

ISLE OF WIGHT GARDENS TRUST

Spring 2025



Front cover—Camellia Debbie, a Williamsii hybrid bred at Caerhayes Castle by J.C.Williams being a hybrid from C. Japonica from Japan and C. Saluensis from central China.

ISLE OF WIGHT GARDENS TRUST

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ISLE OF WIGHT GARDENS TRUST

Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1165283

Member of The Gardens Trust

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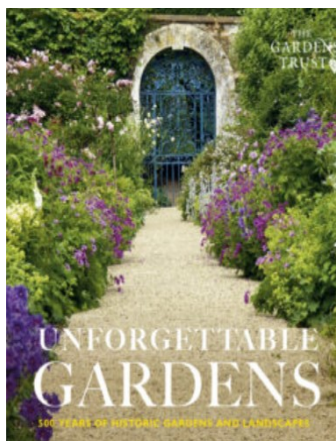
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Trustees Report.

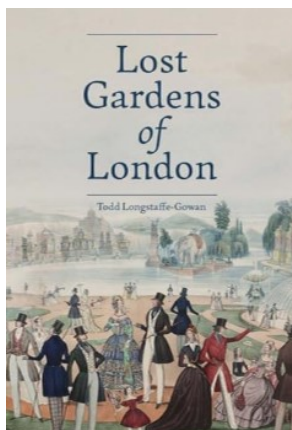
Welcome to our Spring newsletter. Since last autumn the Trust has enjoyed a well-attended and long-awaited trip to the Newt in Somerset and an excellent Christmas lunch at the Garlic Farm. A report on the Christmas party follows in this newsletter.

We were so sorry to hear the sad news of the loss of Simon Goodenough. A long standing member of the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust and the visionary behind the establishment of Ventnor Botanic Garden, Simon's horticultural and designed landscape expertise was well known and respected both on the Island and in the other important national sites he influenced. Before he passed, Simon had kindly contributed a second article on the importance of trees in the landscape for this newsletter. Jonyth Hill has written a tribute to Simon. Our thoughts are with Deb and his family at this sad time.

Our Marine Villas Project has moved on to its second stage with the collation of the excellent information that has been gathered from research and survey by our band of volunteers. We are now planning the final stages of the project which will see our new publication called '*Isle of Wight Marine Villas and their Gardens*' and a planned celebratory event. Vicky Basford, the project lead, gives us a more detailed update. We are grateful to two volunteers who have written a piece for the newsletter on Steephill Castle based on their work for the project. There is also more information about Beauchamp House and the Orchards (both Marine Villa sites) in St Lawrence Undercliff which we hope will be of interest to readers. You might also like to read :



Nationally The Gardens Trust have published in 2024 a book on 500 years of unforgettable gardens. £22. Excellent value.



Also published in 2024 a book by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan on London's lost gardens £25

Also if you have missed it watch Monty Don— "British Gardens." five excellent programmes on BBC iplayer BBC2 .

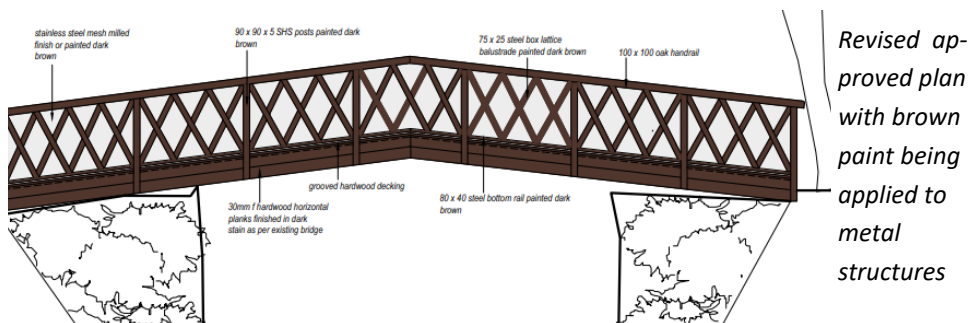
Trustees report continued.

We set out our planned programme for the next few months and details of other garden related events taking place on the Island. This includes the Bonchurch Open Gardens where there is a cluster of Marine Villas that we have been researching, many of which will be opening their private gardens for the two-day event in early July. We hope to organise a mainland day trip to Gloucestershire to visit Kiftsgate and Hidcote, subject to there being enough takers. Find out more details below including information on why these two gardens are of national significance. This year's AGM is kindly hosted by Mr and Mrs Welby at Stenbury Manor, near Godshill. Read on for more information on the event and the history of Stenbury Manor. We also intend to have a talk and visit to Nunwell Farm, thanks to Robert Oglander and his team.

A personal view on the implication of threats for estates from the Chancellor's recent budget is given by John Harrison as he and others, who are custodians of our historic houses and their designed landscapes, battle to keep their estates intact..

Also looking at challenges facing large 'public' parks, our second article on Central Park highlights how economic and social attitudes have influenced and fashioned the approach to its management and use from the late C19th to today.

We have had extensive discussions with Shorwell Parish Council with regard to amendments to the original application for the alpine bridge replacement, which the IW Council were minded to reject. Following our comments and suggestions an amendment was submitted providing mitigation on the impact of using modern materials. This revised application was recently approved, and your Trustees have agreed to assisting financially towards the mitigation measures, in return for the Parish Council accepting changes to reflect the more rustic and rural nature of the earlier structures.



Lastly see our **subscription reminder insert** and we hope to see you at the **AGM**.

Christmas Party at the Garlic Farm - report by Susan Dobbs.

On the 4th December 25 members and friends met for a convivial Christmas lunch in the Nag's Stable at the Garlic Farm. Colin and Jenny Boswell found time to drop in to give us a welcome.

Charlotte and her team were most efficient and welcoming and their young award winning chef cooked a variety of delicious dishes.

Jane Watson had, with her usual skill, dealt with all the applications and Rosie our new minutes secretary, had tidied up and printed my menu cards and a seating plan. It was particularly pleasing to see Patsy Thompson returning from Dorset for this unmissable event and Kitty Fisher, an early committee member.

A card was signed for Simon Goodenough to thank him for his contributions.



Tribute to Simon Goodenough.

Simon was born in Malta in 1955 where his father was serving on behalf of the Foreign Office following his naval career. During his formative years he visited a number of countries with his parents and either went to Military Schools or had a tutor dependent on the posting. These included West and East Africa, Mauritius, the Seychelles and the Oceanic Islands, which he was destined to visit in later years. His later educational years were spent with a brief but not too happy spell at Harrow and finally at Ealing Grammar School.

Simon took a Geology Degree at London University 1971-74 and then took a job on a survey ship doing seismic surveys in the oilfields of the North Sea. This was followed by a spell at London Zoo and then a field trip to Sumatra as part of a multi-disciplinary group evaluating rain forest for an extension to a preserve for orangutans.

It was then that he was inspired by one of the botanists, who expounded on the importance of plants to all life forms.

Consequently, he applied to the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew but told he first must get some horticultural experience. This he did at both Geests in Lincolnshire and then as a trainee for the Parks Department of the Borough of Ealing, during which time he took his City and Guilds in Horticulture and also passed the Royal Horticulture Society's General Certificate. He re-applied to Kew and also RHS, Wisley and was at first told he was too old, as they took their trainees directly from school! Luckily an applicant dropped out and Simon was able to commence a three year course in September 1976 at the Royal Botanic Garden.

On gaining his Diploma, he took a Grade 2 gardener's position, landscaping and re-planting the Temperate House and in 1981 became Supervisor of the nursery raising plants for the arboretum and temperate areas. In 1982 Simon was sent to Socotra in the Yemen Gulf collecting endemic flora. Also three weeks were spent on the islands of Rodriguez and Reunion collecting plants that were endangered. In 1983 he returned to the Oceanic Islands of St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha. The latter two places were for short stays, mainly discovering endemic ferns but on St Helena he set up a programme of plant conservation including a nursery and students were sent to Kew for training.



On the left is Simon at his retirement party from Ventnor. After his retirement from Folly Farm he was asked to be a trustee of Perennial (which we wrote about in our Spring newsletter), a judge for the RHS shows, and was also advising on the restoration of Gatcombe House parkland which we visited this September. He was a respected member of various plant groups. He looked forward to completing a series of articles for us on trees in the landscape.

It was in 1984 Simon first met Deb at Kew, where she had been seconded as an International Intern and subsequently a representative for the International Union for Conservation of Nature. She had trained in horticulture in Canada.

By 1985, they were both considering moving on and Simon applied for the new post of Curator at Ventnor, which he commenced on 3rd August 1986. Several months later Deb, now his wife, (they married in August 1986 at Newport Registry Office) became Nursery Manager and worked with him for 10 years until becoming Head Gardener at Osborne House, the Island residence of Queen Victoria.

The first years were very difficult climate wise, as they experienced a bitter winter in 1986/7, followed by a drought and then the hurricane of 1987, followed by another in 1990. Consequently with the loss of so much plant material and over 400 trees, it took considerable time to clear the devastation and build up the reserves to re-plant. Simon, with great fortitude and some pretty low periods, overcame the odds and with dedication, foresight, inspiration and with invaluable support from his staff, began to create a garden which is now both nationally and internationally recognised. He survived four big changes of Council and as he will be the first to admit, has been controversial at times and one not to toe the line. But his charisma, passion and vision have always shone through and created not only a place for education but also of great beauty and it is certainly one of the most visited venues on the Island.

Sadly in 2011 Simon left the garden when the IW Council could no longer support the garden and he went to the National Botanic Garden of Wales, once again dedicating passion and even vision for recreating the formal landscape of the grounds and other innovations. His last position was as Estate Manager at Folly Farm which was a garden created by Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll in 1906. He then retired with Debs back to their home in Chillerton, still maintaining their wide horticultural contacts and interests. He will be much missed by so many but all would have been delighted to have the privilege of knowing him.

Jonyth Hill.

Editor's note : Simon was an early supporter of the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust and attended with Debs several of our trustee meetings, and also contributed articles for our newsletter– the latest in this issue. In December Vicky and I were delighted to give Simon a card and a book entitled "The tree hunters" by Thomas Pakenham as a thankyou for his contribution. He hosted several conferences at Ventnor including contributing to our National Gardens Trust's conference. Simon had also helped setting up the IW NCCPG group (now Plant Heritage) but was instrumental in setting up the Ventnor Botanic Gardens Friends Society. It was pleasing that the Friends awarded Simon and Debs the Hillier annual award in 2023 for their contribution to Isle of Wight horticulture. His contribution to plant appreciation on the Island cannot be understated. Thankyou Simon. Your legacy lives on.

Update on the Marine Villa project.

This autumn and winter the project team of Vicky Basford, Sheila Caws and John Brownscombe have begun work on our marine villas publication. Sheila contacted all our volunteers asking them to send in their digital records compiled through research at the Records Office, online and by visits to local heritage centres. All information provided by volunteers has been added to our digital inventory. Vicky is compiling the gazetteer containing details of well over 70 marine villas and their gardens which will include new information collected by volunteers during the project. When complete, the draft gazetteer will be circulated to volunteers for comment. It will provide all the details needed to compile the main part of the book which will have sections describing key locations, dates, and owners; the social, economic and cultural context; the role of the Isle of Wight in the Picturesque movement; and the variety of villa buildings and their gardens including scale, design and layout. A section on garden features will discuss common and more unusual elements such as lodges, drives and paths; pleasure gardens; seats, viewpoints and lookouts; follies; water features; boathouses and bathing pools; menageries; parkland; tree planting; kitchen gardens; orchards; vineyards, farms and stables. The book will conclude by discussing survivals and losses and the future of marine villas including opportunities for protection and conservation. Marine villas and their gardens were designed to create a beautiful living picture so the book needs to be well-illustrated with contemporary engravings and paintings as well as more recent photographs. Sheila and Vicky will identify suitable illustrations which are free of copyright. John Brownscombe has offered to do the layout work and prepare maps. We hope to go to press late this year or early next year and launch the book at a public event next spring.

Footnote: An example of work done by volunteers is the account of Steephill Castle by Pat Almond and Eileen Hughes.-included in the newsletter.



A painting of Beauchamp Cottage. Our volunteers have also been researching this and the adjacent Orchards. Some new images and our entry in the gazetteer follow..

This painting courtesy of Robin Mc.Innes.

Uncovering Steephill Castle.

Would you like to be a garden detective?

This intriguing invitation came to us in 2023 to to be a garden detective in connection with the marine villa project. Eileen and I took the bait and chose to investigate the Steephill Estate near Ventnor as our first endeavour. We knew almost nothing about this 63 acre estate (1902) and it's castellated mansion built from 1853 on a plateau 100ft above the high water mark, but we were enthusiastic about finding out more.

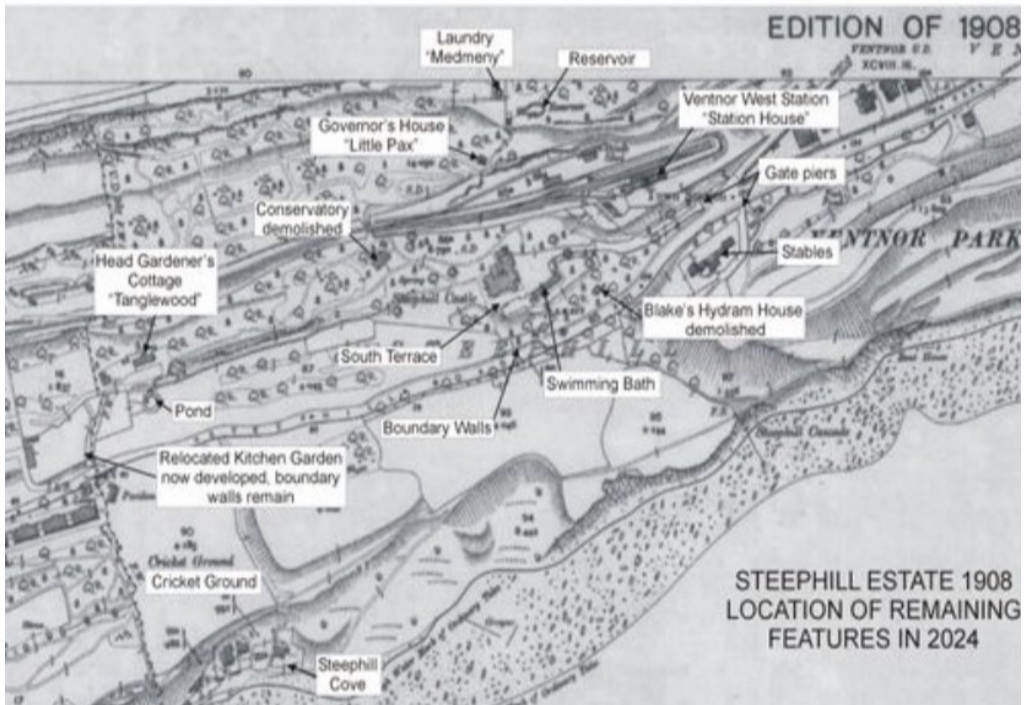
The history of this marine villa is well documented from 1729 and we were able to look at estate maps (1891, 1902) and OS maps (1862, 1907) at the Newport Record Office and photographs and documents at the Ventnor Heritage Centre. There was no shortage of information. We spent many mornings researching photographs and sale catalogues to build a picture of the development of the gardens during the 18th and 19th centuries until the demolition of the villa in 1963. What we really wanted to know was what happened to the wonderful features once the land had been sold for redevelopment. Did they still exist? Had everything we had detected been sold or destroyed? These questions became a fascination for us.

There is no evidence of the Steephill Cottage, the original 18th century building on the site or so we thought and we thought this would be the case also for the castle. The original entrance piers and a short driveway lead to a housing development on Castle Close, from Castle Road. Knowledge of the original landscaping helped us as we investigated the area and spotted high castellated stone walls cornered by bastions we had seen in photographs. We knew that these had formed part of the South Terrace (Victoria's Terrace) We were pleased that local residents allowed us to photograph the walls and decorative urns. Using the internet we established who designed and manufactured these urns (Austin and Seely). The ornamental lions at Osborne House were made by the same company.

We are grateful that friendly residents pointed us to the original swimming bath that was built at the base of the South Terrace. This bath, once heated and now without it's roof, is still in use by the owners of a bungalow on Undercliff Drive.

We knew from auction catalogues that there had been a Head Gardener's cottage as the gardens had been landscaped and admired during Queen Victoria's time. We located Tanglewood further westwards. A friendly and informative chat with the owners led to a sharing of photographs. They pointed out the relocated kitchen garden, the original lime tree walk used by the gardener as a short cut to the Castle and the old carp pond fed by a spring. An invitation by the nearby residents enabled us to take a closer view of this original feature which dominates their garden.

By this method Eileen and I went from garden features to buildings. Each find led us to another. The original laundry mentioned in the sale catalogue (1891) still exists in another form, hidden in the woodland between Castle Close and the Whitwell Road. It still has it's fresh water reservoir, once refilled by a Blake's Hydram, 150ft below. Nearby, also hidden in woodland, is the summer house built by Rt Hon Hans Stanley (Governor of the Isle of Wight) and known as Governors Cottage.



The very large estate of Steephill included glasshouses, an exotic plant conservatory, a lodge, a dairy, a bakehouse, workshops, and stables, none of which are identifiable due to redevelopment. The original kitchen gardens were relocated westwards in 1902 to make way for the extension of the railway to Ventnor. The Ventnor West station building is now a private house. The stables, already damaged by fire in 1888, were also relocated. We identified these in Undercliff Drive.

Our detective work successes energised us to research other marine villas in the area. Steephill Castle was a good start and we had established a productive working team with Pat concentrating on the detailed note taking and Eileen using her computer and photographic skills.

Pat Almond and Eileen Hughes .



Urn on boundary of property in privat...

266.6 KB



VICTORIA TERRACE, FACING SEA.



STEEPHILL CASTLE, FRONT ELEVATION.

Steephill Castle - front elevation - fro

New discoveries at the Orchards - formerly Orchard House by Jo Thornton.

Orchard House, first built by James Mackenzie to designs by John Nash was of the cottage Orne style. However, following his death, the property was brought up by Sir Willoughby Gordon, who was the Quarter Master General of the Army, who also inherited through his wife a half share in Northcourt.



The Orchards, the Undercliff, now divided into three has sadly suffered subsidence and the gardens much decayed.

He transformed the cottage The gardens of Orchard house have much to be uncovered. The remains of a large glass house, possibly used for orange trees and grapes has been uncovered. This can be seen in the above drawing to the far right of the house. It is described in the 1826 Arts Repository as having grounds with: *The gushing fountain, rocky fragments, verdant slopes, with shrubs of every hue embellishing the winding lawns, and picturesque cottages, all meeting the eye at once to captivate the senses, are backed by the gigantic wall of Cliff; for this varied tract, though far below the beetling cliff, stands high above the broad blue ocean that eternally moves beneath. Orchard, as will be seen by the annexed view, is rather in the style denominated Italian : its orange walks of considerable extent, its terraces and richly sculptured vases, its fountains and various other embellishments, give it an air that would seem to say, the luxuriant in art shall blend with the grand in nature.*

There is a large greenhouse/orangery, which has a boiler room beneath with pipes to feed heat into the building and once had a glass front and roof. This could be where the orange trees were placed to grow and during the colder months. Certainly there is evidence of grape vines within the greenhouse. Perhaps it once housed orchids or even pineapples which were popular among the gentry during the Victorian period.



Further down the garden another house, with pipes to provide heat was discovered underneath brambles and a series of reservoirs.

The remains of the fountain can be seen in the woodland, as well as stone arches and stepped terraces beneath the house verandah.



Sir Willoughby Gordon had a bath house built on the shore. The Arts Repository of 1826 tell us something about it: *We ought not to omit mentioning the very pleasing bathing-house constructed by Sir Willoughby on the shore: it is composed of immense stones piled on each other, their rough ends forming dressings to the deep windows and doors. It is most pleasing in its general appearance, and so happily blends with the rude fragments which surround it, that, were it not for the very complete internal arrangements, we should have supposed it to have been merely designed to harmonize with the picturesque and wild scene around it.*

The bath house is described in the book *the Memories of a Shanklin Longshoreman's*. It describes it as a two roomed cottage on the rocks at the beach edge. There was an office upstairs, and the bath house below which filled with the tides. Unfortunately it was washed away in the 1914 storm, with the remains blowing as far around as Binnel Bay



The bath house courtesy of the long-shoremen's museum Ventnor.

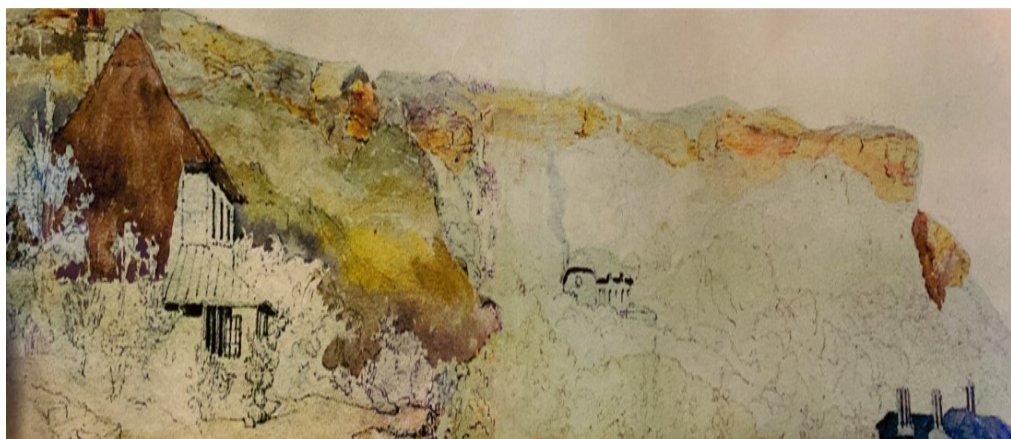


Found on the beach below the bath-house.

The text and images are taken from research carried out by Jo Thornton.

Beauchamp House.

Below is a copy painting of Beauchamp House possibly by one of the Gordon family who also owned it as a guesthouse to the Orchards. The copy of the painting was discovered by Elizabeth Marsden whilst helping to clear the attic at the Old Rectory Niton, in 2024.



NITON (THE UNDERCLIFF)

BEAUCHAMP—Draft to go in the Marine Villa publication gazeteer

DATE: PRE 1796

Located on the north side of Undercliff Drive c.128m west of 'The Orchard'. A holding called Beauchamp formed part of the manor of Niton in medieval and post-medieval period. An engraving of 1796 by Francis Jukes shows a property which appears to correspond to the principal building at Beauchamp as shown on later paintings and engravings. Albin (1808) wrote that *'On the road towards St. Lawrence ...are two lately constructed fancy cottages, Beacham cottage and the Orchard; the former belonging to John Kirkpatrick Esq, the latter ...the property of James Mackenzie Esq.'* The east wing of the rebuilt stable block at Beauchamp, surveyed prior to demolition in 2002, had a plaque giving the dates 1790 and 1952. In 1809 a building called *Beauchamp Cottage* was mentioned in the Niton Parish records, when Michael Hoy was recorded as paying the poor rate on the property. 'Hoy Esq.' is shown as the owner of Beauchamp on Clarke's map of 1812. An undated document in IWCRO describes the sale of parcels of land from Mr Hoy Esq to R.A.Bennett Esq and refers to a parcel of land *'formerly called Sackbutts and now called or known by the name of Beauchamp containing by measure 1a 3r 33p.* It mentions a *'tenement with the outhouses and appurts. erected or built on part of the said last described close and called or known by the name of Beauchamp'*. R.H.A. Bennett was the stepson of Richard Bull of Northcourt, a C17 manor house in Shorwell Parish, and was himself briefly the owner of Northcourt. His widow, described as 'Elizabeth Bennet of Beauchamp Cottage', sold Beauchamp to Sir James Willoughby Gordon of 'The Orchard', her son-in-law, in 1815 (IWCRO DI/302). A watercolour by Lady Julia Isabella Levina Gordon shows Beauchamp 'when Mrs Bennet first had it'. It depicts a thatched stone cottage with veranda. The Niton Tithe Map of 1840 shows a lawn and surrounding shrubberies interwoven with paths to the south, west and east of the house with a stable/ coach house and kitchen gardens to the north of the house. The Tithe Schedule of 1839 gives the area of Beauchamp as c. 3¼ acres and the owner as Sir James Willoughby Gordon Bart.

Bonner (1833) stated that Beauchamp is *'nearly excluded from view by close plantations'*. Cooke (1849) recorded that *'a lawn of the finest verdure slopes towards the road'* and that *'the grounds although small are adorned with some noble firs, pines and a variety of other trees'*. A later reference refers to *the little square cottage of Beauchamp with its hydrangeas, and in the sweet spring months a wealth of primroses beyond all imagining* (Venables 1860). When Queen Victoria visited 'The Orchard' in 1867 the stables at nearby Beau-

The poet Algernon Swinburne was a cousin of Lady Mary Gordon. He is said to have stayed at Beauchamp when it was in a poor condition and his poem 'A Forsaken Garden', 1876, is thought to describe the garden (Niton W.I. Scrapbook nd). It is said that Lady Mary Gordon had the cottage repaired in about 1870, the roof being tiled on three sides and slated on the north (Niton W.I. 1971, 20). The building may also have been re-fronted and encased in dressed stone blocks at this date as the appearance of the house in C20 photographs differs from that shown in watercolours by Lady Mary Gordon 1850.

In 2001 the A3055 (Undercliff Drive) was damaged by landslip. Beauchamp was compulsory purchased by the Isle of Wight Council in order to reroute the road. The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust recorded the property and took photographs in 2002 before the main house and adjacent rebuilt stable block and coach house (then known as Beauchamp Cottage) were demolished. At this date the surviving historic interest consisted mainly of the wooded setting with mature trees including beeches around the house. Despite the rerouting of the A3055 this road had to be closed to vehicles following a second landslip in 2014 although pedestrian access is still possible. A further site visit in 2024 as part of the Marine Villas Project recorded and photographed remaining traces of the garden from a temporary footpath near the southern boundary of the garden.

Thanks also to Pat and Eileen for further work on the Orchards and Beauchamp.



Four newly discovered photocopies of paintings are attributed to Lady Mary Gordon c.1850 daughter of Gen. Willoughby Gordon. They have been offered to the IW Heritage Service for safekeeping. Here is one of the top of Beauchamp garden.

The destruction of the family estate?

It is now 50 years on since the great exhibition “*The destruction of the Country House 1875-1975*”, staged at the V&A commissioned by Sir Roy Strong, then Director. The “Hall of Destruction” made a big impression on so many. I remember seeing a film of the cranes destroying Deepdene, in Croydon in 1964, perhaps our finest Italianate Garden, and the contrast of hearing the birds singing at Cranborne Manor.

Public opinion was mobilised against further destruction of our heritage, but despite that the house and contents of Mentmore were allowed to be dispersed in 1975 to pay death duties. The organisation SAVE was formed, and moves were made to introduce supportive legislation, such as Conditional Exemption from inheritance tax - conditional upon sufficient public access and land or houses being of exceptional interest.

The Inheritance Tax Act of 1984 introduced Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR). The former helped to avoid larger estates being fragmented and the latter helped estates who derived most of their income from public access, and associated activities, like events, weddings, garden centres, serviced self-catering, tea rooms or farming to benefit from BPR. The Garden Trust movement started in 1984 after Hampshire County Council reported on the threats to its parks and gardens.



Here on the Island notable losses were East Cowes Castle (to left), John Nash's own residence, Steephill Castle

Appley Towers Castle, St. Clare Castle, and Westfield Park, all at Ryde – all being Marine villas— but as in our article on Steephill there are often remains to be discovered.

The exemptions have allowed many large estates to remain intact, encouraging their visitor facilities, resulting in a substantial increase in tourism and visitor numbers generally. Also there are those who may have added farmland previously sold off to enhance their activities or benefit from APR.

The Historic Houses Association, Country Landowners Association and others are lobbying hard with the surprised capping of APR and BPR, taxing estates over £1m at 20%. The *Daily Mail* calls it the “War on Downton Abbey”.

This all comes on top of the minimum wage increases, higher taxes, lower wealth generation from less buoyant financial markets, higher NIC, increased energy and building costs all of which are already threatening many of these ventures, so it is no wonder that there has been a record number of large estates put up for sale, especially those who have relied on farming subsidies or profit to maintain their operation.

Now is the biggest threat to maintaining our heritage of historic parks and gardens since 1980, which requires as much awareness and lobbying as possible. Many will be fragmented, developed or just fall into decay, having reached a peak of conservation in the last few years, thanks in part by grant making bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and an attractive fiscal environment. American heiresses we need you again! -Editor.



Appley Towers house was built by the Hutt family, largely from 1875, and was then owned by Sir Hedworth Williamson. After being purchased by Ryde Borough Council in 1945 the house was demolished in the 1950s.

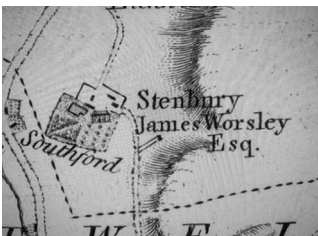
This folly with gothic revival tracery windows and an oriel window to the sea was restored from November 2023 and reopened in August 2024. It has been a great joint venture between Ryde Town Council, Isle of Wight Council, Natural Enterprise and funding from The Heritage Lottery Fund. Monkton Arts are to manage it for the benefit of local artists. We must congratulate all those involved.

Historical background to Stenbury Manor.— by Vicky Basford

The venue of the 2025 AGM at Stenbury Manor presents an opportunity for members to visit this rather remote manor house in a very special location and to inspect the recently created gardens. Here, Vicky Basford reviews Stenbury's history, archaeology and garden history. The Isle of Wight Gardens Trust last visited the property during the ownership of the late Miss Audrey Russell.

Stenbury Manor lies nearly 2km south of Godshill on Carstone beds of the Lower Greensand at the bottom of acombe to the west of Stenbury Down. A spring rising on the downland slope feeds a stream flowing west down the valley past the manor house and associated ponds before joining the River Yar to the west of the Whitwell Road. The house is approached down a long track running south-east from the road. It sits at the centre of a network of paths leading south to Nettlecombe, east to Newbarn Farm and north to Little Stenbury.

The Old English place-name *Staneberie* means 'the stone-built fortified place'. This probably reflects the existence of a fortified private homestead rather than a larger stronghold. ¹ Stenbury Manor's recorded history begins with the Domesday Survey of 1086, in which it is listed as belonging to the king, but the manor pre-dates the Norman conquest as Domesday states that at the time of Edward the Confessor it belonged to Cheping. It passed into the de Aula family and from them to the de Heynos during the 13th century. The de Heyno family had their own private chapel at Stenbury. ² The manor was owned by the de Heynos until 1505 when it was divided between four daughters. The daughters married into the Pound, Wyker and Worsley families, but the various portions of the property had been purchased by the Worsleys by the late 16th century. During the Worsley ownership the property was associated with Appuldurcombe House. According to the Antiquarian Percy Stone, Sir Robert Worsley is said to have lived at Stenbury during the rebuilding of Appuldurcombe in the early 18th century. ³ The Worsleys retained ownership of Stenbury until it was sold by Lord Yarborough (inheritors of the Worsley estates by marriage) in the mid-19th century. ⁴ In the late 1950s Miss Audrey Russell was given Stenbury by her father as a 21st birthday present and owned it until her death in 2014. ⁵



*On left John Andrews map
2nd Edition 1775. On
right six-inch Ordnance
Survey Drawing 1793.*



People have lived in the area around Stenbury for a very long time. 'Ten earthen pots of urns filled with coals and bits of bones', found in 1727 in the moat around the house, were probably the remains of prehistoric cremations. ⁶ Stenbury Manor has settlement remains and a moated site dating from the medieval period which have been designated a Scheduled Monument. At its western end, the scheduled site includes the manor house and a building said to be the remains of the 15th century chapel, both lying within the moated area. ⁷ This dry moat would have surrounded the medieval manor house which preceded the present building. Modern 1:2,500 OS mapping indicates that the east arm of the moat small part of its south arm remain visible. The settlement earthworks to the east of the moated site consist of a building platform, trackways, terracing and a series of water channels and ponds. To the west of the manor house and moated site are further earthworks, including fishponds, lynchets and a platform on the edge of the stream, reputed to be the site of a mill. These earthworks to the west of the moat are not included in the scheduling as their extent and survival are not well understood.⁸

The manor house is a stone-built Grade II listed building. It is T-shaped, with a long range aligned east-west under a continuous pitched roof and a projecting wing to the north. The oldest section of the house is the west end of the east-west range. Here, at the back of the house, facing south, there are square-headed stone mullioned windows of late 16th or early 17th century date. The north-facing front of the house, to the west of the projecting north wing, has sash windows with keystones and contains the house's principal entrance, marked by a doorway with moulded architrave and keystone. Percy Stone suggests that this 'modernised' front elevation was created when Sir Robert Worsley was living there in the early 18th century.⁹ To the north of the house there are three listed barns. Two are of 17th century origin but one is dated 1773 with the initial 'W' for Worsley.



These new beds were created in the last three years. There was no garden when the Welbys bought the Manor in 2017. The house was by that time almost uninhabitable.

Stenbury Continued.

Stenbury Manor House was tenanted for some time after being purchased by the Worsleys in the late 16th century. We therefore might not expect Stenbury to have had an ornamental garden. However, Sir Robert Worsley is said to have lived there briefly and in the early 18th century it was certainly the home of his distant relative David Worsley, son of John Worsley Esquire of Gatcombe.¹¹ It was later the home of David's son James Worsley (1725-87), MP for Yarmouth from 1775-80 and for Newtown in 1784.¹² John Andrews map of 1769 marks Stenbury with the name 'James Worsley Esq.' inscribed under that of the property, implying the residence of a gentleman. The map shows a garden larger than that of the Island's working farmsteads. This lay within a rectangular enclosure to the south of the house and contained an orchard and another area of garden cut by a diagonal path, possibly containing ornamental planting. By the time of the 1793 six-inch Ordnance Survey drawing, the rectangular enclosure had been replaced by one that was heart-shaped and contained both orchard trees and flower beds. A narrow rectangular walled orchard was also shown on the 1793 OS to the north-west of the house. On the six-inch OS of 1862-3 the heart-shaped enclosure was shaded to indicate ornamental grounds and still contained trees. The narrow rectangular walled orchard north-west of the house was also shown with trees on either side of a central path. Sales Particulars of 1939 described 'an excellent walled-in Orchard and Kitchen Garden'. By the late 20th century, this rectangular walled garden was no longer cultivated but it is now in use as a garden once more with the walls rebuilt.



Top right and bottom left shows the garden in 2017, and above right the restored kitchen gardens in 2024.

Simon Goodenough tells us more about trees in the landscape.

The Limes

The two native limes to Britain, the small leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and the large leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* formed a natural hybrid. This happy union occurred in both Britain and Europe. This hybrid had vigour, growing faster than either of its parents. It also proved very easy to clone from sucker shoots. It seems that the clone that is common in Britain is one that vanishes into a tangle of 'whiskers' correctly known as epicormic growth. Here lies a lesson bring in a better clone, as seen in Europe or plant one of the parents.

By the 17th Century it was fashionable to plant limes in Britain. Mass production by cloning made it the most formal of trees, especially when pleached and pruned. The lime with its vigorous growth and geometry suited the new landscapes of walks avenues and allées radiating across Europe after the model of Versailles, the great masterpiece of Andre Le Notre. Initial formal plantings of limes in Britain were with our native species, however the more vigorous naturally occurring hybrid *Tilia x europeae* became the most commonly planted.

Alan Mitchell in his Field Guide to Trees of Britain and Northern Europe does not mince his words about the common lime "Abundant especially in streets and avenues, for which it must be the least suitable tree of any.....a victim of hideous lopping and mutilation" . *In the next edition Simon tells us about the different lime trees grown.*



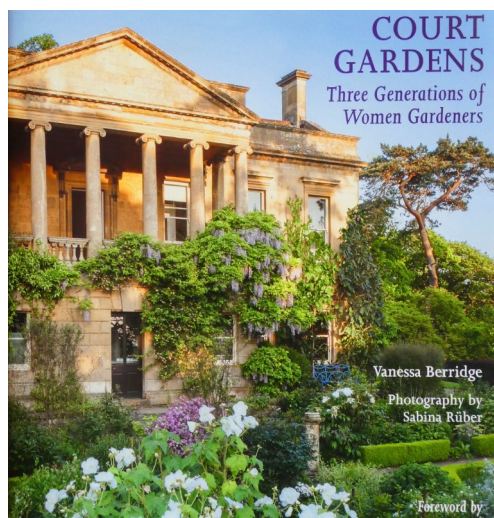
HIDCOTE is on the site of a former priory but became a farmhouse in the 17th century. It was bought by Lawrence Johnson in 1907 together with 287 acres for £7,200. He moved with his mother, Gertrude Winthrop, from America and started designing the garden with guidance from books like Thomas Mawson's *the Art and Craft of Garden Making* and started collecting plants on trips to South Africa, China, and the Alps.

It attracted many well connected people and received widespread acclaim with its garden rooms and choice plants, and he started opening for a few days for charity.

Thinking about its future in the 1940s he approached the National Trust and it was acquired by them in 1948, being the first garden of national importance transferred to the Trust through the Gardens Fund. It is now registered as a Grade 1 garden, recognising its importance in the establishment of arts and crafts gardens.

There is now a good café in the gardens and a plant centre

KIFTSGATE COURT almost adjoins Hidcote but has been developed by three generations of lady gardeners, from 1920, inspired in part by Lawrence Johnson but without the formality. The garden has since evolved and with the steep steps down to the lower garden takes very full advantage of the dramatic views over the escarpment. It has opened regularly for the public for some 50 years with a café in the house.



To learn more about Kiftsgate read this book. The garden is especially famous for the rambling rose Filipes Kiftsgate. Below is the red border at Hidcote.



Central Park - from late C19th to today.

Following on from our last newsletter, in this article we look at how Central Park's fortunes have mirrored the economic and social changes and attitudes of New York City. In its early years, Central Park easily fulfilled its promise of a place for quiet enjoyment and genteel repose. Visitor numbers were recorded by Park Keepers who would also ensure that the park's strict byelaws were upheld, including exclusion from certain areas which were only open on certain days. These tell us that the majority of visitors were the wealthy gentility of the city, who had had the original vision for its establishment. They were now able to pass their leisure time driving their carriages on the newly created pleasure drives and walking on the promenades away from the noise and bustle of the city streets. It became the place to see and be seen. In 1879, Walt Whitman remarked that there was 'an oceanic tide of New York's wealth and gentility, an impressive, rich interminable circus on a grand scale, full of action and colour.'

In the 1860s two thirds of visitors were arriving by carriage when only 5% of New Yorkers owned or had access to such transportation. This activity was admired by the newly emerging middle classes who soon wished to emulate their 'betters' seeing a rise in carriage hire for trips in the park.



The Grand Drive, Central Park. N.Y courtesy of the Library of Congress.

By the 1860s, the middling sort made up around one third of the city population and over the next two decades they would start to visit the park for their own favoured activities of walking, boating, feeding swans, having picnics and going to the newly created zoo. They were also able to attend regular concerts and use the lawns which were opened to the public on Saturdays only.

Despite the much-used moniker of the 'People's Park', the working class were largely absent with around two thirds to three quarters of the city population seldom or never using the park. This was at best an unintended consequence (but perhaps a design) of the park's restrictions, particularly on Sundays. This was further exacerbated by the Sabbatarian movement which was strong in the 1860s and 70s seeing no concerts and no access to lawned areas on the only day of the week that working people may have had leisure time. Another limiting factor was the geographical location of Central Park which, in this period, was away from working class neighbourhoods therefore limiting access due to the cost of travel to Mid-Manhattan on public transport.

However, by the 1880s, more and more middle and working class people were visiting the park and often starting to challenge or actively disobey the rules and byelaws.

Olmstead himself commented that the park was ‘much misused’ compared to its early days when a ‘lawless habit was rare amongst visitors’. Increased use of the park for ball games and the taking of flowers and cuttings met with particular disapproval. Perhaps this also reflected an underlying concern over the new immigrant communities who were starting to establish themselves in the city. Largely of European Jewish or Italian origin, there was a general media allusion to such problems having their origins in the use of the park by these communities and their lack of understanding of suitable behaviours, (this attitude was repeated in the 1950s/60s in regard to the new Puerto Rican and Black immigrant communities). The media were also starting to express concerns over levels of crime in Central Park which was developing a reputation (perhaps undeservedly) of being a place of moral peril. This was perhaps related to the other significant social change of female independence seeing more and more women using the park unaccompanied in carriages, on horseback or by bicycle, something which would have been unimaginable in the 1850s/60s.

In 1882, the original governance structure was abandoned for a new Board of Commissioners appointed by the Mayor of New York and the day-to-day management and maintenance of Central Park becoming part of a Department of Public Parks. A move which sought to address concerns over the former ‘elite’ approach but is now often cited as the start of its decline.

Economic downturn and pressure on the public purse saw the regular maintenance of the park decrease and some of the original drainage systems start to fail. This led to a return of swampy conditions in some areas and the open water become a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Demands for the park to be landscaped to benefit the surrounding wealthy residents (particularly on the south and west sides) were increasing, including the removal of mature trees which were in some locations screening their views of the borrowed landscape. There was also demand for more gateways into the park to ease access and complaints over noxious smells from the zoo and manure heaps used to fertilise the flower beds and shrubberies.

The start of the new century saw the passing of the generation who had been instrumental in providing the vision and delivery of the park, including the original backers and both Olmstead and Vaux. The Greensward Plan was becoming out of step with the demands now being placed on the park by the community. Increased leisure time and competition from new ‘attractions’ such as the theatres, picture houses, Madison Garden, and the pleasures of Coney Island leading to a relaxation of the provision of facilities and commercial activities in the park. Some attempts to instigate charges (such as charging a ‘nickel for a seat’ chair rent) were met with stiff opposition by those asserting the public nature of the facilities. The park was increasingly fragmented in its use and patronage of facilities, with the wealthy using facilities such as the 1920s revamped Casino Nightclub and the poor using the open spaces for games and picnics.



Model Yacht on Central Park lake 1921. Rijksmuseum
Creative Commons licence via Wikipedia Commons.

At this time there was also debate over what to do with the now redundant Croton Lower Receiving Reservoir. Various plans were put forward, some focussing on facilities and pleasure grounds, others seeking to be more in keeping with the Greensward Plan ethos. The economic crash of the late 1920s led to delays in the decision making over investment. The Lower Reservoir was drained in 1930 and a decision made to accept the American Society of Landscape Architects Plans to transform the site into the 'Great Lawn'. Soon this now derelict area became a draw for the many 'vagrants', men who had been attracted to the city looking for work during the Great Depression. The resulting shanty town was nicknamed "Hooverville" or "Forgotten Mens Gulch" and much maligned by the still wealthy residents on Fifth Avenue who, were overlooking the site from their now much higher, 'sky scraping' buildings.

A new head of parks, Mr Moses, was quick to take advantage of the 'New Deal' Federal investment in public works and secured \$113 million for public works on New York Parks. In Central Park, much of this was spent on capital projects to help restore and renovate existing features and the creation of new areas including the establishment of the Great Lawn. Public benefit being at the heart of this approach. He was also a great advocate of the Olmstead and Vaux vision.



View from the Rockefeller Centre, 1955. Illustrated London News Creative Commons via Wikicommons.

The USA and New York city experienced an economic boom after WWII. The improvements from the 'New Deal' were now allowing more people of all classes to access and enjoy Central Park and enjoy the new catering and leisure activities also being provided. In the 40s and 50s the park perhaps reached its potential as the 'People's Park' because of this and a major draw for tourism.

The 1960s saw the increased liberal approach to the Park's use including the 'Great Lawn' for a series of mass gatherings often referred to as "be-ins". Protest events were held for protest against the Vietnam War and for civil rights.

The 1970s saw another cycle of economic downturn resulting in cuts to the public purse and resulted in a general lack of sufficient maintenance to deal with the now heavy use of the lawns and other parts of the park. This led to a powerful challenge to the liberality of

use encouraged in the 1960s and large events were once again controlled by licence. The 70s' recession lasted for much of the decade and the Park and other parts of the public estate showed the resulting signs of neglect, with the City facing bankruptcy.

The tide of change came in 1980. The Central Park Conservancy was formed with a task to encourage greater public and private sector partnership, a return again to the Park's original ethos but for a modern age. This included a clear statement of the need for 'appropriate use'. With the economy now in a 'boom' cycle, the new self selecting committee of the Conservancy included many business tycoons and monied families - similar to the original Board of Commissioners. This successfully garnered business support and the money for the repairs, maintenance and improvements that the park desperately needed. One notable business man, with existing interests on Fifth Avenue and mid Manhattan, partnered to redevelop and then run the ice rink. This reopened in 1986 and was heralded by him as an example of private enterprise supremacy of the failed public sector provision. His name? Donald Trump.



Aerial photograph of Central Park during the Global Citizen Festival 2014 taking place on the Great Lawn. Photographer A Quintano courtesy of Wikicommons

The partnership approach was heralded by the media who by the late 80s were saying it was a 'season of rebirth'. The Conservancy established a Central Park Perimeter Association to specifically appeal to the wealthy who lived and had their businesses next to the Park. The work of the Conservancy has not however been without its controversies. Partisan groups concerned with changes proposed to their areas of interest often opposed or delayed its plans and

increased private sector involvement led to accusations of 'elitism'. With the downturn of the 1990s the Conservancy had to increase its own funding for maintenance and programming as corporate sponsorship contracted.

Despite these early issues, the Central Park Conservancy continues today and now seems to balance the competing needs of users, providing a varied activities including concerts and art installations alongside maintaining the park's fabric and honouring the Olmstead/Vaux vision nearly 200 years after the original idea for a People's Park was mooted. More information on their work can be found on their website - centralparknyc.org

So what does this history tell us? In times of boom and bust, public parks remain essential for the well being and cohesion of communities. Underinvestment can lead to necessity of partnership which may provide successes but are dependent on the economy and needs careful consideration to prevent unguarded self interest.

In the next article, we will look at some more recently created parks in New York City.