



Mr Hamilton's Elysium: The Gardens of Painshill

By Michael Symes

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The Hon. Charles Hamilton was one of those extraordinary 18th-century gentlemen who, like Lord Cobham at Stowe and Henry Hoare at Stourhead, turned their gardens into works of art. Inspired by his time in Italy, Hamilton set out to transform the "accursed hill" at Painshill into a picturesque landscape complete with a serpentine lake and water wheel, Turkish tent, Chinese bridge, ruined abbey, grotto, and hermitage with hermit. The Surrey garden soon ranked with the best in the land but its decline was rapid and it lay forgotten until rediscovered in the 1980s. The restoration over the last 30 years has been as careful and dramatic as any, and now Painshill Park is visited by thousands — even the famous vineyard is flourishing again. This book — fully illustrated with archival images and wonderful modern-day photographs of the park and its amazing buildings — is the first to give the story of Charles Hamilton and his creation.

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Editorial Review

Review

The author of this scholarly and comprehensive book was involved in the resurrection of Painshill from the first, and has produced a beautifully illustrated volume that is worthy of its subject. The photography is of high quality and it's a particular pleasure to see sketches - William Gilpin's urgent pen-and-inks, for example - reproduced so finely. Country Life Includes a stunning selection of photographs and illustrations of the garden's landscape and buildings. Heritage Very readable and accompanied by some highly evocative photographs. Image Interiors Everyone should lose themselves in 'Mr Hamilton's Elysium'. Homes & Gardens An illuminating tour around the crystal studded grotto, Turkish tent, American plant rarities and other features that have influenced generations of garden makers. Financial Times Charts the story of its creation with early prints, paintings and contemporary accounts together with modern photographs. It is a lavish guide to this extraordinary and influential garden, a place for inspired wandering. Guardian Symes is, as usual, lucid on the history and particularly interesting on the Herculean efforts needed to bring Painshill back from the near abandon it had reached by 1970. Historic Gardens Review In an exceptional book, Michael Symes conjures up the highs and lows of Painshill's history with a rare combination of scholarship and readability. Art Newspaper A book for everyone. The general reader can learn about one of Britain's most important landscape gardens. The undergraduate studying art or social history can find a great case study in eighteenth-century culture and taste. And the academic historian who specialises in art, gardens or botany can find detailed discussions of each of these subjects, supported by scholarly references. Project managers should find it interesting too, for the book is an object lesson in how a group of people can succeed in achieving their long-term goals with careful planning and management, teamwork and volunteer recruitment, and fund-raising. Cassone The quality and depth of the research in this book is striking. Every sentence bulges with historic detail. The book is beautifully composed and illustrated, with both up-to-date images and those made by 18th Century visitors. The book is not only of interest to those who are concerned with Painshill. Many sections provide an excellent basis to a wider appreciation of garden history. Research into Painshill is something of a life's work for the author, a garden historian to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his teaching, making this book well anticipated. Garden

About the Author

Michael Symes is a member of the Painshill Park Trust and has undertaken much of the historical research that has underpinned the restoration. He has taught and directed the Birkbeck College MA in garden history and has written a number of books including A Glossary of Garden History, The English Rococo Garden and Garden Sculpture.

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