



Sussex Gardens Trust

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

Newsletter No. 79

Spring 2021

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Photo: Colin Foy

From the Editor

As this spring edition of the Newsletter goes to print I am reminded of an SGT visit last March to the beautiful garden of hellebores and snowdrops at Pembury House in Clayton. To say that there was a hard rain falling would be an understatement, but it was an incredibly memorable visit: the spring flowers were glorious, the company friendly as always, and at the end of the afternoon, as our coats and boots were drying, there was a plentiful supply of cake and tea made by the owners. And of course, unforeseen at the time, it would be our last SGT garden event of 2020. However, despite the first lockdown that came only a few weeks later and its sequels, organisations like the county garden trusts found unexpected opportunities in the virtual world. Perhaps the most surprising success has been the positive response to online activities and lectures. SGT held its first online event in December, which was very well received and is reviewed on page 3. Our Vice Chair, Penny



Vasey, writes on her experience of garden history becoming virtual on page 5.

An interrupted year has also allowed us the opportunity to examine how we raise awareness of the role of SGT with a wider audience and encourage new volunteers to join us. In this edition we present some of our initial thoughts as to how we can bring more attention to the Trust, communicate with our members in different ways and take advantage of the power of social

media. The SGT events committee has also had to think differently about our garden visits for 2021 and I feel sure you will find their proposals on page 7 innovative and exciting.

In earlier times many of you will have enjoyed SGT visits to the fascinating garden at Sedgwick Park. Paul Tosey has been researching the work of Harold Peto, who designed the formal gardens there in the 1800s, and in his feature Paul examines Peto's connection to Sussex and particularly the highly original nautical theme of Sedgwick Park.

Marcus Batty has looked into a little-known eighteenth century garden in Lewes, with the curious name of Baldy's Garden, which surprisingly has a connection with an inoculation programme in the town in January 1794.

We are always pleased to have news of community groups who work to protect and enhance the history of their outdoor spaces and the Alexandra

Park Greenhouse Group in Hastings has a vision to restore a 1930s greenhouse to its former glory. Lynda Foy, a supporter with the Greenhouse Group, describes how a team of volunteers is bringing life back to the building so that it can become a resource once more for the local town.

Finally, congratulations to our members, and recently published authors, Judy Tarling and Maggie Weir-Wilson. Judy's scholarly examination of rhetoric in the English landscape garden was published at the end of last year and is reviewed for us by Susi Batty, while Maggie's in-depth study of the history of St Leonard's Forest was published in January. As we wait for bookshops to open their doors again it's good to know we can order these titles directly from the publishers, online.

Enjoy the spring issue of the Newsletter.

Sally Ingram

From the Chair

Above all, I would like to repeat my thanks, on your behalf, to all those who have striven to make our online events so professional and successful. From a standing start, they have mastered Zoom (and how to run online presentations) and the perplexities of online ticketing systems (not easy!). They have worked extremely hard to maintain SGT's reputation and they have succeeded. Thank you.

What the pandemic has forced us to face squarely is the reality that the future does demand a digital component in our offering. Zoom is here to stay. Twitter, Facebook and other channels are indispensable to organisations seeking to relate to the outside world. At the same time, we must recognise much of our enjoyment of life comes from human interaction, tea and cakes, if you like, after events and visits. Whilst drone camera technology can provide a fast and comprehensive understanding of a garden's layout, it cannot capture the delight of being in that garden, responding to its atmosphere and absorbing the plays of light on the plants and their movements in the wind, with other members and meeting our hosts. Council must find the right balance as we go forward.

The programme of garden visits for the coming summer is under discussion but physical visits in the earlier part at least are very problematic – the extent of this lockdown and the possibility of its being lifted but subsequently re-introduced,

owners' willingness to be visited and members' willingness to visit all must be considered. We will do our best.

Our AGM papers are being circulated with this newsletter and contain a report of our activities during 2020 which I hope that you will read. The meetings (this year's AGM follows immediately after last year's adjourned AGM) are being held online as permitted by company law during the current pandemic. We need your attendance so, please, do sign up. We may have to ask some of you to register and attend online to ensure that we have the necessary quorum. The meetings should last no more than one hour and you will be able to ask questions. So, again, please do sign up. There is also a request for more of you to come forward to volunteer your services. The current members of Council cannot soldier on forever!

You will read elsewhere in this newsletter of discussions re-evaluating how members should receive news currently contained in our newsletter. It has seen gradual improvement over its life – we are now at the 79th – but we have also had the more recent experiences of our publications on Brown and Repton, shortly to be joined by that on Jekyll and of the Coronavirus bulletin. We also believe that our website needs a revamp, perhaps becoming more of an interactive hub. Finally, we are re-examining the research carried out over decades. There is much to do. Join in and help.

Marcus Batty

SGT Research in Action: December 2020 online event

By Sally Ingram

We were delighted that so many SGT members and their friends joined our first online event in December. As our host Penny Vasey said, the delicious meal that we might have enjoyed in different circumstances had to remain in our imagination, but the talks by our four speakers sharing their recent research studies made for a stimulating afternoon.

Our first speaker, **Pat Dauncey**, has recently completed a Masters Degree in Garden History and her dissertation examined rockwork features in British gardens over a two hundred year period. Pat has a background in engineering and she explained that, rather than the history, it was the construction of the rock garden, the materials, methods and equipment that sparked her initial interest.

Through contemporary illustrations, sketches and maps it was fascinating to see how technological changes were reflected in the growing demand for rockwork features in the garden. The fashion of the period was often to create an appearance, imitating a natural land feature, such as a cascade or a grotto, a piece of faux architecture, such as the one at Painshill in 1760, decorated with sponge stone with its honeycomb structure to give a rustic look.

Good research poses questions as well as finds answers and an illustration of the grotto tunnel at Alexandra Pope's house in Twickenham prompted Pat to investigate where thirty tons of rock for such an elaborate construction had come from. A painting of an estate at Bath, belonging to one of Pope's friends, depicted an early form of railway, a tramway, the carriages moving downhill with a brake man at the back of each carriage, which were then pulled back uphill by horses. Rock arrived at Pope's house not as might be expected by road and horse and cart, but by river barges and by sea.

Pat's research revealed an intriguing story of how technological changes, whether in equipment, such as tramways, or materials such as Pulhamite, were inextricably linked to these changing fashions for building in the garden.

The study of Gertrude Jekyll's gardens was instigated through a project in 2018 to have digitised the garden plans relating to her

commissions in Sussex. Building upon previous studies by SGT researchers, a group of volunteers led by **Sally Ingram** is currently investigating Jekyll's less well known gardens, building up a picture of her connections in the county, through her friendships and her clients, as well as some of her earliest commissions. The research group has been extremely fortunate to be involved with the on-going restoration of a Jekyll garden; in this talk Sally brought together the research into the history of the garden, with the reality of bringing a forgotten garden back to life. Jekyll began drawing up her designs for Legh Manor in 1917, and notebooks from the archives reveal this to be one of her favourite colour designs of soft blues, white and pink. Plans which were discovered in the 1990s show a Mulberry Garden and a formal garden. Work has begun to transcribe the planting lists, gradually deciphering Jekyll's handwriting, her abbreviations, discovering the plants that may have changed names, or varieties that are no longer available. This unfolding of the plans and the notebooks will help the owners to restore the original flower borders, that aerial photographs have revealed lie beneath the many years of neglect.

Volunteers in SGT have been researching parks and gardens for the South Coast Project to the west and east of the county and **Jennie Starr** shared her research into the Italian Gardens at Eastbourne. This garden began many years after the development of Eastbourne and the Grand Parade, with its carpet gardens, to plans originally prepared by James Barry. Situated towards the western end of the seafront, the location of the Italian Gardens was originally a quarry and by coincidence Jennie had discovered a connection with Gertrude Jekyll. The site of the current Helen Garden to the west of the Italian Gardens was owned by Mrs Hornby-Lewis who asked Jekyll to draw up plans for this garden in 1917, the same year that Jekyll was commissioned for Legh Manor. Mrs Hornby-Lewis also rented a house at Chaseley, and eventually she chose to live in this house rather than building a new property on the Helen Garden site, which may be the reason why Jekyll's plans were never executed.

Jennie's talk showed how important archival sources in the record offices are in establishing the history of a garden. Through early OS maps, contemporary photographs and old picture postcards, much of the social history of the Italian

Gardens can be evidenced. The tea chalet remains today, and postcards of the early twentieth century show its transformation. An image found in the record office, dated to the 1920s, helps to identify the planting of the pergola, while a Southern Railway guide gives the first reference to the name of the garden. Council minutes have been examined, suggesting a revamp of the garden in 1944. A still from a film of 1951 was also discovered, showing the garden as the location for a dance sequence and it is good to know that the Italian Gardens continue to be used for performance and community events as well as providing a moment of peace in a busy world.

Caroline Scaramanga's research for her Masters Degree in garden and landscape history has taken her far beyond the boundaries of Sussex. Her dissertation on how landscape design portrays the redeveloped waterfront's historic legacy was stirred by the different layers of history uncovered at these sites. Integrating a previously restricted area into a city's mainstream public realm was a fascinating challenge to the designers who wished to hold onto the valued past but encourage a new future.

With a stunning collection of photographs Caroline took us on an enlightening world tour showing how the restoration of waterfronts can respect and celebrate their industrial heritage. We saw what could be done with ex-industrial

sites, such as Ballast Point Park in Sydney, where the framework of a former oil tank is repurposed to harness wind power. Caroline explained how formative Richard Haag's work at Seattle Gasworks Park was in encouraging landscape architects to reconsider the value of ex-industrial waterfront sites, and how his influence extended worldwide in the following decades, as new ways to repurpose and integrate infrastructure also keep the story of the past alive. In the redevelopment of the urban waterfront in Amsterdam, old gas holders buried below ground in reclaimed polder land have become an aquatic garden, whilst, at the Thames Barrier Park in London created in 2000, a new Green 'Dock' provides a visual connection to the site's former dockland history; visitors walk through waves of planting between its towering walls which impress upon the visitor the different scale of the former dockyard.

Academic research by SGT volunteers is published in reports or articles in the Newsletter, and in our publications, but this was the first time that we have shared something of our research in action: the process of delving into a subject and presenting new ideas that add to the field of knowledge.

If you would like to take part in researching garden history with SGT please get in touch. We offer training for anyone wanting to find out more about our designed landscapes in Sussex and our research groups will give you a warm welcome.



Garden history goes online: a personal experience

By Penny Vasey

The restriction of meeting publicly in 2020 has resulted in a wide variety of online learning opportunities, webinar, lecture, video, Zoom meetings and events, all of which need to be enjoyable if not positively entertaining. It has been interesting to gather the views of members who have embraced the 'new normal' of online lectures and courses. So, let us compare the experience we are accustomed to with the new online offerings in garden history.

There are several positive, and sometimes unexpected, aspects to the online lecture. Before 2020, who has not been happy to accept the charm, ebullient enthusiasm and hands-on experience of a head gardener in place of a less detailed and academic presentation? Likewise, a good communicator greatly enhances our reception of an online presentation. Television news reading was probably never an aspiration of the many people engaged in lecturing on garden history and allied subject matter. Notwithstanding, there is a lesson to be learned from the TV genre. Looking directly at the screen is the equivalent of speaking directly to camera, and there is no doubt that speakers who take the trouble to adapt and practise their presentations online give us a much more enjoyable experience and enable us to take in new information more readily.

One serendipitous aspect is the wonderful improvement in the visual experience. No more squinting at a fuzzy landscape from the back row. Not only are images crystal clear but they are much less tiring on the eyes. Those of you engaged in research cannot fail to have been impressed by the marvellous improvement in looking at old maps and plans on a screen.

Let us turn now to the practical aspects of accessing online lectures and courses. At the beginning some people were more at ease with using a variety of electronic devices, such as smartphones, iPad, laptop or PC, while others

might have had limited access to the internet. Yet quite quickly, the need to keep in touch with family members during lockdown or from an increasing awareness of the valuable opportunities to engage in online learning, many more of us have accepted the virtual world as the new way of taking part. There can still exist a divide between experience and the desire to engage online, but I would encourage members to join an online event with like-minded people – even seeing fellow members is such an advantage in these times of restriction. If a date and time does not suit you, a recording of a lecture is made available (which is the norm now) with the added bonus of being able to watch again if there is a part of a lecture that was of particular interest.

Cost is important, of course, and it has been an interesting exercise to compare ticket prices across a variety of organisations. Our own winter lecture series, and the Gardens Trust events are extremely good value both for members and non-members. To purchase a season ticket of four lectures for £20 or less is surely a bargain. By comparison, a limited number of online lectures are offered by the National Gardens Scheme at £10 each. Their virtual garden tours, which are lovely to watch, are free but suggest a donation. I have seen a number of lectures by Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter. They may have been a little more expensive at £15 but lasted two hours with a break and exactly met the learning I wanted.

Many courses have moved successfully online; indeed, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the plethora of lectures on offer. What of 2021? Clearly things will not change for some time, and we should not overlook the massive advantage to so many who live far from London in being able to 'attend' lectures and courses without the added time and cost normally involved. I am proud to be part of the SGT team that has successfully moved our lectures online, and hope that we can continue to adapt and innovate in order to give our members worthwhile and enjoyable experiences.

SGT Communication: going forward

By Sally Ingram

The unexpected events of last year had us all finding ways to keep together while staying apart. Like so many county gardens trusts, we quickly replaced our face-to-face meetings for committee members and our research volunteers with virtual meetings, and the monthly 'Corona Bulletin' started by Marcus Batty provided a welcome diversion for SGT members missing our garden visits, with its snippets of history and esoteric collection of garden related pictures and articles. As the lockdown continued into the second half of the year, we realised that holding our usual Christmas lunch and lecture would be impossible and so we began planning the online presentation of our December event and our spring lectures on sculpture in the garden.

The challenge of keeping our members in touch at this time has presented an opportunity to



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reflect on how we can reach out and engage with a wider and more diverse audience, attracting new members and raising awareness of what the Trust does. To let more people know about our organisation and our role it is clear that we need different kinds of presentation whether in print, on the website, or through social media. Our new Twitter account means that we can put up short messages and photographs, saying what we are doing, advertising events and lectures or raising attention to a campaign. The national Gardens Trust has a new venture celebrating 'Unforgettable Gardens', a three-year theme with CGTs to remind everyone how important our parks, gardens and open spaces are, personally and to the community. We are supporting this campaign by telling the story of our special garden heritage and unforgettable gardens in the county through regular postings and, at the same time, showcasing the work of SGT such as in grant aided projects, or bringing attention to gardens at risk of being lost, to a far wider audience. It has given us a wonderful chance to engage with a student, Kendra Whitelaw, who has volunteered her time and brought fresh ideas to SGT about using social media, and helps us to co-ordinate the Twitter postings.

We are also re-evaluating our website. We would like to make it more of a 'shop window' where we can share information with members and other organisations as well as welcoming new people to our events and activities. We are engaging with other CGTs to learn of their experiences which will inform how we make our website more immediate and attractive.

The SGT Newsletter is another valuable way to share news of what is happening, and to showcase our research. But it reaches a fairly small audience, and cannot respond to events, or promote our activities as immediately as social media or the web site. We were hopeful that a new editor would take over in the new year, but this has not been possible and so it seems a good moment to seize the opportunity and consider a different way to share our knowledge of garden history, perhaps through a journal with more in-depth research features, published yearly. Up-to-date news bulletins could then be published on the website.

SGT welcome your ideas in helping us to make these changes in the coming months. Please get in touch with us, especially if you would be interested in:

- **Suggestions for updating our website**, and thoughts about what should be included. If you have experience of managing a website and feel that you could volunteer some time to SGT we would love to hear from you.
- **Ways in which to raise awareness of our role** and attract new members and volunteers, particularly through social media.
- **Editing a yearly journal of SGT research** and garden history features. If you have a love of gardens and writing, then working with contributors and putting together a collection of articles gives opportunities to pursue your particular interests and is enormously rewarding.
- **Being part of a writing group** for a new SGT garden history journal. We have a number of members who regularly contribute to the newsletter but we would love to develop this group. We know that there are SGT members out there who write for other outlets, and who have had books published. Why not get in touch and join with us in taking SGT garden writing into a new direction.

Email: sallyatcoast@aol.com

SGT Garden visits 2021

Caroline Scaramanga, Events Committee Coordinator

The Events Committee has ideas for garden events with a difference this year!

We are planning virtual visits: accompanying the owners of their gardens, or their gardeners, to include a short tour, slides of their garden, development plans past and future, and their histories.

We would be interested to know our members' reaction to this idea – please let us know your thoughts.

It may be, with a fair wind and vaccination progress, that real visits may also be organised, and tentative outreach is currently taking place to likely gardens, particularly those relevant to the sculpture or water themes of our past two lecture series.

If any members are enthusiastic, experienced amateur film-makers and might be interested in helping produce films of people's gardens, do get in touch with the events committee:

scaramangad@gmail.com



From the Editor

Can virtual birds and sunsets help us to relax?

The University of Exeter is carrying out a research study to find out if a virtual encounter with nature online can give us all the benefits of a walk outdoors or looking at the view from a window.

The study is part of a collaboration with the BBC to explore how people feel when they engage with nature through digital formats such as visual scenes of sunsets or sounds of birds and ocean waves.

Find out more on <https://canvas-story.bbcrewind.co.uk/soundscapesforwellbeing/>

The Gardens Trust 'Chairs' Meet Up'

By Penny Vasey

The annual meeting of chairs of county gardens trusts was held on Zoom on 5 November 2020 when we had the opportunity to hear from the Gardens Trust's new chairman, Peter Hughes Q.C.

Thirty of the thirty-six CGTs were represented, which was more than have met in London in previous years and demonstrates the success of holding meetings and events online. The importance of a continuing good relationship between the National Trust and the Gardens Trust and CGTs was discussed at length. It was

also agreed there remains a need to monitor the National Trust's response to Covid restrictions, particularly the closure of gardens to the general public.

Reporting on activity in CGTs it quickly became apparent that there has been a wide variety of responses to the pandemic. Some county trusts had ceased activity, while others continued to be engaged in local planning and a relatively small number were organising online lectures. I was proud to report that we were due to hold a Christmas event, since SGT was the only county garden trust doing so.

The Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group: saving the life of a 1930s greenhouse in Hastings

By Lynda Foy

A formerly derelict greenhouse is being given a new lease of life, thanks to hard-working volunteers and generous donations by supporters. The 1930s cast iron and teak structure in Alexandra Park, Hastings, was originally a horticultural hothouse supplying the Borough Council's parks and gardens but, after a chequered history, it fell into disuse in the 1980s.



Volunteer Colin Foy laying a new floor. Photo: Colin Foy

In 2013, a group of volunteers, led by the park ranger, entered the greenhouse and forged a path by clearing the jungle and rubbish inside. Supporters formed the Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group with a vision to turn the building into a community hub for growing and selling plants, hosting local groups for talks, workshops and classes, exhibitions and small concerts all year round. The group was registered as a charity in 2018 and was granted a 25-year lease by the council.

Last summer volunteers held a Let's Raise the Roof Crowdfunding campaign to replace the temporary roof with a permanent one. The campaign aimed to raise £10,000, but this target was surpassed. Thanks to a generous donation by an anonymous benefactor, the group now has more than

£90,000 to install reinforced glass panels in the roof and windows. The funds will also be used to repair cast iron gutters and fittings, provide lighting and power to the greenhouse, re-point old brickwork and improve floors and the interior. Award-winning carpenter and joiner Jason Wright has been commissioned to install the permanent roof and hopes to start the work in the spring. The Sedlescombe-based craftsman, who won an English Heritage Commendation in 2007, will spend about twelve weeks bringing the structure back to its former glory.

idverde, the contractor which looks after the borough's parks and gardens, used some Crowdfunding contributions to install a perimeter fence and emergency gate at the greenhouse site in January 2021 with labour provided free. idverde contracts manager Paul Meek, whose depot is next door to the greenhouse, said that the new fence has replaced a temporary one, with idverde staff doing the work for free. He added: "It will make the site more secure for the greenhouse and for us."

Greenhouse supporters have ranged from youngsters to the elderly, including the late Bernard Mallion who joined the greenhouse staff as a teenage trainee gardener in 1941 when the site was used to grow much-needed fruit and vegetables during the Second World War.



Carpenter Jason Wright with greenhouse in 2020. Photo: Colin Foy

Mr Mallion, who lived in St Leonards and died in January 2018 at the age of 92, visited the greenhouse several times in recent years and his daughter, Annette Pavitt, and her husband Terry donated £1,000 in his memory to help the charity's Raise the Roof campaign.

Another supporter is eight-year-old entrepreneur Toby Hopwood, who lives in Hastings. He donated £20 to the campaign after selling seeds, home-grown plants, lavender bags and bath bombs to customers via the internet. Toby and his brother Ollie, aged ten, made the seed packets and bags for the lavender. They also made the bath bombs.

Projects funded by grants have included the restoration of the greenhouse's cast ironwork, using £8,000 from Tesco's Bags of Help initiative.

Blacksmiths, Ben Crosthwaite and Tobias Cobrin from the Over Wrought Forge in Hastings, spent three months cleaning, painting, or replacing iron and steel parts so that the greenhouse's ventilation windows would work again. The Borough Council repaired water pipes and drains, while idverde funded the water supply and have donated plants, manpower and expertise. Cold frames, flower beds and brick walls have been restored or built and the site has hosted events for children to learn about gardening.

Fund-raising events have included annual Heritage Open Days and a talk by Fergus Garrett, head gardener and chief executive at Great Dixter, Northiam. There was also a Mini Chelsea Fringe event in the park where customers bought plants, books, and gardening equipment. Last September's Heritage Days included cacti and succulent displays by expert Alan Bromley from Laughton, near Lewes, and a talk by Lewes-based fruit expert Peter May about the history, care and grafting techniques for Sussex apples.

The greenhouse's current collection includes succulents, cacti and bonsai trees owned by volunteer Eddie Weekes and carnivorous plants grown by another volunteer, Ron Clark.

The building was bought by the council in 1934 from Richardson's of Darlington for £4,000 and was originally one of seven greenhouses on the site. They were then used for the Dig for Victory campaign during the 1940s. The Richardson's



Blacksmiths Tobias Cobrin (left) and Ben Crosthwaite at the greenhouse. Photo: Colin Foy

greenhouse became part of a Pets' Corner attraction in 1970s, when it was known as the Albert House with a statue of Prince Albert at its centre. The attraction closed in the 1980s, followed by years of decline until the group's volunteers revived it.

Group chairman Linda Pearson said: "This is a lovely building which shares its history with that of the town and is remembered with great affection by many residents. We will continue our current work to raise funds to provide stability for years to come. We would like to employ a project co-ordinator to organise events, give support to groups using the building and strengthen the volunteer team."

Would-be donors and volunteers can contact the group via its website at www.our-greenhouse.org or email info@our-greenhouse.org

The greenhouse, which is currently closed until February, is situated in the upper part of Alexandra Park, St Helens Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 2LQ.



Editor's Note

For further information about restored greenhouses see Coronavirus Bulletin No. 12 in which Marcus Batty writes about Foster & Pearson, the glasshouse manufacturing firm, founded in 1841 and the thirteen greenhouses, mostly by Foster & Pearson, which were restored by Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain at West Dean.

Harold Peto: travel diaries and Sussex connections

By Paul Tosey

Harold Ainsworth Peto (1854-1933) is known for his gardens in England and overseas, especially in the South of France, his work being praised by Gertrude Jekyll and Henry Avray Tipping. Trained as an architect, Peto worked in a successful partnership with Ernest George until 1892. Yet Harold, who had already begun to travel, yearned to escape the grime of London and experience the light and warmth of other climates. He spent much of the next seven years travelling until he settled at Iford Manor, Wiltshire in 1899 (the location for the 2020 film version of *The Secret Garden*).¹ Then, over the next decade, he would produce his major garden design work.

I first explored Peto's captivating designs through an online course in English Landscape Garden History.² Later, the opportunity arose to write an article³ about Peto's work outside England, notably the villas Sylvia, Maryland, Rosemary and Salles (Cap Ferrat), Isola Bella (Cannes) and Ilnacullin (Ireland). Peto's gardens in France are not open to the public, hence the article was necessarily based on desk research. Unlike contemporaries such as Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson, Peto did not write for publication. Fortunately, we can read his own words in a series of travel diaries, transcribed by Robin Whalley from hand-written originals in the Peto family archive. Published by Cwareli Press,⁴ they cover Peto's travels from 1881 until 1898 to destinations including Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Turkey, the USA and Japan. For researchers, they provide fascinating textual data about the influence of those travels on Peto's garden designs.



Fig 1: Peto's Travel Diaries (© Paul Tosey)

The diaries feature 'lyrical, highly subjective'⁵ writing about Peto's experiences, impressions and attitudes. He often describes atmospheres created by light, especially the setting sun, together with sounds and scents. For example, while visiting the Generalife, Granada, in 1888 he wrote:

The sun is now sinking and all the sense of poetry is abroad, nightingales singing after the hushed heat of the middle of the day, and all the roses giving forth their fresh evening fragrance, and the water all the time gurgling and rushing along through channels beside the paths.⁶

Although Peto's work is sometimes characterised as 'Italianate', the diaries also emphasise the influence of Moorish architecture and gardens from his trip to Spain and Tangier in 1888. He seems as inspired by informal, local village settings around the Mediterranean as by formal gardens such as the Villa Giusti, Verona. Altogether, the diaries suggest to me that his garden designs may have been guided strongly by Peto's felt sense of the atmosphere which they would create.

Robin Whalley and all involved deserve much credit for making Harold Peto's travel diaries available. Sadly, the diaries extend only until 1898 – or, at least, subsequent diaries have yet to be found. It would be fascinating indeed to read Peto's reflections while he was producing his most notable garden designs.

Peto's travels and work abroad, if not the diaries themselves, have connections to his two known garden projects in West Sussex. According to Whalley,⁷ the spectacular 300 foot-long pergola at West Dean, created for William James in 1911-12,



Fig 2: Peto's pergola at West Dean Gardens (© Paul Tosey)

was Peto's sole contribution to the gardens there, apart perhaps from some alterations by George and Peto in the course of their architectural work on the house from 1891-3.⁸ The pergola's rounded stone columns may, like those he used for his pergola at the Villa Maryland in 1904, have been modelled on a pergola found at Amalfi⁹ which Peto did visit,¹⁰ though outside the period covered by the travel diaries.



Fig 3: Sedgwick Park, with the White Sea in the foreground (© Clare Davison)

Sedgwick Park, near Horsham, is considered to be Peto's work by several authors¹¹ though no documentation relating to his involvement in the garden has been found. It is known that in 1886 the owners, Robert and Emma Henderson, hired the firm of George and Peto to re-model the house.¹² *Historic England's* entry for Sedgwick Park suggests that Peto laid out the gardens at the same time.¹³ If so, this would be both interesting and important because it precedes Peto's principal garden design period by more than a decade.

Later, Peto also contributed to Sedgwick Park's interior design, "HAP 1904" being signed in the plasterwork of the drawing room'.¹⁴ The garden certainly pre-dates this because it featured in a 1901 article in *Country Life*.¹⁵ However, that article makes no mention of Peto, stating that 'the garden was planned by Mrs. Henderson and brought to perfection under her care'.

Both Sedgwick Park and the Villa Maryland on Cap Ferrat have a nautical theme. The former has features named 'The Masthead', 'The Bulwarks', 'The Portholes', 'The White Sea' and so on. The garden layout at Villa Maryland, which Peto re-designed for Mr and Mrs Arthur Wilson in 1904, has been likened to that of a ship,¹⁶ with its central alley from the house towards a pool and a garden house. This echoes Sedgwick Park's strong axis from the house across a terrace to the pool

and the view of the South Downs. The overall shapes, which have probably persisted despite alterations to the gardens since, are quite similar as can be seen via Google map's satellite view.¹⁷

Yet Sedgwick Park's whimsical labels seem uncharacteristic of Peto, an aesthete who usually strove for an authentic sense of antiquity. There is no comparable nomenclature at the Villa Maryland despite the ship-like layout. Grainger notes that Emma Henderson was a keen gardener and suggests that 'After her husband's death in 1893' it was she who 'executed considerable alterations, including the formal garden, laid out to evoke a man-of-war...'.¹⁸ The *Country Life* article attributes the naming of 'The White Sea' to the Hendersons' children.

It seems most likely, therefore, that Peto designed the garden's structure in 1886 with landscaping being undertaken alongside work on the house. The present owner of Sedgwick Park speculates that Peto and Emma Henderson became friends and that Peto continued to assist with the garden informally rather than as a commission.

Whether Peto's ship-like layout at Villa Maryland was influenced by Emma Henderson's ideas or was coincidental – since shipping was also the Wilsons' source of wealth – remains unknown. Curiously, the nautical theme resurfaced in Peto's work in a more literal way when he was commissioned by Cunard to create interior designs for the *Mauretania* (1905-7).¹⁹



Fig 4: Postcard showing a view from the Villa Maryland

There is a second enigma concerning Sedgwick Park. Peto kept a scrapbook, held in the Dumbarton Oaks collection,²⁰ which contains (f. 15v) a cutting from *The Garden* in 1905 of a painting by Beatrice Parsons (1869-1955) of the 'water garden' (i.e. 'The White Sea') at Sedgwick Park. Parsons also painted a view of the South Downs from Sedgwick Park. Both works are presumably in private ownership elsewhere.

Curiously, Parsons also painted views at the Villa Maryland as well as at another Peto garden, Petwood House in Lincolnshire. Indeed, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, her work was ‘acclaimed by leading gardeners including William Robinson and Harold Peto, who invited her to paint their gardens...’.²¹ A print of a Parsons painting of the Iford Manor garden is displayed in the house there today.²²

That Peto and Parsons knew each other seems certain, therefore, yet details of their connection are scant. Peto’s travel diaries make no mention of Parsons, nor has any detailed biography of Parsons’ life or catalogue of her works been produced to date. The fact that Parsons painted several of Peto’s gardens, that she must have painted the water garden at Sedgwick Park before June 1905, and that Peto kept a cutting of that painting in his scrapbook suggest that their involvement at Sedgwick Park could well have coincided, even if the details remain a mystery for now.

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to Clare Davison for her help in relation to Sedgwick Park.

1 Smith, S. (2020) ‘Help save the Secret Garden: why a nostalgic trip to Iford Manor is more important than ever’, *The Telegraph*, 25 October 2020, <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardens-to-visit/help-save-secret-garden-nostalgic-trip-iford-manor-important/>> [accessed 13 January 2021].

- 2 See SGT newsletter 76, Spring 2020.
- 3 ‘Peto abroad: His travels and his gardens’, *Historic Gardens Review*, Sept 2020, Issue 41.
- 4 *Cwareli Press*, <<http://www.cwarelipress.co.uk/index.html>> [accessed 9 January 2021].
- 5 Grainger, H. J., ‘Harold A. Peto (1854-1933): architect, interior designer, collector and aesthete’, in Webster, C. (ed), (2012) *The Practice of Architecture: eight architects 1830-1930*, Reading: Spire Books, p.180.
- 6 Whalley, R. (ed.) (2012), *Harold Peto: Travel Diaries (3) Spain 1888*, Brecon, Powys: Cwareli Press, p.21.
- 7 Whalley, R. (2007) *Great Edwardian Gardens*, London: Aurum Press, pp.41-7.
- 8 Grainger, H. J., ‘The Architecture of Sir Ernest George and His Partners. C.1860-1922’, PhD Thesis: University of Leeds (1985) <<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/239/>> [accessed 9 January 2021], p.286. Grainger suggests (p.288) that Peto made further contributions to the gardens later, in addition to the pergola; this does not appear to be corroborated by other sources.
- 9 Image in Jekyll, G. and L. Weaver (1914) (3rd edn) *Gardens for Small Country Houses*, London: Country Life, p.180.
- 10 Whalley, R. (2005), ‘Harold Peto: Shadows from Pompeii and the Work of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema’, *Garden History* 33.2, 256-73. P.257, refers to evidence from letters that Peto visited Sorrento and ‘other evidence’ (not specified) that he visited Capri, Amalfi and Ravello.
- 11 Bradley-Hole (2006); Grainger (2012); Whalley (2007).
- 12 Grainger, H. J., ‘The Architecture of Sir Ernest George and His Partners. C.1860-1922’, PhD Thesis: University of Leeds (1985) <<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/239/>> [accessed 9 January 2021], p.139.
- 13 ‘Sedgwick Park’, *Historic England*, #1001279. <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001279>> [accessed 13 January 2021]
- 14 Grainger (1985) p.140.



Fig 5: The view across the garden to the South Downs at Sedgwick Park (© Clare Davison)

15 'Sedgwick Park, Horsham: The Seat of Mrs. Henderson', in Leyland, J. (ed.), *Gardens Old and New: The Country House and its Garden Environment (The Second Volume)* (London: Country Life, n.d.), 83-88. Originally published in *Country Life*, 4th May 1901, pp.560-7.

16 Bradley-Hole, K. (2006) *Villa Gardens of the Mediterranean*, London: Aurum Press, p.75; the plan appeared originally in Tipping, H.A. (1910), 'Chateaux and Gardens of France: Maryland, Alpes Maritimes (Part 2). The Residence of Mrs. Arthur Wilson', *Country Life*, 10th December, p.870.

17 Map references 51.02737, -0.31346 (Sedgwick Park) and 43.692839, 7.329843 (Villa Maryland).

18 Grainger (1985) p.139.

19 Grainger (2012) p.186; Whalley (2007) p.42.

20 Peto, H.A. 'Garden Designs', *Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection* <<https://www.doaks.org/resources/rare-books/garden-designs-1>> [accessed 11 January 2021].

21 Cooling, L. 'Parsons, Beatrice Emma (1869-1955), artist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 12 September 2019, doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.68066 [accessed 21 January 2021]

22 Personal communication, Marianne Cartwright-Hignett, Iford Manor Estate, 23 January 2021.

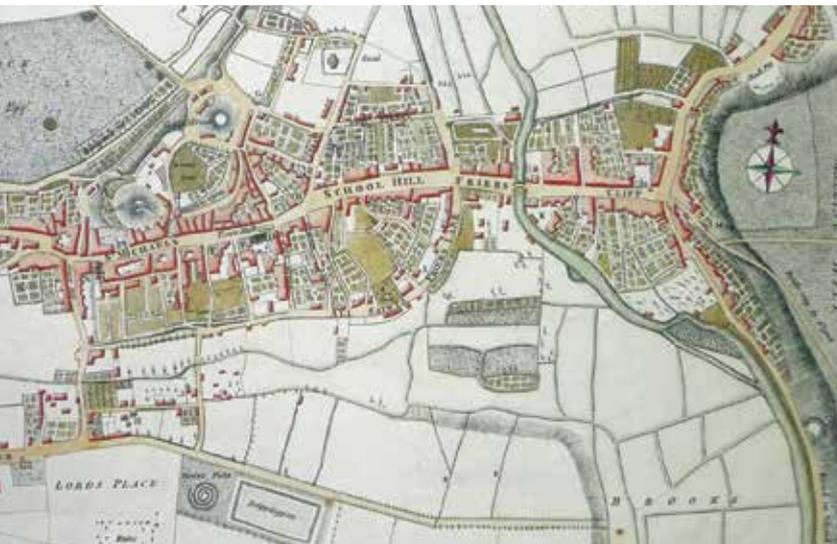
BALDY'S GARDEN, LEWES

By Marcus Batty

Baldy's Garden is largely a forgotten garden. A reference in *Sussex Depicted* by John Farrant to 'A couple [of poems] eulogised Baldy's garden in Lewes in 1746 and 1747' led me to find out more. A 1799 map, the nearest in date I could find, makes no mention of it by name nor does the later Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1878. I am indebted to the Lewes History Group on whose research much of this is based.

Helped by the presence today of an eco-house called Baldy's Garden, I discovered that the gardens lay along the contour above Chapel Hill (between the compass rose on the map above and the end of the main street of Lewes marked "Cliff"). A Thomas Woolgar (1761-1821) in volume II of his *Spicilegia sive Collectanea ad Historiam et ... Viciniae Lewensis* (in the Sussex Archaeological Society library) wrote 'The greatest curiosity of this Vill [presumably Cliffe] is a kind of hanging garden the admiration of all who view it.' He continued that Mr Thomas Baldy 'is ever ready to indulge strangers with the inspection of this delectable eminence ... entirely the work of his own hands'.

Although the Ordnance Survey 6" map published in 1878 (surveyed 1873-5) does not show a garden, the website of the Lewes History Group includes a map referred to as the 'Ordnance Survey 1873 map', clearly in Ordnance Survey style, showing a terrace, an avenue and a small building, just above the first 'L' of 'HILL', in all likelihood marking the entrance, towards the top of Chapel Hill. The garden was presumably to the right and behind the white Georgian house on the hillside in the 1910 postcard, which has Chapel Hill running up towards the top right.



Edwards, 1799, courtesy Sussex Archaeological Society



Woolgar refers to the gate to the garden 'which when entered is found to be laid out in as elegant a Taste as the situation Soil [sic] so would permit ... here are pleasant winding walks Trees and Evergreens of various kinds Flowers of various species' and so he goes on, enumerating 'an Arbour well sheltered from the heat of the Sun, a Beehouse ... Alcoves and different Seats for various prospects, a pretty Summer House ... there has also been a late addition of a Lawn'.

Of the views 'the reflecting mind may enjoy the pleasure of private contemplation in the Cot or Summer house where ... he may ... justly admire the industry labour and capacity & activity of the ingenious contriver of such an elegant source of entertainment and delight all of his own handywork'. There is a poem (*Gentleman's Magazine* 1747) entitled 'The Seat on Cliffe-Hill in Sussex, By a Lady' but this describes the view rather than the garden itself. A few lines will suffice:

See, yon tall grove aspiring from the glade,
Whose beauteous foliage forms a grateful
shade!
Refreshing shelter from the noonday heat,
Where artless birds their songs of love repeat.

Thomas Baldy ran a successful shop in West Street dealing in Chinese goods, no doubt benefiting from the popular appeal of chinoiserie. He owned Lamb House (No. 3 Chapel Hill) and had a warehouse behind Nos. 2 and 2a on the same street to the rear of which he began to build but did not complete a grotto. These lie just below Baldy's Garden. His obituary in the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* describes him as 'for many years a capital chinaman and latterly in partnership with John Lambert' who was the eldest brother of James Lambert senior who painted many Sussex landscapes. On his death in 1782, John Lambert (1715-94), inherited the gardens.

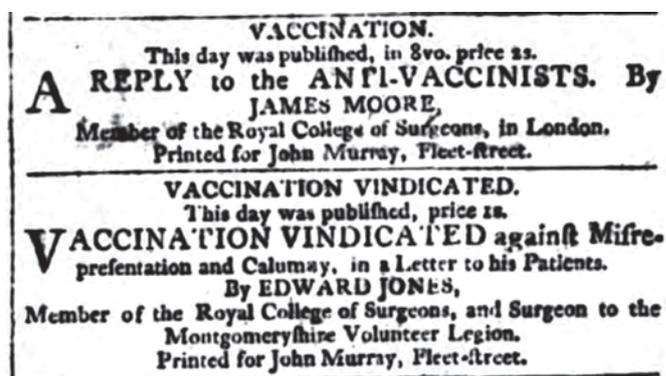
That the garden endured, at least for some years may be apparent from *The Brighton and Lewes Guide* (Button, JV, 1805), given that the gardens passed into the Lambert family on Baldy's death, in which is written at page 44:

Those to whom the ascent would be fatiguing, may enjoy from Lambert's garden, (a spot of ground, enclosed from the hill, at the bottom of the Cliff), a beautiful view of the town and its environs, to which access may at all times be had, as the garden was left for public inspection by the gentleman whose name it

bears. Mr Lambert's celebrity as an artist, stands very high, his proficiency in landscape painting was very high, and solely derived from his own taste and application; his merit as a painter, gained respect, his amiable qualities as a man, entitled him to esteem.

The line of inheritance is incomplete without further research as James, the artist, died in 1788 before his brother John as did the other artist, the junior James Lambert, who died in 1799. Apparently records exist of visits still being possible on payment of a fee in 1846.

There is a nice connection to Covid-19. An inoculating doctor, Dr Saunders, was occupying Lamb House in January 1794 when smallpox had broken out in Lewes. It was eventually resolved at a town meeting 'that as a general inoculation is an evil much less to be dreaded than a general infection, it is the decided opinion of the meeting that a general inoculation should immediately take place'. The general inoculation commenced on 14 January and finished on 20 January 1794. 2890 people were inoculated. Whether the programme had been completed or was stopped because of "anti-vaxxers" who were also active then remains unclear. (*Pox Britannica: Smallpox Inoculation in Britain 1721-1830* DC Brunton 1990 Dissertation.)



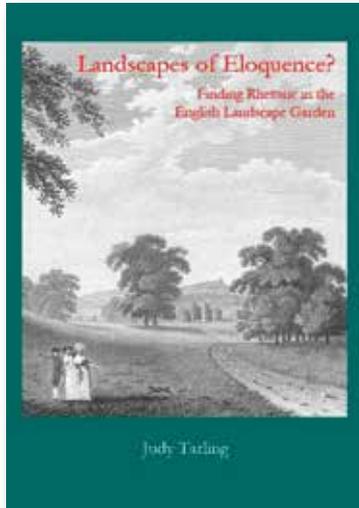
The Star (London) 13 February 1806 (Courtesy British Newspaper Archive)

As a footnote, compare the garden layouts in the 1799 map above with the panorama of Louth shown in our Coronavirus Bulletin No. 12. Here they are boringly rectangular whilst Louth was all swoops and swirls. Forty-five years separates the two although a black and white map of Lewes of 1824 essentially replicates the above. A mapmaker's objective differs from a panoramicist but, still, I am surprised by the contrast with deepest Lincolnshire. Still, William Morris apparently described Lewes as 'lying like a box of toys under a great amphitheatre of chalky hills'.

Book Review

Landscapes of Eloquence? Finding Rhetoric in the English Landscape Garden
Judy Tarling
Punnett Press, Heathfield, 2020,
ISBN 978-0-9932810-1-3, £30

Judy Tarling is an expert performer and interpreter of early music and has written widely about rhetoric and performance. She is also an active researcher for SGT and we benefited from her research skills in our publication *Humphry Repton in Sussex* (2018).



Landscapes of Eloquence? is a significant academic treatise and the result of many years of meticulous study. As such it will find a place on the shelves of serious scholars of the eighteenth-century landscape garden but more general readers will also find much to enjoy.

A word of caution: pay attention to both the pre-introduction (commencing with 'Classical Rhetoric – The Basics') and the introduction for important clues to Judy's thesis before diving into the main text. She quotes Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, 95 AD ('There is the practice of putting the question and answering it oneself, which may have quite a pleasing effect'). Is this delightful explanation of the exploration of ideas ever so slightly tongue in cheek? As background she attributes the origin of rhetoric to Cicero's theory of eloquence as a garden (he described figures of speech as flowers in a field, from which we derive the expression 'flowery language') and to later works such as *The Garden of Eloquence* (Henry Peacham the Elder's catalogue, 1577, contained a list of decorative figures of speech intended as an aid to understanding the Bible). She provides a neat summary of classical rhetoric and oration and reminds us that rhetoric meant elegant persuasion rather than empty, grandiloquent phrases. In the eighteenth century the polite arts (which included eloquence) were governed by 'the universal rules of taste' and rhetoric was their accepted language. One of Judy's claims is that garden design was a logical addition to the list of the polite arts.

She makes her premise clear: 'If eloquence was historically so often linked to a garden, why should a garden not be compared to eloquence?'; and in seven dense chapters, each divided into carefully considered sub-sections, she explores eighteenth century gardens in the context of a dialogue of rhetoric and persuasion. This is a new and refreshing prism for garden historians and theorists. A list of the chapter headings, which follow classical oratory, will give some idea of the detailed exposition: 'Decorum – Time and Place', 'Invention', 'Arrangement', 'Varietas', 'The Passions', 'The Imagination', and 'Speaking Silently'. Space does not permit a full assessment so I have only room to glance at a few of these.

Chapter one, 'Decorum', is interesting as it deals with what might be called 'suitability', a concept that is familiar to landscape historians when expressed as 'the genius of the place'. Just as we use different language to address different audiences, so landscape and architectural designs work best if the situation is respected – is the natural site rugged or peaceful, urban or rural? Is the owner of a new house sociable or contemplative, wealthy or merely comfortable? Careful consideration creates harmonious designs and, to illustrate this, Judy gives simple examples of jarring mistakes (a hermitage on a lawn, Neptune in a flowerbed, the Temple of the Winds in a pool rather than on a hill). She quotes extensively from contemporary authors and provides copious illustrations to flesh out her argument. She reminds us that the 'voice' of a sophisticated garden, like that of poetry or music, can be heard in different ways: easily understood by classically educated visitors but with equal validity by a more general audience.

In Chapter four, 'Varietas', Judy's springboard is again the classical orators, who advocated variety in tone and delivery in order to hold the attention of their audience. Garden writers from Addison to Repton all applauded variety in nature and in landscape design and Judy devotes thirty pages to a detailed examination of what might be termed good and bad variety. Unsurprisingly, her phraseology is often musical – in the section 'the steps of a minuet' she points out that, in the eighteenth century, two of the sister arts, poetry and dance, benefited from regularity, whereas entirely the opposite was true of gardens. Two other sections, 'Unity with Variety – harmony of parts' and 'Harmonising Colours', link the

process of garden composition with that of music and painting and again are crammed with fascinating, wide-ranging contemporary citations and illustrations. 'Change' reminds us how welcome change of, for example, time, season, light or view is in a garden just as, by implication, a change of key in music is valued.

I found Chapter seven, 'Speaking Silently', which considers statues in landscapes, especially intriguing. A statue, although mute, does have a voice and therefore rhetoric. In the eighteenth century knowing the identity of a figure and his or her story conveyed a silent and potent message; gesture, attitude and placement all added to the complexity of the response.

Inscriptions and memorials could also be used to provide 'voices' in the landscape.

Landscapes of Eloquence is a lucid and clever book, thick with illustrations and beautifully produced on quality paper. My only – and tentative – criticism might be that Repton is a little too present, but undeniably much of his writing and his work lend themselves to supporting Judy Tarling's ideas. The level of scholarly research, the integrity of the writing and the range of references is impressive and it is almost impossible to do it justice in a brief review. Judy is to be congratulated on the result.

Susi Batty

IN BOX

St Leonard's Forest, Horsham: A Landscape History

By Dr Maggie Weir-Wilson



SGT member Maggie Weir-Wilson has a new book published which tells the landscape history of St Leonard's Forest, Horsham. If you have ever wondered about the Forest as you were passing by or walking its footpaths, this first in-depth study tells all. You can find out about a



dragon and a saint, the iron and the rabbits, as well as the estates with their parks and gardens, the villages, churches and the people.

The book is available from bookshops (when open) and the Author's Pen, a local publishing company: www.authorspen.co.uk



Summer Newsletter

The SGT research group is working hard on our new publication about Gertrude Jekyll's commissions in Sussex. We are hoping to have our book ready to send to members by the end of the summer, although Covid restrictions continue to make access to the archives very challenging. As I am sure you can appreciate, overseeing the research and editing the publication is going to take up much of your editor's time this year, and so there may well not be a summer Newsletter, but we will make sure that we keep you up to date with news and events. Marcus will continue to issue his Bulletins and would welcome contributions which might otherwise have been offered to the Newsletter.

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