

Weekend Wonder: Green Fingers (part 1)

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May 2020

Welcome to Weekend Wonder: Green Fingers (part 1) – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

This Bank Holiday Weekend might be a chance to flex those green fingers for everyone who has access to a green space or window box. With garden centres being able to open now and this week there is virtual access to one of the world's greatest flower shows at Chelsea, we thought it is a good time to look at the blooming green spaces in our borough. We will be looking through our collections and showcasing our own back gardens here in Haringey.

Haringey is quite blessed with its green spaces of parks, gardens, nature reserves, woodland and school and community gardens. Each year we enjoy Haringey in Bloom, the National Garden Scheme and flower and vegetable shows, amongst other things. It also has a long horticultural heritage of market gardening and specialist plant growing, which we will come back to in later posts. But here are some stories, paintings and photographs to inspire and motivate – whether you have your own back garden, an allotment, a balcony, windowsill, flowerpot or pot plant, let's get creative with our green fingers.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Some of you might recall our exhibition at Bruce Castle back in 2009 called '*Our Back Yard*', where we brought together the Museum's collection of paintings depicting back gardens and displayed them alongside artwork borrowed by local artists. It was refreshingly different to look at our own green spaces that mean so much to us and to share that joy and enthusiasm with others. Our green spaces are important for us to be creative and productive in; they are spaces where we can express ourselves, where we can be peaceful and reflective, watch things grow, be amazed and delighted by nature and also share precious and happy memories.



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

This painting (above) is called '*Nostalgia*' and was painted in 2006 by Queenie Rawle of Tottenham. As she said of her work:

"Nostalgia was my reason for painting this picture. It was also a challenge to put colour into this image, as it is based on a 1932 photograph. It was taken on our allotment where Broadwater Farm Estate now is. The allotment was Dad's pride and joy and we spent many happy hours there."



Photograph from the collections of Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The painting above was one of a series of garden paintings undertaken in oil between 1963 -1965 by Moshe Galili (known to friends and family as Bandi). Speaking in 2009, Bandi said of his work:

“When I came to London in 1962, my wife Ruby had already found a flat for us in Wood Green. It was very different from my flat off the Boulevard San Michelle in Paris. To be in Wood Green in the 1960s reminded me of the Dickensian London I had read about in my childhood back in Budapest.

With all the neglect of White Hart Lane then - which has in the meantime changed - I was intrigued and fascinated by the old houses and the jealously-guarded ramshackled back gardens, with their crumbling wooden fences and crammed garden sheds. The local parks also had these back garden qualities, enclosed by small, old houses – dusty and rather forgotten.

I felt that past history and the hidden beauty behind my first impression of these green places. This made me start to paint our back garden and the other lonely parks or streets of Haringey that they were back then, but that are not so lonely now.”



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

We have already shared the image of our painting above in a previous post about [neighbours in Bruce Grove](#). Called '*A Tangle in My Garden*', this painting is likely to be the garden of 8 Bruce Grove in Tottenham, painted at the home of the artist Beatrice Offor in 1917. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year. Here Beatrice seems to invite and draw you into the deep shade and lush greenery of ferns and shrubbery in this, her magical tangled garden. The painting makes you want to follow the path towards the warm dappled sunshine, as it delicately dances through the leaves and trees beyond.

Although we don't have an image, here are some memories from 1988 of gardening in her former Westbury Avenue home - with a dog - by Hazel Whitehouse:

"The garden was long and narrow, with a large conifer which grew next to an oblong made of old-fashioned concrete. This had once, apparently, been a fish pond. I planned the garden with two rambling roses along one side fences, and cottage garden plants in the main bed. The ex-fish pond was planted up with herbs. Plants were allowed to drift over the path and seed themselves.

The dog Snuff was a highly intelligent border collie. He enjoyed gardening. He helped dig our deep-seated roots of our old hedge, seizing the exposed root in his teeth and tugging with all his might to pull it out. When I weeded the back of the main bed, I would throw the weed to Snuff waiting on the path (he never trod on the flowerbed). He would catch the flying plant in his mouth and carefully take it to the compost heap and drop it there. We worked on the garden together."

Whatever size the back yard or garden, our photograph collections give examples of how people have made the most of what space they have. This view (below) from 1963 shows the tiny back yard of Stone Cottage that once stood at 15 Park Road in Crouch End, with hanging baskets and other plants.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The cottages in the photograph below of 1908 were in Factory Lane, near Tottenham High Road. As the name of the lane suggests, it was close to Warne's Rubber factory, but these long cottage gardens show there were keen gardeners living there, growing flowers and vegetables.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

There were a number of grand houses of wealthy families in the Haringey area, many with large gardens and gardeners to keep them maintained. In the photograph below we can see the Scrimgeours' house in Jackson's Lane, Highgate c.1870. It was the home of the family of Alexander Scrimgeour. The gardener of this impeccably-kept garden stands in the middle of the lawn with a traditional besom broom, looking on at the young girls being pushed in a perambulator (with a hobby horse at the front), and two women leading another young girl on a pony. Keeping a horse must have had obvious advantages for the garden....



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

In the photographs below, we have two views of Bruce House that date from c.1870. A slightly plainer style of house than the one above, this building once stood on the site where Bruce Grove Station is today (corner of Bruce Grove and Tottenham High Road). It was formerly the home of Dr May, a well-known local Quaker. In the first photograph, we can see that the homeowner seemed to like to arrange flowerpots on a display stand outside the window looking out into their garden, reminiscent perhaps of a home-made auricula theatre.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)



— The corner of Bruce Grove. —

From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

Two gardeners are hard at work in the first of these two images below of [Benjamin Windus's house](#) at Philip Lane, by Tottenham Green in c.1865 (there's also another horse!). Windus (1790-1867) was an avid art collector (see the website '[Turner in Tottenham](#)' for this extraordinary history). He had many visitors to his house to look at his collection of paintings by Turner - and clearly the view from the window of the library across his garden was aesthetically important to him too.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)



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Back in the 21st century, we can delight in some magnificent local gardens that are part of the National Open Gardens Scheme each year, raising money for charities in the process. In [St Regis Close in Muswell Hill](#), for well over 20 years, gardeners Susan Bennett and Earl Hyde have been welcoming people to their garden. Their 'riot of colour' has appeared in books, magazines and on TV. Take a look at [these links](#) to [see their garden](#) for yourself. In recent years, in 'Gardens and Health Week' they have also invited a group of Holocaust survivors from Haringey to enjoy an afternoon tea party.

In Tower Gardens in Tottenham, gardener Matthew Bradby (and Chair of Tottenham Civic Society) also opens his garden each year in the National Gardens Scheme. His garden has been in magazines and on television too, most recently back in the summer of 2019 when Alan Titchmarsh's *Love Your Garden* popped along to film with Matthew whilst creating a serene Mediterranean-style corner in his garden (below).



The large house of Tottenham Park (which we saw in one of our [first posts during lockdown](#)), was demolished in 1904. By 1906, its grounds had become a wildflower meadow, as this lovely photograph below shows with a young girl picking flowers.



From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

A hundred years ago in Tottenham - in 1920 - we have learnt this week from our very own Val Crosby about how her mother had planted a philadelphus plant (or 'mock orange') at the family home:

“My [philadelphus](#) (mock orange) is starting to flower today. When I was a child it often didn't flower until well into June. My Mum loved it, and planted this one as a cutting, when she was 5 years old. So we are celebrating its 100th birthday this year! It is higher than the house and is stunning when covered in blossom. The smell is gorgeous!”

Thinking of family, gardens and treasured memories, we come to our last work of art which features a garden. Here's a little sculpture in glazed clay of '*My Family in the Garden*' (photograph below) made by a Haringey schoolchild in 2005. This was part of a project when Haringey primary schools worked with artists to make portraits in clay of their families for the exhibition '[Family Faces](#)' - held at both the National Portrait Gallery and at Bruce Castle Museum.



Courtesy National Portrait Gallery





From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

We will leave you with these two snapshots of Bruce Castle in the sunshine taken this week, showing the flowers that are now in bloom.

With 'half-term' coming up, from Tuesday next week we will also be sharing some Activities for families to make and do. In the attached PDF here, you can find a Gardening wordsearch that you can have a go to start off with.

If you are celebrating Eid, things are very different this year of course in lockdown but we wish you all good health, stay safe and enjoy your special time with your families this weekend – Eid Mubarak! And if you have any photographs or stories to share about how you are doing things differently, we would love to see them.

Have fun gardening too, stay well - and remember social distancing

Take care and best wishes from us all at Bruce Castle

Deborah Hedgecock
Curator

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