

THE GARDEN REVIEW COLUMN

A new regular series of various writers' personal view of a garden they have visited recently

Iford Manor

By Bella D'Arcy Reed

'This unique and romantic hillside garden is characterised by steps, terraces, sculpture and magnificent rural views' - www.ifordmanor.co.uk

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I adore this garden, and I visited it many times before I became disabled, so I knew what to expect - no mobility scooter, no wheelchair of any kind - just two sticks, one of which was a sitting stick, and determination! From the entrance, you can choose to ascend a long flight of steps or go up a dirt path where the tree roots make an occasional step. This is the way I choose, as you can rest at each 'root-landing'.



When you get to the top there is the romantic cloister - up a couple of steps to get inside, and usually a seat to perch on as you take in the quiet atmosphere - don't forget to peer out of the 'Romeo and Juliet' window.





From there it is a few steps to the completely level path. From here you can see down into the gardens, and carefully inch your way onto the (sloped) grass - where I will sit on my stick for several minutes to take in the quiet rustle of the garden and the sound of water. The path takes you past (or into) the summer house, and then past the large pots, the roman sarcophagus, the reproduced boar - which Peto had made as a cast from the original, a practise not allowed now -



to the little loggia with its statue, and box parterre garden:



You can then sit on the semi-circular bench seat and look back at the view



View from the loggia, showing lush Edwardian-style perennial planting



The stone bench, at the back of the photograph. Peto was known for his benches, which garden historian Robin Whalley suggest come from sketches made while Peto was in Pompeii. Such benches are also found in the paintings of Alma-Tadema.

One of the 'glorious alcoves' (right)

A mixture of items brought over from Italy designed into small corner reminiscent of the Roman gardens of Pompeii.



The level lawn, with its Italian cypresses - who would believe you were near Bradford on Avon?



Taking care, you can descend some more steps to see the gorgeous little alcoves with fountains and sculpture, and then take your way across the level grass to the 'long flight' of steps which will take you back to the entrance. As there were lots of perching places I did not feel at all tired. and if you have companions, they can make sure you don't slip. Edging my way down the last steps the gentleman of the house saw me and rushed out to help me down - very kind, as it was damp that day. If you are not chair-bound, you can do this, and with guide dogs and companions. I am sorry for those who can only use a wheelchair as they will miss out - except perhaps on the delicious cakes in the cafe. it is such a pity that the website does not say this - and that it does not encourage the slightly more able-bodied to give it a try.



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