

## ILEX GROVE, CLIVEDEN

There is a secret garden behind the main drive,  
A sacred and captivating space that is the privy of one;  
Sheltering trees and contemplation bench,  
Where once faithful 'Joan' looked on.

Time is lost as senses regain first contact,  
Sharpened by visual grace,  
Hearing sensitive to the least movement,  
There is majesty, there is solitude.

As Joan and I read, nature is meditating in the Ilex Grove.

*Author's note:*

*Cliveden, a manor house and estate above the Thames near Maidenhead, is a sacred spiritual place for me. I first visited Cliveden in the Spring of 1980 and returned there during the Summer of 1980 and 1981. During the school holidays, I volunteered to tend the gardens and it was in the Ilex Grove, that I spent my lunchtimes and occasional afternoons, under the trees reading Laurie Lee and Evelyn Waugh.*

*In the Ilex Grove stood on a small plinth was a sad-looking bronze statue of Joan of Arc. Joan's expression I found sad, not the discolouring. Joan would look down and read with me! A photograph of the exact statue was later used for the OMD single 'Joan Of Arc' released in the UK on 9 October 1981. I learned a few years ago that the statue had been stolen from the Ilex Grove, but may have been later recovered? Joan's value was her grace within the sacred Ilex Grove.*

*In 2002, I returned to Cliveden and made a pilgrimage to the Ilex Grove. Not a lot had changed, perhaps a little thinning out of trees, but Joan was not there. I miss her. My return and the flood of memories in 2002, led to the above poem recalling my Summer days of 1980 and 1981. Thank you, Joan.*

*I revised the poem in 2019.*