

INFO

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Texture and form in the surrounding landscape



"WE HAD AN EXTRA RESOURCE IN THE BLOOMSBURY SET'S PAINTINGS, WHICH OFTEN FOCUS ON THE LANDSCAPE. WE USED THESE TO INFORM THE PLANTING PALETTES"

MEMBER PROJECT: CHARLESTON CENTENARY

Marian Boswall MSGD was involved in the Centenary Project at Charleston, the home to the Bloomsbury Group in East Sussex



Design for the new access, parking and Centenary Orchard

We were delighted to be approached to be part of the Charleston Centenary Project team by Julian Harrap Architects – they knew we specialise in historic sites and we had been recommended by a mutual client. The project aims to introduce new facilities which will enable the site to open year round and to increase income-generating capacity.

I had a fascinating meeting with Julian, discussing the history and meaning of the site and the authenticity and beauty he and his colleague, Jamie Fobert, are aiming to achieve. Julian is one of the fathers of recent Conservation Architecture (think Neues Museum, Sir John Soane Museum, etc) and we saw eye to eye on so many things. We both believe in the importance of the journey, for example, and I was delighted that he was adamant that the old concrete road to Charleston should not be covered in Tarmac. He believes it should remain broken in places and rutted in others, so

that the navigation and rhythm of the approach slows you down and begins the transition from 21st to early 20th-century Charleston.

Our brief was to improve the access and arrival sequence, to work with the design team to blend the new designs with the ancient landscape and, most importantly, to work with the history of the site. Our design includes improved access with a new visitors' road, car parking and picnic areas, extensive hedgerow, wildflower and tree planting and a new Centenary orchard garden.

Our approach always involves a study of the history, geology, geography and ecology of the site. Here we had a wonderful extra resource in the Bloomsbury Set's paintings, which often focus on the local landscape in its many textures and forms. We used these to inform the planting palettes.

One of the biggest challenges with a Charitable Trust is funding. Charleston has wonderful supporters, including Patron HRH The Duchess of Cornwall,

and trustees such as Diane Casson and Tom Stuart-Smith MSGD. So while funding is always on the agenda, the project is well supported by lovers of Bloomsbury literature and art.

Stage one planting has already been carried out, with final stock to follow this autumn, including trees for the access road, which were donated by private sponsors, following an appeal made during the Small Minds festival. Head gardener Mark Divall and his team will be responsible for the ongoing management of the gardens. We are very much in touch with him and will continue to be involved.

It was a privilege to develop the landscape of such an iconic place. It was also a pleasure working with architects Jamie Fobert, Julian Harrap and their teams, as well as the trustees, and the wonderful Mark Divall, head gardener and last true Bohemian in Residence.

www.marianboswall.com
www.charleston.org.uk