



Sussex Gardens Trust

Encouraging the protection, conservation and evolution
of the local garden heritage

Newsletter No. 73

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Queen Elizabeth Oak, Cowdray Park near Midhurst. Photo: Bob Epsom

From the Editor

We have a long relationship with our historic and venerable trees in this country, whether the mighty oak of wood and forest, the familiar London plane of the city's streets, the now endangered ash of the hedgerow, or even an ancient apple tree in a garden. One of the first botanists to collect records of notable British trees was John Evelyn, publishing *Sylva* in 1664, encouraging the planting of trees to provide timber for the British navy. Three centuries later in 1988 the Tree Register began recording trees notable for rare or historic associations and in 1993 the Ancient Tree Forum was founded

to focus on the conservation of ancient and veteran trees. Local groups were established throughout the country and in this issue Bob Epsom, from the South Downs National Park Authority, reports on the setting up in 2019 of the first regional group in Sussex. SGT will be connecting with this group to share information about ancient trees in the county.

At the end of last year the SGT research group saw the culmination of their dedicated detective work with the publication of *Humphry Repton in Sussex*. Susi Batty, the editor, reflects

on the ways in which Repton's bicentenary was celebrated locally and nationally, whilst two members of the group recall their surprise at discovering previously unknown facts about Repton when delving into the archives.

We always welcome contributions to the Newsletter from our members and on page 10 Jack Izatt describes an innovative sculpture in the heart of Chichester with unexpected garden connections. Angela Palmerton, a new member of SGT, has recreated an old photograph of gardeners which has been discovered during research into the King Edward VII Hospital estate near Midhurst, originally planted by Gertrude Jekyll.

The programme of SGT events in 2019 begins with the Spring Lectures at Clair Hall in March, with an opportunity in April to see the beautiful spring

garden of The Old Vicarage in Washington. Full details of our visits for the spring and summer can be found on pages 16 and 17.

The artist Ivon Hitchens, who lived in Sussex in the 1940s, will be the subject of a forthcoming exhibition at the Garden Museum, telling the story through his paintings of the colourful garden that he created with his wife in the Sussex woodlands. The story of another much loved Sussex garden, West Dean, is celebrated in a new book written by the head gardeners and you can read a review in this issue. In contrast, the wildlife that manages to thrive in the urban landscape is the subject of a fascinating book by Bob Gilbert, who traces our unique relationship with the trees that flourish on London streets.

Sally Ingram

Update from Council

Chair

When I was young, my mother bought an old wind-up gramophone at auction with a collection of old Bakelite records in their original brown slip covers. For us kids, there were two we prized – the Song of the Prune (type it into your search engine and play it!) and The Chairman's Remarks which even my father found funny for its serious pomposity, endless repetition and lack of any real content in the verbiage. But there is some real content here.

I am very pleased that my search for members to volunteer themselves on to Council has borne fruit. Subject to members' approval at the AGM, John and Jackie Dorkings, Julie O' Hara and Penny Vasey have all come forward and stand for election to Council. Council propose their election wholeheartedly. They came to our February meeting of Council and have already proved the value of "new blood". There is a "but" and it is this. We need a steady stream of members who are prepared to help, whether on Council, as ad hoc helpers for specific events, as researchers or as conservation committee members. A few members to whom I spoke towards the end of 2018 have already said that they would help on this basis and a few new members have indicated their interests, an enthusiasm which we need to capture. We are still looking for members for the roles of Events Coordinators to take over from Gwen and Colin Chinnery who have done a sterling job over the past few years, Treasurer and Honorary Examiner of our annual accounts as Pat Dauncey and Tony Codd respectively

will be stepping down in twelve months' time and, finally, a member conversant with PR and marketing to help us with our online presence.

At our recent meeting, we spent an hour looking into the future. Whatever we do, we want to do well so it is a question of matching resource and aspiration. Garden events and lectures are key. This newsletter includes details of this summer's programme and we are already looking ahead to next winter's programme of events. Research and conservation are also central and we shall be re-examining our research approach, not just for its own sake but how we publicise our research and feed it in to the public domain. Education is a continuing theme. The RHS have a schools' gardening campaign and many county garden trusts have educational programmes but our early thinking is turning more to those in further education pursuing garden related courses. Members of Council have been asked to look at a variety of issues for the next Council meeting and we would welcome any views which you would like to share. If you go onto the Yorkshire Gardens Trust website, you will find their business plan, under the "about" tab, which might stimulate some thoughts.

Finally, with this newsletter, you will find the papers for our Annual General Meeting. These include a review of the activities of your Trust in 2018 which I will not repeat here except to thank, on your behalf, all those on Council and other members who commit so much time and effort to making the Sussex Gardens Trust the success it is.

Marcus Batty

Sussex Ancient Tree Forum

By Bob Epsom,
South Downs National Park Authority

This spring sees the launch of the Sussex group of the Ancient Tree Forum. The Ancient Tree Forum (ATF) was founded back in 1993 bringing together those that had a real passion for these special trees and wanting to safeguard them for the future. The vision and objectives of the Ancient Tree Forum, which the Sussex local group will adopt, is for ancient and other veteran trees, their wildlife, and their heritage and cultural values to be safeguarded now and in the future.

To achieve this vision, we aim:

- To champion ancient trees and their wildlife, heritage and cultural values and guarantee their future with a robust system of protection
- To secure and expand future generations of ancient trees
- To develop and share knowledge and experience of ancient trees and awaken people of all ages to their beauty and value

Our overall aim is to have no further avoidable loss of ancient and veteran trees. Ancient trees are those that have reached a remarkable age for their species. A yew or an oak will be ancient after hundreds of years compared with a silver birch that will be ancient at 100 years. Veteran trees do not have to have reached a significant age but will have characteristics of being old and provide great wildlife value. Notable trees are those that are significant in size and form compared with its surrounding trees.

Sussex has had many of its trees recorded thanks to the Tree Register of Great Britain, the Ancient Tree Inventory and various other recording projects with over 5,000 recorded. However we believe that there are more to be discovered and recorded. As well as helping to record trees the group will run field visits, run training courses and provide advice. Many of the recorded trees within the county are found within parks and gardens with over a quarter of the trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory found on sites registered as Historic Parks and Gardens. Examples include Capability Brown landscapes of Petworth and Ashburnham Parks. However many of the lesser known gardens and parks may still be under recorded in terms of their trees. Many trees pre-date the designers and were originally part of former deer parks and wood-pastures which were then incorporated into the parks designs.

William Sawrey Gilpin, the landscape designer made the comment: "What is more beautiful than an old tree with a hollow trunk, or with a dead arm, a drooping bough, or a decaying branch?" His

famous uncle, the Reverend William Gilpin, made many similar comments in his work: *Remarks on forest scenery, and other woodland views (relative chiefly to picturesque beauty)*.

As well as being found in parks and gardens, significant trees are found within the rich tapestry of woodlands, hedgerows and fields across the county but also within the urban setting as development has expanded.

The formation of the Sussex ATF has been led by local staff of the Woodland Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority but has been working with other organisations including the Sussex Gardens Trust in helping shape the direction of the group. We will be holding a launch event and field visit to Sheffield Park on May 11, 2019. Bookings will be open in March and will be done through the Ancient Tree Forum website. Following this we hope to have several field visits a year covering all ends of the county.

If you would like to know more about the Sussex ATF and ancient trees in general please visit the Ancient Tree Forum website where you can sign up to the e newsletter to keep up to dates with events happening. Please remember to tick the Sussex region box.

<http://www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/>

If you would like to contact us directly, please email sussex@ancienttreeforum.co.uk and we will get back to you.

The Tree Register

Do you know of any ancient or unusual trees in Sussex which may not have been recorded? Ron Kemeny is a local volunteer recorder for the Tree Register which is a registered charity collating and updating a growing database of notable trees throughout Britain and Ireland. The database records details of rare, unusual and historically significant trees. The Register discovers the location of exceptionally large, tall, ancient and veteran trees and also determines if a local tree is of greater national importance due to its size and age. Information gathered is used by a large and diverse number of organisations and researchers. The honorary registrar Owen Johnson received an MBE this year for Services to the Environment. Ron Kemeny would be pleased to hear from you and he is always able to check if a particular tree or property is already on the Tree Register.

He can be contacted by SGT members at ron@kemeny.eu

SGT Winter Lunch and Lectures at Borde Hill Garden 28 November 2018

By Sally Ingram

Our lectures for this final SGT event of the year were given by Andrewjohn Stephenson Clarke, the owner of Borde Hill, and the garden historian and writer, David Marsh.



The Italian Garden at Borde Hill with Head Gardener, Andy Stevens, and a weather-hardy group of SGT members

Andrewjohn Stephenson Clarke: from Camellias to Colour: building on a wealth of history

It was a day of rain showers and blustery winds when SGT members gathered at Borde Hill for the Christmas lectures but, warmly welcomed by our hosts, Andrewjohn Stephenson Clark and Eleni Stephenson Clarke, we could forget about the weather (although an excited tribe of ducks out on the lawn tried reminding us from time to time) and relax in the comfortable surroundings of the marquee at Jeremy's Restaurant.

In the first lecture of the day Andrewjohn gave an illuminating account of how Borde Hill was created by four generations of his family who, together with the great plant hunters, introduced the rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and camellias that continue to delight visitors today.

The house was built in 1598 by Stephen Borde, a physician interested in the healing properties of vegetables and herbs. When Andrewjohn's great grandfather, Colonel Stephenson Clarke, purchased the mansion in 1893 the planting of the gardens began. Stephenson Clarke sponsored

the plant hunters such as Ernest Wilson who in 1899 started collecting plants from China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, including *Picea*, *Pinus*, *Acer*, and the handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucrata*. George Forrest searched out specimens in China and Tibet and Frank Kingdon-Ward brought back rhododendrons and *Magnolia sieboldii* from his travels to China, Tibet and Burma. Stephenson Clarke then had these new shrubs and trees from across the world planted at Borde Hill.

Andrewjohn inherited the estate in the 1970s and decided to create different areas within the garden, each with their unique style and name; for example, the rose garden, planted in 1996, was named after Andrewjohn's daughter, Jay Robin. There are now as many as a hundred different varieties of David Austin roses in this formal garden. More recently, in the Midsummer Borders designed by Dr Tony Lord, herbaceous plants have been mixed with Gold Standard roses, chosen for their disease resistance and longevity. Andrewjohn said that the garden has continued to evolve, whether to complement the unfolding seasons or to interest and encourage the public to come and enjoy the gardens. Back in 1982 Robert Stephenson Clarke converted an area that had once been the family tennis court into an Italian garden with magnificent views across the South Park and lakes. The Round Dell area, originally the site of iron working and then an exotic garden, has been recreated by a new designer, Sophie Walker, keeping the original concept of a jungle atmosphere but with newer plantings.

Avoiding the rain showers and bracing ourselves against the wind, we were then taken out on a tour by the head gardener, Andy Stevens. Even on a winter's day Borde Hill has much to enjoy and inspire. We could see some examples of the way in which the garden is always changing, such as the installation of the 'Infinity Box' in the Long Dell, as well as something of its longer history. Borde Hill has the largest number of Champion trees in a private collection which together with its rhododendrons, acers and magnolias form a rich heritage across its 200-acre estate. I am sure many members will have been enticed to make a return visit.

David Marsh: Exploits of the Plant Hunters

The story of how remarkable plant hunters brought us the flora that we see in our gardens today was the theme of the afternoon lecture, presented by David Marsh.

The first recorded plant expedition was in ancient Egypt and by a woman, Queen Hatshepsut, who sent ships to the land of Punt, south east of Egypt, to gather frankincense and myrrh together with a number of trees, then transplanted into her own temples. David explained that this was the start of plants moving rapidly around the world. As campaigns went out to conquer land or to open up trade routes, beautiful and useful plants moved from East to West, introducing new crops for food, fruit for orchards and ornamental flowers for the garden.

After the Ice Age Britain's landscape had probably no more than two hundred species, but with the Roman invasion conquest and trade enabled a vast system of plant movement to flourish, bringing leeks, onions, opium poppy and hemlock to enrich our flora. After the Romans departed British gardens then benefitted from the journeys of the Crusaders who brought back ideas from Islamic gardens. Travellers in Persia and Central Asia would have seen poppies, anemones, larkspur, marigolds and the cottage-garden favourite the hollyhock, thought to have originated in East Asia, which migrated over the years to the Middle East before making its way to Britain.

The opening up of sea routes and the discovery of America led to artichokes and apricots, nasturtiums and sunflowers appearing in our gardens, and a journal belonging to Columbus records that he took samples of plants and trees that he thought valuable.

In 1550 there were just thirty-six non-native plants in Britain but only fifty years later this had

risen to one hundred and three. The setting up of the Oxford Botanic Garden in 1621 and the keeping of records of all plants in the garden, which was published as a catalogue in 1648, led to a more purposeful hunting of plants. James Petiver set up an apothecary practice in London in 1692 where he received specimens of plants by post, particularly from America. Realising that most of these rotted on the way to Britain he set out instructions how to wrap and title each plant, according to place and time when it was collected.

By 1700 there were two hundred and twenty-nine non-native plants in Britain. Collectors were now swapping plants and entering the nursery trade. Thomas Fairchild at Hoxton began working with collectors across America, then propagating specimens in his nursery and issuing a catalogue of 'exotic and domestic' plants for sale. As Britain expanded its empire naval scientific expeditions were planned. The botanist Joseph Banks paid to join the Royal Navy on a world trip, arriving in Botany Bay in 1770 where he made a large collection of Australian flora. On his return Banks became director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew sending out other botanists to collect plants for its garden.

David explained how the invention of the Wardian case in the 1800s became important in transforming plant collecting. Previously, plants sent across the ocean frequently died during transportation but an experiment by a physician, Dr. Ward, led to the development of a glass case in which plants could be sealed and sustained. Initially test cases were filled with ferns and grasses sent by ship to Australia. After a long voyage ninety nine percent of the plants had survived, and a number of Australian plants then made the return trip.

Plant collecting has not been without its 'mistakes', David said. *Buddleja davidii*, originally introduced from Peru and loved by gardeners, is now designated as a non-native invasive species, whilst it is now an offence to grow Japanese knotweed, advocated by William Robinson, in the wild. And then there are many plants throughout the world which are themselves in danger, orchids and cactus palms for example, as a result of plant-collecting.

David's entertaining and well-researched account of how plants have arrived from other parts of the world, through exploration, opening of sea routes, expansion and exploits, widened our perception of how plant hunting and the adventurous collectors shaped our gardens.

Repton Remembered

By Susi Batty

Through Sussex Eyes

In fact it is hard to remember when my 'affair' with Humphry Repton began. Somewhat exhausted after our publication of *Capability Brown in Sussex* for the three hundred year celebration of his birth, there was, perhaps, a slight reluctance to undertake more research so soon. However, a few of us attended a preliminary meeting organised by the Gardens Trust in April, 2017 and, faced with some thirty enthusiastic garden historians from Cumbria to Cornwall, it became apparent that we had to join this national project.

Different ways of celebrating Repton's death in 1818 were discussed: study days, community visits and picnics, guided walks, schools projects, reproductions of his Red Books and recreations of Reptonian landscapes. With the realisation that there were substantially more Repton sites in Sussex than in most other counties and that we might have access to ten of his Red Books, excitement began to rise and very quickly we decided to investigate every one of the Sussex sites and to publish our findings. We built a team of twelve dedicated researchers who chose – or who were forcibly allocated – sites; and worked out a basic plan for site assessment and examination before setting out on Project Repton. The results of this arduous, sometimes frustrating, but often thrilling research was published in November last year as *Humphry Repton in Sussex*.

All twelve of us have vivid memories of our journey, of doors unexpectedly closed and doors fortuitously open. You can read about Marcus Batty's and Judy Tarling's experiences elsewhere in this Newsletter but here are a few of the other highlights.

Sally Ingram came across a hitherto unnoticed copy of a watercolour dated 1805 in Gerald Loder's history of Wakehurst Place. It was Repton's habit to paint initial watercolour sketches prior to his finished artwork for Peacock's *The Polite Repository*. This sketch



Repton surveying, from Sketches and Hints, 1795 (private collection)

bears a close similarity to the etching (dated 1808) and may well be by Repton. A happy discovery.

For Maggie Hill ('I'm not a researcher or a writer'), research led her to the records office in Kent and satisfying proof, through payments to Repton in the Drummond passbook, that he had

worked at Stonelands. She also uncovered the story of the marriage that funded Repton's work there: very much a case of 'How to keep my husband amused'.

Melissa Hay recalls walking through the grounds of Bayham Abbey and realising, with a shiver, that she was literally treading in Repton's footsteps. This is a site which straddles the Sussex/Kent county borders, and, after meticulous research, Melissa came to rather different conclusions about the landscape (see Kent Garden Trusts' publication, *Humphry Repton in Kent*). We sometimes forget that interpretation of a landscape is not always absolute.

Caroline Scaramanga was welcomed with open arms by the Chatsworth Estate, who own the Red Book for Compton Place. They gave her almost unlimited access to their archives and generously offered to provide a digital copy of the Red Book for Compton Place to be held at ESRO for further research.

David Bridges, a volunteer and researcher at Uppark and new to our research, was frustrated in his attempts to make use of the Red Book there but delighted to follow the subtext in letters held in the WSRO archives, identifying the changing relationship of Repton and Harry Fetherstonhaugh and a shift from consultant and client to one of friendship.

I made a number of visits to Little Green, now an inspiring school for boys with social, emotional and mental health needs. Repton's landscape there lies sleeping but clear evidence of the eighteenth century environment remains; and the boys embraced a term of research with heartening enthusiasm as, guided by the



staff, they created Repton links with almost every subject. They constructed 'Reptonian' plant containers in technology and carpentry lessons, painted masterpieces of the old house, wrote job descriptions for landscape gardeners, searched the woods and fields for evidence of lost features and considered what might have been planted in Repton's time in the two-acre walled garden. It was a privilege to have introduced them to a greater understanding of their daytime surroundings.

Through National Eyes

That meeting in April 2017 was the first of several organised by the Gardens Trust and these provided a valuable forum for sharing research. Exhibitions and study days sprang up everywhere, often held on Repton sites or hosted by historical and horticultural institutions. It would have been impossible to attend them all but those which I managed to catch greatly enriched my understanding of Repton's work.

Appropriately, the main conference was organised jointly by the Norfolk Gardens Trust and the GT who provided a splendid array of speakers and site visits. The SGT held its own study day at Brightling Park and shared a second day with Kent Garden Trust at Cobham Hall: two very different sites which complemented each other well. Alexandra Loske, the Curator at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, gave a lecture on Repton's exquisite designs for the Royal Pavilion and allowed us to turn the pages of his precious Red Book. The GT day at Kenwood House in Hampstead, organised by Linden Groves, was a rather more relaxed affair, with a Repton-inspired dessert at lunch and eighteenth century garden games.

The Garden Museum held several events, including lectures, seminars and an exhibition, 'Repton Revealed'. Christopher Woodward

borrowed as many Red Books as he possibly could and Stephen Daniels curated a wonderful display of before and after 'slides' and explanatory text. I returned to it several times. Eminent scholars and historians gathered for the two very stimulating day seminars, 'Discovering the Real Repton' and 'Repton Revived'.

Seven county garden trusts chose to publish new books on Repton's work and it was fascinating to read some of them. One of the most rigorous was, unsurprisingly, from Norfolk but two that I found especially enthralling were *Repton in London: the Gardens and Landscapes of Humphry Repton in the London Boroughs* and *On the Spot: the Yorkshire Red Books of Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener*, edited by Patrick Eyres and Karen Lynch. Repton's London was not the London we know: there was far more green space and these estates, many of which have now been devoured by the developing city, would have had room to breathe. In the beautifully illustrated *On the Spot*, Yorkshire Gardens Trust chose to provide a brief introduction to each site and, where Red Books were extant, a transcription; concluding with a thoughtful paper by Patrick Ayres titled 'The Talented Mr Repton: Conflict, Culture and Contradiction in the Yorkshire Red Books'. We await the publication of John Phibbs' book on Repton which will follow his seminal work on 'Capability' Brown published in 2017.

Repton's own writing is serious, often flowery and convoluted, and we have all dug deep into his treatises; but looking back on eighteen months with Humphry I also like to recall a more carefree side. In his *Memoirs* he merrily recounts his first visit to Michelgrove when he and the owner, Richard Walker, almost burnt

the house down by lighting a fire in a blocked chimney, noting that it would have greatly simplified the decision whether to extend or rebuild the house. In another extract he describes a masquerade given by the Walkers where he wore a Dutch burgomaster's cloak covered with

proverbs written on scraps of paper and a cap with bells and the inscription 'Folly in the Cloke of Wisdom'. My final light hearted image is of Repton tossing a coin with the architect, James Wyatt, to decide which of them was to design a birdcage and which an apron for Lady Sheffield.

Repton Research: surprising encounters by SGT members

A musical note at Heathfield Park

You never know where it will come from or where it will take you. A tiny piece of information which might be glossed over by one person might lead to a whole new world for another. This is why research is so absorbing and addictive. One thing leads to another and, once you start, you will never want to stop! So many ideas to follow up and not enough hours in the day. Every person sees history in the light of their own particular knowledge and experience, and no two people will agree on the most important aspect of any garden, painting or document.

In my case, a chance remark in Roy Pryce's exemplary biography of *Heathfield Park, a Private Estate and a Wealden Town* about some obscure glees, or songs, caught my eye. The obscure composer he mentioned would probably not have meant anything to most people but, as a lifetime associate of the Royal Academy of Music, I had heard of William Crotch, its first principal (1822), but he was known to me by name only. As I was already engaged in research about Repton's work at Heathfield Park, I thought this might be worth further investigation. A quick search in the British Library catalogue on-line revealed two printed songs with the name of Heathfield Park in their titles: 'Sweet Sylvan Scenes! On leaving Heathfield Park' for 5 voices, and 'On returning to Heathfield Park' for 4 voices.

The whole story of the songs and their creation gradually emerged from small details collected over the next few months from various sources: the memorial tablet for the Newbery family in Heathfield Church, Repton's Red Book for Heathfield Park, the musical activities of Repton's client Francis Newbery and Repton himself, and the lining up of all these things with a few hints provided by Professor Stephen Daniels who alerted me to a book of poetry published by Newbery in his later life. Intense scrutiny of all these sources and the information they held told a very sad story. Newbery's daughter had been a musician, which we know from his elegy

on her death, and had contrived the text of the two poems, later set to music by Crotch, from Repton's description of the Park in the Red Book. Unfortunately, the exact date of the composition of the songs is not known at present, although the paper on which they are printed might yet reveal the date of publication. It is possible that Mary died before they were composed, as the first song has two soprano parts and the second only one. Was she the missing soprano?

I have written the whole story up in the SGT's new publication *Humphry Repton in Sussex* and will be telling it in detail at the SGT meeting on March 30, along with descriptions of other, more fun amateur dramatic activities by the Newbery family at Heathfield Park, which reveal a familiarity with the world of the late eighteenth-century London theatre.

Judy Tarling

Humphry Repton – an unexpected discovery

When a piece of research helps another, it is very satisfying particularly when that other is a distinguished person in his field. That I was able to help is the result of pure coincidence.

Research for the article on Kidbrooke Park for our publication, *Humphry Repton in Sussex*, naturally focused on the papers of the then owner, Charles Abbot, held in the National Archive. Abbot was a distinguished parliamentarian who was elected as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1802, a position he held until 1817. There are two sets of diaries. The printed version, dealing only with his official position, was no help but is fascinating in its coverage of the issues facing Parliament at the beginning of the nineteenth century: the Napoleonic wars, Irish and Catholic questions, George III's illness and the Regency, the levelling of charges of impropriety against the Princess of Wales and the resignation of the Duke of York as commander in chief following allegations of corruption. It is the original manuscript version of his diaries and records which contain, in addition

to the parliamentary affairs later put into print, the account of activities at Kidbrooke.

At Kent Garden's Trust day at Cobham Hall in October 2018, Repton scholar Professor Stephen Daniels surveyed Repton's work nationally and the new perspectives generated by research at local level across the country. He then put forward his hunch that Repton may even have worked at Westminster, showing a contemporary image (fig. 1) from *Peacock's Polite Repository*



Fig. 1 *Peacock's Polite Repository*, 1808

looking across the garden to Lambeth Palace. The second illustration (fig.2), dated 1830, shows the Speaker's Garden which lay just upstream of Westminster Bridge and is now underneath the current Parliament buildings, constructed after the fire of 1834.

Research at the National Archive into Abbot's manuscript journals and records had uncovered letters by Repton which clearly did not all relate to Kidbrooke Park nor to the promotion of the interests of his architect son who was competing for a project at Westminster. To give a flavour of the detective work, a letter of 12 March 1807 (fig.3) written by Repton to Charles Abbot, supported Stephen Daniel's proposition by referring to



Fig.2 www.british-history.ac.uk/old-new-london/vol3

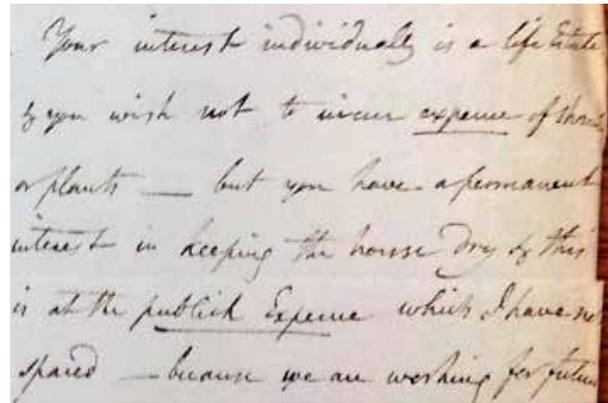


Fig. 3 Letter 12 March 1807 by Repton PRO 30/9/15 (courtesy the National Archive)

work "at the publick expense" and the short term interest that he had in the property as Speaker. Earlier in the letter which was written from a London hotel in St Martin's Lane, a meeting has been called for 3.00 p.m. on the following day "when you will probably be engaged" with "Mr Burchell or his foreman" but wondered whether "by any good fortune I could have five minutes conversation with you on the Spot." Parliament was then in session and Mr Burchell was a London nurseryman. All this points to a commission for the Speaker within the precincts of Parliament. The rebuilding of the Speaker's House by James Wyatt was finished in very early 1808; garden work in early 1807 would not be unexpected nor would the need to keep the house and terrace dry given the proximity of the river Thames. Further references in the journals provide additional support for the argument that it is the Speaker's House which is the subject of the work.

That the Sussex and Kent Gardens Trusts were collaborating over Repton, that Kent chose Stephen Daniels as the expert lecturer, that Stephen illustrated his wide thinking with his hunch over Westminster and that I was one of the Sussex members there on the day was such a coincidence. It does however illustrate how important it is to share research generously and to pass on knowledge which might be helpful elsewhere. In my case, I was wrong to assume that the material which I had come across was probably well known. But to finish with Stephen Daniel's words, written after I had given him the references and he had gone to the National Archive to check the material for himself, "this discovery has not just added another commission to the list, but has transformed my view of Repton's work as a whole, and set in train a further project on his work as an urban planner, as part of reshaping the landscape of the British state."

Marcus Batty

Recent Discoveries by SGT Members

Peace and War

By Jack Izatt

Given that 2018 marked the centenary of the armistice ending the First World War it is not surprising that communities around the country made a special effort to remember the occasion. I was delighted to find that Chichester had commissioned an innovative sculpture to sit in the same area as the existing war memorial. Its garden connections will be of interest to SGT members.

The sculpture was carved from a huge piece of oak, part of a well-loved tree which had stood for more than one hundred years, until 2017, in the nearby allotments. The carving appears at first sight to be of two men sitting back to back. In fact both are based on the same person who represents all who took part in the war. The figure on the north side shows him at war, sitting hunched in his soldier's uniform, a rifle at his side, and, because he is facing north, even on a sunny day the effect is quite gloomy. In contrast, the figure facing south, who has the benefit of the sun, is shown with a spade at his side and holding a flowerpot to depict his



connection with the land. The inspiration for both figures was Private Alfred Smith, a nurseryman from Sussex, who enlisted in 1915, aged 29. Wounded in 1916, he was invalided out of the army later that year. He died in 1978 aged 92.

In my limited experience the sculpture is unique in that it displays not only war but also peace. The figure depicting war is a familiar potent image. That standing for peace shows neither nature, family, home, nor one of the arts, nor any work but horticulture: gardening, and plant growing, creation and re-creation rather than destruction.

Gardens are, of course, traditionally places of remembrance and Litten Gardens is just such a place. However, the aspect of the new sculpture that appeals so much to me is that it contrasts an activity such as war with the activity of horticulture: the epitome of peace.

Members visiting Chichester who would like to see the sculpture should proceed east to the end of East Street, take the left fork along Stane Street to St Pancras where they will find Litten Gardens on the left. The war memorial is clearly visible and the new sculpture is just to the north of that.



Gardening as Therapy – recreating a Jekyll design for a sanatorium in Midhurst

The Director and Founder of Lady Penelope Gardens, Angela Palmerton, is a corporate member of SGT. In this article she describes how the discovery of a historic photograph led to members of her team recreating a scene in a garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll. The gardens and grounds were a design collaboration at the beginning of the twentieth century between H. Percy Adams with extensive planting plans by Jekyll.

When Jekyll began work on the King Edward VII Sanatorium in 1905, she had successfully supplied plants for private clients from the plant nursery at Munstead Wood for a number of years, but the Sanatorium is thought to have been her first public commission.

The building, grounds and flowerbeds were designed by Percy Adams whilst Jekyll created the plans for the borders and supplied the plants. It was an ambitious project with seven gardens and forty-nine beds, more than a thousand feet of stone walls requiring plants as well as piers on the building which were wired for planting. The majority of the plants came from her nursery although the rhododendrons came from the plant nurseries of Jackman's and Waterer's.*



This black and white photograph from over a hundred years ago was uncovered by City & Country, heritage property developers, during research into the history of the King Edward VII Hospital estate just outside Midhurst, West Sussex. The photograph shows patients working in the gardens where as many as seventy-five per cent of the patients were given some form of work in the garden as therapy.

The gardens have been restored and Lady Penelope Gardens are responsible for maintaining the historic gardens and grounds. This was when the idea to recreate the original photograph was born. "I suggested the idea that it would be great fun to recreate the original photograph and pay homage to the staff and patients whose home it was then", Angela Palmerton said. "My team were very eager models! Not only are they highly skilled horticulturists, but also now professional models!"

Suzanne Aplin, Sales and Marketing Director of City & Country said: "We absolutely love discovering the true history of the buildings and gardens that we restore. It has been a pleasure to work alongside Lady Penelope Gardens to bring the gardens back to life and acknowledge Gertrude Jekyll's original designs".

The gardens are listed on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens and at Horticulture Week Custodian Awards 2018, Lady Penelope Gardens were delighted to be Finalists in the Best Gardens or Arboretum (one-to-five staff) for their work on this very special garden.

* See 'The Plant Nursery at Munstead Wood' by Michael Tooley, in *Gertrude Jekyll: essays on the life of a working amateur*, ed. Michael Tooley & Primrose Arnanter, Michaelmas Books (1995)



Photo: Paul ArtHouse Digital

Culture Under the Stars: a seminar at the Garden Museum

By Marcus Batty

An exploration of “outdoor cultures” in six European cities was the subject of a recent day’s symposium at the Garden Museum. Not so much concerned with the physicality of the spaces selected, the speakers concentrated on what they meant to the people. This paper gives a quick overview.

Thus Christopher Woodward, director of the Garden Museum, likened Vauxhall Gardens to an experience of paradise, in the sense of exclusion from an outside world by passing through gates into an Arcadian space enclosed by walls. The concept of “elegant innocence” was maintained for years, policed in a gentle way, trouble mostly being caused by tipsy young buck. That Vauxhall gardens survived for so long was attributed to the sense of excitement it brought with its mix of social class, music, art, novelties, its lighting up of the dark forest allées at nine p.m and even, in later years, balloon flights as well as royal patronage. There was a feeling of suspension of reality, of freedom within limits.

The Palais-Royal north of the Louvre in Paris was a very different space. Defining the initial development of the French royal gardens as gardens of power, pleasure, and competition (in the sense that the Royal family was seeking to establish its court as a pre-eminent cultural centre in Europe), Philip Mansel showed how they gradually became public spaces. It was in 1792 that the Duc d’Orleans opened the Palais-Royal, constructed in 1633, to the public. Originally beautiful palace gardens, the space was gradually turned over to elegant shopping booths, introduced in the 1780s, this commercialisation spreading with the opening of cafes and restaurants, hair salons and bookshops so that by day it was a centre for socialising and fashionable leisure away from the noise and dirt of the streets. It also became a centre not only of vice, with gambling dens and the apartments of the ladies of the night who frequented the square, but also of political intrigue. It was here that the insurrection of July 1789 commenced, leading to the storming of the Bastille, and where the anti-Royalist rebellion of 1830 was said to have started. A few months after, a liberal writer, Narcisse de Salvandy, had commented to the Duc d’Orleans in the Palais-Royal “this banquet is quite Neapolitan; we are dancing over a volcano.”

In 1836 the courtesans were expelled and the Palais-Royal gradually regained respectability.

The Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen were created in 1843 as a device for distracting a potentially restless population from politics by leisure and entertainment. This amusement park, first known as “Tivoli and Vauxhall”, attracted this comment “for this place of romantic, but I confess rather pointless, entertainment, the Danes seemed to nourish an extraordinary attachment”.

Martin Zerlang’s thesis was that the ring of gardens, created as the walls which surrounded the city were dismantled after the 1860s, which complemented the Tivoli Gardens, consciously attempted to provide understandable spaces in the face of the rapid and complex development of a small into a much larger city. In its original walled state, Zerlang likened the city to a hard-boiled egg, contained within a shell. As the walls came down and the moat filled in, the city and its surrounds were still distinguishable – the fried egg stage with separate yolk – but then the swollen city became a scrambled egg all jumbled up with no clear distinction between centre and periphery. The integrity and relative size of the parks acted, so the argument ran, as a self defence mechanism by its provision of spaces in which the individual did not feel overwhelmed. Zerlang brought many references to his argument including the response to the rampart demolition as “a loss of the loving embrace of parents” or “the taking away of memories.”

The ring of urban parks, formed along the line of the moat and ramparts as a response to the cultural upheaval caused during the process of urban modernisation, comprised the Ørsted Park, Ostre Anlæg (in which the lake clearly mirrors the shape of the old ramparts), the botanical gardens and the Aborre Park (now disappeared under the railway).

The next three talks were somewhat simpler. The presentation on the private gardens of ancient Roman, the “horti”, focused on their history, location and the artwork with which they would have been adorned. Created in the centuries immediately before and after the birth of Christ, their function as private spaces of beauty to which Roman aristocrats could withdraw from public duties and business (*negotium*) to enjoy their leisure (*otium*) was linked to the aesthetic qualities of the sculptures and other art placed

in them so that they also had a performative function as displays of wealth and social standing. Some of these now form a nucleus for the public parks near the classical centre of Rome.

My memory of the talk on the island of Margit sitting in the river Danube between the old cities of Buda and Pest is of a story of transformation and recreation following a series of catastrophes. The Ottoman invasion destroyed the old religious communities which had grown up there, the great flood of 1838 submerged the island under two and a half metres of water destroying everything and World War II shelling took its toll. The talk was basically descriptive, leaving the audience with a picture of a car-free island now given over to sport and leisure activities with gardens, water parks and sports grounds and a reminder that islands have their own personality – they are separate and have a permanent and immutably separate quality. Brexit comparisons were inevitable.

Finally we were treated with an overview of two garden festivals in Cordoba, Spain. In May each year private patios are open to the public. Patios have a special significance in Cordoba. The old town is full of alleys running between white washed buildings with blank walls, shuttered windows and closed doors, giving no sense of what is happening within. If a door happens to be opened as you pass, one still gets no sense of an interior space but inside are open patios. The two major influences were Roman and Moorish. Cordoba was an important ancient Roman colony with many villas where the buildings often surround and give on to a central loggia possibly with a fountain. The Moors brought flowers, running water and the concept of seclusion. This Patio festival was contrasted with Flora, a festival of flower installation in public spaces which takes place in October and has been running now for two years, attracting an international entry.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019
The Queen's College, Oxford
Friday 6th to Sunday 8th September



With special thanks to the Provost and Fellows of The Queen's College.

The Gardens Trust Conference 2019 will be held in the Baroque splendour of The Queen's College Oxford from Friday 6th to Sunday 8th September. The weekend will provide an opportunity to revisit some of the gardens and writings of Mavis Batey, a founder of the Garden History Society, the forerunner of the Gardens Trust.

Friday afternoon (registration from 13.00) features a guided tour of the Oxford Botanic Garden accompanied by a tasting of The Oxford Artisan Distillery's Botanic Garden brand gin. An early evening reception and exhibition in the College's elegant private rooms and Fellows' garden precedes supper in College.

Saturday's programme from 9.00am includes talks on Oxford's College gardens with a special focus on new research by Toby Parker, walking visits to Christ Church's private gardens, including the rarely-open Deanery Garden (where the Cheshire Cat appeared), with the head gardener, and Worcester College's gardens. The afternoon features the New Research Symposium's presentations of new research in garden history, chaired by the inimitable Dr Patrick Eyres, and the Trust's AGM. The evening's Conference dinner guest speaker is Robin Lane Fox, Emeritus Fellow of New College Oxford and the Saturday FT's resident garden writer.

Sunday's programme from 9.00am comprises visits by coach to the gardens of two major Oxfordshire historic private estates: at Nuneham Courtenay we will see Mason's iconic flower garden and the Palladian church and walk the historic drive to the Harcourt Arboretum. After a local buffet lunch we go to Shotover for a guided house tour, a self-guided tour of the garden and tea. Return to Oxford at 16.30.



The Temple at Shotover.

Full details and booking options available from 18th February via The Gardens Trust website www.thegardenstrust.org and Eventbrite; booking closes on Friday 10 August.

The Gardens Trust, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ
Phone: (+44/0) 207 608 2409 Email: enquiries@thegardenstrust.org
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Sussex Gardens Trust – Spring Lectures and AGM

Saturday 30th March 2019.

Clair Hall (Studio Room) Haywards Heath 2pm – 4.45pm

Cost: £15 per member, £17 per guest (includes tea and cake)

The programme for an afternoon event includes two lectures and tea followed by our AGM. The event will be held in the Studio Room at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, which is larger and more comfortable than the room used last year.

To book a place for this event, please complete the booking form, which you will find enclosed, and send to the address indicated together with a cheque payable to Sussex Gardens Trust

Programme

Purchasing Paradise: origins of the money that financed the great gardens – Lecture by Roderick Floud

Professor Sir Roderick Floud is a leading economic and social historian who has held positions at many leading universities. In the past few years he has taken up an entirely new field, the economic and social history of British gardening. In 2016 he published a paper on “Capable Entrepreneur? Lancelot Brown and his finances” and in October 2018 gave this fascinating lecture at



A Country Concert – an evening's entertainment in Sussex, James Gillray, 1799 (property of the author)

the Institute of Historical Research which he has kindly agreed to repeat for us.

Tea and cake

Repton as Musician and Writer – Lecture by Judy Tarling

Judy Tarling is member of SGT and a musician well known in the early music world as leader of The Parley of Instruments (with over 80 recordings for Hyperion Records) and author of two books on historical performance practice. Her interest in rhetoric used in performance has led her to investigate what this might mean in historical garden making. In November 2018 she delivered a lecture at the Garden Museum symposium on Repton which included a live

performance of two songs (or glees) written by Repton and inspired by his visits to Heathfield Park. She has kindly agreed to deliver the lecture to us. This will include a performance, which we hope will be with live singers but if this isn't feasible, a recording will be played.

AGM at 4pm – formal notice will be sent to all members by post.

IN BOX

Welcome to our new members who have joined SGT since November 2018:

Amanda and Nick Deyes, David Bridges, Andrew Bliss, Sue Shepherd, Andrew and Sarah Ratcliffe.

Suggestions or contributions for the future issues of the Newsletter are always welcome. You might be researching an aspect of garden history, opening your garden to the public for the first time, or would like to write a review of a garden book that you have enjoyed – we would love to hear from you. Please contact the editor: sallyatcoast@aol.com

The deadline for the summer edition is 14 June 2019.

Forthcoming exhibition at the Garden Museum

Ivon Hitchens: The Painter in the Woods 8 May – 15 July 2019

Ivon Hitchens' vibrant paintings of his wild Sussex gardens will be celebrated in an exhibition this spring at the Garden Museum in London. Known for his semi-abstract, richly coloured landscape paintings, Hitchens (1893 – 1979) delighted in painting his seasonally changing habitat. **Ivon Hitchens: The Painter in the Woods** will focus on the works he produced after leaving London during World War Two, retreating into rural Sussex.

Hitchens found endless inspiration in his new haven, and this exhibition will include his Eye Music compositions, a term he coined for narrow, rectangular canvases with unfolding narratives as the eye “listens” to the painting. Hitchens himself noted in 1940, **“I seek to recreate the truth of nature by making my own song about it (in paint).”** The Eye Music series features meadows, flowers and woodlands depicted in lively fields of colour.

Early Career

After studying at the Royal Academy, Hitchens' early career saw him immersed in London's artistic community of the 1920s and 1930s. He was a key member of the Seven and Five Society, who were famous for holding the first ever all abstract exhibition in Britain. The society also included Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and artist plantsman Cedric Morris.

Sussex Escape

The pivotal moment of Hitchens's career was moving with his wife Mollie and son John to the Sussex woodlands in 1940. Making a quick exit from wartime London, they found themselves living in a cramped caravan on six acres of land. They called their home Greenleaves, and developing the house and gardens became a lifelong passion project.

They created a courtyard garden, its haphazard flowerbeds planted with sunflowers, poppies and dahlias in the sandy soil. Beyond that, the caravan, studio and later the house were also surrounded by a semi-wild 6 acres of rhododendron, silver birch and bracken. The light filtering through the silver birch trees at Greenleaves presented Hitchens with a challenging and ever changing subject.

Ivon Hitchens: The Painter in the Woods will tell the story of an unexpected gardener, and an artist always seeking new perspective on the natural. Uniting works from public collections such as the National Gallery of Scotland, Government Art Collection and the Whitworth Gallery, as well as private collections, in this exhibition, Hitchens' wild Sussex garden will be brought to life once again.



Iris - Greenleaves (c.1952) by Ivon Hitchens, private collection © The Estate of Ivon Hitchens. All rights reserved, DACS 2019

SGT GARDEN VISITS: 2019

Wednesday 24 April, 2.30pm.
Visit to The Old Vicarage, Washington,
The Street, Washington RH20 4AS
Cost: £13 per member, £15 per guest
(morning tea and cake included but not lunch)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEz09jINXA8>
Photo of The Old Vicarage: Dan Stockwell of Lamcat Photography
www.lamcat.co.uk

SGT members first visited this garden in the autumn of 2015, on a fine October afternoon. For this visit, in an entirely different season, we should have sight of a variety of spring flowering bulbs throughout the three and a half acre garden, foremost of which will be tulips. The house dates from 1832 but the garden has a mix of modern and classic elements with steel sculpture, topiary, mature trees, detached conservatory, and a Japanese Zen Garden all of which the present owners have developed since they acquired the property in 1992.

The wide and level lawn at the front of the property contrasts with the grounds at the rear of the house, there being a variety of levels and from which there are uninterrupted views towards the distant North Downs.

For a preview of the garden see an interview on YouTube in which owner, Lady Meryl Walters, describes how she and her husband Sir Peter rescued the garden from brambles and with the help of the National Trust planted trees to baffle traffic noise of the nearby A24.

Tuesday, 4 June 2019, 11am
West Burton House, West Burton, Bury,
near Pulborough RH20 1HD
Cost: £9 per member, £11 for non-members
Refreshment: tea, coffee, biscuits (and possibly cake) is included. Parking on/near site, toilets in main house.

West Burton House began life towards the end of the seventeenth century but a Georgian wing and other improvements were added over the years. This lovely stone house (Grade II) and garden sit in a quiet valley and dominate the tiny hamlet. Sue Middlemas and her husband, Keith, bought it forty years ago and gardened there together, extending into fields and planning and planting until they created a garden that looks as though it was always there.

They took some advice from one of Percy Cane's colleagues but Sue Middlemas is a plantswoman and recognised the importance of structure in a garden, so the first planting was the yew hedges, to establish the bones. Much more followed, some of it with initial reluctance on Keith's part. A political historian and a writer, perhaps he needed a practical reason for garden developments and so the Buttress Garden was rescued from cow pasture to provide a pathway to the house for guests at a daughter's wedding reception and the Sunken Garden or the Garden of Love, created as a sixtieth birthday present for his wife. Building several delightful follies such as a flint gazebo, a belvedere and a Turkish 'kiosk' provided respite from study and an opportunity to reflect outside; and materials were acquired variously from the local tip, in part exchange or, as in the case of a staircase, seized from the roadside.

Sue was widowed six years ago but has continued to garden passionately. This beautifully planted garden is full of interest, enjoyable spaces and lovely views. With luck the magnificent wisteria, the peonies and the roses should be at their best at this time of the year.

Monday 24 June 2019, 2pm.
A visit to a private garden near Pulborough
Cost: Details will be confirmed at a later date by email
Refreshments: tea and coffee. Parking on site, toilets in main house

The very private garden we will visit on 24 June is in West Sussex and is beautifully sited above the River Arun with views towards the Downs. Details of the exact address will follow with confirmation of your booking but are kept discreet at this stage. The seventeenth century house and priory burnt down but the house (Grade II) was sympathetically rebuilt, with later details by the Arts and Crafts architect, Edward Prior. Three acres of formal gardens are part of a ten acre site and have been sensitively and carefully restored and developed by the owners. It is opened infrequently and we are lucky to have this opportunity to visit.

We will be given a conducted tour of this fascinating garden by the very knowledgeable head-gardener.

Wednesday 17 July. A day visit: 10.30am – 3.30pm (exact timings to be confirmed)
The Walled Nursery and St Ronan's School, Water Lane, Hawkhurst, Kent TN18 5DH
Cost: £13 per member: £15 per guest (tea and cake included)

The village of Hawkhurst lies in the High Weald, about twelve miles south-east of Tunbridge Wells; the two adjoining properties in the area to be visited were previously part of an estate known in the nineteenth century as Tongswood.

In 1903 Charles Gunther bought the Tongswood Estate having made his fortune as chairman of the

Liebig Meat Extract Company, forerunner of the more catchy company name, Oxo. The meat extract was finally named Oxo in 1899 due to the letters that dockers chalked on the crates to distinguish consignments of meat extract from corned beef.

Gunther's wealthy, second wife Helen Bell, capitalised on her husband's initial development of the grounds, so that by 1925 Tongswood was acclaimed as being among the country's top fifty gardens. One feature of particular note was an extensive rockery. Other features included a dell with sub-tropical plants, a lake, parkland, a pinetum and an area of ancient woodland harbouring trees identified on the National Tree Register, some of which are considered 'county champions'.

St Ronan's School has occupied the site since 1946. Gunther's walled kitchen garden was separated and sold from the estate in 1992 and has since become The Walled Nursery. There are thirteen Grade II-listed, wooden-framed glasshouses built between 1898-1910 by Foster and Pearson of West Sussex.

Our visit will begin in the Walled Nursery with a lecture on its history and a tour of the conserved glass houses. Thereafter we move into the grounds of St Ronan's School where SGT council member, Virginia Hinze, hopes to talk about the work with some of the research team to our members during this part of the visit. Virginia was project manager of a report on the history of the grounds and development of Tongswood gardens by previous owners (published in 2012 by the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens for Tunbridge Wells).

For further information about the Walled Garden please see an article at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardenstovisit/11578083/The-Edwardian-ruin-that-became-a-21st-century-glasshouse.html>



The Walled Nursery. Photos: Jim Stockwell



Book Reviews

At West Dean: The Creation of an exemplary garden

Jim Buckland and
Sarah Wain

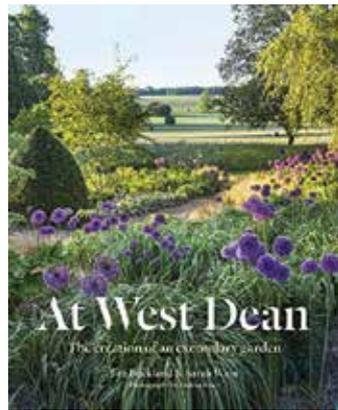
White Lion

Publishing, 2018

ISBN

978-0-71123892-3

£40 hardback



The subtitle of
this book is no

exaggeration. Jim

Buckland and Sarah Wain, partners in life and at work, have created a truly exemplary garden at West Dean, near Chichester in West Sussex where they have worked as Head Gardeners for twenty-seven years. The mansion and estate of West Dean was the home of Edward James (1907-1984), the surrealist and patron of the arts, who created a charitable trust and began the development of West Dean College in 1971 as a centre for education in conservation, crafts and arts. The pleasure garden surrounding the house is part of a 6,400 acre estate much of which was devastated by the storms in 1987 and 1990, but this enforced clearance provided Jim and Sarah with an opportunity to create something quite extraordinary.

This book is crammed with beautiful photographs but is no gentle, coffee table read. It contains a factual, technical and inspiring account of the rescue of a neglected and muddled site and its transformation into one of the most important gardens in England. Jim writes with a deceptively light touch, admitting to an 'infatuation' with West Dean and describing his wife, Sarah, as his grafted 'partner in grime'. He is proud to be what he calls 'a craftsman gardener' and Peter Thoday makes the point, in the Foreword, that Sarah and Jim are part of the tradition of professional garden management begun by Philip Miller in the mid-eighteenth century. For two centuries this was considered crucial to considerate gardening but it is rare today in this era of Grand Designers who move all too rapidly from one project to another.

The meticulous restoration of the 200-acre landscape park at West Dean began with a careful assessment of the site and its history. Fundamentals such as soil analysis and compost were treated extremely seriously. A thoughtful

evolution of a vision for the site emerged but only then were defining paths constructed, hedges planted, new borders created, the refurbishment of the thirteen, now-famous Victorian glasshouses and the nurturing of the fifty acre arboretum undertaken. The couple's ability to hold onto their concept through site clearance and chaos is astonishing. Artists' eyes inform their designs and a thorough horticultural knowledge their choice and placing of plants; but they are also extremely practical in their approach: easily-adjusted hosepipes were used to lay out shapes, metal fencing bars utilised to smash holes for bulbs and the importance of essential storage sheds, workshops and staff rooms acknowledged.

Gardening on the scale of West Dean and the degree of commitment given by Jim and Sarah may seem almost unimaginable but in fact there is much within these pages that is applicable to small gardens. Andrea Jones' photographs, taken month by month from autumn 2016 to autumn 2017, depict exquisitely planted and managed spaces, flowing apparently effortlessly through a valley backed by the Downs, but this book is chock full of construction details and horticultural advice as well as images. Rather charmingly, opposite the Contents page, there is a collage of black and white photographs of people working in the garden, making the point that dedicated and careful husbandry lies behind beauty. I suspect that few of us could aspire to this level of perfection but there is much that we can absorb from this joyful account and use in our own gardens: awareness of spirit of place, lawns and meadow management, tree and shrub planting, fruit and vegetable growing.

In reimagining the garden at West Dean, Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain have created a perfect foil to the creative spirit of the teachings of the college and it is an inspiring place in which to study. This a garden that has bones in the past (Peto's 300' long pergola seems perfectly at home here), looks glorious today, but also anticipates the future and we are extremely lucky that it is in Sussex. Exactly as Jim says, this book is 'an attempt to distil into one volume our philosophy and practical approach to garden creation and management that has evolved over the 40-plus years of our careers'. The key words here are 'garden creation' and 'management'.

Susi Batty

You Should Have Been Here Last Week

Tim Richardson
Pimpernel Press Ltd,
2018
ISBN
978-910258-86-6
£9.99 paperback

Be warned, the sub-title of Tim Richardson's book contains a clue:

'Sharp Cuttings from a Garden Writer'. Tim is well known for his refusal to accept the expected in the gardening world – famously his, to my mind, only slightly provocative and unpublished article, 'A Career in Landscape Design', intended for the *Garden Design Journal*, resulted in the termination of his contract after ten years of monthly contributions.

This collection of deceptively informal essays, culled from publications such as *Country Life*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Gardens Illustrated*, *Literary Review* and even *The Idler*, covers - and questions - subjects including famous gardens and designers, horticultural habits and trends, the RHS and Chelsea. Serious topics - existentialist gardening, green spaces in Korea and ash die-back, for example - jostle with more frivolous essays on, say, sartorial significance in gardens (from floral blouses and 70s flares to what he calls 'haughty-couture for horti-culture'). He can make you think: in the final article, *Is Your Garden good For You?* he asks quite profound questions about why we garden; and make you smile (as in *My Week*, a description of a visit to Apsley House with a class of six-year-old children). He can make you take action: *Tree Planting* had me attempting to find spaces for new trees in my already full garden and his description of Geoffrey Jellicoe's Kennedy Memorial at Runnymede made me want to jump in the car immediately and drive there. And just when you might be beginning to feel, after two wittily critical swipes at sacrosanct Sissinghurst in 2004 and 2008, that he is a *little* too opinionated, his natural good grace allows him to admit in a third article in 2015 that the National Trust is addressing these problems.

Keep this book by your bedside and dip into it regularly. It will make you look at gardens, gardeners and garden theories afresh.

Susi Batty



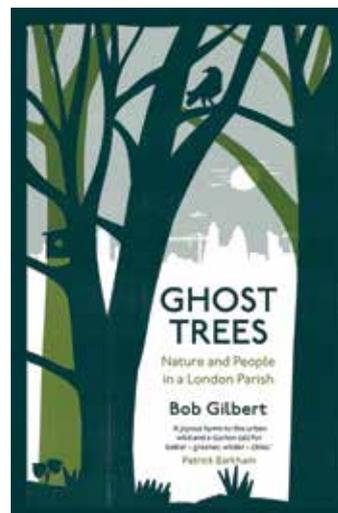
Ghost Trees: Nature and People in a London Parish

Bob Gilbert
Saraband, 2018
ISBN 9781912235278
£14.99 paperback

Growing up in Bermondsey after the war the local playgrounds for Bob Gilbert were the bomb sites, littered with the rubble and debris of homes that once existed on these

London streets and now surviving only as broken walls, peeling paint and traces of staircases. Between the ruins flourished an amazing flora: ragwort, herb robert, buddleia and rosebay willowherb. It is this 'countryside' within a city that Gilbert explores when many years later he moves with his family to Poplar in the East End. Describing himself as an amateur urban naturalist and 'the recorder of plants that grew in the cracks of pavements or that lived out their brief lives at the base of a lamp post', he writes that, as it is cities where most of us live these should be our starting point for a connection with nature. He begins his observation in the inner-city area by noting down whatever catches his interest: goldfinches or a spotted woodpecker in the summer months, mushrooms in front of a new housing block in the autumn, the noise of a fox in the winter but then becomes absorbed by ghost-hunting – searching out the surviving features of the past landscape and particularly the generations of trees that evolved through the history of Poplar. He decides to walk every street in the parish, noting the trees that characterized the area and following the stories revealed by the mulberry, London plane, ash, hornbeam and the Black Poplar. As well as much walking he studies a plane tree in his garden for one year, recording the changes throughout the seasons – the fat buds emerging in spring, the stillness of the leaves in summer, the yellowing and shedding of the bark in autumn.

Gilbert's keen eye for detail and his warm style of writing make this book a fascinating and engaging document of the unexpected natural life in our cities. He draws from literature, mythology, history and painting to explore the relationship between people and nature and shares with us his reflections on the changes that have shaped



London's street trees. Walking with Bob Gilbert through his area of the East End becomes an urban nature trail during which we learn about not only the species of tree but also all kinds of surprising connections with the locality.

The subject of his first 'hunting' is the Poplar poplar. The parish was named after the tree that once grew in the marshes, the black poplar, a species that has long since disappeared, replaced by the Lombardy poplar, an arrival from Italy. But in his search for the original tree Gilbert describes a cultural and social history that connects the tree to the community through the centuries. A healing ointment was once made from poplar buds and used by boxers, a significant sport in the Poplar community, whilst poplar timber was significant in the making of matches. The lightness and toughness of the wood made it resistant to fire and heat, but able to absorb paraffin and so ideal for the Bryant and May factory, built in 1861 in the borough and once the largest factory in London. It became renowned for the action by the match girls against their working conditions.

In his close observations of wildlife Gilbert does not shy away from the reality of city streets. He notes the debris of a plastic bag that lodges in the top of the plane tree which he watches from his window, like 'tree-wrack, an airborne jetsam', eventually to be shredded by the winter wind into strips 'like the monstrous equivalent of a Buddhist prayer flag'. Autumn in the city will transform streets just as in the countryside but he reflects that, although some changes may be 'a work of pure alchemy', the sycamore leaves become a nicotine brown mixed with tar spot, the horse chestnut is disfigured by leaf miner moths

whilst his plane tree leaves have become blotchy, 'more measles than mellow'. These untidy leaves of the plane tree are merely a reflection of the history of the area, once the home of industries that included slaughterhouses, oil boilers and varnish makers.

Nature in the city is resilient as well as inclusive and Gilbert praises the 'weeds' that spring up in abandoned gardens or along empty railway embankments: the groundsel and shepherd's purse and the shrubs like the buddleia, growing behind hoardings on the East India Dock Road, a plant to which he has a particular attachment for its ability to thrive in whatever circumstances it finds itself. As he writes in the introduction, it is the 'small joys that most of us must learn to treasure, and to take them where most of us happen to be'. This fine book is an inspiration to take ourselves outside, wherever we might be, and look more deeply at the natural life in front of our eyes.

Sally Ingram

NGS Handbook 2019

The NGS Garden Visitor's Handbook 2019 has just been published and is the essential guide to over 3,500 private gardens open in England and Wales for the National Garden Scheme. It contains descriptions of all the gardens, photographs, maps and calendars – the perfect 'glove box' companion for out-of-county travel this year.

Available from the NGS website, or booksellers, priced £13.99.

Sussex Gardens Trust

Website: www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk
email: information@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

Research and Recording email: research@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

Conservation Committee email: conservation@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

SGT Council Members:

Chair: Marcus Batty

Secretary: Jennie Starr

Treasurer: Pat Dauncey

Membership Secretary: John and Jackie Dorkings (to be elected at the AGM)

Newsletter Editor: Sally Ingram

Events Coordinators: Colin and Gwen Chinnery

Events Programme: Jennifer Parsons

Research and Recording Coordinators:

Marcus and Susi Batty, Jennie Starr

Research and Recording; Small Grants Project: Virginia Hinze

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