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Annual Conference

Professional Women:
the public, the private, and the political

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Welcome to the Summer 2019 issue of Women's History, a special issue on gardening, guest edited by Dr Catherine Horwood (Independent Scholar), Dr Alice Strickland (Curator, National Trust) and Dr Oliver Cox (University of Oxford). Women’s History is the journal of the Women’s History Network and we invite articles on any aspect of women’s history. If this themed edition inspires you, we would also be interested to talk to you about your suggestions for future special issues.


Introduction

While women’s involvement in most areas of social history has been researched, in the history of horticulture, it has been sadly overlooked. *Gardening Women* was among the first to focus on women’s involvement both in the professional world and private gardens.1

In researching for *Gardening Women*, it soon became obvious that it was impossible to put names to the vast majority of women who gardened or were involved in commercial horticulture. That is not to say they were not there but they were the mostly anonymous ‘weeding women’ of the Early Modern period or the wives and daughters whose work was never acknowledged. It was not until the seventeenth century that one could begin to identify individuals other than queens or aristocratic women but they were still a rarity. Their talents may not have been in ornamental gardening but more likely in the deep knowledge of growing plants for ‘the pot’ and the skills of the still room.

By the eighteenth century, names of women such as Lady Anne Monson start to appear. Lady Anne’s story involves adultery and divorce, scandalous at the time. But it had both a happy and a horticultural ending since she was able to re-marry and her enforced exile took her to South Africa and India where her plant hunting and support of local gardens brought her recognition not just there but in the European horticultural world as well. A correspondence with Carl Linnaeus lead to a plant being named after her, *Monsonia speciosa* and a cartoon of the first meeting of the Horticultural Society (later the Royal Horticultural Society) includes Lady Anne although only as a satirical portrait on the wall since it was a men-only gathering.

This is hardly surprising since, in terms of horticultural history, the eighteenth century appears dominated by men and one in particular - Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. There is no questioning his influence on the English aristocratic landscape. The tri-centenary of his birth in 2016 brought forth yet further confirmation of the seemingly exhausting number of projects he was involved with together with a client list of many of the most aristocratic names almost without exception, male. However, while rarely listed as the main client, there were occasions when females with a position of authority within their homes, were able to either commission Brown or at the very least, contribute their opinions on his work. Such a case is revealed in Andrew Hann’s research on Jemima, Marchioness Grey, at Wrest Park - ‘A tale of two advisors: Jemima, Marchioness Grey and the improvement of the gardens at Wrest Park in the mid-18th century’. Here issues of property ownership and wealth are key to revealing the extent to which she was able to become involved with the design of the gardens.

A passion for plants and gardening can be an expensive hobby but for a few women this was never a problem. Pippa Shirley shows us the rarefied world of the super-rich with an account of Alice de Rothschild’s involvement with the gardens at Waddesdon and nearby Eythrope in Buckinghamshire in ‘Alice de Rothschild and the garden at Waddesdon’. While the extensive gardens with its lavish glasshouses and model dairy were first created by her brother, Ferdinand de Rothschild, it was Alice who took over their management after his death without a male heir. While there was never a question of her getting her hands dirty, Alice’s rich correspondence with her head gardener, George Johnson, shows the strength and depth of her involvement not just in maintaining her brother’s legacy but also developing her own horticultural ideas. For many years, the reputation of Beatrix Whistler (1857-1896), as Professor Clare Willsdon points out in her paper “The lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird”: Beatrix Whistler and horticulture, rested mostly on her status as the wife of James McNeill Whistler. Given the time it took for her to be recognised as an artist in her own right, it is hardly surprising that her horticultural talents have remained overlooked. However, it is not only her skills but the talent to inspire through her gardening that Willsdon focusses on. Her paper encourages us to re-visit the Whistlers’ work for

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1 Roger C. Bailey, *Women’s History* 13, Summer 2019, p. 38

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Front Cover
James McNeill Whistler, La Belle Jardinière, August 1894, lithograph, 32.3 x 20.8cm, © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.
clear examples of her horticultural influence.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the benefits of gardening were being recognised for all classes of society. Improvements in printing meant that horticultural books and magazines began to flood the market. Women's horticultural education was in its infancy to boom in the first part of the twentieth century for a brief period. In working-class areas, philanthropic workers encouraged the ‘greening’ of even the poorest homes with offers of free plants and local flower shows.

Rebecca Preston and Clare Hickman go one step further and look at the use of gardening within women’s prisons around this time in their paper Cultivation in Captivity: Gender, Class and Reform in the Promotion and Practice of Women's Prison Gardening in England, 1900–1939. The contrast between gaol yards and wealthy estates could not be greater. For the women behind locked doors, gardening brought a glimmer of normality and this is a rare glimpse behind the prison walls.

This special edition of the WHN journal was commissioned after a popular study day held in October 2018 in Oxford. The study day stemmed from The Triumph of Hope exhibition at Nymans (June - October 2018). Marking 100 years since the publication of A Garden Flora the exhibition explored the lives of three members of the Messel family - Muriel, Maud and Anne. ‘I think that the garden may fitly be described as the triumph of hope. It was always full of experiments, it gave endless pleasure, and if you walk through it, you will see the careful thought that was bestowed on each plant.’ This was Muriel Messel's opening description of the garden at Nymans in A Garden Flora (1918), a catalogue of trees and shrubs at Nymans.

United by their shared passion for garden design and interest in the cultivation of plants, Muriel, Maud and Anne each played her part in the development of the garden at Nymans. All three were also part of a wide network of horticultural acquaintances and friends. Many of which inscribed their names in the Nymans visitors' books. Their letters and diaries show the development of these friendships and the seeking of advice from fellow gardeners and the joy the garden at Nymans brought to each one of them. For instance, Maud found a friend in Ellen Willmott, the well-known rosarian of Warley Place in Essex. Without her and the devotion of a small group of enthusiasts, of which Maud was one, many of the old roses which are valued today would have been lost.

The discovery of the Messel family’s network of horticultural acquaintances and friends has given an opportunity to look across the National Trust, at the influence women gardeners and designers had on the gardens in their care. While Gertrude Jekyll is believed to have visited Nymans, no proof has been found to substantiate this claim; her work at gardens including Barrington Court and Lindisfarne is well documented and celebrated. Affectionately known as the 'Queen of Spades,' Jekyll is considered one of the most influential British gardeners of the twentieth century. She believed that the appeal of gardening lay in giving 'happiness and repose of mind, firstly and above all other considerations, and to give it through the presentation of the best kind of pictorial beauty of flower and foliage that can be combined or invented.' Wall and Water Gardens (1901).

In the years between the wars Norah Lindsay was a major influence on the course of garden design and planting. Her commissions ranged from the gardens of English manor houses to the grand estates of the country house set; in particular she designed for Nancy Astor at Cliveden. In 1924, the Astors placed Lindsay on a retainer of £100 per year to oversee the plant selection and planting for the pleasure gardens. Over twenty years Lindsay consulted and worked on the gardens at Cliveden. She was involved in the design and implementation, of among other areas, the Long Garden and Water Garden. Lady Astor reprimanded Lindsay on numerous occasions over the course of their professional relationship for spending too much money.

At Blickling Hall which was undergoing a major refurbishment when Lindsay began work there she redesigned the Victorian parterre and Terraces and simplified the plantings in the Temple Walk. She worked for Philip Kerr, 11th Marquess of Lothian, from 1922 until 1930. In the final days of 1935 Lindsay met Maud and Gilbert Russell at Mottisfont Abbey. Inspired by a small window over the front door she designed a small parterre garden. She worked there at the same time as artist Rex Whistler. She also advised on the plantings in the large wall garden at Mottisfont. In Somerset, the amateur gardener Phyllis Reiss designed Tintinhull from 1933 as ‘living rooms’ of colour and scent. She was part of a circle of gardeners that included Vita Sackville-West, then creating her own garden at Sissinghurst. Reiss took a ‘painterly’ approach to her garden, aiming for impact and emotional effect. She took inspiration from Gertrude Jekyll, but simplified the herbaceous planting and planned imaginative and bold colour schemes.

In July 1939, Reiss made two broadcasts for the BBC entitled ‘In my Garden.’ In the 1950s, she also worked on the East Court garden at Montacute and devised a planting scheme mixing flower and shrub borders. In 1959, she gave Tintinhull to the National Trust although she lived there until her death in 1961.

Twenty years after Reiss’s death, Penelope Hobhouse took on the tenancy at Tintinhull with her husband Professor John Malins. It was while living at Tintinhull that Hobhouse developed her ideas on colour and became an internationally renowned garden designer and writer; many of her books reference her work at Tintinhull.

The contribution of women gardeners and designers across the National Trust’s gardens and elsewhere requires further research to uncover, appreciate and celebrate the full scale of their work and its significance. We are therefore delighted that the topic of ‘Women and Gardens’ has been selected for the annual study weekend in 2020 organised by the University of Oxford and The Gardens Trust. The event will be held at Rewley House, Oxford, on 29–31 May 2020. Full details on booking will be available later in the year at www.conted.ox.ac.uk.

Dr Catherine Horwood
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Notes

A tale of two advisors: Jemima, Marchioness Grey and the improvement of the gardens at Wrest Park in the mid-18th century

Andrew Hann

In the grounds at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire is a monument commemorating the contribution of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown to the redesign of the gardens in 1758–60 (Fig. 1). This column, incorporating rusticated blocks perhaps playfully referencing Brown’s rustication of the gardens, now stands at the termination of a ride within the north-east corner of the woodland Great Garden, where it was placed in 1829 by Lord Grantham, who was then reorganising this part of the garden for his ageing aunt, Amabel Hume-Campbell, 1st Countess de Grey. The monument, commissioned from the architect Edward Stevens in c.1770, had originally been located close to the Bath House at the western end of the informal waterways enclosing the woodland gardens, which were Brown’s main contribution at Wrest. Perhaps surprisingly the inscription acknowledges only Brown’s ‘professional assistance’ to the owners, Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima, Marchioness Grey, suggesting that his capacity to make changes at Wrest was tempered by significant input from the owners themselves. In this paper I will argue that this is an accurate portrayal of the relationship between Jemima, in particular, and Brown. At Wrest he was kept on a tight leash by a well-informed client who had very clear ideas about the development of the garden for which she had a deep personal and emotional attachment.

Jemima’s personal attachment to Wrest and her confidence in her own ideas about garden design, I will argue, stemmed from three things. Firstly, her emotional attachment to Wrest where she had been brought up by her grandparents and watched with interest their constant efforts to extend and improve the gardens. Secondly, her pivotal role at the heart of a literary coterie centred on Wrest, which brought together a group of writers and intellectuals with a deep interest in gardening and its intersection with the literary genres of the day. And finally, and perhaps most significantly, her education with a group of like-minded women by the mathematician, astronomer and garden designer, Thomas Wright, which provided her with an appreciation of the aesthetics and ideas of contemporary garden design and the confidence to put these ideas into practice at Wrest.

Over the past twenty years research has convincingly shown that women’s interest and involvement in gardens and gardening during the eighteenth century was perhaps more commonplace than had hitherto been recognised and acknowledged. This fits into a wider reappraisal of women’s role in social and economic history which continues to bear fruit in a variety of subject areas. Recent research has revealed the significant contribution of women as architectural patrons, whilst their influence as definers of taste for interior design and decoration has also now been recognised. We are also beginning to write women back into history as patrons of the arts and architecture in the medieval period. In this context reassessing the contribution of women to the design and development of gardens gains added impetus. Indeed, it makes sense that women must have been engaged in garden design, since we know they played such a central role in the use and enjoyment of gardens. As Kate Feluš has shown, women spent a lot of time in gardens, and used them for a variety of purposes – entertaining, quiet contemplation, recreation and display. It stands to reason therefore that women must often have had a hand in their design, though the study of accounts, plans and bills, and receipts will usually show very little evidence of their input.

This is certainly true of Jemima, Marchioness Grey. The family bank account at Hoare’s bank is in the name of her husband, Philip Yorke. Yet we know that she owned Wrest Park in her own right, the estate having been passed down to her by her grandmother, Henry, Duke of Kent through the Barony of Lucas of Crudwell, which could unusually be inherited by a woman if the holder had no direct male heir. As de facto owner of the estate Jemima must have had more latitude to make decisions about expenditure and design than many of her contemporaries.

Wrest Park in central Bedfordshire was for over 600 years the home of the de Grey family, one of the leading aristocratic families in the country. It had substantial gardens since at least

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Fig. 1 Watercolour of the Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown Column by Thomas Robinson, Lord Grantham (later 2nd Earl de Grey), c.1830. © Private collection
the mid-seventeenth century, when Amabel, Dowager Countess of Kent, a cousin of the diarist and garden designer John Evelyn, started to exchange lands with neighbouring owners to create a ‘new’ garden to the south of the house. These gardens have been added to and embellished over time rather than being stripped away and renewed. As a result, Wrest contains one of the best surviving formal gardens of the early 18th century in Britain today. The gardens are also extremely well documented, with a wealth of maps, written accounts and pictorial evidence.

Extensive formal gardens were laid out by Anthony, eleventh Earl of Kent and his mother, Amabel, the Good Countess from the 1670s. These consisted of walled enclosures containing parterres, fountains, an orchard, two wildernesses and two terrace walks, and beyond these to the south a formal canal, the Long Water. The gardens were then embellished, and greatly extended by his son, Henry, twelfth Earl and later Duke of Kent after 1702 to create the woodland Great Garden on which rests much of Wrest's fame today. In the mid-eighteenth century Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was employed to soften the edges of the gardens, principally by de-formalising the boundary canals that enclosed the woodland garden. A number of new garden buildings were also introduced, such as a Chinese Temple and Bridge and rustic Bath House, but the formal heart of the garden remained. Then, in the nineteenth century, Thomas, second Earl de Grey demolished the old house and rebuilt further to the north, but on the same alignment, and laid out new formal flower gardens in between. In the twentieth century Wrest was sold and came into institutional use. English Heritage took over the site in 2006 and has embarked on a twenty-year programme of garden restoration.

### Brown’s involvement at Wrest

Comparing John Rocque’s 1737 plan of Wrest (Fig. 2) with one drawn up by Thomas, second Earl de Grey in the 1830s (Fig. 3) provides a good starting point for assessing Brown's contribution to the gardens at Wrest as there were relatively few later changes, particularly after Jemima's daughter, Amabel, the widowed Lady Polwarth inherited in 1797. The most noticeable change between the plans is the replacement of the sequence of formal canals bounding the Duke of Kent's Great Garden with a more continuous de-formalised watercourse, suggesting this is where Brown's input was focused. Brown's reputation as a water engineer may have been what encouraged Philip and Jemima to employ him in the first place, as the gardens at Wrest were low lying and often subject to water-logging.

A key purpose of the improvements at Wrest had been to lay together the waters around the garden to make ‘one undivided large stream’ out of the different canals on each side of the garden. This was a plan that had been some time in the making. In July 1757 Jemima had written to her friend, Catherine Talbot of ‘Old Ideas revived after a Year and Eight Months Absence having made the same place both New and Old to me’. In part it perhaps reflected gardens Philip and Jemima had seen on their travels in the 1750s, particularly Painshill, Shugborough and Sugnal, where waterways played such an important part in the design. They had also visited Moor Park, Admiral Anson’s Hertfordshire seat in May 1755 whilst Brown’s work to transform the formal garden into a sweeping open landscape was still ongoing. Jemima’s daughter Mary Jemima later recalled that her mother had ‘got herself knee deep in a bank of new made earth’ during the visit, though she had at least been able to save her shoes.

The column inscription at Wrest refers to work in 1758,

### Table 1. Payments made by Philip Yorke, Lord Royston to Lancelot Brown for work at Wrest Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Mar 1758</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>24 Jan 1760</td>
<td>£250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jun 1758</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td>21 Apr 1760</td>
<td>£200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Oct 1758</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>28 Jun 1760</td>
<td>£190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Dec 1758</td>
<td>£100</td>
<td>4 Mar 1761</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Feb 1759</td>
<td>£170</td>
<td>2 Jul 1761</td>
<td>£230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Apr 1759</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>19 Mar 1762</td>
<td>£100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Aug 1759</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>8 Jun 1762</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Nov 1759</td>
<td>£52</td>
<td>30 Apr 1764</td>
<td>£46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Hoare's Bank ledgers Y fol.282 – C fol.301.*
1759 and 1760, and this is confirmed by payments to Brown recorded in Philip Yorke’s bank ledgers at Hoare’s Bank (Table 1). Interestingly these payments are not listed in Brown’s own bank account, which does record later payments for work at Wimpole Hall, Philip and Jemima’s other seat, from 1767–1772. All these payments must relate to Wrest as Philip and Jemima only acquired Wimpole following the death of first Earl of Hardwicke in March 1764.

The schedule of payments suggests work was in preparation in 1757, something confirmed by two letters in October of that year from the vicar of Flitton, Philip Birt, where he comments approvingly about plans for ‘considerable alteration in your Gardens’ that might provide employment for the poor of the district. Finding work for the poor had added urgency at this time as poor harvests in 1756 and 1757 had led to food rioting across much of the country. Furthermore on 19 October Daniel Wray wrote to Philip confessing his disappointment at being absent from Wrest where he longed ‘to discuss Brown’s project with the Lady Marchioness upon the spot’ Brown’s usual approach of taking payment in advance seems not to have applied in this case. He was clearly already in discussions with Philip and Jemima in the autumn of 1757, though probably not earlier than this as the couple had been kept from Wrest for much of 1756–7 by Philip’s ill health. The continuation of payments beyond 1760 suggests work wasn’t completed by this date, and also perhaps delayed settling of accounts with Brown – aristocrats were notorious for late payment often leaving tradesmen in financial difficulties.

The sequence of events is described in some detail in two letters sent by Jemima, Marchioness Grey to her young aunt, Mary Gregory. Work started in 1758 on the east side of the garden. On 3 October 1758 Jemima wrote

The canals already joined are the Circular Canal, John Dewell’s, & the Mill-Pond, & the Stream which they make is to be lost, that is, the End will be turned into & concealed by some plantation, where that Old Piece of Orchard-Ground within Hedge is on the other side the Mill-Pond from the Terrass, that part of the same Inclosure next the terrass is now all open. This End of the Water (the Mill-Pond) is now at work upon, & not near finished.

It seems likely that work on the Mill Pond was completed during the winter of 1758 so that all the canals on the east side of the garden were joined to form a single sinuous sweep. Brown skilfully used planting of trees and shrubs in the old orchard ground on the far side of the Mill Pond to conceal the turned-back end of the canal so that it appeared to vanish into the bushes. This is a conceit he employed elsewhere, such as at Burton Constable, where one end of the lake ‘is concealed by a hanging wood through which it has the appearance of continuing its course’. Jemima’s letter goes on to note that once the work on the Mill Pond was complete attention would be turned to ‘the Piece of water at the Bottom of the garden, & join that too (altering its Form a little) both to the Circular & the Brook.’ This refers to the canal behind the pavilion which Rocque’s plan shows with an octagonal basin at its centre. This basin was re-shaped and the canal turned at its western end to meet the brook, where a bridge was positioned allowing access to the park. Circular grass features at each end were lost when the canals were joined. It was intended that

the Whole when finished will appear one Stream running-in where the Brook now comes into the garden, & winding on till it is lost among Bushes
involved in the design or building of the bath house, he laid the foundations for its construction by dealing with the hydrology in this part of the garden. What had been a simple ditch taking water from the spring to feed the canal behind the bowling green house became a single stretch of water terminating at the weir which separated Old Park Water from the Serpentine.

Introducing Jemima

Jemima Campbell (Fig. 4) grew up at Wrest with her grandparents, the Duke and Duchess of Kent after her mother, Amabel, Lady Glenorchy died when she was just three years old. This upbringing gave her a lifelong affection for Wrest, and particularly its gardens. Following the Duchess, Jemima Crewe's death in 1728 and the Duke's remarriage a year later, Jemima and her young aunt, Mary Grey, three years her senior, were settled in a house in Chelsea, under the care of Thomas Secker, rector of St James's, Piccadilly. Through Secker Jemima was introduced to child prodigy, Catherine Talbot and the two became close friends.

Jemima still remained close to the Duke and his new wife, Sophia Bentinck and spent a good deal of time with them at Wrest. When the Duke's son from his second marriage died in 1733, he made Jemima sole heir to his estates, a position expressed in the conversation piece painting, Tea Party at the Countess of Portland's by Charles Philips, 1735.

In early 1740 Jemima was betrothed to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, eldest son of Lord Chancellor, Philip Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke. They married on 22 May. When the Duke of Kent died on 5 June Jemima inherited Wrest, the Duke's other estates and the title Marchioness Grey. She was just seventeen years old. Philip and Jemima's marriage was a successful one. They shared a love of scholarship and travel, and an interest in garden design. From 1743 Wrest became their main residence.

Emotional attachment

Evidence of Jemima's deep emotional attachment to Wrest and its gardens runs throughout her many letters. Jemima divided her time between Wrest, her London house at 4 St James Square and villa at Richmond. She also spent much time travelling, but appears to have been happiest when at her Bedfordshire estate. In May 1743 she wrote to her aunt, Lady Mary Gregory:

My attachment to this Place is by no means lessen'd by above Three Years Absence, for so long I must call it, since the Times I have seen it between has been but as a Stranger, & have convey'd a lively Pleasure indeed but a very Mix'd & short One – But it is now again my Home. It is not only returning to the Country & a Country-Life (which I love everywhere) but in the only Place I am fond enough to make those Words peculiarly charming, to the only Place I can heighten my Enjoyment of my Friends.

Her letters from Wrest are deeply evocative and full of references to the spring scents, the verdure, dappled moonlight, nightingale song and the many birds and animals that inhabited the garden. For instance, on 7 June 1747 she noted, "The verdure delightful, & some of the

Fig. 3 Plan of the gardens at Wrest by Thomas, Lord Grantham, produced to accompany his album of watercolour views of the garden, c.1830.
© Private collection
Walks quite perfumèd with Honeysuckles & Ceringo's; but the still greater Fragrance of Bean-blossoms makes the lower part of the Garden more charming; on 2 June 1748 the honeysuckles are described as 'hanging in finer Festoons than Art could imitate among the Bushes', whilst writing to her close friend Catherine Talbot on 18 May 1749 she extolls the virtues of Wrest's 'pure Air, refreshing verdure, flowery Meads, thick-shaded Trees, & the delightful Harmony of Birds who fill up an incessant Chorus from the early & joyful sound of the Lark to the late mournful Notes of the Nightingale'.

Mark Laird argues that this affective relationship with the garden can in part explain Jemima's motivation to conserve and cherish as well as to improve, and is a filter through which we should understand her relationship with Lancelot Brown. That relationship, it seems, was one of equals, a negotiation between advisor and well-informed client. Indeed, the letters reveal Jemima to have had a detailed knowledge of the ongoing improvements, and a clear understanding of the effect she was hoping to achieve. As was the case in other places such as Petworth and Tottenham Park, Brown was given licence to make changes but within clearly defined limits so as not to 'unravel the Mystery of the Gardens'.

This strong emotional connection with the gardens, and clear sense of the legacy bequeathed by her forebears, perhaps explains Jemima's need to be involved in every minutiae of garden activity. When away from Wrest she practiced a sort of 'long distance' gardening, requesting news about the gardens, and included progress of new features or plants from members of the family who were there. Once her daughters were old enough, she passed instructions to them to be conveyed to the head gardener or other estate officials. In the spring of 1774, for instance, there was an interchange about the creation of a new garden under the windows of the house, with Jemima anxious to know the size of the beds and whether the gardener had put sand or gravel between them. She also gave clear instructions for the care of some azaleas and kalmias that she had sent up from London. On 13 May 1774 Amabel, Lady Polwarth wrote to her mother expressing concern that she had agreed to the gardener Mr Thorpe planting out a 'fine magnolia' in the Sand Walk 'without writing to you for Orders'.

Although the influence of the prevailing fashion for the 'intellectual Shepherdess' is apparent in Jemima's letters (she actually refers to herself as a shepherdess, and records watching haymaking on at least two occasions) it is obvious that she cared deeply for Wrext, and was not simply adopting an established literary genre. She records in November 1744 that she was 'always sorry' to leave Wrext for the Town, and describes it constantly as 'delightful', 'charming', and of the 'greatest beauty'. She identified with the 'old oaks', and compared the verdure and shade created by the dense tree planting at Wrext favourably against other gardens, which she felt lacked this very distinctive feature.

She cared too what visitors thought of the gardens, enquiring on more than one occasion whether the weather was favourable for showing the gardens 'at their best'. She was also at pains to ensure that her daughter Amabel's watercolours of the gardens were included on Josiah Wedgwood's Green Frog dinner service, made specially for Catherine the Great of Russia in 1774. Interestingly, the five scenic views which appeared were all of the boundary canals recently formalized by 'Capability' Brown.

All this points to a deep-seated emotional attachment to Wrext, nurtured from childhood when the gardens were a place of safety, friendship and solace after the untimely death of her mother. Her experience of Wrext was a shared one, with family and friends such as Mary Gregory and Catherine Talbot, a shared experience which is played out and reinforced in the letters they exchanged. Jemima had been schooled in the long history of the de Grey family at Wrext, and in the legacy of the gardens which were already almost 100 years old when she inherited the estate in 1740. She regarded the gardens not just as a historical artefact to be conserved, but also for the personal memories of a happy childhood that they embodied. She valued too the sensory emotions that they awakened; the sights, smells and sounds that she wrote about so eloquently in her letters. All this made Jemima reticent to countenance sweeping changes to the landscape at Wrext and ensured Brown was kept on a tight leash.

**The Wrext literary coterie**

From 1743 Wrext was the focal meeting place for a prestigious literary coterie which brought together the friends and associates of Philip Yorke and Jemima, Marchioness Grey. This group contained many of the leading poets, writers and intellectuals of the day including Daniel Wray, Thomas Edwards, Catherine Talbot and Samuel Richardson. Until recently the coterie has received relatively little attention from literary scholars as it operated primarily by scribal circulation rather than publication, yet at the time it was hugely influential, providing a model of sociable literary ideals and a focus for Whig intellectualism. Notably both men and women played an important part in the coterie's literary outputs.
The group, composed of Philip’s Cambridge friends (including Charles Yorke, Daniel Wray, John Lawry, Thomas Birch and Samuel Salter) and Jemima’s social circle (Elizabeth Yorke, Mary Gregory and Catherine Talbot), met regularly at Wrest during the summer to discuss poetry and prose they had written themselves, and to comment on the latest literary outpouring from the London presses. These were convivial gatherings in a congenial setting, with Jemima playing hostess, and participating enthusiastically in the intellectual discussion, though she wrote very little. Her literary contribution comes mainly from her witty and insightful letters, mainly to other women, which shine a light on the social and intellectual activities of the coterie.

There are a range of intersections between the scribal outputs of the coterie and garden design. Many within the coterie or its wider social circle were garden enthusiasts or had made forays into garden design themselves. Notable amongst these were Richard Owen Cambridge whose Twickenham villa had extensive gardens and Thomas Edwards, who experimented in extempore buildings made from natural materials in his garden at Pithanger, Middlesex, then at Turrick in Buckinghamshire. Edwards wrote several sonnets in praise of the gardens at Wrest, one of which adorned the front of the root house which he built there for Jemima and Philip in 1749. A selection of his sonnets, including a number dedicated to members of the coterie were later published as an appendix to his *Canons of Criticism*, a satirical commentary on William Warburton’s new edition of Shakespeare, published in 1747.

Certainly, the gardens and library were the main focal points for sociability and intellectual pursuits at Wrest. Indeed, the literary exploits of the coterie seem to have directly inspired Jemima and Philip’s early forays into garden design, particularly the creation of the Mithraic Glade with its enigmatic altar and root house. The Mithraic Altar (Fig. 5) was erected in 1748 by Thomas Adye, mason to the Society of Dilettanti, based on designs discussed by Wray, Yorke and other members of the coterie. On each side it has an inscription, one in ancient Greek composed by Daniel Wray, the other in cuneiform, then not yet deciphered, taken from a travel account of the ruins of Persepolis in Persia, first published by de Bruijn in 1711, a copy of which Wray had in his library. The altar was conceived as a sham antiquity to mark the completion of the coterie’s great literary work, the *Athenian Letters*, written collectively and published privately in two volumes, in 1741 and 1743.

Work on the *Athenian Letters* had begun in 1739 when Philip Yorke and his brother Charles were still students, but not all the contributors came from the Yorke’s Cambridge circle and the completion of the venture was inextricably bound up with the intellectual life at Wrest. It takes the form of a collection of epistles purportedly written by Cleander, an agent of the King of Persia residing in Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars. The different letters provide a carefully researched commentary on the customs, attitudes and morals of the time in the form of diplomatic dispatches. Unlike other epistolary fiction of the period, such as George Lyttelton’s *Persian Letters* the purpose of the *Athenian Letters* was not primarily political as a commentary of contemporary politics in England, but rather a means of stimulating discussion and consolidating friendships within the coterie, even if these had often to be maintained at a distance through the exchange of letters. The construction of the Mithraic altar at Wrest can be seen as having a similar purpose, of bringing friends together for a common enterprise.

Wray’s Greek inscription on the altar reads simply ‘Cleander of Ephesus, son of Hippias, Servant of the great King, dedicates this Altar to the unconquered Mithras. Telephanes of Samos was the Architect.’ This references two of the central characters of the *Athenian Letters*, Cleander and Telephanes, and hence inscribes the intellectual pursuits of the coterie into tangible form in the landscape. These references were a highly private message for a restricted audience, as only twelve copies of the *Athenian Letters* had been published for circulation within the restricted circle of the coterie. The inscription was rendered more opaque by Wray’s use of an ancient Greek script, and writing the lines alternately from left to right, and right to left, the archaic boustrophedon style. Indeed, Jemima delighted in the altar being taken for a genuine antiquity, writing to Mary Gregory on 14 Sep 1748

> Have I ever told you of the Fame & Praise the Altar has gain’d this Summer? ... It has given us some Diversion from the different Effects it has had upon Strangers; the generality stare & don’t understand it, but some Few of greater Penetration have gone away highly edified with it as a Piece of valuable Learned Antiquity.

Jemima’s response here is instructive. Gardens such as Wrest were public places, and the erection of new monuments and garden buildings was to some extent a public statement. Yet at the same time, they held private meanings for the owners and those close to them. In this case the altar marked the friendship of the coterie and was a monument to their great work, the *Athenian Letters*. 

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Fig. 5 The Mithraic Glade with the Persian altar in the foreground and root house behind. Watercolour by Thomas, Lord Grantham, c.1830. © Private collection
For the Root-House at WREST

Stranger, or Guest, whome’er this hallow’d grove
Shall chance receive, where sweet contentment dwells,
Bring here no heart that with ambition swells,
With avarice pines, or burns with lawless love.

Vice-tainted souls will all in vain remove
To sylvan shades, and hermits’ peaceful cells,
In vain will seek retirement’s lenient spells,
Or hope that bliss, which only good men prove.

If heaven-born Truth, and sacred Virtue’s lore,
Which cheer, adorn, and dignify the mind,
Are constant inmates of thy honest breast,
If, unrepining at thy neighbour’s store,
Thou count’st as thine the good of all mankind,
Then welcome share the friendly groves of Wrest.

The ephemeral gardening which Edwards practised in his own gardens and at Wrest symptomized this search for a purity of natural design, working with the mysteries of nature using natural material that would with time decay back to dust. This is epitomised by his rustic temple at Pitshanger built in 1741, which he described as ‘built with stack wood lined with moss on the inside and roofed with faggots, my columns the boles of trees with the bark on’. Over a fifteen-year period he built around half a dozen structures in his gardens at Pitshanger and Turrick, including a rustic temple, hermitage, rotunda and rookery. Sadly, we have only his written descriptions of these as the buildings themselves have not survived.

Garden design, then, was an integral part of the intellectual...
culture and social life of the coterie at Wrest, of which Jemima and her husband Philip were at the heart. Garden design was important to them both as an intellectual exercise and as a social outlet, a break from politics and material concerns. They were friends with other intellectuals who were also garden designers, including George Lyttelton, who they consulted on the location of the altar and root house, and Thomas Edwards. In this context they, and particularly Jemima, would have wanted a stake in the design of the gardens at Wrest and would not have deferred to the expertise of Brown as others did elsewhere.

**The involvement of Thomas Wright**

Finally, we turn to Jemima's education. As a child, she was tutored, with her young aunts Mary and Anne Sophia Grey, together with her friend Catherine Talbot, and grandmother Sophia, Duchess of Kent by the astronomer, mathematician and garden designer, Thomas Wright of Durham. Wright spent three summers at Wrest in 1736, 1738 and 1739 teaching the ladies geometry, astronomy and surveying, and must surely have shared with them his interests in garden design, druidism and classical culture. He is known to have surveyed the garden at Wrest with his young students, and reference to a plan of the grounds 'after Mr Wright' in a letter of 1745 suggest a finished ground plan was produced, though this has not been traced. Only Wright's rough sketch of the Millpond with suggested alterations is known to survive. After 1740 he continued giving private lessons in London to the widowed Duchess of Kent, Jemima and her aunts until May 1746, and it would be surprising if Jemima had not sought his advice for her proposed improvements at Wrest just as the widowed duchess did for the remodelling of her dower house, Remnans, in Old Windsor. Indeed, Wright kept up relations with the family after his semi-retirement to the north in 1756, gifting Jemima a copy of his two-volume *Universal Architecture: Designs for Arbours (1755) and Grottos (1758).*

Though there is no evidence that Thomas Wright was directly responsible for any of the garden features at Wrest his influence is everywhere in the landscape, reflecting his long association with Jemima as tutor and confidante. The playful and fanciful mixture of styles in the mid-century garden is characteristic of Wrightian landscapes, mixing the mythical, classical, Chinese and Arcadian or naturalistic. Places he worked elsewhere in the 1740s and 50s show a similar mixture of styles. At Dundalk House (1746–7) there was 'an artificial serpentine river, a Chinese bridge, a thatched open house supported by the bodies of fire trees,' while at Shugborough in Staffordshire, a place that Philip and Jemima knew well, there was the enigmatic Shepherd's monument and 'the prettiest Chinese Building' that Jemima had seen. The altar and root house in their informal glade were typical of his antiquarian interest in mysticism and the druids, and in a new style of gardening, working with nature and harking back to a distant and simpler mythical past. Indeed, one of the few surviving root houses of the mid-eighteenth century is the Hermit's Cell built by Wright for the Duke of Beaufort at Badminton in c.1750. This building bears a striking resemblance to the root house at Wrest and was similarly originally in a woodland setting, as Thomas Robin's sketch (Fig. 7) of the 1750s illustrates. The root house also has parallels in some of the designs for arbours in Volume 1 of his *Universal Architecture* published in 1755. The planting in this part of the Great Garden can perhaps also be attributed in part to Wright. In her letters Jemima frequently mentions the flowering shrubs along the sinuous walks which wove their way through the south west quadrant of the garden. For instance, in June 1747 the walks were 'quite perfumid with Honeysuckles & Ceringo’s', and in June 1748 the honeysuckles were twined round every bush, 'hanging in finer Festoons than Art could imitate'. They were perhaps encouraged by Thomas Wright who wrote much about the use of colour to embellish woodland walks in his unpublished treatise on planting and building, though Batty Langley who is known to have worked at Wrest in the 1730s also advocated the introduction of flowering shrubs and serpentine walks.
Conclusion

So we return to the inscription with which this paper started.

These Gardens originally laid out by Henry Duke of Kent, were altered & improved by Philip Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima Marchioness Grey, with the professional assistance of Lancelot Brown Esq in the years 1758, 1759, & 1760.

Did Jemima only require professional assistance? I believe that she did as she already had a vision for the gardens at Wrest. It was a vision formed and informed by her long association with Wrest; by the discussions taking place within the literary coterie, and above all by the guidance of her long-time tutor, Thomas Wright. The eclectic landscape that she and Philip created at Wrest is typical of the mixing of styles favoured by Wright. Indeed, the combination of features at Wrest closely mirror other places with which Wright is associated in the 1740s and 50s, such as Halswell Park, Somerset, Dundalk House, and of course Shugborough in Staffordshire. The altar and root house in their sylvan glade, whose design was undoubtedly influenced by Wright, were typical of his antiquarian interest in mythology and ancient religion.

That there is no evidence of Wright building anything at Wrest is not a surprise. According to George Mason he ‘understood drawing and sketched plans of his designs, but never contracted for work.’ Lancelot Brown, along with William Chambers, Edward Stevens and Thomas Edwards served as contractors, executing Jemima’s vision, and offering practical advice. Most were paid handsomely for their expertise but the grand scheme was hers, guided by her emotional attachment to the place, her intellectual curiosity for garden design and the ideas, both philosophical and practical that she had picked up from Wright. She was both an engaged and well-informed client.

Notes
2. The note accompanying Lord Grantham’s watercolour view of the Brown Column of c.1831 provides the main dating evidence for the repositioning of the monument.
3. The full text of the inscription reads ‘These Gardens originally laid out by Henry Duke of Kent, were altered & improved by Philip Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima Marchioness Grey, with the professional assistance of Lancelot Brown Esq in the years 1758, 1759, & 1760.’
8. Alexander, Wrest Park, 31; Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service (hereafter BARS), L28/12, Agreement between Countess of Kent and Christopher Bishop, 17 March 1658.
10. She was known as the Good Countess for her charitable works and prudent management of the estate which helped to restore the fortunes of the de Grey family.
13. BARS, L30/9a/3, fol. 49, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 26 August 1760.
14. BARS, L30/9a/7, fol. 232, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 15 July 1757.
15. BARS L30/11/123/29, Mary Jemima Yorke to Amabel Yorke, 23 November 1774.
17. British Library (hereafter BL), Add MSS 35693, fols. 18–21, Philip Birt to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, 30 October 1757 and 5 January 1758.
19. BL, Add MSS 35401, fol. 216, Daniel Wray to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, 19 October 1757.
23. BARS: L30/9a/3, fol. 19, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 3 October 1758.


25. BARS: L30/9a/3, fol. 19, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 3 October 1758.

26. BARS: L30/9a/3, fol. 49, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 26 August 1760.

27. Collett-White, 'Yorke, Jemima'


30. BARS, L30/9a/1, fol. 4, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 8 May 1743.

31. BARS, L30/9a/1, fol. 140, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 7 June 1747; L30/9a/5, fol. 68, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 2 June 1748; L30/9a/5, fol. 121, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 18 May 1749.


35. BARS, L30/9/60/31, Amabel Hume-Campbell, Lady Polwarth to Jemima Marchioness Grey, 13 May 1774.


43. In several letters to Philip Yorke, Daniel Wray refers to a Mr Adey, who has been commissioned to make the frieze and tablets carrying the two inscriptions on the monument, for instance BL, Add MS 35401, fol. 76, Daniel Wray to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, 28 June 1748. Rupert Gunnis, ‘Signed monuments in Kentish churches’, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 62(1949), 60.


47. BARS L30/9a/2, fol. 11, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 14 Sep 1748. "Ibid."

48. BARS L30/9a/5, fol. 132, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 3 August 1749. Edwards had acquired this *nom de plume* after erecting a rustic temple in his garden at Pitshanger modelled on the porch of Covent Garden church, built by Inigo Jones.

49. BARS L30/9a/6, fol. 20, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 11 August 1750.


51. BL, Add MS 35376, fol. 13–4, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, 13 August 1749; BARS L30/9a/6, fol. 60, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 25 July 1751.


54. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Bodl. 1009, fols. 192–5, Thomas Edwards to Mr John Forster at Calcutta, 26 October 1741.

55. BL, Add MS 15627, fols. 9–10, Journal of Thomas Wright; Eileen Harris, 'Wrest and Thomas Wright' (Unpublished paper), 1.

56. BL, Add MS 35605, fols. 238–9, Thomas Edwards to Philip Yorke, Lord Royston, 10 August 1745.


60. Recent research by Michael Cousins has questioned the direct involvement of Wright at Shugborough before 1750, though his influence over the designs is clearly apparent. Michael Cousins, 'Shugborough: A Perfect Paradise', *Garden History*, 44/Suppl.1 (2016), 33–73.


63. BARS, L30/9a/1, fol. 140, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, 7 June 1747; L30/9a/5, fol. 68, Jemima, Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 2 June 1748.


‘The lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird’: Beatrix Whistler and horticulture

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Beatrix Whistler (1857–1896) was long remembered – if remembered at all – as the wife of James McNeill Whistler, the artist of Nocturnes and Harmonies, whom John Ruskin famously accused of ‘flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face’. However, she was also an artist in her own right, who studied with her father, the sculptor John Birnie-Phillip, and later, it is thought, in Paris and with E.W. Godwin, the Aesthetic Movement architect and designer. Godwin designed James McNeill Whistler’s extraordinary White House in Chelsea of 1877–8, that looked like some exotic Japanese pavilion transplanted to the streets of London, and Beatrix first encountered Whistler in Godwin’s artistic and literary circle, which also included the painter Louise Jopling. By the 1880s Beatrix was posing for Whistler for works including his atmospheric Harmony in Red: Lamplight (1885–6, The Hunterian), and after Godwin’s untimely death, she married the flamboyant and outspoken artist in 1888. The couple spent eight very happy years together, mainly in Paris, but Beatrix sadly died from cancer in 1896.

A pioneering exhibition at The Hunterian in Glasgow in 1997 by Margaret F. MacDonald brought Beatrix out of her husband’s shadow, and a not insignificant body of work originally attributed to James McNeill Whistler is thus now recognised as Beatrix’s own. Much of this is held by The Hunterian, and ranges from portraits to sensitive, carefully-observed watercolours of flowers and birds, probably done in the garden of Beatrix’s parents’ house at Merton Villa in Chelsea; designs for decorative floral tiles; stained glass; and gardening figures that decorate a ‘Seasons’ cabinet by Godwin and William Watt (c. 1877, Victoria and Albert Museum, London). She was also an accomplished jewellery designer, and The Hunterian owns a delightful finger-ring by her in the form of two billing doves, that presumably symbolise herself and Whistler.

Intriguingly, however, it was not in terms of art, but of horticulture – as ‘the lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird’ – that Stéphane Mallarmé, the French Symbolist poet and friend of the Whistlers, spoke of Beatrix. Taking its cue from this vivid appellation, the present article seeks to enrich our understanding of Beatrix’s talents by exploring her as the maker of the garden at 110 rue du Bac in Paris, where she and Whistler lived in the 1890s; a garden that, together with the tree-shaded precincts of their previous home at 21 Cheyne Walk in Chelsea, inspired some of James McNeill Whistler’s most intimate and personal images. Aspects of these images have recently been explored in the Whistler and Nature exhibition and related book, but the present article is the first investigation of Beatrix’s role in creating the rue du Bac garden as such.

As such, it seeks to question and even upset the notion of the garden as a ‘separate sphere’ that modern accounts of middle and upper-class women in the nineteenth century have often emphasised. Rather than serving as an emblem of women’s horticulture’s ‘genius’, 8 Woman, by this logic, had the sensitivity to combine and select the colours and forms that made a pleasing garden; man had the physical strength to realise her visions. Ruskin had expanded this idea in his 1864 lecture ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ in a way that implicitly blurred the boundaries between garden and wider world, and that privileged women’s agency, and, despite Whistler’s infamous court case against him for his ‘pot of paint’ comment, the Whistlers owned one of the books on horticulture by his keen follower Edith Chamberlain, who argued that women must be ‘the presiding genii of the garden’. The present article thus contributes to the interpretation of horticulture as a pursuit that typically expanded, rather than curtailed, women’s horizons in the late nineteenth century, that historians including Bilston and Horwood have recently proposed. At the same time, bearing in mind Chamberlain’s vision of the ultimate purpose of a garden as ‘beauty’ – a sentiment that resonates closely with Whistler’s Aesthetic ideals in his Ten O’Clock Lecture of 1885 – it is intended to extend wider research on the interrelationship of art and horticulture at the fin de siècle, and to suggest that whilst de Goncourt’s slightly earlier garden has been read as an exhibitionary space, Beatrix’s functioned more as a generative and affective space, that also served as an outdoor studio and place for socialising.

Beatrix did not create the rue du Bac garden from nothing; rather, she took charge of, and modified, what was apparently a somewhat neglected, long, narrow piece of ground with well-established trees and roses, accessed from the back of the Whistlers’ house, a ‘one-storey garden flat’. Although this garden is today changed, we can gain an idea of its original appearance from period photographs, and accounts by friends of the Whistlers such as Joseph Pennell, who recalled ‘a large garden, a real bit of country in Paris’, that ‘stretched away in dense undergrowth to several huge trees…over the door, there was a trellis designed by Mrs. Whistler, and there were flowers everywhere’. Meanwhile, just after the Whistlers’ moved to the rue du Bac in 1892, a letter from Whistler’s patron Howard Mansfield to Beatrix predicted that ‘as the spring comes on…[the] garden especially will renew its fine days under your zealous management’, and added that ‘we shall expect some reminiscence of it…from Mr. Whistler’s hand’ – a comment very much in keeping with the ideal of woman as horticultural ‘genius’ promoted by Ruskin and Chamberlain.
Beatrix's success in 'managing' the garden was indeed recorded by Whistler in a group of lithographs and drawings that includes La Belle Jardinière, a portrait of her tending plants in a decorative plant-stand that she herself had designed [Fig. 1]. From their rounded leaves and trailing growth, we can perhaps infer that these are nasturtiums – fiery orange flowers that Beatrix would have been able to cultivate quickly from seed, to give colour to the newly-acquired garden, and which, in the fashionable 'language of flowers' of the day, signified 'the fire of love'. Whistler's friend Tissot had certainly already played on this symbolism in his portrait of his mistress Kathleen Newton wearing a sprig of nasturtiums, as she sits in her garden in London, and rests her gaze implicitly on Tissot himself in the act of painting her.

If Beatrix grew her nasturtiums for Whistler, in keeping with Edith Chamberlain's maxim that 'The garden has ever been the headquarters of romance', then Whistler's delicate, sensitive line in this lithograph surely speaks of his own affection in turn for her, as if to embody his comment in 1892, 'I look around and see no others as happy as we two are in each other.' The title is wittily taken from Raphael's famous painting La Belle Jardinière in the Louvre, showing the Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist in a field filled with flowers, and in this borrowing, Whistler of course celebrates Beatrix both as an artist – the maker of the elegant jardinière in which the flowers grow – and as a woman gardener (jardinière), even as, being the object of Whistler's affection, she also performs the traditional role of the loved one as the ideal. Like Whistler and Raphael before him, she creates and cultivates beauty, and like the Madonna she is perfect; a dédoublément (ambiguous conflation of roles) that Mallarmé would surely have appreciated, as a master himself of multi-layered meaning in literature. Thanks to Beatrix, the garden at the rue du Bac is thus not only a 'headquarters of romance', but also a work of art, just as Monet was later to call his garden at Giverny his 'most beautiful work of art'.

Whistler adds still further nuance to this play of identities, since he makes the linear folds of Beatrix's skirt in La Belle Jardinière echo the verticals of the plant-stand, so that her tall columnar body blends with it, whilst her sketchily-rendered hat and collar seem but larger versions of the flowers and leaves that froth over the sides of the plant-stand and are picked out nearby in the sunlight. So sketchily-rendered are these flowers and leaves that the butterfly Whistler used as his signature seems to merge with them as it flits in from the right, appearing in the distinctive trefoil shape that he gave it after marrying Beatrix. A further butterfly signature is meanwhile evident at bottom left, as if to underline the Whistlers' identity with nature; circling around the plant-stand/gardener-woman, it perhaps even suggests 'an erotics of pollination with the blossomy Beatrix'.

Beatrix also designed latticework trellising for the rue du Bac garden, as well as for a terrace at Whistler's top-floor studio in the rue Notre-Dame des Champs near the rue du Bac. That at the rue du Bac included the arched porch noted in Pennell's recollection, which is clearly visible in two of Whistler's lithographs. One, The Man with a Sickle, looks from indoors through the porch to the garden [Fig. 2]; the other looks from the garden towards the porch and house. These pictures also show the decorative jardinière in context, on the lawn nearby, and we can see that its geometric structure was matched by the squared latticework of the porch. Rambling plants grow up the porch, whilst its shelter benefits some plants in pots, including what appears to be one of the newly-fashionable Dracaena, or 'Dragon' plants, that were all the rage in Paris at the period. An exotic plant from South Africa, the Dracaena has long strap-like leaves, that Zola had described in his novel La Curée as looking 'like blades of old laquer'. Whistler's friend Monet had already grown a Dracaena some years earlier, as it appears in his Artist's House at Argenteuil (1873, Art Institute of Chicago), in a Delftware pot that would have enabled it to be wintered indoors. And already in a fascinating photograph of Beatrix's father, the sculptor John Birnie Philip, in her childhood garden at Merton Villa in London, we find what looks like an even earlier example of its cultivation in Europe.

These Dracaenae provide a vivid reminder of the radical transformations brought about by the 'great horticultural movement' of the nineteenth century, when the invention of greenhouses and the discovery of hybridisation enriched gardens with ever more unusual or dramatic plants and flowers, many introduced from far-off places by traders, explorers and empire-builders. In seeking to understand Beatrix's horticulture at the rue du Bac, these developments are clearly an essential context, but it is interesting that The Man with a Sickle does not show grass being cut with a lawnmower, one of the horticultural inventions of the nineteenth century, but instead in the old-fashioned way, by hand. In this lithograph, looking
through Beatrix's latticework porch, we see, in other words, the laborious making of the emblematic lawn with which Mallarmé associated Beatrix, when, like some chivalrous knight, he paid homage to her at the rue du Bac as ‘the lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird’. However, whilst this comment again celebrates Beatrix's creative transformation of nature into art – her garden – it also subtly suggests, in its reference to a blackbird, that she nonetheless allowed 'wild' nature a place in that garden. Equally, in evoking work, The Man with a Sickle perhaps reminds us of the further role of the garden as an outdoor studio; a place of artistic work, where Whistler, as well as drawing lithographs, even set up his etching press (the warm summer air presumably aided the drying of the ink), and where the Whistlers also loved to exchange ideas with other artists, such as Pennell and Wuerpel, as well as with writers such as Mallarmé and Count Robert de Montesquiou.

Before exploring further the balance of artifice, nature and artistic nurture in Beatrix's horticulture, it is helpful to note the context of Mallarmé's homage to her as the 'lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird'. In 1888 Mallarmé had translated Whistler's Ten o'Clock Lecture into French – that highly influential credo, in which Whistler had called for art to emulate the harmony of music, and, in this process, to link east and west. 'Nature's flower', Whistler had argued in his lecture, provided a 'choice selection of brilliant tones and delicate tints … suggestions of future harmonies'; the artist must thus 'pick, and choose, and group with science' the 'elements' of nature, 'as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he bring forth from chaos glorious harmony'. And that harmony, as Whistler made clear in his conclusion to his Ten O'Clock Lecture, was to take its cue from the 'beauty' that had already been ‘… broidered, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai – at the foot of Fusi-Yama’. Art, Japan, and birds must come together to serve 'harmony', and Whistler was clearly thinking here of the Japanese images of blossom and birds that had become very popular with progressive artists in nineteenth-century Europe.

In 1889, just the year after Mallarmé's translation of the Ten o'Clock, a review of the reconstructed Japanese house at the Universal Exhibition in Paris had similarly compared its 'grace and lightness' to 'the idea of a pretty aviary which only needs some birds to animate it'. At the rue du Bac, Beatrix's latticework porch, that allowed free passage of light and air, must have created something not unlike the effect of a 'pretty aviary', and may even have been directly inspired by the Japanese house so recently on view in Paris, which had been widely reported and illustrated. For Beatrix added the avian element that her husband had put at the centre of Japanese art's 'beauty', and that had been missing at the Universal Exhibition, as she kept caged birds in the rue du Bac garden. These included a parrot, a mockingbird, and two Shama merles, a rare kind of Indian bird with a very sweet song, that the American art collector Charles Freer had given her. The garden's Japanese affinities were meanwhile enhanced by a gift from de Montesquiou of two bonsai, grown by the 1889 Exposition's Japanese gardener himself. The manipulation of nature involved in the cultivation of bonsai led de Montesquiou to compare one of these to a 'horticultural foetus … a little old monster', and against such artifice, the element of 'nature' provided by the blackbird in the garden would have been all the more telling.

Beatrix herself designed the cages for her exotic birds at the rue du Bac, whose openwork structures would have complemented those of the porch and jardinière. A drawing by Whistler shows Beatrix tending her caged birds at the rue du Bac [Fig. 3], and since the Dracaena is also in view, she is presumably standing in her latticework porch, and near her jardinière. The garden would thus have involved a sequence of complementary openwork structures, one within another, and one beside another: porch, bird-cages, jardinière – and even the latticework box-seats that Beatrix designed. A photograph of her sister's wedding party in 1894 in the rue du Bac garden shows these seats in use.

In the context of Whistler's vision of art as 'harmony' in his Ten o'Clock lecture, this effect of interconnecting, openwork spaces is very interesting. For it would have immersed the visitor in a kind of all-embracing, three-dimensional 'harmony': a sequence of connecting and at least partially contiguous living-spaces for humans, plants and birds, in which floral colours and scents interwove with the sounds of bird- and human song (the garden was near the Paris Seminary of the Roman Catholic Overseas Missionaries, and the Whistlers could hear its monks chanting). Indoors connected with outdoors via the latticework...
the songbirds’ cages, to mingle with that of its resident blackbird, had been designated ‘music’ – harmonious sound rather than noise – by Charles Darwin, in a key section of his *Descent of Man* of 1871. This was the book in which he first published his ground-breaking theory of sexual selection; as a result of his research into difference of colour or song in male and female birds, including the Indian Shama, it argued that the ‘music’ of the male bird’s song was used to attract the female.\(^{45}\) If we follow the art historian Linda Merrill’s interpretation of Whistler’s 1876-7 Peacock Room decoration, with its famous fighting peacocks, as a response to Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest,\(^{46}\) then, in period terms, the garden at the rue du Bac surely replaced this conflict with ‘harmony’. Sounding through the garden, the ‘music’ of the birds at the rue du Bac would have interlinked its multiple structures and spaces, to create a world of perfection where Whistler could set aside his battles with Ruskin and others such as F.R. Leyland, the grudging patron of his Peacock Room. He loved to listen to the singing of the monks drifting over the wall from their seminary,\(^{47}\) and soaring over all, of course, would have been the music of the blackbird, the bird with which Mallarmé identified Beatrix, that typically sings from a rooftop or tall tree: humans, birds, and plants in harmony as one, through the art of the garden. Since Beatrix refers to the monks singing farewell to one of their community who was leaving for China, the music must have included Charles Gounod’s *Chant du départ des missionnaires* (Song of the Departure of the Missionaries), always performed on such occasions.\(^{48}\)

All was perhaps not quite perfect in the garden: the ‘white parrot finally escaped [its cage] and, in a temper, climbed up a tree where no one could get it, and…starved itself to death to Whistler’s grief’.\(^{49}\) A pupil of Whistler’s, Edmund Wuerpel, nonetheless recalled the rue du Bac garden as a place with firmly positive influence – ‘In his roses he [Whistler] buried his troubles’ – and noted that, after a hard day’s work in the studio, Whistler would ‘child-like … follow [Beatrix] … into the garden and they would walk back and forth, arm in arm, until his mood was changed.\(^{50}\) The new, scientific idea that birdsong was ‘music’ would, meanwhile, have directly complemented the poetic notion of ‘correspondences’ – what we now call synaesthesia, where one sensory experience merges into another – that was advocated by French Symbolist colleagues of the Whistlers like Mallarmé and de Montesquiou, and prefigured by Gounod’s music, noted for its ‘colours’.\(^{51}\)

Bearing in mind Mallarmé’s related emphasis on evocation and suggestion – the reason he so admired Whistler’s scenes of London fog – Beatrix’s filigree, lattice and trellis effects at the rue du Bac can also be compared with 18th-century ‘Anglo-Chinese’ or ‘picturesque’ gardens. These had used trellising to ‘surprise’ the viewer, who had to guess and surmise what lay beyond it, and were admired in French Symbolist circles. De Montesquiou, for example, bought his late colleague Edmond de Goncourt’s copy of the 18th-century garden theorist Watelet’s treatise on horticulture, in which trellising is praised.\(^{52}\) We can perhaps thus situate Beatrix’s garden-making more in

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**Fig. 3:** James McNeill Whistler, **Beatrix Whistler looking at her Birds**, c. 1893-5, pencil or lithographic crayon, 23.1 x 15.4cm, © The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

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porch, which in turn housed Beatrix’s birdcages, and opened to the lawn, with its latticework seats framing family and friends in sociable exchange, its organic filigrees of flowers cascading from the jardinère, and its plants climbing on trellises. Although – as we now see it – cages confine and imprison birds physically, lattice or trellis-work and filigree as such, of course, allow free movement of light, air, scent, sound, and stems or branches. As an ensemble, the porch, birdcages, seats, jardinière and climbing or trailing plants would thus have created a complex interplay with the larger garden beyond – the lawn, the ‘masses’ of flowers described by visitors,\(^{45}\) and the colours, shapes, scents, and ‘harmonies’ of the whole. If Whistler himself had a few years earlier sketched a simple ‘trellis’ against a wall for his patron Lady Archibald Campbell to grow plants,\(^{44}\) it was surely Beatrix the gardener, the ‘lady of the garden, lawn and blackbird’, who saw the symbolic as well as the decorative potential of openwork structures.

Birdsong, after all, which floated through the garden from...
the context of the French Symbolist revival of this eighteenth-century aesthetic of concealment, surprise, and suggestion, than of William Morris's inspiration from the medieval *Hortus conclusus*, enclosed by a hedge or trellis of roses, in his famous 'trellis' wallpaper. De Goncourt himself certainly built trellises in his own garden at Auteuil near Paris from the 1880s, including some in 1893 for roses and Japanese clematis, that were inspired by Marie Antoinette's *Salle des Fraicheteurs* in the Petit Trianon at Versailles.\(^3^3\)

If Beatrix turned the rue du Bac garden into an immersive space of colour, scent and sound that would have taken its logical place alongside the aesthetic ideals of Mallarmé, de Goncourt and de Montesquiou, as well as her husband's vision of Japanese-style 'harmony', we should not lose sight of its affinities also with two other developments in nineteenth-century horticulture. The first of these is the 'wild garden', promoted by the British horticulturalist (and admirer of Ruskin!) William Robinson, in which plants and flowers were allowed to grow freely as in nature, and even to form 'colonies' and 'cascades' – terms which imply appropriation and dominance of the garden's space.\(^3^4\) For all the geometry of Beatrix's artful latticework, trellises, cages, jardinière and seats, their setting seems, after all, with its 'dense undergrowth' and 'tall trees' recalled by Pennell, to have essentially remained semi-wild; a corner of nature that Beatrix took in hand, but only partly tamed. Even as the stack of birdcages in *Beatrix Whistler looking at her Birds* has something of the air of a Godwin sideboard, as if part of an Aesthetic interior,\(^3^5\) the gently-waving leaves of Dracaena poke towards it; nature already asserts its presence in the threshold space of Beatrix's porch. Whistler's friend and patron Arthur Eddy certainly recalled the rue du Bac garden as 'one of those quaint old gardens so often found tucked away in the midst of crumbling buildings on the ancient thoroughfares. Its narrow confines were enlarged to the eye by winding, gravelled walks and vistas of flowers and bushes; the rickety seats, half hidden by the foliage, invited the loiterer to repose.'\(^3^6\) A period photograph of the garden, meanwhile, is intriguingly labelled 'showing woodland gateway', as if the site embraced or connected with some vestige of the woods (Bois) that centuries before had given their name to the nearby Abbaye aux Bois.\(^3^7\)

A visiting journalist similarly noted 'masses of pink flowers', as in 'a panel by Watteau'\(^3^8\) – presumably the roses in which Wuerpel said Whistler drowned his sorrows. The comparison with Watteau is somewhat inaccurate; pink roses are more typically found in works by his contemporaries Fragonard and Boucher. But all these artists, as part of the Rococo movement, were admired by de Goncourt, de Montesquiou, and Mallarmé, and share in the wider eighteenth-century tradition of the picturesqueness or Anglo-Chinese landscape garden, whose effects of nature's profusion anticipate aspects of the nineteenth-century 'wild garden'.

The surviving period photographs of the rue du Bac garden, like the 'woodland gateway' view, were taken in winter, but indicate that, in summer, rambling roses would have formed screens of living colour there, just as the flowers spill forth with Robinsonian abundance in *La Belle Jardinière*.\(^3^9\) An 1895 letter from Whistler suggests that Beatrix was well familiar with Robinson's book about gardens in Paris, which certainly praises their 'walls of verdure' – ivy and other plants growing over walls, fences or trellises to give a 'natural' effect.\(^6^0\) From such evidence, it would seem that Beatrix's horticulture was a judicious mix of the 'wild' with the structured (latticework and trellising) – and as such, very much in tune with the blended aesthetic, part formal, part free, for which Robinson's colleague Gertrude Jekyll would shortly become known.

The other horticultural development to which we may perhaps relate Beatrix's garden-making is the tradition of women growing roses that the Empress Josephine had launched in France in the early nineteenth century, at Malmaison. In this sense, Whistler, in his delicate lithographs at the rue du Bac, is the modern-day Redouté to Beatrix, the garden's 'genius', and the 'lady' not only of the 'lawn' and 'blackbird', but also of the rose. If Redouté was famously commissioned by Josephine to record her roses at Malmaison, the tradition of women growing roses extends in Britain through Jane Loudon to Jekyll herself and her colleague Ellen Wilmott, who commissioned Robinson's favoured artist Alfred Parsons to paint her roses in the early twentieth century, in a conscious 'remake' of Redouté.\(^6^1\)

**Conclusion**

The artistic, historical and contextual evidence discussed above suggests that Beatrix Whistler was a richly thoughtful woman gardener, whose work can be placed at the centre of the complex interaction of east and west, art and science, sound, sight, and scent, and human, animal and plant worlds involved in fin-de-siècle aesthetic and social ideals of 'harmony'. Her 'living' trellises, covered in flowers and foliage, were the gateway to the garden's ideal world of peace, harmony and artistic collaboration with Whistler, and would have contrasted implicitly with the industrial iron 'lattice' of the Eiffel Tower, constructed just a few years earlier to the south of the rue du Bac. Whistler had bemoaned already in London how, 'all is of iron. The windows of the Crystal Palace are seen from all points ...the painter turns aside to shut his eyes.'\(^6^2\) If modern science – in terms of the Darwinian 'music' of birdsong – was nonetheless integral to Beatrix's vision of horticulture as harmony, her garden at the rue du Bac inspired not only fine artworks by her husband James McNeill Whistler, but also the literary garden of the sculptor Gloriani in Henry James's *The Ambassadors*. Far from being imprisoned by her garden's confines, she herself used it to unify the 'spheres' of male and female endeavour, just as it also served as a place of sociable encounter for artists and writers invited there by the Whistlers. And if Beatrix's hand, touching a birdcage in *Beatrix Whistler looking at her Birds*, draws attention to her role as that cage's designer, it also intriguingly seems to echo the shape of the butterfly monogram, as merged with Beatrix's own trefoil monogram, that Whistler had adopted after their marriage. In this sense, she 'imprints' their joint hand on her work, just as, in *La Belle Jardinière*, the butterfly merges with the garden foliage (in its trefoil, 'Beatrix' symbolism), and is attracted to the flowers that Beatrix grows (in its 'Whistler', male symbolism). Beatrix and James Whistler were arguably as much a creative team as Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his wife Margaret Macdonald in Glasgow at the same period in terms of architectural design.\(^6^3\) When Beatrix died, Whistler claimed to hear her voice in the song of one of her Shama birds, and perhaps more poignantly still, saw to it that the trellis she had sketched for his own grave was installed at hers, in Chiswick.\(^6^4\) And in due course, he too was buried there, in 1903.

Clare A.P. Willson

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Notes


2. For these and other biographical details in this paragraph, see Margaret F. MacDonald, Beatrice Whister Artist & Designer (exh. cat., Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery, 1997), 66f.

3. See ibid., 3.

4. GLAHA:53482, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.


7. For a discussion of the 'separate spheres' theory, whereby women are associated with the private sphere of the home (of which the garden can be counted part), and men with the public sphere of the street, business, church, etc, see Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History,' The Historical Journal, 36:2 (June 1993), 383-414.

8. This interpretation develops the theme of artistic partnerships explored e.g. in Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-Garde (Barbican Art Gallery, 2018), and Whitney Chadwick, Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership (Thames and Hudson, London, 1993).


10. See e.g. the designation of women as ‘the good genii of gardens,’ in the review of Mme. Millet’s Maison rustique des dames in Revue horticole (1859), 619, cited in Clare A.P. Willsdon, In the Gardens of Impressionism (London, Thames & Hudson, 2004), 80.


17. E.R. and J. Pennell, The Life of James McNeill Whistler (London, William Heinemann, 5th edn. 1911), 309. It has not been possible to establish the exact dimensions of the Whistlers’ garden, but period photographs in the University of Glasgow Whistler Archives, such as Whistler PH1/188, show a large circular lawn surrounded by a path within a walled area near the house, as well as borders under the walls containing shrubs (probably some of the roses recalled by Wuerpel; see n. 1 below). Whistler PH1/189 suggests a woodland area was part of accessible from the garden.


19. Whistler’s other lithographs showing the rue du Bac garden are Fig. 2; The Garden Porch, 1894; and Confidences in the Garden, 1896; his drawing is Fig. 3 (all The Hunterian, University of Glasgow; see Willsdon, ‘Nature on the Margins’, 76-87; 93-101).

20. See e.g. ‘Capucine’ (nasturtium) in Anais de Neuvile, Le Véritable Langage des Fleurs (Paris, Bernardin-Béchet, 1866), 130, and Mme Delacroix, Le Langage des fleurs, nouveau vocabulaire de Flore, contenant la description des plantes employées dans le langage des fleurs (Paris, Delarue, 1881), 22. A further meaning given by Mme Delacroix is a ‘jest’, also potentially relevant here, given the joke on Raphael in the title of the lithograph (La Belle Jardinière).

21. James Tissot, Reading in the Garden, 1881, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.


25. Beatrix’s own monogram was a trefoil; Whistler merged this with his butterfly symbol to ‘signify his luck in marrying her’ (MacDonald, Beatrice Whistler, 1997, 14).
26. Observation by the anonymous reviewer of this article, to whom I am indebted for sharpening my appreciation of the complexity of Whistler's fusion of self, loved one, and garden in this picture.


29. A period photograph of the rue du Bac garden (Whistler PH1/188, Archives and Special Collections, University of Glasgow) includes two further plant stands like that in *La Belle Jardinière*, suggesting they may have formed a decorative feature around the lawn.


33. *John Birnie Philip, seated in the garden of Merton Villa, Chelsea*, albumen print, Special Collections, University of Glasgow (Whistler PH1/27).

34. For more information on the 'great horticultural movement' as it was termed by Clémenceau in *Causerie horticole*, *Revue horticole*, 1867, 434, see Willson, *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, 13–16, 56–63, 80, and Chapter 4; Willson, *Impressionist Gardens* 12-16; and Willson, *Making the Modern Garden* in *Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse* (London, RA Publications, 2015), especially 31–41.


36. Ibid., 847.

37. It is unclear if these birds were the Indian Blue Rock Thrush, termed 'Shama' in Hindustani, or *Copsychus macrourus*, the white-rumped Shama, that lives in India and Asia. For the former, see T. C. Jerdon (Thomas Claverhill), *Illustrations of Indian Ornithology* (Madras, 1847), Plate XX. Merle, we might note, is the French word for a blackbird; might Mallarmé's poetic association of Beatrix with the blackbird perhaps have encouraged the gift to her in turn of Shama merles?


40. Cf the proximity of the jardinière to the porch in *The Man with a Sickle* [Fig. 2].

41. *Mr & Mrs Whibley’s wedding group*, 1894, University of Glasgow Whistler Archives (Whistler PH1/167).


43. See below and n. ivii.


50. Wuerpel cited in ibid; Wuerpel, 'Whistler the Man', 316.


55. For this insight I am again grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this article.


57. Whistler PH1/189, University of Glasgow Whistler Archives. Originally a Cistercian monastery, the Abbaye housed apartments where Chateaubriand, visiting his lover Mme Récamier, had felt himself 'merged with the distant silence and solitude, above the noise and tumult of a great city' (Mémoires d’outre-tombe, Book 29, Ch. 1, Sec 5, transl. A.S. Kline, 2005, at https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Chateaubriand/ChaateaubriandiMemoirsBookXXIX.php#anchor_Toc145913803 (accessed 14 February 2019).


59. These photographs are in the Whistler Archives of the University of Glasgow; see http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/manuscripts/search/results_ca.cfm?ID=1520 (accessed 15 February 2019).

60. Letter to Beatrix (28 October 1895), http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display?cid=6630&year=1895&month=10&rs=4 (accessed 14 February 2019), from which it may be inferred that she owned Robinson's *The Parks and Gardens of Paris...* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1878) (see Willson, ‘Nature on the Margins’, 96-7); *ibid*, 184 ('walls of verdure').

In accounts of the Rothschild family, Alice de Rothschild (1845–1922) has often escaped close scrutiny. Attention has been more focussed on her brother, Ferdinand (1839–1898), a collector extraordinaire, who built Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire and assembled within it, and also in his London house, a collection that became renowned even in Ferdinand's own day. Alice, like her brother and like many other members of the Rothschild family, was also a passionate collector. However, this paper will look at her activities as a gardener, at Waddesdon, but also at her own house, Eythrope, on the adjoining estate, and to a lesser extent the Villa Victoria, her property in Grasse in the south of France. The latter two were her own creations, but at Waddesdon, she was building on her brother's legacy, as his heir.

Both Ferdinand and Alice were from the Viennese branch of the Rothschild family, two of the eight children of Anselm (1803–1874) and Charlotte (1807–1859). They were born in Paris, then moved to Vienna, but also spent time in Frankfurt, where the family originated. Charlotte was an English Rothschild, the daughter of Nathan Mayer (1777–1836), the founder of the London branch of the family business, and as a result her children were anglophile. Ferdinand in turn moved to England and married an English cousin, Evelina, daughter of Lionel, who died in 1866. He built Waddesdon as a country retreat, a place where he could entertain friends and family at weekends, but also as a treasure house, a setting for his growing collection. The design of Waddesdon, conceived by his French architect Gabriel-Hyppolite Destaillieur, was a reflection of his historical interests – an echo of French sixteenth-century chateaux architecturally, but inside a homage to eighteenth-century Parisian town houses.

From the moment that he purchased the Waddesdon estate in 1874, Ferdinand embarked on a monumental effort to create the house and its grounds on a site on which, by his own account, ‘there was not a bush to be seen nor a bird to be heard’ at the outset. The top of the hill was levelled, the drives and terraces excavated, water had to be piped in from Aylesbury and materials brought to site on a specially constructed tramway. Mature trees were imported to landscape the grounds, and mounds and grottoes of artificial Pulham rock were constructed to house a menagerie of exotic species. Benjamin Disraeli, who witnessed the building of the Manor, is said to have commented that the Almighty would have accomplished the creation of the world in much less that seven days had he had the assistance of the Rothschilds. Inside the house, one of the finest examples of what became known as ‘le goût Rothschild’, were opulent interiors in which magnificent English eighteenth-century portraits looked down from silk-hung or carved panelled walls onto the finest examples of eighteenth-century French marquetry furniture, Sèvres and Meissen porcelain, Savonnerie carpets woven for the French royal palaces, gold boxes and other precious objects. It was a collection which was to become famous in its owner’s lifetime.

Importantly, the house and garden were designed as an integrated whole – each critical to the visual appreciation of the other. Ferdinand and his landscape architect Elie Lainé laid out the grounds in a mixture of French-inspired formality and English parkland vistas, with a focal point of view or piece of sculpture at every turn, and with several delightful destinations for visitors, including an Aviary. There were romantic Pulham rockwork outcrops that housed rare sheep, and extensive deer and animal pens. At the bottom of the hill were the huge range of glasshouses, supplied by James Halliday and Co., where Ferdinand’s gardeners cultivated orchids, Malmaison carnations and tender species of fruit, and beyond these were the extensive kitchen gardens, and an ornamental Dairy, also with Pulhamite rockwork and a water garden.

This was what Alice inherited on Ferdinand’s death in 1898. Her brother had never remarried after Evelina’s death, so had no direct heir. Alice, his youngest sister, who had come to join him in England when he was widowed, was the obvious choice as his successor. From the very start she seems to have been determined to preserve her brother’s creation and it is in large part thanks to Alice that Waddesdon and its collections remain in such good condition to this day. She was also a passionate and knowledgeable gardener. In many ways, the gardens could be said to have reached their zenith in her time, even though she made no major structural changes to the layout. Alice was born in 1847, the youngest of Anselm and Charlotte’s daughters. Like her siblings, Alice’s childhood was divided between Paris, Frankfurt (where the family had a villa at Grüneberg), Vienna and holidays at the country estate in Silesia, Schillersdorf, where they revelled in riding and walking and Alice was able to indulge her undoubted skill for drawing and music. Her sketchbooks, two of which survive at Waddesdon, show that she had a good eye and was keenly observant, and that she also had an eye for and an interest in landscape.
Charlotte was also a keen gardener, giving all her children a plot of their own to cultivate, a fact recorded by Ferdinand in his Reminiscences. Both Schillersdorf and the Grüneberg villa had garden features that were copied by Ferdinand and Alice, such as the Aviary and deer pens at Grüneberg, and model stables and dairies. Alice, like Ferdinand, also spent a good deal of time with her mother's family in England, particularly at Gunnersbury, then just outside London. The untimely death of her mother in 1859, when Alice was only twelve, was the start of an unsettling period, when she became, in the words of her aunt Charlotte, a real shuttle-cock, flung from the home of one compassionate relative, under the roof of some other commiserating friend ... flying, travelling, rushing ... from the south of Germany to the North, from the country to the seaside, from Imperial Austria to Royal Prussia, from Switzerland to Italy, from Silesia to England ... because she has ... no mother to love her.

Perhaps because of this, Alice formed some exceptionally strong bonds, in particular with her cousins Constance (1843–1931) and Annie (1844–1926), daughters of her uncle Anthony (1810–1876), and stayed on many occasions at Aston Clinton (demolished after the second world war), their country house in Buckinghamshire, just on the other side of Aylesbury from Waddesdon. These bonds were reinforced when Alice, aged twenty, arrived from Vienna to join Ferdinand in England. They lived together, first in London, where Alice bought the adjoining house to his, 142 Piccadilly, and at Leighton House in Leighton Buzzard, from where they both enjoyed hunting with the Rothschild stag hounds. The death of their father, Anselm, in 1874 left them both independently wealthy. The Waddesdon estate came on the market the same year, Ferdinand bought it and embarked on the building of Waddesdon.

The following year, the adjoining estate at Eythrope was also acquired, and then passed on to Alice, who had the existing house demolished and rebuilt by a local architect, George Devey. It was a day residence only. After a bout of rheumatic fever, she was told that she shouldn't sleep by water, so Ferdinand provided her with a bedroom and sitting room at Waddesdon.

Alice was described in some detail in a memoir by Constance. She was

Gifted with a manly intellect and a firm sense of duty, also an unusually strong power of will and inflexibility of purpose, she pursued her way of life, carrying out her improvements, managing her property, looking after every detail of her estate, undeterred by any opposition she might meet with. No freaks or changes in fashion worried or affected her. She had never been good-looking, but had keen, bright eyes, a thoughtful brow and something unusual and arresting in appearance and expression. She was most precise and punctual in all her habits, visiting daily her gardens and glass houses and farm, her aviary of rare birds, managing personally every department of her property, and never resting until perfectly satisfied with what she saw. No detail, however small, escaped her notice. Her knowledge, indeed, covered a wide ground, for she was well acquainted with the art, literature and history of many countries. She was most interested in animal life, loving her dogs devotedly and was generally followed by some wonderful specimens of their race. Original in mind and speech, she had a great sense of humour and could express herself easily and with point in three languages.

This was a forceful, not to say formidable, personality. Stories of her strictness abound, but those who knew her well also describe someone of great charm and intelligence.

Alice entered into every aspect of Ferdinand's life, both at Waddesdon and in London, dividing her time between the two from 1880 onwards, when the first part of the house, the Bachelors' Wing, was ready for occupation. This was marked by the first of her brother's many house parties, which became legendary in their day for luxury and hospitality. These Saturday-to-Monday parties followed a fairly regular pattern: sumptuous meals, cooked by Ferdinand's French chef, and a round of visits to the gardens, aviary, dairy (where guests could taste the milk and cream), the glass houses and the water garden. Alice would often then invite the whole party across the estate to Eythrope, where they would admire the gardens and be taken up the River Thame to have tea in a charming little river-side pavilion with a mosaic floor. She mingled easily with Ferdinand's friends, including the Prince of Wales and others from his political circle.

This familiarity with the Manor made Alice the obvious
choice when the childless Ferdinand came to select his heir, and on his death in 1898, Alice duly became the chatelaine of Waddesdon. From the outset, she seems to have seen her role as one of both perpetuating the life that he had lived and preserving his legacy. She continued to host house parties, although on a reduced scale and only twice a year, and she continued to pour her energies into the gardens, both at Waddesdon and Eythrove. Guests, who included Sir Winston Churchill, Lord Kitchener and Henry James, enjoyed every possible luxury although some visitors found their hostess could be both intimidating and a little strange. Ottoline Morrell, who visited in 1909 later described Alice as ‘a lonely old oddity’.10 Henry James, who was clearly rather fond of Alice and made several visits, found lunch, attended by enormously tall footmen and with huge white strawberries for dessert, rather oppressive. Even Edward VII, who made a nostalgic visit to his old friend’s house in 1906, was famously told to keep his hands off the furniture. This concern to protect the collection was manifested in what became known later as ‘Miss Alice’s Rules’ which remain a significant force in the house and the management of the collection to this day.

This immaculate attention to quality and detail can be seen in a rare surviving note book in which Alice recorded the flower arrangements for each room in the Manor, even to the extent of specifying their heights so as not to impinge on the picture frames above. Her perfectionism also permeated out into the gardens, where her expectations were always of the highest of standards.11

Alice did not make fundamental changes to the structure of the gardens at the Manor, other than the creation of a small golf course, but she introduced a number of innovations and maintained them to impeccably high standards. She employed fifty-three gardeners to Ferdinand’s sixty-six, divided into different departments – the kitchen garden, the glass houses, flowers for exhibition, flowers for the house and bedding for the gardens generally. Tree management and caring for the lawns and drives had their own teams. The gardens in this period are recorded in a set of stereoscopic autochrome images, which illustrate the opulence of the bedding schemes.12

However, at Eythrove and at her villa in Grasse in the South of France, she was working with a blank canvas. The latter, christened Villa Victoria, after the Queen, who visited in 1891, was where Alice spent her winters right up to the end of her life, except during the First World War. She first visited Grasse in December 1887 and then bought a small country house and olive grove which she extended by buying the adjoining plot of land. When she died, the estate encompassed some 135 hectares.

The villa itself was not particularly distinguished but the garden was acknowledged to be a masterpiece. It was constructed around a series of terraces, each with their own character. Highlights included exotic plants - palm trees, yuccas, aloes, Peruvian heliotrope, black bamboos, New Zealand cordylines, Asiatic pines, cactus, lilies, tulips, camellias and azaleas. Extra interest was provided by architectural insertions – a Japanese kiosk, a winter garden with a grotto complete with stalactites, and a tea pavilion which, as the sale catalogue rather disingenuously remarked, ‘gave the sense of an English cottage in an Alpine site’.13

However, in its prime, the garden became as celebrated in its way as Waddesdon. Alice entertained several royal visitors, all of whom planted trees - Queen Victoria on 11 April 1891, the Empress of Austria on 16 March 1896, the Prince of Wales on 27 March 1897, and the Princess of Wales on 19 March 1899. It was at Grasse that the infamous episode of Alice ordering Queen Victoria off the lawn is supposed to have occurred, although this is likely to be an embroidering of the widening of the paths Alice put in train to accommodate the Queen’s pony carriage.

Back in Buckinghamshire, the garden Alice created at Eythrove is another testament to her passion for horticulture, and where her own style can be fully understood. The grounds here run down to the River Thame, and similarly to the Manor, consisted of a parterre of elaborately-planted moulded beds dotted with statuary close to the house, giving way to a more informal, parkland setting, dotted with specimen trees and wilder areas stretching away to the river.

There was a large rose garden, an Italian Garden and a Mexican garden, planted with succulents. Alice also installed an extensive range of Halliday and Co. glasshouses, with fruit ranges and a kitchen and flower garden. As at the Villa Victoria, she built a Tea House up the river, with a mosaic floor inlaid with a pattern of fishes, to which visitors were conveyed in a small steam launch, an affectation commented on with some amusement by Mary Gladstone, the daughter of the Prime Minister, who came to one of Ferdinand’s house parties in 1888.14

Eythrove also became famous for Alice’s adoption of a late-nineteenth-century gardening feat, three-dimensional carpet bedding. This was first reported at another Rothschild garden, Alice’s cousin Alfred’s house at nearby Halton. An iron frame was filled with peat, soil and compost planted up to create the desired pattern and colours. As the fashion spread, it was adopted in particular in municipal parks and gardens, where floral rolls of carpet, butterflies, clocks and other sculptural objects started to appear. At Eythrove, the autochromes record an ornamental basket and later, a great bird with exotic plumage (two of which have been re-created at Waddesdon in recent years).

As far as is known to date, Alice did not record her inspirations, influences or observations as a gardener. But apart from the physical evidence, and the autochrome images, there is another documentary source which has left us an exceptionally rich seam of information about Alice and her gardens, as well as a unique insight into her personality. These are a collection of letters written by her to her Head Gardener, George Frederick Johnson, whenever she was away from Waddesdon, whether in France or at Mastrick Hall, the house she rented in Bournemouth when the war prevented her wintering at Villa Victoria.15 Her first Head Gardener, John Jaques, had worked for Ferdinand since 1887, but when he retired in 1905 Alice turned to Johnson, who had been in charge at Grasse since 1901, having come from a position in Vienna with Alice’s brother Nathaniel. She set out the terms of his employment very clearly. ‘To begin with, I shall give you 100 pounds a year. If you stay with me and give entire satisfaction you will gradually be augmented up to 130 pounds a year. The park and trees etc are not under you.’ Johnson rapidly became Alice’s right-hand man, and the letters reveal a relationship of trust and affection that went beyond mere exchanges of horticultural detail and planning as well as throwing light on Alice’s robust yet kindly character.

The letters follow a pattern – usually beginning with instructions or questions about some aspect of the garden, such as its planting or management, soil preparation, fertilisers and watering, sometimes followed up by observations on political
events or family news and enquiries about Johnson and his family's health and ending with a weather report from wherever Alice happened to be at the time. They are usually signed 'Yours truly, A de R'. There are frequent underlinings for extra emphasis. Thus, in April 1906 she was advising him that 'blood manure is excellent for roses ... Gibbs (the head gardener at Eythrope) gets blood from the slaughterhouse at Aylesbury for his roses'. She evidently worried a great deal about fertilizer. Later that year she wrote:

I have had a long talk with Tabard about the use of artificial manures - he uses the following: Engrais fennel (bought in Paris), Blood in powder (bought at Marseilles), Guano, Nitrate of Soda. The engrais fennel he uses only for the Petunias and Gloxinias; proportions one teaspoonful to three litres of water. Use this mixture four months before the gloxinias flower about once a week. The blood in powder he uses for the Callas half a kilo of the powder mixed in 100 litres of water, that in the proportion and he waters the callas with it once a week four months before they flower, until they have done flowering. He uses the blood powder also for roses. The nitrate of soda he uses for turf and for herbaceous flowers. I do not see why we should not have as good gloxinias, callas and petunias at Waddesdon as they are cutting[s] grown under glass, as Tabard grows here. You can get the engrais fennel yourself and wash the label off the pots, so that your men do not get at your secrets.26

This minute attention to detail is something which comes through again and again in the letters. Later in November, she wrote twice in one day, concerned about the planting of fruit trees.

I want you to grow all things in Brill [a neighbouring village] soil that it suits as well or the Market Harborough soil, but you must not be penny wise pound foolish and use the Brill soil for things that do better in Harboro soil - Quality is the one thing you must study in all your work at Waddesdon. Economy too as long as you can effect it by good organization, but not by losing the quality of the fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Again in the same month, she wrote

The rain water tanks ought to be emptied, cleaned and examined as to leakages etc every autumn, beginning by (sic) the longest tanks first as they take more time to refill than the smaller ones. Are all the peach trees replanted on the peach wall? You will need to have nets and trainers provided for the ventilators of the peach wall, to protect the ripening fruit from wasps and insects next summer. Thin nets of course need only be in use during the summer months, but they must be ready for use when required.

She continued to be concerned about watering, as here –

'Plums can be watered with chalky water, but no other fruit trees and you had better find out before you use much Chiltern water for the pot plums whether it contains anything injurious ... You can, when next Jaques goes to Waddesdon, consult him about the amounts of artificial watering the trees will need in the peach house - of course there are times when they will need more water than at others.'

She then added a postscript:

'Remember that your Austrian experience is not of much use in fruit cultivation at Waddesdon.'

On several occasions, Alice instructed a complete change of soil in the Parterre or in the kitchen garden to improve yields. The letters also usually finish with a detailed weather report - for example, from Grasse, 'We have had no frosts here so far. The coldest night temperature was two and a half above zero - last night was very mild, 8 above zero at the coldest and the thermometer registered 13 above shade at 7 am. It has not rained here since the 18th inst.' In January 1907 she was writing 'I wrote to you yesterday morning and received your letter by first post this morning. To my mind your men have had touches of mild influenza – they had better go away for a change of air before they assume their work. The after effects of even a mild case of influenza are serious and convalescence after the influenza always takes a long time. You can't be too careful with influenza.'

This apparent obsession with health is perhaps not so surprising in someone who had been advised that it was too dangerous to sleep near water and as a consequence returned from Eythrope to Waddesdon every night, but by the end of the letter her thoughts had turned in another direction, again with typical foresight. 'I hope nothing will prevent my first and most important party at Waddesdon for Sunday July 7th - on that day I should like everything in the gardens to be at its best. For that week I will need an abundant supply of fresh fruit.' Among the guests for this particular weekend was her great-nephew James de Rothschild (1878–1957), the eldest son of Baron Edmond of the French branch of the family, who was to be Alice's heir.

The letters are full of personal colour and social detail. Through January and February 1907 the flu epidemic remained a concern but by March Alice was commenting cheerfully on Johnson's handwriting: 'your handwriting is much more legible than it used to be, but there is still room for improvement, particularly the way your crop your t's and in your I's and d's. If you write slowly, not only to me but whenever you write, you will acquire the habit of writing legibly without thinking about it.'

Although the prime significance here of the letters to Johnson are the insights they offer into Alice's gardens, they also chart her activities and concerns in the latter years of her life. Unable to travel to Grasse during World War One, she spent the winters in a rented house, Mastrick Hall in Bournemouth, from where most of the letters in this period are written. The outbreak of war marks a change in tone, as political comments and worries about the outcome, and the safety, of her Rothschild cousins in Europe are writ large. Conscription of able-bodied men was having an effect on Johnson's team, revealed through Alice's messages of condolence for the families of Waddesdon casualties. Illness remained a concern – both the cholera outbreak in Austria in 1914 and later on the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918–20. Waddesdon's role in the war effort is also documented. 'Grow as much food as possible' Alice urges. 'Do not let people imagine we waste labour on useless luxuries. Grow
your tomatoes well in sight.\textsuperscript{18} The Parterre was turned over to potatoes, hay crops were taken from the lawns and beetroots, carrots and other vegetables were grown in the Aviary garden. Rabbits for eating were raised in the Aviary bird enclosures.

The end of the war brought changes of other kinds. By 1918 Alice had decided that she would not reinstate the gardens or glass houses to their pre-war splendour, and nor would she entertain on the scale that she had previously. This was partly because her own health was declining, and although she resumed her life in Grasse, it was on the way back from there in 1922 that she was suddenly taken ill and died in Paris. Waddesdon was inherited by James and his English wife Dorothy. They introduced some new features, such as a grass tennis court, extending the golf course, and building a stud on the Estate, a result of James’s passion for racing. They also kept the glass houses going, latterly growing plants for commercial sale. In 1957, James died, bequeathing Waddesdon and its immediate gardens to the National Trust. Dorothy continued to manage the house on the Trust’s behalf, but it was not until the present Lord Rothschild took over as Chairman of the charitable foundation that runs Waddesdon that the real renaissance of the Victorian garden began. Under the direction of his second daughter, Beth, many of the features for which Alice’s garden was renowned were restored, including the Parterre and the three-dimensional birds. Lord Rothschild has also overseen the recreation of the gardens at Eythrope (not open to the public except through pre-booked tours) in a contemporary Rothschild spirit, designed by Lady Mary Keen. The gardens blend the history of Alice’s garden, restoring and reusing elements such as the ranges of glass, including a vineyard and a peach and cherry house, with new features – a ‘théâtre’ for displays of auriculas in spring and gourds, squashes and pumpkins in the autumn, for example. It includes areas for cut flowers, fruit and vegetable plots, roses and topiary all maintained to the exemplary standards insisted upon by Alice and using both traditional and modern techniques. It produces fruit, vegetables and flowers all year round. Its creation was presided over by Head Gardener Sue Dickenson, who ran the garden until her retirement in 2017, handing over to Suzie Hanson – the latest in an illustrious tradition of expert horticulturists who have worked for and with the Rothschilds.\textsuperscript{19}

Notes

1. For a comprehensive history of Waddesdon and the Rothschilds who were particularly involved with it, see Michael Hall, \textit{Waddesdon, The Biography of a Rothschild House} (Waddesdon, Rothschild Foundation, 3rd ed. 2012). See also Mrs James de Rothschild, \textit{The Rothschilds at Waddesdon Manor} (London, Collins, 1979) which include Dorothy de Rothschild’s memories of Alice.


3. For Ferdinand’s account of the building of Waddesdon, see \textit{The Red Book}, privately published in 1897.


5. For a more detailed account of the creation of the garden, see Brent Elliott: \textit{Waddesdon Manor: The Garden} (Princes Risborough, National Trust, 1994).

6. Alice’s sketchbooks are preserved in the Waddesdon Archive at Windmill Hill (hereafter WAWH), accession no. 146.1997.

7. Ferdinand’s Reminiscences are held in the WAWH as unpublished typescripts, accession no. 944.


10. Lady Ottoline Morell recorded a visit to Waddesdon with the novelist Henry James in her diary in May 1909. Quoted in Hall, \textit{Waddesdon}, 193.


12. Set of anonymous stereoscopic autochromes, c. 1910, WAWH, accession no. 3694. The autochrome photographic method, which involved coating glass plates with coloured grains of potato starch, was the first commercially viable means of colour photography. For a full account of the process, and the Rothschild enthusiasm for it, see \textit{The Colours of Another Age; The Rothschild Autochromes 1908–1912}, V. Grey ed., (London, Rothschild Archive, 2007).

13. A flyer for the hotel, which contains several illustrations of the garden, is preserved in the RAL. The Lafite Papers 000/929 (OE 462).

14. Hall, \textit{Waddesdon}, 162. Mary Gladstone recorded her 1885 visit in her diary.

15. Alice’s letters to Johnson, covering the period 1901–1922, are held in the WAWH, accession no. 149.

16. \textit{Ibid.}

17. \textit{Ibid.}

18. \textit{Ibid.}

Cultivation in Captivity: Gender, Class and Reform in the Promotion and Practice of Women’s Prison Gardening in England, 1900–1939

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In 1929 the magazine of the National Gardens Guild published an article on recent work by its Honorary Treasurer, Margaret Stubbs (1866–1937), about her gardening classes at Holloway Prison:

From a small class held in the privacy of a cell-like room inside the prison, Miss Stubbs enlarged her ideas (or it might more truthfully be said the ideas of the prison officials) and introduced practical gardening out-of-doors. Throughout the summer a class of women has been engaged in cultivating flower beds and borders, and in addition to gifts from private persons, a number of nurserymen and seedsmen ... has come forward with donations of plants and seeds.1

Although this was reported in 1929, it has clear resonances with a growing number of more recent initiatives in the UK designed to encourage horticultural training within prisons such as Greener on the Outside for Prisons (GOOP) and The Clink charity gardens.2 Since 1983 the Royal Horticultural Society has awarded the Windlesham Trophy for the best-kept men’s and women’s prison garden in England and Wales.3 Established by the former Chairman of the Parole Board, Lord Windlesham, the prize is intended ‘to develop prisoners’ sense of worth and encourage garden excellence within the prison community’.4 This concept of the restorative power of gardening and the prison as a site for horticultural training for those kept at Her Majesty’s pleasure appears at first glance to be a recent, progressive position in line with the emergence of other late twentieth-century organisations such as Thrive (established in 1978), which viewed gardening as an effective therapeutic activity for marginalised groups. However, as the opening quotation attests, this approach has an earlier historical foundation in early twentieth-century organisations such as Thrive (established in 1978), which viewed gardening as an effective therapeutic activity for marginalised groups. However, as the opening quotation attests, this approach has an earlier historical foundation in early twentieth-century schemes run by some prison governors and by voluntary organisations in association with the prison service – the most prominent and lasting of which was the Prison Gardening Association (PGA), whose ambition was to place horticultural lecturers in every prison and borstal institution in England and Wales.

The PGA (formed in 1928) and its parent organisation the National Gardens Guild (founded in 1914 as the London Gardens Guild) were among many voluntary organisations dating from the late nineteenth century which campaigned for gardens and green space as part of urban social, sanitary and aesthetic reform. The Guild’s mission was to promote ‘horticulture as an adjunct to social work’ and, later, to foster a ‘civic spirit’ through the cultivation of flowers;5 its work followed in the footsteps of other, longer-established efforts to ‘brighten’ and ‘beautify’ back yards in poor urban areas from the 1860s, including those sponsored by Lord Shaftesbury, the Kyrle Society, the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and the ‘One & All’ Agricultural and Horticultural Association. Very often these were Christian in origin and, as Lucynda Matthews Jones reminds us in her exploration of the spiritual imagination of the early University Settlement movement in London, ‘brightness and shadows were potent metaphors in late Victorian and Edwardian culture’.6 Settlements, in which usually middle-class intellectuals became good neighbours with the poor, were ‘nurseries’ for those who intended to enter social work.7 The London Guild had itself grown out of a failed attempt to establish a London Gardens Settlement in south London and many of its members were Quakers, Fabians and other Socialists who had connections to English Settlements and to the National Council for Social Service. Margaret Stubbs was herself formerly a worker with the Lady Margaret Hall Settlement in London. Although there is not space to examine them here, we position women’s prison gardening very much within the context of these initiatives to improve and brighten the lives of the poor; prison gardening was also allied to the wider ‘beautification’ movement, which had civic in addition to moral and sanitary aims, exemplified in the work of Ada Salter, former Bermondsey Settlement social worker, first female Labour Mayoress in Britain (1919), chair of the LCC Parks Committee, and one-time President of the National Gardens Guild.8 As such examples suggest, women often played prominent, active roles in these organisations and the work of Miss Stubbs – ‘pioneer woman lecturer to the Prison Gardening Association’9 and her successors at the PGA continued in a tradition of religiously and politically motivated social work. Stubbs’s work within the prison service exemplified the ‘new sense of partnership between statutory and voluntary workers’ observed by Elizabeth Macadam in 1934.10 It also demonstrates how, partly under women’s influence, gardens and gardening became part of the armoury of an increasingly professionalized social-service movement between the wars.

Our aim here is twofold: firstly, to examine the nature of horticultural instruction for women and how it was distinctively gendered in comparison with the gardening activity prescribed for male prisoners and, secondly, to explore the narratives at play in teaching the poor women who made up most of the prison population to appreciate nature through gardening. We discuss this in conjunction with contemporary practice in comparable institutions such as reformatories and schools and, along the way, highlight the little-known horticultural and social work of the lecturers and offer a glimpse of the women who gardened (or were encouraged to do so) behind prison walls. The central focus is on Holloway Prison in London, where the PGA was active from the late-1920s, but we also consider Aylesbury Prison in Buckinghamshire, where in the early 1900s a gardening scheme was managed in-house, and later by the PGA.

In the nineteenth century, gardening and other forms of outdoor labour were undertaken in a variety of institutions including asylums, reformatories and prisons as part of the regime. It is worth noting that ‘prison horticulture has been an element of detention facilities throughout history, including prisoner-of-war and internment camps’.11 A central role of such agriculture was to provide a cheap source of food combined with the discipline of labour but towards the twentieth
Inebriate reformatories, created for those classed as habitual drunkards as an alternative to traditional prisons, were an exception to this rule. At Duxhurst Industrial Farm Colony, founded in 1895 by Lady Isabella Somerset, women were taught kitchen- and flower-gardening on a cottage-garden model to aid in their recovery.

Aylesbury Convict Prison, from 1901 a female State Inebriate Reformatory, also had both vegetable and flower gardens in the early 1900s. This was a 'last resort' institution to which refractory or violent women from the Certified Reformatories could be sent.

As they were considered a 'very rough collection of women', their improvement in both 'health and temper' through kitchen gardening represented an attempt to soften or feminise them.

As this article will demonstrate, even when gardening within reforming and carceral institutions emerged in the 1900s as a suitable occupation for women, it was still gendered in terms of the language used. This highlighted its nurturing and feminine nature, and the type of light horticulture practised, which focused on pot-plants, window-boxes, floral bedding and, in the case of inebriates, kitchen gardening, rather than the more utilitarian, and economically valuable, large-scale vegetable gardening that required physical exertion and was still reserved for men.

Despite a growing interest in the history of garden spaces beyond the domestic, the history of prison gardens and gardening in Britain has generally been overlooked. However, our attention to institutional gardening and its relationship to wider cultural, social and medical concerns forms part of a growing literature on institutional, manufacturing and public gardens such as hospitals, pubs, factories, schools and urban parks. It also reflects a greater attention to horticultural spaces that are not associated with named garden designers and hopes to highlight the cultural importance of more everyday, makeshift gardening practice. As Malcolm Dick and Elaine Mitchell noted...
recently, ‘there has been a retreat from a concentration on the aesthetics of design towards seeing gardens and the activity of gardening within wider social, economic, political and cultural contexts’. As they emphasise, alongside scientific, intellectual and other influences, social class and gender have shaped the creation and development of gardens.

One common obstacle faced by historians when trying to consider how these places were used and who might have been involved in the activity of gardening is the lack of extant archival material; prisons and prisoners present additional hurdles. Our principal sources here are the Reports of the Commissioners of Prisons and the publications and dispersed records of the Gardens Guilds and Prison Gardens Association, supported with evidence from the national, horticultural and medical press. Not surprisingly, articles often anonymised the prison or withheld geographical detail but it is clear from other records that in both rural and urban areas, prisons often had a range of gardens, including those that served as the public face of the institution and private plots for governors and chaplains, and that prisoners often worked in these in addition to any productive ground. Exercise yards occupied large areas of the remaining outdoor space. Our interest in this article is less on design or the organisation of space but rather addresses the teaching of gardening to female inmates and what convicted women did in prison gardens. Nevertheless, the ‘brightening’ effect of relatively small areas of ground was conceived very much in relation to the wider prison landscape: in particular, it was hoped that these little-photographed plots would provide, for some, an alternative to the bleak and heavily supervised space of the exercise yard, as portrayed in an early twentieth-century view of Wormwood Scrubs Prison (see Fig. 1).

‘A healthy occupation of the women’: Gardening and the reform of female inmates

In the early twentieth century philanthropic work in prisons by visiting committees and mission workers sometimes included gifts of plants to ‘beautify’ prison chapels and gardens, for example at Holloway and Bristol in 1912. Voluntary activity by ‘ladies’ associations’ belonged to a tradition of reformatory and welfare work with women prisoners begun by Elizabeth Fry and Sarah Martin in the early 1800s. From the turn of the twentieth century, efforts to reform women through friendship and lectures on a range of subjects began also to include practical gardening. As noted above, at the inebriate reformatory at Aylesbury Prison, which like those at Holloway and Bristol was one of several female prisons experimenting with a ‘modified’ borstal system, inmates were taught gardening in addition to domestic work and their regular schooling. Aylesbury soon had a large kitchen garden with a flower border and greenhouse worked entirely by the girls. By the late-1920s they were allowed to cultivate and plant their own gardens as they pleased. The horticultural work with women continued until, in 1939, the Prison Commissioners transferred all who had formed its gardening class to Holloway and the lectures ceased. This was probably in advance of an unexecuted scheme to close both prisons to women and establish a new, more open women’s prison and borstal in Surrey.

From the early 1920s a handful of male Gardens Guild members, including some who had been gaolled for conscientious objection and so had experience of prison life and hard labour, had been lecturing on vegetable growing in male prisons, with twenty-two prisons and three borstals included in this scheme by 1923. Margaret Stubbs was also lecturing in prisons for two years prior to the establishment of the PGA but, in a gendered pattern which continued through the 1930s, her female pupils were in the main taught ornamental gardening and desk-based horticultural science rather than the productive horticulture and agriculture which characterised the physical labour undertaken by the men. Although the PGA retained its title, HM Prison Commission requested that the new Association be fully incorporated into the Guild as the Prison Garden Sub-Committee and in January 1929 it was making arrangements to cover thirty-eight prison and borstal institutions throughout the country, the Home Office promising to match each £1 raised by the Guild. By September fifteen institutions had signed up and the aim was now to appoint qualified lecturers in every prison and borstal in England and Wales. Stubbs, the only female lecturer, was appointed as Lecturer at Holloway and the post at Aylesbury was taken by Philip Mann.

Holloway Prison was originally the House of Correction for the City of London; it became the first female-only local prison in 1902 and was later notoriously associated with the incarceration and force-feeding of suffragettes. In the early 1920s the Governor reported that a considerable number of Holloway’s inmates were ‘semi-feeble women’ with a great number of convictions and was convinced that many committed petty offences in order to secure a prison sentence and thus avoid the workhouse. These women were allowed a relaxed regime with simple light work. For the younger women committed to Holloway, the Chaplain advised that it would be beneficial if technical education could be provided by qualified teachers in the evenings, and (knowing ‘how the poor live and feed’) recommended cookery classes. These were in addition to the regular lectures on health, nursing and sanitation given by ‘lady visitors’ from 1904. As with attempts to ‘beautify’ the places where the poor lived there was an underlying class element to these initiatives, where the upper and middle classes assumed a level of agency in the lack of domestic skills attributed to some groups of working women.

This was the regime into which Margaret Stubbs entered as prison-garden lecturer in about 1927–28. A ‘special gardening class’ was started in 1929 under the auspices of the new PGA and the ‘gardening teacher’, presumably Stubbs, took over all the prison flower beds. This resulted, the Governor reported, in ‘a very marked improvement in the appearance of the grounds and at the same time it has provided a healthy occupation of the women during the summer evenings’. At this time the gaol held an annual average of 278 prisoners under the charge of female officers and nurses. As noted, many were alcoholic or ‘weak minded’. Ninety-seven of the 165 inmates held in 1929 had been charged with stealing, the remainder with drunkenness, prostitution, child neglect and other crimes associated with poverty, and their sentences ranged from eight months to under two weeks. As the Governor and other authorities noted, sentences of this kind ‘destroyed any hope’ there might be to reclaim them and greater efforts should be made to keep girls in particular outside prison and borstal walls. Access to gardening was then partly an attempt to create a brighter, less prison-like environment for these women but their short stays must have frustrated more ambitious programmes of education and reform.
‘Softer, gentler, kinder’: Prison gardening and gender

The early twentieth-century attention to gardens and gardening in prisons exemplified in the work of the PGA was rooted in the reforming potential of contact with nature and growing things and the moral and mental improvement to be achieved through ‘beautifying dull and ugly places’.42 The aim of reform through beauty and contact with nature led to the idea that prison gardens also had a practical function in providing new skills and rational exercise in a healthier, greener environment as part of attempts to reduce reoffending. As an editor in The Guild Gardener put it, ‘gardening and gardening instruction are recognised by the authorities as part of a system designed to prevent recidivism or habitual crime’.43

The PGA was assisted in its work in brightening prisons by Quaker and other philanthropists. Nurseryman Joseph Cheal, of Cheal’s of Crawley, a vice-chairman of the PGA, supplied many of the organisations’ plants, particularly to women’s prisons.44 At the start of the scheme he sent a dozen rambler roses to Holloway ‘to help in the brightening of the grounds’, where inmates were making a flower garden; later he sent perennials for the gardens of an unidentified women’s prison.45 Here the choice of plants, such as roses, is key to understanding the relationship between beauty and moral improvement which was an underlying feature of women’s prison-gardening schemes and much urban reform in this period.

Dr Selina Fox, Governor of Aylesbury Prison (deputy governor from 1916 and subsequently the first female prison governor46) found also that the depression suffered by long-sentence inmates could be alleviated by ‘keeping their minds occupied with handwork, educational lectures, gardening and the keeping of livestock’.47 Although this applied to both men and women, there is a sense that female prisoners would benefit from indoor and outdoor floral gardening rather than the heavier and less genteel vegetable growing and agricultural labour undertaken by men. This perhaps also reflects wider views regarding gardens as exemplifying the curative powers of tamed nature, which emerged as part of the therapeutic regime of the nineteenth-century lunatic asylum. Transgressions from the tranquil and cheerful behaviour that such spaces were meant to engender could end up being pathologised. As Elaine Showalter states, when a group of female patients at the Fisherton Asylum for the Criminally Insane ‘rippled up every flower the minute it showed its head above ground’, their action was considered a sign of ‘severe psychopathology’.48 This was presumably considered both ‘unfeminine’ and the opposite of the outcome expected by the medical profession. The concept of ordered, domesticated nature as therapeutic or reforming also extended to the concept of gardening where the inmate took on the role of taming nature as therapeutic or reforming also extended to the concept of the medical profession. The concept of ordered, domesticated nature as therapeutic or reforming also extended to the concept of gardening where the inmate took on the role of taming nature him or herself.49

From 1934, Mrs S. K. Ratcliffe (1871–1962), a Quaker, led a compulsory weekly gardening class for a dozen long-sentence women in anunnamed prison near London. In the winter Katie Ratcliffe taught in the classroom with a ‘certain percentage of actual gardening’ at other times. The women had individual plots ‘and more or less enjoy filling them with flowers and emptying them of weeds’. Two strips of waste ground along sections of prison wall were cleared and planted with flowering shrubs at the expense of a ‘fairy godmother’ benefactor. The prison authorities also prepared a rectangle as ‘a yard improvement’, which the women filled with bulbs in a formal pattern. The prison had no enthusiasm for Ratcliffe’s plans to cultivate more of the prison ground, however. Instead, the women made sink gardens and hanging baskets, not always with success. ‘We have, of course, layered carnations, pruned roses, grown flowers from seeds or cuttings’, she wrote. But the women’s interest was always highest, she said, for ‘some issue of the day: soil erosion, wheat experiments, hybridisation, plant pests, etc’.50 This suggests that the women themselves were interested in broader horticultural themes than the more limited and gendered floral concerns favoured, in this case, by the prison. Similarly, other motives may have been at play in other cases which were at odds with philanthropic and official concerns regarding the beneficial role of gardening. Joanna Kelley, Governor of Holloway from 1959 to 1966, recorded the tale of one prisoner who requested open-air work to improve her health on the grounds that her job in the laundry was getting her down. However, when pressed, she admitted ‘that her real reason for wanting to work in the gardens was that she was due to be released in a few weeks and that she thought she would be able to make a better start if she looked fit and sun-tanned when she left prison’.51 Although this example dates from the 1960s, it does establish that prisoners could gain benefits from gardening on their own terms.

However, convicted women and – especially – their babies were often described by observers in terms which compared them to plants in need of care and training to become healthy and upright subjects. Holloway housed the first prison creche nationally, with gardens for ‘prison babies’, who slept outside in good weather, mirroring practice for children in open-air schools and tuberculosis hospitals.52 ‘So long as the infants are in prison care’, wrote journalist Harold Begbie about Holloway in 1926, ‘they thrive exceedingly. When the mother is set free, however, and returns to the difficult places of civilisation, they wilt and wither and die. Safer for mother and child, he said, was ‘the modern prison’.53 A special class was set up for women aged twenty-one to twenty-five, who were employed in their own hall on laundry-work, cookery and gardening as well as schoolwork.54 This was designed to keep them apart from the corrupting influence of repeat offenders and by 1936 the young prisoners were located in a new wing, with their own garden to look after.55

But, as noted above, not all of the inmates were young. Ratcliffe explained of her female students that ‘these are not young girls’ and she nursed ‘no fantastic hope that any will go into horticulture when at liberty, or even become enthusiastic gardeners. But our contact has lovely human results’.56 Such comments indicate that the kinds of social work performed by PGA lecturers had the more realistic and subtle aims of trying to engage and socialise the women. This was less ambitious than some in authority, who – with mainstream public opinion in mind – focussed on the power of gardens to transform criminal or immoral behaviour along more conventionally gendered lines. ‘Gardens in Prisons by a Prison Governor’, an undated article quite possibly by Dr Fox and probably distributed as a PGA fundraising pamphlet, recalled seeing a woman gently touching a Michaelmas Daisy, one of a great feathery mass against a cold, grey wall. She said very quietly to it, “I shall not see you next year. I shall be outside but I shall think of you.” The governor told me she had been one of the worst trouble-makers in the prison, until she had been put to work in the garden. Since then, she
had become absorbed in her flowers, and imbued by their beauty, and her whole attitude to life had become, softer, gentler, kinder.\textsuperscript{35}

Such accounts make clear the belief in the reformatory potential of the garden and its power to ‘soften’ women ‘coarsened’ by poverty and crime but are of limited use as guides to actual practice. As was noted at the time, the inmates said they liked coming to Miss Stubbs’ lectures, ‘because they are not lectures at all, but just talks’; moreover the women were not obliged to attend her lessons but, ‘seeing as the alternative is remaining alone in their cells, they are glad of the diversion’ and thus respite from prison routines.\textsuperscript{39} An article, probably by Stubbs, suggests that she saw the reforming potential of introducing ‘beauty and interest’ not in terms of reforming the ‘criminal character’ (an idea to which she probably did not subscribe) but in quietly expanding her charges’ horizons. The ability of practical and desk-based lectures on nature, plants and gardening to effect small changes in the daily lives of those involved, and to mitigate the corrupting influences of the prison, is summarised by her statement, that ‘nothing made me so happy as to be told, as I often was, “We love the gardening class. It makes us forget where we are”’.\textsuperscript{39}

Conclusion

In the early twentieth century gardening programmes became commonplace in women’s prisons and borstals in England and Wales. Initiated by prison visitors in consultation with prison authorities and, later by the Prison Gardening Association, these initiatives introduced gardening as social work for the moral, educational and physical reform of female inmates. In contrast to institutions for men, this took the form of light horticultural work with a domestic focus. How many prisoners gained from this in personal or practical terms is, for reasons we have described, difficult to gauge. But occasionally, as we have indicated, the actions and voices of prisoners are seen and heard, although heavily mediated by the authorities, the volunteer lecturers and the publications they appeared in. Ratcliffe singled out the lessons on botany and geography as being of particular interest to her students which, if true, could reflect their desire for a more academic education rather than the tedium of domestically focussed instruction. Practical gardening or at least contact with plants and earth does appear to have been an enjoyable activity for some women, perhaps because it offered space for creativity or relative autonomy. As Waliczek and Kajicek stress, ‘gardening has served inmates as a means of creative expression, but also as an expression of individual and cultural identity, and as an act of resistance against incarceration and the rigid structures of the institution.’\textsuperscript{36} The role of gardening as an act of resistance is summarised by Nelson Mandela, who stated that, for him, ‘a garden was one of the few things in prison that one could control. To plant a seed, watch it grow, to tend it and then harvest it, offered a simple but enduring satisfaction. The sense of being the custodian of this small patch of earth offered a small taste of freedom.’\textsuperscript{38} However, for others, such as many of the female inmates of Holloway and Aylesbury Prisons in the early twentieth century, it seems to have offered little more than a temporary escape. This suggests that wider cultural and social concerns impacted upon the design, implementation and success of therapeutic prison gardening schemes and that attention to social and cultural history can offer lessons for those running current prison gardening programmes.

Notes

16. Ibid.
Reviewed by Michele Riley
Purdue University Global

Mary Queen of Scots’ Downfall: The Life and Murder of Henry, Lord Darnley provides a fresh approach to why the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley, ultimately led Queen Mary of Scots to abdicate her Scottish throne. Two aspects set this work apart from its predecessors; first, the book is written in a biographical format with Lord Darnley at its centre. Second, the author contends that Darnley’s murder was an event of primary significance with sweeping ramifications for both Mary and Scotland. As noted by the author, previous studies have portrayed Mary as a martyr in which she was simply a pawn in a political game of chess. Other historians have contended that Mary knew that her husband’s murder was a political necessity and she was an active participant. According to Stedall, the downfall of Mary Queen, although a complex event involving a multitude of actors, it was ultimately brought about by her poor judgement, naivety, ill-prepared training, and lack of political astuteness.

The book is divided into five parts starting with the Lennox family Scottish heritage and ending with Queen Mary’s abdication. In the first section of the book, the author provides information on the complex family heritage of the 4th Earl of Lennox, Matthew Stuart and Lady Margaret Douglas, Henry VII’s niece. This part further examines the significance of the family’s noble heritage in relation to both the Scottish and English succession, the importance of securing a Protestant succession for the English throne after Mary I, the impact on the Scottish Reformation, and power struggle between the Scottish Catholic and Protestant lairds. It sets the foundation for the complex political realities that existed prior to Mary’s return to her Scottish homeland.

Subsequently, Stedall turns the focus to France where he explores Mary’s marriage to the Dauphin and her short tenure as Queen Consort of France. With the death of Mary Guise, Mary’s mother and Scotland’s regent, and her husband King Francis II, the trajectory of her future was altered significantly. In this section, we see many suitors vying for Mary’s hand in marriage including Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Eventually, Mary returned to Scotland to secure her role as Elizabeth I’s heir. Upon her arrival, Mary did not appreciate the complexity of the political landscape which included rival factions between the Protestant and Catholic nobility, competing factions for the English succession, and the pressure of the papacy to advance the Catholic agenda in Scotland to combat the Scottish Reformation.

The main section, titled ‘Darnley’s Arrival in Scotland and Marriage to Mary’, is the pivotal point to the book’s assertion that Mary was ultimately the author of her own demise. Unable to secure the marriage proposal to Protestant and English subject, Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, Mary married Darnley at Holyrood Palace on 20 July 1565. The nuptials threatened Elizabeth’s claim to the throne since both Mary and Darnley were descendants of her Tudor aunt, of Catholic descent, and both were claimants to the English throne. Additionally, the section explores the growing tension between Mary and her half-brother and chief advisor, James Stewart, 1st Earl of Moray. He disapproved of the marriage to Darnley and was a strong supporter of the Scottish Reformation led by John Knox. Moray’s failed rebellion against Mary forced him to seek asylum in England. During the tumultuous period, Darnley grew increasingly jealous of Mary’s friendship with her Catholic, private secretary, David Rizzo. Eventually, Darnley entered into an agreement with the Protestant lords to murder Rizzo in order to gain the Crown Matrimonial. However, the Protestant conspirators had greater plans for restoring Moray and ending the threat of a Counter-Revolution in Scotland. After the murder of Rizzo and the return of Moray, Mary gave birth to James, the future King of England and Scotland.

The remainder of the book covers the plot to kill ‘King Henry’ and Mary’s inevitable abdication. After the birth of their son, Darnley’s behaviour became erratic, he continued to plot against Mary, and his health deteriorated. Stedall contends that the murder plan was conceived by James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell and his fellow henchmen. After the death of Darnley at Kirk O’ Field, Mary’s life spiralled downward quickly. Eventually, she lost the support of the nobility, was forced to abdicate the crown to her son, and was eventually forced to turn to Queen Elizabeth for protection.

This well researched biography weaves together the importance of Lord Darnley’s role, the complicated political realities of the English succession, and the opposing Protestant and Catholic factors. Overall, it is a welcome addition to the current historical literature on the subject.

Reviewed by Ruth Elizabeth Richardson
Independent scholar

Lettice Knollys was born 6 November 1543, recorded by her father, Sir Francis, as ‘the Tuesday present after all Hallows Day’ in his Latin dictionary which has fortuitously survived (1). The third of sixteen children, her name derived from Laetitia (Latin: happiness). Sir Francis, an M.P. in the reigns of King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, was vice-chamberlain of this queen’s royal household and its treasurer from 1572-1596. A staunch Protestant he was tasked, somewhat unwillingly, with guarding Mary Queen of Scots. Lettice’s mother was Katherine Carey, daughter of Mary Carey (née Boleyn) and most probably
of Henry VIII. Katherine was not acknowledged by the king as this would have been an impediment to his marriage with Mary’s sister, Anne Boleyn. This difficulty could have impinged on the legitimacy of the succession so, in Elizabeth’s reign, Katherine was acknowledged as the queen’s cousin. As all parties were apparently content with the status quo, Katherine and her family were made welcome at the royal court.

There are nineteen beautiful coloured plates in this book of twenty-two chapters: genealogical tables of the Knollys, Devereux and Tudor & Stuart families; a dramatis personae summarising twenty-eight main characters in the story; a timeline of the main events; two appendices for Lettice’s epitaph and four extant places to visit associated with her; an epilogue, endnotes and a copious bibliography. Although the dramatis personae is welcome due to name repetition and to unravel relationships, it highlights contextual difficulty. Of the twenty-eight summaries, only eight are female: the queen, Lettice, her mother, three sisters, and two daughters. As the paucity of evidence creates an imbalance, the focus is on the queen and the men in Lettice’s life to the detriment of other women of the court. For example, Nicola Tallis writes that the queen ‘was determined that Katherine (Lettice’s mother) would leave her side only in extraordinary circumstances’ (41), but this was true of all the queen’s ladies. Courtiers who did not obtain permission could expect repercussions. Relationships and connections were everything at the Tudor Court, and the Knollys family was simply an integral part of this circle.

The introduction, which discusses the necessity of rehabilitating Lettice’s reputation is also an excellent summary of the available source evidence. Her first marriage was to Walter Devereux Viscount Hereford, created Earl of Essex (8th creation) in 1572. They had five children. Marriages were business arrangements between families and Nicola Tallis endorses this by writing ‘that Lettice had made a very respectable match’ (56). She then writes effusively of Walter ‘being captive’ to her ‘charms’. However, the endnote shows this is from W. Bourchier Devereux’s book published in 1853. What is not clear is if he used a contemporary source. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of this. Too much is speculation with no supporting referenced evidence. Where evidence is lacking Lettice’s feelings and even her presence are assumed. It is not always clear what is recorded fact and what is surmise, and this can be most unfortunate as surmise is often based on the mores of our time and not those of the 16th or 17th centuries. In addition, the references do not always elucidate the position either, so care needs to be taken sifting which facts are actually sourced.

The prologue describes the key turning point in Lettice’s life of her second marriage to Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, which resulted in her banishment from court. The narrative, continuing as a mixture of fact and fiction, proves fascinating and interesting. Details are given about ‘Leicester, their short-lived son, the queen, and other relations and courtiers’. Leicester appointed her the sole executor of his will which suggests his regard for her and her abilities. As the book proceeds contemporary quotations begin to appear and there is less need to suggest Lettice’s state of mind. The chapters relating to her eldest son, the Earl of Essex, are very informative. There are more surviving papers, including her own will, and letters relating to Lettice in her later years. However, the only extant letter written by Lettice to any husband is to her third, Sir Christopher Blount, executed with Essex following his attempted coup in 1601. Essex’s son, Lettice’s grandson, was eventually allowed to assume the title by King James I. After his death in 1646 the Essex earldom went into abeyance until revived for the 9th creation in 1661. It did not descend as described on p.335.

Lettice Knollys, sometime Viscountess Hereford, Countess of Essex, Countess of Leicester, and Lady Blount, died on 17 January 1635. Her great age meant she had outlived her immediate family and contemporaries. A biography is certainly useful, and this is a brave attempt, but it is a mixture of fact and fiction, with many statements not clearly referenced if at all. Nevertheless, a reader with prior knowledge to negotiate the personnel may enjoy this and find it of interest.

Reviewed by Ruth Elizabeth Richardson
Independent scholar

It is refreshing to have a new thematic approach for a biography of Queen Elizabeth I. Tudor government operated through connections formed by family and personal relationships. Therefore, Elizabeth’s interactions with those about her were the keys to the politics of her reign. This scrupulously academic, but readable, book of eleven chapters is divided into three parts: Kin, Courtiers and Councillors. There are eighteen black and white plates, a Tudor genealogical chart, three-page chronology of the events 1558-1603, introduction, epilogue, useful endnotes and lengthy bibliography.

The introduction serves as an excellent summary of the aims of the book, placing information firmly within the contemporary mores. It is unavoidable in the subsequent text, due to the surviving evidence, that the focus is on the queen and the men surrounding her but it is a pity that the women mentioned are considered such a separate category. Relationships were everything: for example, Lord Burghley’s cousin Blanche Parry, chief gentlewoman and head of the Privy Chamber, was Lady Troy’s niece. Lady Troy, who had succeeded Lady Bryan brought up Elizabeth and her brother Edward VI. Her granddaughter married Henry Carey Lord Hunsdon, son of Mary Boleyn, Elizabeth’s aunt. Hunsdon’s sister Katherine (possibly Henry VIII’s illegitimate daughter) was sister-in-law to Blanche Parry’s great-niece, the younger Katherine Knollys and so it goes on. The Tudor court was a small inter-connected circle of families and Elizabeth’s kin were an integral component.

In ‘Parents and Siblings’ (ch.1), Susan Doran makes an

Reviewed by Scott Eaton
Queen's University Belfast

In the past few decades the history of witchcraft has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Building on his earlier work with Geoffrey Scarre (2001), and previous studies by Diane Purkiss (1996), Charles Zika (2007) and Ronald Hutton (2017), John Callow's *Embracing the Darkness* explores perceptions of 'the witch' in Western European culture. Callow's book is an original, well-written and thoroughly researched study which examines the figure of the witch from Antiquity to modern day. He presents a series of case studies over the course of ten chapters (replete with forty-three illustrations), which he cautions readers 'are constructed from an entirely personal viewpoint' but should 'point to ways in which we have come to define, understand and relate to that thing we call witchcraft' (6). Callow is successful in his aims: he demonstrates in each chapter how witchcraft beliefs influenced, and were interpreted and remolded by, European writers and artists throughout the centuries.

The first half of the book is rooted in the pre-modern period. After establishing the Classical witch-figure discussed by authors such as Apuleius and Lucan (chapter three), Callow moves on to the late Medieval and Early Modern periods. This is where Callow excels. Through his erudite analysis of sketches and paintings by the artists 'Master of the Lower Rhine', Albrecht Dürer, Hans Baldung Grien and Salvator Rosa, he convincingly demonstrates in each chapter how witchcraft beliefs influenced, and were interpreted and remolded by, European writers and artists through the centuries. From chapter seven onwards, Callow examines the construction of the witch-figure by nineteenth-century Romantic authors, twentieth-century historians and in modern television shows. By doing so, Callow effectively traces how 'the witch' came to be portrayed as 'confident, sexual – rather than sexualized –... as the result of the liberties bestowed upon her by the European Enlightenment and the imaginative powers unleashed by the Romantic Revival' (178). He argues that modern perceptions of a witch have come full circle, resembling the Classical archetypes of Circe and Medea rather than their demonized early modern counterparts. Aided by increasing secularization, witchcraft has been popularized, transformed and restyled into a type of benign magic that has shed its past demonic connotations. This process paved the way for modern paganism to flourish.

*Embracing the Darkness* is a welcome addition to witchcraft historiography. Callow shifts attention away from
women's history, as Callow explores perceptions of women in European art, literature and culture.

Susan Boase, Loretta Bellman, Sarah Rogers & Barbara Stuchfield, Nursing Through the Years: Care and Compassion at the Royal London Hospital, Yorkshire: Pen and Sword, 2018. £13.50, ISBN 978-1-52674-8461 (paperback) pp. xx + 227
Reviewed by Susan Cohen
Independent scholar
Honorary Fellow, Parkes Institute, University of Southampton

There is an enduring interest in the history of modern nursing, and this thoughtfully compiled and nicely illustrated book, co-authored by four ‘London’ Hospital trained nurses provides the reader with a vivid, engaging grass-roots historical picture of nursing in London’s East End from the 1940s to the present day. The book is the outcome of a three-year oral history project, based on interviews with more than 85 respondents, all of whom trained or worked at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. Although the nursing memories are hospital and location specific, many will resonate with nurses everywhere.

The book is arranged chronologically, and then thematically within each chapter, and the nurses’ voices shine through on every page, providing personal and often poignant memories. The introductory chapter explains the methodology that was employed, and the difficulties and challenges encountered by the interviewers, who increased from three to seven as the number of respondents grew. A helpful timeline notes important dates in the history of the hospital and of nursing, and each of the seven ‘decade’ chapters are preceded by a brief contextualising overview. Throughout, memories capture the prevailing and changing training regimes, the strict discipline and social control which was hardly relaxed until the 1970s.

Beginning with the 1940s, it is striking that even though the war provided women with new work opportunities, nursing was still favoured by many, and viewed as a vocation. And notwithstanding the frequent bombing, when nurses ‘sheltered babies under their cots’ to protect them from the Blitz (5), the London Hospital remained the training school of choice, for, as ‘Edna’ recalled, the standard was considered to be ‘the highest in the world’ (1). The workload is often commented upon, and in the 1950s, one nurse, June, remarked on the long stretches of night duty, ‘twenty-one days of nights without a break’ which, she was sure, made her look ‘about 40, because I was grey’ (47). For Hazel, working in the 1960s, it was the tuberculosis ward which fascinated her most, whereas Veronica found the district part of her State Enrolled Nurse course ‘fantastic…it was great to see patients in their own homes, a different setting altogether’ (79).

In the 1970s, Katharine remembered needing help overcoming her fear of laying out a dead patient for the first time. The 1980s are recalled as a decade of ‘transition and turbulence’, with different routes available to gain a nursing qualification, including degree courses. No longer an all-female profession, there were male student nurses and Paul thought some of the more senior ward nurses ‘found [this] quite challenging’ (129). What was unchanged was the ward routine of prayers, bedpan and pressure sore rounds, as well as ward rounds. The 1990s heralded an amalgamation with St Bartholomew’s Hospital, and the merger of the two training schools did not please everyone. Social divides appeared and as far as Emma was concerned it was ‘horrrendous…There was a huge animosity [between] us and them’ (146). The chapter on the Millennium and beyond focuses on recollections of the impact of changes introduced by the NHS modernization plan in 2000. Apart from major national changes to training and the way healthcare was delivered, the Royal London hospital began the move to a new purpose-built building in 2012. Several nurses expressed a sense of loss, others recalled the teething problems with new technology, but on the plus side Victoria praised the privacy of the new staff room, commenting, ‘When you look after your staff better…your patients do better’ (167).

Recognising that many of their interviewees had subsequent careers, the penultimate chapter is dedicated to recording the ways in which the nurses moved on, and how nursing provided them with a foundation for a wide variety of different pathways and careers. The final chapter reflects on how nursing has changed in the eyes of the interviewees. Some expressed concern that students do not have enough clinical experience, and lack a sound foundation in ‘basic nursing care’ (199). Others bemoaned the loss of old-style management roles of ward sisters and matrons, which has led, in Donna’s opinion, to the NHS losing its way. Others appreciated that the nurses can now work in advanced practice, that confidentiality has improved, and that ‘the knowledge, technologies and treatments that are available to us now’ save lives that would have been lost in past decades (206).

There is a helpful glossary and good bibliography, but a reference to A History of the Royal College of Nursing 1916-90: A Voice for Nurses by Susan McCann, Anne Crowther and Rona Dougall and to the official website of the Queen’s Nursing Institute, which provides an excellent overview of the history of district nursing (https://www.qni.org.uk/explore-qni/history-of-the-qni/) would have been useful additions. Overall, the book provides an engaging and informative picture of the ‘visible and not so visible’ lives of the nurses who contributed to the project, and is a valuable addition to the nursing history canon (208).
Women's history – whether pursued within or without the academy – has always had, as one of its central aims, 'the recovery of women as subjects and agents in the making of history, and the simultaneous decentring of the male subject.' Long-standing academic debates have questioned whether the endeavour 'just to put the women back into a history from which they had been left out' should continue as a primary objective, or whether more theoretical and analytical approaches are desirable. However, it is clear that, for so long as so many women's lives and achievements remain hidden from history, and male agendas continue to dominate the historical record, the 'recovery' and 'celebration' approach continues to have a popular appeal.

These two books epitomise this approach and make for interesting comparisons and contrasts. Each consists of a series of biographical synopses and features women ranging across the spectrum – from very well-known figures to less well-known ones. In the case of The Women who Built Bristol, this extends to completely obscure women. The book itself can be reduced to an explicit goal, the celebration of women's lives and achievements and, in some cases, their restoration to the historical record. Their relative canvases are broad – both in geographical and chronological scope: from the international to the specifically local; from Ancient Egypt on the one hand and thirteenth-century Bristol on the other, to the present day. The Women who Built Bristol is an initiative of Bristol Women's Voice, a community organisation working to promote and to campaign for women's equality. A History of the World in 21 Women reflects the interests and the career of its well-known author, Jenni Murray, presenter of BBC Radio 4’s 'Woman’s Hour' for thirty years. Thus, each book, whilst a work of women's history, for example, have sought to focus on what has been described as 'the quotidian social and cultural experiences of a wider, woman-centred domain of home and family.' The book's smaller number of subjects allows the biographies to be more fully developed than those in The Women who Built Bristol and, for each subject, there is a list of suggested additional reading. Many of the featured women need no restoration to the historical record – the lives of Catherine the Great, Marie Curie and Benazir Bhutto, for example, have all been well documented. The international focus of the selection, however, provides some interesting contrasts and intersections and the inclusion of women either still living or who survived into the twenty-first century gives the selection a contemporary relevance. The inclusion of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was assassinated in 2006 for her published critiques of her country's government, serves as a powerful and moving example of the
'determination and courage' (4) that Murray is celebrating.

Neither book is the place to look for analysis or theory – but neither claims to be. As readable and introductory compendia, they fulfil their objectives in celebrating women’s historical and contemporary achievements and point to sources of further reading.

Notes

2. Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle-Class (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), 12.
Hon. Research Fellow, Birkbeck, University of London

Anna Seward (1742 – 1809) has, along with other female writers of the eighteenth century, enjoyed a long-overdue revival of interest in her works and life. This relatively short edited volume adds to that revival, allowing us to reappraise Seward’s literary output: both the genres with which she has to date been associated and the historic curation of that reputation by Seward herself and by her posthumous editors. The *Journal* is also a useful source for historians of the period, adding to our understanding of provincial life in the mid-eighteenth century through the eyes of a young unmarried woman – not the most typical of contemporary observers.

Seward’s literary and personal reputation was early-established in accordance with her wishes laid out in her will. Shortly after her death Sir Walter Scott edited a three-volume edition of her poems with extracts from her letters (1810) and Archibald Constable released (1811) a six-volume edition of Seward’s letters written between 1784 (when she was fourteen years old) and 1807 (when she was seventy-five and approaching death). Her age, the decline in enthusiasm for her Augustan poetic style, and Scott’s deployment of the censor’s pencil have left us an image of an extremely serious and high-minded, even humourless, individual as the ‘Introduction’ acknowledges.

Teresa Barnard’s timely contribution is firstly to republish the ‘juvenile’ *Journal* (Seward was between nineteen and twenty-five when this was written, so ‘juvenile’ is perhaps not quite the right term) restoring in full (helpfully printed in italics) the passages deleted by Scott. The image we have of the young Seward is transformed. Here is a nubile young woman – and Seward’s events and characters mix the real and the fictional. The sermons reveal an even greater breadth to Seward’s abilities and add to our understanding of her character and her times with its more political, proto-feminist message about the value to society of the work of labouring women.

What is lacking in the book is a more robust apparatus, in particular an index and endnotes to help the reader with references to the persons and places in Seward’s life. As a text it therefore needs to be read alongside secondary works on Seward such as Barnard’s *Anna Seward: A Constructed Life: A Critical Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

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**WHN MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT**

All members are kindly requested to update their web profiles at:

https://womenshistorynetwork.org/whndb/memberdetails.php

Please ensure that e-mail address and personal information are up to date (and where possible include a phone number).

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(See journal back cover for current rates)
Thank-you
Getting to Know Each Other

Histories of the women's movement post-suffrage, and histories of the domestic and everyday life.

Who is your heroine from history and why?

My doctoral research focuses on women's politicisation and activism in public life after the vote was partially won in 1918. I am examining this through a local study of women in the Black Country. Much of my research is therefore focused on 'ordinary' women who began to take up roles in the public sphere in their towns or neighbourhoods, but who are largely forgotten today. Although there are many individual heroines from my research I could choose from, I especially admire Gertrude Cresswell, who in 1934 became the first woman Mayor of her hometown of Walsall. She was from a working-class background and had been active in Labour politics and the Co-operative movement locally for many years prior to her appointment. One of nine siblings, and herself a mother of five, she drew on her own experiences of motherhood when she became extremely active within maternity and child welfare campaigns in Walsall and she was elected Mayor largely on the strength of her work on these issues. I particularly admire the courage and convictions she and other local activists across the country demonstrated in campaigning for women's rights, at a time when they were often in the minority in public life.

Name
Anna Muggeridge

Position
PhD Student, University of Worcester

How long have you been a WHN member?
Since 2014.

What inspired your enthusiasm for women's history?
Growing up, I was always interested in stories of women in the past, but I don't remember any women's history being on the curriculum in my history classes at school. At university, however, I was able to take various modules which focused on women's history. These really sparked my interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, and I was very fortunate to be encouraged by several very supportive lecturers into pursuing my own research.

What are your special interests?
Committee News

The Steering Committee last met on 23 March 2019 at the IHR, University of London.

Budget and membership

Our finances and membership are healthy. Together with the relatively low spend last year, this means that there is currently around £10,000 in the bank account on top of the required reserves. The main thing we are focusing on is ensuring people that can are Gift Aiding their subscription fees. If members could please check the Subscription tab to ensure they are doing this that would be great.

It was decided to set up two ECR Fellowships, whilst sponsorship from History West Midlands will allow us to provide some research funding for independent scholars.

Women’s History Journal

A new editor is required for the journal. This is a demanding and substantial role which requires experience in publishing. Means of making the role were discussed and agreed and a strategy for advertising and recruitment.

Annual Conference for 2019

We are very much looking forward to the WHN conference ‘Professional women: the public, the private, and the political’ to be held at LSE Library, home of the Women’s Library, on 6-7 September 2019.

The programme is live and all of the relevant information can be found here: https://womenshistorynetwork.org/womens-history-network-annual-conference-2019/#more-8847

Registration is open. It will close 1 week before the conference (30 August 2019).

Date of next meeting

AGM, Women’s History Network Annual Conference 2019
All WHN members are welcome.
National Steering Committee

The following people have put themselves forward for election to the National Steering Committee at the AGM in September 2019.

**Dr Alexandra Hughes-Johnson**

Alexandra Hughes-Johnson is a historian of nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain with a particular interest in women and political activism. She is a Knowledge Exchange Research Fellow at the University of Oxford and the Research Coordinator for the Women in the Humanities Research Programme. Alexandra’s PhD, ‘Rose Lamartine Yates and the Wimbledon WSPU: Reconfiguring Suffragette History from the Local to the National’, was awarded by Royal Holloway University in 2018. Alexandra has been a member of WHN since 2013 and presented her research at a number of WHN conferences. She is currently working on a book chapter that explores the establishment of new suffrage organisations during the First World War and an article that focuses on the establishment of the Women’s Record House and the memorialisation of the suffrage campaign during the interwar period. Her next research project will build on her interest in women’s politics at a local level, and analyse women’s election to local county councils after 1918.

**Anna Muggeridge**

Anna Muggeridge is a social and cultural historian of twentieth century Britain. She is currently completing a PhD at the University of Worcester, which examines the ways in which women in the Black Country were politicised through the ordinary and the everyday in the first half of the twentieth century. Her main research interests are in histories of women’s politics after suffrage, and histories of the domestic. She has a strong commitment to public engagement and had worked with the Black Country History Museum and History West Midlands to share women’s histories from the region with a wider audience. Anna has a longstanding interest in women’s history and has been a member of the Women’s History Network since 2014, when she studied for an MA at the University of Warwick. She has presented papers at a number of WHN conferences and looks forward to attending the 2019 Annual WHN Conference later this year.

If you would like to considered for election to the National Steering Committee please contact chair@womenshistorynetwork.org to find out more about the roles we are looking to fill.

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**EARLY CAREER RESEARCH IN WOMEN’S HISTORY**

The Women’s History Network is offering two fellowships to support Early Career Researchers. Each fellowship is designed provide some financial support to post-graduates in that challenging time between completing their doctorate and attaining their first academic post in order to continue working in women’s history.

**The fellowship will include**

- £1500 to enable the Fellow to sustain their role as a researcher
- £250 EITHER to organise an event or other activity to connect ECRs working in Women’s History OR to undertake an alternative task to promote the WHN
- Costs to attend the 2020 WHN conference

**The deadline for applications is 1 August 2019 and the result will be communicated to the successful applicants by 1 September.**

**Fellowships will last from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.**

**Further details will be available at https://womenshistorynetwork.org/Enquiries about the Fellowships may be sent to Prof. Maggie Andrews, the Chair of the WHN and submissions made electronically to chair@womenshistorynetwork.org**
Publishing in Women’s History

Women’s History welcomes contributions from experienced scholars and those at an earlier stage in their research careers. We aim to be inclusive and fully recognise that women’s history is not only lodged in the academy. All submissions are subject to the usual peer-review process. Articles should be 3000-8000 words in length. Contributors are requested to submit articles in final form, carefully following the style guidelines available at: www.womenshistorynetwork.org/whnmagazine/authorguide.html

Please email your submission, as a word attachment, to the editors at editor@womenshistorynetwork.org

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To submit books for review please email the book reviews editor with details of the book to be reviewed.

For journal/magazine back issues and queries please email:
editor@womenshistorynetwork.org
What is the Women’s History Network?

The WHN was founded in July 1991. It is a national charity concerned with promoting women's history and encouraging women interested in history. WHN business is carried out by the National Steering Committee, which is elected by the membership and meets regularly several times each year. It organises the annual conference, manages the finance and membership, and co-ordinates activities in pursuit of the aims of the WHN.

Aims of the WHN

1. To encourage contact between all people interested in women's history — in education, the media or in private research
2. To collect and publish information relating to women's history
3. To identify and comment upon all issues relating to women's history
4. To promote research into all areas of women's history

What does the WHN do?

Annual Conference

Each year the WHN holds a national conference for WHN members and others. The conference provides everyone interested in women's history with a chance to meet and it has become an exciting forum where new research can be aired and recent developments in the field can be shared. The Annual General Meeting of the Network takes place at the conference. The AGM discusses issues of policy and elects the National Steering Committee.

WHN Publications

WHN members receive three copies per year of the *Women's History*, which contains: articles discussing research, sources and applications of women's history; reviews of books, conferences, meetings and exhibitions; and information on calls for papers, prizes and competitions, and publication opportunities. The journal is delivered electronically in PDF form to all members via email. UK-based members, however, can elect to receive a printed hardcopy of *Women's History* for an increased membership fee.

WHN membership

Annual Membership Rates (/ with journal hardcopy / with journal overseas delivery)

- Student or unwaged member: £15 / £20 / £30
- Low income member (*under £20,000 pa): £25 / £30 / £40
- Standard member: £40 / £45 / £55
- Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy): £350
- Retired Life Membership (includes journal hardcopy): £175

Charity Number: 1118201. Membership application/renewal, Gift Aid Declaration are all available at www.womenshistorynetwork.org