

### **Hampton Gardening Club Meeting Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Sept 2025 Hampton Church Hall.**

Our speaker was Vanessa Berridge who is a writer and speaker on gardens and garden history, and County Organiser for NGS Gloucestershire. She talked on 'Garden Heaven'; a selection of gardens across the U.K which give inspiration and ideas about how gardens are made, and tips for gardeners to use in their own gardens. Vanessa's book of this name aims to combine inspiration and escapism, and her talk covered 4 categories of gardens: Romantic gardens, Walled gardens, Contemporary gardens and gardens created by generations of one family.

The most well-known Romantic Garden is Great Dixter, where between 1954 and his death in 2006, Christopher Lloyd created an exciting, innovative and bio-diverse garden, using wildflowers and tropical plants long before they became fashionable. The whole effect around the Lutyens designed house is exceptionally beautiful and is now managed by Fergus Garrett as CEO of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust. We examined other Romantic gardens such as Mottisfont in Hampshire, with its lovely Rose Garden, designed by Graham Stuart Thomas in the 1970s. With alliums, lavender and campanula, it aims to have a year-round structure. We also looked at Sissinghurst Castle and Vita Sackville West's white garden designed in the 1940s, where a succession of white flowering plants extends the season. Vita and her husband Harold Nicholson visited Delos in Greece in 1935 and came back and planned a Mediterranean garden, but it failed due to cold wet winters. In 2019 the plan was recreated and now succeeds in our warmer climate. Other Romantic gardens included Wollerton Old Hall in Shropshire, Bodnant in Conwy, Glendurgan and Lamorran in Cornwall, all beautifully photographed.

Walled gardens create protected climates for plants. In Norfolk, Felbrigg Hall, surrounded by 4 acres of red brick walls and protected by a shelter belt, has a microclimate similar to that of south-west England. The estate was owned for over 4 centuries by the Wyndham family and now has both sub-tropical and arid planting due to the mild climate. In the kitchen garden ornamental planting mixes with the herbs and vegetables. The garden is divided into four quarters and immaculately maintained by gardeners and volunteers. Hidcote in Gloucestershire was created by Lawrence Johnston in 1907, following Arts and Crafts principles. There are green rooms within walls of box, yew, beech and holly giving visitors constant surprises. Llanerchaeron in Ceredigion has East and West walled gardens covering 2 acres. Herbs and vegetables and espaliered fruit trees are grown in a nature-conscious manner with produce sold on site. Other gardens we explored include Brantwood in Cumbria, where the garden is effectively an outdoor growing lab, and Wallington in Northumberland.

Contemporary gardens include : Trentham, where Victorian carpet bedding has been replaced (by Piet Oudolf and Tom Stuart Smith) with modern perennials and grasses, and Wildside in Devon where Keith Wiley has moved tons of earth to create a variety of landscapes and habitats for plants from around the globe "I am trying to unlock the limitless possibilities of gardening and set peoples's imaginations free."

The final category where gardens have been developed over 3 or more generations includes Borde Hill in West Sussex, Caerhays Castle in Cornwall, Cholmondly Castle in Cheshire, and Kiftsgate in Gloucestershire. At Caerhays John Williams began creating gardens from coastal scrub in the 1880s and he sponsored Ernest Wilson and George Forrest in plant hunting expeditions. The core of the collection is still at Caerhays, grown from seed collected by Wilson and | Forrest.

Vanessa captured the 'joy of garden visiting' which she describes as 'one of life's great pleasures' All the gardens and more are beautifully photographed and described in her book, 'Garden Heaven' Vanessa Berridge published by the National Trust.

Next month October 15 is our A.G.M. Members are politely reminded that subscriptions (£35) are due from that date. There will be essential business, finance, news and views and plans going forward. As always, we welcome new members and visitors.