting which influenced the planting including bamboo, evergreen azaleas and maples whilst keeping the mature native trees. It is home to many rare and unusual trees and shrubs. Ramster is also a very good destination to see masses of bluebells in spring.

In 1922 the Hall and gardens were sold to Sir Henry and Lady Norman. Lady Norman was a very keen gardener and continued the Japanese theme to the garden. She introduced

many of the now famous collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. She grew some of the plants from seed and was also provided with new varieties from people who travelled and brought back different strains.

In 1927 the garden was opened for the first National Gardens Scheme and it is one of the very few original gardens that still open under the scheme.

Rhododendron 'Cynthia' is the gardens trademark rhododendron and can be found all around the gardens. One of the largest and well known rhododendrons is King George which is to the side of the main path and has large pink and white blooms and has a lovely scent.

The gardens are constantly being updated and each year something new is added. A small enclosure of azaleas was planted to coincide with the centenary of the garden in

2022. The upkeep of the garden is led by two gardeners, down from 40 in the past, but they are augmented by volunteers who do their utmost to keep the weeds at bay.

During May of this year the Surrey Sculpture Society was hosting a sculpture trail throughout the gardens. This is the third year the exhibition has been installed at Ramster and around 100 exhibits could be seen, whilst also admiring the 20 acres of gardens. The exhibition coincided with the flowering of the rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias.

The Society visited the garden in October 2020 to view its autumnal colour changes. This was during the few months that we were allowed to meet outside during the COVID pandemic and was greatly enjoyed by the attendees. The Society is hoping to provide a return visit in 2024.



The Dragon Seat



Giselle by Stephen Yeates



Pair of Parrots Allison Catchlove



## Surrey Hills Arts at Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival

### *HABITAT Pilot Project to be exhibited in the Go Wild area of the showground*



HABITAT sculptures at University of Surrey

The HABITAT project uses creative, practical solutions to address the climate and biodiversity crisis. Its aim is to achieve ecological green spaces in urban pockets of land across Surrey, built and nurtured by local communities.

The University of Surrey provided a built-up space on their campus last year and the project set out to transform the area with planting and sculptures created especially to attract and support local wildlife. Four commissioned artists worked collectively, as well as independently, researching local declining species and experimenting with designs and maquettes towards their final artworks. They also worked with local schools, charities and organisations such as Zero Carbon Guildford.

Find out more about the project on the Surrey Hills Arts website at [surreyhillarts.org/habitat](https://surreyhillarts.org/habitat).

The Royal Horticultural Society came to visit the campus last year. They were impressed by the HABITAT project and invited Surrey Hills Arts to exhibit the sculptural habitats. Visitors

to the flower show 'Go Wild' area will be able to see four artworks and visit the Surrey Hills National Landscape gazebo to find out more about the project and our work across the family.

***The RHS said: 'The HABITAT project shares a lot of similarities to the RHS's ethos and work across communities, science, education and art.'***

And there's more good news – The Reclaim network, who aim to 'turn cities from vulnerable spaces to healthy places for people' have also noticed the HABITAT project and are sponsoring two new works for the flower show as well as talks and workshops at their conference later in the year. This is really positive progress for the project which we hope to roll out in other urban areas across Surrey in the next few years working with communities to improve wellbeing and local biodiversity.

The RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival runs from 4-9 July. We hope to see you there!

Ali Clarke

## Engaging with Nature

### Seasonal update from Christa Emmett, our Volunteer and Project Coordinator



Now we have entered the warmer months, the Society's conservation activities have transitioned to wildlife surveys and engagement events.

At the end of April, we completed hedgehog surveys at the Fox Corner Wildlife Area. This involved creating hedgehog 'footprint tunnels' out of corrugated card which we had great fun doing with a group of corporate volunteers. Sadly, we did not detect any presence of hedgehogs in our tunnels, despite us knowing that they are in the local area!

On the early May Bank Holiday, the Society took part in 'The Big Help Out' which was a day of national volunteering as part of the Coronation celebrations. Up at Newlands Corner, 50 volunteers, including the High

Sheriff, engaged in litter picking filling over 10 bin bags of rubbish. A huge thank you to everyone who took part.

We have also increased our engagement with younger audiences and have organised several conservation events. This includes building a bug hotel with Guildford High School's Eco Club, as well as digging a 25m<sup>2</sup> wildflower meadow with 11 children (most of whom were on the free school meals programme) at Surrey Hills and Rivers' base near Haslemere. We also organised our first 'Surrey Hills Family Conservation Day' during the June half term, which involved several local conservation and recorder species groups running activities for children and their families at Cross Farm in Shackleford. Over 50 people took part and we hope that these activities have inspired the younger generation to take action for nature across the Surrey Hills.

Looking ahead, we will be continuing to run our corporate volunteering days, including a day with 100+ Allianz staff removing invasive Himalayan balsam and restoring water channels at the Fox Corner Wildlife Area. We are also running dormouse surveys over the next few months and will be focusing on auditing our Surrey Hills promoted routes to ensure access to nature and the countryside for all.



The Big Help Out at Newlands Corner



Our Family Conservation Day at Lydling Farm, Shackleford



Our bug hotel at Guildford High School

# Events programme July to August 2023

Below is a brief list of planned events we are running.

There is much more detail on our website and a link to a booking form which needs to be filled in whether an event is free or has a cost. We run a free walk every first Sunday of the month but this still needs to be booked.

DATE	EVENT DETAIL
Thursday 6 July	<b>Visit to Bridge End Cottage, Ockham</b> This is a two acre garden offering many different features including perennial borders, small herb parterre, pond and streams and a large wildflower meadow.
Saturday 8 July	<b>A Day in Ripley – President's Day</b> We will meet in the centre of Ripley after which we will enjoy talks by some of the local producers at the monthly farmers' market. This will be followed by lunch and later in the afternoon a guided tour by Send and Ripley History Society.
Monday 17 July 	<b>Patchworking Gardens</b> This is a charity just outside Dorking run by volunteers who provide gardening and crafting opportunities to people who have a physical or mental health condition.
Wednesday 19 July 	<b>Dragonflies at Thursley</b> A guided walk by Natural England ranger, James Giles, on the new 1.3km boardwalk at this SSSI Nature Reserve which is alive with dragonflies and damselflies.
Tuesday 25 July 	<b>Nightjars at RSPB Farnham Heath</b> A late-evening guided walk by Mark Crisp, Warden at RSPB Farnham Heath to hear and hopefully see the incredible Nightjar, one of our Surrey Hills heathland bird species.
Saturday 29 July	<b>Godstone Caves</b> This is an adventure for those who are very fit and are happy in enclosed spaces. Fortune favours the brave!
Sunday 6 August    	<b>Explore Ranmore to Polesden</b> A walk down from the south-eastern corner of the Polesden Lacey Estate through ancient woodland, taking a short break at their coffee shop before taking a different route back to the car park.
Wednesday 9 August 	<b>Guildford Walk – Prayers, Plots and Poisons</b> A very special guided walk exploring the buildings associated with Guildford born George Abbot who rose to prominence by becoming Archbishop of Canterbury.
Saturday 12 August   	<b>Active Inclusion Walk: Gomshall to Guildford</b> The Society is joining with Surrey Hills National Landscape and Community Rail Partnership to host an 8 mile walk for the Muslim Hikers and anyone else who wishes to come along.
Thursday 17 August	<b>Godstone Brewers</b> Two friends who met at university bumped into each other years later and they started the brewery in 2014. We are having a "Tour and Tasting" visit.
Sunday 20 August	<b>Wey and Arun Canal Boat Trip</b> This is a leisurely 1½ hour boat trip on the Surrey/Sussex border with a commentary by a member of The Wey & Arun Canal Trust.
Wednesday 30 August	<b>Visit to Titsey Place</b> We will enjoy a guided tour of the house and can wander in the gardens followed by afternoon tea in the café there.



Family friendly



Dog friendly but kept on a short lead throughout the walk

*When booking yourself on a walk please make sure that you are fit enough to cope with the category stipulated.*



Easy



Moderate



Challenging

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION visit our website OR EMAIL: [info@surreyhillssociety.org](mailto:info@surreyhillssociety.org)  
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