

TRANSCRIPT

SCRC Series: Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project – MC 00191

Field Notes: Patrick Horsbrugh (compiled February 6, 2009)

Interviewee: PATRICK HORSBRUGH, 30TH LAIRD OF HORSBRUGH

Interviewer: Yona R. Owens

Interview Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Location: South Bend, Indiana

Length: Part 3 of 3: Approximately 17 minutes

This interview for the Lewis Clarke Oral Histories Project was conducted at Patrick Horsbrugh's home. Born in Great Britain, Horsbrugh started his career in London but soon gained international recognition for his work on High Paddington and the New Barbican. He ties into Clarke's life as a fellow student at Harvard in 1951 and as a guest lecturer at North Carolina State University's School (now College) of Design while Clarke was a faculty member. They kept up their correspondence for the rest of their lives. Horsbrugh, 89, never married, and has no children.

PH: Salisbury, are you familiar with her book. Lady Salisbury. I can find it for you.

YO: No, I don't think so.

PH: Well, she by inheritance inherited great gardens, traditional gardens in Ireland.

YO: And what was her name again?

PH: Salisbury, Lady Salisbury.

YO: Lady Salisbury.

PH: But in the press she'd be the Marchioness of Salisbury and she was of that society, but her Irish gardens of course fell into disrepair. But as a Marchioness she went back there and repaired some of them. New owners and new plantations and so on and she's restored them and they're illustrated in the book and then she went to France and restored many French gardens. And then she married Salisbury and Salisbury had great estates outside London, and in short distance of London. So she revived the gardens at Hatfield House. And they are of course open to the public and they are world renowned gardens and she went all over England revivifying and after the war and cultivating and helping those who had inherited such gardens. And those that were, that had fallen into disarray—new owners or no owners at all—she cultivated them and has become a statuesque figure in these gardens now worldwide in a worldwide authority in this wonderful book if I can find it or I lent it to somebody, which is simply illustrations which she speaks of history. But she's also a modern garden and she introduces modern sections that are modern in design even or extends old gardens that are open to the public now and she's a great authority at Kew and helps them with the repairs and whatever is necessary. So, she can speak

historic material no less than modern material and does both with great skill. But she's getting old now and is devoting herself to writing.

Well, she has cultivated a great number of things and of course she's helped the Prince of Wales develop his new gardens, which although the house is eighteenth century, the gardens are virtually entirely new. And his house has now become a focal point for gardening not only for gardening but for field gardening such as hedges and fields, and how you leave a field fallow so that the grasses become a garden. And you cultivate special grasses specially in order to return them for the feeding of cattle or a special kind of cattle that like this kind of grass as opposed to that kind of grass. Or this kind of grass has to be scattered with dandelions so that the chemistry of dandelions is mixed with the cattle fodder etc. etc. and doesn't have to be supplied by chemistry, make good, which eventually discolors the meat or it makes the meat go sour more quickly than it would normally and all that kind of thing so that the cattle cultivation is a matter of grass cultivation, and any other food, and the same with vegetation.

There's a girl that I know, in fact, she's the daughter of my brilliant lawyer of New Barbican trial. She lives in America now and she is a world renowned painter of flowers. I can show you her file of flower painting, but she also paints vegetables as though they were flowers. So, she'll paint roots as seriously as a bloom and the leaves as seriously as flower leaves and so as it—that they, they read together. And she has got an exhibition—I think it's on now in New York, which I think is her third exhibition in New York, of the paintings, which are for sale. She is a recognized artist. But the Prince of Wales employs her to paint his blooms and his vegetables and I hope that he will have an exhibition of his own gardens work of all kinds because the Prince of Wales doesn't stop anywhere. He is doing the same for varied out of fashion species of poultry.

Well, we had certain jungle fowl as poultry in Ireland, which were my father's pet things. So, we had jungle fowl, which they were of the jungle the equivalent of now a cultivated fowl. They were smaller birds and more glorious in plumage. I don't have any photographs of those unfortunately. But maybe after lunch you can look at the kind of things that my father was concerned with in the birds of paradise, which of course were not floor birds at all. They were tree top birds. They never came to the floor because they fed in the tree tops. They fed in honeys and blooms and fruit particularly in the tree tops, which he couldn't reach—had to get to them by inhibiting the trees.

But you see everything goes by variety and in human terms variety is interrupted as specialization. So that you become a hospital architect or you become a church architect or some particularity because you would do it more readily and you have a feel for it or something. But in terms of landscape, you see, landscape involves all particularities, peculiarities, specialties and you, if you want to get sucked into a specialization that's fine and it's necessary, medical things particularly. You've got to be—you can't be a general doctor anymore. You have to be a specialist. And then of course the general doctor practice of which Holford suffered from you see because they were all this that and the other specialist, they didn't realize what was in front of them because they were too specialized.

His premature death was really an international tragedy because he was a man. He had this kind of open South African, no sense of class or subdivisions of social, social subdivisions and was welcomed anywhere he went and was an open figure, had a wonderful wife. And she got ill at Harvard and he mentions it in his letter—Lewis—and she never recovered from her illness. She simply became I don't know what mentally went wrong, brilliant woman in herself so probably it was just mental over taxation or something. But at a Harvard dinner party she

suddenly accused her host of being too talkative at the table [Laughs] and he couldn't get her to shut up at the table or ever after. And she was hospitalized in Britain and eventually died—

YO: Oh, goodness.

PH: —before he did because when I knew him he was living alone, a lovely apartment in a great house in Regents Park that was—

YO: This is Holford?

PH: Yes. He lived looking after his wife because he did the looking after personally until she died. But outside the house there was a railing and a shrapnel shell or something had broken a railing and the vertical was—left a gap large enough for him to walk through to, to crawl through. And he refused to allow the people to fix it. And why was if he fixed that he'd have to walk right down to the gate, walk around the gate and walk right back there to get the bus. He didn't like that. He could walk through the gap railing. He wanted the gap kept.

YO: A shortcut.

PH: It was just by the door. So, he got his way whether he removed it after they repaired it or not. I didn't ask [Laughs], but I left well alone. Anyhow that was, that was the nature of Holford and a marvelous man. Well, he was employed all over the place and he went to his doctors and so on and they said, well of course you're lecturing here, there and everywhere and you're flying, you're never at home and of course you're ill. You're [inaudible] and that kind of thing. And they said, take a holiday. So, he asked for a holiday and he was under a government deployment so the guy [inaudible] socialist government said, no, we're all equal here you can take holidays any time you want. They take a month or something so they gave him a month which he took abroad and didn't recover much from the month and was back in the waiting room when this passing student doctor saw him. And he was in the hospital and never came out of the hospital there after. It was too late.

But anyhow that's a sad story of which Lewis was luckily acquainted with him. But there's that kind of person all over the place doing wonderful things, but not getting the recognition which they deserve or getting the recognition distorted in some way, which happens with the modern press. This is why I think Gore has been so wise and why Francis Howard warned me that Gore was not like that and he would—he didn't care for the vice presidency at all and kept very quiet for that period. And whatever reasons you see and he then thought that his name was sufficiently known publicly that he would be a ready candidate for presidency, but that didn't work—

YO: Right.

PH: —anymore than what's her name worked, Clinton's wife. But anyhow, I think he's better out of politics altogether.

YO: Oh, sure.

PH: But you see he's now setting is own stage set and I hope that he'll come forward in support of, in support of the new president. If the new president is able, as I should think he would have the sense to leave Gore alone to do what he needs to do, and quickly, but whether that works out remains to be seen.

YO: Who are some landscape architects today that we should know about or we should be watching?

PH: I would mention Gore without delay. He's not a landscape architect and doesn't pretend to be. I don't know that the landscape association works with him. You see, I had my own private landscape institute advisor in the form of the vice president of the institute, now what the hell is his name, on the board of the Environic Foundation. He had retired and was therefore living in Washington, great help in the Washington area and interpreting the Washington moves because he was fundamentally political because that's where he was vice president of the National Park Service in Washington. And in those days I had great admiration for the National Park Service. Tried to get the National Park Service imitated in Britain and failed, but that—they've done something of the same situation now so that, that I hope is rectified.

Well, anyhow that's what happened, but he guided me and became a doyen and so that anybody working in Washington on the foundation knew him. But he's died now and I'm without anybody and therefore, I don't know anybody and of course an institute of that sort has politics of its own and very often is the self ruin. Because I used to serve on the AIA for oh, ten or more, twelve years I think, before I was not invited to serve back and I knew why. Because I was trying to cultivate Environics in my committee in the thing and my committee was a planning committee not an architectural committee and the architectural committee was not a planning committee. It was a planning committee. I said, what's the difference?

And since I wasn't living in Washington and wasn't a what do you call it a chairman or something, and a good thing, this I was able to avoid the obvious conflict, which may have arisen because I had been advocating the fact that the professions are no longer large enough to command their own profession. They've got to unify. They've got to know each others language and act in union. And that's a very difficult thing to get an architect that has confidence in the landscape architect and vice versa. Let alone get a planner with confidence in anybody least of all his own [mayor].

This is one of the reasons what I found and I thought when I, in the short time I was in Raleigh, that Raleigh with, as a government office as well and the—and that particular man the governor who's name escapes me—

YO: Sanford? Sanford?

PH: —Sanford was an admirable thing and you could talk for instance in—there was a great valley between the one part of thing or another, and I recommended that tunnel the valley in and build the valley, unite the valley with a terrace between for shopping centers and so on with your car parking beneath. You're routing to and from beneath and all the services beneath. Then you've got a shopping center on the surface and high rise above and plantation as an urban forest in between the buildings. So the buildings for the most part were separated from each other by groves of trees so that the sense of trees and buildings became unified. And if that happened visually, instead of having a separate park that had no buildings in it at all, you had a park was

divided up along the streets, into the streets and so on. And that streets were identified by deliberate choice of special species, which even were special in design form, their color or their plumage, or whatever it was, so that the street would have not only a feathered appearance but a particular kind of feather which gave character to the street. And therefore different streets would be known by the different character of vegetation and you could do this on the street walls for instance. Blank walls wouldn't have that at all.

I discovered the highest blank wall covered with vegetation in Toronto with the Toronto climate and it was cinquefolia. And it was two hospital buildings, a children's hospital and another hospital, and this was an original service alley and the hospital had no windows in those walls and the walls were left unattended and nobody attended the street service thing so cinquefolia grew by chance and grew up twenty four floors—is the highest height I'd ever known. They stopped only because that was where the parapet was. But the atmosphere in that [sink?] was cool in the hottest days.

[Break for lunch]

End of Part 3 of 3

Transcriber: Jennifer Curasi

Date: August 18, 2009