WELCOME to Bowhill, home of the Duke & Duchess of Buccleuch.

The landscape structure of Bowhill derives mainly from late 18th and early 19th century schemes instigated by several generations of the Dukes of Buccleuch, keen to transform former wooded hunting grounds into a suitable residential country seat. The land had previously been part of Ettrick Forest, a royal hunting reserve dating back to the High Middle Ages, parts of which were granted to the Scott and Douglas families by Robert Bruce in the 14th century. Two hundred years of tree planting have made the diverse woodland around the Estate what it is today. Whilst Bowhill’s gardens are unlike the traditional, formal gardens found at other Buccleuch properties, Historic Scotland have classified the landscape here as “outstanding” due to the excellent condition of the historical landscape and surrounding woodlands.
Walkling out of the courtyard, on your right hand side extending along the drive is the Rhododendron Bank, many of the rhododendrons grow at the very edge of a small Rock Garden. The Rock Garden was created in the late 20th century, where a section of terracing was re-purposed. Small informal paths wind through plants with a variety of textures and scents, including Sedum, Hebe and Primroses. Nestled beneath a Rhododendron is a small marker for Helianthemum ‘Ben Affleck’, on red earth, a memorial stone to the 9th Duke, who, together with his brother the 8th Duke, set about creating the Rock Garden. This area was at its best in late May or early June when the Azaleas are a mass of colour.

Past the House entrance is the unique Yew Arch. When the wind bends your Yew Trees, turn it into a feature! This arch was created by combining two previously wired pillars of Yew bent by a feature! This arch was created by combining two previously wired pillars of Yew bent by the wind. These arboreal giants, the Three Beeches, are coming to the end of their long lives, and stand as testament to the age of the surrounding House. They were planted by Anne, 1st Duchess of Buccleuch (1643-1732), long before the current House was built, and show how the planting of trees was as central to life on a country estate then as it is today.

The huge faces were created as part of the UK wide ‘Giants in the Forest’ project in 2013, and stand out from the trunks of the trees overlooking the upper terrace. The top-layer are made from woodland foliage and were added by local school children. The giants evoke a somewhat eerie and mystical quality to the grove of the Three Beeches.

The lower loch was altered to fit the artistic vision of Gilpin’s landscaping, and the upper loch, entirely man-made, was excavated and filled in 1818, following the advice of Sir Walter Scott, who had romantic visions of the House being reflected in the waters in the manner of Camelot of legend. On a more practical note, they were stocked with fish to provide food for the household, and, when winter bit, were sometimes used to add to the supplies of ice kept in the nearby ice house. Look out for the Sessile Oak trees (Quercus petraea) at the upper loch’s eastern end. These trees are habitats in their right, with up to 250 species of fauna being recorded in one tree. They are distinguished from the Lodge Oak by the stability of nature of their acorns, which is interesting to note that you are walking on dates back to paths first established during the early 19th century (OS Maps 1863), long before the top loch was created.

The use of Ice Houses dates back thousands of years, as far as we know, to China and Mesopotamia. Ice making was first introduced to Britain in the 17th century. This one slightly pre-dates the existing man made Ice House, and until recently was a place where bams made their home. Ice blocks, sometimes from Scandinavia, and even as far as America, were lowered into the structure, which is 30 feet from floor to ceiling. Portable foods, stored on shelves or hocks inside, were kept fresh and even frozen, by the reduced temperatures. Three sections of these were created from the outside world. Ice was also used for chilling drinks, for ice-cream and for medicinal purposes. A real status symbol!

The Sunken Garden, effectively a small arboretum, is home to a large variety of spring-flowering plants, including Daffodils, Bluebells and Chionodoxa, providing an early season riot of colour. The area was re-planted in 2009/10 with small and medium sized specimen trees to complement the larger trees around the Estate, including the Snakelake Maple (Acer davidii), Smooth Japanese Maple (Acer palmatum ‘Shokazuki’), Golden Elm and Dawyck Beech (Fagus sylvatica ‘Dawyck’). The area is cut at the end of April for firewood. The area is used for the following seasonal food. An oak bench, made in the estate, celebrates the life of Jane, the sixth Duchess of Buccleuch.

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