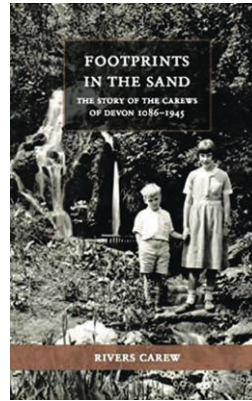


Book Reviews



Footprints in the Sand: the Story of the Carews of Devon 1086-1945, Rivers Carew, (DuBois, 2018).

This is a family history that links in to many aspects of local and national history for it covers thirty generations of Carews over nearly a thousand years. Indeed the very first Carew was recorded as governor of Windsor Castle in the Domesday Book; Sir George Carew drowned when the Mary Rose sank, watched

by his wife with Henry VIII beside her; Sir Nicholas Carew was executed for treason in 1538 despite being a knight of the Garter and previously a loyal favourite of Henry VIII, who coveted his land in Surrey. Less famous members of the family provide fascinating insights into the minutiae of daily living – and dying. The research that has been carried out by Rivers Carew is truly amazing in its extent and detail; historical events, families related to the extensive and widely scattered Carew family, buildings associated with them and a few gardens. The quotations from letters and wills give a flavour of the times, as well as relevant information.

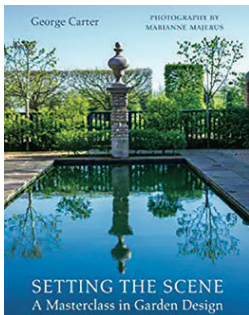
The first land in Devon to be owned by a Carew was in 1280 and included Mamhead; in 1297 Mohun's Ottery, near Honiton, became 'the nest of the Carews' for ten generations; the family seat of Haccombe was acquired in 1425; followed in 1653 by Bickleigh Castle. When Thomas Carew married Dorothy West, she brought Tiverton Castle into the family in 1725. Most of the family acquisitions were by marriage, justifying a remark by Professor W. G. Hoskins that: 'Marriage has been by far the most important single factor in the successful accumulation of estates in Devon' (p. 63). The most impressive example of this was the marriage of Thomas' great-grandson Henry to Elizabeth Palk of Marley. Since her cousin was Sir Lawrence Palk of Haldon House, a chapter on the rise and fall of the Palk family is included, leading to descriptions of Haldon House, Lawrence Tower and insights into the East India Company.

However Haccombe itself is the estate that takes centre stage, especially after the sixth baronet had demolished the old manor house and erected a new one, dated 1778. Sadly this was generally acknowledged to be 'quite lacking in architectural distinction'. Mercifully the small and very interesting church of St Blaise, founded in 1233, has avoided 'restoration'. The author has taken many opportunities to refer to English literature, so Sir Thomas Carew being a founder of the Dean Hunt in 1776 allows him to digress onto Robert Herrick of Dean Prior. His son, Henry, had a career in the army during the Napoleonic wars but then set out to make extensive alterations and additions to Haccombe. This was done to such a poor standard that John Nash was employed in 1807 to oversee the remedial work. This chapter is enlivened by family letters and an entertaining section on the family black sheep: 'The King of the Beggars' – Bamfylde Moore Carew. The nineteenth century Carews settled into country pursuits and county responsibilities, also fighting for

their country and helping to maintain the Empire. An 1889 watercolour (p. 157) shows details of the garden, softening the 'sturdy plainness' of the mansion.

'A Spanish Connection' leads into the ninth baronet, Sir Henry Palk Carew, whose difficult position and spendthrift ways initiated the downfall of the family fortunes through spending beyond his limited means and borrowing heavily. He spent £24. 15s. at Westacott's Nursery in Barnstaple in 1898, mainly on trees; the year in which his expenditure was twice his annuity. His elderly female cousins were in possession of the estates and did try to help him. They paid for the education of his son, Thomas, the father of the author, but were continually disappointed by both baronets as they proceeded through a succession of failed ventures, aggravated by the effects of a conman, death duties, two world wars and national financial problems. The extremely complicated family financial arrangements forced sales in the 1920s of the Haccombe home farm, the Marley and Bickleigh estates. Sir Thomas owned Haccombe for only two years before it had to be sold; the family moved out altogether in 1945. Although this last section makes sad reading, an appendix by Venetia, Rivers' older sister, recalls vividly their wartime freedom to roam and fascinating memories of the gardens and estate. Family tradition continues: the grandson of Sir Rivers Carew, Thomas Theodore, was recently christened at St Blaise by the former Rector and Arch-priest of Haccombe (a unique position, directly responsible to the Archbishop of Canterbury).

Carolyn Keep



Setting the Scene, George Carter, (Pimpernel Press, 2018); special photography by Marianne Majerus.

This beautifully presented and illustrated book has the subtitle A Garden Design Masterclass from Repton to the Present Age. George Carter has distilled thirty years of top level garden design into a unique

format: he has related his experience and practice directly to that of Humphry Repton and to a much lesser extent Repton's two sons and other later designers. Like Repton, the majority of his clients have been willing to spend freely: many examples from his own home in Norfolk partly balance this. Another similarity is his ability to look at house and garden as a unity and within the setting (hence the title),

resulting sometimes in additions to the house and changes in use and ornamentation for ancillary buildings. Drives are moved and hedges or fences inserted with care and skill; there are good lessons to be learned here, including how to park cars near to the house without obstructing any views. His creative approach to garden structure is refreshing; his initial career in designing exhibitions shows through and he admits to recording sentry boxes across Europe!

His planting rarely uses bright colours and caters for clients who can employ unlimited but horticulturally unskilled labour; pleached limes, hornbeam hedges, topiary bushes and trees, and sharp-edged perfect lawns abound. This is realistic with the present shortage of skilled gardeners, although vegetable gardens do appear, albeit often a token gesture to 'grow your own' with plenty of ornament. There are exceptions, such as the colour themed beds at Penshurst Place, but the overall impressions are architectural, whether of live or inert materials. That does not exclude fun and ephemera or a very intelligent use of plants, especially woody ones.

A title and quotation from Repton head each chapter, followed by a relevant example from his papers. Carter has a detailed knowledge of Repton's four books and co-edited Repton's *Memoirs* (Norwich, 2005). He has clearly read widely in garden history and absorbed ideas into his landscape design commissions; modern innovations not available to Repton are also described. Each short section within a chapter is related clearly to theory and practice. 'Water in the Garden' moves from Repton's informal features, such as the cascade at Endsleigh to his formal ones, illustrated by the Conduit at Ashridge. A reminder that the electric pump has made 'waterworks infinitely easier to engineer' leads into Carter's Garden of Surprises at Burghley House and its links to the water jokes of the lost sixteenth and seventeenth century garden at Theobalds. Carter's reflecting pools and canals with black linings and water contrast with his rills and fountains. Cascades vary from a magnificent flight of stairs to a small jet falling into slate-lined runnels in a London garden beside a busy road, where the sound helps to deaden the traffic noise.

Calling this lovely book a master-class might suggest that it provides the practical tools for landscape designing, which it does not. There is only one plan and an aerial photograph and those are of Carter's own Silverstone Farm. However it performs the more important functions of offering new ways to approach a site and inspiring the reader to consider a wider range of responses to the landscape.

Carolyn Keep