

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

A photograph of a group of people on a horse-drawn carriage in a park. The carriage is pulled by two white horses with dark spots. Four people are on the carriage: a man in a top hat and dark jacket, a woman in a red vest, and two other people. They are on a dirt path lined with trees and green grass. In the background, other people can be seen walking on the path.

AUTUMN
NEWSLETTER
2014

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Front Cover: Tring Park, King Charles' Ride

Celebrating the restoration of Charles Bridgeman's
Rond-Point (Photo by Colin Drake)

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(Photos by John Craggs)

The Chairman's Report—Bella Stuart-Smith



2014 is proving to be a record year: a record dry September, a record wet August, a record mild and wet winter/ spring, and in between the sun has shone on most HGT events. Except on the evening of the AGM when we had another record of sorts; the first AGM held around an indoor swimming pool. We were warm, dry and comfortable and have Richard and Susie Walduck to thank for generously welcoming us to visit

the garden at Lower Woodside before it rained, and be inside when we needed shelter and warmth for the AGM and our picnics.

The outings have taken members to some stunning gardens which you will read about. Sadly, we saw Highgrove in a torrential rain storm but it didn't dampen the spirit or the lively discussion. If you haven't been on one of these outings do try one – there is always a friendly crowd and it is an inspiration to see what other gardeners achieve.

The research/conservation teams have been busy and not just with their individual work. An excellent Study Day at Tring Park really filled in the background on the restoration of the *rond point* and Bridgeman landscape. The 'Trees and Treemongers' course, with a winning formula of a lecture one week followed by a walk around a landscape the next, was a wonderful way to appreciate the history of 17th and 18th century parks, helping it come alive. There is a new subject for next year, same formula, and another study day centred on Repton's work at Hailbury.

There is always much to comment on in terms of planning, that Kate Harwood manages to respond to so much is extraordinary. It is exciting to report that both Cassiobury Park and Hemel Water Gardens were successful in their HLF bid, so restoration work on both these public parks can begin. Negotiations continue on the amalgamation of the Association of Gardens Trusts and The Garden History Society and there will be a final vote next year.

Events this year have been different – we learnt some practical propagation skills from Aubrey Barker, as well as heading to Chiswick House for a tour of the house and garden. We are looking forward to a bridge day and lecture next year and planning very much continues for 2016 and CB300.

The Mrs Wheelbarrows delivered 41 workshops in the spring and summer term – that's about 1230 primary school children who have benefitted from an introduction to plants and gardening. It will continue for 2015, and we are hoping

to run the Awards again but with an improved system for auditing the work just to ensure the money we raise is really well spent. If anyone who would like to get involved in this work please get in touch. All who volunteer find it very rewarding.

It has been a pleasure to meet so many members, and welcome new ones and if you have comments or feedback I now have a new email address so please get in touch.



*The Chairman hard at work—
Propagating!*



*Pupils from Killigrew School, St
Albans, working in their HGT
sponsored garden.*

HGT Garden Visits 2014

In May, Trevor Beale led a visit to two contrasting gardens in Cambridgeshire. Fashioned around a historic and photogenic smock mill, painstakingly restored by the owner, the winding paths and naturalistic garden of *The Windmill* at Impington was a stark contrast to the Elizabethan splendour of the house and the formal gardens at *Maddingley Hall*. The party was shown around the gardens of the Hall, an outpost of the University of Cambridge, by its justifiably proud Head Gardener.

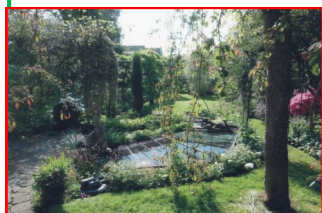
Roy and Ellie Johnson chose two outstanding private gardens in Suffolk for their visit in July. Mr and Mrs Alistair Robinson have created a stunning garden at *Ousden House* and provided a warm welcome for their HGT visitors. The handsome house, converted from a Georgian coach house and stables, provided the perfect setting for the eight acres of gardens that surround it. After lunch the destination was Denston Hall: another immaculate garden spread over 20 acres and designed by Mark Rumary and Xa Tollemache.

Highgrove House was the destination for Sonja Fillingham's garden visit in August. On a somewhat 'un-summery' day a party of twenty four set off for 'Highgrove'. After a short time in Tetbury, we were divided into two parties for the tour of Highgrove Garden. Despite the rain we thoroughly enjoyed our guides' interesting insight into this on-going project of HRH Prince Charles. Following a delicious cream tea, we set off for home in glorious sunshine!

'Numbers 50 and 52'

Two adjacent detached bungalows in a pleasant suburban road reveal little of the gardening treasures that lie beyond. Closer inspection of the front gardens gives a clue: the sweep of Phlox *subulata* 'G F Wilson' leading to the front door of 'number 52' and the collection of Paeonia *mlokosewitschii* ('Molly the Witch'), gaily seeding itself into the borders of 'Numbers 50 and 52', suggest a green-fingered gardener within.

Ellie and Roy Johnson moved into 'Number 52' in 1981. The mature but rather gloomy garden prompted Ellie to give up her job to develop her gardening skills, in particular to begin the collection of hardy perennial gems that, over the years, have spread themselves throughout her garden with joyous abandon. By joining



'Number 52'

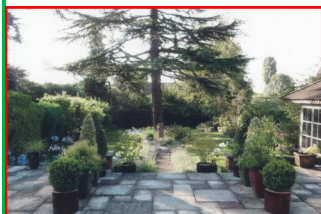
the RHS, Ellie used the RHS London Shows as a source of inspiration and a trove of choice plants; while a constructive relationship with the English Gardening School led to a series of garden visits which has developed into a passion that Ellie and Roy, now retired, enjoy together - and in which members of the HGT can share as part of the Trust's summer programme of garden visits.

Little remains of the original garden: a series of goldfish ponds overlooked by a weeping crab apple tree, an espaliered apple and pear walk trained into a tunnel, and a large greenhouse survive. Following Vita Sackville-West's injunction to 'cram, cram, cram!' Ellie has extended the borders to receive her collection of perennials: Geranium, including G. *palmatum*, spring bulbs, Corydalis, Ipheion, Crocus, Tulipa, 'yak' Rhododendron, Azalea, Pulmonaria, Astrantia, Hebe and Dierama. A collection of climbing roses, including 'Violette', 'Veilchenblau' and 'Cécile Brunner' trained over arches, provides vertical interest and beyond the apple tunnel a pair of dogwoods – Cornus *alternifolia* 'Argentea' and Cornus *controversa* 'Variegata' frame the entrance to a winter garden. Inspired by the Cambridge Botanical Winter Garden, this includes hellebores, variegated hollies, Mahonia in variety, Euonymus 'Silver Queen' as ground cover and dogwoods for stem and leaf colour.

The fascination of the garden at 'Number 52' lies in the detail and variety of its planting – its 'wow factor' is provided by the unique treatment of the original vegetable plot into a 'prairie planting' of Agapanthus *africanus* and hybrids grown from seed. Beginning with a single seed pod, brought home from a holiday visit to Madeira, there are now hundreds of plants creating a summer display. Ellie's Agapanthus have featured in an article in 'Amateur Gardening' magazine. Not only do plants seed themselves in all directions, the greenhouse is a giant Agapanthus

propagator. Plants in pots along the upper staging shelves shed seeds into the fertile soil of the greenhouse floor, where they develop into the next generation of plants for the garden and the pots on the terrace.

It is no surprise that in time Ellie, a plantaholic, had begun to run out of space. After 20 years of intensive gardening the situation was becoming critical. A move to a house with a larger garden was a possibility – but the prospect of leaving so

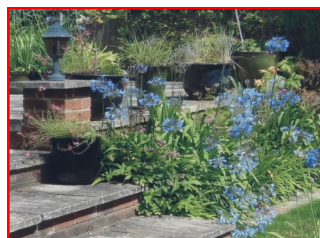


'Number 50'

much behind and starting again was a real deterrent - until Fate intervened: the neighbours from 'Number 50' decided to move. By removing a few fence panels and installing a gate the garden could be doubled in size and nothing would be lost. The question of what to do with a spare bungalow was a minor consideration and the purchase was quickly completed – the problem solved!

The neighbours had not been enthusiastic gardeners. A terrace and a large lawn dominated by a mature Atlas cedar tree gave scope for development. Ellie and Roy have resisted the temptation to mirror the garden style of 'Number 52'. The far end of the garden has been enclosed with a yew and berberis hedge flanking a wooden arch supporting a white, scented 'Boule de Neige' climbing rose, to provide a shady area for hardy plants, shrubs and bulbs: Ilex 'Bacciflora', a yellow berried holly, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *Euonymus phellomanus* with its corky winged branches and showy pink seed cases, Narcissi and Polyanthus in variety, among many others, flourish under a spread of mature birch trees.

Narrow borders provide a home for a choice collection of shrubs: *Euonymus europaeus* 'Red Cascade', white variegated holly pruned into tiers, and several varieties of Deutzia and Weigela to mention only a few; and climbing roses, with 'Reine des Violettes', 'Cardinal de Richelieu' and 'Francis E. Lester' among their number. The cedar has been under-planted with tête-à-tête daffodils, ornamental grasses and sedges, with a summer display of (what else?) short stemmed Agapanthus. But the feel of the garden is of light and space. There is room for an elegant arbour seat and a summerhouse, with the feeling that this is the garden in which the gardener may relax, drink in hand, at the end of a long day. However, 'Number 50' had a spacious terrace, which has given Ellie the opportunity to expand her fine pot collection to over one hundred: flowering tulips in the spring replaced in summer with – yes – Agapanthus and a variety of choice shrubs. At the height of summer there cannot be much time left for simply sitting – but that is real plant passion.



'Agapanthus below the terrace'

The Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Website

John Craggs—Website Manager

Did you know that the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust has a website? Do you know how to get to it? Have you ever visited it? Do you know what it is about? If your answer to any of these questions is 'No', then this article is for you. Editor

The history of the Internet began with the development of electronic computers in the 1950s. However, it wasn't until the early 1980s that the concept of a world-wide network of interconnected networks (the Internet) was introduced. The first website appeared in 1991, created by a British physicist, and as the numbers grew in the 1990s early adopters of the Web were primarily university-based scientific departments and physics laboratories. There were 10 websites by the end of 1992 and one million by 2007 when the HGT website was created. Today there are over 850 million sites.

The HGT site

In 2007 there was pressure from within the Executive Committee to have an HGT website and the Trust approached Orchard Web Design who were developing sites for other Gardens' Trusts. The Committee decided that the site should be structured around five main pages; a **Home page** to summarise the objectives of the Trust and one page for each of our principal activities, namely:

Research – researching into the county's historic parks and gardens.

Schools – working with schools to develop and sustain their grounds.

Conservation – working to protect and preserve Hertfordshire's landscape heritage.

Events and Outings – providing an annual programme of events, lectures and visits.

In addition to the five main pages, there are five supporting pages:

Patrons – Trust patrons, executives and supporters.

Join Us – the benefits of membership and how to join.

Publications – Trust publications and the HGT library.

Contact – how to contact us and who is responsible for what.

Links – useful links to related gardens and garden history websites.

To access the website from a computer or smartphone, type in www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk , or type 'Herts Gardens Trust' into 'Google' and let the computer find the website for you.

Trees and Treemongers—Mary Buckle

‘Parks and gardens of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.’

The first week of this professional and well informed short course got off to a flying start with a talk by Kate Harwood introducing us to the use of trees in the landscape, for beauty as well as utility, and the major tree planters up to the 17th century. John Evelyn and his book ‘*Sylva*’, promoting the widespread replanting of trees in the landscape, was a significant influence at this time.

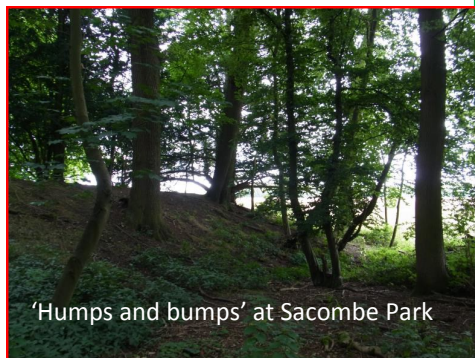


Hartwell House: Gibbs’ Gothic Tower’

Every other week we visited a landscape with which Charles Bridgeman had been involved. Our first visit was to Hartwell House near Aylesbury. We were shown round by Charles Boot of the Bucks Gardens Trust who lives on the estate. He explained that the formal gardens were completed in 1738 with several buildings by the architect James Gibbs. Gibbs then redesigned the house in 1740. There is a series of paintings

from 1736 by Balthazar Nebot depicting various views of the gardens showing a gothic tower, obelisk, pavilion and pyramid. Some of these buildings are still to be found in the grounds. The Gothic Tower is located in the Wilderness which may have been a Bridgeman design as he often worked with Gibbs. The grounds are undergoing gradual restoration but the threat of HS2 passing across the Park hangs ever present

An interesting talk by Jenny Milledge on nurseries and garden writers, with special mention of Moses Cook and the Brompton Park Nursery which was so successful under London and Wise at the end of the 17th century, preceded our second garden visit to Sacombe Park with an advance warning that machetes might be useful as the site is very overgrown! We had to use our imagination to picture the avenues and



‘Humps and bumps’ at Sacombe Park

terrace with grotto underneath looking out to a formal canal. Sadly none of these features remain but there were tantalising humps and bumps in the right places!

Week 5 was the turn of Anne Rowe who sprinted through pollarding of trees and how to spot old pollards in the landscape, topiary and block planting of forest trees. We then moved on to archaeological evidence for historical gardens and landscapes in Hertfordshire. Chauncy's book of 1700, '*Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*', contains 'birds-eye' views of estates and Anne showed us a variety of methods for analysing the old estate maps such as aerial photos taken at different times of the year and in different weather conditions and walking the ground.

Our final week took us to Briggens. The house is closed up and the landscape is currently used as a golf course. Although this landscape is attributed to Bridgeman the evidence is based on a plan dated 1781 showing a Bridgemanic-style layout that is unlikely to be of a later date. There are remains of avenues and a lake fed by a canal in the front of the house.



The contrast between the first garden and the second two that are either disappearing under weed trees or brambles or being altered for the purposes of golf was very marked.

A Tudor and Stuart garden course is being planned for next year and I would highly recommend an early booking.

Not an HGT Member yet?

Full details of the benefits of membership, together with a membership application form, may be obtained from the website:

www.hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

Or, contact the Hon. Membership Secretary:

Email—p.d.figgis@talktalk.net or telephone: 01707 261400

Bridge Fans!

Woolmer Green Village Hall—Wednesday 4th March 2015—11.0am for 11.15am.

Please refer to the accompanying 'flyer' for details.

Humphrey Repton at Haileybury?

A new interpretation of the East India College Commission (1808-1811)

Toby Parker—Archivist, Haileybury College

Apart from Ray Desmond's short piece on the subject, published in *Garden History* (Vol. 6, No2, 1978), and possibly because of the dismissive tone of that article, Humphry Repton's landscape at Haileybury has received very little scholarly attention. My researches at the British Library, looking in detail at the commission and the surviving papers, have offered up a much larger and more important executed scheme than previously acknowledged.

In 1807, the architect and surveyor to the East India Company, Samuel Pepys Cockerell wrote a report to the directors, drawing their attention to the lack of dignity of the site that surrounded William Wilkins' magnificent Greek Revival college. Cockerell went on to inform his employers that no money had been allocated for 'the dressing of garden, ground, fencing, planting'. A little over a year later four directors visited Haileybury to discuss how best to lay out the East India College's grounds. It was decided that the Chairman, Edward Parry, would approach Humphrey Repton to produce a general plan for the estate which would then be laid before the Court of Directors for their consideration. At this point in the story of the site, the Principal of the East India College the Reverend Samuel Henley emerges from the shadows and begins to play an intriguing role in the commission.

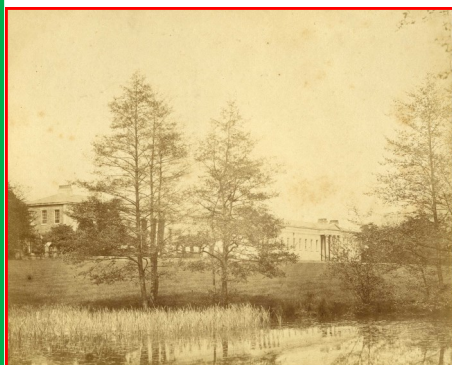


The East India College by Thomas Medland, 1809; dedicated to the Chairman and Directors of the East India Company. When the drawing for this print was executed the terrace and other elements of the landscape had not been agreed. Medland must have had access to Repton's plans and sketches in order to have executed this work

Henley, as a young dissenting preacher in St Neots, was a correspondent for a time with William Gilpin on the subject of the Picturesque. After his ordination at the end of 1770, Henley was appointed a professor at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, where he befriended Thomas Jefferson. In Virginia, Henley made a name for himself as a radical thinker and he was the founding Secretary of the Virginian Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, with John Clayton, author of *Flora Virginica*, as its President.

Henley and Humphrey Repton met for the first time on the 24 November 1808, walking the estate together and discussing the most appropriate land to acquire through exchange with Lord John Townshend. Before the end of the year, Repton produced the *Book of Plans, Sketches and Report*, which were received by the Committee of the College on 25 January 1809, for which he charged them £52:10:00. The plans that Repton submitted were for the western approach to the College, its southern side and the creation of a private road that travelled around the east and north ranges and joined the London Road. Repton's bill and the Committee of College minutes are proof that a Red Book was produced rather than simply 'sketches, report and plan' recorded in Desmond's article.

The East India College commission was a demanding but financially rewarding one for Repton. Between 1808 and 1810, he visited the site at least 13 times making many alterations to his designs, which were more complex than they initially appear, being created for an educational establishment rather than a single family. What has also emerged in this project is the creation of a hitherto unknown flower garden for the Principal with a very strong accent on North American plants, undertaken by Thomas Barr, Repton's contractor.



*Repton's 'Water' from Hayley Lane,
1857.*

*Photograph taken by
Professor Monier Monier Williams.*



*Eastern Avenue, 1857, showing the
avenue of horse chestnuts planted by
Repton.*

*Photograph taken by
Professor Monier Monier Williams*

Haileybury is the only institutional landscape that Humphry Repton produced, his designs for Magdalen College, Oxford (1801) having been rejected and for this reason alone, the scheme for the East India College is of real historical importance. While Repton's *Book of Plans, Sketches and Report* remains lost, the surviving papers offer up a new interpretation of the commission which takes one from the City of London and India, to Virginia and back to Hertfordshire, a favourite haunt of the nabob.

HGT Study Day at Haileybury, 18 April, 2015

Hertfordshire had a wealth of nabobs in the 18th century (see *Hertfordshire Garden History: a miscellany* pub. 2007), so it seems most suitable that it was chosen as the place to train yet more nabobs. As Toby has shown in his article, Haileybury was laid out by the most fashionable of architects and the most popular of landscape designers; yet till now it has received very little scholarly attention - this is about to change ...

HGT will be holding a Study Day in 2015 at Haileybury on Saturday, 18 April, 2015.

Speakers will include Tom Williamson and Toby Parker on Repton and Henley and the landscape at Haileybury. The last Study Day, at Tring Park, was oversubscribed so if you would like to book provisionally now, please contact Kate Harwood:

conservation@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk

You will have the chance to confirm (or change your mind) when final details are available.

And ... Two Dates for Your Diary

Medieval or Renaissance?

Parks and Gardens in the Tudor and early Stuart periods.

Tuesday mornings from June 2—July 7, 2015

Three talks to be held at Woolmer Green Village Hall and three associated visits to significant county garden sites.

Tony Kirkham—'Trees, a cut above the rest'.

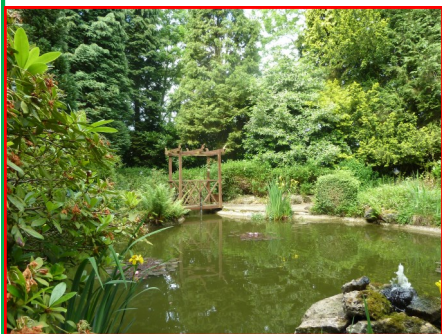
Monday evening, June 1st, 2015 at Ashridge

A talk by Tony Kirkham: renowned speaker and Head of the Arboretum, Gardens and Horticultural Services at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Full details and application forms will be published with the 2015 HGT Spring Newsletter.

Lady Alice Cooper and her Japanese Gardens

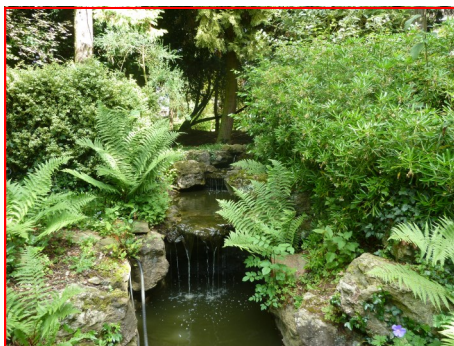
Kate Harwood



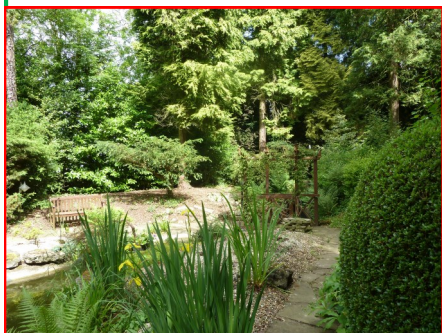
Castle Village—Bridge

Those of us who came to the Felden Lodge day last year will have heard of Lady Alice and seen her Japanese garden there, now sadly in need of TLC. Our speaker, Dr Raggett, spoke of another Japanese garden in the locality at a place called Shenstone Court. Map addicts will have spotted that there is no such place in Hertfordshire – now. But there was and it has a fascinating history.

Britwell, on Berkhamsted Common, was built for Sir John Evans, son-in-law of John Dickinson of Apsley and Nash Mills and a famous archaeologist who excavated Knossos – but that's another story. Eventually the house was bought, in 1937, by Sir Richard Ashmole Cooper and Lady Alice who had moved from Felden Lodge in 1933 and paused briefly at The Krall, a Thomas Mawson garden, before settling here for a few years.



Castle Village—Ferns



Castle Village—Flags

In 1947 the Coopers sold Shenstone Court to their company 'Cooper, McDougall & Roberston Ltd' for use as a research station. It was renamed Berkhamsted Hill, eventually coming under the Wellcome group until 1991 when the site became vacant and the gardens derelict.



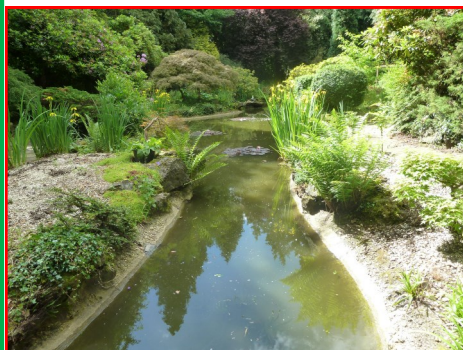
Castle Village—Fountain

Another name and another lease of life. In 1999 the mansion and part of the grounds were developed as a Retirement Village – Castle Village. The residents began to rescue the 28 acres of gardens which remained. The sunken rose garden, expansive lawns and wild-flower meadows are beautifully kept.

But the gem is the Japanese Garden which won a Gold Award in 2007. This immaculately restored and kept garden is the twin of the one at Felden Lodge. The same stepping stones, concrete-lined sinuous pool, summer house (only the base remains at Felden Lodge) and intimate character confirm it as being by the same hand. It contains a surprising collection of bonsai English forest trees and is at its most glorious in azalea season.



Castle Village—Tea House



Castle Village—Water Course

It is seldom open to the public so if you do have the chance, a visit would be well worthwhile. You might be lucky enough to be able to talk to some of the well-informed residents who are passionate about the gardens. Fittingly, a descendant of Lady Alice's still lives there.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are due to Jenny Sherwood who arranged my visit and gave me much useful information, to Mrs Margaret Simmons, who showed me around and other residents who made the time to talk to me.

HGT Visit to Chiswick House and Garden September 2014



Gathering on the gravel in front of Lord Burlington's neo-Palladian masterpiece, Chiswick Villa, our guide cited John, Lord Hervey's remark that it was 'Too small to live in, and too big to hang on a watch'. Inspired by the works of Palladio and of classical Rome, Lord Burlington created a masterpiece of classical proportion and design that was to be enjoyed in the company of aesthetically minded companions as a cultural symbol of

good taste and scholarship, not as a grand residence. Burlington's imposing Jacobean house was but a short walk away and it was not until the latter years of the 18th Century, by which time the property had passed to the Cavendish family, that wings were added to the villa to create a satisfactory residence. After a long period of decline and two world wars the buildings passed into public hands, the wings were removed, and the Villa restored to its former glory.



It could be said of the gardens at Chiswick that they offer the best dog walking grounds in west London and an excellent restaurant. Kate Harwood, our garden guide for the

afternoon of our visit, explained that the restoration of much of the shrubbery adjacent to the car park had to be replanted on more than one occasion because of the exceptionally high nitrogen levels in the soil! That said, the gardens, designed by William Kent to complement the Villa, are a perfect, and possibly the first, English landscape garden of its kind. Based on Kent and Burlington's concept of a

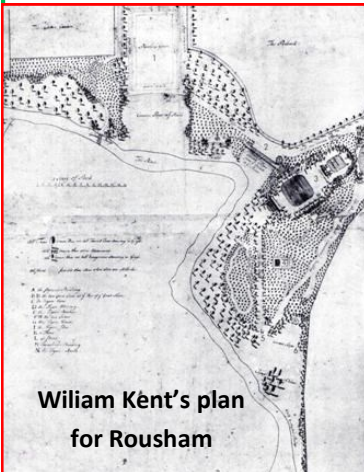


Roman Villa garden, they were the first in England to feature ancient statuary, obelisks and garden buildings skilfully situated to catch the eye and to create vistas along woodland rides and across placid stretches of water. This garden, now splendidly restored, became the inspiration for many of the other great English landscape gardens of the 18th century: Stowe, Badminton, Rousham ...

Rousham—A Personal Perspective

Tom Stuart-Smith

I have always been interested in how gardens relate to their context almost as much as I'm interested in their interior workings. One can think of a garden as you might consider a character in life or in fiction, defined as much by their relationships to those around them as they are by whatever intrinsic qualities they might possess. The landscape at Rousham articulates this relationship between the character of interior and the landscape beyond, with more subtlety than any landscape I know. I am constantly drawn back and always leave inspired and refreshed.



**William Kent's plan
for Rousham**

The plan of the garden, which has stayed almost constant since the 1730's, is something you want to pick up; or rather, I want to prise the outline off the page like a transfer. It shows a square block comprising the house and a grand bowling green connected by a narrow neck to a more irregularly shaped garden sloping down to the River Cherwell which forms the north boundary of the garden. The composition is precisely defined by wall, water or a thick yew hedge for its complete extent, except for a small Iron fence and gate which runs for about 3m between the west front of the house and the ha ha, where you now enter the garden. Because of its setting

above and along a steep bank on a bend in the river, the garden repeatedly addresses the landscape beyond its limits from different angles, through the organising prism of the garden foreground and the distancing device of the water, which often lies between the viewer and the view. Beyond the river lies a condensed and idealised portrait of rural England; longhorn cattle, a gothic folly, sporadic traffic on the B4030 and occasional trains hurrying on to Banbury. Being on the other side of the river means that the scenery is close but separate, like one is divided from passengers travelling the other way by a glass partition in an airport.



**Rousham House and
Bowling Green**



'Looking out'

The way the garden is experienced does not seem to be a rigid sequence, more an overall narrative that gradually becomes apparent as you absorb the genius of the place. There is a constant alternation between looking in and looking out. Parallel to this is an equally compelling and recurrent contrast in mood between the erotically charged narrative of the more enclosed shrubbery and the more forbidding

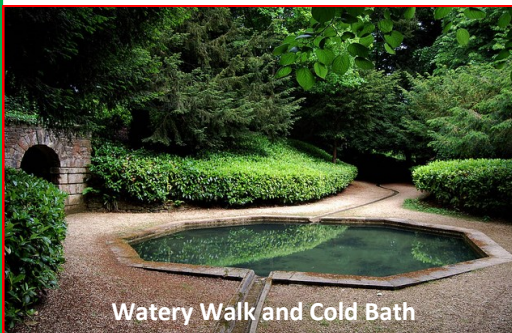
character of the open and formal parts of the garden closer to the house. Within the upper garden, sculptures depicting heroism or violence command focal, symmetrically composed, positions of prospect over the valley. But as one descends the slopes the sculptural mood alters; the deeper the recess, the stronger the erotic suggestion. Sculpture accentuates the difference in mood between the Bacchic internal landscape and the public domain of heroism and rhetoric.

Perhaps these seemingly contradictory qualities of suggestiveness and definition so vividly displayed at Rousham can be seen as essential requirements for the imaginative cogency of a garden. By this I mean the idea of the garden having a parallel life in the imagination as a virtual space that can be explored, reflected on and discovered almost as much in an abstract sense as it in reality. For every hour spent wandering around Rousham there are hours more to be had wandering about the Roushamesque recesses of one's mind.



Upper Cascade

On a recent visit on a misty winter's evening, the remains of snow were spread about and the garden seemed more mysterious than ever before. I noticed that to



Watery Walk and Cold Bath

get into the garden through that gate between the house and the Ha Ha, you have to leave the gravelled drive and walk across a short stretch of turf, as if the connection between the formal area in front of the house and the garden entrance was really quite incidental. There is no instruction. You even have to commit a small transgression.



The Colossus

The house was quiet and empty as it always is, no chairs on the terrace, or light in the hall; a looming eminence in the landscape rather than a centre of activity and attention. Spread out in front of the bare gravel terrace, the bowling green had become an abstract canvas of snow and grass, exposed by the boots and sledges of the day's visitors. The lower part of the garden was so deeply enshrouded in freezing fog that stepping from the grand level lawn around the house felt like a descent from the real world of fact and reason to a place where things are only half seen and partly revealed by shifting mists and melting snow, a world of dreams and

obscurity. The grottos in Venus' Vale seemed as if they might once have been far more substantial structures which had been buried by an accumulation of soil and snow over time so that they would eventually become entirely submerged. Never have I seen the place more cryptic and magical.

Rousham is an intensely psychological landscape and one that provokes as many different emotional responses as there are individual visitors, and this is an important part of its extraordinary appeal; that within the confines of this relatively small plot there is scope for such a myriad of interpretations. This is in part because, to our modern understanding, the messages of the garden seem slightly opaque and are in any event slightly eroded by time. But it is also because it is very easy to get lost. The set pieces themselves may be strongly and even symmetrically constructed; take for example Venus' Vale with its balancing sculpture, central ensemble of descending pools all presided over by the goddess, but the connections between these spaces seem like tangled strings connecting different parts of a mobile, so that even if you have visited the garden on a number of occasions its quite easy to get a little confused. The landscape architect Hal Moggridge once went to the trouble of calculating that there are over 1000 different ways around the garden without re-tracing ones footsteps. Perhaps its even more than this, but whatever the number it is quite possible that one takes a different route each time you visit. This is part of the plurality of the place. We

sense that even though the parameters of the territory are rigorously defined, our own experience is unique and very different each time. We have our own way into and around the garden, and our own way of seeing. The last time I visited with Sue my wife, we swam through the garden. Another way of being immersed in this wonderfully beguiling place.



Venus' Vale

Book Review—Kate Harwood

Garden Cities and Suburbs by Sarah Rutherford (Shire Publications, 2014)

As Hertfordshire has the great distinction of having the only two Garden Cities in the UK, this exemplary little book is most relevant and explores not only the Garden Cities and Suburbs themselves but also their antecedents and the influences, philosophical, social and practical, which formed them.

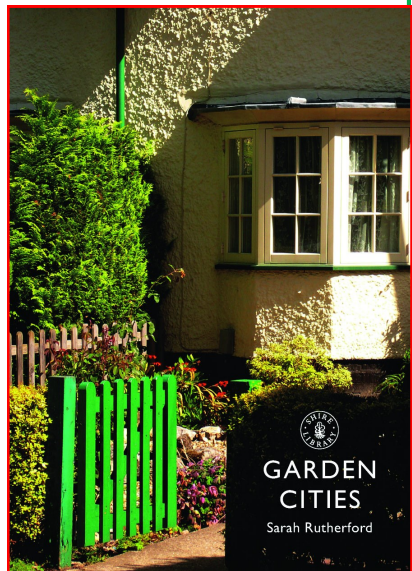
Designed settlements have been around for a while – from the Roman city of Verulamium, to the industrial suburbs of the 19th century. Planned rural settlements, such as Milton Abbas in the 18th century, often followed forced removal of villages to enlarge parks as criticised in *The Deserted Village*:

The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds... (Oliver Goldsmith)

The extension of parks is indeed something that HGT's researchers have encountered, although the picturesque village green planned settlement at Ardeley (1917) did not have to accommodate the dispossessed from a park. Industrial settlements at Port Sunlight, Bournville and elsewhere, together with American influences such as Calgary and Chicago also helped form our Garden Cities – even down to the cocoa on sale at The Kittles Inn in Letchworth.

Other settlements such as the asylum villages: Napsbury, Hill End and Leavesden, are also covered, as are villages for war disabled, retired employees and Quakers.

Much of the impetus for these settlements was a wish to improve the lives of ordinary people. Hertfordshire has a large share of the first wave of post-war New Towns, which were inspired by Garden Cities; these are not covered within the scope of this book, nor is Metroland, which takes up the south-western corner of our county – perhaps in a future publication? This is, though, an excellent introduction to the subject which can take you on to delightful explorations on foot and in libraries.





'Impington Windmill'



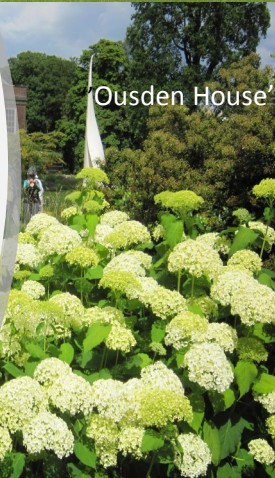
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'Ousden House'



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