

Nature's Favourite Child

Thomas Robins and the Art of the Georgian Garden

Dr Cathryn Spence

No book of such beauty, elegance and clarity encompassing Bath has been published for some time.

Robins is known mainly to the garden history and historic architecture fraternities but few who see his drawings of 18th Century gardens and landscapes fail to be charmed by them.

Spence charts his career with academic rigour, with fine referencing and brings together material from some sources rarely seen. She creates a panorama all of her own, which is populated with delicate drawings, soft colours and figures with a winning, naïve sort of look that never fails to please and raise a smile.

Even the chapter headings have a romanticism about them that chimes perfectly with the subject.

Bath features, as would be expected but many will not have seen some of Robins' sketches which record long lost features of Queen Square and other images of the old city from unusual viewpoints.

Skilful punctuation of the text with watercolours of plants, butterflies and zoological specimens with wonderfully preserved stronger colour, creates the perfect foil for the ethereal quality of many of the other drawings.

Most of the landscapes illustrated have been lost or radically altered but the restoration of the Painswick rococo garden is well covered and adds a reality to what is described.

Spence has a track record of fine articles on subjects of great interest to local historians but this book will surely have a wide appeal and does justice to an 18th Century man of great skill and sensitivity.

Available on thomasrobinselder@gmail.com

£40 or £45 to incl. p&p to UK address.