

## VILLAGE ECHOES

### It's a Small Gardener's World

by Lynda Shepherd

The name Monty Don is well known in gardening circles around the world, but did you know he has a (loose) family connection to Kilndown?

Monty is distantly related to a George Don (a Botanist, with quite a story), who was born in 1764 in Doo Hillock, Forfar, Scotland. George married Caroline Clementina Stuart. Dying in 1814, he left his wife to bring up the six surviving children out of fifteen, in abject poverty.

Amelia Anna Sophia Oliphantina b 1794, George b 1797, David b 1799,  
James Edward Smith b 1807, Patrick Neill b 1806 and Charles Lyell Linneus b 1810,

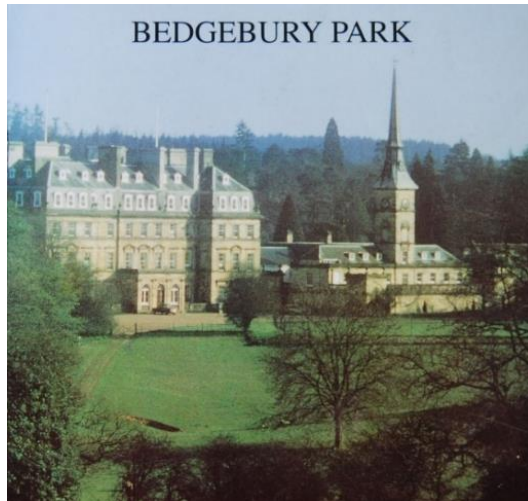
George (born 1797) was principal gardener at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 1802. He also worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden, London. He travelled the world, starting in 1821 collecting specimens for the Royal Horticultural Society. George 'fell out' with the RHS. It is thought that he was angry his salary matched that of a horticulturalist doing the same job back in safe England. Matters were made worse when he gave a newly found specimen of a pine tree to his brother David's employers. George was supposed to write solely for the RHS, but had work published in Sierra Leone. The RHS cut all ties with him. He continued to publish work in Scotland. (that's a long story cut short!)



George Don (1797 – 1856)

George's brother David (born 1799) Professor of Botany at Kings College, London was also a librarian at the Linnean Society of London - another of the Don Family with a notable story. Brother James was a gardener at Knole Park, Sevenoaks. James was a bachelor, and when he died left his effects to brother Patrick.

Moving closer to home.....

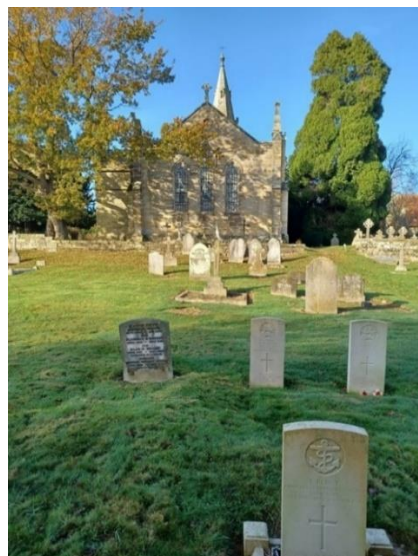


In 1851 Charles Lyell Linneus Don was Head Gardener at Bedgebury Park, however in August 1857 he met with a nasty accident, involving a horse and cart and died from his injuries a few days later. Lady Mildred Hope visited him many times and Lord Hope was a mourner at his funeral at Kilndown. He and wife Anne had five children.

His brother, Patrick Neill Don took over the position. He and his wife Margaret had four children, one died in infancy. Patrick died on 19 August 1876 and Margaret on 26 May 1886, they are both buried in Kilndown Churchyard.

Their son George Alexander is shown on the 1881 Census as being a Gardener Domestic Servant and living at Bedgebury Farm Buildings. In 1878 he was a judge for the Open Classes at the Hawkhurst Summer Show, a very prestigious affair. *"The visitors comprised alike the fashion and beauty of Hawkhurst and the rustic population of the neighbouring villages."*

In the 1901 census, he was lodging with the Pope family at 'Piles Heath', his occupation given as Domestic Gardener. He died on 26 May 1902 and is also buried in Kilndown Churchyard.



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