

The Bucks Gardener

Issue 25

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Spring 2007

Visit to Tyringham House gardens 2pm, Wednesday 23 May



We first visited Tyringham, in the 'frozen north', way back in July 1999 by invitation of the Tyringham Naturopathic Clinic. We were shown around by Mick Thompson, of Ashridge, who had prepared a management plan with Margaret Riley and Diana Sherston whilst at the Architectural Association; at that stage a restoration was under discussion.

Phil and Anne James were soon appointed as head gardeners and began a respectful restoration (with a team of four) on a very restricted budget. By the time we visited again in the following May they had made considerable progress relaying the structure of the rose garden (fencing it against the then epidemic of rabbits), reinstating Lutyens' path network and cutting back the yew hedging to something nearer its original proportions. We were especially impressed with the Stables that had been cleared, newly restored machinery and tools stored neatly where formerly the detritus of ages had been piled up. The walled garden had been cleared of a thicket of brambles and weeds that the Sleeping Beauty's rescuer would have recognised.

Sadly the ambitions of the Jameses were to come to naught, and they had to move on. The Clinic was, probably, already in financial difficulties and soon closed down. Phil thought Tyringham would permanently be written on his heart, the one that got away. Reports of these visits appeared in *BG* 7 & 8.

It was with some relief that we heard of the eventual sale of Tyringham though not before more of the gates and sculpture had disappeared. The new owners seem to have taken on from where the James's left off, under the direction of Beth Rothschild. The BGT was able to help in the initial stages of her researches, and we look forward to seeing progress.

AGM at West Wycombe

6pm, Saturday 23 June

by kind permission of Sir Edward Dashwood Bt.

We hope to be able to hold the AGM on the lawns by the House, though we may have to use one of the rooms if it turns nasty (surely not, in county?). Please bring a picnic, and let us (Sarah Rutherford) know if you want to come. We will have the AGM, and weather willing a walking tour of the gardens afterwards, led by the ubiquitous Richard Wheeler.

THE HARTWELL SEMINAR 2007

TALKING HEADS —

Garden Statuary in the Eighteenth Century

9.30am to 5pm, Saturday August 11

by kind permission of Historic House Hotels

A day of talks and tours exploring the stories behind the sculptures that inhabit the eighteenth century landscape garden, based at Aylesbury Vale's showpiece Hartwell House.

See enclosed flyer for full programme

Price per head : £65, to include coffee, buffet lunch and tea (wine available by the glass/bottle on the day). Please return booking form with cheque and SAE to our Events Secretary: Rosemary Jury, 11 Fledglings Walk, Winslow, Buckingham, Bucks MK18 3QU

The Secret Gardens of Claydon

2.30pm, 8 September

Claydon House, the home of the Verney family, set in the middle of the most rural part of Aylesbury Vale, has long been known for its exuberant rococo interiors, and wonderful collection of family portraits. What is almost totally unknown, however, is the extraordinary set of walled gardens contemporary with the C18 house and devoted in equal measure to beauty and function.

Over the last three years these have been taken in hand by the present Lady Verney and her team of gardeners led by Darren Bullock, with spectacular results. The layers of history have been respected, but the garden does not stand still. A secret garden that should not remain secret for much longer.

Cost; £5, teas can be bought at end of tour

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A PASSION FOR TREES, THE LEGACY OF JOHN EVELYN

Sylva, A Discourse on Forest Trees and the Propagation of Timber is not perhaps the snappy title that publishers of today would encourage authors to use. Yet it is still, after 343 years one of the most widely quoted books. John Evelyn (1620–1706) wrote *Sylva* for two reasons; to help solve the long-term problem of deforestation that England was experiencing and to ensure the steady supply of commercially available timber. The book was a huge success and within two years Evelyn was already revising for a second edition, with a third revision made in 1679. Twenty-seven years later in 1706, the year of his death, when he was aged 86, Evelyn was yet again working on updating and adding to the manuscript. This fourth edition of *Sylva* was published later the same year and then reissued almost unaltered in 1729. Half a century on, what Evelyn had to say about trees was still considered so pertinent that Dr Alexander Hunter (1729–1809) undertook to modernise the original text, and in 1776 an enlarged two-volume edition was published on behalf again of The Royal Society. This itself was reprinted another four times, the last being in 1825, a staggering 161 years after the original book had been published.

John Evelyn was a polymath and is an inescapable companion to our understanding the 17th century; firstly with his *Diary*, which he began as a teenager, and then for the number of pamphlets, and books he published on a wide range of relevant subjects. He moved in court and governmental circles and from his writings he seemingly had a tidy and meticulous mind. Evelyn was a congenital communicator, writer and recorder, words poured from his pen almost everyday of his life. A lot of his published work remains either in print or in manuscript form, available from (in particular) the British Library.



John Evelyn, shown in the first edition of 1664

When I came eventually to own and read a copy of *Sylva* I was astounded at the perspicacity and relevance of what I was reading, and was determined to find a way of bringing Evelyn's ideas to a wider audience. The title itself, for modern readers, is both slightly daunting and cumbersome, but Evelyn was a classicist, and it was entirely appropriate that he would wish to use the Greek word 'sylvā' meaning wood or woodland (the equivalent Latin is 'silva') in the title. The word 'forest' too requires some explanation, as in the 17th century it still retained

FROM THE CHAIR

I always sit down to write this column with a sense of impending dread. Will members respond to gentle hints that we do need them to attend events, join the research team, get involved in planning issues, or help out with the schools programme in order to make it all work? It is a relief that so many of you do. We are very pleased that so many of you have chosen to pay your subscriptions by standing order, to those who haven't yet, please do remember to pay soon.

I was particularly relieved that a dozen members turned up last week to enjoy the sunshine, tulips, tea & cakes at Chenies Manor, considering that it had only been publicised with flyers at the Spring Talks, on our new, small, website (www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk), and by a very last minute mail shot; those who did come enjoyed a wonderful hot afternoon and were given an insight into how it all works by our host Mrs Macleod-Mathews. We also spotted Waddesdon Manor's Paul Farnell indulging in a bit of industrial espionage looking at the huge range of tulips grown there, an ideal opportunity.

We have had a difficult time confirming details of our events this year, which in part explains the late appearance of this newsletter. We do have more in the pipeline, and indeed things are in hand for next year as well; we are already sending out invitations to speakers for next year.

At our most recent Council meeting we had a presentation from Lucy Hand of the UK Parks and Gardens Database. The project is nearly ready for its launch with a lot of work to do

to put information into a format that won't go out of date or be less than useful. It is a project with enormous potential, but with all the usual pitfalls of a scheme with such a huge remit.

It has been great to see the reappearance of greenery after such a wet winter; spring seems to have sprung very rapidly. I am especially excited by the colour of my Hornbeam hedge, an area of which had been swamped by a huge Elder. I am hopeful that it will recover, but it is the red leaf buds breaking to copper foliage, soon turning a delicious green that are so exciting.

Living in a new area, albeit such a short distance from my previous home, has been quite a revelation, and it is always interesting seeing what is coming into flower in other gardens. Perhaps the most unexpected combination is the Wisteria and *Clematis montana* 'Rubens' spreading up the side of a nearby house. Next door is covered in a huge honeysuckle, again in profuse flower; it is a variety of *Lonicera periclymenum*, presumably an early flowering one, but two weeks ago it didn't even have leaves on it. I assume it was the long ripening season last year, with leaf fall not until late November, that is causing this, as we had snow on the ground only a month and a half ago. Still it is making for some unusual and pleasing flower combinations. My apple trees that last year were still choked with ivy are now clear of it, though unpruned, and as I write are covered in blossom; which bodes well for the crop this year. Now if I could only pry myself away from this computer, I might be able to get out to do the digging I should have finished long ago.

Chad Boot

the medieval connotation of land enclosed for hunting, and not as it means today, an area supporting and growing trees.

Collective anxiety regarding the supply of petroleum and oil is the modern equivalent of the shortage of timber in Evelyn's time. Then the newly formed Royal Society decided to grasp the nettle and invited Evelyn to lecture to its members on the subject; such was its impact that the Society invited Evelyn to publish his findings. The result a year later was the publication of *Sylva*.

Although Evelyn is primarily known (in the garden history world at least) as being an authority on trees, his horticultural prowess was much wider. There is no doubt, looking at some of his manuscripts that his interest in gardens, design, and plants was much wider than that contained in *Sylva*. He was occasionally invited by friends to view their estates and make recommendations for their improvement, he certainly modernised his own family estate of Wotton in Surrey. Evelyn's garden style had been formed mainly during his travels on the continent and when he returned to England in 1652, he lived at what had originally been his wife's home of Sayes Court on the edge of Deptford village. The house was dilapidated (it was Elizabethan), and Evelyn wanted to demolish and rebuild it, but part of the attraction of the house could well have been the absence of a decent garden since with ample fields, (over 40 hectares 100 acres) which stretched to the river Thames, there was ample opportunity for him to put his ideas into effect. This he did in spectacular fashion and the garden he developed must have been one of the sights of the neighbourhood. There are no paintings or images of what he achieved over the forty years of his tenureship; all that is left are two pieces of evidence, which together give perhaps a better insight to what he achieved. The first drawn in 1652, is a detailed plan of the proposed garden, with 126 explanatory legends and encompasses all the details which no doubt Evelyn had experienced travelling on the continent; the second is a manuscript, completed about 1686 entitled *Directions for the Gardiner at Says-Court but which may be of Use for Other Gardens*. For gardeners and plantsmen attracted to the history of both the 17th century and garden history, this is a treasure to be savoured, and one which will surely add to our knowledge of gardening in Evelyn's time. Again it is startlingly modern in its approach. As indeed is the precursor of all the garden and horticultural encyclopaedias which followed his 1664 *Kalendarium Hortense* probably the earliest recorded month by month calendar of what to do in the garden. This appeared as an attachment to the first and all subsequent editions of *Sylva*. In 1699 Evelyn published *Acetaria A Discourse of Sallet's* a cross between a gardening and cookery book. All three of these manuscripts were originally intended either as working documents or for inclusion in what would have been Evelyn's *magnus opus* and which he worked on for most of his adult life. He had announced its title *Elysium Britannicum* at about the same time as the publication of *Sylva* and although he planned it in outline and kept notes, all that survives is about a third of the original 1000 pages. One modern day writer describes the material as a morass of different-sized pages, covered with marginalia, interlineations, pasted-on additions and loose sheets.

2006 was the 300th anniversary of John Evelyn's birth, and it gave the gardening world a chance to reassess his worth and influence. His integrity, clear thinking and ideas present us with someone who understood the need for working the land as efficiently as possible, but at the same time encouraging the enhancing of the landscape. In this respect Evelyn is far in advance of his age, as it would be another hundred years before

the great intellectual idea of embracing the countryside into the 'landskip' of the great parklands came into being.

Maggie Campbell-Culver

A Passion for Trees, the Legacy of John Evelyn, from Transworld Eden Project Books, 2007. ISBN-10: 1903919479

Directions for the Gardiner and Other Horticultural Advice, to be published by Oxford University Press in 2009

A CELEBRATION OF JOHN EVELYN
from Marion Woodward of Surrey Gardens Trust

Progress on the publication of the Proceedings of the 2006 Evelyn Conference has been slower than we at first anticipated. However, we are now on track to publish in summer 2007. Much time has been taken up in tracking down suitable illustrations which we have now sourced from over forty individuals and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic. More and more material is available on the Internet and this has added to the adventure, it is amazing what gems Google Images will reveal, and it can only get better.

We have been extremely fortunate to obtain some funding from the Marc Fitch Fund and the Paul Mellon Center for Studies in English Art which has enabled us to include some 160 illustrations, many of them in colour, and still maintain the price per copy at only £15.

We are particularly indebted to those sources who have waived their copyright fees, a full list will appear in the book together with acknowledgement of all the other help we have received from many individuals, not least, Mavis Batey who is our academic editor and whose knowledge and enthusiasm has been invaluable in helping to bring together the diverse contributions from our eight individual authors into a cohesive whole.

Fliers will be available shortly; don't miss this opportunity to acquire your own record of a very successful conference or to see what you missed.

THE GREAT BLOW OF 1987 what do you remember?

Sarah Rutherford sent a message to members of Council in March, asking for reminiscences of the storm of 20 years ago, this autumn. Whilst it may be considered by some to be tempting fate, we thought it would be good to organize an event this autumn, and a collection of accounts to remind us of that fateful night, 15 October. We therefore invite your correspondence on the subject; accounts in both words and pictures are acceptable.

Sarah has kindly offered to donate a *modern* copy of Daniel Defoe's *The Storm* (1704), from which we publish an extract below, as a prize for the most provocative contribution.

I for one am still quite taken by the image stirred up in Sarah's memory; at the time she was head gardener at Horace Walpole's Thameside villa, Strawberry Hill. She recounts how 'I bought a chainsaw so large I could hardly lift it (lucky to get it, they were like hen's teeth), to cut up some of poor Horry Walpole's great oaks'. Geoff Huntingford immediately responded with 'I was at Aldeburgh that night and remember it well, and I then had to visit Sevenoaks School (renamed 'Oneoaks' as you will recall) not long afterwards on business, and the school's estate manager was virtually in tears. Of course it represented a remarkable opportunity in so many other ways'. And, thanks to English Heritage's enlightened response with grants and advice, such has indeed proved the case.

As for me, I was living in Leyton, eighteen-floors up in a tower block, not far away from Ronan Point, and managed to sleep through the whole event. I was working just off Lamb's Conduit Street, in London, and was shocked at the devastation on going into work. Perhaps my favourite street thereabouts (Bedford Row?) was planted with *Schinus molle*, 'the pepper tree'; perhaps the only street planting of this tree in Britain, certainly it is more at home in the Mediterranean. As these were big trees and very slow growing I suspect they must have been very old. They were shattered with barely one left unbroken. Nearby the huge Planes at Gray's Inn were looking very sad too.

THE GREATER BLOW OF 1703 a blast from the past

Mavis Batey has sent us this account of the Great Blow from John Evelyn's *Sylva*, 1706 edition, p. 341. She has hypothesized in the past that the loss of trees, particularly those in avenues may have aided the development of the English landscape style later in the century.

Methinks I still hear, and am sure feel the dismal groans of the Forests, so many thousands of goodly oaks subverted by the late dreadful Hurricane; prostrating the Trees, and crushing all that grew under them, lying in ghastly Postures, like whole Regiments fallen in Battle, by the Sword of the Conqueror; Such was the Prospect of many Miles in several Places, resembling that of Mount Taurus, so naturally described by the Poet, speaking of the Minotaur slain by Theseus;

Illa procul radicitus, Exturbata

Prona Cadit, late quacumvis obvia frangens

[from Catullus: Driven out by the roots it falls far and wide breaking whatever is in its way... R.W.]

The losses and dreadful Stories of this Ruin were indeed great but how much greater the Universal Devastation through the Kingdom! The Publick Account [*Publick Account by Defoe; The Storm: or a collection of the most remarkable casualties and disasters etc.* 1703] tells us, besides in miserable men, reckoning no less than 3000 brave Oaks, in one part only of the Forest of Dean blown down; and in the New Forest in Hampshire about 4000; in about 450 Parks and Groves from 200 large trees to a 1000 of excellent timber, without counting Fruit and Orchard Trees sans number and proportionately the same through all the considerable Woods of the Nation; with those stately Groves, Avenues, Vistas which the Author names, especially one Tree of near 80ft height of Clear Timber; 600 all subverted within the compass of 5 acres. Sir Edward Harly had 1300 blown down; myself about 2000; several of which torn up by their Fall raised Mounds of Earth near 20ft high with great Stones intangled among the roots and rubbish; and this within almost sight of my dwelling.

The Great Blow of 1703 is indeed more fully anatomized in Daniel Defoe's *The Storm* (1704), now available as a Penguin Classic. The book is mainly taken up with personal accounts of the storm that covered a lot of the country and had a particularly bad effect on shipping; indeed the effects of the storm were not confined to England, but were felt on the continent, with accounts reaching from northern France and Holland. He records:

'The Steeples also, and other Parts of the Churches of **Shenley, Waddon and Woolston** in the County of **Bucks** have been very much rent and torn in the Wind.'

Whilst no individual seems to have sent in an account from Bucks, perhaps the general effect can be gauged from the following, mainly recording tree damage:

We have also a large Account of the blowing down of a very great and considerable Number of Fruit-Trees, and other Trees in several Parts; we shall only pick out two or three Passages which are the most remarkable. In the Counties of **Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester**, several Persons have lost whole Orchards of Fruit-Trees; and many particular Mens Loss hath amounted to the Value of forty or fifty Pounds at the least, meerly by Destruction of their Fruit-Trees: and so in other Parts of **England** proportionably the like Damage hath been sustained in this Respect. And as for other Trees, there has been a great Destruction made of them in many Places, by this Storm. Several were blown down at **Hampton-Court**. And three thousand brave Oaks at least, but in one principal Part of the Forest of **Dean**, belonging to his Majesty. In a little Grove at **Ipswich**, belonging to the Lord of **Hereford** (which together with the Spire of the Steeple before-mentioned, were the most considerable Ornaments of that Town) are blown down at least two hundred goodly Trees, one of which was an Ash, which had ten Load of Wood upon it: there are now few Trees left there.

In **Bramton Bryan Park** in the County of **Hereford**, belonging to Sir **Edward Harly**, one of the late Knights of the **Bath**, above thirteen hundred Trees are blown down; and above six hundred in **Hopton Park** not far from it: and thus it is proportionably in most Places where this Storm was felt. And the Truth is, the Damage which the People of this Nation have sustained upon all Accounts by this Storm, is not easily to be valued: some sober and discreet People, who have endeavoured to compute the Loss of the several Counties one with another, by the Destruction of Houses and Barns, the blowing away of Hovels and Ricks of Corn, the falling of Trees, &c. do believe it can come to little less than two Millions of Money.

There are yet behind many Particulars of a distinct Nature from those that have been spoken of; some whereof are very wonderful, and call for a very serious Observation of them.

In the Cities of **London** and **Westminster**, especially on the Bridge and near **Wallingford-house**, several Persons were blown down one on the Top of another.

In **Hertfordshire**, a Man was taken up, carried a Pole in Length, and blown over a very high Hedge; and the like in other Places.

The Water in the River of **Thames**, and other Places, was in a very strange manner blown up into the Air: Yea, in the new Pond in **James's Park**, the Fish, to the Number of at least two Hundred, were blown out and lay by the Bank-side, whereof many were Eye-witnesses.

At **Moreclack** in **Surry**, the **Birds**, as they attempted to fly, were beaten down to the Ground by the Violence of the Wind.

At **Epping** in the County of **Essex**, a very great Oak was blown down, which of it self was raised again, and doth grow firmly at this Day.

At **Taunton**, a great Tree was blown down, the upper Part whereof rested upon a Brick or Stone-wall, and after a little time, by the force of the Wind, the lower part of the Tree was blown quite over the Wall.

In the City of **Hereford**, several persons were, by the Violence of the Wind, borne up from the Ground; one Man (as it is credibly reported) at least six Yards.

To add insult to injury the Storm was followed a month later by an earthquake centered on Lincoln, but perhaps it is better not to get me started on earthquakes in Lincoln.

CB



Tyingham Park, Buckinghamshire (1924) The park layout and temples

FROM THE LIFE OF SIR EDWIN LUTYENS,
by Christopher Hussey, *Country Life* 1950, p. 472–73

[At] Tyingham an architectural landscape and two temples of exquisite form were conceived not as ends in themselves but as an ideal setting for civilised life, means to the apprehension of truth. Soane designed the house, subsequently much altered, to which the owner, Mr F.A. König, desired to append a garden for the recreation of the spirit and the body through the exercise of both. This may sound sententious, but how else can one describe a garden of formalised landscape embodying long waters flanked by a bathing house of temple form balancing a shrine dedicated to parental memory and music? Comparable motives underlay the heroic landscapes of Stowe, near Tyingham, and here, in another age, another if lesser Stowe might have taken shape. Equally, in other hands, a glorified swimming bath, bathing cabin, and cocktail bar might have eventualised. But it was neither pictorial poetry nor self-indulgence, but the humanist ideal of equal provision for physical and spiritual health, which set the theme; an ideal which the architect held with as much conviction as the client, and expressed not in terms of the picturesque or the trite but of fitting classic design.

Two long pools twenty yards broad stretch successively a distance of 150 yards from the house (above) aligned on the dome surmounting it. Between the pools is a causeway containing a round basin between a pair of pillars surmounted by creatures spouting water. Lawns, contained by clipped yew hedges backed by tall elms, flank the water, and at either end of the causeway stand the temples.

They are similar, square in form, with an arch beneath an engaged pediment on each face, of the local stone and a facing of a white crushed-stone compound; their slightly cruciform plan is stepped back above to carry a white concrete dome which echoes that of the house but repeats in miniature that destined for Viceroy's House [New Delhi]. The bathing pavilion, corresponding closely within to its elevations, affords eight cubicles in its corners. The other, we now observe, at first sight identical, is prolonged behind by two diminishing

squares like the choir and sanctuary of a tiny church. This it is, a place consecrated to the apprehension of Divine Truth not through religion but through music and architecture. A Latin inscription dedicates the building 'in memory of our fathers and to the Supreme Spirit author of the universe all parts of which are led upwards to Him in perpetual progress to ever higher spheres'. That faith is qualified elsewhere, however, by another legend. 'Seek truth,' it runs, 'but remember that behind the new knowledge the fundamental issues of life are veiled.'

The west door opens into the square nave, to which eight columns, carrying the dome, give a cruciform plan, and whence two barrel-vaulted compartments extend eastwards. The columns are of green scagliola, the square pillars behind them of black, the floor of grey, white, and black marbles, the altar, beyond the next compartment, of malachite scagliola and white marble. The place glows with structural colour. But where is the music? Its source is concealed where we might least expect it: beneath a wrought brass grille that serves as floor to the second compartment where walnut stalls give the semblance of a choir. Down there are ranged the pipes of an organ of which the keyboard is at the lower level beyond the altar. One uncovers automatically on entering this temple, not only because an altar is associated with consecration but because the act of reverence is instinctive when confronted by the design, so sincere, so noble, so spacious, so instinct itself with reverence yet withal so genial.

The monumental idea of this garden might have been devised for Lutyens's mood at this time, for only he was capable of creating the work of art that it became. In the Music Temple, a shrine of the humanist faith, the last master of humanist architecture matched the uniqueness of the opportunity with its unique beauty. The Tyingham undertaking translates into terms of the landscape garden, with its humanist traditions, the aesthetic conception that Lutyens had been developing from the inception of Delhi and, for a decade, in his work for the War Graves Commission. The scale and classic technique are those of Delhi in miniature, the idealism that of the commemorative monuments, of which the most notable introduced landscape considerations.



A View of the Cascade &c. in the Garden of Sir Francis Dashwood. — Vue de la Cascade &c. dans le Jardin du Chevalier Fr. Dashwood, et Bar. V. de l'Eglise Paroissiale de West Wycomb in S County of Bucka. I de l'Eglise Paroissiale a West Wycomb dans la Comté de Bucka.
London Printed by Robt. Smeath & Prinsep in Fleet Street.

WEST WYCOMBE PARK — from the archives

In a recent trawl of papers concerning West Wycombe for the National Trust, the following items of interest have come to light. We can provide full references if you wish to pursue them further. They tie in rather nicely with this print of *A view of the Cascade etc in the Garden of Sir Francis Dashwood, Bart.*, c.1760, recently reproduced in the Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society's *Historic Views of Buckinghamshire* 2004, £20 ISBN 0-949003-18-2

Receipt/inventory

'The Honble Sr Francis Dashwood Bart.
 Bought of Robt Sapp the 16th Aug 1746
 31 Small Lead Figures and the stone Plinthes to Ditto, 12 larger Lead Figures and the Stone Pedestals to Ditto, A large Garden Ladder, 18 or 19 Garden Chairs, 10 Small looking Glass Plates in a frame, 11 large Wainscot Sashes, 2 smaller Sashes with also the Oak Cells? to Header and all the old Sashes, 9 Stone Flower Potts, 4 Lead Flower Potts, & 2 small Lead Urns, all the Old Stone and Pedestals & 2 Portland Stone Blocks and all the Stone ?rowlers not less than six in number.

Memorandum [garden ornaments]

I do agree to sell the Honble Sr Francis Dashwood Bart. all the Goods as Specify'd above for the Sum of One Hundred and Twenty Pounds the said Sr Francis Dashwood oblidging himself to remove all the above goods from the Seat late of the Baroness of Wentworth as soon as conveniently he can as Witness my hand this 18th day of August 1746.
 £120.0.0 Signed Sapp and Dashwood'
 On reverse 'acct of things bought at Bradenham'

From Thomas Phillibrown's diary, 5 Sept 1750 to 21 July 1758
 [seemingly like us today a regular visitor]

Thursday, 5th October, 1752

'... In the afternoon about 4 o'clock by Mr. Simkin's persuasion, we rode to West Wickham (which is 2 miles distant on the road to Oxford) to take a view of Sir Francis Dashwood's seat, which is exceedingly fine and pleasantly situated and from the road you have a charming view of a large piece of water which he caused to be made, also his walks, alcoves, canals, parks, etc. on the large piece of water are several vessels, the largest of which is called a Snow, is completely rigged and carries several brass guns. There is a sailor whom Sir Francis always keeps to live on board the Snow and keeps it in order. There is also another smaller 2 mast vessel, a little in the Venetian manner, also a 1 mast vessel like a sloop and also a barge which little Fleet makes a beautiful appearance.

'There were also a great number of wild ducks and several swans. We rode up the hill on the right hand just without the town to the church which is very steep but yields a delightful prospect.

'With some difficulty and a little fear, we at last arrived at the Church which is situated on a very high chalk hill, the Tower of which Church Sir Francis has (at his own expense) for the sake of a prospect to his House and Gardens, raised to twice the height it was before and on the top of the said tower is building a spire of timber, on the top of which is built of wood a very large hollow globe, the diameter of which is 8 feet and the outside of it is to be covered with gilt. We just went within the Church and up as high as the bell loft but had not courage to ascend higher. There are also to be, at Sir Francis's expense, a new flight of

stairs, quite from the bottom of the church up to the new tower and from the gallery of the tower steps to ascend into the globe. Above the globe is to be a flag-staff which is to go through the centre of it.

'The church appears in the inside very poor and weak but at a distance we observed 3 monuments, two of which we are informed belong to Sir Francis Dashwood's family.

'... After entertaining ourselves with a delightful view of the country around Sir Francis Park, Gardens, Waters etc., from the church hill, we descended our lofty eminence from an easier descent than we ascended and by leading our horses down the precipice, arrived safe, just at the entrance of the town and remounting our steeds, returned back to High Wycombe very well pleased with our little excursion.

Sir Francis is also making thro' his own ground, a good broad road by the side of his park to High Wycombe and the old road which is low, narrow, washy way, he intends to take in to his own Park. The Commissioners of the roads for this piece of publick service are to allow £10 per annum for 3 years though 'tis said twill cost him £100 to finish it and was it not for the stupid obstinacy of an ill natured old woman, who would not part with a piece of her field on any terms (to complete so useful a work) Sir Francis would have widened and made good half the road from W. to High Wycombe.

'Sir Francis has a very great character both at High and West Wycombe for a very public spirited and generous man.'

Wednesday, Oct. 23rd, 1754

'... After dinner, Miss Simkins, my Bro and sister in ye chariot and Mr. Richardson and self of horseback, all went to see Sir Francis Dashwood's Gardens at West Wickham. They are very pleasant and in which are green houses with exotiks and alcoves and temples decorated with statues, paintings, etc. We saw many pheasants in a place kept on purpose for their breeding.

On ye Grand Canal are great numbers of wild ducks and in it great quantities of fish; and in a bason of water facing ye greenhouse are great numbers of gold and silver fish from India. In ye Grand Canal are various vessels, one of which is a Snow, Burthen about 60 Tun; it is completely rigg'd and carries several brass carriage guns which were taken out of a French Privateer and a sailor constantly is kept who lives aboard this snow to keep it in proper order; we all went on board it and there is a neat pretty cabin, fore-castle or cork room and both under decks and outside is neatly painted and everything in missalure and quite pretty order and well worth seeing. There are also about three other vessels of various forms, a barge and boats which little fleet afford an agreeable prospect. There are also swans on ye canal to add to ye beauty. We were told by ye sailor at one time a battery of guns in form of a fort was erected on ye side of ye canal in order to make a sham-fight between it and ye little fleet but in ye engagement a Capt. who commanded ye Snow coming to near ye battery, received damage from ye wadding of a gun which occasion'd him to spit blood and so put an end to ye battle.

In a pasture adjoining we saw several Greenland horses. They are of an exceeding small size of a nasty black or brownish colour, very long tails and mains and their fore-tops so great a length they almost hide their eyes and with their long shagged coats and rusty colour make an appearance not unlike the bears.

In short, the vast quantity of water with ye various vessels thereon, ye fine walks, the Temple of Venus, ye Alcoves with ye paintings and other ornaments with ye various decorations

and embellishments of nature and art and I may truly say ye luxuriance of nature in affording such a delightful country around, interspers'd with fine beach-woods, form a scene truly charming and worth the observation of every traveller.

After our review, my brother, sister and Miss Simkins went to ye neighbouring inn (where we had put up ye chariot and horses) to refresh. Tea etc. and while Mr. Richardson and I went up the steep hill to West Wickham Church which commands a prospect over Sir Francis Dashwood's House and Gardens and the country adjacent which tho' not so very extensive, occasion'd by surrounding hills, yet for ye diversity of hills and valleys, ye various fine strait beach-woods, ye various colours and divisions of ye arable ground, makes it quite enchanting and for only a land-prospect and a home prospect it is so exquisitely fine and beautiful as the great Poet Pope says,

All fancy is too mean

He can only conceive it, who has seen.

Mr. Richardson was so highly delighted with ye prospect from W. Wickham church hill which far exceeded anything he ever saw and said he thought it worth while to come from London on purpose to behold it. After having thus feasted our eyes, we return'd to ye Inn to our company and then set out for Mr. Bray Simkins's at High Wickham where we supped about 8 o'clock.'

Thursday, 20th July, 1758

'... At 3 o'clock we set off for West Wickham 2 miles from High Wickham. Miss Brickwell, sister Phill, Richardson and his wife in the coach. Bro. and I walked it. We put up at ye George at West Wickham and from thence walked to Sir Francis Dashwood's, but Sir Francis being engaged, we could not then obtain leave to see ye gardens.

We then walked up West Wickham hill to ye church where is a most delightful prospect all over Sir Francis's Gardens and ye country round about. We went up ye steeple into the bellfery and quite up to ye new part of it built by Sir Francis; on the front of which facing his house are cut in very large letters and blacked ye word

MEMENTO

Mr. Richardson went up ye ladder and out on ye leads of ye steeple, to view ye going up into ye great ball (see ye size of it page 73). I afterwards took courage and went up quite round the leads tho with great fear and trembling for the grand height makes it quite shocking. We neither of us had courage to enter the ball which is considerably higher from the leads of the steeple; ye going up is on the outside of a wooden spire with clamps of wood nailed like a ships side and ye ropes to take hold of it and a part of ye ball lifts up into which you can enter. We heard after that our coachman went into it. It is very large and computed to hold 20 persons; there is a table in ye middle, seats around it and windows at top. Sir Francis with 12 or 13 of his friends has been up in ye ball at one time and drank punch there.

There used to be a flag-staff above ye ball but it rotted so very fast that it is now taken down and the workmen told us that Sir Francis proposes to have instead of it, on ye top of ye ball, the images of our saviour with the devil tempting him.

After we had satisfied our curiosity and as we came down, we went into the bell loft and with my stick sounded 6 bells, we came quite down stairs and just that very instant, Sir Francis's footman met us at ye church door who had spoke to the Lady Dashwood and she had given leave for us to be admitted into ye house and gardens, but we thinking our time rather too far gone, declined it and we returned to our Inn at ye George. ...

VIRTUES, ANCIENT AND MODERN —
The Elysian Fields at Stowe by Richard Wheeler



National Trust

The iconography of William Kent's Elysian Fields has been well rehearsed by many authors over the last half century, and it is only with a re-reading of the descriptions by the Swedish engineer, Fredrik Magnus Piper who visited in 1779 that anything substantive can be added.

His work has recently been brought together by John Harris and Magnus Olausson¹, and within Piper's text written in 1811 and 1812 for the 'Idea and General Plan for an English Park' are some startling revelations about the Elysian Fields. His text reads (in translation):

'... on a hill, before one reaches the Temple of Honour, a similar one has been erected to Virtue, but this cannot be reached until you have crossed over a weak and apparently hazardously placed Bridge, and thereafter have pushed your way forward and more or less crawled up a steep, uneven and somewhat difficult footpath. In the latter Temple, there are four Statues, representing Socrates, Lycurgus, Epaminondas and a Philosophical Poet. A short distance away, you notice the overthrown Statue of Louis XIV (right), with broken off legs and arms beside his trophies and pedestal and with the name and inscription on it partly obliterated, as the designer's concept of a suitable Monument to false honour, since it is based only upon the lamentation of so many mortals and the accidents that accompany war...'



William Kent's commission of a garden of Virtue had followed close behind his depressing exposition of Stowe's path of Vice, and centred upon the Elysian Fields. Here, the decision was made not to try and formalise an intrinsically informal piece of landscape. The topography of this secret valley below the old parish church, was accepted as it was and embellished with an essay in morality taken straight from the pages of the *Tatler*. This magazine was not then what it is now. The article was an allegory by Joseph Addison, published in January 1709

describing temples of Honour, Virtue, and Vanity in Elysium, the heaven of the Ancients. To Cobham and his nephews, this, together with Addison's later essay on the Choice of Hercules, fitted perfectly with this new iconography of the garden: a choice between Vice and Virtue.

Just as in the Addison essay therefore, the entrance to the garden lay along

'A great road... terminated by the Temple of Virtue.'

At Stowe this was the Great Cross Walk, running from Lee's Bastion, and bounding the parterre, before terminating in the trees beside the old church, at Kent's Temple of Ancient Virtue (left). This building was designed to remind the visitor of the celebrated Temple of Vesta at Tivoli and was inhabited by the four moral exemplars of the ancient world, Homer, Socrates, Epaminondas and Lycurgus, as described by Piper. In Addison's essay this temple obscured the view to the Temple of Honour, so at Stowe the equivalent Temple of the British Worthies was set across the river and only came into view as one passed Ancient Virtue, and looked down into the valley. Finally Addison described his Temple of Vanity,

'... filled with hypocrites, pedants, freethinkers, and prating politicians; with a rabble of those who have only titles to make them great men.'



At Stowe, Vanity was represented by the Temple of Modern Virtue (above), as the modern antithesis to the Virtue of the ancients. Intentionally built as a ruin, it contrasted the ruinous state of Virtue in modern times, with Ancient Virtue, which, despite its design origins in the ruined Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, was, and is, an entire building.

Modern Virtue was adorned, at least until 1769, with a statue of a headless trunk, unnamed by the succession of guidebooks produced by Benton Seeley from 1744 onwards.

Even William Gilpin, in his Dialogue, has Polyphthon saying of Modern Virtue:

'... I can see nothing here to let me into its design, except this old gentleman; neither can I find anything extraordinary in him except that he has met with a fate that he is entirely undeserving of, which is more than falls to the share of every worthless fellow.'

Callophilus replies:

'Have you observed how the statue is decorated?'

To which Polyphthon responds:

'O! I see the whole design: A very elegant piece of satire, upon my word!'

However elegant the satire, Gilpin leaves his reader to understand what, to them both, was obvious. But no eighteenth century English visitor appears to have been bold enough to express his thoughts in print, and it was left to this Swedish engineer, Fredrik Magnus Piper, to state the obvious, and identify the



statue as the vanquished absolutist monarch, King Louis XIV. This notion once expressed is indeed obvious, and follows the equally triumphalist expression by the Duke of Marlborough, Cobham's commanding officer, at Blenheim, with Louis XIV's larger than life bust over the South Front of the Palace (above).

Stowe historians of the twentieth century, led by George Clarke, have taken the view that the statue was a squib against Sir Robert Walpole, following Cobham's split from the government in 1733, and this is reinforced by Horace Walpole's antipathy towards the place when he ridiculed the idea of '... planting a satire...' But perhaps there is more than a grain of truth in their hypothesis. The eighteenth century man of letters started at the beginning. Established iconography of the time would have seen the statue as a reference to the fate that befalls



all seekers after fame; beginning with the headless torso of King Priam in the Aeneid². And whilst the Roman reader of Virgil's time might have taken this as a reference to Pompey, the Stowe visitor would have made a similar comparison and whilst the outward and visible target was Louis XIV, the sub-text would have suggested an equally eligible candidate — the Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole (left).

The pursuit of Fame is, and was, a treacherous business and the proper path to tread was expounded by one of Cobham's nephews, George Lyttelton of Hagley:

'Do good by stealth and blush to call it fame...', and rather satisfyingly the paths from Stowe's Temple of Honour, or British Worthies has two paths over the River Styx, and into Elysium. The first is that described by Piper, over the Shell Bridge, where the pathway itself is nearly overwhelmed by the water pouring through from the upper part of the river, and then takes a steep and tortuous route up the hillside to the Temple of Ancient Virtue.



The alternative route, crossing the river below the British Worthies, is a straight and easy path, that appears to be leading to Ancient Virtue. But it is not. At the last minute the visitor found that he had arrived at Modern Virtue with the headless torso, and Ancient Virtue had disappeared behind the bushes.

So the one route, the difficult and steep path, led to true Virtue



and Fame, whilst the easy path led to false glories and eventual failure. [On the plan above, **m** is the British Worthies, **w** the Shell Bridge, and **q** Ancient and Modern Virtue.]

This idea of the difficult path to fame was exemplified at Stourhead with the painting by Carlo Maratta of Apollo

(right) pointing the path of Fame to the Marquese Pallavinci. Whilst the picture is in the house, the landscape equivalent can be seen with Henry Hoare's Temple of Apollo on the hill to the east of the gardens, with an appropriately steep and rocky path to it. The comparison with Stowe is nicely expressed in the proper title of the painting: *Il tempo di vertu*.



Notes

¹ *Description of the Idea and General-Plan for an English Park written during the years 1811 and 1812 by Fredrik Magnus Piper, John Harris and Magnus Olausson.* Stockholm 2004. Available in the UK through Mike Park Ltd, 351 Sutton Common Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM3 9HZ

Tel: 020 8641 7796

Fax: 020 8641 3330

email: mikeparkbooks@aol.com

² This understanding of the relevance of the headless torso comes as a result of work by Dr Susan Gordon, now working on the UK Parks and Gardens Database.

SOME 'NEW' CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS OF STOWE

from Michael Cousins

During my researches, I have spent many hours, nay, months, going through travel journals and diaries. The following are extracts from two of them that relate to Stowe (both journals, incidentally, have been transcribed in their entirety). The writers' original pagination, spelling and strikes through have been retained throughout [to aid readability I have changed the authors' underlining into bold print in this publication, Ed.].

The first account is that recorded by [Sir] John Parnell (1745–1801) during his first visit to England made in the years 1762 to 1763. It is anecdotal in nature, but provides useful information on the Pyramid, St Augustine's Cave and the Castle. The Captain was clearly a distant relation of the Temple family, as was Sir James (note: James and John were occasionally used interchangeably), but no attempt has been made to trace this line of descent.

Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.,

M.a.11, pp. 132–40

Friday thru' Sunday sometime at the end of June,
or July 1763

Stow Gardens Make a most Noble Appearance as you approach them from Buckingham, you see their Side and in it such a Multiplicity [sic] of Buildings that they seem a fine town with nothing Apparent, from tall trees in it, but the Public Buildings, Pretty much as Oxford looks, this, when you recollect they belong to one Man carries with it a Vast Idea of Magnificence to speak my mind However freely this is the most Advantagious [sic] light we can Put Stow in. for cost and indeed Beauty within themselves they are very great, but whether not too highly Adorn'd with Buildings to Please a truly rural Genius, and at the same time too defective in Natural Beauties to have been any thing, without this Immense Labour, is a Point that will bear Dispute tho I think hardly to be decided in their favour. It is an observation of a Man of Taste, (Who I can not say) that it is Better to live on a Barren Hill with a View of a rich Valley than in the rich Vale where you can see little but the Barren hill, this we may Aply to Stow very well, the Vast cultivation & Expence bestowd on these Improvements has renderd them certainly very charming but when In them, Except You look from one ornamental Building to another, your Eye can turn no where that the sirrounding country does not Displace you, a naked flat in most Places, this gives the Improvements a lustre like a foil to a Diamond but at the same time shews that Nature has little merit in their Beauty and when she does not act at least the Principle Part, Art must Play very well indeed, to **Please**

Considering the time they were Laid out L^d Cobham has Discovered an amazing taste for Improvement they certainly Shone Long Unrivall'd, but since that taste has Extended itself more universally it has light on more favourable spots to Improve & thus Many Copies have Exceeded their original, As I before observd Stow appears best when without the Improvements, then Indeed you think A little Paradise is within the Ha' ha' as D^r Cotton makes it.

"It Puzzles much the sage's Brains

"Where Eden stood of Yore

"Some Place it in Arabia's Plains

"Some Say, it is no more

"But Cobham can these tales confute

"as All the curious Know

"for he has prov'd beyond Dispute

*"That Paradise is **Stow***

An Italian gentleman who saw it some time ago was not quite so much taken with it He said he could compare it to Nothing but a Stone quarry above ground — and I must confess I think the Buildings too many and mostly heavy for a Rural Improvement but to give them Due Praise some are Exceeding fine Particularly the Temple to Concord & Victory. As there is a Pretty Large Pamplet [sic] containing a Description of the sev'ral Temples &c with Neat cutts I shall say nothing of them Particularly but Refer my Reader to that in w^{ch} too he will find the House Described, one of the most Extensive fronts, and the Newest Richly furnishd House in England Especialy a Gallery of seventy feet in lenth, a Dressing Room, and Bedchamber, Just finishd at the Inside, in a most costly and yet Elegant taste

Lord Temple was at In [sic] the country but very Politely Removed from the Part of the gardens he saw us in that we might see them more freely M^r Pit was with him Enjoying a little Ease after the Winter's feirce combats in the House of Commons, M^r Temple left us and Joind My L^d who I found was a Relation of his but the Captain Kept with us to my great satisfaction, as his observations were truly great, We Passd by a fine Peice of Water which Cⁿ Temple Examined sometime and then came up to me, with an Air of vast Satisfaction, observing that the water was very Beautifull Indeed for it was deep Enow to Carry a Man of Warr at Nip tides Not long After we came to a Pyramid Built with Hewn Stone in Set offs Each row of the work; what can that be for says one? Why (Replies the Captain) to be sure that a man may go aloft and take an Observation



S^t Augustines cave brought the Part between Decks of a Man of War into his Head but he observd the Port holes were too small and great Danger of the Splinters, thus Ev'ry thing that occurd was turnd to some Naval Purpose, which the Honest Captain was as happy in finding out as a Mathematician could

be in a Prospect of Hitting the Longitude, The Deer Park which Many who see the gardens do not know is worth viewing is really a fine one and in the Prettiest Part of the Country well stockd with Deer. but I must say one animal was too Plenty there I mean Pigs which were actually on the graveld Part before the front of the House We returnd to our Inne at Buckingham against Supper well Entertaind I must Say tho not a little tired, After Supper I observd Captain Temple often Mentiond the word S^r James this at first I could not Understand but on farther Enquiry I found that our outside Passenger was Actually a S^r James Temple a Descendant of an Elder Branch of L^d Cobhams family his father Provoked at the Estates being left to the grenvilles quitted England for some of the American settlements as I thought the thing thro the whole was someWhat Extraordinary I have taken more Notice it than I generally do in any family Matter but to return to ourselves, we Disliked the Country round L^d Temples so much that we Determin'd to leave it as soon as We had made ourselves thoroughly acquainted with Stow, to which End we spent the Day following in the Park and the next (Sunday) in the gardens where the Parish church is, and as the country people behave Perfectly Decent and do the gardens no harm they are Permitted to range thro' them as long as the Please all Sunday Which had a Pretty Appearance and Enliven'd the Scene — before I leave Buckingham I must confute a Notion Pretty Prevalent in Ireland that thatchd Houses are uncommon in England So far from it I was never in any Part that had not some thatchd, but here Particularly from an old Mound calld the castle — I Affirm I saw ten thatchd in the town of Buckingham for one coverd any other way —

another thing in my Journey thro' this Shire I thought worth Remarking that sevrul Houses were all coverd at the outside wth spots of Dirt as it Appeard about the size of a Plate on Enquiry I found it was Cow dung thus dashd against the wall to dry in order to Burn it the Better, this was a kind of firing I have heard is used in Fingall in Ireland, but never saw it Burnd before.

The visit of Peter Oliver (1713–91), recorded in his journal, took place from 1 to 2 October 1777. This account is particularly useful as it covers numerous features now lost, and more importantly provides important dating evidence. Oliver relates that Vanbrugh's relocated Pyramid was, at this time, being taken down, and he also records the poor condition of other buildings within the park: the Hermitage, the Artificial Ruins, St Augustine's Cave. That he mentions the Cold Bath in the former Temple of Contemplation, shows that it was still in existence in 1777, even if it no longer featured on maps, as was The Temple of Modern Virtue, which is described in wonderful detail.

Oliver is not so well known, he was born in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. A member of one of Boston's first social and political families, he graduated from Harvard in 1730, and served as a common pleas and superior court judge for 24 years, becoming chief justice of the superior court in 1771. He moved to Plymouth County, MA, in 1774, where he established an ironworks and built Oliver Hall. A prominent Loyalist, he left Boston with the British forces in 1776 and then lived in Birmingham, England, until his death.

BL Egerton 2673, pp. 506–22
1st & 2nd October 1777

A Tour to **Stow Gardens**, the Seat of Lord **Temple** at Stow near to Buckingham, in Company with William Shirley Hutchinson Esq.^r

October. 1.st

We left **Aylesbury** about 12 o'clock in the Rain, & in 3½ Miles reach'd **Hardwick** then 1 Miles to **Whitchurch**, no considerable Village; & then 5½ Miles to **Winslow**, a Market Town, but dirty: then to **Padbury** a small Place, 4 Miles further, & so to **Buckingham**, 2¼ Miles, which is the Shire Town & large; tho' y.^e Buildings are ancient & the Streets narrow and dirty. A few Miles after we left **Aylesbury** we met with excellent bad Roads & dangerous from the many deep Ruts, w.^{ch} held several Miles; but our Driver steered us clear of Danger: — We did not stop at **Buckingham**, but just out of the Town we struck into **Stow Road**, w.^{ch} was thro' several Gates, but strait and smooth: when we approached, the Hills & Valleys entertained with the Appearance & Disappearance of **Lord Temple's House** at a Distance; one Minute a Hill threw a Part of it into View & almost gratifying our Expectation, when a Valley would tantalize us by snatching away the Prospect: this Observation is worthy any Person's Notice, who may travel this Road with a Design to see **Stow Gardens**.

In about 1½ Mile from **Buckingham**, we reached **Stow Inn, Hodginson's**, where we housed for the Night, & tolerably well.

[October.] 2.^[nd]

In the Morning we stept out of our Inn to compleat our View of the most elegant Gardens in **Great Britain**, & which have been so highly celebrated by some of the greatest Poets & best Writers of the Nation.

To give a particular Detail of the Beauties of this Seat of Luxuriance in Taste, is too arduous a Task for a Spectator, who hath had but a few Hours of Observation: the whole hath been already done by those who have had not only Taste but Time to describe them minutely — a very descriptive Account is given in a Book, entitled *Stowe*; a **Description &c.**^{ca}, where the House, Gardens & all their Objects are well engraved & convey a compleat Idea of the whole. — A general Description is this — We descended from the Inn into a Vale, which was bounded by a Range of tall Trees & Shrubs, thro' which the House would hurry on our Expectation to a full View; & it being a wet & miry passage, after so great Rains, we now & then plunged into Mire, with Eagerness to reach our Goal. When we came to the Gate, we were admitted & entered between two elegant Pavilions, when the grand Building burst upon us in all its Glory, in full Front to the South.

The Pavilions stand on y.^e Edge of a Gravel Terrace Walk of considerable Width & 300 Feet long: between them the House is in Front, with a fine Lawn before it, with an easy Ascent, & of a proper Distance down to the Lake, & opposite to the Pavilions — here you see the Lake just before you, of about 10 Acres, abounding with Fish of many Sorts; & by throwing your Eye to the Right, the two Rivers open upon you in divided Streams, & uniting in the Lake.

The Garden contains ab.^t 400 acres, & is interspersed with about 40 Objects, of Obelisks, Pillars, Temples, Rotundas, Bridges, Gateways &c.^{ca}: y.^e Groves, Clumps of trees, Pieces of Water &c.^{ca} are most judiciously disposed, so as to catch the Taste of every Spectator.

We past on to the left till we met with the **Shepherds Cave**, [The Hermitage] immerged in a Wood, with the Lake opening to it. Not far from it, is an artificial Ruin of a **Temple** of two River Gods covered with Evergreens; but the Ruin it self seemed to be in Ruins, & makes a prettier Object on Paper than it does in **Stow**

Gardens. We passed on to the Temple of **Venus**, to the Statue of Queen **Caroline** erected on four Ionick Columns; then to the Pyramid erected to y.^e Memory of S.^t John Vanbrugh: — this Pyramid was 60 Feet high, & must have been a striking Object; but Lord **Temple** is now demolishing it, in order, it is said, to erect some other Object in its Place: if Pyramids are demolish'd either by Art or Nature, all other Monuments must surely veil to the same rigid Laws: an Inscription within seemed to be prophetick, even of the Pyramid it self; it was wrote in Latin & was thus translated, viz.¹

*“With Pleasure surfeited, advanc’d in Age,
 “Retire in Time from Life’s fantastick Stage.
 “Lest Youth the great Indecency contemn,
 “And hiss the[e] from a Scene design’d for them.”
 [Lufisti satis edisti satis, atque bibsti.
 Tempus abire tibi est; ne potum largius æque
 Rideat & pulset lasciva decentius ætas
 Horace]*



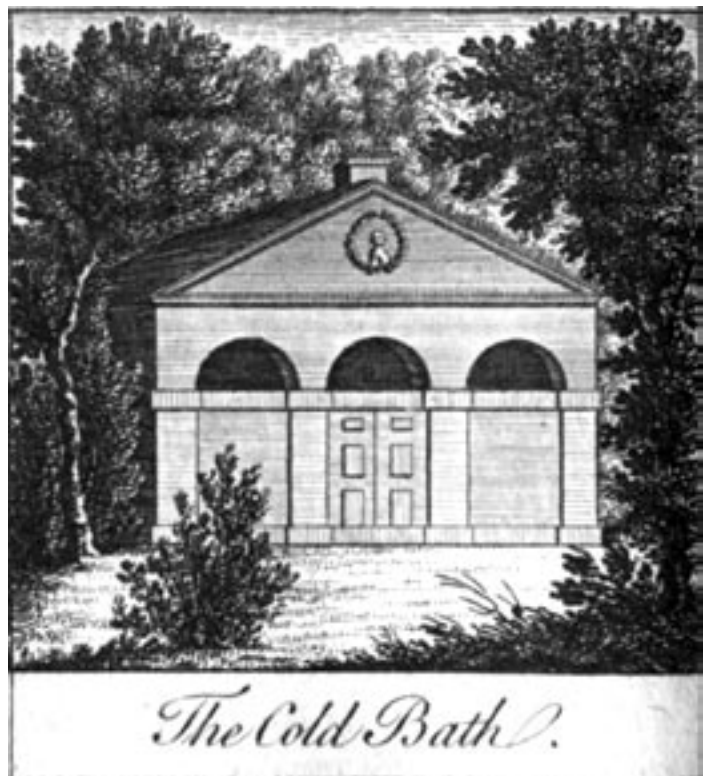
We went on to S.^t **Augustine’s Cave**, which is a Call formed of Moss & Roots of Trees: it is in a Thicket with a Straw Couch & wooden Chair, with Inscriptions over three Window Holes — this Cave is also suffered to be in Ruins; the Couch & Chair demolished, & the Inscriptions on Boards laying at the Door. — We Went on to the Temple of **Bacchus**, & to **Nelson’s Seat**; till we arrived at the House; at the back Front of a which we saw at a Distance, in the Park, the equestrian Statue of **King George 1.st**, in Armour; as also, nearer in the Park, an Obelisk 100 Feet high, erected to the Memory of Major **Gen.¹ Wolfe**. — We then went into the House, part of which was in Alteration, but we saw Rooms enough to give us an Idea of the **Grand**; — the State Bed Chamber was very elegant: some of the Rooms were hung with very fine Tapestry, the Expression of which was fresh, rich & strong — here were some very good Pictures; but this Part of Taste is much excelled in many of the Seats of the Nobility.

You ascend by about 30 Steps to the South Front; before which is a Pillar, in the Top of which is a Statue of **George 2^d**, & from these Steps you have a pretty View of the Gardens & the fine

sloping Parterre down to the 10 Acre Piece of Water, in which were Swans swimming majestically: — we now left the House & turned to the East on the left, & descended to the **Temple of ancient Virtue**, with y.^e Statue of **Lycurgus, Socrates, Homer & Epaminonos**, with Inscriptions; it is a very handsome Building & in Repair: — but not very far from it is a Ruin of the Temples of **modern Virtue**; it is a perfect Ruin, with the Pieces of a Statues scattered about the Head, with a huge curled Wig, lying one Way & the Arms, Legs & Bodies spread other Ways: this Object is curious; but if one was to compare the Principles of ancient & modern Virtue accurately; perhaps there would not be so real a Disparity between them: in the more luxurious modern Times, when Money is the one Thing necessary to support Extravagance modern Virtue may be ascribed without that which there is no living without; whereas in the more simple State of antient Frugality, when Luxury was held in Contempt, the Love of Fame, high soaring Ambition, Revenge & several other of the Vexatious Passions were of equal Force to cultivate what is called, **Love of ones Country**, & to eradicate it also; as Avarice **now** to buy & to sell it too. Human Nature is & hath been always the same; & there are wanting Instances of antient Heroes who overrating their own Merits, have, from disappointed Ambition, quitted their Attachment to their Country & plunged the Dagger into her Bowels by joining with her Enemies ~

Cap.¹ **Thomas Grenville’s** Monument is a Naval Column; it is high & ornamented on its Sides with the Beaks of Vessels; it hath a pretty Effect.

The **Ladys Temple** is very pretty, on one Part is a Painting, of Ladies employed in Needle & Shellwork; & on another Wall, Ladies diverting themselves with Musick & Painting.



The **cold Bath** is very clever, but the **Grotto** is vastly pleasing; it stands in a Valley with a Pavilion on each Side supported, each, by 4 Pillars. One of the covered with Shell Work & the other with Pebbles & Flints: the Pillars of one are twisted & appear as if the whole was tumbling; but the Centre of Gravity, in them, so exactly coincides with the Centre of the Base y.¹ they are quite Firm. — The Inside of the Grotto is furnished with looking

Glasses set in the Walls with Shells & Flints around; & there is an Apartment on each Side adjoining: it fronts a serpentine Piece of Water, called the Stygian Lake, which is fringed on each Side with Trees, whose Shade casts a Gloom on the Water, & the Leaves are suffered to lye at the Bottom, which together with the Shade, causes the River to look quite black. The Owner some time entertains his Friends here in a Summer Evening, when the Grotto & y.^e Trees are hung with lighted Lamps, which surely must have a most brilliant & joyous Effect; even in the Noon Day it appears a delightfull Seat of Contemplation. — This continued on & below; on each Side, are gently sloping Banks, interspersed w.th Trees, called the **Elysian Fields**, which are highly picturesque.

Not far from hence is **Lord Cobham's** Pillar, 100 feet high: it is fluted, & hath a winding Pair of Stairs within to ascend to the Top, from whence is a good Prospect.

Further on is the **gothick Temple**, which throws around a pleasing solemn Effect. It is built with a reddish Stone, & the Stone so picked from the Quarry & in a mouldring State as to render the whole of an antique Cast. It is 70 Feet high & stands on rising Ground: the Inside is ornamented with gothick carving & painted Glass: above the lower Floor is a Gallery around, & little Apartments in the Angles of the Stone Work; & from the Top you have a good View of the Gardens & of the Country around: you also, from hence, see the Castle at a Distance, which looks quite romantick; but tho' externally so, yet y.^e inside is a Farm House.

The **Palladian** Bridge, the **Temple of Concord & Victory**, the **Temple of the British Worthies**, & the **Temple of Friendship**, all which were worthy of Attention: in the latter were Busts of **Lord Cobham's** Friends, together with his own Bust; beginning w.th **Frederick** late **Prince of Wales** — I observed, that at each End of each Name on the Busts was the periodick Dot, except **M.^r Pitt's**, which was indented with a Heart; I suppose by Design, as his best Friend; if so, it is a Pity that the Heart had not been projecting from the Bust, for as it is, it is too emblematical of a certain Hollowness w.^{ch} is not characteristick of an amiable Man: if it was indented when **M.^r Pitt** triumphed in popularity, how much deeper ought it to be sunk now, when **Lord Chatham** is dropped into Contempt by his convincing the World that he never had any Heart at all.

After our Range through the Gardens, where every Step discovers so many Beauties; where, as soon as you reach one Object, the Eye is caught by surrounding & distant other Objects; where one Clump of Trees introduces your Eye to another Groupe; where every Walk is terminated by a Piece of Water, an Obelisk, a Lawn, a Pillar or some other agreeable Object; after all this Entertainment we retired, having had a View of the



most finished Gardens, as Gardens, perhaps in **England**; & it is worth a Travellers Remembrance that **Stow Gardens** ought to be the last Object of his View in this Kind, for altho' there are many other delightfull Seats in the Kingdom, yet this exceeds them all in Taste & Elegance — but, as if Perfection of any Kind is not attainable in this Life, so there is Prospect wanting from this Seat, & altho; from some Situations in it a Spectator may view Distance it self; yet that Distance doth not circumscribe the **Grand** of Nature & Art as many other Situations do — besides, as some of the Objects in these Gardens are verging upon Decay, surely then, when Pillars & Pyramids moulder, the Spectator may reflect that he himself will moulder & fade away like the baseless Fabrick of a Vision. — One Building a Spectator cannot but see upon his Approach, in the Road from **Buckingham**, which is the **Corinthian Arch** which is his Lordships Entrance into the Gardens: it is magnificent, & is the Prelude of your Expectations, & when you leave the Arch upon your Return, it seems to tell you, that your Expectations are not disappointed. — I till take 4 or 5 Hours for a Cursory View of this Paradise, without Satiety, & such a View is but a Stimulus to another Visit.

About 4 or 5 o'clock we left Stow & went to **Aylesbury** about 16 Miles, and were again politely entertained at S.^r **Francis Barnards**, where we lodges.

Note

Illustrations in Wheeler & Cousins, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the BGT's collection of Stowe guidebooks
 Temple of Modern Virtue: Bickham 1750
 Plan: Seeley 1773
 An Egyptian Pyramid: Seeley 1763
 St Augustine's Cave, The Cold Bath & The Gothic Temple: Seeley 1773

NOTES FROM STOWE

Despite my pessimism in the autumn 2005 edition, Stowe has continued to look good and progress is still being made. You may well notice that some areas do not receive the same attention that they did two or three years ago but by carefully deciding which parts of the garden receive regular maintenance, the average visitor does not notice anything amiss. Where possible the mowing regime now involves less frequent mowing and the cut grass is collected for composting. During the winter two new shrubberies have been created, one at the end of the Elysian Fields and the other near the Artificial Ruin. These should start to fill out in a year or two.

Other areas have had extra planting to strengthen their appearance and along the Grecian Valley some of the overgrown laurel has been cut right back to allow new growth and at the same time new plantings have been interspersed to break-up the monotony. Several drains have been installed to reduce wet sections of paths and more work is planned. Some essential tree surgery was undertaken during the winter but storm damage meant that clearing up fallen trees and branches had to take priority. The very wet winter left the ground extremely soft and in some cases work has been postponed because it was not possible to allow the necessary machinery onto the grass.

The programme encouraging visitors to buy bulbs for planting is already bearing fruit and the displays of early spring flowers: snowdrops, aconites and cyclamen have been a delight.

John Walton

LANGLEY PARK VISIT — a tour of a battlefield? 27 June, 2006

Little did I appreciate when I arrived at Langley Park that the date of my visit had been dictated by the military escapades of George II, the 3rd Duke of Marlborough and the French Duc de Noailles, 263 years previously on a battle ground in Bavaria. Warfare has shaped many of our public landscapes in a multitude of ways from officially designated Battle Grounds, to the surprising replica of the Battle of Thermopylae laid out in the churchyard at Kilwarin, County Down, through the sadly, countless number of twentieth-century War Memorials and the contributions of Gertrude Jekyll and Edward Lutyens amongst others, for the War Graves Commission. Private landscapes that reflect warfare include the eighteenth-century mock castle that stood atop a



John Phibbs and BGT members on the banks of 'Capability' Brown's lake at Langley, one of the key restorations in the HLF Lottery bid

military inspired star-shaped bastion at Wanstead House, Essex; the Swiss Cottage at Shrubland Park, Suffolk which housed relics of Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Nelson, and the Battle Garden at Holme Lacy, Herefordshire said by one eighteenth-century source to have been constructed in the manner of fortifications created by William III. Then there were imaginary battle gardens such as that which Tristram Shandy paraded around in the novel bearing his name by Laurence Stern. But it seems possible that the landscape at Langley Park is unique even amongst these strange gardens since Johnnie Phibbs (our guide at Langley Park) is suggesting that some of the oaks and water works may have been used to mimic the troop formations of the Battle of Dettingen which took place on 27 June 1743 as part of the hostilities in the War of Austrian Succession.

Johnnie Phibbs shared his research and thoughts on Langley Park's landscape with us on the 2006 anniversary of the battle. It is testament to the richness of this landscape that he could do no more than note features that would have been the centrepiece of other visits. So we scuttled past the remains of a sixteenth-century pleasance that may have provided a retreat for Elizabeth I riding out from Windsor and, the suggested Carolingian woodland garden of massive proportions and, the apparently hasty fashion in which the Park had been dismembered after the Civil War.

Johnnie explained that the 3rd Duke of Marlborough commissioned Stiff Leadbetter to construct the house we see today (the third house to be erected within the park) in the 1750 and 60s. Leadbetter's houses existed in spite of, rather than because of, their position in the landscape so making it impossible for Lancelot Brown to subsequently create the quality views from within the house that one would expect of him. Still Johnnie could single out Brown's creative touch in the combination of dark yews and lighter leaved London planes which deceived the viewer into believing the park was larger than it really was on the west front. He pointed out where Brown had deliberately brought a drove into view to animate the scene and how he had begun a tradition of planting trees on mounds which was so successful at Langley Park that it was still being adopted by nineteenth-century Head Gardeners.

Most surprising of all was Johnnie's interpretation of Brown's regular plantings of oaks separated by a lost water feature [a cascade leading from the Temple site?]. This represented the 3rd Duke's and Brown's 'Pragmatic Army' — the opposing armies of the 50,000 English, Austrian, Hanoverian and Hessian troops who defeated 70,000 Frenchmen on the banks of the River Main. They now await rescue from the silver birch now obscuring their ranks [the scavenging camp-followers after the battle?]. But it seems a fitting tribute that the achievements of a great general at a great battle should have been recorded by a great landscape improver rather than as a table top display of model soldiers. It seems as if Langley Park has as much to offer the student of military history as it does the student of garden history.

Jane Bradney

EVENING AT EYTHROPE PARK — a report 11 July, 2006

A tree-lined drive of over a mile heralded our keenly anticipated BGT visit to a garden not normally open to the public: Eythrope Park, a private estate of the Rothschild family. The estate lies below Waddesdon Manor but its seclusion and remoteness from local roads means that many are entirely unaware of it. For us, this imparted Eythrope with a particular fascination, and our tour didn't disappoint.

On a beautiful July evening we joined fellow BGT members and were welcomed by head gardener Sue Dickinson who guided us through parkland and specimen trees to The Pavilion, constructed in 1876 for Alice de Rothschild purely for daytime entertaining but subsequently enlarged so that it is now a residence for the present Lord Rothschild. The house looks down over sloping lawns, across which bronze dogs 'run', to the large lake formed by damming the Thame. Formal gardens below the house include a parterre planted in Victorian style with strident red pelargoniums and heliotrope 'Chatsworth' which, we were told has the best scent. Reminiscent of archive pictures of the house, naturalistic plantings of shrubs and herbaceous flowers, many also scented, grow against and up the walls of The Pavilion, complementing its romantic appearance.

A small residence in comparison with most of the other original Rothschild houses in the county, the surrounding gardens are similarly modest in scale but, as a house that the family still uses, much work has been done to develop plantings and make the most of its magical setting, a far cry from the hidden bustle of nearby Aylesbury.

Our tour then moved back across the park from the pleasure grounds to the magnificent walled gardens restored and designed by Mary Keene a decade ago. At the entrance is the stable and service block, including accommodation for the staff, built around a quadrangle in the English Normande style. We entered the gardens through a tunnel of trained pear trees under-planted with cleome to the immaculate vegetable area, as much a visual treat as any floral garden with stunningly healthy vegetables, productive peach house, gravel area with herbs and flowers, and olive trees in huge pots. Our guide was generous with information and advice (game keeper's net for cages: it lasts for years; builder's twine for tying: it doesn't stretch) and recommended vegetable varieties.

From here we wandered through avenue after avenue of cut flower beds backed by clipped hedges; everything imaginable grown in rotation to provide a constant supply for the house. Boxes of flowers and vegetables are sent on Mondays and Thursdays to the London home where the family spend the week; this amazing and beautiful garden is enjoyed only at weekends by the Rothschilds and their houseguests.



Ranges of beautiful sunken glasshouses (above) contained myriad pots of different types of plants; tomatoes, aubergines, ferns, flowering house plants, bulbs, all for the pleasure and entertainment of visitors, and no doubt to impress! Beyond were richly planted borders, lawns and mature trees, and ornamental ponds. Overwhelmed, we stopped for welcome and very fitting glasses of fizz.

Everything here is on the grand scale with more stock than most out-of-town garden centres. Eythrope is essentially the Rothschild's own greengrocer and florist with fresh flowers, vegetables and fruit supplying the London residences during the week and The Pavilion for parties and socialising at weekends. It's a way of life that all the major houses and estates in England followed before WWI and which has long since died out, but not here. Long may it continue.

Vanessa Wiggins & Peter Janaway

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT TO DROPMORE Thursday, 9 November

It was with some anticipation and excitement of the prospect ahead that we joined Bucks Gardens Trust Council members, a large number of locals and others for our private visit to the vast Dropmore estate. After some years at risk, this remarkable Grade I listed building, tragically partially destroyed by fire in the 1980s, and its internationally important Pinetum and garden, is at last undergoing comprehensive rebuilding and restoration.

We began our tour at the front of the huge house, now engulfed in scaffold and surrounded by the paraphernalia of this mammoth project to restore its fabric and reinstate those features surviving before the fire of designers Samuel Wyatt, Charles Heathcote Tatham and Detmar Blow & Ferdinand Billery. Led by enthusiastic project architect George Kalopedis, we made our way to Dropmore's grand south face, overlooking a great swathe of the 222-acre estate.

Although reduced to little more than a shell by the fire, Dropmore is once again taking shape with roof secured, floors replaced and ceilings reinstated, including specially made windows to Wyatt's original innovative designs. Although being converted to some 55 apartments, listed building consent states these must be removable should there one day be a demand for Dropmore to be returned to a single grand residence.

We moved on to the formal gardens, bounded by the long wall that supports Dropmore's magnificent and justly-famous trellis, now forlorn and devoid of plants, and the tired, but still very grand, iron aviary. All will be restored as part of the current project. Behind the wall, the Italianate garden with its overgrown hedges, grassed-over borders and crumbling masonry has an atmosphere of faded grandeur, giving a brief hint of what it must have been like in its heyday; serviced, no doubt, by an army of gardeners.

We gazed briefly at the loggia before moving to the internationally important Pinetum, remarkable for having been planted more or less continuously from the 1790s to the 1970s. Despite its obvious neglect it has lost none of its magnificence and the staggeringly tall trees looked particularly spectacular in the dazzling November sunshine. The generation that planted these wonderful specimens would not have seen them as grand as they are now and it is particularly fortunate that they were not lost in the big storms of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sadly the once-large lake has all but disappeared, the victim almost certainly of over-abstractation nearby.

We returned to the house past Tatham's charming Dairy pavilion and through the courtyard with its stables and service wing, destined also for conversion to dwellings with a swimming pool to be constructed beneath. One large group was taken inside the house for a close-up view of the works. We waited in the sunshine over welcome tea and cake before our own tour. As a much smaller group of only six, we were fortunate in being taken on to the roof which affords stunning views, illustrating

why Buckinghamshire politician Lord Grenville selected this site for his home in 1792. Although currently obscured by trees, Windsor is within view and only the occasional jet *en route* to Heathrow was any reminder of the proximity of built-up areas.

More progress tours are promised next year. Dropmore is a magical place and we hope we can see more of this vast undisturbed area next time, as well as observing progress on the

house and garden restoration. We were very pleased to have been invited and look forward to our return.

Peter Janaway & Vanessa Wiggins

*We should be able to organize future visits as it is intended to have regular open days as the site opens up, Ed. See **Bucks Gardener** 15, Summer 2002 for pictures.*

PHILIP COTTON, Head Gardener at Cliveden an appreciation by John Sales

Philip Cotton was an early member of both our Steering Group and Council and a founder Life Member of the Trust. Some members of the BGT will remember our very first Walk at Cliveden in 1998, led by Philip. Despite it raining for, perhaps, the first and last time on a visit 'in county', we had a tremendous day taking in the National Trust sculpture workshops and the broader landscape, we saw parts of the estate other groups have never reached. So much has happened at Cliveden since, particularly with the initiation of the new conservation plan, suggesting a rosy future there, that it is useful to be reminded by John Sales of the very different constraints that the Trust had to manage with for many years. We are grateful to John for permission to print this tribute.

I first met Philip Cotton in 1972 at Cliveden, known to all as a very important house and garden owned by the National Trust, formerly the home of the colourful Astor family.

I went to Cliveden with my predecessor as Chief Gardens Adviser of the NT because Philip was about to be promoted from Gardener to Head Gardener in charge of this huge garden, and park, alongside the Thames; 368 acres in all, with a gigantic formal parterre, topiary garden, rose garden, Japanese Water garden, flower borders, avenues, many fine trees and hanging woods. With a total staff of eight, probably a quarter of the pre-war numbers, this was a daunting challenge, but Philip was up for it and had all the talents and experience necessary; horticultural knowledge, practical skill, enthusiasm, vision and patience.

Although the property had been given to the Trust in 1942, it remained occupied by the Astor family until about 1970, when the Trust assumed direct management. Advised by my eminent predecessor Graham Stuart Thomas, who was author of many important books on garden plants and the care of gardens, Philip began the immense task for which he will be remembered professionally. The whole garden had become seriously run-down and unkempt, needing fundamental restoration and renewal in every part and every aspect. It was a shadow of its former glory and had lost much of its horticultural interest and detail.

For thirty years Philip devoted his life to this noble endeavour, methodically restoring, renovating, clearing, pruning, felling and replanting, also responding positively to the natural disasters like the great storms and droughts of the late 1980s and 1990s, when thousands of trees were lost. He had to adapt the garden to mass visiting, rising to well over 100,000 each year, with attendant car parking and other facilities, to incorporate then the conversion of the house into a very up-market hotel (£300+ per night for B&B!) with all the disruption that goes with massive wedding receptions and the demands of very well-heeled guests.

The garden has become immensely popular largely due to his efforts and those of his comparatively small team, which never rose above nine. It is a salutary point that the sum total of pleasure, relaxation and public benefit generated by Cliveden over thirty years probably exceeds that of many comparable, but more publicised, attractions, as well as having sustained an important part of our heritage.

For his first twenty years or so at Cliveden, Philip enjoyed the incomparable guidance of my predecessor Graham Thomas from whom he learned a lot. Graham was old fashioned, rather hierarchical in his attitude and was highly prescriptive in his advice. He was always 'Mr Thomas' to the head gardeners, but very significantly in the early 1980s he invited Philip to call him by his first name — the only case I can recall in his long career with the NT.

I followed as gardens adviser at Cliveden for about ten years, before I retired about three years before Philip. We had for years referred to Philip for his outstanding management skills which he accomplished through good organisation, and with patience, modesty and consideration. At every visit I would be handed a typewritten list of suggestions from gardeners, which he had requested, for our consideration and comment. This is a good example of his style, caring, thoughtful, consistent and well organised. In this way he brought the best out of his staff and was able equally to battle it out with colleagues at higher level, and excellent when dealing with the tenants at Cliveden.

He was highly and universally respected in the Trust where he assumed regional responsibility for assisting several smaller gardens, supervising and troubleshooting; notably at Dorneywood, the country house of the Deputy Prime Minister. He also became something of a father figure among his peer group, somebody for the younger head gardeners to emulate. Cliveden had become something of a training ground for promising young gardeners to gain horticultural and management experience. Several have gone on to become head gardeners in important gardens elsewhere and one is now an important figure in historic garden conservation in the U.S.A.

Philip was a quiet man, but determined as well as patient and we enjoyed an excellent relationship. He was always the perfect gentleman, a rare accomplishment these days.

For his work at Cliveden for the Trust, and for garden conservation generally, he was made an Associate of Honour of the R.H.S., a coveted award for outstanding service.

His lasting legacy was that he brought a great historic garden back from the brink of dereliction with minimum resources, but with great skill and determination. He helped write the garden's first long term Conservation Plan and implemented its first phase, laying down the foundations for future development now that the property has 'come into money' through a substantial new endowment.

It was a privilege to know him.

THE 'GARDENS FOR SCHOOLS' PROJECT

The 'Gardens for Schools' project progresses with our nine volunteers having made initial visits to the thirty-two schools who responded to the initial offer of help. Jeanne Bliss has been encouraging schools in the south of the county to prepare for the growing season. We are also grateful to the RHS group of the Horticulture Department of Aylesbury College for taking Bearbrook Combined School, in Aylesbury, as their particular project.

In addition one of our members, Mrs Barbara Edmondson, has generously offered her garden at Castle House in Buckingham as an out-door class-room for interested schools; Toni Clements who is one of our school volunteers and gardens professionally at Castle House, has also kindly agreed to introduce the excitements of gardening to any young potential gardeners!

We hope to have more 'growing' success to report in future issues of *The Bucks Gardener*.

Rosemary Jury

SIX GARDENS IN HIGH WYCOMBE

by Jeanne Bliss

An active schools programme to help primary and special schools to create their own gardens, even in pots and containers, or to maintain existing gardens, most schools are already involved in 'environmental' projects.

Following lunch in my garden on the edge of Port Meadow, Rosemary Jury suggested I join eight others. I know Rosemary would welcome additional helpers to continue her initial work in getting us all started. I was allocated some schools in High Wycombe, as I was born there. For over 70 years, my family lived at Priest Leys Farm near Lane End. My grandfather planned and planted the two-acre garden there in 1926.

"You do not need experience as a gardener", just common sense. On my first visit, I found it convenient to the school to meet the head, a member of the PTA and the project leader, with a second appointment exactly two weeks later, when some of the agreed objectives had already been programmed, with the question always being "Funding?"

As a member of the Trust, I felt responsible to try to introduce some historical background to the initial visit, by introducing architectural features into school grounds. The book *Maths in the Classroom* that I purchased from Berkeley Botanical Gardens last March was examined by the head at each school visited.

At The Disraeli School, I was asked to speak to groups of sixty pupils on 'Recycling'. Following this talk the Garden Club raised £60 at the School Fair from recycled presents, wrapping paper and oddments. Garden Club demonstrations and recycling sales will be held after school one weekday a month to provide funding for larger containers in two courtyards; the initial spurt of activity is encouraging. Two Rotarians will be participating in the 'Growing Gardens' project, once we obtain CRB Police Clearance!

An Outdoor Classroom (1)

"What to do with the space remaining after a redundant swimming pool removed?" At the first school I handed the head my A4 pad and he sketched a design for an Outdoor Classroom, to accompany "A Garden for the 5 senses" presented by his Project Leader, which had been on display boards in the school hall for some weeks. A large donation has already been allocated to this project, so it should be easier for the school to locate partnership funding.

An Outdoor Classroom (2)

At a second school, where there is a successful inner courtyard with pots and raised beds, organised by two enthusiastic members of staff, the Garden Club may extend their work on the new 'allotment' area for the first year, which would have a simplified parterre design, with knots encircling additional larger containers. The head made a sketch of the geometric shapes.

I suggested the school consider a three-year plan, with my help, to raise a major grant for an outdoor classroom facing the sports field. There is also scope for additional shrub and tree planting along one boundary.

If external funding is sought, assessors would need to look at the present standard of maintenance, and a maintenance programme. With this in mind, staff and PTA at three of the schools have each had two-hour pruning and tidying sessions.

An Outdoor Classroom (3)

"Turning ideas into action" with informal work parties, plant stalls and discussion groups. An initial large donation came from the school's catering company.

How can you help?

- Help is needed in making visits to record gardens and existing features.
- Help is needed in speaking to local Rotary, and other, Groups. Members of local horticultural societies or garden clubs are being linked to participating schools.
- Help is needed in linking local horticultural groups with schools projects.

The BGT has allocated a total of £200 to three schools in the High Wycombe area; £100 to the Disraeli School for the continuation of imaginative containers, and £50 each to two other schools. Each grant is considered as seed corn funding to each Environment Group to develop School Grounds, and to continue 'Growing Gardens' projects indoors and out.

Having just completed this pilot scheme in six gardens in the High Wycombe area, I am happy to relocate myself so that others may continue the project during the warmer summer months. I am happy to provide back up with a fortnightly mailing of helpful guidance to funding, which may be available, depending on the school's objective.

Other members may like to volunteer for a BGT stall at an event in a school (there are over 30 helped by the scheme).



Ms. Debra Mansfield, Head Teacher

Turning ideas into action with work parties, photo for Rotary High Wycombe March Bulletin Phase 1 of the Millbrook School courtyard garden to be featured at the School Fair 2 to 4 pm, Saturday May 12 Members of BGT, family and friends are welcome to attend

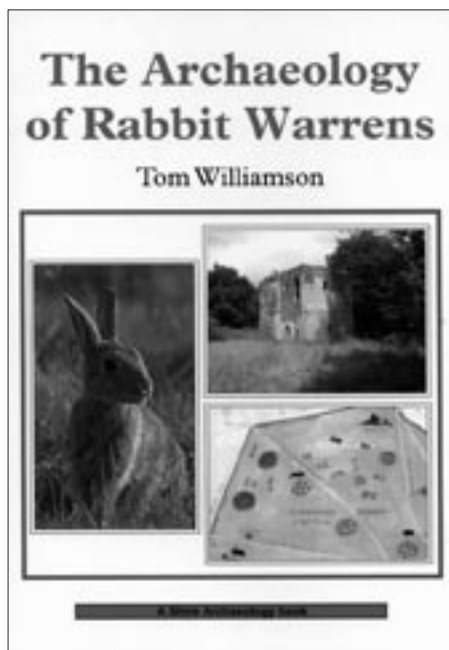
The Archaeology of Rabbit Warrens

by Tom Williamson

Shire Publications 2007, £5.99

ISBN 0-7478-0616-0

An alien species not suited to the British climate; rabbits needed specially built accommodation that was warm and dry. It is the fascinating details about the design and usage of these purpose built warrens that provide the subject matter of this book. Rabbits or coney as they were known, appear to have been brought to this country by the Normans, the earliest documentary record being in the 12th century.



Remains of warrens appear as low earthworks throughout England and Wales. However, archaeologists found it difficult to accept them as rabbit warrens preferring to believe that they were burial mounds. Most of these warrens are of a form known as pillow mounds. Dating these mounds is difficult but many seem to date from the 17th and 18th century but there is evidence that some were constructed as late as the mid 19th century. Apart from pillow mounds there were other types of warren, a cross format being found at some sites. Special arrangements existed for catching the rabbits and traps for predators were built at some warrens.

Tom Williamson's book covers the history and practice of rabbit farming, the age, purpose, location and construction of pillow mounds and other types of warren; details of boundaries and enclosures; traps and vermin traps and details of the lodges that were built for the use of the warreners. This intriguing book is full of detail and well illustrated

with pictures and diagrams. Despite the apparent obscurity of the subject matter I found it an enjoyable read. It comes as a surprise to learn that this pest of farms, parks and gardens has such a full and interesting history! For those who want to pursue the subject further there is a list of places to visit and a list of further reading. Buckinghamshire merits only two mentions, Wing and Aston Sandford [what no Quarrendon?] in the body of the text. However, it occurred to me, reading this book that "Conniburrow" in Milton Keynes almost certainly has some connection with rabbit farming. Are there any other place names in the county that suggest an association with rabbit farming?

John Walton

Forever England

by Liam Bailey

Dewi Lewis Publishing 2006, £9.99

ISBN 1-904587-30-5

At first this book of photographs seems very peculiar, until you realise you are looking at a cross-section of the 3000 odd characters that make up the ever changing population of Bekonscot model village. By looking at them at a scale never seen before, some even in head and shoulder close-up, the rich and amusing world that is Bekonscot comes to life all over again.



The short but illuminating introductory essay by Ally Ireson sets the scene, and makes you realise why Bekonscot seems so much the same, and yet subtly different every time you visit. The six villages that make up the 1.5-acre site do move, after returning from their wintertime quarters (in sheds), and thus, inevitably the characters are constantly on the move too. And yes the village has now reverted

to its original 1930s character, after some years when the modernizers moved in and even Concorde made an anachronistic, if popular appearance.

Few landscapes remain unchanging and Bekonscot is no exception, though the villagers, unlike those so upset at having to move at Nuneham, remain untroubled by the continual change. All life is on show here, the postie putting the mail through a door, a troubling footballer seemingly detached from his head, an archer about to take out her fellow competitors, as well as the more mundane hanging of the washing, a lady distracted on a street corner, and children on swings. Both golfers and polo players are represented, a shooting party and passengers getting onto the plane at an aerodrome. Perhaps the strangest book reviewed on these pages, but by no means the least beautiful.

Charles Boot

The Verneys; a true story of love, war and madness in seventeenth century England

by Adrian Tinniswood

Jonathan Cape 2007, £25

ISBN-10: 0224072552

To see and marvel over the remaining part of what was the Verney family's huge Claydon House in North Bucks, with its wonderful rococo interiors, and then its fabulous collection of family portraits by *inter alia*, Van Dyck and Lely, then surely the case is made for a proper knowledge of the family that lived there, and hence this review.

The Verneys came to Claydon in the fourteenth century and are there still. An unending succession of Edmunds, Ralphs, Johns and Harrys, with the occasional Mun (actually another Edmund) or Francis or Tom to add a little dash of wildness to the clan, filled the years with their national, local and petty affairs and give a fascinating and very personal insight into the catastrophic events of the seventeenth century. Tinniswood's book was launched at Claydon in March and the host was the present Sir Edmund Verney. It is a tribute to the enduring nature of rural communities that one can recognise in this book, not just the family names of today's Bucks landowners, but the farmers and tradesmen as well. The Roades and Dancer families are still very much a part of life in North Bucks.

In Tinniswood's introduction he tells of the great collection of seventeenth century letters and papers at Claydon still,

and how two Victorian members of the family, Parthenope (the sister of Florence Nightingale), and later her daughter-in-law Margaret, following on from more learned historians, had sorted and worked through these papers and produced a two volume *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War*, published in 1892. He tells us, rather unkindly, that they were 'sometimes overeager to turn the Verneys' story into a seventeenth century version of *The Forsyte Saga*.' Certainly, Victorian family biographies are often quite heavy going, and one can but be grateful to writers like Tinniswood who, with their contextual knowledge of the times, take the trouble to paraphrase, *précis* and re-order these works; and transcribe their interminable quotations from their quaint seventeenth century spelling into a modern and computer friendly form.

Indeed it is great fun for those few pedantic reviewers, who are familiar with Parthenope's work, to match so many of Tinniswood's elegant paragraphs to poor Parthenope's laboured prose.

But, whichever the author or transcriber (and one does not refuse a dinner invitation just because one disapproves of the butler) the story of the Verneys, through their own letters, is hugely compelling.

This is not just the lives of the main players. Everyone knows the story of Sir Edmund Verney, the Standard Bearer for the King at Edgehill in 1642, and how, when the Parliamentary cavalry broke through and surrounded the colour party, they had to cleave his hand from his body to get the standard away. His body was never found, but his ghost is said to wander the battlefield (and Claydon) searching for the lost limb. And his son, Sir Ralph, agonisingly on the side of Parliament, but not a warrior, spends his time, mostly in exile, trying desperately to keep his huge and recalcitrant extended family together, and ensuring that the Claydon estates survive those appallingly turbulent times.

This family is made up of real people adding their small part to the great mountain of history.

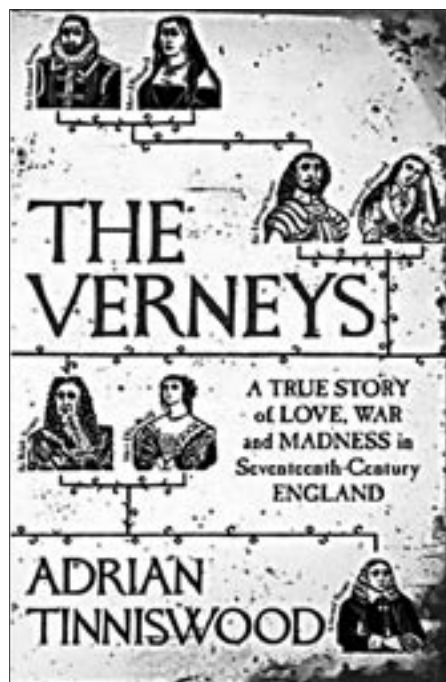
One was Sir Francis Verney, the elder brother of the Standard Bearer, who seeks his fortune in North Africa, but finds the occupation of pirate, and white-slave trader in the service of the Ottoman warlords, a more exciting and lucrative vocation. Whilst his career appeared to be met with some disfavour by the family, the notion that he might have 'turned Turk' or converted to Islam, put him beyond the pale and he died, unmourned,

in Messina in 1615.

Then there was Tom. Tinniswood tells us: 'Brother Thomas was no good... The trouble started in 1634 soon after Tom left school in Gloucester. He launched into negotiations for an unsuitable marriage without consulting his father or asking his permission...'

Parthenope in her account agrees: 'Of all sons 'doomed their father's soul to cross' Tom Verney was certainly the most trying. He had hardly left school when ... he proposed to take to wife the good daughter of a Mr Futsin ... but without the smallest pretence of asking his father's leave...'

The solution was to send him to Virginia, then, when he came back after only one winter, he was packed off to the Navy. This lasted two months, and next he joined an English regiment in France, and so on. He was no better when the Civil War came. His brother Ralph, via his long suffering steward Roades was trying to maintain the allowances to the various family members. When Roades only offered him half his quarterly allowance, Tom told the steward to 'wipe your arse with it'.



Parts of the story of the Verneys are straightforward and immensely interesting in putting together the brutal, and sometimes farcical, reality of The Civil War to the well-known schoolboy dates and battles.

Other parts are a revelation to those readers not wholly acquainted with the tortuous and bloodthirsty complexity of Irish politics at that time. In 1641, Tinniswood tells us that in one corner were the Old Irish, Catholic nobles whose

clans had seen their power eroded by successive waves of English and Scottish colonists. In another were the Old English who had come over to Ireland with Henry II and King John; confusingly a lot of these were Catholic also, the Reformation had passed them by. In the third corner were the New English, Protestants who had come over to take offices barred to Catholics, and finally there were the Protestant Scottish planters who settled Ulster. Not surprisingly, King Charles had an impossible task. Verneys are involved and Mun writes to his brother Ralph about an assault on a castle near Trim where they had put eighty rebels to the sword, but 'like the valiant knights errant, [we] gave quarter and liberty to all the women...' What goes round comes around and seven years later Mun himself is in the Royalist army defending Drogheda from Cromwell, and is one of those put to the sword by the Parliamentary forces.

Perhaps though, the most evocative accounts are of personal and family life in that troubled century, Ralph himself getting married at the age of 15 to a 13 year old bride. Rather sensibly he was not allowed marital relations until his wife was 14, 'giving rise to excruciating comments' from his tutor at Oxford about 'Hymen's delights...'

Then there is the next Mun, Ralph's eldest son. After a good dose of gonorrhoea, with 'one of his testicles swelled ... bigger than his fist', he fell in love with his second cousin Mary Eure. A long and largely unrequited courtship then took place, only to be terminated by his father hinting that he himself might marry again. Mun at last drops that Mary for another, Mary Abell, whom he marries in Westminster Abbey in 1662. Sadly she turns out to be hopelessly mad; 'Zelotipia [a morbid jealousy] is got into her pericranium...'

Finally there is Ralph's death, described from the letters in prurient detail. The undertaker despatches 'his son-in-law, a plumber and a cart which held a lead lined coffin covered in black baize and a hamper with the materials needed to prepare the body...'

And the detail is all. Sir Ralph, Sir Edmund and their wives are commemorated in that wonderful wall monument in Middle Claydon church, in what are now the gardens of Claydon House, which cost £130, 'the carriage of the work by land and water to be done at the charge of Sir Ralph Verney... and also the brick, lime, sand and scaffolding to finish the work in the country...'

Richard Wheeler

Roundup of Events by other County Gardens Trusts

Visit to Grey's Court

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust
2.30pm, Saturday 12 May
Tickets (with directions) must be booked in advance from: John Shortland, Glyme Cottage, Radford Bridge, Enstone, Oxon OX7 4EA or 01608 678145. Price: Members: £4 NB NT members, bring your membership card, non-NT £4.20 extra.

Visit to Woodbury Hall

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust
Saturday 12 May
Further information and tickets from Dorothy Richards, 6 Bromham Road, Biddenham, Bedford MK40 1AF. Tickets: Members £19, non-members £22 to include lunch and tour of the garden.

Rufford Revealed: The History of the Gardens from Cistercian utility to Edwardian Opulence

Leicestershire & Rutland Gardens Trust
Tuesday 15 May
Study Day at Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire. Beneath a popular Nottinghamshire Country Park lie layers of garden history. Through presentations and a guided walk, this study day will reveal the hidden narrative.
Cost: £30. Further information: Lucy Alcock, Rufford Country Park, Ollerton, Newark, Notts NG22 9DF (with sae) or email lucy.alcock@nottssc.gov.uk, or 01623 821 313

Hertfordshire Garden History: a miscellany
A new book to be launched on May 20, this is a collection of essays by members of the Hertfordshire GT & edited by Anne

Rowe, the Trust's Research Co-ordinator.
The book will cost £14.99 (on the day) and is available from Mrs Anne Shellim, 12 Moreton Avenue, Harpenden AL5 2ET. Cheques payable to Hertfordshire Gardens Trust for £17.74 (including p&p)

Talks on aspects of Garden History

10am to 4pm, Saturday 20 May
A series of talks at **Knebworth House**.
11am, Anne Rowe from HGT: *Glorious Gardens of the Past*, hear about some of the great gardens which have been created in Hertfordshire over the centuries.
12.15, Vicki Hynes Senior Archivist: *How to trace the history of your house, Be a house detective!*
1.30pm, Jean Riddell Local Historian: *Courts and Yards of Hertford, Inadequate housing in the early 19th century.*
2.45pm, Clare Fleck Knebworth House Archivist: *500 Years of Knebworth House and Gardens.*

Visit to Southill Park

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust
Friday 8 June
Further information and tickets from Dorothy Richards, as above. Tickets: Members £11, non-members £14.

Lyveden New Bield & Prebendal Manor

Lincolnshire Gardens Trust visit
Thursday 14 June
Lyveden New Bield has one of the oldest gardens in England. The tour will be led by Mark Bradshaw, the NT property manager. Prebendal Manor has recreated medieval gardens and the afternoon will include a guided tour of the house and gardens.
Contact Stephanie Lee; 01507 442 151 or marigoldlee@btinternet.com Tickets cost £25 members or £30 non-members.

AGM at Wroxton Abbey, and tour

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust
11am, Saturday 23 June
AGM at Wroxton Abbey, and afternoon tour of C18 grounds.
See above for booking details.

Lephins, near Wantage

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust
2pm, Saturday 30 June
The first of two modern garden visits: Lephins was designed by present owner.
Tickets: £4, see above for details.

Visit to Bedford Park

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust
6.30 for 7pm, Wednesday 4 July
Led by Bob Morwood, Arboriculturist, Mid-Beds District Council.
Tickets £5, send cheque and SAE to Dorothy Richards as above.

Cottesbrooke Hall and Gardens

Bedfordshire Gardens Trust
Thursday 19 July
Further information and tickets from Dorothy Richards, as above. Tickets: Members £15, non-members £18.

Visit to Brook Cottage, Alkerton

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust
2.30pm, Saturday 21 July
A four-acre plantsman's garden, created since 1964.
Tickets from John Shortland as above. Price: £6.50 to include tea and cakes.

Visit to Cutteslowe Park, Oxford

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust
2.30pm, Saturday 28 July
Tour of park and bring-your-own picnic.
Tickets FREE, but please book, so we know who is coming, with John Shortland, as above.

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To keep up to date with the latest about the BGT please look at our website www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk
We now have an e-newsletter, just send an email to enewsletter@bucksgardenstrust.org.uk labelled sign up

The deadline for the next *Bucks Gardener* (26) is July 1, and it should appear not too long after that

Items are welcomed on all aspects of gardens and gardening in Bucks (and elsewhere), both ancient and modern
Please send all contributions to me, preferably electronically, at: newsletter@bucksgardenstrust.org.uk or at the address above