

The Bucks Gardener

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Visit to Halton House & Gardens

2pm, Tuesday 9 May

We have been invited to visit by kind permission of the Station Commander, RAF Halton.

The House

Baron Lionel de Rothschild bought the Halton Estate from Sir George Dashwood in 1853. The Baron died in 1879 and soon afterwards his son Baron Alfred Charles began to build the new house we see today.

It is an 'ambitious' mansion, in the free French style, mainly a mix of C17 & C18 influences. Contemporaries found it to be 'terribly vulgar' but that was probably as much on account of the lavishness of its contents as for the architecture. The architect was William R Rogers of William Cubitt & Co, who had just built 5 Hamilton Place, in London, for Alfred's brother Charles, and it was finished in 1883. It is now listed at Grade II*. Rogers used Ashlar stone, from Oxfordshire, with steep slate roofs, iron crestings and finials and a prominent *porte-cochère* on the southeast front (otherwise it's the same as the garden front). Originally there was an elaborate winter garden at the south end of the house, reached by way of a garden corridor, with white stone columns and niches. The winter gardens were demolished in 1935-37 to be replaced by an accommodation block by Vincent Harris, though the corridor remains. Though many of the original wall coverings are gone, much of the sumptuous Louis XIV & XVI style plasterwork and other decoration remains. The Dining Room has a scheme of 'fish and fowl', the Smoking

Room an appropriately Moorish scheme, and the Billiard Room is panelled with lavishly carved and gilded woodwork. A recurring motif throughout the house is the marigold.

Originally the house was only intended to last for perhaps fifty years. It was only used at weekends, for entertaining, not to live

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FROM THE CHAIR

I am sure I was not alone in being greatly saddened by the news that the greatest gardener in the country, the wonderful Christopher Lloyd, had died on the 27 January this year. From his writings and those of the late Graham Stuart Thomas and the very much still with us Beth Chatto, I learnt so much. By visiting his unsurpassed garden, Great Dixter, reading his articles in *The Guardian* and *Country Life*, and from his books, perhaps most especially *The Well Tempered Garden* and *Foliage Plants* I really came to know plants and how they might be used. My copies of the latter seem to date back to 1985, when they were revised and reprinted, a rare thing now for a hardback book; I rather think these replaced earlier paperback versions as both are well-thumbed and were then new and revised editions. The great joy of Christo's writing was that he was never afraid of thinking aloud, and those thoughts were always lively and thought provoking, sending one to their sources, with luck the garden, to look at and reassess plants that one recognised, and to reference books or plant catalogues for the many one had never even heard of; and what discoveries one made.

I am brought up sharp by these sentences I started to write now some months ago. This year I have moved house and started a new garden, and for the last month have been in the south of France. The chance to revisit the Hanbury Gardens at La Mortola, just over the border in Italy, and the Serre de la Madone, Lawrence Johnston's garden near Menton, now at last emerging from out of the overgrowth has been a great joy. Visiting the Villa Ephrussi the home of Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild, a warning of what fate might befall Waddesdon if it were ever to fall into less sympathetic hands; in this case the Académie des Beaux-Arts de l'Institut de France, every bit as deadly as it sounds; despite a constant flow of visitors standards here are very low. Though the garden team may try very hard, the management does not appear to have a clue. How fragile gardens are and their creator's intentions even more so? Great Dixter is in the process of establishing a new Trust to keep the essence of the place intact, and under the sympathetic hands of Fergus Garrett it should continue to inspire us all. Lets hope they succeed and Christo's spirit of innovation, friendship and fun continues to flourish. CB

in, as the Baron spent most of his time in London. Well over a century later and the house still stands; this is I believe is due to the very high standards of builders and craftsmanship employed, only the best would do for a Rothschild.

The Gardens

The main feature of the garden lies to the west and northwest of the house. A flight of stone steps, balustraded and with urns lies on axis to the garden door and leads north-west from a broad gravel terrace, descending via a gravel path to a circular pool and fountain, with mermaids (the upper tiers of dolphins have gone). This path was bordered by two rows of circular 'cushion' beds, originally designed and planted by Veitch and Son, with vases at their centres. In pictures they look remarkably like the RAF's familiar circular symbol. Perhaps regrettably these have now been laid to lawn and a somewhat funereal avenue of cypresses now flanks the path. To the north of the pond lies the remains of the Italian Garden, entered through a pair of elaborate cast iron gates, and with the remnants of the original mosaic path and marble edged rose beds. This in turn leads to an elaborate rockery, cascade and oval pond, restored some ten years ago (but now sadly neglected again). Mature trees and shrubs surround the large informal east lawn screening it from the Icknield Way to the east, with views up the wooded slope beyond.

As at Waddesdon the elaborate glasshouses (at least 50), and kitchen gardens are but a distant memory. Originally the garden team was led by a Mr Robert Sanders and numbered some 60 men. Trees have grown up around the shallow circular lake to the southwest, intended for skating in winter. Saddest of all, little remains of the permanent circus, maintained with its animal acts and both resident and visiting troupers by Baron Alfred. Much of the parkland remains though visually separated from the house by trees that have grown up alongside the Grand Union Canal; though parts have disappeared under more recent housing, many of the original trees clumps and belts seem to have survived.

The house and gardens at Halton appeared in the very first volume of *Country Life* in 1897, showing their importance at the time. Today the house and grounds are in demand as a location for film and TV work, perhaps mainly due to their proximity to London. Let's hope the RAF don't leave too soon, but much work is needed.

David Hillier

Further reading

The Story of Halton House, B E Escott (3rd edn) 2003

Beechwood and bayonets, A E Adam, 1983

Country Life 1897, Vol 1, p664-66 and 1973, Vol 154, p1062-64

Flowers in the Landscape: eighteenth century flower gardens and floriferous shrubberies

Monday 19 and Tuesday 20 June at Hartwell House

A two-day non-residential seminar and garden visit based at Hartwell House and organised in association with the Georgian Group. Led by Richard Wheeler this will be a fascinating opportunity to learn from leading historians and practitioners about the development of flower gardens in the Georgian period, all in the superb setting of Hartwell House, with spaces for working gardeners sponsored by the Ernest Cook Trust.

Monday's programme includes lectures by garden historians Mavis Batey and Mark Laird, Senior Lecturer in the History of Landscape Architecture at Harvard. Eric Throssell, mastermind behind the recent restoration of the landscape at Hartwell, will lead a perambulation of the magnificent ninety-acre grounds after lunch, including the rediscovered site of Lady Lee's flower garden. Proceedings will conclude with a comparative study of practical gardening, looking at Ashridge, Stowe, Osterley and Painshill. An optional conference dinner will be held at Hartwell in the evening.

On Tuesday we visit Nuneham Courtenay for a perambulating lecture by Mavis Batey and Doug Stephenson (Head Gardener). After a picnic lunch there will be an optional visit to the Duchess of Bridgewater's garden at Ashridge.

For members unable to attend this conference we will be returning to Nuneham in the autumn, see later.

Evening tour of Langley Park with John Phibbs 6pm, Tuesday 27 June

The ongoing lottery bid at Langley Park (I have cuttings going back to 1997) seems really to be progressing at last. Various consultants have been appointed and much research is now coming to a head, turning up some very interesting new

material. The lead consultants are Scott Wilson, and others involved include Lear Associates who led our visit around the rhododendron collection in Temple Gardens in 2004, and John Phibbs; who has kindly agreed to lead a group around the park this summer. Though he still needs to do more research he has reassessed earlier tree surveys (using GPS) and added an earthworks survey to the archaeological work conducted by Lesley Howes; among other things thrown up is the burial mound of the 3rd Duke's horse (?).

He is looking into the earlier (pre-Brown) phases of the park's development and is hoping to tie Black Park back into the picture (regrettably the Lottery have forced its abandonment from the more holistic approach BCC were hoping to take). This principally relates to the deer leaps between the two parks that would have aided the management of the deer population.

He suggests the development of a major Caroline garden following the reconstruction of the Lodge in 1605, though it would in all likelihood not have been finished by the outbreak of the Civil War and was probably broken up in the Cromwell period. Again this would have been in itself a rare type, a parliamentary enclosure, with oak trees and fences marking the new field boundaries. A new park was laid out at the Restoration, which in turn would have been recycled by Lancelot Brown; though he would most probably have retained the geometry based on the projective views from the House and Temple. Later campaigns were undertaken around 1800, when Picturesque style clumps seem to have been introduced, and in 1900, when the Wellingtonias were planted and the rhododendrons introduced to the Temple Gardens.

John would ideally like to address the problems of grazing and haymaking, much of the open park is now given over to 'horsiculture' rather than deer. He also emphasizes the importance of defining types of planting such as oak rows and the use of planting mounds, redefining lost buildings, perhaps as shams, and reintroducing pollarding, looking at replacing the elm, and use of thorn and elder.

By the time we visit these ideas will be much more substantial or may have changed. The main thing is that we are moving towards the next stage, when the complete project will be submitted to the lottery for assessment at the end of September.

Apparently the date of our planned visit is significant in the history of Langley Park, any guesses as to why? A small prize will be given for the first correct reply.

Eythrope Walled Garden

7pm, Tuesday 11 July

A very rare chance to see this immaculately kept working kitchen garden. Sue Dickinson and her team of gardeners toil here to keep the Rothschild family in fruit and vegetables as well as many types of flowers and pot plants for decoration in the house at Eythrope. The working garden is complemented by a new flower garden designed by Lady Mary Keen. Bookings will be taken on a first come first serve basis.

See also article on page 4

Bucks Gardens Trust AGM

6pm, Friday 4 August

We return to the exceptional Wotton House at Wotton Underwood by kind invitation of our patrons, April and David Gladstone. The meeting will be followed by a light meal (for which there is a charge) and a chance to enjoy the gardens.

Tour of Nuneham Courtenay arboretum & gardens, Oxfordshire

2pm, Saturday 28 October

The Arboretum is now a part of Oxford University Botanic Garden. The Harcourt Arboretum was begun by Archbishop Edward Vernon Harcourt after he inherited the property from a cousin in 1830. This area of land is on greensand, and trees and shrubs that grow here will not grow elsewhere in Oxfordshire, in limestone areas. In 1835 many so called "American" plants and trees were being introduced which thrive in these conditions, such as rhododendrons and azaleas. Most of the area was already wooded, but the Archbishop purchased the strip beside the turnpike (present main road) to add extra land. He employed William Sawrey Gilpin to lay out the area as a "Pinetum", and also to make improvements around the mansion (see later notes), and Sir Robert Smirke to design a new lodge for the new entrance, (as well as to enlarge the mansion for his large family). The property remained in the Harcourt family until 1948, when it was purchased by the University, as an area for the plants that will not thrive in the Botanic Garden.

Nuneham House

The property was originally purchased by the 1st Earl Harcourt's grandfather in 1712, as an investment; although the land had formed part of the estate at a very much earlier stage, it had been sold. By 1712 it was much neglected, and a "bargain". There was an old Elizabethan mansion, and a village of at least 50 houses, with an old church and parsonage and inn at its centre. The main road ran through the village and past the front of the mansion.

Lord Harcourt decided in the 1750s to create a new Italianate romantic landscape, to pull down the old mansion and build a new one, to abolish the old open field strips (and so to consolidate his holdings into several "new" farms), to remove all the village buildings to the main road, and rebuild the old church as a Grecian temple. The removal of the village became famous as the subject of Oliver Goldsmith's political poem *The Deserted Village*.

The second Earl created a new garden, designed by William Mason, based on Mason's poem, *The English Garden*, starting before the death of his father in 1771, but altered soon after his succession. The garden was much admired and visited for the next quarter of a century. There were a number of Edwardian additions and alterations. It has recently been restored. There are the remains of the "Rose Garden" just above this garden. The third Earl never lived in the house, and in his time the garden was much neglected.

In 1830, when the 3rd Earl died childless, the estate was inherited by a cousin, Edward Vernon, then Archbishop of York, who took the additional name of Harcourt when he inherited. He developed both the area around the house, and the new arboretum. His fourth son, Rev William Harcourt, was a founder member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1832, and its first Secretary. He was also a friend of Charles Daubeny, Professor of Chemistry in the University, and additionally Professor of Botany in 1834. When his father died in 1841, the eldest brother inherited. He was MP for Oxford and spent most of his time in London, and died childless in 1861. In 1904 Lewis Harcourt inherited, and made many additions, mostly now gone. After this, few major changes were made, and eventually after the Second World War the whole estate was sold, and the Harcourt family returned to Stanton Harcourt, just up-river from Oxford, where they had lived for centuries before the Nuneham times.

Joanna Mathews

From the *Journal of Horticulture*

EYTHROPE

26 June 1890, p 530

TASTE IN GARDEN DESIGN AND PLANTING HAS FURNISHED A PROLIFIC SUBJECT FOR ESSAYISTS, and so diverse have been the opinions expressed by those who rank as authorities, that it would appear difficult to arrive at any general principles as guides to the inexperienced. A superficial examination of the works treating upon the subject conveys that impression, but a closer study both of books and natural scenery tends to show the divergence is not so great as might be imagined, and it is quite possible to generalise to some extent. The most experienced in such work — the landscape gardeners themselves — have chiefly assisted in promoting differences of opinion, for they have often become the exponents of particular ideas, and by adopting a certain uniformity of style, regardless of situation, they have rendered themselves open to the charge of mannerism and narrowness of views. This occasioned all the criticism to which the earlier landscape gardeners were subjected. They identified themselves with particular methods of treating ground intended for gardens or parks and instead of assisting in softening or modifying the extremes of the systems advocated, they too of ten accentuated their differences designedly, and with the worst effects. A contest has thus been waged between the advocates of the artificial and the natural systems respectively, and until recent years the former may be said to have prevailed. It is strange that in the earlier ages of civilisation, just when men are emerging from a state of semi-barbarism, the natural beauty with which all are familiar has the least attraction, the whole attention of the more advanced is turned to art and artificial productions. The same spirit is seen in the gardens which the ancients admired. Elaborate architectural ornaments and severe formality was their distinguishing characters. These constituted the foundation of the geometrical style of gardening which has ruled the civilised world so long, and found special expression in the Italian and Dutch style introduced to this country.

But with advancing civilisation another stage is reached, when relief is sought from the productions of art in the freshness, the informality, and the charms of natural scenery. So it is that the school of what may be termed Nature's landscape gardeners has been increased in modern times, and, like all innovations, the tendency at first was .to go to the other extreme. Efforts were made to chase from the garden all semblance to art, introducing Nature in her wildest form, with picturesque results at times, but also frequently with but little of the quiet beauty that constitutes one of the great pleasures of a garden. The wiser and the better course has been adopted in still more recent landscape work— namely, a modification of the two extremes, recognising the fitness of the artificial style for certain positions, and especially near to houses and formal buildings, but allowing the natural method to predominate to the utmost. The careful study

of this combination has resulted in the production of some of the most beautiful gardens that adorn our little island, and render it pre-eminent in the world of horticulture. Diversity of aspect, united with the repose so characteristic of a truly English Landscape, sufficient variety in the trees, shrubs, and plants employed to prevent monotony, careful avoidance of all straining after effect, and perfection in the "art that conceals art" give us what no one can fail to admire — a genuine natural English garden.

Favoured with a special invitation from Miss Alice de Rothschild to inspect what she was pleased to term her "little garden". I journeyed recently to Aylesbury, and thence by road to Eythrope, where I found one of the most charming, unpretentious establishments it has ever been my good fortune to visit. The Vale of Aylesbury on a warm but slightly hazy June morning was, after the rains, looking at its best, exceedingly fresh and luxuriant, while the Chiltern hills in the distance gave a little more character to the scene than most of our low southern hills afford. The drive of about four miles from the quaint old town of Aylesbury under such circumstances was most agreeable, and a fitting preparation for the pedestrian exercise to follow under the charge of my lady guide. Crossing an antiquated stone bridge gives the first view of the River Thame, and its beautiful boundary, the gardens and grounds of Eythrope; and passing a bijou lodge a fine curving drive brings us to the house familiarly known as The Pavilion. There Mine Alice awaited me, and under her instructive guidance I commenced a most pleasant inspection of the garden which has been gradually formed in accordance with her tasteful direction.

Fourteen years ago, Eythrope, though possessing considerable historical interest, dating back to an early period, having been originally the site of an ecclesiastical establishment of some kind, was in a state of neglect; in fact it is said to have been little more than a swamp and a wilderness, yet the situation possessed what a famous landscape gardener would have termed "great capabilities", especially for a summer residence, and it was by a development of these qualities that the present garden has been obtained. Few have the satisfaction of seeing the full realisation of their ideas in what may be considered a comparatively short time, but Eythrope has not a suspicion of newness about it. If we were told it had, been formed a hundred years since it could easily be believed and this in one of the many instances the place affords of the thoughtful application of art.

In one short visit it would not be possible to grasp all the details of such a garden, but a general review of its chief features may be attempted, and then some of its specialities will be worth attention. First, then, to commence with statistics, the estate comprises about 1,550 acres, sixty of which are devoted to the garden, and the remainder constitute a farm and park, the latter an undulating and far-reaching expanse of rich green turf, divided from the garden by a sunk fence, and well stocked with cattle.

The picturesque and climber-clad Pavilion stands

upon a slight eminence, and therefore commands a view over the greater portion of the garden, with delightful vistas across the river into the park. To the south and east a wonderful lawn slopes from the house, and this alone is a remarkable feature. It covers a space of 20 acres, not in one unbroken expanse, but relieved at suitable positions by shrubberies, clumps of rhododendrons, specimen trees and flower-beds, and the whole is formed of a soft fresh green turf in excellent keeping, and quite in accord with the general style of the garden.

The River

One of the chief natural features of Eythrope is the river which forms a partial boundary to the garden on two sides, the east and the south, and full advantage in all respects has been taken of this. An extent of over a mile and a half has been obtained, one portion of the south has been widened into a lake-like expanse, islands have been formed or improved, the banks have been planted, and the whole managed with the utmost skill. The result is a thoroughly natural piece of water, as though one of the charming reaches of the Upper Thames had been transferred bodily, with numerous added but appropriate attractions. There were no bare and formal banks here such as in some older gardens have caused the rivers to be stigmatised as canals and the lakes as tanks. Rigid lines and monotony in every respect have been very carefully and consistently avoided, and I do not remember ever seeing, either in Great Britain or on the Continent, so successful an example of tasteful, natural water management on the same scale. The journey by boat from the garden steps to a little "Old English" tea-house, and then to the bridge and back, gives an excellent idea of what has been done, and also affords some pleasing peeps of the garden and the Pavilion. The beds of rhododendrons and azaleas have an especially bright effect in the distance, while nearer at hand is a bed of brilliant poppies with a background of golden yews, which can be seen for some distance along the river, and constitutes a charming picture in itself. The grand rich flowers of the Oriental poppy and the lighter shades of the variety 'Prince of Orange' harmonise well together with the yews, the bright green of the turf between the plants and the water serving as an agreeable foil to such a mass of colour. Upon the banks, either overhanging or providing welcome shade, are graceful willows in abundance and variety, vigorous horse chestnuts and maples, with plentiful flowering shrubs, extend back from the river, giving depth and character to the scene. At the margin of the banks, or in the water itself the yellow English iris flourishes in grand clusters with the towering giant bulrush and countless other small water plants. The Japanese, the Spanish, the English, and the German Irises find suitable places and peep out at irregular intervals along the banks; little groups of rockets and other flowering plants are also seen at different points.

Special effort has been made to impart as much variety as possible without descending to trivialities and more than ordinary success has been achieved,

for there is nothing to tire the eye, and there is sufficient motion in the water to prevent stagnation, and the islands which add so much to the effect of a stream or lake when well managed have been rendered picturesque without losing their agreement with the surrounding scenery.

The Italian and Dutch Gardens

Though Miss de Rothschild admits a greater preference for the "natural garden" style, she yet rightly considers that in a garden of sufficient extent the artificial should also be represented if suitable positions can be provided. Thus we find near the Pavilion an Italian garden with bold angular beds in the geometrical style, but not in an intricate design, and comparatively few varieties of plants are used. Masses of pelargoniums — Henry Jacoby, Mrs. Turner, Black Douglas, and the Pink or Salmon Vesuvius — constitute the leading features furnishing a very rich and imposing colouring. Nearby are large banks of rhododendrons and azaleas, which are just beginning to lose their flowers. In some of these beds and near the house, a succession of lilies is provided, which prolongs their floral attractions far into the summer.

Along a terrace and path to the east of the Pavilion we came to the carpet beds planted in neat and effective designs, novel conical mounds of pelargoniums, and a gigantic bird-like design raised as a pedestal, the framework formed of iron, filled with soil and moss, and closely planted with alternantheras, lobelias and spargula, to represent the colouring seen in some tropical birds. A bed of deep blue violas, with the silver-edged Princess Alexandra pelargoniums and margined with Crystal Palace gem, was attractive near this; also some fine beds of fuchsias. Upon the other side of the lawn is a series of other beds, similar, in a hollow below the level of the turf pelargoniums, centaureas, and tuberous begonias being employed chiefly. Then there is one other formal department to be noticed, the Dutch garden, near the gardener's house, and seen from a raised terrace of turf the small beds have a neat and varied appearance, and it is worthy of remark that *clianthus dampieri* in being there tried planted out, and seems to be established.

The Wilderness, Mexican, and Wild Gardens

In a garden so essentially natural as Eythrope, it is a relief to turn even from the moderate representation of the formal to something of a freer and more picturesque character. About an acre of ground is devoted to the Wilderness, which is only a short distance from the Pavilion, and presents a piece of wild nature that is at any time in the summer restful and shady, but which in early Spring must be delightful. Tall and spreading trees are plentiful, having been preserved from the older garden; the undergrowth has nearly all been planted, but the shrubs and young trees are now so well established, and have made such vigorous growth, that they form a dense thicket of a thoroughly unconventional character. Narrow, irregular, moss-covered walks penetrate this in all directions, and winding about in a mazy but indeterminate plan, they convey the

idea that the extent is much greater than it really is. Beneath the shade of trees and shrubs, primroses, bluebells and violas flourish, and the seed vessels and flower stems prove what a floral feast has been provided earlier in the seasons. Here and there a partial clearance has been made, to bring into bolder relief some handsome old trees, and several grand Scots firs and abies rear their heads on massive stems to a great height. Ferns, too, in countless thousands, luxuriate in moist seclusions of this wilderness, all collected and introduced from distant shires, for Bucks is not a ferny county. The Mexican garden is devoted to groups of succulent plants chiefly, and conspicuous there are Alp-like mounds clothed from base to summit, with silvery *Antennaria*. The wild garden comprises an undergrowth of ivies in about forty varieties, rambling about in the greatest freedom, and a mixture of shrubs with various herbaceous plants in unrestrained profusion, clumps of *Funkia* telling effectively among them.

Roses

A chapter might be devoted to the roses at Eythrope, for they rank as one of the special features, and they are evidently great favourites. The rather heavy soil appears to suit them extremely well, their growth, foliage and flowers affording most satisfactory evidence that their requirements are amply supplied. Between three hundred and four hundred varieties are included in the collection, not of hybrid perpetuals or teas alone, but of all sections, from the graceful old rambling roses of the Ayrshire type, through every grade of the most refined florist's groups. We see spacious beds and banks of luxuriant roses in all directions—trellises, arches and alcoves festooned with the climbers, already becoming wreathed with charming little flowers. The porch and walls of the Pavilion and other buildings are covered with delicate single roses and briars, and clumps in shrubberies or borders of the Persian yellow, the Austrian, and the richest of all the Copper Austrian Briars, flourishing and flowering in their fullest native freedom. Pink roses are especial favourites, particularly *La France* and *Captain Christy*, a long bed containing some hundreds of plants being devoted solely to the supply of cut flowers. There is also a spacious rose house of ornamental design, in which *Maréchal Niel*, *William Allen Richardson*, and *Sunset* are planted out, and cover the roof with their growth and flowers; the other portion of the house being filled during winter with roses in pots, while the surrounding beds are occupied with China roses. In connection with the roses, which assist very materially in the matter, may be mentioned the fact that climbing plants are employed most freely in covering walls and buildings of all kinds where a bare and hard surface would otherwise be visible. The Pavilion itself is in this way completely wreathed in the growth and foliage of ivies, ampelopeses, clematises, roses, and many other plants, the same principle being followed with regard to anything else of a conspicuous character. Some extremely old apple and pear trees preserved from a former orchard are in this way draped with climbers, and were charmingly effective.

Trees and Shrubs

As already noted, many fine old trees have been retained from the former garden, Scots, firs, abies and elms, especially some of the latter, having evidently formed part of an avenue or hedge, such as is often seen where old monastic institutions have stood. These furnish an invaluable framework. Planting has been carried out extensively, large horse chestnuts especially having been most successfully transplanted. Most of them are now so well established that it is scarcely possible to believe that they have only been planted four or five years, specimens forty to sixty feet high rivalling some of their neighbours that have occupied the ground for at least a hundred years. The horse chestnuts were large trees when moved, but the work was done carefully and they do not seem to have suffered in the least. Conifers have also been planted, and some of the hardier sorts thrive, but the low winter temperature and moisture are too severe tests of the delicate firs. *Abies pinsapo* succeeds capitally, and several good specimens were noted. *Wellingtonias* are also making grand trees, especially in one part of the garden, where they have been found to be thoroughly at home, and a large clump has been planted.

With regard to the shrubs, an extensive varied collection has been formed of all that were likely to prove hardy. Much taste has been displayed in the arrangement of these with regard to colour effects when in flower. Coloured foliaged plants are used liberally, the golden yews and golden elders being special features, assuming a richness of hue that is seldom seen, and lighting up several vistas and nooks in a surprising manner. It is very easy to plant such shrubs as these in places where they would not be merely lost but where they would have a great disturbing effect in the general harmony. This has been skilfully avoided, and in nearly every case this effect has been brightened by flowering plants of a suitable kind in their immediate neighbourhood.

Glass Houses

So much space has been devoted to other departments that little can now be said about the houses. There are three handsome span-roofed structures, each a hundred feet long by eighteen feet wide, erected by Messrs. Halliday and Company of Manchester, and admirably adapted for plant culture. One is in three divisions for orchids, a grand genuine collection being grown, but a bank of *Odontoglossum Verilliarium* is wonderfully fine, about a hundred and fifty strong plants being in flower, some with ten racemes each, the flowers large, and varying from white to the deepest rose. Upon the other side of the house *Epidendrum Vitellinum* is flowering well, and contrasts markedly with the *Odontoglossums*. The next house is devoted to carnations, of which there are about one thousand five hundred plants in the best varieties as obtained from Mr. Turner of Slough, and a number of very promising seedlings raised at Eythrope. One of the best dark varieties is *Maestro*, and *Mary Morris* is found to be the best pink both in pots and out of doors. One thousand grand plants of *Carnation Souvenir de Malmaison* occupy



Fig 79. — The pavilion at Eythrope

the adjoining house, all about nine months old, in eight and ten inch pots, fine bushy specimens, with massive flowers of pinky red and white varieties.

Five other span-roofed houses, ninety feet long by fourteen feet wide, are devoted to propagating purposes. The rose house has already been mentioned, and then there is the pelargonium house, in which the ivy leaf variety, *Souvenir de Charles Turner*, is

just now the chief feature and is greatly valued for its freedom and bright colour.

It only remains to add that the stables, bothies, etc, are rendered an ornamental addition to the garden instead of being objectionable, as is too often the case. They are low buildings in the Norman English style, the soft reddish brown tiles having a cheerful, yet not too conspicuous appearance. The building is

in the form of a quadrangle, with convenience for all the employees the bothy has a comfortable reading room, well supplied with books and papers, and is in every respect a model. The gardener's house is in a similar style, and here it should be remarked that Miss de Rothschild speaks highly of the services rendered her by Mr. Gibbs in the extensive work accomplished during the past nine years.

This, for the present, must conclude my notes, upon what has proved to me an exceedingly pleasant and instructive visit.

Lewis Castle

CLIVEDEN:

how the Estate developed

Pre 1666: Edward Manfield (owned Cliveden immediately before 1666)

- The estate contained a deer park. By the late C16 this included two park lodges and 160 acres of woodland. Its structure and position are unknown, but one lodge probably stood in the Pheasantry and the other may have occupied the later site of the mansion. This was one of a number of deer parks in south Bucks.

1670s: George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham (1628–87, owned Cliveden 1666–87)

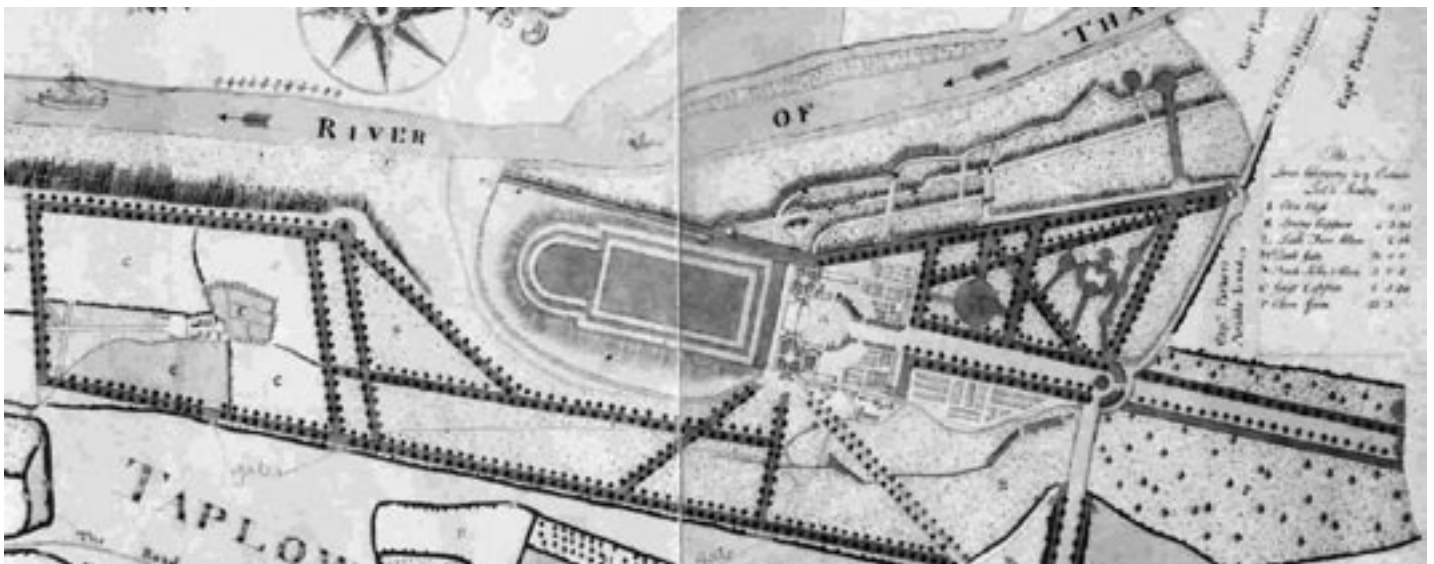
- Buckingham built his new country mansion in Italianate style, possibly for his mistress, the Countess of Shrewsbury. The extent of the surrounding landscape is unclear, but was of sufficient interest to be mentioned by the diarist John Evelyn as a considerable garden including the terrace and 'cloisters ... Descents, Gardens' and an avenue through the woodland. Views of the river and surrounding countryside were deliberately exploited for ornamental purposes.
- The great and innovative Italianate terrace supported the mansion; its early date and European influences make this the most significant feature within the site. Although modified it retains much of the early structure.
- Despite the later rebuilding of the mansion and other developments this remains the most significant design layer. It continued to influence succeeding phases in accommodating the original axis and associated features.

1705–37: George Hamilton, Earl of Orkney (1666–1737, owned Cliveden 1696–1737)

- Orkney created an extensive and ambitious formal pleasure ground and park designed with advice from the Royal Gardener Charles Bridgeman, among others.
- This layer incorporated Buckingham's axial landscape features; it is of great significance as the most extensive of the formal ornamental design layers.
- Cliveden is one of a group of gardens created by Marlborough's wealthy commanders following their return to England including Blenheim, Rousham, Shotover and Stowe.
- Much of Orkney's framework remains, the most important areas including:
 - the massive, French-influenced parterre, laid out as a grass platform, 1723–24; various notable designers advised including Claude Desgots, and possibly Henry Wise, but their designs were unused in favour of a simple grass parterre.
 - the cliffside below the mansion, exploited c.1723 to create walks with extensive views of the river and countryside beyond; two important garden buildings were designed by the architect Leoni to enhance the contrasting themes of the landscape around them: the military north section including the Blenheim Pavilion, and the more Arcadian southern section; Charles Bridgeman advised on its layout.
 - a formal wilderness, c.1727 above the cliff, probably advised by Bridgeman;
 - a network of rides and approaches through the Park Walks east and south of the mansion. Bridgeman may have advised.
 - a strong link with Taplow Court to the south was established via the cliff top Grand Walk.

1737–51: Anne, 1st Countess of Orkney (owned Cliveden 1737–56) m. 1720 William O'Brian 4th Earl of Inchiquin (d.1777)

- The Inchiquins' home was the adjacent Taplow Court; Cliveden was let to Frederick, Prince of Wales.
- The tenancy of Prince Fred. did not lead to major landscape works.
- The most significant events in the landscape were the first performance of the Masque of Alfred (including Rule, Britannia) in 1740, and the striking of the Prince by a cricket ball which is thought to have caused his death in 1751.
- Frederick was closely allied with the Whig coterie of Lord Cobham at Stowe.



Cliveden Estate Map, 1749

1760s–80s: Mary, 2nd Countess of Orkney (owned Cliveden 1756–1791) m. 1753 Murrough O’Brien 4th Earl of Inchiquin (d.1777)

- Cliveden was run contiguously with Taplow Court. The estate was transformed by Murrough O’Brien, 5th Earl of Inchiquin in the late 1770s, when the park and pleasure grounds were remodelled in informal style, but there is almost no information about the work. Inchiquin employed Lancelot Brown at Taplow Court in the late 1770s, possibly with work at Cliveden, but the connection is unclear.
- This was the last major remodelling, but important formal landscape elements were left intact as part of the design. Much of the pleasure grounds and Park Walks were remodelled as they remain today, combining formal elements with an informal overlay.

1795–1818: 3rd Countess of Orkney (owned Cliveden 1791–c.1818)

- The central block of the mansion burnt out, 1795. Much of the estate was abandoned.
- The 3rd Countess of Orkney built Spring Cottage by the river to enhance the mineral spring and considered at least two schemes for rebuilding the mansion.

1820s–30s: Sir George Warrender (1782–1849, owned Cliveden 1824–49)

- Sir George rebuilt the central block of the mansion on the footprint of the original and considerably extended the ornamental design of the wider park to the east and south resulting from the parish Enclosure activities.
- He doubled the length of the Green Drive into the new south park in Taplow Paddocks and Woods and erected the Green Drive Lodge.

1849–90s: 2nd Duke and Duchess of Sutherland (owned Cliveden 1849–1868) 3rd Marquess/ 1st Duke of Westminster (1828–99, owned Cliveden 1868–93)

- The Duke rebuilt the burnt out mansion to Charles Barry’s designs 1849–51, re-establishing the character and position of the original structure.
- The Sutherlands and then the 1st Duke of Westminster contributed significantly to the landscape. Structures in the wider landscape included a group of estate cottages and related buildings in vernacular style such as the dairy; others around the mansion were built in Italianate style, including the terrace pavilion, and clock tower below by Clutton, and the forecourt entrance screen.
- The forecourt was remodelled with open lawns to replace kitchen gardens.
- The east and south park were developed as woodland enclosing large paddocks around the spinal Green Drive.
- John Fleming laid out many horticultural features within the established structure in the 1850s–70s. His seasonal bedding schemes were celebrated and influential on horticultural trends, together with his approach to woodland planting. He planted the Russian Valley in its present form.
- Most horticultural features and non-woody planting from this period have gone, but the layout of the parterre beds remains and is of high significance from this period.
- Fleming’s planting schemes are well recorded.

1893–1906: W.W. Astor, 1st Viscount Astor (1848–1919, owned Cliveden 1893–1906)

- Astor’s contributions were generally set sensitively within the earlier structure. He embellished the estate in two particular ways:
- installed a highly important collection of antique and

contemporary sculpture

- created various self-contained ornamental garden features including the Italian Garden (now the Memorial Garden) Long Garden, Water Garden and maze; also the walled kitchen garden. Several features were created to house sculpture including the Italian Garden, Tortoise Fountain, Long Garden and Packway steps and balustrade.
- The remodelling of the Octagon Temple as a chapel was an important contribution to the decorative arts, but blurred its important function in the C18 landscape.

1906–52: Waldorf, 2nd Viscount Astor (1879–1952, owned Cliveden 1906–1942)

- Few major structural changes occurred; the main alterations were localised:
- The Italian Garden was remodelled as a cemetery and War Memorial Garden.
- The long narrow borders in the Long Garden were halved by central sculptures.
- The hospital was constructed on an enclosed paddock in World War I, reconstructed in World War II and subsequently used as a local hospital.
- Norah Lindsay contributed to the planting of the parterre beds and Long Garden.

1952–66 William Waldorf, 3rd Viscount Astor (1907–66, tenant occupied Cliveden)

- The 3rd Viscount commissioned Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe to design a circular rose garden, now the Secret Garden.
- The woodland was substantially restocked.

1966–2005: National Trust (owned Cliveden 1942 onwards)

- The National Trust took on the grounds, letting the mansion first to an American college and then in the 1990s as a hotel.
- Localised structural changes occurred to the landscape including:
- Glasshouses removed in the walled garden; car park laid out.
- The Water Garden and its planting extended; a car park created in the Captain’s Field.
- Woodlands and many avenues were replanted.
- The northern amphitheatre was re-cut.
- Jellicoe’s Secret Garden was restored and replanted to designs by Isabelle van Groeningen (2002).
- Graham Stuart Thomas provided planting plans for the great forecourt borders, the Water Garden and the Duke’s Garden.

CLIVEDEN REVEALED

Cliveden is much more than just Lord Orkney’s great early C18 avenues, terrace, parterre and cliffside woodlands. There are features from this and other periods unique to Cliveden, such as Waldo Storey’s Tortoise Fountain for Lord Astor, with its breathtaking views over the river and countryside; not one, but two amphitheatres; the remains of the unique Victorian circular fruit garden; the site of the lost hunting lodge which had its own formal grounds; the connections with Hedsor Court and Taplow Court grounds which together with Cliveden formed a great landscape continuum in the C18.

A Brief History

The Cliveden landscape as we see it now begins with the Duke of Buckingham in the 1670s. He was influenced by Italy: Cliveden echoes the Villa Aldobrandini, one of the villas in Frascati dotted around the hillside near Rome. Buckingham modelled Cliveden as a riverside villa on a great platform with dramatic vistas and topography and a stately river approach. As a statement of his

power and influence it was masterly, although he quickly lost both and died in penury in 1687.

But we should not overlook the earlier landscape: although its history is shadowy, there were two hunting lodges in the deer park in the C16. One stood in the present Pheasantry and pinetum, and by the mid-C18 had a formal garden and drive enclosed by the formal landscape of wooded rides and avenues. Nothing of this survives above ground, but it is an exciting part of the landscape history which has not previously been recognised and the site can still be seen. Perhaps Buckingham built his new villa on the site of the other lodge.

Buckingham's great statement of his importance and rank was taken on by Lord Orkney in the 1690s who imported the French influence to complement the Italianate features. Orkney was one of Marlborough's trusted and capable generals who fought and beat the French in the War of the Spanish Succession in the 1700s, beginning with the Battle of Blenheim. He then employed French designers to give him ideas for his great parterre. With the help of the home-grown Charles Bridgeman he created what seems to be a two-amphitheatre garden — is this unique?

Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II, leased Cliveden after Orkney's death in 1737 until his own untimely death in 1751. George II had visited Orkney, and the royal connection continued, with the river providing a short boat journey to royal Windsor. Although it is difficult to identify Frederick's contribution to the landscape, we know for sure that Thomas Arne's *Rule! Britannia* was performed for the first time at Cliveden for Prince Fred. The gardener's agreement to maintain the garden survives from the time that Prince Fred took it on in 1737. He also leased part of the adjacent Hedsor estate, and the avenue extended the length of the present Grand Avenue into Hedsor Court park, making yet another statement of power.

In the 1770s and 1780s Lord Inchiquin added the style of the English landscape garden to the Italian and French influence. He softened the line of many features, but much of the great formal landscape was left and the landscape was remodelled around the Grand Avenue leading up to the house, the great Green Drive and the parterre. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was employed by Inchiquin in the 1770s, but for work to 'Taplow Court, etc' which might or might not include Cliveden, as the two were then run as one estate. It is almost impossible to pin down exactly what the great Brown did and the attribution is tantalising. In the 1790s Cliveden Spring by the river became renowned as a visitor attraction, and George III and Queen Charlotte travelled up-river from Windsor to take tea there. An elegant little tea house was built in the early C19 which still remains as Spring Cottage.



Cliveden Spring

The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland rebuilt the burnt-out mansion around 1850 and were close friends with Queen Victoria, who visited from Windsor many times. Their gardener, John Fleming, pioneered innovative ideas for bedding on a huge scale in the 1850s and 1860s. He was a great publicist and in a popular book published his techniques, which become common in gardens and public parks. Spring bedding and carpet bedding were his particular speciality, but his schemes have mostly been lost at Cliveden. The parterre beds are still cut to his pattern, even though they are planted up with shrubs.

In the 1890s the 1st Lord Astor created gardens in otherwise fairly drab pockets within Orkney's layout. His extensive and wide-ranging sculpture collection is catholic in taste, ranging from Classical Roman to commissioned pieces by notable contemporary sculptors in the 1890s, and prefaces his collection at Hever Castle, Kent. Astor also commissioned the Japanese Garden next to the car park and developed the Spring Cottage garden with further sculpture by Storey.



The Cliveden Estate in the 1875 Ordnance Survey

The National Trust took on managing the estate in the 1960s. They had to find a new, long term and sustainable use for the house, which has become a hotel, and the grounds are open to the public. They are now looking towards a new phase of rejuvenation of the estate, which is looking rather tired in some places, and this new analysis of the estate is a good foundation for their long-term plans.

Sarah Rutherford

Although this article appeared initially as a flyer, we thought it appropriate to reprint it in our newsletter, as a matter of record.

NEW YEAR'S DAY FLOWER COUNT, 2006

We have been sent a couple of lists of flowers out on New Year's Day, the first from Maureen and Colin Welch of Aylesbury:

Sarcococca confusa
Lamium
Viburnum bodnantense 'Dawn'
Viburnum tinus
Mahonia 'Charity'
Winter Jasmine
Clematis cirrhosa 'Freckles'
Skimmia rubella

A second list came from Liza Wormell of Great Missenden, who "had expected a better tally than this":

Sarcococca confusa
Mahonia
Jasminum nudiflorum
Viburnum
Vinca minor 'alba'
2 roses in bud

and near misses are *Helleborus niger* and *H. foetidus*

These lists will find their place on the website in due course, do remember us for next year.

NEWS AND EVENTS AT WADDES DON

The Frog Fountain Steps

Over the winter, we have been working to install a new scheme for the area of the garden known as Frog Fountain Steps.

This feature, below the Parterre, was always regarded as a mystery, since there was no evidence of a fountain, let alone a frog! Last year essential repairs were carried out to the stonework, and in the process, various archaeological remains came to light. These seemed to relate to a number of incomplete schemes, designed by Ferdinand's architect G.H. Destailleur, but never built.

Meanwhile, the architects Inskip and Jenkins had drawn up a scheme to open up the steps to the surrounding gardens, and create a new focal point for the area with the introduction of three vases set around a central pool of water. The vases (new long-term loans to Waddesdon from Rothschild Family Trusts) were carved by James and William Forsyth, for the Poseidon fountain in the Italian Garden at Witley Court in Worcestershire.

On the basis of the archaeological evidence, it was decided to adapt the scheme to reflect some of the 19th-century elements. The Witley Court vases are now triumphantly installed, their splendid setting a fusion of old and new.

Champagne tasting on the parterre

6.30 to 8.30 pm, Saturday 29 July

Enjoy an informal tasting of four Waddesdon own label champagnes and sparkling wines and canapés, while enjoying the Parterre with its colourful bedding schemes and views over the Vale of Aylesbury. The perfect setting for a relaxing Summer's evening.

£30.00 champagne tasting and canapés; £27.50 two course buffet dinner in the Stables Courtyard with music, weather permitting; or £30.00 three course set dinner in the Manor Restaurant. Early booking is recommended

Sculpture in the gardens

Noon, Friday 4 August

The gardens at Waddesdon are populated with sculptures. Mainly of marble, they animate the garden and layer it with poetic, mythological and allegorical narratives. Humans and animals, urns and figured vases mark pathways, create focal points and provide structures of relative permanence amongst the ever-changing plants. Juliet Carey, Curator, will examine the fascinating, ethereal and timeless stories present in the gardens.

£15.00 (includes Gardens admission). £10.00 NT members

A PARK PROBABLY UNEQUALLED IN ENGLAND: the history of Waddesdon's gardens

Noon, Friday 11 August

As soon as Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild purchased Lodge Hill in the autumn of 1874, he began the transformation of a bare hill-top into a horticultural showpiece. Drawing on a wide range of archival sources, garden historian Sophie Piebenga will examine Baron Ferdinand's role as a gardener, his creation at Waddesdon and the influence of his garden beyond.

£15.00 (includes Gardens admission). £10.00 NT members

To book, please contact the Booking Office on: 01296 653 226, 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday

A NOTE FROM STOWE

by John Walton

March 2006

During my regular walks around Stowe, I try to observe the changes that have taken place and to look out for work in progress. The main feature so far this year has been the glorious display of snowdrops; in several parts of the garden there are extensive carpets of them. Elsewhere the bulbs that have been planted in the last two or three years have formed large clumps, and these should provide an ever improving spectacle. The other noticeable feature of these flowers has been the long flowering period; they first appeared in early February and six weeks later they are still in full bloom.

Another, less spectacular display, has been provided by the hellebores (*Helleborus foetidus*); there are large clumps of these pale green flowers in many areas of the garden. Although spring is late by comparison with recent years, early signs are now evident throughout the garden. Trees are in bud, the yews are showing their minute flowers, the few daffodils that exist in the garden are coming into bud but not yet in flower. A few *Helleborus niger* (Christmas Rose) are in flower, the first Scillas have appeared.

The new path at the Pebble Alcove is finished, although the reseeded grass areas still look bare.

The area behind Walpole, one of the school boarding houses, has been cleared and replanted. When this planting has matured it should provide an effective screen to hide the back of this building. If you don't know this area, it is on your right as you walk from the Temple of Concord and Victory towards the Grotto, once you have crossed the tarmac road.

Many grass areas that have become bare have been reseeded; this includes some paths that have become muddy from use over the years.

Stowe recently featured in a BBC programme about the seven man-made wonders of the Eastern Region. If you don't know this garden or have not visited for some years I do recommend that you go and see this lovely landscaped site.

THE LATE, GREAT, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

Why is it appropriate to include a note about Christo, in this a Buckinghamshire based publication? Well one of our sometime members Kathy Pauley is a volunteer gardener at Dixter, braving the M25 at 5.30 in the morning to get there in time for a long day in the garden, she suggested a piece on Dixter and a couple of her colleagues have kindly contributed short notes.

I remember my first visit with my mum, a drive out from London, way back in the early 70's. To be transported from our tiny paved garden in Fulham to the magical surroundings of this story book manor house in extensive gardens was a delight and must have triggered something off. When we came to leave that same house in the 80s, we removed some 124 pots, and there wasn't much left in the garden by the time they had gone. How much her planting owed to the Dixter approach I shall never know, but it continues to inspire me today. My brother now lives in Northiam, so I continue to visit regularly

In those days the famous feature was the Long (mixed) Border overlooking the meadow, a stunning contrast to the more regularly encountered matching herbaceous borders, at least in gardens on this scale; and indeed a wonderful contrast in feeling and mood.

In recent years it is of course his collaboration with Fergus Garrett at Dixter that has seen new and exciting schemes put in place. First it was the now famous Exotic Garden, replacing the by then tired Rose Garden, its lushness really coming into its own as the season progresses. Looking back at the articles collected in *In My Garden* (Bloomsbury, 1993) I see this was being planted in March 1993; the roses were just coming out then, 'the rending noise of huge old roots reminded me of a hyena devouring a plank of wood'. Now, there is bravery.

Since then many of the until then stock beds with their serried ranks of plants have taken on more the air of advanced prairie planting, clumps and sweeps of plants replacing the former discipline (which I must admit I rather liked). The new look is certainly more exhilarating and leads to a tapestry like effect. Another magic moment was seeing the familiar Dixter dachshunds immortalised in the pebble paving in the walled garden replacing a small and, in a heavily visited space, vulnerable lawn.

A recent major scheme has been the replanting of the stunning Lutyens steps, with their circular treads leading to the long border and house, originally topped by two matched mulberry trees, but one came out long ago. Architecturally stunning, the steps have been planted up with a collection of exotics and succulents, not at all expected, but great fun, and certainly a discouragement to fans of jumping...

And then there is the inevitable background work. One such project was the reducing of the hedges. Inevitably yew, and it is mostly yew at Dixter, gradually outgrows its allotted space, and some years ago now a programme of reduction was begun. For a while the visitors were greeted by venerable hedges reduced back to their bare bones, one side at a time, but these all seem to have recovered. Later the same approach was taken to the much bigger ilex or evergreen oak hedge between the walled garden and topiary lawn, and again not only have they recovered, but a forgotten and not inconsiderable area has opened up. Christo's father's beloved topiary is still a big feature, but where it has died out the bold step to replace with something completely different was taken with little fuss, resulting at one stage in a topiary lawn featuring bamboo and smoke bush amongst the more traditional peacocks, again very uplifting. Finally to quote the great man:

On taking risks: from *The Guardian*, 4 March 2006

Gardeners (or, indeed, people in general) who always play safe are missing out on the thrill of taking risks and occasionally bringing off the longed-for coup. If you love colour, then try some outlandish combinations to see how you get on with them. Orange with magenta, for instance. I think those two work splendidly next to one another.

You'll want a setting for them, and that's where bold foliage comes in. I'm currently crazy on a tender grass, *Setaria palmifolia*. It has broad leaves that are boldly ridged, longitudinally. It's not more than 60cm high, but you can't miss it.

The great thing is not to be timid in your gardening, whether it's colours, shapes, juxtapositions or the contents themselves. Splash around and enjoy yourself. If you buy a banana, it'll not be for its fruit (go to the greengrocer for that) but for its huge leaves. There are some fantastic kinds around with wonderful colouring and markings: expensive, most likely, but then tell yourself how few vices you have, thereby saving thousands of pounds annually. That feel-good reaction will see you proudly bearing home a splendid banana.

From Kathleen

I had only visited Great Dixter house and garden the once before coming to work here; mainly because I'd chosen the genus Clematis as my specialist subject while studying at college, so what better place to come for advice and inspiration.

When a vacancy arose for the position of nursery assistant, the meeting with Christopher Lloyd for the interview seemed a daunting experience, but I needn't have worried. It was an informal interview by the large open fire in the parlour with Christo and his brother Quentin. I proffered my CV to Christo, but he immediately said, looking over the top of his glasses, "I don't believe in those bits of paper". When he telephoned in person two days later and offered me the job, I was completely overwhelmed.

Twenty years later I am still here and so is Christo in the atmosphere he created at Great Dixter.

From Tara Culley

Dixter has always been one of my favourite places. As a beginner in horticulture I would often come there just to lose myself in the riot of colour and exuberance I so loved; I even had my birthday party in the carpark one year with a cake and candles!

So when I qualified at Wisley Gardens I could think of nowhere else I would rather work. I sat down with pen and paper and wrote a letter to Christopher Lloyd. As it happened luck was with me and I began work as a gardener here three years ago. Working for Christo was all I had expected and more. The gardening is complex, dynamic and interesting; there is never a dull moment and the atmosphere of experimentation is exciting. Christo always brought in element of playfulness to his gardening and to his life; if you like the idea of something, have a go and don't be afraid of failure, or that others may not share your tastes! He always encouraged people to be themselves, to have their own opinions and to voice them! He was truly an innovator...

He is greatly missed by all here and we feel lucky to have spent some time with him. We now intend to continue the spirit of Dixter into the future and hope you will continue to support us.

Information about the **Great Dixter Charitable Trust**, which is intended to preserve the long term future and landscape setting of the gardens can be found at our website at www.greatdixter.co.uk

Floreat Dixter!



New Acquisition: South Front of Stowe by John Buckler

A NEW ACQUISITION AT THE COUNTY MUSEUM

The County Museum has recently acquired a watercolour of the south front of Stowe by John Buckler (1770–1851). Buckler and his son, John Chessell Buckler (1793–1894), were well known as architectural artists and painted many churches, country houses and other buildings across England. This large watercolour (492 x 700 mm) shows the south front of Stowe House in about 1810. Although the house at Stowe was begun in the late 17th century, Earl Temple extensively remodelled the south front in the 1770s and it is this new work which is seen in the watercolour. The watercolour was generously purchased for the Museum with grants from the Patrons of the Museum, the National Art Collections Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

The Museum already has a substantial collection of drawings and watercolours by John and John Chessell Buckler, including drawings of Hartwell House by John and views of Denham Place by John Chessell. Additionally the Museum has one of the best public collections of art relating to Stowe which ranges from the early 19th century delicate wash drawings by John Claude Nattes to the vibrant mixed media drawings by John Piper. The South Front at Stowe will be a valuable addition to both groups of material.

Perhaps it's about time we had a show dedicated to Stowe at the Museum again, bringing out all the material in one wonderful celebratory sprawl. I note another appearance of the circular tree bench also shown in some of Nattes views, is this a standard type the NT *could* reintroduce?

PUBLIC CATALOGUE FOUNDATION

Over the next few months the County Museum will be taking part in an exciting project run by the Public Catalogue Foundation. The aim of the Foundation is to produce a series of printed catalogues, county by county, giving details of all oil paintings in public ownership. The catalogues include both paintings on display and those in store in publicly funded collections such as art galleries, museums, council buildings and hospitals. Acrylic and tempera paintings are also included. Six catalogues have already been published, including Kent and, most recently, Suffolk.

Work has now begun on the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire catalogue. The Museum owns 92 oil and acrylic paintings, including the newly acquired *The Jury* by John Morgan. A professional photographer will be digitally photographing all of them in the next few months, along with other paintings owned by Buckinghamshire County Council. Of great benefit to the Museum is the fact that all the photographs and their copyright passes to the Museum after completion of the project, leaving the Museum with a collection of high quality images for its own use. After the photography and editing the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Catalogue will be published in 2007 and be available for sale from the Museum shop. Current prices seem to be about £20 for the paperback and £35 for the hardback version, a real bargain.

Of course they are only (!) cataloguing the works in oil so the magnificent watercolour above won't get in. Perhaps another group will come along to do that project.



Allotted time: twelve months, two blokes, one shed, no idea

by Robin Shelton

Sidgwick and Jackson 2006, £12.99

ISBN 0-283-07032-3

I picked this book up in the bookshop and rapidly became engrossed. Perhaps this is due to the fact that I had just moved and was vaguely thinking of taking on one of the local allotments. This idea seems to have bitten the dust for the moment, though I have now cleared some land opposite my house, which is about the correct size. And sure enough the book does what it says on the cover, but in a most delightful and sympathetic way.

The book details the story of Robin and Steve, two 'mates' who have taken that fateful step, and it details the new life they found on the allotment. Although somewhat meandering and occasionally repetitive, though this is excusable as it reflects the work involved, one is soon engrossed in their adventure. Offered a choice between two plots they go for the one without a suspicious mound in the centre, and by the simple expedient of telling his mate that his share of the rent is £20, neglecting to say that he hadn't split this, Robin the author is soon hard at work. Clearing the ground in stages he reflects on the thrill of taking on a new bit of land, the weeds encountered and working out what to do with the few surviving remnants of a previous occupier, notably some current bushes.

A shed is built, fellow plot holders are encountered and weighed up, and gradually two interrupted lives begin to take on new form. Robin, recently divorced, depressed and broke rediscovers

his father (who died when he was sixteen), strengthens his bond with his two young sons and regains his zest for life. Crops are planted, and eventually harvested; the first spuds are even photographed for posterity, and the miracle that they could increase thirteen-fold over those planted duly recorded and wondered over.

Yes they are fools and ditherers, but they are discovering the joys and pains of gardening, or more properly allotmenting, and who can begrudge them that. I thoroughly enjoyed this gentle tale, and wish them well in ensuing seasons. Perhaps I will make further enquiries...

CB



Book review

Coade Stone

By Hans van Lemmen

Shire Publications, 2006, £4.99

ISBN 0-7478-0644-6

A great lion stands at the southern end of Westminster Bridge, staring defiantly at the Houses of Parliament and makes fitting figure for the cover of this new book from Shire. How lucky we are that when the Lion Brewery was being demolished to make way for the Festival of Britain in 1951 this fine sculpture was preserved. It serves as a fitting memorial to the Coade factory, which stood nearby, and to its founder Mrs Eleanor Coade.

Coade stone is one of those terms one comes across and it is much bandied about in discussion of historic gardens. At last a book that tells all, and profusely illustrated in colour too.

Coade was the Haddonstone/Chilstone of its day, but the range of what was produced was far wider, and the technology

much more refined. And this is where my childhood pottery lessons come in handy because yes, Coade is a ceramic. One of the earliest lessons I learnt when making models was that the material could be made stiffer by the addition of grog, essentially already fired and ground up clay body. And sure enough this is how Coade was built up; though the exact recipe defies research, it combines pipe-clay, flint, sand, glass and stoneware, which have been through the furnace and then ground up fine and added to the clay. The hollow pieces were built up in plaster moulds, before being allowed to dry out and then fired in large kilns.

Coade has a delightful pale terracotta surface, capable of taking very fine, crisp detail, and this combined with its excellent weathering abilities and the density of the surface that throws off the weather, has allowed a multitude of pieces to survive, often overlooked, such as in the multiplicity of architectural detail found throughout London and other Georgian cities in Britain.

Mrs (actually Miss) Eleanor Coade started her business in 1769, its name becoming Coade and Seeley in 1799, till reverting to plain Coade in 1813. Eleanor, now 80 then took on a new partner, William Croggon, and they traded on as Croggon late Coade after her death in 1821, becoming in turn Croggon, until his son sold out in 1840. These names are helpful in dating, as they appear incised on the base of pieces.

The book gives a thorough introduction to the subject, and amply demonstrates the range of work produced. From the most magnificent porticoes, to simple rustication and vermiculation to enhance Georgian terraces, to fine statuary and memorials, Coade made itself ubiquitous, so that it is easy to walk about the many thousand surviving pieces with barely a glance. A twenty page gazetteer gives a partial list of places to see Coade throughout the country, pointing to High Wycombe, Buckingham, Stowe and Taplow as places to spot Coade in Bucks, perhaps we need to add to this list.

CB

If you would like to review a recently published book for us, please get in touch and let us know what you are up to, it may be that we can get you a copy. Then again you may like to revisit a particular favourite of yours, that you think would be of interest to fellow members, again, please feel free to do this and send in the results for publication.

BEDFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Events 2006

Milton Manor House, Beds

11 am, Saturday 24 June

Two course lunch at Milton House, plus tour of the garden. A twentieth century garden laid out by ? who died before finishing it at a young age. Plaque to him in the garden on the moon gate. £18 members £20 non-members.



Rainy Aphrodite:

*The now lost bronze head of Aphrodite,
with Finlay's anagrammatic concrete poem*

(From New Arcadian Journal 33/34, A Cajun Chapbook, p101)

Ian Hamilton Finlay Gardens at Stockwood Park, Luton

10am, Wednesday 12 July

The wonderful, though already neglected, allegorical/revolutionary garden and C20 artwork; at risk from Luton's expansion and vandals. With Patrick Eyres, Director of Little Sparta Trust (the late I.H.Finlay's home and garden).

£18 members, £20 non-members, lunch included. Enquiries to Kate Harwood at kateharwood@fsmail.net or book (with SAE): 78 Broadstone Rd, Harpenden, Herts, AL5 1RE

Woburn Abbey private gardens

30 September

Study Day at Moggerhanger Park

Wednesday, 4 October

Book, or for further information, through Events Organiser: Dorothy Richards, 6 Bromham Road, Biddenham, Bedford MK40 4AF enclosing an SAE or: 01234 353 664

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust and other events in Oxford

Events 2006

AGM to be held at Blewbury

Saturday 17 June

Details from Joanna Matthews, 7 Church Way, Iffley, Oxford OX4 4DY, or: 01865 777 531, or email: grannyjo2648@aol.com

Penson lecture

Guilt and the Garden:

Fear and Loathing in Early Modern Paradise

By Prof. M. Leslie, Rhodes College, Memphis

5pm, Tuesday 20 June

The annual lecture at St John's College: free, and lots of champagne afterwards!! No need to book, always a good event but little publicised, probably with a bit about Botanic gardens.

OGT/AGT Study Day

Oxford's Seventeenth Century Gardens

10am to 4pm Saturday 15 July 2006

Magdalen College, New College and Botanic Garden (all Grade I), lectures and visits.

Cost about £35, including lunch in Magdalen College Hall. Details from Joanna Matthews, as above

Ladies on the Loose: New England Gardeners

by Karen Jessup, at Woodstock Museum

7.30pm, Thursday 21 September

Discover the English Idyll. Early 20th Century American gardeners visited England, and were much influenced by what they saw. Karen Jessup is a landscape historian, Chair of Board of Advisors, NE National Trust of America, and is our only American OGT member.

With a glass of wine and the lecture at 8pm; pay at the door. Members £3 and non-members £4

And Also...

Garden Day at Parnham House

Thursday, 6 July

Dorset Gardens Trust are holding a garden at Parnham by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Michael Treichl. A series of lectures during the day, will be introduced by Penelope Hobhouse. Sir Roy Strong will talk about the creation of The Laskett. Jenny Uglow will talk on 'Small Gardens through Time', and Fergus Dowding will talk on 'The History and Growing of Vegetables'. There will also be a question & answer session chaired by Anna Pavord. These lectures and the Q&A session may be in considerable demand and will be bookable in advance [the price per lecture for non-members of the DGT will be £14 for the lectures and £10 for the Q&A session]. Entrance will be £4 per person, payable at the gate, and there will be plentiful parking; but no dogs please. There will be a wide variety of specialist nurseries and other garden-related suppliers, a choice of refreshments, and craft and book stalls. For further information telephone Sczerina Hichens on 01308 488232 or email james@longfamily.co.uk

AGT Study Day

11 October

Advance notice of an AGT/Lincs GT Study Day at Grimsthorpe Castle (the 'Capability' Brown connection of Steffie Shield's talk this spring).

PARKS AND GARDENS DATABASE UPDATE



At the Business Meeting of the Association of Gardens Trusts held in September, 2005 it was requested that a report on the Parks and Gardens Data Partnership should be circulated to all County Gardens Trusts. All CGTs have a copy of the Bid and are fully aware of its contents, but for simplicity an outline is set out below together with the present position of the Project.

The Project

The Project will stimulate interest and deepen understanding and enjoyment of historic parks and gardens and green spaces in the UK through developing a web portal and accessible layered information resource. It will strengthen and extend volunteer participation in researching and recording parks and garden history, and will broaden engagement with and ownership of the resource and contribute to its sustainability.

It will draw on diffused and very extensive information resources that have not so far been co-ordinated, updated or effectively targeted at key audiences. It will draw together these disparate resources and work with all the different agencies in the sector to create a unified view of this material. It will provide detailed depth profiles of particular sites and thematic trails around garden and landscape styles, features and designers.

It will provide training and support for volunteer, professional and academic contributors to use the system, and have a robust content management system to enable the information resource to be refreshed and expanded with their contributions.

The project will create and make available online a web-based portal which will provide access to over 6,000 basic records of parks and gardens across England and Wales and c.1,000 sites in Scotland and Northern Ireland. At least 500 of these records will provide more detailed information, including historical context, narratives and other in-depth content.

Involvement of County Gardens Trusts

Several County Gardens Trusts contributed data to the old York University Parks and Gardens database c.1996–97 and this will be incorporated into the new project. As soon as staff are in place a data audit will be carried out with the CGT's to establish what kind of records they hold and to introduce the Project to the trusts. The feasibility study for the project identified a pool of 265 active garden recorders throughout the CGT's and it is anticipated that the volunteer's work will include the following:

- creating Level 1 (basic) records for parks and gardens within

specific counties where no record currently exists.

- identifying and collating Level 1 and Level 2 records within each CGT for inclusion on the database
- upgrading level 1 records to Level 2
- surveying unrecorded sites
- checking and editing records online to ensure they are accurate in terms of the scope and nature of the contents
- selecting and writing content for the online learning resources.
- updating records when new information comes to light.

Level 1 records are basic records of site identification and location, a brief description of type and history, known persons associated with it such as designers, and a short bibliography. Level 2 records are more detailed studies of historical context. It is envisaged that pilot studies will be undertaken to assess the volunteer's role in gathering and supplying the data required for the project and in the training and support needed to achieve these targets. The Volunteer Co-ordinators, as their title suggests, will train and support the volunteers throughout.

Future of the Project

Funding has been provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund for three years and the partners are determined to ensure continuity of the project beyond this period. The Project Board and the Project Manager are working to identify how this can be achieved.

*Peter Lindesay
February 2006*

AGT AGM Plant Hunters 2006

1 to 3 September

This will be hosted by the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust and will be based at Bangor. The AGM and Business Meeting take place on Friday afternoon followed in the evening by a Plant Hunting Talk by Bleddyn and Sue Lloyd-Jones, modern plant hunters. On Saturday the Keynote talk by Toby Musgrave will be followed by visits to gardens, followed in the evening by the Conference Dinner. On Sunday there will be a talk on the Tradescants and other early Plant Hunters by Jennifer Potter, followed by visits to gardens. Gardens to be visited will include Bodnant, Gwydir Castle, Portmeirion and Crug Farm Nursery. Cost for the whole weekend is £250. Further details: Colonel R H Gilbertson, Coedy-Ffynnon, Lampeter Velfrey, Narberth, Pembrokeshire, SA67 8UJ, email: rh.gilbertson@virgin.net. Cheques payable to: R H Gilbertson (AGT Account) should be sent to Ros Laidlaw, Ty Leri, Talybont, Ceredigion, SY24 5ER

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To keep up to date with the latest about the BGT please look at our website www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

The deadline for the next *Bucks Gardener* (24) is August 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