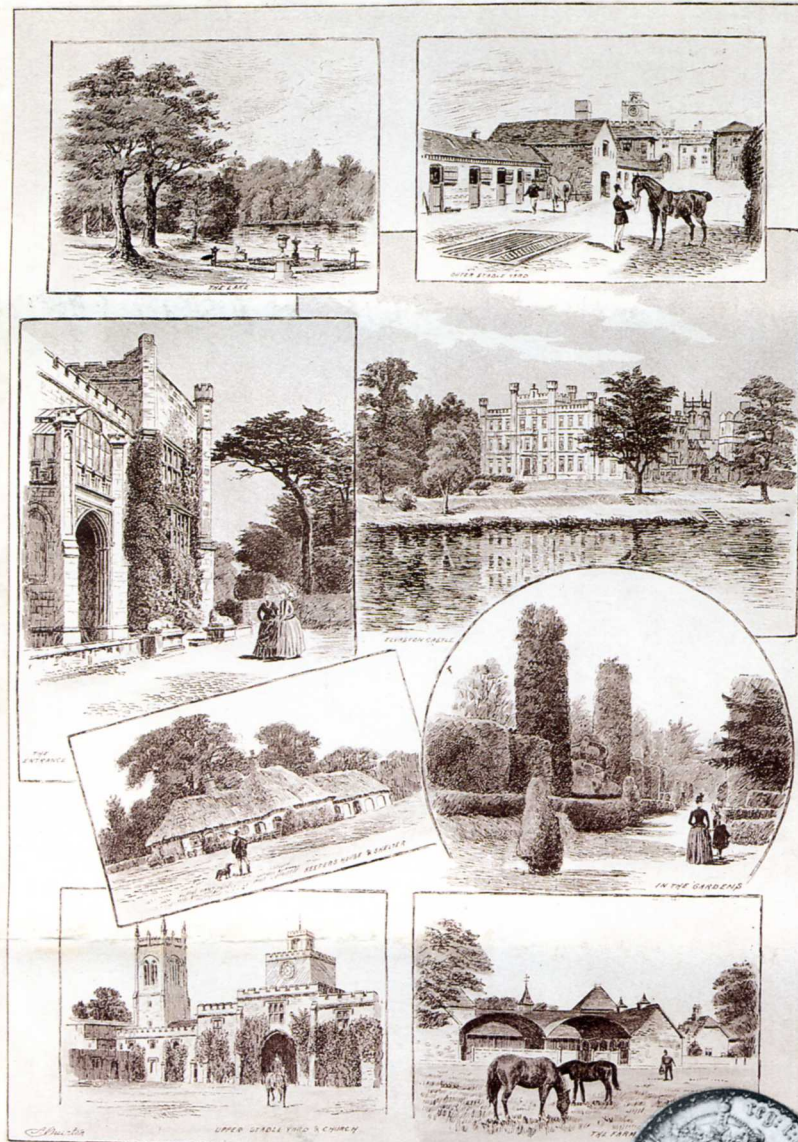


END OF AN ERA



The death of the 4th Earl of Harrington in 1851 was indeed the end of an era for Elvaston and with it came an opportunity long awaited. The 5th Earl, Leicester Stanhope, opened Elvaston to the public at an entrance fee of 3s. a head. It was a high charge for those days but such was the reputation the gardens had acquired that it made no difference; people flocked to Elvaston in their thousands.

Admission 3s. (the average working man's weekly wage was 14s. 6d.!).





'... more than a few windows were broken ...'

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A GREAT SPECIALITY.

WILLIAM BARRON & SON,
Landscape Gardeners and Nurserymen,
BORROWWASH, near DERBY.

Lord Harrington was not a wealthy man. Change was inevitable and the days when Elvaston employed up to ninety gardeners were over. Barron's staff was reduced to eleven and it would take them all their time to trim the hedges and maintain the formal gardens.

But Lord Harrington was a fair man. He continued to pay Barron's salary and told him, '*your talent cannot be buried here, your time will be your own, you must go out as a landscape gardener, and I will do all I can to further your interests*'. They drew up an agreement and Barron took over the Elvaston tree nursery where he continued to propagate many varieties of evergreen. On behalf of the Earl he gradually sold existing stock to the value of £3,000. All were trees he had propagated or reared from seedlings, including some more mature specimens which he felt could be spared from the grounds. A number of conifers were sold to Sir Joseph Paxton and transplanted in the grounds of the Crystal Palace.

On one occasion Queen Victoria's gardener sought Barron's help. He was searching for a specimen of *Picea nobilis*, the Silver Fir, to replace the only one at Osborne which had been lost, much to the disappointment of the Prince Consort. Barron remembered well the visit of Mr. Ingram, the royal gardener.

'I took him to the East Avenue and showed him a host of them, I pointed out a fine plant seven feet and four inches high, and asked him what he thought it was worth, he at once replied "Twenty Guineas".'

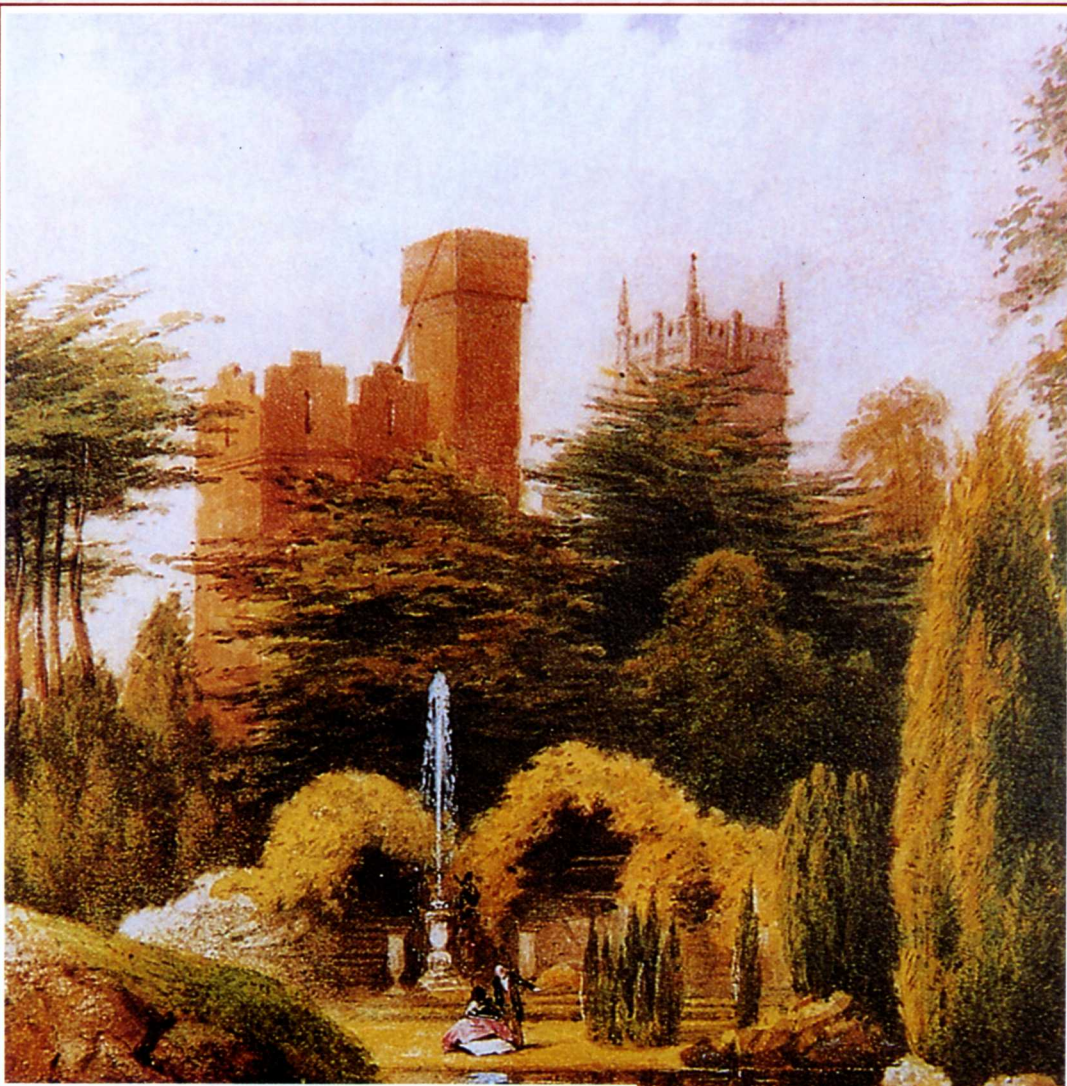
The tree was lifted, complete with a ball of earth weighing half a ton, and transported to the Isle of Wight where, to the satisfaction of the Prince Consort, it was successfully planted at Osborne.

By this time Barron's tree moving achievements were famous. He had refined his methods and his machines, one of which is preserved at Kew, so that it was possible to transport trees of an age and size never previously attempted. Such an operation took eight men and six horses. His greatest feat was the moving of the Buckland Yew in Buckland churchyard near Dover. This tree, mentioned in the Domesday Book, was over a thousand years old when it was successfully moved to make way for the extension of Buckland church.

In 1865 Barron resigned and went to live in Borrowash, just a mile from Elvaston, where he and his son had set up their own nursery. He continued to work for many years, finally retiring in 1886 when he was eighty-one. Barron had long been an eminent figure in the horticultural world and was acknowledged as the leading authority on coniferae. His was perhaps the widest collection of evergreens in the country and included several species which originated at the nursery of Messrs. Barron and Son of Borrowash. Pride of place went to the famous golden yew, *Taxus baccata variegata* 'Elvastoni', developed by William Barron and used to such great effect in the gardens at Elvaston.

The new head gardener at Elvaston, Mr. Goodacre, maintained the formal gardens, supervising the clipping of miles of hedge and thousands of individual trees. He was also an expert fruit grower and under his care the kitchen garden and hot houses flourished. Apart from native species of apple, pear, quince, cherry and soft fruit, Elvaston became known for more exotic crops. Peaches, nectarines, figs, pineapples and melons were grown along with numerous varieties of grape, and the Earl of Harrington's name featured in the prize lists at produce shows all over the country.





The lake – Elvaston Castle by
George Maund.

