

## TALES FROM THE HILLS (Ashmansworth and Crux Easton)

The heyday of Crux Easton must be the years of Farmer Lisle's residency (c1692-1720). Driven from London by disease, and isolating in a country villa, the Lisle family of nine daughters and their father engaged in many creative ventures to pass the time.

Writing in 1776, Lisle's grand-daughter tells us that Lisle's house "had had a mere common garden, yet in the process of time, these young ladies, by their own industry, so decorated the flower garden, so improved a fine wood near the house with all the beauties of art and nature, that for many years it was an object of curiosity that all who were in that part of the country went to see."

One of the sightseers was the famous poet Alexander Pope, who particularly admired the grotto which the sisters had created in the wood. He wrote the following poem about them, entitled "On Seeing the Ladies of Crux Easton Walk in the Woods by the Grotto"

Authors the world and their dull brains have traced  
To fix the ground where Paradise was placed.  
Mind not their learned whims and idle talk  
Here, here's the place where these bright angels walk.

So Crux Easton was Paradise, and its inhabitants were angels!

In 1759 the Taylor map still showed tourists the position of the grotto, but by 2020 the OS map shows only 'Grotto Copse'.

Today there is nothing there but a few bricks and broken tiles; and the trees of Paradise have been replaced by alien conifers.

*Agricola*

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### KEEPING FIT

Several weeks without my sport  
So how can I keep trim?  
A fitness plan is what I need  
I'm all set to begin.

Sit ups, press ups, touch the toes.  
One soon gets out of puff.  
Walk around the village roads.  
Day one! That's quite enough.

Next day I reckon – ease the pace  
So amble not too far.

This exercise is jolly hard  
I scoff a chocolate bar.

Day three – with groans I stretch and bend  
A doughnut spurs me on.  
Then gentle jog around the block  
I've earned a currant bun.

The weather's hot; my shorts don't fit!  
All efforts failed I fear!  
But ice cream in the garden's good.  
I'll hit the beach next year!

*Moyra Harkness*