For a distinguished 18th century contemporary of my ancestors Ralph, Duke of Montagu and his son John, their gardens at Boughton were on an almost unimaginable scale. “Vistas of vast extension” were the words of the celebrated antiquarian William Stukeley and spreading out as they did over 100 acres of intricate design with more than a mile of canals and over 30 miles of avenues, it is easy to understand his amazement.

A huge project of restoration still has much to achieve, but with this new exhibition we hope to explain the early vision of the Montagus. For me, part of the fascination rests in the nuts and bolts of how those forebears set about their garden creation and how over the years tastes evolved from the formal baroque parterres with their stone basins, statues and fountains, to the simpler and more direct relationship with the natural landscape that came to characterise the English garden. At the same time we hope to remind viewers of how the love of gardening has inspired poets and writers, craftsmen and musicians over the centuries.

It is our ambition that you, our visitors, will step from study of the stories and plans from centuries past directly into Boughton’s vast landscape, better able to understand why a contemporary like Daniel Defoe could write that “…even in Italy I have never seen the like”.

The Duke of Buccleuch
July 2017
Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton (1531 – 1602) succeeded his father the 1st Sir Edward 460 years ago in 1557. In the same year, after declaring war on France, Queen Mary Tudor commanded Sir Edward to form a 60 strong militia from his tenants and servants to defend the realm, to include horsemen and footsoldiers.

In 1579 Sir Edward extended the original house and built the Long Gallery, now the “Flower Gallery” at Boughton. His brother Roger, a London merchant, regularly sent seeds and plants, including apricot trees, from London to stock the gardens.

The Garden (1557) by Nicholas Grimald (1519-1562)

From: Songs and Sonnetes

The issue of great love Jove, draw near, you Muses nine!
Help us to praise the blissful plot of garden ground so fine.
The garden gives good food and aid for leech’s cure;
The garden, full of great delight, his master doth allure.
Sweet sallet herbs be here, and herbs of every kind;
The ruddy grapes, the seemly fruits, be here at hand to find.
Here pleasance wanteth not to make a man full fain;
Here marvelous the mixture is of solace and of gain.

To water sundry seeds, the furrow by the way
A running river, trilling down with liquor, can convey.
Behold, with lively hue fair flowr’s that shine so bright
With riches, like the orient gems, they paint the mould’ in sight.
Bees, humming with soft sound (their murmur is so small).
Of blooms and bloffoms suck the tops; on dewed leaves they fall.
The creeping vine holds down her own bewedded elms,
And, wandering out with branches thick, reeds folded overwhelms.

Trees spread their coverts wide with shadows fresh and gay;
Full well their branched bows defend the fervent sun away.
Birds chatter, and some chirp, and some sweet tunes do yield;
All mirthful, with their songs so blithe, they make both air and field.

The garden it allures, it feeds, it glads the sprite;
From heavy hearts all doleful dumps the garden chaseth quite.
Strength it restores to limbs, draws and fulfills the sight;
With cheer revives the senses all and maketh labour light.

O, what delights to us the garden ground doth bring!
Seed, leaf, flowr, fruit, herb, bee and tree, and more than I may sing!

Plate from Thomas Hill’s ‘The Profitable Arte of Gardening’, 1558.

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Thomas Hill’s ‘A most briefe and pleasaunte treatise, teaching how to dresse, sowe, and set a garden’ of 1563 was the first book on gardening published in England. It was so successful that it was republished several times under the title ‘The Profitable Arte of Gardening’. Boughton’s 1574 edition has a design for a maze and a detailed appendix on beekeeping.
Thomas Hill’s – alias Didymus Mountain – The Gardener’s Labyrinth, published in 1577, contains 69 short chapters of comprehensive and practical advice on gardening including the choice of seeds, apt times for planting and watering, designs for knot gardens and mazes as well as advice on the medicinal properties of herbs and flowers through their essences.

The woodcut illustrations alone are fascinating and lead the reader straight into an Elizabethan garden, where the sun is shining, the bees buzzing and the gardeners tending their rose arbour or digging their flower beds.

And in the Sommer-time whilst floures be greene and fragrant, yee shall not have any Gentlewoman almost, no nor yet any droye or pussles in the Cuntrey; but they will carye in their hands, nosegayes and posies of floures to smell at, and which is more, two or three Nosegayes sticked in their brests before, for what cause I cannot tel, except it be to allure their Paramours to catch at them whereby I doubte not but they get many a slobbering kisse, and peradventure more friendshipp besides…

From: Anatomie of Abuses (1583) by Phillip Stubbes

Phillip Stubbes (1555 – 1610) was a puritanical, social reforming pamphleteer and ballad writer. Although his lengthy Anatomie of Abuses is an indignant rant against the manners, amusements and fashions of the time, it is also a highly revealing window onto Elizabethan daily life.

I know a bank where the wild Thyme blows
Where Oxflips and the nodding Violet grows
Quite over canopied with lucious Woodbine,
With sweet musk Rofes, and with Eglantine,
There fleeps Titania, fometime of the night,
Lull’d in these flowers, with dances and delight:

From: A Midsummer Night’s Dreams (1594) by William Shakespeare

1564: BIRTH OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The Winds of March with beauty; violets dim
But sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes
Or Cythera’s1 breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phoebus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds
The flower-de-luce being one.

From: The Winter’s Tale (1611) by William Shakespeare

1587: EXECUTION OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS NEARBY AT FOTHERINGHAY

Sir Edward Montagu was present as county administrator.

1588: THE SPANISH ARMADA

James I attends a feast at Boughton, 1604.

1603: DEATH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I, ACCESSION OF KING JAMES I

3rd Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton ensured that November 5th be declared an official day of thanksgiving.

1605: GUY FAWKES’ GUNPOWDER PLOT

3rd Sir Edward Montagu of Boughton ensured that November 5th be declared an official day of thanksgiving.
A letter from John Hunt to 3rd Sir Edward Montagu outlining the new garden at Boughton.

“The garden besides the terraces from east to west is […missing] and is from north to south 56 yards; the north terrace is 3 yards broad, the east terrace 7 yards broad and the south 6 yards broad.”

“Drewe is contented to make your terrace, set it up and make perfect your stairs and all for £16 and for the arch with columns he is about drawing a pattern of it for Your Worship to see, he talks of £10 but I do think twenty Nobles* will do it”.

* [a high-value gold coin]

Without the hall, and close upon the gate,
A goodly orchard-ground was situate,
Of near ten acres; about which was led
A lofty quickset. In it flourished
High and broad fruit trees,
that pomegranates bore,
Sweet figs, pears, olives; and a number more
Most useful plants did there produce their store,
Whose fruits the hardest winter could not kill,
Nor hottest summer wither……

Pear grew after pear,
Apple succeeded apple, grape the grape,
Fig after fig came; time made never rape
Of any dainty there. ……

Two fountains graced the garden; of which, one
Pour’d out a winding stream that over-run
The grounds for their use chiefly, th’ other went
Close by the lofty palace gate, and lent
The city his sweet benefit.

1611: NOVEMBER 24TH

1616: DEATH OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

3rd Sir Edward Montagu created 1st Lord Montagu of Boughton 1621.

1625: Acession of King Charles I

Charles I grants Lord Montagu permission to clear the forest and extend the park at Boughton, 1639.

1649: Execution of King Charles I

The poet Andrew Marvell was an MP under both Cromwell and Charles II and his influence helped release the poet John Milton from prison during the Restoration. Here he refers to the economic bubble - “Tulipmania” – when Dutch botanists competed to breed ever more beautiful cultivars by exploiting a virus which caused striations to appear on the petals. The booming Dutch economy of the early 1630’s the bulbs had become an ever more expensive commodity with bulbs traded for the price of a house. The market suddenly collapsed in 1637 resulting in an economic depression.
Ralph Montagu is Charles II’s ambassador to France from 1669-1672 and again from 1676-1678. Louis XIV moves into the Palace of Versailles in 1678.

Living a French-style, gilded existence Ralph Montagu “The Magnificent” (1638 -1709), ambitious grandson of the first Lord Montagu of Boughton, was inspired not only by the sight of Versailles but also by William and Mary’s royal gardens at Het Loo and later at Hampton Court, both of which had similar bosquets (enclosed gardens), labyrinthine wildernesses, multitudinous fountains, ‘embroidered’ parterres and radiating walks designed by the Huguenot Daniel Marot, whom Ralph then employed to decorate Montagu House, his palatial London mansion, which later became the British Museum.

In Spring 1685 the Dutch gardener Leonard van der Meulen becomes head gardener at Boughton. Like other artists, artisans and technicians, he had probably been brought to England by Ralph and came with valuable knowledge as a land surveyor and water engineer and became head of the team responsible for Boughton’s extravagant acres of formal gardens, lakes and canals as well as the trees-lined avenues and walkways.

In 1687 the young physician and botanist Hans Sloane accompanied the Duke and Duchess of Albemarle to Jamaica, where the Duke had become governor. It was in here that Sloane began his celebrated collection of plant specimens, which was meticulously documented and illustrated.

When the Duke died, just 15 months after arriving, Sloane was required to embalm the body for the journey home, which took four months. The widowed Duchess was forced to endure a ship laden not only with the late Duke’s preserved body and Sloane’s specimens, drawings and records, but also a number of live animals including an iguana, a crocodile and a seven foot long snake, none of which survived.

Ralph Montagu marries the widowed Duchess of Albemarle in 1694. Her vast fortune enables Ralph to embark on his audacious plans for Boughton House and gardens. She retains Hans Sloane as her physician.

From 1712 Hans Sloane was the landlord and patron of the Chelsea Physic Garden. He amassed one of the world’s most significant natural history collections, which on his death aged 93, along with his wider collections of antiquities and ethnographic objects and his vast library, provided the founding nucleus of the new British Museum at Montagu House (pictured) in 1753.
Ralph Montagu had supported the cause of William III and became a member of his Privy Council. The new Dutch King of England was a passionate garden lover, particularly keen on architectural evergreen shrubs, and on his visit to Boughton in July 1695 Ralph would have been keen to impress the monarch with his developing gardens and his Stateroom ceilings, painted by the Huguenot artist Louis Chéron to co-incide with the royal visit.

"There is great talk of vast gardens at Boughton but I hear my Lord Montagu is very much concerned that the water with which he hoped to make so fine fountains hath failed his expectations". Charles Hatton of Kirby Hall near Corby, Northamptonshire, to his brother, 29th September 1694.

To create the water gardens Ralph Montagu diverted the River Ise into a canal system flowing through various complex features all linked by terraces and tree-lined walks and ending in a great cascade.

"I hope the Cascade, the Octagon, the Water-Sheafs and the Water-Spouts, shall have made my Lady Sandwich forget France".

The exiled Marquis de St. Evremond writing in 1700 about the water gardens at Boughton, which by then were in their magnificent prime. Ralph’s cousin Elizabeth, Countess of Sandwich, who had spent much time in France, lived nearby at Hinchingbrooke.

The parterre from the house looking west sketched on his first visit in 1706 while still a student by Rev Dr. William Stukeley, the renowned antiquary, garden designer and pioneer of field archaeology.

July 1709. A new head gardener’s contract is agreed between the Second Duke and Leonard van der Meulen. One of the detailed clauses from the Articles of Agreement stated:

"that the said Leonard Vander Meulan during the time aforesaid shall and will keep the four hundred and fifty fruit trees clean and water them and also water all other trees from time to time, and also keep the three hundred and thirty oaks and elms clean, hoeing and raking about them…"

He received £250 per annum, paid in quarterly instalments and in addition was allowed three horses, all the tools, iron rods for the yews and junipers and charcoal to preserve the bay trees and orange trees in frosty weather. He was also allowed all the fruits, roots and herbs not required by the Duke.
The first thing our sight was entertained with was the great cascade, which has abundance of a jette d’eaux and falls of water, the other water works are very fine, from one pipe the water plays, as Mr Van der Muhl the chief gardiner said, 58 foot high."

Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport Hall, Northants, July 1709.

“But what deserves our more particular notice are the Gardens, which contain fourscore and ten aces of Ground, in which are a many Statues of Marble and Metal, and flowerpots and Urns, many very large basons with Variety of Fountains playing… here are aviaries, fishponds, very large and long Canals, admirable greens, Wildernesses &c.

The Cascade is very Fine, the Fall of the Water makes a prodigious noise… In one part of the Garden is an Engine of neat Workmanship, to force up Water in great Draughts, which cost above a thousand Pounds…”

William Stukeley on his second visit to Boughton in 1710. His journal Iter Oxoniensis details the buildings and places he visited with friends on a tour from Oxford to Boston, Lincs.

For my own part, I esteem nothing more diverting and agreeable in a Garden, than a fine View, and the Prospect of a noble Country. The Pleasure of seeing, from the End of a Walk, or off a Terrass, for four or five Leagues round, a vast Number of Villages, Woods, Rivers, Hills, and Meadows, with a thousand other Varieties that make a beautiful Landskip.”

From: The Natural History of Northamptonshire (1712)
by John Morton
“On the left of the Parterre is a most noble Wilderness of Forest Timber, full of long Avenues, 10 of which, center in a Star, near a Cascade, which has 27 small jette d’eaux & 13 above in a reservoir. There are also nine Islands & many small jette d’eaux in the Wilderness, part in the Orange Grove. Here is also 3400 yards of clip’d Hedges, & the Duke is making a mount 72 feet high”.


Under Duke John the surrounding countryside estate was transformed by the construction of 23 miles of interlinking tree-lined avenues: “We rode out every day, & generally twice a day, in the fine ridings, forests, woods, vistas, & plantations, which exceedingly out-do Chantilly, as the best judges declare.”...

William Stukeley to Samuel Gale, 1744.

Rev. Charles Lamotte, Duke John’s Huguenot chaplain, suggests having two men for the garden, “…for there is too great a variety of business for one man, without he be one of a great capacity, as Van der Meulen was”. 1720.

Badeslade’s plan clearly shows the layout of Boughton’s gardens with their parterres, allées and rides radiating through wooded plantations in the Baroque style that was fast becoming old-fashioned and expensive to maintain.

1714: DEATH OF QUEEN ANNE STUART, ACCESSION OF GEORGE I OF HANOVER

1717: BOUGHTON’S KEY HEAD GARDENER LEONARD VAN DER MEULEN DIES AND IS BURIED AT WARKTON CHURCH

1717:

If we with weary steps the summit gain,
The extensive prospect round us quits the pain.
Then gentle Isis, all her visits paid,
At once precipitates a vast cascade.
A work most costly, grand and exquisite.
Where all the company together meet.

1722:

A NEW CANAL IS DUG AS FAR AS THE NEW BRIDGE

1723-29:

A NEW ‘GREAT PIECE OF WATER’ IS INSTALLED
THE MOUNT IS BUILT FROM THE RESULTING SPOIL

If we with weary steps the summit gain,
The extensive prospect round us quits the pain.
Then gentle Isis, all her visits paid,
At once precipitates a vast cascade.
A work most costly, grand and exquisite.
Where all the company together meet.

From:
A Month’s Entertainment at Boughton (1748)
by William Stukeley

“A river has been diverted for a distance of five miles, and after forming a lake of about ten acres in front of the house, it makes a bend and divides into several very long channels before falling into a cascade similar to the one at Chantilly, with five separate foaming falls, ending in a large basin of geometrical design. … Above the great cascade, there are another thirteen jets of water….Since this cascade consists of the actual river itself, it never ceases to flow, and is of very great beauty.”

Edward Southwell, 1724.

Vistas of vast extension, like the sun,
Travel from East to Western horizon.
Thro’ all directions their huge lengths are seen,
And stamp the country, Montagu’s domain.

From:
A Month’s Entertainment at Boughton (1748)
by William Stukeley

Rev. Charles Lamotte, Duke John’s Huguenot chaplain, suggests having two men for the garden, “…for there is too great a variety of business for one man, without he be one of a great capacity, as Van der Meulen was”. 1720.
The Genius of the Place

"The park itself is wall’d round with brick, and so finely planted with trees, and in such an excellent order, as I saw nothing more beautiful, no not in Italy itself, except that the walks of trees were not orange and limon and citron, as it is in Naples and the Abruzzo…”

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) author of Robinson Crusoe. From his three-volume travel book, Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain, published between 1724 and 1727.

“But the Gardens, good God! The gardens are wonderful! Terrace walks, groves, wildernesses, a canal above a mile in length, a pond of 2 acres in the middle of the garden communicating with the canal. … Then the cascade was a noble sight! The basin large, the pipes that threw up the water, nine in centre, four in circumference and 13 playing from the uppermost steps of the cascade, with as mighty a torrent as can be imagined!

Dr. Charles Perry. From A journal to the North of England, 1725.

1735: DUKE JOHN BUILDS THE NEW FRUIT GARDEN WALL

The celebrated botanist Philip Miller, curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, advised Duke John on his gardens.

Miller had published The Gardener's and Florists Dictionary (1724) and the immensely popular Gardener’s Dictionary containing the Methods of Cultivating and Improving the Kitchen, Fruit and Flower Garden (1731) dedicated to Hans Sloane, which went into 8 editions.
Born in Lincolnshire, the Rev. Dr. William Stukeley (1687 – 1765) was an avid designer of gardens, landscapes and garden buildings. He studied medicine, astrology, natural history, theology and became a renowned antiquary, one of the pioneers of field archaeology.

Despite being an Anglican clergyman he was fascinated by early Druidic culture, preparing detailed surveys of many ancient sites, including Stonehenge whose builders, he proposed, had used knowledge of the Earth’s magnetism to align the stones.

For his own garden at Grantham he created a Druidic temple of trees imitating Stonehenge and later conceived a gothic ‘Temple of Flora’ for his garden at Stamford, where he became vicar in 1730.

First Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, council member of the Royal Society, William Stukeley was a friend of Sir Hans Sloane and Sir Isaac Newton, whose biography he published in 1752. He saw the Gothic style as springing from England’s ancient Druidic tradition of worship close to nature in sacred, wooded groves where treetops meet overhead.

He proposed designs for a bridge over the River Ise in the park and for a chapel in the Unfinished Wing. Neither was realised but they remain among the earliest designs of the Gothic revival.

Stukeley and Duke John’s 40 year-long friendship is recorded in Stukeley’s diaries and letters.

His influence introduced early romantic stirrings into Boughton’s gardens and it is to his keen and poetic eye that we owe some of the most accurate descriptions on his frequent visits to Boughton.

After a splendid, suitable repast:
A dish of coffee crowns the feast.
To the delightful gardens we repair.
Some to the shady walks, or open air:
Some thro’ meandering wildernesses bend,
Their careless steps, uncertain where they end.
Some the straight walks of fragrant limes frequent,
Whose blossoms yield an odiferous scent:
And arched tops o’er head, like cloisters met;
For sweet discourse, or contemplation fit.

From:
A Month’s Entertainment at Boughton
(September, 1748)
by Rev. William Stukeley
Rich in her weeping Country’s spoils Versailles
May boast a thousand Fountains, that can cast
The tortur’d Waters to the distant Heav’n;
Yet let me choose some Pine-topt Precipice
Abrupt and shaggy, whence a foamy Stream,
Like Anio, tumbling roars; . . .

Yet why should Man, mistaken, deem it nobler
To dwell in Palaces and high-roof’d Halls,
Than in God’s Forests, Architect supreme!
Say, is the Persian Carpet, than the Field’s
Or Meadow’s Mantle gay, more richly wov’n;
Or softer to the Votaries of Ease
Than bladed Grass, perfum’d with dew-dropt Flowers.

Writing in poetic form in 1748 Stukeley describes an idealised
stay at Boughton, enjoying the Duke’s legendary hospitality,
walking in the park, boating on the Ise and finishing with a
concert in the Long Gallery as darkness descends.

Sometimes the walks of Weekly’s beauteous grove,
We pass along; famous for tales of love.
And now we penetrate th’ri’thickest woods,
Where ancient Druids made their fam’d abodes.

Fair Isis and her nymphs pour forth their urns
With floods of tears, and in redoubled tide,
Run headlong down, in hast, the great cascade,
In loudest noise to sound thy obsequies;
To meet thy noble ashes passing by
In solemn pace. While Warkton’s doleful knell
Receive thy great remains, in darksome tomb.

Boughton begins its slumber. Benign neglect takes over…

“In the year 1792 Boughton gardens were thrown open
to the park and the deer and other stock were admitted.
A considerable improvement has been made in them by
means of the mud which was taken out of the ponds.”

Boughton land steward Robert Edmonds, 1797
When once the sun sinks in the west,
And dewdrops pearl the evening’s breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are,
Or its companionable star,
The evening primrose opes anew
Its delicate blossoms to the dew;
And, hermit-like, shunning the light,
Wastes its fair bloom upon the night,
Who, blindfold to its fond caresses,
Knows not the beauty it possesses;
Thus it blooms on while night is by;
When day looks out with open eye,
Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun,
It faints and withers and is gone.

From: The Evening Primrose
by John Clare (1793 – 1864)

I mind me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanish’d quite;
And wheresoe’er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid,
To sanctify her right.

I call’d the place my wilderness,
For no one enter’d there but I.
The sheep look’d in, the grass to espy,
And pass’d it ne’ertheless.

From: The Deserted Garden
by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806 – 1881)

Lady Evelyn Montagu Douglas Scott (1865 – 1948),
remembered the famous cascade still functioning during
her childhood ie. as late as c1875. But after a pair of
estate cart-horses were drowned in the canal just above
the cascade the sluice gates had to be opened and the
stream was allowed to return to its normal level.

From unlikely beginnings near the edge of the Fens
John Clare only became recognised as one of the
greatest English poets long after his death. Born into a
farming community at Helpston, Northamptonshire, he
experienced a childhood of extreme rural poverty, with just
a basic education until the age of 11 when he started work
as an agricultural labourer. Surrounded however by a close
knit community with its own strong folk culture of literature
and music he began writing in his mid teens, weaving the
local language into his informal, almost conversational
poetry. His work was inspired by his native surroundings,
but when he moved away he began to experience the
mental difficulties, which today we might characterise as bi-
polar depression. He spent his last 23 years creatively and
amiable in the Northampton County Asylum, where he had
been abandoned by his wife.
Re-awakening

Duke John’s timber and oilcloth Chinese Pavilion started life in 1745 in the Thames-side gardens of the new Montagu House at Westminster.

A corner of it was captured by Canaletto in his contemporary riverscape painting. In 1917 it was brought to Boughton where it was used as a summer pavilion on the West Lawn until the late 1960’s.

It is now permanently in the Unfinished Wing.

Boughton was requisitioned during the Second World War and the house was used by the British Museum as a safe repository, while the Park was taken over by the military, causing extensive damage during tank exercises.

Hutments were built by the Porter’s Lodge to provide accommodation for staff at Grafton Underwood airfield and for use as a general stores, a medical depot and to train American mobile field units in bread baking, after which it was turned into a prisoner of war camp housing nearly 1300 prisoners at its peak.

Duchess Mary (Mollie, 1900 -1993, wife of the 8th Duke) seen here pouring tea in the garden in 1952, made important contributions to the gardens, particularly in 1930’s, when there were 37 gardeners.

She and her sister Diana planted the rose garden opposite the South Wing.

A 1950’s aerial view, showing the residual outline on the West lawn of the formal parterre walls, whose sunken brick vestiges are skirted today by the inevitable molehills.

The extensive walled flower, fruit and vegetable gardens, which also supplied the family’s Scottish houses, are clearly visible.

Boughton was always filled with flowers when the family was in residence – usually from April to July each year. Along with cut flowers, large pots of highly scented Datura and Humea were particular favourites.

Sir David Scott (1887 – 1986), the ex-diplomat and cousin of the 8th Duke, who lived at Boughton for many years, was a keen plant collector and established the romantic private garden by the Dower House.

He was joined here in 1971 by his second wife, the renowned plantswoman and alpine specialist Valerie Finnis (1924-2006), recipient of the RHS Victoria Medal of Honour and the Kew Medal for her contribution to horticulture.

Orpheus

1975: John, the 9th Duke restores the Broadwater Lake and installs a new sluice gate to dam the River Ise.

The restoration of the landscape begins.

The first sorrow of autumn
Is the slow goodbye
Of the garden who stands so long in the evening:
A brown poppy head,
The stalk of a lily,
And still cannot go

From: The Seven Sorrows by Ted Hughes (1930 – 1998)

1982 - 2004: Roy Lister – Head Gardener

Using modern techniques, equipment and ideas, Roy Lister revitalised the gardens and reclaimed areas like the Wilderness and the Orchard. He also created a successful garden centre with greenhouses supplying the locality with quality plants and the Family with flowers and vegetables.

2003: Richard, later 10th Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, commissions the Landscape Master Plan from the Landscape Agency

2006: Lance Goffort-Hall appointed Landscape Manager and oversees the 5 year project to restore the canals and clear the mount of trees


The new space is inspired by the scale, mass and elements of the historic landscape. An Orphean Hades has been created to complement the Olympian Mount. The inverted grass pyramid descends 7 metres below the level of the restored terraces. Walking around the landscape, the new design is invisible, but drawing near to the mount, a gentle grass path spirals down to a square pool of still water deep underground, where the water reflects the sky. Next to it a stone rill traces Fibonacci’s Golden Ratio.

“Before anything else, it has to work on an emotional and sensual level. You should be able to walk into it without knowing anything about Eurydice or the Golden mean and be moved by it.”

Kim Wilkie

Bernard Opara leads the creative gardening team. David Cullum is Parks and Gardens manager.
The Grand Etang

In 2014 the original acre of water by the North Wing was re-dug, relined and refilled to re-instate the Grand Etang, with its jet d’eau, reflecting the house once again after nearly 250 years.

Now in an open lake, diffusive, wide,
Of vast extent; she rolls her silver tide.
Pleased with her form renew’d, she smooths her face;
Reflects fair Boughton in her watery glass.

From: A Month's Entertainment at Boughton (September 1748) by Rev. W. Stukeley

Two miles of ha-ha walls lay concealed beneath centuries of leaf mould, and Ralph Montagu’s intricate parterres are now largely laid to grass, their hidden brick geometries occasionally traced by molehills.

But 3 miles of 19th century fencing have now been replaced, 2 miles of lime avenues replanted from stock in the estate nursery, 70,000 cubic metres of silt dug out of the canals and Broadwater and the canals lined with 2 miles of 6-foot deep oak boarding.

The celebrated Cascade, once surmounted by 13 fountains and where the water fell over 5 stages flanked by statues, is now being considered for restoration.

Plants veiled ready to be married into summer

Power puity kindness freedom

Shape poem by students at Kettering Buccleuch Academy.