

Saturday 3 February / Sunday 4 February 2018

PROPERTY | INTERIORS | ARCHITECTURE | GARDENS

House & Home

FTWeekend



Dreamers
Daca recipient
faces the future

AT HOME PAGE 2

Tsar turn
St Petersburg buyers
skate on thin ice

RUSSIA PROPERTY PAGE 14



Seoul man
FT's Bryan Harris in
South Korea's capital

EXPAT LIVES PAGES 10 & 11



The home of prime property: propertylistings.ft.com

Follow us on Twitter @FTProperty



The Highgrove Stumpery in the Prince of Wales's Highgrove Gardens — Andrew Burton/highgrovegardens.com

Versatility is an undoubted virtue for a garden designer. You can never tell quite what you might get asked to dream up next; sweeping herbaceous borders one moment, a green-roofed bin store the next. This year I've experienced a first; a client in East Anglia, with a substantial and historic estate, has asked me to design a stumpery.

A what-ery, I hear you cry? There is little doubt the stumpery ranks as one of the more esoteric gardening innovations. An innovation that began as an expression of the pinnacle of horticultural fashion yet remains uncommon, despite high-profile advocates including the Prince of Wales.

At its simplest, a stumpery is a gathering together of old, weathered tree stumps, planted with shade-loving plants and, in particular, ferns. But

Some comprise vast root plates arching skyward like the jagged bones of an elephant graveyard

stumperies are often expansive and elaborate affairs. Some comprise vast root plates arching skyward like the jagged bones of an elephant graveyard, while others use descending paths or even tunnels to accentuate the height of the surrounding stumps.

The roots — pardon me — of stumperies are intertwined with pteridomania, the Victorian craze for ferns that infected not only horticultural trends but the decorative arts, architecture and interiors. The term was first coined in 1855 by historian and novelist Charles Kingsley, author of *Hereward the Wake*, *The Water Babies* and *Westward Ho!*, and recognised the interest in collecting wild ferns that had begun in the 1830s. From the 1850s until the 1890s, it built to become a craze, resulting in feverish

Stump of approval

Gardens | The stumpery was a Victorian contrivance that made a feature out of old weathered trees.

Today it could be viewed as an environmentally-friendly living sculpture. By *Matthew Wilson*



(Left) Placing stumps at RHS Rosemoor and the finished stumpery
Shelagh Deakin/Perry King

Young fern fronds (*Osmunda regalis*) at Biddulph, Staffordshire
National Trust Images/John Hillier



botanising and the uncontrolled collection of plants from the wild. While the expansion of knowledge of UK ecology and native plants was a positive outcome, the same could not be said for the near annihilation of wild populations of the rarest ferns.

James Bateman is credited with the creation of the first outdoor stumpery, at his Biddulph Grange estate in Staffordshire. Working with his friend Edward William Cooke, a marine artist with an interest in zoology, ecology and horticulture, Bateman's garden was the blueprint for Victorian eclecticism. Featuring Egyptian, Italian and Chinese gardens, a Scottish Glen and Rhododendron arboretum, Biddulph Grange epitomises the High Victorian style. A direct reaction to the landscape movement

and the "naturalistic" approach epitomised by the work of Lancelot "Capability" Brown and Humphry Repton, the garden rooms at Biddulph were designed as if celebrating contrivance.

Bateman's stumpery may be contrived, but it is beautifully put together. Tightly-packed oak stumps were used in its creation, which, with 160 years of weathering, are now bleached silvery-grey. Bateman had envisaged the stumps as a supporting structure for climbing plants such as ivy and Virginia creeper, that would then work their way into the surrounding trees. In places, the stumps are stacked to a height of four metres; elsewhere, walls of stumps rise up and arch across to touch in the middle, creating tunnels.

Bateman's stumpery inspired numer-

ous facsimiles but, along with the gardens at Biddulph Grange, suffered abandonment and dilapidation in the decades that followed his departure. In the care of the National Trust since the early 1990s and sympathetically restored, it still has the presence to inspire a new generation of stumpery lovers.

Among those inspired was the Prince of Wales, who created his own eclectic stumpery in a woodland glade at his Gloucestershire Highgrove Estate. It features classical temples — made from timber but carved to look like stone — and a sculptural stone water feature topped off with a clump of massive-leaved *Gunnera manicata*.

The Highgrove stumpery has become an iconic feature of the garden, but hasn't always garnered enthusiastic

responses. The Duke of Edinburgh, on first seeing it, reputedly asked the Prince of Wales when he was "going to set fire to this lot". Therein lies a reality; for some, a stumpery is simply too much contrivance, too much of an imposition in the landscape.

Such negativity hasn't prevented new stumperies from being made. One of the most impressive is at Federal Way park near Seattle. Created in 2009 by volunteers from the local Hardy Fern Foundation, more than 130 logs and stumps have been used in the half-acre site.

At Rosemoor, the Royal Horticultural Society garden at Great Torrington in Devon, a new stumpery is some way through construction. For garden manager David Perry the appeal lies in the "somewhat Jurassic, archaic look. It's a

contrivance but at the same time natural, old and eerie". There's an appeal, too, in the fact that all the "hard" landscape materials are effectively "soft", as all will biodegrade in time.

The Rosemoor stumpery has been designed into an intimate space, something that Perry cites as important in creating the right atmosphere and ensuring the features don't look "plonked" in the landscape. The stumps were harvested from the woodland on the edge of the garden, and winched from the weir on the River Torridge that runs along the boundary of the site.

"The Environment Agency had already hauled some out to keep the salmon run free," says Perry. Some of these stumps are over 2m across and tall, making a significant statement in the design. "We placed the largest stumps first, then worked from them — rather like creating a rock garden." Homemade compost mixed with leaf litter has been packed into planting pockets among the stumps, into which ferns such as *Blechnum penna-marina* subsp. *alpinum*, *Dryopteris sieboldii* and the unusual "felt fern", *Fyrosia hastata*, have been planted. Along with them is a substantial collection of *Galanthus*, with plans to add tree ferns and cycads.

For my East Anglian client the appeal of the stumpery comes partly in the shape of the roots themselves: "the most important part of the tree, but that we only see when they fall; I love the way they soften over time and turn into those aged 'propeller blades'." There is a clear appeal too in upcycling a waste product that still has a viable role to play, potentially for centuries ahead.

So, perhaps it's time to re-evaluate the stumpery. No longer a Victorian curiosity born out of horticultural obsession, but an environmentally-sensitive way to create, in effect, a living sculpture of considerable size, from material that might otherwise just fuel a fire.

Matthew Wilson is a garden and landscape designer and horticultural consultant

Hot property Fireplaces

By Caroline Thorpe



◀ **Es Bosc, Es Cubells, Ibiza, Spain, €22m**

Where Overlooking the Mediterranean Sea near Es Cubells,

a small village in south-western Ibiza. It takes less than 20 minutes to drive to Ibiza airport.

What A lavish, recently-built villa, heavily influenced by Moorish architecture. It has six bedrooms, more than 17,000 sq ft of living space, staff quarters and an infinity pool.

Why A striking 18th-century fireplace, carved from stone and framed by marble pillars, forms the centrepiece of the property's intricately vaulted living room.

Who Christie's International Real Estate, christiesrealestate.com, Tel: +34 971 931 562



▶ **Zermatt, Switzerland, SFr18.5m (£13.8m)**

Where In central Zermatt on the Swiss/Italian border. Helicopter transfers to Sion airport take 15 minutes.

What A five-bedroom chalet with a lift, hot tub, sauna and balconies overlooking the Matterhorn.

Why A striking fireplace is integrated into the open-plan living area. Glazing around the flames can be opened on all sides.

Who Cardis Immobilier Sotheby's International Realty, sothebysrealty.com, Tel: +41 21 781 01 43



▲ **Pippurniemi, Uusima, Finland, €3.98m**

Where On the coast in the scenic region of Kirkkonummi. Helsinki airport is 50 minutes away by car.

What A three-bedroom house designed by Finnish architect Iiro Mikkola and set in woodland. It has a wine cellar, pool, separate sauna building and two private docks.

Why A €20,000 fireplace divides the living room and kitchen. The



glass casing surrounding the flames ascends into the chimney.

Who Snellman Sotheby's International Realty, sothebysrealty.com, Tel: +35 84 58 64 80 62



◀ **Dunsborough Park, Ripley, Surrey, UK, £17m**

Where Just outside Ripley, about 26 miles south-west of central

London. Heathrow airport is about 35 minutes away by car.

What A Grade II-listed house with eight bedrooms, dating from the 1800s and extended in each of the following centuries. The grounds, of more than 100 acres, include 10 cottages, tennis courts and equestrian facilities.

Why There are seven fireplaces in the main house. In the drawing room there is a marble piece with a carved wooden surround while in the "card room" is a cosier alternative, decorated with delft tiles.

Who Savills, savills.com, Tel: +44 20 7016 3780



◀ **South Starwood Drive, Aspen, Colorado, US, \$11.995m**

Where In the Rocky Mountains, above Roaring Fork Valley and a

short drive from the world-class ski resort of Aspen. Private jets can use Aspen Pitkin County airport, about 15 minutes' drive away.

What A five-bedroom house with mountain views. There is an indoor pool, racquetball court and a spa.

Why A Lutyens-inspired log fire is the first thing encountered upon crossing the home's grand threshold. Along with five other fireplaces in the property, it is designed by well-known US "fireplace architect" Walter Moberg.

Who Knight Frank, knightfrank.com, Tel: +1 970 989 8157