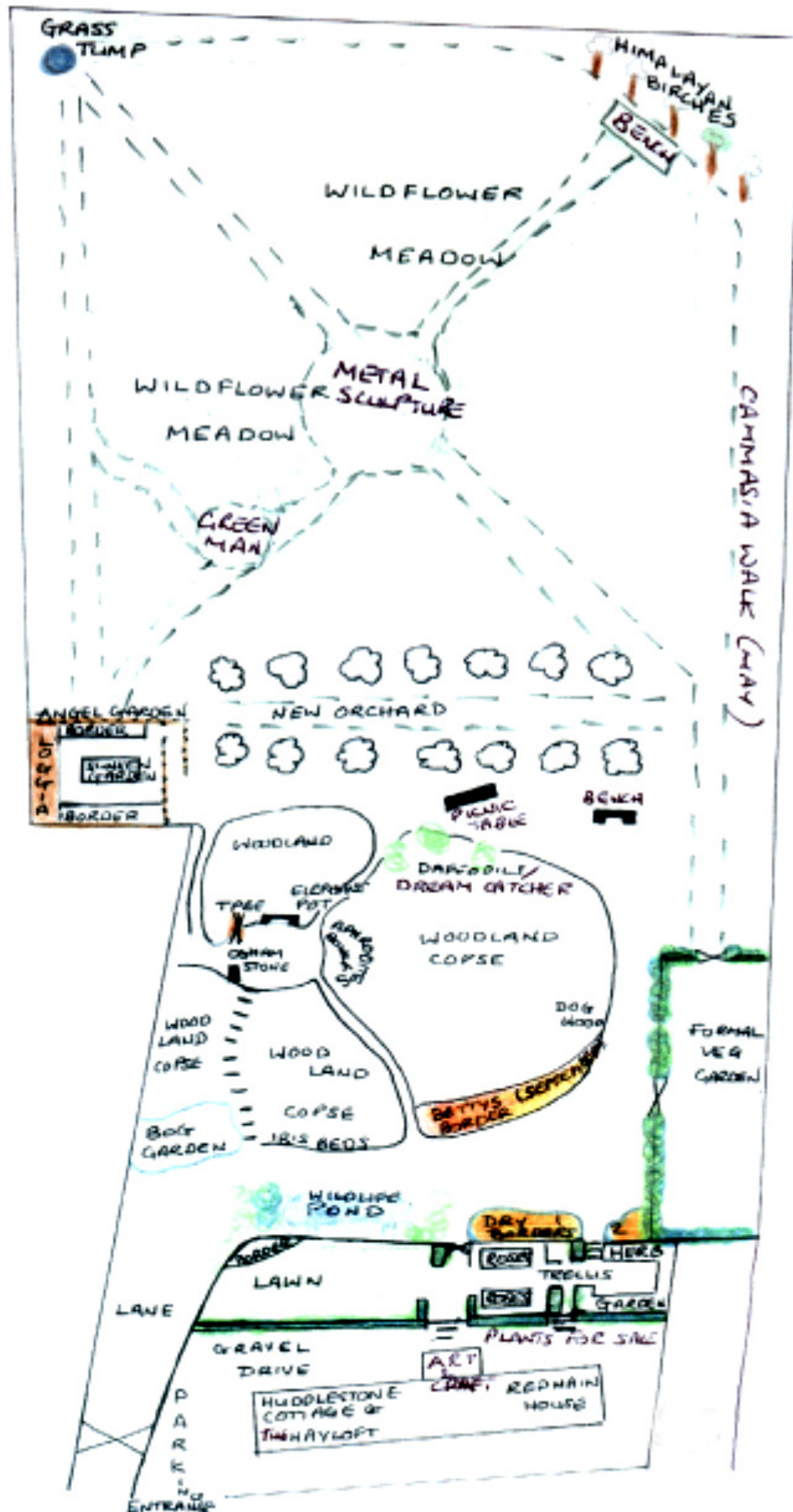


GARDENS AT REDMAIN HOUSE



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When we purchased Redmain House in 1993 it was not just the house that needed to be completely refurbished, the land, totalling around 3 acres, had not been touched. It had been used as a dumping ground. Ash and Sycamore trees had self-seeded everywhere and the dry stone walls were in a bad state of repair. The large field at the rear had been grazed by sheep and did not look in bad condition, but in its first year of non-grazing produced an enormous amount of weed. In particular thistle and dock.

There was no alternative but to go around the 3 acres and remove them by hand. It was all I did that first year and it seemed to work as the following year there were very few that came back. However, I now had a problem with hogweed! Hundreds and hundreds of them appeared everywhere. As anyone will know hogweed has a long tap root, so digging them out was a long and difficult job and I simply could not do them all, so, of those I could not dig up I made sure to cut off the tops so they would not seed. It seemed like a good idea at the time (and it probably was) but it meant that the following year the taproot was twice as big and twice as difficult to get out! I just kept at it for the next couple of years and finally got them under control, but they continue to pop up from time to time so I am still vigilant about getting them out!

The garden soil varies from very little soil over limestone at the top, to stony and free flowing in the vegetable garden to thick clay nearer the house. I have tried not to impose too much on the natural landscape returning the top 2 acres to meadow and planting the copse of trees on the slight hill behind the house which has helped to stabilise the soil there during heavy rainfall. It is largely a natural garden designed to enhance the environment for wildlife, as well as being beautiful – I hope. I am amazed at the number and variety of birdlife that have made their home here – robins, song thrushes, mistle thrush, great tits, tree creepers, nuthatches, bluetits, sparrow, tree sparrow, blackbirds, woodpeckers, housemartins, wren, dunnoek finches and owls and probably a lot more that I don't know, or simply don't know about. I was delighted last year when a blackbird decided to build her nest among the plants in the polytunnel! She quite happily raised her brood behind the tomatoes whilst I came in and out!

Now, in 2013, the garden is mature and how I envisaged it. But I am quite sure there will still be additions, after all a garden is never really finished! Even though we own the freehold of this land, we only ever really pass through, but while we are here we very much enjoy sharing this beautiful landscape with everyone who comes to visit.

An exciting addition to the garden this year is the "Hill Walker" metal sculpture. When Lloyd was 19 years old he had his first trip to the Lake District. Whilst here he purchased a small metal hill walker figure made of horse nails. The sculpture in the centre of the meadow paths is this model made life size. It was made by my brother Russ and I think it looks great! I am trying to persuade him to make another female one to keep it company for next year!

ANGEL GARDEN

As with any garden there are areas that need to be utilised and "tidied". There was an old unused chicken run at one end of the field and a polytunnel. As the garden has progressed these areas were no longer in harmony with the rest and need to be "adjusted". I didn't really have an idea in mind, but one evening as I stood looking at it, the whole picture came into my head in great detail and the Angel Garden was born! A quiet, reflective and slightly monastic area to get away from it all. The colour scheme is very simple so as not to intrude upon the peace; shades of green and white.

Inside at the far end, is what we call the "loggia". It has a clear roof to allow the light in for plants that are slightly tender and need protection. The centre bog area is completed and has been planted with hostas, ferns and white irises. The borders are mostly planted with shrubs, climbers, ferns, hostas, lily of the valley, and a beautiful lime green Japanese Maple.

BETTYS BORDER

My husbands' mother passed away in 2007, but she loved the garden and particularly lots of colourful flowers, so this relatively new border, planted up in 2009, is for her. It is placed in front of the woodland on the opposite side to the bog garden and it is a large long flowing border. The plants include Kniphofia

(3 different varieties, crocosmia (4 different varieties), heleniums, helianthus, achilleas and rudbeckia in shades of yellow, rust, orange, burnt orange and occasional dashes of red. In-between to give a little colour early on I have planted the tulip "Queen of the Night". Sometimes this border can get wet, although it does drain quite quickly, so I will be interested to see how the tulips fair.

Grandma will love it - wherever she is.

BOG AREA

This is a small area at the bottom of the steps in the woodland. Always mushy and frequently impassable this area has been planted with hostas, astilbes and loads of drumstick primulas and another favourite *Persicaria Bistorta Superba*. I absolutely love this area when it is in full swing. A lot of the alder is planted in this area too, to absorb some of the water and underneath them the American skunk cabbage, which produces the most superb yellow leaves as it emerges from the bog in Spring! I first saw this plant at the Dawyck botanical gardens (sister to the Edinburgh botanical gardens and about an hour and a half journey from here) where it has been growing for a lot longer than mine, and in May will just take your breath away. Also planted here are the delicately scented yellow primula florindae and the elephant umbrella plant.

ORCHARD

This area was planted in 2006. I wanted to have an orchard, mainly for the fruit, of course, but it is a nice to sit and read a book or have a picnic here. It is a small orchard with around 14 trees, so far. Sometimes, during Winter this area can take on a lot of water so it was necessary to provide drainage under each tree. The trees have struggled here because of the wind, but they have survived and continue to grow – albeit slowly!

A mown path divides the orchard into two halves and the grass on either side of the path is left to grow naturally. During late spring snakeshead fritillaries and lady's smock, cowslips, daffodils and crocus come up through the grass and usually following a wet spring, spotted orchids will appear. Sometimes, if spring is dry the orchids don't show, but it is better for the fruit trees. How do you choose?

The trees are a mixture of apple, pear, cherry, damson, plum and quince. I have chosen some local varieties, some old varieties and some very new introductions.

THE TERRACE ROSE GARDEN, HERB GARDEN AND LAWN

These three areas lie directly behind the house and were the first part of the garden to be completed. They were completely overgrown and had to be cleared with a JCB. As is common with most ancient houses the rear of the house backed into the soil behind it and so this had to be removed and new dry stone walls constructed to hold the soil in place. This was where I built my first dry stone wall and I'm quite proud of it!

Alistair who did most of the dry stone walling for us managed to complete a quarter of a mile of dry stone walling before I finished mine! Steps were made to access all areas and everything comes together harmoniously. The rose garden and herb garden are protected by box hedging, which are now around 4ft high having been planted from small plants, and cuttings from these plants were used to put box hedging around the lawned area behind the holiday cottages.

Roses are notoriously difficult to grow this far north and I spent many hours deciding which ones were the most likely to survive! I love old English roses and so went for the new old English roses by Peter Beale. Some survived and others didn't so varieties have changed from my original choices and still do change from time to time if they succumb to black spot, the wind, or the wet.

The toughest survivor has proved to be William Shakespeare a beautiful crimson velvet colour. The roses are planted in deep beds edged with lavender and underplanted with chives and alliums. Walking through from this area into the small herb garden under a large pergola, which is covered with the rambling rose Dorothy Perkins, clematis Wilsonii. I cram as many herbs as I can into this area and guests are welcome to pick them for cooking as they please. Two of my favourites here are the monardas

which I have only grown over the last two years and the Florentine iris which only flowers when it is very happy, and mine now flowers profusely. The root of this famous iris is the orris root which is used as a fixative in pot pourri.

THE VEGETABLE AND FLOWER CUTTING GARDEN

This large area has been developed gradually over a number of years. It was part of the field directly behind the house to the right of the woodland area and tilts south-east. Originally a local farmer tilled the soil for me with a tractor as it was mainly rough grass. The soil was not much and weeds were endemic for a couple of years. I planted only potatoes and onions at the beginning. Hours of weeding and tons of manure have now turned the soil into a great place for growing my treasured veggies and flowers.

This area has progressed from a few beds dug out of the soil with muddy paths to a very formal area with 20 boxed deep beds, gravel paths and seating areas and the whole is surround by an 8 foot high privet hedge for shelter. My husband made some cold frames at one end and some lovely obelisks for the sweet peas at the other end. There are three entrances to this garden through arched gateways, the middle being the main entrance, which has a large urn filled with Gypsophilia (Baby's breath) which froths out in all directions during the Summer.

Normally, this area is devoted to growing vegetables, but this year I have turned it into the flower cutting garden. There are two good reasons for doing this; it does give the soil a rest, and I do work my soil very hard each year, and secondly there has been much talk recently about the decline in bee numbers and the important role they play as pollinators. I have identified at least 4 different kinds of bee in the garden, and at least two nests, so I was determined to give them as much help as possible by planting flowers. The veg beds are now growing cosmos, clary, stocks, antirrhinums larkspur, strawflower and sea lavender. All will make good cut flowers whilst helping the bees.

Something to note; our recent cold spring was particularly hard on bees but I noticed that even during the cold spring the pulmonarias in the woodland area flowered well and were covered with bees. Not the cultivated variety but the native kind. If you have some spare room in the garden plant some of them and give the bees a boost next spring. Another plant (shrub) that has been covered in bees is the Hebe, when in flower. I know it's a bit of a "chav" in the garden, but the bees obviously love it!

THE WILD FLOWER MEADOW

This area covers almost 2 acres and follows on from the orchard. Since we came in 1993 we have really done very little to this area apart from weed by hand particularly invasive and unwanted weeds. Nature can often provide its own beauty and so we left the field for a number of years to see what would appear, cutting for hay at the end of July or beginning of August to allow seed to drop.

It was not long before the Lady's smock appeared in large numbers and is a picture in Spring, followed by ox-eye daisies, knapweed and thistles (which we keep strictly under control). Celandine is very invasive and must also be kept under control. We allow the grass to grow all summer and mow paths around the edge and diagonally across the middle to provide a nice walk.

The paths lead to a grass tump/seat in one corner which is the best place to watch the sun go down as it faces directly West. Red field Poppies have appeared recently, but these are from a couple of dry borders situated nearer the house, courtesy of the birds – but they look lovely in the field. It will be interesting to see if they adapt well to what is a predominantly damp spring field. We have also planted around 500 cammasias along the northern boundary providing tall blue swaying spikes in May.

THE WILDLIFE POND

The wildlife pond lies through a five bar gate and behind a wall directly behind the lawned area. Originally, this was where the sheep came to drink from a very muddy pool. Rainwater and spring water from the field accumulated in the muddy pool so it seemed a natural place to put a pond being at the bottom of a shallow hill. We used a mini digger to make it a little bigger than it was, and lined it. It is not meant to be a fancy pond, but is there for the wildlife and fits well into its surroundings at the edge of the woodland area.

Yellow flag iris, willow, reeds and ragged robin grow around the edges and I am pleased that newts, frogs and toads now make their home in and around the pond. If you get up early enough in the morning you may be lucky enough to catch a heron hoping to catch a fish! There aren't any, but nevertheless he is a handsome creature.

Irises are among my favourite flowers and I have made a point of planting them all over the area surrounding the pond. In late Spring blue irises appear everywhere amongst the grassy banks at the bottom of the woodland area next to the pond.

THE WOODLAND COPSE

During that first year my son and I planted a copse of trees on a gentle slope behind the house. According to an old map dated around 1810, there was a copse of trees here before so we decided to replace it. We planted aspen, alder, birch, hazel, elderberry, holly, hawthorn, wild cherry and field maple alongside the two remaining sycamore (one came down the first winter and kept us in wood for the fire for over 2 years). Now, in 2013 the woodland area is one of my favourite places. The wood is mature with a stepped area that leads down through a mass of ferns, geraniums, primroses, aquilegias, Jacobs ladder, dog rose, foxgloves, gunnera, and other native species during June. In Spring it is underplanted with bluebells, daffodils, primroses, wild garlic, forget-me-nots and ground elder!

We have made an area available to sit under the trees when it gets too hot (yes we do get hot weather!) and it is a favourite place for a lot of our visitors and us. A bust of Aphrodite also rests here snuggled in the hollow of the sycamore tree trunk that fell during the first year, surrounded by aconites, geraniums, foxgloves and purple bugle, and geraniums

Website www.lakesnw.co.uk/hudcot/gardens/index.htm has all the above information and hundreds of photographs!

Christine and Lloyd hope you have enjoyed your visit.