BOWHILL

Gardens

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 fourteenth 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, the landscape here is still classified as 'outstanding' by Historic Scotland.

1. Wollemi Pine
2. Rhododendron Bank and Seven Dwarves
3. Sunken Garden
4. Black Gates
5. Adventure Playground
6. Victorian Water Garden
7. Walled Garden
8. Ice House
9. The Upper Loch
10. The Three Beeches and The Giants in the Forest
11. Stone Urn
12. The Terraces
13. The Courtyard

The Minstrel Tearoom
Gift Shop & Reception
Car parking
Toilet facilities

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Illustration: Hannah Longmuir | Design: pmgd

Bowhill Gardens & points of interest

1 On the path coming down from the main car park is the **Wollemi Pine**. This is one of the world's oldest and rarest tree species, dating back 150 million years. Less than 100 endure in the wild. From the same family as the Monkey Puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*), the species was thought long extinct until a grove of 42 specimens was discovered in a remote, steep sided gorge in the Wollemi National Park, 150 km North-West of Sydney, Australia. This particular tree was given as a gift to the 9th Duke of Buccleuch, the present Duke's father, in 2008 by the European Squirrel Initiative, in recognition of his support for the conservation of Red squirrels.

2 Opposite the Courtyard entrance is the **Rhododendron Bank**, including the mainly red *Taurus*, the *Nova Zembla*, with smaller, light red flowers and *Germania*, whose blooms are pink with a white centre. The **Seven Dwarves** bank is planted with different varieties of Rhododendrons named after the characters in the well-known fairy tale. All the 'Dwarves' are variations on a shade of pink, except Grumpy, who is perhaps right to be so as he is pale peach in colour. The lamp post at the foot of the bank evokes memories of the one made famous in C.S Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

3 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 compliment the larger trees around the estate, including the Snakebark Maple (*Acer davidii*), Smooth Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum 'Osakazuki'*), Golden Elm and Dawyck Beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Dawyck'*). The area is cut at the end of June to allow the bulbs to regenerate for the following season. An oak bench, made on the Estate, celebrates the life of Jane, 9th Duchess of Buccleuch.

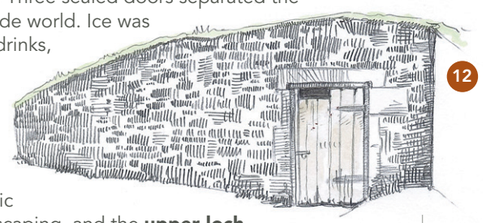
4 The impressive wrought iron **Black Gates** were originally made in the eighteenth century for the family seat at Dalkeith Palace to the south of Edinburgh. During the last war, they were locked away in storage, and lay forgotten until their 'rediscovery' twenty years ago. Today, they mark the approach to the terraced gardens and what was at one time the main entrance to Bowhill House.

5 Reputedly the best **Adventure Playground** for miles around! Parents can relax on the picnic benches while little daredevils of all ages enjoy 30 metre zipwires, slides, rope bridges and a fort, all nestled in the beautiful woodland surrounding the House.

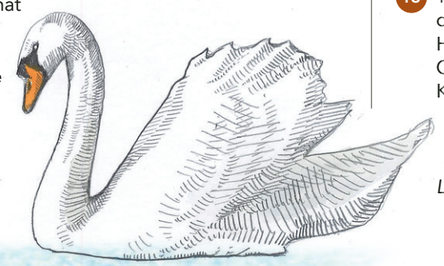
6 Between the Walled Garden and Playground there is trace of an old **Victorian Water Garden**. The area used to house a mid-19th century summerhouse but no trace remains, only elements such as the bamboo, ornamental trees and stones.

7 Although closed to the public, from the gate you can see some of the **Walled Garden** and newly restored Greenhouse. During the 19th Century the Walled Garden would have been an important source of fruit and vegetables for the household, as the majority of food consumed at Bowhill was produced on the estate. Sheltered from the worst of the wind and frost, a wide range of produce would have been grown here throughout the year, including soft fruit, such as strawberries and raspberries, top fruits such as apples and pears and wall-grown fruit like cherries and all the usual vegetables we still use at home today. Unfortunately, there is no longer demand for this amount of fresh produce and so half the area was given over to stabling during the 1970s, with the other half being turned over to grass. Some fruit trees still grow against the walls.

8 The use of **Ice Houses** dates back thousands of years to places as far away as China and Mesopotamia, but they were first introduced to Britain in the 17th century. This one slightly pre-dates the existing main House, and was until recently a place where bats made their home. Ice blocks, sometimes from Scandinavia, and even as far away as America, were lowered into the structure, which is 30 feet from floor to ceiling. Perishable foods, stored on shelves or hooks inside, were kept fresh and even frozen, by the reduced temperature. Three sealed doors separated the interior from the outside world. Ice was also used for chilling drinks, for ice-cream and for medicinal purposes. A real status symbol!

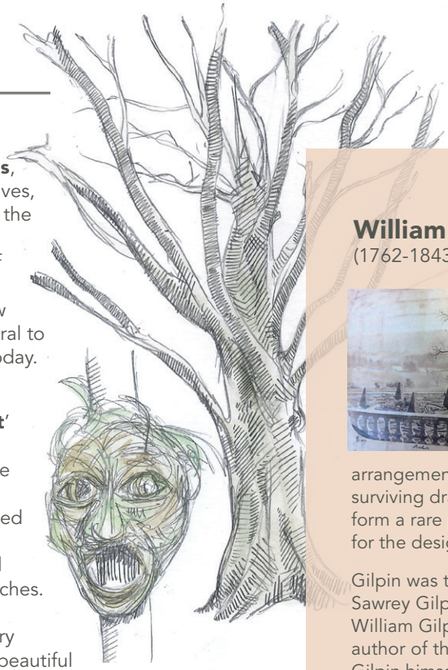


9 The lower loch was altered to fit the artistic vision of Gilpin's landscaping, and the **upper loch**, entirely man-made was excavated and filled in 1816, following the advice of Sir Walter Scott, who had romantic visions of the house being reflected in the waters in the manner of Camelot of legend. 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 own right, with up to 250 species of fauna being recorded in one tree. They are distinguished from the English Oak by the stalkless nature of their acorns. It is interesting to note that the path 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.



10 These arboreal giants, **the 3 Beeches**, are coming to the end of their long lives, and stand as testament to the age of the forest surrounding the house. They were planted by Anne, 1st Duchess of Buccleuch (1663-1732), 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 stare out from the trunks of the trees overlooking the upper loch. The top layers 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.



11 Since the turn of the century, a solitary **stone urn** has stood watch over the beautiful vista to the south of the house. The urn was originally bought as a replacement for one from the colonnade next to the House; however someone seems to have mixed up measurements as this one is somewhat larger than its balustrade-bound comrades!

The long vista is framed by beech trees which were planted in 1919, however the actual orientation of the vista is thought to have derived from an older rectangular tree nursery visible on an 1863 OS Map.

12 The **Terraces** were designed by "Picturesque Improver" W.S Gilpin in 1831 and were designed to emphasise the length and stature of the house and give spectacular views of the Vista and beyond across the Ettrick Valley. On the top terrace, barely visible, is the outline of star and crescent parterres deriving from the Scott family crest, which were created in the 1980s. Since 2015 the lawned Terraces have been maintained by four battery-powered robotic mowers, which can be seen cutting through the season.

13 The early 19th century **Courtyard** and old stables are the hub for your visit. Here you will find the Old Kitchen Café, Theatre, Exhibition and Victorian Kitchen. In the open season the grey stone is brought to life with planters and hanging baskets including seasonal flowers like *Verbena*, *Lobelia* and *Bidens*.

William Sawrey Gilpin
(1762-1843)

W.S Gilpin was heavily involved in the creation of the garden terraces, the entrance drive, the upper loch and associated views, as well as planting arrangements here at Bowhill, and surviving drawings and memoranda form a rare piece of historical evidence for the design process.

Gilpin was the son of animal painter Sawrey Gilpin, and his uncle, Reverend William Gilpin, was the pioneering author of the picturesque genre. Gilpin himself followed this artistic bent, specialising initially in watercolours, to no great critical acclaim, before taking a post as third drawing master at the Royal Military College. Following the conclusion of the wars against Napoleonic France, a cut in military spending meant that, much to his astonishment and dismay, Gilpin found himself made redundant aged fifty-eight. To support his family, he turned to landscape gardening. Despite his inexperience, Gilpin's artistic eye meant he was very successful in his new field, working on a great number of landscaping projects, including East Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh, and, of course, Bowhill.

He endeavoured to apply the principles of landscape painting to the improvement of real scenery, very much a 'picturesque improver', rather than a gardener, he adhered to the notion of the imitation of nature which is well illustrated by his proposals for informal plantations. Gilpin often advised the relocation of house entrances, so as not to allow the approach to the House to interfere with the views from the main windows. While it cannot be said for certain, it may be Gilpin's influence that persuaded architect William Burn to do just that at Bowhill in 1832, resulting in the unimpeded view from the House today. The year after his work here, Gilpin produced *Practical Hints upon Landscape Gardening: with some remarks on Domestic Architecture, as connected with scenery*, which ran to a second edition in 1835.

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