

NATIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS URGENT NOTICE

We have been informed by 'Head Office' that they no longer have the facility to take either Credit or Debit card payments over the telephone or by you writing in with the details of your card. All reference to card payments has been removed from the web site. This is important as subscriptions can be paid from October 1st. 2019. It would seem that Cheques sent to the office (NB *see change of office address in next paragraph!*) or by direct transfer are the ways to pay. (*Whoever said that cheques will soon be obsolete? – Ed.*)

The address of 'Head Office' has also changed – by one very small but crucial element. The number of the office has changed from 15 to **3** Basepoint etc.

SOME 'STAR-STRUCK' GARDENING TIPS (from Samuel Gilbert in 1682)

If you prune your vines when the moon is full and positioned to either Taurus, Leo, Scorpio or Sagittarius, neither worms nor buds will infest your grapes.

When you sow to have double flowers, do it in the full of the moon.

Neither graft, set, sow nor plant anything when there is an eclipse of the moon or the sun.

Dress your gardens, and trim your small trees and shrubs when the moon is in Libra or Capricorn

Set or sow all kinds of pulse when the moon is in Cancer.

(I knew I was doing something wrong!! I must consult my wife more often – Ed.)



Derbyshire Group

NEWSLETTER



AUTUMN 2019

Contents

Notes from the Chair	Page 3
Day Trip 1 - Castle Ashby & Thenford Garden	Page 5
Patience is a virtue?	Page 7
Weekend Trip 2018 – 1	Page 10
Weekend Trip 2018 – 2	Page 12
Weekend Trip 2018 – 3	Page 14
Weekend Trip 2018 – 4	Page 15
Weekend Trip 2018 – 5	Page 17
Weekend Trip 2018 – 6	Page 18
Weekend Trip 2018 – 7	Page 19
Weekend Trip 2018 – 8	Page 21
The Everyday Trials of Country Folk	Page 21
Day Trip 2 - Moreton Hall Gardens & Meadow Farm Garden & Nursery.....	Page 22
Urgent Notice & Old Gardening Tips.....	Page 24

“It is a greater act of faith to plant a bulb, than to plant a tree”

Clare Leighton, 1935

(Contd. from p.22)

The spring garden had featured in Gardeners World fairly recently but obviously we would see a different panorama in July. We were not disappointed! The garden had ‘rooms’, each with their own character and all thoughtfully and tastefully planted in terms of flower and foliage colour and form. Roses and clematis were to the fore, whilst other flowers to feature included *delphinium*, *campanula*, *achillea*, *penstemon*, *nepeta* and, I think, an erect and stately white *veronicastrum*, though this brief list does not do the garden justice. The parkland looked as immaculate as the gardens and on its perimeter was a natural looking pond with water lilies and edged by choice plants, shrubs and trees. The pond area maintenance being performed by two gardeners hardly seemed necessary!

Lunch was at Hillers farm shop, Alcester. The food was good and the bonus was that there was a garden to look round. Some of the plants therein had potted specimens sited adjacent to them to tempt visitors, a crafty ploy which resulted in my purchase of penstemon ‘Firebird’. To my chagrin, however, when I took this to the payment point nearby there was a very large plant sales area which there was not time to view. What a blow to a hardy planter!

Our final destination was to Meadow Farm, Feckenham, home of Rob and Diane Cole. Rob has previously spoken to us at one of our indoor meetings and he greeted us with a witty talk about the garden and nursery. This was followed by a piece of one of Diane’s delicious cakes and a drink, and it was then on to the garden, which was superb, full of colour, delightfully landscaped and with lots of features. Some of the flower colours were really vivid with *echinacea*, *alstroemeria*, *kniphofia* and *lilies* particularly coming to mind. A bonus was the adjacent three acre wildflower meadow where, to our delight, the fairly uncommon marbled white butterfly was on the wing. The nursery is being closed but there were still plenty of plants available for us to buy. What more could we ask? Well done, Lynn. You organised a super day.

Nigel Needham

cycle We just assumed that he was a local resident just saving money on petrol. After reaching a financial agreement with him, he arranged to start a few days later.

Imagine our surprise when he arrived on the **same sturdy machine**, with a *long handle rake* tied to the crossbar and *a pair of hand shears* on the bike rack. After a short time he inquired if I had any electric hedge clippers, saying the hedge looked much larger than remembered.

After a week of toil - and many words which I had to look up in the dictionary, - he told me that the task was complete What a relief! I did not make another appointment for his services again.

The following year we decided to cut the hedge in half using a chainsaw and now have a garden expert with his own tools and pickup truck - but that's another story! The saga continues.

Janet & Dorrell Harrison.

(Have we any other stories like that? I would love to hear them, if you have. – Ed.)

DAY TRIP - 2

MORTON HALL GARDENS AND MEADOW FARM GARDEN AND NURSERY

Sadly, it was not realised until the last minute that no article had been submitted for our above named trip to Worcestershire on 11th July. Thus, this one has been hurriedly assembled and illustrates that old age affords happy memories, but is often reluctant to supply too much associated detail, especially when you have visited umpteen gardens in a season. Please, therefore, forgive the article's shortcomings.

Firstly we visited Morton Hall, a Georgian country house with eight acres of beautifully designed and maintained gardens and extensive parkland near Redditch. The spring garden had featured in Gardeners World fairly recently but obviously we would see a different panorama in July. *(Contd. on p.23)*

Notes from the Chair

FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome back to everyone to what will be our twenty first season. A meeting was held in October, 1999, at the Methodist church hall in Darley Dale to see if there was sufficient support to start a Derbyshire group within HPS. There was, of course, and a consequent resourceful and prudent committee laid the foundations of the flourishing group that we are today. Our thanks should go to all who have contributed along the way, and the best reward we can give them is to continue supporting the group and ensure that a future chairman is echoing these sentiments in another twenty years. This should be no hardship as we have an excellent speaker programme for 2019/20, for which our thanks must go to our secretary, Celia Weaver, and naturally there will be trips and, hopefully, a small anniversary celebration event; so here's to the next twenty years.

Our June holiday to the gardens of Somerset and Devon was hugely enjoyable thanks to the planning of Ian Evans with the support of his wife, Anne. Ian even managed to organise dry weather for three of the four days whilst most of the country suffered downpours. We visited eight cracking gardens and there is an article on each one herein, with each written by a different intrepid author or pair of authors. The only downside to this was that one member thought that the services of some authors had been procured by bullying! As Margot Leadbetter, a wannabe Julie Andrews in an episode of The Good Life almost said, "Bullying is an ugly word, Miss Mountshaft". I prefer 'volunteering', don't you?

I know that many of you look forward to our day trips, as evidenced by their over-subscription, and we again enjoyed two great trips this summer (see articles herein). Lynn Wood was the organiser and she is already working on next year's trips, so thank you and well done, Lynn

On a less successful note, I have to say that I have been disappointed by the apparent lack of response to our new HPS Derbyshire Group Facebook page.

Which has been so successfully instigated and maintained by Ann Franks. Not too many 'hits' have been recorded and although there are a number of postings, including many photographs of our trips and holiday, they have come from very few sources. We do need to have regular postings to keep things fresh and let outsiders know that we are a vibrant, active group which is worth joining. I can understand reluctance on personal privacy and/or triviality grounds, but your surname need not be disclosed when making a contribution, so do please try to view and/or post to the page. Ann will be happy to advise how to do so.

Finally, after members' requests, we have decided that we will try to be more environmentally friendly with regard to refreshments at meetings. Once our stock of polystyrene cups has been used up we will use paper cups instead, although they are more expensive. Further, you are encouraged to bring your own mug to use instead of the paper cups: this will help the environment even more. Our overall contribution may be small in global terms, but every long journey begins with one step, so let's take it.

Happy gardening.

Nigel

OBITUARY

We sadly advise that our long-standing member **Sue Holmes** passed away in June. Sue staunchly supported our meetings trips and holidays along with husband **Keith**. She will be greatly missed, and we offer our condolences to Keith.

LAST STOP

The final garden of our tour is run by the exuberant Derry Watkins who is an American. She has travelled widely collecting new and rare plants. Her nursery is situated at the top of a narrow valley near Bath, Somerset.

The nursery is the first thing that greets you, full of a huge variety of plants for sale; many of them not normally seen in the UK.

The garden descends steeply from the house which could be described as a 'modern-day' arts and crafts building. Derry and her husband have worked wonders, making terraces and sculpting the land into island-like beds. Every plant is listed and named - **394 in all!** The plants do change regularly, though. As you can imagine we are really spoilt for choice!

Too soon it is time to take our leave from this remarkable garden and its owners and head for home; yet more plants for our ever patient driver, Andy, to stash away 'SOMEWHERE' !

June Clarke

The Everyday trials of country folk!! – Episode 1

THE LAUREL HEDGE

Having inherited our laurel hedge over thirty years ago, we originally thought how good it looked when freshly trimmed. After a few years of giving the hedge a light trim it became apparent that more drastic action would be needed. *(It was now 100yds long 9ft high & 9ft wide)!!!*

When reading the local paper in the trader section we were delighted to see that a gardening expert was advertising, and claimed that one of his many areas of expertise was hedge trimming.

After replying to his advert. we were not too concerned when he arrived to assess the task, riding on a large old-fashioned 'sit up and beg' type pedal

Bickham House in Devon; the lady owner telling us, that they didn't celebrate their 25th Wedding Anniversary with a party, they bought Pope's Urn instead!

However I digress. My overall impression of the **Georgian Landscape Garden** was the peace and tranquillity of nature at its best with just the birdsong to enhance the mood. But, no time to linger; on towards **Hestercombe House** which was originally Georgian, but was modified a century later. The Somerset Fire Brigade had their headquarters here for 60 years. The Hestercombe Gardens Trust acquired the freehold of the house in 2013 when the Fire Brigade moved to new premises. It now houses the Column Room Restaurant, second hand book shop (very well stocked) and an Art Gallery on the upper floor. The Trust is attempting to improve the interior as it needs some tender loving care. However, this takes time and money. A kindly guide pointed out the magnificent grand staircase and, in my ballgown, I could make a pretty impressive entrance down those stairs! There is exquisite carved woodwork in the side rooms and superb floor tiles in the Hall.

Finally on to the **Edwardian Formal Garden** designed by Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll. On entering the garden we were assailed by the wonderful scent of *roses* and as we wandered through the arches clothed with *wisteria* and *clematis*, we espied the pink *peony* bushes and the low stone walls covered with tumbling *fleabane*. A truly romantic spot with its views of the Blackdown Hills in the distance.

So now we had travelled from Georgian to Victorian to Edwardian all in one very large garden (50 acres) employing seven full time gardeners and some volunteers. They certainly have their work cut out. However the garden is a delight for the senses and I am so glad Ian and Anne included it on the itinerary for the Devon and Somerset long weekend.

Ann Tagg

DAY TRIP

CASTLE ASHBY & THENFORD GARDEN

We left Alfreton on a cloudy morning hoping for the best but the forecast gave rain, we went through a heavy shower before **Castle Ashby** but it had stopped as we arrived, unusual for an HPS trip.

After an introduction by the head gardener some headed for the cafe, it was cool and wet. The way to the garden entrance gave a view of Castle Ashby House and lawned parterre gardens (not open to the public)

The first garden was a formal Italian garden divided into four beds by straight longitudinal and lateral paths, one bed had an ornate pond with fountain and metal sculpture. The remaining lawns had pieces of stone columns and topiary yews set in them as focal points. All the lawns were cut short and edged, giving a neat appearance.

On the left was a well-stocked orangery with a lily pool inside, as well as many climbing and tender plants. To the right was a large triumphal arch which led into a smaller area including a butterfly garden, secret garden and a rainbow border. Adjacent to this was a *fuchsia* house with a selection of *semi-tender fuchsia*

Leading on from these gardens was the walled garden. This was a disappointment, as it was large but just grassed, and it was not accessible. It seemed to have a raised viewing platform, (a la jousting?).

A small arboretum lead down to an arched bridge over a stream which had been dammed to make three lakes. In the arboretum was a large weeping beech and other good specimen trees. The overall impression was a well maintained garden with varied plants in its borders.

Lunch was taken here and the cafe had a varied menu of good quality.

We travelled on to **Thenford Gardens** near Banbury, the home of Michael Heseltine. The weather deteriorated and was raining when we arrived but it did stop later. This was a tightly timed opening for three and half hours, I think longer is required to do the garden justice.

Thenford House is a classical style of building with central columns at the front and wings each side, it is sited looking over sloping lawns down to ornamental lakes (they knew how to position them). Either side of the house are wide herbaceous borders with climbing plants trained up brick walls; to the left of the house is a sunken white rose garden.

Continuing past the house a stream in a valley is crossed by an arched bridge which leads up to the walled garden. This has four rectangular beds with diamond patterns inside. In each bed are structures as focal points and, also, the diamonds are constructed in different materials some gravel paths, others box parterres.

The walls have herbaceous beds edged in *box*, *climbing roses*, with *pyracantha* trained on them.

The exit of the walled garden, to the right, leads to a nine pond rill, each pond having four bubble fountains. The ponds are formal rectangles edged in stone slabs. At the top of the rill is a semi-circular bubble pond made with different coloured cobbles in a fan pattern. At the bottom of the rill, the water cascades into a pond which is the first of five ponds in a water garden set in a valley.

Beyond the rill is an alpine trough garden, most of the plants came from Rob Potterton near Caistor. Returning towards the house is a sculpture garden divided into rooms by hedges with statuary in each; a surprise to come upon a big bust of Carl Marx. We continued towards the house (meeting the owner on the way) and called at the church barn for tea and cake.

There were parts of the garden we didn't manage to see. These were mostly behind the church and village and the map shows lakes and canal with woodland.

An excellently constructed garden with a large variety of plants and trees, I lost count of the number of acres and magnolias all well maintained.

This was a garden worth more than three and half hours even on a mixed weather day and our thanks go to Lynn for organising a good day; a shame the weather couldn't put on a better show.

Jenny & Stephen Gascoigne

HESTERCOMBE

On alighting from the coach at Hestercombe I was approached by Nigel, our present Chairman, and after a little gentle persuasion, I agreed to pen a few lines sharing my first impressions of the gardens and surrounding landscape. Obviously this request made me focus more acutely on the task before me - but not before partaking of a welcome cup of coffee in the **Stables cafe**.

Studying the guide map, I decided to find my way around the **Victorian Shrubbery** and climb up to the **Octagon Summerhouse**. There, a short film was running explaining how the family would have food brought from the main house to the summerhouse, enabling them to picnic in a relaxed way without servants in attendance. Realising the time factor and the size of the grounds, I couldn't linger too long watching the film.

I climbed upwards passing the **Chinese Seat**, where I met a delightful lady walking her dog. She told me she regularly visited the gardens and had seen Kingfishers skimming the ponds and heard and seen Jackdaws in the woods. "Don't miss the **Great Cascade** and make sure to view the **Rustic Seat**" she told me, before bounding off with her little dog.

I always do as I am told!! (Wally will confirm this!). Onwards and upwards towards **Sibyl's Temple**. It was quite a pull to the top (good cardiac workout, though). On approaching the temple and quite out of breath, I heard workmen's voices. Apparently, Sybil was about to have a "new hat". Staff from Wells Cathedral had just delivered a new wooden dome for the temple (which will eventually be covered in lead), and had the crane and pulley in place to position the dome on the top of the temple. They allowed me to pick my way through the equipment to enable me to view the vista down through the valley.

Since the 1750's the trees have matured and spread their branches and have somewhat obscured the view, it was the opinion of one workman that maybe a couple of trees should be removed to enhance the view. I could see his point.

Making my way down towards the ponds I visited **The Witch House** and **Pope's Urn** (very popular this urn; members will recall that we saw one at

Tintinhull Gardens

We arrived at Tintinhull as the last garden of the third day of a busy tour. We were ready to relax and this was just the place for it.

Tintinhull was mainly the work of two lady gardeners - Phyllis Reiss who lived there for nearly 30 years and Penelope Hobhouse the garden writer who was a tenant of the National Trust.



This is a 'garden with rooms' influenced by Laurence Johnson's garden at Hidcote. It has seats everywhere and good use of water. Sheila and I had visited here many years ago when we were planning our garden. We loved the summerhouse overlooking the pool and garden and we decided then that we should have a summerhouse angled to look away from the house over the garden. We also wanted a water feature and large pots.

During Mrs Reiss's time, visitors were not shown the kitchen garden as vegetables were for eating, not looking at. Now the kitchen garden is very much on show with a path lined by *Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'*.

A wide range of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers for cutting were growing there, many of them being sold to visitors.



Tintinhull is a garden with interest from Spring through to Autumn and is well worth a visit.

Peter James

'PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE'

This sentiment is one that is well known to gardeners, but nonetheless we can be inclined to forget it or be too impatient and cast seeds or plants aside before they have produced the desired reward. However, the phrase was reinforced to me this spring in my own garden in several ways.

In the previous issue of our newsletter, I stated that I had not been particularly successful in my attempts to propagate seed obtained from the HPS seed distribution scheme. Whilst I have still not been exactly flushed with success, these words have come back to haunt me. We all know that some seeds are more likely to germinate if they have been stratified, i.e. placed in a cold environment (e.g. fridge or freezer) to mimic nature's growing conditions in the seed's natural environment. Several types of HPS seed which I set in spring 2018 failed to then germinate, but, following the experts' advice, I left them in a cold frame over the winter and hoped for the best: an action which has, historically, generally not yielded results for me. However, this spring I have been delighted to find that two types of these seeds have germinated, producing seven small but healthy *gillenia trifoliata* plants and two *astrantia* 'Dark Desire' plants. The *gillenia* plants were a particular delight for me as I have had just one specimen for several years and all attempts to propagate more from cuttings have failed. I asked one of our speakers last season (Paul Green?) the best way to propagate *gillenia* and was told that it was from seed. He has been proved right.

Another 'triumph' in similar fashion has been with the seeds of *tulipa sprengeri* from our monthly plant sales stall. Again, I set these last spring, but with no apparent success. However, after a winter in the cold frame they have come up like the proverbial mustard and cress. The foliage has since died and lots of tiny bulbs remained. My next problem is growing them to a size which will produce flowers. I have merely potted them all up in one larger pot for the moment and, if they thrive, expect to have to continue potting up in future. One seed catalogue says they may take 4-7 years to flower, so it's a toss-up whether I will spend more time tending them or attending the local surgery.

My final surprising success has been with *tree peonies*. Contrary to my normal reticence to respond to glowingly worded newspaper advertisements which picture masses of tightly packed flowers that are never so abundant 'in the flesh', I bought five different (Chinese-named) varieties advertised in The Times at a bargain price. How could anyone doubt the authenticity of an advertiser in this bastion of British integrity, a tradition maintained by that well known Brit. Rupert Murdoch, alongside that other paragon of virtue he owns, The Sun? (*and who says that gardeners are not political? – Ed.*) Well, after perhaps 6-7 years, I estimate, two of the five have died, one is still in a pot, and the other two are in the garden, and all their name labels have long since disappeared. The survivors have steadily grown but have never flowered: until this year! Each has now yielded different quantities of blowsy pink flowers. You can imagine my delight, tempered by the fact that they all seem to be the same variety! Well, I don't suppose you can win them all.

Thus, the moral of the story is never give up on your seeds/plants too soon. Patience *is* a virtue, and in the garden can be sometimes splendidly rewarded.

Nigel Needham

PLANT FAIR 2019

The profit from the Plant Fair this year was **£790.98** – a 10.6% improvement on last year. Thank you to all who took part in whatever capacity.

EAST LAMBROOK MANOR

The former home of Marjorie Fish was our second garden visit on day three. A cool cloudy afternoon for our meanderings around a not very large garden. Marjorie Fish was a self-taught gardener and became a famous plants woman writing several books and contributions to early gardening magazines.

The gardens are typical English Cottage style with separate rooms and changes in levels. The beds being planted with *geraniums*, *astrantias*, *penstemon*, *hellebores* and old fashioned *roses* etc., all set against the backdrop of an old Manor House.

The current owner, Mike Werkmeister, was busy dead-heading roses and I asked about the extensive crazy paving paths and was informed that Marjorie and her husband Walter had laid them all themselves, using broken Hamstone roof tiles, the joints being pointed with cement. However Marjorie had other ideas and would break holes in the joints with a crowbar to grow plants in. This would be fine, prior to the day when Health and Safety came on the scene, when these planting pockets became trip hazards.

I was not sure Mark was fully appreciative of this style of paving, He was more in favour of the random stone paving slabs he had left behind in London! "But of course," he stated "nothing can change - we are Grade 1 listed!!".

Regarding change you could say this also applies to the planting with more modern varieties arriving over the 60 years or so since Marjorie first started her garden, but East Lambrook still maintains its original classic cottage style garden and long may it continue.

Situated in the plant centre was a raised and tiered stone bed to perfectly showcase the *geraniums* available.

David Andrews.

family: Julia Kennard was formerly a Roper and the fountain was built to celebrate the Ropers being here for 100 years.

The **Bog garden** was at the top of the hill alongside the Great Pond. The path went through a house made of Beech trees and the garden is accessed by crossing a red Japanese inspired bridge. Glorious candelabra and florindae *Primulas* in all colours, *Calla* lilies, *Rodgersias* and *Mimulus guttatus*.



We arrived back at the Mermaid pond in time to witness a lot of people getting wet. All good fun!

This is a beautiful, historic garden.

Janet Norman & Kay

“A garden is not made in a year; indeed, it is never made in the sense of finality. It grows, and with the labour of love should go on growing.”

Frederick Eden, 1903

2019 DERBYSHIRE HPS WEEKEND to DEVON / SOMERSET

Day 1

Visit to Sudeley Castle, Cotswolds

In spite of the dubious weather we eagerly anticipated our weekend exploring gardens in the South-West. We set off from Swanwick services in the rain but mercifully, by the time we reached Sudeley it had stopped.

I would describe Sudeley Castle gardens as inherently romantic. They are entered by a pleasant walk through a wooded area through stone-wall ruins of the former **Winchcombe Abbey** where the planting is very natural with wild flowers, *foxgloves*, *ferns* and suchlike growing in the walls. This is contrasted with a long formal rectangular *lily* pool complete with koi carp.



The walk carries on to the castle which has a tremendous presence and houses wonderful collections of embroidery and historical artefacts. However I explored the interior on a previous visit when it poured with rain! This time I wanted to do the gardens justice

The gardens have a number of rooms; some quite distinct and others merging in to one another. One such is the **rose garden** - the Queen's Garden - formally laid out with a central pool. There were a lot of old varieties underplanted with *alchemilla* and *salvia*. It was a shame that the rain had spoilt a lot of them.

Another was the **Scented garden** entered through an arch in the wall - a contained rectangular area backed by walls with a central strip of lawn which had been designed by Rosemary Verey and planted by Roddy Llewellyn. The planting was very symmetrical with *Cotinus* [of small tree size] mirroring one another at opposite ends of the narrow sides and raised beds of dark blue and purple *iris*, white *Mrs Sinkins dianthus*, *ferns* and more beautiful *roses* on the walls. The planting was saved from being too soft with tall dramatic *Onopordums* and giant *scabious* [*Cephalaria*].



A short walk took one to the Church where the tomb of Catherine Parr is found. As I am sure everyone knows, she was the sixth and surviving wife of Henry V111. After his death she married Thomas Seymour and went to live at Sudeley which he had been given by Henry's son, Edward V1. She died a week after giving birth to his child. Her grave lay undiscovered until the 1870's when a tomb was built for her in the church. Here endeth the history lesson! It is well worth seeing and it is a lovely church with a magnificent Cedar of Lebanon outside which is being fed and mulched at the moment.

A walk through the grounds away from the castle brings one to the **Physic garden** which pays homage to the earlier presence of the monks of Winchcombe Abbey who used plants for their healing properties. Again the setting is very natural and informal. Plants such as *valerian* [*Valeriana officinalis*], *sage* [*Salvia officinalis*]. The **Signature of Doctrines garden** was another such, referring to the medieval belief that the outward characteristics of a plant related to similar parts of the human body - so *pulmonaria* was used to treat lung conditions.

FORDE ABBEY GARDENS

Originally a Cistercian Abbey, the building dates back to 1141. We entered via the walled garden. Always an exciting prospect as you don't know what you'll find and we were not disappointed. We spotted a *Calycanthus* (looks like a red *Magnolia*) and *Ipomea Mina lobate* (Spanish flag). There were two shrubs we couldn't identify until a lady working in the garden, told us one was a *Buddleja* and the other a *Honeysuckle* from South America. With a little help from Google, the *Buddleja* (pictured) turned out to be *Colvillei* from the Eastern Himalayas, discovered by Hooker in 1849, which he declared the "handsomest of all Himalayan shrubs". The RHS awarded it a First Class certificate in 1896. We haven't been able to identify the *Lonicera*.



At the front of the Abbey itself, we noticed a number of tall blue/grey/lilac flowering plants we'd seen in other gardens. Later we found out they were *Delphinium requienii*, a biennial - avoided by slugs according to Derry Watkins from whom I bought some seeds. (It might turn up at the plant sale later!). Down at the herbaceous borders, adjacent to the Long Pond, much of the planting was yet to come into flower.

We walked around the Mermaid Pond (the Centenary fountain was due to come on at 12 noon). We could see which way the water would fall as the grass became quite boggy. It is said to be the highest powered fountain in England at 190ft. (The Emperor fountain at Chatsworth is gravity fed and reaches 290ft). The current owners are the Kennard



Saturday 15th June

We arrived at **BICKHAM HOUSE** by a mini bus shuttle service from the village of Kenn, the lanes being too narrow for our coach.

The beautiful house was built in 1680 in a coomb (*small valley to you and me*) and is still owned by the same family - Julia Tremlett being the current incumbent.

The gardens were a joint venture with her husband John, until he died two years ago. Now she tends the gardens herself, with the help of "a man who cuts the grass". They embellished the older features such as the Rhododendron Arboretum and an enormous *Tulip Tree* - so tall you couldn't see the flowers - with their own ideas, which are still evolving.

After a brief introduction by Julia, we began our tour on the front lawn which is edged by mixed borders. This overlooked a man-made lake. The woodland walk brought us to the back of the property into a lovely courtyard and we continued on to the one acre walled garden, which was built at the same time as the house. The area was a mixture of flowers and veg, with commemorative structures e.g. the clock tower for Johns' 70th.

The couple were plant hunters and grew much from seed and plants they collected on their travels, such as the avenue of palms - *Trachycarpus Fortunei* - which was set with fruit.

Some of the vegetable garden has been planted with box hedges and blocks of grasses - very effective.

The greenhouses were immaculate and producing fruit even in June.

We enjoyed a cream tea in the conservatory and on the *Wisteria* draped terrace at the end of the visit.

Pat Harris



What I liked about the gardens was the juxtaposition of the formal with the informal - large clipped *box* and *yew*, centuries old [also proved handy to shelter under when a sudden heavy rain shower caught us unawares] and the soft natural planting against the walls and ruins. Then the stone balustrade which separated the formal garden from the soft rolling Cotswold landscape.

It is a truly atmospheric garden.

Linda O'Neill

Day 2 – Visit to Rosemoor Garden

VISIT to ROSEMOOR GARDENS



This was one of the best RHS gardens of our trip, in my opinion; so well designed.

We arrived at the time of the *roses* which were not too battered considering the downpours we'd had the day before. A beautiful show of scented, *rose-covered swags* with a central obelisk. There was, also, a sunken hot garden which was on the brink of loveliness;

just a few more weeks and it will be a spectacular show of vibrant colour.



The sunken hot garden in waiting.

There was a large *wildflower meadow* with swooping swallows to watch, catching the insects from the wild grasses and flowers.

There is a new *stumpery* with upside-down tree stumps dotted with a good collection of *ferns*.

It was, also, a good week for *foxgloves*, in a fantastic shade of peach.

You could spend many hours in this garden. It has woodland walks, a tunnel under the road leading to an arboretum, and an excellent, very large plant sales area where you could while away a few hours.

Also the restaurant serves a very good lunch.



Foxgloves with a view to the Rose Garden



Sorbus aria shaped into large rectangles, with a silvery bench to colour match.

Author: Ruth Sands;

Photos: Sally Meecham