



CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 30 MAY 2011

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

At our last Annual General Meeting in October, we thanked Alison Gould who had managed the membership records since the Trust started and William Emmerson who kept the committee up to date with gardens in danger of disappearing in the north of the county. Both had decided to retire from our Committee. We also record our thanks to Jean Kearney who previously managed our funds but will now assume responsibility for Membership which is increasing steadily. Jane Sills will take over as our new Treasurer and we wish her every success in this rôle. At the AGM, we welcomed Julia Weaver to the Committee. Julia has agreed to pick up the important and exciting challenge of developing our education policy. Her enthusiasm jump-started us to plan a Study Day and, after a couple of meetings, the decision was taken to base the theme on some of the visits scheduled for later in the year. As a result, a very successful and informative Study Day on the theme of 20th Century Gardens in East Anglia was held in Hemingford Abbots Village Hall on 20th March. You will find later in this newsletter a more detailed report for those who were unable to attend what turned out to be a most enjoyable day. I take this opportunity to thank Judith and Phil Christie, Alan Brown and Julia Weaver for their organisational skills which ensured the event ran smoothly. I also thank our President, Lord Fairhaven for introducing the speakers and Christopher Vane-Percy for his thanks and summing-up at the end of the afternoon. By popular demand, it looks as if we will be repeating this event annually, so if any members have ideas for next year's Study Day do let us know. Our apologies for restricting numbers but requests for tickets, especially when catering is involved, must be received one week before the event. Do please bear this in mind for future events.

Continuing the topic of educational outreach, in the year to date the Trust has agreed to donate or to fund: prizes to Primary Schools in the vicinity of Ramsey Abbey Walled

Kitchen Garden for the most innovative Scarecrow; an award to the most interesting garden project at the Cambridge Show at Wimpole hall, and a prize for the most imaginative children's exhibit at the Fen Drayton Open Gardens event on 11-12 June. The latter will be the debut Open Gardens event for Fen Drayton and follows on from much hard work and organisational effort from Judith Christie, who has also enlisted area enterprises such as Stubbins and Bannolds as event supporters. Further information from judith.christie@ntlworld.com or the event website <http://www.honeyhill.org/gardens/index.htm>.

You may be interested to know that the Association of Gardens Trusts, together with English Heritage and Bedfordshire Gardens Trust, are organising a study day at Wrest Park in Bedfordshire on Thursday 13th October 2011 to demonstrate how new research methods have shown that previous restoration was at times inaccurate. I remember visiting this site over several years and noted that the limes which had been planted were not all coming into leaf at the same time, a result of inaccurate re-planting. Hopefully better understanding will guide better restorations in future. The different overlays at Wrest now offer a palimpsest of the landscape through the formal to Regency and family influences. The morning talks will take place in the dining room of the house and the afternoon will allow attendees to walk the landscape, see the completed areas of restoration and the archaeological excavations taking place. For further information on this event, please contact the Co-ordinator at the AGT: co-ordinator@agt.org.uk or telephone 020 7251 2610.

Sue Oosthuizen at Madingley Hall has organised a one day research workshop on 'Designing with Water: New Research in Garden History' on 11th May 2011. Would those interested please contact Alan Brown at fox.239@btinternet.com

Some of you will have noticed that Jane Brown's recent

book about Lancelot 'Capability' Brown is now on sale. A review is included in this Newsletter.

Finally, I should draw your attention to an historical error that crept in to the article on the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden which was featured in our Newsletter No. 29 from October 2010. In the History section, we wrote that the estate was mortgaged to Sir John Fellowes in 1791. Lord De Ramsey has noted that Sir John Fellowes couldn't have mortgaged the estate in 1791 as he died in 1725, or possibly earlier. I believe the date in our text should have read 1701 – a typographical error – but Lord De Ramsey offers a further fascinating snippet. The reason Sir John didn't acquire the estate was that he had lost a fortune in 1721 as Sub-Governor

of the South Sea Company (the King was the Governor), when the "South-Sea Bubble" burst. Not only did he lose his own money but also that of his nephew and ward, Thomas Fellowes, whose father had previously died in Jamaica – a double blow. I'd like to thank Lord De Ramsey for the extra background material. His keen interest in the project is deeply appreciated, together with his generous provision, as owner of the Ramsey Rural Museum, of parking and the access path to the garden. It is true to say that without his support the project would never have got off the ground.

John Drake, Chairman.

STUDY DAY: 20TH CENTURY GARDENS IN EAST ANGLIA

Saturday 12th March, Hemingford Abbots Village Hall

This lovely day did not disappoint; the hall was a fantastic venue, the food was good and there was an atmosphere of a social gathering of old friends. The day was introduced by the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust's President, Lord Fairhaven. Richard Ayres, Diana Boston and Alan Gray were the three speakers and they and their gardens need little or no introduction if you live anywhere in East Anglia !

Richard Ayres took us on a jaunt through Anglesey Abbey through the eyes of a gardener who had worked there for many years. He described the history of the making of the garden with delightful anecdotes about his employer and the influences he had on the creation and style of the garden. The 1st Lord Fairhaven restored and improved the land to create 114 acres of landscaped gardens which were eventually left to the National Trust on his death in 1966. He undertook gardening with military precision, 'lines were to be straight' and 'perfection was only just good enough'. Richard reported Lord Fairhaven's ritual ascent of the stepladder to view the lines of the cut hedge with the inevitable judgement, 'It's about 99% straight – might get it right next time'.

Richard's talk was a mixture of garden, sculpture and plants and some of the trials and tribulations of opening your garden to large numbers of the public. When the garden used to open Wednesday to Sunday, dead-heading was Monday's occupation so that fresh blooms would be visible by Wednesday. Now the garden is open every day and such activities can no longer be hidden from public gaze. The talk was beautifully illustrated with images of the garden, the sculptures and some of the plants in the winter walk. Any discussion about Anglesey Abbey would not be complete without a few words on snowdrops. These became a feature partly as a result of the devastation wrought by Dutch Elm disease, which removed many elms allowing the indigenous snowdrops to prosper. The talk was concluded with just a few examples of the 240 varieties that can now be seen at Anglesey Abbey including, of course, Galanthus 'Richard Ayres'.

The second speaker was Diana Boston who was introduced as 'living in possibly the oldest continuously inhabited house in Britain', The Manor, Hemingford Grey. Diana led us gently through the social and family history of her mother-in-law, Lucy Maria Boston 1897-1990, and how she came to create a garden in Hemingford Grey. Lucy Boston is well known for a number of things. She started to write children's books in her sixties which transformed The Manor into the magical house 'Green Knowe' and the children who lived there. Her son Peter illustrated the books and they won the Carnegie Medal in 1961.

Lucy's patchwork quilts which she would make in the winter because she couldn't get into the garden are still on display at The Manor. Diana has made them more accessible by publishing her own book on them. We were treated to a few images including the triumph of design and skill that is the patchwork of the crosses. Lucy had moved into the Manor, alone, in 1939 four years after her marriage to Harold Boston had ended. She spoke German, gardened in a dirndl and aroused the suspicions of the locals resulting in a visit from the blackout warden after lights had been seen in her loft. Nonetheless, she held musical evenings during the war, especially for the RAF pilots, with gramophone recitals; the same gramophone can still be found in the music room today.

Diana concluded with a tour of the garden through images and descriptions that brought to life the hard toil and delight that maintaining a garden can be. 'The Elizabethan Ladies' as Diana calls the gently spreading yew topiary that lead from the tow path into the garden which Lucy originally planted as very small 'sticks'. The large collection of iris and roses which clothe every possible support provide a rather softer style of gardening than Anglesey Abbey. Here the plants are allowed to take their course, to rise and fall with the flow of life. It is perhaps just as well that the style of gardening here is that nature is to be enjoyed rather than fought, as the images of the flooding which almost completely covered the garden would be enough to dishearten even the hardest gardener. Diana is a

remarkable plants woman just to keep this garden alive and yet she does much more than that; it is a glorious riot of flowers and colour and her talk evoked the floral scents of a warm summer's evening next to the river.

Alan Gray and Graham Robeson have turned an agricultural corner of Norfolk into a feast of garden rooms and exuberant planting. Alan started his talk with photos of the day that they bought the house in 1973 with 2 acres of tufty grass, one Albertine rose and some privet. We were then treated to a pictorial history of how the garden had grown in size (now 32 acres), shape and content over the almost forty years that they have developed it. It was fantastic to see photos of the same view with a twenty year gap and how the plants and trees had developed in this time. It was evident that many areas had been changed more than once and Alan's delightful approach to 'dead plants' as being an 'opportunity for a new plant' was heartening for all gardeners following last winter!

Alan explained how they had to plant swathes of tree belt to protect them from the coastal winds before they could even start to plant in the gardens. However, this illustrious pair used even this to their advantage; there are 'quiet' rooms of calming green surrounded by hedges. The views are clipped and coaxed to bring stunning moments into focus such as the view of Happisburgh lighthouse through a window in one of the tree belts.

The collection of exotic plants that they have bought to this exuberant garden is almost unimaginable. Swathes of desert plants in the desert wash and masses of succulents such as



Richard Ayres, Diana Boston and Alan Gray, the guest speakers at the Study Day.

Aeonium 'Schwarzkopf' in the walled entrance garden. The formal yew topiary and the luscious bananas and tree ferns make this a garden not to be missed. Alan's account of their gardening odyssey was amusing, provocative and delightful to listen to and his photos told a story of gardening passion and a lust for life and colour.

Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust have arranged visits to East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden on 18th May and Anglesey Abbey on 14th July. The Manor, Hemingford Grey is open daily between 11am – 5pm.

Julia Weaver

ABBOTS RIPTON HALL GARDEN 1956 – 2011

This account of work carried out by the owners, the late Lord De Ramsey and Lady De Ramsey, is inspired by the death in March last year of Peter Foster. At a study day in Hemingford Abbots Village Hall in March 2010 I dedicated the lectures to Peter's memory. He was a local architect whose practice of Marshall Sisson was originally at Farm Hall Godmanchester; he later moved to Harcourt in nearby Hemingford Grey, to work in a single storey building in his own garden. When he first applied for planning permission to erect his office in the garden, it was refused by the local planners. Today it is listed by the same planners. Peter Foster was a quiet man of great age. He always said, when asked to speak at a gathering, 'Most of you here today will probably be surprised to see that I am still alive!'. He had worked for fifteen years as the professional custodian of the fabric of Westminster Abbey from 1973 to 1988 and from the early 1970s undertook various garden buildings in the grounds at Abbots Ripton Hall.

I first met Peter Foster when I asked if he would show members of the Gardens Trust around his garden. This he agreed to do, and Jill Cremer and I spent some time looking at the garden and his classical temple at the southern end of the lawn. We then spent more time talking with him and his wife over several glasses of sherry.

From recollections it is thought that during the 1950's Foster was involved with the design of the decorative timber trellis which ornaments the south elevation of the hall at Abbots Ripton for both Lord De Ramsey's parents and later for the present Lord and his wife who asked him to accentuate the fact that the dining room door lines up precisely with the herbaceous border. He designed the swimming pool which sits very comfortably adjacent to the hall with its views overlooking the garden.

Recently I was shown copies of Peter Foster's drawings by Gavin Smith, the present Head Gardener at Abbots Ripton Hall, who also showed me Lady De Ramsey's list of plant orders which she entered in a ledger entitled *Abbots Ripton Gardens Records of Plants*.

Foster's sketches for further buildings in the garden can be dated from copies of his proposals. But before we proceed further, it must be mentioned that the late Lord De Ramsey (1910 – 1993) and his wife (1906 – 1987) were both very involved in planning and planting this garden. Lord De Ramsey's structures were chosen during the period from 1972 – 1977. Lady De Ramsey's *Record of Plants* commences in 1956 and continues for a further 23 years until 1979. So here is a garden undergoing changes of which the structures and garden buildings are undertaken by Lord De Ramsey complementing his wife's planting ideas.

The drawings which accompany this article are taken from dyeline prints produced by Foster some thirty to forty years ago. The originals were probably drawn on tracing paper. Some have been coloured in crayon with the addition of white chalk to highlight significant details and reflections of the proposal when mirrored in water. They have been kept folded and this is obvious in some of the photographs. The

list of garden plants ordered is hand written and the writing has not faded as the ledger has always been kept closed.

In 1970 thirty-five trees and shrubs were ordered from Humphry Waterfield, an artist and garden landscaper who lived in the South of France at Menton. Waterfield designed a terrace garden at Clos du Peyronet, with a water stairway of successive ponds, around which he laid out cypress tree tunnels, filled with a wide range of plants. He was asked to provide Magnolias, Piceas, various Prunus, Halesias, and Cistus.

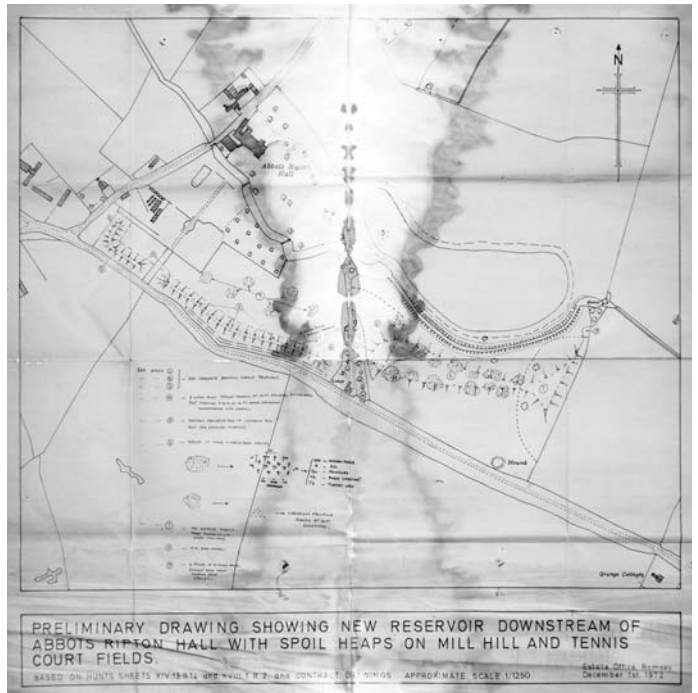


Figure 1. Abbots Ripton Hall garden plan from 1972.

A plan (Figure 1) of the whole grounds, dated December 1972, was prepared by Lord De Ramsey's Estate Office showing the new reservoir to the east downstream of the Hall, with spoil heaps on Mill Hill and the Tennis Court Fields, thereby protecting the grounds from the St Ives road and giving privacy to the garden but providing a hidden view from the formal herbaceous borders through the bank to the outside world. The planting comprised simple groups of mixed trees including Norway Maple, Ash, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut and Turkey Oak. A new planting near the Lodge required *Populus tremula* with sycamore and elm staggered amongst laurel. In area the new reservoir was larger than the whole garden and the existing straight stream was now diverted to run parallel to the south of the reservoir following its curved outline.

Towards the end of 1973 in the *Record of Plants* is an entry entitled, 'Trees for planting by (the) Lake ordered by Lanning Roper'. Roper was an American living in England and designing gardens for clients with large estates, often working in their gardens during weeks in the year. This is the only specific record I have found to state that Lanning Roper was connected with this garden. His order is for several *Salix* (willows) and lists 3 *S. daphnoides*, 10 *S. incana*, 3 *S. irrorata* to name but a few in the collection of 35 willows required.

Also in 1972 a drawing (Figure 2) was received by Lord De Ramsey from Peter Foster showing proposals for a new bridge over the stream as it enters the garden near where, today, the swimming pool is situated. It shows the bridge passing through a short colonnade of concrete columns placed in front of a 'suspended grotto' seen through an arch in a trellis screen. The trellis is made of tanalized softwood painted with three coats of oil. The central section of the bridge is detachable and could be removed if required.

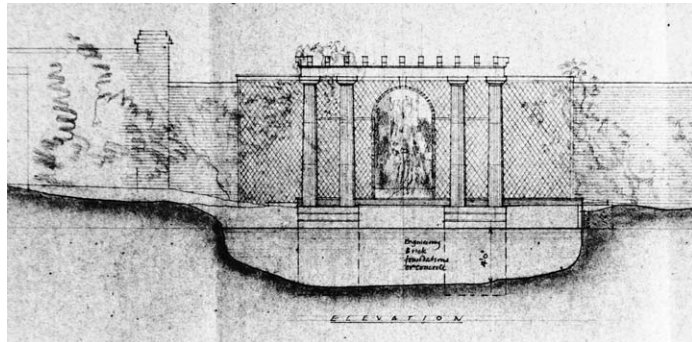


Figure 2. Detail of the Grotto Bridge

By 1972 Lady De Ramsey had filled 18 pages of her plant ledger with her orders. They commence in 1956 with one to Edwin Murrell who had a rose nursery at Shrewsbury. Hilda Murrell had established this nursery, which was Vita Sackville-West's favourite for obtaining old shrub roses. Sadly Vita wrote to her husband a week before she died in June 1962 hoping that she would be strong enough to visit Miss Murrell's roses. The roses included in Lady De Ramsey's order were 8 *Rugosa* – *Blanc Double de Coubert*, *R. Bush Gallica*, *R. Belle Isis*, *R. Striped Moss* plus 20 *Hydrangea grandiflora*, and 3 *Philadelphus Virginal* (Double).

This list of plants is followed by a long list of shrubs and then in 1960 an order is placed with a Miss Lindsay for an extensive list of nearly 700 herbaceous plants, mainly Hostas, Euphorbias, Epimediums, Geraniums, Periwinkles and Violets. The Miss Lindsay mentioned above evidently cannot be the Norah Lindsay who died in 1948 and, at the age of fifty-one, had taken up garden design as a career.

During the same year are two large orders from John Scott's nursery at Crewkerne in Somerset, whose catalogue was lavishly illustrated by Robin Tanner, for Campanulas and other choice herbaceous plants including Dictamnus, Cimicifugas, Lobelia cardinalis and Senecio przewalskii. Then from Hilliers came a range of Acers and a collection of Ceanothus.

With the help of Valerie Finnis (Lady Scott) and Beth Chatto the Grey Border was re-planted in 1963 with some 240 plants. (This border previously grew the then fashionable Hybrid Tea roses.) The plants were obtained from Mrs Desmond Underwood's nursery in Essex. Mrs Underwood introduced many gardeners to the use of grey foliage plants in garden design. I always remember at the Chelsea Flower Show she was the only exhibitor permitted to use a shooting stick behind her display for resting her tired legs during the long hours of the show. The top of the Grey Border was completed in 1964. Each week Valerie Finnis taught the head gardener how to maintain grey plants by taking cuttings regularly.

There was little plant buying in 1966, but large orders followed placed to Mrs Underwood, Murrell, Bloom, Hillier, Broadleigh Gardens, Notcutts, and Carlile nursery. Individuals also provided plants: John Cutchfield for Dahlias, J. R. Pontion for Iris, Charles Alington for Astilbes and Spireas, and L. R. Russell for Viburnums. Included also are several bulb orders.

It is not until 1977 that the garden is graced with a range of buildings and garden features, these provide a more relaxed circulation route and various buildings now seem as if they were provided much earlier. There must have been a very good working relationship between Lord De Ramsey and Peter Foster to whom he turned frequently for new projects to improve the garden.

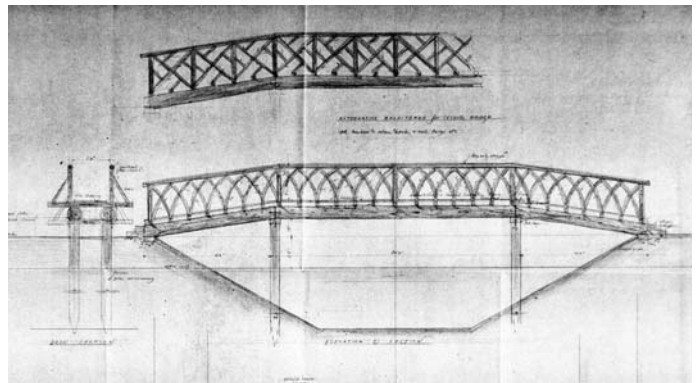


Figure 3. Rustic bridge designs.

Having organised the reservoir, in 1977 Lord De Ramsey asked Foster to prepare designs for the Grotto Bridge (see above) and two rustic bridges, one called Garden Bridge and a design called Temple Bridge. These were later revised in 1979 with alternative proposals for Gothic style rustic balustrades in curved branches covered with their bark (Figure 3). Foster noted that all timbers were to 'retain their bark and some twigs etc'. Sadly, both these small footbridges with rustic balustrades have rotted and collapsed. A Summerhouse was required by the tennis court, and the gate and pillars with the Ramsey incense boat on top framing the 'hidden view', are both fine examples of Foster's designs remaining today. 1977 was a year of great activity in the garden; not only were many of the structures we see today commissioned and erected but, at the same time, Lady De Ramsey was also ordering several trees for the garden.

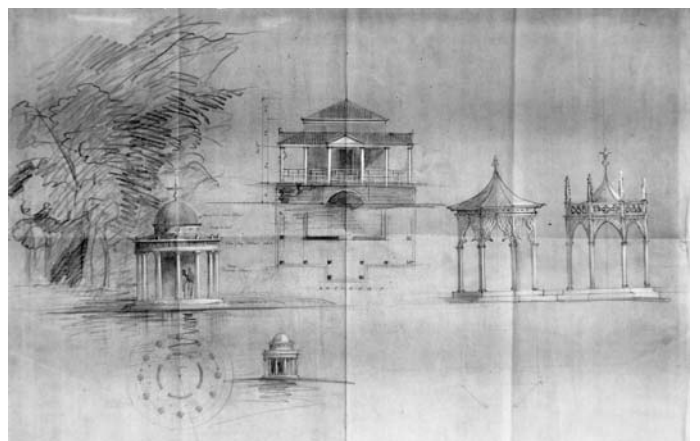


Figure 4. Ideas for the Fishing Pavilion.

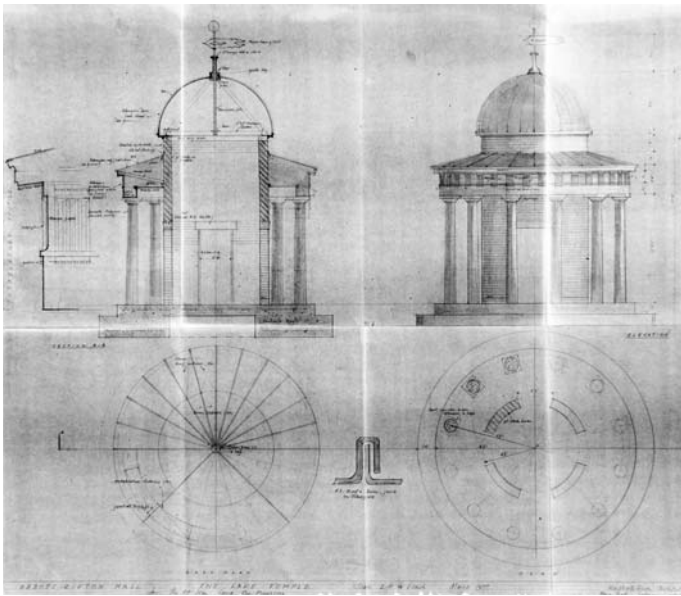


Figure 5. Details of domed Fishing Pavilion proposal

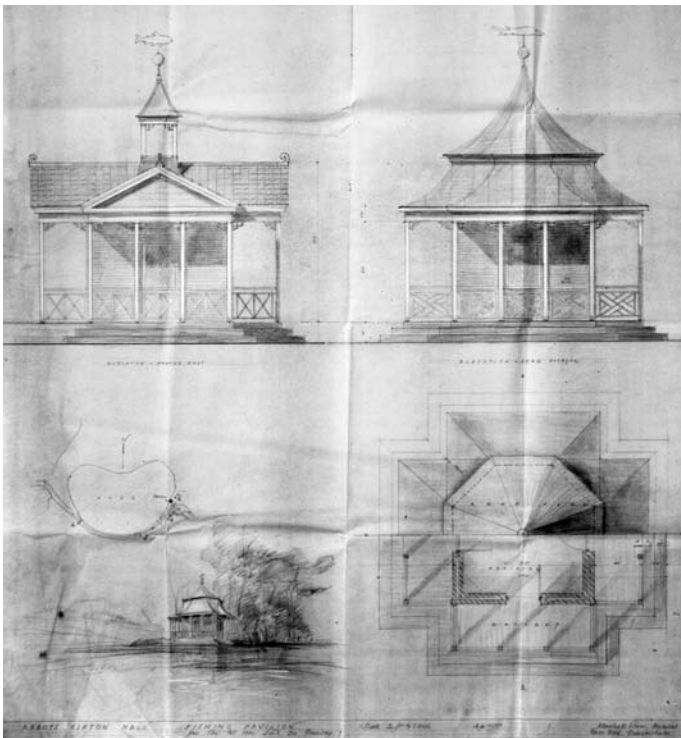


Figure 6. Details of Chinese-style proposal

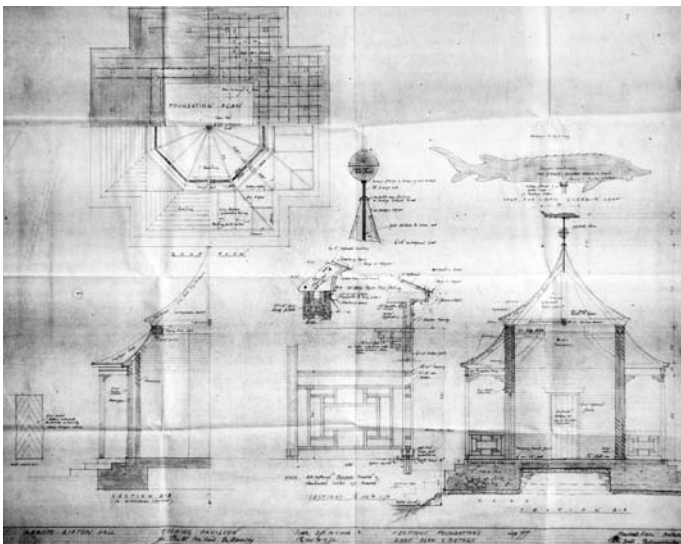


Figure 7. Details of sturgeon weathervane and balustrading.

Between March and September 1977 Foster had been asked to provide proposals for a Fishing Pavilion to be sited on the far bank of the new reservoir. A large drawing (Figure 4) shows sketches of four alternatives – a domed circular building within a colonnade of Doric columns with the dome made from fibreglass, a tea house in the Chinese style, and two gothic structures but with differing roofs. A separate drawing (Figure 5) shows in some detail the construction of the domed circular building which suggests that this design would be the one chosen with its weathervane in the shape of a flag made from copper and gilded. But a further drawing, (Figure 6) coloured in crayons shows that the Chinese style proposals must have been preferred by Lord De Ramsey. Further discussions between Client and Architect occur. Foster later produces a drawing (Figure 7) offering alternatives for the roof, each surmounted with a weathervane in the shape of a sturgeon, and suggests different designs for the balustrading. Each design has a balcony with access from a room in the Pavilion. This design is further developed by Foster showing foundations and roof details using copper – the proposed weather vane not decided. A smaller drawing showing proposals for a pair of circular windows for bird watching was not carried out.

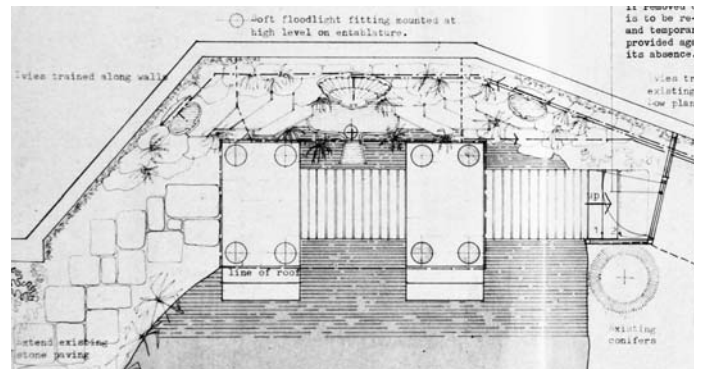


Figure 8. Grotto alterations with shell water cascades

During 1977 the Architects Design Partnership, at Henley on Thames produces a set of drawings including one (Figure 8) showing alterations to the grotto, although keeping the colonnade proposals suggested by Foster some years earlier. One large and two smaller stone-carved half-shells form a water feature: water spills over into the stream from the larger shell in the centre while water from the smaller flanking shells cascades down a series of stepped slate shelves. The shells were carved by masons working for Rattee & Kett, stone masons and builders in Cambridge.

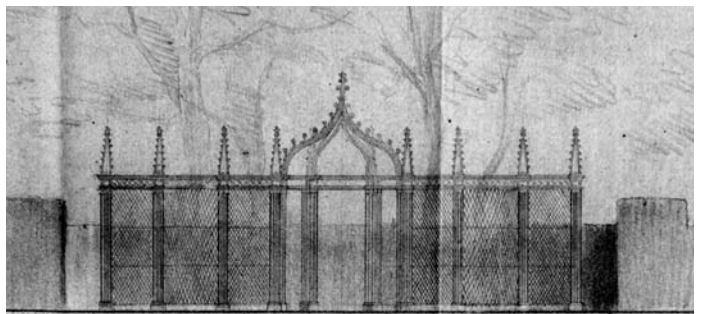


Figure 9. Foster's Trellis in the Great Herbaceous Border.

In 1978 Foster produced sketches (Figure *9*) for the Trellis in the Great Herbaceous Borders. Iroko columns supported

fibreglass pinnacles and the circular plan included large panels of trellis made from soft wood and then creosoted but bent to the curve of the plan. A year later Foster produced a Gothic design (Figure 10) for a timber seat to be placed to one side of the Gothic trellis. The proportions of this trellis fit well in relation with the yew hedges and still look good today.

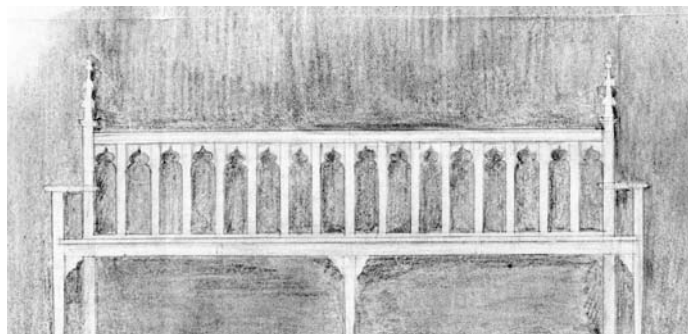


Figure 10. Foster's Gothic timber seat.

Foster's final work for the late Lord De Ramsey and his wife was the Islamic gate, known to his children as 'The Ayatollah's Gate'.

The result of the partnership between late Lord De Ramsey and Peter Foster has achieved a garden where the formal areas have been developed sensitively but kept very formal while the rustic designs for the bridges have blended with the meandering stream through luxuriant plantings creating an almost woodland setting. Then the surprise when you reach the edge of the reservoir to see in the distance the Chinese Fishing Pavilion placed like a jewel with its yellow door reflecting clearly in the water below. Was the inspiration of this setting and building perhaps a landscape painting by an English artist?

A final note about the nurseries that supplied plants for the garden: Jim Archibald, who sadly died recently, and ran The Plantsman Nursery in Dorset with Eric Smith was asked to provide ninety hellebores in 1977 before hellebores became as desirable as they are today. John Mattock, Peter Beales and David Austin all sent roses when required. Washfield Nursery

in Kent sent two hundred and thirty *Cyclamen neapolitanum*: an amazing achievement as whenever I went there one was limited to buying just three of any plant.

Hopefully the massive group of giant knotweed which flanks the pavilion will soon disappear. Today Beth Chatto would have known better than to send four plants of this thug to Lady De Ramsey, as she did in 1973.

Foster continued to produce garden buildings schemes for the family. For the present Lord De Ramsey and his wife, Foster designed a fine snooker room, next to the swimming pool, and the Millennium Sundial which came third in the Country Life competition, in addition to the trellis improvements mentioned earlier in this article.

Over half a century several horticulturalists have advised on the gardens at Abbots Ripton Hall. Jim Russell gave advice and suggestions on trees. Peter Coates certainly visited but it is not remembered what he advised. Tony Venison (who together with Christopher Lloyd wrote the weekly garden articles in Country Life) advised on the maintenance of the garden up to the time when the present Lord De Ramsey arrived.

I am always impressed by the mature elms which still survive in the garden. Trees form an important part of this garden and one should spend time looking at them. Today a collection of rare oaks has been started by Lord De Ramsey and his wife, which have mainly been given by Michael Heathcote Amory from Chevithorne near Tiverton and by Bill Legge-Burke from Glanusk Park.

I would like to thank Lord De Ramsey for his help in writing this article. I would also like to thank Gavin Smith, Head Gardener at Abbots Ripton Hall, for showing me the drawings and the plant lists, and my thanks also go to Howard Rice for taking photographs of the drawings and plant lists for this article.

John Drake

(For those who have not yet visited the garden, please note that Abbots Ripton Hall Garden will be open this year on ****.)



A selection of orders from Lady De Ramsey's Record of Plants including an order from Beth Chatto (top left and another made by Lanning Roper (right).

A VISIT TO THE OLD ORCHARD, GIRTON COLLEGE

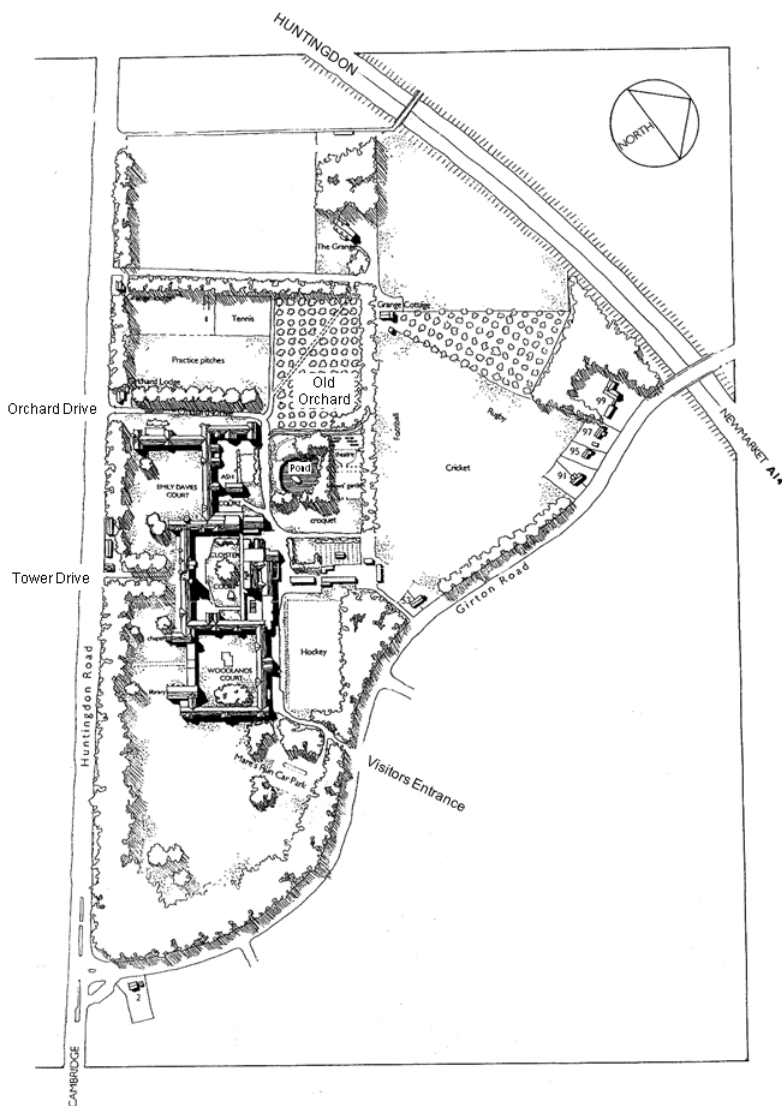
14th October 2010

Miss Emily Davies founded Girton College, the second of Cambridge's women's college in 1873. Together with Newnham College, it was a product of the fight for women's equality and their right to further education. Originally in 1869 young women had lived at Benslow House, Hitchin, but they were moved to a 16 acre site with a south west boundary of Huntingdon Road to the south of Girton village. The College was located two miles to the north of the town centre for reasons of Victorian prudery; Emily Davies purchased the land from John Dennis and began the planting of the present mature trees which today offer privacy and shelter from east winds.

From its foundation apple trees were planted in the 1880's and the acquisition of a further 17 acres in 1886 made possible the development of today's Old Orchard, dating from 1893. The first planting was under the direction of Miss Elizabeth Welsh, a lecturer, who later became Garden Steward and then Mistress. (Girton College has a Mistress, while Newnham has a Principal.) The intention was that the College should be self-sufficient both in fruit and vegetables for 80 young women, and this orchard is a typical example of those planted by large institutions and the owners of county houses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today it is considered to be one of the most important historic orchards in the region on account of its large number of old varieties on one site. It possesses the best and largest collection of varieties of apples in Cambridgeshire. There are some 40 varieties of apple: American Mother, Beauty of Kent, Bismark, Blenheim Orange, Bramley's Seedling, Charles Ross, Chiver's Delight, Crimson Bramley, Court Pendu Plat, Cox Pomona, Devonshire Quarendon, Dr Harvey, Dumelow's Seedling, Egremont Seedling Russet, Ecklinville Seedling, Fortune, Gladstone, Gloria Mundi, Howgate Wonder, James Grieve, John Standish, King of the Pippins, Lady Sudeley, Laxton's Exquisite, Laxton's Delight, Laxton's Superb, Lord Derby, Monarch, Newton Wonder, Norfolk Beefing, Normanton, Northern Greening, Patricia, Peasgood Nonsuch, Rosemary Russet, Scarlet Pimpernel, Warner's King, Wealthy, Wheeler's Russet and Golden Russet. There are three varieties of pear, and three of plum: Conference, Fondant and Pitmaston Duchess; Cambridge Gage, Giant Prune and Victoria. Also grown are medlars, quinces and cob nuts.

To reach this orchard, Orchard Drive was constructed to the north of Emily Davies Court, an entrance just beyond the College's main entrance of Tower Drive. It leads also to Girton's Pond and the Home Garden. Today the Old Orchard has some trees of the earliest planting and they are of interest for their closeness to the original clone. There have been some replacements, some new varieties and a range of root stocks. In the 1930's pruning and new planting rejuvenated the orchard and a new orchard was planted in 1948. The latter was replaced by a sports ground and the Old Orchard reached its heyday under William 'Mac' Stringer,

Head Gardener for 32 years, in the 1960's and 70's. He offered apples for show at both the Cambridgeshire County Show and at the RHS Late Fruit Show, winning numerous awards. Girton College won the Hogg Medal or Silver Hogg at the RHS Show on twelve occasions in the 1960-70s. On 21st November 1979 The Times recorded "Girton College virtually swept the board..... Taking many first prizes, including those for three dessert varieties (Lord Lambourne, Blenheim Orange and Red Coat Grieve) and three cooking varieties (Golden Noble, Blenheim Orange and Edward VII)". By the time of Mr Stringer's retirement at the end of the Lent Term, 1980 he and his orchard had become a legend in Cambridge college gardening circles as well as in the world of pomologists. 'Mac' had worked hard to retrieve lost varieties, propagating some forty and twenty four varieties of cordons. The College possesses his detailed record.



Map of Girton College grounds.

During the later 1990's a fresh start was made with propagations from the Old Orchard and from the 1948 planting. The root stock MM111 was chosen; trees were grafted in the college nursery and grown on. There have also been donations replacing former varieties and offering rare

varieties and those of local interest. In 2001 there were plans for a complete restoration and the Old Orchard is managed using organic principles and environmental balance. No sprays are used, except for spot weed control; the grass is cut at about six week intervals through the summer with one area left until July allowing plant and insect populations to survive and breed. Rabbits, a major pest, are restricted by a fence provided by the Friends of the Gardens. Fruit is no longer considered to be of importance, with little value from sale; this year cider has been considered, while the consideration of grazing has been impracticable to date. The College welcomes visitors to the Old Orchard and asks that they keep to the paths, although they are free to collect windfalls.

An unexpected bonus was the opportunity to follow 'Mac' Stringer's recommended circular walk through the 46 acres of college grounds. From Orchard Drive in the NW one can approach the old wing of Emily Davies Court, Girton's first completed building and the work of Alfred Waterhouse, 1873. As at Pembroke College, he used his characteristic red brick and terracotta. However he broke with Cambridge tradition introducing a plan of corridors rather than staircases. Girton's courts are a mixture of enclosed and open sided. In 1921 there were 7 gardeners and the Mistress Jane Swindale asked for help with planting from her friend, Gertrude Jekyll. For Emily Davies Court she recommended drifts of stachis, bergenias, paeonies and mallows; in the autumn there were shrubs, the blue winter-flowering iris *unguicularis*, a clematis *armandii* and an ivy with parasitical broom rape. On the lawn there is an Atlantic cedar and a black mulberry.

Shrubs and specimen trees offer protection along the boundary with Huntingdon Road; there is a ginkgo, a European larch, an *Acer platanoides* - 'Drummondii' - and a copper beech planted by the Queen Mother in the College's centenary year. In January the front drive is flanked with aconites and snowdrops leading to Paul Waterhouse's Tower Wing and Gatehouse, 1887. Girton follows the Cambridge tradition with the gatehouse as an individual structure in its own right. A *ceanothus*, 'Cascade', grows on the walls. Three generations of Waterhouses, Albert, Paul and Michael, were the architects of the majority of Girton's buildings. On the north side of the Cloister Court and above the small Elizabeth Baker Court is David Robert's Mistress's Flat, 1962. Perhaps reacting against red brick, the Flat is of light design with wooden frame, extensive use of glass and views both of the two courts and of the College grounds to the north. Gertrude Jekyll had offered advice on the planting in Cloister Court with drifts of silvers, greys, blues and soft pinks. In the

cloister corridor adjacent to the Hall are an interesting series of photographs: Edwardian Girtonians working in their own labs, forming teams for sport and even manning their own fire engine.

Returning to the South front there is a brown Turkey fig growing below the Chapel window and then Michael Waterhouse's Woodlands Court, 1931, with its rose beds and large variety of irises. There are climbing roses: Clos Vougeot, Crimson Glory, Etoile de Hollande, New Dawn and Albertine. Between the Chapel and the Library are two beds of hybrid tea roses surrounded by Bourbons, perpetual musk and rugosa, and there is a yellow and white Banksian rose on the Library wall.

Around the corner of Woodland Court to the SE are strawberry grapes, magnolias, a Tree of Heaven, a Cut-leaved beech and then a bluebell glade with periwinkle ground cover. Moving northwards the hockey pitch is flanked by *laburnum rossii* and *Parrotia persica* with its crimson autumnal foliage. Adjacent is the historic Home Garden now grassed and with a collection of delphiniums. This garden had been established by Elizabeth Welsh in the late 1880's, together with the Old Orchard, and had provided the College with vegetables until the end of World War Two. After this war, herbaceous borders had priority over vegetables. At the rear of the main building is an Edwardian closed swimming bath and an interesting collection of gardener's sheds and maintenance buildings.

Then to the east of the Old Orchard is Miss Welsh's Pond and Yew Walk with a Fellows' Garden on the north side. The Pond is a pleasing, wild place with willows, yellow 'flags' and purple loosestrife. Above is a mound named after a Mistress, Miss K T Butler, sometime professor of Italian. *Buddleia alternifolia* grows here and it is reached by a bridge from the Fellows' Garden. In 1992 Penelope Hobhouse, an Old Girtonian, designed a green theatre in this garden, using yews for the wings against a backdrop of trees. The auditorium is a semi-circular lawn edged with shrubs and scented flowers. On the NW side of The Pond is Miss Welsh's Yew Walk and a hundred yard long Honeysuckle Walk - a popular spot for picnics, with hawthorns above and periwinkles below combining with the honeysuckle. At the far end lies the Grange, formerly a private house with Irish Yews and a Golden Yew on the lawns.

In 1969 Roberts and Clarke designed Wolfson Court in Clarkson Road, a more central site for some undergraduates, but the main College retains its atmosphere of a late Victorian house in landscaped grounds.

Charles Malyon

THE OMNIPOTENT MAGICIAN

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown 1716 – 1783

by

Jane Brown

Although much has been written about Lancelot Brown, most of us will be familiar with Dorothy Stroud's *Capability Brown* publication of 1950. This brought to the public's attention the 200 projects Brown worked on. Thus owners of estates which had been modelled by Brown, such as Lord Bath at Longleat, who like others opened their houses to the public really saved Brown's legacy. Today, with greater general interest in parks and gardens, Jane Brown has produced this publication which sets out Brown's life and achievements and which investigates thoroughly the society he lived and worked in, his clients, the changes to grounds and gardens in the 18th century and finally, but not least, his profession.

The population of England in the 18th century was much smaller than it is today. Brown knew a greater proportion of the influential people than most of us do now, and Jane Brown has researched every source and reference to provide the connections and relationships Brown made during the 67 years of his life. One has only to consult the Index in her book to see that it covers no fewer than 20 pages and, together with copious Notes and Sources which cover a further 40 pages, we see immediately that here is a book which replaces those that have been written previously and which will be used by scholars and researchers for the next 60 years.

We are given a helpful map of England showing the 79 most important places with which he was connected, listed in the chronological order of his involvement. Immediately one is astounded at the miles he covered throughout England on horseback during his career. I note that Jane Brown states the journeys she made across England while preparing her book and, even with the benefit of motorways, one realises that her material is exhaustively researched, both literally and figuratively. Furthermore, having trodden the many estates herself, she is able to bring direct contact and experience to her writing.

Besides detailed accounts of his projects there is much of local interest, not only in Northumberland where he was born, but also at the end of his life when his business moved to Fenstanton. Brown's relationship with the Earl of Sandwich, a friend of Lord Gower a government colleague, and his appointment by Sandwich as High Sheriff of Huntingdonshire had previously been undocumented. However, Jane Brown discovered a reference in a letter by Uvedale Price (who wrote the *Essay on the Picturesque*), 'I remember hearing, that when Mr Brown was high sheriff...'. Furthermore, an Assize court, in whose procession Brown participated as a consequence of his office, was held in Cambridge on 13th February 1770 and reported in the Cambridge Chronicle of the 19th February 1770.

The memorial tomb to Brown in Fenstanton Church has been

referred to by many because of its poetic inscription (see Figure), which reads:

*Ye Sons of Elegance, who truly taste
The Simple charms that genuine Art supplies,
Come from the sylvan Scenes his Genius grac'd,
And offer here your tributary Sigh's.
But know that more than Genius slumbers here
Virtues were his which Arts best powers transcend
Come, ye Superior train who these revere
And weep the Christian Husband Father Friend*

Jane Brown has discovered that there is a connection between the families of Mary Elizabeth Cowling and Lancelot Brown (members of both families are buried in the same vault in Fenstanton Church). A Mr Inskip Ladds was onetime church architect for Fenstanton and, about 1910, he was concerned about the state of the Brown monument so he sketched a rough family tree which survives in the Norris Museum in St Ives. Being local and up to date with local knowledge within living memory, he was clearly informed that Mary Elizabeth Cowling was Lancelot Brown's natural daughter (cf the family tree on pages xi and xiii at the front of the book).

I was interested to read that Brown met George Grenville in the summer of 1764 at Shortgrove, Newport, in Essex. (I worked on a garden design for the new owners and found that Brown's plan was in the Hampshire Record office - thanks to help from the Essex Gardens Trust). Grenville was First Lord of the Treasury and, in conversation, Brown took the opportunity to mention his hopes for a royal appointment. He later writes, 'I should be very happy to have the garden at Windsor Castle included in the Warrant... I know it is a very small thing but if the King should like to anything there...' Grenville was quick off the mark and in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of July 1764, it was announced that Brown had been appointed as Master Gardener at Hampton Court. The Royal Warrant, dated 16th July, gives the curious amount of £1,107/6/- a year, plus £100 for 'raising pineapples' and another £100 for 'parcel fruits', but Brown's account book shows that he received the expected £2,000 in four quarterly payments without fail.

Jane Brown reveals at length the important rôle of Henry Holland, the accomplished architect of the time, who married Brown's eldest daughter Bridget in 1773 thereby enlarging Brown's range of important clients. Thus Brown is consulted at Southill, in Bedfordshire, by the Torringtons

and, when the estate is later bought by the Whitbreads, Henry Holland is asked to design the new house. At Wrest Park, also in Bedfordshire, The Marchioness Grey's eldest daughter Lady Amabel, whose husband was Lord Polwarth, described Brown upon arrival for lunch as 'a great Man'. After lunch Lady Amabel tried to get Brown to provide a sketch. He could not be persuaded even to make a sketch, 'a Pencil & Paper he thought would do more Harm than Good, the trees should be mark'd upon the spot'. But he did provide a plan for the work to the north park at Wimpole Hall for the Earl of Hardwicke.

This book is a result of much detailed research and includes many important new discoveries; it extends the reader's knowledge, is tightly packed full of information on every page and, while a compelling read, requires one's uninterrupted concentration to absorb the detail. (Trying to read this caused my new dog Titus much anguish through loss of my attention.)

By the end I felt almost as exhausted as Brown must have been riding on horseback across England. But what a journey has been revealed in Jane Brown's most welcome latest book. A remarkable achievement.

Three exhausted but inspired people (four if you allow the anthropomorphism for my dog!).

John Drake

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The monument to Lancelot Brown in the parish church of St Peter & St Paul, Fenstanton.

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