

## HISTORICAL GARDENS IN HUNGARY.

We are going to start by tracing the history of garden-designing in Hungary since the original conquest of the country, which brought it into contact with European culture. The first of its kings, Stephen I (St. Stephen 1000.1038), created an extremely powerful Christian state; he was assisted by the countries of Western Europe, whose monks and knights brought with them their architecture and their art of garden design. The most outstanding gardens were created with the help of masters from abroad - from France and Italy- at the request of the kings belonging to the House of Arpad, and we possess records which show that these kings sometimes offered gardens as presents.

The Benedictine Order, which was the earliest of the teaching orders, founded an abbey at Pannonhalma whose gardens have been preserved up to the present day, and traces of the same style are still to be found in our cemeteries.

Buda Castle, which was started by Béla IV (1235-1270), and the magnificent gardens of the castles of Esztergom and Tata were famous all over Europe and are admiringly described in the writings of ambassadors and foreign travellers.

It was the kings of the House of Anjou who introduced the castle garden style of the Age of Chivalry. Horticulture progressed during the reign of Robert Charles (1308-1342) and of Lajos the Great; later, King Matthias and his Neapolitan wife, Beatrix, brought the Italian Renaissance to Hungary. The earliest writers to describe our Renaissance gardens were Bonfini, Miklos Olah, Taurinus and Ranzani. In Buda, stone towers and pavilions were built inside the ramparts, below the royal palace; we read of "marble pavilions covered with silver-glazed tiles".

There were ornamental wells, aviaries, gymnasiums, mazes, ponds, grottoes, arbours. The designer was an Italian.

Of rural royal gardens the most famous were those at Viségrad and at Pozsony. Of the palace of King Matthias at Viségrad, Bonfini writes:..." He has enlarged the gardens and provided his palace with ponds and game-preserves, and thus the gardens rise before us in all their perfection".

"We have hanging gardens", we read elsewhere, "and fountains decorated with red marble and bronze". The King's hanging gardens were known all over Europe. "In the most solemn part of the garden the building and nature have embraced one another, as Renaissance taste demands". The well in the lower garden was "an alabaster fountain in the centre of the open space surrounded by marble columns". The pergola system used for the Florentine palaces was the one adopted.

Similar praise is to be found in the descriptions of the King's palace at Nyék. And the gardens of Prince Ippolito d'Este of Ferrara, Primate of Esztergom, at Eger (1417) were also very famous.

But all these palaces and their gardens were unfortunately destroyed during the Turkish wars, and it is only now that excavation work is bringing their ruins to light. (At Viségrad and Buda we have succeeded in reconstructing several of the wells in their original positions.)

After the Turkish occupation garden design made immense progress. The most famous botanist of the time, Clusius, entertained relations with Boldizsar Batthyanyi and designed a garden for his palace at Szalonak.

In the 17th Century, a large number of gardens were laid out for members of the nobility, and on these we possess more detailed information. The most beautiful of all was the garden of the primate György Lippai (1642-1666), completed round about 1633, near the west frontier. "In this garden", we are told, there are to be found all those things which are the fashion - an orangery, a hermitage, a grotto, statues, musical figurines, etc.". The gardens of Boldizsar Batthyanyi at Pémetujvar and Szalonak were also famous.

Renaissance-style gardens, too, were widely found in our country, and we possess pictures of those at Kismarton, Galanta, Kisfalud, Feheregyhaza, Lakompak, Vörösko, and Sarvar. The Palatine garden at Pozsony and Gabor

Bethlen's hanging gardens at Gyulafehérvár are particularly famous. György Rakoczi was passionately interested in gardens and the garden of the château at Sarospatak was likewise renowned for its beauty.

In the 18th Century the Renaissance-style gardens were re-made in the French baroque style, and some very attractive ones were laid out at Féltorony, Köpcsény, Hotkoc, Gernyeszeg and Csaklész. Those of the Pálffy, Aspermont, Erdöbý and Grassalkovich families in Pozsony (1759-1767) are extremely famous. In Transylvania the most famous garden-designer was Janos Luidor, (Féhéregyháza, Zsibo), while the most famous one at Királyfa was Brünnig. At Kismarton the prince's chief designers were Matyas Pölt and Gervaja Louia (1754).

When Miklos Eszterhazy returned from France he began to build the "Hungarian Versailles" at Fertod. The grounds were designed by Pierre Goussard and the fountains and ornamental waters by Perguin (We possess two descriptions and 8 drawings of this garden). The grounds contained an orangery, temples of Diana, Venus and Fortune, a Chinese house, a hermitage, a puppet theatre, artificial waterfalls, five fountains, and 92 statues. The prince's operas were conducted by Haydn himself.

The grounds of Count Festetich's residence at Keszthely were very lovely too, but there were other baroque gardens no less fine elsewhere, as will be seen from the inventory made for this meeting.

The informal landscape type of garden was introduced as early as 1780, and it was the French designer Charles Moreau who re-designed the grounds at Kismarton at the beginning of the 19th Century. Another such designer was Petri Bernhard, who had fled France to escape the French Revolution and enjoyed the protection of Duke Alexander; it was he who designed the Orczy Park in Pest and grounds at Hédervár, Vedrod and Ráro (1794). Among the loveliest of these grounds we should mention those at Tata, Csakvar, Deg, Alcsut, Marguerite Island (Budapest), Totmegyer, Keszthely, Malonya, Bettler, Berkess, and Nemeskosztolany.

Towards the turn of the century there came a decline. The Second World War caused serious damage and most of our castles and mansions with their grounds are now in ruins.

So much for the historical background and I would now like to say a few words about the position at the present day.

A full list of our more important gardens, with particulars of their present condition, their degree of interest and their owners is presented in the inventaire made for this symposium. The most important change occurred in 1945 when our gardens of historical interest became State property.

At the present day the protection of gardens has become a reality

The National Council for the protection of Nature is responsible for protecting our places of natural beauty, and also some of our ancient gardens. Its role is to protect special natural features of cultural and scientific importance and it is responsible for the upkeep of estates which are characteristic of their type and for the coordination of the various types of cultural property which are a part of our national economy. But - as its name shows - it is concerned with the protection of nature and not with the protection of gardens from the aesthetic point of view. Its work of protecting gardens does not come under the heading of the protection of gardens as works of art, but under that of the protection of dendrological species (as in the case of the garden at Zirc).

Thus, the collections of plants at Szeleste, Erdotelek, Alcsut, Sarvar and Kamon and the "live museums" of trees and shrubs are likewise protected.

One very fine set of grounds which is protected is that of Pannonhalma. The gardens at what is now the Creative Arts Centre at Szigliget and those of the similar centre at Zsennye are in good hands, but the grounds of many fine historical monuments have no one in charge and are at the mercy of persons who do not understand the problems involved.

The existence of gardens belonging to historical monuments provides a link between the protection of the latter and that of nature and also between such protection and forestry, and for this reason cooperation with the forestry authorities and with those in charge of the protection of nature is most important. It will suffice here to mention Gödöllo Park, a 330 acre estate, which comes under the Forestry Institute, or Elizabeth Park, whose 60 acres

are looked after by the local City Council. While the grounds at Fertöd are not officially protected, some of the trees there are cared for by the forestry authorities.

The forestry authorities likewise look after the areas surrounding castles and monasteries, where these are officially protected. The areas involved include some hundreds of acres of forest.

Thus protection of this sort is ensured on a very considerable scale. However, the point of view of the forestry specialists differs from that of these concerned with the protection of gardens as works of art; the conservation of a garden of historical interest is not a problem to be solved merely in terms of the protection of nature or of the regular care of forests. Some existent gardens can be protected only by the same sort of methods as those adopted for historical monuments; the grounds of the Szaras-Rudnyanszky Château at Nagytétény provide one such example.

The forestry specialists have in fact stressed that in work on the conservation of palace or other grounds the experience acquired by garden-designers and landscape gardeners must not be neglected, since such work is widely different from forestry as such.

It is this difference which accounts for the differences of attitude to be noted where grounds of historical interest are to be restored; sometimes the forestry specialists with their particular professional background are unwilling to create what they consider to be an "artificial" park and wish to plant trees which will be of use for their own purpose as foresters. We sometimes come across situations which, despite the efforts and excellent intentions of those concerned, are most unfortunate, since insufficient attention is paid to the point of view of the artist.

The gardens officially protected which are looked after by the forestry authorities are not, in fact, conserved by the methods adopted in the case of historical monuments. Passive protection is not sufficient and in the opinion of the specialists far more efficient work is required.

Our historic gardens are ageing and decaying at a progressively increasing rate; if these treasures of ours are to be protected, special and

up-to-date methods will be necessary.

Our historic gardens must be restored in accordance with their original design; it will not suffice merely to preserve them as "green spaces". We have been making efforts over the last few years to have the task of protecting historic gardens taken over by the National Historical Monuments Department and the Study Section has been pursuing this work for 10 years now. The intervention of this Department is absolutely necessary, for notwithstanding the orders issued and the instructions given the protection of our gardens continues to be inadequate.

There is need for a definition of the principles which should govern this aspect of the protection of historical monuments. To start with, arrangements must be made to protect the finest of our gardens and grounds; a detailed list must be drawn up and once this has been done the tasks to be fulfilled must be defined. This particularly applies to the most important of our castles and palaces, where irreparable damage will otherwise occur.

The Historical Monuments Department has now embarked on the work of preserving historic gardens and has already achieved some very considerable results; however, the question has not yet been assigned the importance it deserves.

Those who built our castles and châteaux gave both the buildings and the gardens the attention they deserved; they were fully conversant with the problems of construction and maintenance and were well aware of the value of what they were building. In our day, when man in his daily life is far-removed from his natural surroundings, the importance of gardens and of nature in general for relaxation and rest is constantly on the increase.

The methods to be adopted for reconstruction must be carefully thought out, particularly where the original plans are in our possession (Sarospatak, Edeleny, Csakvar, Nagycenk, Kaszthely, Gödöllo, Fertod, etc.).

It is the aim of the Historical Monuments Department to cooperate closely with the Council for the Protection of Nature. There are several gardens over which it will be well for both authorities to continue to exercise their joint protection; some historic gardens contain rare natural features which are officially protected, and some protected areas contain châteaux or other buildings.

There are even buildings and historical monuments which are looked after by the forestry authorities responsible for the estates surrounding them. What we need are legislative measures which are better coordinated and more helpful; with proper cooperation it will be possible to preserve the property of the nation, which is also public property. Only gardens of purely horticultural interest which are the specific property of other bodies should be looked after by these. The upkeep of forests and gardens of historical interest by the forestry authorities does not involve special expenditure or affect the revenue of the latter, since the total area concerned is extremely small.

The national Building Regulations and the Act governing the protection of historical monuments now make concrete provision for the protection of gardens and grounds, and thus some progress has been made, for such protection now has a legal basis.

We intend to draw up a precise chart of the tasks awaiting us in connection with the upkeep and reconstruction of our most important historic gardens. It is our practice to assist the owners of such gardens by advising them on the use which may suitably be made of the material possibilities at their disposal. For determination of the practical tasks to be carried out it will be essential to carry out detailed surveys of the gardens, showing the materials used for each section

Drawing up a list of the historic gardens of Hungary is no easy task. We have not yet properly dealt with the work of listing them, studying ways in which they can be adapted, examining their scientific value, collecting documentary material and taking protective measures.

There are at least 500 gardens which, while continuing to fulfil our everyday tasks, we must find time to survey and examine. Over the last two years we have examined the 110 most important ones and have thus a rough idea of what is facing us. This work also enables us to fall in with the request of ICOMOS and IFLA and provide this meeting with a list of those of our historic gardens which are deserving of interest on an international level

We are going to continue our survey work until it is complete and at the same time we shall continue to prepare sets of photographs showing the condition of each garden and of the buildings it contains.

Our work of tracing and collecting records with a view to the restoration or construction of these gardens has already produced very considerable results, and we are hoping to be as successful in the future. As the number of such records increases, new aspects of the designing and cultivation of gardens in Hungary continue to emerge.

We are most eager to start restoring some of our gardens in the very near future, for we cannot afford to look on passively and allow such treasures to decay.

We must achieve a far more determined policy in connection with the protection of our historical monuments, for we are ourselves responsible for the preservation of our national treasures for the benefit of our nation as a whole.

Karoly ORSI  
Hungary





Jardin traditionnel à Kyoto, Japon — Traditional Japanese Garden, Kyoto.