were apt to be less architectural in layout than those she designed with Lutyens' (p. 18). In contrast, where appropriate, Jekyll's designs included hard ground effects and were strongly architectural. She was an excellent draughtsman, working out layouts on cartridge paper and sending copies on tracing paper to her clients. Examples in England include Sandbourne (1911), Drayton Wood (1920) and West Barsham Hall (1922);6 and, in the United States of America, The Groesbeck Place in Perintown, Ohio.7

The text of Gertrude Jekyll and the Country House Garden is enlivened by many quotations, only some of which have attributions. It is a pity Tankard did not follow the form adopted in Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement enabling the reader to find a source for each quotation. However, we must give thanks that the author avoided the invitation in a recent book on Robinson that 'The author would be willing to help anyone seeking to track down a specific reference.'8 It would also have been helpful if the captions to the illustrations carried details of the photographer, the date and an article reference. It is necessary to look on the verso of the title page in the preliminaries to find an incomplete list of articles. For example, an article on Bishopbarns was published in Country Life, 28/706 (1910) and the 'Cumulative Index for Country Life Volumes I to CLXVIII to December 1980' shows that there are innumerable articles on the gardens of houses listed here but not used. It would have been helpful to have had a note on the selection criteria.

Finally there are some inconsistencies and text errors; e.g. on p. 123 Stachys byzantina but on p. 130 Stachys lanata; on p. 130 spiraeas is misspelt; and on p. 190 strict nomenclature requires Nymphaea 'Marliacea Albida' and N. 'Marliacea Chromatella'. Such errors, however, are more than redeemed by the colour and blackand-white photographs which, now accessible, will be a great source of inspiration to garden designers and historians, for these photographs do indeed 'capture the enduring magic of Jekyll's creative genius'.

Downfield House, Down Law, Ladybank, Cupar, Fife KY15 7TG, UK Email: mjt4@st-andrews.ac.uk

REFERENCES

- ¹ Judith B. Tankard and Michael R. van Valkenburgh, *Gertrude Jekyll: A Vision of Garden and Wood* (London: John Murray, 1989).
- ² Judith B. Tankard and Martin A. Wood, *Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996).
- ³ Judith B. Tankard, Gardens and the Arts and Crafts Movement (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003).
- ⁴ Gertrude Jekyll and Lawrence Weaver, Gardens for Small Country Houses (London: Country Life, 1912).

- ⁵ George S. Elgood and Gertrude Jekyll, Some English Gardens (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1906).
- ⁶ Michael J. Tooley, 'Gertrude Jekyll as landscape gardener', in Michael J. Tooley (ed.), *Gertrude Jekyll; Artist, Gardener, Craftswoman* (Witton-le-Wear: Michaelmas, 1984), pp. 63–85 (pp. 70, 76).
- ⁷ Susan E. Schnare and Rudy J. Favretti, 'Gertrude Jekyll's American gardens', in Michael Tooley and Primrose Arnander (eds), Gertrude Jekyll: Essays in the Life of a Working Amateur (Witton-le-Wear: Michaelmas, 1995), pp. 163–74.
- ⁸ Richard Bisgrove, William Robinson: The Wild Gardener (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), p. 250.

Sue Minter, The Well-Connected Gardener: A Biography of Alicia Amherst, Founder of Garden History (Brighton: Book Guild, 2010), 124 pp., 31 black-and-white illus., 32 colour illus., £16.99 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-84624-513-8

Sue Minter's The Well-Connected Gardener is the first biography of Alicia Amherst (1865-1941), a keen horticulturist turned historian whose books are all but forgotten today. One reason for Amherst's obscurity is the number of names under which she wrote. Her first book, A History of Gardening in England (1895), was written under the name Alicia M. T. Amherst, but by the third edition (1909) the author's name had changed to Alicia M. Cecil or the Hon. Mrs Evelyn Cecil. To add to the confusion, her last books - Wild Flowers of the Great Dominions of the British Empire (1935), Some Canadian Wildflowers (1937), and Historic Gardens of England (1938) - were written under the name The Lady Rockley. Few readers, including librarians, are aware that they are all the same person. Another reason for Amherst's obscurity is that until recently her archives have been in storage at the Chelsea Physic Garden or in the possession of her family.

As the author states in her Preface: 'Alicia Amherst is not a well-known name in horticultural history, unlike her near contemporaries, Ellen Willmott and Gertrude Jekyll, though she published far more than the former and as much as the latter.' Although there is some truth to this general statement, by no means did Amherst produce the body of work that Jekyll did - six books and a handful of articles versus twelve books and nearly 1,000 articles. As the wife of a Tory minister, Amherst had substantial political interests and supported charitable endeavours in addition to pursuing her passions for horticulture and scholarship. Of these three women, Amherst was undoubtedly the most scholarly in her approach; her books reflect her love of research and quest for original documentation. But despite their usefulness, Amherst's books quickly slipped into oblivion because she was not the eloquent and inspiring writer that Jekyll was.

REVIEWS 285

Minter is well qualified to write this brief biography. She comes armed with academic degrees as well as horticultural training. Before being appointed Horticultural Director of the Eden Project in 2001, she was Director of the Chelsea Physic Garden for many years and also worked at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Like her subject, Minter has devoted her life to horticultural research, but it would have been useful to place Amherst within the context of garden history and thereby justify the book's subtitle: founder of garden history.

Amherst was the daughter of Lord Amherst of Hackney (Conservative MP for West Norfolk) and spent her childhood at Didlington Hall, Norfolk, where she was first exposed to estate gardens and horticulture. Her early interest in history was the result of her father's extensive library, which she acknowledged in her first book, and her early exposure to antiquities collections. As a child, she and her sisters were imbued with a sense of social responsibility, plus she also was well travelled - her mother's family had deep connections with Egyptian archaeologists. Like many young women of her era, Amherst sketched landscapes and plants on her travels abroad. It was at the suggestion of Percy Newberry, a family friend who wrote articles for the Gardener's Chronicle, that she began her first book on English gardens. The importance of A History of Gardening in England lies in the fact that it begins earlier than most books on the subject, mainly because of her father's antiquarian interests. Her book was authoritative and intellectual with scholarly references and an exhaustive annotated bibliography of records on English gardens until 1837, and today it is still a valued resource. First published in a small edition by Bernard Quaritch in 1895, it was reprinted the following year. This still remains her most relevant book, although it is long out of print.

In addition to writing books, Amherst delivered scholarly papers, wrote for various participated in plant-collecting journals, expeditions for Kew and was an accomplished botanical artist. She was an outspoken advocate for women in horticulture during a period when horticultural schools were being founded in England. She was also prominent in the British Women's Emigration Association. After her marriage in 1898 and new role as a mother, she wrote Children's Gardens (1902) that presaged Jekyll's better-known book on the subject, Children and Gardens (1908). One of Amherst's most valuable books is London Parks and Gardens (1907). It contains a trove of information about London's famous and notso-famous parks, squares, open spaces, historical gardens, and private gardens, compiled long before any other serious study on the subject.

In the end, Amherst was a well-connected gardener from a privileged background, with wide-ranging friends, horticultural and botanical colleagues, and political associates. Although she was not the equal of Jekyll in terms of literary output and writing flair, she was a serious

intellect whose books need to be dusted off the shelf again or even reissued. Thanks to Minter's book garden historians will now have a chance to study this remarkable woman's life and her contributions to horticultural history.

JUDITH B. TANKARD 1452 Beacon Street, Waban, MA 02468, USA Email: judith@tankard.net

Jane Brown, The Omnipotent Magician: Lancelot 'Capability' Brown 1716-1783 (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), 384 pp., illus. in colour and black-and-white, £20.00 (hbk), ISBN 9780701182120

Lancelot Brown was, and remains, a landscape designer about whom it is relatively easy to know a little - of his life, his landscaping style, his working methods, his supporters and detractors - but a good deal more difficult to know a lot. Much was written about him either by those who knew him, or as often by those who did not, and the results of both have always to be read with an eye to the background and apparent intentions of the author. A sense of his relations with his clients can similarly be gleaned from the surviving letters which he and they exchanged, but he appears to have been almost intentionally secretive in his dealings with his many foremen and superintendents and relatively few detailed records of the day-to-day management of his many commissions and contracts have been found.

Dorothy Stroud first established Brown's reputation as a landscape designer in her seminal Capability Brown (1950) and in so doing set the benchmark for future studies both of the man and of his legacy. Copious new evidence has emerged since then, much of it derived from field evidence, which would not have been readily available in the 1950s when garden history was treated more-or-less as an adjunct to architectural and/ or art history. A more detailed understanding of some of his designs is thus now possible, but still a detailed appreciation of Brown the man has eluded his chroniclers.

Jane Brown's new biography is presented as a lively chronology of his life, personality and works. To facilitate this, she has made a brave, and perhaps necessary, choice to augment the rather meagre facts with what might, could or may have happened in a particular circumstance. In so doing, she presents a much more dynamic and energetic account than would otherwise have been possible, although I did find myself instinctively challenging statements of apparent fact that could not possibly be verified, especially when these ascribed to him specific thoughts or feelings. Generally, however, she been careful to do this where it adds appreciably to the narrative, without contradicting the known facts: the net effect being to create a rounder portrait of her subject and one which is arguably no more or less a fiction than his well-known portrayal at Burghley by Sir Nathaniel Dance, or his epitaph