



Rosemary Verey: The Life & Lessons of a Legendary Gardener

Barbara Paul Robinson

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Rosemary Verey was the last of the great English garden legends. Although she embraced gardening late in life, she quickly achieved international renown. She was the acknowledged apostle of the "English style," on display at her home at Barnsley House, the "must have" adviser to the rich and famous, including Prince Charles and Elton John, and a beloved and wildly popular lecturer in America. A child of a generation born between the two World Wars, she could have easily lived a predictable and comfortable life, devoted to her family, church, and horses, but a devastating accident changed her life, and with her architect-husband, she went on to create the gardens at their home that became a mandatory stop on every garden tour in the 1980s and 1990s. At sixty-two, she wrote her first book, followed by seventeen more in twenty years. Her husband's death, shortly after her career began, added a financial imperative to her ambition. By force of character, hard work, and determination, she tirelessly promoted herself and her garden lessons, traveling worldwide to lecture, sell books, and strengthen her network.

She was a natural teacher, encouraging her American fans to believe that they were fully capable of creating beautiful gardens while validating their quest for a native vernacular. She also re-introduced the English to their own gardening traditions. Drawing from garden history and its literature, she developed a language of classical formal design, embellished with her exuberant planting style. Here is her story, recounted by a successful Manhattan attorney who worked with her as a volunteer, who saw her as both a person and a professional, and who was close to her for the last twenty years of her life. A demanding and sometimes truculent taskmaster, and a relentless perfectionist, Rosemary Verey, in her life as in her work, was the very personification of the English garden style. Her influence will be felt for generations.

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