

Buscot Park

Faringdon, Oxfordshire, UK

Photographs by Alan Ward 2008, 2011, 2014

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The most significant landscape design at Buscot Park is from the early twentieth century by architect and landscape architect Harold Peto. His work is an overlay on earlier gardens, so that Buscot is now a composite of designs from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The original mansion and landscape were built in the 1780s on a hilltop east of Buscot village on a site encompassing about 125 acres, that was converted into parkland and planted with picturesque groves of trees. A walled kitchen garden and stables were set at a lower elevation near the village (1). The original landscape included two lakes, including a large lake east of the mansion with an arched stone bridge visible from the house. In the 1860s, the estate and grounds were modified to become an industrialized farm with pleasure grounds added east of the house.*

Harold Peto began working on the site under architect Ernest George in the 1890s, and then took over the design beginning in 1904. Peto was influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement and was a frequent traveler to Italy, where he was inspired by the architecture and gardens of the Italian Renaissance. He retained both lakes; the stone bridge remains visible from the north terrace (8). There are six avenues of trees radiating outward from the east side of the house. One of these avenues, almost 1200m long, is a direct path from the house to the large lake, overlaid by Peto on an earlier nineteenth-century arboretum. It begins at the north terrace and drops down almost 5m with steps to a 140m long water garden, extending east to the lakeshore. Channels

of water step down the slope with small cascades and into a series of basins, and at key points along the route, the water in the garden appears to merge with the lake beyond. The visual axis extends another 380m to a rotunda on the opposite bank, also designed by Peto (9-16). The water garden is framed by hedges as it descends following the topography, and at about midway Peto placed a small Venetian-style bridge crossing over a canal (13-14). Inspired by classical gardens, the design also has modern overtones with the simple geometry of the canal, channels and basins - designed with clean, sharp edges. Later additions to Buscot Park from the 1930s, expanded the composition with woodland paths extending through the site, including round points with sculptural pieces.

The photographs are in a sequence starting with the kitchen garden, now the Four Seasons Walled Garden, where the visitor to Buscot arrives. It is followed by the approach to the mansion and concludes with the radiating avenues. I typically use wide-angle lenses to depict and amplify a sense of space, but the avenue with the water garden was so long, that some images are more descriptive using telephoto lenses that appear to foreshorten the space (13-15). That seems to correspond with human perception when following a straight path, or the visual axis of the water garden, where the eye is drawn forward when seeing such elements as the small bridge, sculpture, or rotunda in the distance along the line of site.

List of Photographs

1. Four Seasons Walled Garden, 2011
2. Fountain, lily pond in the Four Seasons Walled Garden, 2008
3. East to west axis in Four Seasons Walled Garden, 2011
4. East to west axis with pleached hornbeams, 2008
5. Steps from Four Seasons Walled Garden to house, 2008
6. Entry gates to house, 2008
7. North lawn and house, 2014
8. View north from north lawn to lake, 2014
9. View northeast down steps to the water gardens, 2014
10. View southeast up steps to the house and theatre, 2011
11. First basin in the water garden, 2011
12. Dolphin sculpture in first basin, 2011
13. Second basin in summer, 2011
14. Second basin in spring, 2008
15. Venetian bridge over canal, 2008
16. Third basin, large lake and rotunda beyond, 2008
17. Water garden at lake edge, 2011
18. View east to Egyptian Avenue, 2011
19. View west to entry of Egyptian Avenue and Theatre, 2011
20. Antinous sculptures and circular citrus bowl, 2011
21. Terminus of avenue and fields beyond, 2011
22. Avenue to the citrus bowl, 2011
23. Avenue to the swinging garden, 2011
24. Avenue with urn, 2011
25. Avenue terminating at the large lake, 2011
26. Avenue and grove, 2008
27. Radiating avenue with allée, 2008























































Notes

* Summarized from Buscot Park & The Faringdon Collection by the National Trust, for a more complete history of the site see buscot-park.com/grounds