



RURAL HISTORY TODAY

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From the Pen of a ‘Gardiner’

‘Amongst the many Books that are sent into the world in this Age, I have adventured to increase the Number by this one.’

So wrote Moses Cook in his book entitled *The Manner of Raising, Ordering and Improving Forest and Fruit-Tree* published in 1676. Cook’s book was overshadowed by a publication on the subject written over a decade earlier. John Evelyn (1620–1706) diarist and writer published *Sylva* in 1664.¹ Following the devastation of the civil war, and the loss of woodland, Evelyn made the economic argument that landowners should plant and manage tracts of forest on their estates. With four editions in his lifetime and a number of posthumous editions Evelyn’s book remained popular.

In contrast, Cook’s book only reached two editions, in 1676 and 1679. But it is a particularly important book, for in the narrative of rural landscapes and estate management, the voices of head gardeners and gardeners are missing. Employed at a time when there was a growing interest in tree planting throughout Britain Cook was a skilled arboriculturalist and gardener. He was head gardener at Cassiobury the estate of Arthur Capell, 1st Earl of Essex (1631–1683) and it was here in rural Hertfordshire that Capell set forth an ambitious lifetime project to raise and plant a forest garden.²

Cook undoubtedly had access to the library of his employer. He was well versed in the works of Paracelsus, Francis Bacon, John Gerard and John Parkinson and quoted verbatim extracts from Oswald Crollius.³ Described by Evelyn as ‘somewhat adept in Astrology’ he had a keen interest in natural philosophy and cosmology, and used the rules of ‘Arithmetick or Geometry’ for planning and planting.⁴ His book is a distillation of natural philosophy and practical application. Of Cook himself very little is known. He was baptized 1665 and died in 1715. Archival evidence indicates he was a man of some means leasing land in the area of Little Hadham.⁵ Towards the end of his working life he was a founding member of one of the earliest commercial enterprises, The Brompton Park Nursery established in 1681.

Cook had a practical, down-to-earth style of writing combining oral traditions, ‘do as our Farmers do’, with the influence of Roman agronomists. He was well

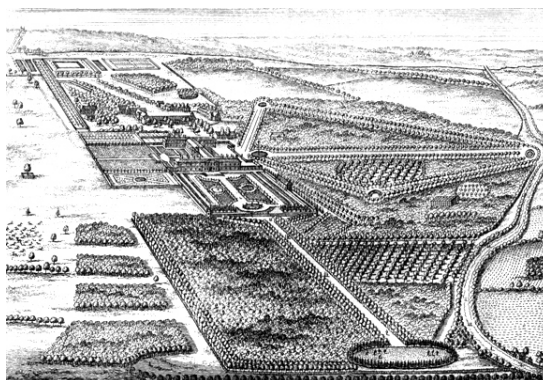


Illustration of Cassiobury as planted by Moses Cook, from Kip and Knyff *Britannia Illustrata* (1707)

practiced in the horticultural art of grafting, budding, root cuttings and laying (particularly hedgerows) techniques commonly used to propagate plants. But the real force for life lay within the seed ‘which is endowed with a Vital Faculty to bring forth its like, it contains potentially the whole Plant in it...the Seed is the beginning of the Tree, and in every grain or seed of a Tree there lies hid another tree.’⁶ Propagating plants from seeds, however, was unreliable as they had an uncanny ability to produce unexpected results. As John Gerard laments, a plant of one colour produced plants of many colours and plants transmuted one into another. ‘Nature doth seeme to plaie and sport herself’ he concluded.⁷

Controlling nature was essential for the creation of strong healthy trees. Cook was drawn to Greek philosophy namely Aristotle’s macro-micro schema and elements, while his alchemical knowledge was influenced by the writings of Paracelsus. According to Aristotle the world was made up of four main elements, water, fire, air and earth. The fifth element was described by Aristotle as *aether*, and by alchemists as *quintessence*, *astra* or *astrum*. For Paracelsians, this fifth element, quintessence, was the force from which all life emanated. Three fundamental processes were required for a new life (germination) to occur. In order to release the *vital faculty* or new life, the seed needs to putrefy and be endowed with quintessence, the vital

Above: Reproduced by permission of English Heritage. The ruins of Rievaulx Abbey, North Yorkshire, taken into care in 1917. See page 6.

Liz Scott is researching seed improvement c.1560–1760 at the University of East Anglia School of History. She draws attention in this article to the work of the gardener and author, Moses Cook.

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British Agricultural History Society

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Diss Corn Hall (Norfolk) – work in progress

In 2012 the Trustees of Diss Corn Hall applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £1.4m to upgrade the Hall as a performance space, and build a Gallery and a Heritage Suite.

*Alun Howkins, Emeritus
Prof of Social history,
University of Sussex and
now living in south Norfolk,
draws our attention to an
under-researched subject.*



Diss Corn Hall was an impressive classical addition to the fabric of one of the main streets in the centre of Diss

The Trustees also sought support to help with the regeneration of the area round the hall which is largely early modern and a product of the prosperity of Diss in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries based on the linen trade. They were given the go ahead and are currently working on the first phase. If that is successful the hall will get the £1.4m. But, and it is a big one, they need to raise another £1m.

During this project I became a trustee (so from now on it is we!) with a role (with others) in looking at the history of the Hall and the area around it. The first thing that struck me when I started the work was how little actual historical work has been done on the Corn Exchanges and Halls despite their ubiquitous and well recognised place in the late nineteenth century townscape. What follows is a few ideas on them; a brief account of the origins of the Diss Hall as an example and a plea for interested others to tell me more.

The purpose of corn halls and exchanges was simple enough: they served as covered markets for the sale of

cereals, although many traded in other commodities like wood, wool or even coal and oil. Ipswich for example also housed a fruit and vegetable market while Manchester's very grand exchange rebuilt in 1903 was actually called 'The Corn and Produce Exchange'. Few happily matched Bristol's famous Exchange which also dealt in slaves. Their heyday was between the 1840s and the 1940s. Most seem to have been either built or rebuilt after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, although a few are earlier, and their decline can be dated to the growth of a truly national grain market after the Second World War. The trading floor at both Leeds and Manchester for example closed in the 1950s. However, smaller and more rural exchanges continued to trade later. Cambridge ceased trading as a hall in 1965, Ipswich in 1972, Newbury in 1983, while Diss, remarkably, continued to operate as a Corn Hall until the 1990s.

From the beginning most of these halls had a dual purpose in that although their *raison d'être* was commodity trading they also had an important role as

public halls and meeting places. Indeed since many of them were commercial ventures it is difficult to see how they could have functioned as markets alone, especially where those markets only took place once a week.

Concerts, bazaars, sales of work and friendly society dinners were the staple of most provincial corn halls and exchanges, as were political and religious meetings. In this respect the role that many corn exchanges have today as theatres or arts centres is a continuation of their original purpose, rather than the break that many would suggest.

The buildings of some of them, especially those in the great industrial cities of the north of England achieved a level of civic opulence which has received recognition in architectural terms. Leeds, designed by Broderick and opened in 1863, is described by Nicholas Pevsener as 'a remarkably independent and functional building' and is Grade I listed by English Heritage, as is the Bristol Exchange. A further 70-plus exchanges or halls are listed including a further five which are grade I. What is striking about the listings is they reveal a quite different kind of corn exchange to those produced by the civic opulence of Leeds or Manchester. What seems likely is that the typical corn exchange was not the grand commercial palaces of the great cities, or even the substantial buildings of provincial centre like Cambridge or Ipswich, but much smaller buildings with a more local focus and marketing area.

It is difficult to be precise about how big this was but it was clearly quite small in some parts of England. For example taking Diss as a centre there was another hall at Harleston 10 miles away, Stradbroke about 12 miles, Stowmarket 21 miles, and Attleborough 12 miles. There were also the much larger exchanges in Norwich at 22 miles and Bury St Edmunds at 24 miles. These small town halls served an area which could be crossed easily in a day by horse and which often accorded with other units of civil society like the Petty Sessions.

The early history and development of Diss Corn Hall is typical of these halls, although it has some unusual features. Prior to the development of halls, cereals were brought by farmers to local markets and sold either to local dealers or millers, often in public houses. By the 1850s this form of marketing was widely recognised as unsustainable especially in the corn growing areas. The situation was clearly put in a report on the opening of the Diss Corn Hall in *The Bury and Norfolk Post and Suffolk Herald*:

The great importance of the corn trade and various businesses connected with it, have, within the last fifty years led the merchants and agriculturalists to desire more suitable accommodation in this

variable climate than the open-street or market square, which for so many ages has been occupied in transacting their business. This desideratum has, in many towns, been supplied by the erection of Corn-Exchanges, or Halls, by subscriptions of shares taken by individuals.

The story of Diss Corn Hall begins in February 1854 when the local press carried the news that Thomas Lombe Taylor, 'Lord of the Diss Manor and grantee of the fairs and markets' was going to build, 'at his own expense' a corn hall. The hall would be 'unconnected with an inn, it being Mr Taylor's wish, as well as that of a large portion of the frequenters of the market that it should be held in a separate and independent building.' The fact that an individual was prepared to undertake the development was unusual since most corn halls and exchanges were built by raising share capital as was the case at Harleston and Attleborough. The larger halls and exchanges were sometimes built by civic authorities as was the case in Cambridge and Ipswich.

Thomas Lombe Taylor was an important figure in Diss and its area. Born about 1803 he was the son of Meadows Taylor an Attorney. His father had inherited the business from Phillip Meadows who had strong family links with the old Dissenting elite of Norwich stretching back to the 1660s. The family also part-owned Dyson and Taylor's Diss Brewery and the Bank of the same name. On his father's death Thomas went into the family law business. However, his career in the law was short-lived as 'the fortune which this gentleman inherited from his father and from the family of his mother having rendered him independent of it, he quitted the profession and devoted himself to agricultural pursuits'. The 1851 Census shows him living at Starston Place, farming 350 acres. He was to live and farm in Starston for the rest of his life, and indeed descendants of his family still live there.

Taylor's public spirited wish to improve his town and 'add to the prosperity both of the town of Diss and its neighbourhood' cannot be doubted, however there were those who felt differently. In fact Diss already had a corn hall of a kind. In or about 1851 Charles Farrow the owner of the 'Kings Head' built a wooden assembly room behind his inn in Mere Street which he offered for the use of the market. When Taylor announced he was building his hall, Farrow and his supporters mounted a vigorous campaign against him in the local press.

Farrow argued that not only did Diss not need a hall but that Taylor's motives far from being public spirited were motivated by a wish to take trade away from Farrow's inn in the Market Square to Taylor's inn,

'The Crown' near to the new hall. Taylor defended himself robustly. He began his defence by saying 'It is difficult, or almost impossible for a man who does a public act, to please everybody...' but his only wish had been, he maintained, to help his native town take advantage of the changed conditions of trade. This was also the reason for the high standard of the building, which he was at great pains to point out was done entirely by Diss labour and expertise. The only exception were the iron girders which came from Ransomes at Ipswich

Finally he pointed to the additional benefits he had given to the town. He would grant the hall to the town in perpetuity to be administered by a group of trustees. Any profits from the hall and from the letting of the stands would go maintain and clean the hall. In addition he wished the hall to become a centre of civic and educational activities for the town. To this end he added to the hall a reading room and library on the upper floor as well as another room on the ground floor which was, it was hoped, by used as a Magistrates Court – which it was.

Interestingly the building of other corn halls aroused public hostility, upset vested interest or both. In East Dereham, also in Norfolk, the building of a new corn hall on Lion Hill was challenged in the courts on the grounds that it encroached on the public or common highway. In fact it seems likely the dispute, which, according to the contemporary diarist the Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, divided the town arose from the removal of market and fair rights from the area. In Cambridge, a local draper, Robert Sayle, took the council to the House of Lords on the grounds that the money spent on the new corn exchange should have been spent on improving the Market Place. Both

attempts were lost and the halls were built.

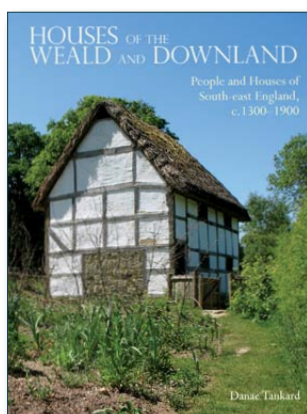
The outcome was the same in Diss and the hall was opened in a suitable blaze of glory in December 1854. The opening was marked by a concert of sacred music to raise money for the Patriotic Fund for widows and orphans of soldiers killed in the Crimea. The concert was repeated the following night. In all it was claimed nearly 2,000 people attended the two concerts raising some £57 for the fund.

The Diss Corn Hall continued its dual function as commodity exchange and social and cultural centre for over 100 years until the mid 1990s, when like many other halls the commodity side of its existence ended. However, because its ownership had been with the town it was possible to retain the building for public use. Also, because it had remained a corn hall until the 1990s, much of its original character remains. The achievement of the full HLF grant and support from the community will ensure that Diss Corn Hall remains the centre of the town's social and cultural life as it has been since 1854.

► *Alun would be interested if any readers of Rural History Today are involved in or are researching the history of corn halls and exchanges. We already know a huge amount more about Diss than I can reproduce here, especially its architectural style and building as well as its role in the area, but I would like to know more about other halls. Please contact me – alun.howkins@btinternet.com If you want to know about Diss Corn Hall and what it does now go to www.disscornhall.co.uk*

► *Alun will be keeping us updated on progress at Diss and the editor would welcome articles or short notes on other corn halls across the country. Do I feel a book/conference coming on?*

A NEW BOOK ...



Houses of the Weald and Downland: People and Houses of South-east England c.1300–1900

This beautifully produced book is the work of the Weald and Downland Museum's Social Historian Danae Tankard.

The book is based on research undertaken between 2005 and 2008 when Danae was an associate on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between the University of Reading and the Museum and asked the question, 'What was life like for the people who lived in these houses?' The book covers eight houses within the Museum collection and examines what life would really have been like for the earliest inhabitants, 'breathing life into the fabric of the structures'.

► *Price £14.99 plus £4 postage from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Chichester PO18 0EU.*

Rare Breeds Survival Trust

The Rare Breeds Survival Trust is celebrating its 40th birthday – and there is plenty to celebrate.

It came into being at a time when the main push in agriculture was increased output at any cost. Quick maturing breeds were fast taking over from the many local breed variations to be found across the United Kingdom. As a result of their work many breeds which as historians we see as crucial to the 19th development of agriculture, such as the Southdown sheep and longhorn cattle were endangered species. However through the work of the RBST, its encouragement of farm parks such as the Cotswold Farm Park, museums such as the Weald and Downland, stands at local agricultural shows and its own show and sale, interest has risen and many breeds are now off the critically endangered list.

The necessity of keeping a diverse gene pool as well as the value of minority breeds in low-intensity farming operations and in the local environments in which they were first developed is now well understood.

Some breeds are still sadly on the critically endangered list. These include the Boreray, Leicester Longwool and the sea-weed eating Ronaldsay sheep, Chillingham wild cattle, and several varieties of shorthorn cattle, British Lop, Large Black and Middle White pigs Eriskay, Hackney, Suffolk and Cleveland Bay horses and ponies.



A Manx Loaghtan ewe and ram: the survival of the breed was classified as 'critical', but thanks to the encouragement of the RBST and its own breed group, is now raised to the 'at risk' category. (photo: Peter Wade-Martins)

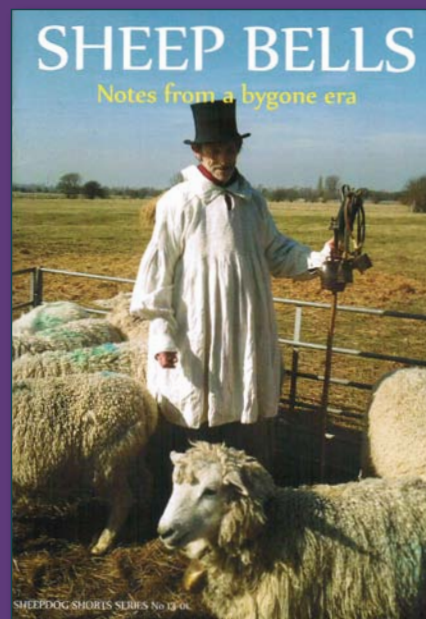
► For more information on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, go to www.rbst.org.uk

Sheep bells

...and on a not unrelated topic the latest publication from a small organization concentrating on sheep matters (Sheepdog Shorts Series) is on the subject of sheep bells, again something with huge regional differences.

A wide range of types were published in a study of 1908 (*Shepherds of Britain* by A.L.J.Gosset) and literary references in books such as *Far from the Madding Crowd* where its importance to the shepherd in ascertaining the activities of his sheep is shown to be crucial. While sheep and goat bells may be a familiar sound in many Mediterranean countries, it is now something that has entirely disappeared from our countryside. Little publications such as this help to remind us of its former importance and something, as Kipling wrote, which could be widely heard across the downlands of southern England early in the last century.

*'And here the sea-fogs lap and cling
And here, each warning each,
The sheep-bells and the ship-bells ring
Along the hidden beach.'*



► Sheep bells; notes from a bygone era can be obtained from www.allsheepdogs.com

Heritage and the countryside: Saving our ancient sites

This year marks a special centenary; it is 100 years since the passing of an Act that helped save Britain's archaeological sites and historic monuments. Sebastian Fry explains the background to this Act and its consequences for the countryside.

Seb Fry is an archaeologist who works for the Designation Team at English Heritage.

Today many farmers and landowners will be familiar with the sight of an archaeological monument on their land – perhaps a prehistoric barrow or stone circle, a Roman fort or even a medieval castle or abbey. Such sites are often enjoyed by walkers passing through the countryside or by the visiting public making a day trip especially for the purpose. However, the situation could quite easily have been different. The pivotal moment came through an Ancient Monuments Act in 1913. This gave the Government the first significant powers to preserve archaeological sites of national importance.

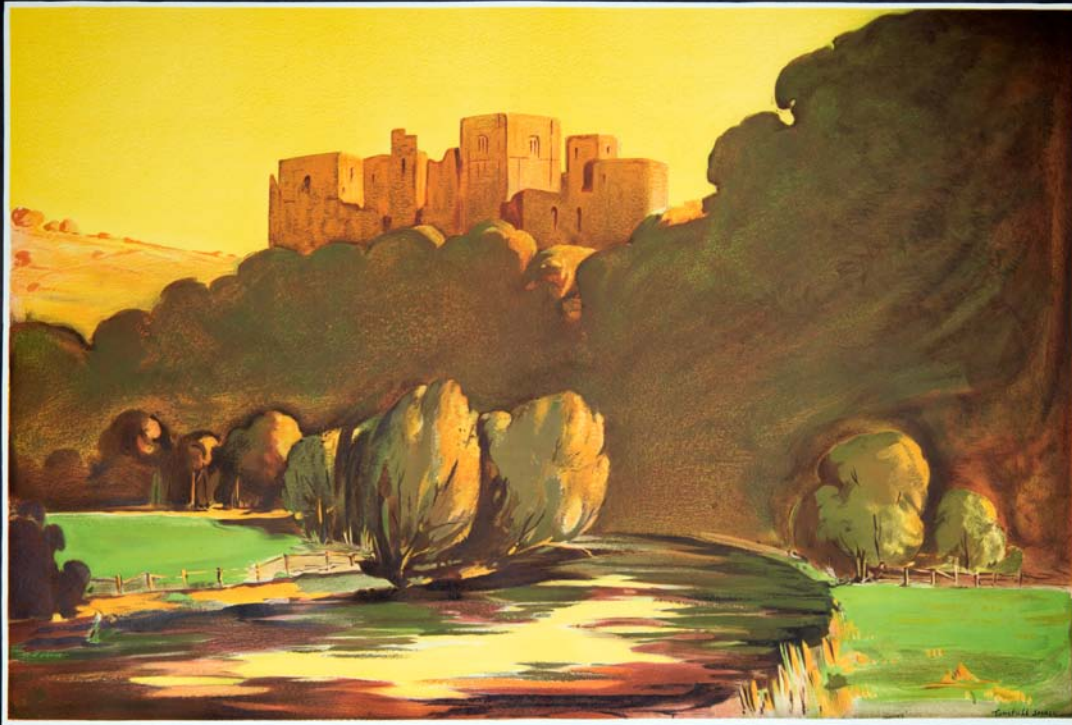
The story actually begins in the Victorian period because there were several earlier Acts that attempted to protect our heritage. However, these were established on a voluntary rather than a compulsory basis. Through the 19th century there had been a growing appreciation of ancient remains in Britain. This was spurred on by the many church restorations that were undertaken and the numerous archaeological societies that were set up. One of the major advocates for the protection of prehistoric sites in particular was the politician, banker and scientific writer Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913). He had been tutored by Charles Darwin on natural history and wrote several influential books on prehistoric man. Perhaps he is most famous for creating the Bank Holiday, which actually gave people time to go out and enjoy historic sites.

Lubbock thought ancient remains like hillforts and standing stones represented the 'unwritten history of our country'. He was appalled by their loss, sometimes for the most careless and trivial reasons. The earthen mounds of barrows were used as a fertilizer to spread upon fields whilst stone circles were dismantled and broken up for gateposts and road surfaces. In one case an Irish landowner had ordered that the remains of Con O'Neill's Castle at Castlereagh, Co Down, be protected with a wall. Mistakenly the agent dismantled the castle itself and used the stones to erect the wall! In another case the Jockey Club mutilated the Anglo-Saxon earthwork known as the Devil's Dyke on Newmarket Heath because tipsters had been using it to sneak views of racehorses in training. Often it was visitors to historic sites that actually caused damage. A popular Victorian pursuit was to hammer off a fragment of Stonehenge to take home as a souvenir.

In the face of this devastation, Lubbock launched a Parliamentary Bill that would enable the Government to purchase any ancient monument threatened by destruction. However, it met with severe opposition. Many landowners thought it would lead to unwarranted State interference in their private affairs. The Bill took eight years to get through Parliament and was severely watered down by the time it was actually passed in 1882. This, the first Ancient Monuments Act, allowed owners to voluntarily hand their monuments over to the care of the State – to be repaired and maintained – whilst they themselves retained the freehold. It was a process called 'guardianship'. A list of the most important prehistoric sites was drawn up and an 'Inspector of Ancient Monuments' was appointed to persuade the owners to hand them over. He was Augustus Pitt-Rivers (1827–1900), a retired army general who had become Britain's leading archaeologist. Perhaps not surprisingly very few people agreed. The first was the owner of 'Kit's Coty House', the remains of a long barrow in Kent. Over the next two years fourteen more sites followed. However, thereafter progress slowed; many landowners were unwilling to hand their monuments into guardianship and at the same time there was little political will or funding to take on extra sites. Worst still, since the process was voluntary, Pitt-Rivers had to stand aside whilst many valuable (non-guardianship) monuments were destroyed. By 1890 he had resigned and the first Act to protect our heritage ended in failure.

At about the turn of the century there was a movement for change. Several groups formed to campaign for better protection. One of these was the National Trust (founded 1895), although its initial focus was largely in safeguarding landscapes. There was a tough task ahead. Not only field monuments but whole buildings were under threat, some even being transported across the Atlantic to serve as curiosities on American soil. The turning point came after medieval Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, was bought up and its interior stripped out by an American syndicate in 1911. Many feared the rest of the castle would also be lost. It was saved at the last minute by the former Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon.

The dramatic rescue of Tattershall was the immediate spur to the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act. A strong case was made in Parliament for measures to permanently safeguard our heritage. The new Act



A WELSH BORDERLAND CASTLE

GOODRICH *In the Wye Valley. Station Kerne Bridge. G.W.R.*

Open to the Public



Reproduced by permission of English Heritage. A poster encouraging people to visit Goodrich Castle, Herefordshire, which was taken into guardianship in 1920.

established the principle that ancient monuments, if important enough, warranted State intervention to protect them. Obviously it would be wrong to think that before this time many landowners did not look after or care for their historic sites. Some even went as far as John Clayton, Newcastle town clerk, who had bought up part of Hadrian's Wall specifically to preserve it. But not everyone was so sympathetic and in these cases it rested with the Government to protect our heritage. The Act gave them the first proper means to do so. A department was formed to preserve the nation's heritage. This was the 'Ancient Monuments Branch' which is the forerunner of English Heritage, CADW and Historic Scotland. The powers to take monuments into guardianship were strengthened. This led to the formation of a National Heritage Collection, which today amounts to 880 historic sites – effectively Europe's largest outdoor museum. Finally the 'scheduling' of archaeological sites was introduced. This involved the compilation of lists of privately owned monuments deemed to be of 'national importance'. Once a site was on the list (or 'schedule') it became a crime to damage it. All these protective measures helped to save the best of Britain's heritage, preserving the historic landscape which so many of us cherish today.

CONFERENCES

BAHS Winter Conference

**Augmented Agriculture:
tools, fuel and traction in farming.**

7 December 2013

Senate House, Malem Street WC1

► A conference in honour of Ted Collins. Lectures include Jordan Claridge, Tom Williamson and Karen Sayer. www.bahs.org.uk

European Rural History

19–22 August 2013

University of Bern (Switzerland)

► The second conference of the European Rural History Organisation will be held at the University of Bern (Switzerland) from the 19th–22nd August. Although the chance for an 'early bird rate' is passed, there is still time to register.

www.ruralhistory2013.org

Medicine and Mortality

21–22 September 2013

Weald and Downland Museum

► The weekend will focus on domestic rituals around human health, sickness, medicine and death. As well as lectures by eminent experts, there will be time to explore the museum's herb gardens with their medicinal plants.

www.wealddown.co.uk

Rural History Today is published by the British Agricultural History Society. The editor will be pleased to receive short articles, press releases, notes and queries for publication.

Articles for the next issue should be sent by 30 November 2013 to Susanna Wade Martins, The Longhouse, Eastgate Street, North Elmham, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 5HD or preferably by email scwmartins@btinternet.com

Membership of the BAHS is open to all who support its aim of promoting the study of agricultural history and the history of rural economy and society. Membership enquiries should be directed to the Treasurer, BAHS, Middle Blakebank, Underbarrow, Cumbria, LA8 8HP Email: taxcaddy@aol.com.

Enquiries about other aspects of the Society's work should be directed to the Secretary, Dr Nicola Verdon History Subject Group, Department of Humanities Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB Tel: 0114 225 3693 Email: n.verdon@shu.ac.uk

Continued from front, page 1

principle. In alchemical terms Cook quoting from Crollius wrote: '*Putrefaction consumeth and separateth the old Nature, and bringeth new fruit.*'⁸

The first step was to collect seeds, and for this Cook used his experience and his senses. Knowing the best seeds required attention to form and shape, taste, weight and feeling of skins and shells. Seeds that were 'pory' (porous), felt spongy and tasted mild were sown immediately for they were already in the process of putrefaction (decay) – elm, sallow and poplar. Seeds that tasted mild, with skin or shell closed could be stored dry until spring approached as with acorns and chestnuts. Hot, dry and bitter tasting seeds with closed skins or shells could be stored for longer and planted in the autumn – peaches, cherries, ash and almonds. Once collected and processed the next stage was planting.

Most alchemical theory was formulated on the Aristotelian tradition and based on a common belief that heaven and earth are linked and that forces and patterns that shape the universe, the 'macrocosm' are mirrored by the activities down on earth, the 'microcosm'. Alchemical work reflected the divine forces of creation and powerful symbolic imagery was used to describe the influence of the heavens on earthbound materials. Cook, quoting Crollius, described the earth as two fold, external and visible and internal and invisible. The external element, the visible, was the body made up of a combination of elements described by Paracelsus as sulphur, mercury and salt. The invisible, internal element held within it fertility and life. Given the mirroring of the earth with the universe, as *astras* are in heaven, so they are to be found in the internal invisible element of the earth.⁹ In order for the seed to receive the quintessence it had to be planted. If planted correctly, the seed begins to putrefy so the timing of sowing was crucial and for this Cook advocated planting according to the phases of the moon. Depth of planting for each type of seed was based on weight. Heavier denser seeds required deeper planting while light seeds putrefied more rapidly and

required less covering. Cook observed how acorns fell to the ground landing with the small end downward. He recorded the seed first put down the root from the small end followed by the shot or body of the tree. The shape determined which way up the seed was planted. Peaches were to be planted with the crack uppermost, other seeds with the crack downwards in order to release any collected water. It was within the rarified containment of the earth the seed was imbued with '*the Astras of the Earth, which bring forth all growing things; for it hath in it self the Seeds and seminal Vertues of all things.*'¹⁰ In this final stage of the process the old life died and new life was released. '*Tis necessary that the first life of hearbs and medicines should die that the second life by the Chymists help may be attained through Putrefaction and Regeneration.*'¹¹

Cook was a meticulous observer of nature enhancing his knowledge and skills through reading natural philosophy. The distilling of the practical and the erudite led to the creation of an extraordinary forest garden described by Evelyn as a '*truly delightful Place without being more then ordinarily ravish'd with its Natural Beauty.*'¹² Cook was acutely aware of the value of timber and in the absence of commercial nurseries, propagated his trees in a nursery on the estate. From germination to maturity his aim was to '*improve its growth, and largeness of Fruit or Seeds.*'

Arthur Capell died in 1683. When Cook left Cassiobury is unknown but he was active in Little Hadham leasing land and there remains a copy of probate of his will original date 24th September 1713, proved 21st February 1713/14. On Thursday 8th June 1922 by the direction of the Countess Dowager of Essex, Cassiobury estate in Hertfordshire was auctioned in London. The contents of the house, art, furniture and four separate libraries were spread far and wide. Apart from a small area now called Cassiobury Park, the estate, which comprised approximately 870 acres at the point of sale, has been erased. Trees that formed the famous forest garden were cut down and Cassiobury sank under urban sprawl.

1 Originally written as a paper *Sylva* was presented to the Royal Society on 16th February 1666.

2 Arthur Capell, 1st Earl of Essex (1631–1683) statesman, collector, and owner of Cassiobury or Cashiobury was born into a gardening dynasty. His father had established an Italianate garden at Little Hadham, Hertfordshire in the style of Inigo Jones. His sister Mary later the Duchess of Beaufort was a great gardener and his brother Henry developed Kew.

3 Oswald Croll or Crollius was an alchemist and professor of medicine in Germany. See *Mysteries of Nature in Philosophy Reformed & Improved*. Translated by H. Pinnell. 1657

4 George W. Johnson, *A history of English gardening*. 1892 pp.115–6. I am grateful to Dr. Malcolm Thick for this reference.

5 DE/We/4/182-3 Moses Cook, Gardiner, Little Hadham date 1667 and DE/We/4/184-189 Moses Cook, Gardiner, Little Hadham dated 1684, Leases and related documents

concerning the Bear Inn, Water Row, formerly The Falcon, Water Row, (now 51 High Street) Ware. Hertfordshire Archives. The Capells owned property in Little Hadham.

6 Moses Cook, *The Manner of Raising, Ordering and Improving Forest and Fruit-Tree*, 1676 Ch. IV p.7

7 John Gerard, *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*. Amended version 1636

8 Oswald Crollius, *Mysteries of Nature in Philosophy Reformed & Improved*. p.42

9 See Oswald Crollius, *Mysteries of Nature in Philosophy Reformed & Improved*. p.38

10 Moses Cook, *To the Reader in The Manner of Raising, Ordering and Improving Forest and Fruit-Tree*, 1676

11 Paracelsus, *Mysteries of Nature in Philosophy Reformed & Improved*.

12 Stephen Switzer, *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation*, London, 1715, pp. 46–7. I am grateful to Dr. Malcolm Thick for this reference.