

# Sussex Gardens Trust

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

Newsletter No. 72 Autumn 2018

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*Autumn fruitfulness: a Sussex garden visited by SGT members earlier this year and photographed by the Head Gardener, Ben Pope*

## From the Editor

In this edition of the newsletter we travel across the centuries to celebrate the garden landscape in Sussex.

Continuing our series of articles by head gardeners, Ben Pope describes the change of season in the private garden he manages in West Sussex. He paints a vivid scene of the garden closing down for autumn and the preparations that have to be made for winter.

It is 200 years since the death of Humphry Repton, who described himself as the landscape gardener, and his bicentenary has been celebrated by Garden Trusts throughout the country. In June our Trust and Kent GT collaborated to present a Repton study day at Brightling Park and reports of this entertaining and informative day are included in this issue.

SGT volunteer researchers began working at the start of the year on a publication to further an understanding of Repton sites in Sussex and their research 'journey' can be found on page 9. While investigating Repton's association with country estates in the Sussex Weald, Jim Stockwell discovered the development of canal building in the area made an attractive investment for landowners and in his article he describes the industrial background at the time of Repton's visits.

The development of a country house estate is the subject of an in-depth research study by Catherine Tite. She examines the fascinating history of Highden House in West Sussex from the 1700s to its heyday in the 1880s and the sale of the house and subsequent disappearance of the garden in the mid-twentieth century.

A report from the 2018 Annual GT Conference held in Birmingham and news of a 2019 SGT visit return us to the pleasures of the garden in the twenty-first century.

***Sally Ingram***

## Update from Council

### Chair

Waiting in the doctor's surgery the other day, I noticed among the old magazines one entitled Malaysia and Singapore Vintage Car Register. I picked it up, thinking it would have pretty pictures to look at, but, as I started reading the opening pages, I realised that here was a club facing exactly the same difficulties as we do in the Sussex Gardens Trust – a relatively long standing committee members of which believe that "they have done their stint" and members who do not want to put their head above the parapet for fear of being landed on a committee from which it will become difficult to resign.

We have two complementary challenges, therefore – finding fresh people to take on the roles which need to be filled if we are to operate effectively and implementing an understanding that, whilst three years or so of commitment is the expectation, it is perfectly acceptable then to stand down.

Unfortunately, Caroline Ikin, for the best of domestic reasons, is unable to organise this winter's lecture series so we are having to rethink our approach and, if a series cannot be put together, we shall endeavour to propose an alternative event. Caroline has been very successful in putting these programmes together and we shall miss her.

As I write this at the end of October, our editor of the forthcoming Repton publication has passed the content on to Smallprint for the design prior to printing. Smallprint has done a great job for us over the past years formatting our newsletter and the Capability Brown publication. SGT's contribution to this year's celebration of Repton's bicentenary, the publication should be launched at the Winter Lecture at Borde Hill which promises to be really good. The researchers and editorial team have done a magnificent job.

Our Repton study day, at Brightling Park proved a great success with speakers John Phibbs and Laura Mayer talking about Repton more generally and our own Alan Starr introducing Brightling Park. The open space at the local village hall was perfect for a good buffet lunch in the bright sunshine. A few members of the Kent Gardens Trust enjoyed the day with us. Their complementary day on Repton was held at one of his sites, Cobham Hall School, near Gravesend in October which a few SGT members attended. The keynote lecture was delivered by Professor Stephen Daniels, author of the major work on Repton published in 1999. He readily acknowledged his excitement at the extent of new information which has come to light since then, particularly over the past couple of years. After lunch we walked up to the Darnley mausoleum, designed by James Wyatt and built in 1783, in bright sunshine and followed this with a guided tour of the gardens, looking back to the "eyecatcher" mausoleum from a classical alcove, known as Repton's seat erected in 1818.

Finally our new programme of garden visits for 2019 will be published in the spring newsletter but we have news of an exciting chance to see Leonardslee Gardens. Closed in 2010, these are now reopening next year. Further details are on page 19.

# Taking Stock: by Head Gardener Benjamin Pope

Ben Pope leads a team of four maintaining and developing a private garden in West Sussex. He has travelled to different countries studying flora and garden styles and before becoming a Head Gardener he was a horticultural adviser with Arabella Lennox-Boyd Design. He enjoys visiting gardens and plant nurseries, travel, art, cooking and photography and botanical painting. In this article for the Newsletter he describes the approach of autumn in the garden.

A heavy morning dew signals that the seasons have changed. Once young and verdant, the leaves now bear the scars of time with their singed tips and nibbled edges. For the garden here in West Sussex the year so far has been both challenging and glorious. A long and cold wet spring gave way to weeks and weeks of sunshine with warm dry conditions, to the point where now as a gardener, I can say that the rain is a welcome change.

The temperatures have cooled and the growth rate of plants has slowed, but the team and I are busier than ever. The walled garden is in full swing as we rush to harvest all that we can for the house. In the kitchen, herbs and chillies are drying, beans are blanched for freezing and various jams and soups are being made to accommodate the last of the summer gluts. Outside the borders need tidying, growing structures are dismantled, greenhouses are cleaned and seeds are being collected for sowing next year.



*Photograph by Ben Pope*



*Photograph by Ben Pope*

Although being a time of harvest it is also a time of preparation. Winter will soon be upon us and the garden will sleep, barely moving during the cold dark months. However before this can happen the last of the hedges must be trimmed, bulbs have to be planted and cuttings of tender perennials need to be taken. The meadow must be cut and cleared whilst the lawns have to be scarified.

The winter preparation doesn't stop with the plants. Drains and gutters need to be kept clear of debris. Logs, which have spent the summer drying outside, must be brought in for winter storage and use. Maintenance of hard landscaping should be completed before the weather deteriorates, whilst water features and pipes need be insulated and prepared for freezing conditions ahead.

At this time of year the list of tasks seems to be endless, broad as it is long. As head gardener it falls to myself to manage all of this, to prioritise

and decide what should be completed today and what can be left till tomorrow. What helps is a list, I love a list! A "To Do" list that shifts and adjusts itself according to the weather conditions and site logistics, to staffing levels and the time dependency of individual tasks.

It's a challenging role being head gardener. It uses various management skills, which have to work alongside horticultural knowledge and practical experience, not to mention dealing with the ever-changing weather conditions. Though what helps immensely is the support and enthusiasm of 'the team'. Of course 'the team' includes the other gardeners who work closely side by side with myself. Day after day among the plants, tending the borders, vegetables, cut flowers and fruit. But it also includes the other staff members of the estate, for the garden exists alongside the house. It is just part of the property and in order to be successful it must function as one.

Most importantly 'the team' includes the owners, in my case the family that call this house and garden their home. It is they who set the tone and standard of the property, they lead by example and offer guidance and support to facilitate all that has to be achieved. This is something I have witnessed during my ten or so years here, it is something I have come to enjoy and cherish as much as the garden itself; a collaborative group of people working together to create and maintain something special. To me, great gardens are about good plants, but more so they are about people that surround them.

Read Ben's blog on his website: theworkinggarden.com

# SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST BRIGHTLING PARK STUDY DAY

## Saturday 16 June 2018

SGT were pleased to welcome members from the Kent Gardens Trust to join our celebration of Humphry Repton at Brightling in June and, in a spirit of partnership between the neighbouring Trusts, **Peta Hodges** from KGT presents an overview of the day.



*Lunch-break at Brightling Park Study Day: Alan and Jennie Starr, with the presenter Laura Mayer (Photograph, Judy Tarling)*

Eight members of KGT attended the Sussex Gardens Trust Study Day at Brightling, a tiny village south of Burwash about forty minutes from Tunbridge Wells. The entrance to Brightling Park itself was on one side of the adjacent churchyard and the village hall where we gathered, on the other, only a few steps away from the carpark by the house. The event had sold out and there was a lively buzz as everyone registered, took coffee and biscuits and settled into their seats. Marcus Batty, the interim Chair from SGT, introduced Jim Stockwell who had organised the day and then SGT member Alan Starr took the floor.

His short introduction to Brightling Park and its history – the house was originally named Rose Hill until 1879 when a new owner took over – was informative and amusing and set

the tone for the day. He was followed by John Phibbs, the well-known garden historian, author and lecturer. Although he thought that Charles Bridgeman should not be omitted from the list, he started by placing Repton as the third and last of the great eighteenth century landscape designers, following in the footsteps of Kent and Capability Brown. He took the opportunity to mention the new memorial dedicated to Brown, following the latter's 2016 tri-centenary celebrations. Suggested by Alan Titchmarsh, designed by Ptolemy Dean and made by Brian Turner, this is a beautiful lead cistern fountain placed on a shaped paved base in the cloister garden at Westminster Abbey.

After John's lecture we divided up into groups for our guided walks, accompanied by one of our hosts, and set off into the bracing wind that sweeps across the estate. Repton suggests that this is not unusual by including two tiny wind-blown ladies fighting with their parasols in one of his sketches for Rose Hill! The weather was not clear enough to see the Channel but Beachy Head was just about visible on the far horizon. We were taken on the route of the original drive from the west (no longer in use) running close to the north boundary wall and screened from view with carefully planted trees until the temple, erected on a knoll in the middle of the western paddock, burst into view. Although there are various pieces of statuary positioned strategically around the grounds, most of these have unknown provenance and seem to have materialised during the Victorian era. We walked past an ornamental goldfish pond awaiting renovation behind the walled garden. The latter, despite, some very recent rebuilding and restoration still has a very long way to go. Although operated during the 1950s as an independent nursery garden, most of the ancillary buildings are now little more than foundations overrun by vegetation. Three fine thoroughbreds were grazing in a cordoned off section inside the walled garden itself with one section of the wall still collapsed and most of the remaining area missing the topsoil and covered in gravel. It once employed eight full-time gardeners!

It seems that Repton found it difficult to deal with the site and with a house patently in the wrong place, and very little of his influence can still be seen. Brown had previously been called upon for advice, but it is not clear what he did apart from planting an area of mixed woodland including Scots Pines not far from the house. Although the house was considerably extended during the Victorian era, these additions have in recent times been demolished and the house as it now stands is probably much closer to the building Repton visited. However, the tree belts he envisaged, often along traditional deep ditches forming a long-used form of stock barrier in this country (predating the eighteenth century brick-built ha-ha of French origin), have matured into billowing boundaries of mixed woodland.

The home paddock is now used as a campsite for the newly fashionable Tepee wedding reception with traditional white bell tents pitched at a distance for accommodation, semi-screened by a shrubbery. As we walked back past the house the church bells were pealing continuously in preparation for an imminent wedding.

The weather was fine enough to have lunch served *al fresco* at little tables in the village hall garden, and the buffet catered for every appetite, even including some award winning local cheeses which were much lauded.

After lunch it was back to the Hall for our last speaker, the lecturer, researcher and author, Laura Mayer. She set off at a cracking pace and succeeded in keeping our interest (in spite of our extremely good lunch) as she showed us a variety of sketches from Repton's Red Books including some of the more fanciful of his suggestions. Many a client found that some of his ideas would have been far too expensive to carry out or were perhaps just too complicated. Nevertheless, unlike Brown who was not a writer and kept few records, Repton was a prolific writer who spread his ideas far and wide.

As John Phibbs commented in his summing up of the day, Repton can take the credit for inventing or combining the features which characterize the English garden: the herbaceous border, gravelled or paved paths to access the garden in all weathers, formal flower beds, rose covered arches, arbours, pergolas, and railings, a statue, flower filled urn or fountain to draw the eye, flowering shrubs, and trees to screen or shelter. After the rather bland green grass of Brown's open vistas coming up to the mansion walls and the focused views of river or lake of the great estates, the colour and intimacy of the pleasure garden in a more intimate setting had great appeal and has lasted to this day.

As our enjoyable study day came to an end, we were offered a choice of delicious cakes with tea or coffee to fortify us for the journey home.

## Brightling Park before the visit by Humphry Repton

Brightling Park – or Rose Hill as it was once called – is set in the High Weald. The views from the house have been celebrated over the centuries, Turner painting the area as a golden landscape. However, the Weald can also be a wet and forbidding place. In the Middle Ages it was a refuge for criminals and, even in the eighteenth century, it was often known as "the Wild".

In the sixteenth century, the Weald was transformed into a centre of the iron industry where bellows and hammers operated ceaselessly. Nowadays the landscape seems peaceful, but each "hammer-pond" in the Weald was created to feed ironworks.

Among the Sussex ironmasters were the Fullers who built a house in Brightling in about 1700. By this stage, simple iron-making was in decline but the Fullers manufactured cannon. There is a statue in the grounds of the park, representing a cannon, an anchor and a ball of flame (Figure 1). When John Fuller was given the house in 1703, he renamed it Rose Hill in honour of his wife, Elizabeth Rose. She came from the West Indies and brought with her a substantial estate in Jamaica. In his time the house was a modest affair, beside the public road and with only a small amount of land.

His son, also John Fuller, enclosed the road and extended the house; he acquired large tracts of land, joining them together to make a deer park.

By the middle of the century his iron-making activities were ceasing to be profitable. However, another member of the family, Rose Fuller, was active in the West Indies, turning the slave plantations into profitable enterprises. When Rose inherited the estate, the fortunes of the Fuller family had become dependent on sugar from Jamaica. There is a reminder of this in one of the "follies" which we can see at Brightling. Just to the south of the park is a crude stone tower called the Sugarloaf after its shape.

This was the estate which Rose's nephew, Jack Fuller, inherited in 1777 at the age of twenty. He was a wild young man with no parents and a huge amount of money. He supported slavery, drank too much and, while an MP, he was jailed by the Speaker of the House of Commons. He was also a patron of music and science, and invited Turner to Rose Hill. It is not surprising that he also invited Repton. Fuller erected buildings in the area, some of which would classify as follies. His tomb in Brightling churchyard is, famously, a stone pyramid. Hence in the twentieth century he was caricatured as "Mad Jack" Fuller.

Following Jack Fuller's death in 1834, the estate passed to his nephew. In the late nineteenth century, the Tew family bought the estate and changed its name to Brightling Park.

***Alan Starr***



*Brightling Park – a view of the Temple. Photograph, Sally Ingram*

## John Phibbs: Convenience and Shelter – Repton's visit to Brightling

John began his lecture with two rather surprising admissions. Firstly, he confessed that in many ways his research into the life and work of Capability Brown had seemed easier than uncovering the life of Humphry Repton, in part because it was Brown who had the greater reputation. Evidence of Brown's widespread recognition as an important figure of the landscape tradition can be seen, for example, in the recent dedication of a fountain and cistern at Westminster Abbey earlier in May to mark his tri-centenary. Secondly, although it is the Red Book by Repton that perhaps makes his work so distinctive, John explained that this lecture would not be solely about the details of the Red Book writings and sketches. He wanted to stress that we need caution when interpreting the Repton landscape because it may not exactly mirror the designs of the Red Book. Repton's work constantly changed, and every new idea did not necessarily appear in the Red Book.



*A view of the house through the trees – one of Repton's 'bursts' in the landscape. Photograph, Judy Tarling.*

John's insightful lecture examined the scheme for Brightling Park independent of the Red Book, considering the context of social and economic events, and how it must have felt to Repton following in Brown's footsteps whilst establishing himself as a landscape artist keen to do things differently. His criticism of Rosehill was its exposed position and he advised it should be built elsewhere in the park. But, as John pointed out, his plans were crushed, and, as we saw during the later tour of the park, it is the 'sensibility' of the landscape that epitomizes Repton's designs. Thus the drive takes the visitor through darkness, the avenue allowing occasional glimpses of the house between the lines of beech trees, until it finally 'bursts' into view".

Events further afield must have also affected Repton. In 1806 when John Fuller (III) commissioned Repton to make recommendations for the site the fall of the Bastille in France was still a vivid memory that instilled both a sense of optimism amongst the people but fear amongst the gentry. John suggested that, as riots began to break out in the country, a new way of landscaping began to develop with buildings around the estate, cottages appearing on their fringes. Such ornamental cottages could suggest either a benign landlord or the presence of the militia. However, in Brightling there was no risk of rioting and so no need for the appearance of cottages.

In his summing-up of the day John emphasised Repton's importance to the creation of landscape style, standing alongside Kent and Brown. He was in no doubt that Repton's legacy has continued to this day and can be seen in such designs as the garden rooms at Sissinghurst or Jekyll's herbaceous border, and in features such as the garden terrace. Through his widely inventive style he created the English garden, and I feel sure that the audience was in agreement with the sentiment expressed in his summing-up of the day that 'Repton is great!'

***Sally Ingram***

## Laura Mayer: The Prolific and Plausible Mr Repton

Laura Mayer set off in the afternoon session determined to keep us all awake with her lively delivery throughout, as she put it, the 'graveyard' slot after lunch. Mayer opened with a consideration as to whether Repton, having 'failed' at certain other professions, might have been a little arrogant in trying to carve out his career niche by appointing himself to the role of successor to Capability Brown. She claimed that Repton valued the social contacts with his clients as much as or more than the financial rewards, and was offended by the 'coxcombery' of many of his clients, including the Prince of Wales.

Mayer drew a picture of the increasing vehemence of the picturesque controversy led by Gilpin, joined by Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, who adored rugged nature, rejecting Brown's bland smooth lawns and shimmering lakes. Repton, although seen as less evil than Brown, was initially caught in the Brownian camp, but he modified his style, renouncing Brown and becoming more in favour of the picturesque as time went on. As the century progressed, his style needed to change yet again to accommodate the commissions he was receiving from the owners of homely villas and industrial magnates, the imposition of higher taxes following the war with France leaving the grand estate owners without funds for improvements.

A typical 'homely' touch (for example at Holkham Hall) was the cottage, with its rising smoke signalling the comfort of, and exercise of philanthropy towards, the estate workers. A few, not entirely complimentary or sympathetic, references to Jane Austen's characters led us through Eliza Bennett's knowledge of the picturesque, illustrated by the appropriate arrangement for a picturesque view – a group of cows.

With direct reference to Brightling, Mayer described several effects such as the 'burst' out of a dark wood for a surprise (which we had just experienced that very morning on the return walk to the house, described by Johnny Phibbs), and the purposes of the folly: to create employment and exert power thereby. The owner of Brightling and commissioner of Repton, John Fuller (III) known as 'Mad Jack', also built an observatory depicted by William Turner in his painting of Brightling Park. Taken altogether Mayer considered that the follies represented a fashion for the revival of Greek architecture 'collected' in the garden, as at Shugborough, to show off wealth and good taste. The Brightling temple by Robert Smirke followed this fashion although the observatory seemed to form more of a tribute to the Roman mausoleum of Augustus.

Mayer included the Brighton Royal Pavilion as part of this mania for follies, describing Repton's failed relations with Nash and how Repton's plans, made with his sons who trained with Nash, were stalled. Repton's Red Book for the Brighton Pavilion was eventually published in 1808 with a treatise on oriental Architecture, describing the use of new technology in the form of cast iron which suited the Indian style.

Mayer summed up by describing Repton's business model as weak, relying on the artistry of the Red Book but having no power over the subcontractors who actually carried out the work, sometimes decades after the Red Book had been delivered. Some of his ideas she judged to be expensive and unattainable as, for example at Beaudesert. She thought he was more of a hanger-on than Brown, disliked by many for his ingratiating and obsequious manner, and that the lack of monuments to Repton spoke volumes. However, he triumphed as a writer and his influence was felt world-wide after his death, before his own invented profession of 'landscape gardener' became extinct.



*The Gothic seat – one of the follies at Brightling Park. Photograph Judy Tarling*

Miss Mayer's talk was certainly lively and well-illustrated, although captions could have made the identification of particular sites clearer.

***Judy Tarling***

# The Repton Researchers: publication of their findings

*By Sally Ingram*

It was back in February that the SGT volunteer research group came together to plan a publication to celebrate the bicentenary of Humphry Repton's death. Many County Garden Trusts, and other organisations, were preparing ways to mark this anniversary and in the January members of our group had attended a meeting for Repton researchers, organised by the Gardens Trust, at which the delegates shared their burgeoning ideas for celebrations. Sussex and Kent Trusts would collaborate to hold two study days – one at Brightling Park and one at Cobham – with keynote speakers considering Repton's achievements. Inspired by the success of their earlier publication of research papers into the work of Capability Brown, our researchers had decided to discover more about the seventeen sites associated with Repton in the Sussex landscape and publish their findings in a journal before the end of the year.

Repton's designs for his commissions in Sussex are wide-ranging, from the grandeur of the unrealised Pavilion at Brighton, to smaller estates in the county. In addition to uncovering the development of each landscape we planned to explore his commissions within the context of the time in which he lived: its significance to his career, and at what stage of his life the project was taking place. Sites were allocated through a combination of personal choice and geography. Then began the challenge and the fun of tracking down the evidence for his involvement in a particular location. For some of Repton's commissions the Red Book is in existence and can be examined, for example, the Red Book for Little Green is at the West Sussex Record Office. But where the Red Book is in a private collection, or its whereabouts no longer known a different path of research was needed. The group became intrepid travellers: to the record offices in West and East Sussex, the RHS Library and the British Library in London, to the county archives in Kent, to Chatsworth and to the Royal Botanic Gardens Library and the Public Record Office at Kew. We visited each site to discover what had altered or if any visible signs of his work remained. Early tithe maps, OS maps and hand-drawn plans were hugely important in order to discover how use of the estate had changed during Repton's time and for evidence of his own designs.

Repton was a prolific writer and we read his letters, memoirs and diaries and explored his account books for confirmation of his involvement, or alterations in the original plans. The attractive watercolours in the Red Books, with the flaps revealing the garden of the future, helped us to understand Repton's desires for these Sussex commissions. So too, his delightful black-and-white sketches, illustrating suggested improvements to an estate which provided a further source for our research as to how he pleased his client.

There were some moments of frustration but many joyful discoveries, some of which were particularly significant to the research. For example, a wonderful collection of Repton's sketches has been made available to Garden Trusts, through the legacy of Nigel Temple. These illustrations suggest that Repton was commissioned at several sites in Sussex which have not been fully documented, leading the researchers to explore more about their significance.

As our ever-diligent and always-encouraging editor, Susi Batty, commented, it seems as if for these busy months Mr Repton has moved into our homes, but I think we shall all miss him as he prepares to take his leave. Working with a dedicated group, sharing a wealth of experience, becoming deeply acquainted with the subject, digging in the archives, discovering beautifully drawn maps and plans – just a few of the reasons that makes research such a pleasure.

Our publication *Humphry Repton in Sussex* will be published in late autumn 2018.

Please talk to any of our research team if you think you would like to be involved in future projects. It's detective work and great fun and we would welcome new members. Susi's email address is susibatty@hotmail.com

# Repton in Sussex – The Industrial Context

*By Jim Stockwell*

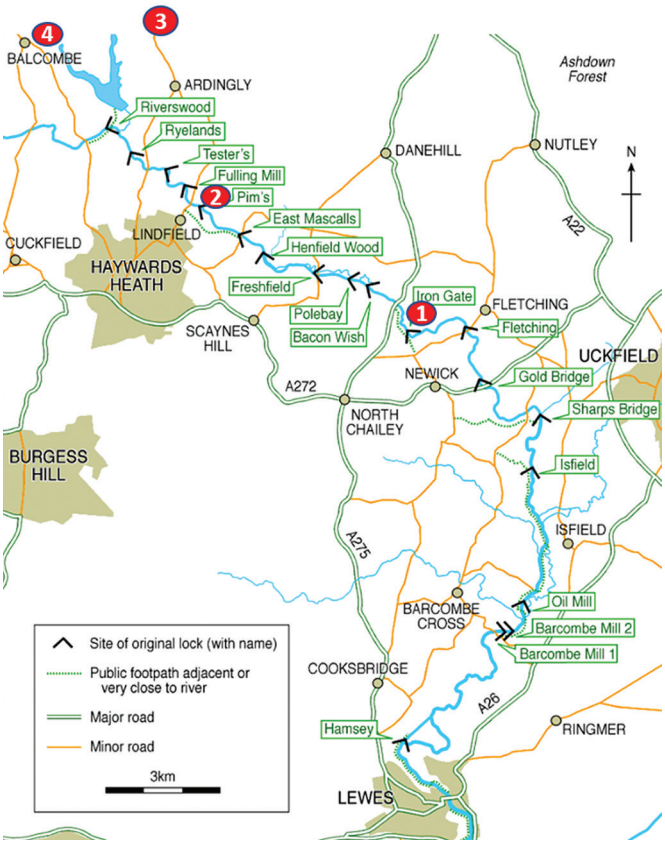
Many of the Sussex sites associated with Repton lie in the Sussex Weald, which today is largely a tranquil rural oasis with little industry and few centres of population. However, in earlier centuries this was not the case. Since before the Roman era until the end of the eighteenth century there was a large iron industry in the county, thanks to an ample supply of iron ore, wood and water from streams running down through narrow valleys in the High Weald to the rivers below (Figure 1). Much of the wealth that funded the estates visited by Repton had its origins in the iron industry.

Moving heavy building materials any distance was very difficult and expensive and, for this reason, great houses were often built from stone quarried close by or from bricks made in nearby kilns. Lime kilns also featured along the South Downs, for instance at Offham where lime was transported down a funicular railway (built in 1808) and then loaded onto barges on the recently constructed River Ouse Navigation.

At the end of the eighteenth century 'canal mania' was gripping the country and some prominent local landowners, such as the 1st Earl of Sheffield, saw in the River Ouse an opportunity to invest and modernise. An engineer of national repute, William Jessop, was asked to survey the river in 1787 and, once the Upper Ouse Navigation Act was passed, construction began. Progress was slow but by 1812 work finally finished with the river made navigable up to Upper Ryelands Bridge, near Balcombe.

### Upper Ouse Navigation and Repton Sites

Repton is known to be connected with several sites along the route of the Upper Ouse Navigation (Figure 1) and the canal was under construction at about the time that he drew his sketches for *Peacock's Polite Repository*, the yearly almanac or pocket-diary which helped promote his landscape designs amongst the wealthy middle-classes. Given their close proximity, the major civil engineering works would have been visible from the neighbourhood of these sites and indeed the owners may have been involved commercially with the construction. Interestingly, at much the same time as Repton drew his scene of the lake at Balcombe (Figure 2), surveyors were




| | Repton Site | Lock (date) | Polite Repository (date) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sheffield Park | Iron Gate 1793 | 1790 & 1803 |
| 2 | Paxhill | Pim's 1809 | 1809 |
| 3 | Wakehurst Place | Ryelands 1812 | 1808 |
| 4 | Balcombe Lake | Riverswood 1812 | 1807 |

*Figure 1. © 2002-2018 Sussex Ouse Restoration Trust*

commissioned to draw up plans for a new canal extension that would have connected Riverswood Lock with the proposed Grand Southern canal near present-day Crawley (passing through a canal tunnel where the rail tunnel is now). Balcombe House with its surrounding park and lake was then occupied by the Reverend H Chatfield; the proposed 1810 route for the canal would have passed through his fish pond, marked on the 1810 plan (Figure 3).

The 1810 plan indicates that the Reverend Chatfield owned most of the route between




*Figure 2. After Humphry Repton,* The Lake at Balcomb*, 1807,* Peacock's Polite Repository. *© The Nigel Temple Collection*

Lindfield and Balcombe, suggesting that he that was a man of substance. Could this be why, a few years earlier, Repton had visited and was he hoping to get a commission?

John Rennie, a Scottish engineer, had proposed the concept of a Great Southern Canal in 1810 at a time when the popularity for canals was reaching it height and there were fears of a Napoleonic invasion. The sea route between the great naval bases at Chatham and Portsmouth could be compromised and the proposed canal was to be large enough for Thames barges. The route would take the canal from the Medway across the Sussex Weald, possibly close to Buchan Hill (another Repton site), and on to the Arun, Chichester and to Portsmouth. It would meet the Ouse canal near its summit in the St Leonard's and Tilgate forests and be fed by reservoirs from this area. A Bill proposing the Great Southern Canal was discussed in Parliament on 8 April 1811 and supported amongst others by Sir Charles Burrell of Knepp Castle.

Neither the extension to the Ouse valley canal nor the Grand Southern canal were ever built but, had they been constructed, the bucolic scene of the "*Lake at Balcomb*" drawn by Repton would have become something quite different.

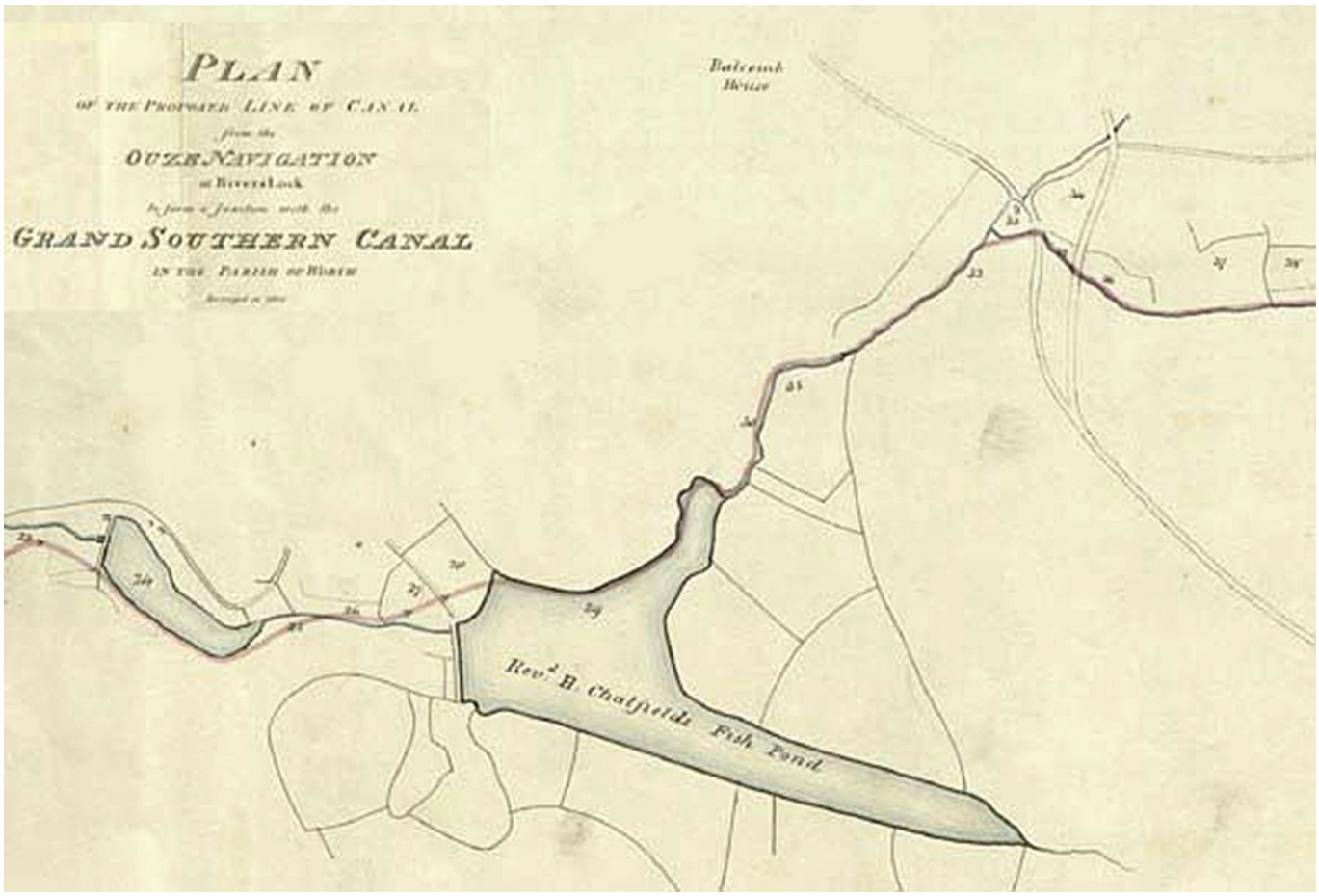



*Figure 3. Detail from 1810 Plan for Ouse Canal Extension © ESRO QDP/29A/1*

# HIGHDEN HOUSE, Washington, West Sussex

*By Catherine Tite*

Highden House estate is of local interest in terms of its historical significance, particularly since the adjoining former estate houses, Muntham to the south and Rowdell to the north, have been demolished. Budgen's map of Sussex in 1724 showed the estate as a gentleman's country seat.



*Figure 1. Highden House, Sussex by Grimm, 1789*
*© British Library Board. Ref. Additional MS 5673; Item number: f.56*

The Highden estate is situated in the parish of Washington in West Sussex. Sitting within the South Downs National Park and south of the South Downs Way long-distance footpath, the estate contains some public footpaths through established woodland and along one side of the house and former gardens. The downland north of the House contains ancient field systems and a covered way. The public footpaths afford partial views of the privately owned Highden House, early eighteenth-century at its core, the walled garden, present before 1839, and the outline of former gardens and pleasure grounds. The main building has been much extended and the eastern gardens have been lost since Windlesham House School took over the House in the 1930s, but the southern lawn area and woods and parkland that are not occupied by the school remain as a rural environment between the A24 and the farms to the west.

## Highden before 1700

The name Highden or Highdown is not uncommon, referring to high ground, and has been spelt variously: *Aidene* (1288), *Heydene* (1341), *Hydeane* (1562) and *Hyden* (1578).

A record of 1233 notes that the King's court was to hear the case of Isabella, widow of Humfrey de Hiden.[1] She claimed from the local Norman lords, the Le Covert family, forty-six acres in Washington as 'her reasonable dower from the free heritage which had belonged to her husband there'. By 1481 Highden had been settled by John Hyden on William Cadman.

William Bolokherde lived at Highden in the mid-sixteenth century, his son later becoming an early grammarian known as William Bullaker.[2] In 1567 Queen Elizabeth I granted to John Bellingham Esquire the Highden lands, held within her gift.

Highden 'manor' was mentioned in Chancery documents in 1617 as a freehold tenement of Washington Manor, in that year passing from Edward Goring to his son, Henry.[3] Papers in the Wiston collection, held at the West Sussex Record Office, show that in 1651 Henry leased lands at Highden to his son to manage, while remaining in Highden House himself.[4]

The Wiston papers chart the history of the influential Goring family of Sussex, whose original estate was Burton near Petworth. In 1680, on the death of Sir James Bowyer of Leighthorne, the baronetcy passed to the then owner of Highden, Henry Goring, now called 2nd Baronet of Highden. Several family members were Catholics, supporters of James II and the subsequent Jacobites. By 1664, records show

that 14 hearths were taxed, indicating that this was a substantial manor house.[5]

**1700-1934**

Henry Goring, a barrister, in the 1660s became an MP for Sussex and then Steyning. He rebuilt Highden House in about 1700. From 1743 onwards, a different branch of the Goring family resided at Wiston, which lies to the north-east of Highden, where they were later responsible for planting trees at Chanctonbury Ring.

Highden House faced south and featured a symmetrical brick façade with quoins, hipped roof and tall chimneys, as shown in a watercolour held by the British Library, painted 90 years later by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm and dated 1789 (Figure 1).[6] If one assumes that the picture is an accurate view of the house in 1789, it shows the familiar drive running along the southern face of the house and curving away to the south and then east. This lane is bordered between the house and the curve by a wall about one and a half metres high. Mixed planting, including climbers, soften the house front and extend along the wall. Beyond are trees on the east of the lane and a lawn in front of the house, with a slope on the west leading up to what looks like parkland. There are already outbuildings and woodland in the background.

The *Victoria County History* reports that Highden's parkland was mentioned in a publication of 1814 and that by 1896 the plantations had been enlarged. In 1838 the house itself was renovated.[7]

In the 1830s the government commissioned tithe maps to be produced, with ownership and an apportionment record showing the state of cultivation of each field or section of land. The 1839 tithe map of Washington parish shows the 323-acre estate of Sir Harry Dent Goring, owner and occupier (Figure 2). Over half the estate was taken up by Highden Down and Cow Down, unproductive land. The arable land and meadows were modest, with only 44 acres of arable and 32 of meadow. The three-acre field numbered 569, north-east of the pleasure gardens, was called The Orchard. Although by this time it was simply a meadow, presumably this was formerly an orchard growing productive fruit trees.

There were three acres designated as garden, probably meaning productive gardens including the walled kitchen garden shown as a square on the tithe map. In addition, the areas between the main house and the walled garden were designated as barn yards, outbuildings and smaller houses and gardens, still visible as former stables, yards and coach house, and employee homes. The five acres designated as Highden House and its pleasure gardens refer to the area including gardens lying to the east and south of the house. Beyond this, due east and to the north-east beyond the orchard, were plantations. These were not noted as cultivated for tithe purposes, so were probably ornamental.

The official census records, taken in spring every ten years from 1841, tell us a little about the Highden estate.[8] Taking care of the Highden estate all the year round were various servants and employees such as gardeners, grooms and the gamekeeper. In the 1840s and 1850s George Evans was the gardener, succeeded in the 1860s by Charles Timberley, originally from Bromley, who lived at Highden with his family. In 1881 there were three gardeners living on the estate,



*Figure 2. Washington tithe map 1839 WSRO ref TD 137*

and in 1891 the sixty-five-year-old George West and his son, from Storrington, were living at the Lodge, with a forty-two-year-old gardener in different accommodation on the estate.

The *Chichester Express and West Sussex Journal* in September 1868 reported on the fourth annual horticultural show of the Findon and Washington Cottage Society, which was held 'in the beautiful grounds of Highden'. The purpose of the Society was to encourage cottagers to have neatly cultivated flower and vegetable gardens. At this event Sir Charles Goring's gardener, Mr Timberley, judged the vegetables while Sir Charles and the Marchioness of Bath (from Muntham) exhibited greenhouse plants, vegetables and fruit.

The first edition of an Ordnance Survey published in 1875 shows a lodge (no longer extant) at the entrance to the main drive, which leads west from what is now the A24 and then curves north towards the L-shaped Highden House (Figure 3). The main southern elevation of the house looks along a basically oval area, probably mainly a lawn, with a sundial placed opposite the main door. To the west of this oval is mixed woodland. The east elevation looks out on a fairly square area surrounded by trees and with pathways cutting across. There is a border by the house, then a path runs parallel to it, connecting with the main drive and sundial area. No dwellings appear east of the main house. At the back of the house is a walled ornamental garden with trees. A pond lies north of the garden.

The walled kitchen garden at this time has an inner perimeter path and is divided into four quarters, with a path making a cross through the garden. Trees or shrubs line parts of each square plot. The walled garden would have been used

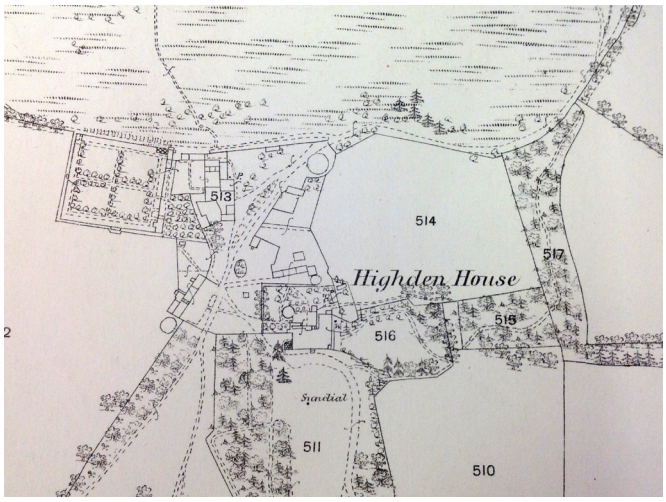


*Figure 3. OS map dated 1875. Ref. LI/9. WSRO*

for growing fruit and vegetables for the house. At this stage, the garden cottage was yet to appear. There are several small outbuildings outside the walled area.

In 1884 Sir Charles Goring died, his personal estate subsequently being valued at £34,661. His widow, Eliza, remarried the following year. Apart from Highden and his London home, Sir Charles had also owned land and buildings at Nyetimber, Oakhurst, Billingshurst and elsewhere in Sussex totalling 4,000 acres. The Highden estate went up for auction on 15 September 1886 at the King's Head Assembly Rooms in Horsham. Major-General Richard Temple Godman of 5 Upper Belgrave Street, London and Ote Hall near Burgess Hill was the purchaser of Highden, lots one to three of Goring's total estate.

The sale particulars of the Highden estate in 1886 give us the best idea of the gardens and parkland at its heyday, presenting a glowing impression.[9]

> *Highden. About six miles from Worthing and Steyning with a fine old mansion house, extensive grounds, gardens and park, home farm, and arable, pasture and wood of 472 acres, with the manor or reputed manor of Highden.*

Prospective purchasers were enticed by the description of a country gentleman's life: good shooting, several local foxhound meets, the Warnham staghounds.

The sales particulars describe the house in its garden. The ground floor southern facing rooms included a drawing room:

> *...an oak panelled dining room with three south windows overlooking the lawn... sliding doors leading to a conservatory. [The lawn was] over an acre, sundial in centre, forming a tennis court.*

The east wing first floor had a lady's boudoir of fifteen feet:

> *two windows overlook the flower garden... fenced in and containing a variety of rare plants and shrubs of large growth...at the end of the corridor is a door and flight of steps down to the garden entrance.*

The sales information describes 'the ornamental grounds' but it is not clear whether these refer to the flower garden or are in a separate position:

> *immediately joining the house [the ornamental grounds] are beautifully laid*

*out, their natural beauty with the extensive shrubberies being a celebrated feature.*

On the lower ground floor was … 'a *furnace chamber for hot-water apparatus to Conservatory and house coils*'. The conservatory was heated along with house central heating, so would probably have housed ornamental tender plants accessed from the dining room rather than pineapples or other tender fruit and vegetables. To the north and west of the house were the orchard and outbuildings, including a game larder and dairy.

The walled garden was a food production area:

*The productive walled-in kitchen garden occupying about an acre is in a sheltered position and abundantly stocked with fruit trees. Greenhouse in two divisions, tool house, potting and store shed, and pump to soft water tank. The walls on the outside are also planted with choice fig and other fruit trees, and there is a small peach house. Another fruit garden adjoins with melon ground and in close proximity the head gardener's cottage.*

In 1891 the census taken at Highden showed the Godmans and their five children well installed at Highden House, with a larger number of employees than Highden had seen before including nursemaids, footmen, coachmen, butler, maids and many labourers. Four gardeners lived on the estate: a father and son at one of the lodges and two other single gardeners. This conjures up an image of a thriving country estate in its heyday.

The Godmans continued the interest in sheep rearing and gardening, *The Sussex Agricultural Press* regularly reporting on their gardener winning prizes for his chrysanthemums and other plants.

The Godmans were in residence for the census of 1901, still with a large staff; in 1911 the census summary book shows seventeen people residing at Highden House, together with other households in the lodges and cottages.

The 1911 edition of the OS map, based on the 1909 revision, still shows the entrance lodge, now with mixed woodland to the left of the main drive as it sweeps north to the house (Figure 4). The walled garden shows no internal paths but has glasshouses against the inner northern wall along its whole length, and some glasshouses leaning against the southern wall on its outside elevation.

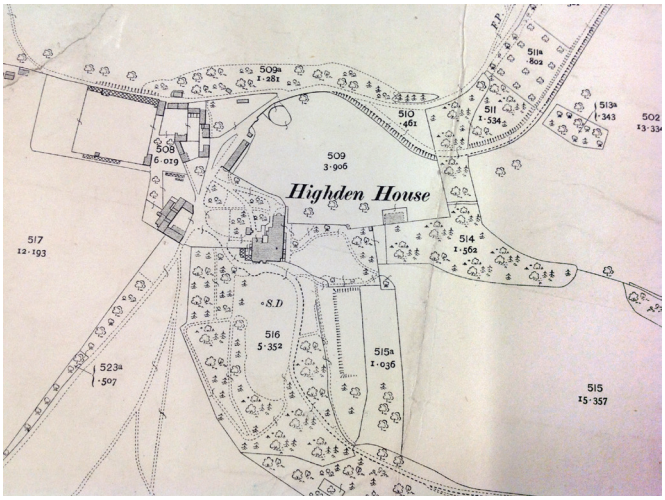



*Figure 4. OS map dated 1911. Ref. LI/9 WSRO*

Major-General Godman died in December 1912 but his widow lived on at Highden until 1932 or 1933, when the estate was sold to Sir Richard Denman. His son, Charles Spencer Denman, was born in 1916 and started life as a gardener before later building a prominent career in the army. The Denman family allowed Windlesham House School to move to the house in 1934, at which stage an additional storey was built and a more modest new home built to the north-west for the family, the new Highden House which appears on the 1943 OS map (Figure 5). The Windlesham House School building had by this time been extended on its north-eastern side while the entrance lodge by the main road no longer existed.

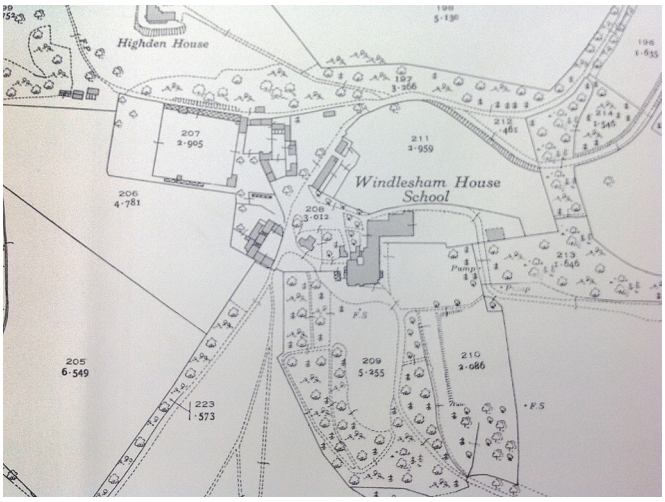



*Figure 5. OS 4th ed. map dated 1943. Ref. LI/9 WSRO*

Nowadays the woodland and field layouts remain very similar to the nineteenth century plans but Highden House's gardens no longer exist, apart from the south lawn and some older trees. The walled garden is visible from the public footpath, on a slight slope and with high brick walls, still

cultivated but without the full range of Victorian glasshouses.

Although the gardens have long gone, to the south-east of the original house are some ornamental trees, including willow, pine and other conifers. The woodland and hedges by public footpaths reflect the sort of mixed native planting common to this part of Sussex: hazel coppice, field maple, tall beeches, yew, hawthorn, holly, spindle, cornus and the possibly non-native sycamore.

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## Events at the Garden Museum

**Repton Revealed**
**The Art of Landscape Gardening**
**24 October 2018 to 3 February 2019**

Our new exhibition celebrates Humphry Repton (1752-1818) and his rare and beautiful Red Books.

Visitors will be able to see how Repton's career unfolded in this special exhibition which brings together Red Books and watercolour paintings, many never publicly displayed before, to celebrate the bicentenary of his death.

It will display 23 Red Books, so named by Repton due to the distinctive red leather bindings he favoured. Very few remain, and this exhibition reunites the largest number of Red Books in one place in 25 years.

Ingenious in design and each one unique, the books were devised by Repton as a clever marketing tool. Clients would open the book to see Repton's delicate watercolours of their garden as it currently appeared, and then would then lift a flap, revealing Repton's new design for their garden as it could be (provided they paid Repton handsomely to make the design a reality!). As pages are turned, trees rise or are felled, a stream becomes a lake, an untidy farm becomes a genteel park, or, as is the case in the Sundridge Park Red Book above, a house is suddenly replaced with another, grander manor. The watercolours are interspersed with notes from Repton, often in a conversational style, recalling walks with the owner of the house during his visit. Compliments are followed by criticism, very often of the designer who had preceded Repton.

Humphry Repton Mulgrave Castle Red Book 1793, with kind permission of the Marquis and Marchioness of Normanby.

As well as exploring the relationship between the interior and exterior, and between the garden and the wider landscape, the exhibition will also look at Repton himself, at his comparatively late start in landscape design (at the ripe old age of 36) and his use of a wheelchair later in life, after a carriage accident, form which he continued gardening.

Christopher Woodward, Director of the Garden Museum describes opening one of Repton's Red Books as *'One of the great treats of garden history. They're probably the most seductive client presentations ever made. Repton saw himself as the heir to Capability Brown, but they were as different as chalk and cheese. Brown was solid, silent, and masterful and made his fortune by digging and planting, not by drawing designs. Repton had been dandy, a failed entrepreneur, a social satirist and an artist before he set up as a landscape designer. He would have been great fun to travel through Jane Austen's England with. And he was a restless, melancholy man who knew that his*

*landscapes would change or vanish and saw these Red Books as his greatest work – and as the legacy of his genius'.*

The exhibition includes objects from around the world, and from public and private collections, including the Royal Collection Trust, the British Library, Royal Academy of Arts and The Oak Spring Garden Foundation.

As well as seeing the Red Books and other Repton watercolours, the exhibition will include a specially commissioned digital animation of Armley, a Repton Garden in Leeds. This allows visitors to step inside and experience the magic of Repton's designs.

The exhibition is been curated by Stephen Daniels, Professor Emeritus at the University of Nottingham, who has studied Repton for 30 years, and is author of the definitive guide to Repton. His considerable expertise will bring the Red Books to life in this special exhibition.



*Before and after from Humphry Repton Sundridge Park Red Book 1793, with kind permission of City and Country.*



*Humphry Repton Mulgrave Castle Red Book 1793, with kind permission of the Marquis and Marchioness of Normanby.*

# The Gardens Trust Annual Conference 2018

*A report by Marcus Batty*

The Gardens Trust Conference 2018 was a very well organised affair, based at the University of Birmingham. It was preceded by two excellent optional tours. Outdoors we walked round the Green Heart project which is opening up the centre of the university campus into green space. In the late 1960s, I looked out of the law library across perhaps one hundred yards to the main library: a student now would look three hundred and fifty yards across a twelve acre landscape of grass, trees and attendant hard landscaping, that main library having been demolished. The project, due for completion this autumn, is transforming the feel of the campus. Indoors we went on to the Cadbury Research Library, home of the university's special collections. Laid out for us were a range of priceless books going back to John Gerarde's Herball of 1597 with, perhaps tongue in cheek, a magazine cover featuring Norman Painting (Phil Archer) and his garden providing a modern touch.

These two tours would alone have justified a visit to Birmingham, but we had the gardens and houses of the adjacent Edwardian Winterbourne and the high-Victorian "Venetian Gothic" Highbury Hall in Moseley to look forward to. Winterbourne was built as a suburban villa for the Nettlefold family (the "N" in GKN plc) in 1903, Margaret Nettlefold, inspired by Gertrude Jekyll, designing the seven acre garden in an Arts and Crafts style. Now the university's botanic garden, it is beautifully maintained as befits a Grade II listed garden.

Highbury Hall was built for Joseph Chamberlain in 1879 shortly after he had retired from industry to concentrate on politics. In contrast to the gardens at Winterbourne, the original twenty six acres of parkland at Highbury (also Grade II) have been neglected over the years but are now in the early stages of a restoration project under the auspices of the Chamberlain Highbury Trust. Farmland up to 1878, Edward Milner (1819-1884) was commissioned to design the landscape. Volunteers accompanied us on our tour, providing insight into the gardens as they would have been and the restoration plans. A notable feature of the gardens were the extensive glasshouses, home to Chamberlain's massive orchid collection, which were demolished in 1922 and 1940. Some of the bones of the original design remain such as the terrace, lake and cascade and the circuit path together with remnants of theme gardens introduced in the early 1900s which included a rock garden, an Italian garden and a Dutch garden.

A highlight of the weekend was the New Research Symposium which consisted of four enthusiastically delivered short papers. The first, on Repton's work at Barton Hall in Northamptonshire, was followed by a very different presentation, the Three Cathedrals of Trees: Glencruitten, Whipsnade, and Milton Keynes. PhD student, Camilla Allen gave us the stories behind each of these, all based on the cruciform shape and formed by trees. Glencruitten (near Oban) and Whipsnade (based on Liverpool Cathedral) were conceived and created by private individuals to commemorate the fallen of the First World War whilst that at Newlands, Milton Keynes (based on Norwich Cathedral) was designed in 1986. She also examined their context and meaning from a number of aspects in a fascinating lecture. The last two papers concerned the restoration of the garden in Berlin of the German impressionist painter, Max Liebermann, (in disrepair since its forced sale in 1940) and of the courtyard garden at the Archaeological Museum in Palermo, Sicily.

Amongst the other presentations, two stand out. The programme started with "1889: the year Birmingham became a city" in which historian Stephen Roberts displayed his affection for his city with well-chosen anecdotes of Birmingham life in that year, including naked bathing in the canals, holiday habits and the report that "no one seemed to care a straw about" becoming a city. Paul Rabbitts, author and Head of Parks and Open Space at Watford, declared his obsession with an after dinner talk on bandstands. Highly articulate and self-deprecating, he has a profound knowledge of his subject which he imparted in a light-hearted manner. He gave us an extremely well-illustrated history of the bandstand, interlaced by amusing little asides (including his wife's attitude to his obsession) and a "trainspotter's" guide to identifying bandstands by their manufacturers' model numbers.

And then the business of the AGM of the Gardens Trust which passed uneventfully, containing no surprises. During the conference, the new Parks and Gardens UK database was demonstrated.

# SGT Events 2019: garden visits in the new year

## Leonardslee Gardens, Horsham, West Sussex

Sussex Gardens Trust is planning two visits for members to the newly restored Leonardslee Gardens in May 2019. The visits will be guided by the head gardener and the numbers for private tours are limited to 25. In anticipation of high interest from members we are giving the opportunity for as many as possible to visit and therefore to book one or other of the tours.

**Further information about the 2019 programme of visits and dates for the visits to Leonardslee will be announced in the spring.**

## The Restoration at Leonardslee

An announcement in *Country Life* magazine, February 2010, informed readers that

'Leonardslee, the world-renowned lake and gardens estate near Horsham in Sussex has been sold. The final spring opening from April 1 to June 30, when the magnificent gardens are at their finest, will be the last time the Loder family will open their Grade I Listed gardens, complete with famous "lawn-mowing" wallabies to the public.'

Like Sleeping Beauty, the estate was out of reach and out of sight for seven years. But, unlike the fairy tale, the brambles and the thorns and the thickets were not surrounding the beauty of the grounds: they were growing throughout the trees and bushes and choking the pathways.

Then a white knight in the shape of Penny Streeter came to the rescue purchasing Leonardslee in July 2017 with the intention of returning the woodland gardens to their former glory and opening them once more to the public. The new owner is also the owner of the Benguela Collection, a vineyard and hospitality group: it takes its name from the Benguela Cove vineyard in South Africa. The Collection includes the 400-acre Mannings Heath Golf Course and Wine Estate, situated eight miles from Leonardslee.

Restoration of the gardens, laid out by Sir Edmund Loder in the late nineteenth century, has taken longer than was originally estimated and in a statement made in February this year on their website, the gardening team released pictures to show the extent of work needed before it was possible for visitors to wander through the grounds.

The new owners say: 'this is one of the biggest garden restoration endeavours since the Heligan project in the 1990s (every horticulturist will know about this!). When you see the finished work, you will be convinced it was worth it: to see the amazing collection of Rhododendron, Camellias, Azaleas, with their riot of colour later in the year and the outstanding example of our Pulham-made Rock Garden, the beautiful lakeside settings, the kites, the deer and the wallabies'.

For more on the history of Leonardslee there is a summary on the website with photographs at https://www.leonardsleegardens.co.uk/unique-history/

See also the entry on the Parks & Gardens website: www.parksandgardens.

***Jennifer Parsons SGT Events Organiser***



**Through the lens: a reminder of some our enjoyable visits in the beautiful summer of 2018 – photographs taken by SGT members**



*Heaselands, Haywards Heath, 16 May*
*(Photograph, Caroline Scaramanga)*



*The Long House, Westdean, 11 July*
*(Photograph, Zoe Hutton)*



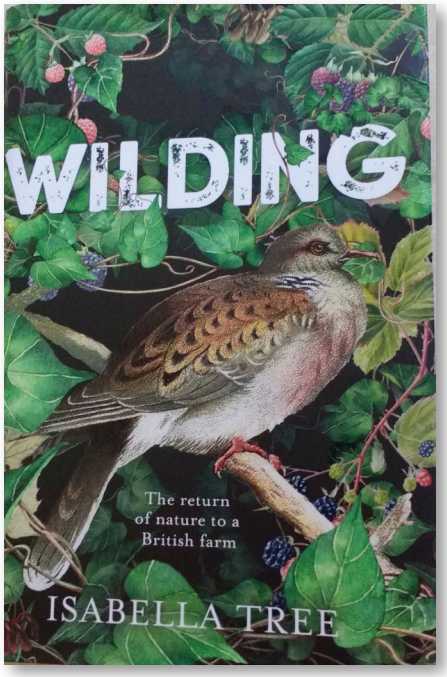
*Fairlight Hall, Hastings, 7 August*
*(Photograph, Sally Ingram)*



*Michelham Priory, 12 September*
*(Photograph, Jack Izatt)*

# Book Reviews

***Wilding: the return of nature to a British farm***
Isabella Tree,
Picador 2018
ISBN 978-1-5098-0509-9 £20.00 Hardback




Isabella Tree and her husband, Charlie Burrell, began an innovative experiment in 2001 to renew the land on the Knepp Castle Estate in West Sussex after years of intensive agriculture. *Wilding* is her story of how the 3,500 acres which her husband inherited in 1987 were restored to create a diverse ecosystem.

The Norman castle at Knepp was built in the twelfth century by William de Braose and the ruins are now known as Old Knepp Castle. In 1787 Sir Charles Raymond bought the Knepp estate and gave it to his daughter, Sophia, and son-in-law, William Burrell. In 1809 Sir Charles Merrik Burrell commissioned John Nash to design the estate in the style of Humphry Repton together with a new castle.

When Charlie Burrell inherited the estate, the farm was losing money and, despite investing in the dairy side and making innovations, he still could not make it profitable. In 2000 he sold the dairy herds and machinery and began the restoration of the Park with funding from the Countryside Stewardship. The ethos was to allow natural processes with free-roaming grazing animals to regenerate the land.

Purposeful wilding or rewilding projects exist in other parts of the world and a Netherlands experiment where deer, cattle and bison roam free on land reclaimed from the sea inspired the vision at Knepp. Tree describes the challenge of creating a rich ecosystem at Knepp whilst giving consideration to neighbours and dog walkers who use the footpaths across the park – bison, for example, were not appropriate to allow on the land. As well as funding from the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, advice on creating new habitats for wildlife was forthcoming from teams of ecologists. Ted Green, a tree expert who was custodian of the royal oaks in Windsor Great Park, was invited in 1999 to inspect the ancient oak trees on the estate and gave his advice on how to preserve the fungal network system.

All the changes made were discussed with conservationists and neighbours, some of whom protested but others offered parcels of their land to be included in the rewilding. Allowing nature to take over the land has presented controversy. Ragwort flourishes at Knepp and many of the neighbours objected to the Knepp estate allowing all weeds and wildflowers to grow without any interference. Animals tend not to eat ragwort and it is a haven for many different insects so the debate continues. Ragwort can be poisonous to animals when reaped and turned into silage or hay with other plants and grasses, but everything at Knepp is done under strict government controls and is not illegal in any way.

The increase in birds has been particularly noticeable since rewilding began and one of the first signs of success was the appearance of turtle doves with one or two recorded in 2007, increasing to sixteen singing males in 2017. They migrate from West Africa and after a hazardous journey are beginning to settle at Knepp in June for the summer.

The first animals to be introduced were fallow deer from Petworth House in 2002 and, in the following year, the Old English longhorn cattle arrived. These were chosen to eat the scrubland and prevent the growth of too many trees and shrubs, as well as being docile creatures. There are no internal fences and Exmoor ponies are allowed to roam freely and eat what they like. The consequence has been that the animals have all thrived, do not need extra feeding and are particularly healthy with minimum intervention by vets. A bonus has been the selling of some

of the cattle for butchering, producing premium organic longhorn beef. Too many cattle would upset the ecology which is being created. Tamworth pigs provide meat for sausages for the castle and the neighbouring community.

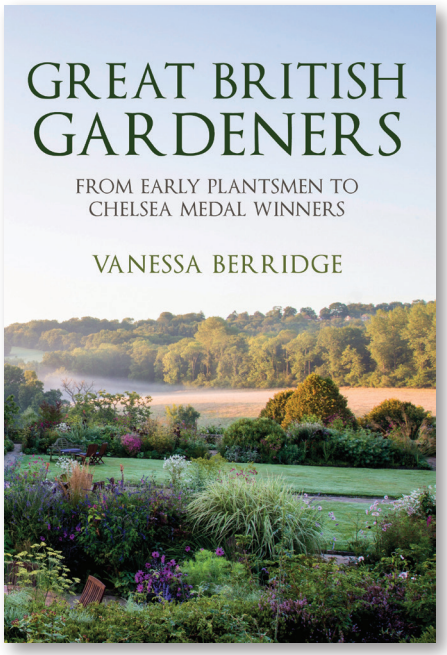
Over the coming years more longhorn cattle, red deer and Tamworth pigs have been introduced with the resulting change in the countryside and a greater diversity of birds and butterflies arriving at Knepp. Thirteen species of the UK's bats now dwell at Knepp as well as dragonflies and mayflies.

This is a delightful book, beautifully written by Isabella Tree and containing many evocative descriptions of the countryside and wildlife at Knepp together with the philosophy that forms the basis of rewilding. It is well illustrated with photographs from the archives of Knepp and many by Charlie Burrell.

The Sussex Gardens Trust visited Knepp in September 2015 and I was delighted by this book which explains in detail the rewilding of the Knepp Castle Estate.

***Lynn Gausden***

***Great British Gardeners: From Early Plantsmen to Chelsea Medal Winners***
Vanessa Berridge, Amberley Publishing 2018
ISBN 978 4456 7240 3 £25.00 Hardback




Making a 'best of' list is beset with difficulties. There can hardly be a participant on *Desert Island Discs* who has not declared how perplexing it is to select only eight records and the question 'what is your favourite book' can cause immediate confusion in the heart of any bibliophile. How to decide who are the great British gardeners would seem an equally impossible task, but it is a challenge that Vanessa Berridge has taken up in her new book *Great British Gardeners*, admitting from the outset that her list is a personal and partial one. Rather than writing a history of British gardening, she has selected gardeners who have been instrumental in forging new ideas about gardens and the landscape, focusing on their individual lives and revealing how their work has reflected changes in society. The biographies of twenty-six key gardeners take the reader from the sixteenth century to the present-day, through familiar names, including 'Capability' Brown, Humphry Repton, John Loudon, Gertrude Jekyll and Rosemary Verey together with less well-known figures such as Philip Miller and William Nesfield. Whilst it is predominately a male list, Berridge gives the distinction of the first great woman gardener to Gertrude Jekyll, born in 1843, and it is not until the later chapters of her book that more women feature: Vita Sackville-West, Margery Fish, Penelope Hobhouse and Beth Chatto. Berridge suggests that, whilst a number of amateur gardeners of the mid-nineteenth century, like Jekyll, became professional in order to earn a living, the twentieth-century gardeners, women and men, were born into the middle-class and garden design has become 'the preserve of the already affluent ... no longer a career path from gardener's boy to landowning and social success...'.

The title *Great British Gardeners* might suggest a collection of biographies with plenty of lush photographs, a proverbial 'coffee-table' publication, fun to look at but without very much substance. But this is not the case. There are colour photographs, arranged within the centre of the book, but these are incidental to the depth of source material that Berridge has drawn from to create an engaging and refreshing account of the lives of notable gardeners. The comprehensive bibliography and footnotes show that primary and secondary sources, as well as interviews by the author with the contemporary gardeners, have informed this study. We may be well acquainted with the famous and the not-so-famous in gardening history, and it would be hard to find any new material on the major characters such as Kent, Brown or Loudon, but Berridge approaches the difficulty of writing about figures who will be familiar to many readers by selecting

wisely and confidently from her extensive research to show what drove these gardeners to achieve their aspirations, the challenges they faced and how they inspired others.

The book is full of examples showing how historical developments affected ideas about British gardening. John Gerard is the subject of the first chapter and it is through his life that Berridge demonstrates the importance of the historical period in which he lived. The development of printing in the vernacular rather than in Latin, coinciding with the publication of his *Herball* in 1597, made learning more available encouraging travel abroad and thereby leading to exotic plants arriving from the New World for study of botany in such places as the physic garden at Kew.

The distinctive writing by gardeners is a strong theme throughout and the author charts the way in which the development of how-to books influenced garden-makers down the centuries. For Thomas Fairchild his book, *The City Gardener* published in 1722, was to be a manual not for those who employed designers but for the merchant class 'as much as for persons of quality', who would come to his nursery in London for advice on what to grow and where. Philip Miller, head gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden, published *The Gardener's and Florist's Dictionary* in 1768, the first practical handbook about gardening and based upon Miller's own experience. As he said of himself 'he has been careful not to publish anything imparted to him, until he was fully satisfied of the facts by experiment'. William Robinson published *The Wild Garden* in 1870, and his book has remained in print, a testament to the popularity of the woodland look. In the mid-twentieth century Vita Sackville-West's weekly columns in the *Observer* made gardening on a small scale seem possible, whilst *We Made a Garden* by Margery Fish, published in 1956, started a fashion for subtle shades of colour rather than bright herbaceous borders. As Berridge points out, garden literature helped shape fashions and preferences in design, whilst reflecting the particular period of history. The success of *The Country Gardener* published by Penelope Hobhouse in 1976, Berridge suggests, was a result of good timing when a combination of increased home ownership and interest in exterior design, together with improvements in colour photography, made lavishly illustrated garden books popular.

The influence of previous generations upon individual gardeners is recognised, but so too is the way in which boundaries are broken and gardeners turn their backs on those who have gone before. Rosemary Verey was apparently full of admiration for Hidcote, designed by Lawrence Johnston in the 1920s, but decided that her garden at Barnsley would not benefit from being divided into 'rooms'. Verey moved to Barnsley in 1951 and the garden opened to the public in 1970 which led to her career in garden design. She apparently gave her clients 'before and after' photographs, rather in the style of Repton but, although she continued to create gardens for clients, including the Prince of Wales at Highgrove, taste moved towards a more naturalistic look using grasses, the prairie-style. A contemporary of Verey, John Brookes, shaped garden design in a very different direction. Influenced by abstract painters and interior designers such as Terence Conran, Brookes considered how a garden would be used by the owners with the publication in 1969 of '*Room Outside: A New Approach to Garden Design*', which Berridge describes as 'the practical manual for the Habitat shopper'. Brookes was 'both reacting to and leading social trends' and she references the garden designer, Bunny Guinness, who claimed he 'did for garden design what Elizabeth David did for food'. Berridge interviewed Brookes shortly before he died and she conveys his appreciation of line, texture and shape, which influenced his design of the garden at Denmans in Sussex with its gravel paths, curved lawns and architectural plants.

Berridge has an acute awareness of the small details that convey a picture of the individual, creating a delightful book for dipping into. We imagine Repton, for example, travelling as much as 500 miles a month to meet his clients by 'stagecoach, post-chaise, hackney carriage and his clients' coaches', or Vita Sackville-West recording in her diary after a visit to Munstead Wood that Miss Jekyll is 'rather fat and rather grumbly ... I have no love for herbaceous borders or for the plants that usually fill them ...'.

As Berridge writes in her introduction 'gardening is an integral part of our island history' and this book will be a very welcome addition to our understanding and appreciation of those who have helped cultivate that history.

***Sally Ingram***

# IN BOX

**A very warm welcome to our new members who have joined since April of this year:**

Mat and Sharon Tremaine-Stevenson; Caroline and Angela Buchan; Christopher and Elizabeth Williams; Josey Don; Patrick and Jennifer Nolan; Sally Sanderson (Friends of Horsham Park).

Suggestions or contributions for future issues of the Newsletter are very welcome. These can be articles about gardens in Sussex, research into garden history, gardeners' accounts, or even a feature about your own garden. Please contact the editor, email address: sallyatcoast@aol.com

The deadline for the spring edition is 15 February 2019.



*July 2018 – SGT visit to gardens in the village of Rogate, East Sussex*


## Sussex Gardens Trust

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