



Caldwell's Nurseries Project

Oral history

<http://www.caldwellarchives.org.uk/>

Alan Sturrock interviewed by Gordon Darlington

Alan Sturrock was a customer of Caldwell's.

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Interview summary

00.00.00	<p>“Good morning my name is Alan Sturrock and I am 59 years old and I am Cheshire born and bred and know Caldwell's Nurseries and the Knutsford area very well having being brought up in that area. My interest in gardening was probably sparked initially by my father, who was a very keen gardener. The first house that I lived in was in Broom Edge near Lymm where I recall a very fine garden which my mother and father had created and when they bought the house which had a piece of derelict land which they incorporated into the garden. We then moved from there 3 or miles down the hill to little Bollington where we moved into what was the old Rectory of Vicarage for the church there at Little Bollington. That house had not been lived in for very many years and the garden was a child delight when we first acquired because it as so wonderfully overgrown but my father and mother I helped a little in my early in teens we cut the vegetation back and created a very nice garden which was often commented on by friends and visitors for its splendour.”</p>
00.01.97	<p>“I lived there until I left home when I was in my early 20's and the house that really has the association with Caldwell's would be the first house that I bought with my fiancée, Tricia when we were engaged which was a beautiful 17th century brick and stone cottage in Mottram St Andrew between Prestbury and Wilmslow. It was on Smithy Lane right at the end of a long and unmade track and no one would have known that the cottage was there rather like the house that I lived in during my childhood in the Vicarage at Little Bollington. This house had not been lived for some time and the house and garden required a considerable amount of time bringing it up to speed. We spent my wife and I twelve months spending 12 months on the house getting into tip top shape and then our efforts moved on to the garden where Caldwell's became very important cog in the wheel.”</p>
00.03.31	<p>“Caldwell's was a place that I think that anybody who is interested in gardening in my youth say in the 50's and the 60's would have known in the area it was renowned as</p>

	<p>a place of excellence I visited it with my father on many occasions when I was not at that stage a purchaser going out with him on a Saturday or Sunday to buy plants for the vicarage garden there is no doubt at all anyone at all who was interested in horticulture or gardening at that time would have known about Caldwell's in Knutsford and book of plants and trees."</p>
00.05.03	<p>"I have to say I can't particularly remember the trees and plants that my father may have purchased but I know when I was buying for myself a few years later for our cottage in Mottram St Andrew my wife and I were very keen to create a true cottage garden a quaint essential English cottage we had purchased and finding someone who really knew their onions about perennials and heights and colours and the varieties that were available was critical to me and that was the obvious port of all. We purchased the cottage in Mottram St Andrew about 30 years ago in the early 1980's and about 12 months after we bought the cottage we started in earnest on the garden and we had aspirations to make certainly at the side of the house a garden with two very large herbaceous beds and in addition we bought some soft fruit and we bought shrubs and things for the front of the house where we had created a very nice parking area but my recollection is that when we decided that we had to get going on the garden."</p>
00.08.00	<p>"We both went down on a Saturday and spoke to a very knowledgeable member of staff and took a plan of what we wanted to do and he was very, very keen to help us make sure that what we wanted to put into the garden would make a super show. It was a plan simply of the dimensions of the garden and the way it faced so that he would know whether we were facing north or south facing and the size of the beds that we wished to create he then from memory kept that plan and told us to come back in a couple of weeks time and he had drawn on it what sort of plants to be planted in 3's and 5's may be so that we got nice colours that blended well and height that matched and I just remember he was extraordinary helpful I suppose we got a free design! When did you actually leave Woodside Cottage."</p>
00.09.12	<p>"We left Woodside Cottage twenty five years ago so that would be late 1980's when we bought the house in Kermincham that we live in now, yes, Caldwell's was still there then, but we had a better garden here that what we had in Mottram St Andrew so we tweaked this rather than doing a huge revamp. I can't remember buying shrubs but I think it was highly likely we did but I do remember how superb they were."</p>
00.10.02	<p>"My wife has certainly walked down the Smithy Lane on a couple of occasions but the house has been substantially altered and so it isn't easy to see the garden we concentrated on as it is now behind a new add on. I would probably think the plants are still there. It would be good to see and recognise some of the varieties and it would be useful to see what Caldwell's were it is useful to see that there is a garden relatively close to us that we could perhaps ask the owners if we could have a look at. I would say very nearly everything that was put into the garden when we created it would have come from that nursery and it is a terrible shame that a Nursery like that in the area does not still exist anymore because you now have to find specialist nurseries for specialist plants and quite often they are many more miles away from where you live to buy the variety of plants you want that is why something like the RHS Show at Tatton is so useful because it shows you the particular plants that you want are available."</p>
00.12.33	<p>"I remember the place well you went in and parked and then there was a shop area on the left hand side which was rather like a white orangery I suppose you would call it. They had very limited garden stock compared to what you would have seen in a</p>

	<p>Garden Centre these days although a Garden Centre and traditional Garden Centre are so poles apart they almost not comparable. Behind the shop area there was an extensive and I mean a very extensive area where they sold herbaceous plants that were in like cold frames I don't suppose they covered them up but they were garden perennials you certainly you would find a number of varieties of a particular plant available to you at any one time just for an example for the question of buying a Hellebore you would have choice of buying six or seven or eight varieties of Hellebore and the same would go for hollyhocks or delphiniums whatever you wanted to buy you had a choice of colour type of plant which of course was marvellous."</p>
00.14.41	<p>"I remember being from sad when I saw Caldwell's was closing and it disappeared although if you wanted to see some further plants from Caldwell's I can actually recall a story where you could look at trees that came out of Caldwell's. I had a friend that lived in a property in Over Alderley which was called Slade Farm and he has left there and now lives in Knutsford but when Caldwell's closed they had a tree field which was opposite the Dun Cow at Ollerton and he bought a hundred trees out of that field they were all very mature trees and that is actually what he wanted to do to plant pretty mature trees in his fields and he had a machine to dig them up and produce a pretty decent root ball and a lorry to take them up to Alderley to replant them all and I expect a significant number of those trees are still alive. My wife knows the people at the farm where he lived and I am pretty sure they would let you have a look at the trees. Slade Farm opposite Slade Cottage in Over Alderley but I certainly will make sure that get you the correct name and address of the people that own the farm so that you can put it on the records. I think it is highly unlikely that we have got any catalogues but as for photos we could probably look through boxes of photographs we do have but I may be able to find something of interest for you, which I can probably sort out for you."</p>