

## Devon Rural Archive: a New Research Resource

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Devon Rural Archive

The Devon landscape is scattered with features of historical and architectural significance created over centuries of development. Historic houses and their settings in particular are abundant and bear witness to the multiple changes in fashion, use and fortune. All too frequently these inconspicuous treasures are overlooked; unrecognizable to the untrained eye they run the risk of being lost forever. With this in mind the Devon Rural Archive (DRA) was launched in 2006 by the Fenwick Charitable Trust with the aim of discovering and recording a number of the region's historic properties. It is hoped this will produce a comprehensive record for the interest and enjoyment of all.

The work of the DRA is carried out by a small team of archaeologists who research and visit sites throughout the county, documenting the known history and possible development of each. At present the focus is on manor houses and farmhouses from AD 1300 to the present day using properties identified on the 1765 Donn map of Devon. So far approximately one hundred and fifty sites have been investigated, though this is only a small proportion of potential properties. Through the project, a host of nationally important features has been revealed and there is no doubt that there are many more exciting discoveries yet to come. Two of the sites investigated and recorded by the DRA are illustrated below.



Watercolour painting of Shilstone (c.1810), showing the original house as it might have appeared in 1614. Held in a private collection in Australia, copy provided by Robert Savery of Diptford.



Shilstone, 2009: restored house with barns in the background and part of walled garden in foreground.



Waddeton Court, one of the manor houses visited by the DRA archaeological team.

The significance of the site at Shilstone, near Modbury in south Devon, is the survival of a truly remarkable and

complex eighteenth-century water garden, which is possibly unique. The house and garden are currently being restored. At Waddeton Court, Stoke Gabriel, there are the remains of a twelfth-century double courtyard mansion. An example of an even earlier site under investigation by the DRA is the large, medieval deer park at Dartington. This multi-phased site contains a medieval park lodge in earthwork form constructed inside what appears to be an iron-age settlement.

Garden recording is, of course, one aspect of the work of both the DGT and the NCCPG; but our approach to research is innovative, as no other surveys of this type or scale have been undertaken in Devon - or possibly Britain - before. The DRA is laying the foundations for future research projects which will combine and embrace both the archaeological and landscape history of the county. Lucinda Lambton, architectural historian and patron of the DRA, once exclaimed 'what lucky dogs you are that such a resource has been dreamed up, set up and launched!'

All this is managed from the DRA premises at Shilstone which is also open to the public. Here, a reference library contains a growing collection of books, periodicals, journals, photographs, plans, maps, prints and some manuscripts. The curatorial and archaeological staff resident in the building can offer support and advice and endeavour to make the archive user-friendly. The DRA also offers a programme of talks which take advantage of the in-built conference facilities. In essence the centre provides a valuable and much needed resource for researchers of history, archaeology and genealogy and aims to enthuse, inform and support researchers of local history across Devon and further afield. It is hoped the public will make use of the service offered by the organization and strengthen their understanding and enjoyment of Devon's historic landscape but also ultimately encourage its preservation. If you have a property that you think we would be interested in, please contact us and we would be happy to consider a preliminary survey.

For more information on the archive or programme of talks available please visit the website [www.devonruralarchive.co.uk](http://www.devonruralarchive.co.uk) or email Amy Davies at [amy@dra.uk.net](mailto:amy@dra.uk.net).

## Resources for Garden History Research

Clare Greener and Susi Batty

This list is intended as an aid or prompt for research students.

- National Archives** - A2A in search engine or [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a)
- Association of Gardens Trusts** - 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ Tel 020 7251 2610; Fax 020 7251 2610; email [gardenstrusts@btconnect.com](mailto:gardenstrusts@btconnect.com) [www.gardenstrusts.org.uk](http://www.gardenstrusts.org.uk)
- Book searches** - Google books [www.books.co.uk](http://www.books.co.uk) Abe Books [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk)
- Census** - [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (Available in libraries and record offices. Pay to view from home, but free fortnight trial) FreeCen [www.freecen.org.uk](http://www.freecen.org.uk)
- Cornwall Record Office** - Old County Hall, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3AY Tel 01872 323129; email [cro@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:cro@cornwall.gov.uk); [www.cornwall.gov.uk/cro](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/cro)
- Country Life Picture Library** - [www.countrylife.co.uk](http://www.countrylife.co.uk)
- Dartington Hall Trust and Archive and Collection** - High Cross House, Dartington Hall, Totnes TQ9 6ED Tel 01803 864114; email [high.cross.house@dartington.org](mailto:high.cross.house@dartington.org)
- Devon Archaeological Society** - c/o Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Queen Street, Exeter EX4 3RK email [dasmal@dasonline.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:dasmal@dasonline.wanadoo.co.uk); [www.ex.ac.uk/das](http://www.ex.ac.uk/das) or [www.groups.exeter.ac.uk/das](http://www.groups.exeter.ac.uk/das)
- Devon Gardens Trust** - c/o Bush & Company, 2 Barnfield Crescent, Exeter EX1 1QT Tel 01404 812112; email [devon-gardens@btconnect.com](mailto:devon-gardens@btconnect.com); [www.devongardenstrust.org.uk](http://www.devongardenstrust.org.uk)
- DGT Archives and Library** - (Held in Devon Record Office for reference in situ not loan; need permission to view archives. Contact Clare Greener; 26 Linden Road, Dawlish, EX7 9QA; [claregreener@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:claregreener@tiscali.co.uk) or Carolyn Keep; Heatherdene, Woodbury, Exeter EX5 1NR; [c.d.keep@tesco.net](mailto:c.d.keep@tesco.net))
- Devon Historic Environment Record** - Devon County Council, Matford Offices, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QW Tel 01392 382246; Fax 01392 383011; email [archaeol@devon.gov.uk](mailto:archaeol@devon.gov.uk); [www.devon.gov.uk/historic\\_environment](http://www.devon.gov.uk/historic_environment)
- Devon Record Office** - Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter EX2 7NL Tel 01392 384253; Fax 01392 384256; email [devrec@devon.gov.uk](mailto:devrec@devon.gov.uk); [www.devon.gov.uk/record\\_office.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/record_office.htm)
- Devon Rural Archive** - Shilstone, Modbury, Devonshire PL21 0TW Tel 01548 830888; Fax 01548 830832; email: [amy@dra.uk.net](mailto:amy@dra.uk.net); [www.devonruralarchive.com](http://www.devonruralarchive.com)
- Dorset Record Office** - Bridport Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1RP Tel 01305 250550; Fax 01305 257184; email [archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk); [www.dorsetforyou.co.uk/archives](http://www.dorsetforyou.co.uk/archives)
- English Heritage, South West Region** - (Covering: Bristol, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly) English Heritage, 29 Queen Square, Bristol, BS1 4ND Tel 0117 975 0700; Fax 0117 975 0701; email [southwest@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:southwest@english-heritage.org.uk); [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)
- Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives** - Tel 01392 285986; email [library@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:library@exeter-cathedral.org.uk); [www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/libraryandarchives](http://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/libraryandarchives)
- Friends of Devon's Archives** - c/o Devon Record Office, Great Moor House, Bittern Road, Sowton, Exeter, EX2 7NL [www.foda.org.uk](http://www.foda.org.uk)
- Garden History Society** - The Garden History Society, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ Tel 020 7608 2409; Fax 020 7490 2974; email: [enquiries@gardenhistorysociety.org](mailto:enquiries@gardenhistorysociety.org); [www.gardenhistorysociety.org](http://www.gardenhistorysociety.org)
- Georgian Group** - 6, Fitzroy Square, London W1T 3DX Tel 0871750 2936; email [info@georgiangroup.org.uk](mailto:info@georgiangroup.org.uk); [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)
- Historical Directories on line** - Digitisation Project, Main Library, P.O. Box 248, University Road, Leicester LE1 9QD email [libdigitise@le.ac.uk](mailto:libdigitise@le.ac.uk); [www.historicaldirectories.org](http://www.historicaldirectories.org)
- Land Tax Records** - Devon Record Office: see 11 above (from 1747, catalogued by parish)

- 22. Museum of Dartmoor Life** - Museum Courtyard, 3, West Street, Okehampton EX20 1HQ Tel 01837 52295; email [dartmoormuseum@eclipse.co.uk](mailto:dartmoormuseum@eclipse.co.uk); [www.museumofdartmoorlife.eclipse.co.uk](http://www.museumofdartmoorlife.eclipse.co.uk)
- 23. The National Archives** - Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU Tel 020 887 63444; email [enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk); [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)
- 24. National Monuments Record** - NMR Enquiry & Research Services, National Monuments Record, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ Tel 01793 414600; Fax 01793 414606; email: [nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk)  
Aerofilms collection, sorted by country for England contact Mike Evans, Head of NMR Archives, email [mike.evans@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:mike.evans@english-heritage.org.uk)
- Online Resources:**  
Catalogues: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmr](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmr)  
Images of England: [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)  
Viewfinder: [www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)
- 25. National Trust** - P.O. Box 39, Warrington WA5 7WD Tel 0844 800 1895; email [enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk); [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)
- 26. Newspapers** - Index and filmed copies of Exeter Flying Post in West Country Studies Library. Times Digital Archive and Nineteenth-Century Newspapers are online at [devon.gov.uk](http://devon.gov.uk) Go into 'library catalogue', then into 'Times Digital Archive' for both archives. To access from a home computer a library card and pin number is needed, available from local library.
- 27. NCCPG Devon** - Trevor Wood, 2 Willens Cottages, Kenton EX6 8HQ [trevor@wood31.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:trevor@wood31.wanadoo.co.uk); [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com)
- 28. Parish Registers** - Registers and microfiche copies at Record Offices and Service Points. For a list of those available go to : [www.devon.gov.uk/record\\_office/parish\\_register\\_list.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/record_office/parish_register_list.htm)
- 29. Parks and Gardens UK** - Parks and Gardens Data Services, Department of Archaeology, King's Manor YORK YO1 7EP Tel 01904 433965; email [info@parksandgardens.ac.uk](mailto:info@parksandgardens.ac.uk); [www.parksandgardens.ac.uk](http://www.parksandgardens.ac.uk)
- 30. Plymouth and West Devon Record Office** - 3 Clare Place, Coxside, Plymouth PL4 0JW Tel 01752 305940; email [pwdro@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:pwdro@plymouth.gov.uk); [www.plymouth.gov.uk/star/archives.htm](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/star/archives.htm)
- 31. Postcards** - The Francis Frith Collection, Frith's Barn, Teffont, Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 5QP Tel 01722 716376; [www.francisfrith.co.uk](http://www.francisfrith.co.uk)  
Nigel Temple Postcard Collection - see English Heritage  
Carolyn Keep also has copies of Devon Postcards.
- 32. Quarter Sessions Records at Devon Record Office** - Ask at Record Office - Quarter session reports can be used to obtain a variety of information from criminal proceedings to wage details.
- 33. Sale Catalogues** -  
DGT Listing CD (available soon)
- 34. Somerset Archive and Record Service** - Obridge Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7PU Tel (enquiries) 01823 278805 (appointments) 01823 337600; email [archives@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:archives@somerset.gov.uk); [www.somerset.gov.uk/archives](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/archives)
- 35. Veitch** - Caradoc Doy, PO Box 28, Topsham, Exeter, Devon, EX3 0WY Tel 01392 877225; email [info@caradocdoy.co.uk](mailto:info@caradocdoy.co.uk); [www.caradocdoy.co.uk](http://www.caradocdoy.co.uk)

## Libraries

- Bristol University Special Collection** - Tel 0117 928 8014; email [special-collections@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:special-collections@bristol.ac.uk); [www.bristol.ac.uk/is/library/collection/specialcollections](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/is/library/collection/specialcollections)
- British Library** - [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

**The Devon & Exeter Institution Library** - 7 The Close, Exeter, Devon. EX1 1EZ. Tel 01392 251017 or Assistant Secretary 01392 274727; [www.devonandexeterinstitution.org](http://www.devonandexeterinstitution.org)

**Exeter Central Library** - Castle Street, Exeter, EX4 3PQ Tel 01392 384225; [devon.gov.uk](http://devon.gov.uk) for online resources which include Times Digital Archive, Oxford English Dictionary

### Exeter University Special Collection -

email [as-contact@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:as-contact@exeter.ac.uk); [www.as.exeter.ac.uk/library](http://www.as.exeter.ac.uk/library)

**Lindley Library** - London Tel 0207821 3050;

email [library.london@rhs.org.uk](mailto:library.london@rhs.org.uk);

[www.rhs.org.uk/Learning/Library](http://www.rhs.org.uk/Learning/Library)

**RHS Rosemoor Garden** - Tel 01805 624067;

email [rosemooradmin@rhs.org.uk](mailto:rosemooradmin@rhs.org.uk)

**West Country Studies Library** - Castle Street, Exeter, EX4 3PQ

Tel 01392 384216; Fax 01392 384228;

email [westcountry.library@devon.gov.uk](mailto:westcountry.library@devon.gov.uk);

[www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies](http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies)

**Victorian Society** - 1 Priory Gardens, London W4 1TT

Tel 020 8994 1019; email [admin@victoriansociety.org.uk](mailto:admin@victoriansociety.org.uk);

[www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk)

## Select Bibliography

**Journals** - (Some available online at Google Books, some available at University of Bristol)

*The Garden*

*Gardener's Chronicle*

*Gardener's Magazine (Loudon)*

*Gardener's Magazine (Hibberd)*

*Hortus*

*Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*

*Country Life*

*Devonshire Association Transactions*

*Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*

*Devon Gardens Trust Journal*

*Devon Historian*

*Garden History Journal*

*Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*

### Newspapers -

*Devon Weekly Times*

*Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*

*The Times*

*The West Britain*

*The Western Times*

*Woolmer's Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*

### Local and useful books -

Cherry, Bridget & Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Devon* 2nd edn (London, 1999)

Chope, R. Pearse, *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall*,

(Newton Abbot, 1967)

Delderfield, Eric R, *West Country Historic Houses and Their Families*

(Newton Abbot, 1968)

Desmond, Ray, ed., *Bibliography of British Gardens* (Winchester, 1984)

Donn, B, *A Map of the County of Devon* (1765), facsimile edition,

Devon and Cornwall Record Society and University of Exeter (1965)

Eburne, Andrew & Taylor, Richard, *How to Read an English Garden* (London, 2006)

Elliott, Brent, *Victorian Gardens* (London, 1986)

*The Country House Garden: From the Archives of Country Life 1897-*

*1939* (London, 1995)

Fletcher, Ronald, *The Parkers at Saltram 1769-8: Everyday Life in an Eighteenth-century House* (London, 1970)

Glenny, George, *Glenny's Hand-Book of Practical Gardening*

(London, 1850)

Gray, Todd, *The Garden History of Devon: An illustrated guide to sources* (Devon, 1995)

*Exeter: The Traveller's Tales Volume One* (Exeter, 2000)

*Devon Country Houses and Gardens Engraved: Volume One A-La-*

*Ronde to Lifton Park* (Exeter, 2001)

*Exeter Unveiled* (Exeter, 2003)

Gray, Todd and Rowe, Margery, eds., *Travels in Georgian Devon Vol I-IV* (Devon, 1997-2000)

Johnson, George, W 'The Cottage Gardener: Practical Guide in Every Department of Horticulture' (London, 1849)

Hooper, Arthur, *Life in the Gardener's Bothy* (Suffolk, 2000)

Hoskins, W. G., *Devon* (London, 1954; repr. 1959)

Kelly's *Directory of Devonshire* (1866, 1873, 1878, 1883, 1889 1893, 1897, 1902,)

Lambert, David, Goodchild, Peter and Roberts, Judith, *Parks and Gardens: A researcher's guide to sources for designed landscapes 3rd edition* (1995)

Lauder, Rosemary, *Vanished House of North Devon* (1981)

*Vanished House of South Devon* (Bideford, 1997)

Loudon, J. C., *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening comprising the theory and practice of Horticulture, Floriculture, Arboriculture and Landscape Gardening* (London, 1822)

Morris & Co, *Directory and Gazetteer Devonshire* (1870)

Musgrave, Toby, *The Head Gardeners: Forgotten Heroes of Horticulture* (London, 2007)

NCCPG (Devon Group), *The Magic Tree: Devon Garden Plants History and Conservation* (Devon, 1989)

*Pigot's Directory of Devonshire and Cornwall* (1830)

*Pigot and Co.'s Royal National and Commercial Directory and Topography, Devonshire*, ed. by I. Slater (1844)

Polwhele, R *The History of Devonshire*, 3 vols (1793-1806)

Pugsley, Steven ed., *Devon Gardens: An Historical Survey* (Stroud, 1994)

Ravenhill, M. R. and Rowe, H. M. (eds), *Early Devon Maps* (Devon, 2000)

*Devon Maps and Mapmakers: Manuscript Maps before 1840* (Devon, 2002)

*Maps of Georgian Devon* (Devon, 2002)

Symes, Michael, *A Glossary of Garden History 3rd edn* (Princes Risborough, 2006)

Synge, Patrick M., *The Gardens of Britain 1: Devon and Cornwall* (London, 1978)

White, William, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter 2nd edn*, (Sheffield and London, 1850)

*History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Devon including The City of Exeter* (Sheffield and London, 1878-9)

Wilson-North, Robert ed., *The Lie of the Land: Aspects of the archaeology and history of the designed landscape in the South West of England* (Exeter, 2003)

## Reviews

*Elizabeth in the Garden, a Story of Love, Rivalry and Spectacular Design*, By Trea Martyn, Faber and Faber (2008), pp.325, illus. in colour and black-and-white, £18.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-571-21693-2

The main theme of *Elizabeth in the Garden* is the rivalry between Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and William Cecil, Lord Burghley, for their Queen's favours and, in particular, their exploitation of her love of gardens, the outdoors, entertainment and novelty. Alongside this we have fascinating insights into the gardens, plants and the splendour of the life surrounding Elizabeth 1.

This is a very readable and engaging book written in an accessible rather than academic style as its subtitle, *a Story of Love, Rivalry and Spectacular Design* might suggest. The reader is somewhat seduced by the mixture of fact, conjecture and possibly fiction, but herein lies the principal criticism. The lack of referencing forestalls any hope that the book can be used as a springboard for personal research. It makes it difficult to trace the evidence behind the assertions and therefore to distinguish between fact and embellishment. The resultant inability to make effective use of the wide bibliography is particularly galling.

What the book creates, however, is a brilliant picture of the gardens and grounds of the era and the revels which took place in them. The lavish attention paid to ornamentation (the garden was indeed an ornament), for example, the gilding of the rosemary needles in advance of her visit and the use of exotic strawberry trees at Leicester House, is vividly described, as is the four day pageant at Hertford's house, Elvetham. It must have been magnificent and demonstrates how far courtiers would go to gain the good countenance of their queen.

The emphasis is on Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire (Dudley) and Theobalds in Hertfordshire (Cecil). There is not the space to describe the gardens in any detail but their inspiration came from Renaissance Italy, although in fact French and Italian gardens were by then passé. Kenilworth introduced the elevated terrace and the obelisk. It had its enormous artificial lake. Theobalds went further in its use of water. Kenilworth had its playful fountain; Theobalds its stone bunch of grapes pouring red wine to one side, white to another - examples of their attempts to outdo each other over the years.

Other created gardens, such as Nonsuch, Greenwich and Beddington Park (with its artificial fish 'made of moving parts skewered on poles' and which Elizabeth visited as many times as Theobalds), are interestingly described. Overall a picture is drawn of the intimacy of compartmentalised gardens, geometry yet romance, controlled space interplaying with expanses of water and parkland, and beauty yet productivity, all involving massive expenditure.

Symbolism, icons, codes and puzzles were ever present. Out of season cherries represented the queen's power over nature. Spenser's imagery in *The Faerie Queen* of Elizabeth's emblematic invincible eglantine and roses 'locked in an embrace with wanton ivy', the maze as a symbol of order, the beauty of swans, the flowers carried by Cecil in plate 13 are further examples cited. Life in Elizabethan times was intricate and multi-layered. In masterly understatement Thea Martyn writes, 'gardens in Renaissance England seem to have meant much more than gardens do today'. Their portrayal in this book is a delight.

The chapter entitled 'The Herbalist' dwells on John Gerard, the author of the eponymous *Herbal*, and contains fascinating descriptions of the gardener's year, pest control, bee husbandry, the grafting process and the species of plants used. The planting of new species is a recurring theme, new species sourced not only from the continent, but also from the New World; including potatoes, sunflowers (the Marigold of Peru), oleander, yucca, hibiscus and ginger.

The illustrations, both the plates and the chapter frontispieces, reflect the impression that this book is really written for a general audience interested as much in the characters and the sensory flavour of court life as the gardens. Out of fifteen plates, ten focus on groups or individuals. It is perhaps a pity that the lakeside pleasure grounds at Kenilworth 'most vividly' painted by Gheeraerts referred to on page 284 is not reproduced. This does not appear to be the portrait at plate 15 which elsewhere (but not in the book) is attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder.

Theobalds is still to be uncovered, although there is an intriguing description of a walk over its site by the author in the epilogue; but, by the time this is published, English Heritage will have opened the recreated Elizabethan garden at Kenilworth Castle to the public. Elizabethan gardens are described as multi-sensory. Will we experience the recreated garden in the same way?

The initial criticism of the lack of referencing stands although one can understand a reluctance to divert attention away from the narrative. A further minor criticism: the chronology sometimes catches one unaware as the author does have a tendency in the earlier part of the book to slip forwards and backwards in time without warning. Other minor confusions in the mind of the reviewer may be the result of some firm editorial control on word count. However that should not detract from the enjoyment gained in reading this stimulating book.

(Marcus Batty)

*Gardens of Delight, Indian Gardens through the Ages*, by Rahoul B. Singh, Pavilion, London (2008), pp.192, illus, £25 (hardback) ISBN: 9-781-8620-5836-1

Returning enthused from a tour of the Mughal gardens of Rajasthan, it seemed natural to pick up *Gardens of Delight, Indian Gardens through the Ages* to provide a wider context. This book is avowedly an examination of 'the primordial relationship between a people and their land'. It really does not live up to its objective. Its four main chapters are more easily read as separate unconnected essays since the book does not present a sequential historical account of garden development in India. Relying heavily on the views of others (fully acknowledged in the endnotes) its content, a mixture of theorising, history and site description, lacks coherence. The wealth of photographs (the text comprises less than a quarter of the available space) suggests more a book to be looked at than read although there are some informative passages for the reader coming new to the subject.

The first three chapters look back into history. 'Gardens Remembered', the first chapter, examines the literary and pictorial record; the text demonstrating how deep-rooted gardens and arbori-horticulture was in ancient India. It also explores the links to mythology and religion. What comes across very strongly is the sophistication and richness of the pleasure gardens in the millennia either side of the birth of Christ.

'My Garden, My Paradise' describes different types of enclosure ranging from home gardens, through paradise and temple gardens, to botanic and zoological gardens; but the descriptions are cursory and merely state the obvious. Of greater interest are the adjacent sections. The first, on the Garden Carpet of Jaipur, underlines how the garden tradition was spread through the media of textiles and also paintings, a tradition which was not purely Islamic but common to other ancient religions. The second lists sacred trees with their attributes and symbolism.

'Temples Palaces and Tombs' is a coherent and satisfying, albeit short, review of the impact of the Mughal emperors; the char-bagh tradition and the importance of water being well-illustrated.

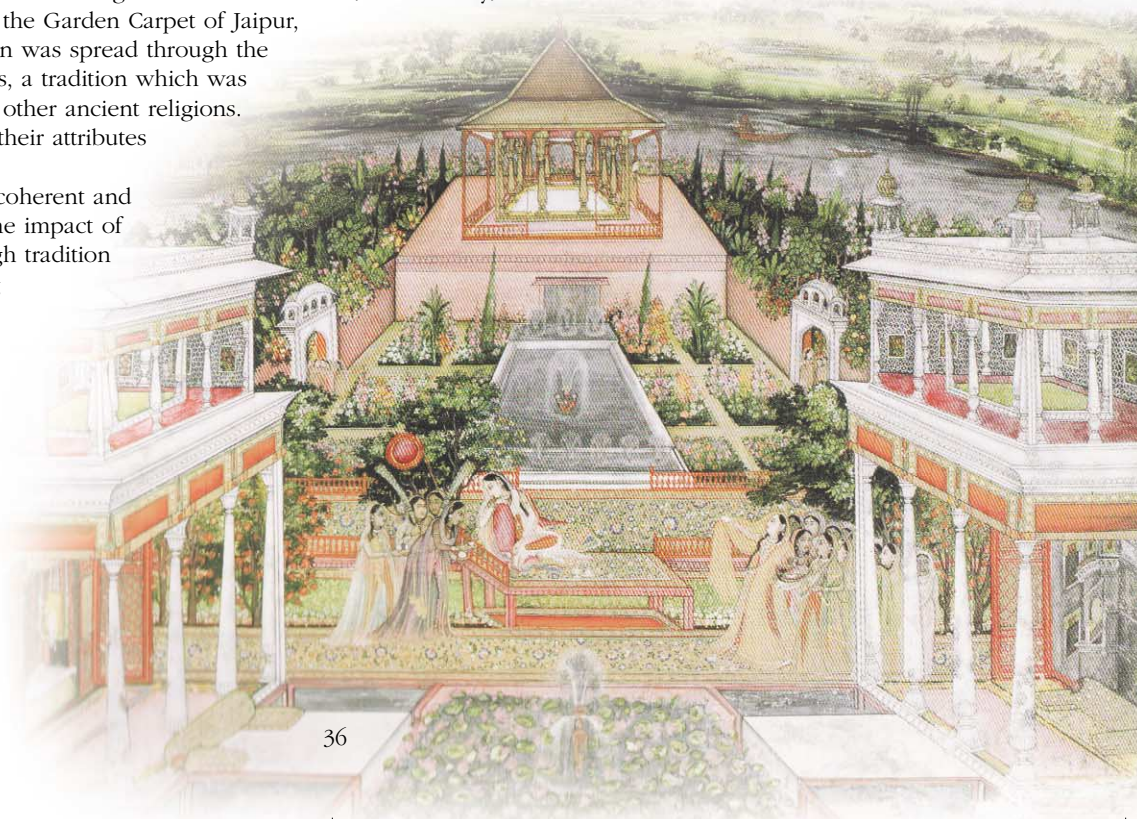
The final chapter, 'Modern India Modern Landscapes', leaves a sense of disappointment. With a third of the book to go there is a feeling of anticipation in moving on from the past and seeing what a rapidly developing subcontinent has achieved in garden terms post-independence and, perhaps most excitingly, in the last twenty years or so. The political concepts behind the design of the Presidential Palace and its gardens are examined but the comparison with Versailles is unnecessarily long. The rest of the chapter mainly deals with a dozen or so modern open spaces and gardens, but very much from an architectural perspective and with little space for comment. Careful editing might have left out the pre-twentieth century sites and those where the interest is primarily architectural. The splendid Baha'i Temple in New Delhi however, well merits inclusion in view of the enduring symbolism of the Lotus.

Room might have been made for a greater exploration of the Garden of the Five Senses which is a major project on a twenty acre site in New Delhi, inaugurated in 2003, in response to a need for public open space. Whether successful or not, it would have been worthy of examination as it links directly to the relationship between people and their land, the theme of the book. Instead there is a six page resumé of the history of European garden styles, with unreferenced images and without a timeline or any attempt to draw cross-cultural comparisons. The section seems pointless to the English reader.

The lavish and opulent grounds of large luxury hotels are well represented in the photographs but do not feature to any great extent in the text. Whilst their inspiration lies in the Mughal tradition, the world of Disney springs to mind. It would have been interesting to have read a critique of a genre which to the western eye often appears pastiche.

The puzzling questions are whether the book was intended for the coffee table or had a more serious intent, and for which market place it was written. The brevity of the text makes it impossible to impart significant information or argument. The photographs take up over three quarters of the book yet, for what is almost a coffee table book, the quality is uneven, their inclusion and placing sometimes capricious and captioning occasionally lacking. Prior to going to India, the reviewer found no up-to-date historical account of Indian gardens on the bookshelves. One is still sorely needed.

(Marcus Batty)



From the point of view of those of us who work in the Archive, it was wonderful to have people enjoying the Archive room, the current display of Dartmoor Century photographs and a chat over a welcoming hot drink to make it feel that our work is of value. On Thursday 29th October, we welcomed more than 100 invited guests to the Devon Rural Archive. There was a fine atmosphere and it was really exciting for us to see the DRA so busy. The Devon Rural Archive (DRA), at Shilstone near Modbury, is staffed by architectural archaeologists. It was created by local entrepreneur Sebastian Fenwick as part of a restoration of the 200-acre estate. The DRA is offering house owners the chance to find out more about the history of their homes on 28 July at a free consultation with its experts.