

'In May there's a sea of candelabra primulas'

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Melbourne Hall gardens,
Church Square, Melbourne,
Derby DE73 8EN

Picked by: Andrea Jones,
garden photographer

'Broad sweeps of lawn, avenues and unexpected vistas belong to an exquisite stately home overlooking a large neighbouring mill pool – truly idyllic. In May atmospheric mists rise off the Great Basin lake and there's a sea of candelabra primulas along the banks of the millstream in the Long Border. You get good light and fantastic sunrises. Lady Ralph Kerr is an established artist with a wonderful eye. In her borders beside the stream she combines lemon, lime and lilac, yellow tree peonies and soft blue irises magnificently.

'There are wonderful wobbly yew hedges and a yew tunnel that allows shafts of light to illuminate the path beneath. There's also a wealth of wildlife here: in the fountain pools I often spot a frog or even a newt. I've explored this garden time and again with my camera, but there's always something new to photograph. As I travel a lot for work the garden is quite an oasis – a little piece of heaven. I drive off the motorway and into my own form of Narnia.'

FAQs

What's the history? Laid out in the early 1700s by Thomas Coke, Privy Counsellor and Vice-Chamberlain to Queen Anne, with George London and Henry Wise. Lord and Lady Kerr have run the estate since 1987.

Best bit? Robert Bakewell's 'Birdcage' – a wrought-iron arbour completed 1711.

RHS Partner Garden? Yes free for Members 2 Apr–28 Sep.

Contact details? 01332 862502; melbournhall.com

Disabled access? Yes; some steep slopes and steps; uneven paths; guide dogs only.

Can I make a day of it? At about 7ha (17 acres) it makes a good afternoon of exploring. Children love the paddocks with alpacas, goats, pigs and more. Courtyard shops and tearoom on site.

ANDREA JONES

