

## THE AMERICAN GARDEN 2023

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THE AMERICAN GARDEN, SALTWOOD, HYPHE, CT21 4EH



The American Garden was created by Archdeacon Croft, who was rector of Saltwood from 1812 until his death in 1869. Son of the rector of Rowley, James Croft was educated at Eton and Cambridge. He became a deacon in 1809. In 1812, he married Charlotte Sutton, daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and was given the living of Saltwood in the same year.

Saltwood, until the Pleurality Act of 1847 (it carried fourteen livings), was one of the richest livings in England with a stipend of £4,850 per annum.

Apparently, Croft was a great lover of nature with a particular passion for gardens, but nothing gave him more pleasure than that others should enjoy what he loved himself. In 1812, the ground he selected for his famous garden was originally a piece of bog land called the Saltwood Alders. The alders were cut down and used to make charcoal for the manufacture of gunpowder at Faversham, and some of them remain to this day on the periphery of the garden.

In 1820, the first shrubs planted were *Rhododendron Ponticum* and its varieties, together with *Rhododendron Arborium*, some now thirty feet high. These may be seen in the Dell Walk and at the west end of the garden beyond the Azalea Walks.

In the spring of 1854, the Archdeacon employed William Acomb as gardener. The American Garden was then in its infancy and the knowledgeable Acomb was given permission to extend



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it and to plant trees and shrubs he thought would adapt well to the boggy type of soil. Croft purchased wonderful selections of rhododendron from the Himalayas, China and Japan, including hybrids, from pale pink to intense crimson. From California came the redwood varieties of Sequoia Gigantea and Wellingtonia, the tallest of which now stands at over 110 ft. It is thought that the name of the garden developed as a result of these specimens from America.

Acomb had charge of these gardens for thirty years until his death in 1884. Year by year, more trees and shrubs were added. Croft was succeeded by a rector who was not wealthy and during his time at Saltwood the garden was somewhat neglected. However, his successor, the Reverend Canon Hodgson, was a true gardener and planted a great many new specimens of rhododendron and azalea.

In 1896, the property was bought by Alfred Leney who preserved and improved the gardens. This process was continued by Stanley Harland from 1947 with the help of his head gardener, Alex Pleuvry, whose practical and academic knowledge was invaluable. He served in these gardens for thirty years until his retirement in 1976. One of the developments during this period was the replacement of areas filled by laurels with a selection of newer varieties of rhododendron and azalea. This included the introduction of the Kurume Azaleas, in particular, on the east bank of the Dell Walk.

Since Stanley Harland's death in 1998, the gardens have continued to be cherished and maintained by his son Nigel. The result is that today the garden remains a place of beauty and serenity.

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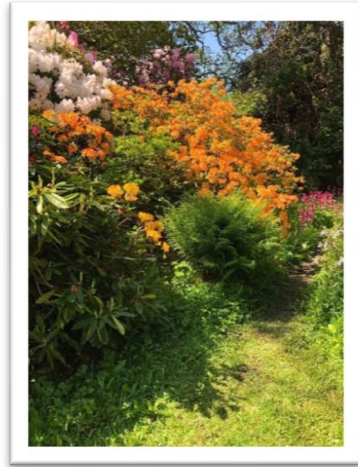
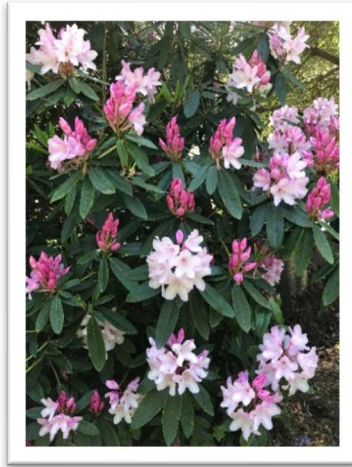


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## PICTURES AND QUOTES BY MEMBERS DURING THE SOCIETY'S VISIT IN MAY 2023



"A stunning variety of Rhododendrons, and the smell of the Gold Azalea beautiful. In all a very pleasant afternoon visit, and delicious cake"



"The most spectacular Rhododendrons and Azaleas in this American Garden which are a sight indeed to behold. AMAZING! "

