SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST



Jottings

Edition No. 4 September 2022

Welcome to the September issue of Jottings. The summer holidays might be over but there's definitely a feel of the 'grand tour' to this edition. We begin in the company of two young Americans, and a bicycle trip to visit some of the great gardens in Sussex during the sunny summer of 1928. Then it's off to Scotland, and Marcus Batty entertains us with a journey that was far from 'dull'! Closer to home, the entrancing Woolbeding is a favourite garden of Susi Batty and the stunning new ten-sided glasshouse was a highlight of her recent visit – not to be missed on anyone's grand tour of Sussex gardens. There's lots more inspiration in our garden events happening this month, so enjoy reading – and travelling.

Things to do, places to be

Sussex Gardens Trust event for members in September

Uppark Garden and Sennicotts (these two visits can be booked separately)
27 September 10.30 am – 4.00 pm.

A morning visit to Uppark, with two guided tours of the Pleasure Ground outlining the history and development of the garden, which has features included by Humphry Repton, including a Game Larder, as eyecatchers along his driveway. After lunch in the café, or a picnic in the grounds, there's a visit to the privately-owned Sennicotts, with walled garden, and views across the Sussex parkland to the South Downs.



Repton's 'eye-catcher' at Uppark.

More information here: https://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/events/

Garden Events and Study Days

Sussex Prairie Garden

Planting a Prairie Garden Large or Small with Juliet Sargeant

Wednesday 21 September 9.30 am – 2.30 pm.

Come and be inspired by the beautiful expanses of grasses and colourful flowers at Sussex Prairie Gardens. With illustrated talks and planting exercises, Juliet will explain how to design similar schemes for your own garden.

Find out more

Events at Denmans Garden



A Year at Denmans Garden – Artist in Residence Exhibition

Thursday 22 September to Thursday 20 October 2022

SKY Arts Landscape Artist finalist Sue England has been working at Denmans Garden for one year, interpreting the changing seasons and bringing her own creative take to this unique garden.

https://www.denmans.org/events/a-year-at-denmans-garden-artist-in-residence-exhibition/

Garden Inspiration – Creative Watercolour Workshop

Friday 23 or Saturday 24 September 10:00 am - 13:00 pm

Join Jo Dowers for an exclusive 3-hour creative watercolour workshop in John Brookes' studio in the Clock House at Denmans Garden. Enjoy exploring & experimenting with a variety of water-based mediums & techniques inspired by the late summer garden.

https://www.denmans.org/events/garden-inspiration-creative-watercolour-workshop-at-denmans-garden/

Coming up next month at Denmans …

John Brookes Lecture 2022 – Art in the Garden

Sunday 9 October 2022

Garden open from 3 pm. Lecture 4.00 - 5.30 pm.

A panel discussion exploring the relationship between Art and the Garden, from the influence modern art has had on garden design to how artists find inspiration in the garden.

https://www.denmans.org/events/john-brookes-lecture-2022-art-in-the-garden/

Events happening elsewhere

Sissinghurst Castle Garden is hosting a series of lectures by professionals in the gardening industry to speak on a range of horticultural topics and these lectures maybe of interest.

The Head Gardener Troy Scott Smith will be hosting these lectures in the quiet intimacy of the Oast House, offering a unique opportunity for individuals to listen to the experts and to receive answers to the questions they may not otherwise have been able to ask. Each lecture also offers ticket holders entry into Sissinghurst's formal garden as well as refreshments. The lectures are as follows:

Dan Pearson – 'Delos: Two Years On'

Thursday 15 September 2022

17:30 – 18:45 pm

In 2018, our Head Gardener asked landscape designer and horticulturalist Dan Pearson for help in reimagining our dry garden Delos, mixing Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's original vision with modern techniques. Two years after the official completion of Delos, Dan returns to Sissinghurst to reflect on how the garden has developed and how it will continue to progress.

Charles Dowding – 'Celebrating No Dig at Sissinghurst'

Tuesday 4 October 2022

17:30 – 18:45 pm

Having first experimented with the 'No Dig' technique 40 years ago, horticulturalist Charles Dowding comes to Sissinghurst to celebrate this method

in relation to our own vegetable garden gaining its organic status earlier in the year. His approach is rooted in organic principles and he will speak on how certain standards could impact on smaller products.

Juliet Sargeant – 'Natural Connections'
Thursday 10 November 2022
13:00 – 14:30 pm

RHS gold medallist and garden designer Juliet Sargeant is no stranger to the powerful qualities beautiful surroundings can have on healthy living. Her advocation for using gardening to enhance social awareness and well-being is rooted in having first trained as a medical doctor. At Sissinghurst, Juliet will speak about our relationship with nature and the inspiration we can draw from it.

Heritage Open Days 2022: 9 to 18 September

Every September volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture. It's a chance to see all kinds of hidden places – which are free to explore and there are lots of events relating to garden history. Check out the full list: https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting

FOLAR
Friends of the Landscape Archive at Reading

Further afield, but there are lots of exciting things happening at FOLAR

Take a look at their **summer special** bulletin and book for their courses:
Future Histories - a brilliant two-day conference coming up 8-9 September to discuss what students should learn today about the history of landscape design, landscape architecture and landscape management.

Who Cares? Two lunchtime talks at Reading Oct 4 +11 with Dr Eirini Saratsi and Prof Flora Samuel looking at what really matters to people about having and using landscapes.

FOLAR's annual symposium **Landscape of Housing** Nov 12 (save the date) and info on speakers and topics (with ticket info to come)

Why so Special? FOLAR and the Gardens Trusts series of 21 talks on post 1945 listed landscapes, parks and gardens are now available online for free.
If you missed this widely acclaimed series of talks on the post war designed landscapes, parks and gardens added to Historic England's register this is a wonderful opportunity to watch the recordings on the FOLAR website.

The Bicycle Boys in Sussex

In the August edition of Jottings we introduced the two young Americans who started out on bicycles in 1928 to visit the great gardens of England, Wales and Scotland. In this issue we take a closer look at a selection of the gardens they visited in Sussex, and find out how some of these historic places have changed today.

The detailed diary that Loyal kept, together with photographs, presents a historical and social narrative of large estate gardens between the two world wars, as well as a vivid personal account of the friends enduring rain and winds, biting insects and bicycle falls, and sometimes rather dubious meals. Loyal planned to use his diary for his dissertation, but this was never completed. The three volumes however, survived, and in 2015 the family donated this and the photographs to the RHS Lindley Library.

The **#BicycleBoys** is a new digital exhibition organised by the RHS and the Gardens Trust, together with County Gardens Trusts, which showcases the tour by the young Americans as they explore Britain's gardens on bicycles in 1928. It is part of the Gardens Trust's Unforgettable Gardens campaign to raise awareness of the importance of local parks and gardens, now and for the future.

The exhibition can be seen here:
https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections/the-bicycle-boys
Sam and Loyal arrived in Liverpool on the 18 June, where they bought their bicycles and started the tour. In mid-August the 'Bicycle Boys', as the RHS Lindley Library calls them, reached Sussex and during two days cycled nearly a hundred miles and visited eight gardens.

We have no idea of how their list of gardens was decided, but as a student it is likely Loyal had read books and magazines about gardens in Great Britain. Several of the gardens they visited in Sussex had been highly praised in editions of *Country Life*, and sometimes a head gardener would recommend another garden to visit nearby.

This link will take you to a map of their trip and you can look at where they cycled on the Sussex part of the tour.
https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1tJdZU8L_C0VadHMzz2Qu41majnL3tUN2&ll=51.042242061360525%2C-0.013131927669594035&z=10

Day One – 14 August 1928

Almost eaten by cayoudles and supper, bed & breakfast for 2/6

Warnham Court - Sedgwick Place - Old Place - Gravetye Manor - Homestall Place - Brockhurst Place



©RHS Libraries Archive

Getting up before breakfast to write letters, and with an early morning of rain showers and sun, 'typical English weather' as Loyal noted in his diary, the first visit of the day was Warnham Court 'owned by Capt. C. E. Lucas, and where Mr C. F. Crump is the gardener'. Loyal and Sam admired the fine views, the great variety of flowering shrubs and this very elaborate topiary work.

'I have no fear of famine now' wrote Loyal, after collecting his mail in Horsham with 'a letter from B.B.W. with a little reimbursement more than I had asked for and more than really needed'. Arriving at Sedgwick Place they were at risk of being 'eaten up by the bunch of cayoudles about the place', but the gardener, Mr Muddell, took Loyal and Sam around the water and rock garden and to see the Japanese features 'such as lanterns and pagodas'.

Does anyone know what a 'cayoudle' might be? Perhaps an American word for a biting insect? We would love to hear your suggestions: Contact us here

Recent research by SGT has discovered that the gardener is likely to be John Muddell, born in 1865, who was living in Castle Cottages in Sedgwick Park, and whose occupation on the 1921 census is given as gardener.



©RHS Libraries Archive

The gardens today

Warnham Court has been owned by the Lucas family for over 150 years. It is open with the NGS one day a year. The park and gardens are registered Grade II. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001413

Sedgwick Park House and Garden is Grade II listed by English Heritage, and in private ownership. The Water Garden, also known as the White Sea, and the Japanese features, were designed by Emma Henderson who had moved there with her husband in 1862. They commissioned the architect Ernest George to redesign the house, and it is thought Harold Peto planned the gardens, although no plans survive. In 1901 *Country Life* praised the garden and Emma's skill as a designer. After her husband's sudden death Emma continued to care for the gardens until she died in 1931. The shipping magnate, Lord Rotherwick, who bought the house in195 was said to be a keen gardener and he added an extensive rock garden to the east of the White Sea. After his death 1958 the estate was broken up and the farms, parkland and cottages were sold off. Clare Davison, and her late husband John, came to Sedgwick in 2001 and set about restoring the garden to its former glory. The park and garden are registered Grade II.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001279



©RHS Libraries Archive


The water gardens in 2022

SGT is delighted to celebrate the #BicycleBoys tour of Sussex with a very special visit to Sedgwick Park for our members on Thursday 8 September.

Next stop on the trip was Haywards Heath, where Loyal comments: 'we had almost to hold our nose and close our eyes to enjoy our dinner, but we ate it anyway and continued on'.

Unharmed from the meal, they reached Lindfield, and were shown the gardens at Old Place by the gardener, Mr Elder. Loyal photographed this sundial, with a bronze pelican atop. He was interested in the sundials on his tour, having written an article before leaving America entitled 'Sun-dials, their construction and present day use' which he submitted to the publishers Charles Scribner & Sons. Sadly, his typescript was rejected.

Loyal always writes about the views seen from the gardens he visited and here at Old Place he admired a good view from the east side of the house, 'down through an axis of Cypress trees'.



©RHS Libraries Archive



©RHS Libraries Archive

Gravetye Manor was apparently rather difficult to find: 'We rode right over the chains in one place where the road was closed and after considerable inquiry, climbing and coasting we found the place, before getting into East Grinstead'. The gardener, Mr Martham, was not about, and they missed out on seeing the terrace as 'there were some elderly ladies there looking about'.

The next stop was Homestall Place, about eight miles away, at Ashurst Wood, and this did not disappoint. The rock garden, Loyal writes: 'comes nearer pleasing me as a rock garden than any I have seen'.



©RHS Libraries Archive



©RHS Libraries Archive

The final garden of the day was Brockhurst Place, where the owner is 'Hon H. A. Hanbury author of some botanical works'. Loyal sometimes has names mixed up and it is likely this was F J Hanbury, a well-known author of the time and acknowledged expert on orchids, as Loyal writes: 'The place is most famous however for the collection of orchids and for the rock garden. They must have at least a dozen orchid houses, all finely equipped and full of orchids'.



©RHS Libraries Archive

The gardens today

Old Place was once owned by Charles Eamer Kempe (1837-1907), the stained-glass artist and a friend of Gertrude Jekyll, so it is possible she was involved in the planting. The sundial may have been inspired by one Kempe saw at Corpus Christi College, Oxford ('A Pelican in Sussex' featured in *Country Life* September 1982, (although some sources refer to Pembroke College) and was perhaps made for him locally. Little of the history of the garden is known although Old Place featured in no less than four editions of *Country Life* in the early 1900s. The original manor house is currently subdivided into five properties. The Middle House is a Grade II* listed building.
https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/old-place

The registered Grade II* garden at Gravetye Manor is much loved for its roses and variety of planting. The garden is open to group visits by arrangement.
https://www.gravetyemanor.co.uk/

Homestall Place (Dutton Homestall) served as a hospital during World War II and became a private school until 2009. The building is listed Grade II.
https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/dutton-homestall

James Pulham & Sons operated from 1845 to 1939, in Broxbourne in Hertfordshire. They became famous for producing Pulhamite – a form of artificial stone which they used in rock gardens in the 1800s. The rock garden at Homestall was built by Pulham & Sons in 1902 for Lord Dewar. Archive resources about Pulham can be seen here: https://pulham.org.uk/the-pulham-archives/ .

Brockhurst Place is a private house. The park and gardens are registered Grade II*.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000348

Their first day ended at Forest Row …

'We ate a couple of the largest meals here that two humans ever consumed. The lady could only figure in terms of half crowns, I guess, for supper, bed and breakfast was 2/6 each'.

Day Two - 15 August 1928

A reprimand for Sam but another fine day

Buckhurst Manor – Great Dixter (with a diversion via Kent to visit Berr's (Burrswood) nr. Groombridge and Penshurst)

The day began with Sam having difficulty making himself understood when asking for directions to Buckhurst Manor (possibly because it took the name Buckhurst Park in the early nineteenth century) but Loyal sorted out the differences in English and eventually they found their way. Some unusual features caught Loyal's attention:

> 'A peculiar thing or two was a sundial in the dense shade of two Yews and second a built basin or pool with pieces of plate glass on edge for the bottom supposedly to reflect light through the water but apparently not very successful'.

He was more impressed by the stonework by Lutyens and the 'hand made waterfall' by Pulham & Sons.



©RHS Libraries Archive

A diversion on their cycles over the border into Kent was then taken as the head gardener, Mr Philpot, suggested they go to Berr's Wood, near Groombridge. This was in fact, Burrswood, perhaps another instance of the two Americans becoming confused by English pronunciation.

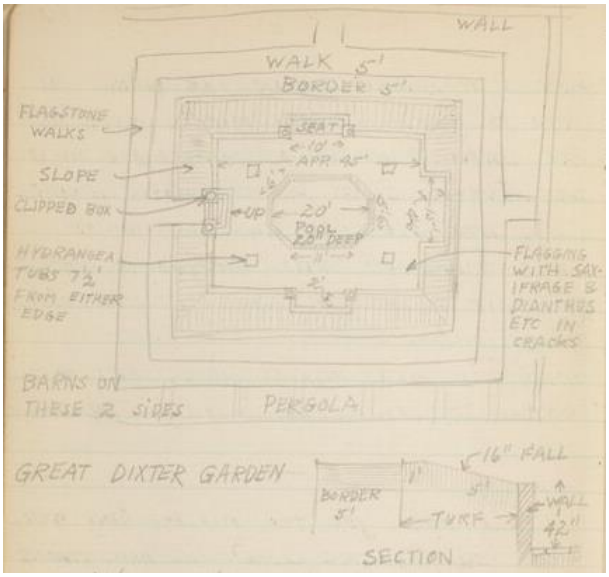
Arriving late at Great Dixter, Sam went to the house to ask permission to see the garden but became ‘so excited and absent minded’ forgot to ask about taking photos. ‘We went ahead taking them anyway as we did everywhere and here's where we got caught up on it’ wrote Loyal. But as he was completing a sketch of the small pool Nathaniel Lloyd appeared and lectured Loyal on taking sketches and pictures without permission.



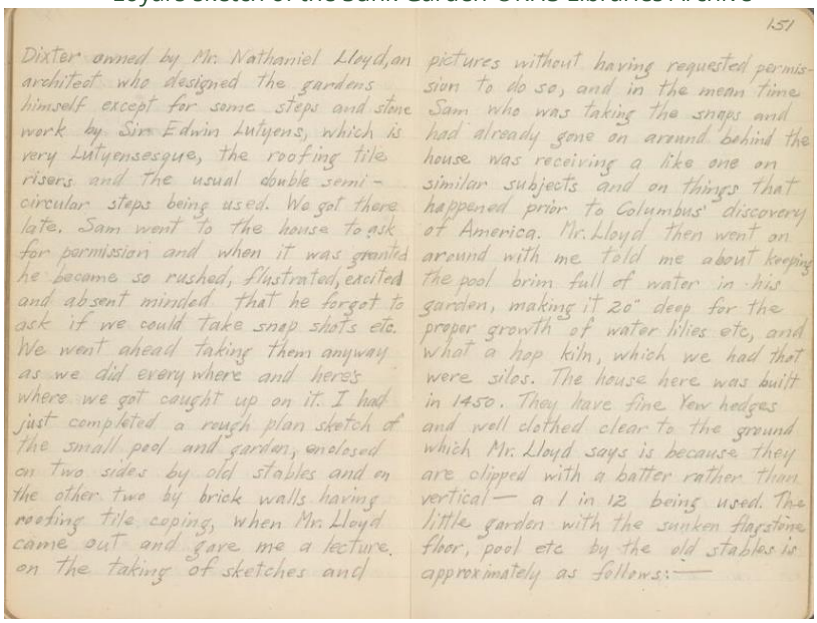
©RHS Libraries Archive

Here is Loyal’s sketch of the pool with dimensions carefully recorded. Lloyd gave the pair a tour of the garden and explained how to keep the pool brim full of water, exactly what a hop kiln was, and how to clip yews ‘with a batter rather than vertical’.

Cutting a hedge ‘to’ a batter is when the hedge is slightly tapered on both sides so the base is wider than the top and lets in more light, but Loyal writes ‘a 1 in 12 being used’ - which suggests some kind of garden tool – any ideas?



Loyal's sketch of the Sunk Garden ©RHS Libraries Archive


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Dixter owned by Mr. Nathaniel Lloyd, an architect who designed the gardens himself except for some steps and stone work by Sir Edwin Lutyens, which is very Lutyensesque, the roofing tile risers and the usual double semi-circular steps being used. We got there late. Sam went to the house to ask for permission and when it was granted he became so rushed, flustrated, excited and absent minded that he forgot to ask if we could take snap shots etc. We went ahead taking them anyway as we did every where and here's where we got caught up on it. I had just completed a rough plan sketch of the small pool and garden, enclosed on two sides by old stables and on the other two by brick walls having roofing tile coping, when Mr. Lloyd came out and gave me a lecture on the taking of sketches and pictures without having requested permission to do so, and in the mean time Sam who was taking the snaps and had already gone on around behind the house was receiving a like one on similar subjects and on things that happened prior to Columbus' discovery of America. Mr. Lloyd then went on around with me told me about keeping the pool brim full of water in his garden, making it 20" deep for the proper growth of water lilies etc, and what a hop kiln, which we had that were silos. The house here was built in 1450. They have fine Yew hedges and well clothed clear to the ground which Mr. Lloyd says is because they are clipped with a batter rather than vertical — a 1 in 12 being used. The little garden with the sunken flagstone floor, pool etc by the old stables is approximately as follows:—

Loyal Johnson's diary pages 150-151. Sam's reprimand! ©RHS Libraries Archive

Coming to the end of their day it was across the border again and a five-mile cycle to Rolvenden in Kent for supper and bed at the Rolvenden Tea Rooms. The owner, Mrs Jones, played the piano which they found 'mighty cozy' and although Loyal started to write his diary he 'got into a session' that 'lasted till past 11.30', just managing to write at the end of his two-day tour of Sussex:

"This was another fine day with big white clouds to increase the beauty'.

One month later and the friends were on board the RMS *Berengaria* sailing back to New York. On his return, Loyal started work with the Long Island Parks Department in New York, where he contributed to the landscaping of the new Jones Beach Park.

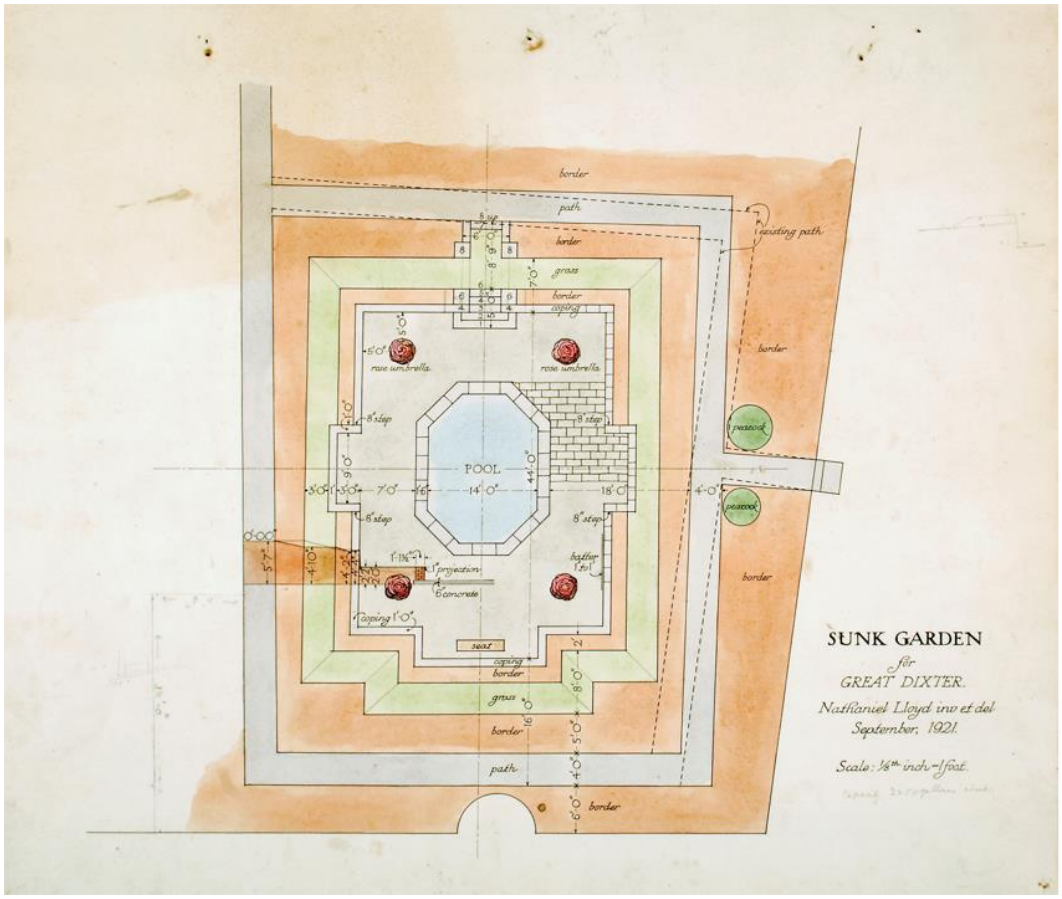
The gardens today

Buckhurst Park is now registered Grade II. Humphry Repton produced a Red Book for Buckhurst in 1806, and in 1903 Edwin Lutyens designed the terraced gardens that Loyal Johnson admired some twenty years later. Gertrude Jekyll produced the planting plans.
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000230

Great Dixter is renowned for its imaginative planting by Nathaniel's son, Christopher Lloyd (1921-2006) who took over the gardens after the death of his mother in 1972, bringing his original and often rule-breaking ideas to the colours and forms of the planting. Fergus Garrett has been the head gardener for a number of years and continues to manage the garden in the spirit of Christopher Lloyd, as well as writing and lecturing. The Sunk Garden had been turned over to vegetables during World War 1 but Nathaniel Lloyd drew new plans for an octagonal pond in 1921. The head gardener in 1928 was Harry Rapley. Formerly assistant gardener at Warren Hill, Eastbourne, he was appointed by Nathaniel Lloyd in 1912 at the time the Great Dixter garden was being laid out. Usually, the Bicycle Boys were shown around gardens by the head gardener, but at Great Dixter Mr Lloyd took charge.
The garden is Grade I registered. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000736
The Sunk Garden remains, although the planting is more exuberant.
https://www.greatdixter.co.uk/



The Sunk Garden, August 2020. Photo © Roy Brigden, Archivist.



The Sunk Garden, plan by Nathaniel Lloyd, 1921. By permission of Great Dixter.

Scotland 2022 - neither dull nor boring

By Marcus Batty

Little did we need to know it but inadvertently our 2022 Scottish safari included two locations, Drummond Castle and Culross Palace, which feature in Outlander, a TV series of which we were only vaguely aware.

Culross on the River Forth is, according to the NT Scotland, 'Scotland's most complete example of a burgh of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'. The principal building is the Palace, never actually a royal palace but the house of a rich merchant, Sir George Bruce (c1550-1625), who traded in timber, salt and coal (he is reputed to have tunnelled the first undersea coal mine). The palace has very fine interiors but the surprise is the sheltered garden of perhaps quarter of an acre immediately behind it. One steps out from the house at first floor level onto a grid of paths which rise steeply up the hillside. It is a delight.

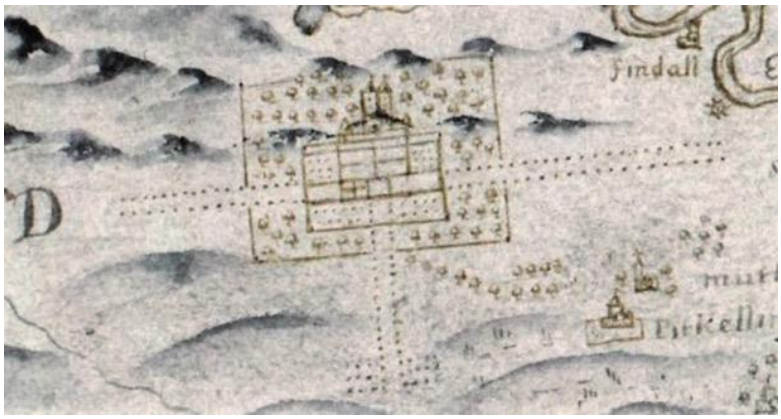






The grounds of Versailles are so grand that it is hard to imagine a Scottish garden being chosen to represent it on film. Drummond Castle in Perthshire clearly fitted the bill. Having driven for perhaps a mile and a half up a narrow carriage drive, lined with tall beech trees, arrow-straight for the first half mile, the lovely lady behind the till was having none of my attempt to secure a discount on entry, my mother being a Drummond (although somewhat lower down the social scale).





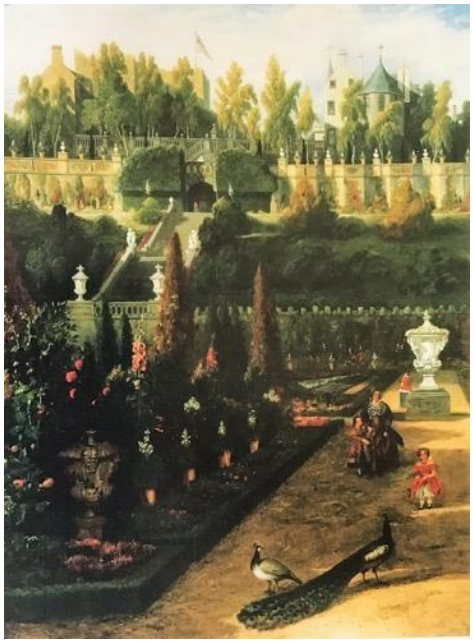
Adair: Mappe of Straithern, Stormont, & Cars of Gourie with the rivers Tay and Ern 1683

Whilst some form of garden existed as early as the 1680s, the current garden was laid out in the decades following 1818 when Lewis Kennedy (1789-1877) was hired as factor. Whether he or Charles Barry (or both) was responsible for the design which we see today is unclear but the result is spectacular; the way in which the terrace punctuated by white busts, the castle behind, dominates a steep slope with a garden at its foot is somewhat reminiscent of the gardens at Powis Castle in Wales.



1937 view of garden contrasted with a present-day view

Essentially a nineteenth century recreation of a ‘courtly seventeenth century Scottish renaissance garden,’ the design has as its focus a St Andrew’s cross, with a 1630 sundial by John Mylne placed at its centre. The symmetrical layout is structurally complex, statuary catching the eye at strategic points. The planting adds not only form but patterns of colour, beds being marked out by low hedging. Overall, it is quite extraordinary - and immaculate. Peacocks still stroll the grounds as they did in 1842.



Painting by Jacob Thomson commemorating Queen Victoria’s visit in 1842.



Travelling from Skye to Perthshire, a couple of miles east of this signpost we spotted a somewhat derelict walled garden on a south facing hillside with an adjacent castle. Castle Menzies was closing but we drove up a track to the walled garden. As we were trespassing on the privacy of estate staff dwellings, we did not linger.



Roy's Military Survey (1747-1755) © British Library Board



Ordnance Survey 25" sheet XLIX.5, Published 1867

There seem to have been originally three enclosures (or levels) with a central axial stairway but only two now remain. The garden was of some repute. According to *The Red and White Book of Menzies* (1894) 'Castle Menzies Gean Trees' from a very early date obtained celebrity all over the country. So famous indeed were these trees at one time, that their seed was sought from all parts of Great Britain, and large quantities were even sent abroad by request to all parts of the world. These Menzies gean trees were considered the oldest and finest gean trees extant'. The trees even inspired an old Highland song 'The Castle Menzies Gean Trees'.



Timothy Pont 23 c1583-1596

If this late sixteenth century plan is to be taken at face value, and it is borne out by parchmarks showing up in aerial photography, the walled garden was originally sited lower down the hill much closer to the house.

We had earlier seen a sign to the Fortingall Yew. In the churchyard of this quiet hamlet stands a rather battered yew, estimated to be at least 5,000 years old and now walled off to protect it from the vandalism which is threatening its continued existence. Thomas Pennant in *A Tour of Scotland Vol.1,* published in 1769, wrote at page 103 that, in the churchyard, 'are the remains of a prodigious yew-tree, whose ruins measured fifty-six feet and a half in circumference.' The trunk has since split into a collection of smaller growths. No photograph can convey an idea of its original majesty and size, now marked by posts driven into the ground a distance from the present trunk.



The Fortingall Yew

Dawyck Garden in the Scottish borders is cared for the by The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. An extensive arboretum on a hillside, it is most attractive with lofty specimen trees gathered from round the world by the great plant hunters such as David Douglas.





A number of labyrinthine coincidences turned up during my research. David Douglas (1787-1834), from his third trip to America in 1827, brought back the first seeds of the Douglas Fir to this country; he also introduced the *Garrya elliptica* and the *Ribes sanguinem*, the flowering currant. He was sponsored by Sir John Murray Naesmith who owned Dawyck which is why there are so many significant specimens of Douglas Fir there. However, the tree bears the name

Pseudotsuga menziesii because it was actually discovered by another Scot, Archibald Menzies (1745-1842) who, however, did not bring back, in 1795, any seeds from his four-year circumnavigation on HMS *Discovery*. He did bring back the first seeds of the *Araucaria Araucana*, the monkey puzzle tree. Menzies was perhaps related to the Menzies of Castle Menzies because he grew up at nearby Styx farmhouse; according to the clan website, he worked in the grounds of Castle Menzies before moving on to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

The Veitch family planted the garden at Dawyck in the seventeenth century, namesakes of the John Veitch who travelled to London in 1768 as a boy and took up an apprenticeship at the Vineyard nursery of James Lee in Hammersmith, later moving to Devon where he founded his eponymous nursery outside Exeter. Lee took into partnership in 1760 a Lewis Kennedy (1721-1782 whose son, John (1759-1842) succeeded to the partnership until its dissolution in 1818. John supplied Empress Josephine with many seeds and plants for her plant collection at Malmaison and had introduced his son, another Lewis (1789-1877), to work there for some years. This Lewis moved on to Drummond Castle as factor. There are many unexpected connections within the gardening world.

The map of Drummond Castle, and the Ordnance Survey and the Pont maps of Castle Menzies are Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. The 1937 view and the Jacob Thomson painting of Drummond Castle are reproduced with the kind permission of the owners. National Trust Scotland have given permission to show images of their properties.

All photos © Marcus Batty

WOOLBEDING: the loveliest valley

By Susi Batty



Evening light in July on the south front of Woolbeding House (not National Trust) at Woolbeding Gardens, West Sussex. 1033849 NTPL Commissioned (NTPL) © National Trust Images/James Dobson

Woolbeding, near Midhurst, is very near the top of my list of favourite West Sussex gardens. Up there with Denmans at Fontwell. Why? In part it may be because it is an adventure to get there. Owned now by the National Trust, it is only open on Thursdays and Fridays and you cannot simply turn up and wave your membership card. Instead, you have book in advance, drive to Midhurst, park near the top of the town and catch one of the very regular shuttle buses to the garden. But is worth it!

Many of you will already know this quietly sensational twenty-six-acre garden and the image above is the classic view of the relatively modest house set against two very long, very wide, exquisitely-planted herbaceous borders. Lanning Roper and Philip Jebb were responsible for the early twentieth century elements - the clever garden 'rooms' and secret spaces near to the house and the earlier delightful garden buildings - but this has always been a garden with an eye to the future and there is much more to discover. I do not intend to describe it in detail, just to present a few of the highlights.

To begin at the beginning, even the entrance courtyard, designed by Isabel and Julian Bannerman, is enchanting: a series of calm rectangular pools surrounded by exemplary planting and linked by water chutes reminiscent of Luis Barragàn's Mexican designs. Further into the garden water slips slowly down the sides of a magnificent stainless-steel fountain designed by William Pye and bridging the space between the house and the nearby church.



Evening light on the modern water feature and the south front of Woolbeding House (not National Trust) at Woolbeding Gardens, West Sussex. 1033848 NTPL Commissioned (NTPL) © National Trust Images/James Dobson

Stepping out into the wider landscape where the river Rother wanders down the small valley, there is further work by the inventive Bannerman duo. A 'ruined' abbey has been subtly inserted into a tree-surrounded space, a yellow Chinese bridge crosses the river, a cascade bursts below a garden pavilion and a river god guards the site. It is all new, but you would not know it.



The River God statue in the garden created by Simon Sainsbury and Stewart Grimshaw at Woolbeding Gardens, West Sussex 1033811 NTPL Commissioned (NTPL) © National Trust Images/James Dobson

The newest part of the garden was only completed this year and sits on the southern edge of the site where the Silk Route Garden leads to a sensational ten-sided glasshouse designed by Heatherwick Studio.





Photos © Raquel Diniz. Heatherwick Studio.

The Silk Route Garden may sound like a contrivance but it is far from it. It was designed by Fergus Garrett of Great Dixter and a twelve step journey mimics the trading routes from Asia to Europe. It is divided into geographical zones with associated geology and the plant species are likewise area specific, chosen to illustrate their significance in European horticulture. Heatherwick's kinetic glasshouse is, quite simply, beautiful. Informed by the design of Victorian terrariums, when closed it resembles a pointed, cut jewel but it literally unfolds like a flower to reveal over 300 species of subtropical plants.

I have mentioned just some of the features of the gardens at Woolbeding but you should visit for yourself. Hurry up though, as it is only open until the end of September. There is a pleasant café but I suggest you take a picnic and find your own quiet spot to reflect on this innovative and thoughtful place.

https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/woolbeding-gardens

https://www.heatherwick.com/studio/news/heritage-flowers-kinetic-glasshouse-and-silk-route-garden-unveiled-by-heatherwick-studio-and-the-national-trust/

Picture Gallery

When the SGT research group began their study in 2019 of gardens in Sussex, designed by Gertrude Jekyll, they were thrilled to discover that the new owners of Legh Manor in Ansty were just starting on the restoration of their original Jekyll garden, which had been all but forgotten for a number of years. With the help of their head gardener, Steven Bowie, the flower borders and pathways are taking shape again, and the new planting is once more giving life to Jekyll's drawings and planting lists, first created over a hundred years ago.

In this month's Gallery we feature some recent lovely views of the garden.



Gertrude Jekyll referred to this area of the garden as the Mulberry Garden, suggesting the mulberry was growing there at the time she was commissioned by the owners, Lady Julia and Sir William Chance, in 1917.



Replanted with some of Jekyll's favourites and included on her original planting lists: *Megasea, Santolina, Stachys*, and the pink *Phlox*.



A view of the four symmetrical flower borders in the Mulberry Garden that Jekyll planted in cool shades of white, blue and pale pink complemented with grey *Stachys* and clumps of the darker green foliage of *Megasea* at the corners.

All photos ©Steven Bowie.

Jekyll's planting design for the garden at Legh Manor is explored in the collection of research essays published by SGT in 2021 - *Gertrude Jekyll in Sussex* - and can be purchased here:
https://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/resources/publications/