

# HAWKEDON by HOBLYN





## Catharine Howard discovers how terraces have transformed a Victorian garden

South of Ickworth and Bury St Edmunds, there is a patch of undulating country with a woldish feel to it. Hawkedon, with war memorial, 15th century church and shaggy village green lies at its centre. Half a mile above stands Hawkedon House: flint and brick construction with tall chimneys and a decidedly Elizabethan look. Seen from the road along the valley it is an eye-catcher. Drawing up the drive to the eastern façade it reveals itself to be of mid-19th Century construction. It was built by a local laird in the style of a rectory to persuade his son to go into the church.

Seven years ago the transformation of a tired old Victorian garden was underway. One of the owners has a love of clean lines, unfussy and uncluttered to go with his collection of modern sculpture. The other brought the influence of her Australian upbringing, amongst other things to reviving the swimming pool – already there and at a strange lopsided angle to the house. At the top end of the garden and framing it was a 12 foot wall of soft brick. This had a rickety greenhouse clinging to it and slumping outwards was an uneasy slope across the garden and view. The house was divorced from all this behind an old yew hedge.

Thomas Hoblyn, a Suffolk designer and regular exhibitor at RHS Chelsea, was picked for the project. He was asked to bring sharp design treatment to the challenge of uniting the house, garden and landscape. The landfall down to the swimming pool was a puzzle solved by installing terraced levels. There are three of them. The top one with the brick wall standing to its back, is of gravel with giant box balls and box headed limes. The lower two are grass terraces – emerald green and irrigated. All have brick retaining walls. One is a large circle with plenty of room for the children to play. The second takes up an oval shape echoed round the swimming pool by the outer curve on the decking made of Balau wood. The pool itself is bedded in by two hornbeam hedges, the inner one on stilts. The new terraces sit so that the garden looks straight out, uninterrupted into the view giving a classic haha effect.

After the tussle with drainage and levels, the rest of the brief was simple: modern, clean lines and to mimic the landscape. Step out of the house and the topography beyond the garden slopes away into a valley with a tributary of the River Glem and then up a gentle hill to Cresslands Wood. This is where the sun sets. ➤



Every landscape has a pattern which will be influenced by the quality of light and atmosphere, whether brilliant, subdued or misty. Out there colours are strong, seasonal and taken from a narrow indigenous palette and the garden curtsies to this. Tom, Kew trained, has kept the plant choice simple with an examination of textures, shapes, juxtaposition and colours that may be subtle but iridescent – even in the days of low winter light.

There are the two types of pleaching; the box headed limes and the hornbeams – the latter are kept as pleaches which are prevented from ‘joining up’ of the branches between the individual trees. Both sorts were bought in as big trees with irrigation seven years back. They have put on astonishing girth. The box balls also have their place in the beds near to the house. It would be no exaggeration to say a person could hide inside one of them. The solid green shapes are given levity by multi-stemmed *Amelanchier lamarckii*, – round their ankles swirl *Anemathele lessoniana* a grass with hairy dog movement in these formal beds, they are also under the pleached hornbeams. A specimen of liquidamber stands as a winter sentinel of grey branches and trunk above a simple planting of *Deschampsia cespitosa* and one area of the wall has climbing roses underplanted with lavender.

Summer gardens have the allure of colour and scent: they can be heady and addictive and almost any garden can look right when the delphiniums and roses are in full spate. Take those colours away from the middle of the paint box and head for the sombre greens, bleached whites, greys and oranges. The best time to judge a garden for its merits is in winter and at Hawkesden a difficult brief has been mastered. It looks effortless. I know it was far from that for Tom told me he had cut potatoes in half, adding them to the garden model to decide where box plantings were to go. Hawkesden comes out like a piece of couture tailoring. Deceptively simple but I know there were plenty of discards on the cutting floor.

**INFORMATION**

Catharine Howard is a designer, gardener and plantswoman with many years of creating and renovating gardens. For a consultation or garden design contact her at: [www.catharinehoward.co.uk](http://www.catharinehoward.co.uk)

Discover more about **Thomas Hoblyn** at [thomashoblyn.com](http://thomashoblyn.com)