

Birkbeck Garden History Group Newsletter

Summer 2019 No 52



Study Day: *Music and Gardens*

16 March

Sight and Sound: harmony in the garden Judy Tarling

Judy Tarling is a garden historian and a musician with a long involvement in early string instruments. Her lively and learned talk showed how, in the 17th century, music and gardens were connected in people's minds with ideas of proportion and resonance to create visual and aural harmony.

We were shown extravagant displays of the horsemanship of the *carrousel*. We clapped to the rhythm of the *carrousel* and saw illustrations of such performances in the gardens of the Palais Royal in 1612 and Louis XIV's three-day *Grand Carrousel* of 1662 at the Tuileries.

We looked at Nicolas Fouquet's spectacular celebration for the king in August 1661 when music, dance and theatre were staged at Vaux-le-Vicomte in the magnificent gardens designed by André Le Nôtre and where Molière's comedy-ballet, *Les Facheux*, with music by Jean-Baptiste Lully, was performed. Giacomo Torelli's theatre design included statues that moved with the use of stage machines.

Although Versailles was an extravagant creation, it did not have a theatre, banqueting hall or ballroom at this time, so any large-scale theatrical or musical events took place in various garden locations. The first grand event in the gardens of Versailles was held in May 1664. A collaboration between Molière and Lully, it was a week of magnificent festivities for 600 guests. Judy gave us well-illustrated explanations of the entertainments in which Louis at times took part himself and over which he had checked every detail to promote the idea of the grandeur of his court at home and abroad. The talk finished with the overture to Lully's masterpiece, *Armide*.



Discord Flies Away by Gillis van Breen
(Dutch 17th century)

Music and Landscape Jonathan Price

Jonathan Price, musician, garden designer and historian, discussed designed and natural landscapes and gave examples of how music can be inspired by landscape and landscape by music. He demonstrated early ideas of the relationship between music and the physical world to include the proposal by Pythagoras that planets in orbit may produce sound – the music of the spheres – and that of Johannes Kepler who explored this concept in *Harmonices Mundi* (*Harmonies of the World*) in 1619.

Many examples were given of music inspired by landscape, including Arnold Bax's *Tintagel* (1919) which was inspired by a visit to Tintagel Castle in Cornwall in 1917. The music of Frederick Delius, so landscape-inspired, included *In a Summer Garden* and we were shown a painting of Delius in his garden at Grez-sur-Loing painted by his wife, the artist, Jelka Rosen.

Soundscapes in landscapes can be the 'sonic wonderland' of sounds all around us, even those that we cannot easily hear. In Paley Park, New York, a waterfall creates white noise blocking the sounds of passing traffic. Sculpture in the landscape can be designed to create silent or audible soundscapes.

In Grizedale Sculpture Forest, Cumbria, *Forest Fugue* by David Kemp is constructed of tree stumps, stone and metal in the shape of an organ and plays a silent requiem for the felled trees. In *Ting*, by Colin Rose, a steel circle in a tree represents silence within noise. *Aeolus* by Luke Jerram, a large-scale artwork of tubes and strings at the Eden Project, the *High Tide Organ* at Blackpool, and *Singing Ringing Tree* at Burnley, all use wind to create sound. The hydraulic water organ at Villa d'Este (1568) creates music from its water and pipes. A duet between cellist Beatrice Harrison and a nightingale in her garden, broadcast by the BBC in 1924, has been repeated every spring for 12 years. One example of gardens with musical inspiration was Julie Moir Messervy's Toronto Music Garden (1999) where she interprets Bach's *Cello Suite No 1 in G Major* through sections of the garden.

Elizabeth Hingston

Gardens in Opera: Secrets, Seductions and Skulduggery Pauline Greene

Pauline Greene, lecturer in music, performing arts and media, had chosen an apt title for her talk *Secrets, Seductions and Skulduggery*, as it quickly became clear that gardens are the perfect place in which to conduct secret love affairs, murders, flirtations and to experience supernatural happenings. The lecture was largely illustrated with operas set in gardens. *Bommarzo*, the 20th century opera composed by Alberto Ginastera, was filmed in the actual garden outside Rome, and makes much use of the huge stone monsters for which the garden is famous

with atmospheric lighting. But perhaps the most memorable scene that Pauline showed us was from Mozart's *Magic Flute* when Tamino searches in a garden for his lost Pamina. The most exotic mix of animals in fantastic costumes and headdresses are enticed out of the woods by the sound of Tamino's magic flute.

***Gardens in Dance* Cherrill Sands**

Garden historian and former dancer, Cherrill Sands began her talk with a most useful history of ballet, even demonstrating some of the ballet moves. Beginning in the 16th century at the court of the Medicis as an interval entertainment, ballet was codified at the French court in the following century. As in opera, gardens provided useful scenes for romantic rendezvous, illicit meetings and magical episodes. We were brought into the 20th century with the dynamic performance of Fred Astaire dancing in a public park with Ginger Rogers and in Central Park with Cyd Charisse. The session ended with the showing of the short ballet *The Lilac Garden* by the dancer and choreographer Antony Tudor and performed by the American Ballet Theatre. It is a languid romantic ballet of lost love and all that was missing was the lilac perfume that was sprayed in the theatre at the first performance.

Jan Clark

Garden Visits

East Anglia. Ousden House and Madingley Hall

11 April

Leaving London on a sunny but chilly morning, we received a warm welcome from Lavinia and Alistair Robinson on arrival at Ousden House. The gardens are a plantsman's paradise and a work of art, cleverly created over 20 years. The site that the Robinsons bought was that of the demolished Ousden Hall, of which only the clock tower and the stables remained. They converted the stables into a comfortable home and have acquired other areas of adjoining land. With some initial help from the garden designer, Arabella Lennox-Boyd, they extended their formal planting from the house out to a small ha-ha, to bring in the beautiful borrowed landscape.

We were too early in the year to appreciate fully their herbaceous planting but we timed it well to see an enchanting range of spring flowers. Hellebores and pulmonarias carpeted an area planted with interesting shrubs and trees. The Robinson's use of hedges for effect and shelter included a stunning crinkle-crankle yew hedge. Other areas gave us a view through some fine gates of the landscape beyond and through cherry blossom to the nearby church. There were two areas of water, a moat garden with a view to the clock tower and beach woodland which led down to a lake. Here was an amazingly realistic sculpture of a horse and foal made from metal reclaimed from scrap Ferraris! Last but not least, we had a delicious home-made lunch before setting off towards Cambridge.



Crinkle-crankle hedge at Ousden House

At Madingley Hall we were greeted by Richard Gant, the head gardener for the eight acres surrounding the Hall. He gave us an interesting summary of the Hall's development and the changes made by different owners. It was here that the future Edward VII lived whilst a student at Cambridge and where Albert visited him over an issue of a woman in his bed, only for Albert to die 19 days later. Richard also explained the challenges faced by himself working with authorities such as the Forestry Commission and the University which have owned the property since 1948.

Of particular interest to people like myself who were involved in the Capability Brown tercentenary research, was the small exhibition highlighting the work undertaken by Brown for the then owner, Sir John Hyde Cotton. It dated from 1756, so was quite early in Brown's career. Unusually, in my experience, details of the contract, which included a serpentine lake, a fishpond, lowering of a road beyond the lake, the extension of the 'View' and the walled garden were given, including the huge cost (£500) and the expected timing of the payments. Copies of correspondence include one from Brown explaining that he was delayed visiting on account of being unwell and because one of his children had scarlet fever. Two of Brown's children had died at that stage and a further one died that year. The view of the serpentine lake from the house was a little disappointing. Our steely Banstead coach managed to get us back near to the appointed time. A great day out!

Ruth Todd

West Sussex. Leonardslee Gardens and High Beeches

2 May

On a dry and often sunny day we headed for the High Weald in Sussex to visit two exceptionally fine gardens which feature acid-loving plants. We started with Leonardslee, reopened after nine years by the new owner, Penny Streeter, following a year of hectic restoration by a team of six gardeners led by head gardener Ray Abraham, who showed us round. At 200 acres, this garden, built on a steep valley, is vast and Ray explained that 60 acres are still unexplored, let alone touched. Historically, Leonardslee was an important site in the local iron industry which explains the string of ponds that are now a major feature of the garden.

The renowned plant hunter, Sir Edmund Loder, who bought the house in 1889, designed the garden so that the valley sides were planted as mirror images of each other with the ponds running along the bottom. Recent

drone footage taken by BBC Gardeners' World confirms this and also reveals that the plants were positioned in a spiral formation. Sir Edmund planted a large amount of exotic flora and we saw the magnificent collection of rhododendrons and azaleas at its peak. James Pulham was commissioned in 1890 to create a substantial rock garden. The Victorians never did things by halves and Ray has found over 4,000 taps around the garden, indicating an extensive network of underground pipes fed from the pump house and backed up by four 100-foot wells.

Only a few miles away lies High Beeches, bought in 1846 by Sir Robert Loder and where Edmund Loder was born. The house was destroyed in the Second World War by a bomber crash-landing into it but the 27-acre garden survived largely unscathed. Sir Robert's grandson, Colonel Giles Loder, laid out the garden we see today. He was advised by his friend and neighbour, the artist Sir John Everett Millais, and some features such as the pond, intended as a tranquil spot, were the result. Russell Yates, the head gardener here for the last 10 years, explained that the cluster of fine gardens along the route from London to Brighton is due to its proximity to the city for wealthy Londoners and its ideal topography for gardens. Like Leonardslee, this garden contains a large collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, many hybridised by the Loder family. Plant hunters George Forrest and Ernest Wilson also contributed many rare plants and the garden is home to the National Collection of *Stewartia*. The acid wild flower meadow, which has not been cultivated since 1906, has been listed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Helena Poldervaart

Sri Lanka, Lunuganga



Giant mask of the Hindu-style Pan

As this year is the centenary of the birth of the celebrated Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, it is an opportunity to briefly describe his unusual and quirky garden near Bentota, south of Colombo, which some members of BGHG have been lucky enough to visit. Unfortunately, given the recent terrorist attacks, it may be some time before tourists can safely enjoy the experience again. Bawa (1919-2003) is regarded as an architect whose work combined environmentally appropriate beauty with cultural sensitivity, and he is most associated with the style known as 'tropical modernism'. The son of a wealthy Muslim lawyer and a Dutch burgher, he studied English and law in England, returning later when he had developed an interest in garden design to study architecture.

Lunuganga garden was created from an abandoned rubber estate and an earlier cinnamon plantation. Its sources of inspiration are 16th century Italy, specifically the garden of Bomarzo, and the great English landscape gardens such as Stourhead and Stowe, but eastern and western cultural traditions are intermingled. Making the garden and maximising the site's natural beauty lasted over 50 years from 1947 and Bawa liked to claim it had planned itself. He gradually cleared the hilly promontory, making the various terraces and lowering the hill to establish views over the lake (actually an inlet – Lunuganga means 'salty river') and to a distant temple, now much obscured. He then planted shady and open areas, different in feeling and mood, to be enjoyed at different times of day – breakfast on a southern terrace, lunch under a jackfruit tree, a shady place for afternoon tea, and a peaceful sunset space.

The house and other buildings were continuously altered and expanded over time but have the feel of being open to nature. Walking down the hill by mossy steps to the lake you encounter the Water Garden and the Butterfly Pool, which, with imagination, is roughly the shape of outspread wings, before coming to a string of frangipani trees and small bright green rice paddies; past the lakeside statue of a leopard, where you can bathe if you make enough splashing and noise to keep the crocodiles away. Then onto the Plain of Jars (these are large and carefully placed) past a giant mask of a Hindu-style Pan staring into a pool, then up to a small pavilion. The balustraded west terrace with classical statues in front of the house looks over the lake. The view left is of Cinnamon Hill, over a small lane which ran across the estate but was cleverly sunk, to produce a ha-ha effect. This allows an unobscured view up to the top of the hill beyond, where a large urn now stands on the spot where Geoffrey Bawa was cremated in his tropical landscape garden and his ashes buried.

Susan Jellis

The Deepdene – a landscape rediscovered by Alexander Bagnall.

The Cockerell Press, 2019. £15.00

Alexander Bagnall manages the countryside estate of Mole Valley District Council and has overseen the restoration of this once-celebrated garden from a state of dereliction. His book, *The Deepdene – a landscape rediscovered*, is enriched with a generous selection from the many surviving contemporary images of the site over three centuries. It opens with a succinct but engrossing account of three significant periods, from the garden's creation in the 1650s by the Hon. Charles Howard, plant collector and amateur scientist. Early admirers included John Evelyn who named it the 'amphitheatre garden' for the deep narrow site within the steeply rising Surrey hills. But Deepdene's period of greatest splendour came under the ownership, from 1808, of Thomas Hope, the famous furniture designer and art collector. Estate and gardens were extended and embellished with garden buildings, statuary and lavish planting. The tenancy of Lilian, Duchess of Marlborough, an orchid enthusiast, saw a brief Edwardian golden afternoon. What follows is an all too familiar chronicle of decay and destruction: bankruptcy,

residential development, war damage and demolition of the house. Seventy acres of deer park and derelict garden remained as a public open space.

A turning point came in 2008 with the discovery of the forgotten and apparently lost Hope family Mausoleum, designed in 1818 by Thomas Hope, in the Greek Revival style. Alexander Bagnall's personal account does justice to the drama from the moment that he noticed a 'lump of stone' among a tangle of vegetation to the excavation and opening of the tomb. The structure had been buried to the roofline in 1957 and rapidly engulfed in scrub. The campaign to restore the Mausoleum awakened public enthusiasm for the rescue of the amphitheatre garden and its equally submerged Embattled Tower, grotto, parterre and pathways. The book concludes on a high note with the triumphant public opening in 2016 of the partially restored garden along with tantalising hints of possible further reinstatements.

Alexander Bagnall will be our guide on the BGHG visit of Tuesday 20 August to the Deepdene garden and Hope Mausoleum, which is now fully excavated and immaculately restored.

Margaret Scholes

News

The English Landscape Garden – a survey

Michael Symes, BGHG President, says that his latest book, *The English Landscape Garden – a survey*, published in April this year by Historic England, would be better read before his complementary previous book *The English Landscape Garden in Europe* (2016) which, with its wider brief, has less detail. The latest book presents an overview of the political, philosophical, literary, botanical, horticultural, architectural and technological aspects of the landscape garden and explains, not only how it evolved, but why. It identifies 45 causes and factors that led to its creation and evolution. The question of why the landscape garden was so popular and how it changed ways of seeing and appreciating gardens and landscapes is also tackled.

Archaeological digs

Volunteers are often invited to help on significant digs, some of which are of interest to garden historians. An example is the recent uncovering of what is considered to be the last undiscovered Tudor garden at Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire. A geophysical survey has revealed the outline of the garden, the paths and the existence of a banqueting house. Home to Katherine Parr, Sudeley has a long history of royal visits including that of Elizabeth I who was extravagantly entertained in the banqueting house over three days in 1592 when on her progress to celebrate victory over the Spanish Armada. The Castle fell into dereliction following its slighting by Cromwell. The dig in the garden of Hanwell Castle, Oxfordshire, now in its seventh year and led by Oxford University, hopes to uncover a water parterre that could be the location of the 'House of Diversion' that was built on an island on one of the fishponds according to Robert Plot's 1677 *Natural History of Oxfordshire*. Information: <http://newarchaeologyuk.org> and www.archaeology.co.uk/digs

William Pitt, the Younger's pleasure ground opens at Walmer Castle, Kent

Following a £2.3 million restoration, the chalk quarry, known as The Glen, has been restored following a century of neglect and is now open to the public. Walmer Castle (visited by BGHG in 2015) was built as an artillery fort in 1539-1540 for the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and has had many notable residents, not least the Duke of Wellington and the Queen Mother. William Pitt the Younger, who was Lord Warden from 1792-1806, started the process of transforming the coastal fort into a stately home and the surrounding windswept farmland into a garden. Pitt was greatly helped by his niece, the archaeologist and society hostess, Lady Hester Stanhope. Together, they created the walled garden which was restored in 1997 and is now known as the Queen Mother's Garden. The Glen, which had become an impenetrable jungle, took over a year to clear. The new planting there closely follows the original, thanks to information gathered from Lady Hester's letters.

The kitchen gardens at Hillsborough Castle, County Down

The 100-acres of park and garden at Hillsborough Castle, the Georgian residence of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, have profited from part of the £24 million restoration budget raised by Historic Royal Palaces. A particular focus has been the kitchen garden which opened to the public this spring. Archaeological evidence accorded with the Byer's map of 1788 and provided the layout of the two-acre walled garden within which the kitchen garden occupies one section. The planting is described as a 're-imagination' rather than a 'restoration' and it includes historical as well as modern produce and flowers plus some unusual conversation pieces. It was planted with the help of a team of gardeners brought over from Hampton Court where the kitchen garden was established in 2014.

31 August deadline for applications for the 2019 MA in Garden and Landscape History

The Institute of Historical Research is accepting applications for their MA in Garden and Landscape History, the only Masters of its kind in the UK, until 31st August. For programme and student testimonials: Sas.enquiries@london.ac.uk. Tel: 020 7862 8835. www.sas.ac.uk/study/gardenhistory

Events

BGHG Programme 2019

27 June	Turn End and Tythrop Park, Buckinghamshire.
2 July	Fuller's Mill, Suffolk and Chippenham Park, Cambridgeshire.
20 August	Deepdene and Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden, Surrey.
4 September	Hatfield House, Hertfordshire.
17–19 Sept.	Garden trip to Dorset.
8 October	Study visit Upton House, Warwickshire.
November	Annual Lecture.

Fulham Palace Restoration

Until November 2020. Exhibition *Discovering the Bishop of London's Palace at Fulham.*

Visits to the newly restored 13-acre botanic garden of Bishop Compton (1675–1713). Open daily during summer. Bishop's Avenue, Fulham, London, SW6 6EA. Tel: 020 7736 3233. www.fulhampalace.org
Email: mail@fulhampalace.org

Oxford University Dept. of Continuing Education

3–4 July. Understanding and conserving historic gardens and designed landscapes. Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JA. Tel: 01865 270 380. Email: professional.arch@conted.ox.ac.uk
www.conted.ox.ac.uk

Paul Mellon Centre Breakfast Talk

Thursday 4 July 9.30–10.30 pm. *The three phases of the Privy Garden at Hampton Court from Henry VIII to the Restoration of the William and Mary Garden.* Bryan Fuermann. 16 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3JA. Tel: 020 7580 0311.
www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk,
Email: info@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk

Painshill Afternoon Talk

Thursday 4 July 1.00–2.00pm. *Thomas Fairchild (1667–1729): the city gardener and his plants.* Led by Karen Bridgman. Portsmouth Road, Cobham, Surrey, KT11 1AA. Tel: 01932 868 113. Email: info@painshill.co.uk, www.painshill.co.uk/events

Chelsea Physic Garden Day Course

Tuesday 9 July 10.00 am–4.00 pm. *The History of Chelsea Physic Garden in 10 Objects.* Letta Jones and Michael Holland. 66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS. Tel: 020 7352 5646.
www.chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk/events-and-courses

Editor: Caroline Foley, 25 Batchelor Street, London, N1 0EG, mail@carolinefoley.co.uk.
Assistant Editor: Sheila Poole, smpoole4@gmail.com

RHS Lindley Library Courses

Friday 12 July 2.00–4.30 pm. *How to research your local park.*

Fridays 11 October–8 November. *Beyond Brown's landscapes.* Stephen Smith. 80 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PE. Tel: 020 7831 3050. Email: library.london@rhs.org.uk, www.rhs.org.uk/libraries

Marlborough College Summer School

15–19 July. *The Prehistoric Landscape from Avebury to Stonehenge.* Isobel Geddes. Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 1PA. Tel: 01672 892 388.
Email: admin@summerschool.co.uk
<https://summerschool.co.uk>

Denman Courses

17–19 July. *History and Heritage: London's royal parks: hunting grounds to parks of beauty.* Peter Lawrence.

21–23 August. *History and Heritage: follies, temples and grottoes.* John Vigar. Marcham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6NW. Tel: 01865 391 991.
Email: info@denman.org.uk, www.denman.org.uk

Oxfordshire Gardens Trust Lectures

Friday 20 September 6.30 pm. *Clivedon and Ditchley: a case of relative values.* Helen Langley.

Friday 15 November 6.30 pm. *Purchasing Paradise: the money that financed great gardens.* Sir Roderick Froud. Kellogg College, 62 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PN. Tel: 01865 874 945.
https://ogt.org.uk/events_news

Institute of Historical Research Seminars

Thursdays fortnightly 3 October–12 December 6.00 pm. This term's theme is *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth Century*. Details on the website from July. Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 6HU. Email: ihr.gardenhistory@gmail.com, www.history.ac.uk/events/seminar/history-gardens-landscapes

Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education. Three-unit course at weekends.

5 October 2019–31 May 2020. *The making of the English Landscape: landscape history and archaeology.* Stephen Upex and Simon Draper. Madingley Hall, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ. Tel: 01233 746 262. Email: artsience@ice.cam.ac.uk
www.ice.cam.ac.uk

Kent Gardens Trust Visit

15 October. *Eltham Palace and Kewington Hall.* Yew Cottage, Station Road, Eynsford, Kent, DA4 0ER. Email: andrewwells@mere-house.co.uk
www.kentgardenstrust.org.uk/events/future_events/

V&A Weekend Course

21–22 March 2020. *Landscape as Art.* Paula Henderson. Cromwell Road, London, SW7 2RL. Tel: 020 7942 2000. www.vam.ac.uk/whatson