

Birkbeck Garden History Group Newsletter



Autumn/Winter 2021 No 59

Pashley Manor and Great Dixter

BGHG Visit 5 August

In August BGHG was able to resume its usual monthly garden visits at last. Not only were we delighted to meet each other and renew friendships, we were able to enjoy two contrasting gardens in East Sussex.

The original Pashley Manor house was situated on a moated island in the garden, where a statue of Anne Boleyn now commemorates its connections to the Boleyn family, who owned the estate until 1540. Yet despite its long history, in 1981 when James and Angela Sellick bought the timber-framed Tudor house, backed by a Georgian addition, only an overgrown early 18th-century walled garden remained.

The Sellicks have developed the garden over 40 years, helped with advice from their friend, the garden designer Anthony du Gard Pasley (1929–2009). The garden represents a late 20th-century garden style with a



Pashley Manor borders

Photo: Jean Cornell

series of discrete areas including a rose garden planted in subdued shades. As James Sellick enjoys 'hot' colours, adjoining farmland has been incorporated to form a cruciform-shaped garden with large herbaceous borders. Plants were chosen for the colour and shape of their foliage and seed heads; perennials in red, orange and yellow are enhanced with dahlias, lilies and sunflowers. This garden and the area with the two lakes look out into the wider landscape. A charming feature is the eclectic collection of sculptures displayed throughout the garden including the small area of woodland, with new works appearing each year.

In contrast, Great Dixter was completed in 1912 when Edwin Lutyens combined the existing 15th-century house with a 16th-century yeoman's house brought from Benenden in Kent for Nathaniel and Daisy Lloyd. Lutyens also laid out the garden's formal areas, including the sunken garden.

Whilst Nathaniel Lloyd became an expert on the topiary that remains in the garden today, from the outset Daisy Lloyd, a devotee of William Robinson, began to develop meadow gardening and plant spring bulbs in the



Great Dixter, sunken garden

Photo: Jean Cornell

lawn at the front of the house; she continued to do so in the orchards and meadows until her death in 1972. She also inspired her son, Christopher Lloyd (1921–2006), the celebrated garden writer and weekly columnist for *Country Life* for 42 years, to develop and take forward her ideas when he returned to live at Great Dixter in 1954. This tradition continues today under the guiding hand of the head gardener and Lloyd's protégé, Fergus Garrett.

Christopher Lloyd was noted for his planting of the Long Border, a mixed border of shrubs and perennials that flower from May to October. However, he enjoyed introducing more controversial innovations and colour schemes. In particular, the small yew-enclosed Edwardian rose garden became an exotic garden full of

tender plants. Innovation is still uppermost at Great Dixter under Garrett and many formal areas like the sunken garden now have exuberant modern perennial planting. It takes considerable skill to achieve a balance between the two.

The design and planting in both gardens gave us plenty to think about and we were all delighted to believe that this day was the first of many future visits.

Dr Jean Cornell

Westminster Abbey Gardens

BGHG Visit 7 October

A visit to College Garden, St Catherine's Chapel Garden and the Little Cloister Garden

Even if you didn't know that you were about to visit a former monastery garden, your route to College Garden, twisting and turning through the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, might give you a clue. But you could not be expected to guess that College Garden is reputed to be the oldest horticultural space still under cultivation in central London; it has probably been a garden of some kind for around 1,000 years. A community of Benedictine monks settled here around 960 AD and stayed for more than 500 years until Henry VIII closed the monastery in 1540. That was not quite the end of the story for the monks; the end came in 1560 when Elizabeth re-founded the church as The Collegiate Church of St Peter in Westminster, its official title to this day.

So it was that in 1560 Abbey Garden became College Garden. At just under one acre in size, this was the largest of the three Abbey Gardens on our tour. As you emerge from the gloom of the cloisters into the bright green space – bright green even on a relatively gloomy day – it comes as a big surprise. Despite being enclosed, it is large enough to feel like a small park with a variety of trees and benches. The monks grew vegetables and had their orchard of apples and plums in here as well as herbs and medicinal plants. The modern garden does not try to mimic the monastery garden but rather to evoke it. New features have been added over time, such as a rose garden in 2002 and a herb garden in 2010. The herb garden has been placed where it is thought the monks had theirs.

Back through the relative gloom of the cloisters, we visited St Catherine's Chapel Garden, a 1371 chapel now open to the sky. The garden was created in the 1960s when the area was rebuilt after bomb damage. A few features of the old chapel, such as stumps of columns and archways, remain but highlights are a south-facing flower bed created from the stone ruins and a large *Magnolia stellata* tree to give a sense of the scale of the old building.

We entered the Little Cloister Garden, which we had glimpsed earlier looking all the more magical for being partly hidden behind a beautiful gate. In monastic times, this was part of the infirmary, with rooms around it for convalescing monks but it became a garden in 1706. The white marble fountain was installed later, in 1836. More recently, the flower beds beneath the walls have been cleared of sprawling ivy roots and replanted to create a jewel-like effect. The delicate *Succisella inflexa* was particularly attractive.

Even at this time of year, there was something about each of these gardens owing to their very setting, history and diversity, as well as a few lingering late summer flowers, to create a sense of nostalgia and draw us into their past. I hope to return on a bright sunny summer's day to experience the difference.

With thanks to Jan Pancheri, head gardener at the Abbey, for guiding our tour. See also: *The Gardens of Westminster Abbey*, by Jan Pancheri with foreword by Sir Roy Strong, Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers Ltd, London, 2018 and *Westminster Abbey: a short tour*, Ed. Esme West, Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers Ltd, London, 2013.



St Catherine's Chapel Garden

Photo: Joan Pateman

Jo Roll

Chatsworth's greatest garden renovation since Paxton

The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire appear to be fearless when it comes to grand design. Ten years ago, as part of a £33 million project, they cleared the soot blown in from Sheffield onto the building and painted the window frames gold so the magnificent house now glitters in sunlight like a fairy palace.

Next came the sustainable renovation of 25 acres, a 'rather forgotten' portion of the 105-acre estate, encompassing the Ravine, Paxton's Rock Garden, the Maze borders and 'Arcadia', comprising 15 acres of woodland. Land had to be cleared, 1,000 tons of mulch applied and 300,000 trees, shrubs, herbaceous material and bulbs planted. The project is being carried out by the home team of 26 gardeners, four trainees and 70 volunteers as well as members of the family.

Work started in 2015 directed by designer Dan Pearson, whose 'Best in Show' Chatsworth and Laurent Perrier Garden that year at Chelsea inspired the redevelopment of the Rock Garden and the Trout Stream which winds down a gentle slope through sylvan and flowery glades and flows into the Jack Pond. New planting, a pavilion, sculpture, giant topiary and a secluded elliptical pond are ongoing.

Tom Stuart-Smith, the next designer on the scene, is carrying on with the Rock Garden which he sees as a ‘fantasy domain ... full of picturesque diversion’. Indeed, it is an imposing sight, reminiscent of Brobdingnag, Gulliver’s land of the giants, with its awesome, jagged rocks. Formerly a grassy area with trees, it has been dramatised further with bold perennials, making a distinct contrast to the new formal borders around the yew Maze which stands on the site of Paxton’s Great Conservatory. Nearby is a seeded wild meadow installed by Professor James Hitchmough of the University of Sheffield.

To my mind, the most beguiling planting, seen on a mellow autumnal day, comes in Arcadia. Three different lyrical glades are linked by woodland paths with well-placed gaps to provide tantalising glimpses to the landscape beyond. The glades have the contemporary feel of the perennial planting school with drifts of woodland plants and grasses under the fluttering canopies of ash and birch.

The Duke and Duchess say they cannot understand why the gardens at Chatsworth are often described as ‘traditional’ when their actual tradition is one of spearheading the very latest designs and scientific advances. After all, were not Chatsworth’s illustrious garden designers, Kent, Brown and Paxton, amongst the foremost innovators of their day?



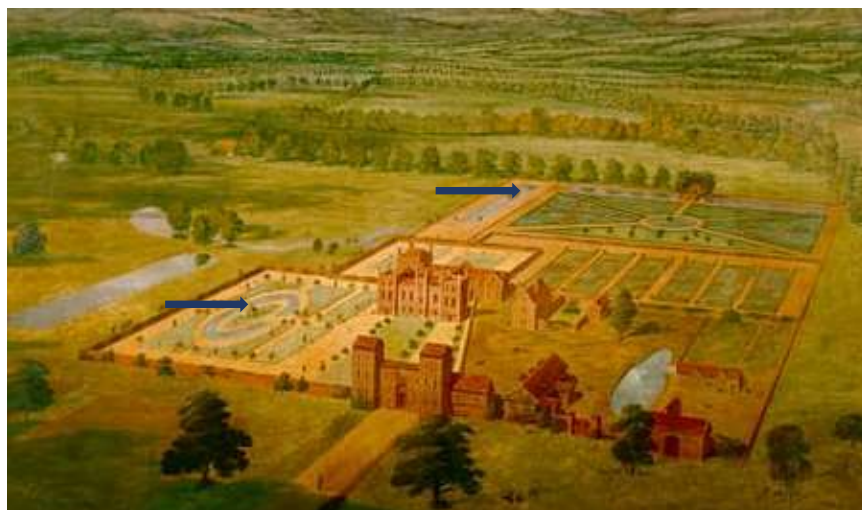
Chatsworth, Rock Garden 2021 Photo: courtesy of Duke and Duchess of Devonshire

Caroline Foley

Developments at Belhus Park, Essex

It was an exciting spring at the golf course at Belhus Park near Thurrock in Essex. The remains of Tudor and Jacobean gardens were discovered earlier this year buried under the fairways. Unlike Colehill Hall on the route of the HS2 (see Newsletter Spring No 57), Belhus Park is a well-known site with considerable recorded history. The park contains a remnant of a mid 18th-century park by ‘Capability’ Brown with additions by Richard Woods. Belonging to the Barrett-Lennard family, it was once one of the largest estates in Essex. Previously, in the mid 17th century, Belhus was surrounded by elaborate formal gardens. The question though was whether any trace of the early formal gardens remained after the later modifications and the construction of the modern golf course.

In partnership with The Gardens Trust, and with financial support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Land of the Fanns scheme was set up to record heritage across East London and South West Essex. As



Painting of Belhus Manor c1710

Image: courtesy of Thurrock Museum

part of their Designed Landscapes project, volunteer researchers studied the evidence around Belhus Park, including aerial photographs and inspection of the site, and compared them with the historical material available, particularly a 1619 pictorial survey and the painting of a birds-eye view of the property as it was in c1710. They believed that traces of the formal garden to the south-west of the house shown in the painting could be detected in the modern evidence. Historic England agreed to do an analysis using modern non-

invasive archaeological techniques such as drone surveys and ground-penetrating radar research, with permission from Impulse Leisure, operators of the golf course. To everyone’s delight, the large circular water feature in the centre of the walled garden south-west of the house, indicated by the lower blue arrow on the painting, plus evidence of the paths and some walls, were discovered. In addition, evidence of the water features in the 17th-century garden to the north of the house, upper arrow in the painting, came to light.

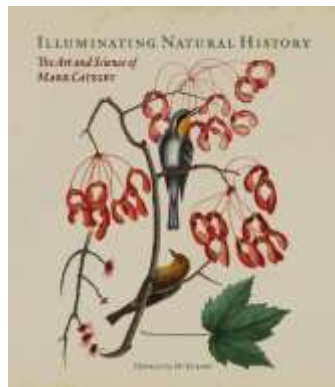
The full report from Historic England can be found at <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/30-2021>. For a description of the history and development of Belhus Park (registered Grade II), see <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000738>

Joan Pateman

Book Review

Illuminating Natural History – the Art and Science of Mark Catesby by Henrietta McBurney

Published by the Paul Mellon Centre and distributed by Yale University Press, 2021



Henrietta McBurney sets the scene – in her richly illustrated and scholarly biography of Mark Catesby – by putting his remarkable achievements, both as a naturalist and artist, within the context of the great scientific era of Hooke, Boyle and Newton. A respected and influential figure in his day as the author of the two-volume *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* (1731–1743), the first illustrated record of North American natural history to reach Europe, Catesby subsequently disappeared from view. He was only rediscovered in 1997 when a touring exhibition of his watercolours in the United States caught the attention of scientists and the public alike.

In contrast to his contemporaries, who worked on dead specimens, Catesby drew his flora and fauna from life out in the field, capturing their character and vibrancy. Not being as wealthy as his gentlemen amateur contemporaries, he etched and hand-painted many of the 220 full-page copper plates himself in his *Natural History* and there is much beauty in the colours and the detail.

The ‘Curious Mr. Catesby’ was born in 1683 near Sudbury, Suffolk, into an intellectual family who would have counted the East Anglian naturalists amongst their circle. In 1712 Catesby set off to America and spent seven years independently recording the indigenous flora and fauna in Virginia, North Carolina and the West Indies. On his return home, his drawings, specimens and herbarium impressed some members of the Royal Society sufficiently for them to sponsor a second field trip back to Carolina and onto the Bahamas in 1722. The correspondence between Catesby and his sponsors on receipt of seeds, pickled fish and bird heads makes interesting reading.

Once home for good, Catesby spent 20 years working on the *Natural History*. In 1733 he was elected to the Royal Society. He died in London in 1749. Some 80 first editions of his great work can be found in prestigious libraries, including the Royal Society; at Windsor there is a fine edition and original drawings purchased for George III. Editions of the original two-volume *Natural History*, with the illustrations, are available to view in the Biodiversity Heritage Library’s online collection; for one example see the website <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/218060#page/1/mode/1up>

Caroline Foley

On Monday 6 December, Henrietta McBurney will be giving a lecture online about Mark Catesby. See Events.

News

BGHG Newsletter Editor

Caroline Foley, who has been our Newsletter editor since 2019, has retired as full-time editor but we are delighted that she is willing to remain on the editorial team as adviser. BGHG have been very appreciative of the insight and imagination she brought to the Newsletter and the high standards she set. Caroline has contributed such a lot over nearly three years and we are most grateful to her.

BGHG is now looking for a new Newsletter editor to join the team. If you would like to join us or would like to discuss the role, please contact Joan Pateman (joan.pateman@zen.co.uk).

BGHG Events Calendar Coordinator

Below, you will see a note of the comprehensive BGHG Calendar of Events managed by Barbara Deason and available via the BGHG website. With all her other website tasks and her work as treasurer, Barbara would very much appreciate an assistant to keep the list up to date in future. If you can help or would like to learn more about the task, do get in touch with Barbara (barbara.deason@lante.plus.com).

The Garden Museum and Cedric Morris’s House

The Garden Museum has just announced a significant new development in the story of Benton End, Cedric Morris’s house near Hadleigh in Suffolk. The Pinchbeck Charitable Trust bought the house in 2018 and in partnership with the Garden Museum planned to open it again as a centre for the study of art and horticulture.

On 1 November, the Garden Museum released the news that the Pinchbeck Charitable Trust have transferred ownership of Benton End to the Garden Museum – a most generous gift. The Garden Museum intends to lease the house to a new subsidiary charity, the Benton End House and Garden Trust, to set up an art centre, a

residency and to run the house and garden. They plan to start by renewing Morris's garden in 2022, although work has already begun on clearing it and repairing the walls. The redevelopment of the house will be a longer term project with the aim of adding an exhibition gallery and spaces for learning dedicated to art in the garden.

The Garden Museum Director, Christopher Woodward, said in their press release that 'This would not be a rural outpost of the Garden Museum. The Trust will be a hybrid of the Garden Museum and the heritage of Benton End and its neighbourhood. It will not be a museum, but once again a house where things happen.'

For more information about the developments and about the history and ethos of Benton End, see the Garden Museum website, <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/news/>

Brazilian home of Burle Marx receives World Heritage status

Roberto Burle Marx (1909–1994), has long been celebrated as an influential artist and as the landscape architect who revolutionised the design of gardens and public spaces in Brazil, most famously the two-and-a-half miles of vibrant swirling mosaic patterns along Rio de Janeiro's seafront, Copacabana. However, it is as a botanist and plant collector that he has earned universal respect and, thanks to his property becoming a World Heritage Site in July this year, international recognition.

As an early conservationist, Burle Marx noted the absurdity of Brazil's gardens using European plants while the indigenous tropical and sub-tropical flora were exhibited under glass in Europe, inspiring him to shake up the conventions and bring the rain forest into Brazilian gardens. He organized a series of plant expeditions with a team of botanists, architects and landscape architects.

His property, now called Sítio Roberto Burle Marx, a 100-acre site on the hilly outskirts of Rio in Barra de Guaratiba, is a forested area of lush mangrove swamp, restinga and Atlantic vegetation. It is home to an astonishing 3,500 tropical and sub-tropical species, including 500 *Philodendron* and some 30 species bearing the Burle Marx name. In 1985, he gave the property to the federal government for safe keeping. After his death, IPHAN (the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage) took over the management. UNESCO's acknowledgement of Roberto Burle Marx's fine legacy in creating a cultural landscape of 'exceptional universal value for mankind' is, hopefully, the final guarantee of its safety in perpetuity.



Sítio Roberto Burle Marx

Photo: Halley Pacheco de Oliveira. Wikimedia Commons

Women and Gardens

The annual weekend conference held by the University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education in association with the Gardens Trust will be on the theme of *Women and Gardens* and will be held on 3–5 June 2022 in Rewley House, Oxford OX1 2JA. The conference will explore the pioneering contributions made by women to the development of gardens and landscape design from the medieval period to the present. New research will be presented to highlight the roles of women as designers, patrons, writers, botanists, craftswomen and artists and to explore the rich and varied possibilities offered by combining gender history and garden history. The programme includes an afternoon coach trip to Wrest Park. For the programme and booking details, go to <https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/women-and-gardens>

RHS Lindley Library Digitisation Project

The RHS Lindley Library has undertaken an ambitious digitisation programme with the support of the Heritage Fund. The library plans to launch the digital collection portal in late 2021, with more than 30,000 digitised images. Online exhibitions and displays will highlight aspects of the collection. One of the attractive exhibitions already available is about William Van Sommer and the early development of garden photographs in colour. Another features Thomas Fairchild and his book *The City Gardener*, published in 1772. For the complete list of available exhibitions, see <https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections>.

Garden History Lecture Calendar

There are so many events and lectures available these days that it was not possible to fit them all into the Events page. In particular, the numerous series of lectures online organised by the Gardens Trust in association with county gardens trusts have been omitted. They are listed on the Gardens Trust website: <https://thegardenstrust.org/events-archive/>

The BGHG web editor, Barbara Deason, has collated a full calendar of events and made it available on the BGHG website. See <https://birkbeckgardenhistorygroup.wordpress.com>

Events

BGHG Programme 2022

February **AGM and Lecture**

March, tbc **Study Day**

Circumstances permitting, both the above events will be in person.

The full programme for 2022 is still being finalised and will appear in the next newsletter

Advance Notice

Spring 2023 **Three day trip to gardens in Cumbria with Susan Pullen**

Georgian Group Lecture online

Thursday 18 November, 6.30 pm *Celebrating Mrs Eleanor Coade, a 200th anniversary talk*, Caroline Stanford. Email: office@georgiangroup.org.uk, <https://georgiangroup.org.uk/events-2/>

Go West Hampstead Lecture online

Friday 19 November, 7.00 pm *The Hidden Histories of London's Mulberry Trees*, Peter Coles. Tel: 020 7794 3729, www.cawh.org.uk/events-1

The Gardens Trust Research online

Saturday 20 November, 4 – 6.30 pm *11th New Research Symposium part 2*
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/11th-new-research-symposium-part-2-tickets-195217309227>

The Manchester Continuing Education Network Thursdays at 7.00 pm online

25 November, 2 December, 9 December *Last three lectures in the Introduction to Roman Gardens Series*
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/an-introduction-to-roman-gardens-tickets-168625745143>

Fulham Palace Lecture online

Wednesday 1 December 12.30 – 1.30 pm *Profit and Pleasure – History of the Fulham Palace Gardens*, Alexis Haslam. <https://www.fulhampalace.org/whatson/events/profit-and-pleasure-the-history-of-the-fulham-palace-gardens-online-lecture/>

Wuffing Education Study Day online

Saturday 4 December 10.15 am – 2.45 pm *The Pursuit of Paradise: a history of the garden 2 - From the Renaissance to the 21st Century*, Edward Martin. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-pursuit-of-paradise-a-history-of-the-garden-2-with-edward-martin-fsa-tickets-167735835399>

Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Winter Talks

Mondays 2.30 – 4.00 pm online

6 December *The Swiss Garden – Restorations of a Regency Gem*, Corrine Price.

21 March *Garden Archaeology in Hertfordshire and Beyond*, Tom Williamson. These are part of a series. Email: info@hertsgardenstrust.org.uk
<https://hertsgardenstrusts.org.uk/events/>

Linnean Society 2021 Founder's Day Lecture

Monday 6 December 6.00 – 7.00 pm online

Mark Catesby: Artist, Explorer and Naturalist, Henrietta McBurney. Email: info@linnean.org, <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mark-catesby-artist-explorer-and-naturalist-tickets-180198678097>

Institute of Historical Research Seminars

Thursdays 6.00 pm online Spring Term 2022

Theme: Conversations across Continents (cont'd)

Dates: 20 January, 3 and 17 February, 3, 17 and 31

March. Enquiries: gardenhistory.ihr@gmail.com

The programme will be available by mid December on www.history.ac.uk/seminars/history-gardens-and-landscapes

Cambridge University Institute of Continuing Education Weekend Course

28 – 30 January 2022 *Capability Brown and Thomas Gainsborough: nature as art or art as nature*, Caroline Holmes. Madingley Hall,

Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ. Email: hortcourses@ice.cam.ac.uk

<https://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/course/capability-brown-and-thomas-gainsborough-nature-art-or-art-nature>

London Gardens Trust Winter Lectures online

Tuesday 11 January 6.00 pm *The translation of landscape: Brown to Repton to Olmsted*, Kirkharle, London and the New World, John Phibbs.

Tuesday 15 March 6.00 pm *Hidden in Plain Sight: Fifty Fabulous Features in the Land of the Fanns*, Twigs Way. These are part of the series. See <https://londongardenstrust.org/whatson/talks/>

Kew Mutual Improvement Society Lectures

Mondays at 6.00 pm in person and online

21 February *Derek Jarman, Prospect Cottage and Me*, Howard Sooley.

28 February *The Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman: Victorian Botanist and Plantsman*, Advolly Richmond. These lectures are part of a weekly series. Lady Lisa Sainsbury Lecture Theatre, Kew Gardens, Richmond, TW9 3AB. Also bookable via Eventbrite. <https://www.kew.org/learning/talks-and-lectures/kew-mutual-improvement-society>

Essex Gardens Trust Lecture online

Saturday 19 March *Chinese Gardens*, Timothy Walker. Details to follow.

<https://www.essexgardenstrust.org.uk/our-news-2>

City Lit Course Great Gardeners in London

Saturdays 10.30 am – 4.30 pm

18 June *Humphry Repton*, Letta Jones.

25 June *Thomas Mawson*, Letta Jones. 10 Keeley Street, London, WC2B 4BA. Booking later in 2022. Email: humanities@citylit.ac.uk, www.citylit.ac.uk

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