

ISLE OF WIGHT GARDENS TRUST



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2022



Front cover. Persian Silk Tree (*Albizia julibrissin rosea*) flourishing in the heat wave.

Climate emergency.

Is this the tree of the future for our suburban gardens? It certainly loved this summer and the tree at Northcourt is now 12 years old. The RHS are currently testing its suitability for wider planting.

It can be used for cosmetic purposes, revitalising tired skin, tightening weak contours, for a fresh and smooth complexion and for boosting cell energy. I think we all need this, especially for our ageing membership and after a hot and sunny summer!

The RHS produced a report entitled “Gardening in a global environment” in 2002 and an updated report in May 2017 entitled “ Gardening in a changing climate “. We had been warned of the threat to our gardens through the climate emergency, so seeing our hydrangeas wilted and rhododendrons and azaleas looking beyond redemption, we failed to take heed, to prepare for the drought.

As our trees already started an autumn fall in August , being stressed out, we must wonder whether our parklands, herbaceous borders and hydrangea dominated gardens, will survive into the next decade.

Visiting gardens in mid summer may also become rare. But as we know every season is different and unpredictable. Adapt we must. Plants however are surprisingly resilient and after rain in early September recovery was swift.

To read the RHS report see [RHS Gardening in a Changing Climate report / RHS Gardening](#)



ISLE OF WIGHT GARDENS TRUST

Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1165283

Member of the Gardens Trust

Committee of Management (Trustees) 2022

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Vicky Basford (Research),

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Chairman's Foreword

The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust is very saddened by the death of Queen Elizabeth II who was so keen on her gardens, and in her annual visits to Chelsea in particular as patron of the RHS. She opened three of her gardens under the National Gardens Scheme. In King Charles we have a very strong supporter of everything green. Amongst other patronages he was patron of the Cornwall Gardens Trust, Plant Heritage, The Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew and Edinburgh, the National Botanic Garden of Wales and others. As he steps back from these we know he will retain a keen interest in the Royal Gardens, and his own garden at Highgrove. We wish him well.

Welcome to the autumn/winter newsletter. This edition sees our usual array of interesting articles, reports on our activities over the last few months and plans for events taking us into 2023.

It occurred to me that there is a common theme through many of these, that of the challenges and opportunities that are presented in the face of change. This year's extraordinarily dry summer finally gave way to rain in September but in the guise of dramatic storms and flash flooding. Perhaps this gives us pause for thought on how best to deal with extremes in our own gardens no matter their size. Water is such an essential part of horticulture, and a lack or excess of it may need to be embraced through alternative approaches to design and planting. John Harrison's article on the climate emergency and his article on cascades seem very apt as we do this.

At the beginning of the year, we enjoyed another of Kate Harwood's excellent illustrated talks via Microsoft Teams. Hearing of how landscape designers dealt with the challenges and opportunities of the devastation and social upheaval caused by the after effects of World War II was very inspiring, more in my short write up.

Vicky Basford tells us about the planning application at Norris Castle.



Above is the Norris Castle farmstead. This is nationally unique but threatened by the building of 24 dwellings.

We have enjoyed two visits this year which we report on later.

On the subject of membership, may I take this opportunity to remind everyone that subscriptions were due in April and that these have increased (single annual membership now £15 and joint annual membership now £20). Please would you check that your standing order is correct and that your subscription is up to date. We value your continued support.

Finally, some exciting news. As a result of the concerns over the planning application for development at Norris Castle (previously reported and yet to be determined by the local planning authority), Historic England commissioned a national consultant, Kate Felus to research and report on the significance of marine villas. Kate kindly shared an early draft of her yet to be published report with us as we had helped her by sharing information from our records and it is a fascinating and detailed read. In essence, she has concluded that the Isle of Wight was and is the most important location for the fashion for marine villas in the 18th and 19th centuries with some of the best remaining largely unaltered examples of these building and their associated parks and gardens in the UK (not least being Norris Castle). We see as an opportunity to develop a new project to further Kate's work at a local level and highlight these important nationally important island heritage assets to a wider audience. We are considering how best to approach this and will report back soon but would like to hear from members and prospective members who may be interested in helping us.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Best wishes

John Brownscombe Chairman Isle of Wight Gardens Trust

The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust is also saddened by the loss of two particular members: Roger Woodcock, who served on the committee under Peter Marsden, was very active in helping Vicky Basford put together the local list of sites which the Isle of Wight Council adopted. He and Phyllis who survives him attended many of our social events, and son Tim was our treasurer.

Tony Aylmer attended the very first meeting to discuss the formation of our Trust and his wife Shaunagh served on our committee. As custodians of Nunwell House for 30 years they welcomed the Trust on many occasions and opened annually for the NGS.

A MidSummer's Day AGM at Northcourt - 21st June 2022

From an ordinary member's point of view, what could be nicer - a lovely warm afternoon, a stunning location and the likelihood of tea and cakes... Of course, from a Committee Officer's perspective there are the details to deal with: how many people will attend (numbers for chairs, copies of reports, tea cups), have all the legal requirements been met and can we risk sitting outside. I fully appreciated the effort taken to welcome us to the Sunken Garden at Northcourt and was pleased to have arrived early enough to help with chairs and parking.

It was a relatively small gathering of members, many old faces but some welcome new ones too and all were warmly acknowledged by our Chairman, John Brownscombe before he opened the meeting officially. The Reports had all been made available online so John was able to tell us more informally that, post -Covid lockdowns, membership remained steady and supportive, events and visits had resumed and the all-important research and involvement in planning issues that could affect our park and garden landscapes was ongoing. Particular thanks was offered to Vicky Basford and James Harrison for their input to the ongoing work surrounding plans for Norris Castle.

John Harrison had just begun to expand on the work done to put the Trust's finances onto a more even keel (largely, I concluded through his volunteering to do work that previously had incurred payment) when John interrupted himself, "can you hear that?" A distinct sound was coming from the direction of the walled garden; "my Little Owl - they have occupied the owl box this year". A group smile spread widely as we enjoyed the surreal moment.

Perhaps it was the warmth of the afternoon but it seemed that elections of people already doing great work were largely a formality with only the hint of a cloud on the horizon - mention was made of applying for a grant to aid succession, the passing on of crucial skills and knowledge.



As with so many charitable groups, our Officers are aware of the need to attract help from a younger contingent; this has many benefits, not merely physical, but also in the passing on of crucial skills and knowledge. Perhaps it is why I responded to an invitation to write this report? Perhaps you have a skill, or time to learn a new one, that might be invaluable to the IWGT? All are volunteers with jobs, families and gardens so the only compulsion is your desire to help, and to enjoy the company of like-minded friends who wish to protect and improve the managed landscape of the Isle of Wight.

And so to tea (and cakes) - thank you Christine and the cake providers. As always, John and Christine Harrison were eager for us to enjoy the gardens at Northcourt - the walled kitchen garden and the sunken garden were a delight. John then took John B and I to see his improvements along the stream including a new cascade plus the unintentional opening up (and planting opportunity) created by the recent storm that had felled an old willow. John H keeps talking about reducing his workload in the garden he has personally developed for forty years - I see no sign of that, just a wonderful legacy for us all.

Report by Sally Peake.



Sally Peake, John Harrison and John Brownscombe after the AGM

Your committee have been busy again;

Shorwell Midsummer Fair-reports by John Brownscombe

John and Christine Harrison kindly invited us to have a stall inside their beautiful gardens during this year's Shorwell Midsummer Fair on Saturday 18th June, which raised over £10000 for local societies and organisations. We pitched our gazebo close to the sunken garden and next to the entrance of the walled kitchen garden. We chatted to many of the people who had chosen to pay a small entrance fee to explore the beautiful and peaceful gardens and grounds of Northcourt, away from the bustle and noise of the very busy Fair being held in the main field. The summer gardens were in their full glory albeit, like many across the island, already showing some signs of the impact of the lack of rain and the higher than normal temperatures we all experienced this summer. Our displays, and in particular additional information on Northcourt and its history, were appreciated and we were able to speak to many people about what we do as a charity and more generally about gardens and plants.



Here is our gazebo at the end of Northcourt's sunken garden.

This is the last of 60 years that Northcourt has hosted the fair as Unfortunately car parking in the neighbouring farm is not available.



The sunken garden at Northcourt is

Thought to date from the beginning of the 20th century. It may have been an iris garden, but now combines this with a very natural style., allowing plants to self seed. Verbascum gives height to the grass Stipa tenuissima.

Wolverton Manor Garden Fair



We ended the summer by once again having a stall in the AONB Environment tent at the Wolverton Manor Garden Fair over the weekend of the 3rd and 4th of September. A very popular show with islanders and also with visitors, the last of the season, this year's event did not disappoint. Our updated display with photographs of the nationally registered parks and gardens of the Isle of Wight, our past events, talks and visits and our conservation and research work prompted some very interesting conversations with visitors. It also helped us to sell our publications and give away many membership leaflets in the hope of gaining some new members in the future. We welcomed two new members who paid for an annual joint membership at the event. Sales of home grown plants also proved a hit and in all we raised around £198 over the two days. Thanks again to all who volunteered over the weekend and in advance in the planning and creation of the new displays and logistics for the day.

To the left below is a corner of our marquee showing some of our chairman's plants for sale. To the right Wolverton Manor.



Kate Harwood's talk. Report by John Brownscombe.

At the end of March we enjoyed an informative and educational illustrated talk from our regular speaker and friend Kate Harwood, this time focussing on the gardens and landscape designs in the mid C20th.

Joining us via Microsoft Teams, Kate took us on a journey from post WWII to the late 1970s. Excellent slides told the story of a new approach to design, initiated by the need to address the impact of bombings of urban areas and in providing opportunities for new ways to provide housing and public spaces. This was perhaps epitomised by the optimism of the Festival of Britain with its bright colours and unabashed futuristic viewpoint. Influences from the new atomic age with structures looking like models were used to represent atoms, the space age, with rocket shapes and a strong emphasis on level changes and lines in design. Traditional opportunities for commissions for garden and landscape design were few and far between, with the grand country houses reeling from the effects of decreased labour, lack of access to new nursery stock (many nurseries and indeed many



Festival of Britain in Battersea Park

walled gardens and estate land had been given over to the 'Dig for Victory' campaign) and shortages of materials and requirements for Ministry approvals. I was particularly taken by the importance of public investment and the opportunities this gave for careers for talented and influential women who have left a strong legacy as a result and whose stories in my opinion, deserve greater prominence in UK mid-century design appreciation.

Modern Art also played its part, with key installations of sculpture, approaches to wall treatments (geometric tiles etc) and in terms of layout design from angularity through to more sinuous curves. These were particularly popular in the design approaches in the public realm spaces in the New Towns (such as Stevenage, Harlow, Basildon etc), with their areas of paving and low circular planters having been influenced by Scandinavian design, and designs also often incorporating areas of water by way of fountains, ponds/pools and rills. Perhaps with today's hindsight, these New Towns were rather patronising in their vision of a new Utopia which has not always been the reality for the communities living in these somewhat sterile new designed spaces. Even without the sense of place of locations which have 'evolved' in a more organic way with a patina of the past to be seen all around, the quality and care of their designs were and are still self evident.

Part of the design for a new way of living was an increased awareness of the importance of play for children and space for this in public places gained prominence. This was first championed by the pioneering social reformer, children's activist, and landscape architect Lady Marjory Allen of Hurstwood in the 1940s. She was a strong advocate for the need for adventure play for disadvantaged children, something that would have been commonplace in the bomb sites of London, captured well in the opening scenes in the Ealing Studios film "Passport to Pimlico". Lady Allen's work and approach was influential in the passing of the Children's Act in 1948. Organised play space has continued to be provided as an important part of public realm design but perhaps in the latter part of the C20th and early C21st we have designed in greater aversion to risk, losing the important adventure element?



Stevenage New Town officially opened 1959 by the late Queen

Away from landscape and public space schemes, in the 1960s there was a gradual move towards domestic gardens being seen as outdoor rooms as suggested by designers such as John Brookes and Preben 'Ben' Jakobsen. Fashions at Chelsea Flower Show saw the emergence of two distinct approaches, the formal garden with straight lines, trained and pruned shrubs and trees contrasting with a more informal 'organised chaos' approach with the potager and return of the cottage garden style harking back to the earlier C20th (still a popular style today). An increasing interest in gardening as a leisure pastime was catered for by an increasing number of radio shows and television programmes such as Gardener's Question Time and Gardeners World, publication of books and magazine for the amateur and products being available outside of specialist nurseries (Woolworths for example). Over the decades these started to create the new gardening zeitgeist starting in the 1950s with nature tamed and disciplined with regimented bedding, wall trained shrubs and fruit trees to the Goods in "The Good Life", in the late 1970s, returning perhaps to the 'Dig for Victory' approach but this time for self-sufficiency reasons.

I found Kate's talk amazingly detailed with a lot covered in a thought provoking and interesting way as always. I was particularly taken by the importance of public investment and opportunities this gave for careers for talented and influential women who have left a strong legacy as a result and whose stories in my opinion, deserve greater prominence in UK mid-century design appreciation. **Report by John Brownscombe**

Kate will rejoin us for another talk this winter. On Wednesday February 15th 2023 at 19.00 hrs. Please check website for Teams link, and we will email members with the code in the New Year. Her topic will be **Swiss Cottages and the Alpine Picturesque**. Please keep the date free.



The University of East Anglia campus designed by Denys Lasdun, landscaping Brenda Colvin

SUSSEX VISIT May 4th 2022– report by Susan Dobbs

We visited Denmans at Fontwell and Architectural Plants at Pulborough with lunch nearby at the White Hart, travelling with White Minibus. The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust added friends from NGS, Ventnor, Bembridge and the Hardy Plant Society to make up the 15 . Sadly our chairman John developed Covid and had to miss the visit(the rest tested OK).

DENMANS

I regularly passed the Inchbald School of Garden design near my school in London . This combined with Kate Harwood's lecture describing John Brookes as one of the most influential garden designers of mid 20th century made a visit to Denmans a must. The Manor House was requisitioned for the WRAF during the last World War, and the farm later became a productive market garden, supplying Covent Garden. In 1946 Hugh and Joyce Robinson started to convert the farm into an ornamental garden. Joyce learnt about the new plants available after the war and experimented with growing in gravel and by 1970 had built two dry river beds inspired by a trip to Delos The garden became a huge attraction in the NGS yellow book and was called Denmans after the estate owned originally by Lord Denman.

In 1980 John Brookes MBE from the Inchbald School and already of international fame took over the running of the garden. He made two ponds and widened the curved beds for Joyce's buggy and to show off the exotic-self seeding plants. He converted the old stable block into the clock house and moved in, starting his own Clock House school of design. The garden has now been added to Historic England's register.

ARCHITECTURAL PLANTS.

Our visit here fully met our expectations with a fascinating collection of half-hardy and spectacular plants, tempting some members to buy plants for immediate impact. Fortunately there was room in the minibus.



Our visit to the Old Rectory, Kingston



Louise and Derek Ness have created and are constantly evolving this romantic and rural countryside garden set in the beautiful South Wight at Kingston, over the past 20 years. Complete with a walled garden they created, the garden is packed full of plants, carefully chosen for colour and form.

This has long been a favourite place to visit and used to open for the NGS Yellow book, but we were lucky that she was prepared to open for 30 of our members. As always her large collection of roses were most interesting to see, and in the image above adorning the house. Louise has a large Instagram following. Her “garden shed” was superbly organised and clearly propagation was on the go on a large scale. The wild meadows were looking stunning with the oxeye daisies at their best and the knapweed ready to flower, but her formal garden (above right) with clipped yews and subtle colours was the biggest attraction. The tea afterwards was the icing on the cake ! (below some of our members tucking in.). Shame other members missed out !



Cascades

News and views from Northcourt 4. by John Harrison

You might wonder why I am writing about cascades in the driest year on record when many of these have turned into a mere trickle and lost their full impact. But I have been researching cascades as part of our own restoration at Northcourt. Our cascades of 1799 and that of 1968 were both restored this year. I am pleased to say despite the drought both have still been running .

The creation of cascades in the UK was inspired by the renaissance gardens of Italy, the most famous of which is probably the Villa d'Este at Tivoli designed between 1550-1572, which I visited in 2010, with the Gardens Trust, together with seeing the wonderful cascade at Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati, which also has a very fine Teatro delle Acqua (water theatre).

The Grand Tour took many of the British aristocracy to visits these fine gardens and buildings and they came back inspired to replicate what they saw in some way. The Chatsworth cascade was designed by a French engineer in 1696 and later extended.

Another early cascade was at Stowe, a collaboration between Charles Bridgeman and Sir John Vanburgh for Lord Cobham in around 1720, .(bottom right)



Shortly afterwards William Kent designed for Lord Burlington this one at Chiswick, recently restored (left).

Many of the early cascades were very formal and lacked a natural setting. However in the mid to later 18th century the nobility having done the Grand Tour were keen to explore Britain's natural landscape inspired particularly by William Gilpin's tours and quests for the perfect picturesque images and the tours of Scotland by Thomas Pennant. This inspired the picturesque movement – a desire to replicate nature maximising the natural landscapes as much as possible imposing picturesque embellishments in the gentry's estates.



One of the most natural cascades I have visited is that of Bowood (left) in Wiltshire designed in 1785 at the head of a lake by Capability Brown.

At the upper end of the Northcourt waterways was built a bathhouse made of flint which has 4 steps leading down, but only ever deep enough to be a hip bath, and at the lower end the bridge in the style of a packhorse bridge with a pointed almost gothic style arch. This is slightly reminiscent of the seven bridges in the valley gardens at Studley Royal water gardens next to Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, of a slightly earlier date. (see back cover).



From our bathhouse (left) many springs were collected into a brick lined underground stream which with a sluice gate at the lower end enabled sufficient head of water to create a short and narrow cascade. water falling about 6 feet to create a visible stream. Sadly tree roots have destroyed part of the wall so we have installed an electric pump to recreate a cascade coming out of a fernery, below a 400 year old yew tree.



The upper (left) and lower cascade at Northcourt part of the picturesque landscaping.

The lower “cascade” of about a foot only, was built in 1968 by dredging and widening the stream and creating a dam, but it leaked and the widened stream had become full of silt from road water overflow from the fields above. Now with a digger much silt has been removed and the dam repaired so we now have a second cascade. It is a joy to hear the sound of falling water again- very peaceful and definitely picturesque. At the same time we have built a large silt trap pond in the woods to be filled when we have heavy downpours as we had last summer and in recent thunderstorms.

There was no longer a need to travel to Italy or even the Wye Valley, the Lake District or Scotland to see the picturesque, the Island then becoming part of the picturesque tour of Britain, with Shanklin Chine opening in 1818 and Blackgang in 1843, and the Cascades at Ventnor developed from the location of an abandoned mill around 1900 by the Town Surveyor. (to right)



The Ventnor cascade

Little did William Gilpin, setting off on his travels from Heathrow (not in flight) in 1770 on his journey to travel up the Wye, realise just what an impact he would have on garden design nor on encouraging tourism in Britain.

Alnwick successfully encouraged tourism to Northumberland with their £30m garden project masterminded by Belgian landscape designers and at the heart of it is the new cascade. It has been subject to much criticism encroaching on a historic landscape and it can hardly be described as “picturesque”. What would William Gilpin have thought ? And what would Capability Brown have thought and what about the 2022 judges of the Chelsea flower show gardens ? We visited Alnwick Castle in 2016 but took one look at the garden entrance and decided it was not for us.



The twenty one year old Grand Cascade at Alnwick, Northumberland

Northcourt now has our little cascade gushing water after maybe an absence of 150 years to enhance the natural picturesque landscape and try and carry us away to some distant land. Adjacent is now a giant *Gunnera manicata* so maybe we can imagine being in the Brazilian jungle, avoiding the need to visit in the flesh adding to our carbon footprint . Next to that are *Echium pinnina* from the Canary Isles, *Zantedeschia (arum lillies)* from South Africa , bamboos from china, and a tree fern from New Zealand—so the whole world within yards of the sound of water bouncing off the rocks. Why travel abroad ?

Norris Castle Planning Application still to be determined

Norris Castle is the only Grade I registered park and garden (RPG) of the Island's nine RPGs. It lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the north coast with the grounds of Osborne House RPG on its south-east side. Norris Castle dates from 1799. It was built for Lord Henry Seymour by James Wyatt and Humphry Repton was probably involved in the design of the landscape park. It is a rare surviving example of a Regency marine villa estate (see Marine Villas article).

Development proposals were first put forward in 2016 and in 2018 the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust collaborated with Historic England in organising a workshop to study the significance of Norris Castle and its landscape. In February 2022 a planning application to the Isle of Wight Council was submitted for Norris Castle and the adjoining locally listed Springhill estate. The application proposed a luxury resort with hotel facilities within Norris Castle Grade I listed building, resort residences within the parkland and a spa facility with new-build accommodation within Norris Castle Farm Grade I listed building. Land at Springhill would be used for an access road and for residential development

The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust gave the application careful consideration with Vicky Basford and James Harrison spending many hours studying the proposals and holding discussions with Historic England and key local stakeholder groups. We submitted a detailed response to the council on 8 April concluding that *'the application will lead to major interventions taking place across the Registered Park and Garden which we believe will cause long-term, irreversible substantial harm'*. We also pointed out that the development would lead to substantial harm to the Springhill Estate. We therefore objected to the application and recommended that consent should be refused. The Gardens Trust (national organisation) also objected to the application and Margie Hoffnung, the GT Conservation Officer, has written an article on the proposed redevelopment in **GT News** Issue 19 (Summer 2022). The Isle of Wight Council has now advertised an agreed extended date for a decision of 30 December 2022. **Dr. Vicky Basford**



National Importance of Isle of Wight Marine Villas confirmed by New Study



" x 9"

'PUCKASTER COTTAGE, NITON'

Robert Lugar, 1828

A report on historic marine and seaside villa landscapes by Dr Kate Feluś has concluded that the Isle of Wight was probably the prime spot in which to build a marine villa in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This report is entitled *'A Delicious Retreat': The Marine Villa and its Setting, in England, c1760 to c1840 – A Contextual Study*. It was commissioned by Historic England in 2019 to consider the national resource of marine villas, partly in response to development proposals for Norris Castle (**see article in this newsletter**). The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust supplied Dr Feluś with information from our archive and Vicky Basford joined her on a field visit to the Undercliff gardens of Marine Villa and Puckaster House. COVID-19 delayed the completion of the report and we have only recently received a draft copy via the Gardens Trust. Web publication by Historic England in their Research Reports Series is still awaited.

The draft report by Dr Feluś draws two main conclusions: firstly 'due to a dearth of information on and analysis of marine villas, there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding of them as a specific type of heritage asset' and secondly that 'surviving ensembles of marine villas and their settings are now very rare'. Dr Feluś points out that apart from the designed landscapes of Norris Castle and Osborne House none of the Island's marine villa settings appear on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Many are now lost but a few remain undeveloped and relatively unaltered. Quite a few of the villa buildings are listed, mostly at Grade II, while East Dene at Bonchurch, Northwood House at West Cowes, and Sea Cottage and Lisle Combe at St Lawrence are notable Grade II* examples. Norris Castle and Osborne House are Grade I listed buildings with their grounds registered as Grade I and Grade II* respectively.

The report identifies over seventy marine villa sites on the Island, of which probably around 45 date from before 1850. Several major marine villa settings had already been eroded by around 1900, St. John's at Ryde – a landscape designed by Humphry Repton – being a prime example. Dr Feluś concludes that the number of likely pre-Victorian sites where the ensemble of house, ancillary buildings and landscape survive largely unaffected by later development is around 15. “Of those the number that retain the integrity of the original landscape setting and original marine villa is considerably less, perhaps a half. And of that handful, only one is earlier than Norris Castle – Sir Richard Worsley's Sea Cottage at St. Lawrence (now known as Marine Villa)”.

Dr Feluś urges that more work should be undertaken on the Isle of Wight, including further site visits to identify relative interest now that rarity has been established. She considers that the few best surviving examples of marine villa landscapes on the Island are worthy of being considered for designation. In particular, “consideration should be made of marine villa clusters and overlapping sites, for example those along the Isle of Wight Undercliff, including the linked marine villa settings of Lisle Combe and Marine Cottage, which share a history but also stand alone”. It is concluded that Puckaster Cottage at Niton Undercliff ‘is probably the best surviving example of all of those on the Island – where house and intricate Picturesque setting are both intact and essentially well-cared for’. She also draws attention to Binstead House on the north coast, which it was not possible to visit but where “map evidence shows typical features seemingly intact and the rare survival of the tidal bathing pool and the bathing house are visible from the beach”.

The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust hopes to use this excellent research as a springboard for a project on marine villa landscapes, the significance of which we identified in our Historic Environment Plan for Designed Landscapes (2015). We wish to further increase our knowledge of these important sites and to celebrate their significance locally and nation-

ally. We will be exploring grant funding opportunities to help us with this and will look to use the findings to ensure the sites are



Brannon image

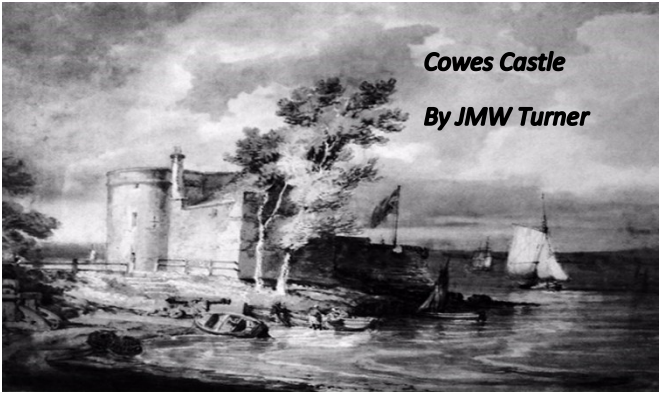
Of St. John's Ryde

EVENTS

Thursday

15th December 2022

**Christmas Lunch at the
Royal Yacht Squadron**



**Cowes Castle
By JMW Turner**

You are invited to come to our Gardens Trust Christmas lunch on the platform at 12.30 for 13.00.

Cost will be £35.00 to include a welcome drink. A wine bar will be available and after lunch there will be raffle of table plants.

A chance to enjoy the yacht club, Solent views, and the view across to the proposed Norris Castle development. There will be a short informal talk after lunch which will tell you about the designed landscape importance of the Springhill headland.

Guests welcome ,but we reserve the right to give priority to members and their partners.

Please complete the enclosed slip and pay by Thursday November 24th.

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Wednesday February 15th 2023. Online talk by Kate Harwood on Swiss Cottages and the Alpine Picturesque. Online link to be sent in New Year.

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Saturday March 20th 2023 18.00 (venue to be confirmed)

The legacy of William Robinson at Gravetye Manor.

Gardens and Landscapes of Ryde

Two guided walks were organised in 2022 on behalf of the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust: one in May as part of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival, and one in September for Heritage Open Days. Both explored gardens and landscapes of Ryde.



Mike Dawson leading the walk at Ryde Cemetery

The first aimed to show how Ryde developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, from farmland, woodland and commons into the largest town on the Island, and how it coped with the increase of inhabitants and with the large number of burials. Starting at St. Thomas' Church, built in 1719 by Thomas Player, the main local landowner, this

the first Ryde church was soon too small and was rebuilt in 1827. The churchyard also became overcrowded. In 1840 George, Thomas Player's grandson, donated land for Ryde Cemetery, which opened in 1842, and is the oldest municipal cemetery on the Island. The cemetery is now home to a huge variety of plants, including trees, some of which are more than 150 years old, which the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust surveyed in 1999. Large areas to the west of Ryde were developed later, in the 20th century. Some of this more recent development has skilfully incorporated existing streams, woodland and old trees.

The second walk revisited the St John's area in east Ryde. The focus of this event was St John's Park, a private suburb of Ryde, centred on shared 'lost' gardens, unique in the Isle of Wight. Originally laid out in the 1850s, the design by leading Ryde architect Thomas Hellyer was for substantial villas on large plots surrounding a central park. There was no single developer, so the houses were very varied in design, mainly in an Italianate style, and attracted wealthy owners including Generals and Majors. Many of the original houses remain, mostly now converted into flats. All had gates from their rear gardens into the central park. Although overgrown, parts of the boundary walls and gateposts survive, together with many original trees and shrubs. Ryde Town Council has now agreed to acquire this area, and the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust is following this with interest. **Mike Dawson**



The triumphal arch built by the Earl Spencer for Westfield Park, Spencer road, Ryde in about 1815.

Below is the stone bridge at Northcourt part of the stream and cascade complex, probably built in 1799, to the design of Catherine Bull.



West Cowes Castle from a tour of the Isle of Wight by Charles Tomkins 1796..

