

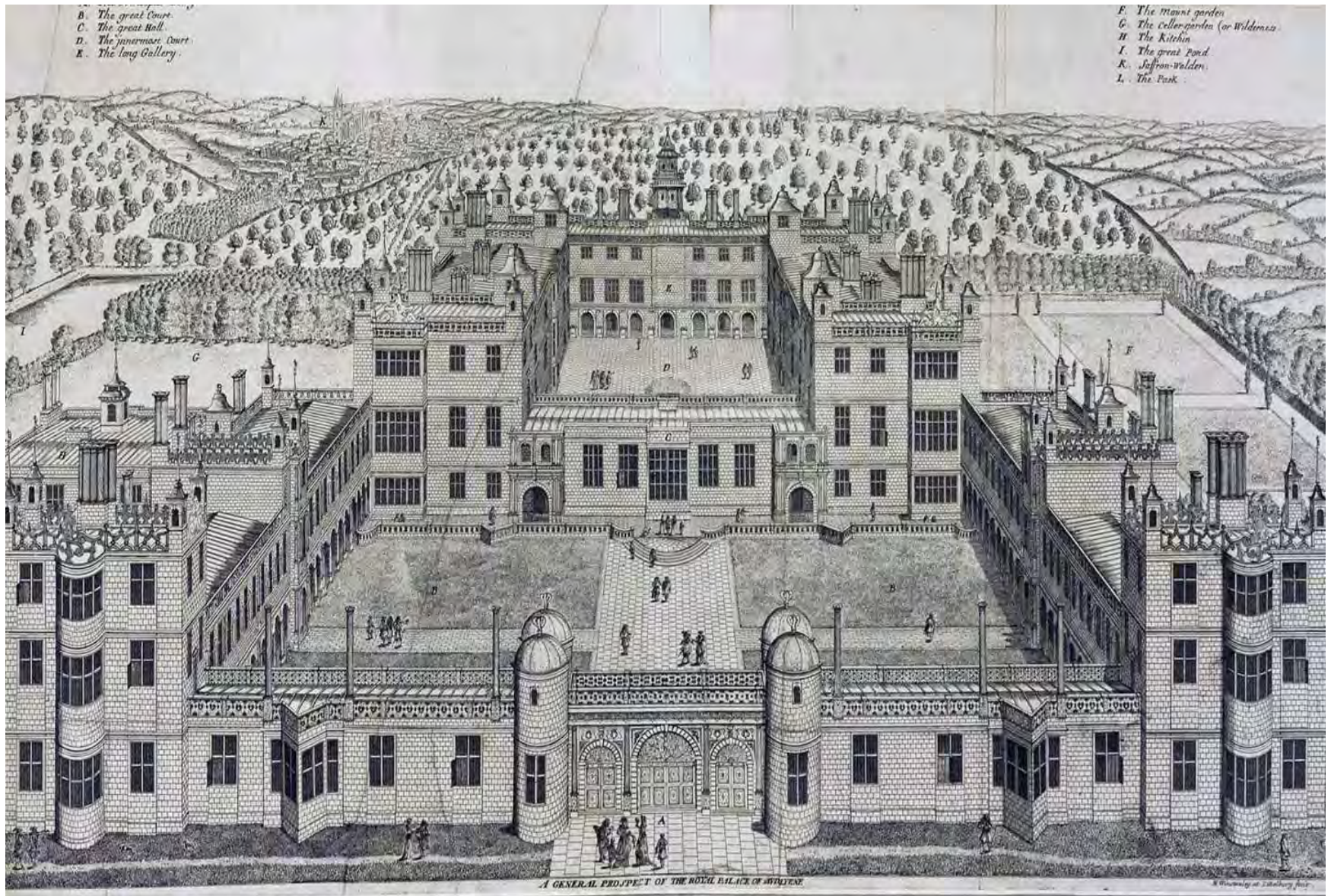
Audley End House and Gardens

“Gardeners for the present and the future”



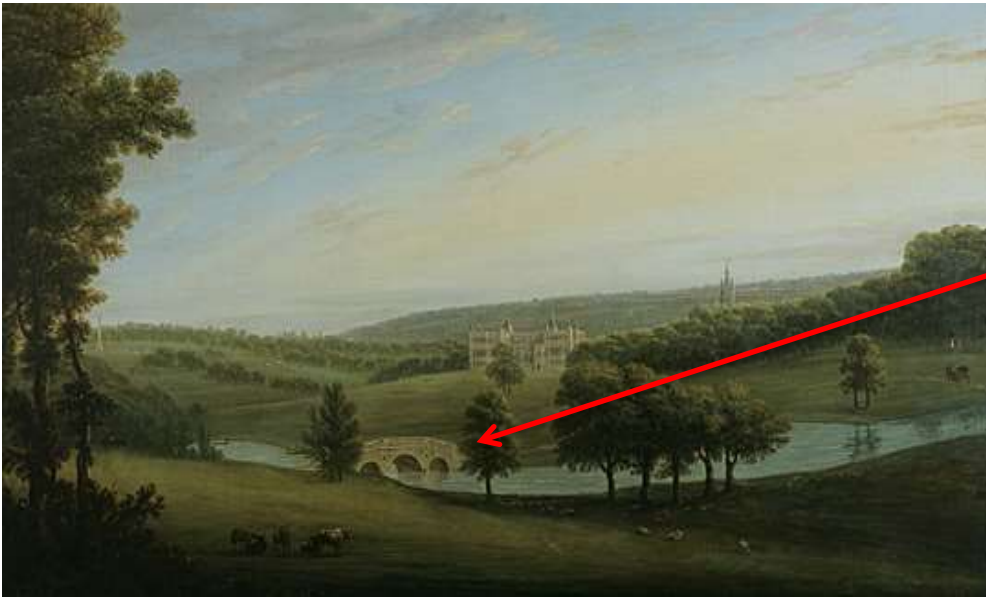
Rob Shinn Photography ©

Context: The history of Audley End House and Gardens



Henry Winstanley's drawing of Audley End in **1676** shows the vast scale of the Jacobean mansion. This was gradually reduced over time to what we see today.

Paintings of Audley End



A view of Audley End House from the west, by Edmund Garvey (c 1782), showing the Robert Adam bridge separating the two lakes

Audley End from the south-east by William Tomkins, about 1788, looking towards Robert Adam's Temple of Victory on Ring Hill and showing the landscape designed by Capability Brown



Parterre Gardens - 1831



The Parterre was restored to its original design by English Heritage in 1989



Elysian Garden – 1780s



Pond Garden - 1865



The Kitchen Garden – est. 1750s



The Kitchen Garden - Aerial View



The Vinery and Back Sheds

This reconstruction drawing shows the Vinery range as it may have appeared at its peak, towards the end of the 19th century. Most of the building has now been returned to its original use.

The Bothy: This was the home of the unmarried apprentice gardeners, close at hand to stoke boilers and adjust ventilation whenever required. An exhibition here illustrates the history of the Kitchen Garden and the lives of those who worked in it.

Potting Shed: The long potting bench in front of the window and tall racks filled with pots are once again in use here. The brick floor is deeply worn by generations of gardeners who worked long hours at this bench.

Packing Shed: Here produce was prepared for sending up to the kitchens at the house. When the family were away, produce and plants were carefully packed and sent off in special hampers to their house in London. The gardener's diary for 13th June 1874 records: 'Up early to gather strawberries, to be sent with other fruit to London by 1st train.'

Boiler House: The earliest heating for the Vinery was probably supplied by smoke-filled flues in the brickwork of the rear wall. These were replaced by a much more efficient hot water heating system around 1850, with two cast iron boilers. The boiler house is set 8 feet deep below ground, so that hot water can rise and circulate around the whole building.

Mushroom House: Now restored, this windowless 'dark house' was used for growing mushrooms and forcing blanched delicacies such as asparagus and sea kale.

Toolshed: The original toolshed, with its hooks where spades have been hung for nearly two centuries, is now back in use by today's gardeners.

Early Peach House: Peaches were being picked in this early house at the beginning of June in 1874, after early forcing. The cropping that year continued in the late-Peach House until the end of August, and through September on the walls outside. This house is now used for a wide variety of plants and propagation.

Early Vinery: Black Hamburg grapes, a vigorous early-fruited variety, have been grown here since the early 19th century, though the present vines probably date from the early 20th century. Early grapes grown here won a prize at the Cambridge Horticultural Show on 20th May 1874.

Show House: This plant house forms the centrepiece of the long glasshouse range - a common Victorian arrangement. A wide range of pot-grown plants, for both foliage and flowers, were arranged here on staging, for admiration by the family and guests. Here the floor is of York stone, and heating pipes are hidden beneath decorative cast iron grating.

Late Vinery: This grape variety, Lady Downe's Seedling, ripens late in the season and with intensive treatment it was said, 'will hang without decay or discolouration or loss of plumpness till the end of March.'

Late Peach House: This house was replanted as a peach house in 2000, with peaches and nectarines trained against the rear wall and at the front.

YOU ARE HERE

The Vinery range was built in the 1820s, replacing a much smaller classical greenhouse. It has five separate bays, giving a variety of growing conditions for different plants, enabling production throughout the year. To the rear, on the shaded north side of the wall, was a long range of original service buildings. The 'Back Sheds', as it was called, survives in remarkably complete condition, and is now back in use.

The Vinery was comprehensively repaired in 1993-5, but nearly all of the original structure has been preserved. Typical of its early date are the great sliding sashes for ventilation in the roof, before the Victorians introduced cast iron cranking systems. Another rare survival are some sections of glazing in small panes, before new technology encouraged the change to larger pane sizes from the mid-19th century.

The 'engine room', which supplied heating to the whole range, was the boiler pit at the rear. The Victorian under-gardeners would have been expected to maintain each glasshouse section to within 2°F of the desired temperature, stoking the boiler last thing every night.

Head Gardener's Office: Here the Head Gardener once again has his base, to plan the year's crops, keep records and order seeds, plants and materials.



1802: Early Vinery – and the Tomato House (former early Peach House).

**'Black Hamburg' grapevine
(Early)**

**Late Vinery and late Peach
House (Now our only Peach
House)**



**'Lady Downe's Seedling'
grapevine (Late)**

Orchard House – 1856 design (reconstructed 2001)











G. J. WRIGHT LTD
REPAIRS & BRANCHES

75 1150430
S12

Please
DO NOT
Touch

In the 1880s there were 15 staff employed in the gardens here at Audley End



March 1874

T 26 Wind N.W. 8 degrees of frost in morning. Potting of Verbena's Hardy brown Cos Lettuce, plants out. P. Golden feather put in pit, to harden off.

F 27 Wind S. blowing freely, very mild. 64° in shade. Cuttings of Alternanthera put in. in pans in heat, Potting off bedding Geranium. Fig trees on walls uncovered & nailed out, having been tied up & bound with hay bands all winter Mr B out.

S 28 Wind S. fine & warm clearing & rearranging plants in houses. Old Asparagus beds from which plants had been taken for foreign well manured, trenched and replanted with 1 year old plants of Conners Colossal asparagus. Boat race between University of Oxford & Cambridge took place on the Thames, won by the latter.



Diary of a Victorian
Gardener
William Cresswell and Audley End





Restoration – in partnership with Garden Organic (formerly HDRA) - 1990s





THE KITCHEN GARDEN TODAY

Garden was 9 acres in total – 2.5 acres fully restored.



- Audley End is visited by 175,000 visitors a year
- Income is earned from events, paid for tours, and member workshops
- Several outlets for produce – Local organic box scheme, village farm shop and an artisan bakery
- Produce is also sold on site to visitors, and used by the restaurant.



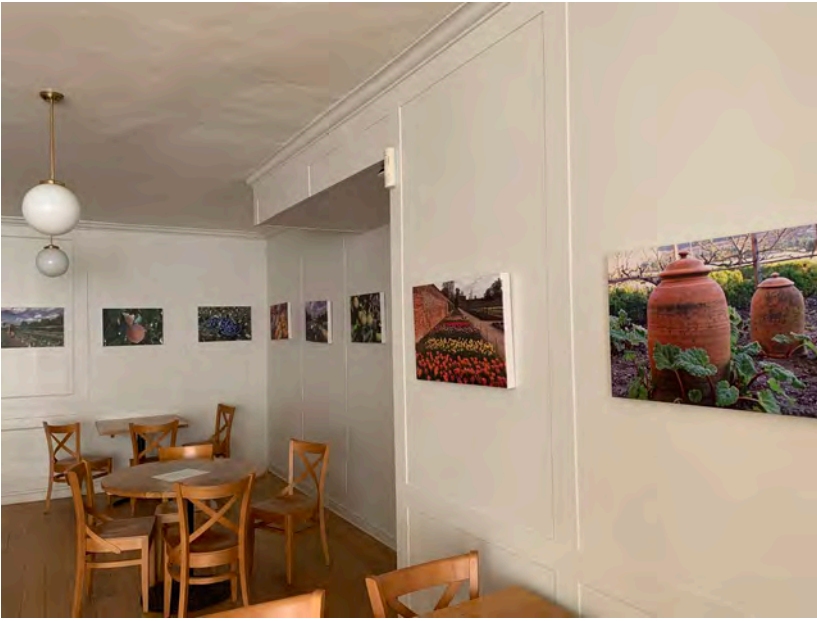
The 'Packing Shed' Audley End Produce Shop





Audley End Apple Juice







SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFIED

- Garden run to Soil Association standards.
- Inspected each year.
- Need to keep detailed yield records and ensure produce for sale is clearly labelled.
- Practice integrated pest management – cultural and biological (programme for under glass and outside). Encourage natural predators.
- Minimal inputs to garden – own site composting system, green manures, limited granular fertilisers, liquid seaweed feeds.

INTERPRETATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Kitchen Garden is the one area of the garden that has interpretation panels.



Challenge is keeping them up to date – we are awaiting updates for some of our key boards.

INTERPRETATION AND ENGAGEMENT *Continued*

The gardens are also interpreted by staff and volunteers who are regularly asked questions.

Free and paid for tours – cover the history of the garden, key features, current crops and plants, and seasonal tasks.



Member Workshops offered in fruit tree pruning. We are looking to develop Workshops in planning and seasonal tasks, and organic gardening.

INTERPRETATION AND ENGAGEMENT *Continued*

Educational activities. English Heritage offers 'Discovery Visits' to local schools. These visits meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and are facilitated by trained Educational Volunteers. We are working with our colleagues in the Education Team to develop garden focussed activities.

Events. For the past 15 years there has been an autumn event that is focussed on the Kitchen Garden. Previously this was promoted as an Apple Day – more recently it has been incorporated into a Taste of History event. It is attended by approx 4000 – 5000 over 2 days.

A June event – Blooming Gardens – is also supported by the garden team.







VISITOR FIGURES AND STAFFING

- The site has 110 Staff and 153 Volunteers.

The Garden team comprises 11 full time gardeners with 3 core members in the Kitchen Garden. 45% staff time is dedicated to the Kitchen Garden



GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

55 Volunteers contribute 3000 hours per year. (This equates to the hours that would be done by 7 additional full time staff in a year).

Majority carry out gardening tasks. We have 6 DIY / Maintenance volunteers; 5 garden tour guides; 3 bird surveying volunteers and one plant records volunteer.





Host garden - **Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme** (HBGTP since 2006. 2 Trainee Gardeners per year)

12 months practical experience – 50% of time in Kitchen Garden

Written work – journal, plant ident tests, 3 projects

Opportunities for training bursaries and secondments during year



Student Projects

Key Kitchen Garden Tasks

- Season fruit pruning (Top and soft fruit) - grafting
- Planning vegetable plots – raising from seed/bed preparation/successional planting/harvesting/propagation/record keeping
- Working under glass – peaches – historic grapevines





Thank You and Merci!