

# Princes, Prime Ministers and Pre-Raphaelites Terrace Gardens and the Duke of Buccleuch

*In November 2010, English Heritage made major amendments to their register entry for Terrace & Buccleuch Gardens and, for the first time, included a summary of the Gardens' principal heritage features [see Appendix]. This has very important implications for the future maintenance of the Gardens. To understand this, it is useful to look at the complex history of the Gardens from the point of view of one of the key figures, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Buccleuch.*

Walter Montagu Douglas Scott, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Buccleuch and 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Queensberry, was a man who was at ease with royalty. Buccleuch was himself descended from monarchs: the first Duke of Buccleuch, better known as the Duke of Monmouth, was the favourite illegitimate son of Charles II.<sup>1</sup> When the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke was only 16 years old and already a very wealthy landowner, George IV spent two weeks as a guest of the Duke on his Midlothian estate. This was the famous occasion in 1822 when the kilted Hanoverian was in Scotland on a visit organised by Buccleuch's eminent relative and namesake, the novelist Sir Walter Scott.<sup>2</sup>

In 1827, on the death of his grandmother – the daughter of the Duke of Montagu and the wife of 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buccleuch – the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke took possession of a small estate bordering the Thames and stretching half way up Richmond Hill. Back in 1790, Horace Walpole had described Montagu's garden as *"perfectly screened from human eyes, tho' in the bosom of so populous a village: and you climb till at last, treading the houses under feet, you recover the Thames and all the world at a little distance. I am amazed that it is not more talked of"*.<sup>3</sup> Having been orphaned at the age of thirteen (as he was about to attend Eton), Buccleuch seems to have already spent a considerable amount of time at his grandmother's Richmond home. Now, in 1833, this was where he laid on a magnificent fete for William IV and Queen Adelaide and other noble personages.<sup>4</sup> William was no stranger to the area: in the 1790's, when he was the Duke of Clarence and a bachelor, he had leased a neighbouring property apparently as a love nest for himself and his mistress, the actress Dorothy Jordan.<sup>5</sup> Many years later, in 1867, after Buccleuch had acquired the neighbouring estate of the Marquis of Lansdowne (the eminent Whig politician), so that his estate now extended to the top of Richmond Hill, he received *"in truly regal magnificence"* a more exotic guest – the Sultan of Turkey – who arrived on Buccleuch's lawn by royal barge, accompanied by the Prince of Wales.<sup>6</sup> Sultan Abdulaziz, the first ruler of the Ottoman Empire to visit Western Europe, was made a Knight of the Garter during his stay. Buccleuch already had that honour.<sup>7</sup>

However, the most glittering occasion of all had been in June 1842, when Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, an aging Duke of Wellington and former Prime Minister Melbourne were seen strolling on Buccleuch's riverside lawn. Buccleuch had just been made a Privy Counsellor and Lord Privy Seal in Robert Peel's Tory government – the administration that would be responsible for the momentous repeal of the Corn Laws.<sup>8</sup> His wife Charlotte Anne, Mistress of the Robes to Queen Victoria, was noted for her hospitality, but she had never before had, and would never again have, such an illustrious guest list as on this occasion. They included, in order of precedence: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, King Leopold I of the Belgians and Queen Louise-Marie, Queen Dowager Adelaide, the Duchess of Kent, the Duke and Duchess

of Cambridge, the Duchess of Gloucester, Princess Augusta of Cambridge, Prince George of Cambridge, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, the French Ambassador and the Countess of St. Anlaire, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, the Duke of Wellington, Viscount Melbourne, the Dukes and Duchesses of Norfolk, Beaufort and Cleveland, the Duchess of Northumberland, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Marquis of Salisbury, Lady Robert Peel, the Marquis and Marchioness of Londonderry, the Marquis of Westminster, Earl and Countess Denbigh, and Lady Augusta Somerset.<sup>9</sup>

For the occasion a huge floral arch festooned with flags was erected over Lower Road (now Petersham Road). Royal and Company barges looked resplendent on the Thames. Spectators thronged the opposite bank or took to rowing-boats. A marquee on the lawn by the River contained the royal table with sixty-four places, while a grand tent on the other side of Lower Road had covers for 480 people. “*So crowded was the interior that numbers could not obtain a seat until some of the occupants retired.*” Cannon were fired on the approach of King Leopold and the three Queens. Madrigals, catches and glees were sung. Dances were performed. One of two military bands, the Royal Household Guards (“The Blues”), played a selection of waltzes, including one composed by Prince Albert. At nine o’clock, the trees and shrubs in the gardens were illuminated and there was a splendid fireworks display. The royal party stayed until midnight. The next day, the Morning Post declared with a touch of hyperbole: “*A scene of more gorgeous grandeur, as well as beauty, was never before seen in this or any other country*”<sup>10</sup>. Later in the same year Buccleuch welcomed Victoria and Albert once again – this time on his Midlothian estate. This was the start of the royal couple’s famous love affair with Scotland.<sup>11</sup>

The Duke of Buccleuch died in 1884 and four years later a very fine statue of him by Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm was unveiled in Parliament Square in Edinburgh.<sup>12</sup> His son, the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke, decided to put the Richmond estate up for sale, and this caused consternation in the town. The fear was that the land would be covered with villas, which would mar the famous view from The Terrace on Richmond Hill and, in the words of The Chair of the Vestry, “*the prosperity of Richmond would disappear*”.<sup>13</sup> Sir Walter Scott had no doubt become familiar with this view when visiting his relative, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buccleuch (d. 1812)<sup>14</sup>, and through his description of it in his 1818 novel *The Heart of Midlothian* he had helped to make it world famous. Now, to protect the view, a group of notable artists of the day, including John Everett Millais<sup>15</sup>, Holman Hunt and Frederick, Lord Leighton (then President of the Royal Academy), made the case for Buccleuch’s garden to be acquired by the local authority. Richmond Vestry duly purchased the site in 1886 for the considerable sum of £30,000 and immediately sold on

<sup>1</sup> Warren, Charles D., “The royal wedding: local associations of the Buccleuch family”, *Richmond & Twickenham Times*, 9 November 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford dictionary of national biography*. Article on 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Buccleuch.

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, W.S. (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s correspondence*, vol.11, 1944. Letter to Mary Berry, 29 July 1790.

<sup>4</sup> Warren op.cit.

<sup>5</sup> Cloake, John, “Cardigan House and its architects”, *Richmond History*, no.15, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> “Visit of the Sultan”, *Surrey Comet*, 20 July 1867.

<sup>7</sup> List of Knights of the Garter: [www.heraldica.org](http://www.heraldica.org).

<sup>8</sup> ODNB op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> “Her Majesty’s visit to Richmond”, *Richmond Herald*, Queen’s Jubilee Supplement, 24 June 1887.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> HM Queen Victoria, *Leaves from the journal of our lives in the Highlands*, 1868. Entry for 1 September, 1842.

<sup>12</sup> Article on the Royal Mile: <http://en.citizendium.org>.

<sup>13</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, Terrace Gardens number, 25 May 1887.

<sup>14</sup> Warren op.cit.

<sup>15</sup> “The Duke of Buccleuch’s House at Richmond”, *Illustrated London News*, 16 October 1886.

the strip of land beside the river and other small areas for £15,000. “*The speculative builder was cheated of his prey*” and the matchless view from Richmond Hill was saved.<sup>16</sup> This was sixteen years before the celebrated Act of Parliament that was introduced in 1902 to save the view from a new threat. In May 1887 the land that remained in the Vestry’s possession was opened to the public as pleasure grounds and was given the name of Terrace Gardens. The opening ceremony was performed, on a very rainy day, by another royal – the Duchess of Teck, who was a cousin of Queen Victoria. Her daughter, the future Queen Mary, accompanied her.<sup>17</sup>

Among his other occupations, the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke had been President of the Royal Horticultural Society for thirteen years (in succession to Prince Albert).<sup>18</sup> Richmond Vestry had noted that the grounds “*had been laid out not many years ago by the Duke of Buccleuch*”<sup>19</sup> and had therefore decided “*to keep the gardens practically as they were - there was no need to gild the lily*”.<sup>20</sup> A special edition of the Thames Valley Times, published a week after the Terrace Gardens were opened to the public, provides us with a very good contemporary description of the Gardens. From this and other sources we have a good idea of what Buccleuch’s garden must have looked like. Around 1869, after he had acquired the Lansdowne estate, Buccleuch had demolished Lansdown House, so that the area that was destined to become the original Terrace Gardens of 1887 was already a self-contained garden without a house (apart from some outhouses that have survived as Langholm Lodge).<sup>21</sup> Prints of 1842 and 1886 show the Lower (Petersham) Road perimeter lined with tall trees, indicating the secluded character of Montagu’s garden had been preserved.<sup>22</sup> Newspaper reports in 1887 described the garden as “*magnificently wooded*” and “*charming in its leafy retirement*”.<sup>23</sup> The Thames Valley Times enthused over the area known as “The Wilderness” at the south end of the Gardens: “*Where the shadows cast by the tall clustered trees are thickest, and where the sounds from either boundary road come faint or not at all, are heard in full perfection the voices of innumerable singing birds. For this pleasure alone the gardens would repay a long journey to visit. Through what is almost a jungle of laurel and other shrubs, a pretty little thatched summer house is gained. The spot is delightfully secluded*”.<sup>24</sup>

The other main feature of Buccleuch’s garden highlighted by the Thames Valley Times was its sequence of vistas, internal and external, that can still be recognised today. From the uppermost terrace stunning external views were, and are, to be had. Where Lansdowne House once stood “*the view stretches away to blue far-off uplands which fade into the horizon. An expanse of rolling country, thick with trees, dotted with houses, and vivid with the green of advanced spring, are what chiefly impress the beholder. But minor effects are also caught – the play of light and shade, and the varied hues of plant, and leaf, and flower ... The spectator seems to stand almost on a level with the tops of the trees.*” From a point further north along this terrace “*the major portion of the lower lawn is seen, and at that instant there flashes upon the sight a glimpse of the father of English waters himself [the River Thames]. At this point on a favourable day some wonderful effects of light are seen*”. From the Tea

---

<sup>16</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Elliot, B., *The Royal Horticultural Society: a history 1804-2000*, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, Terrace Gardens number, part 2, 1 June 1887.

<sup>20</sup> “Our riverside II”, *Richmond & Twickenham Times*, 8 January 1944.

<sup>21</sup> Warren, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Gascoigne, Bamber, *Images of Richmond: a survey of the topographical prints of Richmond in Surrey up to the year 1900*, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, part 2 op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> *Thames Valley Times*, Terrace Gardens number, 25 May 1887.

House, previously a summer-house, in the centre of the gardens (*“in perpetual shadow and ... all the more welcome to those who shall have come from out the sunshine”*) *“the view, though broken, is restful. To the right is a noble sweep of an emerald lawn. On the left is a variety of shrubs and undergrowth”*. From the south end of the lower lawn *“distant objects have vanished, but the nearest have become magnified. One or two summer houses are placed in this quarter, but the most prominent erection is the conservatory, with its white, almost imposing, front”*. And from the lowest point of the Gardens beside the Petersham Road perimeter *“the spectacle upward, though restricted, is hardly less impressive in its way than what is gained from the summit. Here the lawn is seen in all its fair amplitude. The trees seem somehow, looked at from below, to have acquired threefold height and stateliness”*.<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

The strip of land beside the River that the Vestry had sold on to John Whittaker Ellis in 1887 was re-acquired by Richmond Council in 1937. Buccleuch’s house, which was standing on it, was demolished and the area was opened to the public as Buccleuch Gardens.<sup>26</sup> Part of the former Cardigan estate – the Duke of Clarence’s erstwhile love nest, but Council property since 1926 – was re-landscaped as a woodland garden and opened as an extension to Terrace Gardens in 1962. Elizabeth, widow of 5th Earl of Cardigan (brother of the Duke of Montagu) and formerly Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, had anticipated the Duke of Buccleuch’s habit of holding lavish fetes attended by an array of royals. In 1817, on the occasion of the Prince Regent’s 55<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Prince, Queen Charlotte and eight other members of the royal family were entertained at Cardigan House by the Dowager Countess. For the occasion, the neighbouring grounds – the future Lansdowne estate that would be acquired by Buccleuch in 1869 – were made available to the hundreds of guests.<sup>27</sup> (This sumptuous garden party was doubtless the inspiration for Turner’s famous painting *Richmond Hill on the Prince Regent’s birthday* [1819].) The entire area of the current Terrace and Buccleuch Gardens, therefore, has a history of royal fetes. Are there any other small suburban municipal gardens anywhere that can claim to have been visited by four reigning monarchs (five, if you include the Prince Regent)?

Today the trees in the Gardens continue to preserve the view from The Terrace on Richmond Hill by framing it and screening out a large portion of built-up Twickenham. A commentator in 1896 had observed: *“What the landscape has lost in extent it has gained in richness ... It must be remembered that many of the former features of the scene which are now invisible wear a less attractive appearance at the present day than they did in the eighteenth century”*<sup>28</sup> In 1887 it was still possible to talk of a view downriver *“where Cambridge Park is picturesquely situated”*.<sup>29</sup> By 1901 things had changed. A commentator in that year wrote: *“Turn to the map, taken from the last Ordnance Survey [1898] ... The first section, behind Cambridge House, has been invaded. A great deal of building has taken place recently, and blocks of little six-roomed villas have been added to the older Cambridge Park. These now cut down to the back of Cambridge House, and threaten to show on the river front”*. He added: *“Look again at the view from Richmond Hill. Cambridge Park and three other properties do not come into this, the principal view, and are largely screened away by the*

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “Our riverside II” op.cit.

<sup>27</sup> Aldred, Margaret G., “A royal birthday”, *Richmond & Twickenham Times*, 6 August 1960.

<sup>28</sup> Garnett, Richard, *Richmond on the Thames*, 1896.

<sup>29</sup> *Thames Valley Times* op.cit.

*terrace trees. This, the “view” proper, begins with Glover’s island*”.<sup>30</sup> It is this restricted, but aesthetically improved, view that was protected by Act of Parliament in 1902.

Terrace & Buccleuch Gardens were registered Grade II by English Heritage in 2001. The historic boundaries of registered gardens are sacrosanct, therefore English Heritage does not recognise the recently re-positioned southern perimeter fence, whatever its aesthetic merit.<sup>31</sup> In 2006, in order to improve the view from Richmond Hill, London’s Arcadia (a Heritage Lottery funded project in which Richmond Council was the leading partner) removed an ugly chain-link fence that followed the rectangular boundary of the former Montagu/Buccleuch estate. Arcadia originally planned also to remove all the old paths and flights of steps, all the shrubs, most of the trees and even the daffodil bulbs in this area. However, when the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded their grant, they imposed a special condition on Arcadia, requiring them to hold further public consultations.<sup>32</sup> The outcome was a compromise whereby all the paths and steps and most of the trees were reprieved. What is left is now recognised by English Heritage as a remnant of the historic “Wilderness”.

Aside from their screening function, the Gardens are immensely important in their own right. Their secluded character and their sequence of views remain largely intact to this day, and a remnant of The Wilderness survives. However, these features have been degraded in recent years due to a lack of understanding of the structure of the Gardens. This will become especially evident when the development currently under construction in the former gardeners’ yard is completed. This development was given planning permission without the benefit of an opinion from the Garden History Society (a statutory consultee). It will seriously detract from the Gardens’ secluded character and will mar several historic internal views. Urgent measures are needed to mitigate the effects of this and to ensure that there is no further degradation of heritage features, so that the Gardens can remain, as described in 1887, “*the property of Richmond for ever and ... the inexpressibly beautiful heritage of every reverent lover of Nature*”.<sup>33</sup>

## APPENDIX

### English Heritage PAG 4974 – Reasons for Designation (amended 2010)

Terrace and Buccleuch Gardens are designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Historic plan: the late C18 and early C19 design and plan of the gardens, both in separate and then joint ownership is still clearly visible in the layout of the grounds - in particular the path system and location of borders and mature trees.

Planting: the gardens were purposely designed to be secluded and enclosed, a historic characteristic which dates from the C18 and indicated by surviving specimen trees and shrubs.

---

<sup>31</sup> English Heritage, “Register of parks & gardens of special historic interest”. Entry for Terrace & Buccleuch Gardens (PAG 4974), revised 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Heritage Lottery Fund, notification of grant award to London’s Arcadia, 10 December 2004. Special condition no.4.

<sup>30</sup> MacColl, D.S., “Richmond Hill and Marble Hill” in “Cuttings from papers re view from Richmond Hill”, 1901 (in Richmond Local Study Collection).

<sup>33</sup> *Thames Valley Times op. cit.*

Historic interest: association with significant historical and political figures of C18 and C19, notably the Duke of Buccleuch; acquisition by Richmond Vestry and context of the Act of Parliament (1902), an important landmark in the history of the conservation of landscapes and of the amenity movement.

Setting: the gardens frame the important historic view from Richmond Hill (Richmond Terrace Walk, registered Grade II\*) which was protected by Act of Parliament (1902); views within the gardens and across the grounds, with outward views to the River Thames and Surrey from the top of the Gardens; group value as one of the interlocking landscapes along the River Thames between Kew and Hampton Court.

© Ron McEwen

---

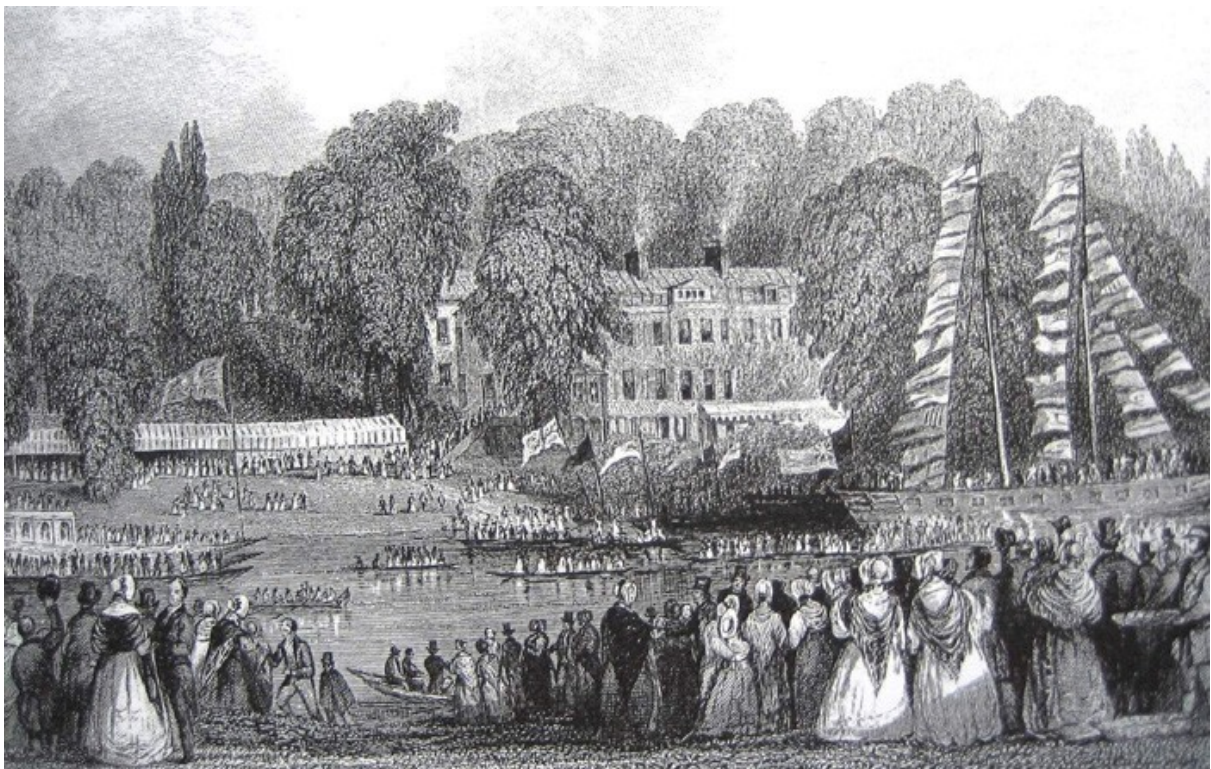


5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Buccleuch, Edinburgh, 1887.

Published by Richmond Local History Society, March 2011.



Turner, *Richmond Hill on the Prince Regent's birthday, 1819*



Queen Victoria's visit to Terrace Gardens, June 1842