





A sweet and secure asylum

*Carolside, Earlston,
Scottish Borders*

Tim Longville
is thrilled by both
the landscape and
collection of old roses in
a Berwickshire dell near
a river 'where the frost
rime falls heavy'

Photographs by Val Corbett

THE 1834 *New Statistical Account of Scotland* described Carolside in Berwickshire, poised on a green plateau beside the River Leader and sheltered by the surrounding slopes of its own extensive woodlands, as 'a sweet and secure asylum from the toils and troubles of the world'. That still remains largely true today, although the busy village of Earlston is only a mile away and the traffic on the A68 passes by the top of Carolside's steeply downward-swooping drive.

The house—Georgian with Regency wings and discreet 20th-century additions—is as handsome as its situation. It has been owned by several distinguished Scottish families—Humes, Lauders, Inneses, Reays and Gilmours—but, for the past two decades and more, has been the home of Anthony and Rose Foyle. ➤

Characteristically exuberant planting in the walled garden, with *Alchemilla mollis* and *Nepeta* spilling in waves onto the path. The pink rose on the arch is Blush Rambler, the tall pink flowers in the right foreground *Filipendula venusta* and there are delphiniums en masse

Many of those earlier owners were also considerable gardeners. Not only did they plant trees; they mixed flowers with fruit and vegetables in the early-19th-century oval acre of walled garden, situated unusually close to the house for a Scottish property of this age and size. The writer of the report of an 1886 visit by the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, for example, noted that its borders were 'stocked with a rich assortment of perennials, both old and new, and the greenhouses contain several orchids, besides successfully grown ferns of considerable rarity'.

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Later owners continued the tradition, particularly Sir John Gilmour and his wife, Lady Mary, a daughter of the Duke of Abercorn, who had grown up at Baronscourt in Northern Ireland. There, she had been instilled with a passion for gardening that continued throughout her life. At Carolside, after the Second World War, for example, she brought new life to the extensive Edwardian rose garden on the lawn between house and river.

That had disappeared completely by the time the Foyles arrived, but Mrs Foyle, who also grew up in Northern Ireland, shares her predecessor's passion for gardening in general and roses in particular. Not that gardening here is easy, as, in the ringing words of that Victorian naturalist's report: 'Being in a hollow near the river, the frost rimes fall heavy and remain long unexhaled.'

However, although Mrs Foyle has redesigned the areas outside the walled garden as a series of 'rooms', that has not, she insists, been essentially in response to the challenges posed by the climate. Rather, it has been an instinctive feeling that she wanted the garden to have 'surprises, intimacy. When we arrived, it was wonderful—but you could see it all in a single glance'.





Above: The parterre in front of the Victorian greenhouses, block-planted with the rose *Eglantine*. **Left:** The garden room is one of the more recent additions to the house. In front is an ever-expanding population of hydrangeas, hostas and lilies in pots



She has treated the walled garden in the same way, increasing the feeling of enclosure by widening borders so that they could contain much taller plants, such as filipendulas and veronicas-trums, then backing them with roses on chains, and roses on arches (Paul's Himalayan Musk and Blush Rambler) span the garden's main paths.

As well as widening existing borders, she's also created new ones. Now, for example, there is a double row of borders running round within the walls, the narrower inner borders, recently created, being designed largely

as homes for her National Collection of pre-1900 Gallica roses. That has been established, and those and the garden's hundreds of other roses all persuaded to flourish, despite the soil here being 'a free-draining sandy loam, not ideal for roses'. The answer to how it's done is simple, she says: 'Lots of manure!'

In those narrower beds her 'special' roses are grown alone, so that they can be intensively fed, but in the wider ones and in the main borders from top to bottom of the garden and across it, they grow happily in association

Carolside, on its green plateau beside the River Leader and sheltered by its surrounding woodland, is still 'a sweet and secure asylum from the toils and troubles of the world'

with a rich variety of herbaceous perennials and shrubs. Many of the roses in those box-edged borders are modern, often David Austin roses, such as Brother Cadfael and Lady of Megginch, 'which do surprisingly well here'.

The colours Mrs Foyle uses tend to be mostly soft pastels, with, as she explains, 'no bright reds and no hard yellows', but with the occasional burst of shocking pink or magenta 'to wake things up'. (Two favourites for that purpose are *Filipendula palmata Rubra* and the Hybrid Perpetual rose, *Magna Carta*.)

In the central double border, for example, designed to reach its peak in July, the colours begin in the softest tones at the entrance to the garden, then grow deeper and stronger towards the surviving Victorian greenhouses at the far end. And at the intersection with the cross borders, she's used big blocks of a tall, chicory-like *Cicerbita*, or blue sow-thistle, again to increase the sense of enclosure and mystery.

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In front of the greenhouses is a small box-hedged parterre, here when the Foyles arrived, which Mrs Foyle has mono-planted with the David Austin rose *Eglantine*. And, hidden within the lush exuberance of those borders, there are still the traditional four ‘working’ areas—three devoted to vegetables, one to Mrs Foyle’s cutting borders.

Outside the main walled garden there were fewer traditions that had to be respected, but, even so, Mrs Foyle’s reinterpretations and additions are all designed to fit seamlessly into their surroundings. Here, tucked away, is a formal box-edged herb garden. Adjoining it is ‘the secret garden’, its curved wall and yew hedge added by the Foyles to increase its ‘hiddenness’. In the nearby orchard, full of old Scottish, Irish and even Russian apple varieties, there are few flowers, just some arches covered in the rose *Frances E. Lester*.

A beech hedge divides the main garden from the river, ‘scalloped’ into what Mrs Foyle describes as ‘windows’, as they offer glimpses of the peaceful river walk beyond. It is, she says, ‘another way to provide a change of mood, a relief from flowery intensity’. It is entirely appropriate, however, that the way through that hedge is via a handsome new pair of metal gates, lavishly ornamented with copper roses.

The garden at Carolside, Earlston, Berwickshire (01896 849272; www.carolside.com), has a National Collection of pre-1900 Gallica roses and reopens in July, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 11am-5pm. Group visits possible by appointment



Above left: Blush Rambler, a cross between The Garland and Crimson Rambler, bred by Cant and introduced in 1903. Above right: The deserved old favourite, Charles de Mills



Above left: The Gallica Ombrée Parfaite, bred by Vibert and introduced in 1823. Above right: This is thought to be the Gallica OHL, whose ‘pedigree’ is slightly mysterious



Above and below: The gates, appropriately adorned with a rose design, which lead to the river walk



Agarland of roses

Mrs Foyle selects a few of her favourites, ‘although it’s an impossible task when I love so many of them’

The shape of the buds of the old Alba *Celestial* is exquisite, as is the contrast between the pink blooms and grey-green leaves



My favourite Moss rose is one not often seen. Louis Gimard was introduced by Pernet Père in 1877 and has buds covered in brown moss. The magenta flowers are as charming as the buds

Magna Carta is an old Hybrid Perpetual, introduced by Paul in 1876, which I love for its huge, fully double flowers, pink with deeper shadings

Belles des Jardins, often known in Britain as Village Maid, is a Centifolia introduced by Vibert in 1845. What particularly excites me are its unique flowers, of the softest white with lavender-pink stripings

My favourite climbing rose is a favourite of almost all lovers of old roses, the climbing *Bourbon Blairii* No. 2, which freely produces with great reliability its large, double flowers of vibrant pink with deeper pink centres

My favourite rambler is an unusual one called the Mannington Mauve Rambler. A seedling of The Garland that was found growing in the grounds of Mannington Hall in Norfolk, it has large clusters of delightful little semi-double mauve flowers