



Arne



Inspired by Maynard

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME IS HIS CASTLE, AND any manor house calls for well maintained gardens designed in harmony with the architectural style.

Arne Maynard is the landscape architect who is commissioned to uphold the heritage. He was a garden designer for the landscaped park at Cottisbrooke Hall, a grand Queen Anne mansion in Northamptonshire. He was commissioned to design the grounds at Dyrham Park for the National Trust, and gardens at the medieval manor house, Haddon Hall in Derbyshire.

Arne has an unmistakable design signature, creating a quintessentially English country house garden. His sense of capturing the history of a place sets his gardens apart, so that one steps into its timelessness.

Almost, but not quite effortless. The tall herbaceous borders of wildflowers are breezy but never overgrown, held in check by the trimmed box shaping the flowerbeds. It's a finely tuned instinct to get the balance right between evoking a timeless meadow of wildflowers or a wilderness of overgrown flowers. Rambling roses trail purposefully around doorways and window frames.

Arne brings a sense of order, with parterre topiary box hedging shaping the expanse, while pollarded trees stand like sentinels.

Photos Britt Willoughby Dyer

His sense of structure is honed by a background in architecture. "I chose to study architecture, probably because I didn't think I could make much of a career out of gardens, but I didn't ever settle into my course," he admits. His first and foremost love was gardening. "I love buildings, but it is their relationship with the landscape around them that excites me. A successful garden is one that has a sense of place, a perfect harmony, between house, garden, history, owners, and the surrounding landscape.

"The inspiration for all my garden designs is this search for harmony between house and garden. My passion is creating a sense of place. A sense of place is the soul of the garden. It is the intangible and harmonious atmosphere that stems from the perfect balance between the house, garden, landscape, plants and the dreams of the owners.

"Before I sketch any ideas for a new garden design, I first establish a little history of the existing garden. Then how the client wants to use the new garden. I design gardens to enjoy, relish and use, not simply to look at."

Haddon Hall is a medieval manor dating back to the 1100s, fortified by crenellations and turrets and surrounded by terraced Elizabethan gardens, which are open to the public from April to October. It has been in the same family for 450 years.



Photo Britt Willoughby Dyer

The present incumbent, Lord Edward Manners, lives in the 17th century games pavilion in the grounds. Arne Maynard was commissioned to design a garden for the pavilion, as Lord Manners' private residence, from where he oversees the management of Haddon Hall and its estate.

It is something of a tradition that Haddon Hall, in Bakewell, Derbyshire, passes to the Duke of Rutland's secondborn son, ever since John Manners, the Earl's second son, eloped with his true love, Dorothy Vernon, in 1563.

Dorothy's father, Sir George Vernon, a friend of Henry VIII, was an ambitious man known as "The King of the Peak District", and disapproved of the match, as only the Duke of Rutland's firstborn son would inherit Belvoir Castle and the title, to become an Earl.

Sir George of Haddon Hall, held a masked ball to encourage Dorothy to mingle and make her marriage a merger with a Duke. Dorothy slipped away, fled across the garden, down stone steps and over a footbridge, where her lord was waiting for her. The couple rode away and wed.

Love prevailed and Dorothy's father was won around and accepted their marriage, and the couple inherited Haddon Hall on his death two years later in 1565. Sir George finally realised his ambitions a few generations later, when the couple's grandson Sir John Manners of Haddon, inherited the Earldom, on the death of his distant cousin, the seventh Earl of Belvoir Castle.



Photo William Collinson

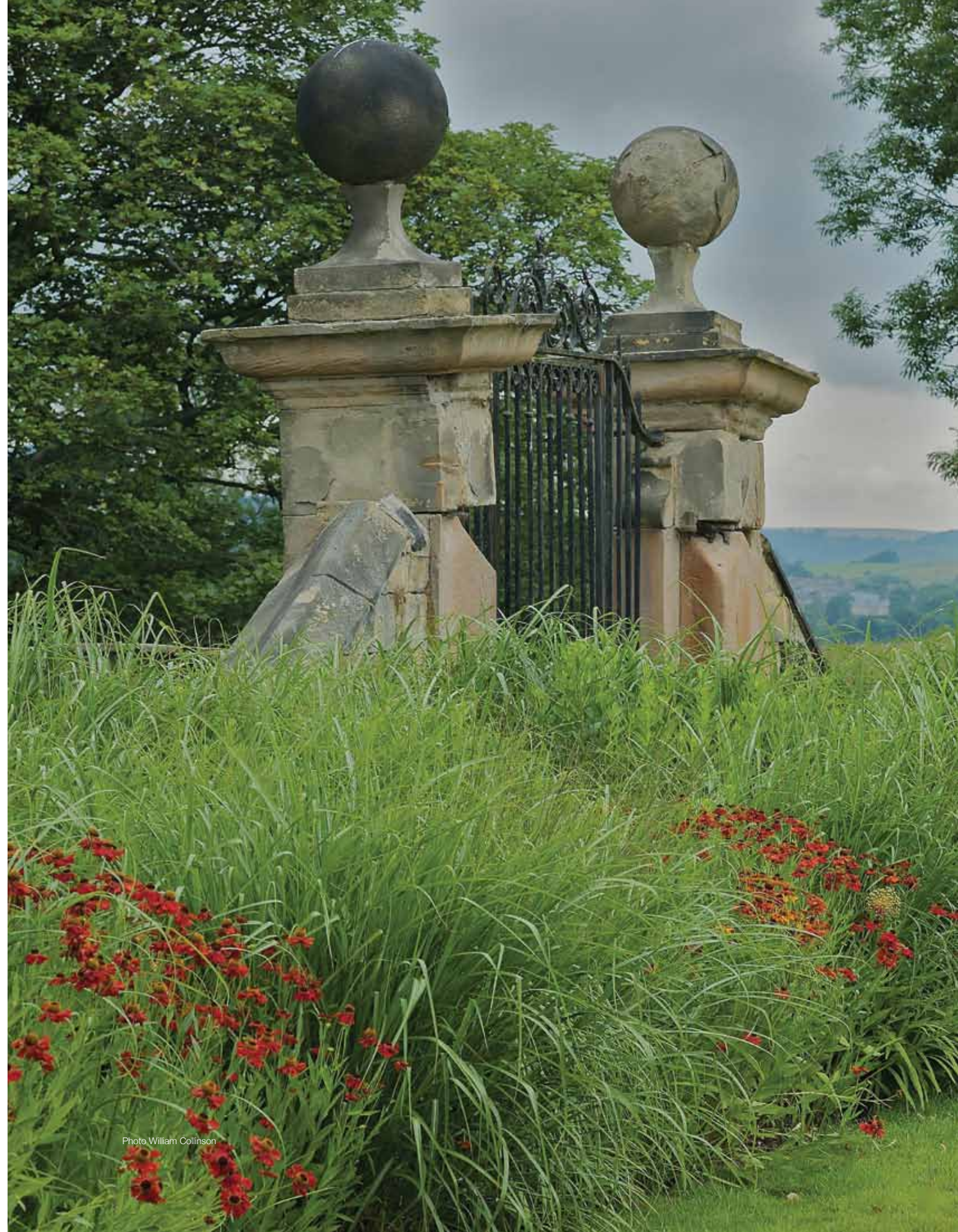


Photo William Collinson



Haddon Hall still has the banqueting hall with a medieval minstrels gallery, where the ball was held, and the romantic tradition of passing to the second son while the Duke occupies Belvoir Castle has been revived. The 9th Duke of Rutland, also named Sir John Manners, undertook a meticulous restoration in the 1920s and created the topiary garden alongside the stable block cottage, with clipped topiary, including two topiaries shaped into a peacock and a wild boar, the heraldic symbols of the Manners and Vernon families respectively, featured on the coat of arms.

The present Lord Edward Manners set about restoring the chapel. “It’s amazing to have this length of history behind you and see yourself in a continuum – to be conscious of what you will leave behind and how you will make that link with the future,” Lord Edward Manners says. “In the meantime, it’s about enjoying it.”

Beyond boule-clipped box topiary of the Elizabethan gardens, the family’s private garden designed by Arne Maynard, known as the Bowling Green, sits perfectly alongside the Elizabethan scheme, yet its copper beech cubes give it a contemporary twist.



Photo Britt Willoughby Dyer



Photo William Collinson



Photo William Collinson

Lady Cavendish, of neighbouring Chatsworth House, has been seen nodding in approval and making a note of the modern plantings.

While faithfully preserving the history of the Hall, Lord Edward decorated their summer home with relatively contemporary furnishing. “The garden needed to reflect this shift towards a more contemporary style whilst retaining the authenticity of the original games pavilion,” Arne explains.

An indented lawn at the centre is a subtle repeat of the pattern found in the terrace of the bowling green of the main hall and adds pattern without becoming fussy.

He planted a grid of copper beech cubes that give a bold structure to the open space, and contrasted it with the soft planting of herbaceous grasses and flowers in square beds to the sides, while scented rose beds and a deep herbaceous border are near the house.

“We created a dramatic amphitheatre behind the house by moving earth to form terraces before sowing with a mixture of grasses and species bulbs.”

Sculptural earth works are one of Arne’s flourishes. Arne Maynard uses his own gardens as a testing ground to see his ideas bed in over the seasons, and as a mood board for his planting palettes and themes.

His home, Allt-y-bela at Usk in Monmouthshire, is a romantic medieval cruck-framed farmhouse with a Renaissance tower. It has been lovingly restored by the Spitalfields Trust and has won several conservation awards. Arne has created a garden; the structure has now bedded in.

Creating a sense of place requires patience. “I have enjoyed having time to think about the design for the garden at Allt-y-bela, we haven’t rushed it, we have taken time to settle into the house and the surrounding rolling landscape. When I’m designing a garden, whether in a rural or urban setting, I spend time looking at the environment around it, and making sketches. On first moving to Usk, I spent many frosty sunny mornings ‘zen driving’ – with my camera and sketchbook I drove around the villages and lanes looking for ideas, observing the trees and plants growing naturally in hedgerows and verges. I look for native plants, wild flowers and trees that thrive. I make a note of materials used in garden walls, fences, hedges and buildings.

Tricia Guild, founder of Designers Guild, says of Arne: “Arne Maynard is one of the most talented garden designers today. His gardens are a magical combination of architecture and romance, the classic and the contemporary, and relate to their surroundings in subtle ways.”

“I have been lucky enough to have designed gardens all over the world, from farmhouse gardens and Chelsea mews houses to English manor houses and Middle Eastern palaces,” says Arne. “But as a gardener, I love to come home. I am most comfortable designing for English country houses and estates.”

One project was to revive the gardens of an Elizabethan hall in Norfolk. “Arriving at this extraordinary, romantic hall in Norfolk we found only minimal remains of the Tudor garden which we know had once existed. Our brief was not to re-create the Tudor gardens but to design something new, which had echoes of its history.”

The garden was on three separate levels. Steps were built to connect the areas on foot, and elements were designed to visually draw the areas together, conceptually connecting the garden. Oak trees are punctuated by topiary, softened with a scattering of wild flowers and herbs.

Simplicity is used to great effect. A hand-made willow trellis supports a white climbing rose against a barn. Great oak gates open from an enclosed vegetable garden to a terrace of filled planters overlooking lawns and herbaceous borders filled with cottage garden plants, hollyhocks and lavender.



Photo Britt Willoughby Dyer

“I constantly return to the Elizabethan era for inspiration and ideas and I often make plant choices, for flowery meads or kitchen gardens, based on what would have been grown in the 16th century. It was a Golden Age in terms of art and design and well worth studying for context of our contemporary choices.”

Materials to create paths, walls and boundaries are crafted bespoke using traditional methods. His own designs are based on simple, traditional shapes, hand crafted by the estate craftsmen at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire using English oak grown and aged on the estate.

Arne loves to visit gardens when they are opened to the public to view the dreamy planting schemes, manicured topiary, and aromatic herb gardens as much as any garden lover does.

For inspiration he returns to Rousham in Oxfordshire. The first ever landscaped garden, it has geometric parterre hedging, clipped boules of box, stone statues, footbridges, and a tranquil pond. “I never tire of the gardens there,” says Arne. “Rousham is quite simply a perfect garden. “It is one I go back to again and again for inspiration in my own work. William Kent (1685-1748) set out a wonderful journey through this garden and the garden has a real sense of place. It is proof that the fundamentals of good design don’t change.”



Photo Rowan Isaac



Chelsea Flower Show 2000. Photo Arne Maynard Garden Design Ltd

“One of the things I love most about Rousham is the sense of arrival. When you turn in to the drive you know that something is building up. You catch sight of a classical doorway in the boundary wall and spot a rusticated temple. You drive past a field of grazing long-horn cattle, past an unpretentious lodge, then suddenly the view opens up to an archetypal English country house scene. The ingredients are simple: the façade of the beautiful Jacobean house and a broad swathe of velvety striped grass, framed by mature lime trees.

“Rousham is about simplicity and quality. It is a big, grand garden; every time I visit, I come away with something that can be re-interpreted in the smallest of gardens. Only a few species of plant have been used to create the impact and this is something I’ve taken – that a limited palette of plants can be more effective and elegant than too much of a mixture.”

The art of perfect restraint has won Arne Maynard many accolades. A Gold Medallist in 2000, he won the coveted Best in Show Garden Award at the Chelsea Flower Show with Piet Oudolf. His long awaited reappearance is this year for Laurent-Perrier Bicentenary. The design echoes the grounds of a stately home in miniature, with pleached copper beech trees for height and structure, topiary for character, and an antique pear tree. Flowing water outlines the garden, adding movement and elegance.

“I love the use of sculpture within a garden and adore the work of the late Breon O’Casey. We are using one of his bronze birds in the Laurent-Perrier Bicentenary Garden. Bronze sits so naturally in a garden setting.”

Arne is the author of beautiful coffee table books on garden design published by Conran Octopus. He gives talks on Gardens with Atmosphere and Theatre in the Garden for the Royal Horticultural Society, tours on the worldwide lecture circuit, and teaches one-day gardening courses at his own garden.



Laurent-Perrier Bicentenary Garden, Chelsea Flower Show 2012



Photo Britt Willoughby Dyer

“I’ve always been a gardener, that’s how I describe myself, to clients,” says Arne. “Growing up I spent a lot of time with my mother in her garden, and my godmother who had a large garden. They taught me the joy of sowing seeds and I began my lifelong love of growing food.

“Creating a garden that sits harmoniously in its landscape can only be achieved by knowing the area well. We spend a lot of time with clients, talking to them about surrounding architecture and how they want to use their garden.” He also gets them to roll their sleeves up and dig in.

“People who come to us with a new project are looking for this style of garden. I think what surprises them is the level of involvement we demand of them. Many clients have gardeners, but I like clients to experience the art of planting – particularly in a kitchen garden.”

Most importantly, Arne practices what he preaches and is a passionate and experimental gardener at home in his own garden, described as being amongst “the best domestic gardens created in the last 50 years.”

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