



# CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

## NEWSLETTER No. 19 SEPTEMBER 2005

PRESIDENT

THE LORD FAIRHAVEN

PATRONS

Lady Crossman  
Lord and Lady De Ramsey  
Lady Nourse  
Mrs D Astor  
Lady Proby  
Dr J Parker  
Mr C Vane Percy

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

Mr J. Drake .....Chairman  
Mr M. Wilkinson...Secretary  
Mrs G. Watts .....Treasurer  
Mrs A. Gould  
Mrs J. Trevor

Mrs E. Davies  
Dr W. Emmerson  
Mr A. Brown  
Mr C. Malyon

---

## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I think that the Trust has been established for almost ten years and like other members of the group I feel that we must make our role and activities wider known to members and other organisations in the county. For my own part my activities have been greatly limited by illness this year and this have given me time to think how the Trust should continue in the future. Two objectives immediately spring to mind – that of making our annual AGM a more social event where members and friends can have time to talk, and then to encourage members to carry out research into their gardens and record them. We are advising a group of the ST Ives NADFAS garden research group about how to look for information concerning gardens and this is bearing fruit.

Since our last Newsletter Charles Malyon and myself have been researching the history of the garden at Leckhampton, along Grange Road for Corpus Christi College, whilst others have been treated to seeing another range of gardens not normally open in the county and in Norfolk. We will be improving our arrangements for such visits next year. We hope to have one member of the committee as the contact for each day's visit and their name and telephone number will appear on your ticket. We had to alter the date of our visit to

Ryston Hall because of the threat of snow and I was unable to lead the garden tour of Thorpe Hall at very short notice.

The book we are writing on Wood & Ingram has made very good progress this year, it is proving difficult sometimes to choose what is included or omitted. But hopefully it will be ready for printing in the New Year.

This year's social evening was held at the Ramsey Museum and Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden and was a great success. This was probably the first time members were able to visit the garden and they were shown historical documents, shown a video of the clearance and given a talk by David Cozens about the history of the site. After more drinks garden volunteers showed those present the fruit trees, strawberry plants and sweet peas that had been planted. A group of trees provided pleasant shade in the garden. These have now been removed (at last!) and now part of one of the quadrants is covered by green pumpkins.

In all this has been another successful year for the Trust and I thank all members and your committee for their staunch support. But please remember to encourage friends to join.

*John Drake*

## HARRY DODSON 1919–2005

Some members may have read the obituary to the late Harry Dodson in The Times Newspaper on August 6th 2005. Those members who came on one of the Trust's early coach trips will recall the excitement when the coach left Foxgrove Nursery after lunch and proceeded a few miles west, past the red brick walls of the walled garden at Chilton Foliat and turned into the entrance and saw the tall lean figure of Harry Dodson waiting to greet us in the stable yard.

We had all watched with enthusiasm the BBC series *The Victorian Kitchen Garden* during 1987 and greatly admired the programme with Ruth Mott as the Victorian cook receiving trugs of vegetables from the garden which had been expertly grown by Harry Dodson. His tour that afternoon was tinged with sadness as the structure of the garden at Chilton had been allowed to decay and the garden was used mainly for rearing bedding plants for sale in the local market town. Before we left we were shown the contents of the bothies and the thatched apple store. When one looks back I seem to remember it was the perfect spring day soft light, with no wind and the garden had an atmosphere filled to the brim with historical associations.



*'He beat 26 other candidates for the head gardenership at Chilton Foliat in Wiltshire.*

*It was 1947 and Dodson was 47, a young age to be responsible for a staff of nine gardeners and grounds with vineries, peach, nectarine, melon and fig houses, supplying pot plants and cut flowers to the mansion. In that year he exhibited at the*

*Royal Horticultural Society's show for the first time. Such displays were spectacular; 30ft long and 8ft deep, they might feature up to 100 varieties of 36 vegetable.*

*By the 1960s, when they stopped exhibiting, Colonel Ward, the owner of Chilton, had stepped forward to receive a gold medal on ten occasions, equalling the record set in 1934 by Edwin Becket, a doyen of Edwardian horticulture. This joint record has not been bettered – and is unlikely to be, for the era when private gardens had the capacity to stage such exhibits is long gone. In 1956 the RHS asked Dodson to join its fruit and vegetable committee, and he became a judge at RHS shows, including Chelsea. He sat on the committee of the Gardener's Royal Benevolent Society.*

*In 1987, when he was 68, Dodson became a television personality. In the BBC series *The Victorian Walled Kitchen Garden*, he demonstrated Victorian methods of running a walled kitchen garden. His skill, easy manner of speaking, capable head gardener's hands and brown boots soon became cult viewing, and the first series was followed by several more over the ensuing decade. Along with others, including Ruth Mott as a Victorian cook and the co-presenter Peter Thoday, Dodson captivated audiences not only in Britain but in continental Europe, North America and Australia.*

*The Times August 6 2005'*

---

## STUDY DAY : PETWORTH HOUSE, SUSSEX : ASSOCIATION OF GARDENS TRUSTS : April 2005

During the winter months our research into the Huntingdonshire Nursery, Wood & Ingram, led to a more detailed investigation into the involvement of Lancelot Brown with the Park at Wimpole Hall. The National Trust allowed us to see his fine map of 1767 made for the 2nd Earl of Hardwicke. In Hertfordshire Record Office we read through the Earl's estate papers of that period and the payments he had made to Brown. Archival material belonging to Brown himself is to be found in the Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields. We were privileged to handle his Account Book and several letters he had received from the Earl of Hardwicke during the time work was proceeding at Wimpole. A fuller account of these and the link with Wood & Ingram is to appear in the publication on the history of the Nursery.

Another great estate, renowned for its Brownian landscape, is Petworth in Sussex. When the Association of Gardens Trusts and Sussex Gardens Trust announced a Research and Recording Study Day was to be held at Petworth on Saturday, 9th April 2005, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Egremont and the National Trust, entitled "Mr Brown and the Third Earl", attendance seemed imperative.

Not surprisingly, the Study Day was very popular and over 50 delegates gathered in the Servants' Hall at 10am for the day's proceedings. We were welcomed by Lady Egremont and the local organisers of Sussex Gardens trust, the Chairman Sally Walker, the chairman of the study day Virginia Hinze and Kristina Taylor.

On display throughout the morning were selections from



*Petworth – view from house to lake*

the extensive Petworth House archives chosen for their relevance to work in the park and gardens, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries. Of fascination were some early records of Petworth, which belonged to the Percy family (later to become Earls of Northumberland) from the 12th century. An account for the gardens from 1376 to 1377 includes pears, walnuts and leeks. There was a 1520 account for making knots for the garden. An account for the 'Creation of the Birch Walk' dated 1589 showed that 100 birch cost 12 pence.

Of special importance are the four Contracts between Lancelot Brown and the 2nd Earl of Egremont for the period 1753 to 1757. A later account paid to Brown two years later after the Earl's death brought the total to £5,500. (This may be compared with the payment of £3,460 made to Brown by the 2nd Earl of Hardwicke for his work at Wimpole between 1767 to 1770). During the time of Brown's involvement at Petworth large orders of plants were placed with the London firm of John Williamson. An account, which included a wide range of flowers and flowering shrubs, such as lillies, black hellebores, honeysuckle, lilac, broom and jasmine amounted to £364. (Wood's order book of 1763 shows that just such plants were available from his Nursery in Huntingdon).

The Petworth House Archives are administered by the West Sussex County Council Record Office, County Hall, Chichester. No access is allowed to the archives at Petworth House itself. Further advice and information may be obtained by contacting Alison McCann, Assistant County Archivist, at the record office.

The main talk of the morning was given by Simon Hoare of Colvin and Moggridge on "New research that unveils information on the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in Petworth Park, together with the work of the 3rd Earl Egremont".

Petworth House lies very close to the church and houses in the town. Indeed there is an entrance straight from the

road to the Servants' Hall, which in turn leads across a small courtyard to the very modest entrance to the house. The grandeur is from the opposite side. The west front of the 21-bay mansion looks over the extensive park

But even here there had been problems in setting the house comfortably in its landscape because until the 1760's there was a public road running through the park linked to two villages very close by. These difficulties were clearly shown in the meticulous study made by Simon Hoare of various estate maps and surveys from the 17th and 18th centuries. These he had

superimposed on the 1875 First Edition Ordnance map. This digital technology is so helpful in the understanding of the history of the landscape.

At the time of the 9th Earl of Northumberland (early 1600's) there were formal gardens around the house, a huge quadrangular stable block to the west, obliterating any vistas, and rising terraced ramparts on a hill to the north-west. Three generations later Lady Elizabeth Percy married, in 1682, Charles Seymour 6th Duke of Somerset. Known as the 'Proud Duke', it was he who built the Grand Mansion we see today. The Duke had a genuine interest in gardening and who better to help him create a grandiose setting for the new house than George London, royal gardener to William III. The result is depicted in a painting of about 1730. The approach from the north was by a grand route from the London Road, across the park, through handsome wrought iron gates up to the centre of the mansion. The terraces on the hill became even more elaborate and, as at Versailles which George London had visited, there was now an Orangery with a walled orange-tree garden of one acre facing the north end of the house. Between this and the terraces was an enormous greenhouse in front of which was a parterre with a central fountain. This was served by a Fountain House on the top of the terraces and used by the Duke as a summer Banqueting House.

The Duke died in 1750 and Petworth was inherited by his daughter and her husband, Charles Wyndham, 2nd Earl of Egremont. They immediately called in Lancelot Brown who carried out his first survey in 1751. Brown's involvement at Petworth was to continue over the following twelve years. His influence on the landscape persists to this day. His proposals, drawn on a large sheet of paper in 1752, were eventually implemented almost in their entirety. The sequence in which work was carried out can be assessed from the four dated Contracts and the final account. First, the formal courts around the mansion were removed.



A curving road was made which passed the house to the hill on which the terraces were carved, known as Lawn Hill, an excellent viewing point. The second contract was largely concerned with the Pleasure Grounds, and the making of the Ha-Ha on either side of the mansion. Animals could then graze right up to the windows of the west front. The third contract returned to the 'Water' (the large lake), the removal of several buildings and much of the Duke's grand route. The fourth contract included the creation of the Lower Pond (beyond Lawn Hill) with some planting. This feature was to become an important 'view' from the new Brownian routes around the Park. These implementations together with the first part of a 10 feet high brick wall surrounding the park were implemented by the time of the 2nd Earl of Egremont's death in 1763.

His son, the 3rd Earl, was only a minor when he inherited Petworth but he was to work on improvements to the Park for the next 60 years. He completed the 'Brownian Water' – after consultation on recurring problems of leaks! – and introduced 'features' such as islands, a boat-house and much statuary. He greatly improved the quality of the land by introducing mixed animal grazing. A noble piggery was built, quite close to the house, and his daughter-in-law was amazed "to see a sow and her litter of pigs get in through the window and gallop down through the rooms". The Earl planted an enormous number of trees, many being new imports from America. He was interested in the acclimatisation of foreign trees and plants, maintaining a correspondence with Sir Joseph Banks and others. The tulip tree, the occidental plane, and several kinds of oak all seemed to accommodate themselves under his care. Phrase such as 'this princely estate' a 'truly noble demesne' were elicited from the cognoscenti of the day in recognition of the 2nd and 3rd Earl's achievements at Petworth.

The second speaker was Richard Wheeler, Gardens and Parks Curator of the South of England, the National Trust. His talk was on the Pleasure grounds of Petworth House. There is an intention by the Trust to implement a renewal programme for these together with the area immediately adjacent to the north end of the house. Studies are continuing before a final Conservation Plan is drawn up. Lancelot Brown's plans of the 1750's will be of prime importance. The third presentation was by Alison McCann, Archivist of Petworth House and West Sussex Record Office. She covered the Sources for Garden History in the Petworth House Archives". It was selections from these that were on display. Lancelot Brown's work stands out as the most complete archive. Mentions of gardens during other periods is often buried in a mountain of paper and teasing it out requires patience and dedication.

A highlight of the Study Day was a visit to the re-designed private walled gardens of Lord and Lady Egremont. It was the present Lord Egremont's father who had persuaded his elderly, childless uncle of the advantages of the National Trust as Petworth's custodian. Petworth House and the Park, but not the estate, were duly handed over in 1947 together with a substantial endowment. The family continue to live in part of the house. They have recently completed a new south terrace which leads gently down to the walled enclosures. Within these Lady Egremont and her gardener have been

designing gardens of differing styles which they kindly showed us around. We were invited first into the Grand Hall at the south end of the house, created by Anthony Salvin when he carried out some remodelling around 1890. Lady Egremont had put on display more, fascinating archive material. The walled enclosures we were about to visit were from the time of the Proud Duke. He had enlarged the kitchen garden area in the 1720s using an enormous number of bricks which were made in a kiln in the park.

We stepped from the house onto the new south terrace. This is sufficiently elevated to provide a splendid view of the Brownian landscape. Steps descend to a grassy area with winding paths and wild flowers where *Fritillaria meleagris* were flowering in large drifts. There is breath-taking vista through the Proud Duke's elegant archways aligned in his series of red-brick walls. This tantalising view opens into the first of several walled enclosures which covers twelve acres. Here Lady Egremont had kept large established specimens of *Magnolia grandifolia* which recently had been tightly tied back to the walls. The centre of this garden was a formal area reminiscent of a Roman garden where plants enjoyed sun and heat with a central fountain. The use of gravel was a surprise instead of grass but, when one was told there were only two gardeners to maintain her gardens, one understood the logical thinking behind the approach to the design. Of interest were hornbeam standards planted slightly away from the north facing walls connected by low hawthorn hedges between, thus reducing the impact of the red brick on the enclosed space.

We moved east into a different garden planted for scent with lower levels edged with box hedging leading to a central planting of lavenders and cistus. Here the grass was effectively cut at different heights to help with maintenance. A further enclosure of narrow proportions was dominated by more magnolias tightly trained against the wall and inter planted by fruit trees. Evergreen shrubs and yew were clipped thus providing a perspective view into another enclosure which turned out to be a formally planted orchard with rough grass and more wild flowers. That day there were sheep grazing under the fruit trees. We retraced our steps and were led into what at first glance appeared to be a maze but turned out to be an enclosed swimming pool. No decision has been taken yet if the pool was to remain. The yew hedges were set off with stone statues placed at strategic locations. From the formality of yew enclosures we were taken to the largest enclosure which until now was not gardened but used as a series of small paddocks for horses. We returned to the scented gardens and then stumbled into the most eastern enclosure which was the vegetable garden providing food for the kitchen. This area had recently been dug over and apart from a three moderate glasshouses looked very tame compared with the other enclosures. But we were there in the spring and I can well imagine that what was bare earth is now filled to capacity with rows of potatoes, beans and brassicas. The further you walked from the house these lower enclosures, in the tradition of many centuries, were given over for grazing and fruit growing.

These sensitive new creations contribute greatly to the Garden History of Petworth.

JILL CREMER and JOHN DRAKE

# THE ENCHANTED EDGE: OUR VISIT TO GUANOCK HOUSE, 22nd June 2005

We met at Murrow on a clear blue midsummer day, shimmering with heat: Murrow? Where on earth is that, I hear you ask/ It is in north Cambridgeshire, just; and will be found by crossing the Nene channel and Bishop Morton's Leam at Guyhirn and taking the B1187 north across the Adventurer's Land and Wisbech Fen. At Murrow, we sizzled in our sunhats while waiting for everyone, and then followed our leader

through Parson Drove; at one of those 90 degree bends that the fenland drains dictate we crossed the North Level Main and, leaving B1187 to go on its winding way to Holbeach, Whaplode and Spalding, we kept trekking northwards. We had come to the end of Cambridgeshire and crossed into a corner of Lincolnshire; it could not be far to the end of England, which the flat, straight road seemed to have in mind as it headed for the misty haze of the Wash.

This is definite fenland, still seeming new made, rather unfinished, and parcelled out of rigid blocks, each block with a farm or barn. Is there some ancient law that forbids tree planting (for roots would snag the drains) in this land that cries out for shelter and shade of trees? All around were farms named for their one tree – holly, poplar, ash – with perhaps a few straggling pines; no place for gardens. So we knew when we'd arrived at Guanock House because of its battlements of green, trees and hedges, and our steamy caravan turned gratefully into the drive. Indeed, the heat had composed a mirage, for wooden trestles and chairs, that looked as though they had come from a 1940s vicarage fete, were set out for our tea, and each table sported an enormous jar of old-fashioned sweet peas.

Guanock House (the name comes from *gannick* or hospice, we were told) is the retreat of the garden designer Arne Maynard; he found it after a four-year search, the restored house with five acres of land but virtually no garden, and another fifty plus acres of



*East front with 300 year-old yew and clipped hornbeam  
Photo by kind permission of Lesley Brown*

surrounding fields, and he has been quoted as saying that he was attracted by its remoteness 'as though it had been forgotten by time'. He has made the garden in just over ten years: so, rather a new garden for Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust? Yes, but the site is old, very old, a shingle island that the Romans found when these marches were covered by salterns, and then a grange belonging to the rich Benedictines of

Spalding Priory. Many of the buildings were demolished at the Dissolution, but the house was re-built on old foundations in 1699 by one Marmaduke Dayrell, who must have benefited from the completion of Vermuyden's drainage of the North Level which gave him a farm of five hundred acres. This date, and the initials MD are on the east front of the mellow brick house, the entrance for the approach by water, via Lady Nunn's Old Eau (now the county boundary) in the field beyond the garden. The field is also crossed by the zero contour line – whether in feet or metres it matters not – this is sea level.

Our guide for the afternoon was head gardener Robin Parker, in his seventh year at Guanock House, and we were accompanied by Jen Dolby, a trainee from WRAGS (Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme)\*, clearly enjoying her placement. They led us through a brick-floored bothy, complete with ancient (though sleeping) stove and a store of ready wood, into the west courtyard and the welcome shade



*End of east vista. Photo by kind permission of Lesley Brown*



of huge roses, *Paul's Himalayan Musk* and *Bobbie James* growing into the canopies on ancient apple trees. Here the 'green battlements' against fenland winds and rain could be seen from the inside, the clipped-hedged courts hugging the house, giving way to free hedges and trees around a paddock for mouflon sheep, which came from Flag Fen, and the outer 'rampart' of mixed hedging and more trees. Next to the sheep paddock we came into the Orchard, planted by the previous owner and the house's restorer, architect Brian Harris, and maturing nicely, with Cambridgeshire varieties of plum and gage, as well as pears, apples, damsons and morello cherries. At the far corner surplus soil had been piled and cut into a snail mound, which allows a view over the hedges towards Lady Nunn's Old Eau, somnolent in this dry summer.

The south and east fronts of the house give onto the most elaborate gardens, walks and enclosures that interlock like a Chinese puzzle, and yet are logical and elegant. The east



Photo by kind permission of Lesley Brown

front has a vista down crowded borders of surprising plants – pink and white rosebay willow herbs, spires of white foxgloves, linarias, lavenders, astrantias, salvias, marguerites and nepetas, all tumbling – in an ingeniously controlled way – against their backdrop of dark yew hedges. Thick low hedges of lavender lead the eyes and footsteps to the garden's veteran, a yew thought to be over three hundred years old, rescued and clipped into a vigorous drum by Arne Maynard, and underplanted with thymes. From the tiny and intricately

paved and hedged court on the south front of the house, another vista leads through the rose garden – China roses in box edged beds, with pyramids of copper beech and *Crambe cordifolia* with mauve campanulas and astrantias – always this (seemingly) combination of free-flowering flowers and clipped shapes. A pair of pink-washed, lead-domed pavilions carry this vista through to a very grand 'room' indeed, white gravel setting off the box boxes in which stand eight 'umbrellas' of *Elaeagnus*, with a central basin of water surrounded by *Iris pallida*, verbena and yellow mimulus.

The arrangement of the 'rooms' is both satisfying and amusingly puzzling; there are imitations of both Hidcote and Sissinghurst, and even an oval of clipped hornbeam that might have been seen at Dumbarton Oaks, but all these have been filtered through Arne Maynard's designer's eye and brought seamlessly together to dress this enchanted fenland place. We enjoyed the garden in the time of roses in high summer, but it must also be worth seeing with the spring carpets of bulbs, and in the fruitful and colourful autumn.\*

Our tour ended with Robin Parker's pride, and any cook's delight, the immaculate and well-stocked vegetable garden in the lee of the old stables. Then it was teas, with the sweet peas – which Robin gave to us on leaving – and the most delicious cakes, which like the vintage tables and chairs, came from 'the village' (though which village I forgot to ask!). Our thanks to Robin and Jen (not forgetting Brandy, the companionable retriever) for a wonderful afternoon, on the edge of England. We thought it might be a lonely place to work, but Robin's endless stock of stories about plants and people, assured us otherwise. Of course, Guanock cannot have many days like ours, under the blue

dome of sky without a breath of wind, and it was especially memorable for that touch of fenland glory.

JANE BROWN

WRAGS is run by the Women's Farm and Garden Association, who can be contacted at 175 Gloucester Street, Cirencester, Glos., GL7 2DP, tel. 01285 658339, email [admin@wfga.fsbusiness.co.uk](mailto:admin@wfga.fsbusiness.co.uk)

For details of Arne Maynard's design projects and courses held at Guanock House call 020- 7689 8100 or visit [www.arne-maynard.com](http://www.arne-maynard.com)

## CORPUSTY MILL GARDEN, NORFOLK: Our visit on 13th July 2005

The small village of Corpusty lies in deep Norfolk country between Blakeney and Norwich. The Mill House dates partly from the 17th century, but the Mill garden is not a 'historic' garden in the usual sense of the word.

John and Roger Last started planting around their parents' house 40 years ago. It had been orchards, farmland

and farm buildings. However the garden they created has many historical references. There is a grotto in an 18th century manner, a gothic tower, a Palladian style pavilion, and much much more. The emphasis could be heavily intellectual, but no, it's intended for fun.

The garden of four and a half acres benefits from a neutral soil, good sheltering trees, and a high water table. In

fact it's almost an island, with the River Bure on one side and a stream that was a spill-way for the mill pool on the other. The first wave of planting was near the house. Then planting and pools were made taking advantage of the river. Roger Last is now planting an arboretum across the road from the house.

There are pools, large and small in all three gardens. One contains a watery cave with a drowning figure surrounded by massive gunnera leaves. Another pool is crossed by a delicious flint bridge, reminiscent of Lakeland. Nearby a spiral staircase mounts a romantic tower inviting a Rapunzel to let down her hair. The piece de resistance is the grotto, which was 15 years in the building. It is so authentically slippery, slimy and creepy that some of our party wouldn't enter. There are four chambers, with a glimpse of daylight coming in from an unexpected opening over a small stream. Flickering candles barely light the long winding and narrow passages to the central chamber, with masks of river gods, and a dripping rill.

Outside, all along the paths are found objects; architectural features such as masks, finials, bas-reliefs, in walls and seats, incorporated into the flint structures. In fact there is much building in flint. Roger and John Last must have enjoyed working with it. A permanent memorial to John Last is the magnificent flint boundary wall, its niches contain classical masks, and there is a plaque in his memory.

Modern is as important as traditional – as long as it's fun. In an open meadow between the river and lake is a 7 metre high 'spire' designed by Roger Last. The narrow cone is mirror-bright stainless steel. Peer into it, and your reflection staring back is a distorted fairground image with the garden in panorama behind.

Plants are almost as important as architecture, and the garden is richly planted with many treasures. The largest *Drimys wateri* I have ever seen; *Magnolia 'Leonard Messel'*, *Cornus florida 'Eddie's White Wonder'*, an amur cork tree, *Acer griseum*. There are rich areas of bog planting along streamside. Plant lists make dull reading and it would be a long one. This planting, wonderful in late summer, must be inspiring in Spring. We can only dream of such gorgeous plants in dry Cambridgeshire, and remember that the abundant water can flood too.

If this was not enough, the plantsman in Roger Last wanted more trees, and a new arboretum is a relaxed and open meadow with a Chinese bridge crossing a large pool. Viewing this area is important too. There are steps to a platform on top of a war-time Pill Box, and a mount to climb beside the river.

It's easy to get lost in the garden, for the rich planting is intended to separate the follies and garden rooms from one another, and divert the eye. We were fortunate to have Roger Last give us an afternoon of his time. He led us eventually to the completely hidden Palladian pavilion within the walls of an old barn. Its down-to-earth planting is a massive raspberry patch.

Mr Last's hospitality and a splendid tea were much appreciated. He cares for the immaculate 4 acres virtually single handed, and must always be busy.

MARGARET LYNCH

*Further information about this garden can be found in 'The Englishman's Garden' Allen Lane 1982, and 'Gardens Illustrated' August 2004.*

---

## LECKHAMPTON HOUSE AND GARDEN

by John Drake and Charles Malyon

### Acknowledgements

*We are most grateful for the enthusiastic help given by Lady Cynthia Postan (member Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust) who dined with Louis Clarke at Leckhampton House and pointed us towards his father who established a famous garden at Borde Hill in Sussex and to Mr A Stephenson Clarke, the present owner of Borde Hill for information about his Garden and William Robinson. Miss Margaret Rishbeth (member CGT) and Miss Harriet Jondorf recounted their visits to and memories of the garden at Leckhampton House.*

*We would like to thank the Rt Hon Sir Martin Nourse and Lady Nourse (Patron of CGT) who is the County Garden Organiser for the National Gardens Scheme for their suggestions. Three other members of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust were of great assistance – Dr Jill Cremer and Ms Jane Brown who suggested ways of looking through the vast amount of Myers's papers in the Wren Library and especially Mrs Anne Malyon who has spent literally hours typing out the research which we both have forwarded to her over a period of several weeks.*

*Last but not least we would like to thank Lady Adrian who originally suggested to the Bursar at Corpus Christi College that we should write up the history of Leckhampton Garden.*

### The Site

Leckhampton House and Garden lies in what was Carmefield, one of the West Fields of Cambridge. Using Terrarium Cantabrigiae (ULC Add.2601) and the C18 Blackmore Estate Map, Catherine Hall and Jack Ravensdale identified Corpus Christi College (CCC) as an important collegiate owner of land in the mediaeval West Fields (*The West Fields of Cambridge* 1976). The 1566 Terrier of St John's College (XXXI 24) describes Carmefield "This Carmefield (or College-field) is that which lieth next the town, betwixt Longegreene on the East and Bin brook on the West. Bin brook is a drain that runneth from New Close to Grantchester and doth divide the College Field from Little Field" (to the west). CCC owned land within Carmefield and the researches of Hall and Ravensdale identify two through ways provided by ancient long balks running from north to south through this field. The more westerly was Custes Balk (from Elde Newenham Weye, roughly Barton Road) which "goeth down to Bin brook and so into Carmefield" and the other was Long Balk (Parallelogram, later Grange Road). They state "The line of Custes Balk is still marked by the avenue of trees which leaves Barton Road almost opposite



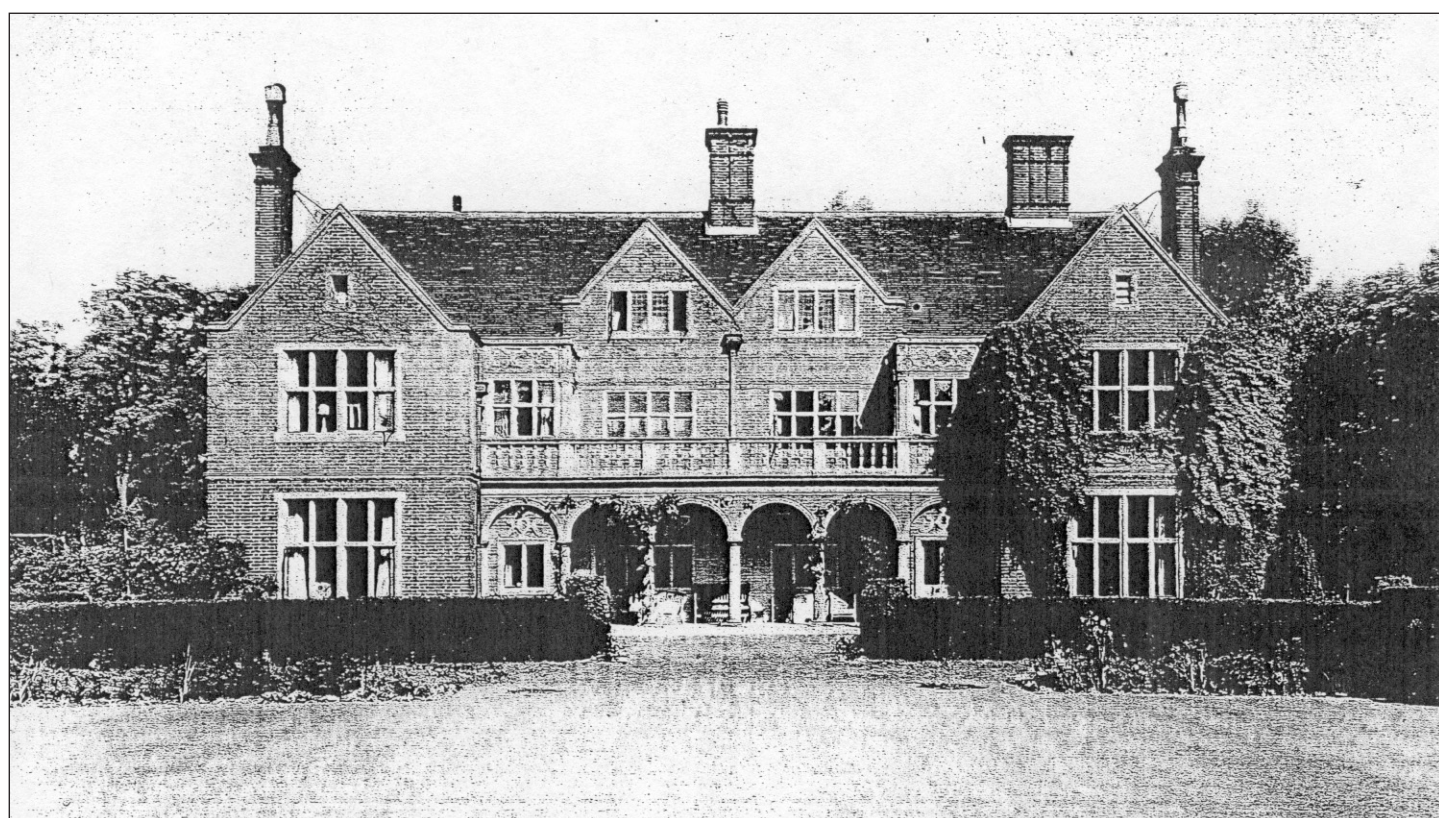
Grantchester Road and continues into the garden of Leckhampton House". (end paper map, *The West Fields of Cambridge*). Leckhampton and the adjacent property of Pinehurst were part of this CCC land in Carmefield, lying between Custes Balk and Long Balk approached from the latter.

Cambridge's West Fields, enclosed by the St Giles Enclosure award 1802, were in greater part held by colleges who released land for house building by dons after the Revised Statutes of the University of Cambridge 1878 allowed Fellows to marry and to reside outside the historic confines of their colleges.

The earliest house plot on what was to be Grange Road was 'Pinehurst', leased to Augustus Arthur Vansittart, followed by a lease to Frederic WH Myers (MA Cantab) in 1878. The 99 year lease between CCC and FM was "*for erecting a dwelling house, building and premises for an annual rent of £30 . . . all that piece of land containing One Acre Two Rods or thereabouts situate in the Parish of St Giles in Cambridge and near to a certain Road there called the Parallelogram Road*", on condition that FM

any necessary repairs. Also "*If the Lessors agree FM can make or construct carriageway and pathway 20ft to connect different portions of the roadway*". (CCC 1st Lease Book p490) In 1869 CCC had provided a new drain for its tenant A J Gray linking to Bin brook and running along the north boundary of the later Leckhampton site. A lease with Vansittart in 1873 (CCC 1st Lease Book) allowed Myers to connect into the new drain and he paid £13 11s 0d to CCC. Myers became "*responsible for the whole length of this Public Drain*". Appended to FM's diary (The Wren Library) beginning 9th January 1884 a letter from Flower and Nussey, 1-2 Great Winchester Street Buildings, London recorded FM's right to use Vansittart's drain and the arrangement bound Vansittart and the Master and Bursar of CCC and their successors.

Leckhampton House was thus approached from a drive constructed by CCC running from what became Grange Road to the east. This road from Barton Road led to an isolated Grange, situated approximately on the site of the present University of Cambridge RFC ground.



View of Leckhampton House prior to 1919

build a house in "*fit and proper materials*" costing at least £3000 on or before 31st August 1880. FM was required to "*keep in good repair and sufficient fences*" to north, south and west. Similarly he must keep "*ditches, drains and watercourses*" clean. In return the College would construct a roadway to the north of the site "*a carriageway and pathway with proper kerbstones to the width of 20ft*". (CCC 1st Lease Book, 1869-82 p390). FM, a bachelor, met the conditions, erected a house and, now married, in 1881 requested to lease more land "*for the purpose of gardens, plantations and pleasure grounds*". A new lease of 29 September 1881 was granted, composing a further 5 acres and 21 perches bounded largely by CCC land and land to the east leased to Vansittart. The annual rent from 1882 for the enlarged property was raised to £102. The roadway to the north would be extended but FM was to pay a proportion of

It was not until 1893 that Leckhampton House had easier access to the borough of Cambridge. In that year Sidgwick Avenue was constructed. Professor H Sidgwick wrote in 1889 "*Newnham College has been trying to get leave to close a path that runs through it: and this has got mixed up with the making of a road which is to take a slice off (other people's) gardens: hence tears and wrath and long letters in the Cambridge papers, and in short, a first-class row, in which I had to be Protagonist of Newnham.*" The path was closed in 1892 and the new carriage road gratefully named after Professor and Mrs Sidgwick, who paid for it. (F Keynes *Gathering Up The Threads*). His wife Nora, Principal of Newnham College, had the idea to plant plane trees in the new avenue. She paid for them and their tending (Helen Fowler in E Shils and C Blacker *Cambridge Women*).



With the completion of the Nook, Frederick notes in his diary “Roses in Nook” (20 January 1882); while on 21 January 1882 “Snowdrops cover in Roundabout”. FM writes to EM May 1882 “London Pride and an Ixia (Lydia) are the only new things out, but the lilies are now in all their glory”. On 22 July 1882 Myers recorded “Flower show with Fellowes”. There followed frequent references to flowers: “Evy’s pansies” (4 April 1882); “Hollyhocks” (8 August 1882); “A lovely rose tree has come from Farrens; L wants to put it outside the Hot House, but I would not have it done till I talk with you” (FM to EM March 1883) “A warm rainy day. It will bring out Muscari Szovitzianum”; “Such numbers of crocuses out and such pretty varieties in the yew hedges, they look quite bright from the drawing room garden door . . . one red tulip is out in the yew hedge . . . tulip beds” (2 April 1883 EM to FM). By May of that year “Garden with Ambanum men” and FM wrote to EM 24 May 1883 “We ought not to take up the aesthetic coppery tulips too soon or they will be quite spoilt for next year”.

The following year FM told EM (23 Feb 1884) “The garden is lovely with crocuses and the greenhouse with cinerarias”; “Irises given at M Fosters” (7 July 1884). (Sir Michael Foster was a Fellow of Trinity. An eminent Professor of Physiology at Cambridge, and Secretary of the Royal Society, he lived at Nine Wells House in Great Shelford and collected 200 irises from all over the world. He also raised many Eremurus Shelford hybrids in his garden.) The garden was well stocked: “snapdragons” (6 June 1885); “mulberries” (July and August 1886-7); “Ampelopsis visible on balcony from bedroom” (20 September 1887); “tulips” (7 May 1888); “The garden looks beautiful with the Palakerram Poppy blazing away” and “I only think you have been too liberal and that half the quantity of Narcissus would amply have satisfied my needs” (24 May 1888 and 9 September 1888 EM to FM).

Their records of the range of flowers they had planted in their garden, together with their comments about their gardening success throws light on how their marriage grew and prospered through their garden. FM wrote to EM on 3 September 1888 “All is looking green and flowery – convolvuli, dahlias, phloxes”; “Paeonies lovely. Weismann’s sprays” (11 June 1889); “Tranquility and marigolds” (8 September 1889); “Cowslips on field” (12 May 1890); “Tree paeony” (29 May 1890); “Paeonies and campanulas” (26 June 1890); “Harold among the chrysanthemums” (November 1890); November 1890 “Acacias for approach come” (November 1890). Their blooms were recorded 13 June 1895 and FM wrote to EM 12 May 1898 “too late for acacia – none of the market gardeners in Cambridge had any. King is planting some fresh ivy – thinks some of the first lot will survive”. On 3 May 1891 FM writing to EM referred to “daffodils Mr Watkin and Bicolor grandis”, and also to “auriculas”. The correspondence continued “Lobelia and paeonies fine” (22 June 1892); “Golden Quasa daisia bright” (23 June 1896); “Golden yews smoke” (22 February 1897); “Ribes blooming (28 March 1897); “Lilies beautiful” (15 May 1897); “Pink Mays” (1 June 1897); “Sowed poppies with E. RH-H series. Heaven of stars” (28 July 1900).

Frederic and Eveleen Myers involved their children in fruit-picking, haymaking and with the care of a variety of animals. In December 1881 an orchard had been planted and by 21 September 1882 “Our first apple”. “We picked some of the apples to store” (10 August 1893 EM to FM); FM writes to EM (20 August 1885) “Better plums ripening – await your arrival! Some apples for stewing sent to you”. By 8 October 1893 “Harold and fallen pears”; on 1st May 1895 “Fruit trees in bloom” and on 5

November 1899 “showed HS my medlars”. Their daughter Sylvia obviously enjoyed living at Leckhampton house and drew a small pencil sketch, which still survives, of the house from the south lawn c 1895 (xi). Elsewhere there were references to soft fruit which the children helped to pick: FM writes to EM (24 July 1897) “The gooseberries are not yet ripe” and on 4 July 1901 “strawberries abundant”. As early as 22 July 1882 “our hay crop mown”, while every year in June from 1889 to 1901 there were references to haymaking, children on the haycarts and haystack. This activity continued after Frederic’s death: “Hay all in” (16 June 1904).

Myers had a keen awareness of natural life: he referred to nightingales in the garden in June 1891 and 1895 and in April 1896, and to “Covey of partridges on rimy lawn, 7.30am” on 28 November 1891. He enjoyed “Hedgehogs with Leo/Sylvia” on 1 August 1886. From the day of Leo’s birth, 9 July 1881 “O fresh day, O fair day, O long day made ours”, he included occasional sketches of rabbits in the diary. A year after Leo’s birth there were “sheep in the field” 20 September 1882; “Pigeon holes up” 22 March 1883; “2 Black pigs come” 11 September 1883.

FM writes to EM 16 January 1884 with Leo “seen the new piggies and turned on the fountain”. Eveleen continued to keep pigs after her husband’s death, 12 January 1904 “12 little pigs born”. The pigs were joined by drakes, (FM to EM 23 February 1884). “The hen house is finished and the 2 drakes are in it”, and by hens in 1884. They had bought an incubator and incubated chicks in April 1887. In December 1885 Eveleen took Leo to a poultry show. On 30 June 1887 “Planned new hen house with Leo”. On 5 February 1885 “Drove Leo on pony round the garden”, while on 18 January 1886 “Donkey comes; drive in donkey cart”. “They are simply overjoyed at the donkeys far more than I thought they would be – will you please tell your mother how much I thank her for the donkey and carriage to come which I look upon as her gifts (the donkeys were called Gribouille and Innocent) . . . I had talked with Laurence yesterday and had told him to get me from Mr Halls a small cart and saddle so that we may fully test the donkey riding and driving, these I shall do myself” (EM to FM 1885).

“Sylvia drove our little fat brown pony – we went to Hardwick today, such a lovely drive” (23 August 1890 EM to FM). “New pony . . . We all went into the field with L to look at the two ponies. Leo took a ride on the new one . . . S took the brown pony into the avenues and trotted and galloped about alone all over the garden in a state of inexpressible joy” (3 September 1890 EM to FM). At some stage a cow or cows were bought: “Red cow calf born suddenly” (6 March 1887); “Alderney Cow comes” (12 October 1887); “Calf with children” (3 February 1892) and “Harold’s picture of cowhouse” (14 May 1892). There are few references to stables, coach house or utilitarian outbuildings apart from “Stables” (November 1893) and “Shed in order”, (25 July 1904). In January 1894 they had acquired a little dog.

By 1887 the grounds were yielding an income for Eveleen. It is noticeable that from this date Eveleen slowly takes over the responsibility from her husband for the running of the garden and the paddock. Her husband is often away and now trusted his wife to make the correct choice concerning decisions about the grounds. FM writes to EM 24 June 1887 “Hay in Harold’s Field wonderfully thick and good” and 27 June “a dealer offers £25 for it”. FM to EM 30 August 1888 “Pigs probably to be sold on Saturday – market has been bad – sold for £10” and 7 January 1889 “A pig has been sold £2-15s”. On 8 January 1899 FM

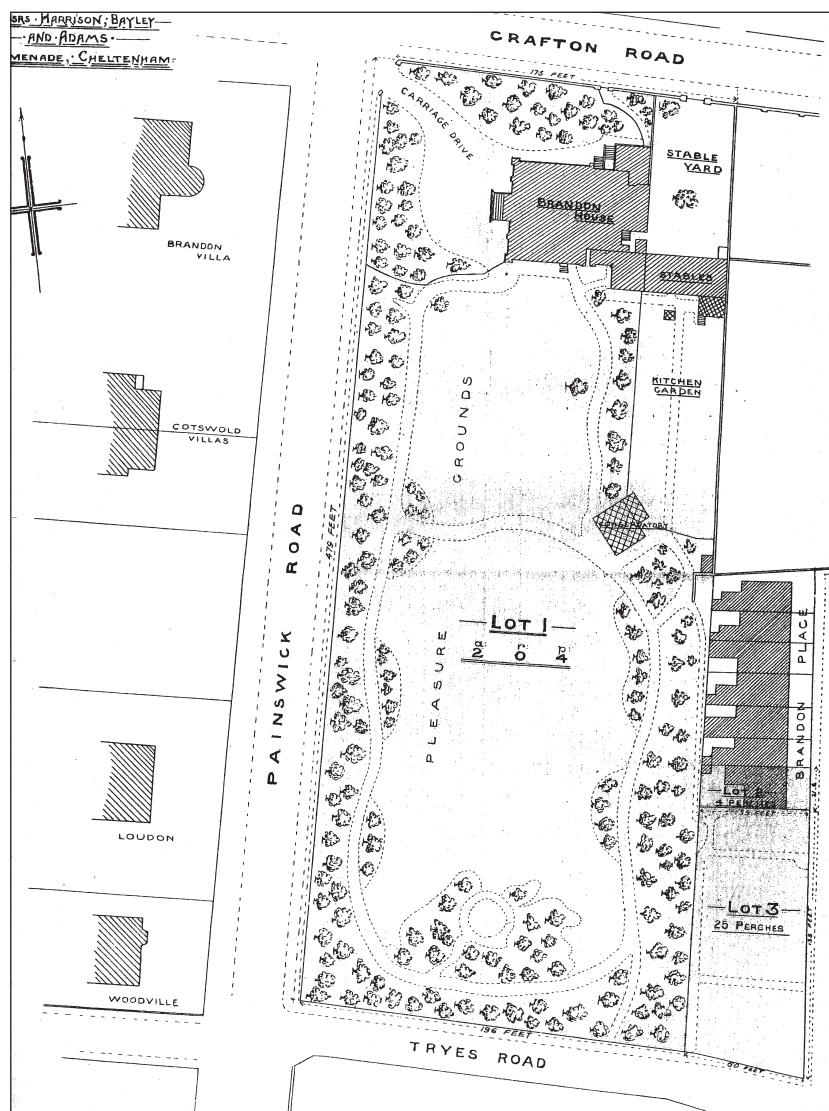
to EM "There are 100 eggs ready for you and more coming"; eggs were preserved and butter was made. From 1889 Eveleen was selling her photographs and she was confident in making new purchases for the family. On 5 August 1892 "New carriage chosen" and "E rides bicycle alone" on 7 September 1896. The sale of some excess produce from kitchen garden produced funds. On 4 June 1894 "Charles King, gardener, comes"; on 21 May 1895 "King in kitchen garden - good"; "Will you tell King to send some greenery and a few flowers of any chrysanthemums (to 2 Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, home of Eveleen's mother)" (12 December 1897 EM to F).

Earlier in 1887 Eveleen wrote with delight to her husband whilst on holiday from Salisbury House, Felixstowe "I had a little hamper of potatoes today. It is so nice and I feel such a privilege having all these nice things from home" (12 September 1887 EM to FM) from Salisbury House, Felixstowe. The week before (FM to EM 5 September 1887) "Laurence will take up potatoes when he thinks right!!". Eveleen continued to employ gardeners to raise vegetables from the kitchen garden after her husband's death in 1901. On 12 June 1903(xii) she recorded "New man at work" and on 9 December 1903 "Greenhouse cleaned". Eveleen continued to record: "Terrace bulbs" (7 November 1903); "Azaleas" (9 December 1903) and a later reference "Creeper on the house lovely" (19 October 1904).

Understandably the diary refers to fewer structural changes in later years, but the pleasure which the garden afforded did not diminish. On 23 June 1900 the year before Myers dies he records in his diary "E returns - sweet garden survey with her".

## Leckhampton House – a Home affording Opportunities for Leisure and Social Activity

Leckhampton House was a convenient base for Myers's work as Inspector of Schools, but it was also the focus for his social activities and for the Society of Psychical Research of which he was co-founder with his friend Henry Sidgwick, husband



Sales particulars of Brandon House & Garden, Cheltenham 1896 – Frederick Myers's mother's house & garden.

© Myers Papers, Trinity College Library

of Nora, Principal of Newnham College. This society was formed for the purpose of making an organized and systematic attempt to investigate various sorts of debatable phenomena which are prima facie inexplicable in any generally recognized hypothesis. By 1869 Frederic had become disillusioned with Christianity and began an investigation of spiritualism, which was attracting much interest. Between 1873–78, together with Sidgwick and a group of Trinity Fellows and friends including Edmund Gurney, Walter Leaf, Lord Rayleigh and Arthur Balfour, Frederic met a number of mediums. Myers, writing to his mother (undated) "brings me face to face with the old problems of Spiritualism – it is very hard to believe the spiritualistic hypothesis is all false and very hard to believe it is true. I do not wonder it is causing Henry

Sidgwick some searchings of heart". Lady Jebb of Springfield, their friend, wrote "the most arrant nonsense and imposture in my mind, but it amuses these great geniuses who think they can see some distance into a millstone – (they) are the head of the investigation as they call it, but they both seem as easy to delude and are anxious to believe as any infant." They attempted to interest George Darwin of Newnham Grange. George attended a seance by the celebrated Mrs Piper at Leckhampton House in 1899 but was not persuaded. Jane Harrison of Newnham wrote in 1925 "There was the actual Cambridge academic circle – a brilliant circle, it seems to me looking back. Cambridge society was then small enough to be one, and there were endless small, but not informal, dinner parties. The order of the University precedence was always strictly observed. Henry Sidgwick was the centre, and with him his two most intimate friends, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney . . . This was the psychical research circle, their quest, scientific proof of immortality. To put it thus seems almost grotesque now; then it was inspiring". Frederic Myers was also a friend of John Ruskin, William Whewell then Master of Trinity and the 'great and good' of later Victorian Cambridge and England. Myers had a London address: 3 Bolton Row, Mayfair and had been host in Cambridge to George Eliot in 1873 and Turgenev in 1878 before his house had been built. Henry James came to lunch with the family at Leckhampton House in July 1884.



## Frederic W H Myers and his Family

Frederic W H Myers (1843–1901) was the eldest of three sons of a former Fellow of Clare, who later became perpetual clergyman of St John's, Keswick. His mother, Susan Harriet Marshall (1811–1896) was the daughter of an owner of large estates in the Lake District, whose considerable fortune came from his Leeds flax mills. On her husband's early death, she moved to Blackheath and then to Brandon House, Cheltenham. Frederic and his brothers attended Cheltenham College as day-boys. A minor scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge, FM had an outstanding career there. He won both the Bell and Craven University Classical scholarships, the Chancellor's medal for English verse twice and the Camden medal for a Latin essay three times.

Although he was forced to resign the Camden medal for Latin verse when plagiarism was discovered, he was elected a Fellow of Trinity College the year after his graduation in 1865 and he was a College lecturer in Classics from 1865–1869. Feeling unsuited to teaching, he resigned his lectureship to work on behalf of the movement for the higher education of women. In 1872, aged 29 years, he became an inspector of schools, working in the Cambridge district; he held this post until not long before his death.

Together with his great friend, Henry Sidgwick, he was one of the founders of the Society of Psychical Research. (DNB) On 13 March 1880 after a short whirlwind romance in Paris the previous December FM married Miss Eveleen Tennant in Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey. She was the youngest daughter of Charles Tennant of Cadoxton Lodge, Neath. Her interests were social and artistic. A gifted portrait photographer, she photographed the garden at Leckhampton House in 1886, and also many of its visitors. Francis Galton wrote "*I marvel at your photographic skill*". She was not in the least intellectual but the bond with her husband was emotional and passionate. She was a devoted, if somewhat possessive wife and mother and they had three children: Leopold Myers (b1881), Sylvia (b1883) and Harold (b1886). On 17 January 1901 FM died in Rome surrounded by his wife and children. His widow continued to live at Leckhampton until 1919 and died in 1937. On returning from Rome, she recorded 23 April 1901 "*His Library, His house, His love, His absence. Everywhere turn my soul to anguish and to agony*".

### The House

There are no detailed plans amongst FM's papers about the construction of the house, the planning or planting of the garden. Similarly there is no record of his finances before his Will in 1901. However from FM's diaries and correspondence with his wife it is possible to follow the building of the house and to develop an idea of the structure of the garden and the plants they used. Myers commissioned his cousin William Cecil Marshall, a London architect, to design the house after the model of a Cotswold manor. W C Marshall, a Cambridge Blue and a Real Tennis player, was also the architect of the University Real Tennis Courts in Burrell's Walk, of some university buildings and of other houses in West Cambridge. No doubt at Leckhampton House they were influenced by FM's family home of Brandon House, Cheltenham. This was a

*"Commodious stone-built family residence of noble architectural design on two floors approached by a carriage drive set amongst charmingly picturesque and diversified grounds completely isolated and surrounded by a belt of Grand Timber and splendid and specimen trees with stabling for three horses occupying an area of 2 Acres 0 Rods 4 Perches". (Sale Catalogue 1st October 1896, Wren Library) Until his mother's death in 1896 FM was a regular visitor to Cheltenham and spent many happy hours in the neighbouring village and wood of Leckhampton. He named his new house 'Leckhampton' to remind him of these associations. "Then there was Christmas 1880 when we went up Leckhampton Hill together, the real hill and not the little mole-hill which imitates it."* (Letter from FM to his wife, 25 December 1882)

FM's diary reveals that he made regular visits to the site before the house's completion, moving in during the last month of 1879. He recorded these visits, commenting on "*the digging of the foundations*" (March 1879), "*the arrival of red bricks in April*" and by July he had mounted the scaffolding.

He visited USA during August and September and on return "*climbed by ladder to the attic floor of the house*" (5 October 1879). Later entries refer to the "*North Hall*" (22 April 1879), "*a Drawing Room*" (22 February 1880), "*a Balcony*" (27 July 1880), "*a Yellow Room*" (1 August 1881), "*a Blue Room*" (7 September 1881), "*a Library*" (19 September 1881) and "*a Verandah*" 18 July 1882. On 5 September 1887 FM wrote to EM "*Verandah – pavement improved – much less was amiss than had been feared*". On 21 April 1882 there is reference to "*outside blinds up*".

After the birth of his children FM records "*a Nursery*" (6 February 1883) and Kett's men were involved in decorating and carrying out repairs. Several years later FM mentions "*a Studio*" (13 September 1889), indicating Eveleen's need of a room in the house to be set aside for her photographic interests. Further changes are noted: "*a new Dining Room*" (1 February 1892) and "*modifications to Eveleen's bedroom*" (14 July 1896), completed by 18 September 1896 by Kett's men, an old Cambridge firm of builders, who were involved in decorating and carrying out repairs for the Myers. Myers mentions only one sum of money, a particularly large amount, in his diaries. On 23 January 1889 his mother Susan gave him £4700. This would have been sufficient to pay for the construction of a house of that size towards the end of the 19th century.

Myers had built a large modern up to date residence for himself and his family. Initially the Myers wanted to have lamps outside the house. FM's letter to EM dated 9 May 1882 states "*The lamps have come and I am telling Leach to hang them up for greater safety*". On 30 July 1895 FM recorded "*Electric light turned on, two upper floors*" and on 24 September "*Electric light, dining room*". Four years later on 26 June 1899 "*Electric supply changed. New voltage*". Leckhampton House was one of the earliest private houses to be provided with electricity. Peterhouse was the first Cambridge college to be serviced in 1884, under the supervision of a Fellow of the college, Sir William Thompson.

He used Farrant's system. Trinity followed in 1893. The firm Baily, Grundy and Barrett generated electricity at St Mary's Passage with a gas engine and a dynamo. For two years the firm provided buildings with lighting only during the hours of darkness. With growing demand, a 24-hour

continuous supply was generated and in 1896 the firm sold its goodwill to Cambridge Electric Supply Company. This company operated in Thompson's Lane from 1892; 1895 was the first year of public supply. Gwen Raverat (*Period Piece*) recorded its supply at Newnham Grange, and Myers was one of the first to take advantage.

## The Garden

When Eveleen Myers took up residence in the Spring of 1880 the house had been built, the boundaries fenced and the grass sown. Despite suggestions that the garden at Leckhampton was designed by William Robinson (1838–1935), a prolific garden writer and hater of Victorian bedding and herbaceous borders, Frederic Myers recorded in his diary, just before his marriage, on 5 March 1880 “*Lay out ground with E*” and “*C'est ici ma maison, mon champ et mes amours!*”.

FM had little experience in designing gardens. At Leckhampton House he created for his family a garden layout he had been familiar with for several years as a young man (vii),(viii). Both the layout of his mother's garden at Brandon House in Cheltenham and his own garden at Leckhampton House in Cambridge are identical, but mirrored. They consisted of a long, narrow plot divided into a carriage drive, kitchen garden, stable yard, together with a long narrow garden, enclosed by perimeter tree planting and at the far end a small rock garden. In the distance halfway along its length, the garden space is narrowed by planting either side of a central vista to give an impression of parkland in the distance.

The 1896 sale particulars of his mother's garden at Brandon House, Cheltenham (Wren Library), record that:

*An important feature of the property is*

*The Picturesque and Park-Like Grounds arranged in a Great Expanse of Level Lawn beautifully kept, and in park laid out with Ornamental Parterres, winding gravel walks, well-grown shrubberies, Plantations, & the whole bordered and screened from the surrounding roads by a wide Belt of Woodland Trees composed of Grand Specimen Trees, embracing Chestnuts, Elms, Beech, Fir, Sycamore, Acacia, Weeping Willow, Mountain Ash, Box, Wych Elm, and including a Magnificent Spreading Oak.*

*Intersecting the grounds are gravel paths, flanked with choice shrubs and coniferae of mature growth, and leading to cool and shady walks of sylvan beauty and which give to the Property a sense of complete seclusion. Skirting the Lawn, at the southern end of the grounds is a large crescent-shaped Ivy-clad Rockery clothed with creeping plants and Ivy, constructed at great cost and enhancing the general effect.*

His diaries offer no description of the grounds around his house at Leckhampton, only brief references. However from these comments it is possible to develop an idea of the plants he used and how the garden became a suitable venue for leisure and social events. The planning, choice of plants and trees and actual gardening involved close consultation with Eveleen. Writing to her June 1889 “*The garden is so much our joint creation and joint delight that I don't feel that I enjoy it properly without you*”. Initially Eveleen deferred to her husband on matters involving expense but later took a lead on issues of planting. In later years Frederic deferred to her wishes as she took over the running of the garden (she sold excess produce and the hay crop).

EM reported to FM: “*I have a printed notice from the Water Works, 4 Benet Street, from the Directors requesting that we should not use so much water for the garden roses . . . should I not let the hose play on the lawn day and night, tell me. I have stopped it for the present*” (25 August 1884 EM to FM); similarly EM “*the bricks (Mr Key) suggests using are deep slate colour, like our Vansittart tiles they will be bricks and cemented together and will look like bricks. I cannot decide without hearing from what you think, so we await your answer – He says it will be much stronger than cement and cost the same*”, (undated EM to FM). A few years later, “*Do you give Arthur orders, I hope so! Clip hedge . . . dig for pond pipe – cemented up . . . remove potato stalks in Hal's field. Take more cuttings and pot big geraniums. What about lobelia – do spring planting out of forget-me-not*”, (11 October 1892 EM to FM). Earlier FM reported to EM on 8 September 1887 “*Laurence – several hundred geranium cuttings already taken*”.

Between 2–4 December 1878 the property was fenced, by January hedges were planted and in February 1879 a mound was constructed. On 23 April 1879 Myers made his first reference to a roundabout, which is the site of frequent walks with his mother and friends. (This was probably the walk around the lawn immediately to the south of the house although a small circular bed existed in the drive opposite the front door.) At this early stage grass areas were sown; by 28 February 1879 “*grass springing*”, 29 May “*grass edges mown*” and 15 July “*lawn being mown*”. After Eveleen took residence in 1880, she was fully involved in structural developments and planting in the garden. On 5 May 1881 “*the foundations of a greenhouse were laid*” and another greenhouse was added in August 1883. “*The Taxonia in the greenhouse is just about to flower, it will be lovely*” (24 December 1882 EM to FM); Laurence, a gardener “*anxious to grow orchids in greenhouse . . . L has been very busy cleaning the greenhouse and has made out the vegetable list, which we will go over together*” (1883 EM to FM) and “*I have just been over the new greenhouse, it is most perfect and the propagation bed is so complete. L wants to get a few Palm trees and very hot housy things*” (EM to FM).

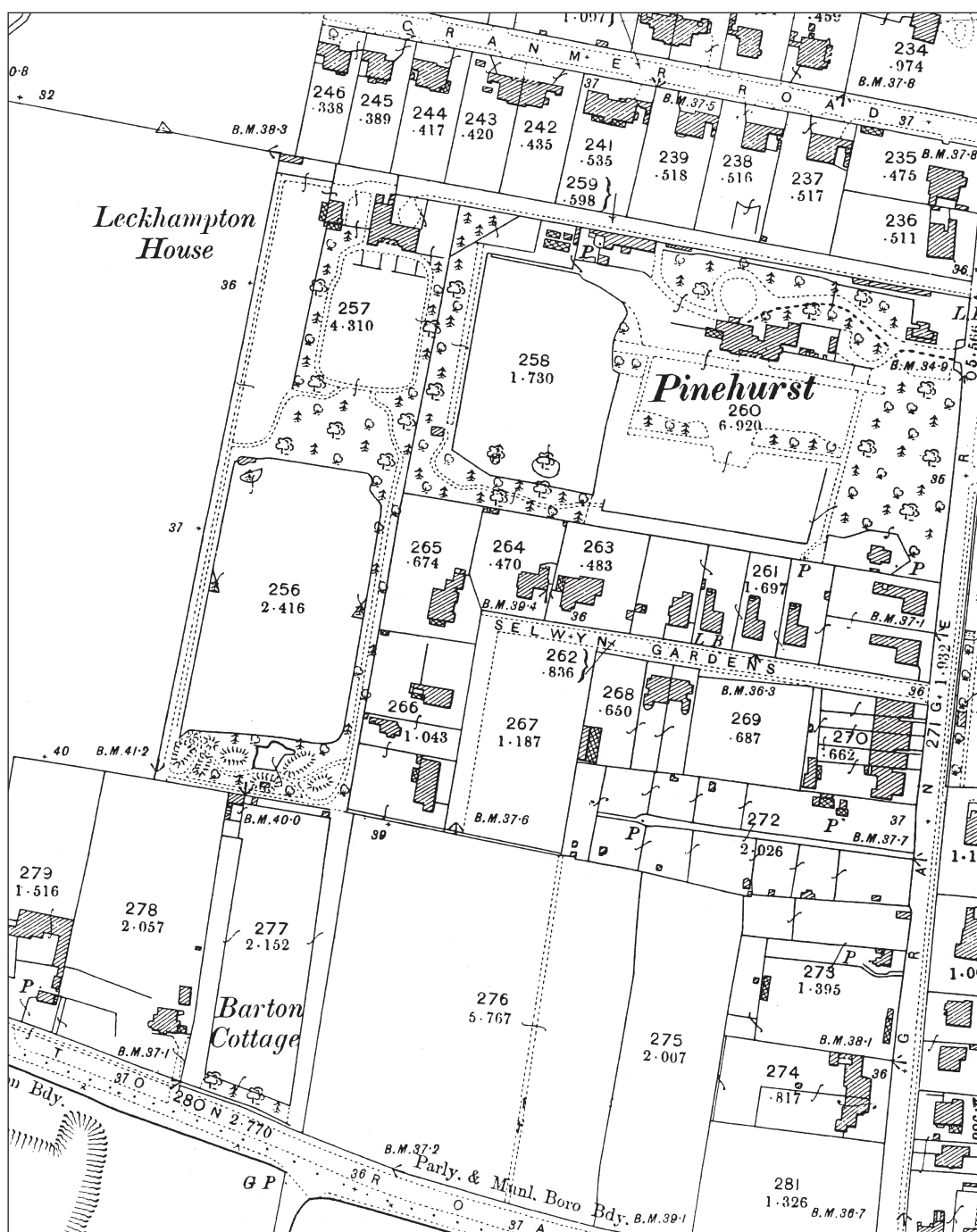
When Myers secured the second lease for over 5 acres on 29 September 1881 (CCC archive) he recorded “*man at work on new land*”. There followed extensive planning and construction. 6 December 1881 “*Central avenue begun*”; 10 December “*Orchard planted*”; 14 December “*Nook staked out*” and 16 December “*Facade of pergola completed*”. Following this flurry of activity they gave further thought to the garden during the Christmas festivities: 26 December “*Idea of Amphitheatre*” and 30 December “*Idea of south lake*”. These ideas were not developed but there are later references to a pond. “*I was so surprised to find a lake 3 ft deep between Homer and Virgil, (perhaps two small statues) all the blue sky reflected in it, it looked quite beautiful reaching up to the brinks of the hills; this morning it is a sheet of ice*” (24 December 1882 EM to FM).

An undated letter (1882? EM to FM) reveals Eveleen taking on an early responsibility for garden maintenance: “*I asked (Mr Key) minutely about the edge of our pond or lake. He says that if we fill it with water, there will never be any risk whatsoever of the upper asphalt cracking – the brick may chip, but there is no danger as to cement cracking, if it is kept full of water*”. The next year (1883) Eveleen wrote to her husband “*I took Leo to see Mr Hillier's nursery garden (a small Cambridge nursery on the corner of West Road and Grange Road) – I have picked such a*



nice bunch of violets out of our own beds – Mr Hillier I spoke to and he is so busy with the lake, that he will not be thinking of planting for a couple of days”. FM to EM 27 September 1884 “The lake is completed and looks very nice” and May 1886 “I am having a new pit made to drain pond”. By the New Year, 2 January 1882 the paths of the Nook were gravelled and 3 January “Turf in Nook”. It appears that gravel was extended to other paths for ten years later, on 24 January 1892 EM wrote to FM “Children helping to gravel the paths” Myers was a good tenant, honouring the terms of his lease. A further decade on “Tarring begun – fence all tarred outside – beginning inside” (FM to EM 14 August and 25 August 1900). While men were tarring the fence an exit through some laurels was made.

Early in the marriage on 12 March 1882 FM records “Garden Survey”, presumably to consider further structural changes and plantings. “There are 2 new kinds of flowers out in the bed no 2 and 3 and three great yellow lilies” (1882 EM to FM). “Hillier’s shrubbery plan” (14 August 1882), “Ha-ha begun” (23 September), “new mounds forming” (21 September), “I have ordered a new mound, but shall not tell you where it is to be. Perhaps it is to be called Sylvia’s hill?” (1 December 1882 FM to EM). “I have settled with L about the verandah roses and the potatoes and spoke at great length about the seats. There is some difficulty about having the length or rather depth you wish, the seats will pass the pillars so that we must compromise” (19 January 1883 EM to FM). From January-April 1883 a summerhouse was built, roofed and windowed and on 3 June 1883 “Theosophist head in Summerhouse”. “Leo and I have been up to the summerhouse (I carried him up the steps) looking at the fields thro’ the coloured glass” (FM to EM 30 May 1883). Perhaps it was used in the summer for seances? “I have just returned from a walk round our lovely garden, the air is heavy with the scent of all the flowers, syringa and sweet briar, and the rain has brought out the delicious smell of the hay. If only you were here to enjoy it, and make me enjoy it ten fold” (19 June 1883 EM to FM). “The irises are all planted. Also the furze along the ha-ha. The path is wrongly cut along the summer hill, so I have sent for Mr Hillier to have it altered. They cut it on that very wet day before yesterday. I did



As late as 1891 they were considering a further extension of land. "I am thinking of bidding for the plot of ground. I have considered it with him (Fennell). He would go on living there indefinitely, and thinks that there would be no difficulty in finding a tenant if he left. There shall never be any question of Laurence's living there. I quite agree with you in that. But land near us is rising so fast in value that this may be a very good, and cannot be a bad, investment" (FM to EM 28 April-3 May 1891). By 30 April "Probably the Master of St Catharine's will buy the plot. He would be a good neighbour. I have told Fennell not to bid more than £900 if he (the Master) is bidding. £900 would be very cheap". On 3 May "The purchaser of the plot is the Master of St Catharine's after all, so we have a good neighbour – all right". (Is this plot St Chad's, St Catharine's, a site on the corner of Grange and West Roads or is it the plot adjacent to Leckhampton, now the Research Centre for International Law?)

Myers's early associations with Leckhampton, Gloucestershire showed his love of trees. 18 May 1876 he recorded "Leckhampton Wood beautiful" and in the early 1880's he visited the Botanic Gardens at Cambridge and Kew with his friend E G Balfour. While Leckhampton House was being built, he was planting trees in January and February 1879 and again in November 1882(ix),(x). In January 1882 he notes "Birches in valley ordered"; "Chestnuts come" (1 November 1882); "Chestnut avenue planted" (3 November) and "South Avenue (elms) planted" (4

November). FM wrote to EM in May 1882 and mentioned the "lilacs and laburnums and a beginning of white and crimson may". By 2 June 1899 he recorded "Scarlet chestnuts fine", "The garden is looking so pretty and bright, the shining laurels in the chestnut avenue look so brilliant . . . 4.30(pm) I do so like Sylvia's Hill, it is a great improvement to all that region" (21 December 1882 EM to FM).

In the following year, 1883, EM wrote to FM "Darling the golden yews look so lovely on the summer hill and some deciduous trees also and the little plantation of birches. I have had the water plants planted, they also look interesting" and reference to Collins, a gardener "weeding the avenue". In October 1883 there were "Trees from Veitch", an Exeter & London nursery; "Scarlet oak beautiful" on 16 October 1884; "Walnuts – roundabout" on 20 September 1886. FM wrote to EM in October 1886 "I have told Laurence to ask you for a cheque if needed – to get trees at a sale at Tredgett's". On Christmas Day 1891 EM replied to FM "There are a lot of new trees in de Lessep's walk". There are a few further references to trees: "Purple beech; tulip tree" (20 October 1897),

and one strange reference on 14 May 1897 "Tree A Foubruise 1 (i) Clemens". In September 1897 trees were cut down and again during the first two weeks of November 1903 Eveleen recorded further felling – "Sadness". One other reference "A great dead elm – next to the big good elm on Barton Road has blown down in gale – fell forward towards field" (FM to EM 9 August 1890) shows the extent of Myers's land.

For shrubs and flowers there were also early references in FM diary: "sweet briar" (26 May 1879); "Laburnum – pink May" (8 June 1879); "Taylor's van – shrubs" (30 June). With the arrival of Eveleen emphasis moved to bulbs and flowers. FM writes to EM March 1881 "such a multitude of crocuses and daffodils on the Knotts!"; and a month later he mentions "Seeds come: walk to Tredgett's HS" (23 April 1881); and "Sir J Lubbock on seeds" (27 April 1881). 1881 was an exciting year of early planting. Myers records on 11 May "Such flowers from my bower. Tulips from Holland". There were "Bulbs from Kzelage" in both October 1882 and 1883. "Some bedding out" was completed by 16 May; "Gardenia at Tredgetts" on 29 June; "Laurel walk with E" (21 August); "Choose bulbs with E" (28 August) and on 5 December

1881 "Squarrosa and dolabrata planted". "I am afraid it may have been rather wet for squarrosa and dolabrata" (FM to EM 13 April 1882), but by 2 May 1882 "Dolabrata has been mown. I have not been able to make the ascent of squarrosa, but it towers greenly in the distance". "I thought today how nice squarrosa would be looking and the paeony



Sketch of Leckhampton House by Sylvia Myers c.1895.

© The National Portrait Gallery, London

avenue" 31 March 1883. Ten years later on 8 February 1891 "Harold rolls down south slope of dolabrata".

Both these conifers – 'squarrosa' and 'dolabrata' sadly no longer exist in the garden today. In Myers's time they were both recent introductions – *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Squarrosa' was introduced from Japan in 1861 and is a small to medium-sized conifer of broadly conical outline with spreading branches and dense, billowy sprays of glaucous juvenile foliage, soft to the touch; *Thujopsis dolabrata*, although a native of Japan, was first introduced in 1853 when Thomas Lobb sent a plant to Veitch of Exeter from Java Botanic Garden. The first commercial introductions were by John G. Veitch and Robert Fortune in 1860-61. It is recognised by its broader, flatter branchlets, and grows up to 40 or 50 feet high, at its best a striking and beautiful conifer needing a sheltered position and tolerant of shade. Myers must have seen both these growing and appreciated that they would give his children much pleasure in the garden. There are specimens of both these conifers growing in Cambridge Botanic Garden.



A number of large late Victorian and Edwardian mansions standing in their own, often considerable, grounds were built in Newnham and the first generation of children of dons began to emerge, including those of Myers and his friend George Darwin. Gwen Raverat, daughter of George Darwin, wrote in *Period Piece* that the regular round of formal dinner-parties was very important in Cambridge with 12–14 guests seated according to status. Myers's correspondence in the Wren Library shows that Leckhampton House was a popular venue and that he and Eveleen held frequent dinner parties.

Frederic Myers's diaries reveal a youthful interest in both lawn-tennis and skating, and tennis courts were laid out at Leckhampton House. FM wrote to EM (1 October 1890) "*Lawn mower must wait a bit as house is not sold*" (his mother's Brandon House, Cheltenham). There were frequent entries of lawn-tennis being played between 1881–91. FM had written earlier to EM (14 September 1887) "*I have been playing lawn tennis with Mrs Jebb*", also with the Sidgwicks and Balfours. "*I have ordered a beautiful garden seat with a tent over it from the Corporation. We will put it on the lawn near the house for people looking at lawn-tennis and move the existing one to the other end*" (1886 EM to FM). From 1892–1900 tennis gave way to croquet. There was no lake, but there were references to Myers and children skating or bathing in the pond, 1886-7. "*Leo greatly enjoys the pond and thinks he is progressing much with his swimming. The pond is a wonderful delight to them*" (6 August 1893 EM to FM).

The garden, too, became a place of pride, pleasure and presentation. George Darwin "*walked round the garden which he thought beautiful! and was rather envious of – said he preferred our situation so much to his (Newnham Grange) – we were so countrified and how splendid our garden was!*" undated EM to FM. Already on 10 June 1888 "*Many people in garden*" and 31 May 1892 "*Garden party, over 200 people*". So the house and garden offered to Myers and his family a place for social gathering, a venue for psychical research and a home of valued tranquility. In Spalding's 1901 Directory of Cambridge the head gardener at Leckhampton House is recorded as being a Mr H Wallis when Mrs Myers was the only named occupant.

## Leckhampton House 1919-1936

Eveleen Myers ceased living at Leckhampton House in 1919. The surveyor, Arthur Rutter of 63 Sidney Street, Cambridge, made a plan of Leckhampton House and garden on 23 July 1919 (CCC archive). The plan of the house lists on the top floor four bedrooms leading off from a landing; on the first floor a landing with six bedrooms, a south-facing library and a bathroom and WC; on the ground floor an entrance hall with WC, a large reception hall facing south with a lobby leading to verandah, a south-facing drawing room, a dining room and facilities for servants – kitchen, scullery, pantry, servants' hall and back stairs. A cellar provided a furnace and boiler for central heating. The house was approached by a carriage drive of 300 yards ending in a sweep at the front door. The well secluded and mature grounds contained tastefully laid out Pleasure Grounds with a rose garden, flower beds, lawns for 3 tennis courts, shrubberies, arbours and a gravelled walk in the avenue of limes circling the property. There was a private bathing pool with a summer house on a tumulus. In addition there were 2 paddocks with

out-buildings and a kitchen garden. The property extended to Barton Road to the south.

A correspondence between Eveleen Myers and Buckingham Palace in 1919 reveals the possibility of Leckhampton House acquiring royal tenants. Princes Albert and Henry were to spend a year at Trinity College arriving on 10 October. Eventually it was decided that the bathing facilities were not quite of suitable specifications and that Brooklands, Brooklands Avenue was preferred.

Buckingham Palace August 4th 1919

Dear Mrs Myers

Thank you so much for your letter. I note what you say about the dinner and breakfast services also the glass. As regards the gardener we should like to keep him and his wife on if he is willing and pay him the two pounds a week.

The whole question of advising H.R.H. taking the house turns on the bathroom. If the small bath which exists at present in the bathroom could be taken up and put in the Tank room, and replaced by a large modern bath, I think the great objection to the house at present would be removed.

The house at present, with its bath accommodation is not fit for their Royal Highnesses to live in as they are both very keen on their bathing arrangements. I am telephoning Mr Rutter tomorrow in the same strain so that you will probably hear from him again – the cleaning of the house too is imperative such as the beating of the carpets etc.

I trust you are not overwhelmed with our "suggestions and improvements" but I must try and get a suitable house for them. At present the house seems quite suitable in that respect.

Yours sincerely

Louis Greig.

A further letter was received from the Palace a week later:-

Buckingham Palace August 12th 1919

Dear Mrs Myers,

After careful consideration of your house and the house we saw yesterday – "Brooklands" – Prince Albert has decided that he thinks he would prefer Brooklands. For one thing "Brooklands" requires no alteration whatever and seems just the thing he and his brother Prince Henry would like. He wishes me to thank you for your great courtesy in offering to make all the changes necessary.

I can't help being sorry in many ways, as your charming grounds and gravel foundation were great points in favour of Leckhampton. I hope we have not put you out too much in our tentative efforts at house hunting.

Mr Cunliffe Foster of Brooklands has been kind enough to offer to vacate his house in the event of it being suitable to their Royal Highnesses and after our visit yesterday Prince Albert was greatly taken with the house and grounds and we are on the point of taking it for their year at Cambridge.

Yours sincerely

Louis Greig

In the event, the princes were established at 'Southacre', Latham Road, travelling to Trinity either by bicycle or motor

bike. They were visited by Queen Mary, so Leckhampton missed royal tenants and a Royal visitor.

From 1920-3 the tenant was Capt C J Balfour, Scots Guards and Adjutant of Camb Univ OCTU; from 1926-9 Capt J Henniker Heaton; from 1929-30 C M Methven. The house was empty 1923-6 and 1930-1. From 1931-36 Leo Myers was in residence.

## Louis Clarke, the last tenant of Leckhampton House 1937-60

Louis Clarke, Curator of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology 1922-37, became the tenant of Leckhampton House when he was appointed Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 1937-46. An art connoisseur, of "slight build and bird-like speed of mind and pitch of utterance, as well as bodily movement" (DNB, AM Jaffe), he was an enthusiastic gardener and "deeply interested in his beautiful garden". (M Keynes *A House by the River*).

Louis Colville Gray Clarke (1881-1960) was the 10th son and youngest of fourteen children of R Stephenson Clarke (c1862-1948), a wealthy coal factor (a merchant buying and selling on commission) and his wife Agnes Maria Bridger of Croydon Lodge, Croydon, Surrey. Stephenson Clarke had obtained a large house and estate at Borde Hill, near Haywards Heath in Sussex in the early 20th century where he planted an extensive range of rare trees, shrubs, greenhouse plants and bulbs, many collected by E H Wilson in China and by David Douglas in North America. Today Borde Hill Garden is famous for its magnificent collections of rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and mahonias originally planted by Stephenson Clarke, which come into their glory in April and May each year.

In 1923 Stephenson Clarke bred the most famous *Camellia x williamsii* 'Donation', which later received an Award of Merit in 1941. This orchid pink, large semi-double is still considered the most beautiful *Camellia* raised in this country with its long free-flowering period from November to May. His 40 acre garden at Borde Hill is part of a 3,000 acre traditional estate, including parkland and beautiful woods. The walled garden was built in 1906 and is surrounded by very high walls on which still grow plants put in before the 1914-1918 War. In recognition for Stephenson Clarke's horticultural achievements he was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour in Horticulture (VMH) by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1936, the highest award the society can make. Books from his extensive horticultural collection were donated to the Cambridge University Botanic Garden library. From childhood Louis would have been aware of plants and gardens.

Borde Hill is closely surrounded by several famous gardens set in large estates in Sussex, all established by rich owners. Leonardslee lies to the west and was created in the late 19th century by Sir Edmund Loder (1849-1920) and is still in private ownership. Nymans was laid out by Leonard Messel who died in 1913. Messel employed Gertrude Jekyll to suggest a layout for herbaceous beds which were later changed using William Robinson's advice; the garden is now owned by the National Trust. Wakehurst Place lies immediately to the north east of Borde Hill and was acquired in 1903 by Gerald Loder, Edmund's brother, who became

President of The Royal Horticultural Society from 1929-3. The grounds are now owned by The National Trust, who lease it to The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Immediately to the north of Wakehurst Place is Gravetye Manor, owned by William Robinson (1838-1935) who had advised the Messels on their garden at Nymans. Robinson obtained this 1,000 acre estate in 1884 and lived there until his death. He was famous not only as a pioneer of natural gardening but also as the country's leading authority on forestry. In 1928, at the age of 90 and in his wheel chair, he showed Vita Sackville-West his shrubberies and alpine meadow leading down to the lake at Gravetye Manor.

Louis Clarke went up to read history at Trinity Hall, Cambridge in 1899 and graduated in 1903, taking his MA in 1920. He travelled extensively in Europe and Central America and, on returning to London, formed a lasting friendship with the artist Augustus John. He obtained a few oil paintings and many of John's best drawings. These he displayed later in Leckhampton house. After service in the First World War he was quickly invalided out because of his small physique. In 1919 he matriculated as a mature candidate for the diploma in anthropology at Exeter College, Oxford, attracted by the opportunity to study under R. R. Marett, Arthur Thomson, and Henry Balfour. Clarke did valuable work as a volunteer in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford of which he became a lifelong benefactor. In 1922 He succeeded Baron Anatole von Hugel as curator of the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge. In 1937, when Sir Sydney Cockerell retired after twenty-nine years as Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Clarke was chosen to succeed him. From 1929 Clarke had resided at a small house with no garden at the Old Granary in Silver Street, Cambridge.

He now required a larger residence to house his own collection of art and archaeological finds collected on his travels in Mexico, Chile, Peru and Ethiopia. Clarke had been elected a Fellow of Trinity Hall in 1929 and he was a much appreciated member of that high table (xvii). He never had a room in College, but shared with other professorial and non-stipendiary fellows the use of 'Room K' for entertainment and small meetings. As a member of the governing body he was refreshingly unorthodox in its academic discussions, and was also its *arbiter elegantiarum*. In 1958 Clarke gave various gifts to his college (anon. until his death in 1961) of shares, valued at £10,000 in 1958, rising in value to £22,000 in 1961, partly for grants for theological studies. To the college Boat Club he gave £300 and a bequest of his wine cellar to the Fellows in 1960 which included a few bottles of a 1896 port.

## Louis Clarke's Garden at Leckhampton House

In 1937 Louis Clarke leased Leckhampton House from Leopold Myers. When he arrived at Leckhampton the trees and shrubs in the garden had reached maturity, but many of the herbaceous plants had disappeared over the period when the property was leased out earlier by Mrs Myers and her son.

During the First World War nurseries had been kept open as the demand for plants for gardens did not cease. Larches, which had been felled for trench supports, were replanted in



case such timber was required in a future war. The gardens had been kept up at Borde Hill throughout this period and for a rich bachelor as Clarke was, there was no question of the garden at Leckhampton being allowed to deteriorate during the Second World War. Clarke's attitude to a garden was completely different from Frederic Myers's requirements. He had no children, he did not need farmyard animals and poultry to produce food from the garden. Anything pertaining to a small holding would have been anathema to him. Having no use for a paddock and a hay meadow, Clarke abandoned the paddock between the pool and the Barton Road.

Throughout his life, he had spent his time travelling in Europe admiring fine houses, their contents and their gardens. Socially gifted, with a prodigious memory manifest in a welter of genealogical information, Clarke knew a wide range of collectors of art who were entertained by him at Leckhampton House.

Here he set about planting various trees between the ha-ha and the pool. Many of these were Japanese cherry trees, which had been promoted by Captain Collingwood Ingram who had been introducing them into the country from Japanese Temple gardens in the early 20th century. *Prunus 'Tai haku'*, an old Japanese variety known to have grown in the neighbourhood of Kyoto, was thought to be extinct, but a survival in a Sussex garden was found by Ingram in 1923. He managed to propagate from it. Planted extensively for its handsome foliage and large pure white flowers, it has become a favourite addition to every garden. Ingram's work *Ornamental Cherries* (1948) still remains a classic study of the genus. It is of no surprise that Clarke appreciated these elegant trees as a reminder of gardens he knew in Sussex and he wished to enjoy them in his garden at Leckhampton House. The perimeter trees gave him the privacy he required and he continued to protect all the trees during his tenancy. Between 1956-61, towards the end of his life, Clarke was in correspondence with Bidwells (agents for the CCC) who were acting on behalf of the residents in adjoining Selwyn Gardens concerning the nuisance and extensive shade in their gardens caused by the chestnut avenue along part of the east boundary of Leckhampton. Clarke's reply was dismissive, saying that *'such comments were to be expected by town dwellers who never appreciated trees'*.

During 1938 there had been correspondence between Clarke and Bidwells, requesting extra land to the west of the garden for building 2 cottages and for establishing an orchard. The land obtained for the orchard still remains today, a few fruit trees survive and the ground is used today by the college garden staff for storage of compost. In 1939 correspondence noted that the college agreed to give Clarke a 25 years' lease for this additional land; permission was also granted to build the cottages later. They were never built.

Between the ha-ha and the pool a large grassed area now contains many bulbs and wild flowers which bloom during the spring. Perennial lupins have flowered regularly for many years and are slowly advancing through the long grass towards the ha-ha. This lupin is *Lupinus polyphyllus*, similar to the lupin growing in the Botanic Garden. Recently the Botanic Garden has named the plant *Lupinus argentinus*. It is very unusual to see lupins growing in grass in English gardens.

During his time at Leckhampton House, Clarke kept the pond and tennis court in order, but he was often reminded by the college to keep the garden fences along the north boundary free from ivy: as Myers had agreed to do when obtaining a lease for the site. In the later 1930s Miss Margaret Rishbeth, daughter of the librarian at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, recalls that she had to weed the tennis court and clear the pool before she could play tennis and swim. The college obviously carried out regular checks to see if both house and fences were kept in good order. Professor Owen Chadwick writes *"Louis's personality was so enchanting and somehow it perfectly fitted and made a sort of centre-piece of his garden"*. Lady Chadwick recalls that they often walked in Leckhampton House garden with him:-

*"We thought he preferred a slightly wild kind of garden to carefully cultivated 'park-land'. In a vaguely romantic cape he would carry with him a stick with a spike on the end and on his walk would spike at the weeds which he passed. He loved cyclamen and would point them out. He planted a flowering meadow that bloomed in May, poppies, daisies and blue delphiniums (is it possible that these were lupins as no delphiniums remain in the tall grass?) in the long grass and flanked by cherry trees. Where the rose garden now is our memory is that he had a tennis court. One certainly could not swim in the pool at the far end which is now a swimming bath."*

Professor Geoffrey Woodhead has memories but failed to visit Clarke's garden. *"No one that I knew ever penetrated to his garden. I used to referee College rugby matches on our Sports field, and Clarke would frequently have his man bring him out to sit and watch. But looking from the ground into the garden took one no further than the lime avenue. Earliest impressions, when the College took possession, extended to little more than of a fine garden that could have been better maintained (though Mr Tuck did his best), with a pond at the end, weed encircled, which apparently depended on rain water supply."*

Following the death of Leo Myers in 1949, The College obtained the remainder of the lease from his executors and arranged with Clarke that it would gain possession of the house and grounds when he died. By 1956 Clarke, now 75 years old, was engaged in regular correspondence with the college concerning his tenancy. He was worried that he might have to leave and asked the college if his tenancy could be extended. After some thought it was agreed that it could be extended on a yearly basis until his death. Clarke's executors surrendered the lease on 25 June 1961. This allowed six months for the transfer of Clarke's work of art to his beneficiaries.

### Leckhampton House – the Home of the Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum

Clarke had little time to impose his taste on the garden before the onset of war. Neither had he much time to reorganise the hanging of paintings in the Fitzwilliam Museum; the main collection of paintings were removed to safer places in Cornwall and Wales. During the 2nd World War students from Bedford College, London were billeted at Leckhampton House. Lady Brenda Clark (no relation) was such a student, and recalls her reminiscences of this evacuation:-

*"I and four or five other undergraduates from Bedford College, London were billeted on Louis Clarke in the first year of the war. Since*

he was a bachelor, our chaperone, Miss McNaulty, the Assistant Registrar of the College, was billeted on him too. The others were in the main house. I had a bedroom in the gardener's cottage but took all my meals in the house. The permanent establishment, apart from the gardener and his wife, consisted of the butler (Mr Ernie Hawkes whom Louis Clarke had known from his army days), a footman and the cook who was seldom seen but who did wonders with our ration cards. My overwhelming impression of Louis Clarke was his great civility and unfailing courtesy, I thought it very kind of him to have us at his table every evening, except on the rare annual occasion when Queen Mary called (they were reputed to exchange antique tea-caddies at Christmas) and it was a joy to listen to the distinguished interesting guests who dined there, Eileen Power (Professor of Medieval History at the London School of Economics), Professor Seligman (part-time Professor of Ethnology at the London School of Economics, together with E Power were evacuated to Cambridge during the 2nd World War. He was a rich American anthropologist who with his wife collected fine Chinese porcelain), Leonard Wooley (the notable archaeologist who carried out excavations at Ur in Mesopotamia), Oscar Raphael (a collector of Chinese porcelain who eventually gave several pieces to the Fitzwilliam Museum) and a host of others, talking so fascinatingly of archaeological discoveries, opening a casket in Tutenkamen's tomb and the peacock feathers inside crumbling to dust as they did so; excavating Sutton Hoo.

From the garden side of the house, the main feature was the 1st floor balcony on which Oliver Lodge, who had built it, was reputed to conduct séances. (Oliver Lodge who became Professor of Physics at New College, Liverpool in 1881. Besides his interest in science he became a member of the Society of Psychical Research. He was very shaken when in 1901 his psychical mentor Frederic Myers died. He took over Myers's responsibility as President of the Society of Psychical Research. There is no record that he built the verandah at Leckhampton House.)

*I have forgotten the names of two or three young explorers from the Scott-Polar Research institute who used to come for meals. Interesting and fascinating. Another interest of Louis Clarke and presumably a gift from one of them, was a husky dog, his constant companion, who had been on an Arctic expedition. I think there was another dog too, perhaps a dachshund. Each day he would walk round the large gardens with both of them. At the end, behind a hedge, was a lily pond on which we skated . . ."*

A letter from Andrew Croft, Strand on the Green, London, dated 1979 referred to his knowledge that Louis Clarke donated funds for the Oxford University Arctic Expedition of 1935/36. Clarke was particularly interested in two Huskies from the expedition when it returned to England. Clarke kept Dupilek (leading dog) and Hasigne (bitch) at Leckhampton House, exercising them in the garden. Unfortunately Hasigne escaped one day and cornered thirty-five sheep in a neighbouring field which was too much for the shepherd. Hasigne was sent to Whipsnade Zoo, rejoining the other members of the team of Huskies, but Dupilek remained at Leckhampton House until he died in 1943. Croft warmly acknowledged Clarke's interest in his research work; he had funded him to study Swedish Lapps and the reindeer herds. The latter led to the first establishment of a herd of 100 reindeer on an estate at Aviemore in Scotland.

## Leckhampton Garden – Post 1961

Until Louis Clarke's death his gardener, Mr Bill Tuck, had kept the grounds of Leckhampton House to a reasonable standard. In November 1961 the College embarked on plans to provide accommodation for research students in the grounds of Leckhampton House. They chose the architect, Philip Dowson of Ove Arup Associates to prepare a design to provide accommodation for both Fellows and research students. The site chosen was the kitchen garden, originally established by Frederic Myers, to the west of the house. The new building was opened by Sir George Thomson in October 1964 in the middle of a thunderstorm.

Ove Arup's site plan of 1961/62 shows in detail the layout of the grounds around the house as Louis Clarke left it (xviii). There was no paved footpath to the front door; in fact the drive used the whole width of that part of the house. Immediately to the east of the drive was a hedge and a further hedge in which was growing a magnolia. It had been planted between the kitchen and the gardener's cottage. Behind the hedge to the east of the drive was a wide horseshoe flower-bed with an adjacent rectangular rose bed the same length as the east wall of the house. To the south of the house was a paved area and flower-beds enclosed by low yew hedges; a central sloping opening in the hedge gave access to the main lawn. Immediately to the south of the gardener's cottage was a tall Scots pine and an extensive shrubbery with several elms and evergreen shrubs forming a visual division between the main lawn and the kitchen garden.

The copper beech on the south lawn is recorded as having a height of 55 feet. Further to the south was a small garden shed (still on site) and a tennis court. Most of the mature trees had been planted by Frederic Myers and were now 80 years old.

The College employed Mr Fred Jackson as their first head gardener and although a Gardens Committee was formed no minutes were kept of their meetings. The low yew hedges around the south terrace and any herbaceous plantings were removed in 1964. During this year Sir Frank Lee, Master of the College, generously donated Henry Moore's statue 'Seated Figure' for the garden. This was placed somewhat out of sight from the south terrace of the house.

On Sunday 20th May 1974 Corpus Christi opened the garden at Leckhampton in aid of charities supported by The National Gardens Scheme. The following entry appeared in the Yellow Book of that year:-

**Leckhampton**, 37 Grange Road, Cambridge (Corpus Christi Cambridge) 2-7 Adm, 10p, Chd 5p.

*8 acre garden of the resident community of Corpus Christi College: originally laid out by William Robinson as garden of Leckhampton House (private residence built in 1880): formal lawns, small herbaceous beds and rose garden; extensive wild garden with bulbs, cowslips, prunus and fine specimen trees. No Dogs.*

The sum of £30.05 was raised at that first opening. Since 1974 the College has continued to open the garden at Leckhampton for the National Gardens Scheme and in 1995 Mrs Daphne Foulsham, Chairman of the Scheme and Lady Nourse presented a trowel to the head gardener, Mr Neil Taylor, in recognition of the garden being opened 21 years to raise money for the charity.



Following damage by gales and Dutch elm disease in 1979/80 major alterations occurred in the garden. A mature Scots pine along the east mound was blown down and also a conifer (*Squarrosa* or *Dolobrata*?) near the swimming pool. Only one elm survives along the western avenue and it seems to be in good condition. The group of 11 elms which screened the kitchen garden were cut down. The tennis court, which had been used for 100 years, was replaced by a formal rose garden. A further planting of conifers to the south of the new rose garden was made. The rose garden and the horseshoe herbaceous plot have been removed from the east side of the house and a new footpath has been laid from the edge of the drive to the front door. The original timber garage, timber shed and coal store near the gardener's cottage have been replaced by new buildings. The air raid shelter in the kitchen garden has been filled in. Luckily the garden shed overlooking the new rose garden remains.

In 1985 the college appointed a new head gardener Mr Neil Taylor. The college had acquired houses in Selwyn Gardens for research students and a path was required for access to the new dining room at Leckhampton. The herbaceous border to the south-east of the house was thereby removed. By now many of the flowering cherries planted by Louis Clarke had died. Most have been replaced by similar Japanese specimens which are proving hard to establish. In Myers's time there was ample space to lay out a croquet lawn on the south lawn; this area has slowly been reduced by the growth of several low tree branches. The fine copper beech tree has grown to enormous size and research students are woken at night by the high branches hitting the window panes of their bedrooms. The meadow has encroached towards the house between the two mounds which frame the vista to the meadow. The pond is now protected by an unsightly high timber slatted fence to stop anyone falling into it. Myers's children used to skate on it!

A description of the garden appeared in Martyn and Alison Rix's book '*Garden Open Today*', a Guide to Gardens open to the Public through the National Gardens Scheme. Published in 1987:-

*Leckhampton House was built as a private house in 1880 by F.W.H.Myers, a prominent member of the Society of Psychical Research, on land leased from the College. The long rectangular garden of seven acres, with the house at its northern end, was laid out by William Robinson. The house reverted to the college in 1961 and was used as the nucleus for a graduate residential community; a dining hall and residential block (Civic Trust Award 1965) have since been added, along with a further 2 acres of garden on the north side. Although altered in detail, the main garden has retained principal features of Robinson's design, with lawn and herbaceous borders near the house, changing into an extensive wild garden to the south. There are lime tree and chestnut avenues on the east and west sides, and fine specimen trees such as *Halesia* named after an old member of the College, Dr Stephen Hales (1671-1761), dating from the original planting. In the central waist of the garden are bulbs and spring flowers, cowslips and oxslips, and later lupins naturalised in the long grass. An old tennis court was replanted as a rose garden. There are many flowering cherries, including a fine *Prunus x hillieri* on the west side, and maples, *Parrotia* and autumn foliage on the east. The end of the garden is closed by a rockery bank, surmounted by a Grecian Folly, originally formed from spoil from the adjacent lily*

*pond, now converted into a swimming pool. The nearby wild garden under trees contains wild flowers, and other shrubs have been planted to encourage butterflies. The gardens to the north side have fine lawns, with some heather beds'.*

(An *Halesia* was planted in the garden but it died a few years later, the roots did not like the soil at Leckhampton.)

The 2005 entry in the Yellow Book for Leckhampton informs the reader that the garden consists of 10 acres. There would seem to have been a steady increase in size from 7 acres in 1974, to 8 acres in 1987 and finally increased to 10 acres when the rear gardens of nos 15-23 Cranmer Road were added in 2005. We are sure that both Frederic Myers and Louis Clarke would have both approved of this increase in size of the garden!

## William Robinson – his influence at Leckhampton House?

Nearly every written description of the Garden at Leckhampton includes a statement that the garden was laid out or designed by William Robinson. We have found no written record in the Myers's papers to this effect. Robinson was born in County Down, Northern Ireland and wrote prolifically about gardens. His most famous book '*The English Flower Garden and Home Grounds*' was first published in 1883. It was reprinted many times with new editions appearing during the next twenty-five years. He advocated '*many hardy flowers that will thrive better in rough places than ever they did in the old border – in a semi-wild state the beauty of a species will show in flowering time – it will enable us to grow many more plants that never attained a place in our 'trim' gardens – because in consequent of plant, fern and flower and climber relieving each other they will look infinitely better than in stiff gardens*' (9th Edition 1909). Although *Lupinus polyphylus* was listed by Robinson in his gardening books, it was never recorded as growing at Leckhampton by Myers in his diaries.

If FM had met William Robinson this most certainly would have been noted in either his diary or in his correspondence with his wife. Considering that there must be some hint of truth in any rumour, we draw attention to the fact that Robinson's famous garden book was published in 1883 at the same time Frederic and Eveleen Myers were planting their garden at Leckhampton. However the layout of their garden is an exact mirror copy of his Mother's garden in Cheltenham and at that time there was no attempt at creating an alpine meadow.

They may have discussed Robinson's opinions, they may have talked to Mr E G Balfour of the Botanic Garden about their ideas, we will never know.

Myers obviously liked herbaceous borders whilst Robinson hated them. During the time when Mrs Myers and her son were renting out the house and grounds to tenants, in the early 20th century there would seem to be no apparent reason to ask William Robinson to make the long journey to Cambridge to give advice on the garden when he was in a wheel chair.

Mr Stephenson Clarke most probably would have visited his gardening neighbours, exchanging plants of new rhododendrons and recent introductions. His son Louis Clarke was brought up in an environment where luxuriant plantings and parkland was the only way to garden in

Sussex. Considering the Lupins which originate along the west-coast of North America, and are now spreading slowly through the meadow towards the house at Leckhampton; may have been noticed by Clarke on one of his archaeological ventures and introduced into his garden at a later date.

Whether or not Louis Clarke ever visited Gravetye Manor with his father is open to conjecture. But Louis Clarke obtained Leckhampton House in 1937, two years after Robinson had died.

### **Sources for Leckhampton House and Garden**

Wren Library, Trinity – Catalogue for FWH Myers's papers,  
F Myers Diary 1 29th October 1865 – 7 July 1886,  
F Myers Diary 2 July 1886 – 28 October 1904 M14  
Correspondence: F Myers to Eveleen 7(1-272); 8 (1-173);  
10(1-173); 11(189); 18(127-141); 25 (130-131)  
Correspondence: Eveleen to husband F Myers 1882-97 6(1-248)  
Alterations to Leckhampton and correspondence with  
Buckingham Palace 27 (8,9,10,11,12)  
Family tree 14(7); 17(73-75)  
Myers Will 3(2)  
Letters from mother (Susan) to F Myers 1860-96 15(1-71)  
Letters from F Myers to son Leo 1886-96 18(142-145)  
Letters from Sylvia to father F Myers 1892-98 10(176-179)  
National Portrait Gallery  
E Myers, photographs 1890-1914

### **Corpus Christi College Archives**

Chapter Book 1854-84 – meeting 18 October 1878

Lease Book 1869-82 – pp390-6 and 490 ff with plan

Lease Book 1882-1901 – pp390 ff Outline Plan November

1878 – Charles Bidwell, surveyor

### **Trinity Hall Archives**

#### **Printed Sources**

Catherine P Hall and J R Ravensdale 'West Fields of Cambridge' 1976.

Jane Harrison 'Reminiscences of a Student's Life' 1925.

Florence Keynes 'Gathering Up The Threads' 1950.

Gwen Raverat 'Period Piece' 1960.

Margaret Keynes 'A House by the River' 1976.

Ed. Shils and Carmen Blacker 'Cambridge Women' 1996.

R Griffiths 'The Houses of West Cambridge, The Suburb and the Suburban Detached House 1882-1939' Thesis – School of Architecture Cambridge, May 1981 – photographs of Leckhampton garden.

WJ Bean 'Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles', 8th Edit rev Vol II D-M 1978 2nd impression.

Martyn and Alison Rix National Gardens Society Handbook 1987.

Hilliers' 'Manual of Trees & Shrubs' 1973.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust 'The Gardens of Cambridgeshire –A Gazetteer' 2000.

Frances Gapper, Patience Gapper and Sally Drury 'Gardens of England' The Blue Guide 1991.

Clive J King, 'Catalogue of Plants in the Cambridge University Botanic Garden' 1990.

JOHN DRAKE AND CHARLES MALYON

Copyright © Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust