

## ALDSWORTH HOUSE

The first mention of the house we have been able to trace was in Mr Barwell's map of the Stansted estate in 1785. The west part was built on by Mr Dixon of Stansted for his sister in 1823 from the remains of the unsuccessful college in Aldsworth for converting Jews to Christianity. Considerable alterations have taken place since then including a temporary billiard room put up by Mr Wilder when he moved here in 1900 when Stansted House burnt down. This temporary building lasted until 2003 when it was replaced with the orangery style swimming pool room.

Tom's grandfather Mr Yeo bought the house in 1918 and was an enthusiastic gardener. The two full time gardeners provided enough vegetables and fruit for the household of 12 people as well as tending an extensive flower garden. The vegetables were grown in the inner walled garden, the outer garden and in the war in part of the hen field (where the car park is). In 1920 Mr Yeo gave each of his four daughters a basket full of spring bulbs to plant under the plane tree and it is these bulbs which have naturalised and spread.

Captain and Mrs Hynes, Tom's aunt and uncle took on the house and garden just after the war. They were very keen sailors and if it was a fine day they would sail. Mrs Hynes continued single handed dingy sailing at EMSW orth Sailing Club until she was 92 years. She herself admitted she was not a gardener – just attempting to control weeds and keeping the lawns and hedges cut.

In 1994 when we were lucky enough to inherit the house we had a very fine crop of bindweed and ground elder but have tried to keep other weeds in check by very close planting. We began by planting the main part of the east facing border in the walled garden in 1996. The south facing border was begun in 1999 after laying black plastic on it for 2 years ( This provided considerable entertainment to the Jack Russells who spent the 2 years chasing mice underneath it) The walled garden contains very old fruit trees, some of which are believed to have been planted in the 1880s and one of which was the only known specimen until grafted cuttings were given to the RHS and the Brogdale Fruit Collection. The two half circle borders with pergolas were created in 2000 and the new shrub border in 2003. Behind this there is a peony bed with a stone circle which has been recently redesigned (thanks to an idea from a visitor last year) and is currently being

created. We began planting the mini arboretum under the oak trees, and the mound and shrubbery near the drive gate in 2001. The old juniper trees were replaced in the clipped garden in 1997, but the deer destroyed the first replacements and the rabbits ate the lavender. The lavender was replaced with acanthus, one of the few plants that deer and rabbits do not eat. The old conifer hedges were taken out at the end of last year and replaced with yew. Last autumn the outer kitchen garden has been planted up with shrubs and has a new pergola entrance supporting the rose that collapsed. Two lions have taken up residence overlooking the croquet lawn.

We are lucky enough to have ten hours a week excellent help from Darren who we reluctantly share with many other gardens in Westbourne etc. Otherwise Tom and I look after the garden with the enthusiastic help of a terrier and a spaniel. The weather has been a real challenge and we sadly lost a number of plants because of the winter snow, the late frost and the very dry spell recently, including a 35 foot olive tree. We have left many in the hope that they may show signs of life later. The late season means that many plants are still in flower three weeks late and some expected to flower are still tightly in bud. We are trying to label as many plants (before we forget what they are) and we are very grateful for the help of visitors in identifying plants.

