

SPRING OUTING

Wednesday 13th May 2021

Compton Acres, Poole, Dorset, BH13 7ES

Compton Acres is a large, privately owned garden in Poole, Dorset, England. It was founded in 1920 by Thomas William Simpson, an entrepreneur who had become wealthy through the manufacture of margarine. The gardens consist of five themed sub-gardens: an Italian garden, a rock and water garden, a heather garden, a Japanese garden and a less formal garden called the "Wooded Valley"



Compton Acres in Poole is widely recognised as one of England's finest privately owned ornamental gardens. Spanning ten acres, the gardens are celebrated for their beautifully designed themed landscapes, a fascinating origin dating back to the 1920s, and outstanding facilities for visitors. This remarkable site holds special appeal for those interested in the history of gardens, the evolution of landscape design, and expertly curated plant collections.

Established in 1920 by Thomas Simpson, Compton Acres reflects the influence of Simpson's travels, which inspired the creation of a sequence of themed gardens throughout the grounds. Today, Compton Acres is acknowledged as one of England's most significant ornamental gardens. Located at 164 Canford Cliffs Road, Poole, Dorset BH13 7ES, not far from Sandbanks, the estate encompasses ten acres of meticulously designed and maintained landscape.

Compton Acres is organised into five principal themed gardens, linked by transitional plantings and pathways. The Italian Garden features formal terraces, statuary, and water features, complemented by the award-winning Italian Villa used for events. The Japanese Garden stands out as one of the most admired in Britain, with authentic architectural elements and carefully composed planting. Woodland Valley offers shaded paths, mature trees, and watercourses. The Rock & Water Garden presents dramatic stonework and cascades, while the Heather Garden, alongside sub-tropical and Southern Hemisphere areas, boasts unusual species for the UK climate, adding horticultural breadth. Thousands of new plants have been added since 2003 to enhance year-round interest.

Compton Acres is a textbook example of early-20th-century garden eclecticism—an era when wealthy owners created immersive “world gardens” reflecting travel, taste, and horticultural ambition. Its survival, restoration, and continued private ownership make it an unusually intact specimen of this design philosophy.

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Website: www.comptonacres.co.uk

The Haslemere Gardening Society visited Compton Acres in Poole on the 12th of May 2021, after waiting nearly two years since the last coach trip. Members of Haslemere Gardening Society were able to meet and enjoy an outing postponed from last Summer. We obeyed the rules at present in force, and so the coach had fewer passengers, socially distanced, and all wore masks.

The coach set off from Haslemere Hall at 8.30 am en-route for Compton Acres in Poole, Dorset, a privately owned garden set on a steep hill and including a wooded valley. The weather was very much better than had been forecast, with some lovely sunny spells, making exploring the many and varied elements of the garden very enjoyable.

Each corner held a new and delightful view where the plants seemed to have been placed exactly in the right place. Water runs all through the garden, and it includes an atmospheric Japanese Garden, a rocky water garden and a more formal Italian garden planted with beds of uniform tulips supported by amazing bright blue forget-me-nots.

