

Embargoed until Tuesday 16 November 2021, 12:00pm

PRESS RELEASE

Historic Houses Announces Garden of the Year Award 2021 Winners

Gordon Castle Walled Garden in Moray become the first Scottish garden to become the public's outright favourite since 1984, with Cambridge's Elton Hall picking up the Judge's Choice award.

In a record-breaking vote, Gordon Castle Walled Garden, in Moray, Scotland, has won [the 2021 Garden of the Year Award](#), sponsored by Christie's auction house, accumulating over three thousand votes for the first time in the competition's 37-year history. It is the first success for a Scottish garden [since 1998](#), and is the first Scottish garden ever to win the award outright. [Gordon Castle Walled Garden](#) overcame stiff competition from Harewood House in Yorkshire, Lowther Castle in Cumbria, and five other extraordinary gardens across the UK. Over eleven thousand votes were cast in total.

Scotland's Gordon Castle Walled Garden wins in a public vote

Gordon Castle was one of the largest houses in Scotland until the mid-twentieth century, when circumstances led to the sale of the estates and the demolition of the greater part of the building. The surviving, much more modest but handsome castle is now home to Angus and Zara Gordon Lennox and at the heart of a busy diversified estate and innovative and entrepreneurial business. The Walled Garden has been a leading project amongst many.



Gordon Castle Walled Garden becomes the first Scottish garden to win outright

Cambridge's Elton Hall wins the Judge's Choice

Winning the Judge's Choice Award was Meredith (Lady) Proby's creation of an almost entirely new garden in the historic setting of [Elton Hall in Cambridgeshire](#). Lady Proby has spent a lifetime transforming and enriching a garden that had already been through many guises over the centuries, into something that brings joy to plantsmen, visitors, and her family alike. The Judge's Choice award, in its second year, aims to support smaller gardens with less public exposure, and follows the success of Gresgarth Hall Gardens, Cumbria, in 2020.



Elton Hall in Cambridgeshire becomes only the second Judge's Choice winner

Ben Cowell, Director General of Historic Houses said:

“Our own hardy perennial, the Historic Houses/Christie’s Garden of the Year Award, has celebrated the very best in British gardening since 1984. This year’s winners are no exception. We hope the award will mean many more garden visitors will seek out the horticultural wonders of Gordon Castle Walled Gardens. Meanwhile, Elton Hall is the very worthy winner of our Judges’ Choice category, recognising excellence in garden creativity and design.”

Orlando Rock, Chairman, Christie’s UK, said:

“The annual Garden of the Year Award, presented by Historic Houses and sponsored by Christie’s is an opportunity to celebrate some of the UK’s most beautiful gardens and we are delighted to recognise the achievements of this year’s winners Angus and Zara Gordon Lennox of Gordon Castle Walled Garden, in Moray, Scotland. With planting that combines cutting edge design with the productive ethos of a traditional kitchen garden, Gordon Castle Walled Garden received a record number of votes, marking the first Scottish garden ever to win the award outright. We hope these spectacular gardens will continue to be enjoyed by many more visitors, in addition to being a focal point and support in relation to the local community. Congratulations also to Lady Proby and the outstanding gardens of Elton Hall in Cambridgeshire on winning the Judge’s Choice Award.”

Angus and Zara Gordon Lennox, the owners of Gordon Castle Walled Garden, said:

“We are absolutely delighted to have won the Historic Houses Garden of the Year award and would like to say a huge thank you to all our visitors, followers and friends of the Walled Garden for their votes. For us, and our small team of gardeners and volunteers, it is the stuff that dreams are made of.

It has been seven years since we embarked on the project to restore this magical place from a near abandoned grass field to the productive and beautiful space which has emerged, showcasing the very best of fruit, herbs, vegetables and cut flowers. None of this would have been possible without the extraordinary hard work of our entire team and the support of the local community.

This award will deliver an enormous boost to The Walled Garden, the local economy and hopefully to Scottish gardens as a whole, recognising the significant benefits gardening has on well-being, health, and happiness. We hope visitors will be encouraged to come and visit the Garden, to discover this beautiful area of Moray and Speyside and, inspired by what they find, leave with a smile on their faces.”

Ursula Cholmeley, Gardens Editor for Historic Houses’ members magazine, said:

“I am delighted that this eight-acre walled garden has won against fierce competition. The whole team is committed to showcasing a productive kitchen garden and it is remarkable that a project that is only 10 years old attracted so many votes. This is the first garden in Scotland to win the Garden of the Year Award outright and they are rightly proud of their achievement.”

Ed Bollom, Head Gardener at Gordon Castle Walled Garden, said:

“We couldn’t be more excited about winning the Garden of the Year Award. We are only a small and relatively unknown garden and we’ve been working incredibly hard over the last seven or eight years to turn a bare patch of ground into one of the biggest working kitchen gardens in Britain, it has truly been a labour of love.

Our visitors are often surprised by the sheer variety of plants within the walls. Everything we grow has a use; the vegetables go to our café or for sale direct to visitors, the fruit is used for cider, gin, jams and chutneys, and our cut flowers are used to decorate the castle and holiday cottages or sent off to local florists. We extract essential oils from our lavender and rosemary and the herbs are used in a range of cosmetics. The garden and gardeners work very hard to earn their keep! Originally the Walled Garden was used to provide fresh produce for the Duke of Gordon but now it’s used to provide an income for the estate and the gates are open to all. I find it immensely satisfying to see the fruits of our labour being enjoyed by so many people. We want the garden to be enjoyed by everybody and with a hardy band of volunteers, regular trips from the local schools and growing visitor numbers we’re really becoming part of the local community.

We are so grateful to our visitors for voting by the thousand to help us win this award. We’re still relatively unknown and so the title of ‘Garden of the Year’ will go a long way to put us on the map and spread the word about the project and all of the fascinating things that are going on in our walled garden the far North of Scotland.”

Lady Proby, Elton Hall, said:

“We came here in 1980. There was a dilapidated Edwardian rose garden, which we revamped in 1983. It was reworked again after an attack of rose sickness – we had to import 500 tonnes of new soil to replace all the existing soil, and now it sustains dense herbaceous borders that the insects love late in the year, and a modern fountain from Giles Rayner.

Early on I started planting hedges, in what was previously a very large and almost totally open expanse. Hornbeam, yew, topiary – making the task of managing the gardens more achievable by returning some of what the Victorians had gardened to parkland instead. I hope that the compartmentalisation into several different rooms actually makes a smaller area feel bigger, because you can’t see everything at once, so you feel you have to get out there to explore.

It’s been a joy to make these changes, not only for myself and my husband William [Sir William Proby Bt], but also for future generations – our eldest daughter Alexandra now lives in the house with her family, and all generations enjoy the garden, which is gratifying to see.”

Notes to Editor

This release is strictly embargoed until 12pm Tuesday 16 November 2021.

The official announcement will be made at the Historic Houses National AGM at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster, London.

Images and quotes

Further information, including quotes and images can be sourced on the Historic Houses website here.

Press enquiries can be made to:

Historic Houses: info@historichouses.org and dominic.head@historichouses.org

Gordon Castle Walled Garden: marketing@gordoncastlescotland.com

Elton Hall: events@eltonhall.com

[All images and full quotes can be found on the Historic Houses website here](#)

About the Garden of the Year Award

For almost forty years the public have voted one of Historic House's member gardens their favourite of the year.

The award, run in conjunction with Christie's has gone from strength to strength since then – in 2020 more votes were cast for the shortlist than ever before, and a new category of award, the Judges Choice, was added to recognise smaller gardens.

Any garden of a Historic Houses member property that is regularly open to the public may enter the award. Our judging panel whittles down contenders for the main award to a shortlist of eight, which then compete to win the votes of the public and Historic House members all summer.

In addition, the panel will make a second, direct, award to a garden they consider embodies excellence on a smaller scale, either of area, staffing, or access, and hence has less opportunity to influence the popular poll.

Each winner holds the crown for the whole of the following year – the sought-after title can considerably boost visitor numbers, really putting the garden on the map.

About Historic Houses

Historic Houses is a not-for-profit cooperative association representing around one-and-a-half thousand of the UK's independently owned historic houses, castles and gardens. Hundreds of them open their doors to visitors for days out, special tours, school visits, film locations, weddings and events, or as memorable places to stay.

Members range from iconic stately homes such as Blenheim Palace, Highclere Castle, Castle Howard, Woburn Abbey, Longleat, and Burghley, to more intimate houses such as Traquair in Scotland, Treowen in Wales and Belle Isle in Northern Ireland. Most are still private family homes.

The association was established in 1973 to help owners conserve these wonderful places in the interests of the nation and carries out public affairs, advisory and marketing work on behalf of member properties. Just over three hundred houses and gardens take part in a member-access scheme, admitting over fifty thousand card-carrying Historic Houses visitor members for free.



About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert live and online auctions, as well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's offers a full portfolio of global services to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, with flagship international sales hubs in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It also is the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai).

Christie's auctions span more than 80 art and luxury categories, at price points ranging from £200 to over £100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi*, 2017), for a single collection sale (the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller, 2018), and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' *Rabbit*, 2019).

Christie's Private Sales offers a seamless service for buying and selling art, jewellery and watches outside of the auction calendar, working exclusively with Christie's specialists at a client's individual pace.

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