

EDINGTON GARDENING CLUB

(FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH)

Our speaker for November was Neil Ross, a garden designer who had lived and worked in New Zealand and had also been head plantsman at Sissinghurst. His talk was entitled 'Behind the scenes at Sissinghurst' and we were treated to a fascinating insight into how Vita Sackville West and Harold Nicholson turned the overgrown Victorian farmyard into the garden that we see today. They took ideas from Hidcote, making compartment rooms with a vista from one side of the garden to the other, and how many of us who have visited Sissinghurst have noticed that many features are crooked but held together with straight lines to a focal point.

Vita wanted the garden to be open to the public and by writing articles in magazines and newspapers made people want to visit it and although the garden has changed since Vita and Harold's day because the National Trust keeps it fresh by experimenting with plants and more rigid colour schemes, many thousands of visitors each year appreciate its splendour. In Vita's day, the rose garden contained old fashioned romantically named roses and had grass paths; the Spring Walk was adopted by Harold, who had his own gardener and planted a 'liquorice allsorts' of spring bulbs framed by lime trees and hornbeam hedges. The Great Exhibition attracted many visitors to the UK and the White Garden was created at this time as a 'romantic moonlight garden.'

How many of us knew that plugs of grass were grown to replace worn out grass; that sheep netting was used as a framework on large walls, and is particularly good as a support for clematis; that only the 'top' gardener was allowed to mow the lawns closest to the house; gardeners are allocated specific jobs each day, rather than have responsibility for a particular part of the garden or that everything must be finished by the 1pm bell?

Those of us who visit Sissinghurst in the future will look at the garden in a new light after Neil's talk and will no doubt try to spot the 'crooked lines' in both the paths and the lawns!

Our next meeting is the Christmas party on Thursday 5th December -7.15pm for a 7.30 start. There will be no meeting in January. The first meeting of 2014 is on Thursday 6th February when Rodney Cundick will talk on 'Vegetable Gardening'

Wendy Pollard