

Little Sparta

Poet and artist Ian Hamilton Finlay was immensely prolific and left behind a huge body of work, from short stories and concrete poetry to internationally exhibited installations. Little Sparta is an interactive poetry garden that was first cultivated by Finlay and his wife Sue in the 1960s.

The couple acquired the garden and grounds of Stonypath in the Pentlands and set about filling it with sculptures that provocatively play with phrases and meaning. Poetry is embedded into the bridges and water features of the grounds and the sculptures, like objects dropped by a giant, are surprises among the trees and foliage.

Finlay had many thematic concerns and his garden grew alongside these. His works contrast classical ideas of culture, society and warfare with modern attitudes and Finlay had an enduring interest in the French Revolution and the Second World War.

If you're intrigued, or already a committed fan of Finlay, then be prepared as his garden is almost as elusive as his poetry. You can get the 100, 101 and 102 bus services from the Edinburgh Bus Station on St Andrew Square to Dumfries, however there is no public transport for the last four miles to Little Sparta. It is recommended that you book a local taxi to meet you (http://www.greenlyne.co.uk/private_hire.html)

As the garden requires constant conservation it is only open on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday afternoons, 2:30-5pm, from 24 May to 29 September and is not suitable for children under 10.

During August, a special bus service from Edinburgh is sometimes available, please check the Little Sparta website for details: <http://www.littlesparta.org.uk/index.htm>