

More English Horty Times with Max, Frankie, and the WHPS

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June 11-12, 2002. The trip was off to an auspicious beginning, with seemingly uneventful flights for everyone. There was a slight delay waiting for our “stanchion” assignment at Heathrow.

Ten of us gathered at the Claverly Hotel in the Knightsbridge section of London, on a quiet one block, dead-end street divided by a row of London plane trees (a hybrid of the American and Asian sycamores). There were those of us who descended on Harrod’s, and a few even made it to the V&A Museum up the street. But most folks eventually konked out in their rooms and learned more about the art of the dealing with “The Really Small Bathroom.”

After a nap, I made a trip out to Queensberry on the #74 bus to meet with Victoria and Clare, representatives of the travel company who set up our tour. I couldn’t help but observe that commonplace *Hebes X ‘Franciscana variegata’* (Hebes are New Zealand woodies) in the window boxes and front stoops of even the dingiest London flat. This was the same plant sported so proudly by the Guru of All Things Green and his “neighbor” this summer, and previously envied by some (certainly not me!). That Hebe even “graced” the window box along side our table at the pub where we took dinner that evening. Oh, such a common thing!

That evening we enjoyed walking around the high rent district town houses with their elegant front pocket gardens. None of those plebian Hebes here.

June 13—Wisley. Breakfast began at 0700 in the company of the Guru of All Things Green. We observed that the sluggards in our group were going to have to shift into a higher gear as we had the breakfast room to ourselves. Later we all tubed to Waterloo Station to get the train to Woking where we hoped to get the 11 a.m. shuttle bus to Wisley. The day was gray, overcast, with a few showers spotted on the horizon.

At Woking Station, things were a bit confusing and we missed the shuttle bus to Wisley. However, a cab took us through the charming village of Wisley and brought back pleasant memories for those of us who had stayed in B&B’s here on previous visits to the garden.

We did spend a glorious day at Wisley. We had a chat with the head gardener for the Country Garden. Designed by Penelope Hobhouse, it had achieved maturity since our last visit with the WHPS two years before.

Notable plants in bloom included *Aconitum ‘Bressingham Spire’* (this could be mistaken for a delphinium and blooms at the same time—managed to pick this up on the Minneapolis trip with the WHPS), *Geranium ‘Mavis Simpson’* (nice, low growing habitus), *Geranium ‘Magnificum’* and *Digitalis ‘Grandiflora’* (very large flowers). In our wanderings about the other areas of the garden, I was also taken by *Acer palmatum ‘Orido nishki’* (tricolored Japanese maple I am trying to grow in a pot back home), *Abutilon megcapotamicum ‘Wisley Red’* (fabulous trailing Abutilon with small red and yellow bells growing in a candelabra like fashion), and a number of jewels in the Alpine houses—*Tsuga diversifolia ‘Hiroshi’* (wonderful dwarf form of Japanese hemlock), and *Raymonda myconi* (a darling of the NARGS folks).

At the main entrance to the glass houses, I was excited by the display of *Impatiens auricula* (finally got one seed of this to germinate this year) and a new one for me, *Impatiens sodenii* (large pale lavender flowers). Inside, the displays of fuchsias and begonias were breath taking. In the begonia house I noted ‘Tiny gem’, ‘Looking Glass’ (fabulous white leaves), ‘Burl Marx’, ‘Ginny’, and ‘Swirl Top’ to be on the lookout for (Logees has some of these).

Everyone was on good behavior, though one member was severely chastised by a Wisely gardener for sampling the gooseberries. They were quite sour too, hardly worth the transgression. In the demonstration gardens, I found the divinely elegant metal pots to replace the less desirable spray painted gray plastic ones on a trip member’s patio back home. We later found them for sale in the Wisley shop for 125 pounds (about \$200)!

We had dinner that evening in a small Italian restaurant across from a side entrance to Harrods. We were touched by stardom as we had a ringside seat for the covey of paparazzi who were covering the arrival of Michael Jackson in a large limousine, for some after-hours shopping at Harrods. He presumably met Al Fayed (the owner) inside. The evening was later marred by two members of our party who, having left their keys in their room, had to wait “patiently” (Ha!) for the owner to get back from the theater with the master key at 11:30 p.m. Perhaps a suitable punishment for snitching the gooseberries?

June 14—London to Edinburgh. The day began with a taxi ride across London to King’s Cross Station. Passed by the British Library, Buckingham Palace, British Museum, Marble Arch, National Gallery (never noted the NG was surrounded by a fig hedge). This was followed by a 4.5 hour, relaxing and uneventful train ride to Edinburgh.

On arrival in Eddy, Max and Frankie somehow managed to meet us right “in” the station with the big coach. Max’s weaving of the coach into the station and through the streets of Eddy was a miracle on wheels. We began with a guided city tour and the coach took us almost immediately up to the Edinburgh castle, which we climbed.

At the very top was Steve Harsy’s *Geranium magnificum* blooming in what appeared to be solid volcanic rock. (Steve gave this to a number of us some years ago and we would see it in full bloom many times on the trip). Also, climbing up the sides of St. Mary’s Chapel (oldest part of the castle) was a small-leaved barberry that caught my eye. The tomb of the unknown soldier, with its books containing the lists of warriors lost in individual battles of the last 1000 years, was somewhat depressing, and I was glad that going back down the hill to the coach the talk returned to a discussion of epimediums.

At dinner that evening at the Hotel Roxburghe on Charlotte Square it was a lively group, though one traveler, on one of these tours for the first time, dared to remark that she hadn’t seen any gardens yet? I assured her that by the end of the nine days she would be crying “Uncle” when it came to seeing another garden!! After dinner, several of us took a stroll and, as we failed to take appropriate rain gear, got thoroughly soaked from a quickly passing shower. Everyone did enjoy the world’s oldest continuously planted floral clock in the Princess Street Gardens at the foot of the castle massif.

June 15—Edinburgh. Our day began at the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) founded in 1670 as a garden for medicinal plants. Its 70 acres hold 20,000 taxa, which is the minimum required these days to be one the “big boys,” according to Galen Gates of the Chicago Botanic Garden, who was part of our group. They claimed Eddy was relatively dry, with only 26 inches of rain a year, but from the looks of things, most of this rain must have fallen in the week before our visit. Interestingly, there was no admission charge. There was some amazing stuff, including a 100-year-old beech hedge that was the backdrop for the long perennial border. Another marvel was the infamous rock garden, whose design and size were overwhelming.

Plants that demanded my attention included a very low-growing, creeping epimedium with rather large leaves (unfortunately unlabeled), a fabulous woodland peony with large single pink flowers (*Paeonia veitchii* Var. *woodwardii*), and a gorgeous bronzed leafed form of *Astilbi rivularis* (three feet tall). Entirely new plants for me were *Nomocharis apertia* (a bulb in the lily family) with large, deep pink flowers and *Anemone trifolia* subsp. *trifolia* (light blue flowers—we would see these throughout Scotland). Impressive plantings of *Bergenia* ‘Pugsely’s Pink’ (one of the new, large, vigorous cultivars, which blooms much later than some of the others) and *Paeonia lute*, a towering 12-foot high in full bloom, were pointed out to us. A large specimen of *Acer griseum* was the most impressive that most of us had ever seen.

After a hurried lunch (my first drink of Ribena, made from black currant juice) and quick visit to the garden’s shop, we were off to our next stop—Manderston an Edwardian house and garden. The house contained a famous silverplated staircase, which we did not see. We were greeted by the owner Lord Palmer himself, who did not hesitate to inform us that we had murdered his great, great uncle in Buffalo sometime ago, the President of the United States for whom our highest mountain is named. When I informed him that Mt. McKinley was now called Denali to be politically correct, he simply stated “Why I take offense at that.” Perhaps this explains why he was not overly friendly and certainly not solicitous.

We were the only ones in the garden which was designed on a grand scale, but not terribly well maintained. There was a delightful formal garden that overlooked a small lake and a vast hillside that was planted solidly with rhododendrons in full bloom. The colors were all shades of lavender and rose which made it work—no whites, etc. The loo was in the old stable and was reportedly one of the finest in the UK (the stable that is) with teak ceilings, rosewood paneling, brass fixtures and tile watering troughs. Also very impressive was the estate’s “marble” dairy, which indeed was all done in white marble with porcelain cheese separators and milk pans etc. All and all, however, I could have skipped this garden, and certainly Lord Palmer. As someone said, it was probably more appropriate for movie setting than for a tour of serious (and critical) gardeners.

The final garden of the day was Tynninghame, located in the countryside near the North Sea. Leading up to the estate was a mile long alley of beeches, whose branches seemed to swallow up the coach. The manor house was most impressive, one that has been recently subdivided and now lived in by a half-dozen families who maintain the gardens and surrounding park as a group effort. This is apparently a new thing in the UK, and a great way to maintain some of the many manor houses.

We were shown around by the Factor, a Mr. Baker, and his yellow lab, who some may remember from the Victory Garden episode last year. We were all enthralled with the purple smoke trees set like clouds on the front lawn. The nearby secret garden was the one of your dreams. Somewhat overplanted, its narrow paths revealed surprises around every bend, including large urns, sculptures, arbors, gazebos, etc. Some of us got “lost” in this garden, and almost missed the Factor’s tour of the walled kitchen garden somewhat distant from the house. It had been transformed into a garden of mixed herbaceous borders, a common fate for these old walled gardens of a previous era. The walls had been espaliered with fruit trees, and originally contained a heating system for the early production of summer fruits.

June 16—Perth, Scotland. Today we journeyed north of Eddy to visit three more gardens. The first was Wester Dalqueich, the

small cottage-style garden of David and Rae Raulston, who had been gardening on this site for 25 years. David was also the principal organist of the village church. Most notable to me was the setting of the garden on a country hillside with two natural burns (streams). The art work in the garden was most extraordinary. Several totem poles were carved with representations of the birds and small animals found in the garden, one topped with a marvelous owl. Three life-size goats occupied an area under a dense stand of spruce amid the woodpile for the cottage. Made of poultry netting and cement, they had weathered to a deep gray accented by a green moss patina.

The paths wondering up and down the hillside, back and forth across the burns was a plantsman's paradise. An *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum' was perfectly placed against a dark clump of Irish yews, and we were all impressed with several large clumps of *Rodgersia podyphylla*, the largest leafed form of this genus. The collection of lupines was outstanding, particularly the clumps of mixed white and yellow. The yellow meconopsis (poppy) from the Himalayas was striking. We were all impressed with a large vine *Solanum jasminoides* on the front of the cottage (a much finer form of our common deadly night shade). At bickies and tea we were entertained by Joey the Jack Russell terrier who was digging for China in the midst of everything, attempting to ferret out a mouse.

From there we traveled through Dundee to the city of Perth, known as the "Garden of Scotland." The clumps of pink, white and blue lupines along the motor way drew many oohs and ahs from the passengers in the coach. We noted a number of Victorian chimney pots on the roofs, sprouting small trees, attesting to their uselessness and explaining their frequent appearance at antique shows and fine garden centers in the US to be used as planters.

In Perth, we proceeded to Branklyn Garden, a property of the Scottish National Trust. It was a two-acre garden created by Dorothy and John Renton from 1922 to 1968, who befriended many plant explorers. They specialized in plants from the Himalayas, and the collection of meconopsis (shades of blue, purple, yellow, white and red) was outstanding. We were told by Steve McNamara, the head gardener, that none other than Reginal Farrer had been involved in the design and plantings of the garden.

As this had been a private garden, the paths were narrow and the collection was a plantsman's paradise. The largest *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum' I had ever seen was a shining light near the entrance with its red seed pods in much abundance, adding to the plant's total effect. The collection of Japanese maples was extensive. I spotted *Epimedium grandiflora* ssp *Koreana* and *E. acuminatum*, with its long tapered, notched leaves. The close relative *Vancouveria hexandrum* from the Pacific NW was much in evidence, and the form *Vancouveria planipetala* with slightly smaller but glossy leaves, spilling over the rocks into the paths, was much coveted by a number of us with shady rock walls in our gardens back home. The garden also included some very large clumps of the shade loving willow gentian (*Gentiana aesclepiadea*) which blooms in August. Roses did not get much billing in this garden nor where there any large water features.

This was the one day we did not allow for a lunch stop, but at the very next garden, the notable House of Pitmuies (also featured on Victory Garden), we were served high tea by the garden's creator, Margaret Ogilbie. Her husband had inherited the house and garden from his parents. Margaret, elegantly dressed, met us at the coach holding a pair of Felco #2's so we knew we had a true gardener here. She was a lover of trees and had been on expeditions around the world to collect specimens for the garden.

This was a large country garden with marvelous structure, and we were all wowed by the wall garden with its long double border, knitted together by the white form of *Hesperis matronalis* (Dame's rocket) which some of us consider an invasive species. Most notable was the 100-year-old specimen of *Acer griseum* and two massive 400 year old Spanish chestnuts (*Castania citiva*). Also noted were large clumps of *Geranium* 'Anne Folkard', with its gold foliage and deep lavender flowers. As it was not flopping over, we noted that the long border was underpinned by netting that was placed about two feet high over the border in mid May, according to Mrs. Ogilbie.

During our proper cream tea (scones with jam and clotted cream among other special cakes made on the premises) served in her elegant drawing room, we learned that Roy Klehm had preceded us by a couple of years and rated the garden a ten. He had sent Margaret a collection of peonies that included *P.* 'Joseph Rock'. There were some beautiful peonies with deep purple foliage, also a gift from Roy. Other notable plants were a giant pink phormium planted in a pink terracotta pot that not only color-echoed the pink in adjacent foxgloves but also the pink bark of a nearby prunus.

Back at the garden's entrance, we couldn't help but gawk at the slate roof outbuildings, whose roof tiles were covered with a dense matting of ferns up two feet high. These included Athyriums, Blechnums and ebony spleenwarts. At the foot of the buildings were yellow and orange Welsh poppies. Margaret accompanied us out to the coach and Norman, her friendly Lhasa Apso jumped onto the bus with us, apparently wanting to accompany us back to Eddy. All in all, a wonderful day without any rain and some gorgeous gardens. No one really seemed to mind the absence of lunch.

June 17—Edinburgh to Strandraer. We rolled out of Edinburgh at 0845, not before experiencing a beautiful sunny morning in the windy city, whose gray granite buildings also give it the name the gray city. The castle was gloriously bathed in the morning sunlight and I again enjoyed the row of fastigiate elms (*Ulmus glabra* 'Exioniensis') in the Princess Street Gardens. I had the good

fortune of conversing with the gardener who preened the floral clock each morning, perched precariously over the clock using a system of two extension ladders balanced on wooded boxes. I also heard tell of members of our party who had crashed a "hen party" at the Italian restaurant across the street from our hotel, in order to watch a male stripper who began his striptease dressed as a fireman!

The motorway from Edinburgh across Scotland to Glasgow (Scotland's largest city) was tedious and as slow as the Kennedy Expressway at rush hour. But once through Glasgow and beyond the village of Paisley (famous for what else but Paisley), the roadway opened up and we were soon enjoying the SW countryside of Scotland as the coach wiggled along the coastline to our first garden of the day, Culzean Castle, a Scottish National Trust Garden. There we were met by Susan Russel and Ian Stevenson who led groups of us around the garden.

The Robert Adam castle, rebuilt in the mid 19th century, was stunning in its cliffside perch above the Irish Sea, and the surrounding gardens were totally subordinate to the castle. The formal Fountain Court on the landward side of the garden was a "romantic garden." It was completely outlined with a border of red kniphofia, which we were told bloomed in October for a stunning fall display. We then passed through a gothic styled camellia house (orangery), which had recently been restored, on our way to the walled garden, built in 1786.

This was truly a double-walled garden, one side being a pleasure garden for the gentry and the other side a true kitchen garden worked by the employees of the estate. The former kitchen garden now contained a 100-yard-long 30-foot-deep double herbaceous border, which unfortunately did not reach its glory until July and August. In between the two walled gardens, the dividing wall now backed a restored glass covered vinery, the object of which in the 18th century had been to harvest grapes in April. The original heating and venting system had recently undergone an archaeological restoration as the site had been covered for many years by a mixed herbaceous border. Even the bones of horses used for fertilizer had been excavated and gruesomely put on display.

The "pleasure" walled garden also contained a newly planted "jungle garden" in which temperate plants were planted to imitate a tropical jungle. Outstanding was the collection of bold leaved rodgersias of several different species in full bloom, backed by a giant-leaved petasites. Other plant material used, that I could identify, included plume poppy, calla lilies, and *Ligularia przewalskii*. The whole effect reminded us of what Jeff Epping was trying to do at Olbrich BG with the landscaping of the new Thai Temple Garden. There was adjacent to the jungle garden a grotto which contained two unique "cuddle nooks," and was over planted with alpine type plants. After a hasty lunch at the gardens' restaurant, we all agreed that we wished we had had more time here.

Proceeding towards Strandraer, we arrived at our third garden by mid afternoon—Castle Kennedy. To set the stage, it was a glorious afternoon, with swiftly moving, sun-bathed puffy clouds, and a strong SW wind creating a symphony of sound from its movement through leaves and branches of ancient trees. Flocks of terns and gulls soared overhead and gray-legged geese gathered on the lochs. This garden was part of a 48,000-acre estate and was on land between the Black and the White Lochs. It included the ruins of Castle Kennedy destroyed by fire in 1716, and Lochinch Castle at the far end of the garden, built in 1867 by the Earl and Countess of Stair, whose descendents were still in residence.

The panoramic views (8 primary viewpoints) of the lochs, castles and distant sheep studded hillsides were beyond words. There were some impressive terraced earthworks, which were modeled after 18th century battle site fortifications that had been constructed by the Earl's soldiers. The great collection of mature trees, including the alley of 100-year-old monkey puzzle trees (planted from seed) was simply enchanting and made for a memorable afternoon. Near the ruins of Castle Kennedy was another 18th century wall garden planted with herbaceous plants and many unusual woodies. We enjoyed tea in the glow of the late afternoon, and hated to leave this wonderland.

From the garden it was only ten minutes to our hotel, the Northwest Castle, situated on the Strandraer Harbor (Loch Ryan) across from the ferry landing for the boats to Belfast. The owner of the hotel, Hamilton (Hammie) McMillan and captain of the Scottish Olympic curling team, was absolutely charming and enjoyed showing us the hotel's very own indoor curling rink, the first of its kind in the world. Just before dinner we had a chance to stroll through the town's city garden, appropriately adjacent to the hotel. We had a delicious four-course dinner in the hotel's dining room that night, which included haggis (a crumbled sausage only found in Scotland) and a choice of luscious desserts, including a chocolate steamed pudding. Some of us managed to observe the beautiful 10 PM sunset across the Irish Sea illuminating the departure of the Belfast ferry.

June 18—Strandraer. The next morning we journeyed to the nearby Logan Botanic Garden, a branch of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Galen Gates gave us a little introduction to the gardens on the coach before our arrival, as he had been there the week before. He prepared us for our visit by saying he only recognized 11 taxa out of the 4000 present in the garden. Our guide was Barry Unwin, the curator of 29 years. It was a beautiful morning and we appreciated the catbirds serenading us as we went around the garden.

Logan is near the Gulf Stream and its taxa are mostly from the Southern Hemisphere. We heard tell of an unusual cold spell in the winter of 1995-1996 in which the temperature dipped to minus 10 degrees and the garden lost 500 taxa. The memorable feature of Logan was a three-acre walled garden with the requisite tower ruin. The seven gardeners kept the grounds in immaculate condition.

Almost immediately we spotted *Myosotidium hortensia*, the blue forget-me-not with leaves the size of those of bergenia found only in the Chatham Islands (South Pacific). Other plants that caught my eye were the giant fern *Blechnum tabulare*, and a stand of *Rodgersia podophylla* with its giant leaves and towering pyramids of white flowers. The wall itself held a fabulous semi-climbing campanula in full bloom—*C. fenestralata*. The avenue of “house plants” (Cordylines) towering 30 feet above our heads in the center of the wall garden was pretty amazing.

For our next garden, we went through a gate in the wall to Logan House, owned by the family who had donated the LBG to the RBGE. We were met by the head gardener, Timmy Reed, who was a most colorful character. We were wowed by a monstrous *Pinus radiata* (Monterrey Pine) planted in 1860 along the path leading to the 18th century pink stuccoed Logan House with wonderful coin stones on each corner. It was quite windy once again, and Timmy noted that the wind on occasions would “blow the lugs off a soo” (blow the ears off a pig). This garden also had a row of monkey puzzle trees planted from seed in the 19th century, and he explained what we had suspected, that there were both male and female trees with two different size cones. Seeds from the cones were the size of brazil nuts, and he sold them for a little pocket money.

Tragically, the house was empty with no furnishings, despite two full-time gardeners on the premises. He showed us wonderful old trees on the property, and we marveled at the slate stone work, particularly the elegant slate turrets at the end of each wall. After a quick lunch in the LBG restaurant, most of us checked out the garden shop and plant center. This was a very special plant center, as the LBG was obviously propagating many of the exotic species seen in the gardens for the shop. I lusted after the plants of *Rodgersia podophylla* (must have this plant!) and oh, the collection of fuchsias on sale. These included *Fuchsia margellanica* ‘Variegata aurea’ and, oh my, the small leaved *Fuchsia procumbens* ‘Variegata’ (I’d kill for this one!).

It was just a short coach ride around the Loch Luce to our next garden, Glenwhan (glen of the rushes), which was very different from the gardens we had seen to this point. This was a very new garden, started by Tessa Knott in 1979 on 103 acres of gorse, rushes and rock outcroppings high on a hillside overlooking the Loch Luce. It had a series of large pools originating from an old Victorian reservoir at the top of the hill.

The 12 acres of gardens can best be described as modern lochans and water-garden, with narrow paths winding through bogs and up steep hillsides with magnificent views. Every now and then there were interesting objects d’art, such as a replica of that wonderful warthog in the Uffizi Museum in Florence. Other objects of note were two stone dogs marking the doggie cemetery, and a ball-on-ball slate sculpture at the highest points in the garden. In several “peat gardens,” the ground literally quaked under your feet as you viewed the choice primulas, astilbes and other moisture-loving plants. The wind blew strongly and incessantly, and we couldn’t understand how Tessa could survive day after day with all of the physical exercise this garden must require.

The “daisy holly” (*Olearia cheesmanii*) was very much in evidence, whose bushes in full bloom were 12 feet wide. We also noted some *Buddleia globbosa* that must have been 15 feet high in full bloom, the largest such specimens any of us had ever seen. After a brief stop in the tea shop, we returned to our hotel in Strandraer in time for a stroll through the shops or along the harbor to check out the lovely homes with their small private gardens.

June 19—Strandraer to York. The next day was a long one, made even longer by the shutdown of the Motorway near Dumfries after an enormous traffic accident involving a number of lorries. Diverted through the countryside, we were also trapped in a smaller accident as a result of the increased traffic on the detour route. We were all a bit “peckish” by the time we reached Gretna Green for a break, where most of us grabbed a sandwich to eat on the coach. It was early afternoon by the time we reached our first garden of the day—Holker Hall in Cumbria (in the Lake District). The village of Grange-over-Sand, a coastal town on the approach was a quaint English resort seemingly populated by keen gardeners, made us all desperate to get off the coach to investigate its lanes. As we pulled up to the imposing red sandstone manor house at Holker, we were met by our guide, Julie Chambers.

The garden held the national collection of *Styrax* trees, which were in full bloom. There were immense specimens of golden yew and several of the largest cut leafed beeches that we would see on the trip. Julie led us straight away to the immense (30-40 feet around) 300-year-old lime tree that had been designated as one of the 50 Golden Jubilee trees in England. The spaces within the trunk could hide not only gnomes, but persons. I also saw for the first time a double form of white camassia—*C. leniae semipleno* (Available from Brent and Becky Heath’s Bulbs). There was also a small meadow in which martagon lilies had naturalized and were coming into bloom. These had been mowed for years and Lord Cavendish, having recalled that they were a favorite of his grandmother’s when he was just a lad, requested that the area not be mowed, and apparently they recovered. The flock of black Peking ducks that popped up here and there were useful slug deterrents. There were many fine details in this garden.

Our next stop was Levens Hall very close by and required another Oooh and Aaah trip through the town of Grange-over-Sands. We were greeted by a three-legged whippet named Harry in the car park and then given an introductory talk to the gardens by Chris Crowder, the head gardener of 18 years. The outstanding feature of this garden was the 400-year-old topiary garden, the only one of its kind in England. To describe the effect of the giant topiaries whose greens and yellows were striking in the late afternoon sunshine, is beyond words. The gardeners begin clipping the topiaries in mid August and the project is not done until mid February.

Though we expected the Alice-in-Wonderland topiary garden, we had not been prepared for the beauty of the herbaceous borders, with massive clouds of *Crambe cordifolia* in full bloom, used very effectively with astrantias and tall spikes of delphiniums. The garden wall was planted with all sorts of interesting vines and bordered with yellow and red foliaged woodies. Nicely spaced benches facing the afternoon sun, beckoned a respite.

After a delightful break in the patio of the teahouse, literally in the shadow of the walls of the manor house, we reluctantly boarded the coach and were off to our hotel in York. This was a two-hour meandering journey across the southern part of the Dales National Park in the picturesque late afternoon sunshine. The hues of green overlaid with a netting of dry stone walls covering the hillsides told you that you could only be in North Yorkshire, James Herriot country. Of course, many of Britain's 33 million sheep were also within our view. We had a late arrival at our hotel, the Royal York, a spectacular old Victorian turreted structure built in 1878. The immense colorful lobby with its enormous Venetian glass chandeliers wowed us. The hotel is sandwiched between the railway station and the city's medieval wall and offered fantastic views of the York cathedral. We had a delicious dinner of roast pork shortly after our arrival in the cavernous dining room with 25-foot ceilings.

June 20—York. The next morning, after the usual full English breakfast, we were off once again. This time it was to Studley-Royal Fountains Abbey, the most visited garden in the National Historic Trust (300,000 visitors a year, probably because it is open all year round). There we met Bruce Rigsby, Professor of Horticulture and former chairman of the Hort Dept at Askam-Bryant University just outside York. Of course, Bruce was one of Ed Hasselkus' former students, and he led us on a delightful two-hour tour of the garden. Studley-Royal is a green garden (few flowering plants) which follows the River Skell as it winds through a narrow valley. Bruce made special arrangements for us to see it through his eyes, entering the East Gate (normally closed for coaches), and wandering through the deer preserve with its spectacular view of the Ripon cathedral from an allee near St. Mary's Gothic chapel.

Entering into the garden, we were stunned by the serenity of the large full-moon and crescent ponds, reflecting the trees on the valley walls and the wide grass lawns and berms. In the distance, antique follies dotted the hillsides and were also strategically placed in the water garden. Enormous benches with high backs invited meditation and contemplation. We then climbed up through the serpentine tunnel (it was really dark in here, and probably used for romantic purposes by the lords and ladies of a previous era) and came out at the octagon tower, with its view down into the valley.

We followed the upper path, with occasional glimpses into the valley below until we reached "Anne Boleyn's Seat" for the surprise view seen through a Victorian window cut into the ancient hedge of yews. The surprise looking up the valley was the 900-year-old ruins of the abbey, the ultimate garden ornament. Behind the window was the headless statue of Anne Boleyn, a fate she ultimately suffered at the hands of Henry the Eighth. The ruined abbey is also a reference to Henry VIII, who, unable get permission from the Pope to marry Ann Boleyn in the first place, took matters into his own hands. His solution was to kick the Catholic Church out of England, establishing the Church of England with himself as its head. He then promptly seized and destroyed the Catholic abbeys and monasteries of England, one of the largest ruins of which was the a focal point of this garden. As we walked nearly two miles through this valley of serenity, we were all happy to climb up to the waiting coach.

We proceeded a short distance to the next garden, Newby Hall, considered by some to be the finest private garden in England. You arrive through an avenue of lime trees leading up to the manor house, with sheep crisscrossing in front of the bus along the long drive. There we were met very appropriately by Tulip Primrose (no kidding!) who led us on a whistlestop tour of the garden's many highlights. We all agreed that the geraniums, crambies, and nepetas were among the finest we had seen. The house itself was built in 1615 by Peter Aram and served as an elegant crown for the garden. We passed through "Sylvia's garden," one of subdued colors (blue, white and pink) with its Byzantine corn grinder on a plinth in the center. Then we proceeded to the War of the Roses garden, with the red roses of York and the white roses of Lancaster separated by a row of red and white striped roses.

We were told that the present owners, Linne Compton and his wife, and been stewarding the garden for 50 years. Their eldest son, Robert Compton, is a horticulturalist in his own right at the University of Reading and is responsible for eliminating the genus *Cimicifuga* and placing it into the genus *Actea*, the result of both historical research and DNA sequencing.

We then went to the Ellen Willmot Rockery (she was reportedly the designer) and through a long curving pergola planted with laburnum and wisteria. Newby Hall holds the national *Cornus* collection and we were not disappointed as the *Cornus kousas* were at their peak. In fact one of these, *C. koussa* 'Satomi', covered with very large deep pink blossoms, was definitely the woody plant

of the day! We then proceeded to the long walk with its great double herbaceous border, said to be the longest of its kind in England. Clumps of *G. magnificum* used repeatedly in the borders led the eye through a gardener's paradise.

The walled orchard garden was another surprise, with its inner square of *Philadelphus monteau d'hermine* (1899 AGM) in full bloom and really overwhelming. It is a fragrant, low-growing, fully double-flowering variety and we all agreed that we had never seen *Philadelphus* used so effectively. The statue of the Sea Maiden by David Ellis in the middle seemed almost an afterthought, given the floral display of the mock orange. Just beyond was a magnificent grove of six very large *Betula utilis* 'Jacquemontii' (white barked birch) from N. India and Nepal.

After we indulged ourselves with an outdoor lunch overlooking a lovely wall garden, it was back to the coach. We traversed the countryside, over the Petty Pot Bridge to our final garden of the day, Harlow Carr Botanical Gardens, the Wisley of the North. As a matter of fact it has been taken over by the RHS in the last couple of years as their northern outpost. The guide of my group was David Green, a charming man who was a former president of the Northern Horticulture Society.

The gardens were easily viewed from the entrance, displaying themselves before us in a low valley. There were lovely perennial borders, an herb garden, a fragrant garden, and an alpine section. We did not care too much for the six small competition gardens, and as for the national collection of rhubarb, well they may have two hundred cultivars, but most looked pretty much same. Perhaps the difference was in the taste. It does represent an important library of plants however, as the rhubarb industry in Britain has all but expired. A highlight of the garden was the dramatic display of primroses, particularly the variety "Harlow Carr Hybrids," a hybrid of *beesiana*, *bulleania*, and another candelabra type, at their peak bloom (eat your heart out Ruth Cadoret). There were also some amazing *Rodgersias*, including the perennial plant of the day, *Rodgersia sambucifolia*, with its white blooms, the first time we had seen this species on the trip.

We then drove back to York through the town of Harrogate, and met Ruth and Judith Rigsby at the Royal York Hotel. They led us on a tour of the historic Museum Garden (Bruce used to be in charge of this garden) belonging to the city. The ruins of the abbey in this garden (also destroyed by Henry VIII) were significant, as the monks who had founded Fountains Abbey had come from here. We also had a quick supper at their favorite fish and chips place.

June 21—York environs. The next morning we visited two more small private gardens. The first of these was Stillingfleet Lodge and Nursery, owned by Vanessa Cook. She was a charming woman with a lovely cottage garden in the small village of Stillingfleet. We were accompanied around the garden by her two small terriers. This garden had lots of small intimate spaces, and we were moved by the white doves perched in the white roses growing across the red tiles of the farm house roof. There were some great plant combinations including *Pempermella major* 'Rosea' (a pink-flowered cow parsley) with a deep crimson *Knautia macedonia* and a wonderful *Pulmonaria* 'Trevi fountain'.

Vanessa holds the national collection of pulmonarias, which were prominently displayed in the garden, but a bit tatty at the end of June. I was also taken with a variegated malva, *Lavatera arborea* 'Variegata', whose white splashed leaves were dotted around the garden. We also identified the giant scabiosa with its large pale yellow flowers as *Cephalaria gigantea* (one of Christopher Lloyd's favorites, apparently). We enjoyed very much the tea and bickies served by Vanessa in the garden, and we all trooped through her nursery, where we were able to correctly identify a number of plants we had seen along the trip. At the entrance to the nursery, the arbor was covered not only with a variegated pyracantha, but also a knockout rose—*Rosa complicata* with saucer sized flowers.

After a brief visit at the village sandwich shop to take on board some sustenance, we were on the way to the next garden. Throughout the trip, we were often asked by the garden guides where we had had lunch or where we were going for lunch. They didn't understand that in our passion for seeing yet more gardens, some days we skipped lunch! A meal was never a priority.

The next garden, Red House Farm, had been recommended to us by Vanessa, and belonged to her friends Kate and Ian McPhail. Ian was a retired professor of psychology and met us in a bright red vest (much to A. Hort Hound's disapproval!). Their garden was located in a small country village on what had originally been a 30-acre working farm purchased in 1963. The couple invited us to "just pleasure around" their garden and served us orange squashes to drink. They were a wonderful couple, and went out of their way to identify plants for us, including calling the coach on a cell phone the next day to identify for us a monstrous clump of white and yellow iris seen in their garden, as *Iris orientalis*. Their dogs accompanied us around the garden and their horses were in and out of view.

This was a garden of plants with relatively little ornamentation, except for a large round garden house mounted on a swivel stand, which allowed it to turn 360 degrees to follow the sun. The mixed herbaceous borders were truly lovely, and plants that caught our eye were the large pink flowered *Astrantia maxima* and the magnificent climbing rose 'Wedding Day', which draped itself over the arbor leading from the house into the garden. There was a large meadow garden with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. We all felt very privileged to be the first American group invited to this garden. I think the McPhails were impressed with our collective enthusiasm.

Our last garden of the day, on the outskirts of Leeds (village of Adele), was perhaps the most magnificent small garden I have ever seen, and indeed it is considered one of the finest small gardens in England. York Gate was without question my favorite garden of the trip, and what I would aspire to in creating a garden.

It is a garden of small paths, with stellar objects of antiquity worked into the planting scheme. The garden had been left to the Gardeners Benevolent Society in 1994. This is a charity that benefits from the National Gardening Scheme and aids retired gardeners throughout England. The garden itself was started by the Spenser family in 1951 (purchased as an old farm house). The family had an auctioneering business, and obviously collected the cream of the lot from this business for their garden. Old architectural artifacts of both stone and wood were incorporated into the garden. The potting shed was full of antique pots and baskets, and there was a pair of Dutch verdigris green copper watering cans outside the rear entrance of the house to die for.

A low wall featured a bonsai collection planted in the lead cisterns that had originally been part of the eave trough systems of the large manor houses. A gazebo was made of 400-year-old oak beams rescued from a building that had been destroyed by fire in Leeds. The Spenser's son Robin, the creative force behind the garden, had commissioned a stunning spherical sundial on a serpentine granite post that was a focal point for the white garden. Mr Spenser senior died of heart attack at age 56 and his son Robin died of a heart attack at the age of 48 in 1986. Mrs. Spenser, who loved the garden very much, died in 1994.

The garden was entered through a courtyard paved with cobblestones creating a medieval labyrinth. Sculpted balls of yew surrounded the labyrinth. In the dell garden I recognized *Luzula sylvatica* 'Variegata' (snowy wood rush) in large clumps which made my day. Galen Gates inched down a stone wall and perched himself rather precariously just to get a picture of a variegated sweet chestnut which caught his eye—*Castanea sativa* 'Albomarginata'. The design and structure of this garden was outstanding with a "must photograph" in any direction to which the eye was directed. Robin was obviously greatly influenced by the intimate rooms (albeit on a larger scale) of Laurence Johnson's Hidcote and the hardscaping favored in the garden designs of Edwin Lutyens. What the garden did not have was the immense double perennial borders and far ranging vistas that characterized many of the large gardens we had seen. The use of plant material was exquisite.

On the way out of the garden, we were drawn to York Gate Cottage adjoining York Gate. This house was originally the barn of the Spenser family and of course had been part of the original farm yard. The garden was splendid, and we were fortunate enough to be invited into the driveway to view the garden by its owner, an elderly woman very elegantly dressed for a day of gardening with a broad rim sun hat and long gardening gloves that reached her elbows. She had been a neighbor to the Spensers for 38 years, and obviously missed them terribly. She was charming and appeared to enjoy her enthusiastic American audience.

We were all very sad to leave York Gate and wished we had had time to go all around the garden once again. Arriving back in York, we had a couple of hours before dinner to explore the city. We had our farewell dinner in the elegant dining room of this hotel, though I must note that one should never have turkey in England. You could use it to replace the soles of your "trainers" instead. We enjoyed each others company immensely and it is of note that one person did not get served dessert. I think she was still being punished for the gooseberry she had snatched back at Wisley.

June 22—York to Gatwick. The next day, the last of our trip, we boarded the coach to begin the long journey from York to Gatwick airport south of London. We enjoyed the English countryside from the M-1 motorway and arrived at our final garden, Chatsworth House, in time for lunch. Chatsworth, belonging to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, was the largest formal garden of our visit. Its thousands of acres included a 17th century Capability Brown landscape on the distant hillsides facing the giant manor house.

You entered the gardens through the house, which demanded going up and down stairs several times as you toured a few of the 150 rooms (50 really large rooms, only 27 bathrooms). We were told that the record time for getting through the house to the garden was 11 minutes, and on this Saturday afternoon it proved impossible to make a new entry in the Guinness Book of Records, due to the crowds of people stopping to view the treasured paintings, furniture and china. This gave you the definite feeling that in many respects, English gardening was all about "social class." Needless to say, I was glad to get out of the house (after all, if you've seen one English manor house, you've seen them all), even though there were tantalizing views of the family's formal West side garden (a mere seven acres) not open to the public.

The gardens were truly laid out on a grand scale. I proceeded to the grand cascade with its 25 waterfalls, all of different heights, each creating a distinct sound. I was somewhat distressed that even parents joined their children in wading in the cascade. From the cascade I traveled to the new "Revelation" garden, opened in 1999. It contained a giant moving water sculpture by Angela Connor. An enormous silver sphere was perched just above the surface of a small pond (the water was filthy looking), and after a few minutes the sphere began spewing water as it began to rise above the water. As it did so, the immense silver petals of the sphere opened up to reveal a golden orb—all the while water spewing out everywhere. This giant "revelation" had a circus side show quality to it, and there was really nothing subtle or beautiful about it to my eye.

I then made my way down the path to the 200-year-old terraced herb and vegetable garden, which has always been one of my favorite spots at Chatsworth. The signs also pointed to the “Devonshire Diamond,” which was shortly to reveal itself incongruously in the middle of the ancient vegetable garden. It was indeed a diamond, about five feet high, with mirrored facets that reflected rays of light as it turned around and around rather quickly. Perhaps it was a 21st century interpretation of a scarecrow, but you could accomplish the same end in your own garden with a few disposable aluminum pie plates strung up here and there. All in all, the sculpture would have been better placed in the center of a very quiet, green, walled garden room, in my personal opinion, though nobody asked for it.

I then made my way down the long walk along the formal reflecting pool (200 yards long) which contained the Emperor Fountain with its geyser of water shooting up to 300 feet in the air. My objective was to see the sculpture of the War Horse by Dame Elizabeth Frink at the end of the pool, my favorite sculpture in the entire garden. My colleague, Galen Gates, kept commenting on the topiaries of yews which were rather badly pruned and often bent into awkward angles. Galen stated that this would not pass muster at the CBG, and I guess he did not appreciate the almost gnome-like quality of many of these topiaries.

The old conservatory garden just to the South of the maze garden, was the highlight of the garden for me. The rectangular garden was solidly planted with a beautiful collection of lupines in full bloom. The hues and color combinations of individual flower spires were stunning. Galen must have taken 25 photos.

From there we proceeded to the rockery, created in 1842, perhaps the most astounding rockery ever created. The rocks were piled more than 50 feet high, complete with cascading water falls. All this in a landscape that was originally rock free, seemingly an undertaking on the order of the pyramids of Egypt. Unfortunately, the dominate plant material was a gigantic cows parsley, towering up to 10 feet with its massive two feet wide flower umbrels, which did seem very much in scale with the enormity of the rock formations. However, it is an invasive weed that creates a botanical desert wherever it occurs. It is actually outlawed in many countries, including the US.

We moved in the direction of the restaurant, passing by the willow tree fountain, dating from 1692, whose many branches release fine sprays of water in every direction.

The restaurant at Chatsworth, in the old stable complex, was the finest dining room we had ventured into in any garden along the trip. There was a rather long que, but we all enjoyed a very fine lunch. The stop at the loo, which actually received a “loo of the year award” in England (no, this is not a joke) was rather impressive. A couple of us burst into laughter as we stood at the men's urinal and looked directly at a tile mosaic of Chatsworth's grand cascade. Though our own cascades were not as grand, they certainly made their own unique sounds. Easy to see why this won an award for its design, which included not so subtle humor.

A significant adverse event occurred as we arrived back on the coach. Two of our colleagues thought we were leaving at 3:15—not 2:15, and it proved impossible to find them in the crowds and vastness of Chatsworth. We were all subjected to a stern lecture by Frankie as we departed the grounds of Chatsworth rather late as a result. As several of us were to observe, at least we did not miss any gardens because of it, an act which might have resulted in more severe repercussions, like buying everyone wine at dinner to help us out of our misery!

It was a very long ride back to Gatwick, and most of us dozed off from time to time. We did get a view of Windsor Castle on a hill top in the distance, and were tied up as usual in the traffic of the M-25 (the ring road around London), a motorway we have grown to fear from other WHPS trips. Some of you will recall how we all but missed Hidcote on our first trip because of the traffic on this motorway.

Back at the Copthorne Hotel, near Gatwick airport—also familiar from previous WHPS trips, we all dashed into the “Carvery” (read buffet!) for a late dinner, for once forgetting about “smart casual” dress. Indeed, some of us even wore trainers (sneakers) to the dining room. The public areas of the hotel were jammed with a large wedding party occupying all of the bar space, so I really do not think anyone noticed, except Frankie of course. The food was excellent, and it was a wonderful evening in which we reminisced about the trip and talked about the trip planned for 2004.

Yes, for those of you not sitting in the rear of the coach, we planned the route for the next trip, which presently includes three times the number of gardens that we covered on this trip. Oh, well, we'll just have to visit four or five gardens a day rather than three, and when the guides ask us where we're going for dinner, we'll simply say we're skipping it as we pull out the portable defibrillator to revive them. The English will never understand our passion for English gardens—they are food enough, at least for some of us.

—A. Hort Hound