

Council to discuss what could be done to safeguard the future of the wall. He requested a report on the condition of the wall from the structural engineer at English Heritage; and arranged for the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to clear the brambles and other vegetation from around the wall. In 2007, he arranged for the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to clear the vegetation again; but it is clear that this needs to be done regularly to stop the vegetation regenerating.

Coombe Royal and its grounds are owned by Devon County Council, and the building is currently used for Adult and Community Services (A.C.S.) purposes. The estate management responsibilities have recently been outsourced by the Council to Norfolk Property Services (South West). It is understood that, during the past year, officers of the Council's Environment Directorate have been in discussion with local A.C.S. staff, members of the local community, including the Kingsbridge Town Council, and N.P.S. (S.W.) regarding the possibility of increased access to, and positive management of, the grounds, including the Citrus Wall. Support was being sought for the funding of an initial feasibility study of the site to address increased community access, management of the historic environment interests and management/enhancement of the wildlife interests. With the recent change of administration at the County Council, there appears to be a fresh opportunity for the Devon Gardens Trust and the Garden History Society to work with the Council and others on securing an appropriate management scheme to safeguard the future of the important Citrus Wall structure.

The wall and its surroundings are in need of urgent remedial works to prevent any further decay from their present 'At Risk' state, but the costs of such work are high. The vegetation around the wall, both to the front and rear, needs to be eliminated. There is excessive damp to the rear of the wall, due to the vegetation around and on the wall itself. The capping stones are badly eroded and this has resulted in the loss of the overhang intended to keep the rainwater run-off away from the wall surface. Major areas of staining and moss build-up at localised areas are especially noticeable at the rear; and spalling of the stone surface is particularly bad to the capping stones and pillar caps, some of which are entirely missing. Pointing failing allows water and plant ingress; and rusting nails and iron hooks project from the stone work.



The citrus wall today (John Clark, November, 2007)

Due to the massive amount of undergrowth in the area, there has been a complete loss of context. The wall is no longer part

of the historic garden landscape and thus does not relate to its surroundings; nor is it recognised as the important listed feature that it is. It is a far cry from 1827 when Coombe Royal was described as being 'in a sheltered well wooded vale & is remarkable for the vigorous growth of the oranges, lemons, limes &

citrons which are trained against the garden walls & slightly protected in winter'.



The Citrus Wall in its planned landscape context (photograph owned by Mr John Elliot)

## The Coombe Royal Citrus Wall

John Clark (Conservation Officer, Garden History Society SW Region) and Malcom West (Conservation Officer, DGT)

The Citrus Wall is a listed structure in the grounds of Coombe Royal (spelt variously 'Coombe' and 'Combe'). It is in a state of considerable disrepair. In 1999 John Clark, the D.G.T. Conservation Officer at the time, met the Conservation Officer of Devon County