

Royal 'delight' for cameraman Martin

by **KATHRYN CROSS**

kathryn.cross@archant.co.uk

Fakenham cameraman Martin Hayward Smith has been to some of the most remote parts of the world and filmed some amazing sights from polar bears in the Arctic, to the untamed beauty of Madagascar, to the flora and fauna of the Great Barrier Reef.

But his latest job, which took him to rural Gloucestershire, has proved an "absolute delight" for the naturalist.

As cameraman for a one-off documentary presented by Alan Titchmarsh and which screens tomorrow night, Mr Hayward Smith was given an extraordinary insight behind the scenes of a garden which has become the passion of one of the most senior members of the Royal Family – Highgrove House.

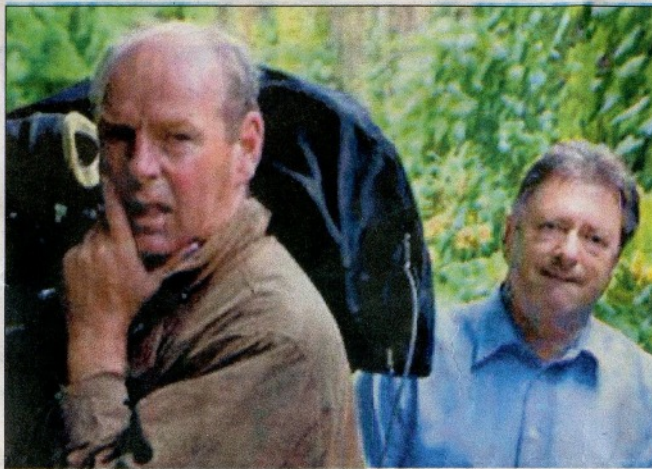
The 15-acre site has been transformed by the Prince of Wales over the past 30 years, an outlet for his organic aspirations, and a true retreat from the hectic schedule that comes with his position.

As a key member of a small team invited to put the documentary together Mr Hayward Smith was given "carte blanche" to film wherever he wanted to show the garden at its absolute best, and record its life over three months through the spring and early summer.

"It was a complete privilege to be involved," he said.

"The director Charlie Clay, who I have worked with before, asked me to do the job because we work really well as a team. We run on parallel lines knowing what we need and want from each other.

"This was also my sixth programme with Alan Titchmarsh so it was great to see him. He is very professional, a true gent, and I knew we would have a highly polished result."



WHEN MARTIN MET ALAN: Martin Hayward Smith (left) with presenter Alan Titchmarsh at Highgrove. Right, Mr Hayward Smith back at home.

The team started filming in April and over the next three months saw the garden unfold. Mr Hayward Smith said he was particularly enthralled by the wild flower garden and was amazed by the Prince's relaxed manner when it came to them getting the perfect shots.

"We dug holes in the ground to put in five lock-off posts where we could set up a camera for a giant time-lapse shot and he wasn't precious about it at all," he said.

"It was entirely his idea so he was happy to have us there. But everywhere looked a picture, there was form and composition everywhere you looked in rain or sunshine.

"For me the wildlife was fantastic as well, hearing the song birds singing out. There were even spotted flycatchers nesting by the front door."

It was the first time Mr Hayward Smith, who now lives at East Barsham, near Fakenham, had met the Prince; but, with their Norfolk connections, they found they had plenty in common.

"He was very professional and, of course, we had a lot to talk about my home patch, such as the pink footed geese.

"We talked a great deal about Norfolk and I found him a very patient man."

One of the key elements of the programme is a performance of The Highgrove Suite, a piece of music commissioned by the Prince to celebrate his horticultural achievements.

Composed by Patrick Hawes, each movement is inspired by a different aspect of the gardens.

"The suite was played by a full orchestra on a lovely, balmy summer evening. All the doors and windows of Highgrove were open and the song birds were trying to outdo the musicians," Mr Hayward Smith said.

"I have been all over the world but it is an absolute delight working in the UK and showing off our British wildlife.

"It has been a great year. I have since been working with Ray Mears on a Wild Britain programme which comes out later in the year.

"I do get to mix with a lot of celebrities but I take it as a way of life now. It might seem a bit surreal to other people but it is still a job. It's not a bad job, though."

● Highgrove: Alan Meets Prince Charles will be shown on BBC2 tomorrow at 8pm.

