



**Annual Conference
31 August – 2 September 2017
at
University of Plymouth**

"Blest Elysium" – Sustainable?

The Gardens Trust Conference 2017, based at the University of Plymouth, will combine lectures and visits in and around the city. The **three day fully-inclusive** package will explore eighteenth century landscapes developed on earlier gardens, a Victorian public park, memorial and twentieth century civic spaces. It will discuss themes and challenges faced by professionals, custodians and managers working in such historic landscapes. How can conservation be balanced with ensuring they are sustainable and relevant in the twenty-first century?

Plymouth is an amalgamation of three towns that have played a crucial role in Britain's mercantile and colonial history: Sir Francis Drake, James Cook and Charles Darwin all set off from and returned to Plymouth on expeditions that were to have both a direct and indirect impact on the gardens of the British Isles. The city lies below Dartmoor facing a large bay with natural harbours flanked by the hills of Cornwall and Devon. Lush vegetation, rock and water are naturally abundant, providing some of the most stunning views from any historic gardens in the UK.

Conference Programme

After gathering on early Thursday evening with talks setting the scene for the following few days, we discover **Drakes Place**. These gardens were laid out in 1891, restored by the University of Plymouth to an original 1910 design by Treseder Nurseries of Truro and reopened in 2014. They stretch below the Victorian reservoirs built in the 1820s on the course of the 28km Drakes Leat that was constructed in 1592 under the supervision of Sir Francis Drake to supply water from Dartmoor to the town.

On Friday the day starts with the ever popular New Research Symposium. We then board a boat for a tour of Plymouth Sound en route for the traditional approach to **Mount Edgcumbe**, the erstwhile home of the Earls of Mount Edgcumbe, and once the go-to destination for royalty and nobility. The Grade I gardens and parkland with fifty-five listed structures and myriad breath-taking views have changed little since their main development in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Mount Edgcumbe estate is now in divided ownership, the mansion, gardens and parkland are managed jointly by Plymouth City Council and Cornwall County Council, the home farm, kitchen garden and wider estate are in private ownership. After exploring the gardens, tea and talks, dinner will be taken at Mount Edgcumbe.

Saturday takes us to the outskirts of Plymouth. **Saltram**, now National Trust, but formerly the home of the Parker family, whose estate once extended from their original mansion at Boringdon with its interconnected landscape, was cut in two by the building of the A38 dual carriageway in the 1970s. The gardens, in part designed by Nathaniel Richmond, have more recently been encroached by landfill and large housing projects. Public parks in Plymouth, originating from the Victorian period have seen a resurgence in recent years with friends' groups playing a vital role, and we will visit one of the largest, **Devonport Park** designed by Frederick Meyer. Following the AGM we go down to **The Hoe**, the iconic heart of Plymouth, with the post WWI Royal Navy memorial obelisk towering over its vast parade ground, Victorian terraces, outdoor lido (the Tinside Pool), and Smeaton's Tower, the upper section of the Eddystone Lighthouse. A few hundred metres inland is the **Civic Square** designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe, and the adjacent Plymouth Guildhall, that was rebuilt after World War II, its predecessor having been destroyed in the 1941 bombing of the city; the location for the Conference Dinner.

On Sunday we visit the thirty-five acre Victorian **Ford Park Cemetery**, and then, looking to 2018 and the anniversary of Humphrey Repton's death, we end with the garden he designed at **Endsleigh** for the Duke and Duchess of Bedford. The fishing and hunting lodge, begun in 1810, was designed by Sir Jeffry Wyattville, its setting chosen because it was so reminiscent of the Duchess' Scottish homeland. Since 2005 Endsleigh has been run as a small hotel and its 100 acres of gardens, registered Grade I, have undergone extensive restoration, including the shell house, valley garden, great formal terrace, dairy and children's garden.

A further two to three days' post-conference tour exploring gardens in other parts of Devon may be arranged if there is sufficient interest.