

**LANDSCAPE-PAINTER AS LANDSCAPE-GARDENER
THE CASE OF ALFRED PARSONS R. A.**

VOLUME I

(two volumes)

NICOLE MILETTE, architect

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of York

Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies

January 1997



In the memory of my mother's laugh and my father's determination.

“Be aye sticking in a tree, Jock - it will be growing whilst you are sleeping.”

Scott, 1878: 773 ‘The planting of waste lands’

Front colour illustration: 'When Nature Painted All Things Gay' Alfred Parsons R.A.

Modern Masterpieces of British Art. London Amalgamated Press Publisher, Fleetway House, London. c1929

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xv
RELEVANT MATERIAL ALREADY PUBLISHED	xvii
ABSTRACT	xviii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS and CONVENTIONS	xix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 AIM OF THIS STUDY	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	3
1.3 PERSONAL MOTIVATION	8
1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	9
1.5 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH	10
1.6 METHODOLOGY	11
1.7 SOURCES	12
1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	16
2 LANDSCAPE-PAINTERS AS LANDSCAPE-GARDENERS	17
2.1 PARSONS AS DESCRIBED IN PRIMARY SOURCES	22
2.2 PARSONS AS DESCRIBED IN SECONDARY SOURCES	24
2.3 THE TRADITION OF 'LANDSCAPE-PAINTERS AS LANDSCAPE-GARDENERS' ...	26
2.4 A BREAK IN THE TRADITION	45
2.5 LAMENT OVER THE BREAK: THE NATURAL 'AHEAD OF' THE FORMAL	60
3 FORMATIVE YEARS, EARLY AND MIDDLE YEARS	68
3.1 THE FORMATIVE YEARS: 1847-1868	70
3.1.1 Somerset: Nature as a teacher: 1847-65	73
3.1.2 London: Conventional apprenticeship in art: 1865-67	74
3.1.3 Drawing Master	77
3.2 THE EARLY YEARS: 1868-1878	78
3.2.1 First Galleries	82
3.2.2 1875: The Oxford Set	84
3.3 THE MIDDLE YEARS: 1879-1896	88
3.3.1 1878: Parsons's 'Aesthetic' Convictions	89
3.3.1.1 The Grosvenor	89
3.3.1.2 Parsons's style of painting	93
3.3.2 1878 on: Parsons's work as an illustrator	98
3.3.2.1 Parsons's style of illustration	98
3.3.2.2 Magazine illustrations for William Robinson	101
3.3.2.3 Magazine illustrations for other editors	103
3.3.2.4 The horticultural journalist	106
3.3.3 Book illustrator	109
3.3.3.1 Illustration work for William Robinson	109
3.3.3.2 Illustration work for other editors	114

3.3.4	Collaboration with Edwin Austin Abbey: 1879-1911	114
3.3.5	Keeping aspects of the English past alive	122
3.3.5.1	Philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement	122
3.3.5.2	Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 1881-1900	124
3.3.5.3	Art Workers' Guild: 1884 -1905	126
3.3.6	1888: Parsons the craftsman	131
3.4	CAREER EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION: 1881-96	134
3.4.1	Membership in various additional artistic societies	135
3.4.1.1	The Institute of Painters in Oil Colours: 1883-1894	135
3.4.1.2	The R. I. of Painters in Water-Colours: 1883-1898	136
3.4.1.3	The Fine Art Society: 1885-1894	137
3.4.1.4	The New English Art Club: 1886-1890	140
3.4.1.5	'When Nature Painted all Things Gay': May 1887	140
3.4.1.6	The New Gallery: 1888-1908	143
3.4.2	The Broadway Group: 1884-1896	150
3.4.3	1890: <i>The Genus Rosa</i> and Garden Painting for Ellen Willmott.	156
3.4.4	First landscape gardening commissions: 1884-94	165
3.4.4.1	The first known garden: Clouds: 1884	167
3.4.4.2	Broadway: Russell House and The Court Farm: 1890	174
3.4.5	Bishopswood, Herefordshire: first commission with Partridge: 1895	181
3.4.6	Alfred Parsons and Japan: 1892-1896	190
3.4.7	Parsons: set designer: 1895	196
4	THE LATER YEARS	200
4.1	SUMMARY	200
4.2	ASSOCIATE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY: 1897	201
4.3	THE ROYAL WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY: 1899-1920	204
4.4	LANDSCAPE GARDENING COMMISSIONS 1899-1907	208
4.4.1	Introduction	209
4.4.1.1	Verbal recommendation	210
4.4.2	A lucrative business	216
4.4.3	The general context of obtaining landscape gardening commissions	223
4.4.3.1	Problems with landscape gardening.	226
4.4.3.2	Concerning plants	227
4.4.4	Semiotics of Edwardian landscape design	228
4.4.5	Parsons's 'landscape gardening' styles	230
4.4.6	List of commissions.	237
4.5	LUGGERSHILL , THE PAINTER'S HOUSE AND GARDEN: 1911	242
4.6	VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS ABROAD	250
4.7	LEICESTER GALLERY: 1909 & THE ATHENAEUM: 1912	254
4.8	THE GREAT CHALFIELD COMMISSION: 1907-1912	255
4.9	THE MILTON LODGE SKETCH: 1913	260
4.10	JUDGE AT THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW: 1915	261
4.11	LAST YEARS AT LUGGERSHILL: 1917-1920	263
4.12	POSTHUMOUS EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS	266
5	CASE STUDIES	267
5.1	INTRODUCTION TO THE WELBECK GARDEN CASE STUDY	270
5.1.1	Opportunities for aristocratic commissions:	270

5.2	THE WELBECK GARDEN: 1900-1905	272
5.2.1	Proof of the involvement of Parsons and Partridge	272
5.2.2	A description based on a literature review	274
5.2.2.1	Current management of the gardens	278
5.2.3	Parsons and Partridge beginning work at Welbeck	279
5.2.4	Principal phases of the commission:	281
5.2.5	A description based on a site visit	282
5.2.6	Analysis of Parsons's contribution	296
5.2.6.1	The East and South Terraces	297
5.2.6.2	The Double Herbaceous Border	303
5.2.6.3	The rose garden with the mulberry grove.	307
5.2.6.4	The Sunken Garden	311
5.3	QUOTATIONS CONCERNING THE WELBECK GARDEN, FROM MSSRO.	316
5.3.1	Primary source descriptions	321
5.4	BATTLEDENE	323
5.4.1	Introduction	323
5.4.2	The purchase of Battledene	323
5.4.3	The making of Battledene	325
5.4.4	Quotations concerning Battledene Garden, from MsSRO	329
5.5	BATTLEDENE: A SHOW PIECE FOR PARSONS AND PARTRIDGE	331
5.5.1	The sale of Battledene	332
5.5.2	Surviving elements:	332
6	CONCLUSION	336
6.1	PARSONS'S CONTRIBUTION TO HISTORY : PART OF A CONTEXT.	336
6.2	PARSONS'S VARIOUS EXHIBITION VENTURES: CONTINUITY.	340
6.3	WHY HAS ALFRED PARSONS BEEN FORGOTTEN BY HISTORY?	340
6.4	ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	343
6.5	PROPOSITION	344
6.6	THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	344
6.7	PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THIS THESIS	346
7	APPENDICES	351
7.1	PARSONS'S GENEALOGY	351
7.2	BOOKS ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED PARSONS	360
7.3	ARTICLES ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED PARSONS	362
7.3.1	Alfred Parsons's illustrations in <i>The Garden</i>	364
7.4	SOLO EXHIBITIONS CATALOGUES OF PARSONS'S EXHIBITIONS	369
7.5	EXTENT OF COLLABORATION TO MAGAZINES AND PAPERS	369
7.6	CORRESPONDENCE TO ALFRED PARSONS	370
7.7	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARSONS WORKS EXHIBITED AT VARIOUS GALLERIES ..	374
7.8	CHART SHOWING THE RISE OF THE NUMBER OF ART STUDENTS IN ENGLAND	375
7.9	PARSONS AT DIFFERENT LONDON GALLERIES AND SOCIETIES	376
	The Dudley Gallery	376
	The Dudley Art Society	378
	Society of Oil Painters.	379
	Suffolk Street. SA (RSA)	380
	The Royal West of England Academy	380
	The Royal Academy.	381
	The Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours RI	382
	The Royal Water colour Society RWS	383

	Botanical Sketchbook at Bankside Gallery.	385
	The Grosvenor Gallery. GG	386
	The Fine Art Society. FAS	387
	Dowdeswell & Dowdeswell	392
	The New English Art Club. NEAC	392
	The New Gallery. NG	393
	The Leicester Gallery	394
7.10	VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS IN THE U. K.	397
	Birmingham	397
	Dublin (<i>Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts</i>)	398
	Glasgow	399
	Liverpool	400
	Manchester	401
	Sotheby's	402
	National Gallery of British Art; Oldham, Hull, Corcoran Art Gallery	402
	Hanley Museum, Stoke-on-Trent: 1921	402
	Christie, Manson & Woods	402
	Various exhibitions abroad	403
	Brussels, 1897	403
	Saint-Louis World's Fair, Missouri, USA, 1904	403
	The New Zealand International Exhibition in 1907	403
	Franco-British Exhibition of 1908	403
	International Fine Arts Exhibition, Rome 1911	403
	The American Art Galleries, New York 1916	403
	Washington and Milwaukee in America	403
	Japan National Gallery in Tokyo, 1892	403
	British Works of Art at Recent International Exhibitions	404
7.11	EVOLUTION OF RETAIL PRICES 1700-1994	405
7.12	WILLIAM ROBINSON'S BIBLIOGRAPHY	406
7.13	ART WORKS HELD BY W. ROBINSON AT GRAVETYE	411
7.14	TABLES CONCERNING <i>THE ENGLISH FLOWER GARDEN</i>	415
	AP's illustrations reproduced in ten or more editions.	415
	Proportion of AP's illustrations in <i>The English Flower Garden</i>	416
	List of engravers involved in <i>The English Flower Garden</i>	417
7.15	'THE LANDSCAPE GARDENER AND HIS WORK' BY MR. O. C. SIMONDS	418
7.16	PARSONS AS SEEN BY HENRY JAMES IN 'OUR ARTISTS IN EUROPE'	421
7.17	CAPTAIN PARTRIDGE'S CHRONOLOGY	424
7.18	PEDIGREE OF TUDWAY	428
7.19	WHITE LODGE, RICHMOND: BRIEF HISTORY (C. 1900)	429
7.20	ANALYSIS OF A SECONDARY SOURCE: ANNE HELMREICH'S THESIS	431
	Questions of accuracy of detail (misdemeanours) in Helmreich's thesis	432
	Queries about the validity of Helmreich's argument	433
	Parsons and "the invention of tradition"	436
	a) Englishness	436
	b) Mercantilism first, Nationalism last	436
	c) Paintings as justification for designs ?	437
	d) Traditions	438
	e) Illusion or escapism	438

7.21	PLANTS AT OR FOR GREAT CHALFIELD	440
7.22	PLANT NAMES MENTIONED IN MSSRO DOCUMENTS	442
7.23	PLANT LISTS MENTIONED IN THE MSSRO DOCUMENTS.	445
7.24	DATES OF THE INTRODUCTION OF PLANTS INTO THE UK (NAMES MENTIONED IN MSSRO DOCUMENTS)	446
7.25	APPENDICES RELATING TO THE WELBECK GARDEN	447
7.25.1	The Welbeck Garden Bibliographical sources	447
7.25.2	Summary of overlays	449
7.25.3	List of maps	451
7.25.4	Collection of 50 Lumière Autochrome plates	452
7.25.5	List of plants at The Welbeck Garden	455
7.26	GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY	456
7.27	MAPS SHOWING LANDSCAPE GARDENING COMMISSIONS: 1884-1913	469
7.28	SOURCES JUSTIFYING THE LIST OF GARDEN COMMISSIONS	478
7.29	ALFRED PARSONS'S CHRONOLOGY	490

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Figure 1 Alfred Parsons. ‘Our artists in Europe’ [*Harper’s* LXXIX, June 1889: 61] . xxi

CHAPTER 2

Figure 2 Title page from *Dialogue sur le Coloris*. [British Library] 35

Figure 3 “La nature,...., n’est pas toujours bonne à imiter”
[Roger de Piles, MDCXIX: 6] 35

Figure 4 John Ruskin. Portrait by W. Biscombe Gardner
[V&A Print Room E 683-1920 EW 72] 59

Figure 5 William Morris. [V&A: Sir Sidney Cockerell ms] 59

CHAPTER 3

Figure 6 Joshua Parsons drawn by Edwin Abbey. 1882 p.c. 76

Figure 7 Old Tree. Signed AP June 1867. 6 3/4" x 9 1/4". p.c. 76

Figure 8 Eskdale Nr Cumberland. Near Woolpack Inn. 11" x 7 1/2".
Private collection [1867?] 77

Figure 9 ‘An Alma-Tadema’. [*The Art Journal*, 1889: 357] 80

Figure 10 Alma-Tadema’s house in St-John’s Wood, London.
The house is in great need of repair. 80

Figure 11 ‘L’Omnibus de la Tour à Pinerolo’. From the second sketch book.
Private collection 84

Figure 12 Alfred Parsons. Impressionistic Watercolour. 1882 Private collection. 92

Figure 13 ‘To my friend Ellen Willmott’ Private collection. 96

Figure 14 An early landscape watercolour signed ‘AP 1878’.
Property of Christopher Parsons. 97

Figure 15 A landscape. Signed Alfred Parsons. Property of Sir Richard Parsons. 97

Figure 16 ‘Bridge in St John’s Vale.’ [*Harper’s* I: 346] 99

Figure 17 Hartley Coleridge’s Home. Signed ‘Alfred Parsons 1879’
[*Harper’s* I: 176] 100

Figure 18 Wordsworth’s Seat, Grasmere. [*Harper’s* I: 339] 100

Figure 19 ‘Goodwood Park front. Alfred Parsons. 6 May 1880’
[Robinson, 1883: xvi] 102

Figure 20 ‘The Bridge.’ Eckington Bridge. Signed Alfred Parsons.
Private collection 105

Figure 21 ‘Jeanne d’Arc’ by Bastian (sic) Lepage. [*Harper’s* I] 105

Figure 22 Portrait of Edwin A. Abbey. [*Harper’s*, June 1889: 58] 120

Figure 23 Edwin A. Abbey, Russell House, Broadway. [Lucas, 1921] 120

Figure 24 Illustration by Edwin Austin Abbey. [*Harper’s*] 121

Figure 25 Illustration by Edwin Austin Abbey. [*Harper’s*] 121

Figure 26 “To be Merry” Abbey and Parsons. [‘Herrick’s poem’, *Harper’s*, I: 69] ... 123

Figure 27 An illustration set in mediaeval times. E. Austin Abbey. [Lucas, 1921] .. 123

Figure 28 Art Workers’ Guild list of members. [Massé, 1935] 130

Figure 29 Art Workers’ Guild list of members. [Massé, 1935] 130

Figure 30 Gravetye Manor. The Moat Cottage.
Sketch of the porch by the author. (1994) 132

Figure 31 Gravetye Manor. The Moat Cottage.
Survey of the porch by the author. (1994) 133

Figure 32 Fine Art Society Exhibition Catalogue 1882 [V&A NAL] 139

Figure 33 Catalogue: New English Art Club, 1886 [V&A NAL] 142

Figure 34	‘When Nature Painted all Things Gay.’ [<i>The Art Journal</i> , 1909: 162]	142
Figure 35	Grosvenor Catalogue, 1887 [V&A NAL]	145
Figure 36	Parsons’s illustration in Grosvenor Cat. 1880. [V&A NAL]	145
Figure 37	Institute of Painters in Oil Colours: 1886 Catalogue [V&A]	146
Figure 38	Inst. of Painters in Oil Colours. 1886 Cat. AP illustration	146
Figure 39	Catalogue: The New Gallery, 1893 [V&A NAL]	147
Figure 40	The New Gallery. 1888 Catalogue. Parsons’s illustration. [V&A NAL] . .	147
Figure 41	The New Gallery: 1888 Catalogue [V&A NAL]	148
Figure 42	The New Gallery: 1888 Catalogue. Plan of the Gallery	148
Figure 43	54 Bedford Gardens. Alfred Parsons’s house and studio in London	149
Figure 44	54 Bedford Gardens. Detail: Front Entrance.	149
Figure 45	“Alfred Parsons. <i>China Roses, Broadway, Worcestershire.</i> ” [Hobhouse, 1988: 34]	150
Figure 46	“Russell House, Broadway” [Hobhouse, 1988: 35]	155
Figure 47	“Alfred Parsons. <i>Warley Place, Essex.</i> ” [Hobhouse, 1988: 199]	156
Figure 48	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	159
Figure 49	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	159
Figure 50	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	160
Figure 51	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	160
Figure 52	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	161
Figure 53	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	161
Figure 54	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	162
Figure 55	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	162
Figure 56	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	163
Figure 57	Watercolour of Ellen Willmott’s garden. Private collection.	163
Figure 58	“Poplars by Mill Stream” Drawn for <i>The Garden</i> by Alfred Parsons near Thatcham, Berks. [<i>The Garden</i> : 2 July 1881: 11]	166
Figure 59	Clouds. c. 1883. [John Brandon Jones’s collection]	172
Figure 60	Clouds. c. 1886. [John Brandon Jones’s collection]	172
Figure 61	Borders at Broadway, Worcestershire. From a picture in possession of the author. [W. Robinson] Robinson, 1896: 75	173
Figure 62	Russell House. The Gazebo.	177
Figure 63	Russell House. The Gazebo: detail.	177
Figure 64	Russell House. Detail of terrace steps.	178
Figure 65	The Court Farm. Postcard. [Brent Elliott’s collection]	179
Figure 66	The Court Farm. Postcard. [Brent Elliott’s collection] “The Cherubin Fountain” (stolen).	179
Figure 67	The Court Farm. Topiary.	180
Figure 68	The Court Farm garden.	180
Figure 69	Bishopswood. OS map: 25". First edition. LIV.4 Herefordshire 1878-87	184
Figure 70	Bishopswood. OS map, 25". Second edition. XXIII.13 Gloucestershire 1903	185
Figure 71	Alfred Parsons painting. [Garden unknown. Private coll.]	194
Figure 72	AP Watercolour reproduced in <i>Notes in Japan</i> : 15 [Sir Richard Parsons’s collection]	195
Figure 73	‘Naka no Chaya- On the Northern Slope’ [<i>Notes in Japan</i> : 143] Henry Batterbury’s coll.	195

Figure 74	The garden scene in 'Guy Domville' designed by Alfred Parsons. [Theatre Museum, London]	199
CHAPTER 4		
Figure 75	Royal Watercolour Society: Parsons's botanical notebook. 'Oct. 7 1904'	206
Figure 76	Royal Watercolour Society: Parsons's botanical notebook. 'Nagi. Maibara'	206
Figure 77	'The Garden' by Alfred Parsons, given by Princess Louise to the RWS in 1926.	207
Figure 78	Charles Tudway, age 29. [Colchester, 1985: 83]	216
Figure 79	Parsons/Tudway/Partridge draft Partnership Agreement. [24 April 1899 MsSRO 1/7]	231
Figure 80	Parsons/Tudway/Partridge draft Partnership Agreement. [24 April 1899 MsSRO 1/7]	231
Figure 81	Callis Court Garden. General view with Central Fountain in the background.	232
Figure 82	Callis Court Garden. One of four water basins around Central Fountain. ..	232
Figure 83	Callis Court Garden. Central Fountain.	233
Figure 84	Callis Court Garden. Statue. [Edward VII ?]	233
Figure 85	Sketch by Alfred Parsons for Milton Lodge. 1913	236
Figure 86	'The Artist's Garden at Luggers Hill [sic], Broadway, Worcestershire.' [Hobhouse, 1988: 36-37]	245
Figure 87	'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house.	246
Figure 88	'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house. Detail of the rear entrance.	246
Figure 89	'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house. General view of the facade.	247
Figure 90	'Luggershill'. From the pergola, with left side of facade in the right background.	247
Figure 91	'Luggershill'. Property wall.	248
Figure 92	'Luggershill'. A Rose garden with pergola in the background.	248
Figure 93	Letter from Alfred Parsons to Sir I. Spielmann. 4 Jan 1905	253
Figure 94	Oil painting. 'The Hawthorn' Christopher Parsons's collection.	253
Figure 95	Climbing roses at Great Chalfield	257
Figure 96	Stone steps at Great Chalfield.	257
Figure 97	Wightwick Manor. Topiary garden attributed to A. P.	258
Figure 98	Wightwick Manor: roses and hedges.	258
Figure 99	The Provost's Lodging. Worcester College. Oxford	259
Figure 100	Lamb House, Rye. Henry James's house and garden.	259
Figure 101	Garden at Nymans. Photographed by the author.	264
Figure 102	The rose garden at Nymans. Photographed by the author.	264
Figure 103	Alfred Parsons's watercolour of Nymans. [Hobhouse, 1988: 62]	265
CHAPTER 5		
Figure 104	Welbeck Abbey. The Front entrance to the West. [Author's photograph 1995]	267
Figure 105	Welbeck Abbey. The Oxford Wing. 1995	269
Figure 106	Base of the double herbaceous border's Italian fountain. Acronyms of the Duke and the Duchess.	273
Figure 107	"Palm House, Welbeck Gardens. [G. C. 15 August 1891: 195]	275
Figure 108	Steps leading to the palm house, seen from the picturesque tunnel in front	276
Figure 109	Entrance to the sunken Palm House. 1995	277

Figure 110	Interior of the Palm House. 1995. Fortunately the structure is still standing.	277
Figure 111	Army College North Welbeck Abbey. Map by M. Carus Wilson, Major, R.A.E.C. Nov 1949	278
Figure 112	Principal Entrance to Park and Grounds, Welbeck Abbey. [<i>G. M.</i> 11 June 1910: 450]	282
Figure 113	Welbeck Abbey from the south. C. 1730 [Thompson, 1938: 27.1]	283
Figure 114	Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1888	284
Figure 115	Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1898	285
Figure 116	Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1919	286
Figure 117	Welbeck Abbey. Postcard not dated. [1895?] Brent Elliott's collection. ..	288
Figure 118	Welbeck Abbey. Postcard not dated. [1905?] Brent Elliott's collection. ..	288
Figure 119	The Welbeck Garden looking North. The location of formal rose garden (now gone) in front and the beginning of the double herbaceous border in the foreground.	289
Figure 120	The Welbeck Garden looking North. Author's photograph 1995.	289
Figure 121	The Welbeck Garden looking North-east-East.	290
Figure 122	The Welbeck Garden. Summer House, front view.	291
Figure 123	The Welbeck Garden. Ornamental wall dividing the East terraces from the North section.	291
Figure 124	The Welbeck Garden. The East Terraces.	292
Figure 125	The Welbeck Garden. Looking South-east at the modification to the East Terraces in 1995.	292
Figure 126	The Welbeck Garden. The South Terrace with the South-west Cricket Ground.	293
Figure 127	The Welbeck Garden. The South Terrace with the South-east Cricket Ground.	293
Figure 128	The Chapel and Titchfield Library to the left (in the old riding school built by Smythson in 1622) To the right, the 1749 kitchen wing. In the foreground: grotto entrance to the subterranean toilets.	295
Figure 129	Welbeck Abbey. The Oxford Wing seen from the cricket ground.	295
Figure 130	The Welbeck Garden. The East Terraces looking South. Spring 1995, lead figures.	299
Figure 131	The Welbeck Garden. Hedges of Golden Yew and Flower Beds on East Terraces. [<i>G.M.</i> 11 June 1910: 451]	299
Figure 132	East Terraces and Fountain at Welbeck Abbey. [Holme, 1908: plate CXXV]	300
Figure 133	Flower Garden and Venetian Well at Welbeck Abbey. [Holme, 1908: plate CXXIV]	300
Figure 134	The Welbeck Garden. East Terraces looking towards the Abbey. Alley adorned with Italian vases.	301
Figure 135	Italian vase from Impruneta. Detail.	301
Figure 136	Shiplake Court. <i>Country Life</i> . 27 Oct 1906	302
Figure 137	"Borders of Hardy Flowers at Welbeck Abbey." [<i>G. M.</i> 11 June 1910] ...	304
Figure 138	"A Portion of One of the Herbaceous Borders, Welbeck Abbey. The Seat of the Duke of Portland." [<i>G. M.</i> 16 October 1909: 802]	304
Figure 139	Temporary equipment elevated in the middle of the double herbaceous border. (North of border)	305
Figure 140	The Welbeck Garden. Hardy flowers between the Double Herbaceous Border's former location, and the Rhododendron Valley.	305

Figure 141	The Welbeck Garden. Spring 1995. The Italian Fountain: centre of the Double Herbaceous Border.	306
Figure 142	The Welbeck Garden. Acronyms at the Base of Fountain brought from Venice in 1901.	306
Figure 143	Welbeck Abbey. The Rose garden with the Mulberry grove. Brent Elliott's post card collection. [1910?]	307
Figure 144	Welbeck Abbey. East side of the Rose Garden with the Mulberry Grove, looking at the South Cricket Ground.	307
Figure 145	Welbeck Abbey. East side of the Rose Garden with the Mulberry Grove. .	308
Figure 146	The two pergolas enclosing the Rose Garden. Seen from the South Terrace.	309
Figure 147	The Rose Garden. The Summer House. [Date unknown] Looking to the Cricket Ground.	309
Figure 148	The Sunken Garden. Christopher Stannard painting. Private collection. .	311
Figure 149	"[The Sunken Garden] herbaceous borders 120 yards and 80 yards long respectively, which provide magnificent displays." Rockley, 1938: 210, plate 71	312
Figure 150	The Welbeck Garden. The Sunken Garden in the autumn of 1995.	313
Figure 151	The Welbeck Garden. Pulham wall vermiculated artificial stone cladding.	314
Figure 152	The Sunken Garden. The curved Pergola.	315
Figure 153	"Sunken Gardens, Welbeck Abbey." [Brent Elliott post card collection. c. 1910]	315
Figure 154	Battledene. The Lodge. Photograph of 1995.	325
Figure 155	Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map First edition (1880?) [Berks XLIII; 6"]	326
Figure 156	Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map Second edition (1900) [Berks 42.8 & 42.12; 25"]	327
Figure 157	Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map 1911. [Berks 42.8 & 42.12; 25"]	328
Figure 158	Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map 1911 with Mrs Pearson's additions. .	333
Figure 159	Battledene. Wooden gate at the entrance.	334
Figure 160	Battledene. Drive leading to the main entrance.	334
Figure 161	Battledene. Yew hedge above old brick wall.	335

CHAPTER 6

Figure 162	Alfred Parsons in old age. [Sir Richard Parsons's collection.]	347
-------------------	--	-----

SECTION 7

Figure 163	Chart of the raise of the art students in England.	375
Figure 164	Pedigree of Tudway: [Wiener, 1981: 58]	428

LIST OF TABLES

Garden makers according to current most widely diffused knowledge	6
Garden makers and writers promoting the artist doing landscapes : 1650 to1850	44
Garden makers of the break in the tradition : 1850 to1890	58
Garden makers and writers preaching for the return of the tradition : 1880 to1910	67

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ken Hampson, my husband for believing that I had the capacity to read for a PhD in England. His support was crucial.

Dr Brent Elliott, Writer, Archivist and Head Librarian at The Lindley Library, my dedicated and challenging academic supervisor for patiently reading and re-reading the whole thesis noticing contradictions, correcting mistakes, and discussing concepts. Without his serious involvement this thesis would never have come to an end.

Peter Burman, Director of the Centre for Conservation Studies, for his academic understanding and his dedication as internal examiner.

Dr Harriet Jordan, Inspector of English Parks and Gardens, English Heritage, especially for her rigorous work as external examiner.

Dr Michael Stratton, my administrative supervisor, for sending me back to do further analysis.

Peter Goodchild, for giving me the inspiration to start this doctoral study.

Charles Cockburn, Chairman of the Board of Studies; Sheila Fischman, translator, who copy-edited the thesis, encouraging me to go further; Keith Garner, architect, and his computer; Andrée Hampson, 'mon bras droit à Montréal.'; Helen Ward, doctoral candidate, who will also finish one day.

Simon Lewis, whiz on all databases, especially the Parsons's databases and Chloe Newnham deserve special thanks.

From the University of York several people must be acknowledged for their personal help:

William Middlemist, who drove me to several gardens; Phil Thomas; Keith Parker, Librarian; Jan and Mike Powell for their constant support; Dr Sultan Barakat, for always asking me "When is it over?"; Dr Patrick Nuttgens, my precious advisor and Bridget Nuttgens, both my role models; David Jacques, expert in Georgian gardens; John Robinson, whiz on IBM, who regularly prevented me from crashing the computers; Gavin Ward, whiz on Macintosh, who created the computer illustrations for my publication; Peter Halls, whiz on computer generated maps who generated Parsons's gardens maps; Isabelle Van Groeningen; Dr Ada Segre; Hazel Fryer; Kelly Roberts, Pam Hodgson, Angela Vickers, and Pauline Dickes for their real support; Dr Sophieke Piebenga; Steve Desmond; Val and Ian Hepworth; Simeon Underwood for his article 'The Extinct Thesis' [*The Times Higher*, 15 April 1994]; Arthur Kelly, Chris A. Cockerill, Ron Tyson, Tony Craig and Bill Ellis.

Several Academics, especially:

The late Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe for a most enlightening interview on the sense of doing history; Dr Sunil Kumar, for finishing a year before me, setting himself as an example; Dr Kathleen Watt, who tried to teach me how to do proper Social Science doctoral research; Dr Aylin Orbasli, a brilliant model to follow who always encouraged me to go ahead; Nick Savage, curator Royal Academy Library; David Ottewill, Professor Gillian Naylor, Royal College of Art; Dr Alan Powers; Professor Toshio Watanabe; Dr Jay Appleton; Richard Green, curator, York Art Gallery; Alan Crawford, author; Michael Hall,

architectural writer at *Country Life*; Dr Anne Helmreich; Dr Judith Roberts; Simon Fenwick, archivist, Royal Watercolour Society; Cynthia Zaitzevsky, art historian; Gerald Southgate, Secretary, Art Workers Guild; the curators and staff at the CCA in Montreal.

People related to the gardens, for their wonderful and warm generosity especially:

The Lady Anne Bentinck; The Earl of Portland; Mr and Mrs William Parente; Lord and Lady Mark Birdwood; Derek Adlam; David Tudway Quilter and Mrs Tudway Quilter; Nicholas Mander, Monty Smith and Stephen Ponder; Wallis Hunt and Sally Bond, The Life-Agnew Trust; Penny Shepard and Suzanna John; Mr and Mrs John Berkeley; Mr and Mrs John Brandon Jones; Mr and Mrs Michael de Navarro; Dr Nicholas Shrimpton; Mr and Mrs Robert Floyd; Mrs Floyd; Mr Peter Herbert; Mrs Virginia Murray and Richard C. Simon, a friend of 'Florham', New Jersey.

Descendants of Alfred Parsons:

Sir Richard Parsons; Christopher Parsons; Henry and Heather Batterbury; Gabriel Pelham Olive; John Olive; Elizabeth Bremridge; Marian Shaw; Prudence Morris; Daphne Boddington; Stella Clark.

Various Library staff members, especially:

Staff at the Lindley Library in London, especially Elizabeth Gilbert, assistant librarian; Staff at the National Art Library; Staff at the Somerset Record Office especially T. W. Mayberry, assistant County Archivist, and Mrs Rice; Staff at the Royal Academy Library, especially Mr Nick Savage, Deputy Librarian and Curator, Helen Valentine, Curator of Paintings and Sculpture and Frieda Matassa, Registrar to the permanent collection. All record office members of staff involved in replying to my numerous letters.

Special friends for their help:

Anne-Françoise Wauthy, Strath Goodship; Harold Gosney; Lisa Foster, who copy-edited an early and difficult version of Chapter Three and Four; Dodie Mastermann, artist, J. V. Vickers.

A very special friend for her help: Lilian Panich, graphic artist and teacher in computer technology.

Fellow teachers at 'CEGEP du Vieux-Montréal',
(Collège d'Enseignement Général Et Professionnel), especially:
Marlène Mirey, Tran Minh Ngoc, Pierre Roy, Jean Lamontagne.

Granting bodies:

The University of York
The Oversea Research Scholarship
The 'CEGEP du Vieux Montréal'

Danielle Lalonde, my niece, who from the ages of five to nine contributed drawings to decorate my various offices; my brother, Claude Milette, who phoned me during the hardest period of the research in my little attic at the King's Manor and, finally, my sister, Michelle Milette Lalonde for her clever and practical advice and for her continuous support.

To the many other people who helped me, please accept my deepest thanks.

RELEVANT MATERIAL ALREADY PUBLISHED BY THE PRESENT AUTHOR

Some of the material discussed in Chapter Four was published in
Milette, N. *Parsons-Partridge-Tudway, An Unsuspected Garden Design Partnership*,
Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, (IoAAS), University of York, 1995.

The footnotes with the source 'Milette, 1995' identify the parts cited.

ABSTRACT

The main argument of this thesis is the brief resurgence in the late nineteenth century of the belief that an artist could create better gardens than those designed without artistic knowledge.

The work of Alfred Parsons, Royal Academician (1847-1920), as a professional landscape-painter and professional landscape-gardener is described for the first time. This is also the first comprehensive analysis of Parsons's works within their social context. Parsons's patrons tended to have faith in such leaders of English cultural thought as John Ruskin, William Morris and William Robinson, whose ideas were widely circulating in the garden literature of the time.

This resurgence, which appeared early in the 1870s, vanished with the First World War.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS and CONVENTIONS

(Date) MsSRO (Bundle number)

Manuscripts from Somerset Record Office. Mostly from Box 48 DD/TD, unless otherwise noted. The reference mentions also the bundle number, when available.

All quotations are from letters of Captain Partridge to Charles Tudway, unless otherwise noted.

Harper's: *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*

NAL: National Art Library located in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

V&A: Victoria and Albert Museum.

Ms HWRO: Letters to Alfred William Parsons of Broadway from various (61) correspondents. Held at Hereford and Worcester Record Office.

Donors: Mrs Stella Clarke, Mrs Cecily Pilgrim and Hon Mrs Prudence Morris.

Acquired 2 June 1993. Accessioned 8 Jan 1996 Number: 705:1235. The authors of these letters are listed alphabetically by name from i to lxi.

Coll. : Collection

RI : Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour

FAS : Fine Art Society

RWS : Royal Watercolour Society

CONVENTIONS ON SPELLING

The possessive for names ending in "s" are now written "s's" although the present author had received other recommendations on this flexible grammar rule. Apologies to some readers if this makes reading awkward.

At the turn of the century, the use of the hyphen in 'Landscape-gardener' varied. As Parsons used it, it was decided to follow his usage. For the sake of consistency, landscape-painter was also hyphenated, as it appears in the 1991 Oxford Dictionary. These two professions are at the heart of the present thesis and deserve the emphasis the hyphen gives them.

FORMATTING CONVENTIONS

The main text is formatted according to the University of York rules: 1.5 line spacing of text with right margin of 4 cm and other margins, 1.5 cm.

The quotation format within the main text, single spacing of the text with indents, accounts for the absence of quotation marks.

The quotation format in the footnotes maintains quotation marks because of the single spacing of the text lines.

CONVENTIONS ON REFERENCING

For the sake of preserving reading flow, it was decided to footnote all references and comments. The Harvard method of referencing [Author's family name, publication date of book or article: page number or 'name' of any alphabetical concept extracted from a Dictionary] has been integrated into the footnotes, within brackets when accompanying further comments. The 'Harvard' reference always follows the comment. Every book or article is first identified by the author's name so as to accelerate finding the complete reference.

A quotation within a quotation is completely referenced in the footnote, not in the general bibliography.

Quotations from magazine articles are referenced in the footnote only.

FORMATTING CONVENTIONS

The main text is formatted according to the University of York rules: 1.5 line spacing of text with right margin of 4 cm and other margins, 1.5 cm.

The quotation format within the main text, single spacing of the text with indents, accounts for the absence of quotation marks.

The quotation format in the footnotes maintains quotation marks because of the single spacing of the text lines.

ATTITUDE OF AUTHOR TOWARDS ASSUMPTIONS

In most of this thesis, the present author has based her judgment on the facts accumulated being conscious that this judgment is relative to her own cultural context. On some occasions, intuitions have been expressed, as they could lead to further research. These intuitions are clearly identified as such in the text, the word 'assume' making their occurrence obvious.

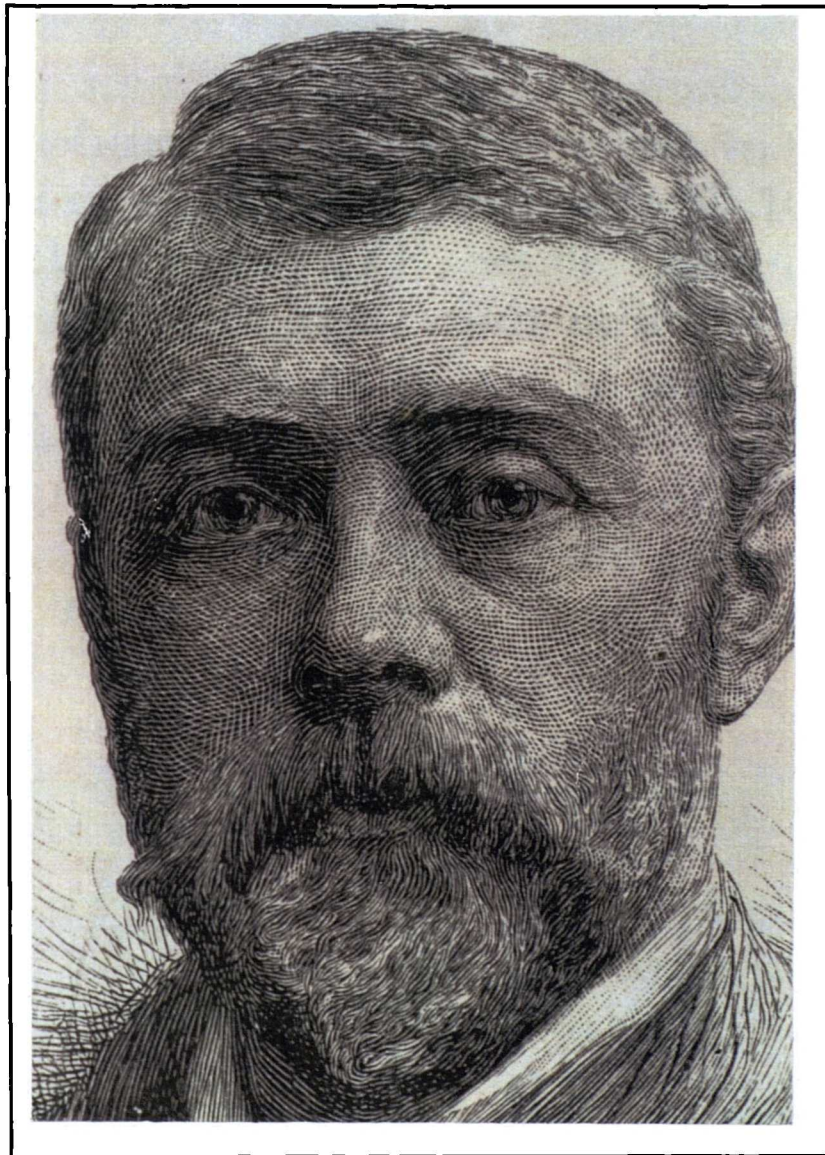


Figure 1 Alfred Parsons. 'Our artists in Europe' [*Harper's* LXXIX, June 1889: 61]

1 INTRODUCTION

Landscape-painter as Landscape-gardener, the Case of Alfred Parsons R. A.

1.1 AIM OF THIS STUDY

The principal aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the brief resurgence of the previously established belief that an artist, namely a landscape-painter, could design gardens thought of as being of a higher quality than the ones designed without artistic knowledge. This belief circulated in upper middle class English society, in the late nineteenth century. Following that belief, Alfred Parsons (1847-1920), Associate of the Royal Academy in 1897, evolved progressively from an amateur to a professional landscape-gardener by 1899.¹ His work from 1884 to 1914 will provide an original case study illustrating that resurgence.²

At the turn of the century terms like ‘garden designers’ were just beginning to be used. In England, the term ‘garden architect’ was more common and André Le Nôtre, a French garden architect, very influential in England, had been known as one of them since the seventeenth century.³ The term ‘landscape architect’, used mainly in United States, had already started to make its way in England.⁴ This new way of naming an activity that had existed since the seventeenth century but had not yet been regimented into a discipline, was not approved by all.⁵

¹ Alfred Parsons himself hyphenated the term landscape-gardener.

² For the sake of preserving the flow of the reading, it was decided to footnote all references and comments. The Harvard method of referencing [Author’s family name, date of publication of the book or of the article: page number or ‘name’ of any alphabetical concept extracted from a Dictionary] was integrated into the footnotes, with no brackets when not accompanying further comments. The ‘Harvard’ reference always follows the comment. Every book or article is first identified by the author’s name so as to accelerate finding the complete reference.

³ See page 27 for more on Le Nôtre.

⁴ The term appears to have been used first by Gilbert Meason, a friend and travelling companion of Sir Walter Scott, in his book *On the Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters of Italy* (1828), and was subsequently taken up by Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and his partner Calvert Vaux, an Englishman. By that term, Vaux originally meant to adorn landscapes and gardens with various buildings designed by an architect. Olmsted used the term ‘landscape architect’ in the sense of creating large public parks as part of broad planning. [Jellicoe et al under ‘landscape architect’]

⁵ “In the flood of books now on garden design, some of the authors misuse words and confuse ideas. One, writing on the gardens at Hampton Court, is not satisfied with the terms gardening, garden design, or laying out gardens, but uses the word ‘gardenage’. Another has ‘lay-out’ for plan, though it would be better applied, one should say, to the hen that is laying eggs in the hedgerow; another, who has written a book in which he advises clipping the Ailantus tree into a mop-head, is not satisfied with the good word ‘landscape-gardener’, used by Loudon, Repton, and many other excellent men, but imitates the French in calling himself a landscape-architect -a stupid term implying the union of two absolutely distinct studies, one dealing with varied life in

(continued...)

In England in the 1880s, the term ‘landscape gardening’ was still the most commonly used.⁶ Alfred Parsons was one of those who described himself and was described by others as a ‘landscape-gardener’. This title linked Parsons with a long tradition of landscape-gardeners judged by his contemporaries as being in danger of extinction.⁷ Parsons is the paragon of this thesis: he combines the arts of the landscape-painter and of the landscape-gardener.⁸

The study of Parsons’s career illustrates a key moment in the evolution of a middle-class approach to landscape gardening in the United Kingdom. This occurred when many of the ‘nouveaux riches’ were attempting to emulate the aristocracy. Gardens became symbols of Englishness and patrons were numerous, either as tenants living in aristocrats’ houses or as owners of newly built mansions inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement. As Plumptre affirmed, “The period that ushered in the twentieth century laid the foundations of the contemporary garden; while today virtually no one creates or looks after a garden in the

⁵ (...continued)

thousand different kinds and the natural beauty of the earth, and the other with stones and bricks and their putting together. The training for either of these arts is as wide as the poles asunder, and the earnest practice of either art leaves no time, even if there were genius, for the other.” Signed “W. R.” *The Garden* ‘Misuse of Words as to Garden Design’ [LX 20 July 1901:47]

⁶ For example, in *The Garden* and *Gardening Illustrated* ‘landscape gardening’ was widely used. The period between 1876 and 1906 was examined closely.

⁷ In 1891-92, two books on gardening written by architects were published: John Dando Sedding, *Garden Craft Old and New*, 1891 and Reginald Blomfield and F. Inigo Thomas, *The Formal Garden in England*, 1892. Their publication was followed by a vehement polemic in the gardening world. William Robinson was against architects doing or writing about landscape gardening.

William Robinson regularly used Parsons’s drawings of landscapes and gardens to illustrate his naturalistic landscape gardening ideas. See the long list of Parsons’s illustrations in *The Garden* in the appendices on page 364.

See *The Garden*, ‘Nonsense about gardening’ anon. XLI, 5 March 1892: 204;

“This is a reply to two insolent and shallow books of recent appearance on formal gardening” in *The Garden* ‘Architects Garden Design’ WR. XLI, April 2 1892: 309-11

See *The Garden*, ‘Garden Design and Architects’ Gardens ‘illustrated by Alfred Parsons and others. XLII, Aug 20 1892: 175;

See *The Garden* ‘Garden Design in Relation to the Formal Garden’ anon. XLI, March 5 1892: 204;

See *The Garden* ‘Art in Relation to Flower-Gardening and Garden Design.’ XLVII, Jan 19 1895: 38-40;

See *The Garden* ‘The Ugliness of it: Versailles’ signed W. R. LI, Jan 2, 1897: 8-9 ;

“Having been frequently exasperated by the use in American writings of the term landscape architect and landscape engineer, we see with much pleasure a protest against the use of these terms by Mr. E. C. Simonds, of Chicago, in an article which in other respects is interesting and true. (...) The term ‘landscape-gardener’ instead of ‘landscape engineer’ or ‘landscape architect’, is used here because it is believed by the writer to be the most suitable to convey the meaning intended.”

See *The Garden* ‘The Landscape-gardener and his Work’, although written by Mr. E. C. Simonds, it was reprinted by William Robinson in *The Garden* July 10, 1897: 27-28. This article could be a good example of social convergence or a sign that Mr Simonds was aware of William Robinson’s own writings. See the full transcript of this article in the appendices on page 418.

⁸ His life and work are put forward as a paradigm, i.e. the best example possible to illustrate the thesis.

Victorian manner”.⁹ The present writer believes that Parsons’s gardens were part of those foundations. They were an important part of the English continuum of garden making. Several of Parsons’s gardens were owned and visited by influential people in the gardening community. Photographs and watercolours were made of Parsons’s garden designs, and articles were written and published. These were part of the vast amount of literature on gardens being published at the beginning of the century. The love of garden making was being transmitted to future generations. The eclectic style of Parsons’s garden designs with their freedom from rigid and fixed attitudes, links them even more closely to contemporary garden design.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There is no published study on landscape-painters as landscape-gardeners at the turn of the century. Some books deal with similar subjects, the great majority using a positivist framework.¹⁰

Madison Cox, in his book *Artists’ Gardens*¹¹, discusses various artists who designed their own gardens, mostly during the twentieth century. F. R. Cowell, in *The Garden as a Fine Art from Antiquity to Modern Times*, focuses more on aesthetics than on the makers of these gardens or their respective social context. George Plumtre, in *The Garden Makers*, enumerates various garden makers, from 1600 to the present era, giving a short biography of each.¹² He also discusses the styles of all these gardens using a positivist approach, one which gives no background on social context as an aid to understanding these various designers and their work. As it is one of the rare books that discusses garden makers, contemporary with Parsons, it was taken into consideration. It is a modern secondary source, but precisely because it was a well-received book aimed at the general gardening public, it is a useful index

⁹ For a succinct and precise description of the forces present in garden design from 1880 to 1920, read [Plumtre, 1993: 127-132]

¹⁰ These authors use a descriptive language that they believe to be perfectly transparent. They analyse their subject within a formalistic approach, listing attributes and facts. Most of the time they do not justify why one fact has been eliminated and another retained, and give no clue to their own value system. Positivism is the longest standing tradition in History. The present thesis will use a cultural orientation. By setting Alfred Parsons within his social context, the aim is to show how Parsons’s gardens were embedded within his social relationships. Their designs are more than just a style.

“Positivism: philosophical system of Auguste Comte, d. 1857, recognizing only non-metaphysical facts and observable phenomena, and rejecting metaphysics and theism.” “Metaphysics: the theoretical philosophy of thinking and knowing. The philosophy of mind” [*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1995]

A cultural analysis is possible only by means of not rejecting the ‘thinking and knowing’ capacity of the mind. The source of this reflection was given by Dr Kathleen Watt, in the course of several lectures and meetings with the author of this thesis.

¹¹ Cox, 1993: passim

¹² Plumtre, 1993: passim. See the list of these designers on page 6.

of the perceived standing of the gardeners it discusses; it is a measure of general reputation, more than an academic work could be.

In the chapter 'International influences, 1880-1920', Plumptre enumerates the best-known of these designers.¹³ They are men and one woman from very different backgrounds, all practising garden design between 1884 and 1914.¹⁴ As landscape architecture became a profession in England only in 1919, it is understandable that the background to garden design was so varied. It is also significant that very few garden makers were recognized artists. He makes the point that the landscape-painter as landscape-gardener was an endangered species. At least in rhetoric of late nineteenth-century, it was considered to be an endangered species.¹⁵ Of the garden makers mentioned by Plumptre, Francis Inigo Thomas was the only garden designer who also possessed a painter's knowledge, but he designed a limited number of gardens.¹⁶

At the turn of the century, Parsons did not have national standing as a garden designer, but

¹³ Here is a brief annotated résumé of 'International Influences, 1880-1920' in Plumptre, 1993:127-167. The author describes six gardens by Sir Reginald Blomfield. Achille Duchêne, a French garden designer, is described as being the first to enjoy an international career. [As it will be demonstrated, Parsons enjoyed an international career]. Duchêne's work at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire is presented. Gertrude Jekyll is described as 'the fairy godmother of 20th-century gardening.' Twenty-eight gardens are named, ten of them by herself alone. Her partner, Sir Edwin Lutyens, is compared in popularity with Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Thirty-nine gardens are listed, eighteen in partnership with Jekyll. Major Lawrence Waterbury Johnston is mentioned for Hidcote Manor. Thomas Hayton Mawson is cited as an example of the steady progress in professional garden-making from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. From being a nurseryman he became a 'landscape architect', ending his career as the first president of the Institute of Landscape Architects. [Only thirteen of his gardens are mentioned, but Dr Harriet Jordan, in her thesis *Thomas Hayton Mawson 1861-1933 The Garden Designs of an Edwardian Landscape Architect* identified 155 gardens while [Beard, 1978] identified 136 gardens and 40 unspecified works by Mawson.] The partnership of Harold Ainsworth Peto (1854-1933) with the architect Ernest George is mentioned as one of the most respected practices in the late Victorian period, followed by Peto's private practice from 1892. William Robinson, a practical gardener, writer and editor of horticultural books and magazines, is mentioned for his own garden, Gravetye Manor. Sir George Reresby Sitwell, Bt, was a patrician, landowner and the gifted amateur maker of Renishaw Hall, his family seat. Plumptre goes on to discuss three gardens by Francis Inigo Thomas, the illustrator of *The Formal Garden* by Reginald Blomfield. [Between 1886 and 1893, Thomas exhibited one landscape painting at the Royal Academy in 1893 and was not a landscape-painter like Alfred Parsons.] The last man mentioned for the 1880-1920 period is Ernest Henry Wilson. He was an important plant collector and collaborated indirectly on the design of several gardens which had exotic plants in their designs.

¹⁴ Consult the following table, comparing Parsons with the most famous 'garden makers' of his period, as listed in Plumptre.

¹⁵ Dr Harriet Jordan, January 1997, detailed comments to this thesis: "Perhaps this being was always a rarity. There has always been a scattering of painters involved in designing gardens and perhaps the numbers actually vary little. It is more the philosophy and rhetoric of garden design which shifts with fashion."

¹⁶ "Francis Inigo Thomas (1866-1950), artist, architect and garden designer. Illustrated Reginald Blomfield's *Formal Garden in England* (1891). Designed gardens at Athelhampton, Dorset (1891-93), Barrow Court, Somerset (1892-96). Rotherfield Hall, Sussex (1897), Drakelow Hall, Derbyshire (1902), and Chantmarle, Dorset (1910). Virtually the only discussion of his work is in [Ottewill, 1989: 13-21]" [Letter dated 6th March 1997, from Brent Elliott to the present author]

that does not mean that he should not gain such standing now, in 1997. The quality of his work at Welbeck justifies a better appreciation of his projects. Alfred Parsons's landscape gardening commissions should now be discussed in books on the history of landscape and gardens such as Plumptre's *The Garden Makers*, and this thesis provides reasons for this conviction. His absence there, as well as his absence from other landscape history books, demonstrates that there was and is a need for more research on Parsons. He was a serious *professional*¹⁷ artist doing *professional* landscape gardening. In one sense, Parsons was unique, but in many ways he was also a product of his time. Although unique in the sense of combining professionalism in landscape painting and in landscape gardening, Parsons approach to landscape design was not unlike that of his contemporaries. At the turn of the century, many writers on landscape gardening promoted the concept of the artist's eye. Reference to these writers is provided in Chapter Two: "Lament over the break: the formal against the natural"¹⁸. In England, some dilettante garden designers were also dilettante artists.¹⁹ Amongst the well-known amateur artists practising garden design was Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932). Jekyll's own writings on colour schemes for gardens, closely linked to a knowledge of the painter's palette, contributed to a wave of writing on artists versus pure horticulturists as better landscape-gardeners.²⁰ It is in that context that Parsons's work will be studied.

¹⁷ The term 'professional' implies receiving a remuneration either from the selling of paintings or the selling of services as landscape-gardener. It implies also that the clients were sometimes unknown to the artist.

¹⁸ The principal men were Scott, Ruskin, Morris and Forbes Watson. See page 60.

¹⁹ "The Society of Artists of Great Britain had held exhibitions of oil paintings and watercolours from 1760 to 1791 and the Free Society of Artists also held similar exhibitions from 1760 to 1791." [Ambrose, 1987: 88] The Royal Academy was founded in 1768. The Old Watercolour Society was founded in 1804. As Kent died in 1748, he could not have joined such Societies.

See Chapter Two on page 29, for more on Kent. In William Kent's own period, all artists were dilettantes; it was only later that artists decided to exhibit their works and group themselves into 'professional' Societies. By the time Parsons was exhibiting, it was the accepted way for a 'serious' artist to sell paintings. It is suggested here that Kent would have exhibited at the Royal Academy had it existed in his day, just as Repton had done, exhibiting fifteen landscapes between 1787 and 1802. Gertrude Jekyll exhibited only once, in 1865, a portrait.

²⁰ This "wave" is treated in Chapter Two on pages 60.

Garden makers according to current most widely diffused knowledge: 1850 to 1925

'Garden makers' contemporaries of Alfred Parsons. Plumptre, 1993: <i>The Garden Makers</i>	Life span	Architect	Designer	Land. painter	Crafts	Land. architect	Gardener	Collector	Landlord	Nurseryman	Horticulturist	Land.-gardener
Sir Reginald Blomfield	(1856-1942)	•	•									
Achille Duchêne	(1866-1947)		•									
Gertrude Jekyll	(1843-1932)		•	•	•							
Sir Edwin Lutyens	(1869-1944)	•										
Major L. W. Johnston	(1871-1958)								•			
Thomas Hayton Mawson	(1861-1933)					•				•		
[Alfred Parsons]	(1847-1920)			•							•	•
Harold Ainsworth Peto & Sir Ernest George	(1854-1933) (1839-1922)	•	•									
William Robinson	(1838-1935)						•					
Sir George R. Sitwell, Bt	(1860-1943)								•			
Francis Inigo Thomas	(1866-1950)	•	•	•								
Ernest Henry Wilson	(1876-1930)									•	•	

The first inspiration leading to this doctorate was to study the illustrations of gardens in the United Kingdom. While consulting several illustrated works, the present author was impressed by the quality of Parsons's illustrations in various books. His illustrations for William Robinson's *The English Flower Garden* were then analysed. All the illustrations by Alfred Parsons, in the fifteen editions of that book, from 1883 to 1933 during Robinson's lifetime, were collated, described and compared, using a data-base. The extent of Parsons's contribution was evaluated. Very soon it became obvious that the research topic had to be scaled down. It also became obvious that some aspects of Parsons's work were underestimated and that, professionally, his career expanded from illustration into landscape gardening, though maintaining landscape painting as a continuum throughout his life. Profound gaps in the knowledge of Parsons's life and work had to be filled in. Little was known on Parsons's landscape gardening career. Bryan Brooke, in 1987, was the first secondary source

to concentrate on Alfred Parsons.²¹ Brooke mentioned that Parsons designed the garden at Wightwick Manor.²² *The Edwardians and After*, edited by Mary Anne Stevens, provides the best account of what is now known about Parsons. It mentions that he was an expert gardener, but adds only briefly that he advised on the laying out of Wightwick Manor.²³ In 1988, Penelope Hobhouse and Christopher Wood mentioned Court Farm (sic) and Luggers Hill (sic).²⁴ David Ottewill, in 1989, had given the best insight into Parsons's landscape design career, but he mentioned only five gardens: Wightwick Manor, Worcester College, The Court Farm, Lamb House. He mentioned incorrectly that Parsons assisted Webb at Clouds.²⁵ A 1991 report by the National Trust attested that 'Parsons & Partridge' had done work at Great Chalfield.²⁶ When the author first saw a 'Parsons & Partridge' business stamp on the drawings reproduced in that report, the hunch that many more gardens remained to be discovered really became clearer.²⁷ Reading Parsons's obituary in *The Daily Telegraph*, where his garden design at Welbeck is mentioned, also suggested that Parsons might have been a major landscape-gardener. On the other hand, compiling the list of Parsons's exhibitions confirmed that he was more than a botanical illustrator. It was then decided to restrict the research to Parsons's landscape gardening work within its historical context. From then on, a fantastic pursuit à la Sherlock Holmes began. Where could the partners have left their archives? In the late summer of 1994, part of them were found. This thesis then became possible.

²¹ Thomas, Graham S., 1987: 16-18 'Alfred Parsons and The Genus Rosa.' section contributed by Bryan N Brooke, grand nephew of Alfred Parsons.

²² "He advised on laying out the garden at Wightwick Manor, designed by William Morris and now owned by the National Trust." [Thomas, Graham S., 1987: 16]

²³ Stevens, 1988: 134-135

²⁴ Hobhouse and Wood, 1988: 36

²⁵ Ottewill, 1989: 130-131. See page 168 in Chapter Three for a discussion on Clouds.

²⁶ Humphris, 1991-2.

²⁷ See the chronology of Captain Walter Croker St Ives Partridge, in the appendices on page 424. People would refer to him as 'Captain Partridge'. He was born 18 March 1855 in Dublin and died 19 September 1924 in Coopers, Eversley, Hants.

1.3 PERSONAL MOTIVATION

As with a number of specialists at the turn of the twenty-first century, the author's motivation for this research came from a profound need to open up the frontiers of specialisation. Landscape architecture was not a separate field of knowledge in the eighteenth century: William Kent, the 'architect', possessed knowledge of landscape gardening as well. As an architect, the author needed to enlarge her awareness of the history of gardens as a challenge in cultural cross-fertilization. This urge is obviously falls within the territory of social convergence.

There is a need for a contextual approach to the study of gardens, drawing upon a variety of materials and disciplines which will unlock the resources of many branches of human art and culture from literature, painting, and architecture to religion, class, politics, and land use.²⁸

Contemporary urban architecture pays little attention to its surrounding landscape. A remark by the Prince of Wales is inspiring:

I very much hope that all the building disciplines, not just architecture, will be encouraged by reading this book [*Architecture Art or Profession?*] to reverse the present trend towards over-specialization and uniformity, and to introduce a greater variety of courses with more cross-fertilization.²⁹

The hope of Prince Charles should be extended so as to encompass the reading of this thesis as an example of the reversal of over-specialization. The author's focus was on a contextual approach to the analysis of Parsons's life and work. Parsons was a product of his time, his career depended on the market laws, the 'supply and demand' laws of his period. Elements of analysis are enlightened by readings in the Social Sciences. They also include various readings in history of art, history of landscape, literature, politics and architecture.

²⁸ Hunt, 1992: 3

²⁹ Crinson and Lubbock, 1994: v; introductory letter.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- i In view of the budget and time available, it was decided to limit the visual surveys to twelve of Parsons's gardens. It was also decided to study three of them in greater detail.
- ii Limitations were also set by the availability of primary material. The correspondence between the partners discovered to date by the author of this thesis, runs mainly between 1894 and 1906. More gardens were designed between 1907 and 1914, but the sources of information have not yet been found. Very few sketches, plans or plant lists of the gardens have survived, or have surfaced, although they are constantly alluded to in the correspondence. This limited the level of refinement of the analysis.
- iii It has not been possible to trace the descendants of all of Parsons's brothers and sisters. Joshua Parsons and Letitia Harriet Williams, Alfred Parsons's parents, had nine children who in turn had issue down to this date. Descendants of five out of nine possible lines were interviewed. The grandchildren of Katharine Elizabeth (Kitty) Raikes Bromage, Samuel (Sam) Parsons, Letitia Margaret Keith, and Winifred Grace Puddicombe have yet to be located.

1.5 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

A number of books discuss the history of landscape gardening at the turn of the twentieth century. They are principally concerned with the definition of predominant styles of the gardens being designed. None of these books discusses the topic of ‘landscape-painters as landscape-gardeners’ as a specific approach to garden design. This is the main original contribution of this thesis. The Conclusion will state in detail the various contributions to knowledge by this thesis.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

History of landscape is such a young discipline that much information had to be gathered. Until the early 1990s, Wightwick Manor and Great Chalfield were the most important designs reputedly by Parsons. In his book, *The Edwardian Garden*, Ottewill adds Worcester College, Hartpury, The Court Farm and Lamb House.³⁰ Early in this research Littlecote³¹, [Correspondence held at Great Chalfield], Welbeck [*The Daily Telegraph*'s obituary] and Russell House [Brown, 1990] were known. In the autumn of 1992, research was begun to find more. Exploratory searches were done in several record offices. Amongst the relevant manuscripts, the partnership's letters were uncovered for the first time in 1994. It was decided to transcribe 265, those most relevant to the research. These letters were chosen if the text discussed garden design, if the name of a garden's owner, or a garden's name was mentioned. They were also chosen if plants were mentioned. They were then ordered chronologically and indexed according to the owners and gardens named.³² The first three editions of OS maps, showing the evolution of the design of all possible houses and gardens that Parsons and Partridge could have been involved with, were consulted. Correspondence with around thirty Record Offices was established to obtain photocopies of the first three editions of the Ordnance Survey Maps (usually dated 1880, 1900 and 1920), concerning all the known gardens by this partnership.³³ The evidence of their involvement was then investigated. The maps were useful in understanding the basic design characteristics of these gardens.

As far as Parsons as 'landscape-painter' was concerned, exhibition catalogues were traced and analysed and a complete list of the titles of paintings was assembled for the first time.

Reading was focussed on understanding the early traditions of landscape gardening, the English social context at the turn of the century and the main debates in the landscape gardening world between 1884 and 1914.³⁴

³⁰ Ottewill, 1989: 130-131

³¹ Captain Partridge became the agent at Littlecote according to his obituary. See the appendices on page 424.

³² Often, in A letter, only the owner's name was mentioned, sometimes only the garden's name. The D.N.B. and the Peerage were useful tools for making connections between owners and their home address, i.e. garden. If a garden was referred to in the following way: 'a garden in Antibes', it remains a mystery.

³³ It was recommended to reproduce only those discussed in the argument of the thesis.

³⁴ The date 1884 was chosen because it was in that year that Parsons designed the garden at Clouds, his first known commission. [Ottewill, 1989: 131]

The primary reference for Clouds: [Blunt, *Country Life*, 19-11-1904 738-748 "On the east side the garden is
(continued...)

1.7 SOURCES

The primary sources of information on Parsons came from various articles published during his lifetime. *The Garden*, *Gardening Illustrated*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *Country Life* were the main magazines consulted, roughly between the period 1875 and 1920, precise publication dates depending on the respective magazines.

In 1890 *The Art Journal* published a half-page reproduction with the following inscription 'A Bend of the Avon. By Alfred Parsons. Royal Academy.' It was a pastoral landscape, as one might imagine reading about in *News from Nowhere*.³⁵ In 1892, Frank D. Millet³⁶ informed readers that Parsons was highly knowledgeable in literature and that his painting work was appreciated by both the general public and by botanists and gardeners. In 1893, an anonymous writer in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* described him as a talented floral and landscape artist who had spent most of 1892 in Japan. This anonymous author insisted that Parsons's landscapes commanded attention but that his trees and blossoms stood on a plane of artistic achievement far above anything else in the same line. *The Art Journal* printed a large illustration from *The Wild Garden*, promoting a recent edition of this book by W. Robinson that was completely illustrated by Parsons.³⁷ Alfred Lys Baldry³⁸, in a long illustrated article published in *The Studio*, in 1899, explained Parsons's method of working.³⁹ John Guille Millais published a biography of his father in 1902; John Everett Millais had insisted that Parsons, along with a few other artists working in black and white, deserved to enter the Academy for the quality of their work.

³⁴ (...continued)

formal, enclosed by yew hedges, the design of which was given by Mr. Alfred Parsons.": 740]

³⁵ [Morris, 1891] See page 57 for more on the William Morris's influence on William Robinson and Alfred Parsons.

³⁶ [*The Book Buyer*, New York, Feb, 1892: 4-6 with a full-page portrait of Alfred Parsons, photograph by J. Harold Roller] A painter and writer and very close friend of Parsons. See the appendices on page 372 for more on Millet.

³⁷ 'The Black Poplar in the Kennet Valley' *The Art Journal* 1894: 319

³⁸ Alfred Lys Baldry was an art critic at the turn of the century. He wrote several biographies of artists and several articles for *The Studio Magazine*. Between 1894 and 1908, his biographies include Albert Moore, Burne-Jones, Diego Rodriguez de Silva Velasquez, G. H. Boughton, Hubert von Herkomer, Frederick Leighton, David Cox, Marcus Stone, Sir John Everett Millais. One interesting book was *The Practice of Water-Colour Painting*, illustrated by the work of modern artists, Macmillan & Co, London, 1911, for which an extensive correspondence is held at the Victoria and Albert National Art Gallery Collection. These artists were mostly contemporaries of Parsons. Parsons is not one of the chosen watercolour artists in that book. This may prove what the author of this thesis believes: that in 1910, Parsons was more renowned for his landscape paintings in oil than he was for his watercolours.

³⁹ For more on this article see page 95 in chapter Three.

In 1903, Rose E. D. Sketchley⁴⁰ described Parsons as a landscape pen-draughtsman. In 1906, the *Gardeners' Chronicle* reviewed Parsons's exhibition 'Gardens and Orchards' held that year at the Fine Art Society. The anonymous author praised in particular his watercolour drawings of daffodils, his wild flowers in an orchard and three views of Broadway's cottage gardens. The next year, *The Art Journal* published a half page illustration of his painting 'The Pond, Poulton Priory', exhibited at the Royal Watercolour Society. In 1909, Alfred Tennyson praised Parsons's capacity to depict 'rural simplicity'.⁴¹ In 1910, one year before Parsons became a Royal Academician, Austin Chester wrote a very long and generously illustrated article entitled, 'The Art of Mr. Alfred Parsons, A. R. A.'⁴² This writer was amongst the first to define Parsons as 'adept' in English landscape gardening.⁴³

In 1911, a painting by Parsons was reproduced in *The Rome Exhibition Catalogue*.⁴⁴ In 1920, six of the obituaries so far collated repeated most of what was known about Parsons. *The Art Journal*, in 1911, published a half-page reproduction of "The Heart of Somerset" with the mention "...his paintings of landscape subjects are very popular."⁴⁵

In summary, these primary sources confirm that Parsons was publicly recognized for his conservative work as a landscape-painter and for the minutiae of his botanical drawings, either

⁴⁰ An art historian and writer. From 1903 to 1915, she published four books including: *J. W. Waterhouse, illustrations in colour and Watts...etc. The Glass of the Great Choir Windows at Dunblane* by Louis Davis: *Memorial to Janet McEwan Younger*, and *English Book-Illustration of To-day - Appreciations of the work of living illustrators with a list of their books*.

⁴¹ Alfred Browning Stanley Tennyson, b. 1878, the first son of Hon. Lionel Tennyson, himself 2nd son of 1st Baron Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892; Baron U.K 1884). Alfred Browning Stanley Tennyson was formerly an Inspector, Local Govt. Board, Ireland [*Debrett's Illustrated Peerage*: 1049]. In October 1882, Alfred Parsons did several drawings to illustrate an article on Alfred Lord Tennyson. The titles of these later published drawings were: 'Somersby Rectory, Lincolnshire'; 'The meeting of the Severn and Wye'; 'Burleigh House, by Stamford Town'; 'Caerleon Upon Usk'; 'Almesbury'; 'In the New Forest'; 'The Edge of Blackdown', showing Tennyson's House' exceptionally signed 'Alfred Parsons Aldworth 1882' (in full instead of the habitual 'AP'); 'Tennyson's home at Aldworth, Surrey' signed 'Alfred Parsons, Aldworth Oct 1882.'; 'The Oak Lawn, Aldworth.' See Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. *Harper's 'Alfred Tennyson's birthplace'* VII, Dec 1883-May 1884: 20-41.

⁴² *The Windsor Magazine* No. 183, 1910: 455-68

⁴³ "Mr. Parsons arrests the steps of his wanderings to invade the complexities of the Japanese landscape-gardener's art, a subject peculiarly interesting to him since he, in the gardens of Welbeck and of many other places, has shown himself an adept in English landscape gardening. (...) He has brought the sharp sight of a Nature-lover's eyes to bear upon the beauties of the world, and such eyes /'See more than any other eyes can see, / and in this sight the gardener in him comes out very strongly." [Chester, 1910: 455-468]. Previously, mention of Parsons's landscape gardening work had been made in two other articles: Blunt, 1904 (Clouds) and [*Country Life* v.20, 1906: 594-602 (Shiplake Court)]

⁴⁴ It was 'The Hawthorn in the Dale'. See page 251 for a fuller discussion of this painting.

⁴⁵ *The Art Journal*. n.s. Vol X: 170 and 174

in watercolour or pen and ink. Only ten years before his death, his proficiency in landscape gardening was finally publicly acknowledged.

Other snippets of information were found in the biographies of Parsons's friends; Edwin Abbey's biography by E. V. Lucas was particularly useful. Other primary sources were letters in various collections mentioned in the sources section.

Letters to Parsons held at The Hereford and Worcester Record Office⁴⁶, letters to William Robinson held at the Royal Horticultural Society Lindley Library⁴⁷ and other letters to William Robinson held at John Murray Publisher on Albermarle Street in London were consulted.⁴⁸ Letters from Sir Edward Burne-Jones to Thomas Armstrong were consulted in the hope of finding cross-references with Parsons (not conclusive).⁴⁹ Both the letters from Captain Partridge to Charles Tudway held at Somerset Record Office⁵⁰ and the letters to Sir Isidore Spielmann held at the National Art Library⁵¹ were the most informative collections during Parsons's lifetime. Several sources of Philip Webb's archives were consulted, principally at the Victoria and Albert Museum National Art Library and at the British Library manuscript section.⁵² The microfilms of *Harper's Magazine* were consulted at the Rare Book and

⁴⁶ See the Correspondence to Alfred Parsons in the appendices on page 370. Ms HWRO Access number 705:1235

⁴⁷ MS RHS Gilpin Bequest, 1976.

⁴⁸ Photocopies of these are now held at The Lindley Library. The authorisation was granted by Mrs Victoria Murray at the request of the present author. The only obligation is that the reader must quote the source, if used, and that no more photocopies shall be made of these documents.

⁴⁹ MS Letter from Sir Edward Burne-Jones to Thomas Armstrong 86 HH 53. 20 letters

⁵⁰ MsSRO Box 48 DD/TD in several bundles also Boxes 42, 46 and 47.

⁵¹ MS NAL Letters to Spielmann, 86 PP 18: 27 letters, from 1897 to 1915 and MS NAL Letters to Spielmann, 86 PP 21: 4 letters 1903 to 1914. These are the letters to Sir Isidore Spielmann, "an energetic organizer of national and international art exhibitions and was one of the original founders of the National Art Collections Fund." [Codell, 1989: 146] Brother of Marion Harry Spielmann, one of the most prominent and powerful figures of the late Victorian art world, who was helping to shape Sir Isidore's tastes in Art. Marion Harry was editor of *The Magazine of Art* (1887-1904), critic of *The Graphic*, art editor for *Black and White*, which he helped to found, art critic of *The Daily Graphic*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *London Illustrated News*, *Westminster Gazette* *Morning Post*. He published essays on art education and museum administration in *Contemporary Review* and the *Figaro Illustré*. [Codell, 1989: 139]

⁵² Webb, Philip.

'House Account Book' . 1854-1900.

V&A NAL: ref 35 M 169.

'Note book of professional contacts with addresses and comments, and other notes, 1859-1912.'

V&A NAL: ref 35 M 170.

'Office expenses, 1884-1896.'

V&A NAL: ref 35 M 171.

'Certificate book for work in progress. 1889-1898.'

V&A NAL: ref 35 M 172.

'Summarized Accounts for six houses designed and supervised by Philip Webb, 1887-1897.'

V&A NAL: ref 35 M 173.

(continued...)

Manuscript Library- Columbia University Libraries New York⁵³ and the Archives of Gertrude Jekyll, at Berkeley University, California, USA. Mrs C. M. Floyd and Mr Robert Floyd, her son, kindly gave the author access to several original documents, including old photographs, concerning Great Chalfield Manor. The Spetchley House collection of Parsons's water-colours were all photographed by kind permission of the owner John Berkeley.⁵⁴ Dr Daniel's archive was consulted. He was Provost of Worcester College at the turn of the century; his papers are held in the Special Collection at Worcester College, Oxford.⁵⁵ Manuscript letters by Alfred Parsons, held at the Bodleian Library, were consulted.⁵⁶

The secondary sources of information are found principally in several brief biographies from various dictionaries. In general, they focus on the fact that Parsons was a clerk in a Post-office bank before he studied art. Most of them describe Parsons as a flower painter or as an illustrator. These articles rarely mention Parsons's landscape gardening career. The most important secondary source was Anne Helmreich's thesis: *Contested Grounds: Garden Painting and the Invention of a National Identity in England, 1880-1914*; it was helpful in establishing the framework for the present thesis. Helmreich uses the broader theoretical framework of cultural hegemony.⁵⁷ The present author inserts her own observations on Parsons's life and work in the cultural context of the turn of the century.

Several interviews were done with various descendants of Alfred Parsons. The late Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe was kind enough to receive the author for an interview about art and landscape gardening. This was one of the most memorable moments of this research.

⁵² (...continued)

'Letters from Philip Webb to Sir Sydney Cockerell 1891-1915'

V&A NAL: ref 86TT15

'Letters from P. Webb to William Morris & others 1884-1896'

V&A NAL: ref 86TT13, 14, 16

'Letters from P. Webb to G. P. Boyce.'

B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45354 f 237-239

'Letters to Members of the Morris family, vol V'

B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45342 f 1-181

'Letters to Members of the Morris family, vol IX'

B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45346 f 139

⁵³ *Harper's Contract Books*; v. 2-6 1867-1889

⁵⁴ See the water-colour paintings of Ellen Willmott's gardens in Chapter Three on page 158.

⁵⁵ W.C.A. MS 328; LRA 6.4-8. 'A collection of letters to and from members of the Daniel family, incl. letters from J. H. A. Murray and Walter Pater.'

PATER, Walter. W. C. A. MS 325; YC 4.32 'Letter to Mrs Daniel.' about printing of *An Imaginary Portrait*. Undated April-June 1894. Presented by Mrs J. Kirkman Aug. 1962

PATER, Walter. W. C. A. MS 286; YC 4.32 'Letter to Mrs Daniel.' (? 1894) Presented by C. H. Wilkinson, Oct. 1959.'

⁵⁶ For example a letter bequeathed by Mr Percy Noble in 1937. [MS Don e 85 Dated Nov. 13 1911]

⁵⁷ Northwestern University, Chicago, 1994

Jay Appleton, in conversation with the present author, provided a good and informative discussion on his book *The Experience of Landscape*.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter Two describes the evolution of the concept of landscape-painters practising landscape gardening. To preserve the chronological flow of the description of Parsons's life and work, Chapter Three and Four are much longer than the others. Chapter Four begins in 1897, a year conveniently chosen as a turning point, when Parsons moved from illustration to landscape gardening.⁵⁸ Both these activities complemented his life's main activity: landscape painting. Chapter Five sets out the case studies. Chapter Six concludes the thesis.

⁵⁸ The present author, considering Parsons's life and work, had to take decisions on how to categorize his activities. When an area of interest started to dominate his work, a date was chosen. For example, he started designing gardens in 1884, but it is not until 1897, after he becomes ARA, on January 14th, that he is commissioned to design Sunningdale Park for Major Joicey. [Ms SRO 12 Aug 1897 1/7] This is the year his landscape gardening career really took off. As proof of this assertion, a second letter: When starting Wightwick Manor landscape gardening commission, Parsons sent Mander to visit "Joicey for practical design." [Parsons to Partridge. Ms SRO July 19 1897 bundle 1/7]

2 LANDSCAPE-PAINTERS AS LANDSCAPE-GARDENERS

Summary of this chapter:

This chapter aims to follow the evolution of the concept of landscape-painters practising landscape gardening so as to explain how Parsons linked himself to this long tradition. It answers the following queries:

First query: In the gardening and landscape literature in England since 1700, was there a tradition of favouring painters as landscape-gardeners? Yes there is.

Since the time of William Kent, 1685-1748, a tradition in landscape gardening literature has considered painters to be those best placed to create aesthetically pleasing landscapes and gardens.¹ At the beginning of the eighteenth century landscape-gardeners and painters were generalists who often were knowledgeable about architecture and literature as well. Their gardens, made for the aristocracy, were the status symbols *par excellence* in England. The tradition was unchanged through the eighteenth century. The answer to this query starts in section 2.3 of this chapter.²

Second query: Was there a break in that tradition?

During the Victorian Age, landscaping and gardening were influenced by internationalism, a new interest in science and new technologies. Specialization of knowledge was about to arrive. The professions only began to differentiate themselves at the beginning of the nineteenth century.³ The rise of the middle classes, and the popularisation of knowledge by means of various publications and books, modified attitudes to the older practice of ‘landskip improvement’.⁴ Even if John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) was to write against the ‘bad’ influence of these publications, his own *Gardener’s Magazine* joined the list in 1826, followed

¹ Before Kent, gardens were mainly formal. It is only with the natural style implemented by Kent that the concept of ‘landscape gardening’ as such began.

² See The Tradition of ‘Landscape-painters as Landscape-gardeners’ on page 26.

³ “Pupillage, established in the mid-eighteenth century, had become the most common but by no means the only form of architectural training by the end of the century. Its importance was maintained throughout the nineteenth century, though its form, conditions and length were never universally defined.” [Crinson and Lubbock 1994: 44]

“The Industrial Revolution had led to the involvement of industrialists and men of commerce in town government, and the middle class (...) Architects now [1830s] dealt not with patrons but with committees. Their status and interests needed some protection.” [Ryder and Silver 1970: 25]

The RIBA was founded in “1834, the culmination of a series of societies that had been established in the previous forty years to advance the interests of architects. These included the Architects’ Club (1791), the London Architectural Society (1806), the Architectural Society (1831), as well as the informal get-togethers between leading London architects such as Taylor and Chambers.” [Crinson and Lubbock 1994: 41]

⁴ For a discussion of this term see page 28.

by *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* in 1838.⁵ Numerous middle-class owners of the ever-growing new villas succumbed to this DIY⁶ promotion.⁷ Several builders, surveyors, horticulturists or estate managers planned gardens. Architect-builders who did not paint, like Sedding, Blomfield and Mawson, wrote about the new concept of landscape architecture. Throughout the Victorian era, a wider range of foreign plants made available was publicised through these magazines. Joseph Paxton (1803-1865), an English gardener and architect, had no training as an artist. He epitomized the best use of the latest technologies with his designs for the Crystal Palace and use of exotic plants at Chatsworth. Italianate architecture and scientific gardening encouraged a new formality in landscape. The extensive practice of the bedding system⁸ was the source of a widespread controversy. 'Landscape gardening' was still practised by only a few artists working for the landed gentry.⁹ The last two proponents of this nearly extinct tradition were William Sawrey Gilpin (1762-1843) and William Andrews Nesfield (1793-1881). But only two artists, against an army of non-painter landscape-gardeners, were not enough to maintain the reputed tradition of landscape gardening done by "true artists" alive in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ The answer to this query starts in section 2.4 of this chapter.¹¹

Third query: Was there a lament over the break in that tradition?

A reaction against all three influences (internationalism, scientific interests and new

⁵ It seems obvious that Loudon hoped his writings would educate the self-made landscape-gardeners.

⁶ DIY: abbreviation British: do-it-yourself. [*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1991]

⁷ This term was rightly chosen by Piebenga: see [Piebenga 1995: 209]

⁸ Technique of growing exotic plants under glass during the winter and transplanting them outside in the late spring weather. Usually consists of very bright flowers planted in geometric patterns.

⁹ It is not the aim of this research to make an inventory of all the gardens and all the landscape-gardeners of the period. The computerized inventory of historic parks and gardens of the United Kingdom presently under way at The University of York will eventually provide more information for researchers.

¹⁰ See the discussion of the true artist on page 64.

¹¹ See 'A Break in the Tradition' on page 45.

technology) emerged.¹² Sir Walter Scott,¹³ John Ruskin¹⁴ and William Morris¹⁵ were the forerunners of this reaction. Another influential critic, contemporary with William Robinson, was Forbes Watson¹⁶ with his book *Flowers and Gardens*, published in 1872.

Controversies are common in the history of gardens. A majority of Victorian gardens were judged as ‘inartistic’ according to some critics. A lengthy controversy appeared in several magazines from the 1870s until around 1900: it was the battle of the formal garden (often seen as ugly) versus the natural garden (often seen as artistic). This dispute was never resolved, both styles of gardens being created abundantly. One of the evils identified by the critics was to be found amongst the ‘designers’ themselves. Who was most qualified to design gardens?

¹² Mitchell, 1988: 430

¹³ Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), born in Edinburgh, writer to the signet, a clerk in the Secretary of State’s office, called to the bar in 1792. Partner in James Ballantyne & Co, booksellers. He was a prolific writer of poetry, novels, dramatic works and criticism. His large and imposing monument is a well-known landmark along Princes Street in Edinburgh. It was designed by George Kemp (1795-1844) the sculptor, who won the second competition for it.

¹⁴ John Ruskin (1819-1900) was one of the greatest figures of the Victorian age. A poet, artist and critic, he was also a social revolutionary [according to Hanson] who challenged the moral foundation of nineteenth-century Britain. For example, he founded the Guild of St. George for workers in Sheffield and wrote *Fors Clavigera, Praeterita, Unto this Last*. A pioneering conservationist, Ruskin clearly understood the damage that man was causing to the natural environment. [Hanson 1995: 5] Between 1873-1884, he exhibited some landscapes at the RA seventeen times and five times at the Institute of Oil Painters, but he did not really consider himself to be an artist. Ruskin’s first publications were for *Loudon’s Magazine*. He also contributed articles to William Robinson’s publications. In the conclusion to his first volume of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin wrote: “They [the young artists] should go to nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her labouriously and trustingly, having no other thought but how best to penetrate her meaning; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing.” [as quoted in Staley 1973: 18]. Although addressing only beginners, his influence was tremendously important to the Pre-Raphaelite painters who took these words quite literally, avoiding all forms of impressionism in their style. Ruskin’s defence of Turner did not seem to influence them. (Joseph Mallord William Turner 1775-1851, was the greatest of English Romantic and colourist landscape-painters. He anticipated and inspired the Impressionists, and even the abstract artists. [Osborne 1992: ‘Turner’]) Ruskin’s fortune was dispersed chiefly to philanthropic causes, before his death.

¹⁵ “William Morris (1834-96) was an English poet, merchant, artist, craftsman, decorator, medievalist, printer and social reformer. He believed that architecture was connected with all the other arts as a “tangible expression of all...order” [Mackail 1899, vo.1: 78] (...) Morris’s emphasis on the need for artists to contribute their talents to the ‘useful arts’ helped to stimulate the Arts and Crafts movement.” [Placzek 1982: ‘Morris, William’] The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, established by Morris, will be discussed in Chapter Three, on page 124.

¹⁶ Forbes Watson (1840-1869), a Ruskinian doctor, was “trained in the accuracy of scientific observation and endowed with a true perception of beauty” [*The Garden*, ‘Books.- Flowers and Gardens’ August 3, 1901: 86]. He wrote this one book during the last days of his short life. Quite influential, it was first published in 1872 and reprinted in 1901. Canon Henry Nicholson Ellacombe wrote the preface to the second edition. Canon Ellacombe (1822-1916) was even more influential. [*The Garden*, ‘Henry Nicholson Ellacombe. A book on the venerable canon and his famous garden’ January 17, 1920: 32].

Bitton, the Canon’s garden, was evoked as a model by William Robinson. [Elliott 1986: 152]. He was a propagandist for the Horticultural Vernacular, and had written *Plant-lore and Garden-craft of Shakespeare* (three editions). See the chapter ‘The Horticultural Vernacular’ in [Elliott 1986: 230], for more on the subject.

William Robinson¹⁷ was a leading critic. He orchestrated the lament over the break in the tradition of artists doing landscape gardening.¹⁸ Around 1870, Robinson began to deplore the lack of artistic sense in several gardens he had visited. He dismissed the new fashion, favoured by architects of formal gardening, like Blomfield, Mawson or Sedding. He criticized the poor knowledge of plants shown by these new ‘landscape architects’, even dismissing the new term ‘landscape architect’. He insisted that the artist, closely observing nature and thus learning about nature, was in the best position to judge the beauty of a garden.¹⁹ Through his writings, he encouraged people to recognize the artist’s eye as the best judge of the quality of gardens, and consequently the best to create gardens.²⁰ But not every artist was acceptable. Even Robinson’s obituary of the artist William Nesfield was to include criticism of his formal work. Robinson favoured the natural garden rather than the formal one, and he favoured artists in sympathy with the ‘picturesque’ rather than those in sympathy with the strict geometric style, be it gardenesque geometric or formal gardens.²¹ The referenced answer to this query starts

¹⁷ “William Robinson (1838-1935) greatest [according to Allan] of English gardeners and author of *The English Flower Garden*, the most widely read gardening book ever written.” [Allan 1982. Description on the book jacket]. See the section ‘William Robinson: art, illustration & horticulture’ on page 109.

¹⁸ See Robinson, 1892: *Garden Design and Architects’ Gardens. Two reviews, illustrated, to show, by actual examples from British Gardens, that clipping and aligning trees to make them ‘harmonize’ with architecture is barbarous, needless, and inartistic.* Robinson reviews Blomfield’s *The Formal Garden in England* and Mawson’s *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, two books on garden design written by architects. “The two reactionary books recently published contribute nothing to the art: “Formal Garden” and “Garden Craft” just costly ugliness.” Robinson writes that when designing a garden you sometimes have to ignore the house, the latter being sometimes so badly built. Contrary to Blomfield who argues that house and garden, both formal, should be cut off from its surroundings by “a good High wall”, Robinson argues that it depends on the situation. He then definitely contradicts Blomfield’s belief that uncultivated Nature is beautiful, even the Natural woods needs to be planned and well kept, “there is no Nature absolute free hand”. Robinson goes on “There are as yet no effective means of teaching the true art of landscape gardening - this delightful English art” and “Here and there a man of keen sympathy with Nature does good work” but engineers and surveyors have a training that makes them unfit “for the study of the elements of beautiful landscape. Thus we do not often see good examples of picturesque garden and park design, while bad work is common.” He finishes his preface by giving Clouds as a good example. “As regards the best new houses, Clouds, so well built by Mr Philip Webb, is not any the worse for its picturesque surroundings, which do not meet the architect’s senseless craving for order and balance.” [Robinson, 1892: vii to xiii] The present author strongly believes that Alfred Parsons was commissioned to design Clouds’ garden against Philip Webb’s wishes. See p. 168.

¹⁹ To design gardens, it was the artist knowledgeable about nature (horticulture) that he favoured, not the few impressionist artists seen in England in the eighties. Robinson also personally really enjoyed painters like Corot or Henry Moon who had a touch of impressionism in their style.

²⁰ Robinson was arguing that the training of artists who closely observed nature developed their eye, neglecting to acknowledge the innate genius of the artist, born with a sense of composition superseding the abilities of other landscape-gardeners.

²¹ “The Wild Garden does not take the place of the Flower-garden. After the central error above shown there comes a common one of these writers, of supposing that those who seek natural form and beauty in the garden and home-landscape are opposed to the necessary level spaces about a house. I wrote the ‘Wild Garden’ to save,
(continued...)

in section 2.5 of this chapter.²²

Fourth query: Why is there a need for a better study of Parsons's life and work?

It is in this context that Alfred Parsons started his landscape gardening career. In several short biographies, Parsons is described mainly as a flower painter and as an illustrator. In a recent thesis, Parsons is described as being mainly a garden-painter. Both these views of Parsons's career are limited. There is no biography of Parsons in existence.

There is a need for a better study of Parsons's life and work that would bring together several facts for the first time. Robinson took a big step in directly encouraging Parsons to become a landscape-gardener around 1894. That aspect of Parsons's career has yet to be revealed. According to Robinson, Parsons could design beautiful gardens because of his training as an artist and horticulturist. This study reveals what the author believes to be a step towards a more realistic view of the man. It places Parsons in the cultural context of turn-of-the-century England. In Chapters Three and Four, Alfred Parsons's life and work are presented and analysed. His work as a landscape-gardener at Welbeck and Battledene is presented and discussed in Chapter Five. Welbeck because of its importance as a catalyst to the development of his career and Battledene, although highly regarded by its creators, as an example of a garden lost through neglect and ignorance of its cultural value. As the reader goes through these three chapters he or she will learn why there is a need for more study of Parsons's life and work.

²¹ (...continued)

not to destroy, the flower-garden; to show that we could have all the joy of spring in orchard, meadow or wood, lawn or grove, and to save the true flower-garden near the house from being torn up twice a year to effect what is called spring and summer 'bedding'." [Robinson, 1906: 5]

²² See 'Lament over the Break: the Formal against the Natural' on page 60.

2.1 PARSONS AS DESCRIBED IN PRIMARY SOURCES

Through the middle years and into the latter years, from 1890 to 1914, art journals and periodicals in Britain and America discussed and critically reviewed Parsons as a professional artist. In several brief biographies, Alfred Parsons is described mainly as a flower painter and as an illustrator. The title of Parsons's obituary in *The Times* was: 'Death of Mr. Parsons, R.A.. Painter of Flowers and Gardens'.²³ According to the author of this thesis, it should have been: 'Death of Mr. Parsons, R.A., Landscape-painter and landscape-gardener.'

ARTICLES ABOUT PARSONS

However *The Studio* did not limit itself to the illustration of fine arts only for it called itself 'An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Arts'. It was a magazine that had little time for theories, for it was not written for intellectuals. It was a show-case designed for artists to display what they had done; it did not attempt to tell them what they ought be doing.²⁴

Country Life unlike *The Studio* never had large sales abroad and so has had little influence outside Britain. However, in the British Isles it has probably been the most influential magazine concerned with the arts ever published. Ironically this is because the paper has never concerned itself solely with the arts but, as its title suggests, with all aspects of country life.²⁵

Contemporary critics of Alfred Parsons (1890 to 1914) had a view closer to the reality of his profession as a landscape artist, much more than the 'garden-painter', the main description still use by critics in the 1990s.

Parsons had his first solo exhibition at the Fine Art Society (FAS) in 1885: drawings of landscapes along Shakespeare's river. In 1887, he won the Chantrey Bequest. Several brief reviews described him as a conservative painter of pastorals. Serious published articles about Parsons seem to begin with the long article by Henry James in 1889: 'Our artists in Europe' in which he describes Parsons as a painter of the bucolic. This article was about the painters of the Broadway Group, who will be discussed in Chapter Three. Published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, it had tremendous influence.²⁶

The following year 'A Bend of the Avon' by Alfred Parsons was reproduced on half a page of *The Art Journal* in 1890. Then, in 1891, came the second large solo exhibition by Parsons at The Fine Art Society, 'Gardens and Orchards', for which Henry James wrote the Prefatory notes.

²³ *The Times*. London, 21 Jan 1920: 15

²⁴ Gradidge, 1980: 24

²⁵ Gradidge, 1980: 26

²⁶ See an extract of this article focussing on Alfred Parsons in the appendices on page 421.

The English love of flowers is mighty; it is the most unanimous protest against the greyness of some of the conditions, and it should receive justice from those who accuse the race of taking its pleasure too sadly. A good garden is an organized revel, and there is no country in which there are so many.²⁷

As argued by Helmreich, Marcus Huish, the manager, was the initiator of the theme. Before then, Parsons had exhibited in several venues, and landscapes were the predominant theme.²⁸

Three years after the first article by James, Harry Quilter, in his book *Preferences in Art, Life, and Literature*, in the section 'Art at the Royal Academy - Traditions and changes', linked Parsons to the race of English landscapists of the first half of the nineteenth century.

For much of the hopeless diversity of aim amongst our painters Mr. Ruskin is in one way responsible, for he headed the revolt from tradition to nature, and many of those who either adopted or were influenced by his teaching, have stuck fast in the clutches of a dull realism which is as far removed from great landscape art as if it were the most conventional of methods. The race of English landscapists which during the first half of the present century seemed to promise such great things has died out; we have no one living in this branch of art who is equal to Turner, Linnell, David Cox, De Wint, or even Samuel Palmer, most limited and most delightful of painters. Indeed, we can hardly be said to have a living landscapist at all. The most sincere landscape artists living are M. Hook, Mr. Alfred Hunt, Mr. Albert Goodwin, Mr. Thomas Collier, and Mr. Aumonier. (1)

(1) Mr. Hine (the elder), Mr. Alfred Parsons, and, at his best, Mr. Wimperis should be added to the above list of painters, of whom *one only* (Mr. Hook) *is a member of the Academy!*

In the same chapter he then discusses the Royal Academy exhibitions, year by year, and mentions Parsons in 1879 for his painting 'Ending of Summer' "[a] good careful landscape, and marked by a suggestion of poetry and thought".²⁹ Although not a member of the Royal Academy, Parsons is mentioned as being a 'landscape artist', not a garden painter.

Also in 1892, Frank D. Millet reviewed his work in an American magazine, *The Book Buyer*. As Millet was one of Parsons's closest friends (as was James) it is probably a biased view of the painter, but he did know Alfred Parsons better than a remote critic. He wrote:

Keenly appreciative of the charms of literature, and a diligent and judicious reader, he counts among his friends most of the prominent literary men in England and America. Few men have ever illustrated more intelligently than Mr. Parsons, for few artists have had such true appreciation of the quality of literary work, and his work appeals not only to the artist, but to the public and to the specialist. The general recognition and warm admiration of his work by gardeners and botanists must be as grateful to Mr. Parsons as it is rare to any painter, and his popularity among them adds new lustre to the honors [sic] he has

²⁷ James, 1891: 5

²⁸ See the section 'Parsons at Different London Galleries and Societies' in the appendices on page 376.

²⁹ Quilter, 1892: 334

received at the hands of his fellow artists. *F. D. Millet*.³⁰

In 1893, *The Gardener's Chronicle* described him as a floral and landscape artist.

2.2 PARSONS AS DESCRIBED IN SECONDARY SOURCES

In a very recent criticism of the painting *When Nature Painted all Things Gay*, McConkey depicts it as an example of the 'Edwardian Arcadia'. It is clear that the art of Parsons had links with the Greek revival world of *Daphnis and Chloe*. His pastorals were part of the phenomenon whereby the new middle classes were establishing links with a long painting tradition, attributing these idyllic views of an English countryside to what they believed to be a continuum: the numerous views of English landscapes painted since the sixteenth century. They incarnated the landscapes of the Aesthetic Movement, being merely 'beautiful' with no reference to the difficulties of agriculture and obliterating the signs of industrial squalor.

Alfred Parsons, working on *When Nature Painted all Things Gay*, 1887, (fig 34 and full page coloured illustration page i) alongside his friend John Singer Sargent as he painted *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, was unaffected by radical tendencies. In this work Bastien-Lepage's exhausted haymaker has produced an indolent son with Holman Hunt's *Hireling Shepherd*. He inhabits an Arcadia reminiscent of that lovingly portrayed by Helen Allingham and Myles Birket Foster. His blossoming orchard England is less rigorously structured than that of Clausen's *Shepherdess*, a work already acquired by Mr Maddocks for his Bradford villa. Parsons produced a sophisticated compromise acceptable to the Chantrey Bequest. He was, nevertheless, a modern painter who stayed well clear of Impressionism; although he illustrated Fontainebleau for a series of articles by Robert Louis Stevenson³¹, *Bredon on the Avon*, one of his Academy-pieces of 1912, typifies his entire production. The synthesis achieved in *When Nature painted all things gay* was highly significant and Parsons was unable to escape its inevitable consequences. The painting's title concealed the fact that the setting was derived from the fields around Broadway in Worcestershire, a prosperous area of fruit cultivation which had been protected from the sweeping changes affecting British agriculture elsewhere. However, for the viewer these literal truths were less important than the general effect of a day in spring, somewhere in England. It was this rediscovery of a cottage-orchard England which held the popular imagination through the Edwardian years. Its most salient expression was found in the poet-laureate Alfred Austin's *Haunts of Ancient Peace*, 1908.³²

The present author agrees that 'Bredon on the Avon' typifies Parsons's landscape paintings. It is a pure landscape painting similar to the ones he regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy.

³⁰ Millet, 1892: 'Alfred Parsons'. *The Book Buyer. A summary of American and Foreign Literature*. Vol. IX Feb. 1892: 5-6 and portrait. It is worth mentioning that this magazine was published by Scribner's Sons in New York and that Edwin Abbey was a contributor to *Scribner's*.

³¹ The discussion of his first illustrated article on 'Fontainebleau' is in section 3.3.2.3 on page ?.

³² 'Edwardian Arcadia' in [McConkey, 1995: 74] There is a discussion of McConkey's description in the conclusion on page 342.



McConkey's text will be discussed in the conclusion.

In 1994, Anne Linden Helmreich submitted her thesis *Contested Grounds: Garden Painting and the Invention of National Identity in England, 1880-1914*, to Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In this recent thesis, Parsons is described mainly as a garden painter who contributed to the invention of the new nationalistic genre of 'garden painting'. The present author disagrees for two main reasons. First Parsons was far from being a 'garden painter'. He was primarily a 'landscape-painter'. Secondly, the English garden painting genre was not 'invented'. The painting subjects were adapted to a smaller size of gardens, different in character from those depicted since the seventeenth century. Parsons was definitely linking himself to a long-standing tradition of landscape painting. The present author agrees with Helmreich that a nationalistic framework was superimposed on garden paintings at the turn of the century. But the present author disagrees with other aspects of her thesis not immediately relevant to the flow of the present argument but important enough to figure in the appendices.³³

All traditions are human made. We pick and choose, adapt or create them according to our needs. Tradition is the past living in the present. The positive side of traditions is that under 'normal' conditions, they assure the cohesion necessary for human beings to live in harmony in a society. In 'abnormal' conditions, they can lead to fascism, wars and mass murder. Parsons was not inventing a tradition of garden painting (as implied by Helmreich) and even if he was, it was not harmful to English society at the turn of the century.

"Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), when consulted about laying out the grounds at Blenheim, recommended to the Duke of Malborough to advise with a landscape-painter upon that subject, as the most competent judge." - Sir Walter Scott.³⁴

³³ Read the present author's analysis of Helmreich's thesis in the appendices on page 431.

³⁴ Scott, 1878:779, first published in 1828.

2.3 THE TRADITION OF 'LANDSCAPE-PAINTERS AS LANDSCAPE-GARDENERS'

The previous section showed that primary and secondary sources have yielded incomplete descriptions of Parsons's work. Before completing the description, mainly in Chapters Three and Four, the following three sections will set the background for the landscape-painter Alfred Parsons to do landscape gardening. They will follow a broad chronological sequence, mentioning key figures in relation to the main argument. This section discusses how key garden makers of the seventeenth century were also capable at drawing and painting. To create a landscape scene that would look good in a picture was seen by many writers on landscape gardening to be a worthy objective.³⁵

The story of gardening in England goes back to Roman times. Medieval and Renaissance gardens in England had been in the formal style. Gardening had been one of the leisure activities of the rich and mighty for several centuries. Gardens were an important component of the display of good taste by Royalty or the Church. Their creators were either botanists, 'gardeners' or architects, and at that time an architect was often an artist. These various gentlemen were generalists, wealthy, from the upper classes and privately educated.³⁶ Before any school system was established in England, they were well read in literature and philosophy, to which some added the knowledge of mathematics, music, art and architecture.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, a man of taste showing interest in landscape gardening would add this speciality to his general education, which usually also included drawing and painting. John Evelyn (1620-1705) who wrote *Elysium Britannicum*, a massive work in the 1650s, illustrated it himself with sepia ink drawings³⁷.

³⁵ See Table on page 44, for a list of the garden makers or writers discussed in this section.

³⁶ Gentlemen: not necessarily men of gentle birth, but men of superior position in society, often men of money and leisure. [*Oxford Dictionary*]

³⁷ "John Evelyn (1620-1705), English virtuoso, garden designer, writer and translator of gardening books. In 1642 he undertook an extended tour of Italy, France and Germany, recording extensively in his diary the state of the arts and especially that of gardening. (...) his prolific writing on many branches of art was more important and influential in changing the taste of the nation." [Jellicoe et al, 1991: 18D-81]. See <http://www.bl.uk/exhibition/evelyn/archive.html> for more on John Evelyn archives kept at the British Library. The front-page of this Webb Site reproduces one of Evelyn's drawings. See Raphael Sandra: John Evelyn's *Elysium Britannicum* in *The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, 1977, vol.102: 455-461 where John Evelyn's own drawing of tools for the garden is reproduced. It a sepia ink drawing the appearance of which reminds the present author of the type of sketches Leonardo da Vinci used to make. The manuscript of the *Elysium Britannicum* is at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Another example of such a man of taste is the French architect Le Nôtre³⁸ who ‘showed a taste for painting’³⁹. Because of his wide influence, he is well remembered in English history. Le Nôtre’s designs became models for the next generation of English landscape-gardeners. There were attempts in 1662 and again in 1698 to persuade André Le Nôtre to cross the Channel, these attempts failed but a number of French gardeners were attracted to England beginning with André Mollet who was made Royal Gardener at St. James’s in 1661.⁴⁰

John James was responsible for the vast influence of Le Nôtre on early eighteenth-century gardeners. His translation of Dezallier D’Argenville’s *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* is largely illustrated by plans and figures inspired by Le Nôtre. In total 37 large plates illustrate the book. The book does not state directly that one must be an artist to design gardens, but it relies heavily on an ability to draw, to help design a pleasure garden. The author Dezallier D’Argenville motivates his reader, the Master of a House, by promising a knowledge that would either free the reader from commissioning tradesmen or generate the respect of his gardeners. One chapter, “On the Manner of Tracing Out All Sorts of Designs Upon the Ground” stresses the need for the reader to draw on paper and on the ground.

I suppose in the first place, that this Person has considered and understood all the short practices in the first Chapter of this second Part, and that he has tried and drawn them out one after the other upon the Ground.⁴¹

To include several examples here, of Le Nôtre’s influence would require too much space, but it is interesting to note that as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century George Devey (1820-1886), an eminent and established country house architect, who was trained as a painter with John Sell Cotman and James Duffield Harding, probably used Le Nôtre’s drawings as a source of inspiration for Ascott House in Buckinghamshire.

... while he made Ascott into a free Tudor rural palace he retained painterly instincts, and

³⁸ André Le Nôtre (1613-1700) was first the leading garden designer under Louis XIV. He is also known as an architect. In the sixteenth century, architects were trained through apprenticeship to a master builder/architect. From a family of gardeners, André Le Nôtre was first apprenticed to the painter Simon Vouet, where the painter Le Brun was a fellow student. He then became apprentice to the French architect François Mansart (1598-1666). “The young student set up a most friendly relationship, which was an undoubted influence upon André’s career as designer of the parks and gardens of Versailles. [Guiffrey, 1986: 4]

³⁹ “André soon showed a pronounced taste for painting; he even studied at the atelier of the most famous artist of the period, Simon Vouet where he also met Charles LeBrun. The young students set up a most friendly relationship, which was undoubtedly an influence upon Andre’s career as designer of the parks and gardens of Versailles.” Page 4 of *The Great Artists Their life-their work. André LeNotre (1613-1700)* by Jules Guiffrey with translation and annotations by George Booth. The Book Guild, Lewes, Sussex, 1986, 89 pages. Original work in French published by Renouard, Paris, 1913.

⁴⁰ Jellicoe et al , 1986: 165

⁴¹ D’Argenville:128

modest ones, in this layout for the garden.⁴²

A loose sheet of designs for the treillage pavilions for which Devey used the grandest of French inspirations probably from Le Nôtre and other early eighteenth-century sources.⁴³

In the 1880s the aging Devey was a hero and inspiration to young Arts and Crafts architects and his work at Penhurst, and perhaps Ascott, was studied and admired by Antony Salvin, Richard Norman Shaw, William Eden Nesfield and Charles Voysey.⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that the word 'landskip' was first introduced into the English language just a few years before 'landscape', around 1596. But above all, 'landscape' was originally a painters' term. Landscape gardening was said to be "the art of laying out grounds so as to produce the effect of natural scenery." (1602)⁴⁵. One of its early meanings was 'a background of scenery in a portrait or figure-painting' (1676). Early English designers of the seventeenth century added garden design to their other interests.⁴⁶ In *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*⁴⁷, John Evelyn (1620-1706) is described as an English virtuoso, garden designer⁴⁸, writer, and translator of gardening books; George London (d. 1714) as being an English garden designer, his partner Henry Wise (1653-1738) as a master-gardener.⁴⁹ John Rose (1629-77) is called an English gardener, John James (1672-1746), an English architect and translator and Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) an English writer and garden designer. But as explained earlier, their education made them generalists first, and painting was usually part of that education. In this list the present author has not found proof for a specific knowledge of painting for Evelyn to Switzer, but John James obviously could draw.

⁴² Brown, 1989:108

⁴³ Brown, 1989:108

⁴⁴ Brown, 1989:109

⁴⁵ *Short Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933 reprinted in 1956.

⁴⁶ This term 'landscape gardening' would be replaced by 'landscape architecture' in the Victorian period. 'Landscape architecture' seems to have been used first by Gilbert Meason, a friend and travelling companion of Sir Walter Scott, in his book *On the Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters of Italy* (1828), and was subsequently taken up by Olmsted and Vaux for their plan of Central Park, New York, in 1858. This term was not appreciated by Sir Walter Scott who preferred 'improvers or layers out of ground'. (...) The profession of landscape architecture was formally established in Britain on 11 Dec. 1929, just 30 years after its American equivalent, with Thomas Mawson as president. [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 322-24]

⁴⁷ [Jellicoe et. al. 1991]

⁴⁸ This modern term, used by Jellicoe et. al, means landskip gardener, place maker, landscape-gardener or even landscape architect. For the evolution of the term, semiological research needs to be done.

⁴⁹ London and Wise were horticulturists who ran a nursery at Brompton Park in 1688. They condensed Evelyn's translation of *The Compleat Gard'ner* by La Quintinie (1693) in which in the fourth chapter 'How to make choices of a good gard'ner' they wrote: "The applicant should also be asked whether he can write or draw."

At least two main tendencies regarding the makers of gardens in the eighteenth century are identifiable: the first favouring gardeners, the second favouring farming artists. The following text exemplifies them.

William Kent⁵⁰ is reputed as being the first gentleman⁵¹ to practise the art of landscape gardening.⁵² In other words the concept of landscape gardening as a liberal profession was initiated by William Kent. Horace Walpole⁵³ said of him “he was a painter, an architect, and the father of modern gardening. (...) In the last [character he was] an original, and the inventor of an art that realizes painting, and improves nature.” Kent received encouragement from Lord Burlington and from Alexander Pope (1688-1744). “Pope’s dictum that ‘all gardening is landscape painting’ was one which Kent made his own, freeing garden design from the last traces of formality⁵⁴, and in doing so, creating three-dimensional pictures in which woodland and lawn, water and the contrast of light and shade, were his media.” “A new taste in gardening arose after Mr. Kent’s notion of gardening, viz, to lay them out, and work without either level or line.” These were the words of Sir Thomas Robinson of Rokeby, writing to the Earl of Carlisle in 1734; and he added: “this method of gardening is the more agreeable, as when finished, it has the appearance of beautiful nature, and without being told, one would

⁵⁰ “Kent, William (1685-1748) English landscape designer and architect, began his working life as an apprentice coach-painter in Hull. (...) Kent’s studies in Italy had given him a wide knowledge of the paintings of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa, and from these he had undoubtedly absorbed a feeling for the picturesque scene.” [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 310] “Kent emerged as architect and landscape-gardener in about 1730. (...) Kent is indivisible as architect and landscape-gardener, for architecture was a powerful persuasion in his landscapes. His genius as a landscape-gardener is unquestioned. He was one of the first to create the archetypal Arcadian garden in which the temple is one of the most important elements.” [Placzek 1982: 561]

⁵¹ “Kent was not a gentleman by birth. His talents attracted attention, and three patrons enabled him to travel to Italy. He was then introduced to the 3rd Earl of Burlington making his first grand tour with him. He attained a superior position in society, which brought him income and leisure, two of the characteristics of ‘gentlemen’.” [Jellicoe et. al. 1991, 310 and *Oxford Dict.*: ‘gentleman’]

⁵² [Osborne 1992: 623] Kent was the first to concentrate on the profession of landscape gardening. Although he was an artist, according to Robert Adam, Kent was no good as a painter! “In a letter to his brother James on 26 November 1756, Adam stated: ‘I have a greater ease in drawing and disposing of trees and ruins pictures [quely?] which (the architect and painter) Kent was not quite master of, as all his trees are perpendicular and stiff and his ruins good for nothing’.” [Robert Adam, quoted in descriptive note for item no.88, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Exhibition September 1993]

⁵³ Fourth Earl of Orford (1717-97)

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note how several writers, including William Robinson, will associate the artist with the more natural style of landscape gardening, forgetting how some artists, like Repton or Nesfield, could master the formal style better than the natural one. “Pictorial effects fascinated Pope in garden layouts. He was always striving for them ... chiefly as a result of his painting lessons from Charles Jervas. ‘All gardening is landscape painting’ he told Spence in 1734, ‘just like a landscape hung up.’ Pointing to some trees in his own garden in 1739 he observed ‘Those clumps of trees are like the groups in pictures’.” [Spence 1: 606-607 - *Joseph Spence, Observations, Anecdotes and Character of Books and Men*. James M. Osborne, Editor, 2 volumes, Oxford, 1966.]

imagine art had no part in the finishing.”⁵⁵ Kent’s ideas were widely disseminated and amateur gardeners applied them in their gardens⁵⁶. Philip Southcote (c.1699-1758) is one of them and for example he stated “tis all painting” (...) when writing about Wooburn Farm, the first ferme ornée (his own creation).⁵⁷

Thomas Whately⁵⁸ is an eighteenth-century figure who took the gardener’s side (i.e. Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown’s side). Whately and Brown believed that the gardener was most qualified to design gardens. Whately expressed at least two ideas relevant to this thesis. In his book *Observations on Modern Gardening* he wrote: “[Gardening] is as superior to landskip painting, as a reality to a representation”.⁵⁹ Whately, like his predecessors Kent and Pope, compared landscape gardening to landscape painting, but he had a different view. He found gardening superior as a liberal art. The second idea was developed in his chapter ‘Of Picturesque Beauty.’ Since landscape painting was limited in representation by its dimensions and by the medium used, ‘faint’ representations created a different impression from that which their subjects made in nature.⁶⁰ Whately concluded that paintings can be a good source of inspiration, but they are not models to be faithfully copied in the garden.⁶¹ In his book, the gardener was the hero.

⁵⁵ Jellicoe et. al., 1991: 310

⁵⁶ For example “Charles Hamilton of Painshill, Philip Southcote of Woburn Farm and Henry Hoare of Stourhead (...)” [Jellicoe et al, 1991:311]. “Both these gardens (Painshill and Stourhead), begun in the 1740s and developed with knowledge of each other over the next three decades, reflect the ideas and interests of the new enthusiasm for ‘nature’, for the ‘landscape’ and for ‘painting’, which had been elaborated as an alternative to the formality of the previous age. [Thacker, 1994:191]

⁵⁷ Thacker, 1994: 189

⁵⁸ Whately, Thomas. d. 1772. Was a politician and political manager for George Grenville, and later Under Secretary of State under Lord North; he was also the anonymous author of *Observations on Modern Gardening* published in 1770 (5th edition, 1793). (...) “he undoubtedly was a formative influence upon the development of the jardin anglais” [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 602]. This was the opposite to a jardin à la française, in the style of Le Nôtre, in France a natural garden.

⁵⁹ “Gardening, in the perfection to which it has been lately brought in England, is entitled to a place of considerable rank among the liberal arts. It is superior to landskip painting, as a reality to a representation: it is an exertion of fancy, a subject for taste; and being released now from the restraints of regularity, and enlarged beyond the purposes of domestic convenience, the most beautiful, the most simple, the most noble scenes of nature are all within its province.” (...) [Whately, 1770: 1]

⁶⁰ Whately 1770:153-157 and Hunt 1982 reprint of Whately 1770:146-9

⁶¹ “The works therefore of a great master, are fine exhibitions of nature, and an excellent school wherein to form a taste for beauty; but still their authority is not absolute; they must be used only as studies, not as models; for a picture and a scene in nature, though they agree in many, yet differ in some particulars, which must always be taken into consideration, before we can decide upon the circumstances which may be transferred from the one to the other.” [Hunt 1982 reprint of Whately 1770: 146-7].

Many more instances might be alleged to prove, that the subjects for a painter and a gardener are not always the same; some that are agreeable in the reality, lose their effect in the imitation; and others, at the least, have less merit in a scene than in a picture.⁶²

In contrast to Whately favouring the gardener, William Mason⁶³ promoted the artist's knowledge as being of greater importance. This was in the line of Pope and Kent. A follower of Kent, he set out his theories on landscape gardening in his long poem *The English Garden*, the first edition of which started to appear in 1772.⁶⁴ In his elegy to Kent, he links the painter's knowledge to the powers of the landscape-gardener:

Kent who felt
The pencil's power: but, fir'd by higher forms
Of Beauty, than that pencil knew to paint,
Work'd with the living hues that Nature lent,
And realiz'd his Landscapes.⁶⁵

In the general postscript to *The English Garden*, Mason describes the first book as:

containing the general Principles of the Art, which are shewn to be no other than those which constitute Beauty in the sister art of Landscape Painting.⁶⁶

In his commentary⁶⁷ to *The English Garden*, published as an integral part of the 1783 first complete edition of the poem (begun in 1767), Mr W. Burgh explains that Mason wants the reader to study the "works of the Painter", (...), "that by them we shall see the principles of the Art exemplified, and from the study of their practice, be enabled to correct our Taste, and extend our Fancy; (...) we may (then) bestow beauty upon the ordinary features of natural scenery."⁶⁸

It must not be forgotten that around 1765, during the years when William Mason was

⁶² Whately, 1770: 156-157

⁶³ Mason, William. 1725-1797. Was a Yorkshire clergyman, poet and dramatist, amateur painter and musician, political activist, and gardener [Hunt, 1982: preface to Mason; Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 358]

⁶⁴ Like Pope, whom he quotes, he preferred that style of writing: "Verse, because precepts, so written, strike more strongly, and are retained more easily: Rhyme, because it expresses arguments of instructions more concisely than even prose itself." [Mason, 1882: 52] and [Mason, 1783: preface vi]
See the discussion on William Mason sense of mixture in using picturesque principles in [Robinson S. K., 1991: 6-7.]

⁶⁵ [Mason, 1778: 32] and [Mason, 1783: 23, line 510, Book I]

⁶⁶ Mason, Book 4 and Postscript 1781: 40

⁶⁷ "it (the commentary), was written, (...) and has been so fortunate as not only to receive the approbation, but actually now to appear before the world, under the sanction of the Author (W. Mason)" [comments by W. Burgh in Mason, 1783:122].

⁶⁸ Mason, 1783:145

See the discussion on William Mason's sense of mixture in using picturesque principles in [Robinson S. K., 1991: 6-7 'Mixture'].

writing his book, English painters got organized to exhibit their work in public. This increased visibility produced a plethora of literature discussing art at that time.⁶⁹

Mason was a contemporary of William Shenstone⁷⁰, who had written: “I think the landscape-painter is the gardener’s best designer”.⁷¹ In other words, Shenstone meant that the landscape-painter was the best designer to help the gardener. In the eighteenth century, the ‘gardener’ was often the gentleman owner turned amateur gardener.⁷² Shenstone added:

Gardeners may be divided into three sorts, the landskip gardiner, the parterre gardiner, and the kitchen gardiner, agreeably to our first division of gardens. / I have used the word landskip-gardiniers; because in pursuance of our present taste in gardening, every good painter of landskip appears to me the most proper designer.⁷³

The gardening of Kent⁷⁴ and Shenstone⁷⁵ and Mason⁷⁶ eventually came to be called

⁶⁹ They exhibited at The British Society of Artists, at Suffolk Street: “The arrival of the annual exhibitions [1760] marked a crucial watershed in the artistic production in Britain. Regular public exposure gave painters an unprecedented freedom to experiment, to take risks in the hopes of attracting attention and material support from an audience far larger and more diverse than the traditional elite of wealthy and cultured gentlefolk who had previously played so preponderant a role in the dispensation of knowledge” [Solkin 1993: 247].

⁷⁰ “One can regard Shenstone (1714-63), poet, essayist, and man of taste, as a typical artist of the first phase of the landscape movement.” [Tunnard 1948: 16]

“Shenstone divides gardening into three kinds, kitchen gardening, parterre gardening, and ‘lanskip, or picturesque’, and this third kind is the sort that he admires. Landscape gardening is in turn seen as having three main aspects: the ‘sublime’, the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘melancholy or pensive’. (...)Again Shenstone sums up contemporary thought by seeing landscape gardening as an extension of painting.(...)The paintings he would like landscape gardens to represent were indeed those of Claude or Rosa: varied natural scenes, made more interesting with signs of man’s nobler activities, such as a bridge, a farm, a ruin, an urn or a memorial.” [Thacker, 1979:200-202].

⁷¹ Mason was quoting from Shenstone’s *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening*. [Tunnard 1948: 18 (2nd edition)].

“I use the words landskip and prospect, the former as expressive of home scenes, the latter of distant images. Prospects should take in the blue distant hills; but never so remotely, that they be not distinguishable from clouds. Yet this mere extent is what the vulgar value. Landskip should contain variety enough to form a picture upon canvas; and this is no bad test, as I think the landskip painter is the gardener’s best designer. The eye requires a sort of ballance (sic) here; but no so as to encroach upon probable nature.” [*The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* ‘Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening’ Vol II i.e.: Shenstone, 1774: 129]

In the 1774 edition of this book, gardener is spelled “gardiner”. In the fifth edition of 1777, the word gardiner is replaced by ‘gardener’ on page 115. More research is needed in the sixteen editions and reprints of this book, between 1764 and 1779, all held at the British Library, to find out when exactly the word ‘gardiner’ became ‘gardener’.

⁷² “He [Kent] was of course an amateur, but then some of the most admired of landscape gardens, Hagley, Persfield, Stourhead and Paine’s Hill, were laid out or developed by amateurs, with the great Price and Knight leading the host of gentlemen turned gardeners.” [Tunnard, 1948: 16]

⁷³ Shenstone, 1777: 123-24

⁷⁴ “From 1712 until 1719 he (Kent) was in Italy studying painting.” In speaking of Kent’s introduction of the temple of the Sibyl: “the most frequently imitated ancient building in the landscape garden”, some daring versions deliberately built in a ruined state, Thacker adds: “much of this approval of old, rather than new, and of ruined rather than complete buildings comes from a wish to avoid the brash, authoritarian and worldly which

(continued...)

picturesque gardening, in imitation of Italian scenes.⁷⁷

William Mason had even closer links with picturesque attitudes. He was a friend of William Gilpin, and was responsible for the publication of his picturesque tours.⁷⁸ It was at Nuneham Park that Mason claimed he had brought both a 'Poet's Feeling and Painter's Eye' to his gardening art.⁷⁹

Mason translated Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica* (1783)⁸⁰. It was a treatise on painting in the form of a poem. The title was translated as *The Art of Painting*.⁸¹ Du Fresnoy's poem

⁷⁴ (...continued)

- the English thought - typified the formal gardens of France."

This attitude of Kent and his way of designing gardens as pictures makes his gardening picturesque: "Kent's training led him to see gardens not only in terms of Claudian landscapes, but as compositions of a three-dimensional yet essentially painterly kind, where the visitor proceeds from one 'landscape picture' into another, and so onwards through the garden." [Thacker, 1979:186-187].

⁷⁵ It was at his estate, The Leasowes, that Shenstone left his best picturesque work. "The Leasowes combined the attractions of Arcadia, The Vale of Tempe, Nymphidia, Claude Lorrain, Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator Rosa." [Humphreys 1937: 93]. It was there too that Shenstone pursued his quest of Sharawadgi: "Without pretending to exhaustiveness, it may be said that Sharawadgi, as understood in England, has three main ingredients. In the first place, it has no faith in mathematics and defies irregularity. In the second, it finds beauty in infinite variety. In the third, it treats natural material according to that material's own potential organic pattern." [Humphreys, 1937: 41]

"At Oxford in the 1730s, Shenstone imbibed the gardening ideas formulated by Addison and Pope, and put into practice by Pope, Southcote and Kent." [Thacker, 1979: 199]

"By allowing the land itself always to lead his work, William Shenstone created a landscape which has persisted for more than two hundred years since his death. " [Christopher Gallagher, 'The Leasowes: A History of the Landscape', in *The Journal of the Garden History Society*, Winter 1996, Vol.24, No. 2, pages 201-220: 214]

⁷⁶ "According to Gilpin himself, Mason had his own 'very picturesque ideas'. Mason felt that systematized landscape design had brought English gardening into disrepute and he advocated a return to the true principles first established by poets and painters." [M.L.B. (Mavis Batey) in Jellicoe et al, 1991: 358].

⁷⁷ Tunnard 1948: 35

⁷⁸ Gilpin, William (1724-1804), English clergyman and author, was the true pioneer of the picturesque. His essentially practical ideas were later developed into an abstract theory by Uvedale Price. His publications linked the enjoyment of pictures and the appreciation of scenery in his admirers' minds, so that people of sensibility, like Jane Austen's Tilneys in *Northanger Abbey*, were seen "viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing" and deciding on "its capability of being formed into pictures". [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 227]

⁷⁹ Mason felt that systematized landscape design had brought English gardening into disrepute and he advocated a return to the true principles first established by poets and painters. [Jellicoe et. al. 1991:358]

⁸⁰ Du Fresnoy, Charles Alphonse. Poet and Painter (1611-1665). Stayed two years in Rome and eighteen months in Venice. Copied Carracci for the Cardinal of Lyons. Famous for his poem on the art of painting. [Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers*. G.Bell and Sons. London, 1919.]

⁸¹ First written in Latin by Charles Du Fresnoy [The British Library catalogue incorrectly spells Dufresnoy in one word], with several quotes in Greek, the British Library holds twenty-two editions. Mason's translation into English was not the first one. Mr Dryden, had first translated it in 1695 (reprinted: 1716, 1750, 1769) and Mason, not happy with that work, decided to do better and in 1783 produced a new edition (1809, 1811, 1851). A Mr Wills translated it into English in 1754, but Mason does not mention it. These numerous editions shows

was written around 1650 and a century later, Mason spent several years of his life translating it into English. Du Fresnoy does not say in his poem that the painter must be the slave of 'Nature' but rather that nature is the source of inspiration that gives the artist the power to surpass it, in making perfect art.⁸² The Notes of 'M. Du Piles'⁸³ on that poem were also translated by Mason. About Nature as a source on inspiration, Roger de Piles wrote:

all the rules which this theory, or any other, teaches can be no more than teaching the art of seeing nature. The rules of Art are formed on the various works of those who have studied Nature the most successfully.⁸⁴

Roger de Piles was a prolific author who contributed to the immense respect literary people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had for painters. Roger de Piles would develop these ideas in a subsequent book, *L'idée du peintre parfait*, first published in 1706.⁸⁵

⁸¹ (...continued)

how *De Arte Graphica* was a very influential book; it was also translated into Dutch and German (1699) and went through six editions in the French version (1673, 1684, 1688, 1720, 1761, 1789).

⁸² Nor Yet to Nature such strict homage pay
As not to quit when Genius leads the way.
Yet more than these to Meditation's eyes
Great Nature's self redundantly supplies;
Her presence, best of Models! Is the Source
Whence Genius draws augmented power and force
Her precepts, best of Teachers! Give the powers,
Whence Art, by practice, to perfection soars [Mason, 1783(translating Du Fresnoy): [62] Line 765, the poem ending at 798]

⁸³ [Mason, 1783(translating Du Fresnoy)] on page 67 of his book, refers incorrectly to 'M. Du Piles'. He meant Roger de Piles (1635- 1709), the French painter, critic and 'man of taste'. He travelled to Italy and Holland. Roger de Piles was a pupil of Charles Du Fresnoy who introduced him to painting and art criticism: "Il [Roger de Piles] dut beaucoup à Charles du Fresnoy qui paraît avoir été son véritable initiateur, que développa son goût naturel pour la peinture et surtout pour la critique d'art, qui le forma, le dirigea et exerça sur lui une influence qui ne s'effaça jamais." [Mirot 1924: 32-33]. The present author is grateful to Dr Brent Elliott who made the connection between 'M. Du Piles' and 'Roger de Piles'.

⁸⁴ The study of Nature that will be so dear to John Ruskin almost two hundred years later. [Mason 1783 (translating Du Fresnoy): 116] Mason's 1783 volume is a translation of a 1650s book.

⁸⁵ The first separate edition of *L'idée du peintre parfait* appears in 1706. In 1699 and 1715 a *Traité du peintre parfait* is published together with *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*. In 1706 *L'idée du peintre parfait* is reprinted in *Conférences de l'académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* and in *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens [sic] peintres anciens et modernes*, both published by André Félibien. Two further separate editions of *L'idée du peintre parfait* were printed in 1707 and 1736. In all, there were seven different editions of this book from 1699 to 1736. Associating the concept of 'perfection' with the person of the 'painter' in this title certainly had a great influence on its readers. Literate English people, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, read Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish and English.

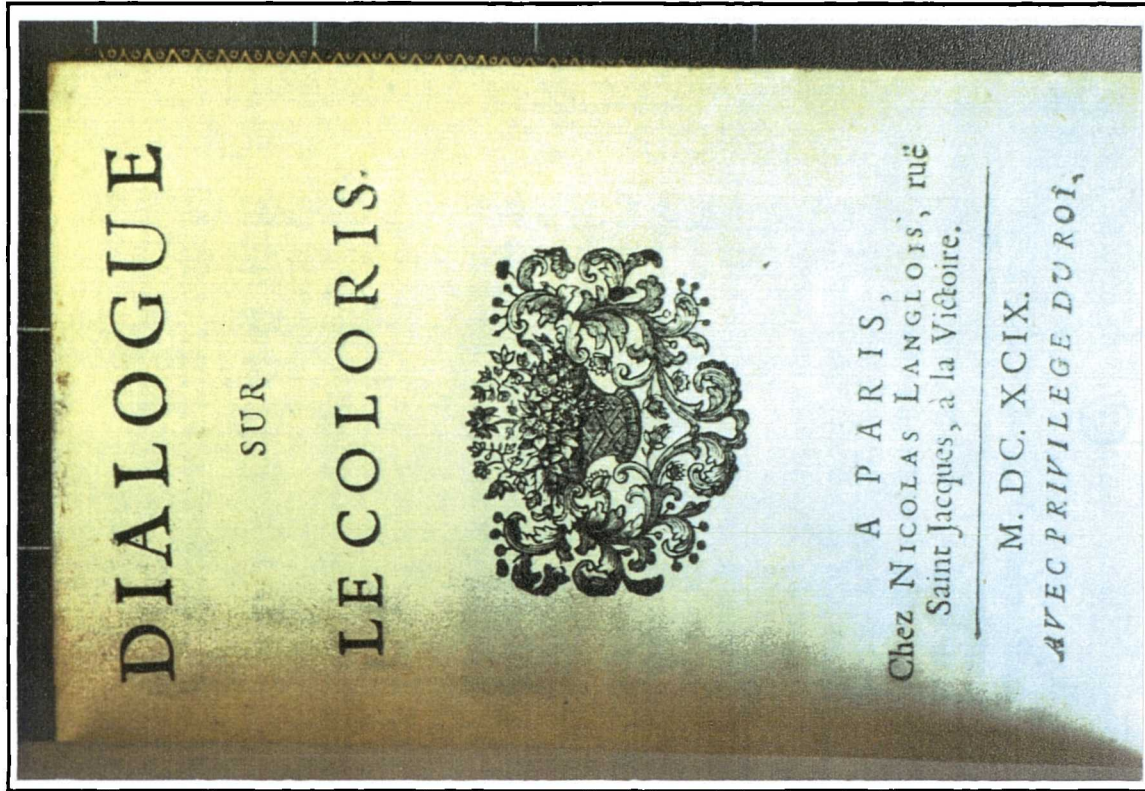
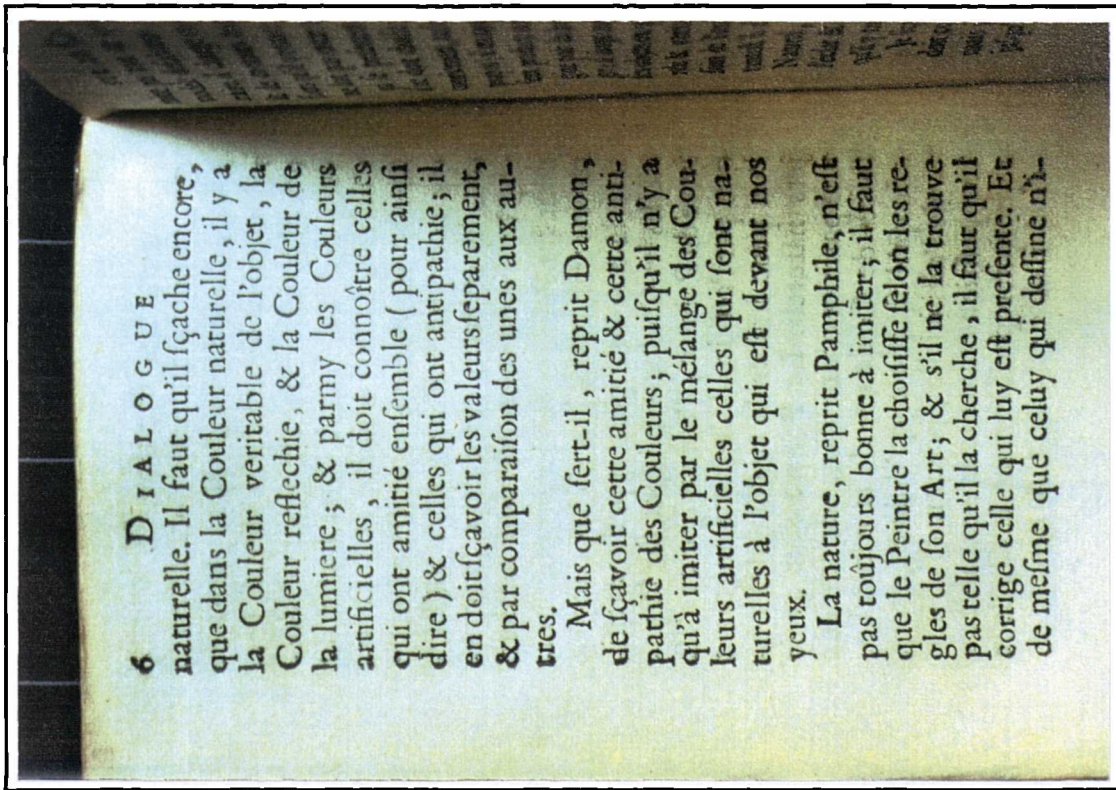
Figure 2 Title page from *Dialogue sur le Coloris*. [British Library]

Figure 3 "La nature, ..., n'est pas toujours bonne à imiter" [Roger de Piles, MDCXIX: 6]

He insisted that first of all, genius is needed if one is to become a perfect painter. He meant that innate artistic qualities were a prerequisite for further development of the acquired qualities of the artist. These acquired qualities included the lessons received from a close observation of nature.⁸⁶ In his own poem on landscape gardening, *The English Garden*, published in 1783, Mason was very explicit in his comparison of the painter's art with the landscape-gardener's art. The landscape-gardener used trees and plants just as the artist used colours on his canvas.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ It is important to leave the reader of this thesis with a clearer picture of the ideas of Roger de Piles. In his book *L'idée du peintre parfait*, de Piles writes "Le génie est la première chose que l'on doit supposer dans un peintre. C'est une partie qui ne peut s'acquérir ni par l'étude, ni par le travail; il faut qu'il soit grand pour répondre à l'étendue [sic] d'un Art qui renferme tant de connaissances, et qui exige beaucoup de tems [sic] et d'application pour les acquérir." [de Piles 1707: 3] ["Genius is the first thing one must expect in a painter. It cannot be acquired by studies nor by work; it must be great to respond to the vastness of an art encompassing so much knowledge and requiring so much time and dedication to acquire that knowledge": [the present author's translation]

Mrs Dodie Masterman, a former student at the Slade School of Art in London (1934-39) and a former teacher at Camberwell, wrote: "Actually 'observation' is not enough. The insight of brilliant individuals and the influence they have on how we see things is what MAKES FOR CHANGE. Experience in art teaching confirmed this view in all my experience at Camberwell. Students could look & look but helping to see what they were looking at was the activity that did the job of teaching. Revelation not looking was what was needed." [Masterman's hand-written notes on the draft of this chapter dated: 29 March 1996]

In 1699, Roger de Piles wrote *Dialogue sur le coloris*, translated into English by Le Clerc in 1673, 1684 and 1688.

⁸⁷ Of Nature's various scenes the Painter culls
 That for his fav'rite theme, where the fair whole
 Is broken into ample parts, and bold;
 Where to the eye three well-mark'd distances
 Spread their peculiar colouring. Vivid green,
 Warm brown, and black opaque the foreground bears
 Conspicuous; sober olive coldly marks
 The second distance; thence the third declines
 In softer blue, or, less'ning still, is lost
 In faintest purple. When thy taste is call'd
 To deck a scene where Nature's self presents
 All these distinct gradations, then rejoice
 As does the Painter, and like him apply
 Thy colours; plant thou on each separate part
 Its proper foliage. Chief, for there thy skill
 Has its chief scope, enrich with all the hues
 That flowers, that shrubs, that trees can yield, the sides
 Of that fair path, from whence our sight is led
 Gradual to view the whole. Where'er wind'st
 That path, take heed between the scene and eye,
 To vary and to mix thy chosen greens,
 Here for a while with cedar or with larch,
 That from the ground spread their close texture, hide
 The view entire. Then o'er some lowly tuft,
 Where rose and woodbine bloom, permit its charms
 To burst upon the fights; now thro' a copse
 Of beech, that rear their smooth and stately trunks,
 Admit it partially, and half exclude,

(continued...)

Like De Piles, Shenstone, Kent, Mason and Du Fresnoy all revered Nature as a splendid muse. They probably inspired Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown who created landscapes so natural that they could be confounded with Nature.

In his poem *The English Garden*, Mason praised, among others, his contemporary Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown,

From just posterity; Bards yet unborn
Shall pay to BROWN that tribute, fittest paid
In strains, the beauty of his scenes inspire.⁸⁸

In other words, Mason saw Brown⁸⁹, although not a painter by profession, as the leader of the powers of Nature. He was to be praised by the Muse, well before the birth of poets, who would be inspired by the beauty of his landscapes.⁹⁰

For thirty years from 1753 to 1783, Brown is said to have had no rival in the profession of ‘place maker’. He was responsible for smoothing out the English landscape with what was to be called the ‘landscape style’, erasing even more traces of the formality of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century gardens than Kent. Brown wanted his “English gardens to be exactly fit for the owner, the Poet and the Painter.”⁹¹ In the eighteenth century, ‘Art’ (poetry or painting) had never been very far from the preoccupations of any improver, place maker or landscape-gardener, and like taste, appreciation of it varied according to the degree of cultural development of the beholder. Brown’s credentials, coming from the gardening world rather than the art world, introduced what was to become a standard in landscape gardening in the mid nineteenth century. Brown was the first ‘gardener’ maker of places. With this statement the present author wishes to stress the fact that Brown was not a generalist like the other garden makers mentioned previously. He did not take part in a grand tour. He was from a

⁸⁷ (...continued)

And half reveal its graces: in this path,
How long foe’er the wanderer roves, each step
Shall wake fresh beauties; each short point present
A different picture, new, and yet the same. [Hunt, 1982, Mason: 9-11. Line 184 to 215]

⁸⁸ Mason, 1778: 33-34

⁸⁹ Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown (1716-1783) English landscape designer, generally known as ‘Capability’ from his references to the ‘capabilities’ of the places on which he was consulted. [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 455].

⁹⁰ Nigel Everett judges Mason’s positive appraisal of Brown as a clear Whig political statement: “Defending Brown’s work in the revolutionary 1790s, the Reverend William Mason sought to demonstrate its national values and constitutional validity: ‘Liberal thou Limited, restrain’d tho free, an emblem of pure legal liberty’. The principal theoreticians of Brown’s work in his own time were quite deliberate, however, in equating taste with the heightened display of property and the appropriation of nature to personal use.” [Everett, 1994: 39].

⁹¹ Jellicoe et. al., 1991: 77

yeoman family and was educated at the local school in Cambo.⁹² In a sense, he was challenging the tradition of ‘Painters-landscape-gardeners’, although his work was judged as better art because it was closer to nature.⁹³

A key figure of the period was to raise his voice for the return of ‘art’ into the profession of landscape gardening. Sir William Chambers⁹⁴, the architect, is remembered for his Dissertation and his garden designs at Kew. His book was translated into French in the year it was first published. Chambers proposed to his readers that the Chinese manner of gardening could be a solution to the inadequacy of garden styles prevailing in England at the end of the eighteenth century. In the preface to his book he wrote:

Amongst the decorative arts, there is none of which the influence is so extensive as that of Gardening. (...) the charms of cultivation are equally sensible to the ignorant and the sensible (...) Is it not singular then, that an Art with which a considerable part of our enjoyments is so universally connected, should have no regular professors in our quarter of the world? On the continent it is a collateral branch of the Architect’s employment, who, immersed in the study and avocations of his own profession, finds no leisure for other disquisitions : and, in this island, it is abandoned to kitchen gardeners, well skilled in the cultivation of salads but little acquainted with the principles of Ornamental Gardening. It cannot be expected that men, uneducated, and doomed by their condition to waste the vigour of life in hard labour, should ever go far in so refined, so difficult a pursuit. (...) In England (...) our gardens differ very little from common fields (...) It is I think obvious, that neither the artful nor the simple style of Gardening here mentioned, is right: (...) One manner is absurd, the other is insipid and vulgar: *a judicious mixture of art and nature* (italics by the present author), an extract of what is good in both manners, would certainly be more perfect than either.⁹⁵

A comment made by Nigel Everett after largely quoting from the preface to Sir William Chamber’s dissertation is relevant to the argument of this section:

Only someone familiar with all the polite arts [certainly not Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown who had a yeoman’s background], well travelled with considerable leisure, and able to

⁹² Plumptre, 1993: 64-68.

⁹³ “The painter’s conception of landscape having by this time [middle of eighteenth century] become widely known, it was beginning to be recognized by a few as slightly artificial, selected, and untrue; in fact, though it was undoubtedly good art, there was just a possibility that it might be bad nature. The artistic pedestal was being removed and the goddess set upon her own feet.” Tunnard’s way of introducing Brown. [Tunnard, 1948: 21]

⁹⁴ “Chambers, Sir William (1723-96), English architect, had visited China twice (1744 and 1748) at a time when there was a growing European vogue for Chinoiserie, (...) it was from Chambers that any real Chinese influence in England was derived. When Chambers published his famous Dissertation on Oriental Gardening (1772) (...) it was really a protest against the devastation and bareness of the Brownian landscape. His plea for the garden of varied form, texture, and toned colour, designed to awaken curiosity and to evoke contrasting sensations of pleasure, surprise, or alarm, anticipated the picturesque and aroused controversy lasting until modern times.” He laid out the Botanic Gardens at Kew including numerous structures. “Of those remaining today, the ten-storeyed Chinese pagoda (1761) and Roman ‘ruined’ triumphal arch are outstanding.” [Jellicoe et al, 1991: 105].

⁹⁵ Sir William Chambers *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*. W. Griffen, London, 1772: Preface: i -xi

converse with the owner of a place on relatively equal terms, in short a gentleman, and hope to be a worthy practitioner of landscape gardening.⁹⁶

Chambers's dissertation, a statement on the need for a style involving a mixture of formal and natural elements, was published in 1772, just eighteen years before Archibald Alison's⁹⁷ *Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, published in 1790. This essay was very influential and by 1825 was in its sixth edition. Basically, Alison's idea was that associations of ideas (Association Theory) were a key to the feeling of beauty produced on the viewer of scenery.

Alison went on to say that a "general principle" was needed for landscape, not the "mere assemblage of picturesque incidents", but "some decided expression, to which the meaning of the several parts may be referred to and which, by affording, as it were, the key of the scene, may lead us to feel from the whole of the composition that full and undisturbed emotion which we are prepared to indulge."

As Piebenga has accurately observed: "The eighteenth century liked to have its emotions sanctioned by philosophies and Alison's theory of association of ideas in viewing scenery provided the philosophical background to picturesque improvement."⁹⁸ Alison's essay was not a direct critique of the Brownian landscape but was clearly an appeal for a more 'philosophical landscape', rich in associations, that today would be labelled 'cultural associations'. A more direct critique of Brown's landscape style was to be made by Price and Knight.

Sir Uvedale Price⁹⁹ and Richard Payne Knight¹⁰⁰ were to argue vehemently against Brown's style. These two gentlemen were not professional landscape-gardeners as such; they were landowners and place-makers/improvers. Their writings were so important to the development of the profession that a brief mention of their work is necessary.¹⁰¹ They shared a common dislike of what they believed to be the impoverishment and disfigurement of the English

⁹⁶ Everett, 1994: 104

⁹⁷ Archibald Alison (1757-1839): "...writer on 'Taste'. Took orders in the Church of England. (...) From 1800 Minister of the Episcopal chapel, Cowgate, Edinburgh. His sermons published in 1814-15, were much admired. (...) The *Essay on 'Taste'* is in the polished style of Blair; (...) Alison's essays, though their psychology is out of fashion [in 1885] contain many happy illustrations, and may be still read with interest." [DNB, 1885]

⁹⁸ Piebenga, 1995: 122

⁹⁹ "Price, Sir Uvedale (1747-1829), Bt, English landowner and writer, is best known for his *Essays on the Picturesque* (1794-1801, repr. 1810)(...)" . [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 455].

¹⁰⁰ "Knight, Richard Payne, (1750-1824), English scholar, connoisseur and author (...) Like his friend Uvedale Price he deplored the landscape style of Brown and his school, which he attacked in his poem *The Landscape* (1794) (...)" [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 315]

¹⁰¹ For an excellent analysis of Price and Knight and the picturesque, consult Piebenga, 1995: Chapter Two.

countryside at the hands of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown¹⁰² and other professional designers, whom they accused of destroying “variety and connection, two qualities indispensable in the composition and arrangement of scenery”, as taught by the study of Dutch, French, or Italian landscape painting.¹⁰³ The fact that Brown was not an artist was one of the reasons for their campaign against him.

In his poem *The Landscape*, dedicated to Price, Knight also suggested that improvers should study paintings, observe the sources of picturesque beauty in Nature and reproduce these in their improved scenery. Addressing Nature he wrote:

Your native graces let the painter’s art,
And the planter’s skill, endeavour to impart;¹⁰⁴

An avid art-collector, Knight owned no fewer than 273 drawings by Claude, which he studied intently, and encouraged other landowners intent on building to study Claude and Poussin, in whose pictures classical and Gothic buildings were ‘naturalised’ in the landscape.¹⁰⁵

Though Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) thought that every landowner, as a gentleman of taste and discrimination, ought to be his own improver, he tried to find a landscape designer who would put his ideas into practice. He was looking for an artist landscape-gardener who was in agreement with his convictions.¹⁰⁶ Humphry Repton proved to be a disappointment to Sir Uvedale Price, but William Sawrey Gilpin was more receptive.¹⁰⁷

W. S. Gilpin, although not a genius in the art of watercolour, exhibited 85 landscapes at the Old Watercolour Society between 1800 and 1815¹⁰⁸. As an artist, he was entirely in sympathy

¹⁰² Brown’s landscape designs lacked in roughness, sudden variation and irregularity. “When Price identifies the three qualities of roughness, sudden variation and irregularity as the forces, or ‘causes’, that make a picturesque composition, he is only stating half the case. The Picturesque does not rely exclusively on these qualities but on their mixture into a composition that lacks them.” [Robinson, 1991: 5].

¹⁰³ Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 455

¹⁰⁴ Piebenga, 1995: 37

¹⁰⁵ Batey 1995: 7

¹⁰⁶ “Price strongly urged improvers to study Art and in particular landscape paintings, in order to develop an awareness of picturesque beauty and of the principles of painting. This is clearly reflected by the full title of his work which reads: *Essay on the Picturesque, as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful, and on the Vue of Studying Pictures, for the purpose of Improving Real Landscape.*” [Piebenga 1995: 34]

¹⁰⁷ See Piebenga, Sophieke. *William Sawrey Gilpin. (1762-1843) A review of his work as a landscape-gardener.* D Phil Thesis, University of York, Nov. 1995. 2 Volumes and ‘William Sawrey Gilpin (1762-1843): Picturesque Improver.’

¹⁰⁸ “It was the first exhibition in 1805 of the newly formed Society of Painters in Water-Colours (which Gilpin had helped to set up and of which he was elected first president), that allegedly exposed his mediocrity as an artist.” See Roget, 1891. [Piebenga, 1994: 176].

with Price's and Knight's picturesque theory¹⁰⁹ and he became one to integrate the picturesque style into his numerous landscape designs. According to Dr. Sophieke Piebenga, W.S. Gilpin called himself 'a picturesque improver' and was involved with the laying out of sixty gardens.¹¹⁰ Sharing ideas of the eighteenth century, he practised at the beginning of the nineteenth and began his landscape gardening career at the age of sixty.¹¹¹

If Humphry Repton (1752-1818), landscape-gardener and artist, proved to be a disappointment to Uvedale Price, it was the prettiness of his later style and his affiliation with Brown's landscape style that made him objectionable. Whereas he incarnated the 'artist-landscape-gardener' *par excellence*¹¹², he unfortunately (for Price and Knight) relied on exotics¹¹³ and highly artificial compositions near the house. According to Price and Knight, some of the use of exotics, in contrast with the picturesque principles, were, as exotics, not in harmony with the surrounding nature. Repton, announcing the next century's ideas, subjected his artist's eye to his practical gardener's knowledge. "Repton's system of landscape gardening embraced flexibility and amenity as well as picturesque principles which flourished and was practised all over the country."¹¹⁴ In *Sketches and Hints*, published in 1794, Repton made an important statement. It is easy to understand why J. C. Loudon edited Repton's work in 1840; the two men had a lot in common, and for both, gardening came ahead of aesthetics (but without rejecting aesthetics) :

I have adopted the term 'Landscape Gardening', as most proper, because the art can only be advanced and perfected by the united powers of the *landscape-painter* and the *practical gardener*'.¹¹⁵ The former must conceive a plan, which the latter may be able to execute; for though a painter may represent a beautiful landscape on his canvass, and even surpass

¹⁰⁹ "The picturesque, in spite of Price's recommendation that it should be detached from all reference to painting, never had had any other meaning than 'that which is pleasing to the eye, and may be expressed by the painter's art'. " [As quoted by [Piebenga 1995: 40] in Cheney 1855; 'A Review of Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque' by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder ed. (1842) in *Quarterly Review*, December 1855, 98, no. 195: 189-220]

¹¹⁰ "Gilpin's early career as a landscape-painter obviously made him eminently suitable for the job of landscape-gardener - hence Price's endorsement." [Piebenga, 1995: 180].

¹¹¹ A further discussion of him is to be found on page 54.

¹¹² He exhibited landscapes at the Royal Academy on fifteen occasions between 1787 and 1802. [Graves 1901: 231] Repton is still the first name that comes to mind when thinking of the landscape gardening profession. In Tom Stoppard's play, 'Arcadia', produced in 1995 in London, Repton shows his famous Red Book views, 'the before and the after' to stimulate his patrons to execute his landscape proposal.

¹¹³ Plants imported from warmer countries that need to grow in greenhouses during the winter.

¹¹⁴ Piebenga, 1995: 126

¹¹⁵ In italics in Repton's text, the author of the present thesis has added the quotation marks.

Nature by the combination of her choicest materials¹¹⁶, yet the luxuriant imagination of the painter must be subjected to the gardener's practical knowledge in planting, digging, and moving earth; that the simplest and readiest means of accomplishing each design may be suggested; since it is not by vast labour, or great expense, that Nature is generally to be improved.¹¹⁷

As shown in this section, from 1650 to around 1800, these key garden makers and key writers on garden making were mostly generalists who shared at least knowledge of drawing and often that of painting. They were gentlemen, 'familiar with all the polite arts'.¹¹⁸ As shown, several of them clearly wrote of their belief that knowledge of landscape painting was a great help in creating a more aesthetically pleasing landscape.¹¹⁹ The present author calls it a 'tradition' in garden literature of the eighteenth century. Kent, Pope, Chambers, Shenstone, Mason, the Gilpins, Price, Knight and Repton¹²⁰, from 1700 to 1800, continuously shared that belief, with various nuances. The present author agrees with Thacker that: "few landscape-painters of merit ever designed gardens"¹²¹, but the argument about the need to link artistic knowledge to garden making was very real. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the 'plebeian' gardener, and Thomas Whately, the politician who 'came close to the point of identifying taste with obvious possession'¹²², both Whigs according to Everett, were less inclined to favour the polite art of landscape painting. They were both at odds with the dominant attitude towards landscaping gardening in the eighteenth century, as expressed in that century's literature.

¹¹⁶ Direct allusion to Mason's poem cited ahead.

¹¹⁷ Loudon, 1969 (1840): 29

¹¹⁸ See the definition of a gentleman as quoted in Everett, 1994:2.

¹¹⁹ See the table on page 58, for a list of the garden makers or writers discussed in this section.

¹²⁰ The present author is aware of the quarrel between Repton and Price and Knight.

¹²¹ Thacker, 1994: 188

¹²² Everett, 1994: 39

However, they herald the break in this tradition which was to follow in the next century. It would no longer be a necessity to be a generalist (gentleman) maker of landscape gardens. Horticulturists came into force. As late as 1843, only W. S. Gilpin had survived the strong 'horticulturists winds' of change that came from 1800 to 1870. And following Repton¹²³, John Claudius Loudon in the nineteenth century placed horticulture and functionalism ahead of artistic considerations; he was the figurehead of the time.

¹²³ Mrs Dodie Masterman, an informed amateur on eighteenth-century paintings, disagrees in some respects with Repton's placing functionalism ahead of artistic considerations. As her opinion is of interest, her original text follows: "Was Loudon designing for use by more people in his gardens, parks etc and London squares? It is interesting that certain kinds of landscape design seem to belong to its own pattern of 'staffage' [accessory items in a painting. Esp. figures or animals in a landscape picture, *Oxford Concise Dictionary*]. Versailles needs stately crowds strolling on the terraces whereas a Repton park ('lonely parks of gentlemen' as described by Repton) best feature a distant sportsman with his dog. The idea was a tranquil uninhabited terrain as in Claude paintings with perhaps a small group plus goats. And so Loudon's gardens which suggest inhabitants have in common with Repton's treatment of the immediate precincts of the house a comfortable suitability for USE and ENJOYMENT of a participating kind, instead of being seen as a series of visions to be looked at. However, Repton did not relinquish the idea of the more distant terrain being a PICTURE TO LOOK AT. I suggest that to Repton horticulture & functionalism was acceptable near the house, but that he always saw the entire property as having to be treated as a series of uninhabited pictures, convenient, suitable perhaps but pictures." [Notes on the 29 March 1996 draft.]

Garden makers and writers promoting the artist doing landscapes : 1650 to 1850

Key Garden Makers and Key Writers :											Draughtman, Painter	Writer	Garden maker	Architect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influential on garden making from 1650 to 1850 • Sympathetic to artists doing landscapes, with nuances. 														
<i>(In italics: French men)</i>	1600	1625	1650	1675	1700	1725	1750	1775	1800	1825				
<i>Charles du Fresnoy</i>	1611		1665								•	•		
<i>André Le Nôtre</i>	1613				1700						•		•	•
John Evelyn	1620				1706						•	•	•	
<i>Roger de Piles</i>		1635			1709						•	•		
George London		circa			1714							•	•	
Charles Bridgeman			circa			1738					•		•	•
John Rose		1629		1677								•	•	
Henry Wise			1653			1738							•	
John James				1672		1746						•	•	
Stephen Switzer				1682		1745						•	•	
William Kent				1685		1748					•		•	•
Alexander Pope				1688		1744					•	•	•	
Thomas Whately				circa			1772					•		
Philip Southcote				1699			1758				•		•	
Sir William Chambers					1723			1796			•	•	•	
<i>First Academy of Painting and Drawing</i>					1711									
William Shenstone					1714		1763				•	•		
Lancelot 'Capability' Brown					1716			1783			•		•	•
William Gilpin					1724				1804		•	•		
William Mason						1725		1797			•	•		
Sir Uvedale Price						1747				1829		•	•	
Richard Payne Knight							1750		1824			•	•	
Humphry Repton							1752		1818		•	•	•	•
Archibald Alison							1757			1839		•	•	
William Sawry Gilpin							1762			1843	•	•	•	
Sir Walter Scott							1771			1832		•		

2.4 A BREAK IN THE TRADITION

From around 1820, the tradition of linking landscape painting to the making of what was thought to be truly aesthetic gardens was challenged. In garden literature more emphasis was now being placed on horticultural skills and preferences in garden design. Garden writers and makers definitely shifted from nature and painting towards botany. Although several garden makers showed skill in draughtsmanship and painting, the formal side of their garden designs would be judged as being less artistic than the natural and picturesque styles of the previous century.

Brent Elliott, in *Victorian Gardens*, titled the transition between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth: “From the picturesque to transcendentalism”. By transcendentalism he meant the accession to freedom of the creative genius of landscape-gardeners.¹²⁴ Creation replaced imitation.

John Claudius Loudon was at the forefront of transcendentalism.¹²⁵ He was an admirer of Repton and was attuned to the opportunities of his time. He was a Scottish author and designer who also exhibited landscapes at the Royal Academy, but on only five occasions between 1804 and 1817. Loudon did not deny the need to be a painter in order to be a landscape-gardener:

The easiest, and the most complete way, in my opinion, to get a practical knowledge of the art of landscape gardening, is, after a liberal education, first to acquire a tolerable knowledge of agriculture, gardening, botany and architecture, particularly gardening and botany. Secondly, to study the principles, and follow the practice of landscape painting. Then to read Price’s *Essays*, Knight’s *Poem*, D’Ermeonville’s *Essay* (sic), Gilpin’s *Works*, Shenstone’s *Remarks*, and several other books on this subject. Next, to visit, and to make sketches from the most romantic parts of the country. After this time, we may suppose the artist has acquired a just relish for nature, and a correct idea of the general principles of painting, combined with his practical knowledge of the materials of real landscape. Now (and not before, lest his taste should be vitiated) he may visit all the best improved places, to acquire a just notion of convenience in laying out a place. He may then be placed as an assistant to a landscape-gardener.¹²⁶

But as we see, Loudon strongly insisted on the necessity of knowing botany, gardening, and architecture:

¹²⁴ [Elliott 1986: 23] “Art is nature destroyed and re-constructed.(...) Taste is a faculty indolent and passive: genius is proud and free. The artist in destroying and improving matter advances toward the end of art, which is the triumph of human over physical nature.” [Elliott 1986: 25 quoting Cousin, 1848: 121-2, 128-9] Victor Cousin was a French eclectic philosopher, cited by Charles M’Intosh in 1838. M’Intosh was one of Loudon’s rivals.

¹²⁵ “J. C. Loudon, 1783-1843, (...) A. J. Downing wrote: ‘the most distinguished gardening author of the age.’ He was also a designer of parks and gardens but the chief reason for Loudon’s historical importance is undoubtedly the quality and volume of his literary output.” [Jellicoe et. al. 1991: 344]

¹²⁶ Loudon, 1804: 294-295

For the art of creating a real landscape depends not only on the knowledge of the principles of painting...¹²⁷

He identified himself as a 'landscape-gardener, etc.' on the front page of his 1804 publication: *Observations...*. The 'etc.' included the applied knowledge of botany.

The break in the tradition comes more from the emphasis that the 1800-1870 garden makers gave to botany in their gardens, all under the tremendous influence of Loudon's vast literary production.¹²⁸

With Loudon, the gardenesque style was born, and the picturesque progressively faded away.¹²⁹ The objective of the gardenesque was to allow each individual plant to develop its natural characteristics as fully as possible, in conditions only possible in 'gardens' (hence 'gardenesque'). It was intended to contrast with the 'picturesque' conditions loved by painters in which plants were often gnarled with age and limited each other's growth by competing for light and space.¹³⁰ Horticulturists and gardeners, who often collected exotics, were fond of the gardenesque style. But for others, their resultant designs were of scattered effect.¹³¹ Another aspect of Loudon's preaching was the need for artificiality in the art: the need to make a 'loud' artistic statement. In other words:

By the 1830s, whether derived from Loudon or from others, the notion was in the ascendant that the garden should display the unmistakable signs of artifice.¹³²

By 1843, Loudon noted that the most common method of laying out pleasure grounds, "whether on a small or large scale, is to adopt the Italian style immediately on the lawn front of the house; and, where this style terminates, to commence either with the picturesque or the gardenesque style".¹³³ Both styles, gardenesque and Italian, were highly artificial. They were

¹²⁷ Loudon, 1804: 209

¹²⁸ Everett, 1994:

¹²⁹ But even Loudon was talking of 'picturesque improvement', creating a scene that would look good in a picture. "By picturesque gardening is to be understood the production, in country residences, of that kind of scenery which, from its strongly-marked features, is considered as particularly suitable for being represented by painting." [Loudon 1850: 35]

Loudon never said that the painter was better placed to design a garden. He considered the artist's qualities as 25% of the qualifications required: "58. Picturesque imitation. - To design and execute a scene in either of these styles of imitative art, the artist would require to have, to a certain extent, the eye of a landscape-painter; the science of an architect and of a botanist; and the knowledge of a horticulturist." [Ibid: 37]

In this principle, Loudon uses the word artist in the sense of 'the one who does well', not in the sense of 'the painter'.

¹³⁰ First proposed by J. C. Loudon in the Dec. 1832 issue of the *Gardener's Magazine*. [Jellicoe et.al.1991: 211]

¹³¹ See discussion on page 60.

¹³² Elliott 1986: 32

¹³³ *GM*, 1843: 168. As quoted in [Piebenga 1995: 226]

‘creations’, not an imitation of nature. The gardenesque, with its exotics and its planting schemes; the Italian with its formal terraces, statuary and water works. For some critics, to be artificial was not artistic, while for others, now a majority, only ‘artificial art’ works were perceptible. For them, imitating nature was not art, only original creation was.

This dominant view of artificiality was the second reason for the changing ‘profession’¹³⁴ of landscaping. Another very successful and characteristic writer of the period was (James) Shirley Hibberd (1825-90), who produced some fifteen books on garden matters, many of them directed specifically to owners of smaller gardens.¹³⁵

He promoted mostly geometrical or symmetrical arrangements for the design of small suburban or town gardens. In the chapter entitled ‘The Pleasure Garden’, Hibberd writes:

It should be borne in mind by every cultivator of taste in gardening, that a garden is an *artificial* contrivance, it is not a piece scooped out of a wood, but in some sense a continuation of the house. Since it is a creation of art, not a patch of wild nature, so it should everywhere show the evidence of artistic taste (...). True nature is not to be shut out of the scene, but nature is to be robed, dressed, and beautified, and made to conform to our own ideas of form and colour, and while we delight in some amount of picturesqueness, we are to consider art¹³⁶ rather than nature as the basis of every arrangement.¹³⁷

If the aim was to produce artificial gardens or parts of gardens, the education of the majority of the ‘designers’ themselves could be different. Loudon had his convictions: by 1804, he was maintaining that the best way to become a landscape-gardener was to begin by studying the technical aspects such as agriculture, gardening, botany and architecture, before turning one’s attention to landscape painting.¹³⁸ Although emphasizing horticulture, Loudon did not denigrate the need for other knowledge.¹³⁹ For him, the picturesque style addressed itself only

¹³⁴ Landscape gardening was never to become an official profession, like landscape architecture in 1929 in Britain. See footnote on page 25.

¹³⁵ Thacker, 1994: 271

¹³⁶ Art is here understood as artifice.

¹³⁷ Hibberd, 1870: 279 (3rd ed.), as quoted in Thacker, 1994: 271 (Hibberd 1857: 330-1 (2nd ed.))

¹³⁸ [Loudon 1804: 294-295]. Besides studying landscape painting, Loudon advised the newcomer to read Price, Whately, William Gilpin, Shenstone etc. The next stage was to observe and sketch Nature and to visit some of the best landscaped sites, before signing on as an assistant to a practical landscape-gardener. Only then was one fully prepared to start off on one’s own. [Footnote 20 in Piebenga, 1995: 199]

¹³⁹ “No gardener, however, ought to be limited in his knowledge to one department; for even a moderate knowledge of landscape gardening will be of use to the garden cultivator; and a landscape-gardener without a knowledge of plant culture could never direct the execution of his plans.”

In *The Suburban Gardener*, Loudon was to state that, in general, it would be easier to make a good landscape-gardener out of a ‘garden cultivator’ than out of a landscape-painter [Loudon 1838: 151].

This distinction by Loudon between a garden cultivator and a landscape-gardener is a useful one, reflecting the

to lovers of scenery:

(...) and the gardenesque not only to the lovers of landscape scenery, but to the botanist and the gardener. The latter, therefore, embracing, as it does, more than one kind of beauty, stands higher in the scale of art than the former.¹⁴⁰

Loudon's book, *The Villa Gardener* was published in 1850, seven years after his death. It was a revision of *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* published in 1838. Loudon's widow had assembled her husband's writings. It included a long chapter of 'general principles which should be taken into consideration previously to laying out and planting a Villa Residence.'¹⁴¹ It was part of the formidable popularisation of knowledge of the mid-Victorian period.¹⁴² It followed the rise of the middle classes and advocated a self-landscape gardening approach. It was also part of the first steps towards feminism. 'Ladies' could now do it!¹⁴³

¹³⁹ (...continued)

difference between gardening as an art of cultivation on the one hand and landscape improvement on the other.

¹⁴⁰ Loudon, 1835: 612

¹⁴¹ Loudon, 1850: 6-43

¹⁴² "In 1826, in the introduction to his first issue of the *Gardener's Magazine*, Loudon explained that the art of landscape gardening had been on the decline since the beginning of the century, '[giving] way, first, to war and agriculture, and since the return of peace to horticulture'. [*GM* 1826: 5] 'It seems to be now almost forgotten', he wrote, 'that...landscape gardening, about a century ago, was as much the fashion as horticulture is at present'. [In 1840, introducing Repton's works on landscape gardening, Loudon ascribed this rise of gardening 'as an Art of Culture' (as opposed to gardening 'as an Art of Taste'), on 'the abundance of good and cheap book on subjects belonging to the former department, and the scarcity and high price of those treating of the latter' [Loudon 1840:v] Sir Henry Steuart's *The Planter's Guide* (1828) painted an even bleaker picture, referring to 'the present neglected state of Landscape Gardening as an art, with the diminished numbers of its professors, and the unmerited disregard in which their useful labours have been held, for the last five-and-twenty years'. [Steuart 1828b: 387-388] Like Sir Walter Scott, Steuart commented on the lack of 'educated' people studying landscape gardening; he could not name a single person in Scotland who 'has attained even ordinary proficiency in it'. [Steuart 1828b: 387] He explained:

'The opinion, now nearly universally prevalent, that Country Gentlemen are the best landscape-gardeners for their own places, has mainly contributed to produce this effect; and it [i.e. this opinion] is too flattering to their self-importance not to be highly relished, and to become universally popular among this class of men.'

In addition to this 'DIY-attitude' (which, incidentally, Steuart blamed on writers such as Walpole, Price and Scott), there was competition from more 'mechanical' men such as nurserymen and builders. 'If you want your land drained, or your kitchen garden laid out or improved, the professional person who undertakes it will probably offer his assistance to improve your Park; and he will to a certainty spoil your place, if you permit him', Steuart wrote.[Steuart 1828b: 387]

He pointed out the need for the services of a professional landscape-gardener instead. Much earlier, in his book *Country Residences* (1806), Loudon had already urged proprietors to employ picturesque improvers to assist them in laying out their grounds.[Loudon 1806: 631-632]

On that occasion, Loudon had also noted that few owners were actually doing so. It was in the same context that Loudon, repeating this call for professional advice in 1838, specifically mentioned Gilpin and Nesfield.' [Piebenga 1995: 209]

¹⁴³ "If we can succeed in rendering every lady her own landscape-gardener, which we are confident we can do, we shall have great hopes of effecting a general reform in the gardening taste, not only of this country, but of every other for which this work is calculated: and we intend it for circulation in the temperate climates of both hemispheres". [Loudon 1850: 4-5]

The evolution of landscape gardening was significant from 1800 to 1843 when Loudon died. He himself progressively came to agree with his wife that if the lady of the house became her own landscape-gardener, it would greatly improve the aesthetic of English gardens. Shirley Hibberd was also very influential in the evolution of the landscape gardening profession. His books could easily please feminine readers.¹⁴⁴

Loudon himself acknowledged the decline of the traditional landscape gardening profession. He believed that the lack of publications accounted for the lack of people practising it, not seeing that it had exactly the opposite effect. In 1812, he noted that nurserymen and builders were often employed in the laying out of grounds, as cheaper alternatives to the professional improver.¹⁴⁵

Foremost amongst these “builders” was John Buonarotti Papworth (1775-1847). Papworth suggested that most architects, at that time, possessed a certain knowledge of painting and landscape gardening, beside their building skills.¹⁴⁶

This phenomenon was observed at the very beginning of the eighteenth century. Art was of less importance in the apprenticeship of architects who were increasingly becoming builders, as construction technology evolved and required more of their time.¹⁴⁷ All of Loudon’s publications, be it the *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822), *The Gardener’s Magazine* (1826-1846), or *The Architectural Magazine* (1834), to name just a few, aimed at diffusing knowledge once held by a few privileged educated men. Gardens were for everyone, and there was no need to commission an artist. The owner of a villa had only to learn the artistic principles and apply them himself.

As Loudon was one of the numerous editors of gardening books and magazines, his popularizing attitude has to be admitted as one of the causes of the decline of the tradition of

¹⁴⁴ See the writings of Viscountess Wolseley, who started the School for Lady Gardeners, near Glyndebourne, at the turn of the century. In 1919, she wrote that “Briefly, the necessary qualifications [of the future garden designer] (and they apply to both men and women) are: 1. Sound health (...), 2. Talent for drawing and artistic work (...) being able to foresee ground alterations, 3. The most important point of all, (...) a superior education is essential.” [Wolseley, 1919: 267-8].

¹⁴⁵ Loudon, 1812: xi, as quoted in [Piebenga 1995: 197]. Curiously, Loudon helped to encourage that occurrence.

“Contrary to Loudon’s observation that ‘builders’ were cheaper to employ than professional improvers, J A Repton was charging twenty guineas a day in 1826, compared to Gilpin’s five guineas”. [Piebenga 1995: 201]

¹⁴⁶ Piebenga, 1995: 201

¹⁴⁷ This assumption originates in the author’s personal understanding of the evolution of the profession, knowing that by the end of the nineteenth century, steel structures were starting to appear (in commercial buildings).

commissioning artists to design a garden, even for the upper classes.¹⁴⁸ As already discussed, the second cause was Loudon's introduction of the gardenesque style. The third was the evolution of the professions themselves and the fourth, the number of 'DIY' books on the market. Underpinning this was the evolution of an English society with a tremendous population growth, with increasing needs to emulate the aristocracy still in power.¹⁴⁹

...in one crucial respect the examination of problems of class in the nineteenth century remains unaltered today [1970]: that is, despite the development in social mobility that has taken place, the element of inheritance in people's social position has not disappeared. (...) It was certainly true of Victorian society that men did not 'choose and create' their way of life, and were aware that they did not.¹⁵⁰

In the middle of the century politics was still 'to a remarkable extent the plaything of the nobility and gentry'.¹⁵¹

Eminent landscape-gardeners were very expensive for the middle classes, or to be more precise for the upper-middle class, so self-landscaping was a solution. (No demand, no landscape-gardeners.) The aristocracy was poorer and could not afford the extravagance of painters landscape-gardeners. The Napoleonic wars 1805-15, were a dry period for everyone. The present author assumes that self-landscaping in the 1830's came to light because of this general 'dryness'. There are economic reasons for the changing taste in the design of landscapes. The 'traditional landscape-gardener', as wished for in the 1820-1870 literature on landscape gardening, was not to be in great demand for the next fifty years. By 'traditional', the present author refers to the eighteenth-century 'generalist-gentlemen' makers of places.

There is a long list of non-painters practising landscape gardening before 1884, when Alfred Parsons started his career.¹⁵² Elliott mentions a number of these.¹⁵³ John Dobson (1787-1865) and Repton's son, John Adey Repton (1775-1860), were two architects by profession who

¹⁴⁸ See Piebenga, 1995: 195-235, for a very good analysis of the large number of publications on 'How to do landscape gardening', by several writers along with Loudon.

¹⁴⁹ "In the period between 1801 and 1891, the population of England and Wales increased by roughly 20 million. The rural population (living in places with less than 5,000 people) in this period increased from 6.6 to 9.2 million, and urban population from 2.3 to 19.8 million. Eighty per cent of the total increase went, therefore, to the towns. (...) The balance of urban to rural population in Britain was roughly equal at mid-century. By 1891 the ratio was roughly 21 million to 8 million for Great Britain as a whole. The highest percentage growth rates of the major cities tended to occur roughly between the 1820s and 1850s." [Ryder and Silver 1970: 32-3]

¹⁵⁰ Ryder and Silver, 1970: 62-3

¹⁵¹ Ryder and Silver, 1970: 64 quoting Clark, G. Kitson 1962. *The Making of Victorian England*. London: 206-14.

¹⁵² Consult the table on page 58.

¹⁵³ Elliott, 1986: passim

practised landscape gardening during Repton's time. Two other landscape-gardeners of the period who did not have painting in their background are Lewis Kennedy (1789- c.1840) and Joshua Major (c.1787-1866). Both had a nursery background. The fact that most of the early nineteenth century garden-makers were non-painters does not explain why they preferred a systematic and formal way of designing, putting formality ahead of free, artistic composition. Even William Andrew Nesfield, a painter, did so!

William Sawrey Gilpin¹⁵⁴ and Nesfield¹⁵⁵ were painters doing landscape gardening in the Victorian era. Nesfield was designing with a revival in formality but Gilpin was using the painter's eye rather than 'mechanical know-how'. Piebenga writes that when William Sawrey Gilpin started his professional career in 1820, the cultivation of plants was receiving more attention than landscape gardening.¹⁵⁶ In 1821, the *Quarterly Review* reported on "the extraordinary interest which [Horticulture] has of late excited, and the decided lead which it seems to have taken among the rural pursuits of the higher classes".¹⁵⁷ But this phenomenon continued throughout the Victorian era.

By practising the picturesque principles at a time when horticultural developments dominated the scene, Gilpin helped to ensure that the next generation did not lose sight of them. By use of his written work, *Practical Hints upon Landscape Gardening*, and by reference to his landscape practices, the mid-nineteenth century generation of authors and gardeners were able to study and apply the picturesque principles as advocated by Price in the late eighteenth century.¹⁵⁸

Gilpin was part of the first sign of the 'Merry England' revival that would become so strong at the turn of the century.

The *Quarterly Review* was a conservative journal, and expressed the views of those who blamed the ideals of Utilitarianism and laissez-faire for promoting a competitiveness and self-interest that was dividing men from one another. These opinions were not exclusive to traditionalists though, but together with notions of cities as anonymous and alienating, they became pervasive in the mid nineteenth century. Neighbourliness and old

¹⁵⁴ W. S. Gilpin (1762-1843) English landscape-gardener and writer, was the nephew and pupil of William Gilpin. Originally a teacher of drawing.

¹⁵⁵ See page 52 for a discussion of William Andrews Nesfield.

¹⁵⁶ Piebenga, 1995: 198

¹⁵⁷ [Piebenga, 1995: 198]

This development was reflected by the enormous amount of literature which appeared on the subject, such as Walter Nicol's *Villa Garden Directory, or monthly index of work...with hints on the treatment of shrubs and flowers* (1809) and Alexander Forbes's *Short Hints on Ornamental Gardening* (1820). In 1839, towards the end of Gilpin's career, Loudon was to remark on the fact that "there are a great many cheap books on gardening as an art of cultivation, (...) comparatively few on gardening as an art of design and taste". [*Gardeners Magazine* 1839: 714]. It was largely in order to redress this balance that Loudon re-issued the works of Repton in 1840. [Loudon, 1840:v]

¹⁵⁸ Piebenga, 1995: 234

communities were thought to have disappeared and connections between individuals to have broken down. Contemporaries of many different ideological persuasions looked back longingly to an agrarian past, thought of as 'Merry England', when institutions such as the manor or the village bound men together in relationships strengthened by mutual interests and affections.¹⁵⁹

William Andrews Nesfield's¹⁶⁰ (1793-1881) approach to landscape gardening was to be criticized by William Robinson. As mentioned in his obituary, probably written by Robinson, Nesfield had not chosen the right 'natural' approach to landscape gardening. Nesfield, although an artist, was not favoured by Robinson. It is the capacity of artists to love and improve Nature that Robinson wanted, not artificiality.

After leaving the army his taste for painting led him to become one of the earliest members of the old Water Colour Society, of which he was for 30 years an active exhibiting member, his contemporaries and friends being Turner, Copley Fielding, Cox, Prout, and Stanfield. Later, he took up landscape gardening as a profession, which his education as an engineer at Woolwich and his talent as an artist (as quoted in Ruskin's *Modern Painters*) well qualified him to fulfil. (...) He approached landscape gardening from the artificial side- not as one loving Nature so much that man's garden art should serve her, but rather that the geometry of a past age should form the foreground of what might be the fairest scenes in our garden land and dominate the whole landscape art, and a very artificial one, for its own sake rather than Nature in her wealth, simplicity, and dignity.¹⁶¹

Nesfield was under the influence of Loudon. And like his contemporaries practising in the Victorian age, either in the Italianate or the Gardenesque or high-Victorian styles, he relied more on architecture and horticulture than on painting for his effects.

Few traditionalists of this period, long before William Robinson, were trying to retain previous practices. But their opinions were strongly voiced. In 1828, four years before his

¹⁵⁹ Banham and Harris, 1984: 27

¹⁶⁰ "In this capacity he was constantly consulted in the improvements and alterations of the London parks and Kew Gardens. He planned the Horticultural Gardens at South Kensington and a number of other gardens, his work being mostly a revival of the Dutch and hard early geometrical style of a period when our garden treasures and tree flora were very poor, and when formalism in trees and gardens seemed to please by contrast, perhaps with the wildness of things around, at the time." [*The Garden*. 'Obituary - Mr. W. A. Nesfield' Vol XIX, March 12, 1881: 296. Probably by William Robinson.]

Nesfield was largely inspired by late seventeenth and early eighteenth century formal gardens, using coloured gravels to create *parterre de broderie à la Dezallier d'Argenville* (1680-1765).

¹⁶¹ [*The Garden*. 'Obituary - Mr. W. A. Nesfield' Vol XIX, March 12, 1881: 296.] Probably by William Robinson. In the 1880s Robinson was actively involved with the writings in *The Garden*. A contributor would often sign under a pseudonym or with his initials. Robinson would not identify his own texts. But there are exceptions to this rule. Robinson would sometimes sign W.R. The author of this thesis assumes that Robinson might have also used the pseudonym 'Justicia' to sign the first Leaflets. There are very good reasons for suspecting that this is the voice and the convictions of William Robinson. A pseudonym was a way for Robinson to make believe that several other writers shared his opinion. If he had signed everything, he would have been perceived as an author who tended to repeat himself: a driveller ('radoteux'). Most of *The Garden's* articles are signed by pseudonyms, initials or full names.

death, Sir Walter Scott¹⁶² strongly voiced his opinion in his review of Steuart's book *The Planter's Guide*.¹⁶³ Thackeray had defined Scott as a medievalist. Scott had promoted the idea of 'Merry England' in the Middle Ages.¹⁶⁴ Scott tried to steer away from the phrase *landscape gardening*, preferring to call its practitioners "improvers or layers out of ground".¹⁶⁵

He lamented:

[the] idea of its being...a variety of the gardening art, with which it has little or nothing to do, has given a mechanical turn to the whole profession, and certainly encouraged many persons to practise it, with no greater qualifications than ought to be found in a tolerable skilful gardener. This certainly, however intelligent and respectable the individuals may be, is not the sort of person, in point of taste and information, to whom we would wish to see the arrangement of great places entrusted. The degree of mechanical skill which they possess may render them adequate to the execution of plans arranged by men of more comprehensive abilities, better education, and a possession, as demanded by Price, of the knowledge connected with the higher branch of landscape painting, and with the works of the first masters.¹⁶⁶

Sir Walter Scott, favouring the traditional way of landscaping (understandably; he was of the older tradition himself) wrote:

Gardeners should concern themselves with matters of cultivation; it was people with 'more comprehensive abilities, better education, and a possession, as demanded by Price, of the knowledge connected with the higher branch of landscape painting, and the works of the first masters', to whom the arrangement of scenery should be entrusted.¹⁶⁷

He also said:

The importance of this art, in its more elegant branches, ranks so high in our opinion, that we would willingly see its profession (and certainly it contains persons worthy of such honour) more closely united with the fine arts than it can now be esteemed. (...) The rules of good taste, when once exemplified, are pretty sure to be followed.¹⁶⁸

This would have the effect of raising the landscape gardener status and salary who would

¹⁶² Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832): Scottish poet and novelist.

¹⁶³ Sir Henry Steuart (1759-1836), "whose transplanting machine and technique of moving large trees bare-rooted served as the model for many experiments during the next decades" [Elliott 1986: 19]

¹⁶⁴ "Scott's novels of the Middle Ages were essentially concerned with their history and covered subjects set in periods ranging from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. (...) Unlike later medievalists Scott did not sentimentalise the distant past. (...) This is not to say, of course, that Scott's representations were not highly romantic, nor the impulses behind the novels nostalgic and escapist, but that he presented the Middle Ages as robust rather than poetic." [Banham and Harris, 1984: 25]

¹⁶⁵ This information was found by Sophieke Piebenga. [Scott, 1828: 318-9]. For a subsequent reference to Scott's remarks see a later article in the *Quarterly Review* by Thomas James. [James 1842: 206].

¹⁶⁶ Scott, 1878: 318. See also Steuart, 1828b: 387 [Piebenga 1995: 209]

¹⁶⁷ Scott, 1878: 318-319. Piebenga mentions the 'DIY-attitude' lamented by Scott. [Piebenga 1995: 209]

¹⁶⁸ Scott, 1828: 780

“be entitled to demand from their employers a greater degree of fair play”.¹⁶⁹ Scott was really hoping for a major change in the style of gardening of the period; this was written in 1828:

A certain number of real landscapes, executed by men adequate to set the example of a new school, which shall reject the tame and pedantic rules of Kent and Browne, without affecting the grotesque or fantastic - who shall bring back more ornament into the garden, and introduce a bolder, wider, and more natural character into the park, will have the effect of awakening a general spirit of emulation.¹⁷⁰

Sir Walter Scott’s claim that “nothing is more completely the child of art than a garden”¹⁷¹ was certainly to inspire the lament over the break in the tradition of artists doing landscape gardening in the 1870s. In that respect, Scott was fifty years ahead of his time.

Another great critic of the period was John Ruskin. He did not limit himself to the criticism of the social system or the environmental problems caused by the industrial revolution. He was an advocate for the preservation of the English landscape.¹⁷² He even commented on the practice of gardening. In fact, his very first articles were published by Loudon.¹⁷³ Ruskin’s definition of a garden is eloquent. No greenhouse or hothouse had his favour:

Your garden is to enable you to obtain such knowledge of plants as you may best use in the country in which you live by communicating it to others; and teaching them to take pleasure in the green herb, given for meat, and the coloured flower given for joy. And your business is not to make the greenhouse or hothouse rejoice and blossom like a rose, but the wilderness and solitary place.¹⁷⁴

Other sources of Ruskin’s statements can be found, to demonstrate his real influence on the philosophy of gardening, for example: *The Architectural Magazine* of 1837-1838.

To Ruskin, speaking in 1837, a flower garden was an ugly thing, ‘an assembly of unfortunate beings, pampered and bloated above their natural size, stewed and heated into diseased growth;(…) He who has taken lessons from nature, who has observed the real purpose and operation of flowers (…) will never take away the beauty of their being to mix into meretricious glare.’¹⁷⁵

In August 1888, W. Simmonds admitted the direct influence on him of this observation:

¹⁶⁹ Scott, 1828: 780

¹⁷⁰ Scott 1828: 781

¹⁷¹ Scott, 1828:303

¹⁷² Trevelyan, 1979: 35 “ ‘Modern Painters II’ had been published in April 1846. An exceedingly pious work, a theme being that every form of beauty was in some way divine, it had that same eloquence and marvellous handling of words. The preservation of English Architecture and landscape, and the glories of Fra Angelico and Tintoretto were other main threads.” *Modern Painters* is Ruskin’s major written work.

¹⁷³ “His first published writings, however, were articles in Loudon’s *Magazine of Natural History* (1834).” [Harvey 1978: ‘Ruskin’]

¹⁷⁴ Hanson, 1995: 18

¹⁷⁵ [Ottewill 1989: 28; and footnote no. 8: 205: ‘J. Ruskin, The poetry of Architecture’, first published in *The Architectural Magazine* (1837-8)]. See Ruskin, 1903: Vol. 1: 156-7

In Loudon's *Architectural Magazine* of nearly fifty years ago there is a series of interesting articles on 'The Poetry of Architecture' by one 'Kata Phusin', whose name cannot conceal him from any intelligent reader of Ruskin. The passages quoted below occur in one of them, and forcibly express conclusions to which a very limited experience in gardening had led me just when I first saw them.¹⁷⁶

Simmonds then quoted a very long passage from which one can read:

But in laying out the garden which is to assist the effect of the building, we must observe and exclusively use the natural combination of flowers.

It reminds us of what would become Robinson's *leitmotiv* forty-five years later when he published *The Wild Garden*. Ruskin also insisted on a faithful observation of nature, acknowledged by Robinson in *The Garden* as early¹⁷⁷ as 1876:

In speaking in rather complimentary terms of a young artist's work, Mr. Ruskin made a remark to the effect that he would have to go through the Valley of Humiliation before reaching the Mountains of Beatitude. Hereupon the young artist wrote to Mr. Ruskin saying that he greatly valued the advice of so eminent a critic. (...) He told his correspondent to take a tumbler, place it bottom upwards, put half a dozen Cherries round this tumbler, and send him a water-colour sketch of this subject (...) [Ruskin criticized the artist's sketch and added] 'If you can't draw a Cherry, why do you presume to paint women's heads.'¹⁷⁸

It is interesting to note that Robinson printed this significant anecdote in a horticultural magazine. It shows how Ruskin's influence was infiltrating every sphere, and how Ruskin's close faithfulness to reality (nature) was to be assimilated by Robinson. Ruskin's philosophy was to have a tremendous influence on his century. It is tempting to assume that the nineteenth century rise of the social recognition of the artist had to do with Ruskin's masterpiece *Modern Painters* which included the section 'Lecture on Landscape', and with his numerous art reviews.¹⁷⁹

In the obituary of John Ruskin, signed by D. T. Fish, the essence of what Robinson took from the philosopher is mentioned:

How far the revival of gardening as a fine art and a revealer of natural beauty may be attributed to the works and life of John Ruskin, Mr. William Robinson, late of *The Garden*, can best tell us, and in doing so he may be able to lead us all yet higher and further upwards and onwards in gardens of richer beauty, more faultlessly formed by art,

¹⁷⁶ *The Garden*, 'Ruskin on Flower Gardens' Aug. 25, 1888: 181-2

¹⁷⁷ The first issue of the magazine *The Garden* was published in 1872.

¹⁷⁸ *The Garden*, 'Explaining it', Feb. 26 1876: 216

¹⁷⁹ Although not everyone approved of *Modern Painters*: "Separate what is really to be thought and said about art from false assumption, futile speculation, contradictory argument, crotchety views, and romantic rubbish, and ninety-nine hundredths of what Mr Ruskin writes, and half of what most write, with fall to the ground." ['Modern Painters' *The Quaterly Review*: Dec 1855, vol XCVIII: 384-433. J. G. Lockart was the editor of *The Quaterly Review* from 1853-60]

and richly and variously filled through the inexhaustible resources of Nature.¹⁸⁰

The following week, 'John Ruskin-An appreciation' was published on the first page of *The Garden*. As announced by D. T. Fish, the article, although not signed, is by Robinson. The care with which this appreciation is written shows how important Ruskin's teachings were in shaping William Robinson's philosophy of landscape gardening.¹⁸¹ Ruskin prepared the ground for Robinson to campaign for the return of the artist's eye to landscape gardening. For example in this quotation from Robinson, with emphasis added by the present author, Ruskin's principles are clear:

The gardener should follow the true artist, however modestly, in his love for things as they are, in delight in natural form and beauty of flower and tree, if we are to be free from barren geometry, and if our gardens are ever to be pictures.¹⁸²

The previous quotation is from William Robinson's chapter 'Art in Relation to Garden Design', a crucial part of *The English Flower Garden*, tremendously effective in explaining his philosophy. Parsons's illustrations for this chapter are maintained throughout the fifteen editions of the book.

William Morris was also greatly influenced by Ruskin, especially in the development of his ideas on architectural conservation. The romanticism found in Morris's writings and the profound nostalgia for an idealized past were to gain Robinson's sympathy. Robinson quotes Morris in *The Garden*.¹⁸³ An important Address to the students of the Birmingham Society of Arts School of Design, delivered by William Morris on 19 February 1879, was published in its entirety by Robinson. It shows how influential on Robinson Morris was. After all, *The Garden* was a publication about gardens, so Robinson felt that Morris's address had a bearing on the making of gardens. It had a Marxist basis and introduced some of the ideas later expressed in

¹⁸⁰ *The Garden*. 'Obituary- John Ruskin'. Jan. 27, 1900: 69-70

¹⁸¹ "Of all who have lived and worked throughout the length of the present century there is no one whose influence in matters relating to the fine arts has so thoroughly permeated all who read and think throughout the English-speaking world as this truly great man...who has most effectively encouraged us to endeavour so to see with our eyes and so to receive with our hearts that we may have a more worthy apprehension of the good gifts that are within the grasp of all: of the beauty of flower and leaf, of the sunny smile of peaceful pastoral land, the angry menace of the storm-cloud, the fearful majesty of mountain masses...the chief aim of Mr. Ruskin's teaching was to search out and make clear to us what in Nature was most wonderful and lovely, and what in the best of man's work was true and honest and good and beautiful." [*The Garden*. 'John Ruskin-An appreciation'. Feb. 3, 1900: 73]

¹⁸² Robinson, 1902: 7

¹⁸³ More research is needed on all of Robinson's magazines to find how often he quotes William Morris.

*News from Nowhere*¹⁸⁴, first published twelve years later, in March 1891. In this address, which corresponds to the main argument of this thesis, Morris contributes nostalgia for the past, of which the traditional ‘artists-landscape-gardeners’ were part, for example: “the little grey church that still so often makes the commonplace English landscape beautiful, and the little grey house that still, in some parts of the country at least, makes an English village a thing apart to be seen and pondered on by all who love romance and beauty.” And he continues “It is quite true, and very sad to say, that if anyone nowadays wants a piece of ordinary work done by gardener, carpenter, mason, dyer, weaver, smith, what you will, he will be a lucky rarity if he get it well done.”¹⁸⁵

Bringing back traditional values in all the crafts, as promoted by Morris, had a influence on the making of gardens during the period 1880-1910.¹⁸⁶ A craftsman was basically a true artist. In 1882, Morris was probably, like Robinson, influenced by Forbes Watson and Ruskin in their dislike of the artificiality of mid-nineteenth-century flower gardens.¹⁸⁷

The main idea was to communicate to the student of art the “seed of real art, the expression of man’s happiness in his labour - an art made by the people, and for the people, as a happiness of the maker and the user.” Not an art of luxury that existed on slavery. For William Robinson “a way of labouring with pleasure and passion” was to write about gardening. Was it that Robinson wanted his reader to find his own happiness in the making of gardens?

Let us look at how these writings influenced gardening at the turn of century.

¹⁸⁴ “It is not possible to understand Morris’s mediievally-oriented future utopia, as projected in a work such as *News from Nowhere* (first published in 1891), without realising that joyous labour is central to it. Morris’s socialism is characterised by the demand for an existence made meaningful through work and art - through work which is not separated from either physical or creative satisfaction.” [Banham and Harris 1984:13] “He pictured his utopia in *News from Nowhere* : London about 2090 has been rebuilt with buildings inspired by, but not in imitation of, medieval models.” [Placezk 1982: ‘William Morris’]

¹⁸⁵ *The Garden*. ‘Mr Wm. Morris on the Art of the Future.’ April 12, 1879: 298-300.

¹⁸⁶ “When was the Arts and Crafts Movement? It came to a climax in the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s, and the early years of this century;...”[Burman, 1997: 3] “What were the origins of the Arts and Crafts Movement? The influence of John Ruskin is critical.” [Burman, 1997: 7]

¹⁸⁷ “In 1886 William Morris included a section in his *Hopes and Fears for Art* which reinforced Forbes Watson on the (supposed) perversion of ‘over-artificiality in flowers’. Between them, Robinson, Watson and Morris in the texts I have named, set out the sternest principles for ‘natural’ as opposed to ‘artificial’ gardening which had been enunciated since the eighteenth century.” [Thacker, 1994: 278].

Garden makers of the break in the tradition : 1850 to 1890

	Key Garden Makers of what was to be judged a break in the tradition :					Draughtman, Painter	Writer	Garden maker	Architect	Horticulturist
	1775	1800	1825	1850	1875					
John Adey Repton	1775			1860				•	•	
John Claudius Loudon	1783		1843			•	•	•	•	•
John Dobson	1789			1865				•	•	
Joshua Major	1787			1866				•		•
Lewis Kennedy	1789		1840			•		•		•
W. A. Nesfield	1793				1881	•		•		
Sir Charles Barry	1795			1860		•		•	•	
Ninian Niven	1799				1879			•		•
Decimus Burton		1800					•		•	
Robert Marnock		1800			1889			•		•
Joseph Paxton		1803		1865				•	•	•
Edward Kemp		1817						•	•	
Shirley (James) Hibberd			1825		1890			•	•	•

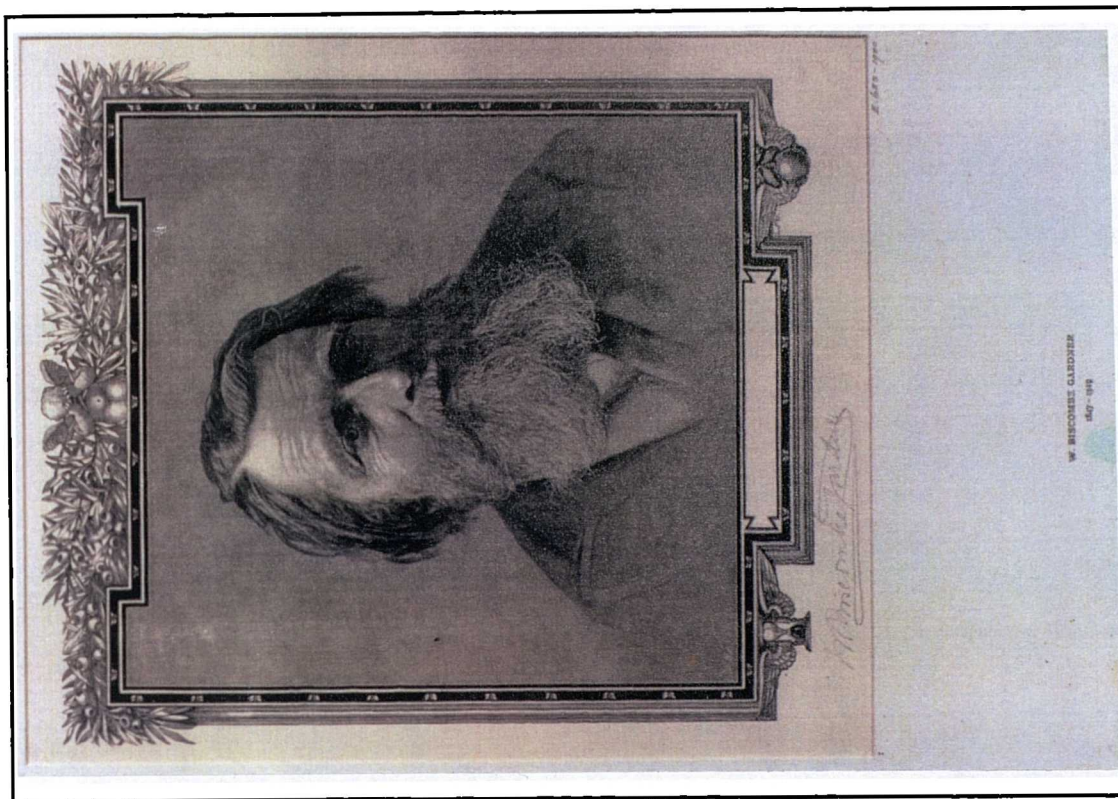


Figure 4 John Ruskin. Portrait by W. Biscombe Gardner [V&A Print Room E 683-1920 EW 72]



Figure 5 William Morris. [V&A: Sir Sidney Cockerell] ms]

2.5 LAMENT OVER THE BREAK: THE NATURAL 'AHEAD OF' THE FORMAL

As introduced in the previous section, at least three men, three 'dilettanti art philosophers' were lamenting over the breaks in traditions during the nineteenth century. These men were Sir Walter Scott, John Ruskin, and Forbes Watson. They were alluding directly to the lack of artists (painters) doing landscape design as in the previous century. Morris was concentrating on the loss of craftsmanship, which was to have an indirect influence on the nostalgia for painters as landscape-gardeners. This attitude of mourning the past was typical of the era, and the landscape profession did not escape it. Ruskin was the greatest mourner for the past. In 1872, he had written: "Whatever else we may have advanced in, there is no dispute that, in the great arts, we have steadily, since the thirteenth century, declined."¹⁸⁸

By the 1870s, according to William Robinson and others¹⁸⁹ (who will be discussed later), 'designers'¹⁹⁰ of gardens who chose the formal style did not create artistic gardens. Only picturesque¹⁹¹ and natural gardens deserved to be qualified as 'artistic', and their creators consequently as 'true artists'. Robinson continuously lamented the lack of true artists.

Just carefully read the following passage:

In the work of Alfred Parsons and a few others we see the beginning of things of beauty in the painting of gardens, but it is for us gardeners to commence by first being painters ourselves and opening our eyes to see the ugly things about us. Artists of real power would paint gardens and home landscapes if there were real; pictures to draw; but generally they are so rare that the work does not come into the artist's view at all.¹⁹²

Formal gardens were evil, natural gardens were heaven on earth. Especially in his chapter 'Art in Relation to Flower-gardening and Garden Design'¹⁹³ Robinson was to progressively dilute this strong statement. Commenting on the formality of the subdivisions of his own west flower garden at Gravetye he wrote: "formality is often essential for the plan of a garden but never to the arrangement of its flowers and shrubs; and to array these in rigid lines, circles or

¹⁸⁸ 'The Eagle's Nest - X Lectures on Art', given March 9th 1872 at Oxford. [Ruskin, Crowell, 1905(?): 148]

¹⁸⁹ See page 67, for a table listing the garden makers or writers discussed in this section.

¹⁹⁰ This word is chosen deliberately so as not to use 'landscape-gardeners', because only proper artists would qualify for the title 'landscape-gardeners'. (Proper as being artists using Nature as a source of inspiration; Alfred Parsons's painting of a garden in Broadway was one of them in a informal way).

¹⁹¹ Picturesque in the sense of avoiding symmetry, regularity and the obviousness of being artificial; picturesque in the sense of 'Sharawadgi'. Not picturesque in the sense of Loudon's picturesque gardenesque.

¹⁹² From the sub-section 'Landscape Painting and Gardens' in Robinson. 1902: 14

¹⁹³ A chapter in the *English Flower Garden* from the 4th edition in 1895 to the 15th of 1933. In general it consisted of ten dense pages of text with around three illustrations.

patterns can only be ugly wherever it may be.” [Robinson, 1902: 20].

In Robinson’s mind, an artist was not necessarily a painter, but someone with the sensitivity of the artist. It is not an extension of his thought to say that in his writings he promoted painters as landscape-gardeners. Another quotation from Robinson himself will prove this: “We want all the help we can get from those whose taste and training enable them to help us - the landscape-painter best of all, if he care for gardens and trees.”¹⁹⁴

More must be said about Forbes Watson, who was introduced on page 19, before we speak of Robinson himself. Practising medicine Forbes Watson had a thorough scientific knowledge of plants and he was fascinated by their beauty. Before dying, in 1872, he left as a kind of testament his book *Flowers and Gardens*, to explain what he thought should be done to improve flower gardening.¹⁹⁵ Forbes Watson acknowledged the influence of Ruskin, “the greatest and best of art-teachers” on his convictions.¹⁹⁶ This shows how important Ruskin’s influence was in the rebellion against flower bedding and topiary art of the middle of the nineteenth century. He felt that the bedding system treated plants as mass colour makers, not as beautiful individuals.¹⁹⁷ Worse, this mode of planting cut off the gardener and the passerby from the pleasure of knowing the plant through its complete evolution.¹⁹⁸ Watson includes a passage against topiary, for which Robinson will also show so much hatred.¹⁹⁹ The chapter ‘Faults in gardening’ was to be very influential. It took up fifty pages of the work and represented 20% of its content. The book went through a second edition, in 1901, which

¹⁹⁴ Robinson, 1892b: 17

¹⁹⁵ These ideas were highly tinged with his religious beliefs. “Now the faults of gardening, against which my present paper is directed, all centre in this one thing- the constant subjection of the imagining or higher, to the sensuous, or lower, element of flower beauty.” [Watson, 1872: 121]

¹⁹⁶ Watson, 1872: vi - “Lastly, in many instances, my remarks bear more or less reference to the works of Ruskin, the greatest and best of art-teachers.”

¹⁹⁷ “The consequence is, people see the flowers on the beds without caring to know anything about them, or even to ask their names. It was different in the older gardens because there was just variety there, the plants strongly contrasted with each other, and we were ever passing from the beautiful to the curious. Now we get little of quaintness or mystery, or of the strange delicious thought of being lost and embosomed in a tall, rich wood of flowers. All is clear, definite, and classical- the work of a too narrow and exclusive taste, as was that of Pope and other writers of his school.” [Watson, 1872: 131-2]

¹⁹⁸ “It has degenerated into a mere assembly-room for brilliant parties, where childhood and age are both alike out of place.” [Watson, 1872: 137]

“Now the natural course is for people to delight in loving and cherishing plants from their earliest youth, and in tracing their slow progress into age. Nothing can be more pleasurable than this.” [Watson, 1872: 138]

¹⁹⁹ “There are people even now so unfeeling as to clip their trees into the form of fountains and peacocks, and we sometimes see a bed of much-prized flowers so embarrassed with pots, hoops, sticks, and matting that our interest in the flowers is destroyed-they seem like the inmates of a prison.” [Watson 1872: 142]

indicates part of that influence.

After the vigorous propaganda of Robinson, Farrer, and the like, this attitude [mass-planting used as coats of paint] was to become a fixture of twentieth-century horticultural rhetoric: we can see in Watson the first systematic exposition of the modern doctrine of the plantsman. Watson's rhetoric was continued by William Robinson.²⁰⁰

It is important to realize that Robinson, who started his publishing career in the early 1870s, was propagating the ideas of other people and influencing several others.

Dean Hole was one of them. In his book *Our Garden*, first published in 1899, he wrote of his appreciation of William Robinson:

The English Flower Garden by W. Robinson is a work which could have only been achieved by a pure love of the beautiful, by a righteous disdain of deformities, by a devoted service, (...) and it is accepted as the most comprehensive and reliable book upon its subject. It expresses pleasantly, lucidly and concisely a most sincere and accomplished zeal, and with an abundance of exquisite illustrations the artist accompanies the author, as some skilful pianist a song.²⁰¹

Dean Hole was converted from "bedding out" syndromes by "three friends, three famous friends - Mr Robert Marnock, aforesaid Mr William Robinson and Mr William Ingram (...) [Hole, 1899: 86-87].

In his memoirs Hole dedicated four chapters to artists, 43 pages mostly about John Leech, John Tennant, Frederick Taylor, Edward Lear, Herbert Marshall, Herbert Oliver, Charles Furse, Mr Kempe and a few musicians. He also had three chapters on gardens, insisting on the love of horticulture that should be encouraged. In total, there were 31 pages on the subject.²⁰²

Another greatly influenced by the ideas of Robinson was Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, an American. She wrote *Art Out-of-Doors*, published in 1893, just a year after Robinson's *Garden Design and Architects' Gardens*. *Art Out-of-Doors* was published by T. Fisher Unwin in London and by Scribner and Sons in New York. It was reviewed in four of the principal English gardening periodicals of the period.²⁰³ The book's main argument states that landscape gardening is an art "that should be practised and judged as are arts of other kinds." [Van Rensselaer, 1893: vii]. It concludes with the need for a "school of gardening art" that would

²⁰⁰ Elliott 1986:152

²⁰¹ Hole, 1899: 300

²⁰² Hole, 1899: Artists: 14-57; Gardeners: 215-246. The book has 377 pages with 8 illustrations of which 6 are by Hole, one by Leech and one by Thackeray,

²⁰³ *The Gardeners Magazine*, vol.36, 21 Oct 1893: 628; *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*, vol.27, 14 Sept. 1893: 250; *The Gardeners' Chronicle* vol. 14: 496 and *The Garden*, 21 Oct. 1893: 383.

include the study of painting in its curriculum.²⁰⁴ It is argued here that Van Rensselaer was seriously influenced by William Robinson, especially by his *Garden Design and Architects' Gardens*, since the quotations from the book in her third chapter 'The Home-Grounds', call Robinson 'The Englishman' and thus avoid mentioning his name.²⁰⁵ Both authors, Robinson and Van Rensselaer, agreed that the art of the landscape-painter could best help the art of the landscape-gardener.²⁰⁶ Van Rensselaer had obviously also read the chapter 'Art in relation to garden design', as she mentions *The English Flower Garden* in her list of books on Gardening Art in the appendices.²⁰⁷

In the Victorian era, art was seen as the cure for all evils.²⁰⁸ Robinson had read Price, Whately and William Sawry Gilpin and several others. He quoted them to advocate a return to a sense of harmony, to give more attention to groups than to individuals and to be inspired by the spirit of the place, always following Nature when designing gardens.²⁰⁹ Robinson would

²⁰⁴ "We ought to have a school of gardening art. Today if a man wants to study this art he must usually be his own master. He can study painting, architecture, engineering, botany, and horticulture in this school or in that; or all of them, perhaps, at one university. But the art of design as applied to landscape, and as including the needful amount of instruction in these practical branches, is nowhere taught in America. Nor do I think it is in France or in England, although some more or less efficient teaching of it is probably practised in Germany." [Van Rensselaer, 1893:371-72]

²⁰⁵ Van Rensselaer calls 'the writer' an enthusiast for 'natural gardening methods'. She also refers to him as 'the Englishman'. On page 54 she quotes that "the lawn is the heart of the true English garden (...)" which comes from [Robinson, 1892b:6]. She agrees with Robinson's judgement that terrace walls cutting off the view from the house are big mistakes [Robinson, 1892b:11]. On page 55 she again quotes Robinson: "most of the houses built in our time (she adds in England)." [Robinson, 1892b:17]. She quotes further: "if a garden has any use it is to treasure for us beautiful flowers, trees and shrubs." [Robinson, 1892b:17] and disagrees on page 58 that these plants should mostly come from other countries. [Robinson, 1892b:]

²⁰⁶ In the appendices, 'Books on Gardening Art', pages 387-399, she lists books from 1625 (Francis Bacon's *Of Gardens*) to 1893 (*Report of the Metropolitan Park Commission of Boston*). William Robinson's *The English Flower Garden* (1882) and *Garden Design and Architects' Gardens* (1892) are both listed. A total of 74 books are mentioned of which 40 are English, 15 are French, 9 are German and 10 American.

²⁰⁷ The preface of *Art Out-of-Doors* starts with "Ce qu'à nos jardins sont les fleurs, les arts le sont à la vie". Which translated by the present author becomes: "What flowers are to gardens, the arts are to life."

²⁰⁸ See the Chart on the increase in the number of art students in England on page 310.

²⁰⁹ " '-The source of the superiority of good landscape gardening lies in the artist's removing from the scene of his operations whatever is hostile to its effect or unsuited to its character; and, by adding only such circumstances as accord with the general expression of the scene, awakening emotions more full, more simple, and more harmonious.' -Uvedale Price, 1796

'-To range the shrubs and small trees so that they may mutually set off the beauties and conceal the blemishes of each other; to aim at no effects which depend on nicety for their effects, and which the soil, the exposure, or the season of the day may destroy; to attend more to the groups than to the individuals; and to consider the whole as a plantation, not as a collection of plants, are the best general rules which can be given concerning them.' - Thomas Whately, 1770

'-It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that Nature is to be followed, not spoilt at the expense of labour and ill-employed wealth, not strangely and violently disfigured in the effort to embellish. All gardens cannot be

(continued...)

go one step further in blaming the faults of gardening in that period to the lack of ‘artistic sense’ of the various creators of gardens: “The landscape-gardener of the present day is not always what we admire, his work often looking more like that of an engineer.”²¹⁰ In the first chapter of *The English Flower Garden: ‘Art in relation to flower gardening and garden design’*, beside a full-page illustration of ‘An English cottage garden. Simple expression of the beautiful garden.’ done by Alfred Parsons near Tew, Oxon in 1878, Robinson is eloquent:

The gardener should follow the true artist, however modestly, in his love of things as they are, in delight in natural form and beauty of flower and tree, if we are to be free from barren geometry, and if our gardens were ever to be pictures.²¹¹

He strongly believed in the judgement of landscape-painters to evaluate the quality of a garden, and in this case the landscape-painter is Alfred Parsons. Robinson wrote the following in *The Garden* in 1891 and included the last sentence in his book, *Garden Design and Architects’ Gardens* the following year:

It should be remembered, however, that our garden flora is now so large, that a life’s work is almost necessary to know it. How is a man to make gardens wisely if he does not know what has to be grown in them? I do not mean that we are to exclude other men than the landscape-gardener proper from the garden. We want all the help we can get from those whose tastes and training enable them to help us - the landscape-painter best of all, if he cares for gardens and trees; the country gentleman, or any keen student and lover of Nature.²¹²

This was written at the height of the battle against Reginald Blomfield, who had just published *The Formal Garden* in England. A dispute flourished between the two authors, and is still remembered today. Robinson’s book *Garden Design and Architects’ Gardens* was published in 1892. In this book, 20% of the full-page illustrations are by Alfred Parsons.²¹³ Robinson attacked architects who built ugly houses that disfigured gardens. He insisted on the need for an artistic union between landscape gardening and architecture. He insisted that formal, artificial, bare and geometrical gardens could never become pictures. He wanted to protect the English landscape and link the flower garden to it by not erecting fences. This ran counter to Blomfield’s opinion. Robinson was also making a plea for gardens to show exotic

²⁰⁹ (...continued)

planned after some one pleasing model. The special character of the ground must be regarded. By attending to this we shall be more faithful to Nature, and a greater number of gardens will be beautiful without being servile copies.’ - W. S. Gilpin” [*The Garden*, ‘Landscape Gardening’, Jan. 5, 1889: 7].

²¹⁰ Robinson, 1892b:18

²¹¹ Robinson, 1896: 7-8.

²¹² ‘Nature and Art in the Garden’ *The Garden*. June 6 1891, XXXIX: 524-26 signed W.R. Present author’s emphasis.

²¹³ A total of 26 illustrations, 20 full-page, 4 full-page by Parsons and one half-page.

plants, neglecting to notice the contradiction this implied. It should be understood that for Robinson, the landscape-gardener could use any plants, either endemic species or imported exotics, as long as their arrangement would emulate the true art of nature. On several occasions, Robinson did praise the landscape-painters to the extent of bringing back a sense of loss of the old tradition.

Later writers have credited Robinson and his colleagues with restoring life and vigour in place of an outmoded and stultified tradition. In the words of Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, 'They retaught the almost lost art of gardening to a nation who were all eagerness to learn'.²¹⁴

In another article, in 1897, Robinson also condemned the garden at Versailles. He published a photograph of the South front as seen from the orangery. The only trees present were in pots: the Versailles tubs. The title of the article was, 'The Ugliness of it: Versailles'. It is the epitome of his disbelief in architects as landscape-gardeners, and of their incapacity of "forming a picture."²¹⁵

Robinson discredited most of the formal gardens. His indoctrination had been efficient:

Robinson was as skilful a propagandist as he was a gardener, and his condemnation of much that had previously been in favour makes persuasive reading. It is easy to forget that he was presenting only one side of an argument. The ideas expressed in *The Wild Garden* and *The English Flower Garden* certainly did plenty to reinvigorate the horticultural scene. But millions had taken pleasure in the style of gardening that he condemned, and, if he inspired the 'modern' gardener, he just as effectively destroyed the reputation of his predecessors.²¹⁶

The Aesthetic of Scatter so popular during the 1840s and 50s, under the influence of the gardenesque style, was to be buried deep by Robinson and his followers.²¹⁷ It was the picturesque principle of harmony that they wanted back. W. S. Gilpin had been the sole survivor of that school, but he died in 1840. As described, William Andrews Nesfield, although

²¹⁴ [Carter 1984: 117] The whole chapter 'The Pleasure Ground' [117-150], in Carter's book summarizes very well the battle between the formal and the natural garden of the end of the nineteenth century.

²¹⁵ "Garden designing, by all the writing about it, seems to be becoming a fashionable profession. We hear talk about it among the architects, and but very little evidence of the slightest knowledge of the subject, the main idea they urge being that the best and only kind of garden is one with a good high wall, though there are many situations where such a high wall would be ruin to all beauty, both of landscape and garden. So we thought that perhaps it would be as well to call attention in *The Garden*, which has shown so many examples of really beautiful gardens in our country, to what a builder's garden really is - how extravagant, lifeless, and ugly. This view of Versailles, for example, shows the present effect of that famous garden from one important point of view, the very opposite of a picture. People who say that this sort of thing is necessary in such a situation do not consider the other beautiful effects that might be shown on the same piece of ground. The total absence of the life and grace of vegetation may be indeed the architect's notion of form in gardens, the only sign of life being the few trees on the orangery, and of course they disappear in the winter. However, the picture tells its own sad story of waste and ugliness. W.R." ['The ugliness of it: Versailles.' *The Garden*. Jan. 2 1897, LI: 8-9]

²¹⁶ Carter 1984: 150

²¹⁷ See the section 'The Aesthetic of Scatter' in [Elliott 1986: 34-40], for more on the subject.

an artist, had chosen a formal style of landscape gardening which forbade Robinson and his followers to consider Nesfield as a 'true artist'.²¹⁸ So there was a relative break in the tradition after W. S. Gilpin's death. Alfred Parsons was to be an 'artist-landscape-gardener' who would revive this long tradition.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ In commenting Mr Sedding's book *Garden Craft, Old and New*, Robinson wrote: "He (Sedding) assumes that landscape-gardeners all follow artistic ways, and that only architects make terraces, whereas the greatest sinners in this respect have been landscape-gardeners - Nesfield and Paxton." [Robinson, 1892b: 68].

²¹⁹ "It thus appears that in the rapid progress of horticulture and ornamental gardening and in the subsequent development of the pleasure ground, the picturesque principle of connection, harmony and unity of character had been lost." [Piebenga, 1995: 229]

Garden makers and writers preaching for the return of the tradition : 1880 to 1910

Key Garden Makers and Writers against formal gardening or followers creating 'natural' artistic landscape designs.										Draughtman, Painter	Writer	Garden maker	Architect	Botanist
	1750	1775	1800	1825	1850	1875	1900	1925	Wild G.					
Sir Walter Scott	1771			1832							•			
John Ruskin			1819				1900				•	•		
Samuel Reynold Hole (Dean Hole)			1819				1904				•	•	•	
William Ingram			1820			1894			Belvoir Castle			•	•	•
Canon Henry Nicholson Ellacombe			1820				1916		Bitton			•	•	•
George F. Wilson			1822				1902		Oakwood			•	•	•
William Morris				1834		1896					•	•		
Sir Herbert Maxwell				1835				1937				•	•	•
William Robinson				1838				1935	Gravetye			•	•	•
Forbes Watson				1840	1869							•	•	•
Van Rensselaer					1851			1934				•	•	•

3 FORMATIVE YEARS, EARLY AND MIDDLE YEARS

1847-1896

The life and artistic career of Alfred Parsons spanned seventy-two years from 1847 to 1920, during which time he developed professionally both as a painter and illustrator, before embarking on his ultimate career, that of landscape-gardener. For ease of analysis, the year 1897 has been chosen as the turning point when landscape gardening surpassed his illustration work. His production of paintings however remained constant throughout his lifetime. The aim of this chapter is to describe the social context that accompanied his artistic achievements and to explain how his career in painting and illustration led him to design gardens.

Four major events influenced the development of his career. These define a loose framework consisting of four distinct periods of artistic endeavour. The four events were: his studies at the South Kensington Art School, his meeting with Edwin Austin Abbey (Ned) in 1879 and with William Robinson in 1880, his winning the Chantrey Bequest in 1887 and the publication of his only book *Notes From Japan* in 1896. The four periods were respectively his educational years, the early painting years, the middle years during which he pursued both painting and illustration and, finally, the later years when illustration gave way to landscape gardening. Landscape painting was the continuous thread, the important ingredient, all through his professional life.

It is convenient for the argument of this thesis to set 1897 as the starting point of his career as a 'landscape-painter/landscape-gardener' as this is the year he was made Associate of the Royal Academy.

These are the periods inasmuch as they fit into chronological time intervals:-

- The Formative Years, which span 1847 to 1868. During this period Parsons was living in Frome, Somerset. Here he had both the opportunity and a suitable environment to develop and nurture his dual interests in horticulture and art, bringing together skills and interests that would later be directly related to his achievements as a landscape-gardener.
- The Early Painting Years spanning from 1868 to 1878, during which Parsons developed as an artist and embarked upon the formation of friendships which would later influence his art and the development of his career in garden design.
- The Middle Painting Years from 1879 to 1896. It was in 1879 that Parsons met Edwin Austin Abbey, a meeting that would launch his career as a professional illustrator. During

this time he was living in London, where he began to establish his career as a painter. The period ends with the publication of his horticultural-topographical book, *Notes in Japan*. During this period he was able to move from illustration to professional landscape gardening for the next and final period of his life.

- The Later Years spanning from 1897 to his death in 1920, which were both painting and landscape gardening years.¹ For convenience, it will be dealt with in the next chapter.

¹ See the justification for the choice of this date on page 16.

3.1 THE FORMATIVE YEARS: 1847-1868

Alfred Parsons was raised during the prosperous second half of the nineteenth century in Victorian England, a factor that would continually influence his work. At four, he probably visited, with his parents, the Great Exhibition of 1851: the greatest symbol of Britain's supremacy.²

“Victorianism represented a cluster of restraining moral attributes - earnestness, respectable comportment and behavior, ‘character’, ‘duty’, ‘hard work’, and ‘thrift’ ”³. These were probably the values that Parsons's parents taught him. In museums, he would have seen the first Pre-Raphaelite paintings which had recently been hung. He would have read Ruskin and Dickens and later Swinburne and Morris. He would have seen how, in England, acceptance of the first Impressionist paintings met with resistance; resistance with which he would have agreed.⁴ From 1854 onwards schools of art were springing up like mushrooms in England, helping to form the tastes of future informed patrons of the arts.⁵ Parsons is likely to have attended such a school, and after completing his own art studies, he became a drawing master himself. Art schools were believed to encourage a moral control over the middle-classes.⁶ It is art as an improving activity that they will foster.⁷

In 1861, when Parsons had reached secondary school age, the Taunton Commission,

² The Victoria and Albert Museum was established with the profits from that exhibition.

³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol 19: *United Kingdom*: 86

⁴ 1871: First Exhibition of the Impressionists in France.

⁵ Consult the lists of the development of schools of art in Great Britain in *Report of the Department of Science and Art* printed by Eyre and Spottiswoode. Great Britain, Parliament, London, 1854-1899.

⁶ In a letter dated Sept. 25, 1857, to Rev. F. Temple, Ruskin wrote “I think the art-examination should have three objects. / (1.) To put the happiness and knowledge which the study of art conveys within the conception of the youth, so that he may in after life pursue them, if he has the gift. / (2.) To enforce, as far as possible, such knowledge of art among those who are likely to become its patrons or the guardians of its works, as may enable them usefully to fulfil those duties. / (3.) To distinguish pre-eminent gift for the production of works of art, so as to get hold of all the good artistic faculty born in the country, and leave no Giotto lost among hill-shepherds.” [Ruskin, John. *Letter ... On the proper use of art in education*. 1st edition, 1858.]

Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, was shortly after the leading spirit of a commission called “the Popular Education Commission or the Public Schools Commission” created on Dec 28, 1864. [Sandford, 1906: 133] The members of the Commission were “Sir Stafford Northcote, Dr. Hook (Dean of Chichester), Dr. Temple, Mr Thorold (afterwards Bishop of Winchester), Mr Acland, Mr. Edward Baines, Mr. W. E. Forster, Mr. Peter Erle (Chief Charity Commissioner), and Dr Storrar. [The secretary being Henry J. Roby]” [See the chapter ‘Memoir of the Education Office Period 1847-1857’ signed Henry J. Roby in Sandford, 1906: 134]

⁷ See the section ‘Female Art Education as a Quest for Moral Perfection’ in Gillett, 1990: 153-7

reviewed the entire system of secondary education in England.⁸ One of the aims of reform was to improve the education of the lower and middle classes. Art was considered to be a good social remedy to the squalor left by the industrial revolution.⁹ Social preoccupations did not seem to exert an influence on Parsons's art work, as it did on others. Like so many painters of his generation¹⁰, Parsons preferred to focus on the beauty of nature instead of painting the social realities of his time.¹¹

Parsons chose various ways to raise himself to a better standing. All through his life he would send gifts to people he admire. The correspondence to Parsons now held at the Hereford and Worcester Record Office is quite eloquent about this behaviour.¹² Like several other young artists, he witnessed the growing reputation of Frederic Leighton and tried to emulate him.¹³ This artist had achieved a level of fame and fortune that would be envied by an

⁸ Young, 1936: 89

⁹ "In the years after 1850 interest in the material [terracotta] was heightened by ideals of art and architecture shaping the morals of the masses and acting as agents of 'self-improvement'." [Stratton, 1993: 11]

¹⁰ In the 1870s and 1880s, of the three hundred and fifty regular exhibitors at the Dudley Gallery, very few chose social realism as a genre of painting. The majority were landscape-painters.

¹¹ Sir George Clausen (1852-1944). "English painter of Danish parentage. He studied at South Kensington and worked for Edwin Long (1829-91). In the late 1870s he visited Holland and Paris, where he came under the influence of Jules Bastien Lepage and was converted to the methods of the *plein air* school. (...) He painted landscape and bucolic scenes which have been likened to those of Millet. (...) Sentimentality, superficial prettiness of subject." [Osborne, 1992: 247]

"During the summer of 1889 he (Clausen) exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris and was awarded a second class medal. There he saw hanging together, Courbet's 'Stonebreakers' and Bastien Lepage's 'Jeanne d'Arc écoutant les voix'. The force of this comparison brought home to him the limitations of his chosen master: (Bastien-Lepage)." [McConkey, 1980: 32].

"But his attachment to naturalism in the 1880s was because he truly believed that this was the most advanced form of painting. It provided a very literal representation of the subject; indeed it placed literal representation before the subject. That is to say it demoted narrative. The individual was presented in his or her particular environment. Clausen was therefore a naturalist painter of rustic subjects. His depiction was realistic, but he was not a realist in the sense of having an ideological commitment to peasant themes. (...) Clausen partook of the great revival of interest in that range of subjects set down in the mid century by J. F. Millet. (...) Clausen acquired anti-elitist sympathies which were to some extent maintained throughout his life and effected his subsequent exploits in the field of art exhibitions and art education". (...) "Of the English artists born in the 1850s and 60s, with the exception of Sickert, only Clausen's work continued to develop after his initial flirtation with French art in the 1880s." [McConkey, 1980: 11-13]. "He dabbled in many media and experimented with a variety of styles. (...) It is therefore difficult to document precisely these fluctuations of taste. Clausen developed rapidly and retained the capacity to work in difficult styles at the same time." [McConkey, 1980: 16-17].

¹² Ms HWRO 705:1235

¹³ Lord Frederic Leighton (1830-1896). "English painter and sculptor. He first made his name with a large quattrocento Pastiche, *Cimabue's Madonna carried in procession*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy and bought by Queen Victoria ... With Alma-Tadema and Edward Poynter, he set himself in opposition to Pre-Raphaelite Romantic realism with an over-refinement of pseudo-Hellenistic Classicism. Leighton was a man whose [knowledge of] culture surpassed his achievement. He was eminently successful in the office of President (continued...)

entire generation of young painters.¹⁴ Leighton was a highly skilled figurative painter, one who incorporated conservative, scientific and aesthetic preoccupations in his art. Parsons was to become a conservative painter who would also adhere to the principles of the Aesthetic Movement. In February 1891 Parsons sent flowers to Leighton and in Dec 1895 he gave him a book. His admiration for Leighton was real.¹⁵ Parsons own technical skills were to be related to the Arts and Crafts movement.¹⁶ In 1878, as Parsons was starting his career, the Whistler-Ruskin trial made headlines throughout the world.¹⁷ The progress of modern art in England was slowed by this battle, and Parsons reaffirmed his choice of a traditional and reassuring style of landscape painting.

Like many young painters, Parsons chose to live in the Royal Borough of Kensington, in the same area as Leighton. He added a studio onto his residence at 54 Bedford Gardens and joined as many societies as a man can deal with in his lifetime. (Figure 43 and Figure 44) Steadily Parsons's standing rose. His first paintings sold at the Dudley for £2 in 1871, while his later works would fetch such prices as £840 in 1902 at the Manchester Art Gallery. As a suitable closing to this brief outline of the early period:

Victorian history is the story of the English mind employing the energy imparted by Evangelical conviction to rid itself of the restraints which Evangelicalism had laid on the senses and the intellect; on amusement, enjoyment, art ; on curiosity, on criticism, on science.¹⁸

Parsons's life offers a good example of the loosening of the restrictions on amusement, enjoyment, curiosity and science. His travels, his social life, the development of his botanical skills - all these made him a man of his period. His art, whether in painting or landscape gardening, offered only a mild critique of the immediate past (1820-1870); it was more a revival of the early years of the nineteenth century: peaceful idyllic landscapes.¹⁹

¹³ (...continued)

of the Royal Academy." [Osborne, 1992: 650].

See the correspondence from Leighton to Parsons in section 7.6 on page 370. Parsons was sending gifts so as to gain his gratitude.

¹⁴ Consult [Gillett, 1990] for more on the Victorian Painter's context.

¹⁵ Ms HWRO xxxvii. Frederick, 1st Baron Leighton of Stretton (1830-96). 1. Acknowledgement of gift of flowers. 16 Feb 1891. 2. Acknowledgement of gift of book. Dec 1895.

¹⁶ See section 3.3.6 'Parsons the craftsman' on page 131.

¹⁷ See the discussion of that trial on page 90.

¹⁸ Young, 1936: 5

¹⁹ See the discussion of Parsons's painting style, in particular the Idyllic school, on page 93.

3.1.1 Somerset: Nature as a teacher: 1847-65

Very little is known of these years.²⁰ Parsons was encouraged by his father to share the Victorian appreciation of the beauty of nature, allowing his interest to be expressed through the artistic skill he displayed as a child. Doctor Joshua Parsons was a noted expert on perennials and rock plants²¹ and he introduced Alfred to plant identification. A wonderful sketch done in 1882 by Edwin Abbey²² of Dr Parsons with a planting shovel in his hand, attests to Joshua's favourite hobby. (Figure 6). Parsons's father is himself said to have been a good draughtsman, perhaps lending encouragement to Parsons's interest in drawing.²³ His sister Letitia also showed an artistic talent that would become dormant upon her marriage. She also exhibited at the Dudley Gallery, the Royal Academy and at the Grosvenor Gallery.²⁴

Little is known of Parsons's early education. His school and place of early education have yet to be discovered. In 1862, at only sixteen, he went on a 'Grand Tour' in Europe, in keeping with a long standing English tradition. A sketchbook in the possession of a descendant testifies to his stay in France, Switzerland and Italy at that time. The present author assumes that he was travelling with someone who was aware of his growing talent as an artist.²⁵

²⁰ From 1868 to 1879, Parsons's brothers were registered at King's School, Bruton. For more on family members, see the chronology on page 491 and the family genealogy on page 351.

²¹ Brooke, N. in [Thomas, 1987: 16]. A. Parsons was Bryan N. Brooke's great uncle. See the discussion of this book on page 156.

²² "No other American artist was so deeply assimilated into the life of his adopted country as was Abbey into England. He played cricket; he painted the official picture of the Coronation of Edward VII; he specialized in English eighteenth-century costume drawings; at his studio in Broadway he inaugurated the Cotswold Picturesque; above all, unlike his fellow American artists domiciled in England, he resisted the international appeal of Paris." ['Edwin Austin Abbey and his American Circle in England.' Edward Morris in *Apollo* CIV, 1976: 220-21]

²³ Sir Richard Parsons's interview, descendant of Alfred Parsons. Joshua Parsons was the doctor at the scene of a famous murder case in Frome: the Rode Hill murder 1859. Consult Yseult Bridges *The Saint with Red Hands*.

²⁴ Letitia Margaret. b. Beckington Oct.19.1856. d. 10 Aug 1920 m. 1887 David Rothney Keith who died 20 July 1932.

²⁵ On the other hand he might also have been travelling alone. More research is needed.

3.1.2 London: Conventional apprenticeship in art: 1865-67

While nurturing his interests and talents, his parents attempted to encourage young Parsons to pursue a conventional career as a civil servant.²⁶ At the age of eighteen, he seemed destined to spend his years as a clerk in the Savings Bank of the Post Office. Less than two years later in 1867, he had given up this early career to devote himself to painting²⁷ and he was also concentrating on the art courses that he was attending at night school.²⁸

South Kensington Art School was his choice for an education in art - a natural choice for a member of the middle class. It had also been the choice of Gertrude Jekyll in 1861, and was to be that of Edwin Lutyens and Detmar Blow in 1885.²⁹

For reasons not yet known, Parsons returned to Somerset before completing the course of study. This early departure could perhaps signify that, like Hubert Herkomer³⁰, who became a good friend, Parsons did not enjoy his time at what Herkomer described as 'that stupid school'.³¹ There is no evidence that he left art school early, due to a desire "to make a quick

²⁶ "He early developed artistic tendencies, but his career as an artist was at first hampered by the desire of his parents for some more certain employment." Obituary in a local newspaper (Frome) dated Jan 23 1920. Not signed. S. R.O.

²⁷ This is the typical first statement of almost all obituaries or short biographies of Parsons. This research has revealed that it is of no relation to the seriousness of his artistic career. D.N.B. 1912-1921: under Parsons, Alfred William (1847-1920): 426-427.

²⁸ It would be interesting to learn who were his teachers at South Kensington School of Art. In 1868, Francis Grant P.R.A., Daniel Maclise R.A., J. C. Horsley R.A., Fred Leighton A.R.A., Rich Redgrave R.A. and H. A. Bowler all signed the competition report of the Return showing the Grants made by the Science and Art Department to Schools of Art, Night Classes, and Schools for the Poor, in 1866. In 1872 MD Wyatt, CW Cope Esq. R.A., R. Westmacott Esq.; R. Redgrave, R.A., F. R. Pickersgill R.A., J. C. Horsley Esq. R.A., H. A. Bowler Esq. and J. H. Pollen were the examiners. None of these examiners was referred to during Parsons's lifetime except for Leighton. Could Leighton have been the one who inspired Parsons to leave the post office? Parsons is also said to have become a teacher at South Kensington. [Mallalieu, 1976,1986,1990] [Clayton-Payne and Elliot, 1988]. Mr Mallalieu could not remember his source and indicated to the author of this thesis that he had consulted the archives of the R.I. and the R.W.S.. After a thorough verification of both these archives, no proof was found of Parsons having taught at South Kensington. See page 382 for more on R.I.

²⁹ Both Lutyens and Blow are famous Arts and Crafts architects. Jekyll is known for her landscape designs, as a partner of Lutyens whom she discovered. To study art was to respect the Arts and Crafts philosophy of uniting all forms of art in an architectural project. "In England at that time [1880s] there were no full-time schools of architecture. The young architect-to-be and his parents, chose an architect as a master, and while working on the day-to-day work of the office the pupil learnt his trade by seeing all the problems of the practical business of building. He learnt little of theory, but a lot from practice." [Gradidge, 1980: 3]

³⁰ See the brief biography of Herkomer in the correspondence to Parsons on page 370 .

³¹ Frayling, 1987: 51

buck”.³² What is more likely is that like many other young artists who did not benefit from a large family income Parsons had to earn a living.

Whatever his motives the result was that Parsons’s talent and skills were developed on his own; he was largely self-taught. This was aided by a close observation of nature, following Ruskin’s precepts on how to learn art. Ruskin’s writings would have been available to Parsons.

In 1870, at the age of twenty-three, Parsons returned to his parents’ house, ‘North End’ at Frome in Somerset, where he devoted himself to his art.³³ Many years later, Henry James commented on Parsons’s early observations of nature in Frome:

In this happy series [of work exhibited at the Fine Art Society] we seem to see still more how that talent was formed, how his rich motherland has been, from the earliest observation, its nurse and inspirer. He gives back to her all the good she has done him.³⁴

Significantly, amongst his first drawings from this period are plants in their natural settings. This will remain one of his interests throughout his life. His earliest known oil painting is one of a tree, dated 1867. (Figure 7) Another early work is a landscape. (Figure 8)

³² From a lecture by Andrew Stephenson, University of East London. ‘Art and Masculine Identities in the Victorian High Renaissance.’ This lecture was given in the context of the conference ‘Frederic Leighton and the Victorian Art World’ held at the Victoria and Albert Museum on Saturday 2 March 1996. Lord Leighton was fortunate to have been able to study in France and Germany, good resources always being helpful to the development of taste and talent. Several young painters were attracted to the career wanting to earn money as easily as Leighton did.

³³ Several of his early paintings shows this address on their back. It is also the address he gave to be printed in the Dudley’s catalogues.

³⁴ FAS. ‘A Collection of Drawings by Alfred Parsons, R.I.’ with a prefatory note by Henry James: Gardens and Orchards. Exhibition No. 84. The Fine Art Society, London, 1891. James, 1891: 11



Figure 6 Joshua Parsons drawn by Edwin Abbey. 1882 p.c.

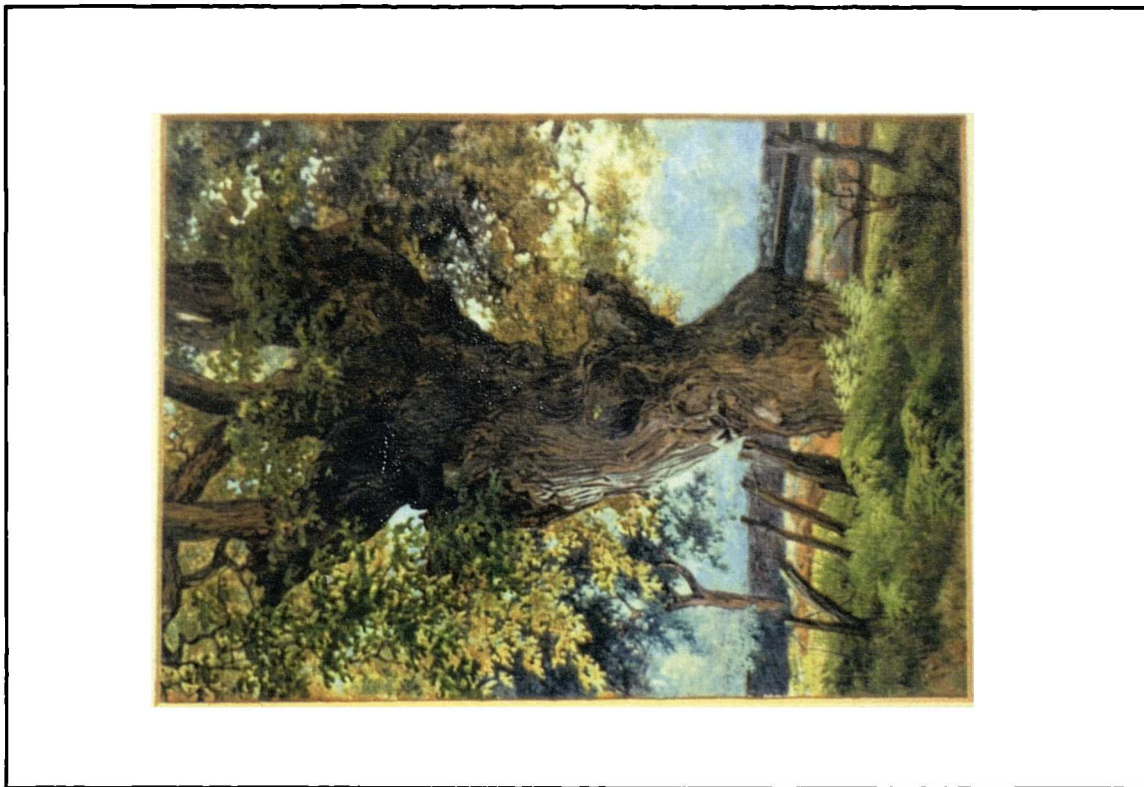


Figure 7 Old Tree. Signed AP June 1867. 6 3/4" x 9 1/4". p.c.

3.1.3 Drawing Master

Teaching art at the King's School, Bruton.

Shortly after leaving his art studies in Kensington, Parsons became a drawing master at the King's School, Bruton, some time during the period when his brothers were registered there from 1868 to 1879. The actual dates when he taught at the school are not yet precisely known.³⁵ The hope of finding more information is hampered by the fact that several of the school's archives were destroyed in a fire. Nevertheless it is a significant fact that early in his career, his skills as a painter were already being recognized.³⁶



Figure 8 Eskdale Nr Cumberland. Near Woolpack Inn. 11" x 7 1/2". Private collection [1867?]

³⁵ Ms letter from the King's School registrar, Martin Passmore, to the author. Bruton, Somerset. BA10 OED. Dated: 16-01-95

³⁶ It is really his paintings that first made his reputation; this at least eight years before his first illustration work.

3.2 THE EARLY YEARS: 1868-1878

General Introduction

Throughout his professional career, Parsons exhibited widely.³⁷ Through the records and archives of the institutions where he exhibited it is possible to trace Parsons's artistic career. These records help explain important links with other artists and patrons, especially those made while he was a member of different societies or clubs where his art was hung alongside the work of his contemporaries.

Exhibitions were common at the end of the nineteenth century, and artists like Parsons were often invited to exhibit their work: they did not need to knock on doors to obtain gallery space.

The Societies were important because they provided artists with a place where they could exhibit their work and sell it, and also gave them an opportunity to view the work of other artists.³⁸

Through exhibitions, Parsons met people and formed influential links to groups such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) or the Art Workers' Guild in London, of which he was a founding member. His artistic associations extended to artists' groups such as the Broadway Group, and through friendships with people such as William Morris, Henry James, Alma-Tadema³⁹ and John Singer Sargent⁴⁰, to name the most famous. Alma-Tadema was living near Parsons in London. See Figure 9 and Figure 10.

What is unusual about Parsons is the frequency with which he exhibited during these Early Years. This passion continued throughout his life and into the Later Years, when he was pursuing his career as a garden designer. According to the *Dictionary of Artists* by Algernon Graves, most artists exhibited, on average, fifteen times throughout their entire lifetime.

³⁷ [Graves, 1901] mentions 204 exhibitions before 1903. These included the Royal Academy: 39; Suffolk Street: 9; the New Watercolour Society: 20; the Grosvenor Gallery: 15; the New Gallery: 14. Also included are a further 104 times listed under Various Exhibitions: including the Dudley, the Institute of Oil Painters and possibly 'The Society of Portrait Painters': a total of 104 entries for the various exhibitions. Parsons's possible contribution to 'The Society of Portrait Painters' exhibitions being highly improbable, the author did not verify their catalogues.

The author of this thesis has counted a further 59 exhibitions in London after 1903, the year when Graves stops his inventory. A total of 35 exhibitions were counted for Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Dublin. The Dublin catalogues collection at the V&A was incomplete. See the Appendices on page 376 for the known lists of works exhibited by gallery and see the comparative list of total number of works exhibited by Alfred Parsons; a comparison of [Johnson, Jane 1976: 391] and the actual findings of this research on page 374.

³⁸ Ambrose, 1987: 89

³⁹ Alma-Tadema became a close friend of Parsons. See the résumé of 13 manuscript letters from Tadema to Parsons in the appendices on page 370.

⁴⁰ John Singer Sargent, who was to share a studio in Broadway with Parsons, Millet and Abbey, is said to have been the 'Van Dyck of our Time' in Nowell-Smith, Simon, 1964: 332.

Parsons, in contrast, exhibited his work over 300 times within the fifty year span of his professional public career as an artist.⁴¹

Like many others, he often exhibited at societies which had opposing views on the type of artists and style they should be promoting. For example, we know that Parsons was exhibiting at the Royal Academy at the same time as he was exhibiting at the Grosvenor and at the New English Art Club. This shows how exhibiting and selling his work was his first priority and not an allegiance to strict artistic principles.

Exhibitions must have been the link to his work as an illustrator, for during the middle years when he was developing his career as a landscape-painter, he expanded his work into professional commercial illustrations for books and magazines. Commissions for illustrations came to him through key friendships with William Robinson and Edwin Austin Abbey, friendships made in part through exhibitions during the early years.⁴²

⁴¹ For a summary of the total works exhibited consult the appendices on page 374

⁴² See section 3.3.2.2 for more information on his commissions for illustrations, page 101.



Figure 9 'An Alma-Tadema'. [*The Art Journal*, 1889: 357]



Figure 10 Alma-Tadema's house in St-John's Wood, London. The house is in great need of repair.

Early period of exhibitions: 1868-1879**Overview**

The Dudley is the earliest known gallery where Parsons exhibited in 1868, when he was twenty. A few years later, in 1871, he began exhibiting regularly at the influential Royal Academy (R.A.), where he continued to exhibit for forty-eight years until his death in 1920. After a study tour in Europe⁴³, he expanded the range of his venues to include four more exhibition spaces, including two provincial ones: in 1872 he exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Society in Dublin; in 1873, he exhibited at the Suffolk Street Gallery (otherwise known as the Society of British Artists) in London; in 1877, he exhibited at the Fine Art Society in Glasgow; and finally, in 1878, he exhibited at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.⁴⁴

After ten years of regular exhibitions, mostly of oil paintings in the Barbizon style, in 1878 Parsons was invited to exhibit at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery. The present author assumes that his links with the Oxford artistic community made this possible. Through friends including Emily Crabb Olive (the future wife of the Provost of Worcester College), John Fulleylove, William Morris and Walter Pater, Parsons would have been introduced to a wider circle of painters exhibiting in London, such as Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Hubert Herkomer, Walter Crane and E. J. Gregory.

⁴³ The date of the study tour is unknown.

⁴⁴ Two years before Helen Allingham.

3.2.1 First Galleries

The Dudley Gallery was founded in 1865 for artists who did not belong to the Royal Societies.⁴⁵ It had rather permissive rules for selection, and membership was not required to exhibit. It is known that contributors to the Dudley were, with the exception of a few painters, not members of the Royal Academy, making this a very good venue for artists starting a career.⁴⁶

There were three types of exhibitions per year at the Dudley: oils, watercolours, and black and white drawings. Between 1868 and 1882 Parsons contributed a total of ninety works to thirty exhibitions there.⁴⁷ On the whole, the Dudley Gallery maintained and enhanced its reputation as a showcase for the most innovative trends in contemporary art, not only with its exhibitions of oil paintings, but also with its watercolour shows.⁴⁸ Several of Parsons's early paintings submitted here were done at Orchardleigh near Frome, in his immediate surroundings.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ "When Allingham became better known, she stopped exhibiting at the Dudley since it was associated with amateur artists and might have hampered her professional reputation." [Helmreich, 1994: 35]

⁴⁶ Archambault, 1978: 14

A list of Committee members exists; Parsons's name is never included. It is possible that at an exhibition he met George Du Maurier and Hubert Herkomer. [See the correspondence to Parsons in the appendices on page 370]

Lists of committee members might also give clues to Parsons's social circle. In 1876, 350 exhibitors were listed in the Water-Colour exhibition, including Walter Crane, Mark Fisher, Henry A. Harper (42 Grove End) Albert Goodwin and Kate Greenaway, to name the familiar ones. In 1877 the Committee members listed in the fifth Exhibition Catalogue of Works of Art in Black and White were: Arthur Croft, Philip De La Motte, Arthur Ditchfield, G. Du Maurier, Edwin Edwards, Heywood Hardy, Hubert Herkomer, J. P. Heseltine, Mason Jackson, Jules Jacquemart, Léon Lhermitte, Hamilton Macallum, Robert Macbeth, HS Marks, A.R.A.; Francis Powell, Edward J. Poynter, R.A.; Samuel Reid, Frederich Tayler, Tom Tayler, WL Thomas and Frank Walton. In 1878 the Committee members listed in the fourteenth General Exhibition Catalogue of Water-Colour Drawings were Charles R. Aston, John B Burgess, WS Coleman, Walter Crane, Frank Dillon, Arthur Ditchfield, Charles Earle, W. W. Fenn, Walter Field, Mark Fisher, George F. Glennie, Heywood Hardy, J. E. Hodgson A.R.A., Joseph Knight, G D Leslie R.A., Charles J. Lewis, A. C. H. Luxmoore, Hamilton Macallum, Thomas R. Macquoid, H S Marks A.R.A., Henry Moore, J. C. Moore, Henry Pilleau, Edward J. Poynter R.A., John J. Richardson, Briton Riviere, Arthur Severn, Tom Taylor, Spencer Vincent, Frank Walton, Ernest Waterlow, D. Wynfield, W F Yeames A.R.A. Worth mentioning is Selwyn Image, like Parsons a member of the Art Workers' Guild and who exhibited water-colours in January 1905.

⁴⁷ See the list of the Parsons's paintings at the Dudley on page 376. His sister Letitia M. Parsons contributed a total of nine works, to five different exhibitions.

⁴⁸ Archambault, 1978: 18

⁴⁹ No mention is made in the Dudley catalogues of the following two paintings; but their descriptions confirm that nature was his favourite subject. It is interesting to surmise that they were done around Frome because of their early date. "Eight Saint Martin's Place,/ Trafalgar Square./ W. C. / Second May 1905 / My Dear Parsons / ...No.1 A quiet pool with a background of trees nearly screening a meadow beyond & a heron rising against one of the darkest trees. Foreground reeds, docks, etc. Size 8½ x 10½ inches. No.2 An upright landscape of
(continued...)

Parsons first exhibited watercolour in 1868 was entitled 'The Forest of Selwood'. Typical of his first paintings, which were mostly pastorals, it was inspired by Carolus Duran, Corot and the Barbizon school. During this early period he also painted plants⁵⁰ but often a painting such as 'Bulrushes'⁵¹ which was shown at the Dudley's second winter exhibition, was in effect a landscape painting - an early indication of his future career as a landscape-gardener. Of the 1887 Dudley Water-Colour Exhibition, one critic said 'at first glance one sees an overpowering amount of common place'⁵², but by then Parsons was exhibiting at the Grosvenor Gallery.

In 1872, Parsons made another trip to the Continent. A second sketchbook⁵³ mentions Antwerp, Drachenfels and several cities in Italy.⁵⁴ (Figure 11) Upon his return, for a very brief period, in 1873-74, he exhibited landscapes at Suffolk Street⁵⁵, otherwise known as 'The Society of British Artists'. As at the Dudley, young artists did not need to be members to exhibit.⁵⁶ From 1873 he also exhibited in Dublin.⁵⁷ In the forty years from 1877 to 1917 he contributed seventeen works to Fine Art Society exhibitions in Glasgow. These too were mostly landscapes in oil. Between 1878 and 1920, fifty-four of his works were shown at the

⁴⁹ (...continued)

brilliant autumnal foliage bracken & bunnies in the foreground - On the back of this is written apparently in your handwriting 'No. 1 Woods in October. Alfred Parsons. North End. Frome. Size 12½ x 8½ inches.' Both pictures are signed 'Alfred Parsons. 1870'. They look all right, but in these days of unscrupulous villainy you never can be sure till you know. So if you can tell me anything about them - I shall be indeed obliged. J. Ashby-Sterry". [MS]

⁵⁰ At his second watercolour exhibition in 1869, he showed 'Yucca Gloriosa', 'An Early Crop - Dorsetshire'. At his first Cabinet in Oil winter exhibition, 1870, 'Wild Roses' and 'A Sketch in June' were displayed.

⁵¹ Behind the painting is written: By Alfred Parsons North End Frome. It is in the possession of Mr Peter Herbert, one of the current owners of Gravetye Manor. Gravetye is the former residence of William Robinson.

⁵² *The Art Journal*, 'Some London Exhibitions' 1887: 93

⁵³ Henry Batterbury's collection.

⁵⁴ A travel schedule from one city to another: Bologna, Venice, Milan, Carneolata, Colico, Splugen, Chur, Berne.

⁵⁵ See page 380 for the list of paintings at Suffolk Street. This is another gallery, like the Dudley, where exhibitors were not required to be members. The prices Parsons asked for his work varied from £15-15 to £32, but these prices were soon to rise as his reputation grew.

⁵⁶ Catalogues between 1870 to 1920 were reviewed with only one, that of the 1887 Annual Exhibition, being missing. According to Graves, Parsons exhibited there nine times before 1903, although only four exhibition catalogues were found in which he appears as a contributor. Could it be that Parsons began to exhibit as early as 1866? This society is also called the Suffolk Street, because it was housed in Suffolk Street in London. In 1884-5: Miss Letitia M. Parsons, Alfred's sister, exhibited number 557: Zinnias £4, 4s.

⁵⁷ See page 398 for a partial list of his contribution there. Several records are not available at the National Art Library, as part of Dublin's archives were lost in a fire.

Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.⁵⁸ Parsons exhibited more often in Liverpool than Glasgow, exhibiting for a total of thirty-three years in Liverpool as compared to fifteen in Glasgow, during the same forty-three-year span.

The prices of his works exhibited in Liverpool varied between fifteen pounds fifteen shillings in 1877 and eight hundred and fifty pounds in 1898, which was more than the average middle-class annual salary of five hundred pounds. See the table from the 'Pocket History of Price Swings' in the appendices on page 405, to see how prices hardly fluctuated between 1850 and 1910.⁵⁹

3.2.2 1875: The Oxford Set

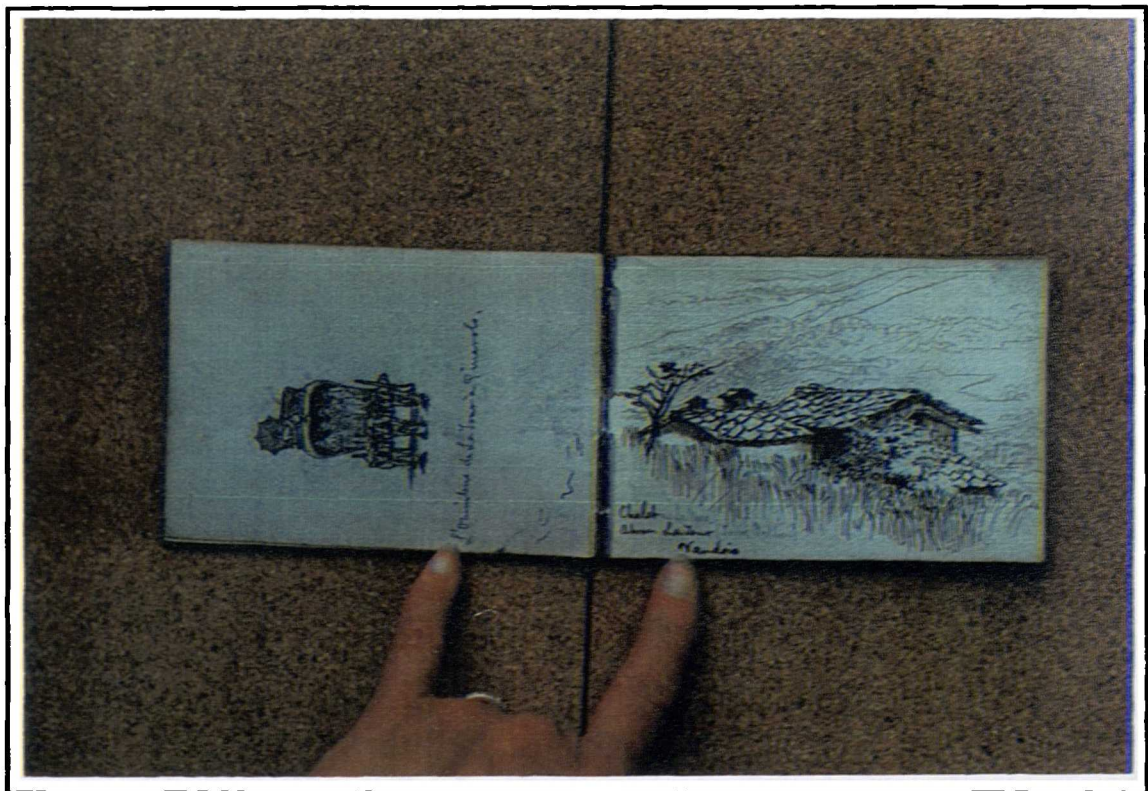


Figure 11 'L'Omnibus de la Tour à Pinerolo'. From the second sketch book. Private collection

Parsons returned to Frome after his art studies at Kensington. While in Frome, through family connections, he established influential contacts in Somerset and Oxfordshire, which set

⁵⁸ See the list of these mainly pastorals in the appendices on page 400.

⁵⁹ Helmreich speaks about Allingham's work of 1884 in these terms:

"A cottage garden sold for 73 pounds and 10 shillings, a substantial price for a small-scale art work considering that annual rent of a house 'in a healthy if not very fashionable street' in this period was around £130 pounds. This rent was considered affordable for those making £800 pounds a year, the typical annual income of a member of the upper middle classes." [Helmreich, 1994: 37 quoting Perkin, 1989: no page number given.]

his career in motion. At the same time he was pursuing leisure and outdoor painting activities near Broadway in the Cotswolds. There he first met some of the members of the future Oxford Art Society (1891). Some of these friends later formed the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and also became members of a group of artists known as the Broadway Group. Parsons first met the painter John Fulleylove and the artist, writer and philosopher William Morris during this period.

Amid much speculation of a romantic link, he often visited his cousin, Emily Crabb Olive at Crabb Hall, Tellisford, a small village about two miles from Shawford, five miles northeast of Frome. The Crabbs were a well-to-do family and would have been in contact with the artistic community of the region.⁶⁰

In 1875, aged twenty-nine, Parsons painted the portrait of his cousin Emily Olive fuelling family speculation that this was a labour of love - perhaps unrequited love since a few years later, Emily married Mr. Daniel.⁶¹

Contemporaries certainly thought that their association had a romantic beginning:

Parsons was a cousin of Mrs. Daniel and his painting of her as a young girl under a chestnut tree with Japanese pots and white doves hangs in the Moma exhibition. On the back of the picture is written: *What's this dull town to me, what made it dear?*⁶²

Whatever his affections for Emily, Parsons never married and little is known that is not

⁶⁰ Salmon, Judith. 'A brush with the past.' *An Oxford magazine* March 1993. See also by the same author: *A Century of Art in Oxford, 1891-1991*, Oxford Art Society, 1992. Received by the author of this thesis, from Henry Batterbury in July 1993: Henry's cousin (in a letter of June 1993) wrote him: "Emily Crabb Daniel, Olive, was my grandfather's sister. *The Crabbs were a well to do family living in Crabb Hall*, Tellisford, a small village about two miles from Shawford, where there are Crabb memorials in the church. The painting is dated 1875 when Alfred was 28 years old and Emily 22. She is dressed in mourning presumably for her father, Edmund Crabb Olive who had died the year before. Three years later Emily married another cousin, Henry Olive Daniel, later Dr. Daniel Provost of Worcester College, Oxford." Letter written by Charles Theodore Olive.

⁶¹ Judith Salmon tells a tale of unrequited love in a brief history of the Oxford Art Society, on the occasion of its centenary exhibition held at Moma (Museum of Modern Art) in Oxford. The Oxford Art Society was founded in 1891 and among its early members were Sir Hubert von Herkomer, Edward Burne-Jones, Sir Edward Poynter, Sophia Anne Davenport, John Fulleylove, Alfred Parsons and Edmond New [Salmon, 1993, 'A brush with the past': from a Magazine printed in Oxford]. Photocopy provided by a relative of A. Parsons, with an incomplete reference. After further investigations, the full reference is still not available. See Salmon, Judith. *A Century of Art in Oxford, 1891-1991* published in 1992. Parsons's friend was C. H. O. Daniel [1845-1919], Provost of Worcester College and founder of one of the earliest private presses, preceding William Morris's Kelmscott Press. These presses were created in reaction to the fact that early 19th century artists did not control the entire process of the production of books. "This [the creation of these presses] was an art ideal, inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement." [Gradidge, 1980: 29]

⁶² Where could this quotation be taken from? Parsons, like painters of his period, used quotations from poems as titles for some of his paintings. Discovering the source of this title might throw light upon the matter of Parsons's love life.

speculation about his private relationships.⁶³

After Emily's marriage in 1878, Parsons chose to remain friends with the Daniels, staying with them at Bablockhythe where he painted the sign for the Rose Revived Inn which now hangs in the pub's snug bar.⁶⁴ In early 1882, Parsons visited Emily Daniel in Oxford and designed the printer's bookmark for the Daniel Press.⁶⁵ This connects him with the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement. Emily was working at the Press with her husband, Provost Daniel.

This was to be an important contact. Writers such as Walter Pater and Robert Bridges were publishing at the Daniel Press during this time. Alfred Parsons might have met Walter Pater at some of the numerous receptions held by the Daniels. This assumption is based on Parsons's letter of October 1880 to William Robinson, discussing 'the motive of art', shows his adherence to the aesthetic principles promoted by Pater.⁶⁶

By this time Parsons had been accepted into the highest circles of artistic society which included such people as Alma-Tadema, Frederick Leighton and George Henry Boughton⁶⁷. The latter, now forgotten, was often mentioned in the art magazines of the period. Boughton

⁶³ Some of Parsons's descendants have speculated that he was homosexual; some dread the idea. The research is ambiguous. For example, the following quotation could be read in different ways: "Sir Luke Fildes was naturally interested in the young invader from New York [Abbey] not only by reason of his personal attraction, which was very noticeable, but because some of Sir Luke's own early drawings for *The Graphic* were among those which Abbey had seen and admired in New York, and which helped him in his resolve to visit England." [Lucas, 1921: 139].

⁶⁴ Salmon, Judith. 'A brush with the past.'

⁶⁵ The Daniel Press was in Worcester College in Oxford where the Provost Daniel was head of it. Parsons designed the logo for the press, representing Daniel in the lions' den, with the legend 'Misit Angelum Suum'. [Franklin, 1969:48]

"an Albion hand-press was obtained. Fell type was used from 1877: the press was at Worcester House, 1878-1903: until then in College rooms. From 1904 to 1920 it lay almost unused in the old Garden-house at Worcester House, and in the latter year it was given to the Bodleian." [Daniel, 1921: 56].

⁶⁶ "Walter Pater, a fellow at Brasenose from 1865 until his death and noted lecturer on Plato and Platonics, wrote many works that contributed to the aesthetic and decadent movements. In his most influential work, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), he coined the phrase which later became the aesthetes' slogan: "art for art's sake." Pater promoted the concept of nondoctrinal, nondiscursive, nonutilitarian art.' [Mitchell, 1988, under 'Pater']. "Apostle of a somewhat exaggerated cult of beauty which set a supreme value upon the enjoyment of aesthetic experience" [Osborne, 1992: 821].

"Walter Horatio Pater (1839-1894). English critic and essayist. He was a fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and associated with the Pre-Raphaelites." [Osborne, 1992: 821]

⁶⁷ "Boughton, George Henry (1833-1905). Born near Norwich but family moved to New York not long after birth. Studied in France 1860-62. Began exhibiting at British Institution and Royal Academy, 1862-3. ARA 1879; RA 1896. Member, Royal Inst. Painters in Water-colour, 1879. Painted scenes of peasant life in Brittany and Holland, and historical pictures of Puritan life in New England. *Sketching rambles in Holland* (1885) records travels with Edwin Austin Abbey. Wrote fiction and illustrated books. Had house in Kensington built for him by Norman Shaw. Posthumous retrospective exhibition at Leicester Galleries, 1905: catalogue by A. L. Baldry published." DNB

also shared some affinity with the aesthetic movement:

People forget the commercial value of the [aesthetic] movement, its influence on trade and manufacture. For example: we used to go to France for stuffs and dyes; we not only do so no longer, but France is coming to us for these very things.⁶⁸

The year 1877 was memorable for the Ruskin-Whistler trial but it was also the year in which the SPAB was created. Parsons was to join this society four years later in 1881, and he was to develop friendships and associations with other SPAB members which later led to important commissions, first in illustration work and later in landscape gardening.⁶⁹

In February 1878, Parsons had a studio at 'Hayter House', 238 Marylebone Road, N.W.⁷⁰ Shortly afterwards, he moved to 54 Bedford Gardens, his permanent residence in London until World War One.

⁶⁸ Hatton, Joseph. 'Some Glimpses of artistic London.' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* Vol VI June - Nov. 1883: 828-850: 844

⁶⁹ See the sections on page 101 and page 109 for more information on the commissions for illustrations.

⁷⁰ MS Lindley Library, Corr. to William Robinson of Gravetye, Jane Mary Gilpin bequest 1976. Package 9

3.3 THE MIDDLE YEARS: 1879-1896

Overview

The period 1880 to 1896 are the years in which Parsons established his reputation as an artist and became a public figure in various art societies in the UK, United States and Japan.

During this period, Edwin Austin Abbey, the American artist (1851-1911), and Parsons became close friends - a relationship which remained close for over thirty years until Abbey's death. On a visit to New York, the first of many trips they were to take together, Parsons was introduced through Abbey, to Charles Parsons, the art editor at *Harper's*. Alfred Parsons and Abbey exhibited regularly together in London where they developed numerous friendships in several artistic circles. Abbey's love of eighteenth century England, as shown in his art, was highly prized and opened the doors to the Royal Academy to him before Parsons, but it was Parsons who introduced Abbey to England. Another important Parsons's friendship was the one with Princess Louise.⁷¹ Surviving correspondence to Parsons testifies to the importance of these friendships.⁷²

During this period, Parsons exhibited at a series of galleries which changed over time, as his artistic recognition grew. These galleries ranged from the Dudley Art Society (1881-83) and the Society of Oil Painters (1883-94), to the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours (1883-98). After leaving the Grosvenor in 1887, he joined the New Gallery in 1888. The Fine Art Society, the New English Art Club and Birmingham also figured on the list. Throughout this period, Parsons exhibited every year at the Royal Academy. He illustrated around twenty-five different books and from 1884 he began designing gardens, principally for friends. He occasionally wrote botanical notes for *The Garden* and produced occasional illustrations for the *Daily Telegraph*. He travelled to Japan from early March 1892 to the middle of December 1892. This trip resulted in the publication of *Notes from Japan* in 1896. This horticultural-topographical book marked a turning point in his career, as his illustration work was gradually being supplanted by his landscape gardening practice.

⁷¹ See her short biography on page 372. More will be said about Princess Louise in the next chapter on page 213. She commissioned Parsons to design her garden at Roseneath (or Rosneath, both spellings were used).

⁷² [Ms HWRO 705:1235] Hereford and Worcester Record Office. Worcester Branch County Record Office, St-Helen's, Fish Street, Worcester WR1 2HN. The authors of these letters are listed by alphabetical name from i to lxi.

Consult Dr Nicholas Shrimpton's inventory, to which the author of this thesis has added a little information, in the appendices to this section on page 370. These letters span the years from 1881 to 1915. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema is very well represented and people like Randolph Caldecott, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Austin Dobson, Henry James, Edmund Gosse, Thomas Hardy, Sir Hubert Herkomer, S. Reynolds Hole, Frederick Leighton, Princess Louise Duchess of Argyll, Edward Poynter, John Singer Sargent, Arthur Severn, Leslie Stephen; Victoria, Princess Royal of Great Britain and German Empress are included. Parsons's descendants kept letters from 61 different correspondents.

3.3.1 1878: Parsons's 'Aesthetic' Convictions

3.3.1.1 The Grosvenor

In 1878, Parsons's status as an artist was confirmed with an invitation to exhibit at the Grosvenor, the fashionable new gallery devoted to Aestheticism.⁷³ During the fourteen years 1877 to 1890 in which summer exhibitions were held at the Grosvenor Gallery, 1,028 artists showed 5,091 works there.⁷⁴

The position occupied by the Grosvenor Gallery in London in the 1880's was that of a social and artistic Mecca. Attendance at the private views and Sunday afternoon receptions became *de rigueur* for aspiring social climbers. The sanction of royalty and the aristocracy dictated that the middle classes appreciate and patronise the exhibiting venture - which they did.⁷⁵

The Grosvenor Gallery was the most progressive exhibition space of the Victorian age. (Figure 35 And Figure 36). The initial ambitions of the proprietor of the Grosvenor coincided exactly with those of the Fine Art Society as both galleries sought to foster and encourage both the practitioners and the production of 'high art'.⁷⁶ The paintings and works of art shown at the Grosvenor, by such artists as Burne-Jones, Watts and Whistler and by a host of other figures associated with the Aesthetic Movement, challenged artistic conventions and caused sharp debates on the meaning and purpose of modern art. At the same time, the very existence of this gallery which attracted so much fashionable attention and which lent such great prestige to the artists who exhibited there, served to counter the stultifying influence of the Royal Academy at that time.⁷⁷ Walter Pater and the writer Oscar Wilde, apostles of the aesthetic creed, were part of the circle of the Grosvenor. It was alleged that the Grosvenor Gallery was

⁷³ "Decorative abstraction and rejection of narrative, Aestheticism reflected both the mimetic and the didactic roles of art and placed supreme emphasis on the intrinsic worth of formal values such as colour, line, tone and pattern, finding its source in the writings of the philosopher Victor Cousin (1792-1867) who first coined the phrase *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake), and in the poetry of Théophile Gautier, whose minutely polished style demonstrated his belief in the perfection of form as an end in itself..." [Treuhertz, 1993: 131] For more, read the complete chapter 'The Aesthetic movement' in Treuhertz, 1993: 131-158.

⁷⁴ Newall, 1995: 43

An average of 363 works per exhibition were shown at the Grosvenor, the lowest being 324 works by 171 artists in the summer of 1880 increasing to 413 works by 270 artists in the summer of 1887. This increase must have been a factor that led to several artists breaking with the Gallery. This rate of exhibitions was comparable with that of other galleries, but was much lower than that at the Dudley, where around 600 works were shown every year, or at the Society of British Artists (Suffolk Street) where 928 works were shown at the Annual Winter Exhibition of 1872. See the appendices for some statistics on art galleries on page 376.

⁷⁵ Archambault, 1978: 342

⁷⁶ Archambault, 1978: 23 quoting *The Sketch* 'The Art Publishers of London. II. The Fine Art Society.' XVI, 1896

⁷⁷ Newall, 1995: Leading page.

created in opposition to and as a rival to the Royal Academy. 'In fact, Sir Coutts Lindsay had never announced publicly any intention of challenging the Royal Academy.'⁷⁸ Royal Academicians and Associates were exhibiting at the Grosvenor along with renegade and anti-Establishment painters.⁷⁹ Archambault has clearly demonstrated how the Grosvenor was not 'secessionist' to the Royal Academy.⁸⁰ This explains how Parsons, like many other artists, could exhibit at both establishments simultaneously. It also sheds light on how he gained the popularity that undoubtedly contributed to his elevation to Academic rank in 1897.⁸¹

In actual fact, the Grosvenor Gallery did not separate and sequester its loyal artists from the mainstream of English art, but, on the contrary, served to thrust a number of them into the arena of Establishment respectability and fame.⁸²

Finally, Edwin Austin Abbey himself confirmed the reputation of the Grosvenor Gallery in writing to Charles Parsons, the art editor of *Harper's* in New York:

I have been invited [March 10th (1879)] to exhibit at the 'Grosvenor', which the men seem to think a great deal of here, and shall try to get a little water-colour done. The Secretary of the Gallery, Mr. J. Comyns Carr, is also the English editor of *L'Art*, and would like to have a little sketch of mine to reproduce in that periodical.⁸³

Parsons was now himself 'in the arena of Establishment respectability and fame' and he could seek to climb even higher in the hierarchy of art galleries. He became a close friend of the Comyns Carrs and even designed their garden.⁸⁴

In a letter to William Robinson, written in 1880, the year he joined the Grosvenor Gallery, Parsons confirmed his links to the Aesthetic Movement:

It is raining cats & dogs again so while I smoke the matutinal cigarette I feel moved to say a few words about the motive of art. I do not say that great things may not be done with a distinctly moral purpose, the artist posing as a preacher & wishing to convert others to his belief but the true state of mind in which to produce the greatest artistic work is an

⁷⁸ Archambault, 1978: 339

⁷⁹ At The Grosvenor in 1877, Whistler's 'Nocturne in Black and Gold : The Falling Rocket' was exhibited. Ruskin accused Whistler publicly of "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face"; and the farthing's damages with no costs awarded in the consequent libel action left him bankrupt. [Osborne, 1992: 121] "The quarrel between Whistler and Ruskin was a quarrel between generations." [Staley, 1973: 179]. This event is considered to have marked the beginning of modern art in England.

⁸⁰ Archambault, 1978: 331-345

⁸¹ "Several other Grosvenor exhibitors were assimilated into the national institution as a result of their affiliation with the Gallery. Hubert Herkomer (A.R.A. 1879), John Singer Sargent (A.R.A. 1894), George Boughton (A.R.A. 1879), and William Blake Richmond (A.R.A. 1888)." [Archambault, 1978: 340]

⁸² Archambault, 1978: 339

⁸³ Lucas, 1921: 83. First number published in 1881.

⁸⁴ See the description of the design of 'The Quarter Deck' on page 271.

intense desire to express some beauty that you either see or imagine.⁸⁵

This ‘intense desire to express some beauty’ shows the assimilation by Parsons of a very civilized virtue, one that was embedded in the cultural significance of the art of the 1880s.⁸⁶ Accordingly, the expression of beauty was for Parsons the main objective of painting, and he believed that the artist was in the best position to feel beauty. He adhered beyond any doubt to the belief of ‘Art for Art’s sake’ as the rest of his letter showed:

It is obvious that this desire can only come when the artist feels some truth, or underlying principle, which causes that particular beauty to impress him more than others, & in this way all good art is religious. But his object in painting or writing of it so far as he has a definable object, is not to teach that truth or principle but to make others feel the emotion that he himself feels. Have you ever noticed how feeling is intensified by the fact that it is shared by many people around you at the same time? For instance when you hear some marvellous music, or stirring sentence in a speech? This, I believe, is what makes it possible for the artist to produce the highest quality of work; he is more the expression of his time than an individual mind, & so in Greece men could carve the human figure (they called them Gods but it was the man they really worshipped), & in the middle ages could paint Madonnas; & in our own times can paint landscapes & pictures showing the sad side of human labour because these are now felt deeply as the others were felt by the people of past times.⁸⁷

Although Parsons here shows his awareness of and sympathy for the paintings of poor peasants that were highly fashionable in the 1870s, his own art avoided that kind of subject.⁸⁸

The writer whose extract you sent me⁸⁹ seems to mix up these things considerably - he talks as if Hogarth’s work was of the same kind as Reynolds’, or Turner’s or of the builders of Westminster Abbey. There seems to me to be all the difference in the world between a religious impression (this is not a good word for it but you will know what I mean) & a didactic purpose. I put flowers in a foreground because they are lovely & add to the sentiment of the place, & not to teach the flora of the district. Another thing about which I quarrel with your man is the way he speaks of pleasure ‘merely to give pleasure’ as if it were something inferior, if not bad. But this is another subject & you must be

⁸⁵ MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 12, # 128. Alfred Parsons to William Robinson. Swann Inn, Thatcham, Berks, Tuesday [5, 12, 19 or 26 October 1880?]. Parsons was staying at the Swann Inn with Abbey, sketching for *Harper’s*. Robinson, underlined this letter in blue wax crayon, as he did in his manuscript of *Gravetye*. It was a tradition for editors to correct drafts of document with a blue pencil. “did I not fear the blue pencil and waste-paper basket of the Editor.” [*The Garden*, ‘Henry Nicholson Ellacombe. A book on the venerable canon and his famous garden’ January 17, 1920: 34]

⁸⁶ “For Spielmann ‘art’ was most valuable as a signifier of civilized virtues epitomized not only by the best artists, but also by connoisseurs and collectors on whom he lavished as much praise as he did on the artists themselves.” [Codell, 1989: 158]

⁸⁷ MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 12, # 128

⁸⁸ Clausen and Herkomer did paintings of this type.

⁸⁹ It appears that the writer of the text Robinson had sent to Parsons was most likely a critic who did not approve of the new aesthetic ‘sect’. More research is needed to discover which article they were discussing.

getting weary of talk: I must write an article one day on the poetic mind & motive.⁹⁰

Parsons concluded his letter on the importance of the artist's sentimental vision of his period, a vision to be shared with his public:

The artist's mind seems to me to be like a rainauge which collects all the little driblets of sentiment & enables us to measure the feelings of his time.⁹¹

This letter was written in 1880, two years after Parsons had met Robinson, and the two were by then close friends. It was also written at the height of the popularity of the Grosvenor Gallery. As the controversy about the Aesthetic Movement had appeared in several art magazines,⁹² it is understandable that Robinson would be reading a critique of the Aesthetic Movement, then writing to discuss it with Parsons.

The importance of this letter to Robinson is confirmation that Parsons adhered to the principle of 'art for art's sake' advocated by the aesthetes.⁹³



Figure 12 Alfred Parsons. Impressionistic Watercolour. 1882 Private collection.

⁹⁰ MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 12, # 128

⁹¹ MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 12, # 128

⁹² Archambault, 1978: passim

⁹³ See the article by Dr Nicholas Shrimpton Pater and the 'aesthetical sect' in *Comparative Criticism* XVII 1995.

3.3.1.2 Parsons's style of painting

As Julie Codell mentions, typical and conventional artists like Alfred Parsons are an important part of the artistic life of turn-of-the-century Britain:

The late Victorian art world was not dominated by the modern avant-garde sensibility, which was only then just beginning to take on its current shape and authority. Although we have studied the lives of avant-garde artists thoroughly, our understanding of the lives of more conventional, economically successful, and typical artists must also be expanded, if we are to understand the concrete material and social conditions of artistic life.⁹⁴

Parsons was a disciple of Ruskin. The following two excerpts from *Notes in Japan*, provide a clue to his philosophy of painting:

The lotus is one of the most difficult plants which it has ever been my lot to try and paint; ... The leaves are so large and so full of modelling that it is impossible to generalize them as a mass; each one has to be carefully studied. ... Japanese drawings of flowers - and they usually draw them beautifully - are often influenced in some way by a tradition. The man who invented the method was a true impressionist, he seized what appeared to him characteristic of the plant, and insisted on that to the exclusion of other truths, thus founding a mannerism which all following artists imitated.⁹⁵

Parsons goes on to explain how the spots on the lotus stems were enlarged more and more as the drawing was simply copied from Japanese artist to artist⁹⁶:

and so it will be until some original genius arises who will not be content with other people's eyes, but will dare to look for himself, and he may perhaps, without abandoning Japanese methods, get nearer to nature, and start a renaissance in Japanese art.⁹⁷

This statement clearly links Parsons with John Ruskin. And this one does so even more:

The everlasting question in art is the imitation of nature; it has never been carried further in certain directions than by Millais and his pre-Raphaelite brethren, or in others than by Manet, Monet, and the modern French, but no one can put in everything; look at a simple bunch of leaves in sunlight against a wall, and think how long it would take to really imitate all their complexities of form, color [sic], and light and shade; some facts can only be given by ignoring others, and the question what is the important thing which must be insisted on is the personal affair to each individual artist in every country where art is unfettered and alive. But in Japanese, as in Byzantine and other Eastern arts, this question is still decided by the practice of past generations, and it will take all the vitality of a strong man to infuse new life into it without destroying its many exquisite qualities. Perhaps when Japanese artists absorb its spirit instead of merely trying to imitate its methods, Western art may help in the direction of freedom; at present I fear that its influence has

⁹⁴ Codell, 1989: 156

⁹⁵ Parsons, 1896: 101

⁹⁶ Menpes, 1901, also discussed Japanese artists methods of work. He made it clear that the artist was using his memory while observing the real object of his eventual drawing.[Menpes, 1901: 63-5] Kiosai, the Japanese artist Menpes described was not a mannerist, i.e. one who copied other Japanese artists. Parsons was against mannerism, not against the use of memory.

⁹⁷ Parsons, 1896:101-102

done more harm than good.⁹⁸

This next quotation from Kemp's biography of Ruskin states clearly that even Ruskin believed that imitation of nature could be surpassed; thus when Parsons writes "and the question what is the important thing which must be insisted on is the personal affair to each individual artist in every country where art is unfettered and alive", he is still linking himself with Ruskin:

'Go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her labouriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.' The phrase 'rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing' has often been interpreted as a defence of naturalism, of a purely mimetic art. But those who quote it out of context overlook the fact that Ruskin was advising the beginning painter, and also that he was deliberately exaggerating, because he was trying to put across ideas which were not generally accepted. The sentence does not imply that, beyond the initial stages, art is or even could be mere imitation of nature.⁹⁹

Other influences on Parsons can be identified. Parsons exhibited at the Grosvenor for eight years, from 1878 to 1886.¹⁰⁰ Mostly he exhibited Barbizon-like landscape paintings and images of flowers.¹⁰¹ Barbizon was a village on the outskirts of the Forest of Fontainebleau in France. The members of this school were all primarily landscape-painters:

Their feeling for nature, amounting almost to a cult, may be regarded as a form of Romantic revolt from the drabness of urban life and coincided with a longing among the urban population in expanding cities to renew the contact with nature.¹⁰²

Jean-François Millet¹⁰³ and Jean-Baptiste Corot were later associated with this French group. Started in the latter half of the 1840s by its leader Théodore Rousseau, it became very popular in the eighteen sixties. Several articles were published on the Barbizon school, including some by Robert Louis Stevenson.¹⁰⁴ The Barbizon school became influential in England, thus setting the context for the young Alfred Parsons. The paintings were subtle in light, especially when compared to the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings. A sketch was done in the

⁹⁸ Parsons, 1896:102

⁹⁹ [Kemp, 1983-1990: 87] quoting and commenting on [Ruskin 1903-12, III: 624]

¹⁰⁰ See the list of Parsons's works exhibited at that famous gallery in the appendices on page 386.

¹⁰¹ Helmreich, 1994: 73.

¹⁰² Osborne, 1992: 106-7 'Barbizon School'

¹⁰³ Millet's archetypal images of rural labour were widely known (in England), but the French artist most influential on the British was Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-84) who made his name at the Paris salon of 1878 with 'Les Foins'. [Treuhertz, 1993:194].

¹⁰⁴ *The Cornhill Magazine*. 'Forest Notes' XXXIII, May 1876: 545-61

open air and the painting was finished in the studio, in contrast to the impressionists who finished their work in the open.

The author Alfred Lys Baldry mentioned that Parsons made several sketches from nature and then finished the work in his studio by the help of the material collected.¹⁰⁵ This clearly linked him with the tradition of the Barbizon school of painting. Another painter, under the influence of the Barbizon School, had Parsons's favour. On 12 May 1880, Edwin Abbey met Alfred Parsons in Paris and the two visited the Salon of Paris.¹⁰⁶ They admired 'Joan of Arc'. (Figure 21). From that day its author, Bastien-Lepage, became their idol. Parsons admired various French painters. In a letter to William Robinson he mentioned Corot, Daubigny, Fantin Latour and Bonnat.¹⁰⁷

For pragmatic reasons, artists such as Parsons, although they exhibited at prestigious galleries such as the Grosvenor, never took strong positions in controversial artistic debates, with the exception of Whistler who paid dearly for doing so. As a result, the sales of their art never failed to bring in a comfortable income.¹⁰⁸ Parsons in particular managed to please everyone, from the conservatives of the Royal Academy to the modern painters of the Grosvenor or the New English Art Club. Parsons's paintings ranked high in the art market. To own a 'Parsons's' was a sign of economic success, and an indication that the collector was linking himself to the historic and traditional ties of English culture.¹⁰⁹ Later on, having a

¹⁰⁵ Baldry, 1899: 152-6

¹⁰⁶ [Lucas, 1921: 102-03] "I Have been profoundly stirred by my sight of the pictures in Paris (...) The reason the Salon looks so mean is because Lepage so utterly swamps and bangs the lot. But they are no where in comparison. I think 'Joan' the greatest picture of this age - those I have seen- and pretty nearly the greatest - i.e. the most emotional - of any other." Edwin Abbey also appreciated Whistler "People generally have a very vague idea of Whistler's work (...) I consider him a very tremendous artist." [Lucas, 1921: 85] The author of this thesis assumes that Parsons too shared these opinions, along with his best artist friend, Abbey.

¹⁰⁷ "19 May [?] / Alfred Parsons / London / 54, Bedford Gardens, Kensington. W. / My dear Robinson / Many thanks for the cheque for the watercolours; I am sorry I forgot to have that frame touched up- I think you are very wise to get your portrait done by Fantin. That is a very fine portrait by him in the first room at the Academy. You ought to ask him first what his price is for a portrait- Bonnat would do a very strong thing, but his price would be much higher. There are fine landscapes by Corot in the Luxembourg; notice particularly some small ones of his earlier period in the narrow passage gallery- And one of Daubigny's that used to hang in a room to the left- a rocky river with a shallow place in it. We are very busy getting things ready for this Institute ball- I shall be glad when it is over- Yours ever/ Alfred Parsons" [RHS Ms Gilpin Bequest, Package 12: # 129.]

¹⁰⁸ It is interesting to speculate that to others, including Leighton and Alma-Tadema, all friends and neighbours of Parsons in Kensington, he would be diplomatic. See the appendices for more on the prices of Parsons's paintings, starting on page 376.

¹⁰⁹ Like many other artists of his generation, Parsons had a long correspondence with Marion Harry Spielmann. Spielmann's roles as broker and scholar and the major influence he sustained in so many artists' careers reflect the effects of the expansion of speculative capitalism into the art market in England." [Codell, 1989: 158]

garden designed by Alfred Parsons would carry a similar 'cachet'.¹¹⁰ 'Progressive conservatism' would be the category that suits him best, in painting for the spontaneity of some of his published sketches, but specially in landscape gardening.

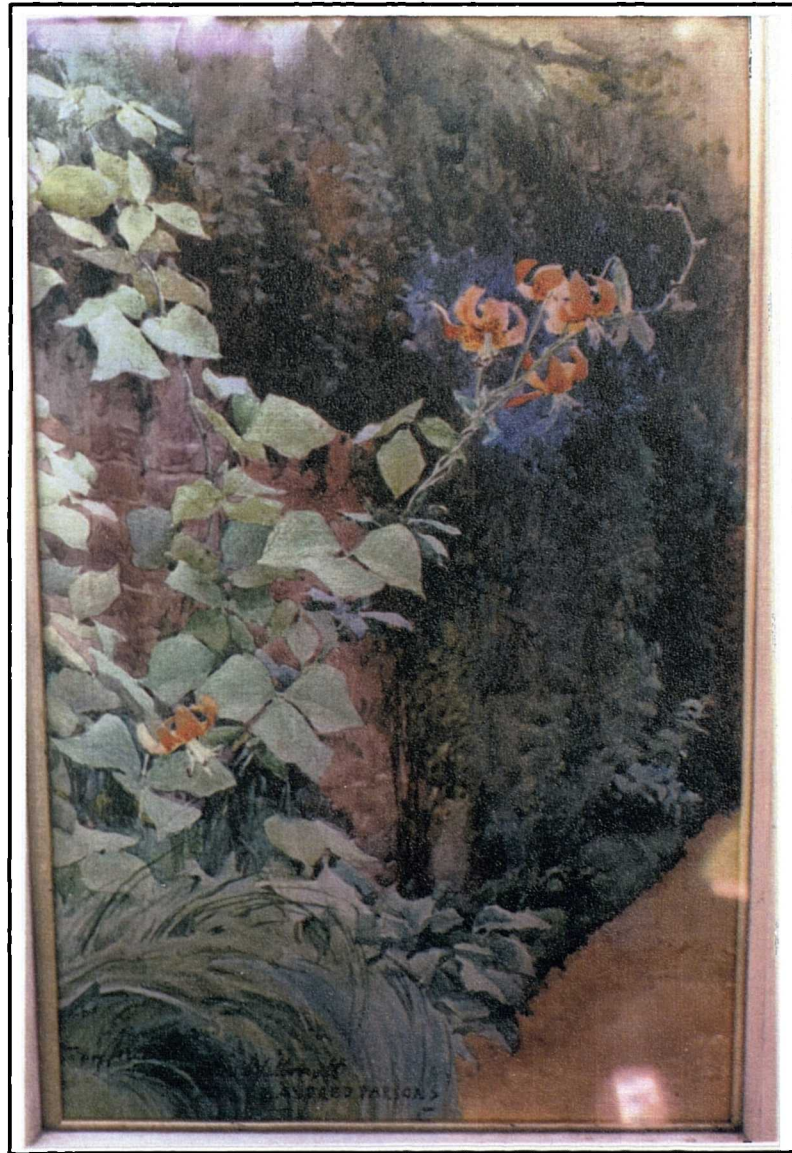


Figure 13 'To my friend Ellen Willmott' Private collection.

¹¹⁰ "The complex and symbolic cultural associations surrounding an art work further elevated critics and collectors in their cultural status, not only for their taste but also for their new roles as civic-minded contributors to national cultural life. These qualitative values which the collector assimilated (as art became a sign of intelligence, taste, social acceptability, economic success, historic and traditional ties) created an art market in which much more than labour or a commodity was purchased." [Codell, 1989: 157] Codell quotes Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* Yale U. P., London, 1985.



Figure 14 An early landscape watercolour signed 'AP 1878'. Property of Christopher Parsons.

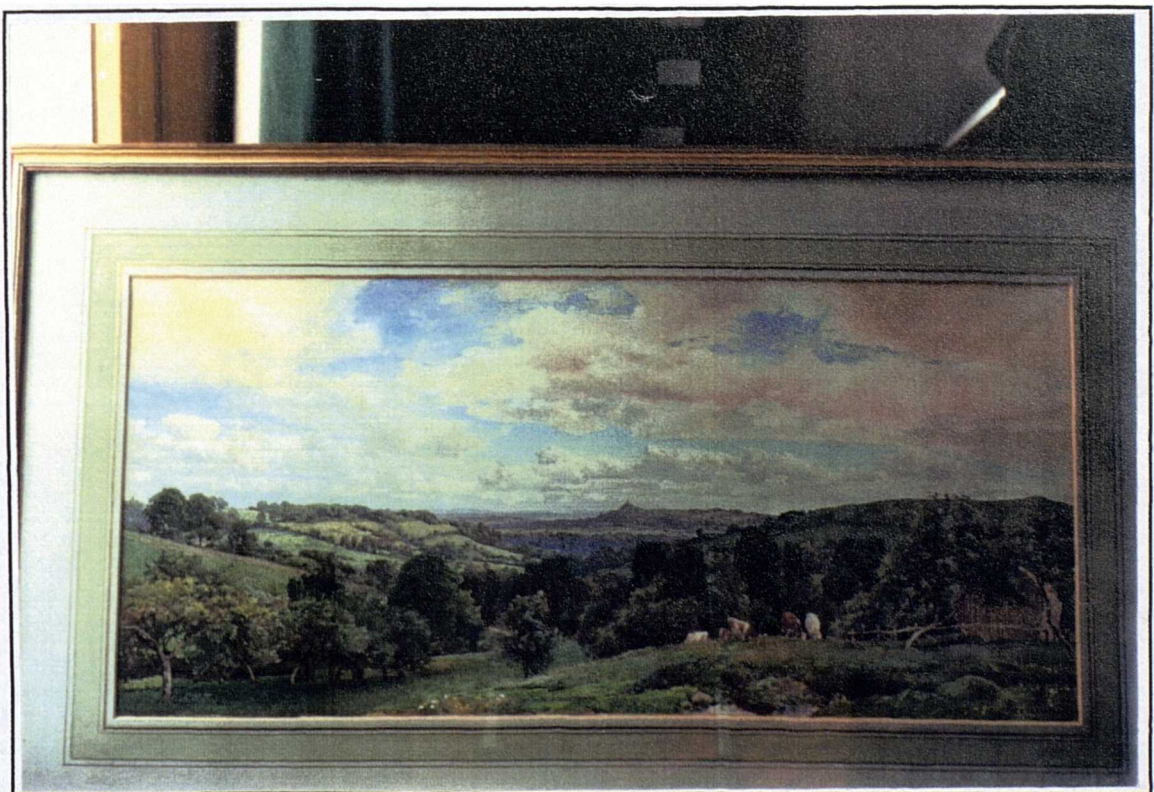


Figure 15 A landscape. Signed Alfred Parsons. Property of Sir Richard Parsons.

3.3.2 1878 on: Parsons's work as an illustrator

Summary

In several short biographies, Parsons is described mainly as an illustrator. This was only one aspect of his career, but it was also an aspect that brought him fame. After ten years of landscape painting, from 1868 to 1878 - and he was never to stop landscape painting - Parsons expanded the nature of his work to include illustrations for books and horticultural magazines, mainly from 1878 to 1896.¹¹¹ These works were engraved on wood, a traditional technique favoured by Parsons.

3.3.2.1 Parsons's style of illustration

Parsons's illustration style owes much to the Pre-Raphaelites and the Idyllic School or 'Open Air' school, the two main stylistic strands for illustration at that period. The Pre-Raphaelites were essentially literary artists and, like them, Parsons was often inspired by literature when painting.¹¹² One need only look at the list of titles of the articles he illustrated to be convinced of the literary subjects of Parsons's illustrations. The idyllic school included artists like Pinwell, Houghton, Robert Barnes, William Small, Sandys, Mary Ellen Edwards, Frederick Walker and J. W. North.¹¹³ These artists were concerned with the depiction of everyday scenes.¹¹⁴ To this list should be added Howard Pyle, who worked for *Harper's* at the same period. When Paul Goldman describes J. W. North as 'the only genuine landscape artist of the Idyllic group and indeed one of the very few of the entire period'¹¹⁵, the author of this thesis strongly believes that Parsons was a second. These illustrators worked in a precise

¹¹¹ See the list of articles illustrated by Alfred Parsons on page 362.

¹¹² [Goldman, 1994: Chapter Five: 'The artists': 77-96] The illustrations by John William North are quite similar to Parsons'. See 'The Home Pond' from *A Round of Days* published in 1866 and 'The Four Bridges' drawn by North in 1867 (also published that year in *Poems* by Jean Ingelow). These illustrations must have had quite an influence on Parsons when he was learning art at the age of twenty. J. W. North was exhibiting at the New Gallery in the 1880s and 1890s when Parsons was on the selection committee. North also exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. North was living in Washford, Taunton, near Frome where Parsons had spent his childhood and early formative years.

¹¹³ Goldman, 1994: 87

¹¹⁴ "A further clue to the exact meaning applied to these illustrations is offered in the introduction to *A Round of Days* 1866, a work sometimes considered typically Idyllic in spirit. Here we read, 'As life consists of "a round of days" that title has been chosen to designate a collection of Poems and Pictures representing everyday scenes, occurrences and incidents in various phases of existence.'" [Goldman, 1994: 87-88]

¹¹⁵ Goldman, 1994: 90

figurative style with a touch of romanticism and nostalgia. Parsons's scenes often referred to historic settings, or related to the works of great poets like Coleridge, Tennyson or Wordsworth.

While contemporary, the poetry he illustrated was largely influenced by the poetry of the seventeenth century. Austin Dobson and Richard Jefferies were amongst the contemporary writers he favoured. Dobson was a poet, largely inspired by the French 'rondeau' of the fifteenth century and Jefferies was a writer about the rural countryside.

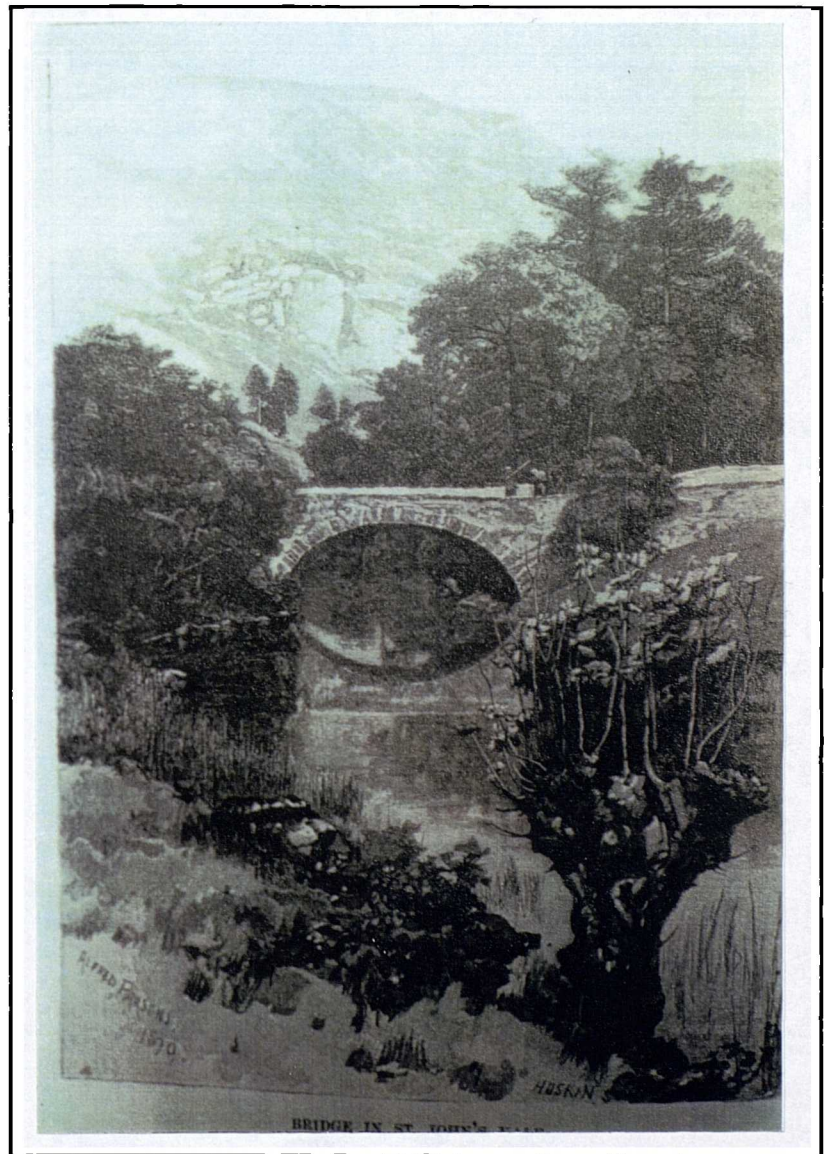


Figure 16 'Bridge in St John's Vale.' [Harper's I: 346]

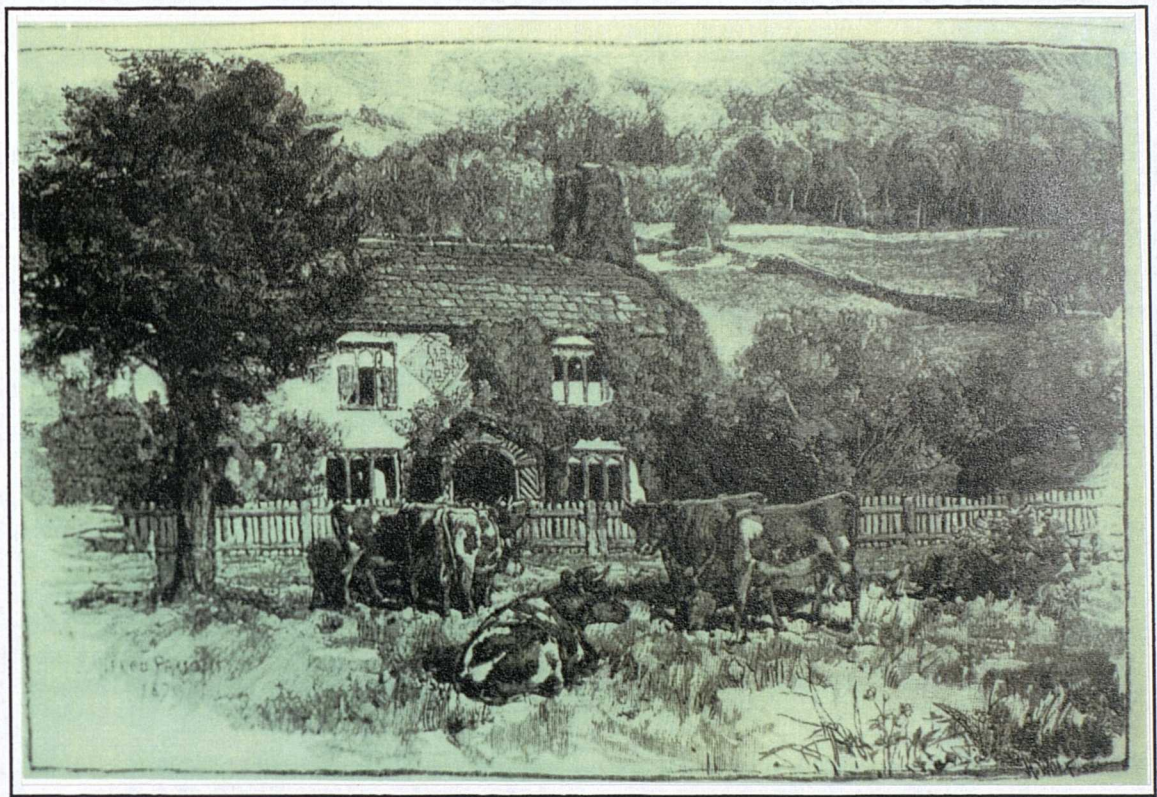


Figure 17 Hartley Coleridge's Home. Signed 'Alfred Parsons 1879' [*Harper's I*: 176]

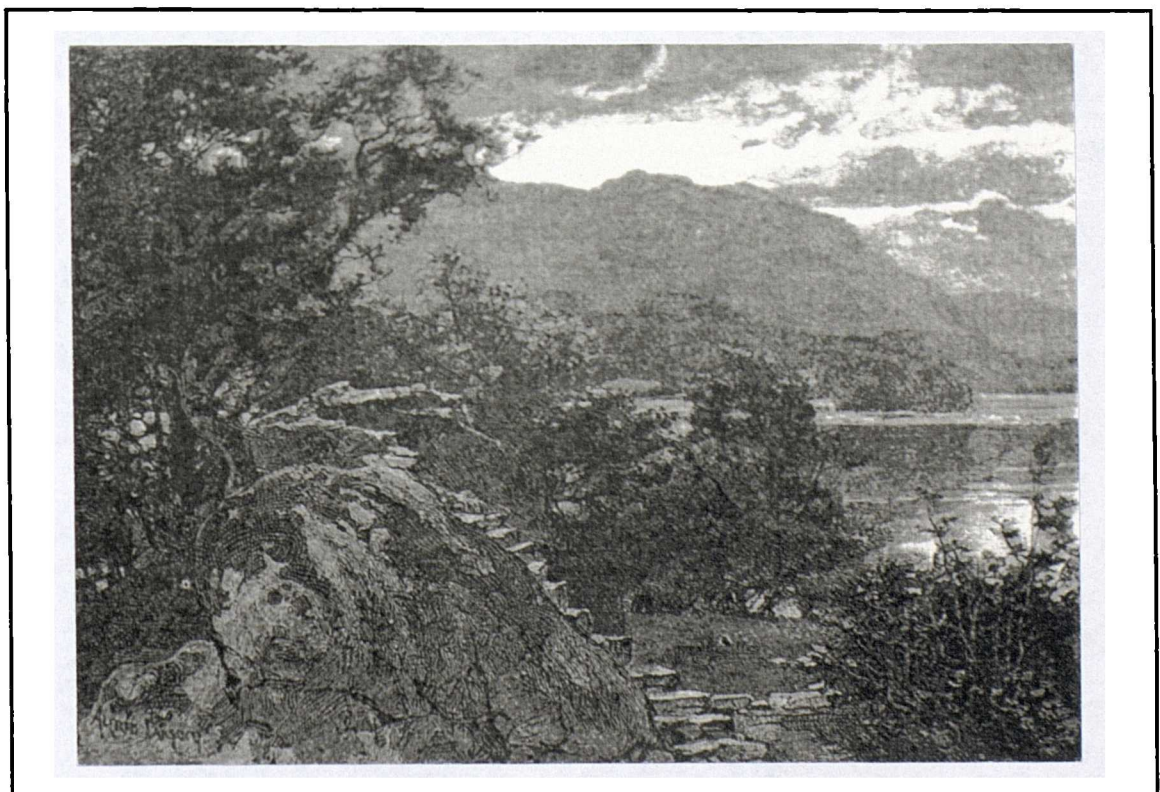


Figure 18 Wordsworth's Seat, Grasmere. [*Harper's I*: 339]

3.3.2.2 Magazine illustrations for William Robinson

The first known evidence of Parsons illustrating a magazine is dated 15 June 1878. This was in *The Garden*, published by William Robinson. In 1884, at the founding meeting of the Art Workers' Guild, Parsons expressed the wish that the Society would aid wood engraving.¹¹⁶ This love of a traditional engraving technique was shared with Robinson. The title of his first article was "The Flower Garden - Hardy Orchids". The illustrations for 'The Wild Garden in Early Spring' were printed from a wood block. Robinson was proud of it, as it occupied twenty-five percent of the surface, in the centre of the page.¹¹⁷ The drawing was one of a series that Parsons was preparing for Robinson's books *The Wild Garden* and *The English Flower Garden*.¹¹⁸ Both books were to be published five years later. This drawing represented the ideal symbol of Robinson's lifelong battle against the formal garden.

Parsons produced illustrations for *The Garden* on a regular basis until the turn of the century. Robinson used a minimum of eighty-five illustrations by Parsons between 1878 and 1906.¹¹⁹ Three reasons may explain this interruption in 1906: -1. William Robinson was no longer editor of *The Garden*; -2. Photography had largely taken over from the use of wood blocks to produce illustrations; -3. Parsons was starting his landscape gardening practice on a serious basis. Robinson reused some Parsons's drawings in his various magazines and books, even after 1906.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ See the transcript of these minutes in the footnote on page 127.

¹¹⁷ *The Garden* XIII June 15, 1878: 565

¹¹⁸ In 'A Perennial Favourite : The English Flower Garden', Judith B. Tankard writes "Undoubtedly one of the most important books on horticulture and gardening philosophy at the turn of this century...Originally published in 1883, it remained in print for over fifty years during the author's lifetime and saw fifteen editions, each one of which was slightly different from its predecessor. The book was the gardening bible of the day and seemed to be a publishing success story that no other book or author could rival." [Tankard, 1991: 74]

¹¹⁹ See the list of Parsons's illustrations to *The Garden* in the appendices on page 364. Though the author of this thesis finds Parsons's illustrations more 'artistic' than many of the others in *The English Flower Garden*.

¹²⁰ At the beginning of the century, copyrights often (automatically) belonged to the publishers, not to the artists.

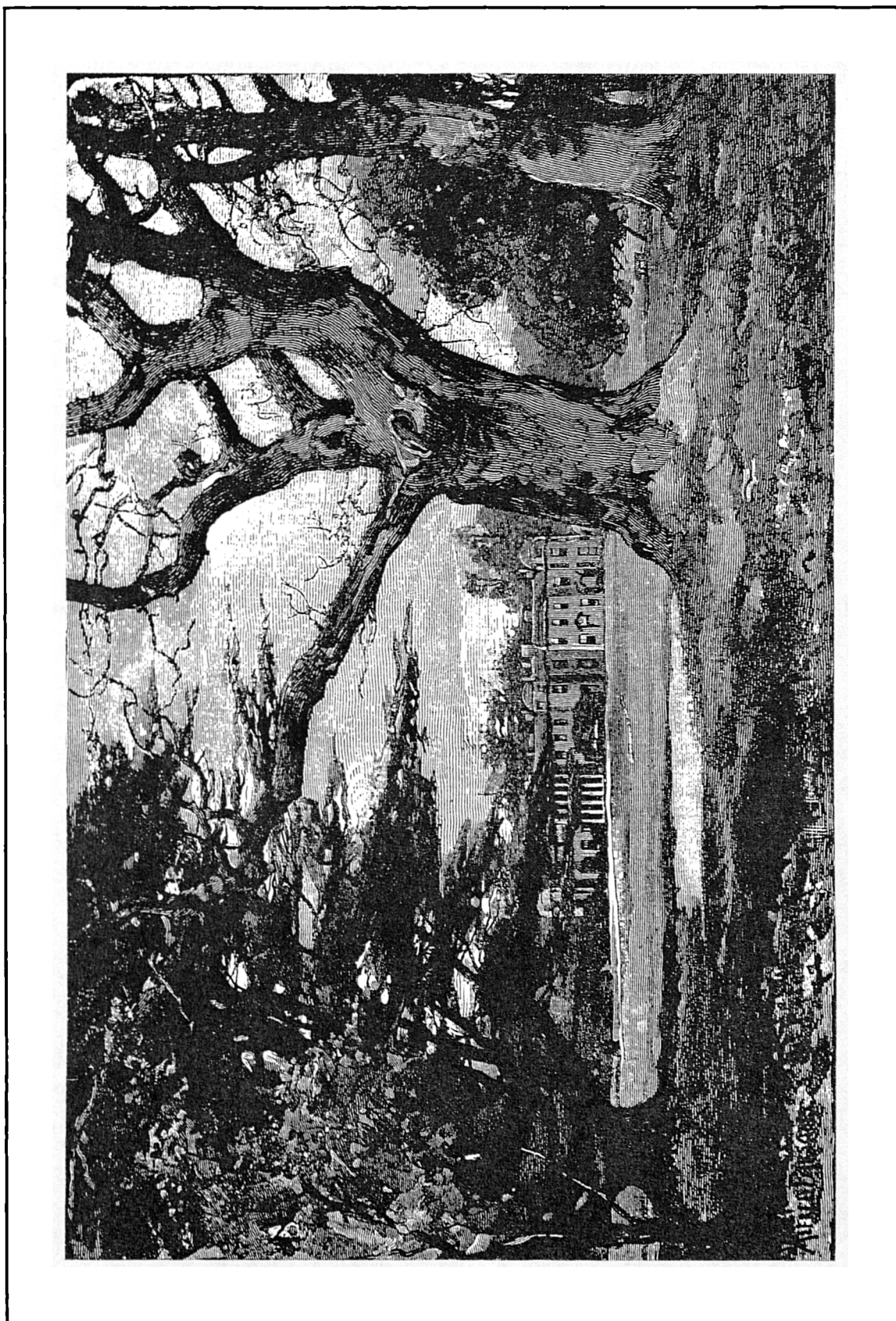


Figure 19 'Goodwood Park front. Alfred Parsons. 6 May 1880' [Robinson, 1883: xvi]

3.3.2.3 Magazine illustrations for other editors

Parsons also produced illustrations for the editors of other magazines. *The Century* and *The Pall Mall* also published his drawings as he steadily did such illustration work for over 15 years, from 1880 to 1896.¹²¹ An article by Robert Louis Stevenson, on the school of painters of Fontainebleau, was published in *Cornhill Magazine* in May 1876. Parsons is reputed to have illustrated another early edition of this article.¹²²

At first, Parsons acted as a topographical journalist for *Harper's* magazine.¹²³ *Harper's* magazine had been founded in New York in 1850 as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. In its first years, it serialized the works of the popular English novelists such as Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot. Later, these were displaced by American writers such as W. D. Howells, Mark Twain and Booth Tarkington.¹²⁴ *Harper's* attracted readers by printing outstanding illustrations, including Thomas Nast's cartoons, and by crusading for political and civic reforms.¹²⁵

Parsons's first drawings for *Harper's* were dated 1880. The accompanying article, 'The English Lakes and their Genii', was by Moncure D. Conway. It was included in the first number of *Harper's* European edition.¹²⁶ In that edition, the article began on page seven, and it is significant that Parsons's drawings were amongst the first to be seen in the magazine. One of *Harper's* objectives was to sell the dream of England to Americans, and the dream of America to the English. In another of these illustrated articles, Parsons went down the River Avon by

¹²¹ See the list of his illustrated works on page 360.

¹²² The source of this information is in [McConkey, 1995: 74].

To date the author of this thesis has looked at three versions of Stevenson's article. The first, 'Forest Notes' published in *Cornhill Magazine*, XXXIII, May 1876: 545-61, contains no Parsons's illustrations. The second, 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters' in *The Magazine of Art*, May and June 1884: 265-72; 341-45, is illustrated by A. W. Henley and engraved by various 'sculptori': Balc Z., H. Werdmuller, J. Harmsworth and J. G. Bayley. Finally there were no illustrations in 'Fontainebleau: Village Communities of Painters' in the *Complete Works of Stevenson Sketches, Criticisms, Lay Morals and other Essays*, Heinemann, Chatto and Windus: Cassell, Longmans Green & Co. and Scribner's son, 1923: 430-456. The present author's letter to Mr McConkey remained unanswered. More research must be done to determine whether and how Parsons met Stevenson. Was it through Henry James?

¹²³ His commissions for *Harper's* were more regular than the occasional ones for *Cornhill Magazine* in the mid-seventies, or for *The Century Magazine* in the mid-eighties.

More research is needed to assess all of Parsons's work for these magazines.

¹²⁴ *Encyclopaedia of the arts*. Thames and Hudson. Editor Herbert Read, 1966.

¹²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1992. Micropaedia Vol 5 under Harper Brothers: 715

¹²⁶ 'The English Lakes and their Genii.' [Conway, Moncure D. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Vol 1 Dec 1880-May 1881: 7-27.]

canoe, sketching along the way and producing some ninety-six illustrations which appeared in *The Warwickshire Avon*.¹²⁷ Parsons also went on another such expedition, this time down the River Danube. Sixty-one sketches from this journey became part of *The Danube from the Black Forest to the Black Sea*.¹²⁸ Parsons would sketch plants and topographical views along the way.¹²⁹ In many instances, these journeys also led to exhibitions of his work being mounted, several at the Fine Art Society in London. Parsons's last contribution to *Harper's*, dated 1894-95, was a series of articles about his travels to Japan.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Parsons made this trip with a good friend, the poet Arthur Quiller-Couch, known as Q. During these travels, Q. wrote a poem which he afterwards sent to Parsons. It does not figure in the book, although on page 123 there is a sketch of the bridge. This poem refers to England's historic battles as having had no effect on the imperturbable and faithful mother nature. It ends on the spring awakening of the aconite, one of the more symbolic metaphors for the English Wild Garden. Parsons was an apostle of the English Wild Garden, and could fully appreciate Q.'s poem. A deeper analysis might reveal other connotations in the last stanza, possibly referring to a more intimate relationship. Parsons's friendship with Q. has still to be investigated. Peter Goodchild and Brent Elliott helped the author to decipher Q's handwriting.

'Eckington Bridge, / i / O pastoral heart of England! Like a psalm/ Of green earth telling with a quiet beat-/ O wave into the sunset flowing calm! / O tire'd [sic] lark descending on the weat! / Lies it all peace beyond that western fold/ Where now the lingering shepherd sees his star/ Rise upon Malvern? Paints an Age of Gold/ Yon cloud with prophecies of linke'd [sic] ease / Lulling this land, with hills drawn up like [these?]/ To drowse beside her implements of war? / ii / Man shall outlast his battles. They have swept/ Avon from Naseby Field to Severn Ham./ And Evesham's dedicated stones have stepped/ Down to the dust with Montfort's oriflamme./ Nor the red tree, nor the reflected tower/ Abides: but yet these eloquent grooves remain,/ Worn in the sandstone parapet, hour by hour,/ By labouring bargemen where they shifted ropes./ E'en so shall man turn back from violent hopes/ To Adam's cheer, and toil with spade again./ iii / Ay, the mother Nature, to whose lap/ Like a repentant child at length he hies,/ Not in the whirlwind or the thunder clap/ Proclaims her more tremendous mysteries:/ But when in winter's chamber, seal'd [sic] of light,/ With still small voices divinelier whispering-/ Lifting the sunk head of the aconite,/ Feeding with sap of hope the hazel shoot-/ She feels God's finger active at the root,/ Turns in her sleep, & murmurs of the Spring./ Q.

See the appendices, section 7.6 for more on Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch.

2973 copies were printed of *The Warwickshire Avon*, Harper's had only 1370 left on hand by 1891, (probably the rest were sent to England). [MS Colombia University Libraries. Special Collection. Harper Bros. Reel #34, Harper Royalty Books Acts, Dec 1891: 26-7. Parsons is #878 entry in Harper's books.]

¹²⁸ Millet, 1892: 5,6

¹²⁹ [Lucas, 1921: passim] refers to Parsons 'botanical note-books'. The Royal Watercolour Society, at Bankside Gallery, owns what the author of this thesis believes to be a very special botanical notebook. It consists of 80 elaborate drawings of plants, in pen and ink. They were executed from 15 Sept 1880 to 7 May 1918. This must have been a valuable record for Alfred Parsons, since he identified and dated every drawing, making sure that it contained one drawing per year. See the list of these drawings in the appendices on page 385.

¹³⁰ 'The Japanese Spring': 103-116 ; 'Early Summer in Japan': 522-534 [Parsons, Alfred. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* XXVIII, June - Nov 1894.]

'A Time of the Lotus': 51-64; 'Fujisan' 269-282; 'Autumn in Japan': 767-779; 'Some Wonderings in Japan': 900-13. [Parsons, Alfred. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* XXIX, Dec- May 1894-95]



Figure 20 'The Bridge.' Eckington Bridge. Signed Alfred Parsons. Private collection



Figure 21 'Jeanne d'Arc' by Bastian (sic) Lepage. [*Harper's* I]

3.3.2.4 The horticultural journalist

In contrast, little is known about Parsons, the horticultural journalist who himself wrote articles. Not only did he illustrate, he also wrote several articles on horticulture for *The Garden* and for *Gardening Illustrated*. There follows what the author of this thesis believes to be firsthand proof of his contribution to horticultural writing. The first known evidence of Parsons's journalistic efforts is found in the 1880 issue of *The Garden*, where an 'A. P.' signed *The New Zealand Reed at Orchardleigh*. Orchardleigh was, and still is, an estate very near Frome which Parsons often drew at the beginning of his career. In the article, Parsons acts as a topographical or botanical journalist. His writings are illustrated by his own sketches.¹³¹ The article is written in a neutral style. It does not say 'the artist sketched' or 'the author of this article sketched' - it says 'The annexed sketch of *Arundo conspicua* was made from a plant in the gardens of Orchardleigh Park, Somerset, the seat of the Rev. Arthur Duckworth...'. This neutral style of writing was common at the time. Like other articles in *The Garden*, it was signed by initials only 'A. P.'¹³² For now it is sufficient to assume that this 'A. P.' was Alfred Parsons because: first he knew the botanical names of plants¹³³; secondly, he was himself raised in Somerset where the article was set and thirdly, other similar articles from this period were signed 'Alfred Parsons's in full.

Parsons most extensive journalistic contribution to *The Garden* must be 'An artist's Notes' - two fully signed articles published in January and February 1881. In these sketches Parsons allowed himself the spontaneity of the Impressionists.¹³⁴ The first article refers to Parsons visiting Greenlands and Fawley Court to sketch plants, trees and cottages. These two places are near Henley-on-Thames. They are important old gardens with sufficiently aged and attractive specimens of trees to draw. In the latter articles he visited Bucklebury Common,

¹³¹ Topographical artists used to describe the places they visited through text and original drawings. This was a common practice in the 1880s for artists to earn a living.

¹³² [A. P. 'The Flower Garden - The New Zealand reed at Orchardleigh' *The Garden* XVIII Nov. 13, 1880: 479.] Almost all articles in *The Garden* magazine, if signed, were signed with initials only.

¹³³ "Parsons says the *Vaccinium* sample is - *Pennsylvanicum*, and there is no such Plant as - *Pennsylvaticum*." [March 4th 1903, MsSRO 1/5, Parsons to Tudway]

¹³⁴ Parsons saw the first exhibition of the Impressionists in London in the seventies, but he resisted this style of painting. There seems to be an ambivalence in his attitude when he joined the NEAC, for just a few years. Parsons gave Ellen Willmott a little water-colour with the dedication: "To my friend Ellen Willmott". This watercolour is almost Impressionist in style and leads the author to believe that Parsons had some sympathies for Impressionism, but he would not adhere to this way of painting preferring to respect Ruskin's ways. (Figure 12)

Highclere and Erleigh Court near Reading to sketch mainly the most picturesque plants and trees.¹³⁵ In these writings, Parsons shared Ruskin's and Robinson's ideas about art and nature: "it struck me, of the way in which Nature combines beauty with utility, and of the wisdom in such matters of taking any hint that she throws out."¹³⁶

Another very good journalistic effort was the article on Goodwood Park published in November 1880. (Figure 19) It was a long article of three full pages with four large illustrations by Alfred Parsons.¹³⁷ In the 27 November 1880 issue of *The Flower Garden* Parsons wrote and sketched around 'an old Elizabethan house at Beckington, Somersetshire'.¹³⁸

The following year in *The Garden*,¹³⁹ 'A. P.' signed an article entitled 'Selwood Cottage, near Frome' and offered some learned horticultural comments. This article reappeared later in *Gardening Illustrated*.¹⁴⁰ The new title was 'A Cottage in Somersetshire'. The re-edited text is in a neutral style: all references to names of owners or gardeners are removed. The main illustration of Selwood Cottage was shown for the third time in 1883, in *The English Flower Garden*.¹⁴¹ All these articles helped progressively to establish Parsons's reputation as a landscape-gardener.

His masterpiece of horticultural journalism is without a doubt the series of articles for

¹³⁵ [Alfred Parsons 'An Artist's Notes' *The Garden*, XIX, Jan 22 1881: 94-95] and [Alfred Parsons 'An Artist's Notes' *The Garden* XIX, Feb 12 1881: 176-177]

¹³⁶ Alfred Parsons 'An Artist's Notes' *The Garden*, XIX, Jan 22 1881: 95

¹³⁷ ['Country Seats and Gardens of Great Britain - Goodwood' *The Garden*, XVIII, Nov 20, 1880: 507-509, 511, 515, 522]. At the beginning of the second sentence of this article, in: 'As seen in our engraving', the 'our' refers to Parsons himself. The following elements of vocabulary and choice of adjectives qualifying the visual perceptions all suggest that this article is by the artist Alfred Parsons: 'delightful', 'beauty', 'contrast', 'superbly', 'prettily', 'scenery', 'panoramic view'; or sentences like '...the Cork Oak, which are singularly interesting, especially when the morning sun gives to the bossed bark a beautiful golden-brown hue.' (...) 'The bark of these trees is so beautiful, that no opportunity should be lost to grow the Cork Oak in districts where it does well'.

¹³⁸ 'The White Lily in a Somersetshire Garden' [Parsons, Alfred. *The Garden*, XVIII Nov. 27, 1880: 535]. The first Parsons family home was in Beckington.

¹³⁹ 'Selwood Cottage near Frome' [A. P. *The Garden* XX Aug 27, 1881: 205]

¹⁴⁰ 'A Cottage in Somersetshire' [Parsons, Alfred. *Gardening Illustrated* April 21 1883: 87]

¹⁴¹ Robinson, 1883: xxvi

Harper's that became in 1896 *Notes in Japan*.¹⁴² F. W. Burbidge¹⁴³, who was a good friend of Parsons, wrote this laudatory review of this book:

Mr. Alfred Parsons's handy little volume on Japan is of particular interest to all who are fond of the grace and beauty of Japanese flowers and trees. (...) *Notes in Japan* will be quite a revelation to garden lovers as to the flowers and gardens of Japan, and those who have not as yet seen it will be likely to read it and to admire the sketches with much genuine pleasure.¹⁴⁴

Burbidge was also a flower illustrator. For example he illustrated his own book, *The Narcissus: its history and culture*, with 48 coloured plates of Narcissi.¹⁴⁵

Some years later, in 1903, Burbidge made another laudatory comment, this time referring indirectly to the Japanese landscape gardening abilities of Alfred Parsons:

Some of these new Japanese gardens are far from artistic or from being Japanese, and we believe that they cannot be successfully done except by those who know Japan. Mr. Alfred Parsons, who has travelled much there, tells us that what they do in gardens is bound up with their history, geography, and literature, and other things, unknown to most who have formed such gardens here.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Parsons received a royalty of 10 percent and 2000 copies of the book were printed. [Columbia University Libraries. Spec Ms Coll Harper Bros. Alfred Parsons, New York, 1 June 1895; p.d.s., 3 p. (contract for his *Notes in Japan*)

¹⁴³ "He entered the gardening profession at Chiswick...(his) death leaves a gap in gardening circles, not only in Ireland, but wherever gardening is loved and practised. (...) It is over 26 years since F. W. Burbidge was appointed Curator of Trinity College Botanic Garden, Dublin, a position he has held ever since.(...) Impressed with his minute and wide-reaching knowledge of plants." [Obituary , n. s. : W. Robinson?]. *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, Dec. 30, 1905

¹⁴⁴ Burbidge, F. W. 'Notes in Japan'. *The Garden* LI May 22, 1897: 372-3. Burbidge used to sign several articles in *The Garden* under the pseudonym 'Veronica'. [Source: Brent Elliott, 20th Dec 96 meeting] See *The Garden* Feb 3 1883 'Concerning Garden Design' signed V. and *The Garden* 15 March 1884 'Art in the Garden'. In both these articles, the present author sees how 'V.' and 'Veronica' shared landscape gardening ideas with William Robinson, principally in the simplicity of design. Parsons was to move away from this principle at The Welbeck Garden.

¹⁴⁵ Publisher: L. Reeve and Co., London, 1875.

¹⁴⁶ *Flora and Sylva*. Vol.1 No3, June 1903, 111-114: 114 'Sidelights on Things Japanese' F.W. Burbidge

3.3.3 Book illustrator

Texts were often initially published as series in a magazine then, a year or two later, as a book. Seventy-five percent of Parsons's work was first published directly in book form.

3.3.3.1 Illustration work for William Robinson

Since the collaboration between Parsons and William Robinson had a tremendous effect on Parsons's future career, it is worth looking at the development of their friendship in more detail.

William Robinson was one of the most important people to have influenced the development of Parsons's career as a landscape-gardener. Robinson¹⁴⁷ edited a tremendous number of books and magazines on horticulture and landscape gardening.¹⁴⁸ Parsons's dual interests in art and horticulture were, in Robinson's opinion, the two skills required to be a landscape-gardener.¹⁴⁹ These two great friends shared a common love of art and gardens.¹⁵⁰ It is through Parsons's paintings that Robinson first met the artist, not through his illustrations as Helmreich has suggested.¹⁵¹

In his writing Robinson struggled perpetually to combine the botanical opportunities of the Gardenesque with the scenic qualities of the Picturesque, and he is most notable for something he did only unconsciously: to extend the idea of the Picturesque from the large canvases of Salvator Rosa to the vignettes of natural plant compositions portrayed for *The Wild Garden* by Alfred Parsons. For Robinson, columbines and geraniums in meadow grass, the large-leaved Cretan borage or the stately spike of *Mulgedium* (now *Lactuca*)

¹⁴⁷ "William Robinson (1837-1933) greatest of English gardeners and author of *The English Flower Garden*, the most widely read gardening book ever written." [Allan, 1982. Dusk jacket description.]

¹⁴⁸ The long bibliography of Robinson's publications can be consulted in the appendices on page 406.

¹⁴⁹ In 1881 Robinson published a long letter from Alfred Parsons describing in length the landscape and plants of New York. ['American Woods' *The Garden* XX Nov. 12 1881: 475-6] In his letter dated October 25th 1881, Parsons was discussing various American landscapes and the garden of Mr Parsons of Flushing, New York, who was writing an article for Harper's. [Parsons, S. B. 'A Home Lawn' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* Vol V Dec 1882-May 1883: 722-733]. This shows that Parsons had a thorough knowledge of horticulture, acquired before his meeting with Robinson in his early years.

¹⁵⁰ Robinson always had great respect for artists and he frequently invited them to Gravetye. A tradition in England is to have a visitors' book signed when staying at your house. In 1895, for three weeks, he had probably misplaced his Gravetye Manor' visitors book [It is assumed he had one]. Robinson was keeping a manuscript on the making of Gravetye Manor House and Garden. On 26th August 1895, six persons signed page 95 of the manuscript, as if it was a visitors' book. They were: Frederick Toms, Ellen Toms, Herbert A. Olivier, F. W. Burbidge, Evelyn Taylor, Helen B. Dayfour. The following week, August 31 1895, Mark Fisher and H. A. Olivier signed underneath the first group. Finally on 8th September 1895, D. E. Thomas and W. P. Thompson added their signatures to this curious list. William Robinson had favourite artists, Alfred Parsons was one of them together with Fisher, Moon and Olivier. Consult the list of works of art in the possession of William Robinson at Gravetye Manor on page 411.

¹⁵¹ "Parsons's reputation as illustrator brought him to the attention of William Robinson, a well-known garden designer and writer." [Helmreich, 1994: 72]

plumieri were just as suitable subjects for a picture as were the rocky streams of the Wye Valley or the classical ruins of an Italian hillside.¹⁵²

As has already been mentioned, Parsons was one of the many artists Robinson commissioned to illustrate his publications. Most of his work was done between 1870 and 1900.¹⁵³ As early as 1879 Robinson was mentioning Parsons's name as an illustrator for his magazine, an uncommon practice at that time.¹⁵⁴ The title page of *The Wild Garden*, fifth edition, 1895, proudly says: "Illustrated by Alfred Parsons". Robinson had never before mentioned the names of artists in such a direct manner. This public admiration for Parsons's artistic skills shows how he respected Parsons and how gratifying their collaboration must have been.¹⁵⁵

Robinson genuinely admired Parsons's drawings. As with Parsons's articles, Robinson would often re-use some of his illustrations. 'The White or Huntingdon Willow' first produced for *The Wild Garden* in 1881,¹⁵⁶ was reprinted in *The Garden* of 1882,¹⁵⁷ and again in *Gardening Illustrated* of 1887.¹⁵⁸ It was, partly for the quality of the wood blocks which were becoming more and more expensive to produce, that Robinson chose to re-use some of them. It was also for the beauty of the drawings and the subjects themselves. It is accepted that beauty is a relative concept and the author of this thesis believes, like Jay Appleton, that

beauty resides neither intrinsically in 'beautiful' objects nor 'in the eye of the beholder', but that it is to be discovered in the relationship between the individual and his environment, in short in what he [John Dewey, 1859-1952] calls 'experience'.¹⁵⁹

In his struggle to bring back the wild garden into fashion, William Robinson was reacting

¹⁵² Bisgrove, 1990: 195

¹⁵³ For a list of the previous engravers who contributed work to *The English Flower Garden*, see the appendices section 7.14.

¹⁵⁴ *The Garden*, XVI, Aug 9 1879: 125

¹⁵⁵ Henry Moon would be mentioned by Robinson for his outstanding contribution to *Flora and Sylva* in 1903-04.

¹⁵⁶ Robinson, 1881: 259

¹⁵⁷ *The Garden* XXII 1882: 227

¹⁵⁸ *Gardening Illustrated* X 1887: 99

¹⁵⁹ [Appleton, 1986: 48]

Appleton quotes Dewey, who was promoting American naturalism. In popular culture there is a saying that reflects exactly how beauty is a concept that is relative both to the loved object and to the subject who loves: "A woman is beautiful only when she is loved." This was quoted to the author by an English gentleman, Mr P. Laundry, as the author was struggling to edit this chapter, discussing some of its content with various friends. A feminist friend of the present author, Valentine Paquet, resents this quote. A woman even ugly can still be loved and even more because a woman can be beautiful independently of being loved. It is the word 'only' she really resents.

against the previous half-century of exaggeration in formal gardening. Formalism, which had been the craze, was now in disrepute and what had been considered beautiful was now felt to be ugly. In addition to work for books and magazines, Robinson commissioned Parsons to do paintings of his own house and garden, 'Gravetye Manor', and to design the porch of 'Moat Cottage', where Robinson lived on his newly acquired estate while work was being done on the Manor.¹⁶⁰ These commissions must have led Robinson to further recommend Parsons to his friends as a landscape-gardener, since Parsons and Robinson were also often discussing horticulture.¹⁶¹

The following reply to Robinson's first letter from Parsons, in the winter of 1878, is most revealing. It proves that Robinson requested a meeting with Parsons in order to buy one of his watercolour landscapes. It also shows that Parsons, prior to meeting Robinson, was already painting 'wild gardens' - this one showing daffodils in the wood. Had he read Robinson's first edition of *The Wild Garden* published by Robinson in 1870?

Your letter of the 1st was forwarded to me from Frome. I do not exactly remember the drawing you mention; if you can call any day at my studio, at the above address, it will give me much pleasure to show you what sketches & studies I have. Several of my watercolours are going away to an exhibition on Tuesday evening, among them a study of blackthorn in blossom with some daffodils in the foreground which is not yet sold & which you may like. Could you give me the pleasure of seeing you either to-morrow or Tuesday? I shall be in both days till 5 o'clock.¹⁶²

The letter demonstrates the cultural convergence of the wild garden concept. Several Englishmen and women shared the love of wild gardens at that period. Indeed, Forbes Watson had published *Flowers and Gardens*, discussing the topic of natural design in 1872. The illustrated edition of Robinson's *The Wild Garden* was published in 1883, Robinson having been criticised by a friend for the lack of illustrations of his first edition.¹⁶³

From this first meeting a long standing friendship developed. It is important to understand that Parsons was first seen by his contemporary as a landscape-painter, and that it was the landscape-painter whom Robinson visited in his studio. Parsons's reputation came more from

¹⁶⁰ See section 3.3.5.3 on the Art Workers' Guild.

¹⁶¹ [MsSRO 1/7] "Jan 24 [1899?] It is typical of Parsons not to write the full date] /54, Bedford Gardens, Kensington. W. / My dear Tudway / Robinson brought me some things yesterday & it struck me that you might as well make a beginning by raising seedlings from some of the berries. The purple leaved holly may not come true, nor the orange berried [holly from William Robinson], but the chances of similar seedlings than from ordinary seed are better. Cotoneaster horizontalis, being a species, will come all right. (...) Alfred Parsons"

¹⁶² 3 Feb 1878, Alfred Parsons (Hayter House, Marylebone Road) to William Robinson (37 Southampton St/ Covent Garden/W. C.) [MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 9: # 70]

¹⁶³ Ms W. Robinson at John Murray's, and photocopies at the Lindley Library. *The Wild Garden* file.

his landscape paintings in oil than from his later black and white illustrations:

Mr. Alfred Parsons, whose portrait is given in this number of *THE BOOK BUYER*, is a successful landscape painter who, at frequent intervals, takes up illustration with the same serious intention with which he approaches the more complex problems of color and the more intricate methods of painting.¹⁶⁴

Robinson would discuss aesthetics and go to the theatre with Parsons. They shared conservative tastes. Parsons had advised Robinson about going to Paris for his oil portrait, recommending Fantin Latour, but which would finally be done by Carolus Duran, a conservative painter.¹⁶⁵

The English Flower Garden

Parsons largely illustrated the first three editions of *The English Flower Garden* and contributed drawings to all of its editions.¹⁶⁶ This book ran into fifteen editions during Robinson's lifetime and several more later.

The flood of new plants introduced during the nineteenth century was recorded in an illustrated, alphabetical catalogue, with detailed descriptions, making up about two-thirds of the book; the rest gave advice on planning small or large gardens, with lists of appropriate plants for particular situations and purposes and further encouragement for a more natural style of design.¹⁶⁷

These comments from a reprint of the fifteenth edition published in 1984, underline the significance of this book:

The book's prestige and authority was also enhanced by the distinguished gardeners and horticulturists who contributed articles to it over the years. His admirably functional organization of the book into introductory chapters asserting his design philosophy followed by a dictionary of plants is also integral to its persuasiveness.¹⁶⁸

Since Parsons contributed so many good illustrations to this important book, further discussion is relevant. Starting with the fourth edition in 1895, photographs were used more

¹⁶⁴ Millet, 1892: 5,6

¹⁶⁵ See the letter transcribed in a footnote on page 95.

¹⁶⁶ See the table of the 'inventory of Alfred Parsons's contribution compared with the total production of illustrations for *The English Flower Garden* on page 416. The number of Parsons's illustrations diminishes in the later editions. After 1900, photographs were more and more common, and the contribution of Armand Kohl engravings from various photographs was omnipresent. (Dodie Masterman, illustrator, is still 'cross' at the fact that Robinson did not acknowledge his engravers. The author of this thesis shares her feelings but has to observe that in the nineteenth century all engravers were treated like mere tools.)

¹⁶⁷ Jellicoe et al, 1991: 474

¹⁶⁸ Deborah Nevins. Introduction to the 1984 edition. [Robinson, 1884: xiii]

frequently in the second part of the book. Gertrude Jekyll was one of the main contributors¹⁶⁹ of photographs that replaced Parsons's numerous wood blocks.¹⁷⁰

The quantity of Parsons's illustrations in *The English Flower Garden* cannot account for their specific quality. It is difficult to analyse their impact objectively in comparison with other illustrations in the book. The size and location of an illustration is significant. Robinson illustrated his various introductions with his favourite and more detailed illustrations. Although Parsons's illustrations were few in number, they were often full-page drawings, a rare occurrence in the book. Their impact was, and is still, visually rewarding for the reader. In number they varied from forty-seven in the third edition to four in the thirteenth. In the fifteenth edition, William Robinson even included a colour reproduction of a painting of Gravetye Manor by Parsons : the one and only colour illustration in all fifteen editions.¹⁷¹

It is significant for the argument of this thesis to realize that Parsons gained social recognition, and horticultural credibility, because of the wide circulation and huge popularity of *The English Flower Garden*.

The Wild Garden

The drawings for *The Wild Garden* took Parsons at least five years to prepare and he illustrated the second edition(1881) onwards. Continuous artistic observations in the open air were for him a formidable teacher of nature's genius at work. *The Wild Garden* encouraged 'the placing of perfectly hardy exotic plants under conditions where they will thrive without further care', an idea so important in modern gardens that the book was reprinted in 1977, in 1983 and again more recently.

Robinson's alternatives to the formal bedding-out of tender plants contributed to a revolution in garden design. His influence still flourishes in the current taste for informality, with bulbs massed among grass, mixed borders of native and exotic plants, and a softer and more subtle use of colour and plant associations.¹⁷²

A daffodil, hybridized by Edward Leeds before 1877, was given the name 'Alfred Parsons'

¹⁶⁹ Tankard, 1991: 84,85

¹⁷⁰ See the table in the appendices on page 416. It lists eight illustrations by Parsons that Robinson used in ten or more editions of *The English Flower Garden*.

¹⁷¹ *The English Flower Garden*, fifteenth edition: 1933

¹⁷² Jellicoe et al, 1991: 474

in 1884.¹⁷³ It is to the success of *The Wild Garden* that the present author attributes Parsons receiving this honour in 1884.

3.3.3.2 Illustration work for other editors

Parsons contributed illustrations to a known total of twenty-six books.¹⁷⁴ In content they ranged from topography to poetry, all in the spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as the magnificent book *Old Songs*. At a time when the search for folklore was at its height, it is understandable that, in his illustration work, Parsons wanted to be part of the fashion of his day.¹⁷⁵

3.3.4 Collaboration with Edwin Austin Abbey: 1879-1911

A key person with whom Parsons worked as a topographical artist was Edwin Austin Abbey.¹⁷⁶ Parsons met Abbey in 1879 in London. See his portrait on figure 22. This meeting was of crucial importance because of the American social and artistic connections that Abbey's friendship provided to Parsons. For example, on 22 April 1890, Abbey married the sister of the American architect William Rutherford Mead, a partner in the renowned New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White. Abbey was 'a stocky genial little American who drew 18th-century bourgeois life with a perfect sense of incident'.¹⁷⁷ When they met, Abbey had been working for Harper Brothers as an illustrator since 1871.¹⁷⁸ In December 1878,

¹⁷³ It is mentioned in 'Bicolor Daffodils' in *The Garden*, vol XXXIV: 226-7, Sept 8, 1888. The *Conference Supplementary Catalogue*, Barr and Sons, 1884, gives a complete list of 'fancy' names given to daffodils that year. W. Robinson was amongst them.

¹⁷⁴ See the list of the books illustrated by Parsons on page 360. This list was compiled by the author.

¹⁷⁵ "At the same time [1901] a different, and seemingly contradictory, movement was developing which led musicians back into provincialism and into their own past. The folk-song revival hit England, the outlying parts of the Austrian Empire and Scandinavia at about the same time. (...) This influence of English folk-song, with its deep underlying nostalgia, or that is how English composers tended to see it, seems to have been unacceptable on the Continent." [Gradidge, 1980: 37]

Elgar, who was a friend of Parsons, wrote a good part of his 'English' music while inspired by the Malvern hills. He shared with the Arts and Crafts Movement the West of England as a source of inspiration. Elgar often visited Broadway. All this nostalgia for the past and this appetite for Englishness is rightly discussed in Helmreich's thesis. [Helmreich, 1994: passim]

¹⁷⁶ For example in June, 1888, Abbey and Parsons had a joint exhibition at the Fine Art Society on *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Wordsworth's Sonnets*.

¹⁷⁷ Alan Crawford in *Country Life*, January 24, 1980 'New Life for an Artist's Village': 252

¹⁷⁸ Lucas, 1921: 22

Abbey first visited England. He went to Stratford-upon-Avon, to find the proper historical settings for a series of illustrations he was preparing for Robert Herrick's poems: illustrations of landscape, houses and costumes. Abbey¹⁷⁹ had several years experience as an illustrator for *Harper's* and he can be largely credited with introducing Parsons to this type of work.

Stratford-upon-Avon was very close to the artistic and intellectual centre of Oxford, where Parsons introduced Abbey to his relatives, the Daniels. Both friends concentrated their artistic endeavours in Oxfordshire, Somerset and London. In his biography of Edwin Austin Abbey, E. V. Lucas provides a taste of that period:

On March 1st [1884] Abbey moved into a new studio at 17b Eldon Road, and on April 3rd Alfred Parsons and he gave a dinner to Lawrence Barrett, the American actor, and a fellow Kinsman, among those present, in addition to such friends as we should expect, being Mr. Sargent, Mr. Dobson, George du Maurier, Henry James, Linley Sambourne, Sir John Robinson and Archibald Forbes of the *Daily News*, W. Q. Orchardson, and W. S. Gilbert.¹⁸⁰

Alfred Parsons's notes tell us that the winter of 1883-1884 was a festive one at Bedford Gardens; and among the names of the two friends' more constant visitors and guests are those of John Pettie, Colin Hunter, Austin Dobson¹⁸¹, George du Maurier, Linley Sambourne, Tadema, Marcus Stone, Comyns Carr, Luke Fildes, Black and Boughton.¹⁸²

During Christmas 1878, Abbey was invited to Fred Barnard's home, Warrington House, on Steele's Road. Barnard was an English illustrator, and already a friend of Parsons. Shortly

¹⁷⁹ See the brief biography of Abbey on page 370.

¹⁸⁰ Lucas, 1921 : 139. For more information on some of these people see the correspondence to Parsons on page 370.

¹⁸¹ Dobson, Henry Austin (1840-1921), educated at Beaumaris Grammar School and at a gymnasium in Strasbourg, then a French city, entered the Board of Trade, where he served from 1856 to 1901. He was an accomplished writer of verse of the lighter kind, some of his best work appearing in *Vignettes in Rhyme* (1873)... A further volume, *At the Sign of the Lyre*, (1885) was extremely popular. Dobson had a wide knowledge of the 18th cent., testified by his prose biographies of William Hogarth (1879 extended 1891), Steele (1886), Goldsmith (1888), Horace Walpole (1890), Samuel Richardson (1902), Fanny Burney (1903). ... [Harvey, 1978]

'He was at his best in taking his readers round such famous places as Ranelagh, Stowe Gardens and Prior Park.' in *Apollo* 'An Essayist from Ealing' editorial n.s. (Denys Sutton editor) CIV, 1976: 84-87

The author of this thesis has a hunch that Parsons gave free advice on several of these friends' gardens, since it is now certain that he did so for the Comyns Carrs, for Henry James and for Linley Sambourne's daughter's relatives, the Messels, at Nymans. It is tempting to speculate that Parsons and his good friend Robinson discussed the planning of the garden at Gravetye Manor!

¹⁸² [Lucas, 1921 : 132]

At least three of these painters had brief biographies published in *The Strand* under a series of articles written by Rudolph de Cordova: 'Portrait of Celebrity' which became 'Illustrated Interviews' in 1899. See also George Henry Boughton [*The Strand* Vol XX, July-Dec 1900: 3-17], Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema [*The Strand* Vol XLIX, Jan-June 1900: 603-614]; and Linley Sambourne [*The Strand* Vol Jan-June 1898: 318-?].

after, Abbey was introduced to another friend of Parsons, George Henry Boughton.¹⁸³ Abbey promptly took a studio in 80 Newman Street, close to Hayter House, 238 Marylebone Road, where Parsons already had his first London studio. It was at E. Matthew Hale's studio that Abbey and Parsons would meet on January 27th, 1879.¹⁸⁴ Hale, like Parsons, was a member of the Institute of Oil Painters.

As E. V. Lucas mentioned, Abbey and Parsons were instantly to become inseparable friends. Parsons, the elder of the two, was the more knowledgeable in the same cultural areas for which Abbey felt such a great affinity and passion, a love of early English poetry, of Shakespeare's Avon country and of the vernacular architecture of the Cotswolds being the most obvious shared interests.

In 1881, Abbey first brought Parsons to New York where they stayed from 26 Sept 1881 to May 1882. While in New York they became members of the Tile Club¹⁸⁵ and when they came back to England they promptly embarked upon very productive careers. Abbey introduced Parsons to Henry Harper and Charles Parsons, the art editor of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. In August 1879, Abbey and the author Moncure Conway went to the Lake District to prepare a new article for *Harper's*. This would be the first article illustrated by Alfred Parsons while assisting Edwin Abbey.¹⁸⁶ Parsons's work as an illustrator also included *The English Illustrated Magazine*.¹⁸⁷ During the next few years Parsons and Abbey became part of a larger artistic community. In 1883, Henry James wrote to a friend about Abbey and Parsons and the artistic life in London:

¹⁸³ Boughton had recently built 'West House', at the top of Campden Hill. "Boughton was never a great painter, but he was an accomplished one, and in both his favourite themes-the peasant life of Brittany and Holland, and the New England days of *The Courtship of Miles Standish*." [Lucas, 1921: 71]

¹⁸⁴ Lucas, 1921 : 132

¹⁸⁵ "The Tile Club consisted of William Laffan, Arthur Quartley, Frank Millet, William Paton, William Baird, William Chase, Alden Weir, Frederic Dielman, Elihu Vedder, Reinhart, Boughton, Hopkinson Smith, Napoleon Sarony, Edwin Abbey and Alfred Parsons, all American painters in New York." [Lucas, 1921: 53] Alfred Parsons was not American, but he frequented so many Americans, and visited America so many times, that even Millet, in his biographical article 'Alfred Parsons's had to mention that Parsons was English. [Millet, 1892]

¹⁸⁶ Conway, 1880-81. Re-edited in 1985 by Stuart D. Ludlum for Thames and Hudson.

¹⁸⁷ "*Harper's Magazine* was founded as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1850 in New York. In its first years it serialized the works of the popular English novelists such as Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot. Later these were displaced by American writers such as W. D. Howells, Mark Twain and Booth Tarkington." [Encyclopaedia of the Arts. Thames and Hudson 1966. Editor Herbert Read.]

"*Harper's Weekly* attracted readers by printing outstanding illustrations, including Thomas Nast's cartoons, and by crusading for political and civic reforms." [Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1992: Micropaedia Vol 5 under 'Harper Brothers': 715]

To Elizabeth Boott¹⁸⁸
 Ms Harvard
 3 Bolton St. Piccadilly
 Dec. 11th (1883)

Dear Lizzie¹⁸⁹

(...) for I think you would enjoy the artistic world of London, and find it intelligent, and cultivated-find it, that is, above all, sociable and entertaining. I went only last night to a pleasant artistic function: to see Leighton² as president of the R.A., deliver the annual prizes to the students of that Institution. Boughton took me, who is a very good fellow, if a weak painter, and before it we dined together with dear little Abbey, the American and Alfred Parsons³, the landscapist, his *fidus achates*. [faithful friend]. Leighton is wonderful for such an occasion as that he *represents* admirably - and the thing was interesting. I often see Tadema,⁴ and Du Maurier, who has something in him singularly intelligent and sympathetic and satisfactory and whom I like exceedingly. Burne-Jones I have become quite intimate with, and he sends me photos of his works, marked with assurances of his 'affection'.¹⁹⁰

Henry James

In 1887, eight years after their first meeting, both Parsons and Abbey along with several other artists, attended meetings of the Sketching Club, held in each others studios.¹⁹¹ They were professionally so close that, on September 1st 1887, Abbey wrote to Charles Parsons, Harper's art editor¹⁹²:

Alfred's illness has kept me from doing many things I otherwise should have done. I have been waiting about for his recovery which now, I am glad to say, is imminent, but in the meantime I have done very little to justify my artistic existence. We had plans for work this summer in which he was so much mixed up that I could not go on without him. We were to have finished the 'Quiet Life' series (...) and then we were to have set about the

¹⁸⁸ This was Elizabeth Boott, daughter of Francis Boott, an American artist. She had been a pupil of Thomas Couture and of William Morris Hunt and was a painter of distinct merit. She had lived and studied in Paris, Florence, and Boston. As Henry James had travelled to all these places, their friendship is understandable. She married her Munich art teacher, Frank Duveneck, in 1886. "Duveneck, Frank (1848-1919), painter, etcher, sculptor, teacher, was an outstanding figure in the art of his time." [*Dictionary of American Biography*, 1928-81][Edel, 1980: 18]

¹⁸⁹ Henry James was a member of the Broadway set. See Parsons comical poem 'To Lizzie' on page 249. Further research is needed to find out if Elizabeth Boott was Parsons's Lizzie. Princess Louise's nickname was Loosy.

¹⁹⁰ This is not unusual for Burne-Jones. See MS Letter from Sir Edward Burne Jones to Thomas Armstrong 86 HH 53 #108 : "The Grange, / North End Road, / Fulham S.W. / Dear Old boy, / Friday then at 6.45 I will be with you. & diplomacy, intoxication, crime, anything you like afterwards' Your [s] affy [Affectionately.] Ned." There are 20 letters from Burne-Jones to Armstrong in the collection.

¹⁹¹ "The Club consisted, in 1887, of I cannot say how many members, but the most enthusiastic and regular were Abbey himself, Colin Hunter, R. W. Macbeth, C. E. Johnson, P. R. Morris, H. Cameron, E. J. Gregory, John Burr, C. E. Holloway, Frank Holl, T. Graham, J. Pettie, W. Q. Orchardson, H. Harper, Cecil Lawson, Alfred Parsons and J. MacWhirter. Alfred Parsons has some of the Sketching Club's drawings made on a night when the subject was "Our Daily Bread". [Lucas, 1921: 165]

¹⁹² Abbey lived with Parsons.

‘Walton’ in earnest. *Now these must both go over.*¹⁹³

Abbey and Parsons contributed numerous illustrations to the same books; they even collaborated on the same drawing: Ned as the expert on the human figures and Alfred doing the landscapes. In October 1889, Abbey wrote from Bedford Gardens:

I hate the expense of being here - one is let in for all sorts of things, and can't help it. (...) I am very much afraid that Alfred won't be able to come over with me. His throat has troubled him greatly this autumn so far, and Semon says he must go directly to Aix and stop there until he is well on the mend. (...) I wanted very much to have him with me this winter. (...) I only catch glimpses of him.¹⁹⁴

When Abbey married, their relationship was progressively transformed. Six years later, on 16 February 1896, Parsons wrote to Abbey upon his election as an Associate of the Royal Academy:

No one more heartily rejoices in your election to-night than I do (...) We are drinking your health in the wine of the Champagne district, and if I don't return to J. W. North¹⁹⁵ and John Sargent and Boughton and Frank Millet and Gilbert and Couch¹⁹⁶ (who is here with me) I shall not get my whack, so good-night. My love to you. And to Mrs Abbey he said : Let me congratulate you too (...) and though he could not have come to the front so quickly in a new line without his wonderful genius, it is largely the result of the impetus and the help which you have given him.¹⁹⁷

Parsons, still single, was also showing Abbey what great fun it was to still relish the life of a good old boy. Parsons was to wait another year before he himself became an associate to the Royal Academy. Abbey was made a Royal Academician in 1901 and in 1902 he painted the

¹⁹³ Lucas, 1921: 168

¹⁹⁴ [Lucas, 1921: 211]

1889 was not the first time Parsons went to Aix to cure his colds. In 1886, after a hard winter, unemployment was especially high in London. It is not surprising that Princess Louise and Alfred Parsons, amongst many other privileged people, enjoyed the winters in the South of France. At the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1886, Parsons exhibited ‘The Dent du Chat, Aix-les-Bains’. The social context did not favour everyone. “On the afternoon of February 8th 1886, a large meeting of the unemployed assembled in Trafalgar Square. Although they dispersed quietly, eight thousand members of the Social Democratic Federation, fired up by the oratory of their leaders, who had told them ‘hanging was too good for capitalists and landlords (...) sitting in comfort, careless whether the poor starved or not’. They unfurled a large red flag and chanting, ‘Unless we get bread they must get lead’, marched westwards through London.” [Wake, 1988: 280-81] For more on the context of the passing of the Home Rule Bill that followed these demonstrations, see the chapter ‘Political Life’ in [Wake, 1988: 277-286].

¹⁹⁵ In a letter to Waterlow, dated Jan 20 1904, Parsons mentions that North will come and stay with him the week after. Parsons wanted to lend his watercolour of North that he called ‘Old Apple Trees’ for the St-Louis Exhibition, insisting that North should be part of it. MS NAL Letters to Sir Isidore Spielmann, 86 PP 18: letter #11. Parsons was the Hon. Sec. Of the Art Committee for the St-Louis Exhibition.

¹⁹⁶ Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch: ‘Q.’

¹⁹⁷ Lucas, 1921: 290-291

official picture of the Coronation of Edward VII.¹⁹⁸ Ten years of hard work would lapse before Parsons could lose an 'A.' to become 'R.A.'.¹⁹⁹ This was to be on 27 March 1911, four months before Abbey's death on the first of August. A tablet designed by Parsons in memory of Edwin Abbey, was unveiled in St-Paul's Cathedral, on the 13 of March 1917 by Princess Louise.²⁰⁰ On that occasion an address was also given by Sir Edward Poynter, P.R.A. A commemorative plaque to Abbey hangs on Chelsea Lodge, 42 Tite Street, S.W., his last home in London.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Parsons's long friendship with Princess Louise, sister of Edward the VII, must have played a role in the awarding of that commission to Abbey.

¹⁹⁹ Abbey was always to gain further social recognition before Parsons. It is tempting to assume that Parsons's nomination to the Royal Academy was in part the result of thirty-three years of friendship with Ned Abbey.

²⁰⁰ Princess Louise remained a good friend of Alfred Parsons throughout his life. On 16 April 1926, six years after his death, she presented one of her Parsons paintings to the Royal Watercolour Society: 'The Garden', "hoping it may be added to their charming permanent collection of Members' own works presented by themselves in which the Princess thought the art of Alfred Parsons was not adequately represented by the picture he had given." [Manuscript letter from the Archives of the Royal Watercolour Society held at Bankside Gallery in London].

²⁰¹ Before his death, Abbey set up a trust to help artists to study in Rome. Like Parsons, who visited Italy several times, Abbey felt that Italy was stimulating for artists.

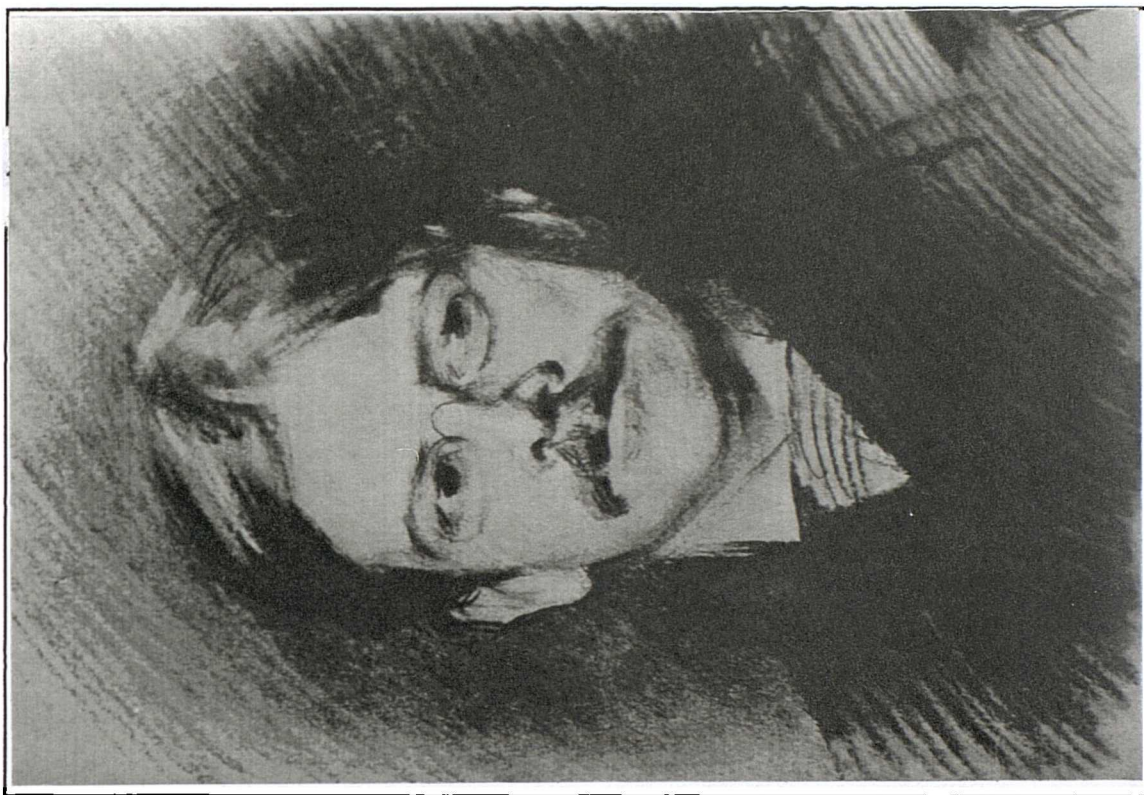


Figure 22 Portrait of Edwin A. Abbey. [*Harper's*, June 1889: 58]

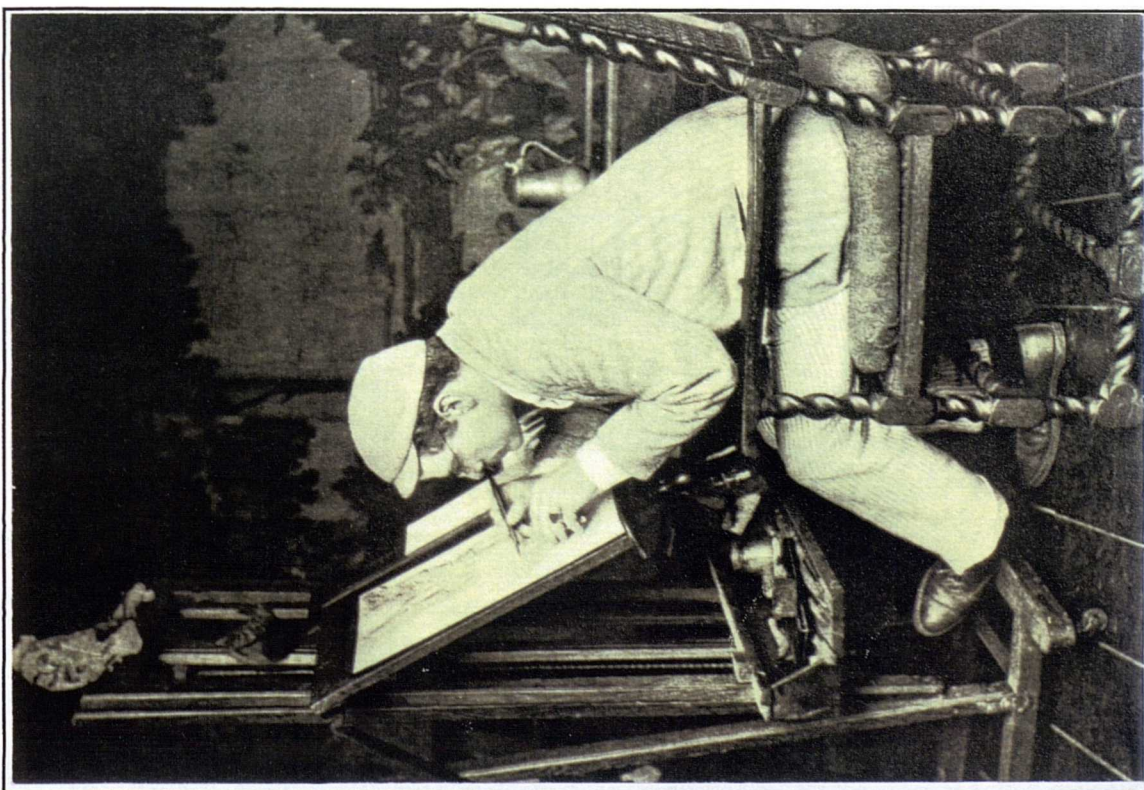


Figure 23 Edwin A. Abbey, Russell House, Broadway. [Lucas, 1921]



Figure 24 Illustration by Edwin Austin Abbey. [*Harper's*]



Figure 25 Illustration by Edwin Austin Abbey. [*Harper's*]

3.3.5 Keeping aspects of the English past alive

3.3.5.1 Philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement

The following quotation from *Treasures on Earth, A good housekeeping guide to churches and their contents* refers to almost all the areas of the arts touched upon by the Arts and Crafts movement. Only the art of the garden is absent from the list:

In addition to offering guidance on the conservation of stained glass, sculpture, textiles, metalwork, floors, furniture, decorative plasterwork, paintings and so on, the book also covers the technical aspects of creating the right environment with the heating, ventilation and lighting of the building.²⁰²

Parsons was to give advice to his friends in almost all these areas of building and design including the surrounding gardens.²⁰³ His good taste was trusted.²⁰⁴

The basic philosophy on which that architectural work rested came from Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin. In *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* he had stated the “two great rules of design”: that “there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction or propriety”, and secondly, that “all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building”. (...) And Morris when constructing the Red House followed these principles. “Have nothing in your houses”, Morris said, “that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful” With that doctrine he became the leading theorist of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Echoing Ruskin, he declared that “Art is the expression of man’s pleasure in labour”. Life and work and art were one.²⁰⁵

Parsons’s life, work and art were one. When he touched gardens it was with his artist’s eye. In that sense his gardens were the descendants of the Arts and Crafts Movement, from the choice of the right colour and shape for the paving stones to the sculpting of the sundials²⁰⁶, from the use of English hardy plants to the addition of the most beautiful old-fashioned roses. The spirit of the Arts and Crafts was respected.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Burman, editor, 1994. Abstract on the book’s dust cover.

²⁰³ “The first stage of the Arts and Crafts Movement can be seen to run roughly from the early career of Street in the 1840s through the work of William Morris to Philip Webb at Standen.” [Gradidge, 1980: 15]

²⁰⁴ Parsons is giving Partridge advice on the choice of silver: “It is not quite your style of silver but I think the work is very good. Parsons saw the pieces after I had chosen them & liked them very much. They will make a great effect as they really look worth four or five hundred pounds.” [22nd October 1895 MsSRO 1/1]

²⁰⁵ Nuttgens, 1976:4-6

²⁰⁶ “I have been thinking out a scheme by which we could utilize your stone carving man at Wells- Mills if I remember rightly his name - a good branch of our business might be to supply Garden vases & sundials [making a business of...] & I will try to get some good models for him to copy. Do you think he would be equal to it?” [Parsons to Tudway: Jan 24 1899 Ms SRO 1/7]

²⁰⁷ Parsons himself gives testimony of his interest in the Arts and Crafts:
“Nov. 30th 1914 / My dear Spielmann / Thank you very much for your letter & for the promised souvenir of
(continued...)



Figure 26 "To be Merry" Abbey and Parsons. [Herrick's poem', Harper's, 1: 69]

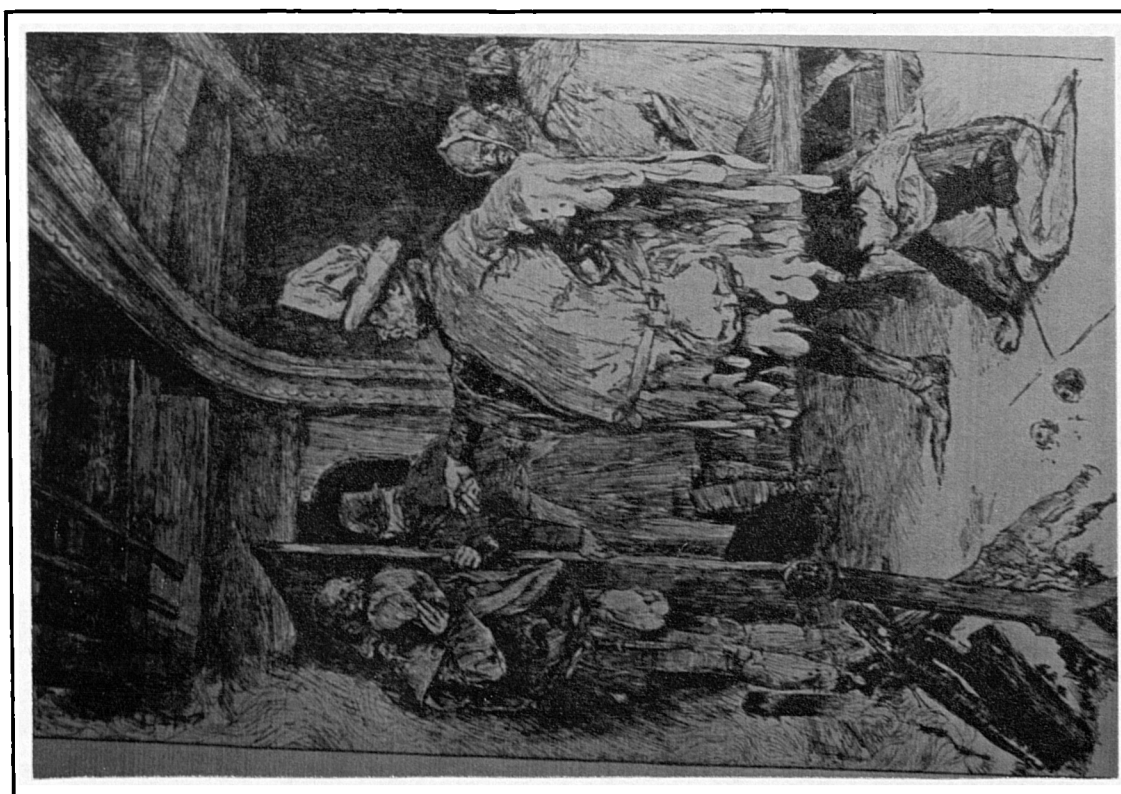


Figure 27 An illustration set in mediaeval times. E. Austin Abbey. [Lucas, 1921]

207 (...continued)

the Arts & Crafts Exhibition in Paris, it will be especially interesting as I had not an opportunity of seeing the exhibition. I stayed there in August on my way back from Vichy but it had already closed." MS NAL Letters to Sir Isidore Spielmann. [86 PP 21: letter # LX111, 5]

3.3.5.2 Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: 1881-1900

One of the most significant society that Parsons joined was The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, (still known today as the “SPAB”). He was a member from 1881 until 1900.²⁰⁸

This society, established in 1877 by William Morris, is “the original of all the voluntary conservation societies in Britain.” Morris was reacting with “horror” against the architect Gilbert Scott proposal for an overly intrusive and conjectural reconstruction of Tewkesbury Abbey. He and other members of the SPAB were seeking to preserve and protect the original fabric of ancient buildings and to discourage the “scraping off the additions and ornaments of later ages to achieve as authentic a condition as possible.” This led to a “famous polemic between the forces of ‘scrape’ and ‘anti-scrape.’²⁰⁹” Thus this policy of respectful repair became “affectionately known as Anti-Scrape.”²¹⁰ This was “the new attitude associated with the Arts and Crafts movement which saw architecture as the art of building, that led people to find pleasure and aesthetic significance in untidy crumbling walls of different dates, and fittings from different periods.”²¹¹ Archaeological evidence was not to be removed from picturesque old buildings.²¹² Morris’s philosophy was that social reform could be achieved in part through art and architecture.²¹³ From this philosophy emerged the promotion of the arts and crafts as separate from commercial manufacturing.²¹⁴ The SPAB was one of the sources of the

²⁰⁸ Source of information: Miss Nicola Sterry and Miss Cecily Greenhill both working at the SPAB in London in Autumn 1995.

²⁰⁹ Young, Elizabeth, 1986: 25

²¹⁰ Nuttgens, 1992: 194

²¹¹ Dixon, 1993: 228

²¹² “The origins of the controversy that led to the foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877 lie in the battles between antiquarians and architects of the early Gothic Revival. The Society of Antiquaries looked on medieval buildings as archaeological evidence and objected to architects tidying them up to conform to contemporary ideals of regularity.” [Spence, 1982: 3]

²¹³ Lecture given by Professor Patrick Nuttgens. ‘The Arts and Crafts Movement’. Manchester Victorian Society, November 1976. Typescript: 7.

²¹⁴ Several contemporary writers are challenging this description of Morris’s philosophy in the sense that he himself employed specialists in his firm who were cut off from all aspects of the production of art objects: for example consult the typescript of the lecture by Professor Gillian Naylor, Royal College of Art, London ‘The Decline and Fall of Morris and Company’ given at the William Morris Conference, V & A in June 1996. “The firm, therefore, is now [from catalogues not dated but published just before the First World War] intent on
(continued...)

development of the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, of which Philip Webb was an architectural icon, is not, of course, a style. It is a philosophy, an attitude, an approach to design and to life. It evolved in response to, and in turn helped to define, moral principles which were never clearly, or entirely consistently stated, but which were broadly anti-academic, which encouraged the creation of well crafted, locally responsive, organic, soundly constructed buildings and things and were (at the start) anti-industrial.²¹⁵

Before Parsons joined SPAB, he had already been quoting Morris and Swinburne²¹⁶ in texts for his paintings, thus showing his early acquaintance with both men. For example, in 1873, at the Dudley Winter Exhibition: Cabinet pictures in oil, Parsons showed three works. Number 110 was a painting having this verse as a title:

Welcome, O March, whose kindly days dry
Make April ready for the Throstle's song;
Thou first redresser of the Winter's wrong.
Morris ²¹⁷

Parsons joined the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1881, four years after its founding.²¹⁸ This meant that he adhered to the 'Anti Scrape' principles. It also meant that Parsons had occasion to enlarge his circle of influential friends. As Michael Hall mentioned in a talk given at the May 1996 Philip Webb Conference: "the secular and materialist attitudes which are the basis of so much in the Arts and Crafts Movement" meant that for Parsons contact with the movement brought him several commissions through word of mouth.²¹⁹ The garden at Clouds is an example. Wyndham was a member of the SPAB. Parallels must also be

²¹⁴ (...continued)

supplying the market, rather than forming it ... which was the Ruskinian ideal, as well as that of William Morris... and it is an eclectic production which evokes what might loosely be described as the Morris style." [Naylor, June 1996: 11]

²¹⁵ Thomas, Philip, May 1996, a lecture.

²¹⁶ "Swinburne, Algernon Charles (1837-1909), (...) early united by ties of friendship with Rossetti and his circle. Showed an unsurpassed mastery of melodious verse. (...) He detested Kings and priests. His prose works of literary criticism included monographs on Shakespeare (1880) and other Elizabethan dramatists." [Harvey, 1967]

²¹⁷ See the works for the years 1873 and 1876 on page 376 under the 'Dudley Gallery'.

²¹⁸ SPAB is an important first national society devoted to the correct repair of the built heritage and it is still very active today. "The Society is not a mere pressure group - though it is that too - it is a school of building construction." [Spence, 1982. Introduction by David Pearce: 3]
Philip Webb, a founding member, played a leading role in SPAB.

²¹⁹ Lecture given by M. Hall, a writer on architecture at *Country Life*, on 16 May 1996. The Philip Webb conference was organised by Peter Burman, Director of Conservation Studies at the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, (IoAAS), University of York from the 14th to the 17th of May 1996. It was part of the events that marked the William Morris Centenary Year.

drawn between the Aesthetic and the Arts and Crafts Movements. The philosophy behind the Aesthetic Movement had very materialistic side-effects. As already mentioned, Parsons also had affinities with the Aesthetic Movement.²²⁰ As early as 1883, Boughton the painter, one of Parsons's best friends, had mentioned the materialistic repercussions of the Aesthetic Movement:

People forget the commercial value of the movement, its influence on trade and manufactures. For example: we used to go to France for stuffs and dyes; we not only do so no longer, but France is coming to us for these very things.²²¹

SPAB members were recruited amongst architects and artists but mostly amongst the upper middle class. They were under the spell of the Arts and Crafts philosophy. They were able to help protect historical buildings because of their influence and their financial resources.

In the pages of *Country Life*, Arts and Crafts became the architectural and artistic expression of early twentieth century, upper-middle class English life at its most beguiling; the land of lost content, builded here among these English fields.²²²

The focus of SPAB was on historic buildings, so the need was felt for another group with an integrated approach.²²³

3.3.5.3 Art Workers' Guild: 1884 -1905

A committee contemplating the establishment of this new society was set up among the pupils and assistants of the architect Norman Shaw.²²⁴ This preliminary committee was called the 'Society for the discussion of Art and Architecture'. On October fifth 1883, the discussion involved the fact that Art and Architecture were drifting apart. Was it possible to do anything to bring them together again? The members present decided

to invite by means of a prospectus, the co-operation of eminent Artists, Sculptors and Architects, in forming with this Committee a new Society for promoting more intimate relations between Painters, Sculptors, Architects, and those working in the Arts of Design, with the view of advancing the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Design.²²⁵

²²⁰ This was developed in the section: 'The Grosvenor Gallery & Parsons 'aesthetic' convictions'.

²²¹ Hatton, Joseph. 'Glimpses of Artistic London' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. VI Nov 1883; 828-850: 844

²²² Thomas, Philip, 1996.

²²³ Consult H. J. L. J. Massé *The Art-Workers' Guild 1884-1934* Oxford, 1935

²²⁴ Ernest Newton, E. S. Prior, Mervyn Macartney, Gerald C. Horsley, W. R. Lethaby, and E. J. May were the Committee. Of these all except the last were pupils of R. Norman Shaw. [Massé, 1935: 7]

²²⁵ Massé, 1935: 8

Alfred Parsons was amongst the few eminent artists invited to the founding meeting of the Art Workers' Guild on January the fifteenth 1884.²²⁶ Parsons's direct intervention at a meeting of the Guild was only mentioned for that first official meeting.²²⁷ This suggests that his involvement with the Guild was more of the 'Honorary' type. Parsons was seen as being one of those 'eminent' invited artists for several reasons. By 1884, he had been a regular exhibitor

²²⁶ [The following transcription respects the page setting from the manuscript]

"Minutes of The Art Workers Guild

1884: 1885:

A meeting of Artists was convened on Tuesday Evening January the 15th 1884 by Messrs Newton, Prior, Macartney and Horsley for the purpose of getting opinions from other artists as to whether it would be possible to form a Society or Association of Artists of Every Kind.

The Meeting was convened by invitation and consisted of

Messrs J. Belcher (in the Chair)

Somers Clarke

Basil Champneys

Lewis F. Day

E. Onslow Ford

Hamilton

W.C. Horsley

G. C. Horsley (Secretary protem) [MS: Minutes of the AWG: 9]

names. (Continued) [Beginning of another page, Ibid: 11; the back of page 9 and page 10 were left empty.]

W. R. Lethaby

M. E. Macartney

J. Micklethwaite (the th being added in pencil)

W. Marshall

Ernest Newton

Alfred Parsons

E. S. Prior

H. Schmalz

J. D. Sedding

George Simonds

Hamo Thorneycroft A.R.A.

J. R. Wirgman

Mr H. Holiday was invited & accepted the invitation but owing to his having mistaken the day he unfortunately was not present at the meeting.

Messrs Ernest George & Heywood Summer were also unable to attend

At the Meeting Mr J Belcher having been opted into the Chair, and Mr G. Horsley appointed Secretary protem, the secretary read the Schemes.

Mr. Simonds thought it was not wise to start exhibitions. He thought the one thing wanted was greater social intercourse amongst Artists. He thought if a Society could be formed, whose members would be drawn from all varieties of Artists, who would meet at certain times, for the Communication of ideas, a Great thing would be gained to Artists.

Mr. Basil Champneys quite agreed with Mr Simonds.

Mr H Thorneycroft thought there were enough Exhibitions already in London, but thought they should be more decorative.

Mr Parsons thought a social club was more

Continuation from ⁴⁸ [Beginning of another page, Ibid: 13]

wanted than anything else, & thought if the Society could aid wood engraving, it would be good.

Mr Lethaby thought painters themselves might take up wood engraving.

Mr Sedding thought Architects should be more Artists than tradesmen.

Etc. Etc. Etc.

See Minutes of proceedings."

²²⁷ The minutes of the years 1884-85 were consulted.

at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery since 1878. The book for which he was sole illustrator, *The Wild Garden*, had been published in 1883 and had been very well received by the public. He was a member of the Oxford set and had become a member of the 'Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' the year before. While a member of the SPAB, Parsons took his first steps in landscape gardening, thus integrating his artistic skills with his horticultural knowledge. This was in the spirit of the new Art Workers' Guild who wished to unite artists, craftsmen and architects in the same influential group.²²⁸ The Guild held its first meetings at the Century Club in Pall Mall, becoming tenants at Barnard's Inn in Holborn from 1888, and leasing Clifford's Inn Hall from 1894, until a permanent home was secured at 6 Queens Square. This metropolitan base made it easy during the London season for people to attend Art Workers' Guild meetings. Two kinds of members joined the Guild: the public school boys and the real craftsmen. The public school boys wanted to elevate the crafts to the level of intellectual knowledge. The Guild was not present on the public scene so members could easily and freely express their opinions, even if they criticized standard opinions. Lively discussions took place behind closed doors. Morris is said to have put his feet on the table while reading his paper when he got bored with what was going on. Shortly after Alfred Parsons resigned, Thomas H. Mawson²²⁹ joined the Art Workers' Guild.²³⁰ Mawson became the first official 'garden-designer' member.²³¹

Inferences from various sources suggest that Mawson, Jekyll, Lutyens and Parsons were all in competition for clients. For example at Hestercombe²³², Parsons & Partridge lost the commission to Jekyll & Lutyens. Parsons also did garden landscaping work, at Hartpur House and Wightwick Manor, where Mawson took over. Parsons's resignation that year could

²²⁸ There were no women members of the Guild until 1963 when Joan Hassall joined in. Dr Alan Powers, currently writing the history of the Art Workers Guild, contributed this information. In Parsons's chronology on page 491 are the titles of the lectures, given at the Art Workers' Guild in London; the present author identified [AWG] those principally linked with Parsons's interests. The transcripts of these lectures do not exist in published form..

²²⁹ Thomas Mawson (1861-1933), was the most prolific garden designer of his day and the author of a highly successful book on *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* which appeared in five editions between 1900 and 1926. [Jellicoe et al, 1991: 360]

²³⁰ " 14 : March : 1904 / A letter of resignation from W. Alfred Parsons was sent - it was agreed that the Master (Emery Walker) should write to him on behalf of the Committee." [Portland Loose leaf Ring Book Minutes of Ordinary Meetings and Committee Meetings of the Art Workers' Guild. Signed C. Harrison Townsend, Master (1903). Kept at 6 Queens Square, Bloomsbury, London]

²³¹ Described as such in the list of members. Parsons was listed as 'artist'.

²³² Partridge wrote to Tudway to thank him for introducing them to the Portmans. "It is very kind of you to have mentioned us to the Portmans." but "at that moment they had someone in view" for Hestercombe. [14th May 1901 MsSRO 1/5] In 1904, Lutyens and Jekyll designed Hestercombe's garden.

also mean that he was more on the 'mixed' side of landscape gardening while Mawson and several other members of the Guild were more on the 'formal' side of the profession, calling themselves 'garden designers'.

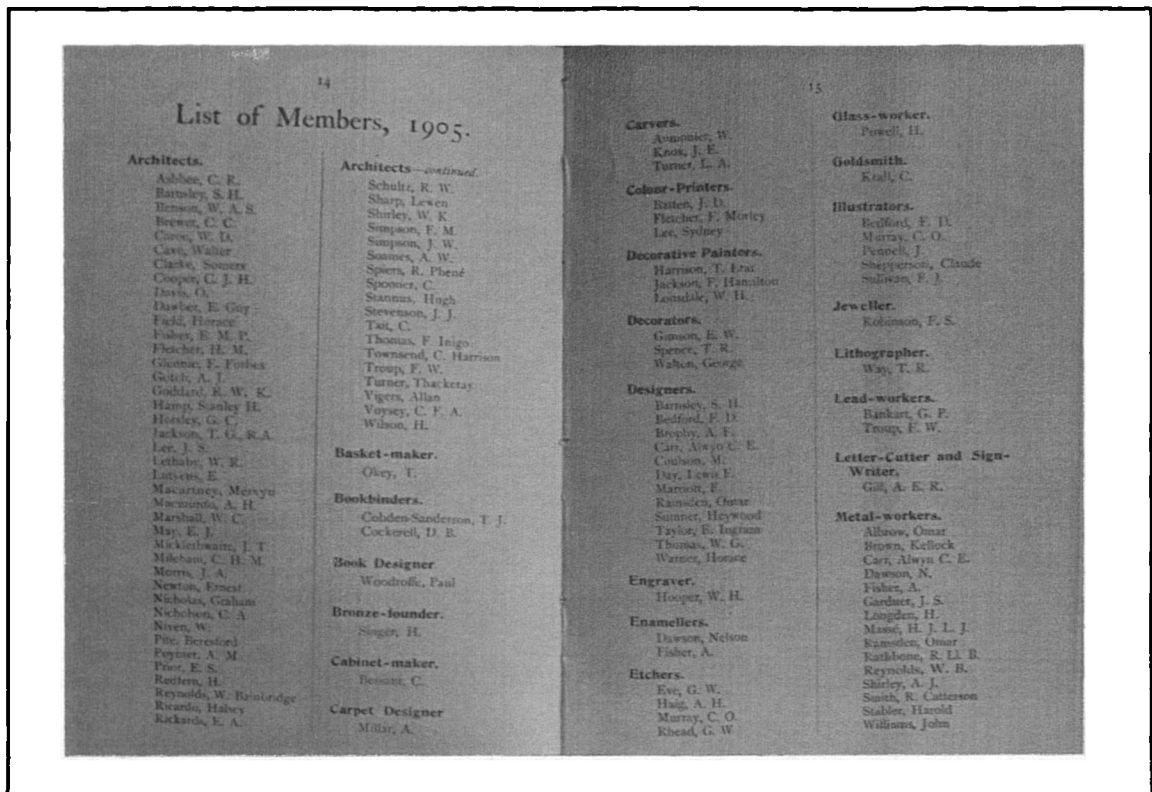


Figure 28 Art Workers' Guild list of members. [Massé, 1935]

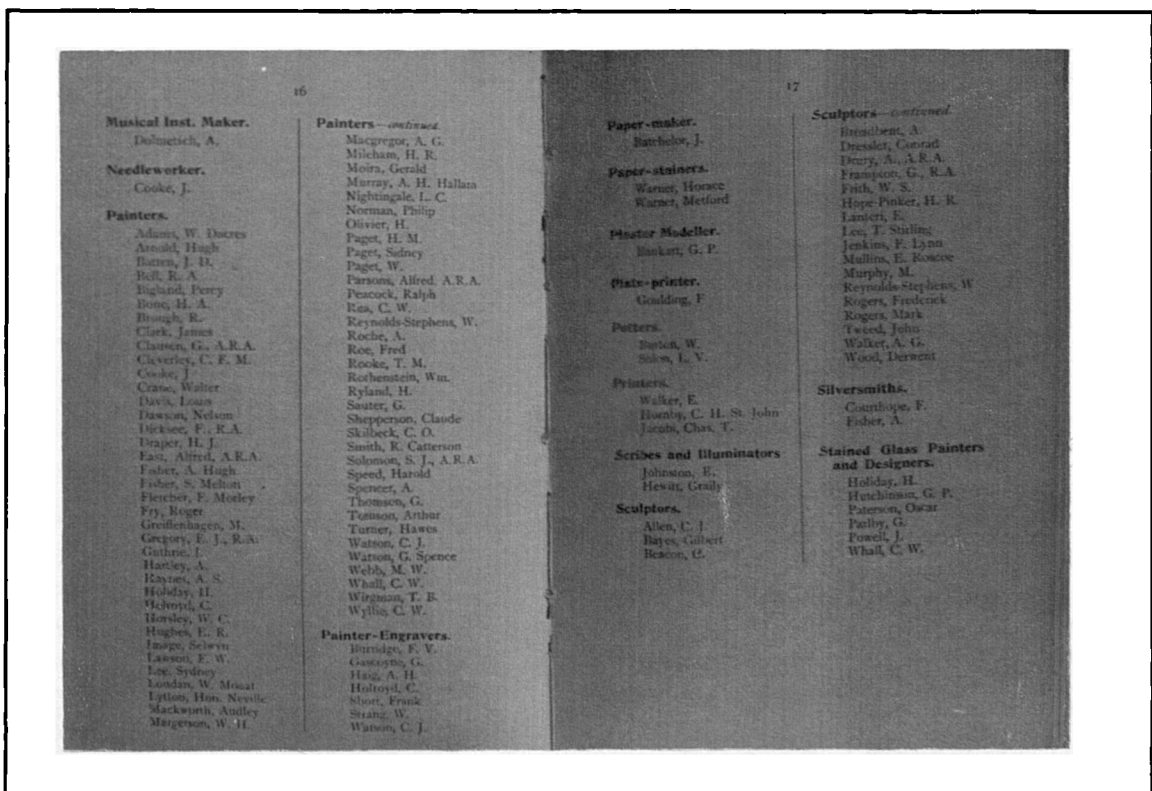


Figure 29 Art Workers' Guild list of members. [Massé, 1935]

3.3.6 1888: Parsons the craftsman

Like other Arts and Crafts believers, Parsons knew about the architectural vocabulary as the letter reproduced here testifies.²³³

The only official reference found to his work touching architecture is the design he made for the porch of The Moat Cottage, property of his friend William Robinson. This porch was added to the Moat Cottage at Gravetye Manor in 1888. Consult the reproduction of a survey and sketch of it made in 1993.

Porch to moat House commenced to make April 24th of oak framing and rafters with a view of making the old house prettier and more comfortable. Finished in May: effect very good. Put in two strong oak seats in old porch. I hope to cover all this & the trellis & walls with climbing roses & others climbers.²³⁴

It was later altered.²³⁵

In the correspondence between Charles Tudway and Captain Partridge several allusions are made to Parsons giving advice on what today would be called interior design. For example:

Very many thanks for sending me Hallidays' sketches of the glass, and light brackets, which I now return. Parsons who has been here the last few days thinks that a pair of gilt Queen Anne glasses something after the enclosed sketch (which please let me have back) is what is wanted in the Drawing Room [at Battledene, Captain Partridge's house].²³⁶

²³³ MS NAL 86 GG 3; 11, 181-200.

²³⁴ RHS, Ms. Robinson, 1885-1915. Entry in the manuscript for the year 1888. Vol 1: 82

²³⁵ See the photograph of William Robinson at Moat Cottage with his nurse Mary Gilpin and Miriam Markham, (wife of his head gardener). [Allan, 1982: 194]

²³⁶ Nov 14 1904, MsSRO 1/4

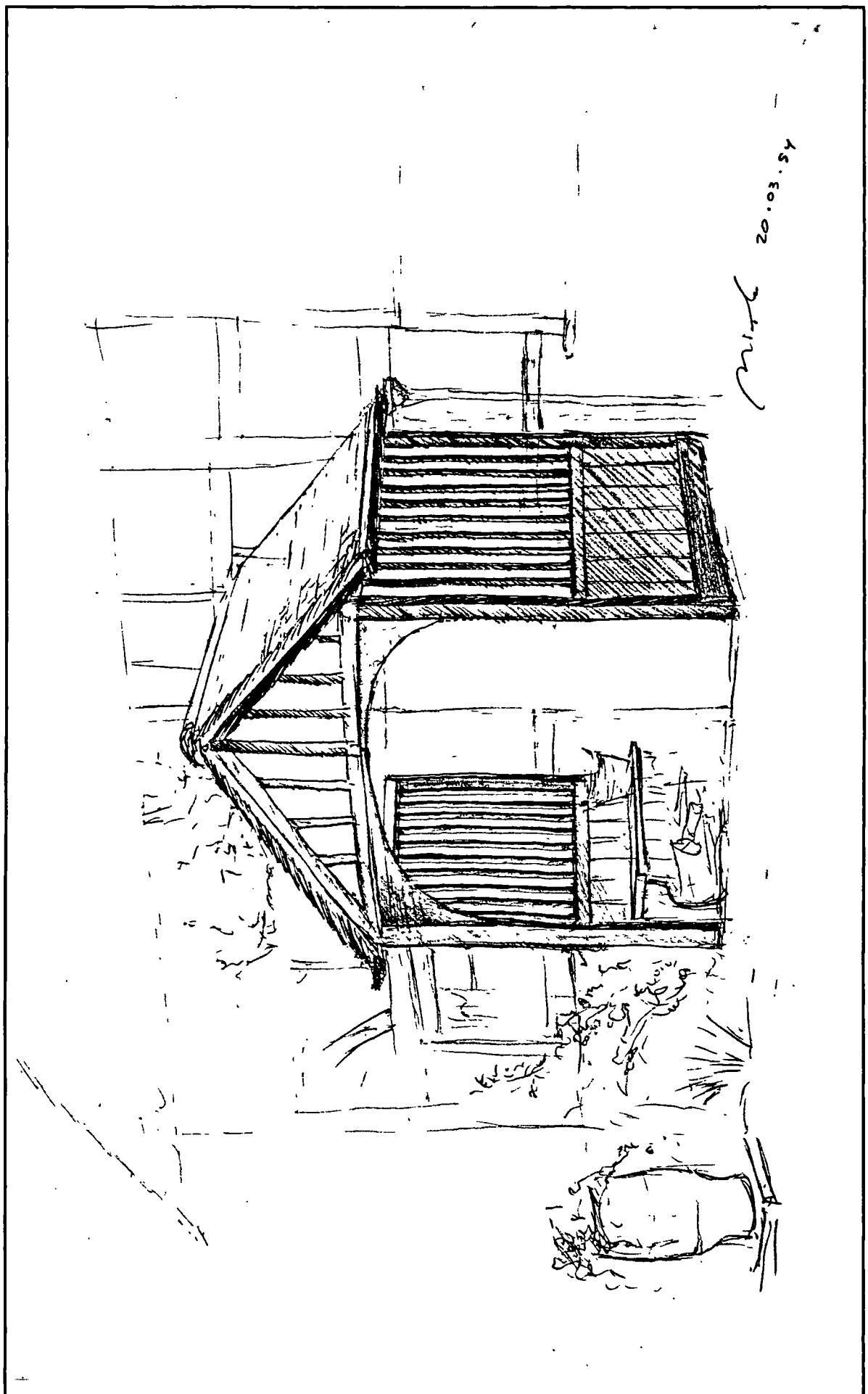


Figure 30 Gravetye Manor. The Moat Cottage. Sketch of the porch by the author. (1994)

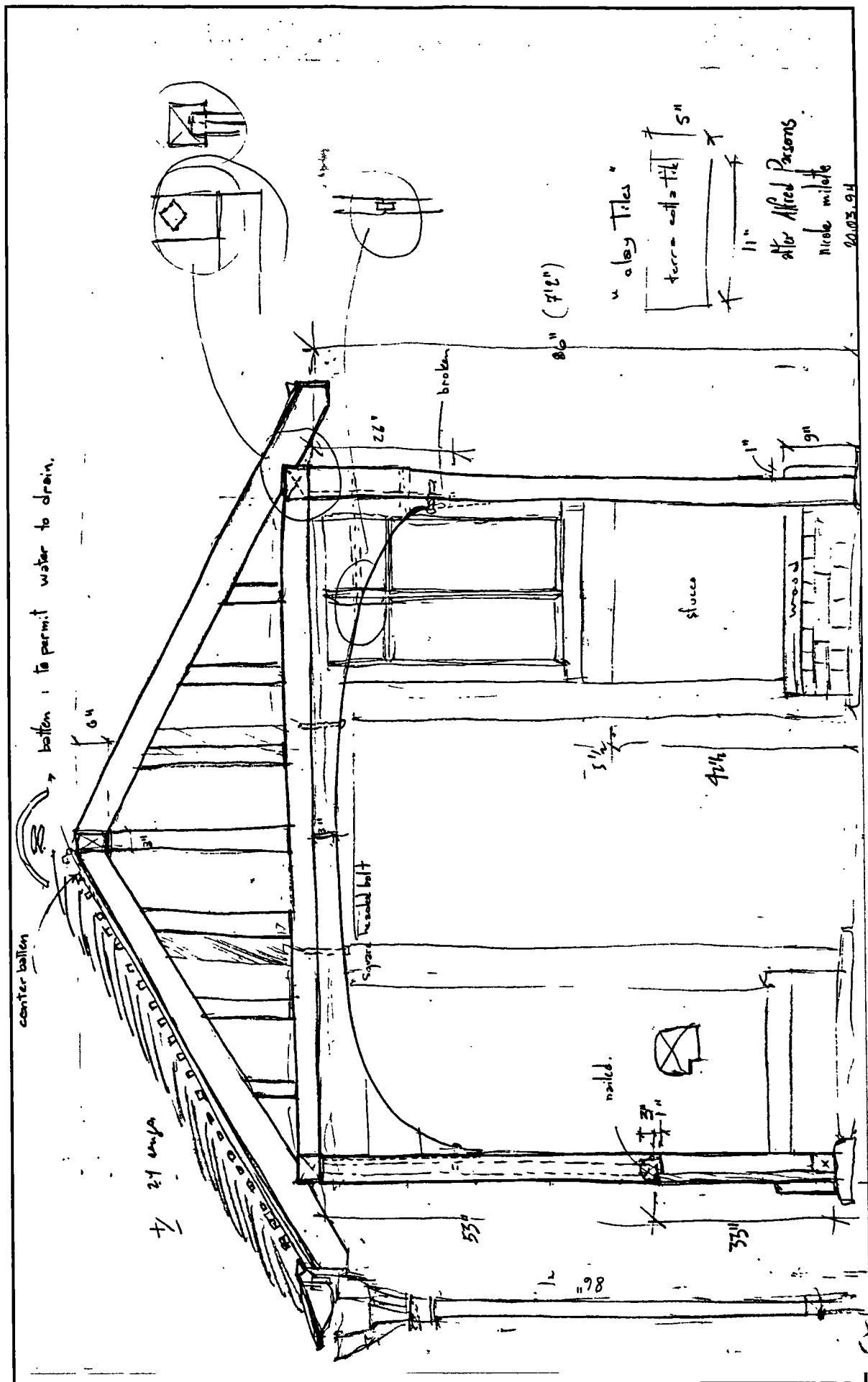


Figure 31 Gravetye Manor. The Moat Cottage. Survey of the porch by the author. (1994)

3.4 CAREER EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION: 1881-96

Summary

By 1881, Alfred Parsons enjoyed an expanded public career as an artist and as a disciple of the Arts and Crafts movement. He was exhibiting his work in Birmingham in 1881, followed by the Society of Painters in Oil Colours (SPOC) and the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours (RIPWC) in 1883. For the first time Parsons had solo exhibitions.²³⁷ Four solo exhibitions were held by the Fine Art Society (1885-1894). There he had a fifth joint exhibition with Edwin Abbey in June 1888. These exhibitions were linked closely with his work as an illustrator for *Harper's*. Also during this time, Parsons frequently travelled to Paris and Aix, participating in most of the international exhibitions of English painters abroad. In general, everywhere Edwin Abbey joined, Parsons followed.²³⁸ The Broadway Group was formed. Parsons joined the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and was a co-founder of the Art Workers' Guild in London. By the end of the period, Parsons was integrating landscape gardening into his regular activities.

²³⁷ Henry Harper also had solo exhibitions at the Fine Art Society.

²³⁸ Except for the Pastel Society

3.4.1 Membership in various additional artistic societies

3.4.1.1 The Institute of Painters in Oil Colours: 1883-1894

Before 1886, Parsons joined three additional art societies. The first was The Institute of Painters in Oil Colours²³⁹ (IPOC) which held its first exhibition in 1883.²⁴⁰ He served on the Council from the beginning until he was replaced by John Fulleylove. Parsons continued to exhibit there until 1894.²⁴¹ He took part in a total of eight exhibitions, showing 12 works.²⁴² Most of the exhibitors had only one painting at each exhibition. It was comparatively easy for artists to exhibit at the IPOC. In 1886, 586 exhibitors displayed a total of 901 works, all of which were for sale. As late as 1909, Frank D. Millet, one of the Broadway Group painters²⁴³, was exhibiting at the Royal Institute of Oil Painters (previously IPOC).²⁴⁴ To be a member of such a society ensured a more secure way of earning a living:

If one is elected one has a certain amount of standing and one gets better prices for one's pictures, as much goes for name in art.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ 1883 to 1898: The Institute of Painters in Oil Colours; 1898 to 1903: Society of Oil Painters; 1904 to 1908: The Institute of Oil Painters; 1909 to 1920: The Royal Institute of Oil Painters.

²⁴⁰ In 1904 the Society of Oil Painters consisted of around 100 artists including honorary members. Poynter, Watts, Alma-Tadema, Frank Dicksee, John S. Sargent, Frank D. Millet, John Fulleylove, George Samuel Elgood, Frederick Sandys and Ernest Waterlow were all members. Elgood, Parsons and Waterlow were producing the same kind of landscape paintings.

²⁴¹ In 1883, Sir James D. Linton, P. R. I., Frank Walton, R.I., and Wm. L. Thomas acted respectively as president, vice-president and treasurer. Bale, Edwin, R. I.; Green, C, R. I.; Gregory, E. J., R. I.; Halswelle, Keeley, A. R. S. A., R. I.; Hawes, Edwin, R. H. A., R. I.; Hunter, Colin, R.I.; Macbeth, Robt. W., A. R. A., R.I.; Macwhirter, J., A.R.A., R. I.; Moore, Henry, R.W. S.; Orrock James, R. I.; Parsons, A. and Topham, F. W. W., R. I. formed the council.

²⁴² His sister Letitia M. Parsons submitted 8 works to 4 exhibitions.

²⁴³ See the Broadway Group on page 150, for more information on Frank D. Millet.

²⁴⁴ Numerous links can be made with the Broadway Group. For example, in 1901 the Honorary members of the Society were Sir E.J. Poynter, P.R.A.; Geo F. Watts, R.A.; Sir L. Alma-Tadema, R.A.; Sir George Reid, PRSA; Frank Dicksee, R.A.; John Singer Sargent, R.A.; Frederick Sandys; Ernest A. Waterlow, PRWS, A.R.A. Sargent and Tadema were members of the group, Geo F. Watts later painted a portrait of Mary Anderson, living at The Court Farm, Broadway.

²⁴⁵ Helmreich, 1994: 82: E.A. Rowe to Sophie Slater, Feb. 96, Rowe family papers property of Mr. Derrick Rowe, Bearsted, Kent.

3.4.1.2 The R. I. of Painters in Water-Colours: 1883-1898

In 1883, Parsons joined The Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours (RI).²⁴⁶ Until 1898 he exhibited his work there twenty times.²⁴⁷ A total of 631 works were exhibited that year, enough to say that this gallery was not as select as The New English Art Club where fewer than fifty painters exhibited. One explanation is that watercolour, although important in England, rarely attracted the prestige and patronage that oils did.

²⁴⁶ 1804: The Old Watercolour Society; 1807: The New Society of Painters in Miniature and Watercolour, (otherwise known as New Watercolour Society); 1832: The London Institute of Painters in Watercolours, (otherwise known as The Institute of Painters in Watercolours); 1884: The Royal Institute of Painters in WaterColours.

²⁴⁷ This number includes the years he was listed as a member but not exhibiting. The R.I. is now at 17 Carlton House Terrace London but their papers are now held by Mr. George Large, 13-14 Markets Place, Woburn, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire. MK17 9PZ. They do not contain anything on Parsons, except for old exhibition catalogues.

According to the 1890's catalogue, 222 paintings are exhibited in the West Gallery. (Two paintings were by Geo. S. Elgood, R.I., 178: 'A Warwickshire Village' and 188; 'The Alcove Walk, Arley'), 292 paintings were exhibited in the Central Gallery, two were by Alfred Parsons R.I., number 228. 'Goldfinches' and number 456: 'Bad Barley' (two more paintings were by Geo. S. Elgood, R.I., 275: 'The Rose Garden and' and 352: 'Calvary, Guimilian', one by Miss Kate Greenaway, R.I. 416: 'Head of a Boy' and one by E. Arthur Rowe (not a member) 376: 'The Flower Garden, Compton Wynyates').

In the East Gallery, 275 paintings were shown, number 653 was 'Purple Loosestrife' by Alfred Parsons. In general, members would exhibit from one to eight paintings. Only two facsimile sketches were printed; the first by Geo. S. Elgood, R.I. with 'Calvary, Guimilian' and the last by Otto Sinding with 'The Fugitives'.

Most paintings, in 1897, were sold for around £10,0,0. [Pounds, shillings and pence] Parsons's prices were over £100,0,0 matching the prices of Edgar Bundy, C. Green, HR Steer, John Fulleylove, B. Evans, Thos Hudson and J. Orrock. Either these few artists were greedy or their fame justified these prices. [More research is needed.]

3.4.1.3 The Fine Art Society: 1885-1894

Parsons first exhibited at The Fine Art Society (FAS) in 1885.²⁴⁸ This was the third gallery he joined during the ‘middle years’. The Fine Art Society was founded in 1876, one year before the Grosvenor Gallery, with one fundamental goal: to exhibit and publish copies of pictures by British artists, through solo shows.²⁴⁹ The aims of the FAS, in particular those of Marcus Huish, its managing director, were at first to ‘cater for the few and the fit’, but they soon found that a great deal of money was to be made through ‘low art’, and through the generation of widespread public interest in it.²⁵⁰ Parsons was one of the new and less well-known artists to hold a solo exhibition at the FAS. Four of his five exhibitions at the FAS were linked to his book illustrations. The fifth, ‘Gardens and Orchards’ was to presage the transition in his career from illustrator to garden designer.²⁵¹ His main work as an illustrator was completed before his departure for Japan in 1892.²⁵²

Art dealers, in attempting to cultivate a middle-class art market, shaped late nineteenth century art production. Commercial galleries cultivated a specific aesthetic, favoring small-scale works and lyrical subject matter.²⁵³

Parsons’s first exhibition at the FAS was in 1885: A Collection of Drawings ‘Illustrating Shakespere’s River’ [sic]. The second in 1888 was a joint exhibition with Abbey: ‘Black and White Drawings Illustrating *She Stoops to Conquer* and Wordsworth Sonnets’. The third in 1891 was: ‘A Collection of Drawings ‘Gardens and Orchards” ’ and the fourth in 1893: ‘A Collection of Water-Colour Drawings “Landscapes and Flowers in Japan”.’ The last one in 1894 was: ‘A Collection of Drawings in Black & White’, consisted of illustrations for several recent books.²⁵⁴

It is clear that these exhibitions, which were part of the process of marketing Parsons’s

²⁴⁸ This gallery is still at 148 New Bond street in London.

²⁴⁹ Archambault, 1978: 20

²⁵⁰ See *The Sketch* ‘The Art Publishers of London. II. The Fine Art Society.’ XVI, 1896: 48

²⁵¹ See the appendices on page 387 for the complete list of works exhibited. They will be further discussed in the section *The Genus Rosa* and book illustration on page 156.

²⁵² This is discussed on page 109.

²⁵³ Helmreich, 1994: 27

²⁵⁴ The FAS held an exhibition called *Japan Festival 1991. Opening the windows: British Artists in Meiji Japan 1880-1900*. One Watercolour by Parsons was on show: ‘Tea-House at Kamkura’. See [FAS, 1893] in the bibliography.

work²⁵⁵, aimed to attract a targeted clientele of buyers of Englishness of every kind. Commercial art galleries aimed to promote works of art, appeal to a public and sell the works with a profit. The Marxist analysis²⁵⁶ of the Fine Art Society by Helmreich, demystifies the appeal of the school of garden painting. It makes the reader realize how, in a liberal society, it is common to see a clever marketing study which identifies a need being used to promote consumption of works of art. This does not diminish the value of the works exhibited nor their usefulness. Parsons was part of the alleged 'School of Garden Painters' which was being promoted by the managing director of the Fine Art Society Gallery, Marcus Huish. Helmreich identifies the painters chosen by Huish as being part of a school, to illustrate her thesis:

Between 1880 and 1914, a loosely-knit school of garden painters arose in England. This school, made up of Helen Allingham (1848-1926), George Elgood (1851-1944), Alfred Parsons (1847-1920), Beatrice Parsons (1870-1955), and E.A. Rowe (1860-1922), portrayed a wide range of fashionable gardens, from aristocratic formal gardens to small cottage gardens.²⁵⁷

Calling the artists a school conferred status and authority on their paintings thus enhancing their authenticity and desirability in the eye of consumers.²⁵⁸

This so-called 'school' was so loosely knit that no proof of direct contacts between Alfred Parsons and any of the so-called members, came to light during the last four years of research. These artists often exhibited at the same venues, just as Monet and Parsons were exhibiting at the New English Art Club, but with no evidence of the two men ever meeting.

²⁵⁵ Although it should be noted that Harper's owned the copyright to most of them.

²⁵⁶ "Packaged and promoted by dealers and art critics who recognized in garden art the potential for a popular middle class art, the five artists' paintings circulated in urban art markets and worked in concert with the Garden City movements, the cottage and formal garden preservation movements, and tourism to elevate gardens as symbols of a national identity based on an admiration for the past and a close identification with rustic England, idyllically conceived as a place of social harmony." [Helmreich, 1994: iii]

²⁵⁷ Helmreich, 1994: iii

²⁵⁸ Ibid: 67

The exhibition 'Garden and Orchard' was particularly well covered by the art critics, including Henry James. The catalogue gives a list of Parsons's paintings of gardens probably executed around 1890. It is relevant to this thesis that Parsons would visit old traditional aristocratic gardens as well as Arts and Crafts cottage gardens, just a few years before he started designing gardens himself. Studying them was the best apprenticeship in landscape gardening a man could get in 1890.

At Markyate Cell	[H&W SO 9946]	Saintbury. [Glos SP 1139]
Blackdown [Hants, Warwick or Devon?]	Frome [Somerset ST 7747] North End, Frome.	Shiplake Court. [Oxon SU 7678]
Blewbury.[Berkshire in 1891, Oxon, SU 5385?]	[Old fashioned walled garden]	Stourhead
Bodenham, Mrs. Gatehouse's Orchard. Bodenham, Hereford [H&W SO 5351]	Gravetye [W Sussex TQ 3634]	Stourton Gardens. [Staffs, Warw or Wilts?]
Broadway [H&W SP1238] Mrs. Hopkins's Cottage. Broadway.	Hagborne [Hagbourne Hill Oxon SU 4986]	Sutton Place [Kent or Surrey?]
Buscot [Oxon, SU 2496]	Herefordshire	Welford, Warwickshire. [SP 1550]
Canon Swayne's Garden, Salisbury.	Holme Lacey [H&W SO 5535]	Willersey. [Glos.]
Corsley, Wilts. [Wilts ST 8245]	King's Langley [Herts TL0702]	Winchelsea [E. Sussex TQ 9517]
Fladbury Rectory	Rokeby, Wimbledon	
	Rye, from the Terrace Walk.	
	Winchelsea.	

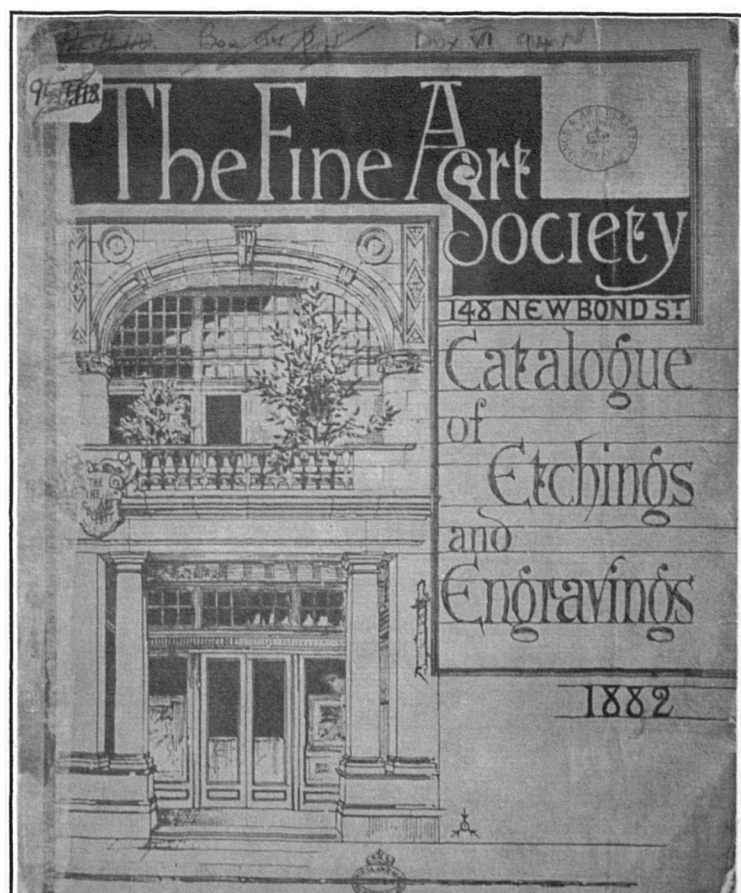


Figure 32 Fine Art Society Exhibition Catalogue 1882 [V&A NAL]

PROGRESSIVE GALLERIES (MODERNIST)

The two next venues were more progressive. Though he exhibited there, Parsons always managed to avoid controversy in his art affiliations.

3.4.1.4 The New English Art Club: 1886-1890

The New English Art Club was the outcome of a movement or feeling expressed at divers meetings held in Paris and London between the year 1880 and 1886, with a view to protesting against the narrowness of the Royal Academy and to obtaining fuller recognition for the work of English artists who had studied art in France.²⁵⁹

Both Newlyn²⁶⁰ painters and rural naturalists were amongst the early exhibitors at the New English Art Club, founded in 1886 in order to exhibit the work of the French-influenced *plein-air* school of painters, to whom the Academy was unsympathetic. (...) In 1888, the NEAC split between the more conservative rural naturalists and a progressive clique which supported Whistler, led by Walter Sickert (1860-1942).²⁶¹

Parsons was a 'plein-air' (outdoor) artist who had affinities with both the Barbizon and the Newlyn schools of painting, but he never painted in the modern style of Whistler. He was part of the more conservative rural naturalist group and after just a few years left the New English Art Club for the New Gallery.²⁶² (Figures 33 and 39)

Plein-air painting is a very important issue. From the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century it became the keymark of 'progressive' art, the sign of painting dealing directly with the truthfulness of things with nature unsullied by law and convention.²⁶³

3.4.1.5 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay': May 1887

The Chantrey Bequest purchased this painting which was shown at the Royal Academy in May 1887. This was an important recognition of the popularity of Parsons's work as a painter. It gave a tremendous impetus to his career and the next year he was chosen to be on the selection committee of the New Gallery.

The following lines, written by William Morris in 1891, are almost like a description of Parsons's painting, 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay'. This is an example of the social convergence between literature and painting.

²⁵⁹ Laidlay, 1907: 3

²⁶⁰ A school of painters living in the village of Newlyn, Cornwall, along the coast near Penzance.

²⁶¹ Treuherz, 1993: 197

²⁶² See the list of Parsons's paintings exhibited at the New English Art Club on page 392.

²⁶³ Alfrey et al, 1993: 90 from the chapter 'The British Landscape Tradition' by William Vaughan: 85-101

I turned a little to my right, and through the hawthorn sprays and long shoots of the wild roses could see the flat country spreading out far away under the sun of the calm evening, till something that might be called hills with a look of sheep-pastures about them bounded it with a soft blue line.²⁶⁴

“The most popular pictures [shown at the Royal Academy] were frequently those bought for the nation through the Chantrey Bequest.”²⁶⁵ In 1887 the Chantrey Bequest purchased for £400 ‘When Nature Painted all Things Gay’. This was a substantial sum and it shows why a Chantrey purchase was such a help in the development of an artist’s career.²⁶⁶ Seven years later, in 1895, a gardener hired by Partridge was earning, in one year, the equivalent of £1000 a year in today’s money: “The wages I have been giving Rodman are 25/- a week, with coal, house & vegetables.”²⁶⁷ To try and understand these figures, the price paid for the painting was equivalent to £16,000 in today’s money.²⁶⁸ At the end of his prolific career Parsons became a member of the selection committee for the Chantrey Bequest.²⁶⁹

This recognition is another reason why Parsons was among the painters who were at the origin of The New Gallery.

²⁶⁴ Morris, 1891: 225

²⁶⁵ The painting ‘Carnation, Lily, Lily, Roses’ painted by Sargent in that same year was also purchased by the Chantrey Fund. Hutchison, 1986: 140

²⁶⁶ Both the *Gardeners Chronicle* and in their obituaries of Parsons mentioned this important event in his life.

²⁶⁷ [1st April 1895, MsSRO.] Prices were stable between 1850 and 1910. See the table on page 405. In 1892 an article discussed the extravagant price of £200 asked for the a year’s training for a gardener: “he (the head gardener) may obtain a salary of £80 per annum with a house, results that will certainly not justify the initial expenditure of £200 (to be trained)” [*The Gardeners’ Magazine*. ‘A gardener’s graining’ in ‘Notes of the Week’. March 26, 1892: 167]

²⁶⁸ £400 x 40 = £16,000. From Management Today ‘Pocket history of price swings’. Jan 1995: 69. See table page 405.

²⁶⁹ “He served on the Council of the Chantrey Bequest for several years, helping to determine what art would be purchased for the nation.” [Helmreich, 1994:79]

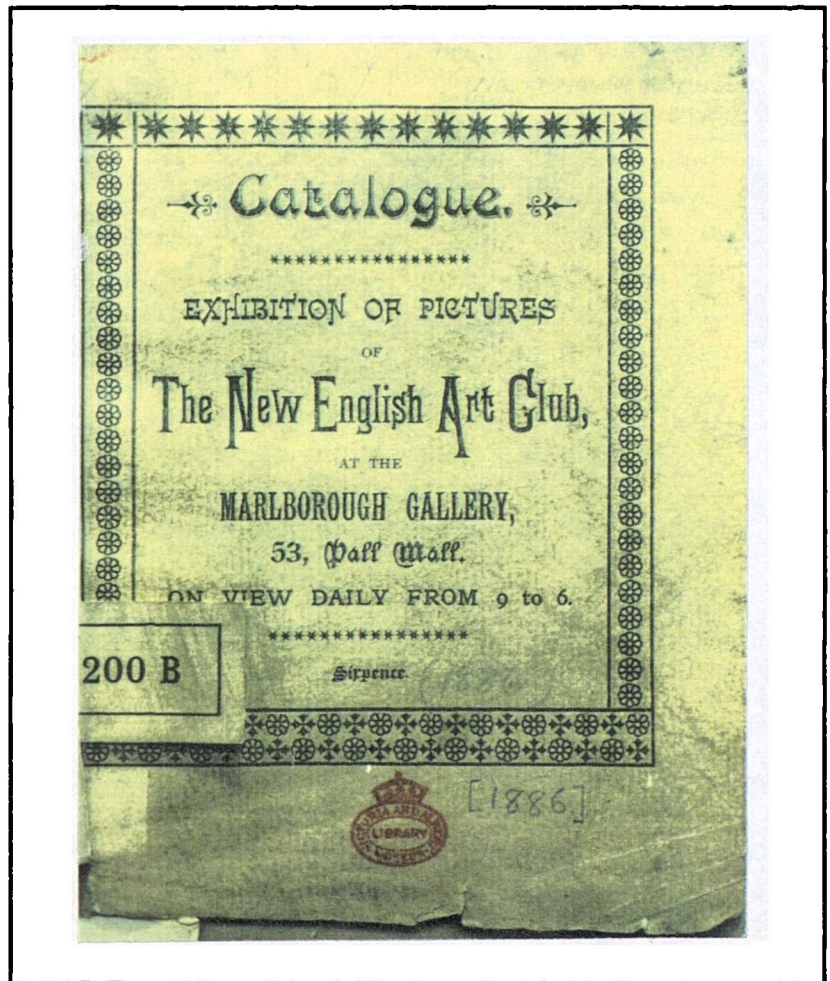


Figure 33 Catalogue: New English Art Club, 1886 [V&A NAL]



Figure 34 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay.' [*The Art Journal*, 1909: 162]

3.4.1.6 The New Gallery: 1888-1908

Following Burne-Jones's initiative, several members in 1887 left the Grosvenor Gallery. The controversy leading to the creation of the New Gallery involved a more mercantile approach to art, one that was not like the Grosvenor's type of exhibition rooms or style of catalogue. Parsons began exhibiting at the New Gallery in 1888 and continued to do so for the next twenty years.²⁷⁰

The gallery rooms were at 121 Regent Street in London, in a new building designed by Mr. E. R. Robson F.S.A.²⁷¹ The New Gallery published regular catalogues, and the illustrated catalogues of their yearly exhibition were very similar in presentation to those of the Grosvenor.

Parsons was on the consulting committee, a group of twelve influential art personalities and/or painters, for several years, from its establishment until 1908.²⁷² The first committee consisted of five artists from the Royal Academy, five from the Society of Artists (Suffolk Street), and one from the Royal Watercolour Society; the last, Arthur Lucas was not affiliated with any society. H. Herkomer, R.A. joined the committee later on. The formation of the New Gallery is closely linked with the attitude of the Royal Academy during that period.

During the latter decades of the nineteenth c. the reputation of the Academy sank very low and it began to be regarded as the bulwark of orthodox mediocrity in opposition to creative and progressive art. Other organizations, such as the New English Art Club, and later the London Group, were formed to accommodate progressive trends.²⁷³

The number of submissions [at the R. A. exhibitions] declined to about 8,000 from 1916 to 1919 but increased again to 10,000 or so in the early 1920s and the total of works exhibited varied between 1,250 and 1,950. Many of the pictures depicted the grimness of war, such as, all in 1916, *Youth mourning* by George Clausen, *Defeat of the Prussian Guard* by W. B. Wollen and *A Fight to the Last* by W. L. Wyllie, while others in the same

²⁷⁰ See the list of Parsons's paintings exhibited at the New Gallery on page 393.

²⁷¹ "The New Gallery is under the management of Messrs. C. E. Hallé and J.W. Comyns Carr, the promoters; with a Consulting Committee consisting of Messrs. L. Alma-Tadema, R.A.; E. Burne-Jones, A.R.A. ; A. Gilbert, A.R.A.; E. Onslow Ford, A.R.A.; W. Holman Hunt, J.W. North, Alfred Parsons and E.R. Robson, the architect." [Blackburn, 1888. *New Gallery Notes*. London, 1888: 3] To this list, Walter Crane added two names: Sir W. B. Richmond (A.R.A.), and even the former secretary of the Grosvenor Gallery, Mr. J. W. Beck. And Crane adds "The meat market was transformed by the skill of Mr. E. R. Robson, the architect, into the handsome galleries we know, and he did wonders with marble linings and gilding." [Crane, 1907: 322]

²⁷² The 1907 members of the consulting committee were Sir L. Alma-Tadema, Alfred Gilbert, H. A. Grueber, W. Holman Hunt, Arthur Lucas, J. W. North, C. H. Read, Sir George Reid, E. R. Robson, Sir W. B. Richmond and Sir Isidore Spielmann. The directors were C. F. Hallé and J. W. Comyns Carr. The secretary was Leonard Lindsay.

²⁷³ Osborne, 1970, 12th reprint 1992: 'Royal Academy of Arts in London': 1020-1021

year, such as *Sunny Morning* by Alfred Parsons and *A Spring Revel* by R. Anning Bell, seemed to be specially designed to keep at bay the horrors of the time.²⁷⁴

Despite the artistic differences between the New Gallery and the Royal Academy, Parsons like many others, bridged the gap and continued exhibiting at both societies until 1908, when the New Gallery closed. At the Royal Academy, there was a continual fight to get paintings hung 'on the line'.²⁷⁵ The physical setting of a smaller gallery improved the sales of works of art.²⁷⁶ It is tempting to assume that Parsons had gained sufficient social recognition by then and that in contrast to other landscape-painters, he was well treated at the Royal Academy. Parsons always strove for social recognition. He was the secretary of the Royal Academy Club and in 1889 he won a gold and silver medal for his work exhibited in Paris. These could explain his having a special treatment at the hanging of the Royal Academy summer exhibitions. Parsons could not renounce his allegiance to the Royal Academy even though he generously helped to set up the New Gallery.

²⁷⁴ Hutchison, 1986:144; Chapter 15: 'The Great War and its Effects 1914-1928.' Those paintings are reproduced in *Royal Academy Illustrated 1916*, in order of mention: p. 5-21-76-11 and 61.

²⁷⁵ The line was a decorative moulding on the wall, fixed at eye level. Hanging at this level provided better viewing of the work exhibited.

²⁷⁶ Morse Peckham demystifies the work of art as a way of earning a living comparing the artist with a plumber who is paid to repair pipes. We put artists on the level of Gods, living pure unselfish detached lives given to art: only the very rich can afford such luxury. 'When one studies culture in the anthropological sense, therefore, one is engaged in studying patterns of human behaviour and the attendant problems, transmission and innovation. Culture is patterns of behaviour; and artifacts, including works of art, are merely the consequences of deposits of that behaviour. Novel kinds of artifacts are consequences of novel kinds of behavioural patterns, again including works of art.' [Peckham, 1965: 11]

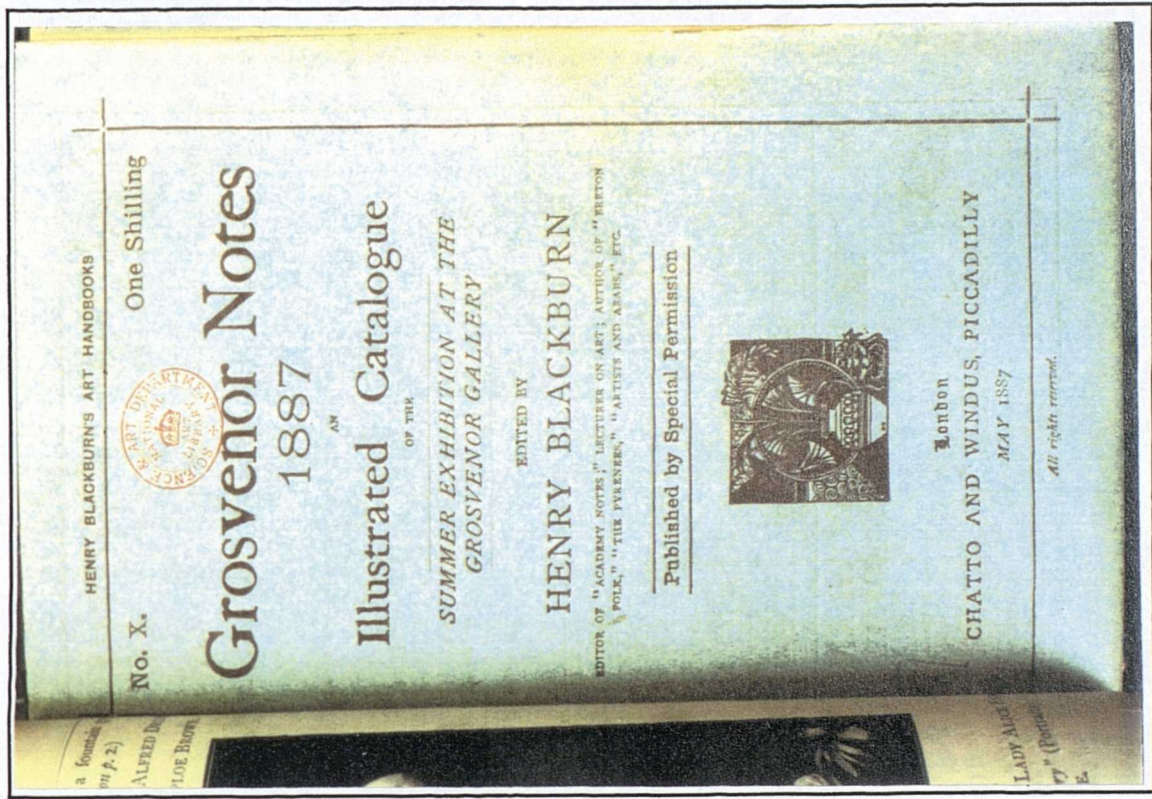


Figure 35 Grosvenor Catalogue, 1887 [V&A NAL]

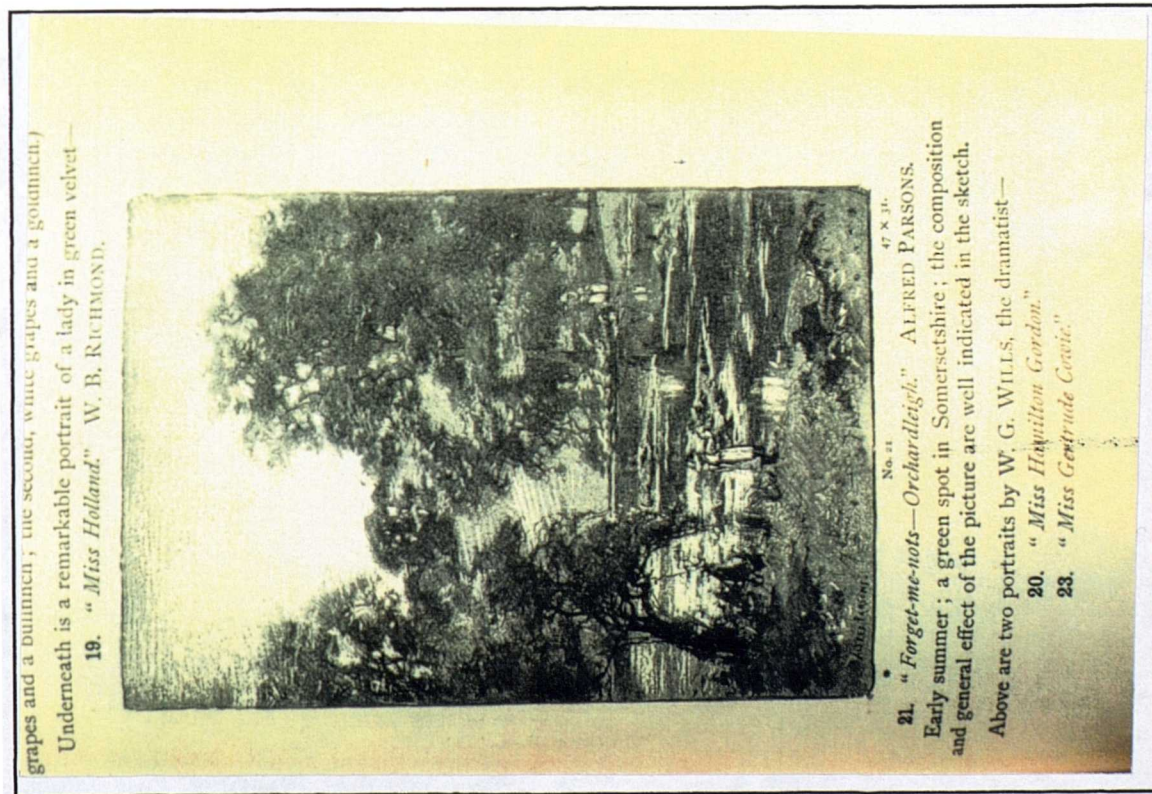


Figure 36 Parsons's illustration in Grosvenor Cat. 1880. [V&A NAL]

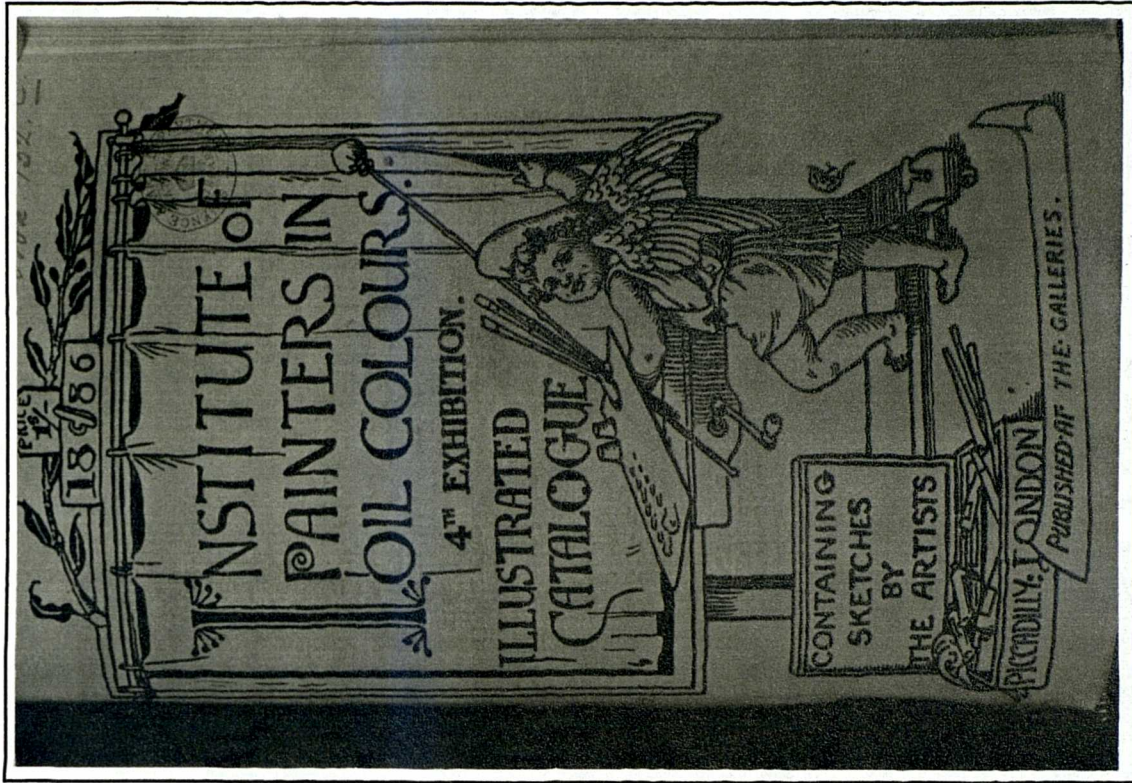


Figure 37 Institute of Painters in Oil Colours: 1886 Catalogue [V&A]

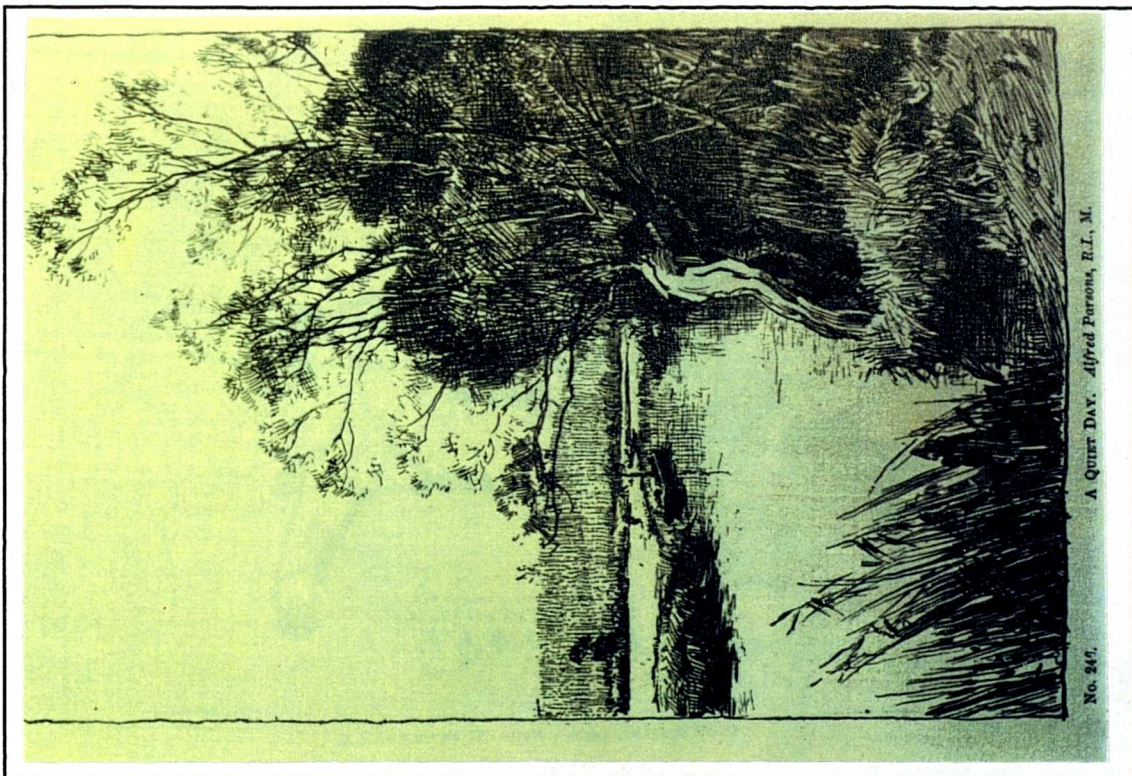


Figure 38 Inst. of Painters in Oil Colours. 1886 Cat. AP illustration

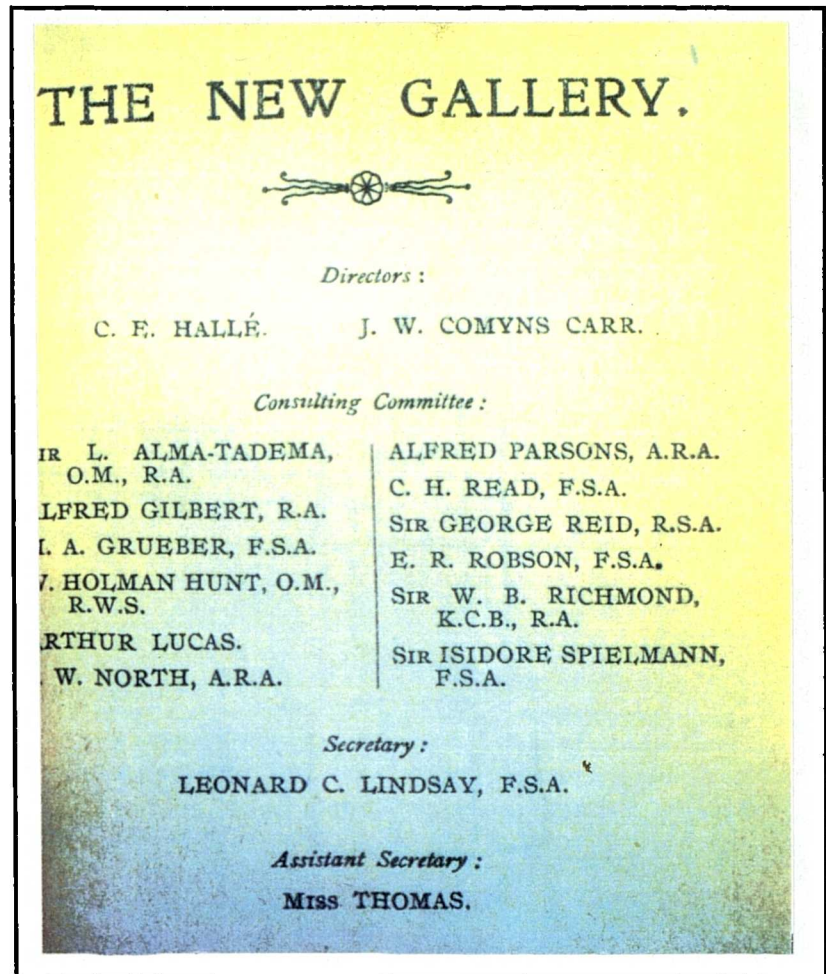


Figure 39 Catalogue: The New Gallery, 1893 [V&A NAL]



Figure 40 The New Gallery. 1888 Catalogue. Parsons's illustration. [V&A NAL]

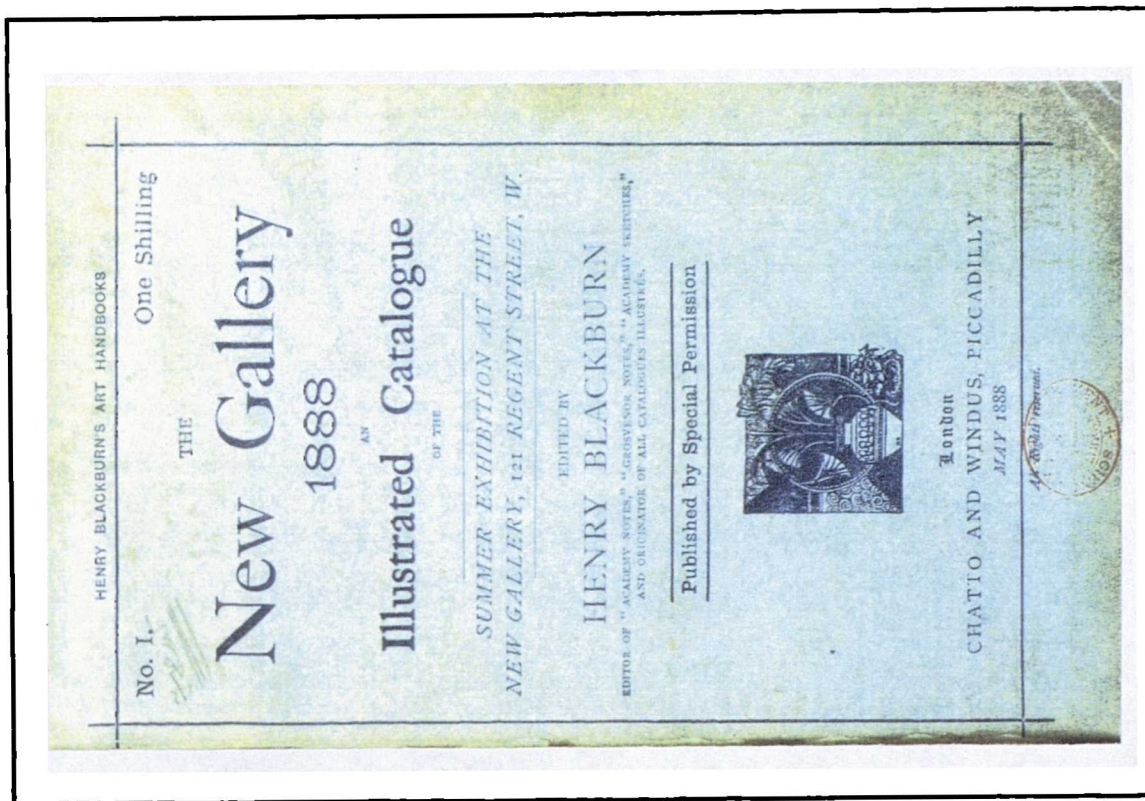


Figure 41 The New Gallery: 1888 Catalogue [V&A NAL]

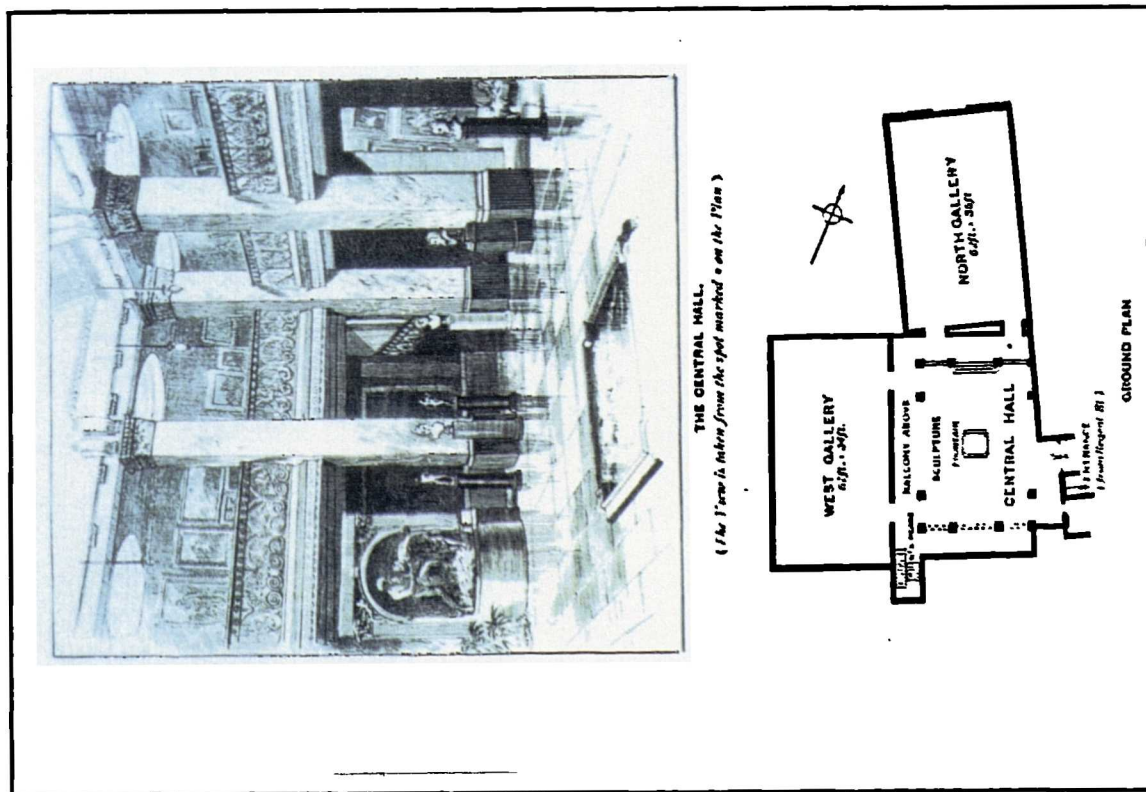


Figure 42 The New Gallery: 1888 Catalogue. Plan of the Gallery

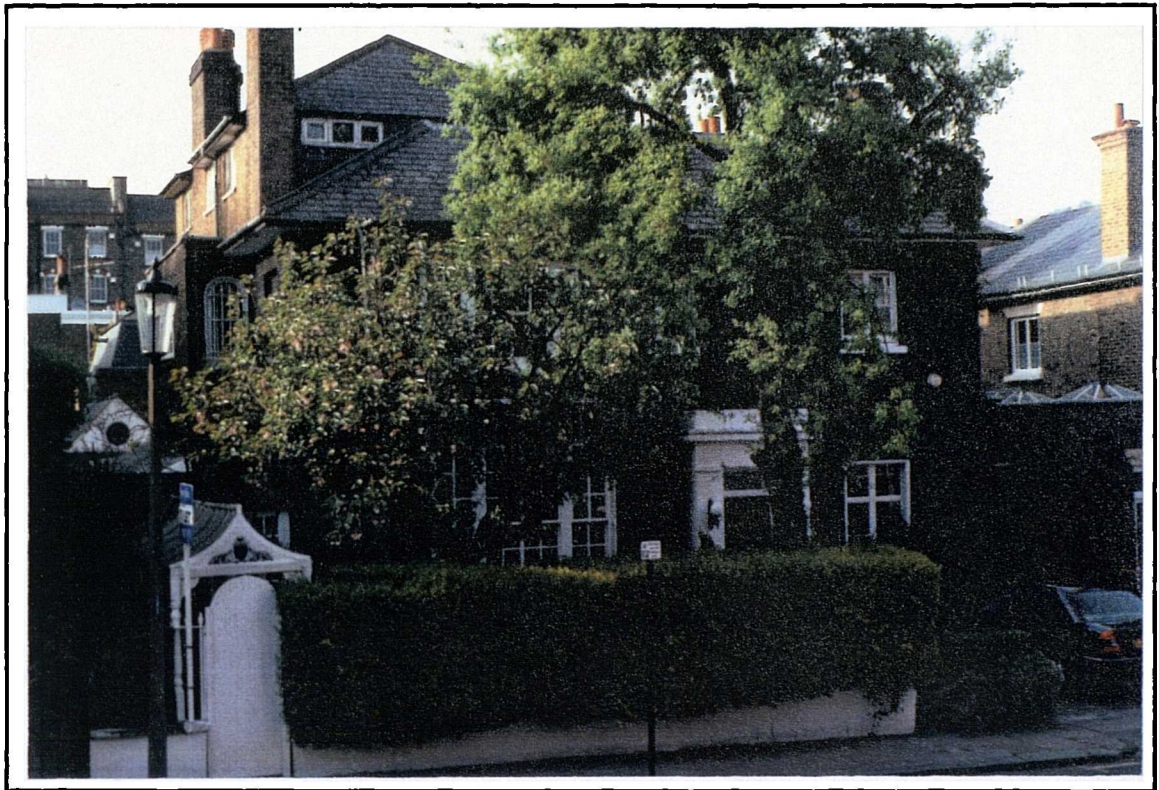


Figure 43 54 Bedford Gardens. Alfred Parsons's house and studio in London



Figure 44 54 Bedford Gardens. Detail: Front Entrance.

3.4.2 The Broadway Group: 1884-1896

Figure 45 "Alfred Parsons. *China Roses, Broadway, Worcestershire.*" [Hobhouse, 1988: 34]

During the mid 1880s, the Broadway Group was formed. Its members were mostly very close American friends who had in common a love of art. They were united stylistically in their love of Nature, since they were under the spell of the Aesthetic Movement. As has been well described by Helmreich, they were part of the back-to-the-land and the Arts and Crafts philosophy of living.²⁷⁷ They enjoyed cottage gardening, painting and social games such as tennis and cricket. Together they shared a repudiation of everyday difficult social realities. A clue to how this group came together may be found in the common American origins of these artists. For them, escape from America was an escape from reality. Europe offered, as Thomas Cole put it, “a delightful freedom from the common cares and business of life - the vortex of politics and utilitarianism that is forever whirling at home.”²⁷⁸ But for Broadway members like Parsons, it was the search for ‘true’ English roots that was his motivation.

Broadway was a village far from the city. In 1889, Parsons illustrated a poem by Thomas Randolph, probably written about 1632. In it, a thatched-roof cottage, a ‘chaumière’, sits in the middle of an idyllic seventeenth-century landscape, that could be in the Cotswolds. The whole poem is a farewell to the city in favour of the country. It is another manifestation of the 1880's social convergence that gave birth to so many writings, prints and paintings about what was seen as the idyllic, seventeenth century:

Come, spur away,
I have no patience for a longer stay,
But must go down,
And leave the chargeable noise of this great town;
I will the country see,
Where old simplicity,
Though hid in grey,
Doth look more gay
Than foppery in plush and scarlet clad,
Farewell, you city wits, that are
Almost at civil war;
‘Tis time that I grow wise, when all the world grows mad.

More of my days
I will not spend to gain an idiot’s praise;
Or to make sport
For some slight puisne of the Inns-of-Courts,

²⁷⁷ Mary de Navarro, who was living in Broadway, had William Morris wallpaper in several of her rooms at The Court Farm. This was just one example of this way of living with art. She organized musical evenings and folk songs with Elgar as one of the guests.

²⁷⁸ Morris, Edward. ‘Edwin Austin Abbey and his American Circle in England’ in *Apollo*, 1976, CIV: 221. Curiously, the author of this article completely neglects mentioning Parsons who was a key member of the group. Much has been written about Abbey, including his biography by Lucas, and comparatively little about Parsons. Abbey set up a fund for artists after his death and his wife made sure that his memory was kept alive. Parsons left no such traces for posterity.

Then, worthy Stafford, say,
 How shall we spend the day?
 With what delights
 Shorten the nights?
 When from this tumult we are got secure,
 Where mirth with all her freedom goes,
 Yet shall no finger lose;
 Where every word is thought, and every thought is pure,

There from the tree
 We'll cherries pluck, and pick the strawberry;
 And every day
 Go see the wholesome country girls make hay,

....

Harper's reprinted this poem in 1889.²⁷⁹ In this illustration work, Parsons was following the general mood of the period. It was in the spirit of the writings of William Morris and of Ruskin. Broadway was the paradigm of *News from Nowhere*:

He drove on again, while I smiled faintly to think how the nineteenth century, of which such big words have been said, counted for nothing in the memory of this man, who read Shakespeare and had not forgotten the Middle Ages.²⁸⁰

Life in Broadway, an English, idyllic and traditional village of great age, was closely linked to the SPAB and the philosophy of the newly formed Art Workers' Guild. Here again, William Morris was the great inspiration. Morris was the first arrival; in 1876 he rented the Broadway Tower, a folly overlooking this well secluded Cotswold village.

Here he found the perfect expression of his ideals of life and of handicraft in the Cotswolds, as epitomized in a cottage that he saw in Broadway in 1876, "a work of art and a piece of nature-no less". In September 1876 he visited Cornell Price in Broadway and later described the cottage he had seen there with Philip Webb.²⁸¹ Followers of the Arts and Crafts movement shared an idealistic vision. They were also making useful objects, a satisfying process in itself. The Broadway Group took Morris's advice, but more was done to increase their upper middle class production of either paintings, songs or writings. To his endeavours, Parsons added gardening activities and, less frequently, amateur architecture.

It is central to the ideas of Morris and his followers that not only should the products be enjoyed by as many people as possible, but that the artist in making them should create for himself and for the people working with him a full and satisfying life. If so, it will be as some kind of community; the environment for making things could become, in the phrase of Eric Gill, "a cell of good living". That has many different sides. It may mean a good life; it certainly means that work can not be directed entirely with a view to making money.

²⁷⁹ Randolph, Thomas. 'Poem to Master Anthony Stafford' [*Harper's* XVIII June-Nov 1889: 181-87]

²⁸⁰ Morris, 1891: 54

²⁸¹ Ottewill, 1989: 130 and 211

It might be a self-centred world. It cannot be entirely a world of profit. It can safely be said to anyone thinking of enjoying the life of an artist-craftsman that no fortunes are to be made in this way.²⁸²

Yet, it was not the life of an artist-craftsman as such that motivated Parsons to be among the followers of William Morris.²⁸³ This provided him with commercial opportunities as well. Through the Broadway Group, he was able to climb the social ladder and turn his passion for travel and sketching into substantial earnings.²⁸⁴ As the Englishman of the Broadway Group, Parsons introduced these Americans to the idyllic English way of life. Parsons had been living at 54 Bedford Gardens since 1878 and had made new contacts with Kensington society. When exactly Parsons met F. D. Millet²⁸⁵ is not known, but the chances are that the young Edwin Abbey introduced several Americans to Parsons shortly after January 1879, when they first met in London. From the spring of 1881 to April 1884, Parsons shared a studio with Edwin Abbey, the first in Broadway along with Millet in 'The Priory', the second in London at 54 Bedford Gardens.²⁸⁶

Parsons and Leonard Hutton visited Morris in Broadway and soon after brought with them the Americans working within the *Harper's* circle. It was a sign of the times, the intellectuals and the middle classes were escaping the misery of the towns.²⁸⁷

Another influence which helped create the desire to live in a small village came from France. English artists were emulating the Forest of Fontainebleau group, where the Barbizon School of painters had flourished from 1840 to around 1870.²⁸⁸ In 1876, Parsons had illustrated an

²⁸² Nuttgens, 1976: 11

²⁸³ Other important craftsmen came to the Cotswolds. Ernest Gimson (1864-1919) in 1893 and the Barnsley brothers, Ernest (1863-1926) who set up craft workshops in Sapperton in 1903. C. R. Ashbee who had founded the Guild of Handicraft in 1884, moved to Chipping Campden in 1902.

²⁸⁴ Parsons liked to travel to remote places such as Japan, the USA and Colombia. See chronology page 491

²⁸⁵ See a brief biography of Millet on page 372.

²⁸⁶ See 'Parsons as seen by Henry James' on page 421. "it would still be almost inevitable to speak of him [Parsons] after speaking of Mr. Abbey, for the definite reason (I hope that in writing it I may not appear to invade too grossly the domain of private life) that these gentlemen are united in domestic circumstance as well as associated in the nature of their work. In London, in the relatively lucid air of Campden Hill, they dwell together, and their beautiful studios are side by side." [James, June 1889: 58.]

²⁸⁷ "Out of upper - and middle-class anxieties over changes in rural England as well as the deterioration of England's cities came the back-to-the-land movement, based on "love" of the countryside and belief in the 'restorative powers' of nature." [Marsh, 1982: 1-7 as quoted by Helmreich, 1994: 108.]

²⁸⁸ Group of French landscape-painters who took their name from a small village on the outskirts of the Forest of Fontainebleau where its leader, Theodore Rousseau, and several of his followers settled in the latter half of the 1840s.(...) Unlike the Impressionists, however, they painted only studies in the open air; their finished pictures were done in the studio. Their feeling for nature, amounting almost to a cult, may be regarded as a
(continued...)

article by Robert Louis Stevenson on that school. It is tempting to assume that Parsons had been to Fontainebleau during his study tour in Europe in the early seventies.²⁸⁹ Parsons was under the influence of the painters of the Barbizon School.

At first Parsons, F. D. Millet and Edwin Abbey leased Farnham House on Broadway Green. Then Millet bought Russell House and Mary de Navarro bought The Court Farm. In 1911, Parsons built his own house, called Luggershill, nearby with Andrew Noble Prentice as architect. The style chosen respected the architecture of the Cotswolds vernacular and the principles of the Arts and Crafts. Henry James, Sir John Hare, John Singer Sargent²⁹⁰, Alma-Tadema, Mary Anderson de Navarro, J. M. Barrie, Edmund Gosse, Frederick Barnard, Bernard Partridge and Elgar, all came to Broadway and helped to make it the most famous village in England.²⁹¹ It is significant that Parsons found himself in the midst of such an influential group of the elite. Activities involved music, literature, architecture, crafts, gardening and cricket²⁹²: the perfect example of the Arts and Crafts philosophy at work. In 1904, the railway arrived, heralding the beginning of the decline of this idyllic village and its bucolic activities. Today Broadway is choking from the effects of excessive tourism and car traffic.

It is hard to establish just when the Broadway Group broke up since it was never really a formal group with regular meetings. The author of this thesis believes that 1896 is a realistic guess. By then John Singer Sargent was touring the world and producing elegant portraits for the privileged few, while Henry James had rented a house in Rye, Sussex. This is also the year in which Parsons stopped contributing to *Harper's* magazine, as he was getting more commissions for landscape gardening.

²⁸⁸ (...continued)

form of Romantic revolt from the drabness of urban life and coincided with a longing among the urban population in expanding cities to renew the contact with nature. Corot is often associated with the group but his work has a poetic and literary quality which sets him somewhat apart. Millet is with less justification regarded as a member of this school. He settled in Barbizon in 1849 and during his last period he painted pure landscape. But his idealization of peasant life is rather in line with the sentimental humanitarianism of the mid-19th c. than the love of landscape for its own sake which unites the Barbizon School proper. [Osborne, 1992: 'Barbizon School': 107]

²⁸⁹ More research must be done to find out if Parsons visited the Forest of Fontainebleau.

²⁹⁰ The friendship with Sargent was to last until Parsons's death, when Sargent chose the works to be exhibited at the posthumous exhibition of Parsons's work.

²⁹¹ Ottewill, 1989: 130 & 211; Houghton, 1980: 5. For more on Broadway see *Country Life*, January 24, 1980 'New Life for an Artist's Village': 252-54 and January 31, 1980 'The Turning Point': 308-10 by Alan Crawford.

²⁹² Sir James Barrie's Allahakabarries cricket team. [Barrie, 1899]

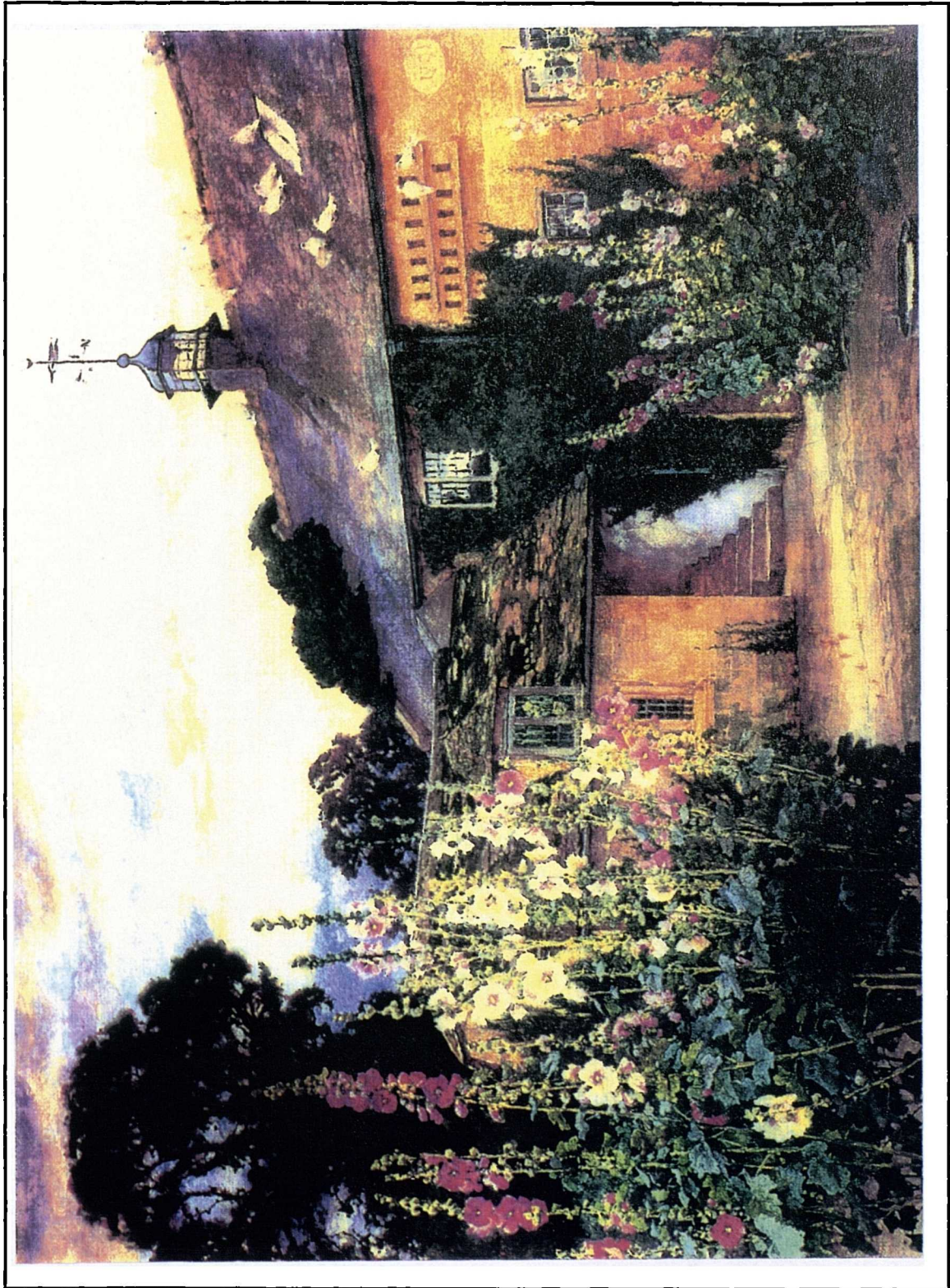


Figure 46 "Russell House, Broadway" [Hobhouse, 1988: 35]

3.4.3 1890: *The Genus Rosa* and Garden Painting for Ellen Willmott.

Figure 47 "Alfred Parsons. *Warley Place, Essex.*" [Hobhouse, 1988: 199]

The Genus Rosa, commissioned by Ellen Willmott, is Parsons's most famous illustrated horticultural book. It includes seventy watercolours of roses painted between 1890 and 1908, which are now held by the Lindley Library in London. This work contributed significantly to his reputation as a painter of flowers and gardens, although it represented only a small part of his lifetime artistic production.

Ellen Ann Willmott (1858-1934) was an English gardener and author. Her garden at Warley Place was well known for its collection of trees and shrubs, lilies, daffodils, alpine plants, and especially *Crocus vernus*, which grew wild in large drifts.²⁹³ She commissioned Parsons to do these illustrations because of his reputation as an illustrator and horticulturist. They probably met through William Robinson and the Royal Horticultural Society circle. As early as 1879, Parsons had a full-page coloured illustration of roses published in *The Garden*: 'Roses Mons E.Y. Teas and Jean Liabaud', which Willmott had obviously seen.²⁹⁴

Another incentive for their meeting was their common love of daffodils.²⁹⁵ Parsons, Jekyll and Willmott all had daffodils named after them.²⁹⁶ Thomas speculates on why Parsons took the Willmott commission:

The Times referred to his business capacity which made him invaluable to his colleagues. Parsons's background had provided no guarantee of comfort, and through necessity he had become successful in business. (...) Although it was not long before his illustrations and his landscape gardening began to meet his needs, and more, the need to grasp any and every opportunity had become ingrained. It would be less than surprising if Parsons saw a double chance of financial reward in his association with *The Genus Rosa*.²⁹⁷

Although highly praised today, this book had a difficult birth. There is a very good analysis of the publication difficulties in Graham S. Thomas's book, *A Garden of Roses*. Parsons and Willmott share the blame. On one side, Parsons is blamed because of his financial interest in his favourite printer's company. Today it is agreed that he was justified in criticizing the quality

²⁹³ Jellicoe et al, 1991 : 608

²⁹⁴ Plate CLXXV, 'Drawn by Alfred Parsons's *The Garden* XV April 12 1879 The article is signed George Paul from Cheshunt, Herts. The roses were seen at La Croix-Rousse in Lyons, in the old-fashioned garden of M. Jean Liabaud.

²⁹⁵ "The care which he devoted to the painting of flowers was astonishing; his friends tell of a simple narcissus on which he was engaged, off and on, for years, trying it in all lights and from every angle." ['Death of Mr. Parsons, R. A.' *The Times* Wednesday, January 21st 1920.]

²⁹⁶ All three were members of the Royal Horticultural Society. ['A New Daffodil (Gertrude Jekyll) ' *The Garden* XXIII Jan. 13 1883: 31]. A conference on daffodils was held in 1884. Barr and Burbidge were on the committee that named the Alfred Parsons's daffodil that year. It was a daffodil hybridized by Edward Leeds before 1877. "Creamy white, trumpet rich yellow, compact habit. Foliage broad and robust." [*Conference Supplementary Catalogue*. Barr & Son. 1884]

²⁹⁷ Thomas, Graham S., 1987: 17

of colour printing, but at the same time he is blamed for having refused to collaborate with the printers Murray and Willmott, who had been chosen against his wishes. On the other hand, Willmott is blamed for procrastinating and delaying payments and the production of the text. It seems she and Parsons were rivals over the eventual renown of the book. The research was not conclusive in discovering if Willmott and Parsons remained friends after this feud.²⁹⁸

Ellen also commissioned Parsons to paint her three gardens. These were: Warley Place (Figure 47) 'Warley Place' ('Reserve of the Essex Naturalists' Trust since 1978), the château of Tresserve²⁹⁹ near Aix-les-Bains and Boccanegra³⁰⁰ on the Italian Riviera near La Mortola.³⁰¹ This collection of watercolours remains the property of the Berkeley family.³⁰² It is a unique collection, one that concentrates on several watercolours by Parsons solely of gardens. Parsons's points of view are aimed at hardy flowers in a semi-wooded setting: Robinson's wild garden. In all the views, contrast is the key to harmony: fluffy roses surrounding a tree trunk, bright irises and lilies in front of subdued willows, leafless deciduous oaks in front of green hollies and poplars, old fashioned climbing roses softening formal pergolas, herbaceous colourful planting that frames vanishing mountains across the sea: Parsons was the master of composition. See Figure 48 to Figure 57 on the following pages.

²⁹⁸ Archival material has to be found for the period beginning in 1907 to 1920. It is worth mentioning that Willmott lent a Parsons work to be shown at the international exhibition in Rome in 1911. *The Genus Rosa* was published 3 years later, in 1914.

²⁹⁹ Which she owned from 1890 to 1920. [Jellicoe et al, 1991: 608]. Ellen Willmott bought Tresserve in 1890. Is it Parsons who introduced her to Aix? Or was it Princess Louise who was often in France?

³⁰⁰ From 1905 to the early 1920s: *ibid.*

³⁰¹ Sir Thomas Hanbury (1832-1907) bought La Mortola in 1867. He gave the Royal Horticultural Society its garden at Wisley in 1903. One hundred years later, a large number of RHS' members are fighting to prevent the RHS Library, 'The Lindley', to be moved from Vincent Square, London to Wisley. Did Ellen Willmott buy Boccanegra because she had visited La Mortola?

³⁰² "Willmott's sister, Rose, married into one of the oldest and wealthiest families in the country- The Berkeleys at Spetchley Park, Worcester, and Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire." [Thomas, Graham, S., 1987: 14]

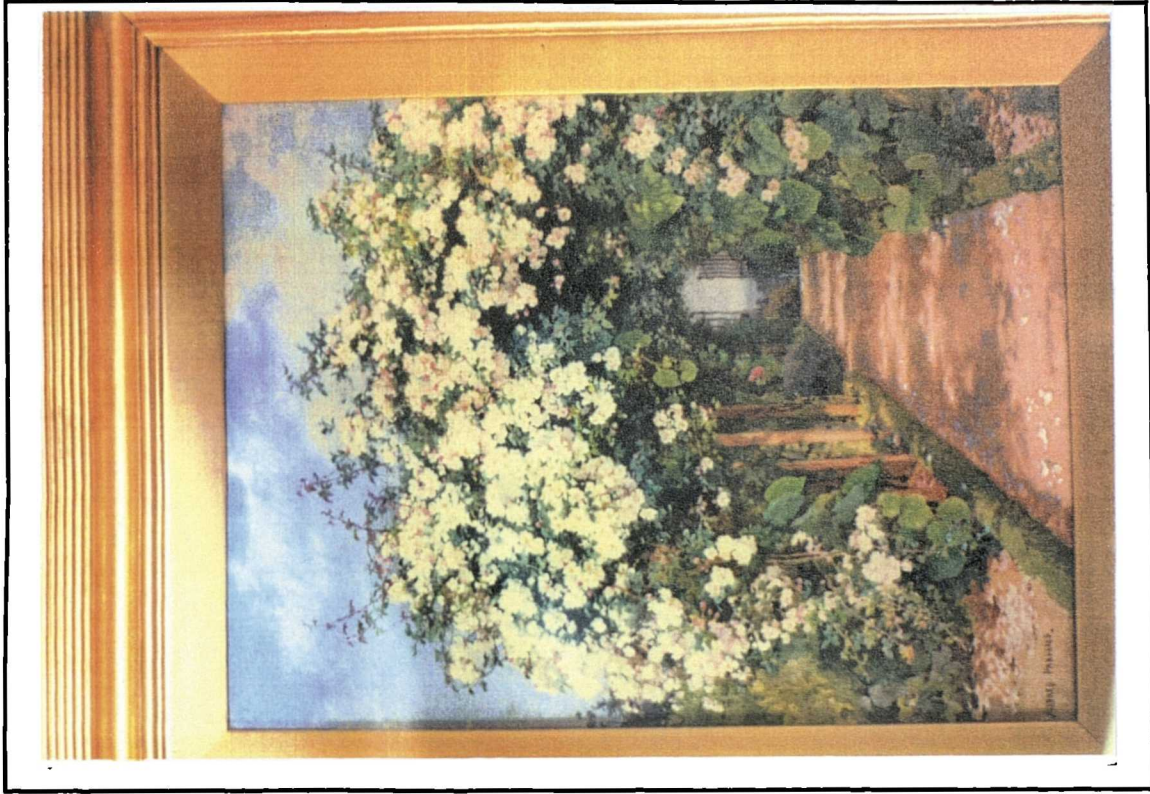


Figure 48 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

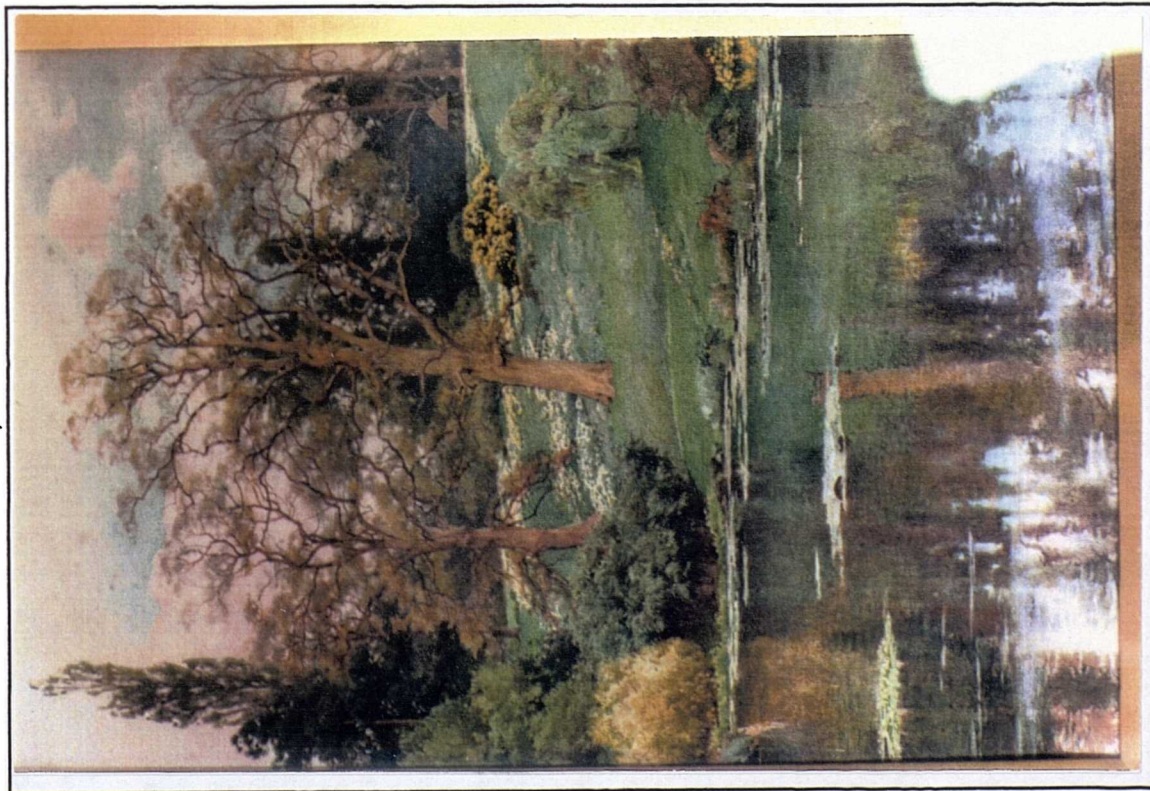


Figure 49 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.



Figure 50 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

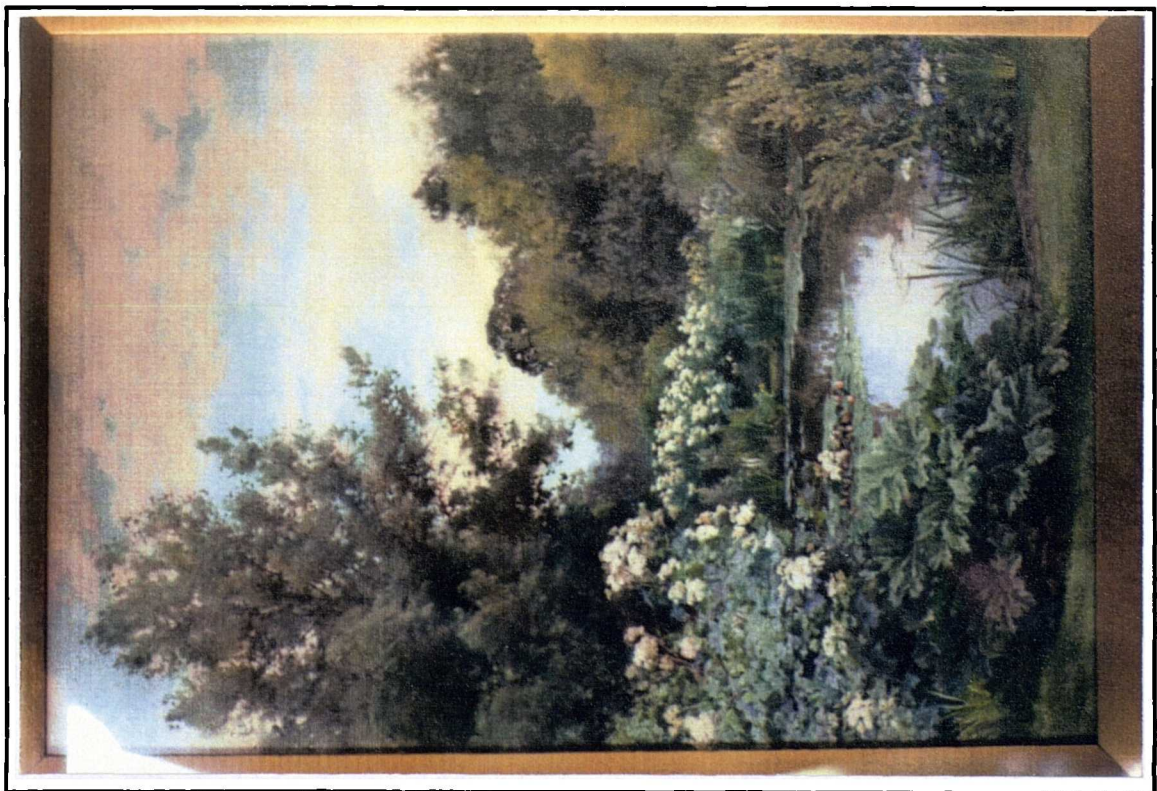


Figure 51 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.



Figure 52 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

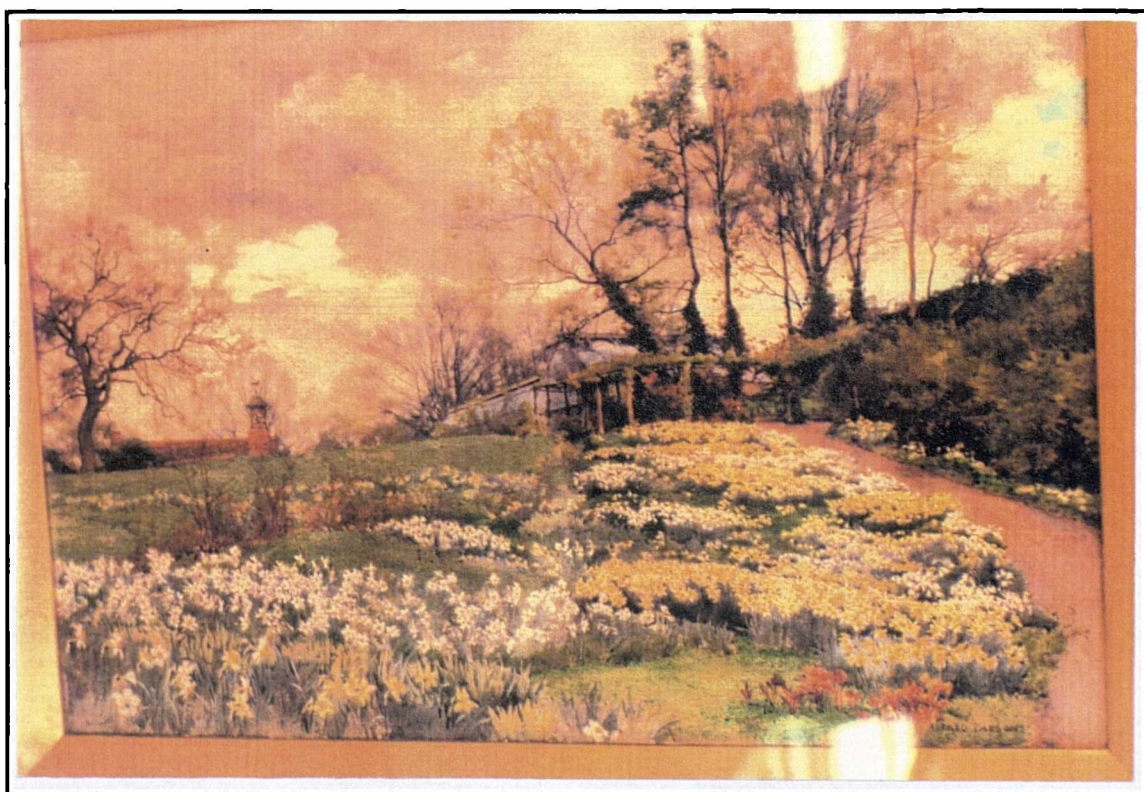


Figure 53 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

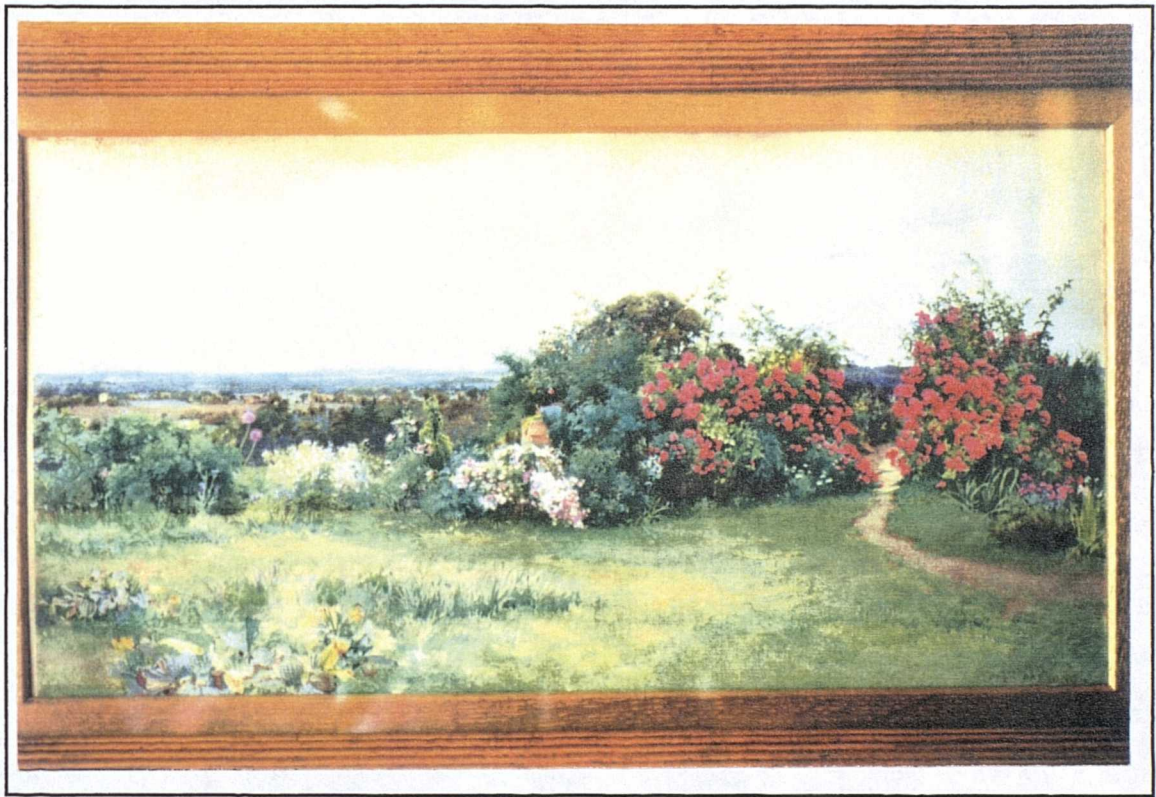


Figure 54 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.



Figure 55 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

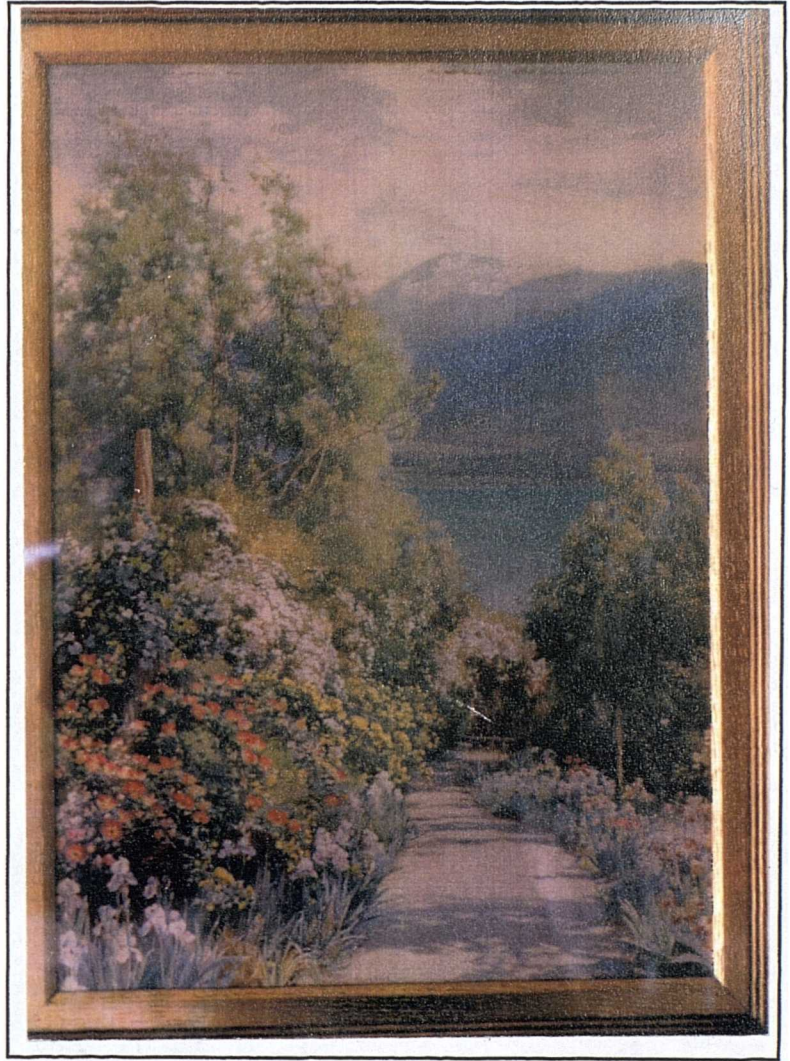


Figure 57 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.



Figure 56 Watercolour of Ellen Willmott's garden. Private collection.

Parsons exhibited some of these paintings. In 1898 at both the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours and the Royal Academy, he showed 'Clematis Montana at Tresserve, Aix-les-Bains'. Parsons travelled to Aix several times.³⁰³ Three reasons for this seem plausible: for those who could afford it as a spa instead of Harrogate, Aix was a fashionable resort for relaxation from the life in the 'Metropole' and, for Parsons, a necessary place to be seen, to meet friends and to gain patronage. Secondly Parsons periodically needed to recover from exhaustion and from various ailments.³⁰⁴ Lastly, at least two ladies making regular visits here knew Parsons: his very good friend Princess Louise, and Ellen Willmott. The visits with Princess Louise will be discussed in Chapter Four. More than anything else, the collaboration on the *Genus Rosa* gave Parsons horticultural credibility, and helped him focus on landscape gardening at the turn-of the century.

³⁰³ In 1886, he exhibited 'The Dent du chat, Aix-les-Bains' at the Royal Academy. At the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colour, also in 1886, two water-colours were shown: 'Lac Bourget, Aix-les-Bains' and 'The Borders of the Lake, Aix-les-Bains'. In 1887, 'The Borders of the Lake, Aix-les-Bains', was then sent to the Royal Society of Artists: Birmingham. He travelled back to Aix in the autumn of 1889. In 1903, at the Royal Watercolour Society he showed 'The Marshes, By Lac Bourget, Aix-les-Bains'. See the chronology of his life on page 491.

³⁰⁴ See the letter by Ned Abbey on page 118.

3.4.4 First landscape gardening commissions: 1884-94

Parsons did not go to any school of landscape architecture. He gained his experience from years of observing and describing country estates for the numerous articles and books he illustrated. When he planted trees at Bishopswood, Welbeck or Battledene, he had in mind texts like the one below:

The annexed picturesque group, so well and truly drawn to nature, is a striking instance of the capability of this Poplar to give ornamental and impressive effect to the landscape. The following is an artist's view of the way in which the Lombardy Poplar should be dealt with: The same principles which would guide a man in planting hardy flowers would equally apply to the planting of trees. As a rule, one would use them in groups, sometimes a clump composed entirely of one kind, and sometimes a mixed clump carefully arranged as to growth. The Lombardy Poplar would naturally make a kind of highest point in the composition to which the other lines would lead up. I do not think that it looks well isolated, nor do you get the full advantage of its distinct form when it occurs singly among other trees, but the repetition of the perpendicular line is what you want. I think, too for an avenue, or for a line of trees by water, the Lombardy is not easily beaten. It would be very effective on high ground, but it usually gets broken by the wind in such situations; it seems also to do best in a damp soil.³⁰⁵

(Figure 58)

The article ended with the following sentence:

“The annexed picturesque group, so well and truly drawn from nature, is is a striking instance of this Poplar to give ornamental and and impressive effect to the landscape.” Then, within brackets, the author quotes ‘an artist’s view of the way in which the Lombardy Poplar should be dealt with. The present author believes that these were the words of Alfred Parsons himself as he was ‘the artist’ illustrating the article.

³⁰⁵ This is from a long article entitled: ‘The Lombardy Poplar’. The author, George Berry, gardener at Longleat, probably wrote to Parsons about his sketch to illustrate it, and decided to print part of Parsons’s reply. *The Garden*, XX, July 2, 1881: 11-12

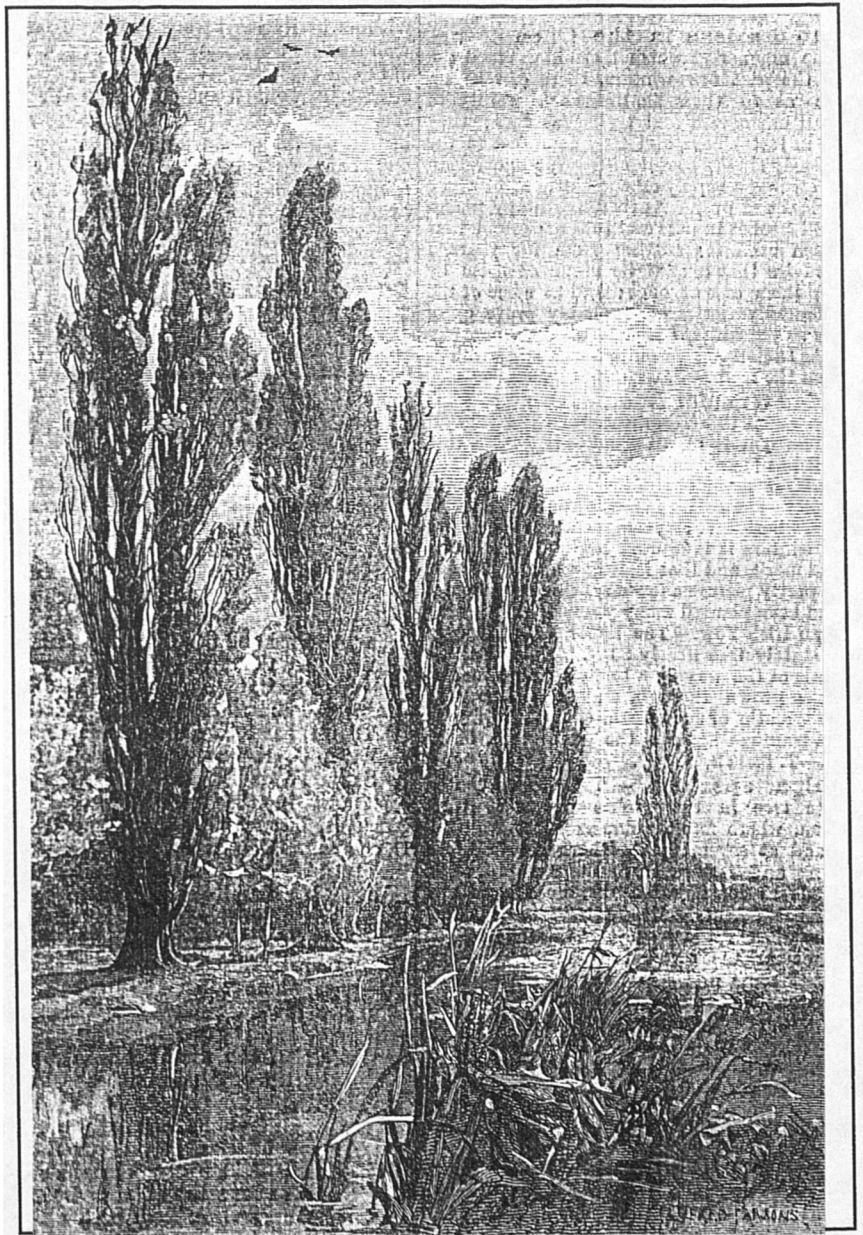


Figure 58 "Poplars by Mill Stream" Drawn for *The Garden* by Alfred Parsons near Thatcham, Berks. [*The Garden*: 2 July 1881: 11]

3.4.4.1 The first known garden: Clouds: 1884

Percy Wyndham³⁰⁶, a member of SPAB, was the owner of Clouds. In the eighteenth century the estate belonged to the Still family who were close to Beckford, the celebrated author of “Vathek” and owner of Fonthill, and it is said that the planting around the house and in the park was done under his direction.³⁰⁷ In 1880, Wyndham commissioned Philip Webb to design a full-sized country house.³⁰⁸ The House was inhabited by 1885 but on January 6 1889 a fire burnt it to the ground, thus postponing completion of the project until 1892.³⁰⁹

Philip Webb was the architect, and the house was furnished almost entirely with curtains, chintzes, and carpets designed by William Morris, and old furniture which my mother collected long before it became the fashion.³¹⁰

On August 28th 1884, Percy Wyndham asked permission to Philip Webb, to alter and rearrange the plan of the East and kitchen gardens.³¹¹ Twenty years later, in November 1904, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt wrote that Parsons had given a design for the East garden.³¹² It is not known exactly what was Parsons’s contribution. At Clouds the link between Webb and Parsons is made through Percy and Madeline Wyndham. Parsons did not assist directly Webb

³⁰⁶ Percy Wyndham figures in the list of SPAB members in both May and August 1877. He bought one of Whistler’s paintings exhibited at The Grosvenor Gallery.

³⁰⁷ Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen. *Country Life*. ‘Country Homes & Gardens Old & New. Clouds, Salisbury. The residence of the Hon. Mrs Percy Wyndham.’ 19 Nov. 1904:738-748: 738. ‘Blunt was related to the Wyndhams.’ [Franklin, 1981: 147]

³⁰⁸ Hussey, Christopher. *Country Life*. ‘Fifty years of Taste.’ January 3, 1947: 42-47

³⁰⁹ “Webb originally designed Clouds on a much grander scale as a courtyard house. It came out to be too expensive so he reduced it to become the villa scheme, making the length of the central hall run from front to back of the house. He gave the plan considerable formality by aligning all the central doors, and placing the staircase opposite the inglenook and in a classical and unfunctional spirit he matched the smoking room with an unnecessarily large dinner service room for the sake of symmetry. (...) service rooms were separated from the main block by a courtyard. (...) It was a very old-fashioned way to plan by this date.(...) By the end of the century, new houses with a top-lit central hall had become very rare.” [Franklin, 1981: 146-7]

³¹⁰ Wemyss, Mary (née Wyndham) Wyndham Family Record. ?

³¹¹ Private collection. Philip Webb to Mrs Wyndham. 1884 August 30. See transcript on page 171.

³¹² On 28 April 1997, Dr Sheila Kirk, the Philip Webb expert, wrote to the author: “...although he (P. Webb) had supplied designs--possibly not detailed-- for the gardens on the east side she did not intend to abide by them. William Scawen Blunt, who at one time had Madeline as one of his mistresses and so knew her well, wrote in *Country Life* that ‘On the east side the garden is formal, enclosed by yew hedges, the design of which was given by Mr. Alfred Parsons.’ [Blunt, 1904: 740] This sentence could mean either that the garden was designed by Parsons or merely that the hedges were.” She then refers to Caroline Dakers’s book on Clouds [Dakers, 1993] and mentions that from this text it seems that the hedges were planted at an early date during construction of the house, and would therefore have been Webb’s suggestion. This would leave the design of the interior of the east garden to Parsons.

to design the East garden as Ottewill assumed it was.³¹³

After research in the correspondence and papers of Webb at the British Library³¹⁴ and at the Victoria and Albert National Art Library, no clear mention linking Alfred Parsons to Philip Webb was found.³¹⁵ Only one letter from Philip Webb to the Boyce couple alludes to landscape-painters:

According to Madame's note "Landscape painters have always difficulties in the way of their work and, according to an interscription of Monsieur's it is from incompetency in the painter.

G. P. Boyce, like Parsons, was a landscape-painter. Webb had designed his house in Chelsea, London. In a very humorous letter of which a longer extract is to be found in a previous footnote, Webb deprecates 'man' and in particular, the 'landscape-painter man'. The letter is very polite and there is no clear allusion to Alfred Parsons, the landscape-painter turned landscape-gardener.

The same sense of enjoyment comes across strongly in his [Webb's] design of a house for G. P. Boyce, now 35 Glebe Place, Chelsea. Here, though, both the proportions and the flavour of the mixture have changed, with the result that, for the first time, Webb's work can be described as 'Queen Anne', rather than as some derivative of it.³¹⁶

Part of the Webb archives held by John Brandon Jones, whom the author met at the Philip Webb conference in York, were photographed and will help to follow the development of the planting of the Clouds garden.³¹⁷ Figure 61 shows the house before any planting was done.

The description of the garden, in the Estate of Clouds sale document of 1936, mentions attractive gardens, comprised of a formal Rose Garden with rose arches and a pedestal for sundial, surrounded by a yew hedge, fine magnolias, fig tree and vine and herbaceous border. Beyond were a wild garden and a shrubbery. There were four greenhouses and the south facing loggia had three oak seats and creeper-clad arches.³¹⁸

³¹³ [Ottewill, 1989: 131] "and he assisted Webb with the enclosed gardens on the east side of Clouds."

³¹⁴ Philip Webb had a voluminous correspondence with Janey Morris; held at the British Library.

³¹⁵ V&A National Art Library: reference 35 M 171. Webb, P. Office expenses. 1884-1896.
 V&A National Art Library reference 35 M 170. Notes and Addresses 1859-1912.
 B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45354 f 237-239 Letters from P. Webb to G. P. Boyce.
 B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45346 f 139 Letters to Members of the Morris family.
 B.L. Manuscript: Add MS 45342 f 1-181 Morris papers vol V, vol IX Presented by Dr R. Steele.

³¹⁶ Girouard, 1977: 24.

³¹⁷ Efforts have been made to find the Wyndham papers, without success. Mrs Sally Webster, who lives at Clouds Cottage, and is herself a keen gardener, confirmed that these papers have vanished. Consult [Dakers, 1993] for the story of successive ownership of Clouds.

³¹⁸ Document given by Mrs Sally Bond, Secretary to Wallis Hunt of The Life-Anew Trust.

Figure 59, 60 shows the south front with the climbing roses and the terrace encircled by a wooden fence. The fence is a Philip Webb design³¹⁹. When designing Mrs Mainwaring's garden, Brynbella, in 1899, Parsons took great care to create a sunken fence.

I came on here last night & have spent the day with another client, Mrs Mainwaring, Brynbella, St Asaphs. She is a widow & a good sort - but not rich & there is nothing in it but an occasional visit to advise about planting. It is a good last century house built for Mrs Piozzi & has never been altered either inside or out. It reminds me in some ways of Harleyford in its Georgian arrangements. Fortunately very little mischief has been done in the garden, & it was easy to arrange a sunk fence in front. I thought at first of a balustrade on the top but found that the fall of the ground was too much to keep the wall back, so arranged to have posts & chains to mark the division. The remaining work is rearranging planting of big border & shrubberies & I shall probably go down there again in the late autumn to see if her gardener an intelligent little Welshman, got hold of my ideas. I think he is a good man. She paid me £12.12.³²⁰

Did Parsons recommend the removal of that fence? With the house being on top of a hill and commending such a picturesque and natural view, a sunk fence, like at Brynbella, could have been Parsons's choice. In other gardens, Parsons would have had a balustrade built and not a wooden fence.³²¹

Compare Figure 59 and Figure 60 to judge part of the evolution of the design of the Clouds garden.

It is significant that in a *Country Life* article of 1904 about Clouds, the name of Alfred Parsons is prominently mentioned. Parsons had already designed 'The Welbeck Garden' and was at the height of his popularity as a landscape-gardener. In that article the gardens were said to have an air of dignity rather than pretension. On the east side the garden was formal and was enclosed by yew hedges.³²² In 1997, part of the rose garden to the East remains and

³¹⁹ "I am now certain that Webb was responsible for: the placing of the house on site; layout of approach roads, domestic offices, stables, etc.; the design and position of the water-tower; the position of the kitchen garden and layout of its paths, position of water cisterns, and design of its surrounding wall and buttresses; the simple grass terracing on the south side of the house and the pale fence which divided these lawns from the parkland (this white-painted fence with ball-topped posts set in concrete foundations can be seen on some of the early photographs of the house: Webb always preferred simple lawns on the south side of his houses); the position of the gardens east of the house; retention of existing trees and of the old thatched-walled garden east of the house and the design of a 'little garden house in the south wall at the bottom of garden'; and the design of the loggia which backed on to the kitchen. (Detmar Blow, Webb's disciple and protégé, designed the pergola on the south side of the stable block.) Webb was extremely strong-willed and customarily arranged the overall positioning and layout of gardens surrounding his houses but seems to have been fairly happy to leave the planting design and choice of plants to his clients, usually the lady of the house, though you will see from the letter to Madeline that he recommended greenhouse and tree and plant suppliers (Webb was a keen and knowledgeable gardener)." [Dr S. Kirk's letter to author: 28 April 1997]

³²⁰ 19th July [1899?] MsSRO 1/7

³²¹ See The Welbeck Garden on page 270.

³²² *Country Life* 19 Nov. 1904:743-744

further East, next to it, hedges surround a young forest. The pergola garden has not been seen by the author, but Dr Sheila Kirk mentioned that at the bottom of the hill it still exists. The photos from *Country Life* can testify to its former beauty.³²³ Pergolas are an important element of the landscape vocabulary of Parsons's design. They are found at Welbeck, for the 6th Duke of Portland, at Callis Court, Kent for Harry Hananel Marks; The Court Farm, Hereford & Worcester, for Mary de Navarro; Trysull Manor, Staffordshire for J. W. Mander; Preshaw House, Hampshire, for Cholmondeley.³²⁴

Fact sheet on Clouds:

Address: The Life-Anew Trust, Clouds House, East Knoyle, SP3 6BE

County: Wiltshire

Location:

On top of a hill above East-Knoyle village, about eighteen miles from Salisbury.

Map series: 2nd 1898-1900 Map sheet: LXIII:12 Grid reference: ST 8730

Site designers:

Philip Webb, architect and Alfred Parsons, landscape-gardener

Published sources:

[Wemyss, Mary [C. E.?]. Wyndham Family records]

Dakers, Caroline. *Clouds. The Biography of a Country house*. Yale U. Press, USA, 1993

Dakers, Caroline. *The Countryside at War 1914-18*. Constable, London, 1987.

Franklin, Jill. *The Gentleman's Country House and its Plan 1835-1914*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981.

Girouard, Mark. *The Victorian Country House*. Yale U. Press, New Haven, London, 1979

Description:

Late C19 house (villa, because of its top-lit central hall) and gardens, built at the beginning of the Arts and Crafts movement. Parsons created two areas on the South front of the house enclosed within hedges. He probably also created a circular footpath along the edge of the property, passing through The Grove on the far South of the pleasure garden. See the three extracts of Ordnance Survey maps.

³²³ "For details of the gardens see East Knoyle Women's Institute scrapbooks, including an interview with Harry Brown." This interview took place on 9 June 1906. Dakers, 1993: n. 14 and n. 15 page 267.

³²⁴ The author hopes to visit all the surviving gardens with a post-doctoral research grant.

Letter from Philip Webb to Madeline Wyndham³²⁵:

1884 August 30

To Hon M^{rs} Percy Whyndam

Dear M^{rs} Wyndham (Clouds H^{se}) Wilbury House by Salisbury

In answer to your letter of the 28th instant- You are, of course, perfectly free - so far as I can be concerned - to alter and rearrange the plan of the East and Kitchen gardens; I have done neither of these works professionally and should not have suggested any arrangement except that things were required to be done at once when they were undertaken: with regard as the East garden, I should naturally have an opinion, as the whole surroundings of the house have been under my consideration for some years, and as I have had experience of many failures happening from want of careful attention to circumstances I arranged my plan with such knowledge & taste as I had: It was a pretty piece of ground and required delicate handling and doubtless you saw this in your dealing with it. Would it not be well to [differ?] fitting up the little garden house in the South wall at the bottom of garden till things are more settled? It should be a handy neat & tidy place and be very convenient : I say this because of the rather wild suggestion to turn it into a dirt hole of a mushroom house - the kitchen garden would be the place for such things where proper heat will be supplied.

Surely the houseplant greenhouse sh^d not be attempted this year as many things will have to be thought of with regard to it and the other glass houses in Kitchen garden M^r Brown could rig up some frames for his plants this winter without difficulty - As to makers of glass houses, they are legion - There is Wakes of Chelsea, Smith of Howick (&?) But care would have to be used in dealing with them or you will be filled with work at great cost & which would ruin the appearance of the most lovely place in England: I send you a plan of the ground on which the greenhouse is to stand, and as there is plenty of room there w^d be no reason for removing the sycamore tree - Of course it w^d not do to put the Green house on the East side of gardener's house as i w^d be in full view of all who come up to Clouds: I dare say you have noticed the pretty look of that corner as you pass the stables towards the house? I will write to M^r Simmonds and tell him to send you an accurate plan of the kitchen garden with the roads & as laid out _ Veitch is I believe the best nurseryman for rare plants (costly in proportion) Rivers for vines and other fruit trees, but as the Salisbury man seems to have supplied you with a good lot of apple trees he might also be able to do the same with other fruit trees, and at a less cost than Rivers (though vines has better come from Rivers [inserted by P. W. between two lines]) Ware of Tottenham is a good man , I hear, for all herbaceous plants.

Believe me yours very truly Ph. W.

³²⁵ John Brandon Jones's collection. Copybooks by Philip Webb. Letter Book, vol. 2: 43-45.

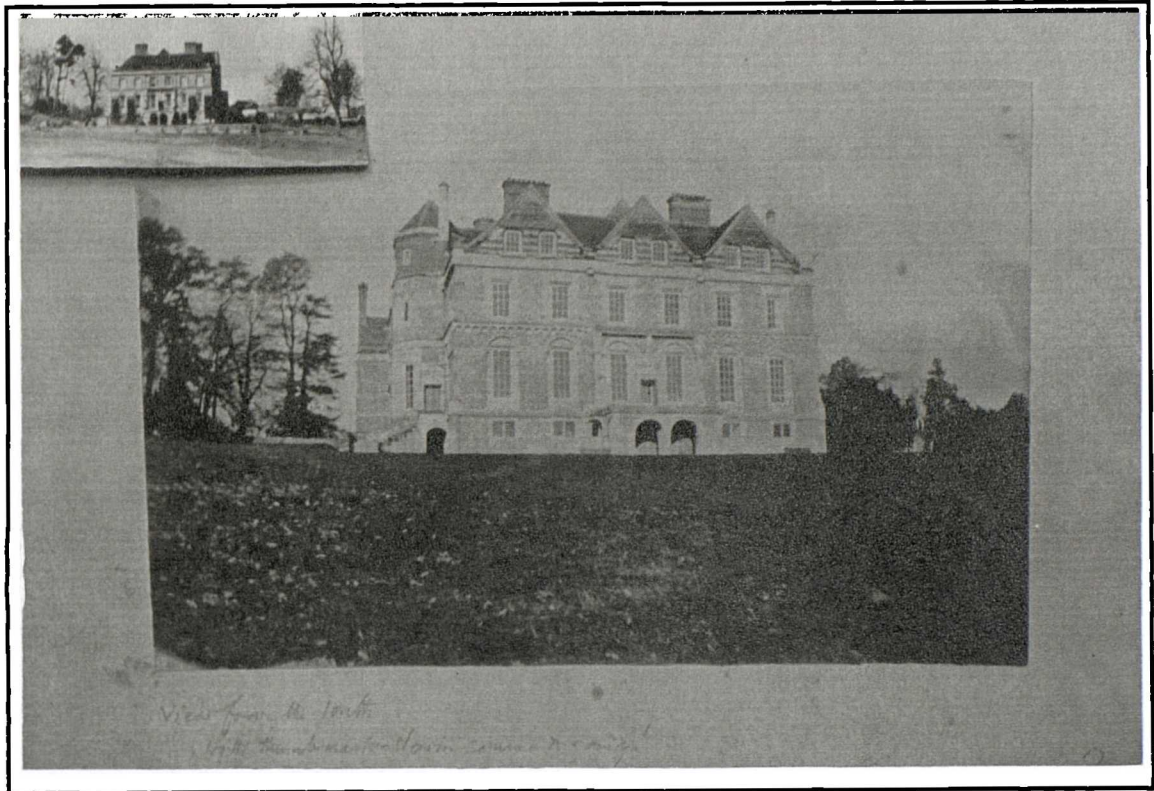


Figure 59 Clouds. c. 1883. [John Brandon Jones's collection]



Figure 60 Clouds. c. 1886. [John Brandon Jones's collection]



Figure 61 Borders at Broadway, Worcestershire. From a picture in possession of the author. [W. Robinson] Robinson, 1896: 75

3.4.4.2 Broadway: Russell House and The Court Farm: 1890

When, in 1899, Theodore Mander Esq of Wightwick Manor needed to be convinced that he should commission Parsons and Partridge to design his garden, Parsons sent him to visit the garden of Russell House.³²⁶ Around 1893, Parsons had painted a view of Russell House's garden. In the section "Flower Garden" of *The Garden*, the author of the article, in sympathy with William Robinson's philosophy of garden design, wrote:

Common sense and simplicity have some chance in these little gardens, which are not laid out by a man who comes with a regulation plan in his pocket to adapt to every situation (...) And so we get something that a man can draw, paint, and remember with pleasure. This garden (...) is, we believe, in the possession of Mr Frank Millet.³²⁷

Both gardens, Russell House and The Court Farm, were designed in the 1890s. Russell House was the first one, as Frank D. Millet was the owner of the house, the grange and the large garden as early as 1890. Frank Millet was an American painter working for *Harper's*, and he and his wife Lilly Millet became two of Parsons's closest friends.³²⁸ Parsons used to dine regularly with the Millets.³²⁹ This garden, famous for 'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose', painted there by John Singer Sargent, is now divided among three owners. The Post Office took part of it in the 1960s and that part is now occupied by a telephone exchange. The Grange is a second property separate from the main house. The third part, Russell House itself, has a very well kept garden. Some traces of walls and steps are still in place. A survey of the house garden was carried out in 1972 as part of a grant application to restore the gazebo. The garden is no longer open to the public.

The Court Farm is the second garden in Broadway known to have been designed by Parsons. Andrew Prentice was later to be the architect for the house. He linked The Court

³²⁶ "He [Mr Mander] & Mrs Mander are going abroad the 1st August. & would like to decide something before leaving. Do you think you can manage it? He wanted to know where he could see something that I had done, so I referred him to Joicey for practical design & to Millet 's garden [Russell House] which is looking well just now for effects of hardy plants." Letter from Alfred Parsons to Captain Partridge. [19th July [1899?]] MsSRO 1/7]

³²⁷ *The Garden*, XLIII April 15, 1893: 297

³²⁸ See the appendices on page 372 for more on Millet.

³²⁹ Their son was named 'John Alfred Millet' in honour of that friendship. Tragically Frank died in the Titanic disaster of April 16th 1912. Parsons received a letter from Frank written on the Titanic and dated April 11th 1912. It was mailed from Queensland, Ireland the same day the Titanic started to cross the Atlantic for New York. Research to try to locate descendants of John Alfred Millet, the son of the Millets who became a psychiatrist in New York, has been inconclusive.

Farm to Bell Farm by building a room between the two.³³⁰

The repair and alteration of buildings could produce equally interesting results, and often presented the greater challenge as the aspirations of the client could vary considerably from the principles of repair and maintenance recommended by the SPAB.³³¹

Mary de Navarro had moved at The Court Farm in 1895 and Parsons designed her garden shortly afterwards, before Prentice's work. She wrote this passage in her *Memories*:

When I looked out from the old house to where the garden should be, I saw a huge, magnificent elm, its trunk in giant's armour, and ancient and shapely yew-tree, and bright, pink roses growing here and there in the broken stones of the old courtyard, giving out great fragrance in return for their meagre fare. But beyond these was nothing but a riot of rough, nettle-grown, uneven ground, some old outhouses, barns, and rows of pigstyes; no paths - disorder, ugliness everywhere. I knew nothing of gardening and felt bewildered. Fortunately for us, our old friend, Alfred Parsons R.A., was living in Broadway at the time, and his hobby and recreation was the planning and planting of gardens (he has made beautiful ones). He came to my rescue and said there was every possibility of making a charming garden out of that wilderness. He got busy at once: had hundreds of cartloads of earth taken away, made a tennis court, planted a yew hedge now ten to twelve feet high and, where pigs had wallowed, made a rose garden. He taught me how to plant these queens of flowers who found the place he had chosen for them much to their liking, for they flourished amazingly. He made a great display of larkspurs - Alma-Tadema said that looking down from the hillside it was as though a patch of the blue sky had come to rest in our garden. Paths were laid out and seats placed round the trunks of some of the old trees. It was unbelievable: soon there was a very pretty garden seen from the old house where I had stood despairing but a short time before.³³²

A few things comes to mind in relation to the argument of this thesis. Mary Anderson mentions that Parsons was a Royal Academician, she publishes this book four years before the 6th Duke of Portland commissioned Parsons to design The Welbeck Garden. In the 6th Duke own memoirs, a very nice portrait of Mary Anderson is reproduced. She was certainly influent in the 6th Duke choice of landscape-gardener. Eighty years later, Alan Crawford made a very

³³⁰ It "consisted in 1895 of two houses, Court Farm to the west and Bell Farm to the east, the gap between them coming east of the gabled wing to the road on Court Farm. Bell Farm had been a SPAB case in 1892, involving Arthur Dixon the Birmingham Architect, Oliver Baker, Philip Webb and Sydney Cockerell, but SPAB minutes are such that it is hard to know what the threat was beyond the mention of dreaded Broseley tiles. What Morris said about Bell Farm and the doorway (or was it Orchard Farm?) Was: 'Tis no ideal house I am thinking of, no rare marvel of art, of which but few can ever be vouchsafed to the best times and countries; no palace either, nor even a manor house, but a yeoman's steading at the grandest, or even his shepherd's cottage; ... everything about it is solid and well wrought : ... there is a little sharp and delicate carving about its arched doorway, and every part of it is well cared for; 'tis in fact beautiful, a work of art and a piece of mature - no less; there is no man who could have done it better considering its use and its place. Who built it then? No strange race of men, but just the mason of Broadway village; even such a man as is now running up down yonder three or four cottages of the most wretched type we know too well...' When Maud Valerie White left Bell Farm to live in Sicily, the de Navarros took it over and employed Andrew Prentice to join the two together. This was probably in 1900 and the earliest work of Prentice I know of in Broadway. (...) He linked the two buildings by a large music room on the garden front." [Crawford, 1978: 18]

³³¹ Greensted, 1993: 70

³³² Anderson, 1896: 254-55. The whole chapter: 'The growth of a garden' is to be read. 252-260

good description of The Court Farm's garden:

The garden was designed by Alfred Parsons: a small paved area near the house, then large sweeping lawns, occasionally stepped, a very strong accent in some massive yew hedges to the west, and a note of formality only in the rose garden. The whole against the backdrop of Broadway Hill, on which the light does wonderful things. If it does not seem particularly 'designed' or original, it is only because the English cottage garden approach that Parsons took has become the standard for all middle class houses in the country.³³³

It would be of interest, in the near future to make an extensive case study fo The Court Farm.

The historical importance of Mary de Navarro and all her American friends, not to forget her English friend Alfred Parsons justifies it. The garden kept enough of its original character to be rightly restaured as a unique Arts and Craft garden.

³³³ Crawford, 1978: 'A Tour of Broadway and Chipping Campden' *The Victorian Society*: 19



Figure 62 Russell House. The Gazebo.



Figure 63 Russell House. The Gazebo: detail.



Figure 64 Russell House. Detail of terrace steps.

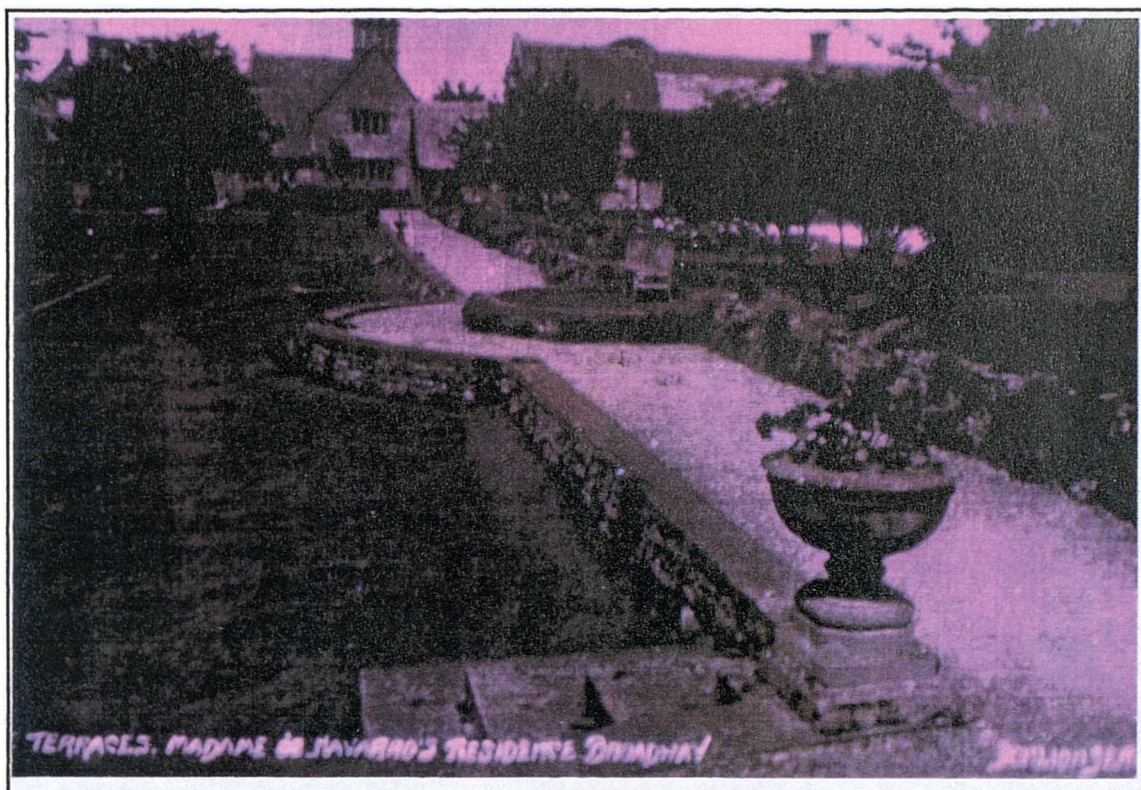


Figure 65 The Court Farm. Postcard. [Brent Elliott's collection]



Figure 66 The Court Farm. Postcard. [Brent Elliott's collection] "The Cherubin Fountain" (stolen).

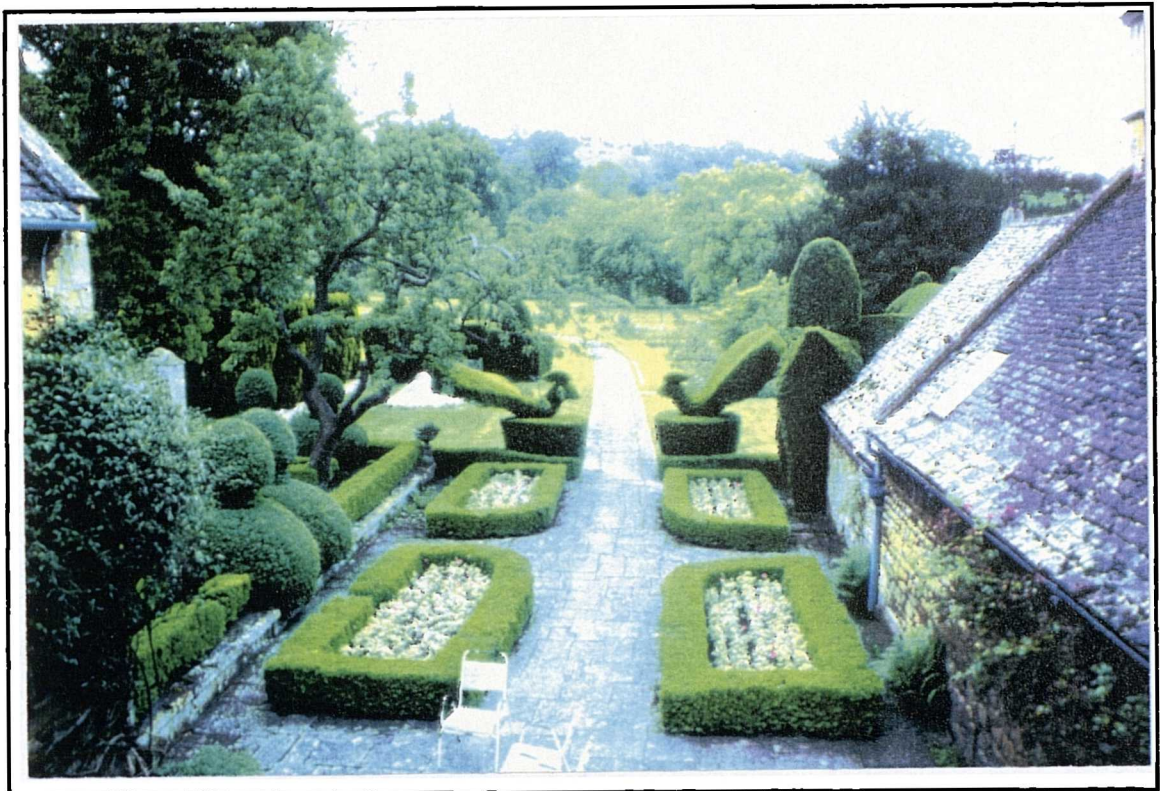


Figure 67 The Court Farm. Topiary.



Figure 68 The Court Farm garden.

3.4.5 Bishopswood, Herefordshire: first commission with Partridge: 1895

Partridge started the search for the best landscape-gardener in November 1894. By spring 1895 he had found Parsons with the help of William Robinson and Charles Tudway. It was William Robinson who introduced Alfred Parsons to Captain Partridge in 1895 as a suitable designer for the garden at Bishopswood. As this is of crucial importance for the argument of this thesis the author must quote from her previous publication:

HOW PARTRIDGE DISCOVERED PARSONS or THE QUEST FOR THE BEST LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT³³⁴

When, on December sixth 1894, Captain Partridge wrote to his friend Mr Tudway, it was not, as usual, to discuss their favourite topics: shooting, farm animals or shows coming up; it was to ask him for help in finding ‘the best landscape-gardener living in England’ and nothing less. Here are his words:

I think of getting a landscape-gardener down here to go round the place & give me his idea how it can be improved, what trees to plant, & where to plant them &c &c At present I know of no good man. Who do you consider the best for this work? If you know anyone really good & competent for such a job, I shall be so much obliged if you will give me his name & address. A line to the Naval & Military Club will always reach me.³³⁵

Tudway immediately wrote to several of his friends. William Goldring was the best according to several of them, but he was too busy in India. Even W.R. Thiselton-Dyer, the then director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, agreed on the choice of Goldring. W. Wilks, secretary of the RHS, also noted that Goldring was designing a garden in India and boldly added that “he could himself fully describe the work wanted”.

Unfortunately for Mr Wilks, he was not recommended by anyone but himself. Other names were suggested: W.B. Thomas who like Kemp did not give proper consideration to soil, and anyway “Kemp was dead, and Thomas was now infirm”. Reginald Upcher was difficult “to keep in order as to money”. J.F.Hall, living at Sharcombe, Wells, Somerset³³⁶, replied to Tudway that he could not name one best landscape-gardener and added:

³³⁴ Pages 10-13 in *Parsons-Partridge-Tudway, An Unsuspected Garden Design Partnership*, Nicole Milette, IoAAS, University of York, 1995.

³³⁵ Milette, 1995:10

³³⁶ I am grateful to Dr Brent Elliott for identifying the mysterious J.F.H. who signed that letter. He was J.F. Hall, a member of the R.H.S. in 1894.

‘Is there such a man living? Would not the best way be to ask the Secr. of the Horticultural Socy. or the Curator of Kew Happy thought! If anyone knows [,] it will be Alfred Parsons [.] I will send him a wire tonight- and advise you. (...) J.F.H.’³³⁷

So when J.F. Hall wired Alfred Parsons, it was with good reason. Parsons, immediately contacted William Robinson, his good friend and patron. The remaining correspondence makes us assume that he thought William Robinson as being the best landscape architect for Bishopswood. But Robinson had other plans, as we can read in his reply of [15?] December 1894 :

‘My dear Parsons, You know that any landscape-gardener in our sense is not to be had. There is so much to know & so few know it & how can a man design a garden if he does not know trees & flowers. Goldring knows a good many but he is in India. Milner is perhaps the best known landscape-gardener, but his work seems to me full of inartistic “grading” & quite second rate stuff. Thomas; I know nothing about his work. Roads & all that are easier to get done well: so perhaps if your friend would tell you the kind of work he wants done it wd. be easier to help him. I am doing several places now as it always interests me to study the thing on the ground but it only throws my books & business back to take up much work of the kind and it is also very ungrateful work as one rarely gets the thing done as it shd. be owing to wives husbands & gardeners and all friends of the family having strong & often opposing views, only a saint could step about among them without losing his temper- I have given you the idea of the country at Christmas as Mrs Brush is ill so I accept your good invitation with pleasure. Have you time to see a play before that & dine here^{338?} WR [William Robinson]
[Diagonally written on the top left corner]:
If so name a likely day & tell me what you want to see.’³³⁹

On Dec 24th 1894 , a few days later, Partridge wrote to Tudway:

‘...& from what you say of Robinson, & judging by his letter, I think he would suit us very well. He certainly appears to be a character, & I like the way he writes.’³⁴⁰

We know that Robinson visited Parsons again in January 1895, giving him seeds, and we strongly believe that Robinson encouraged Parsons to start a landscape design practice.³⁴¹ Not all the correspondence has come down to us, but one guesses that Robinson later introduced Parsons to Partridge.³⁴² Only four months had elapsed before Parsons accepted the landscaping

³³⁷ [Milette, 1995: 11] Often a change of line in the manuscript justifies for the missing punctuation.

³³⁸ ‘Here’ is 63, Lincolns Inn Fields, London, W.C., i.e. William Robinson’s house.

³³⁹ Milette, 1995: 12

³⁴⁰ Milette, 1995: 13

³⁴¹ This is the second time that Robinson helps the son of his good friend Doctor Joshua Parsons, a keen alpine plant collector. The first time was when he hired him as an illustrator when Parsons was around 20 years old.

³⁴² See [Milette, 1995: 10-13] . The source for Robinson’s letter is [(15th Dec 1894?) MsSRO 1/1]. It is also tempting to attribute part of Alfred Parsons’s decision to become a professional landscape-gardener in 1899 to a reading of ‘The Landscape-gardener and his Work’ published in *The Garden*. July 10, 1897: 27-28. See the full article in the appendices.

gardening commission at Bishopswood.

When Partridge³⁴³ first saw Parsons at work at Bishopswood, in April 1895, he gave his friend Charles Tudway his impressions:

‘I have been very busy the last 3 days with Parsons. I like him very much & I am sure he is clever, he is not only an artist in design & conception but he has what most of them lack, the art of detail. He thought very highly of the place & saw every idea at once & I have given him the job.’³⁴⁴

In 1894, Captain Partridge was Estate Manager for Henry Leslie Blundell McCalmont³⁴⁵ and the estate was Bishopswood in the Forest of Dean in Herefordshire.

In *Burke's Landed Gentry* for 1898, ‘Partridge of The Coppice, Bishop’s Wood, is listed. It was William Partridge, born in 1740, who first bought Bishopswood (then written as Bishop’s Wood). His grandfather, John Partridge (born 1672) had successfully established nail and iron factories in the district of Ross.

McCalmont had bought Partridge’s family property in 1890.³⁴⁶ It is understandable why Walter Crocker St. Ives Partridge wanted the best landscape-gardener to improve Bishopswood; part of his soul was in the property. The house, The Coppice, was located to the South-East of All Saint’s Church. Partridge’s correspondence address was The Coppice Bishopswood, Ross. (Telegrams: Lydbrook. Station, Kerne Bridge). See the following Ordnance Survey plans of 1878-89 and of 1903 to compare some of the work done by the eventual partners.

³⁴³ For more on Captain Partridge, see the appendices on page 424.

³⁴⁴ [Milette, 1995: 13] Monday [15th April 1895?] MsSRO 1/1. Hand written on Herefordshire Club stationary.

³⁴⁵ “CB 1900; M.P. (C.) J.P. D.L.; Col 6th Batt Royal Warwickshire Regt (Militia); b. 1861; e.s. of HBB McCalmont, barr at law; Educ: Eton; d. 8-12-95. Recreations: Member of the Jockey Club and the Royal Yacht Squadron. Address: Cheveley Park, Newmarket; 11 St James Sq. S.W.” [DNB]

³⁴⁶ Information received at a meeting with the actual owners on July 15 1997.

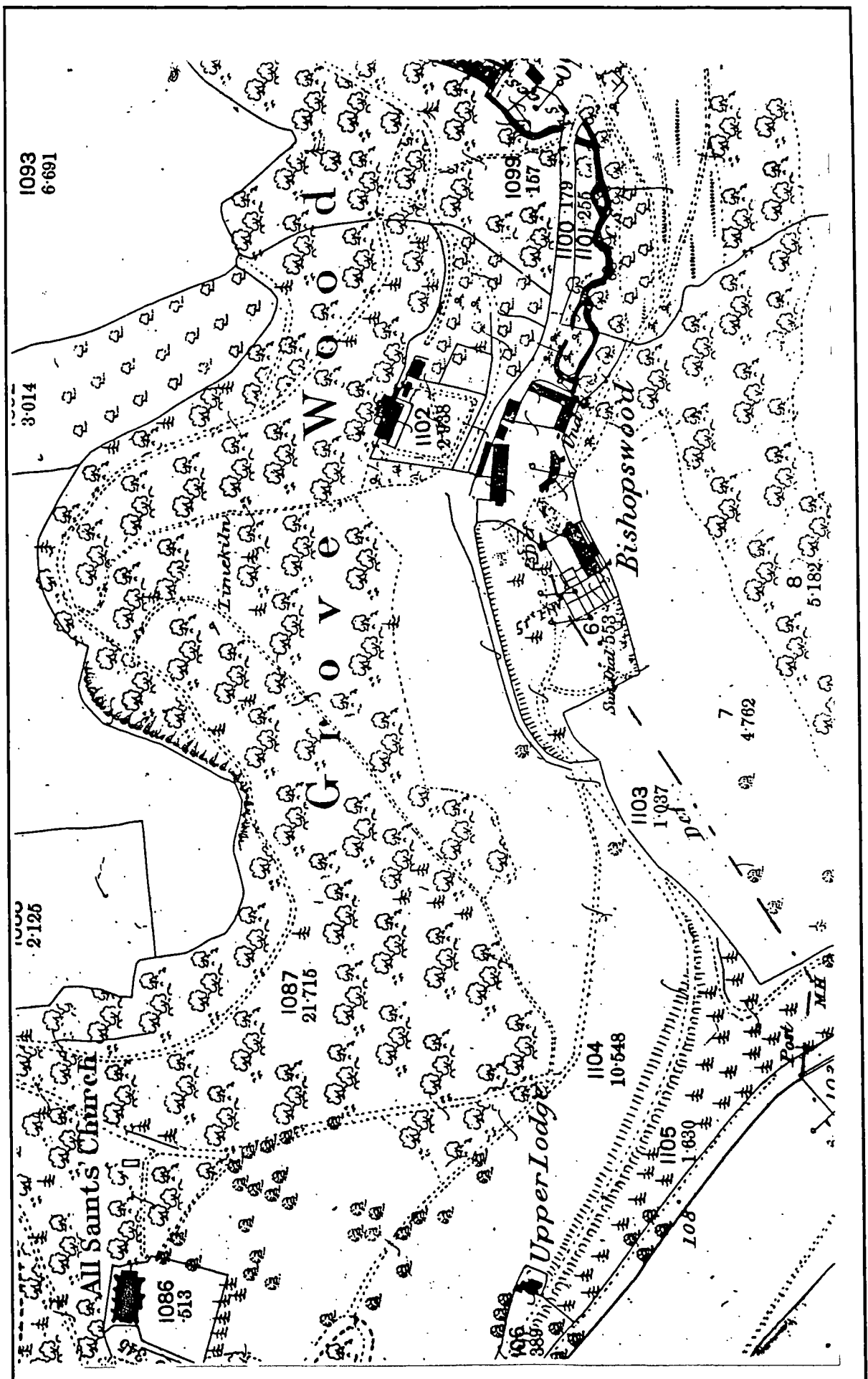


Figure 69 Bishopswood. OS map: 25". First edition. LIV.4 Herefordshire 1878-87

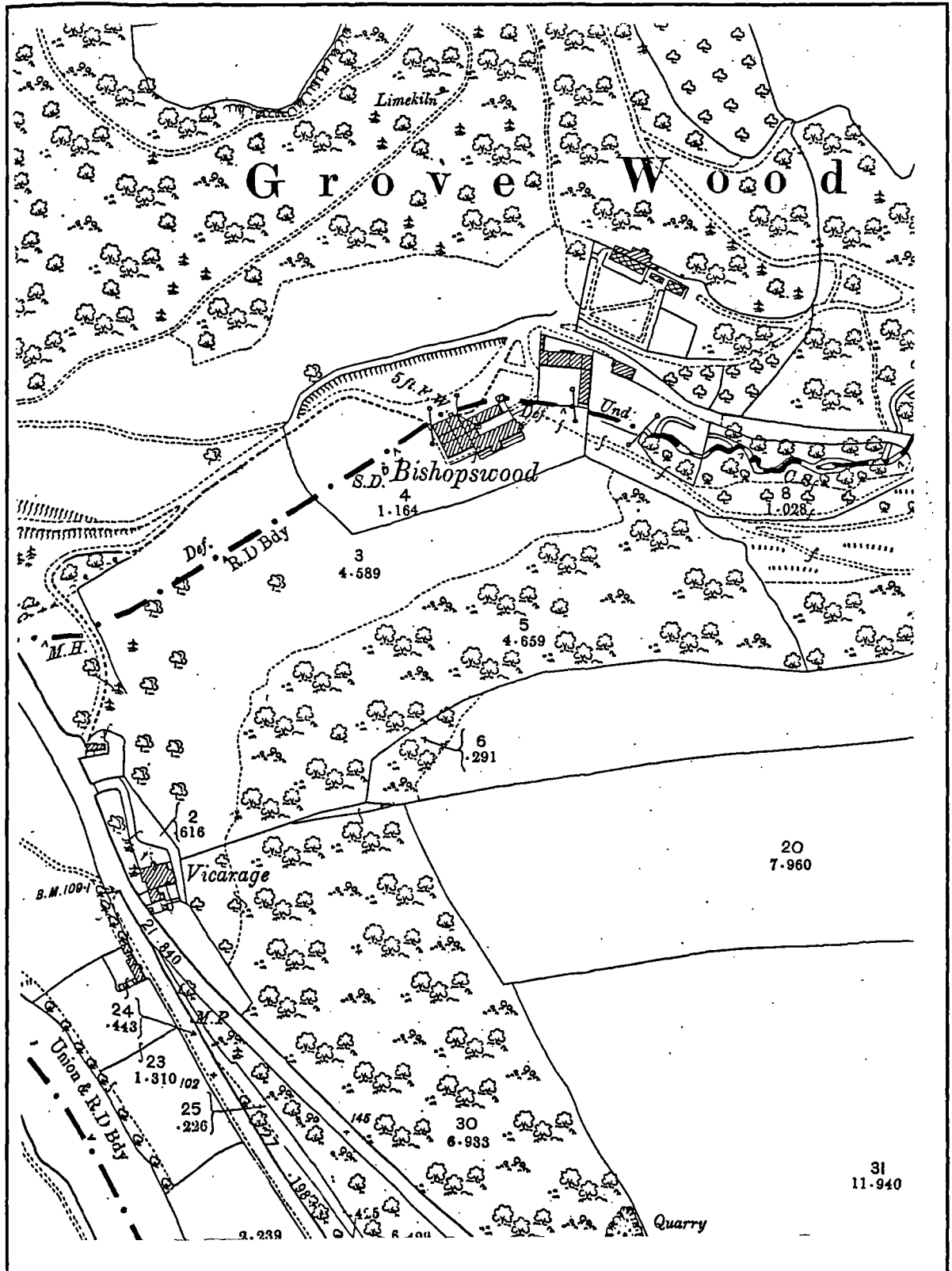


Figure 70 Bishopswood. OS map, 25". Second edition. XXIII.13 Gloucestershire 1903

Parsons undertook the laying out of the whole property. The job was to last three years and Parsons was paid £200 a year and his travelling expenses. On April 24 1895 Parsons marked the trees to be cut down, a job he says he did not fancy at all.³⁴⁷ By the end of August Partridge wrote:

I think you will be pleased when you see the progress we have made in the last few months, but we are not getting on quite as fast as I could wish.³⁴⁸

Four areas were specifically mentioned in the correspondence: Howard Brain's house, the Home Farm, the Coppice Garden and No1 Jersey Yard. A nut walk was to be planted with trees from Bunyard. About 100 tons of loam were ordered to start the vines and peaches (there were two vineries, the early vinery 24 feet long, the late vinery 36 feet long and a peach house 32 feet long), at least ten trucks of turf, and loads of cobble and Hereford gravel. Parsons chose some Draycott stone that would look quite attractive around the tank. Curbing was ordered, both long narrow stones and paving stones.

Vines and trees were ordered from Veitch's, two thousand English yews and sweet briars for hedges from Browne and Dickson. 'Mrs Pollock', 'Louisa Smith' and 'Golden Harry' geraniums, Marie Louise & Neapolitan violet, apple trees, soil for the vine borders from Tudway, a collection of ivies from Clibrans to hang down from the low wall opposite the potting shed. In the conservatory was an Almander, a Schuberti and a Grandiflora.³⁴⁹ In December 1896 Tudway gave Partridge a calanthis. One hundred Azalea Mollis were ordered from Aper,³⁵⁰ and roses chosen by Parsons were also ordered.³⁵¹ The Cyclamen flowered in February 1897 and Partridge wrote Tudway

They have really been A.1.. I see in the Gardener's Chronicle someone has been Cracking up a plant with 35 blooms on it. We have just counted one of ours; it has 62 full flower blooms & several buds coming on.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ April 16th 1895 MsSRO 1/1.

³⁴⁸ August 28th 1895 MsSRO 1/1

³⁴⁹ These names are taken from the correspondence. According to Brent Elliott, 'Almander' could be 'allamanda', 'calanthis' a 'calanthe', 'zonals' should be 'zonal pelargoniums'. Schuberti, grandiflora and Aper, remains mysterious. Elliott further suggests that "Curbing, in England, would be rendered kerbing. Browne & Dickson is probably Dickson, Brown & Tait." [Copy editing list of corrections, received on 20th December 1996 at The Lindley Library in London]

³⁵⁰ "I think you told me that Aper charged 2/6d each for really good plants, if so, can you order me 100, that is to say if he will send good sorts & fine specimens of them." [6th February 1897 MsSRO 1/5]

³⁵¹ "Parsons has selected all the Roses, & I am writing to one or two Firms for quotations." [1st March 1897 MsSRO 1/5]

³⁵² 6 February 1897 MsSRO 1/5.

Later, on 19th August 1896, Tudway and Partridge went to Cyphers, and to Smith's at Worcester to buy 'a good many fruit trees'. On August 25, Parsons laid and pegged out the garden, and the three men later went to several nursery gardens in Yorkshire and also in Worcester and Chester to buy the plants. Specimen fuchsias were sent by Hibberd, Tudway's gardener and zonals were bought at a show in September 1896.

Partridge was always consulting Parsons before planting anything. On 24th April 1896, Partridge tasted his first strawberries from the garden: 'I never saw bigger ones, or tasted better.' To relax, Partridge would go shooting at Croxton Park, Thetford, Norfolk. McCalmont would sometimes invite him to Cheveley Park.³⁵³ Partridge would regularly ask the advice of Charles Tudway on various technical aspects of gardening, such as distances between vines, type of manure to use, whether or not to add chemicals. Tudway was often the intermediary for ordering trees and plants. This informal way of doing things would be formalised and written down in the agreement of 1899 (Figures 79 and 80).

A dairy, a conservatory, a model poultry house and greenhouses were built, along with the vineries and peach house. The architect doing the renovations and designing new buildings was Huckvale from Tring. Rooper was McCalmont's accountant from London. On the 16 January, Partridge hired Hibberd to be in charge of the woods and the nursery gardens for £75 a year with cottage, and vegetables. Partridge was complaining about the difficulty in getting masons since there was 'such a lot of building going on about'.³⁵⁴

In the spring of 1897, the sundial was installed; Tudway had sold it to Partridge. Bulbs of tuberous begonias and a dozen calanthes were added to the Bishopswood collection of plants. By that date, Partridge was selling flowers at Bishopwood "the flowers certainly pay us well now (the only thing that does!)"³⁵⁵

Everything was taking shape until McCalmont, surprisingly, decided to sell the place:

13th April 1897 / (...) I tell you that [McCalmont?] has decided to sell this place fortunate if he can get his price viz £100,000 if not he will carry it on at the best possible expense. (...) I need make no comments in all this (...) It is a dirty sneaky trick & [?] unworthy of a man.

21st April 1897 / (...) Parsons here & shouting for me so excuse such a hasty scrawl

25th April 1897 / (...) Tomorrow I am off to Elvist[on?] to meet Parsons & go over

³⁵³ "They had a wonderful day at Cheveley in the Park, 2100 Pheasants, in all over 2500 head. I haven't a notion what they will kill here next week, but I should not say more than a thousand Pheasants each day. Personally I think that quite enough especially with the class of birds we get here. I do not know what shooting is coming to. People will not be satisfied soon with under 5000 Pheasants a day. It is really getting overdone." [28th October 1896 MsSRO 1/2]

³⁵⁴ 7th October 1895, MsSRO 1/1

³⁵⁵ 7th February 1897, MsSRO 1/1

Holfords³⁵⁶ place (...) I am feeling [?] depressed & unsettled the uncertainty of the future of this place is most discouraging.

2nd May 1897 / (...) [McCalmont?] & Rooper have fixed to come here the 14th inst with Bourke who knows of a possible purchaser for the Estate. (...) I only hope the place may fall into better hands & become the property of someone who will appreciate it. I never saw a place alter so much for the better as it has done in the last 6 [weeks?] / You can imagine I am not feeling very gay.

9th May 1897 / (...) I suppose I shall know by this time next week what these people intend to do with this place.³⁵⁷

29th May 1897 / (...) It is very good of you to try and help me in procuring a bailiff.

There is a gap in the June 1897 correspondence and Partridge is still managing Bishopswood at the end of July 1897:

The little rain the last few days has freshened things up & the garden looks a bit better. We have had a real good hay Harvest & I should think we have made about £1200 worth of hay putting it at £3 per Ton./next page The stuff I got from Veitch 's has turned out very badly indeed. We have lost nearly all the Lilies we got from them & those that have flowered are a poor lot. I fancy the bulbs could not have been, ripened off. He offers to replace those we have lost at half price but I think he ought to have done more than this considering the amount of stuff we have bought from him lately. We have only lost three nut trees & four fruit trees from the stuff we got from Bunyards & he is going to replace these. Some of the Yews look very Dicky, but I do not fancy we shall be able to blame Dickson if they do die, because they all started very well this Spring until the cold East winds cut them up. They then shot up again about a month ago when we had another spell of East wind for a week, the end of June & this has shrivelled them up very much indeed.³⁵⁸

In August, Parsons occupied Partridge's house at Bishopswood and painted 'Bishopswood Mooters' which was then exhibited at the Royal Academy in the summer 1898. Parsons also started a new landscape gardening contract for a very good friend of Partridge named Joicey³⁵⁹. Partridge mentions the beauty of the Allamanda in the stove at Bishopswood. The last two years of managing the estate were now giving good results.

Partridge was to wait until mid-April 1898 before losing his job at Bishopswood. Leslie McCalmont, the present owner had decided to sell his estate. After trying to buy it with a 'low offer' Partridge was shattered when it was refused.³⁶⁰ In July he was considering going

³⁵⁶ Holford, James Price William . B. 25 Nov 1833, d. 6 Feb 1916. M. 1891 Mary Eleanor 3rd d. of P.R. Gordon Canning, Hartpury, Gloucester. One d. Educ. Eton, Christchurch Ox. M.P. Address. Buckland Bwlch S.O. Breconshire; Treholford and Cilgwyn, Carmarthenshire.

³⁵⁷ MsSRO 1/7

³⁵⁸ 26th July 1897 MsSRO 1/7

³⁵⁹ Major James Joicey. J.P D.L.; formerly Major 4th Durham Vol. (Retired). b.1836, married Mary d. of R.P. Clark, 1868; d.23, Jan. 1912. Address Sunningdale Park, Berks.; Linhope near Alnwick; 9 Lennox Gardens SW. DNB. Sv 9567. Mentioned in MsSRO between Sept. 1897 to Apr. 22nd 1901.

³⁶⁰ "[Saturday] (...) Parsons & I had a very heavy week 's work. He left yesterday afternoon for Broadway & goes to Town Monday morning. I have just wired asking him to wire you the name of the Portrait painter. I
(continued...)

to Newmarket to find another estate to manage.

I still feel very inclined to go to Newmarket in the hopes that among all the rich & influential people who go there, one might meet one who would want someone to manage his business. (...) Lord Temple(...)Sir James Blythe(...)Gilbey : a billet they could offer me. (...) I cannot help feeling that those who have known me in the Agency line will feel sorry for me at the way McCalmont has treated me. (...) Hibberd and Wiles both say they will not remain after I leave, also Meech & many others on the place.³⁶¹

This was the last letter on Bishopswood letterhead. There is a gap of two months in the correspondence and then in December 1898, Partridge is living in Brighton. This was one month before Parsons was to meet Princess Louise at Cannes. The following month, the future partners were discussing a nursery business and by February 24 1899 the commission for the garden at Welbeck was in the air.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ (...continued)

shall go up to Town from the Lords on Friday the 22nd & hope to meet you at Barnes the next day. We might go down there together in the morning. I hope McCalmont will be there so that I may have a chance of hearing what his views are with regard to this place, & whether he would be likely to accept a low offer for the property." [16th April 1898, MsSRO 1/3]

³⁶¹ 20th July 1898 MsSRO 1/1

³⁶² See The Welbeck Garden case study on page 270.

3.4.6 Alfred Parsons and Japan: 1892-1896

For a long time, Parsons was attracted by Japan. Among the important Parsons exhibitions of that period were the six solo exhibitions, or those shared with a small group of artists, held at the Fine Art Society³⁶³ between 1885 and 1894. The most significant were the last two: 'Gardens and Orchards' in 1891, held just before Parsons left for Japan and the 1893 exhibition, 'Landscapes and Flowers in Japan', held upon his return at the same time as the publication of a series of articles in *Harper's* on his travels to Japan.³⁶⁴ These two exhibitions, one showing Parsons's appreciation of gardens, the other his deeper knowledge of Japan, led to illustration work for further books with Japan as the background. Most of all they contributed to the beginning of his career in landscape gardening, just as his articles which became *Notes in Japan* had led to the Bishopswood and Sunningdale garden commissions. For a long time Parsons had prepared for his stay in Japan, "the country which for years it had been my dream to see and paint."³⁶⁵ When he was seven, the first exhibition in England solely devoted to Japanese art was held at the Gallery of the Old Water Colour Society in Pall Mall East. The most important exhibition was the well-known Japanese section at the 1862 International Exhibition in London.³⁶⁶ Parsons was then fifteen years old and was likely to have been aware of it. By the 1890s, 'Japonisme' was at its heyday. Whistler, who was a friend of Parsons, was one of the artists, along with Alfred East and John Lafarge who popularized this influence.³⁶⁷ The three painters often exhibiting at the same venues.³⁶⁸ According to Geneviève Lacampe,³⁶⁹ the origin of the interest in Japanese art or 'Japonisme' can be traced back to Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan in 1853. An illustrated article

³⁶³ See the Fine Art Society on page 137, 387.

³⁶⁴ See the list of articles illustrated by Parsons in the appendices.

³⁶⁵ Parsons, 1896: 3

³⁶⁶ [Watanabe, 1984: 669] Professor Watanabe, along with Yuko Kikuchi, Research Fellow, Chelsea College of Art and Design, is currently preparing the exhibition 'Ruskin in Japan. 1890- 1945', the first venue will be the Ruskin Gallery, Sheffield in May-June 1997.

³⁶⁷ John La Farge, the American painter who played an important part in Henry James's career as a novelist also went to Japan and wrote a book: [La Farge, 1890: *An Artist's Letters from Japan.*] This was six years before *Notes in Japan* was published. La Farge published articles in *The Century* but unlike Parsons, shortly after the publication of his book. See 'Tao: the Way' Vol XLII 1891 442-8. It is tempting to assume that Henry James and probably Poultney Bigelow, both of whom wrote for *The Century*, played a part in suggesting the idea of a book to their friend Parsons.

³⁶⁸ George Henry (1858-1943) and Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864-1933) worked in Japan at the same time as Parsons, "but the pictures they produced after their return were disappointing." [Treuhertz, 1993: 206].

³⁶⁹ Lacampe, 1988. 'Sources du Japonisme au XIXe siècle' in *Le Japonisme*. Exhibition catalogue.

published in Washington on 13 Dec 1856 was shortly followed by one in *The Illustrated London News* (3 Jan 1857), which initiated the craze for things Japanese. This spread like wildfire to every form of art in England and in Europe including literature³⁷⁰, painting, architecture³⁷¹ and gardening. A few examples of this craze that touch upon Alfred Parsons himself can be mentioned.³⁷² For example: John Dando Sedding³⁷³ quoting Alfred East in the Chapter 'On the Theory of a Garden', "the Japanese will even combine upon his trees the tints of spring and autumn". Sedding, who was sympathetic to the Arts and Crafts movement, was also an architect who was well aware of 'Japonisme', as was the artist Alfred East.³⁷⁴ Sedding was in the Art Workers' Guild along with Parsons, while Alfred East was exhibiting at the New Gallery at the same time as Parsons.

It is understandable that a revival of the Arts and Crafts movement included admiration for anything Japanese. Japanese craftsmen had been venerated in Japan for centuries before influences from the West arrived at the turn of the century.³⁷⁵ Another artist who was also an enthusiast about Japan and whom Parsons had obviously met at the Royal Watercolour Society, was Mortimer Menpes.³⁷⁶ Menpes had travelled to Japan several times.³⁷⁷ Five years after

³⁷⁰ "The April baby had an exhausted-looking Japanese doll with her (...) 'Good-bye trees' I heard say; and then she made the Japanese doll bow to them, which he did, in a very langer'd and blase fashion." [Arnim, 1898: 100]

³⁷¹ "The rejection of centuries of tradition, the refusal of rich interior and exterior decors, the quest for an open and peaceful way of life linked both to freedom and structure, were strengthened by the encounter with Japanese architecture which had been fairly stable since the Seventh century." (Author's translation) [Lacampe, 1988: 58]

³⁷² Parsons made several visits to Paris exhibitions. See the chronology on page 491. He obviously knew of Degas, although Parsons does not discuss the art of Degas in his writings (those seen up to now). Degas, like many French and English artists, collected Japanese prints from as early as 1875. He owned works by Kiyonaga, Utamaro, Sikenobu and Hokusai [Degas exhibition, London Tate Gallery, Summer 1996]. Whistler, who exhibited at The Grosvenor at the same time as Parsons, is one of the well-known 'Japonistes' (the author's own word meaning 'fond of Japanese art').

³⁷³ Sedding, 1891: 11

³⁷⁴ 'Alfred East. Trip to Japan.' *Universal Review*, March 1890

³⁷⁵ An anecdote was provided by Professor Toshio Watanabe, at the William Morris conference held at the Victoria and Albert Museum from June 21 to 23 1996. In Japan around 1925, on the occasion of a joint exhibition of Japanese craftsmen and painters, a craftsman exclaimed, 'Is it not terrible to have to expose your work with mere painters!' Until then, craftsmen were considered superior to painters in Japan. Professor Watanabe teaches at the Chelsea College of Art and Design in London.

³⁷⁶ Menpes and Parsons were on the selection committee of the New Gallery.

³⁷⁷ Menpes dictated to his daughter a wonderful passage on landscape gardening. "I was once struck by seeing a little man sitting on a box outside a silk-store on a bald plot of ground. For three consecutive days. I saw this little man sitting on the same little box, for ever smiling and knocking out the ash from his miniature pipe. (...)"
(continued...)

Parsons, Menpes dictated a book to his daughter: *Japan, A Record in Colour* “purely from the artistic standpoint”³⁷⁸, but including a chapter on gardens. The present author believes Parsons to have been the only artist writing from a horticultural standpoint at that time. In 1899, Menpes, an Australian painter, used Japanese motifs in the decoration of his London house.³⁷⁹ Parsons was most probably aware of a book published by John Lafarge, *An Artist’s Letters from Japan*, six years before his own book appeared. Lafarge and Parsons were friends of Henry James.

In his lecture Professor Toshio Watanabe also discussed the influence of English artists on Japanese art. This side of the coin is rarely understood. He mentioned four British artists, John Varley, Sir Alfred East RA, Charles Wirgman and Alfred Parsons who were influential in Japan to a degree that was out of all proportion to their reputation at home. Miyake Kokki, a Japanese artist, described to Japanese readers his impressions of Varley’s exhibition, which he saw in 1891 and, most of all, of Parsons’s exhibition of 1892 and his growing interest in watercolours, as follows:

I lost my interest in life drawing completely, was mostly absent from the morning [art] classes and fervently immersed myself only in watercolours from nature.³⁸⁰

The Parsons exhibition was held at Tokio Bijutsu Gakkô (Tokyo Art School). The works were mostly of Japanese landscapes, with an emphasis on flowers. Professor Watanabe mentioned the strong influence of Ruskin on the Japanese people. Ruskin’s attitude towards nature had a strong influence on the Japanese watercolour movement, the Japanese mountaineering movement and Japanese geology. In *Notes in Japan*, Parsons devotes a chapter to Fujisan.³⁸¹ In it, Parsons describes Japanese flora seen while climbing Mount Fuji and

³⁷⁷ (...continued)

‘What is he going to do?’ I asked perplexed. The merchant gazed at me in astonishment, mingled with pity. ‘Don’t you know,’ he said, ‘he is one of our greatest landscape-gardeners, and for three days he has been thinking out a garden for me?’ (...) I came in a few days, and I was shown the most exquisite set of drawing s it has ever been my good fortune to behold. What a garden it would be!’ [Menpes, 1901: 108]

³⁷⁸ Menpes, 1901: 93

³⁷⁹ [Lacampe, 1988: 53] quoting *The Studio*, April 1889, #77, XVII: 173-4

³⁸⁰ Miyake Kokki. *Omoizurumama* (1938): 58 quoted from Mizue no Akebono. Tokushima Modern Art Museum. 1991: 95 Translated by T. Watanabe.

³⁸¹ “The great mountain of Japan is well known to us all; its form appears on countless screens and fans, and its foreign name, Fusi-yama, is as familiar as Mont Blanc or Pike’s Peak. By the Japanese it is called Fuji, or Fujisan, or sometimes Fuji-noyama when speaking poetically; it is difficult to understand how an *s* came to be substituted for the *j* by foreigners, but under any name there is a peculiar fascination about the mountain, and the first sight of it, from the hundred steps in Yokihama, from Ueno in Tôkiô through a haze of telephone wires, or across the waves of Suruga Bay from the deck of a steamer, is an event which will be fixed in the traveller’s

(continued...)

stopping to do watercolours along the way. No wonder his book was so popular in Japan and England, for it linked him directly with the theories of Ruskin.³⁸² Watanabe mentions that Yorozu Tetsugoro changed direction away from *Nihonga*, the Japanese style of painting, towards a more Western style of painting. In 1905 he also began to publish a magazine, *Mizue*, literally ‘water painting’, which flourished until recently.³⁸³ From 1905 to 1909, this magazine regularly published articles by Alfred Parsons, all taken from his book *Notes in Japan*.³⁸⁴ Parsons remained in contact with his Japanese friends, most of whom were artists.³⁸⁵ Three years after his return from Japan, Parsons did illustrations in the Japanese style for Rosina Filippi’s *Three Japanese Plays*.³⁸⁶ The eight images in this book were printed from wood blocks which had no tonalities at all and which were inspired by the linear Japanese way of drawing.³⁸⁷ Parsons’s original style is recognizable only in the floral head pieces.³⁸⁸ The book was published by the Daniel Press which lasted from 1845 to 1919³⁸⁹ and who had their offices in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The second book inspired by the Japanese style was *The Bamboo Garden* for Lord Redesdale (Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford), which was published in the same year that Parsons’s *Notes in Japan* appeared. Parsons collaborated on ten illustrations for *The Bamboo Garden* and these were also done from wood blocks.³⁹⁰

³⁸¹ (...continued)
memory.” [Parsons, 1896: 119]

³⁸² “Mr. Alfred Parsons’s handy little volume on Japan is of particular interest to all who are fond of the grace and beauty of Japanese flowers and trees.” [Burbidge, 1897: 372]

³⁸³ Watanabe, 1995: 42-43

³⁸⁴ See the list of these articles in the Parsons bibliography on page 360.

³⁸⁵ In 1896, one of them visited: “1st September 1896. / My dear Charley / (...) He got landed at some place on Saturday night & could not get up to Lakeside till yesterday morning, nor could he communicate with his friend from Japan who had come all the way to meet him at Lakeside.” [MsSRO 1/2]

In 1908, Professor Okakura visited Parsons in London: “March 14 1908 / My dear Spielmann / Professor Okakura who was very good to me in Japan, has promised to dine with me on Friday the 22nd , 8.30 p.m. at the Arts Club (...) Alfred Parsons” [NAL 86 PP-18 Spielmann Letter VII, 21]

³⁸⁶ The British Library has the 20th copy in 125, printed on special O.W. paper.

³⁸⁷ A definition of the Japanese style of drawing [author’s translation]: “Forms simplified to the extreme, clear colours with no shadows, lack of depth, love of the arabesque, care for minute details.” [Lacampe, 1988: 18]

³⁸⁸ See the discussion of his painting style on page 93. See the discussion of his illustration style on page 98.

³⁸⁹ Alfred Parsons designed the ‘logo’ or printer’s mark, of the Daniel Press. It was printed on the last page of every book they published. See the section on the Oxford set on page 84.

³⁹⁰ Lord Redesdale, known as Mr Freeman Mitford, was raised to the peerage on the occasion of the coronation of His Majesty the King. He was one of the pioneers in modern gardening, and his beautiful garden at Batsford
(continued...)

At the end of the Middle Years, spanning 1879 to 1896, Parsons was close to fifty years old and felt a need to vary his artistic activities. His Arts and Crafts philosophy led him into the realm of design for the theatre.



Figure 71 Alfred Parsons painting. [Garden unknown. Private coll.]

³⁹⁰ (...continued)

Park was mentioned in the dedication of *The Garden* LXII: 1902: iv. More research is needed to find out if Parsons had an influence on his friend's garden designs.



Figure 72 AP Watercolour reproduced in *Notes in Japan*: 15 [Sir Richard Parsons's collection]



Figure 73 'Naka no Chaya- On the Northern Slope' [*Notes in Japan*: 143] Henry Batterbury's coll.

3.4.7 Parsons: set designer: 1895

Upon Parsons's return from Japan in January 1895 and a year before his book was published, *Guy Domville*, a play by Henry James, opened at the St. James's Theatre. Parsons had designed the sets for the garden scene of the first act and these are said to have been very effective.³⁹¹ Unfortunately the play was less successful than this set design.³⁹² Parsons's friendship with Henry James was not affected by these events. The following descriptive quotation is indicative of the success of Parsons's design for the garden scene:

If anything went wrong with the piece it was not the fault of the setting, which must fully have realised Mr James's sense of the picturesqueness of old-fashioned English life. The garden at 'Porches', with its clustering tea roses, its rustic seats, and ancient wicket gate was only matched by the scene of the interior of the house shown in the final act.³⁹³

The following illustration of the garden scene in Act one is from a drawing done by C. Seppings Wright in 1895. It is quite interesting to compare this design with the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement which was still popular at that date. We see a garden seat, similar to the one Edwin Lutyens designed for William Robinson, a rusticated neo-gothic garden chair, and the rustic and picturesque facade of an Elizabethan house, just like that of Madame de Navarros' house in Broadway or perhaps Frank D. Millet's Russell House. Parsons had also designed garden seats for Mrs de Navarro at The Court Farm.³⁹⁴ All these elements would have meant something to a middle-class audience, who might even have been future patrons

³⁹¹ In the Spring of 1889, Edwin Abbey designed the costumes for a London production of *Tosca* (the play) and he also produced several other costume designs. This could have been one of the influences that encouraged Parsons's involvement in the world of the theatre.

³⁹² Speaking of another play Mary Anderson wrote "It was through Henry James that R. L. Stevenson and Henley came to see me with a play they had written for me, and at Henry's request I saw them twice. I thought the play poor and can't even remember its title or what it was about." [Anderson, 1896: 52]

³⁹³ [*Queen's* 'First Night at the St. James's Theatre' Jan 12 1895] "Sir Frederick Leighton was early to be seen in the stalls, and in his neighbourhood were Mr and Mrs du Maurier. Towards the front sat Mrs Clifford, and elsewhere Mr and Mrs Humphry Ward might be recognised. Mrs George Alexander [wife of George Alexander, acting *Guy Domville* and manager of the St. James's Theatre] and opposite to her were the Hon. Maude Stanley and a large party of friends. Lord and Lady Londesborough [Parsons and Partridge were consulted for their garden], Lord Hothfield, Mr Marion Crawford, Mr H. D. Trail, Mr and Mrs Arthur Lewis, Mr Sidney Colvin, Mrs Jopling Rowe, and Mr Bram Stoker [author of *Dracula*]." This illustrates quite well the context of the leisure class attending the theatre. The author of this thesis is convinced that Alfred Parsons would also have been sitting in the stalls, not far from Sir Frederick Leighton (informed speculation). Of course Mary Anderson (De Navarro) must have been present, since she commented on the play in her *Memoirs*. For more names of people present, including Parsons and Millet, read [Edel, 1969: 469-470]

³⁹⁴ Anderson, 1896: 254-55. Read the quotation on page 175.

of a garden designer.³⁹⁵

The first act was well received but things started to go wrong in the second act.³⁹⁶ As the designer, Parsons had a lot to gain from this public exposure, but not so Henry James as playwright. The play proved to be not very successful.³⁹⁷ It had a fairly short run of five weeks and was replaced on February 14 by the first performance of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.³⁹⁸ Mary de Navarro and the critics agreed that it was the 'mise en scène' that needed improvement, not the acting or the sets.³⁹⁹

Four years later, in 1899, Parsons's set design was effectively reproduced in the *One & All Gardening* magazine for the year 1899. George Alexander had sent a photograph of it to the editor, Edward Owen Greening, saying: "I have often been struck by the great love of the general public for gardens upon the stage, and in several of my pieces, I have endeavoured to

³⁹⁵ "While the author of *Guy Domville* sat uneasily in his stall seat at the Haymarket, carriage after carriage was depositing ladies in rich wraps and shimmering gowns and well-groomed, fashionably dressed gentlemen before the St. James's Theatre. (...) It was an audience of celebrities, one of the most distinguished ever to be assembled in a London Theatre. (...) There was one section which laid no claim to distinction. It had queued up for some hours in the raw, biting cold at the entrances to the pit and gallery, shivering and stamping its feet as it waited for the doors to open." [Edel, 1969: 469]

³⁹⁶ "The curtain rose on one of George Alexander's expensive and elaborately realistic settings which were the pride of his management. The scene was a garden at Porches, the time 1780. Clustering rose bushes and honeysuckle trailed round quaint lattice windows; borders of multi-colored flowers and a close-cut privet hedge set a tone of peaceful rural charm." [Edel, 1969: 472]

³⁹⁷ Henry James could have been the victim of a cabal directed against Alexander. Men would have been hired by 'friends of an actress who was said to have been slighted by Alexander.' [Edel, 1969: 480]

³⁹⁸ "Dramatic Art would have been the poorer if *Guy Domville* had never been produced. In the hands of a strong and keen dramatic craftsman nothing would have been more impressive than the struggle of *Guy Domville* with his destiny. Born with a definite vocation for the Church, he is suddenly confronted on the eve of taking orders with the destiny that leaves him the last of his race. He is sophistically persuaded that it is his duty to return to the world and perpetuate his name. Forgetting that the most wise of Kings told us that all things are Vanity, he yields. He renounces the higher life only to taste the bitterness of things. The girl he is persuaded to woo loves another. The woman he really loves is loved by his dearest friend. To win her heart would be to break another. So *Guy* gives her up and eventually returns to the cloister. Why did this essentially beautiful and simple story fail miserably as a play? First, because the very difficult art of writing for the stage has not yet been thoroughly acquired by Mr. Henry James. At enthralling and critical moments, when nothing but a few direct and pregnant phrases were wanted, he made his characters talk sermons. They wandered and they wearied. If there was a point that they ought to have come to, they exercised superhuman ingenuity in avoiding it. The natural strength of their emotions they disguised in superfluous words. What could have been conveyed in a line they dallied over for pages. And little by little they talked *Guy Domville* down his doom. 'I am the last of the *Domvilles*' he said; and the gallery, with a sigh of relief, replied, 'Hear, hear!' We do not advocate this class of criticism, but we are constrained to confess that it very correctly reflected the feeling of the stalls." [*Vanity Fair*. "Guy Domville at the St. James's" January 10, 1895 n.s.] Leon Edel reports another reply from a voice from the gallery: "It's a bloody good thing y'are." [Edel, 1969: 475] between the intellectual elite, the friends, the well-wishers, and the rowdies to whom the applause was an act of defiance. [Edel. 1969: 478] Harmony did not exactly reign between the classes in England at that time.

³⁹⁹ [De Navarro, 1896:]. She was a famous actress at the turn of the century and although a close friend of Parsons, her subjective opinion is of interest. In fact it reflected the opinion of several friends of Henry James.

bring the scent of the roses over the footlights. My friend Alfred Parsons, A.R.A., once designed me a garden for the stage at St.James's Theatre." In the article there was a careful omission of the name of the play for which the set had been created.⁴⁰⁰

This garden scene leads us into the second part of Parsons's life and career. Chapter Four begins when landscape gardening began to take over a good part of his endeavours as an artist.

⁴⁰⁰ *One & All Gardening*, 1899: 52-53

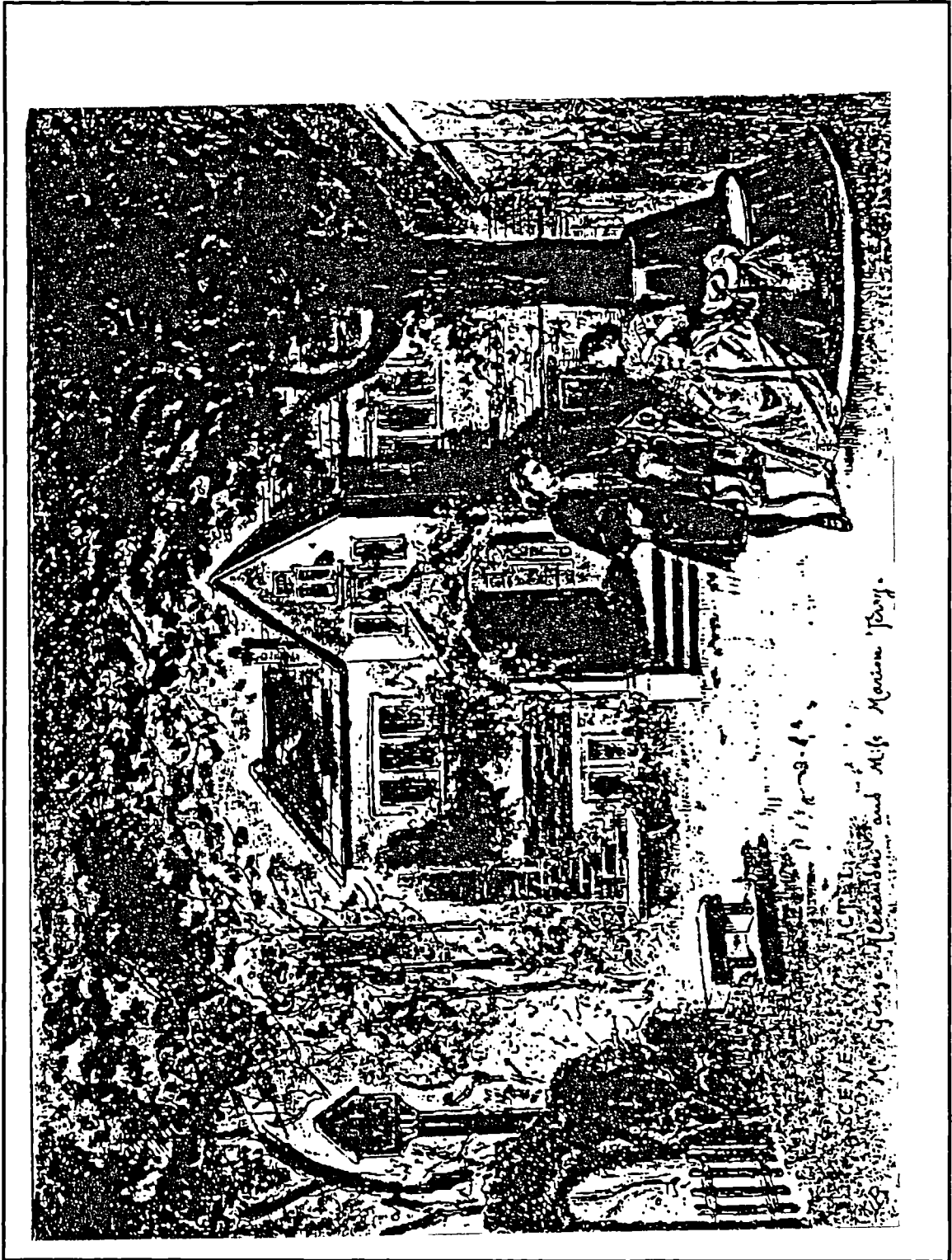


Figure 74 The garden scene in 'Guy Domville' designed by Alfred Parsons. [Theatre Museum, London]

4 THE LATER YEARS

1897-1920

Early in 1897 Abbey wrote: Alfred painted a fine, big picture of rolling hills and wooded vales - and is hard at work on studies of gardens, in which he delights - not only himself but other people.¹

4.1 SUMMARY

The Later Years span from 1897 to Parsons's death in 1920, including both painting years and landscape gardening years.

Parsons's solo exhibitions, his professional involvement with the New Gallery, the medals he won at Paris and Munich, the Chantrey Bequest² that purchased his painting 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay', his growing popularity in the press as the author of a culturally important book in 1896, were all factors that led to his being named as an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1897 (A.R.A.) followed by full membership in 1911, and served as a catalyst for his career as a landscape-gardener. The success of his landscaped garden at Bishopswood, where aristocrats in the circle of Henry Leslie Blundell McCalmont used to visit and shoot, was also determining.³ These considerations were followed by his being admitted to the Royal Watercolour Society, of which he became President in 1914. During the last years of his career as a painter, Parsons was active on several committees for the promotion of English art and for support of the war effort. These activities also gained him high conservative social recognition. His final years were spent in Broadway.

The narrative of this chapter conforms to the chronological approach already followed in Chapter Three. It aims at understanding why Parsons-Partridge-Tudway's landscape gardening practice developed, by looking at the correspondence between the partners.⁴ Although Partridge played an important role in the partnership, it focuses on Parsons, who was the designer in the partnership.⁵ Their landscape gardening practice would last twenty-three years, from 1897 to 1920, and would see them design at least forty-five gardens.⁶

¹ Lucas, 1921: 320

² A fund, created in 1877 and administered by the Academy, for the purchase of fine works of art.

³ See the section on Bishopswood on page 181

⁴ It goes beyond the scope of this research to give a detailed history of each garden the partners touched.

⁵ Milette, 1995:16

⁶ More research is needed to find evidence of work on the seventy gardens mentioned in the correspondence between the partners Charles Clement Tudway, Captain Walter Croker St-Ives Partridge and Alfred Parsons.

4.2 ASSOCIATE OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY: 1897

Although Parsons started exhibiting annually at the Royal Academy in 1871, he was not elected associate until 14 January 1897 at the age of 50.⁷ He joined 173 other Associates, all hoping to be elected one day as one of the forty members.⁸ Parsons's solo exhibitions at the Fine Art Society, his professional involvement with the New Gallery, the medals he won at Paris and Munich, the Chantrey Bequest⁹ to purchase his painting 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay', his growing popularity in the press and the publication of his book *Notes in Japan* in 1896 were all factors that lead to this nomination.

In 1897, the Royal Academy still enjoyed significant social credibility amongst the most conservative layer of British Society, although it was contested by the younger generation.

But in general, the type of landscape painting that dominated the summer Exhibitions around the turn of the century was bland and unadventurous. The Royal Academy had lost credibility as an artistic leader. It had survived because of its social prestige and because of the success of Leighton in improving its standards, associated with the revival of high art. But by 1918, when Poynter, the last eminent Victorian to be President of the Academy, stepped down from office, he and the Academy were both anachronisms. (...) The Grosvenor and the New English Art Club had shown artists that they could make their reputations without the Academy. Burne-Jones exhibited at the Academy only once; many

⁷ At the general meeting for election, on 14 January 1897, La Thangue (25 votes) was balloted against Parsons (29 votes) who became an associate. ['Balloted' is the term used in the manuscript, meaning 'To run against'] At the same meeting, Parsons's good friend John Singer Sargent, was "duly elected a Royal Academician". ['General Assembly Meeting Books, 1867-1898' manuscript at the Royal Academy Library:257-261] On 1st July 1898, down from fifteen candidates, to six on the second ballot, Abbey (28 votes) was finally duly elected Royal Academician after being balloted against E. A. Waterlow (22 votes) in the last run. ['General Assembly Meeting Books, 31 January 1867-1898' manuscript at the Royal Academy Library:272-274] At the General Assembly for election on 26 January 1911, Ernest Newton [who did some work at Welbeck Abbey] was elected Associate of the Royal Academy along with J. Lavery. At the next assembly, on 22 March 1911 Parsons (15) was balloted on the second run against A. East (4), E. A Drury (7) and R. P. Blomfield (9). On the third run Parsons got twenty-five votes, against only eleven for R. P. Blomfield. Edward Poynter was president of the Royal Academy and attended the meeting at which Parsons was elected. Alma-Tadema, Abbey and Sargent voted along with thirty three other members. These three very important friends of Parsons must have had a real influence on the vote. ['Minutes of election, 31 January 1899-5 December 1930' manuscript at the Royal Academy Library: 89-94] Winning against Blomfield must have been a significant victory, knowing the sentiments Parsons probably shared with William Robinson on Blomfield. "Nonsense about gardening on the part of writers is, unhappily, not rare, but there was more of it than usual last week. À propos of Messrs Blomfield and Inigo Thomas's book, the following is a choice specimen from *The Builder* of February 27 [1892]: *As regards what is without, it is no business of the garden to imitate or blend with that. Imagine Shrubland or any other beautiful garden in the open country made on this principle of shutting out the landscape beyond, or Cecil Lawson's picture of 'The Minister's Garden' with nothing but the foreground. It is a real loss to landscape gardening that many men write about it who have clearly never thought about it.*" [N.s. *The Garden* XLI 5 March 1892: 204]

⁸ 107 painters, 19 sculptors and 38 architects. ['List of Painters, Sculptors, and architects, nominated by members' Copy dated January 1897, left in the manuscript 'General Assembly Meeting Books, 31st Jan 1867-1898', held at the Royal Academy Library.]

⁹ A fund administered by the Academy for the purchase of fine works of art, created in 1877.

of the younger generation simply ignored it.¹⁰

The apparent dichotomy, expressed in the history of art literature, between the conservative Royal Academy and the progressive New English Art Club, is questioned by Mary Anne Stevens. Parsons was one of the thirty-six out of fifty-eight Royal Academicians who, between 1900 and 1950, exhibited at both these societies. Stevens adds to her argument:

Since the New English Art Club had been set up as a specific gesture of revolt against the Royal Academy, the election to the Royal Academy of such founder members as Stanhope Forbes, Bramley and La Thangue suggests the presence of a more liberal spirit than is generally accorded the institution.¹¹

Parsons had shown a liberal spirit when joining the New English Art Club, but he was also of the old generation. 'Progressive conservatism' is the category that suits him best, as already mentioned in the discussion of his painting style. When the Royal Academy finally recognized his capacity to become an Associate, he rejoiced. For artists of his background, the prestige was very real.¹² For his patrons as well, who were of the same generation, the Royal Academy was the Academy of Leighton, as mentioned above.¹³

In 1899, *The Studio Magazine* published an eight page article, 'Some Sketches by Alfred Parsons, A.R.A.', illustrated with ten reproductions of his work and one colour reproduction of his watercolour, 'An Old Garden.'¹⁴ This was the first long article to be published about Alfred Parsons. It illustrates how important it was for an artist to be elected Associate of the Royal Academy.

During his lifetime, Alfred exhibited 116 paintings at The Royal Academy; from 1871 to 1919, he had from one to five paintings on display, mainly landscape oil paintings in the

¹⁰ Treuherz, 1993: 207

¹¹ From the chapter 'A Quiet Revolution: The Royal Academy, 1900-1950' in Stevens, 1988: 19

¹² Consult the list of his paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1871 to 1919 on page 381

¹³ In 1911 the Royal Academy was still a very conservative society. Parsons died in 1920 before any sign of modern thinking about the equality of the sexes reached the structure of the Royal Academy. In 1996 the art world is still very much a man's world. There is no female equivalent to Picasso or Rothko. Fame still falls on male artists. "Formal provision governing the eligibility of women to be elected members of the Academy was put in place on 20 January 1880. Although the Foundation Members had included two women artists (Angelica Kauffman and Mary Moser), no woman had ever been elected to the membership. This was not achieved until forty-two years later when Annie Swynnerton became an Associate in 1922. The rights and privileges of women members were not the same as those enjoyed by their male counterparts: they could vote at Election but not General Assemblies; they were eligible for election to professorships but not as Visitors in the Schools; and they were not entitled to serve on the Council. On 17 June 1936 however the laws were changed to allow women members to serve on Academy committees and on Council if elected an Academician. On 1 June 1965 women were finally given the vote in General Assemblies provided they had been members for three years. (This probationary qualification was abolished on 6 July 1967)" [Nicholas Savage, preface to Popp & Valentine, 1996: viii.]

¹⁴ Baldry, 1899: 149-157

Barbizon style.¹⁵ The link between his landscape gardening commissions and these landscape paintings is real. Parsons often painted in the vicinity of a garden he had or he would be designing.¹⁶ Parsons occasionally painted his own designs, like for instance his own garden, Luggershill.¹⁷ This was the case at Shiplake Court.¹⁸ Like fashionable painters of his period, he would have private views at his studio, just before the annual Royal Academy summer exhibition. On one of these occasions, one of Queen Victoria's daughters visited him in his studio at 54 Bedford Garden.¹⁹

Although Parsons was said to be one of the most popular Royal Academicians²⁰, very little of his work remains at the Royal Academy. 'Orange Lilies, Broadway', Parsons's diploma work, accepted on 7 November 1911, now hangs in an office of the Royal Academy²¹, and the Library collection holds around seventy-five small drawings presented in 1955 by Dr Bryan N. Brooke, a descendant of Parsons.²² The fact that he was secretary of the Club of the Royal Academy²³ might explain one side of his earlier popularity; the conservatism of his paintings

¹⁵ [Graves, 1906: Vol IV : 64 and Jarman, 1987: 278.]

Members were allowed to show a maximum of eight works at each Summer Exhibition and, after the reform of 1903, six works. [Stevens, 1988: 15]

¹⁶ [April 22nd 1901, MsSRO 1/8] "I wonder if you will meet Parsons at Joiceys, [Sunningdale Park, SW of Virginia Water] I believe that he is down there. The subject for his academy picture for next year is somewhere in that neighbourhood." [Paintings showed at the Summer 1902's Royal Academy Exhibition : Poplars (room 1), Brown Autumn, Carnations]

¹⁷ See [Hobhouse, 1988] for a reproduction of one of his Luggershill's paintings. Were the paintings done at Nymans his own designs? More research is needed to find this out.

¹⁸ At the 1889-90 Institute of Oils Painters Summer Exhibition he showed the painting number 367: 'From Shiplake Hill.' At the 1891 Fine Art Society solo Exhibition 'Garden and Orchard', Parsons showed the painting number 30: 'Monthly Roses. Shiplake Court'. At the 1899 Royal Watercolour Society Summer Exhibition he showed: the painting number 52: 'Near Shiplake'. "We have been to see & advise about gardens in several places during the last few weeks. Mrs Dallas Yorke, Mrs Manning & Mr Dillon also Harrison & the Gilliat 's [written Gilliat's]" [26th July 1899 MsSRO 1/7] Mr R. H. C. Harrison was the owner of Shiplake Court.

¹⁹ Recollection of Henry Batterbury, a grand-nephew of Parsons.

²⁰ Phillips, Sir Claude. 'Alfred Parsons's obituary' *The Daily Telegraph*. 22 January 1920

²¹ [Stevens, 1988: 134-35] "In this painting the white doves on the lawn of this idyllic garden evoke the languid atmosphere of a perfect English summer's day." See the coloured reproduction in Stevens, 1988: 41.

²² They are kept in one binder identified: 'Uncle Alfred Black and White Drawings' / Pencil sketches of animal drawings, etc (1954)/ Presented by Dr Bryan N. Brooke, 1955/ Filing number: 6035; P.4F. The author of this thesis collaborated on preparing a description of the binder's contents. Bryan was the son of Florence Margaret (Madge) herself the daughter of Henry Franklin (Frank), Alfred's eldest brother. See the genealogy of page 352.

²³ Robinson, MS: Gravetye . The 25 July 1901, invitation card is glued in the manuscript. Robinson was proud to entertain such important artists! "ROYAL ACADEMY CLUB. / SUMMER OUTING, 1901/ (continued...)

was certainly the other factor.

On 22 March 1911, Parsons was finally elected full member.²⁴ This was shortly before the death of Edwin Abbey, who had become a Royal Academician thirteen years earlier.²⁵ The decline of the Royal Academy during the first decade of the twentieth century might explain why Parsons did not receive such an enthusiastic response in the press in 1911 as he had in 1899.²⁶

4.3 THE ROYAL WATERCOLOUR SOCIETY: 1899-1920

Two years after his election as an associate of the Royal Academy, in 1899, Parsons left the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours and was elected a member of the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS)²⁷, a prestigious step in his career. The latter was a more select Society than the Royal Institute (RI).²⁸

The prominence of their exhibitions was heightened by their fashionable venues; the R.W.S.'s galleries were in Pall Mall East while the R.I. exhibited at 195 Piccadilly. Their exhibition, reviewed by all the leading art critics, was of the utmost importance 'since it was through exhibiting societies that contacts were developed, reputations made, and sales

²³ (...continued)

Thursday, July 25th is the date fixed./ The Club will leave Victoria Station (L.B. & S. C. R.) At 10.40 a.m. for East Grinstead./ Drive to Gravetye Manor, where William Robinson, Esq., will kindly provide luncheon./ Drive back to East Grinstead by West Howthly and Forest Row./ Dine at East Grinstead at 6.30 punctually and leave by 9 o'clock train, arriving at Victoria at 10.30 p.m./ The Hon. Sec. will take railway tickets and will be much obliged if you will let him know as soon as possible whether it is your intention to be present. Only two Guests can be invited. A post card for reply is enclosed./ Alfred Parsons Hon. Sec./ 54, Bedford Gardens./ Kensington, W."

²⁴ The turnover of Royal Academicians was very slow. An associate had to wait for the death of a member before being eligible for election to membership. "The Society shall consist of Forty Members only (...) an exclusivity that distinguished it from all earlier artists' societies in Britain." [Quoted from *The Instrument of Foundation of the Royal Academy*, by Nicholas Savage, Librarian to the Royal Academy, in his preface to Poppand Valentine, 1996:v]

²⁵ Abbey (28 votes) was balloted against E. A. Waterlow (22 votes) on July 1st 1898.

²⁶ For statistics on the decline of the Royal Academy, consult [Stevens, 1988: 13-21].

²⁷ Founded 1768, first exhibitions at Somerset House in 1780. From 1867 Burlington House, Royal Academy, Picadilly, London.

²⁸ In 1883, the Royal Watercolour Society had 33 members among them Alma-Tadema, Alfred Hunt and Henry Moore. Mrs Helen Allingham was an associate as were Holman W. Hunt and George Du Maurier. In 1902, the President was Ernest Waterlow, the Vice-President, E. R. Hugues, and the Treasurer Arthur Hopkins, along with only three more members, bringing the total membership to 36. They included Alma-Tadema, George Clausen, Albert Goodwin, Charles Gregory, Hubert Von Herkomer, John North, Sir Edward J. Poynter. The society had also only 36 associates among which Abbey, Parsons and some familiar names like Walter Crane and Stanhope Forbes. In 1904, John Singer Sargent, although not a member, exhibited in the rooms of the RWS.

secured.’²⁹

Parsons would be elected President in 1914 (P.R.W.S.), succeeding Sir Ernest Albert Waterlow.³⁰ Two different sources describe his election:

The election of Mr. Alfred Parsons, R.A., as Sir Ernest’s successor appears to denote that there will be no change in the policy of progressive conservatism hitherto followed by the Society.³¹

And the Society loses in him a president whose amiability, keen sense of justice, and business capacity made him invaluable to his colleagues.³²

A letter from Parsons himself on his election reveals a modest man.³³

Dec 16 1913 / My dear Spielmann / Thank you for your kind letter of congratulation: I shall do my best to be a worthy successor but I regret as much as anyone that Waterlow found it necessary to resign the Presidentship & that the Society could not find a younger man than I am to look after its interests. With all good wishes / Yours sincerely / Alfred Parsons.³⁴

Always generous with his time for social occasions, he was involved in organizing the 1915 Royal Watercolour Society special exhibition and wrote to Spielmann:

The R.W.S. Sale at Christie’s was quite a success & we have sent to Lord Rothschild a cheque for £2032.4, pretty good for a small Society of artists.³⁵

The Royal Watercolour Society archives, at Bankside Gallery, holds a painting by Alfred Parsons entitled ‘The Garden’ and the most wonderful sketchbook that the author of this thesis was privileged to come across during this research.³⁶

As president of the Royal Watercolour Society, Parsons wrote the preface to the catalogue for an exhibition held at the American Art Galleries on Madison Square South, New York. In this preface, Parsons displays a thorough knowledge of the history of watercolour painters in England.³⁷

²⁹ Helmreich, 1994: 24-5 quoting Marsh et. al., 1989: 119

³⁰ D.N.B. 1912-1921. Under Parsons, Alfred William (1847-1920): 426-427

³¹ *Connoisseur*, 1914: 66

³² *The Times* Obituary. ‘Mr. Parsons, R.A.’ Wednesday Jan. 21, 1920: 15

³³ Was he modest or was he just being diplomatic? A mixture of the two must be the answer.

³⁴ MS NAL Letters to Spielmann 86 PP 18: letter 25

³⁵ MS NAL 86 PP 18 Letters to Spielmann: letter #VII-26

³⁶ Discussed in the footnote on page 104. The painting was given by Princess Louise as mentioned on page 119. See the list of the sketches in the appendices on page 385

³⁷ See [Parsons, 1916] in the bibliography.



Figure 75 Royal Watercolour Society: Parsons's botanical notebook. 'Oct. 7 1904'



Figure 76 Royal Watercolour Society: Parsons's botanical notebook. 'Nagi. Maibara'



Figure 77 'The Garden' by Alfred Parsons, given by Princess Louise to the RWS in 1926.

4.4 LANDSCAPE GARDENING COMMISSIONS 1899-1907

By 1898 churches and even commercial buildings are considerably less interesting than the houses which were being produced by a whole galaxy of young architects. (...) In architecture there have never been such opportunities for younger men as there were at the turn of the century. Suddenly it seemed everyone was building what they thought of as small houses, mostly in what is now called the stockbroker belt in Surrey, Sussex and Kent. So often these rich middle-class clients turned to the new young men who were able to create a softer and more acceptable house than those of the earlier generations, who thought too often in terms of vast mansions only.³⁸

Roderick Gradidge adds in his book *Dream Houses*, that this was the great period for house parties with numerous guests and servants, all components of the leisure society. Houses and gardens were built to accommodate such an influx of people.

Moreover, the garden is actually a trade asset; the house with what the estate agents call a 'well-established' garden will usually command a better price and is easier to let or sell than one which stands in merely a bare patch of ground. The value of residential property is distinctly enhanced by the outlay upon those accessories and decorative adjuncts which the gardener can supply, so that even if his art is measured by the bald and unsympathetic commercial standard, it proves to be not incapable of being made to pay.³⁹

Parsons and Partridge were amongst the numerous designers of gardens of the period, but as genuine 'landscape-gardeners'.⁴⁰ They were also well aware of the marketing value of a good garden.

He [Captain Cholmondeley] came to see Kidmore House when it was in the market and admired the lay out to the garden there very much.⁴¹

³⁸ Gradidge, 1980: 9

³⁹ Holme, 1908: xix

⁴⁰ "The British economy in the Victorian 'Golden Age' was, of course, susceptible to setback and crisis, but the picture of the third quarter of the century is over all one of astonishing economic and industrial expansion." More people would have more money to spend on gardens and art. [Ryder and Silver 1970: 58]

⁴¹ 14th Nov 1904 MsSRO 1/4 Parsons and Partridge had designed a garden for Kidmore House in 1904. Captain Partridge was managing the Kidmore for his brother-in-law, Ronald Mackenzie. Two tenants successively occupied the estate, first a Mr and Mrs Calvert in 1903-04 and secondly a Mr O'Shaughnessy.

4.4.1 Introduction

The main concern in this section is to give a description of the *modus vivendi* for the partnership in its social context (working arrangement and process) and then to introduce the known commissions done by the partners, which were mostly part of the activities of the later years. Several elements of Parsons's landscape gardening activities had to be presented chronologically in the previous chapter. The origin of the partnership has been largely explained in *Parsons-Partridge-Tudway. An unsuspected garden design partnership*⁴². Their business agreement has been also presented and discussed.⁴³ The very first landscape gardening commissions Bishopswood, Clouds and Russell House were described in the previous chapter.

The context of their work will now be examined more closely.

In January 1898, just before starting their partnership, Parsons joined the Royal Horticultural Society, only a few months after Captain Partridge.⁴⁴ The Royal Horticultural Society had had Prince Albert as its president in the late 1850s and the prestige of this Society was still very high at the end of the nineteenth century. There was no landscape architects' group in 1899, even less a landscape-gardeners' association. Parsons and Partridge gained credibility among their patrons through their membership in the Royal Horticultural Society.

⁴² Milette, 1995: passim.

⁴³ See Milette, 1995 and Chapter Three section '1895: Bishopswood, first landscape gardening commission with Partridge.' on page ?. More research is needed to find the papers of Mr Rooper, McCalmont's accountant from London, who helped to prepare the official agreement between the partners.

Rooper's address: 17 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, W.C. Telegraphic address: "Biennially, London." Telephone. Holborn, 365, Rooper & Whate[l ?]y [31st July 1899 Max Rooper to Mr Tudway, MsSRO 1/7]

⁴⁴ Partridge was not listed in 1905 or 1906 and stopped his membership in 1917. Parsons is present in all the lists until 1919. In 1920, only new members figure in the list . [*Journal of the RHS. 'Arrangements and Reports of the Royal Horticultural Society, consulted from 1860 to 1920]* . Gertrude Jekyll: 1888-1919; William Robinson: 1903 to 1916; Viscountess Wolseley: 1890-1916.

4.4.1.1 Verbal recommendation

They did not advertise their services in the Horticultural Directories.⁴⁵ One main reason is here put forward: verbal recommendation was the privileged way of recruiting the elite's commissions.⁴⁶ The following extracts demonstrate the importance of word of mouth:

I went to Cap Martin last night [27 February 1899] to dine & sleep with some friends who wanted to introduce me [Alfred Parsons] to the Duchess of Portland with a view to doing something in the gardens at Welbeck. She was seedy unfortunately, but I saw her mother Mrs Dallas Yorke, who seems to boss things, & I think there is a good chance of our getting that job. They want the whole surroundings of the house laid out, money no object, it would be a fine start for us - I told Miss Willmott that we had gone into partnership, & that you would do the executive part, & she though it a fine scheme, & that we should do well, & as she is a great authority among a large set, she will be a valuable ally.⁴⁷

Dear Mr Tudway / Just a few lines in haste to tell you that I have heard from Parsons & Partridge that they will be able to come to Warnham on Monday next when I hope to see to go into the matter of the formation of my new Wild garden. I am told they are rather expensive people. I hope they won't ruin me! Hoping it will be a fine day. Yours sincerely
C. T. [or C.F. ?] Lucas P.S. The 10:30 & 11:35 trains are the best from Victoria to Horsham Station.⁴⁸

The same Lucas was mentioned in one of Partridge's private letters to his best friend Charlie:

Lucas called here in his motor car on his way to some place the other side of Stockbridge, he was very nice and pleasant but as usual pleaded poverty and said he was afraid he could not afford to carry out our recommendations. He did not intend to spend more than £500 on the job. The end of it was I consented to accept a fee of Two hundred guineas for the 3 years. I do not know what Parsons will say but I hope he wont be very annoyed. I told

⁴⁵ Not all the landscape-gardeners lists were consulted (only The Lindley Library's collection of Directories was consulted). In 1891, Goldring W. and Mawson, Thos. H. are mentioned, along with 19 others. In 1909, Goldring W., Mawson, Thos and Veitch and Son are listed along with 40 others.

"The Horticultural Directories were published annually by the *Journal of Horticulture* between 1860 and the magazine's closure in 1915. (After that date, they were carried on by the *Gardeners' Chronicle* for some years; the date at which it stopped appearing is not known.) It is not known whether a complete run of these Directories survives; the RHS Lindley Library has copies for 1870, 1889, 1891, 1905, 1909, 1919, and 1924 only. The Directories listed gardens which could be visited, horticultural societies, nurserymen and seedsmen, and other tradesmen, including landscape-gardeners." [24-12-96 Brent Elliott, Librarian at the Lindley Library].

⁴⁶ The following quote shows how elitist and sexist were Partridge and Tudway: "I must have got a chill on Saturday and can only account for it as the result of setting in a draught in the train with the window open, thanks to the obstinacy of a disgusting female. (...) I am having your silk socks washed and will post them on to Savile Row." [May 9th 1905 MsSRO 1/6]

⁴⁷ [28th Feb 1899 MsSRO 1/7] Partridge quoting Parsons in his letter to Tudway. Parsons was a close friend of Ellen Willmott: "Have just heard for the first time that Miss Willmott met with a fatal accident near Aix about a month ago Fell over a cliff while picking wild flowers. I have seen no account of it in the papers (...) Parsons will have lost a good friend or patron if it is [Oct 5th 1904 MsSRO 1/7]

⁴⁸ 5th July 1904 [MsSRO 1/3] Lucas to Tudway. Charles Thomas Lucas married Charlotte Emma. Their son: Charles James Lucas b. 25 Feb 1853 d. 17 April 1928. It is not clear which Lucas, father or son, signed this letter.

him we never reduced our fee and that I only did so now on the understanding that if the work lasted more than 3 years we should have to be paid extra. It is perfectly ridiculous a rich man like that imagining for a moment that he is going to make a garden of about 6 acres for £500. The planting alone ought to cost quite that. He said he did not wish to spend more than £100 a year. The more I see of rich men the more reconciled I become to being poor.⁴⁹

Lady Warwick wired to him [Parsons] just before he started to say she was “charmed with the Down Hall garden alterations & wanted him to come & work at her garden”. Peto⁵⁰ is doing the work there so of course till we knew what she meant we couldn’t go down there.⁵¹

Moving in these circles, it is not surprising that Parsons gained the Welbeck commission. Another important clue about how Parsons and Partridge would know and get patrons is provided by their reading:

Could you also find out where Vol III of *Country Life* can be got, I want a copy also Parsons, I believe they are going to bring out a vol of all the gardens if so I should like to get it. (...) Don't think you ought to write to several people agent etc about the landscape jobs. You did no end for them & now it is their turn. Carr ought to help you also Webb (tho I don't fancy he is much of it) I am writing to Carr also the Perkins? Sir J Blythe etc etc. I had such a nice letter from Welbeck. I wish I had had the Laycock job to handle from the first. Now I am afraid it won't work out well, but must give you his garden job. Don't do another stroke for him you really [must write & send?] for me I'll tackle him about oof.⁵²

['oof' will be discussed in a few paragraphs]

Country Life reading was part of learning about the ‘taste’ of the period. This magazine was a display of middle-class values from cover to cover. Volume III contains several articles that might have interested the partners. One talked about ‘Mr. G. S. Elgood’s Pictures at the Fine Art Society’s Galleries. New Bond Street’. The article was largely illustrated with paintings done at Newlands, Hampshire; Great Tangle Manor House, Surrey; Easton Park, Essex; Loseley, Surrey; The Dean’s garden, Rochester; The Terrace at Renishaw, Derbyshire. Was it that the partners had designed part of one of these gardens, such as Easton Park?⁵³ Or were

⁴⁹ Sept 2nd 1904 MsSRO 1/4

⁵⁰ “Feb 10. 1904 My dear Tudway / Thank you for writing - I have sent the names of the three men to Peto & I should think that one or other of them would surely suit him. I hope you will have a pleasant time in Paris. Yours sincerely. Alfred Parsons “ [MsSRO 1/6]
Partridge and Parsons always respected Peto, even sharing workers for their landscape gardening jobs.

⁵¹ Sept 12th 1903 MsSRO 1/5

⁵² 11th May 99 MsSRO 1/7

⁵³ “Lady Warwick has carried out man fanciful ideas in this Essex garden. To her, the most interesting of these is the Shakespeare border, in which flourish the many flowers and herbs of which the great poet has written so lovingly - the ‘roserie,’[sic instead of ‘roseraie’] full of old-fashioned roses, the Damask, the Provence, the Moss, the Bourbon, and the China; and the ‘Border of Sentiment,’ where together grow basil, white clover, balm, heath, blue salvia, wild yeallow heartsease, veronica, and foxglove. Mr. Elgood sketches in another
(continued...)

they merely looking for inspiration? A second article was ‘Condovery, Shropshire. The Seat of Mr. R. H. Cholmondeley.’, an article illustrated with views of the terraces. In November 1904, six months later, Partridge wrote

The next day we have got a new garden to look at near Winchester belonging to Captain Cholmondeley. I hope it will mean a job.⁵⁴

I have got to go and see Captain Cholmondeley about his garden on Wednesday. I hope the job will come off and unless he thinks our fee too high and the cost of the work too much I think it is pretty certain to do so.⁵⁵

I have just got back from Preshaw, Captain Cholmondeley’s place and think we are pretty certain to get the job. He asked me who the best people were to go for trees shrubs etc. and I told him without doubt the Cedars Hardy Plany Nursery, so I think I shall be able to manage this business for you, and Cholmondeley happens to be a very nice man to deal with...⁵⁶

This was H. H. Cholmondeley and the garden was in Hampshire.⁵⁷ It could be a case such as the Wightwick Manor and Trysull Manor gardens done for two brothers, the Manders.

In volume III, a full-page portrait of Gladstone is given, but another article of interest, for Parsons and Partridge, could have been the front page of the issue of Saturday, 8 January 1898, where Mrs McCalmont was sitting in all her splendour. She had just married Mr. McCalmont, the former owner of Bishopswood. The text accompanying the portrait gives a good feel of the social importance of *Country Life* magazine:

Mrs Harry McCalmont, whose portrait appears on the frontispiece, is the youngest daughter of General Sir Henry Percival de Bathe, and widow of Mr. Atmar Fanning. She became the wife of Mr. H. McCalmont, M.P., last season. Her sisters are Mrs. Archdall, Mrs. Harry Lawson, and Lady Crossley, all very smart members of society and much admired. Mr. and Mrs. McCalmont are wintering in Egypt.

Wintering in Egypt was certainly indispensable to leading a pleasant ‘country life’. It could also give a good indication of your ‘oof’ level. ‘Oof’ counted for a good part of gaining commissions.⁵⁸ Patrons would have to display their good taste and their ‘oof’ to be valued by

⁵³ (...continued)

picture the remarkable sundial in Lady Warwick’s ‘Garden of Friendship’ a sundial with a gnomon of clipped yew...” [*Country Life*, Feb 12th 1898]

⁵⁴ Nov 7th 1904 MsSRO 1/7

⁵⁵ Nov 14th 1904 MsSRO 1/4

⁵⁶ Nov 16th 1904 MsSRO 1/6

⁵⁷ “George Henry Hugh Cholmondeley. B. 3 July 1858, d. 15 March 1923.” [Burke’s *The Complete Peerage*]

⁵⁸ The author understands ‘oof’ as being associated with being rich and wealthy. According to the Oxford Dictionary, ‘oof’ is a Yiddish word for money. “Did you know Miss Deane (the one we interviewed at Wells Station) is married & will be Lady Walsh next year!! Her husband is a great [bors ?] in Australia & plenty of oof” [22nd Jan 1900 MsSRO 1/7]

peers:

Life is essentially a matter of aesthetic choices: most obviously, we all have to decide what to wear each day and more frequently still, select branded goods (mostly packaged to have some kind of emotional appeal) to eat, to groom ourselves, to decorate and maintain our homes, to display our 'good taste', or otherwise be identified positively in particular ways.⁵⁹

Oof can also be associated with being seen with Royalty. In January 1899, Parsons had travelled to Cannes⁶⁰ to meet his good friend Princess Louise.⁶¹ Every year, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, there was a Flower Show at Cannes.⁶² On the 28th of February *The Daily Mail* published an article about his going there to draw with the Princess. Princess Louise had at least three reasons for liking Parsons. He was single, fairly elegant and very sociable.⁶³ He also shared her political views: for example, Princess Louise was a friend of Gladstone⁶⁴, as was Parsons.⁶⁵ Most of all, she admired his watercolour work and his landscape gardening skills. From 1899 to 1901, Parsons went to Roseneath to design her garden.⁶⁶ He continued to visit regularly, sketching there as late as 1908. Parsons and Princess

⁵⁹ Gear, 1989: 109.

⁶⁰ As early as 1872, Princess Louise travelled to Menton (Mentone) to cure her horrid winter cough. Mentone was considered the best health resort in the South of France, along the Mediterranean coast. "There was a saying 'Cannes for living, Monte Carlo for gambling and Mentone for dying.'" [Wake 1988: 163]

⁶¹ [7th Jan 1899, MsSRO 1/7] "Parsons is off to Cannes on the 14th; Princess Louise has sent for him she seems to have [taken?] him up a good deal. I have written to impress upon him the absolute necessity of getting her to secure us a job at Windsor." See the brief biography of Princess Louise on page 372.

⁶² For example see *The Gardeners' Chronicle*. Feb 9 1895: 174; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*. April 4 1896: 422.

⁶³ "Like her mother, Princess Louise was susceptible to beauty in everything, but especially in the form of good-looking men. It is one thing, however, to admire good looks and to flirt and quite another to indulge in illicit affairs. (...) In fact, no evidence suggests that she ever had a sexual relationship with another man, apart from her husband." [Wake, 1988: 321]

⁶⁴ "In the spring of 1898 Gladstone fell seriously ill. Princess Louise had asked his daughter, Mary Drew, for reports of his health, writing, 'Please give him my love. He knows what an admirer I have always been of his and do say how much I think of him and how I wish it were in our power to do anything to take his pain away.'" [Wake, 1988: 322]

⁶⁵ On July 26 1889, an illuminated album was presented to Gladstone at the National Liberal Club. "A group of artists were invited to contribute, and Messrs. Marcus Stone, John MacWhirter, Alfred Parsons, Lewis F. Day, Henry Holiday, Arthur Severn, and myself [Walter Crane] each designed a page in this album, Mr. Day designing the text throughout. Each artist in turn was presented to him." [Crane, 1907: 329]

⁶⁶ Parsons received a thank you note from Princess Victoria, Princess Louise's sister, upon the reception of AP's condolences on Queen Victoria's death. See appendices on page 373

Louise remained friends all their lives.⁶⁷ Captain Partridge was also well connected. He had been an instructor in Musketry in the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers and was an expert horseman.

I have been offered a post connected with buying horses for Paris & the French Royal family - Am to meet the lawyers etc in [Tudor?] the 1st week in August do hope it will turn out trumps. Why they selected me I cant think. I have to get them about 200 horses a year it will fit in A1 with my other work. All news when we meet.⁶⁸

Partridge also loved shooting and riding.⁶⁹

Friends of Alfred Parsons, whom he had met at the home of Captain Martin, first introduced him to the Duke of Portland; then Parsons introduced Partridge to the Duke. The Sixth Duke of Portland is known for his love of horses.⁷⁰ The partners' correspondence clearly demonstrates that they would form long-standing friendships with their patrons, with whom they shared more than a love of gardens. For example, Parsons started working for Major Joicey in 1897 and as late as 1904, was still staying at Sunningdale Park for long periods: "Parsons is away at Joiceys"⁷¹. Other patrons, were also met while attending yacht races⁷²,

⁶⁷ In a sketchbook held at the Royal Academy Library, some ink drawings done from a boat trip are identified: 'Rosneath June 1906', then 'Birches near Castle: Roseneath; May 25th 1908'. Ref 6035; P.4f

⁶⁸ [16th July 99 MsSRO 1/7] "Hennerton, Henley-on-Thames" Blue ink printed letterhead.

⁶⁹ "In 1937, the Duke of Portland admitted to feeling 'quite ashamed' at the 'enormous number of pheasants we sometimes killed' at Welbeck in the years before 1914." [Cannadine, 1990: 369] These feelings were shared by Captain Partridge. See following footnote on page 215 (The fifth following footnote)

⁷⁰ "He is a staunch Conservative, and holds - for the second time - the important office of Master of the Horse in her Majesty's Household." [Welbeck case study bibliography: Warren Spencer, 1899: 635]

⁷¹ [Dec 16th 1904 MsSRO 1/7] Major Joicey was the owner of Sunningdale Park.

⁷² "Monterey Croix des Gardes, Cannes. My dear Partridge, (...) [third page] this morning it is cold & wet & I fear the weather has broken up rather a sell for the yachts men whose races begin today. I am first going down to Croisette to see [4th page] to see [repeated] the start. Hope you are well & flourishing / Yours very truly / Alfred Parsons" [Feb 24th 1899 MsSRO 1/7]

taking the waters at Harrogate⁷³, watching fireworks at Eton⁷⁴ or shooting⁷⁵ thousands of pheasants and partridges on large estates owned by people with “oof”.⁷⁶ Watching a cricket game at Lords was also effective for making one’s reputation.⁷⁷ These numerous ‘leisure class’ activities were alluded to in the correspondence of Captain Partridge to Charles Tudway, including travels to New York, Europe and Antigua, by either partners.

⁷³ “Hôtel Majestic, Harrogate. (...) Am alight again, & being electrified, thumped massaged & tickled all day & every day. Been to an oculist, & am wondering whether I shall next be sent to an orist, then to the dentist!” [Oct 14th 1902 MsSRO 1/3] .

“Hôtel Majestic, Harrogate. (...) This place is very full, but the Hotel as comfortable as ever. My next neighbour at meals is a Major [Dup?]Dale he knows you, lives in Dorsetshire, he seems rather nice, something like Cuddy Crawshag in face.” [Oct 10th 1902 MsSRO 1/8]

The new garden jobs we went to look at are not of much use I fancy, they wont spend the money on Parsons fee! I heard from Mrs Calverley the other day to say she was delighted with her garden, but that her lawyer would’nt [sic] let her spend any more on it just yet- What a bore it is as now we cant really finish it up, planting etc, as we should like, & the consequence is our work wont do us 1/2 the credit it otherwise would. [Sept 12th 1903 MsSRO 1/5]

⁷⁴ “It leaves Reading at 10-50 pm so you ought to have plenty of time to see the fireworks at Eton and get to Reading in time to catch the connection.” [June 2nd 1903 MsSRO 1/3]

⁷⁵ “They had a wonderful day at Cheveley in the Park, 2100 Pheasants, in all over 2500 head. I have ‘nt [sic] a notion what they will kill here next week, but I should not say more than a thousand Pheasants each day. Personally I think that quite enough especially with the class of birds we get here. I do not know what shooting is coming to. People will not be satisfied soon with under 5000 Pheasants a day. It is really getting overdone.” [Oct 28th 1896 MsSRO 1/2]

“I was shooting with Baxendale.” [Jan 7th 1901 MsSRO 1/8]

“My shooting days appear to be over as I never have time to go anywhere or do anything but work.” [Nov 27th 1903 MsSRO 1/4]

⁷⁶ Like Lady Walsh’s husband with “plenty of oof” [Jan 22nd 1900 MsSRO 1/7]

⁷⁷ “I shall see Byam Davies at Lords where I may possibly be on Thursday to have a look at the Varsity match.” [4th July 1905 MsSRO 1/3]

“I shall be staying in Town most of next week and shall hope to see you at Lords at one of the matches. I shall be staying with Mrs Leveson Gower in Manson Place.” [July 4th 1905 MsSRO 1/3]

“at Lords to see the Eton and Harrow match” [July 17th 1905 MsSRO 1/4]

4.4.2 A lucrative business

Partridge, like Parsons, was a real businessman. For example, in 1899, Partridge had taken over a new management agency and was offering his services for more “agency work”.⁷⁸ Charles Tudway wrote to Partridge to tell him that Sir Cuthbert Quilter, Tudway’s relative and owner of Bawdsey Manor⁷⁹, was looking for a manager.⁸⁰ Partridge answered, describing the job he was currently doing:



Figure 78 Charles Tudway, age 29. [Colchester,1985: 83]

If you see him you can tell him what I have done here [an estate in Elcot, Caversham, Reading and probably for Captain Partridge’s unmarried brother-in-law, son of Edward Mackenzie, Esq., of Fawley Court, Buckinghamshire] - I came here as you know to find everything in the most awful muddle possible, absolute chaos, a property of 2500 acres losing £1300 a year for the last 17 years, & under 3 different agents the loss much about the same. I have been here 3 months, I have let all but one farm, have put thing in train to be as exact as they were at BWood, & this next Xmas I shall make the Estate pay a

⁷⁸ He was using the letterhead “Park House, Newbury”.

⁷⁹ Clare Tudway, b 1887, eldest daughter of Charles Clement Tudway and Lady Edith Nelson, dau. of Horatio 3rd Lord Nelson, married Percy Cuthbert Quilter. See the Pedigree of Tudway on page 428.

⁸⁰ For an un-named estate.

dividend at the rate of £1000 a year, & as time goes on I hope this will increase. I hate sounding my own praise but this is a positive fact, & I have hopes of making the Estate a model of its kind - & I feel I could take several more.⁸¹

Parsons's business character can be clearly understood by the following statement:

Dont forget my tip about getting in some garden jobs I feel sure if you dont Parsons wont see it in any other light but a business one & he already calculates what orders you have recvd through recommendations & argues that Waterer or any other large nurseryman would strive all they could to get us business & would do so - This is private but I am sure you will be glad I mentioned it to you. You see Parsons likes no commission but naturally would like business put in our way in lieu of commissions. / ps He wrote on board ship. I enclose a photo of Welbeck please return.⁸²

It must be understood that Parsons and Partridge were recommending The Cedars nursery, owned by Tudway, to their clients. Parsons would prefer not to be paid in money, but in other landscape gardening commissions brought by Tudway. Charles Tudway was the aristocrat of the partnership and on several occasions would bring his friends to Parsons and Partridge as clients.⁸³ This was not exactly in the line of what Robinson wrote in his article 'The Landscape-

⁸¹ Oct 14th 1899 MsSRO 1/6

"I sent Mackenzie a cheque for £500 today, it is the first return he has ever had off the place. He is going to have the cheque framed!" [22nd Jan 1900, MsSRO 1/7]

⁸² Jan 4th 190 [2] MsSRO 1/6

⁸³ To convince the reader of Tudway's privileged background, read 'The Cedars and the Tudways' in *A History of Wells Cathedral School* written by David Tudway Quilter, descendant of Charles Clement Tudway. Tudway Quilter writes the story of his family from 1759 to our day. Consult the "Pedigree of Tudway" in the appendices on page 428. "My grandfather succeeded to the family estates at the age of nine, and he was fortunate during the period of his education at Harrow and at Magdalene College, Cambridge, to have the help and advice of both his grandfather, Sir William Miles, and his uncle, the Revd. Henry Tudway, who together looked after and improved the Wells estate and in general protected his interests until he came of age in 1867. This occasion, as might be imagined, was undertaken in style with a ball at the Cedars for some two hundred and sixty personal friends and relatives when, at midnight, the four cannons situated outside the north door of the house were fired and the bells of St. Cuthbert's sent out a merry peal which was repeated at intervals during the whole of the next day. A day or two later the tenants and workmen on the estate with their wives, numbering in all about two hundred, were entertained to lunch in a marquee erected for the purpose on the other side of College Road. The Bishop, Lord Auckland, attended together with a few relatives and close neighbours, and the usual speeches were made and toasts proposed, including one by Sir William Miles to 'The Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese'. Perhaps because he considered it was the proper thing to do so close to the Liberty. A cedar tree was then planted on the lawn across the road from the house and that evening there were fireworks and a massive bonfire on Tor Hill which could be seen for miles around. The festivities ended with another ball at the Cedars for tenants and tradesmen with their wives and relatives. (...) He was an expert horticulturalist, specialising in flowering shrubs, and for many years he acted as steward of the horticultural section of the Bath and West Society of which he became a Vice-President. At the Cedars he developed a hardy plant nursery, managed by his head gardener and steward Oscar Fewtrell, which sold herbaceous plants, flowering shrubs, climbers, roses and fruit trees, together with much sought after loam from the top of Priors Hill." [Colchester, Tudway Quilter, Quilter, 1985: 83]

Charles Clement Tudway was married twice, the second time, in 1877, to Alice Hervey-Bathurst, of Clarendon Park near Salisbury, whose children were Clare, born in 1887, mother of David Tudway-Quilter; Hervey, born in 1896; Lionel, born in 1893 and Pamela, born in 1896. He died on Jan 11 1927: "Tudway, Mr Charles Clement, J.P., (79) of Milton Lodge Wells, Somerset a Deputy Lieutenant for Somerset (unsettled). (net

gardener and his work':

While he [the landscape-gardener] should have no pecuniary interest in any work that is carried on - that is, should have no interest in any nursery or nursery stock, or act as agent for any firm - he should usually purchase the material furnished by nurserymen on account of his knowledge of what is required, of the prices that should be paid, and the standing of the various nursery firms.⁸⁴

Parsons was interested in achieving a 'work of art' from a garden but, he was also interested in making a good income from it.⁸⁵

Parsons was the designer of the team and the 'lure' for new contracts. The fact he was a Royal Academician painter was definitely part of this lure:

Dear Mr Parsons, / ... I am going to London for a few days next week & shall gladly await myself of your kind invitation to visit your studio on Friday.⁸⁶

Partridge showed great respect for Parsons, mostly as a landscape-gardener but also as a landscape-painter, as the following extracts show:

Parsons is going to start his picture for next year 's Academy here. The subject is to be the Bishopswood Mooters.⁸⁷

Yesterday I took a trip to Ventnor in an excursion steam boat, the wild flowers growing on the cliffs & rocks were perfectly beautiful, what a picture Parsons could paint there from the top of the cliff looking towards the needles.⁸⁸

I calculate that it will cost us in travelling alone 50Gs ' [£52- 5 shillings]& this is all included in our fee, which in adding ways would be 250, but knowing Canning [Hartpury] so well I dropped the 50 without being asked - It is funny how some people value artistic work - They think nothing of paying a Dr 200Gs ' [£210] for an operation, & the operation we have to perform at Hartpury is just as difficult as a surgical one - However I am glad to say some people know what a man like Parsons's time is worth.⁸⁹

I'm sure you will be delighted with the design of the new drive to this house [Battledene]

⁸³ (...continued)
personalty nil) £65,293." [*The Times*, Tuesday, Jan 11, 1927]

⁸⁴ *The Garden* LII July 10th 1897: 27

⁸⁵ Here is another example of Parsons's business mind: "I had a talk with Parsons about the Herbaceous scheme - at first he rather threw cold water on it, but before he left I think he quite came round to see that there were great, & many possibilities of making the scheme a success. It would take too long to write & tell you all the pros & cons he brought forward, but it will suffice to tell you he will help you in every way he can both as regards advising what to grow, & recommending people to buy them stuff from you - He has also a scheme of writing a book of Herbaceous [Ivee?] etc & would bring in the Wells Herbaceous Coy/ etc & quote from the stock etc etc but all this must be talked over between us. I am of the same opinion viz that there is a good deal in the scheme, & that I am willing to join you on the terms we talked over." [15th Sept 1901 MsSRO 1/5]

⁸⁶ [March 10-99, MsSRO 1/7] 'The Cedars, Wells, Somerset' letterhead; signed [G.] Dallas Yorke.

⁸⁷ 12th August 1897, MsSRO 1/7

⁸⁸ 24th June 1899, MsSRO 1/7

⁸⁹ [Dec 14th 1900, MsSRO 1/7] Gs' is the abbreviation for guineas. "An English gold coin issued from 1663 to 1813 and fixed in 1717 at 21 shillings. A unit of value equal to one pound and one shilling.

it will look A1, I feel sure. The more I see of gardens the more foolish I think people are to do them themselves. I mean the designs & schemes. I should always call in a professional to get out a scheme & work out the details myself. Parsons designs seem to me to improve every day. I go to Welbeck next week to set out the Rose garden it is a perfect design absolutely original with a grove of mulberries worked into it.⁹⁰

I also send you the rough plan of the Rose garden for East Burnham Lodge as I think it will interest you to see it, dont you think Parsons has fitted in the design wonderfully well.⁹¹

I got back from Welbeck on Saturday night and am glad to say I found everything going on there very satisfactorily and Mr Parsons was extremely pleased with the work we had done during his absence. I think you will agree with me that his design for the Fountain garden at Down Hall is quite a Master piece.⁹²

If I remember rightly I think he [Traherne] wants a water garden and I am not at all sure that I feel equal to giving really good advice about this and it is a point that Parsons would excel in.⁹³

I heard from Major Gilstrap today he says he wouldnt pay such a high fee so that job is off. I cant think what people imagine is the value of an artist like Parsons's time - We asked a fee of 50Gs & our travelling expenses & as it would take us both about a week I consider it was dirt cheap.[Underlined in the manuscript] It really is extraordinary. If he had sent for a Dr he would have had to pay 4 times the amount for his advice- & one sort of professional advice should have been as valuable as the other. Let me have list & plan [Ballimore?] back when you have done with them.⁹⁴

Partridge always showed appreciation of Parsons's contributions. In a letter to Charles Tudway about the design of Sunningdale Park⁹⁵, Partridge wrote:

I wonder if you will agree. I think the general scheme excellent and the ultimate effect will be capital. I must say Parsons is a thorough garden Artist.⁹⁶

He sometimes felt that Parsons was not visiting the garden sites as often as he should, but on the whole he greatly respected his partner.⁹⁷ In 1905, Parsons had to have a knee operation and Partridge wrote:

Unfortunately we have got another very unsatisfactory account of Parsons this morning and I fear it looks very much as if he was now suffering from blood poisoning. (...) It seems too cruel that a valuable life like this should be wasted when there was possibly no need for it. I am feeling horribly upset and anxious as apart from the possibility of losing a real good friend and most pleasant companion I should be losing a partner that I am sure

⁹⁰ Jan 22nd 1900, MsSRO 1/7

⁹¹ Oct 16th 1902, MsSRO 1/3

⁹² March 17th 1903, MsSRO 1/4

⁹³ [April 20th 1905, MsSRO 1/4] As mentioned, value and respect went along with money.

⁹⁴ Dec 3rd 1901, MsSRO 1/5

⁹⁵ Major Joicey being the patron. [Started in 1899?] Berkshire, OS reference grid number: SU 9567

⁹⁶ May 30th 1901, MsSRO 1/5

⁹⁷ It is tempting to assume that Tudway shared these feelings. The fact he preciously kept all the correspondence from his two partners can be interpreted as a sign of appreciation.

it would be almost impossible to replace.⁹⁸

Partridge's high opinion of Parsons came along with the prices that the partners would charge. Parsons charged £12.12 to Mrs Mainwaring of Brynbella, St Asaphs, for one visit in July 1899. He was going back there in the autumn to see if the gardener had done a good job. For £25 then, a patron could get advice from Parsons the landscape-painter and landscape-gardener.⁹⁹ The partners would not give advice for free. Their fee is almost comparable to the twenty guineas Repton was charging in the 1820s.

I went over to see Mrs Harvey's place and find it has great possibilities. I took a great fancy to them, and should very much like to do the work [East Burnham Lodge]. They seem very nice indeed, with a good deal of taste. I am afraid however that the £.s.d. is a consideration.¹⁰⁰

Here are amounts paid for their first jobs:

You will be glad to hear Mander [Wightwick] has written to give us the garden job. I really feel proud at getting it as he was a regular teaser to tackle. It is a good job fee 250Gs. [£262-5 shillings] Welbeck 650Gs [£682-5 shillings] Laycock 150Gs [£157-5 shillings] & numerous 10Gs [£10-10 shillings] jobs dont make a bad start - I mean to get a lot more before the year is out if all goes well.¹⁰¹

Partridge, like Parsons, was sensitive to good lucrative business as the following statements show. The first was made on the occasion of Captain Partridge's visit to 'The Glynde's dairy' in 1899 with Archie Little, its manager.¹⁰² 'The Glynde' was owned by Garnet Joseph, first Viscount Wolseley.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ April 22nd 1905, MsSRO 1/6

⁹⁹ "Five guineas a day, incidentally, seems to have been the standard amount throughout the early nineteenth century, with Repton, Webb and Nesfield all charging the same fee. Nesfield, like Gilpin, had also produced a sheet which detailed his charges [Goodway, 1986: 86]. In comparison, John Adey Repton's fee of twenty guineas a day (1826) seems extraordinarily high [Carter et al., 1982: 130]." [Quoted in Piebenga, 1995: 17]

¹⁰⁰ [19th Aug 1901, MsSRO 1/5] Pound, Shilling and Pence. Shilling = a former monetary unit of the United Kingdom equal to 12 pence or 1/20 of a pound. Pence = penny: Formerly equal to 1/240 pound but now equal to 1/100 pound.

¹⁰¹ 2nd Aug 1899, MsSRO 1/7

¹⁰² "Wolseley, Garnet Joseph, first Viscount Wolseley (1833-1913) field-marshal. M. 1867 to Louisa daughter of Mr. Alexander Erskine, died in Mentone. (...) Lady Wolseley survived her husband 7 years, and the title devolved by special remainder upon their only daughter." [DNB]

'The Glynde School of Lady Gardeners' was created by Wolseley's daughter, Hon. Frances Wolseley at Ragged Lands, Farmhouse, Glynde, Sussex, in the Autumn of 1901. The patrons of the school were Mrs C. W. Earle, W. Robinson Esq, Miss H. M. White, Miss Gertrude Jekyll, Miss E. Willmott, C. Jordan Esq and the Lady Ardilaun. There is a fantastic history still to be written about it! The present author would love to do it. In Jan 1908, Frances Wolseley published a book and on this occasion, here is a letter William Robinson wrote her: "21 Jan 1908 / Dear Miss Wolseley / Why certainly we will review the book with pleasure. But please think of the reasons against women being working gardeners about which I send you a short essay. / Yours very truly. W. Robinson." [Frances Wolseley manuscript papers 'Common Place Book, 1901-06', no. 184, Hove Library]

¹⁰³ "I saw Wolseley 's house & I have a worse opinion of him than ever. I expect you know Glynde, & this house is the Farm house, having the church yard at the back 15 yard off on one side, the farmyard 20 yards on another side & the high road in the 3rd side I really wouldnt (sic) like to be found dead in the place- What a
(continued...)

I looked over the books at his [A. Little's] request & from the Capital £7000 & that the net profits last year were £2000. This is business.¹⁰⁴

Here is another gem from Partridge:

I always told you we should make a hit & there is a £100 to you to start with [Welbeck]. You must not advise for nothing it will be absolutely fatal to the firm if you do, hand them over to me & I will settle them à la Welbeck. I have Laycock to tackle now, I think a fee of 100 [£110] or 150 Gs. [£157-5 shillings] Let them all come, as the song says.¹⁰⁵

When it came to buying plants and trees, mostly yews, Partridge was always comparing prices between John Waterer's, Paul's or any other nursery, including Mawson's nursery, that would sell the best plants at the lowest cost.¹⁰⁶ Partridge showed great respect for his head gardeners and fought for them to have a decent salary.

I am going to see Hall & Cockburn again in town tomorrow, & I suppose we shall then settle matters one way or the other. Strictly private, Cockburn is a [rotter?] I am afraid, & I am not very keen on the job tho' the fee is a big one (...) Cockburn wont give more than about 22' / (shillings) - a week for a head gardener, one who will have to make the place, & have about 8 or 9 men under him. What rotters people are.¹⁰⁷

22 shillings a week meant 1144 shillings a year i.e. £57 / 2' shillings a year. This represented one-third of what was offered a man for Welbeck in 1905.¹⁰⁸

As an addition to their income, Parsons and Partridge even thought of producing and selling their own garden vases and sundials:

I [Alfred Parsons] have been thinking out a scheme by which we could utilize your stone carving man at Wells-Mills if I remember rightly his name - a good branch of our business might be to supply Garden vases & sundials [making a business of...] & I will try to get some good models for him to copy. Do you think he would be equal to it? I could not get round to call yesterday as I hoped to do, having people here all the afternoon. / Yours very truly / Alfred Parsons, over [Parsons wrote on the other side of the paper] Will you let me know the name & address of your gardener, so I may send him any seeds that come into

¹⁰³ (...continued)

[Cin?] Chief he must be- I am at my wits end about finding a suitable house." [7th Jan 1899, MsSRO 1/7]

¹⁰⁴ 7th Jan 1899, MsSRO 1/7

¹⁰⁵ 7th May 1899, MsSRO 1/7

¹⁰⁶ To maintain the flow of the argument it has been decided not to give extracts of all these letters. For example, "Do you know I honestly think Mawson's sample at £ 24 a 100 is the best that has been sent here Waterers included, & you know we did'nt [sic] think much of Mawson's yew when we looked at it here." [27th Dec 1902, MsSRO 1/6] These yews were for Marks at Callis Court.

¹⁰⁷ 3rd Jan 1900, MsSRO 1/7

"I hear again from Cockburn he has offered us the job but I don't know if we shall take it, if we do, it will entail endless supervision & I shall have my hands full." [Jan 22nd 1900, MsSRO 1/7] The author believes that Partridge did not have Cockburn enough in sympathy to work for him.

¹⁰⁸ "Have you heard anything more about a man for Welbeck / The wages are £170 a year, house, coals etc etc." [Feb 9th 1905, MsSRO 1/3]

my possession while you are away?¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Parsons to Tudway. Letter dated 'Jan 24' [1899?] MsSRO 1/7. It is typical of Parsons not to write the full dates on his letters.

4.4.3 The general context of obtaining landscape gardening commissions

The middle class were a much larger and heterogeneous group than the leisure class. Leading metropolitan professionals such as lawyers and clerics were close in lifestyle and values to the plutocracy. The home and the [?] were the centres for much middle-class recreation. (...) The suburbs symbolized fresh air and the outdoor life. Gardening was a growing preoccupation and cycling continued to be popular both as a way of discovering the countryside and for sexual and social reason.¹¹⁰

To give credibility to the author's previous analysis of the partnership's *modus vivendi*, some extracts of social science background readings are here appraised. Parsons's landscape gardening work belongs to the more eclectic Edwardian period.¹¹¹ The context of the Edwardian era is explained so as to understand how such a landscape gardening practise could develop.¹¹²

Sport and recreation demand time, money and energy. For most people in Britain in the fourteen years before the First World War, work was the dominating experience of their lives.¹¹³

Three-quarters of the English population belonged to the working class. Parsons-Partridge-Tudway's patrons are from the remaining quarter: mostly leisure class and some middle class members.

At the other end of the social spectrum the leisure class did not have to worry about money and its members certainly did not have to work for it.¹¹⁴ Gladstone had called British landowners the leisure class. By 1900 the traditionally landed elite had been joined by the new plutocrats of financial and industrial wealth to make up a leisure class of some four thousand families. (...) New and expensive hobbies like motoring and old and expensive ones like sailing had many adherents. (...) Shooting at Bisley, horse-racing at Ascot and Epsom, croquet and tennis at Hurlingham, the Eton and Harrow cricket match at Lords, rowing at Henley and yachting at Cowes; these were the places to be if you were somebody.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ibid: 113-4. The present author now fully understands why one should never use 'ibid'. The source of this quote remains a mystery.

¹¹¹ "The first fifteen years of the twentieth century, sometimes conveniently but inaccurately labelled the Edwardian era. The heads of state of Britain and Ireland during this period were Victoria (1837-1901), Edward VII (1901-10); and George V (1910-36)." [Johnson, Paul, 1994:76]

¹¹² Milette, 1995

¹¹³ Johnson, 1994: 111

¹¹⁴ MPs (Members of Parliament) were not paid until 1911.

¹¹⁵ Johnson, 1994: 113

Getting a commission for The Welbeck Garden was a tremendous status symbol.¹¹⁶ It is significant that Parsons and Partridge, two conservative men in business, won the patronage of the sixth Duke of Portland. The Dukes of Portland gained that title in 1716. They belong to England's highest nobility, who had been the ruling class until the middle of the nineteenth century. The English nobility usually acquired land by rendering services to the King or Queen; titles, power and politics used to go hand in hand. In the middle of Queen Victoria's reign, the Ulster King of Arms noted that titles were scarce in England.

It was generally accepted that a landed income of at least £2,000 was necessary to keep up the position of a baronet, and £5,000 to sustain the dignity of a peer. (...) Above all, there was no alternative status structure in existence: the honours system was essentially patrician, landed, and limited. Yet by the First World War, it had been fundamentally transformed, both in terms of the numbers and the nature of the recipients.¹¹⁷

By the time Parsons and Partridge got their commission, the spendthrift Fifth Duke had died. Although the Portlands had reduced their spending at the turn of the century, the Sixth Duke did manage to have grandiose gardens completed. In contrast to this noble commission, Parsons and Partridge's other patrons were mostly members of a broadening social background 'newly honoured' milieu.¹¹⁸ Even the Sixth Duke was accumulating more titles as were the newer ennobled classes, a sign that a more diverse governing class had come into being, of whom the grandees and gentry were now only one part. The democratisation of honours started after the 1850s. At first, to protect the status of their honours, some aristocrats gave up an existing title upon receiving a new one. By the late nineteenth century, however, the aristocratic conventions of promotion and abstemiousness had been superseded by a mania for collection and accumulation.

Even a lower-middle-class provincial composer like Edward Elgar was generously and progressively rewarded: from a Knight Bachelor via a KCVO to the GCVO, the OM and a baronetcy, and he was much disappointed not to obtain a peerage.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ "In 1883, the Portland's family Estates consisted of 43,036 acres in Nottinghamshire, 12,337 in Northumberland, 8,074 in Derbyshire, 903 in Lincolnshire, 591 in Norfolk, 9 in Worcestershire, and 5 in Bucks, besides in Scotland 101,000 acres in Co. Caithness and 17,244 in Ayrshire. In total, 183,199 acres worth £88,350 a year, exclusive of £19,570 for mines. The Duke of Portland was one of the 28 noblemen who, in 1883, possessed above 100,000 acres in the United Kingdom, and stood 9th in point of acreage and 8th in point of income." [Cannadine, 'quoting' (without giving his source) from *The complete Peerage*, 1945: 598] (...) The Sixth Duke of Portland was the last of his family to entertain formally. Not until 1919 did he leave Grosvenor Square in London. (...) But it was not just the aristocratic houses that vanished in the inter-war years: it was also the aristocratic principle of formal entertaining. (...) During the 1920's, like many other aristocrats, he sold off part of his estates in Ayrshire, Somerset and Dorset. [Cannadine, 1990: 352]

¹¹⁷ Cannadine, 1990: 299

¹¹⁸ "Perhaps this is what Oscar Wilde meant when he once remarked that the peerage was 'the best thing in fiction the English [sic] ever did.'" [Cannadine, 1990: 708]

¹¹⁹ Cannadine, 1990: 302

The seventh Duke of Devonshire, Lord Curzon, Lord Halifax and the sixth Duke of Portland, William Cavendish-Bentinck, are examples of those who accumulated honours.¹²⁰ Democratisation did not completely erase the political tradition in England. Even in 1922, although only around 20% MPs were from the landed gentry, the Marquess of Titchfield, heir to the Duke of Portland, became MP for Newark when only twenty-nine. He was a well-connected youth.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Cannadine, 1990: 300?

¹²¹ Cannadine, 1990: 186

4.4.3.1 Problems with landscape gardening.

Landscape gardening was not always fun. Several things could go wrong: the client could be difficult; the plants bought could be of poor quality, and competition could be fierce. In a few letters Partridge loses his temper:

I sent you a copy last night of my reply to Stratford's letter re the yews also I enclosed his letter. They are a rotten double face lot these gardeners- I enclose a sample from Hobby - I think you will begin to form an idea of the constant worry this garden business entails.¹²²

Of course this was a brief moment of despair, and Parsons and Partridge were still designing gardens in 1912, as the Great Chalfield papers showed.

With regard to the yews at Callis Court, the reason I wrote Fewtrell [Tudway's head gardener at The Cedar's nursery] about them viz that I want him to realize that all of the stuff he sends to one gardens must be selected, I mean each plant & shrub. (...) I want Fewtrell to judge for himself & to satisfy us, & it / cannot do this to have one part of a hedge brown or dead & the other part green- (...) I see the necessity for this class of business more & more every day. I am afraid you will think me figetty & difficult to please, but it is because I want you to have real success that I write like this & have done so on several occasions. I want to feel assured of the plants & trees etc you supply our gardens as I do of our own designs.¹²³

I have just returned from Kidmore and was most disgusted to find all the yews and newly planted stuff going back. The gardener has not watered them once since they were planted!!¹²⁴

Both Parsons and Partridge were perfectionists. They would try to ensure good site supervision to be certain the designs were executed as planned.

I hope they have taken the drive on the lines I recommended but these things are never quite satisfactory unless they are planned and pegged out on the spot by the person who originates the idea.¹²⁵

We pegged out a lot of planting at Woodcock, and Stratford said he would send you off the order at once. Please see there is no delay, and that stuff sent is good, and don't forget Parsons is more particular than I am. We went on to Down Hall Monday night, and found great progress had been made with the work which is turning out exceedingly well.¹²⁶

¹²² Xmas 1902, MsSRO 1/3

¹²³ 12th April 1903, MsSRO 1/3

¹²⁴ 19th July 1904, MsSRO 1/4

¹²⁵ 23rd April 1904, MsSRO 1/6

¹²⁶ 4th March 1903, MsSRO 1/5

4.4.3.2 Concerning plants

The partners would stay away from laurels and *Ponticum* rhododendrons

I am delighted to hear you are going to do away with the laurels in the Combe [Milton Lodge]. The more I see of laurels, the more I detest them, and I begrudge the enormous amount of labour that is usually spent on keeping them trimmed. Nasty hard bad coloured shrubs I call them.¹²⁷

“Can’t stand sight of PONTICUM rhododendrons”¹²⁸ Captain Partridge himself capitalized the word *Ponticum*. Plants were often mentioned in the correspondence, but rarely by their Latin names.

It is clear that Parsons knew them as this extract shows:

I have been through your lists [The Cedars nursery plant lists being check by Parsons] & you will find some notes enclosed which I hope may be useful to you. The list will want careful proof-reading when it is set up as there will necessarily be many errors in spelling- If you are in any doubt you will find Veitch ‘s & Wallace ‘s catalogues the best in that respect: they are evidently carefully revised by Scholars botanists [Sept 21 [1904?]]- I hope you will send me a copy when it is ready for publication.¹²⁹

Only one plant list is believed to survive: that for Great Chalfield, found in the appendices. A list of plants compiled from the partners’ correspondence is also given.

In general Partridge was satisfied with the result of their work:

I am absolutely confident that the success Parsons and I have had in this Garden business is mostly due to our never leaving anything to chance. / I got a letter from Welbeck on Saturday to say that the levelling was done, and I am going off to-morrow to Sheffield so as to be over at the Gardens Wednesday morning just to satisfy myself that all is right, so you see we dont allow mishaps to occur if we can possibly help it.¹³⁰

Partridge seems to have not believed in architects doing landscape gardening. One of William Robinson’s numerous followers, he read Robinson regularly. In 1903 he wrote to their third and silent partner, Charles Tudway:

I return you Blow’s letter what a humbug it is these Architects going in for laying our [sic] gardens. Blow knows as much about gardens as I know about astronomy! judging from some remarks he made to me on the subject.¹³¹

¹²⁷ 28th Dec 1900, MsSRO 1/7

¹²⁸ 2nd March 1904, MsSRO 1/6

¹²⁹ Sept 21st [1904?] Parsons to Tudway, MsSRO 1/7

¹³⁰ 14th Feb 1903, MsSRO 1/5

¹³¹ [December 8th 1902 MsSRO 1/4]. *All letters quoted are from Captain Partridge to Charles Tudway, unless otherwise mentioned.* Parsons and Partridge were working on a garden for Lady Agnews. In another letter there is even a worse reference to the architect Blow who was designing ‘their’ gardens:

“We shall have to go down to Lady Agnews again shortly [Woodcock Lodge, Herts, TL 2906], I hate that job, & dislike the woman very much. I dont think she is straight, & I detest her architect Blow he is a real crooked rotter. Pat her in the Box if she does’nt pay you. Serve her right the swine-“ [Sept 12th 1903 MsSRO 1/5] His opinion of Blow was further expressed in another letter “I have heard nothing further from Lady Agnew so don’t know what is going to happen there, but Parsons and I are quite determined not to go there again after

(continued...)

4.4.4 Semiotics of Edwardian landscape design

This section is a pleasant teaser more than an in depth analysis. In a description of the meaning of the lotus flower to the Japanese, Parsons wrote:

Hardy says of Tess, “Beauty to her, as to all who have felt, lay not in the thing, but in what the thing symbolized”; this is unavoidable with most of us, and the suggestion of feelings and memories of our own does not necessarily obscure our visual sense; but a fixed and recognized suggestion is the result of mental laziness, and may lead to the ignoring of intrinsic beauty.¹³²

During his travels to Japan, Parsons became more and more aware of the cultural meaning of objects and habits. As early as 1896, in *Notes in Japan*, he carried on a discussion on signs and symbols, and observed that Japanese art was too much a work of memory, using symbols instead of closely observing the subject drawn. He concluded by stating that this cultural difference was preventing Japanese artists from seeing Nature.¹³³ But Parsons the landscape-gardener was not always conscious of the symbols he himself was using.

Hedges were a very important symbol in the garden¹³⁴ and were used in all the gardens Parsons and Partridge designed. Not only were they useful for creating various rooms, or to underline a specific vista, they were also a way to give the impression that the garden had a long history. Formal gardens

¹³¹ (...continued)

the way she and Blow have acted. It is a funny thing but I find I am not often wrong about people, and I told Parsons the first day I saw the Lady what I thought of her and also what I thought of Blow. At first Parsons did not at all agree but he now finds I was right.” [8th Oct 1903 MsSRO 1/5] This is the second time to the present author’s knowledge that Detmar Blow shared clients with Parsons. Blow had done work at Clouds as Philip Webb’s protégé.

“Detmar Jellings Blow (1867-1939), architect and garden designer. Ruskin’s last protégé: discovered by Ruskin in Abbeville Cathedral (“Detmar is as good as gold”), and studied under Sedding. Designed houses3gardens at Happisburgh Manor, Norfolk (1900), Wilsford Manor, Essex (1904-6), Hatch House, Dorset (1908) Charles Hill Court, Surrey (1910), and Eaton Hall, Cheshire. At William Morris’s funeral, drove the cart carrying the coffin, dressed in peasant smock; had a similar rustic funeral himself; but became mainly known as an urban architect during his partnership with Fernand Billerey. Became architect to the Grosvenor Estate in London, and private secretary to the Duke of Westminster - whom he met through George Wyndham of Clouds, and who eventually destroyed his career with allegations of financial misconduct (but there’s a lot of secrecy over what actually happened). Blow died disgraced and insane. See, once again, Ottewill, 1989: 118-120; also, in part, Simon Blow ‘The Duke who killed my father’, *Spectator*, 7 December 1996: 26-7. But we await a decent study.” [Letter dated 6th March 1997 from Brent Elliott to the present author]

Michael Drury, RIBA architect is currently doing research on Detmar Jellings Blow.

¹³² Parsons, 1896: 106

¹³³ See the discussion about Parsons views on Japanese art on page 93 and Alfred Parsons and Japan on page 190.

¹³⁴ “According to architects, walls or hedges were absolute necessities in modern gardens, in order to ‘conceal villadom and the hulking paper factory beyond’ (Sedding, 1891: 10). The Arts and Crafts garden designer E. S. Prior, for example, argued forcibly for enclosed, formal gardens, stating that there was ‘little inducement to look over our garden wall’ because of ‘the unseemly squalor of spreading suburbs, the vagaries of estate developers, and all the unblushing ambition of our architects’ (Prior, Edward S. ‘Garden Making’ *The Studio* XXI October 1900: 31).” [Helmreich, 1994: 134]

with hedges were common during the Tudor period, and new owners of gardens insisted on having these instant tall hedges so as to create the impression of a long-standing garden.

The love of the formal garden, once so pronounced in England, has for some time given way to the more open, free, and natural style of gardening now so popular, and in which the garden hedge does not play so conspicuous a part as it necessarily did in the arrangement of the more formal design. (...) It is not difficult to call to mind some of the most interesting and quaintly beautiful of English gardens which owe their charm in a great measure to the quality and disposition of their hedges. Such, for instance, is the delightful garden of the Hon. Mrs. Boyle of Huntercombe. Take away the hedges, and the charm in a great measure would be gone.¹³⁵

The author of this article on Hedges went on to mention other historic gardens, such as Haddon Hall and Chatsworth; and more modern gardens such as Ascot and the garden of the Rev. C. C. Ellison, of Bracebridge, where hedges provided interest and charm. He added,

Another weakness most people will confess to in relation to a hedge is the fact of wanting a hedge to grow to a good size quickly, and the best and only way of securing this desirable issue is by the liberal cultivation and manuring of the ground beforehand.¹³⁶

The following extract is given simply as a sample of one of at least fifty letters in which Partridge discusses with Tudway his various problems regarding yew trees. Obtaining well rooted yew trees of the correct size at the correct time and price was a tremendous challenge.

I have just returned from Kidmore and was most disgusted to find all the yews and newly planted stuff going back. The gardener has not watered them once since they were planted!! I gave him strict instructions to start watering them at once and I am in hopes I am just in time to save the yews which if they are lost will be entirely due to this idiots carelessness, laziness or ignorance. The yews had started growing beautifully. Can you imagine a man calling himself a gardener being such an infernal idiot as not to water newly planted stuff this weather. I have written to O'Shaughnessy on the subject, and if he takes my advice he will sack the man at once as he cannot be of the slightest good.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Thomas, Owen. 'Hedges for All Purposes' *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*. March 12, 1903: 221-22. Thomas speaks of the various types of trees or bushes used for hedges: the Beech and the Hornbeam, the Yew, the Common Holly, the Thorn or Quick Hedge, the Privet, the Box Tree, the Bamboo, the Conifer (Thuja) as a Hedge Plant, the Laurel, the Ivy, Roses, the Sweet Briar and the Lavender. All these were mentioned in Parsons / Partridge / Tudway's correspondence. Thomas had received the Victoria Medal of Honour given by the Royal Horticultural Society.

¹³⁶ Thomas, Owen. 'Hedges for All Purposes' *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*. March 12, 1903: 221

¹³⁷ [19th July 1904, MsSRO 1/4] Kidmore was a garden owned by Ronald Mackenzie. Partridge was the estate manager and rented the place first to Mr and Mrs Calvert in 1903-04, then to O' Shaughnessy. Mr Bennett was the gardener. The research was not conclusive in locating Kidmore. OS Oxon LVI.7 showing a 'Kidmore End' is much too small in scale.

4.4.5 Parsons's 'landscape gardening' styles

No one 'style right'. - There is no such thing as a style fitted for every situation, and only one who knows and studies the ground well will ever make the best of a garden. Any 'style' may be right if the site fits it.¹³⁸

Charles Clement Tudway himself, in a rough draft concerning the partnership arrangement, discussed the garden styles they were going to use:

Object of the Firm / To give advice as to the laying out of Estates gardens Public Recreation grounds and all classes of work connected therewith, such as the planting of coverts, make of roads, laying out of parks either in Elizabethan or modern taste gardens. Erection of suitable glass fruit & plant houses the Employment use of water for decorative Effect for the purposes as of a decorative for the purposes of use & decoration & all other work connected with the landscape or Estate¹³⁹

Tudway did not feel a contradiction between Modern and Elizabethan styles. The partnership styles was to be inspired by several genii: the genius of the place, the genius of the house and the genius of the client. Although Parsons played down the 'Modern' aspects of his art, he nevertheless could use a 'non-nook' vocabulary. The plants used at Welbeck were not only old fashioned plants, as the typical expectation of their style suggests:

The partners' style seems generally to have been a cosy reinterpretation of old-fashioned English country gardens - small formal gardens enclosed by trim hedges, softly tinted with old varieties of plants and animated with topiary yews - what Henry James referred to as 'nook quality'. The garden at Chalfield probably exemplifies the pair's work.¹⁴⁰

Another example of the use of modern, or rather non-traditional, vocabulary, is found in the present shape of the water basins at Callis Court.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Robinson, 1896: 'Chapter two - Design and Position': 22. Strikeout in the manuscript.

¹³⁹ Tuesday Aft [20th April 1899] MsSRO 1/7.

Tudway arrangement, being a very rough pencil draft, no heading, on thick beige 8vo paper. Parsons and Partridge also wrote their version of the arrangement, but did not qualify the 'styles' they were going to use.

¹⁴⁰ Humphris, 1991-2: 5

¹⁴¹ Much more research would be needed to find the actual drawings for the water gardens at Callis Court. Were these water basins modified since 1905?

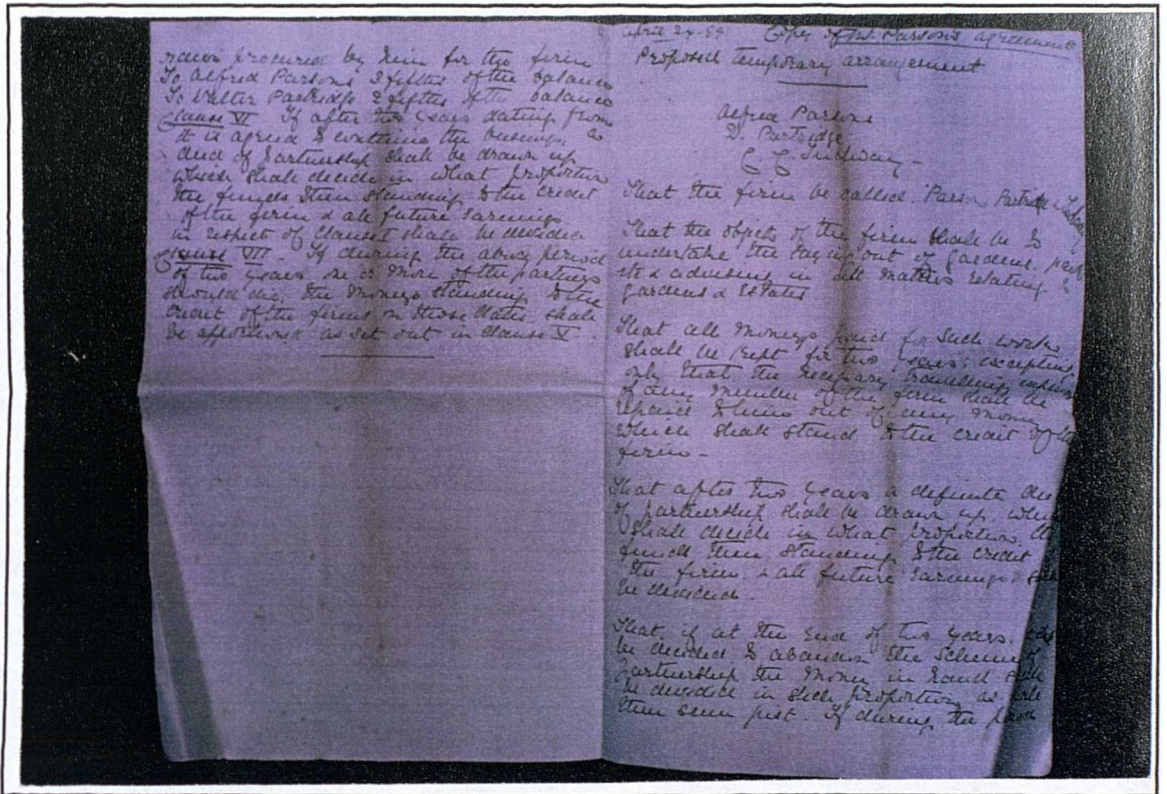


Figure 79 Parsons/Tudway/Partridge draft Partnership Agreement. [24 April 1899 MsSRO 1/7]

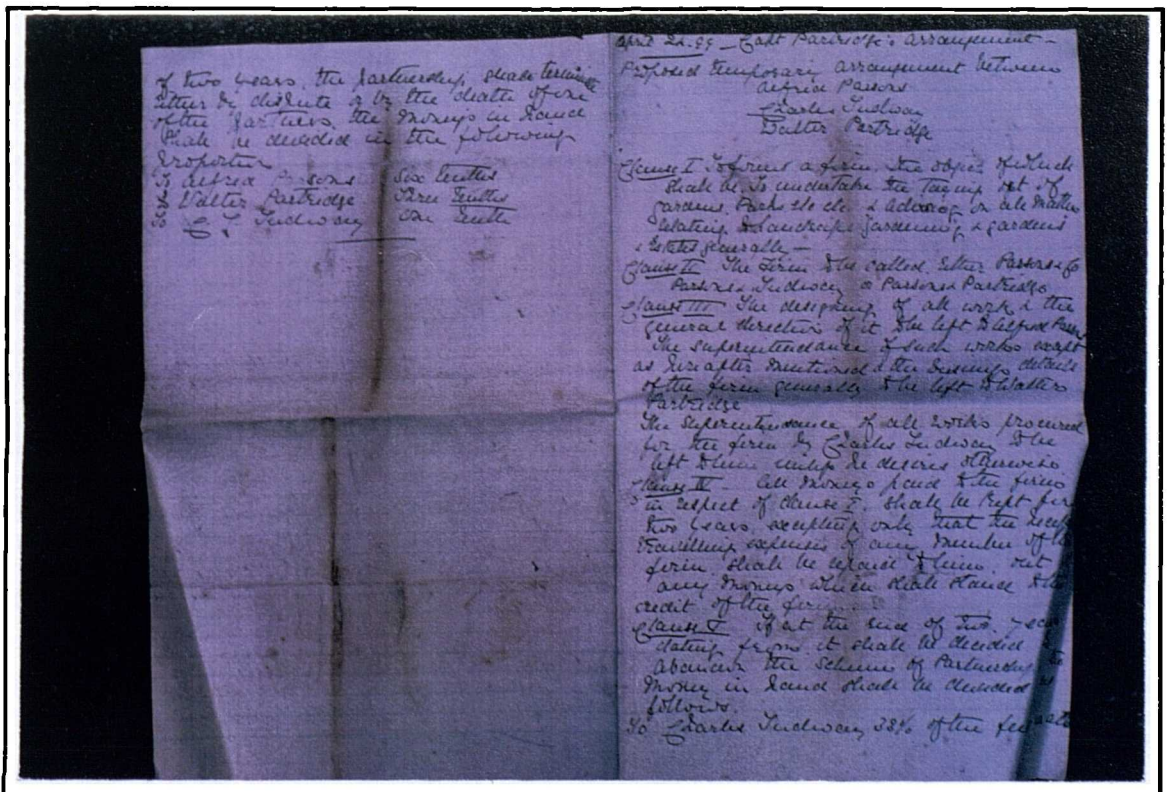


Figure 80 Parsons/Tudway/Partridge draft Partnership Agreement. [24 April 1899 MsSRO 1/7]

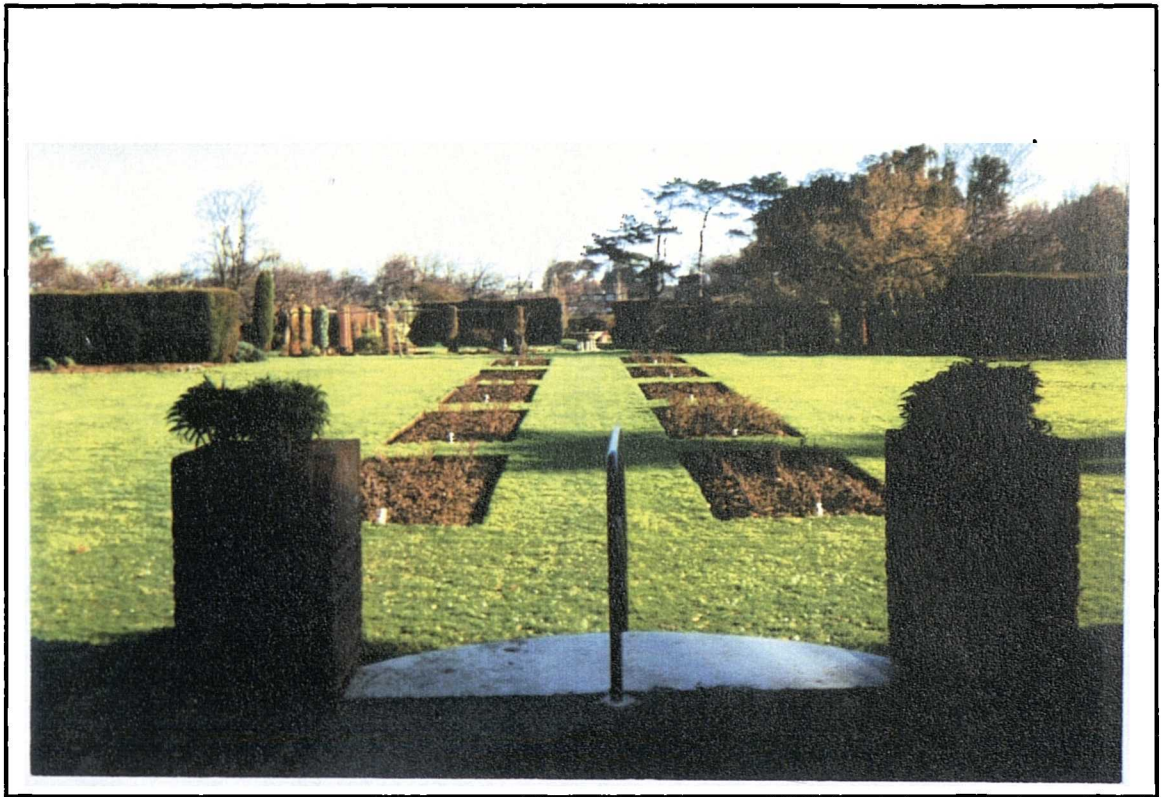


Figure 81 Callis Court Garden. General view with Central Fountain in the background.

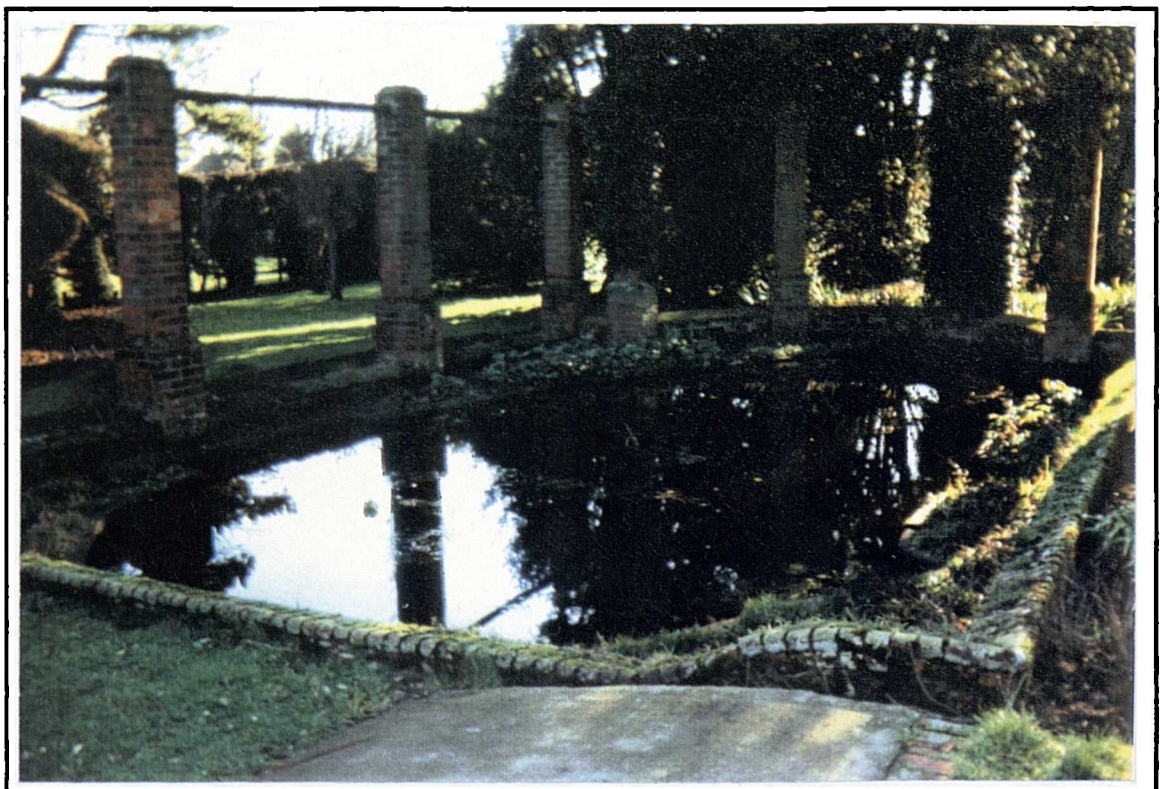


Figure 82 Callis Court Garden. One of four water basins around Central Fountain.

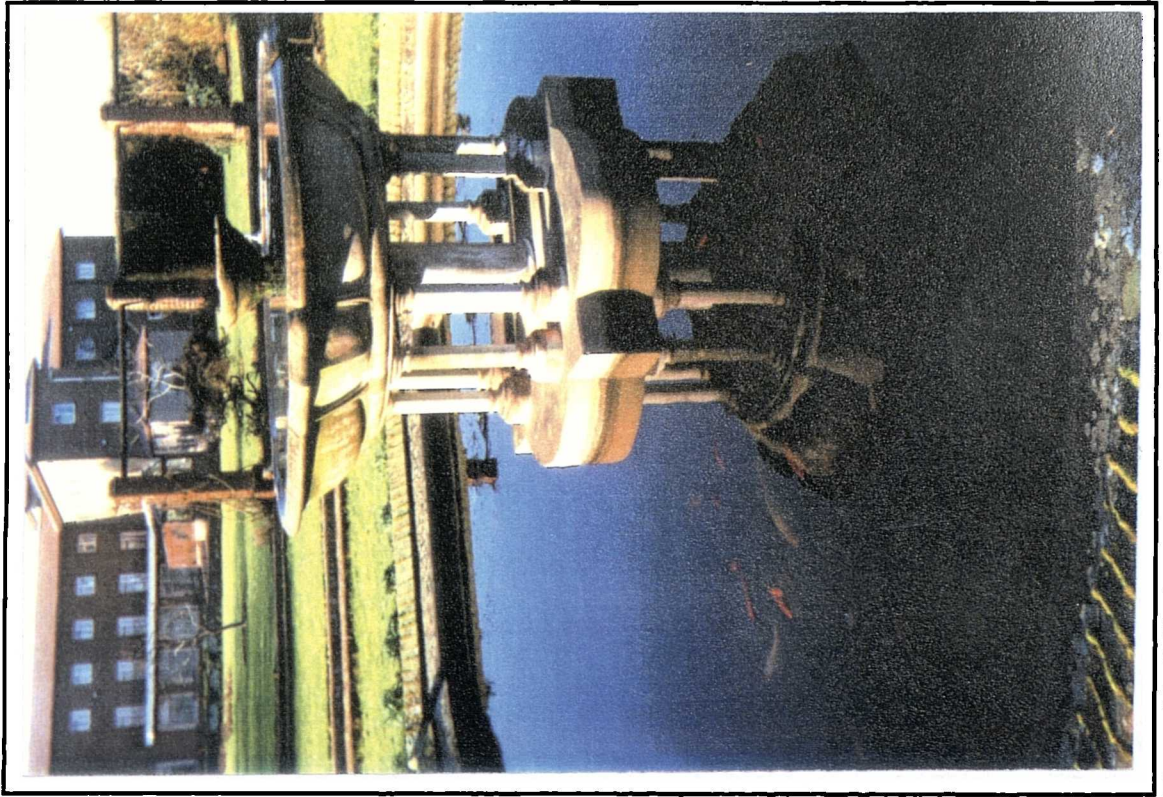


Figure 83 Callis Court Garden. Central Fountain.



Figure 84 Callis Court Garden. Statue. [Edward VII ?]

A survey of all the gardens touched by the partners would reveal the amount of 'Modern' work done. As already discussed, Parsons often linked himself to the 'old way' of practising landscape gardening; for instance he never was, or was never described as, a landscape architect or designer.¹⁴²

One characteristic of his practice reminiscent of the 'old ways' was that he made his planning decisions on site and without much preparation on a drawing board. This linked him directly with William Robinson. He used to stake out his gardens on the first or second visit, avoiding several drawings of the place, following Robinson's advice.¹⁴³

Gardens should be designed and staked out on the ground they are to occupy - not drawn on paper and then transferred to the ground. The main difference between real mediaeval building and modern imitations of it is that the old work was staked out on the ground from a rough sketch and the details filled in as the work proceeded; whereas, the modern work always fails in picturesque effect, because it always looks like a built drawing.¹⁴⁴

The previous quote from Robinson must be compared with the extract from the following letters, describing Parsons's and Partridge's abilities in design, as both partners used to design on the spot:

I have been very busy the last 3 days with Parsons. I like him very much & I am sure he is clever, he is not only an artist in design & conception but he has what most of them lack, the art of detail. He thought very highly of the place [Bishopswood] & saw every idea at once & I have given him the job.¹⁴⁵

If I remember rightly I think he wants a water garden and I am not at all sure that I feel equal to giving really good advice about this and it is a point that Parsons would excel in. If it is however only to give him a general idea of my opinion how the garden should be laid out, in other words ten guineas worth, I think I can give him value for the money.¹⁴⁶

These extracts show the extent to which Parsons was a disciple of Robinson in his landscape gardening practice. Unfortunately, because of this technique Parsons left very few sketches and drawings.

¹⁴² See the discussion of these various terms in the footnote on page 2.

¹⁴³ [MsSRO passim.] For example "Nov 3rd 1902 (...) Tuesday Parsons came here and we laid out Wombwell 's place." More research is needed to find out if Wombwell's garden was Newburgh Priory, Coxwold, York. It could have been Mr Wombwell who had a Mr Elford as gardener at *The Firs*. (Oxon Ordnance Survey maps number: SU 6979, LVI.2 and LVI.6.)

¹⁴⁴ Robinson, 1883: lxxxv

¹⁴⁵ Monday April [15th 1895?] / Hereford, /Herefordshire Club, MsSRO 1/1

¹⁴⁶ April 20th 1905, MsSRO 1/4

The following extract further shows how Parsons was of the Robinson school of landscape gardening. Parsons's description of Wightwick Manor reminds the reader of Robinson's wit and convictions:

Dear Partridge / (...) I went there [Theodore Mander Esq / Wightwick Manor / Wolverhampton] yesterday from Broadway & found a very elaborate modern oak timbered house, the best of its kind that I have seen - large rambling grounds with no coherence & no leading ideas, & the immediate surrounding of the house about as bad as it could be. Silly little banks & things completely depriving the house of any character / long walks with enough formality of planting to make them dull & not enough to make them dignified. - He seemed to think that I could just say straight off how to make it perfect. In the afternoon I pegged out the line of a proposed narrow paved terrace round the garden front of the house, which would have many uses as you will see when you go there, & leave a broader space for croquet lawn & flower garden. It will also be in keeping with the quaint character of the house. (...) Alfred Parsons.¹⁴⁷

An important source of inspiration for Parsons and Partridge gardening style was found visiting other gardens.

Just back from Westonbirt where we had a very good day & picked up a good deal of knowledge. Mainly what to avoid.¹⁴⁸

The correspondence between the partners becomes scarce after 1905 as does the information on any gardens they might have designed. Three reasons are now put forward to account for this gap. When David Tudway Quilter gave several documents to the Somerset Record Office in the 1950s, a number of envelopes with precious stamps were stolen in transit between The Cedars and The Record Office. It is possible that some of Partridge's letters were in these envelopes. Another possibility is suggested in the following extract:

Parsons has just come back from Welbeck. He tells me that Roberts has been sacked owing to extravagance. All this shows the signs of the times and how hard up everyone is, and until this beastly war is settled, I am afraid things wont improve very much in the business line.¹⁴⁹

The final possibility is that by 1905, when the Welbeck commission seems to end, Parsons had a knee operation and was in convalescence for a long six months.¹⁵⁰ What happened to Parsons's and Partridge's correspondence between 1906 and 1920 is a mystery. It is definite that the partners were still working together as late as 1913: a sketch done for Milton Lodge is the proof.

¹⁴⁷ July 19th [1899?], MsSRO 1/7 'Queens Hotel / Chester / Wed. Night.' letterhead. Sheila Fischman, who copy edited the December 1996's draft of this thesis, noted that Wightwick was definitely not 'oof' before Parsons's visit. The author agrees with her remark.

¹⁴⁸ April 28th 1897, MsSRO 1/7

¹⁴⁹ Jan 17th 1905, MsSRO 1/8

¹⁵⁰ "I am sorry to say that I had a rather depressing letter this morning dictated by Parsons. He tells me that until the day before yesterday he was making good progress and then his knee became inflamed and that the prospect of his getting away from the Hospital is as distant as ever. I sincerely trust that no serious complications will arise, but it really begins to look like it. I think it is a great pity, that he did not have a Specialist to operate on him at first." [March 18th 1905, MsSRO 1/6]

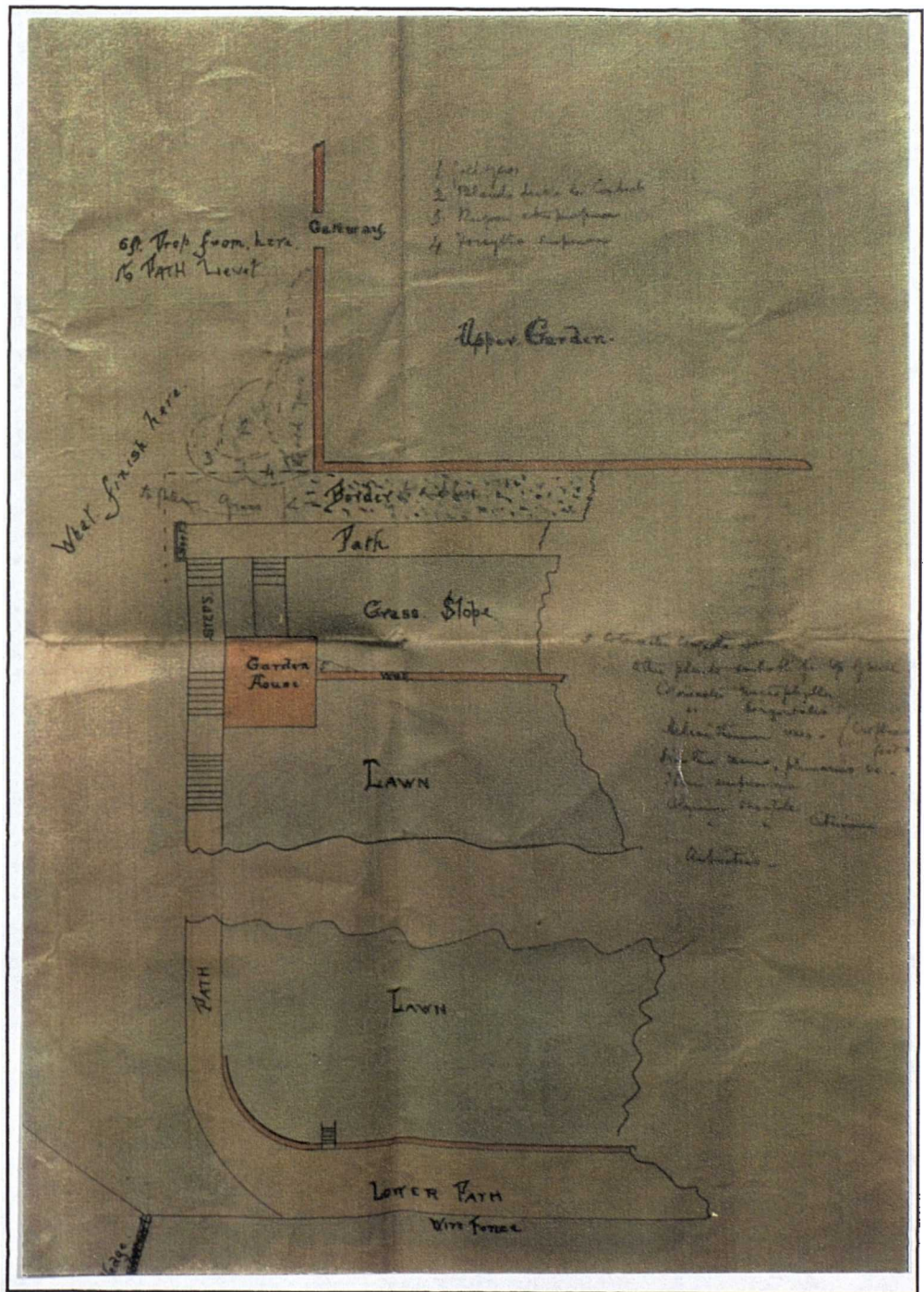


Figure 85 Sketch by Alfred Parsons for Milton Lodge. 1913

4.4.6 List of commissions.

The present author has found references to seventy-one gardens, but proof of contributions to only forty-five of them.¹⁵¹ The complete reference to the list of these commissions that follows is given in the appendices.¹⁵² The correspondence in which all these gardens were mentioned covers mainly the period 1894 to 1906, with the exception of Milton Lodge (for Tudway himself) in 1913. Great Chalfield was done between 1907 and 1912. It is firmly believed that more gardens were designed between 1907 and 1920. For the moment, the last known commissions seem to be Great Chalfield in 1912 and Milton Lodge in 1913.

In one of Partridge's letters a 'garden in America' is referred to. On 20 February 1997, the present author happily received more information on that garden.¹⁵³ Alfred Parsons worked on the Italian garden at Florham, the country estate of Mr and Mrs Hamilton McKown Twombly in Madison, New-Jersey from 1903 to 1907.¹⁵⁴ The owner had married Florence Adele Vanderbilt, the granddaughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt I. The Vanderbilts were one of the most socially prominent and wealthy families in nineteenth-century New York.¹⁵⁵

Florham's grounds had first been designed by Frederick Law Olmsted around 1892. Olmsted was a friend of Stanford White, of McKim, Mead and White, the architects for the project. "The new house was modelled on Hampton Court and the construction lasted from 1893 to 1896 although secondary buildings and landscaping projects continued until past 1900."¹⁵⁶ "Olmsted had had a falling out with

¹⁵¹ MsSRO passim

¹⁵² See page 478.

¹⁵³ "Parsons & the American Millionaire Twomblin's (sic) Agent are coming down here [Bishopswood] on Friday to have a look round the place." [MsHWRO 14 October 1895 1/1]

"We have two more Gardens in prospect, and Parsons got a very good job in America for Vanderbilt's Brother in Law." [March 4 1903, 1/5]

Florence Vanderbilt (1854-1952) wife of Hamilton McKown Twombly, daughter of William Henry Vanderbilt (1821-1885), and granddaughter of the famous 'Commodore' Cornelius Vanderbilt, had five brothers. Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1843-1899) her eldest brother was probably the 'Vanderbilt' to which the letter referred to.

¹⁵⁴ Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Historian, had bought the present author's publication at the University of York and was intrigued by the mention that Parsons had designed "a garden in America". She by chance met Richard Simon, a member of 'Friends of Florham', while doing her research on Olmsted. Since 1988, Cynthia Zaitzevsky worked on the Autumn 1996 Olmsted Exhibition at the Center for Canadian Architecture in Montreal.

¹⁵⁵ Mrs William H. Vanderbilt, Florence's mother, when unable to lease one of the only eighteen boxes at the Academy of Music (because of her 'nouveau-riche' status), encouraged her husband and his millionaire friends to found the new Metropolitan Opera in 1883 in New York. [Klein, Carole. *Gramercy Park*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1987: 148]

¹⁵⁶ Fact sheet from 'The Friends of Florham'. Dated 1993.

his client Twombly in late 1892 or early 1893¹⁵⁷, thus leaving room for other landscape-gardeners to work on the project.

H. McK. Twombly is having a fine Italian garden constructed adjoining his residence at Florham from plans by an English architect (sic), Mr. Parsons. The work will approximate \$50,000 in cost, and it is expected that the completed garden will be one of the finest in the country.¹⁵⁸

It is now understandable, how Parsons's friendship with Abbey, who had married Mead's sister, led to this landscape gardening commission. It is also significant that Twombly's agent in 1895 had visited Bishopswood, Parsons first large commission, before giving the advice that he should work for Hamilton McKown Twombly in America. Since the 1950s the Florham estate has been part of Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey.

¹⁵⁷ Letter dated Feb 28 1997 to the present author, from Richard C. Simon, Chairman of the Board of Macculloch Hall: Historic Home, Morristown, New Jersey.

¹⁵⁸ *Jerseyman*, 29 Nov 1907

'Parsons and Partridge' list of landscape gardening commissions: 1899-1913.¹⁵⁹

Legend:

Garden name	: commissions executed
[Garden name ?]	: consultations with probable involvement
[Garden name]	: consultations only, with verbal or written designs not carried out.

No.	Garden's name; County;	Client;	1994 Ordnance Survey ref. no. (<i>Bartholomew</i>)	Commission Date
01.	[Aske Hall] N. Yorks	Lord Zetland	NZ 1703	1901
02.	[Ballimore] Strathclyde, Loch Fyne	Major John MacRae-Gilstrap	NR 9283	1901
03.	Battledene Berks	Captain Partridge	SU 4563 & SU 4564	1900-1915
04.	[Bawdsey Manor?] Suffolk	Sir C. Quilter, Bart.	TM 3440	1899-1901
05.	[Bedpetry?] Surrey	Beresford (Lord Marcus)	SU 9871	1899
06.	[Bembridge?] [Vectis Lodge?] Isle of Wight	Mr Ronald Mackenzie	SZ 6488	1900-1905
07.	Bill Hill Park Berks	Mrs Leveson Gower	SU 8071	1901-1906
08.	Bishopswood H & W	Henry Leslie Blundell McCalmont	SO 5919	1894-1899
09.a	[Bryngarw?] M Glam	Mr Traherne	SS 9683	1904-1905
10.	Brockhampton Park Glos	[Fairfax Rhodes, Esq.?]	SP 0222	1901
11.	Brynbella Clwyd (Tremeirchion)	Mrs Mainwaring	SJ 0872	1899
12	Hardwick Hall Durham (near Sedgfield)	Lord Boyne	NZ 3429	1904
13.	Callis Court Kent	Harry Hananel Marks, Esq.	TR 3969	1902-1905
14.	[Cheveley Park?] Cambs	McCalmont	TL 6760	1895-1896
15.	Chorleyford Ho [Same as Charleywood Cedars?] Herts	John Saunders Gilliat	TQ 0396	1899-1900
16.	Clouds Wiltshire	Hon. Percy and Madeline Wyndham	ST 8730	1884
17.	[Clumber Park?] ¹⁶⁰ Notts	The Duke of Newcastle,	SK 6274	1900
09.b	[Coedriglan?] ?	Mr Traherne ?		1904-1905
18.	[Crowsley Park?] Oxon	Col Baskerville	SU 7280	1896
19.	Down Hall Essex	Major Calverley and Mrs Calverley	TL 4409	1902-1905
20.	East Burnham Lodge Bucks (and Park)	Mrs Harvey	SU 9583 and SU 9584	1901-1903
21.	Easton Grey Ho Wilts	[Mrs Graham Smith?]	ST 8787	1901

¹⁵⁹ Milette, 1995: 21-24

¹⁶⁰ "I am going to on to Clumber, tomorrow to see Hibberd at the Gilliat's." [Aug 24th 1900, MsSRO 1/6]

22.	[Easton Lodge?] Essex (Peto was doing work)	Lady Warwick	TL 5924	1903
23.	[Elmestree House?] (or Partridge's holiday house?) Glos	Lt Col. Henry?	ST 8791	1901-1905
24.	[Fawley Court?] Bucks (Henley-on-Thames)	W. D. Mackenzie, Esq. Partridge's father-in-law	SU 7684	1900?
25.	Fullerton House (W. Cory, Esq., owner in 1909) Hants	Miss Cory	SU 3739	1904-1906
26.	[Friar Park?] West Midlands	Sir F. Crisp	SP 0094	1900?
27.	Gillott Oxon (Henley-on-Thames)	Gillotts	SU 7682	1899-1904
28.	Great Chalfield Wiltshire	Major Robert Fuller	ST 8663	1907-1912
29.	Harleyford Manor Bucks	Dillon? or Harrison? (Owner in 1909: Sir W. Clayton, Bart)	SU 8284	1899-1900
30.	Hardres Court Kent [Upper?] (S. of Canterbury)	Marshall	TR 1550	1901
31.	[Hardwick House] Oxon	C. D. Rose	SU 6577	1901
32.	Hartpury Glos	Mrs Gordon Canning	SO 7822	1899-1906
33.	Hatherop Castle Glos	Sir T.S. Bazley [G.S. Bazley?]	SP 1505	1901
34.	[Hestercombe] [Jekyll and Lutyens won the competition] Somerset	The Portmans	ST 2428	1901
35.	[Honnington Hall?] Warwick	H. Gilliat, Esq.	SP 2646	1900?
36.	[Hollington House?] (Blumfield the architect) Berks	Mr Taylor	SU 4260	1902
37.	Kidbrooke Park East Sussex	Mr and Mrs Gerard Leigh	TQ 4234	1902-1904
38.	Kidmore End Oxon	Ronald Mackenzie, landlord	SU 6979	1903-1905
39.	Lamb House East Sussex (Rye)	Henry James	TQ 9120	1898
40.	Littlecote Wiltshire	The tenant [Leopold Hirsch, Esq, tenant in 1909 or Mr Gerard Lee Bevan, Esq., tenant 19?-1922?]	SU 3070	1907
41.	[Londesborough?] Humberside	"Lady L"	SE 8645	1900-1902
42.	Lower Hare Park Cambs	E. De La Rue, Esq.	TL 5959	1899-1900
43.	Luggershill H & W	Alfred Parsons	SP 1238	1911-1920
44.	Milton Lodge Somerset	Charles C Tudway	ST 5446	1895-1913
45.	[Nymans?] [Through Linley Sambourne ?] West Sussex	L. Messel, Esq.	TQ 2629	1900?
46.	? in Oxford Oxon	Mr Dillons	SP 5106	1899
47.a	[Oakbrook?]	W.S. Laycock, Esq.		1899

	Lincs?		TF 5061?	
48.	Petty France Avon	Major W.A. (Bill) Harford	ST 7885	1900-1902
49.	Preshaw House Hants	R. H. Cholmondeley, Esq.	SU 5723	1904-1905
50.	Preston Hall Leic	Mr and Mrs Codrington	SK 8702	1900-1902
51.	Roseneath S'clyde [same as Rosneath]	Princess Louise	NS 2583	1899-1902
52.	Russell House H & W	Frank D. Millet	SP 0937	1890-1899
53.	[Sharcombe?] Somerset	[J.F. Hall and Cockburn?]	ST 5745	1899-1901
54.	Shiplake Court Oxon	Robert H.C. Harrison	SU 7678	1899-1905
55.	Spreacombe Manor North Devon	Style	SS 4841	1903-1904
56.	Sunningdale Park Berks	Joicey [Major James Joicey?]	SU 9567	1897-1899
57.	The Court Farm H&W	Mary de Navarro (Mary Anderson)	SP 1238	1895
58.	The Firs near Binfield Park Oxon (Henley-on-Thames)	[Mr Wombwell]	SU 6979	1902-1905
59.	The Provost's Lodgings Worcester College, Oxford Oxon	Mr Daniel, the Provost	SP 5006	1904
60.	[Tregothnan?] Cornwall	Lady Falmouth (Evelyn Edward Thomas Boscawen, 7th Viscount)	SW 8541	1901
61.	Trysull Manor Staffs	J. W. Manders [or for B.H. Manders?]	SO 8594	1900-1902
62.	Waltham Place Berks	Byam Davies	SU 8577	1901-1906
63.	Warnham Court [now a school] W. Sussex	Mr C.T. Lucas	TQ 1533	1904-1906
64.	Welbeck Abbey Notts	The 6th Duke of Portland and Mrs Dallas York	SK 5674	1899-1905
65.	[White Lodge?] Richmond Park G. London	[Edward the VII]	TQ 2073	1901
66.	Wightwick Manor W. Mids	Mr Theodore S. Mander	SO 8698	1899
47b	[Wiseton Hall?] Notts	J.F. Laycock	SK 7189	1899
67.	Woodcock Lodge Herts	Lady Agnew (Sir Andrew Noel Agnew, bart), tenant; Baker family, owner	TL 2906	1899-1903
68.	[?] in Woodstock W. Sussex	C. D. Rose	TQ 2629	1904
69.	[Worth Hall?] near Three Bridges W. Sussex	?	TQ 3236 and TQ 3231	1903
70.	Florham Madison, New Jersey (now Fairleigh Dickinson University)	Hamilton McKown Twombly, Vanderbilt's Brother-in-law		1903

4.5 LUGGERSHILL, THE PAINTER'S HOUSE AND GARDEN: 1911

Parsons had his house, Luggershill, built in 1911 with the help of the architect Andrew Prentice.¹⁶¹ It remains unknown where Parsons was living in Broadway between 1890 and 1911; with the Millet's is the author's informed guess. It is sure that he was staying Broadway before 1911 as Mary de Navarro, in her 1896 memories wrote: "our old friend, Alfred Parsons R.A., was living in Broadway at the time [1895]"¹⁶²

Parsons moved to Luggershill permanently in 1914. Jane Brown, in her book *Eminent Gardener* wrote:

With the help of the architect Charles Bateman, Alfred Parsons built himself a house called Luggershill, in Springfield Lane, off China Square and the Green.¹⁶³

In a letter dated 18 May 1996, Alan Crawford, the Arts and Crafts historian, mentioned to the author, that there was "a good full set of drawings for Luggershill by Andrew Prentice" at Hereford and Worcester Record Office.¹⁶⁴ After verification at the Record Office in April 1997, these drawings are really signed by Prentice and the building permit issued in 1911. Crawford was right and Jane Brown speaking on the phone could not remember the source for Bateman¹⁶⁵ being the architect.¹⁶⁶ It is understandable to have thought that Bateman was the architect as "in Broadway the wealthy middle-class newcomers ensured that the talents of architects such as C. E. Bateman and Andrew Prentice were in continual demand."¹⁶⁷

Alfred Noble Prentice (1866-1941), architect for Luggershill, was a Scot, articulated in

¹⁶¹ "It was partly to be near Millet that he built, with almost excessive care, the house at Broadway where he died." *The Times* Obituary. 'Mr. Parsons, R.A.' Wednesday Jan. 21, 1920: 15.

¹⁶² Anderson, 1896: 254-55. The whole chapter: 'The growth of a garden' is to be read. 252-260
ANDERSON, Mary. (later de Navarro) *A Few Memories*. Ill. by Alfred Parsons. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. 1896

¹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁶⁴ [Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, reference number 382/11.] It could be that Andrew Prentice was drawing for C. E. Bateman. More research is needed to find out.

¹⁶⁵ Crawford (1980: 309) mentioned that Charles Edward Bateman (1863-1947), a Birmingham architect, "was one of the most constructive and least recognised contributors to modern Broadway, his most interesting job being an addition to Abbot's Grange and done as late as 1933".

"Charles Edward Bateman (1863-1947) was articulated to his father, John Jones Bateman, but worked for Verity & Hunt in London before returning to Birmingham to join the family firm. In C. E.'s time, Bateman & Bateman was celebrated for numerous houses in the West Midlands, in particular the Sutton Coldfield area, which had a strong Cotswold feel. But the practice was general, and some of C. E.'s most original projects were for commercial premises in Birmingham, designed around the turn of the century." [Davey, 1995: 107]

¹⁶⁶ Parsons's name figures in the London Post Office directories from 1884 until 1913.

¹⁶⁷ Greensted, 1993: 61 in chapter Five by Catherine Gordon: 59-77

Glasgow, after which he worked for Colcutt. He built up a prosperous practice which included interior decoration for some of the large early twentieth century steamships of Australian and South American lines. Though an early advocate of Classicism (he published *Renaissance Architecture and Ornament in Spain* in 1893), “he was happy to adopt vernacular models in the country - for instance in his un-executed design¹⁶⁸ for a house at Willersey, Gloucestershire (1908) which has all the local characteristics.”¹⁶⁹ His houses were in the manner of Ernest Newton¹⁷⁰ architect.¹⁷¹ Luggershill was built in local limestone in accordance with Arts and Crafts principles which encouraged the use of local materials for building. Luggershill is of a larger scale than most of Broadway’s buildings. Its location on top of a hill makes it distinct from the houses along the main road that follows a slow but steady fall.

In Broadway, Dawber, C. E. Bateman and Andrew Prentice often took an equally liberal attitude to please their prosperous clientele.¹⁷²

Catherine Gordon further reports the “outrageous ease when A. N. Prentice moved an entire farmhouse up the hill from the centre of Willersey, just outside Broadway in 1911-12.”¹⁷³

Andrew Prentice’s nephew, Mr C. Prentice, wrote to the RIBA in 1942 and gave a short list of what he considered to be the best works of his father. Luggershill was on this list of eleven works¹⁷⁴ as was The Court Farm, Mary de Navarro’s house.¹⁷⁵

The gardens at Luggershill took a good part of Parsons’s time and gave him real

¹⁶⁸ “I am not sure which ‘un-executed house in Willersey Davey is referring to, but you could suitably refer to Willersey House (formerly Top Farm), Willersey, a house of c. 1912 designed by Prentice. This is the house Catherine Gordon refers to; one wing of it was a reconstruction of Top Farm, a c17 farmhouse originally in the centre of Willersey village, and moved by Prentice to complete his design.” [Notes on Nicole Milette’s PhD. Thesis on Alfred Parsons. By Alan Crawford 17th June 1997.]

¹⁶⁹ Davey, 1995: 115

¹⁷⁰ “Ernest Newton. 1856-1922. Articled to Norman Shaw, remained as his assistant until 1879 when he set up his own practice. There was a Gothic gloom about Newton’s houses, little of the romantic picturesque or even of the Arty and Crafty.” [Felstead, 1993: 272]

¹⁷¹ RIBA biographic file: A N Prentice from [Gray, 1985: 294]

¹⁷² Greensted, 1993: 73

¹⁷³ Greensted, 1993: 73

¹⁷⁴ RIBA biographic file: A N Prentice, F.R.I.B.A. Letter to Ian Mac Alister Esq from C. Prentice dated 17-02-1942. The other nine works were: Top Farm, Willersey, Glos.; Buckland Manor, Glos.; Daghingworth Manor, Glos.; “Farther Bonton”, Cirencester; Dumbleton Hall, Worcs.; Top Farm, Broadway, Worcs.; Royal Moulart Seamen’s Orphanage (now Royal Navy Schools); Beewood, Berks.; North Bay, Oulton Broad, Norfolk.

¹⁷⁵ See the article ‘A remodelled house in the Cotswolds. Alterations and Additions Have Been Made to Orchard Farm, Broadway, but the House Remains True to its Original Character’ in *House and Garden*, August 1921: 32-33 and 38.

pleasure.¹⁷⁶ Like his brother Clement, he loved roses and spent a lot of time taking care of them. Little survives of the planting to be seen during the garden's heyday. The structure, underlined by the paths and hedges, seems intact. More research might reveal its evolution from 1904 to 1996. One corner of the original 2.2 acres was recently cut off from the property to allow for the construction of a house. Luggershill is a very large house and was recently up for sale again.

Here is a wonderful letter written to his old friend Robinson, which gives the reader a feeling for life at Luggershill and his activities towards the end of his life:

My dear Robinson

Oct. 6, 1918

Worcestershire.Broadway,Alfred Parsons, Broadway

For some weeks past I have noticed a change in "Gardening" & Mrs Berkeley who was here a few days ago told me that you had given it up: I always felt when reading it weekly that it was a pleasant link with the past & kept me in a small way in touch with you & I am sorry that you have parted with the little paper. I well remember its birth & have loved it since its infancy; it more than justified the enterprise of its Parent & has done a lot of good mark; it may continue to do so in other hands but it will inevitably lose its personal quality & the touch of originality which made it different from other Gardening papers. I hope that you did not give it up on account of your health but only that you might have more time for other work, for life without any work would, to my mind, be intolerable- My paint & my garden keep me constantly busy: I hardly ever go away from here now a days, except for the brief visits to London which are necessary Always yours sincerely, Alfred Parsons¹⁷⁷

The following photographs (Figures 87 to 92) give an idea of what Luggershill looked like in 1993. Figure 86 is a watercolour of the garden in its heyday.

¹⁷⁶ "My dear Spielmann/ I am not well up in the work of our modern miniature painters by I have seen some good work by Mrs Llewellyn, withe of the portrait painter, & I should think that the commission might safely be entrusted to her. Have you noticed any of her things? I am keeping well & working hard down here but I find many more things to distract me in the country than in London: there is always something in the garden which needs attention- I hope you are keeping well - Yours very sincerely / Alfred Parsons" [Ms NAL 86-PP-18 # VII 12]

¹⁷⁷ MS RHS Gilpin Package 12 # 133



Figure 86 'The Artist's Garden at Luggers Hill [sic], Broadway, Worcestershire.' [Hobhouse, 1988: 36-37]



Figure 87 'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house.

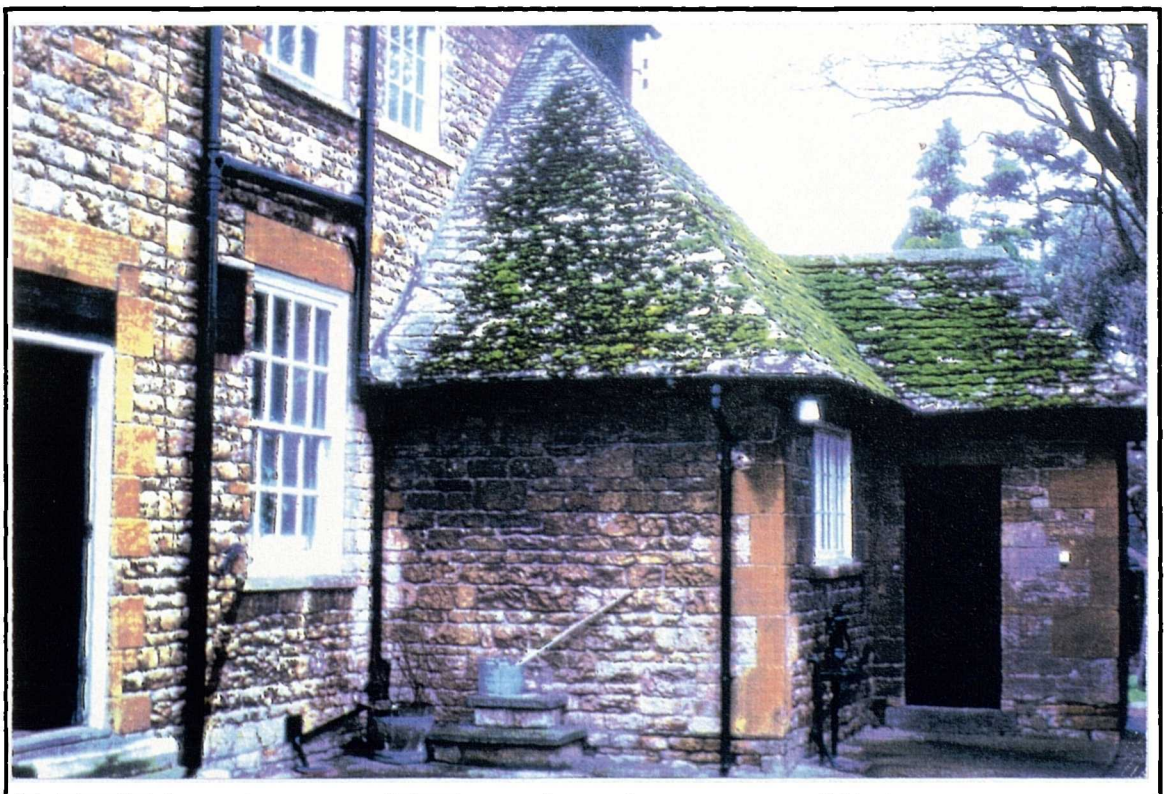


Figure 88 'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house. Detail of the rear entrance.



Figure 89 'Luggershill'. Alfred Parsons's house. General view of the facade.



Figure 90 'Luggershill'. From the pergola, with left side of facade in the right background.

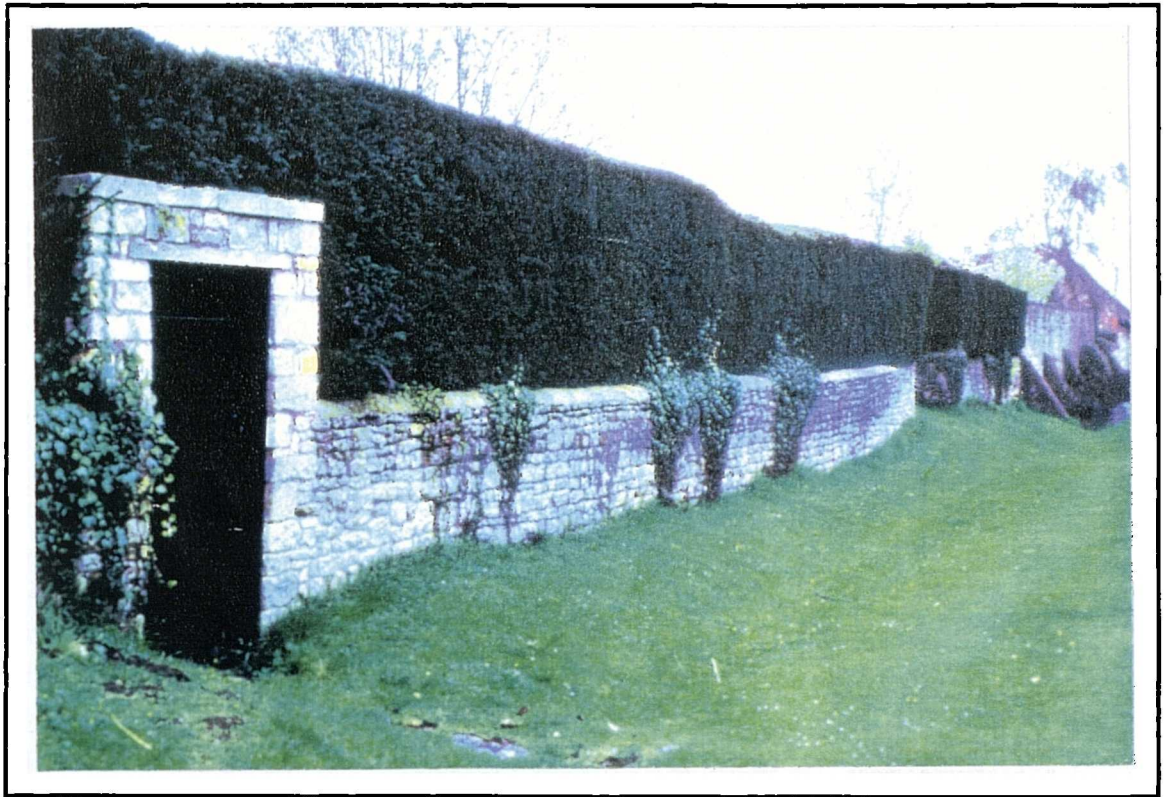


Figure 91 'Luggershill'. Property wall.



Figure 92 'Luggershill'. A Rose garden with pergola in the background.

In 1919, E.V. Lucas wrote:

Mr. Parsons's house, which stands in a lovely garden, every flower in which has received personal attention from his hands, is indigenous and is rapidly merging into the landscape.¹⁷⁸

At Luggershill, Parsons had three indoor maids and two gardeners. The garden brought him tremendous joy. He was still single, despite Mary Anderson's comments in 1890. In a letter from the Hotel Metropole, Menton, she had announced her marriage to Mr. De Navarro and added:

From my heart I hope you will follow my example & get engaged soon - for it makes one see life so differently. I hear dear old Neddie is engaged too¹⁷⁹ it was so strange to see his engagement announced the day I had my own.¹⁸⁰

In another (undated) letter from Mary Anderson to Alfred Parsons, we read:

I have read your verses with great pleasure & had no idea the woman lived who could [make] such a poet of you. Yours with deep [?] Lady / M A / Brighton Sunday. ¹⁸¹

She enclosed Parsons's poem to a mysterious 'Lizzie'.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Lucas, 1921: 149

¹⁷⁹ Abbey, known as Ned, married on 22 April 1890.

¹⁸⁰ MS HWRO iii Mary Anderson, later de Navarro (1859-) actress

¹⁸¹ MS HWRO ibid

¹⁸² To Lizzie

Dear Lizzie, since the day I saw
The Lock. Scott that you wear
To fix the frill around your neck
Than marble far more fair./
It's ever since that I have wished
A salmon bold to be
That you might on occasion cast
A Lock.Scott over me/
Perhaps it cannot be anchored
It's nice within your jaw
To have a salmon.fly enfixed
While you sulk in the Awe;/
But sulking wouldn't be my game
If Lizzie's were the hook;
It's little trouble she would have
In bringing me to hook/
Right gladly would I spring to bank,
Unheeding? her faint cries,
Content to see in my last gasp
The triumph of her eyes/ AP
(Could it be Elizabeth Boot, who was a very close friend to Henry James? See [Edel, 1961:29])

4.6 VARIOUS EXHIBITIONS ABROAD

All through the later years, Parsons exhibited widely abroad. He received an Honorary Mention in Paris in 1884; he was at the Universal Exhibitions of 1889 and 1900 where he won Gold and Silver medals.¹⁸³ He exhibited at Brussels in 1897. As already mentioned, Parsons exhibited in Japan as well. The reviews of Parsons's contribution to these exhibitions has already been discussed in Chapter Two.¹⁸⁴

From 1904 onwards, Parsons's name is mentioned in the catalogues of international exhibitions. Now fifty-seven years old, he had a long artistic career behind him, one that justified such publicity. He was now definitely part of the establishment. At the St. Louis International Exhibition of 1904, he was chosen to be on the hanging committee.¹⁸⁵ He selected the works to be exhibited, along with Charles Gregory who was also a member of Royal Watercolour Society. Both men were in contact with M. H. Spielmann at the Kensington Museum, who was in charge of organising these exhibitions for the government.¹⁸⁶

Parsons exhibited three works, which all sold, at the New Zealand international exhibition in 1907. Although collectors today would buy George Samuel Elgood paintings before those of Parsons, Elgood did not sell any of his work at the same exhibition. The average number of works exhibited was two per artist.¹⁸⁷ Parsons had more works on display, either because of his status or because he was exhibiting in two media. In Isidore Spielmann's book *New Zealand International Exhibition, 1906-07*, there are two reproductions of Parsons's work on pages 95 and 144; another sign of appreciation of his work.

At the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908, he showed five works of both French and English landscapes. It was difficult to have work accepted for exhibition in the British Section at any international show and not every work by British artists was reproduced in Sir Isidore Spielmann's books.

¹⁸³ Pavière, 1968: 87

¹⁸⁴ See the table of his contribution to international exhibitions abroad in the appendices on page 403.

¹⁸⁵ For more on the Saint-Louis Exhibition consult: Spielmann, M. H. *The greatest of Expositions: Completely Illustrated: Official Publication*. Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904.

¹⁸⁶ For more on H. Spielmann, consult the article by Julie F. Codell, 'The artist's cause at heart: Marion Hary Spielmann and the late Victorian art world' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Univ. Library of Manchester*, 1989, 71, no. 1 (spring) 139-163.

¹⁸⁷ For more statistics on British art abroad, see the table on page 404.

Finally, one of Parsons's contributions to the international exhibition in Rome merits discussion. Parsons's 'The Hawthorn in the Dale', was reproduced in the 'Souvenir of the British Section'. One reason why his painting was favoured is because Parsons had been made Royal Academician on 22 March 1911. Another explanation is Parsons's close friendship with Spielmann. (Figure 93) A third has to do with the image of England that the upper middle class favoured. Hawthorns¹⁸⁸ were among the icons of Merry Old England. They were considered almost a sacred tree by the Arts and Crafts believers. For example, hawthorns are mentioned in 'News from Nowhere', William Morris's famous novel. Parsons painted several works that included 'Hawthorn' in their title. It is worth analysing how he used this tree as a source of inspiration and income.

Chronological occurrence and price of paintings with 'Hawthorn' in their titles:

1878 DUDLEY BLACK AND WHITE EXHIBITION			
549	Hawthorn	<i>Pen and Ink</i>	£ 4, 4
1885 THE FINE ART SOCIETY, EXHIBITION NO. 35 CAT. NO. 18 OF SERIES			
10	"When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear."	Owned by Harper's	
41	"Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade To shepherds looking on their silly sheep, Than doth a rich embroidered canopy To kings?"	Owned by Harper's	
46	"Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind."	Owned by Harper's	
1908 SUMMER EXHIBITION AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY			
221	The Hawthorn in the Dale		
1908 AUTUMN EXHIBITION AT THE LIVERPOOL ACADEMY			
96	The Hawthorn in the Dale		£630
1909 WINTER EXHIBITION AT THE GLASGOW INSTITUTE OF THE FINE ARTS			
142	The Hawthorn in the Dale	(central room)	£500

The last painting, 'The Hawthorn in the Dale', exhibited several times and reviewed in art chronicles, was finally bought by Major Cloman for £500 (a substantial sum in 1909), after

¹⁸⁸ 'Aubépine' in French.

Parsons had failed to sell the painting in Liverpool.¹⁸⁹ Major Cloman lent it for the Rome Exhibition, a sure way to display one's wealth. The fact that the painting was chosen to be reproduced in the Rome catalogue fits in with part of Anne Helmreich's thesis:

To elevate gardens as symbols of a national identity based on an admiration for the past and a close identifications with rustic England, idyllically conceived as a place of social harmony.¹⁹⁰

Here, it is not the garden that is elevated, it is the hawthorn, so often praised by Shakespeare.

In 1911, The 'Hawthorn in the Dale' a landscape painting which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1908, was reproduced in *The Rome Exhibition Catalogue*. Very few paintings were reproduced and it shows that Parsons was felt by his contemporaries to be one of the last English landscape-painter of merit.¹⁹¹ (Figure 94)

¹⁸⁹ There is a slight possibility that failing to be sold in Liverpool and Glasgow, the painting might have been exhibited in Dublin. More research in Dublin should be done. The National Art Library do not hold these catalogues.

¹⁹⁰ Helmreich, 1994: iii

¹⁹¹ "The race of English landscapists which during the first half of the present century seemed to promise such great things has died out; we have no one living in this branch of art who is equal to Turner, Linnell, David Cos, De Wint, or even Samuel Palmer, most limited and most delightful of painters. Indeed, we can hardly be said to have a living landscapist at all. The most sincere landscape artists living are M. Hook, Mr. Alfred Hunt, Mr. Albert Goodwin, Mr. Thomas Collier, and Mr. Aumonier. (1)

(1) Mr. Hine (the elder), Mr. Alfred Parsons, and, at his best, Mr. Wimperis should be added to the above list of painters, of whom *one only* (Mr. Hook) *is a member of the Academy!*" [Quilter, 1892: 302]

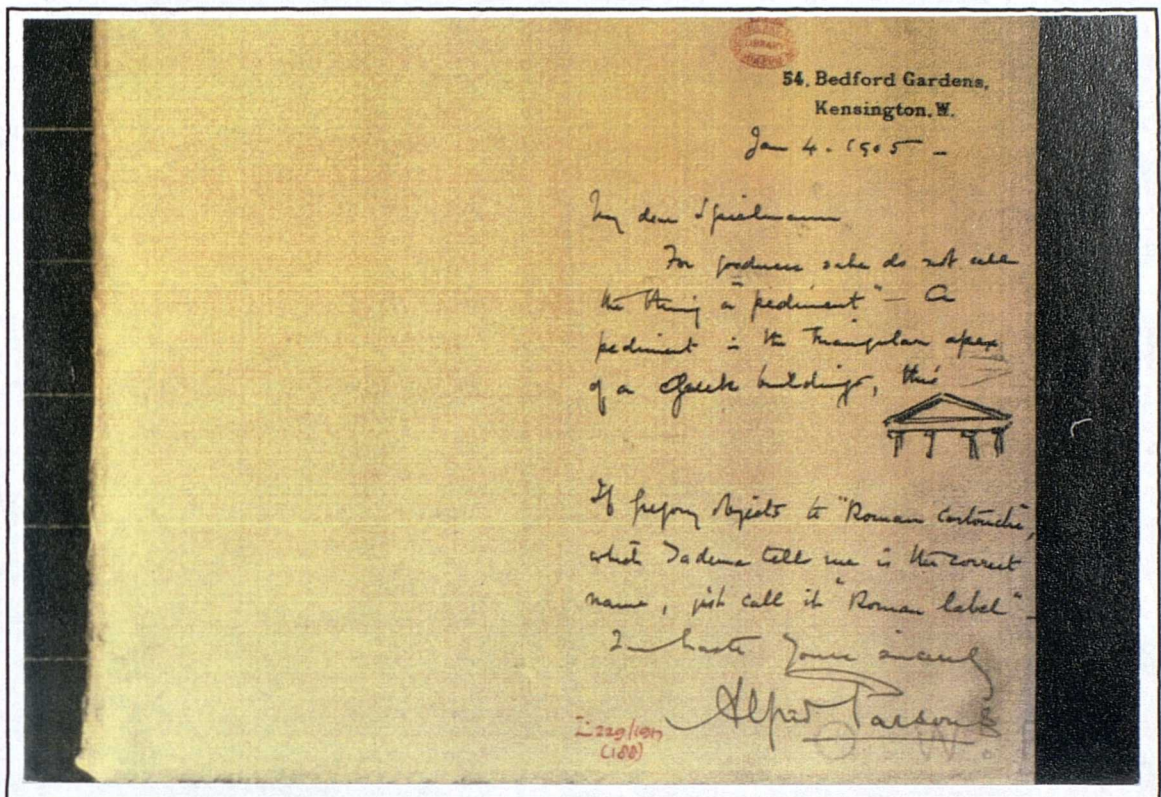


Figure 93 Letter from Alfred Parsons to Sir I. Spielmann. 4 Jan 1905



Figure 94 Oil painting, 'The Hawthorn' Christopher Parsons's collection.

4.7 LEICESTER GALLERY: 1909 & THE ATHENAEUM: 1912

Before having solo exhibitions there, Parsons entered group exhibitions of 'Leading Artists' such as the 1903 November-December exhibition.¹⁹² Another group exhibition was at the Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell Gallery in London in 1908: 'Exhibition of Landscapes in Watercolour by Eminent Artists'.¹⁹³ That same year, Parsons stopped exhibiting at the New Gallery and had two solo exhibitions at the Leicester gallery, the first in 1909 and the second in 1915. He was still very conservative in his painting style. At his 1909 exhibition, *Pastorals by Alfred Parsons, A.R.A., R.W.S.*, he also used the traditional practice of using extracts of poems to title almost all his works.

There is no denying that they [Parsons's paintings] fail to please the modernists of art, and that while the ordinary cultivated crowd of the private view expresses its admiration in superlatives, the lovers of the International and its types remain absolutely cold in the presence of Mr. Parsons and his "pastorals".¹⁹⁴

Parsons, who belonged to modernist art groups, and circles until the early twentieth century, was still regarded as representative of traditional practices in landscape painting and watercolor[sic]. *The Times*, for example, praised Alfred Parsons's 1906 (sic, 1909) exhibition "Pastorals" because of its markedly anti-modern subject-matter and painting techniques.¹⁹⁵

It was safe and lucrative to maintain a moderate style. His practice in landscape gardening depended on his traditional approach to landscape painting. In his second solo exhibition at the Leicester, *Collection of an Exhibition of Studies in Water-Colours*, he still shared a sense of professionalism devoted to serving the ideals of society and projecting the image of a peaceful, idealised England. It was in contrast to the new generation of painters, who were serving the demands of art itself.¹⁹⁶

Increasingly, towards the end of the century, one finds a desire among artists (and not only those of the art-for-art's-sake persuasion) for the freedom to become totally absorbed in their painting, a desire to turn away from the earlier Victorian painter's sense of social mission.¹⁹⁷

The Leicester Gallery was a fashionable venue. Arthur Rowe or Beatrice Parsons never

¹⁹² *Catalogue of an exhibition of Water-Colour Drawings by Leading Artists*. The Leicester Galleries, London, Nov.-Dec. 1903. See the list of 'leading artists' from the exhibition catalogue on page 394.

¹⁹³ See the list of 'eminent artists' on page 392.

¹⁹⁴ Helmreich, 1994: 217 quoting *The Times* 'The Leicester Gallery'.

¹⁹⁵ Helmreich, 1994: 216. Incomplete quote from *The Times*, probably in 1909 'The Leicester Galleries': 10.

¹⁹⁶ Gillett, 1990: 68

¹⁹⁷ Gillett, 1990: 66

made it there. Allingham, a Royal Watercolour Society member, and Elgood, a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, were represented. Artists exhibiting at the Leicester were very competent, but on the whole, not the most progressive¹⁹⁸, if Whistler is discounted.¹⁹⁹

In 1912, at the age of sixty-five, Parsons was elected Member of the Athenaeum at the request of the Committee of the Club in recognition of his achievements. The title of Royal Academician was still needed to attain this social recognition, and Parsons, as already mentioned, had become a full Royal Academician in 1911.²⁰⁰

4.8 THE GREAT CHALFIELD COMMISSION: 1907-1912

Great Chalfield Manor is now a National Trust property. Dating from 1480, the manor house is set across a moat between parish church and stables. It was restored early in this century by Major R. Fuller, whose family still lives here.²⁰¹ Great Chalfield, is the only garden recently documented before the beginning of this doctoral work. It gave the author the clue to the existence of a much larger landscape gardening practice with Parsons as the principal designer.

Great Chalfield Manor is located near Atworth in west Wiltshire. The Manor and gardens were given to the National Trust in 1943 by Robert Fuller, who had restored the house and created the gardens at the beginning of the century. Mr Robert Floyd, the grandson of Robert Fuller, and his family now live in the Manor and manage the farm and estate.²⁰²

The reader must consult the excellent National Trust report written by Joanne Humphris in 1991-1993. The report includes a Catalogue and Summary of Correspondence, a Catalogue of Historical Plans, a Historical List of Plants, a 1991 Plant List and a Transcript of Letters, with Plans in a separate volume. The Historical List of Plants is transcribed in the appendices.²⁰³ It will give the horticulturist a good idea of the plants used by Parsons and Partridge. It must not be assumed that they always used the same material for all their gardens,

¹⁹⁸ Some of these artists were from the Newlyn school. They depicted village life as followers of Jule Bastien-Lepage (French artist, 1848-84). Newlyn was a Cornish fishing village. [Treuhertz, 1993:196]

¹⁹⁹ Mr Richard Green, curator at the York Art Gallery helped the author in making this judgment.

²⁰⁰ See footnote on page 201

²⁰¹ *Great Chalfield National Trust guide book.*

²⁰² Humphris, 1991-2: vol I, 2

²⁰³ See page 440

but the chances are that these were part of their habitual horticultural 'palette'. A thorough historical research was carried out by Humphris. Only two errors caught the attention of the present writer. Captain Partridge is said to be resident of St Ives, Battledene. In fact St-Ives was part of his family name: Captain Walter Croker St-Ives Partridge. Humphris also writes that Parsons "spent quite a lot of time travelling, or working on his floral painting"²⁰⁴, not mentioning that Parsons was also painting landscapes.

See the photographs taken in 1994 by the author. (Figure 94 and Figure 95)

Location:

Great Chalfield Manor, near Bradford on Avon

Wiltshire;

Ordnance Survey grid number: ST8663

Ordnance Survey first edition number: XXX11:12 [32.12]

Sources:

National Trust *Great Chalfield Manor (guidebook)*, 1946

Floyd, R. *Great Chalfield Manor (guidebook)*, 1980 revised 1986, 1990 reprinted 1993

Pevsner N. rev. Cherry B, Wiltshire 1975, 257-259.

Country Life. 'Great Chalfield Manor I, Wiltshire. The Seat of Mr. Robert Fuller' Aug. 15 1914

Country Life. 'Great Chalfield Manor II, Wiltshire. The Seat of Mr. Robert Fuller' Aug. 29 1914

The National Trust Guide, A complete Introduction to the Buildings, Gardens, Coast and Country owned by the National Trust. Jonathan Cape, London, revised edition 1977. 339-40.

English Heritage. *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*. Part 46 Wiltshire. Great Chalfield Manor.

Humphris, Joanne. *Great Chalfield Garden Survey*. The National Trust, London, 1991-2.

Vol I: 73 pages Vol II: 143 pages

²⁰⁴ Humphris, 1991-2: vol I: 5

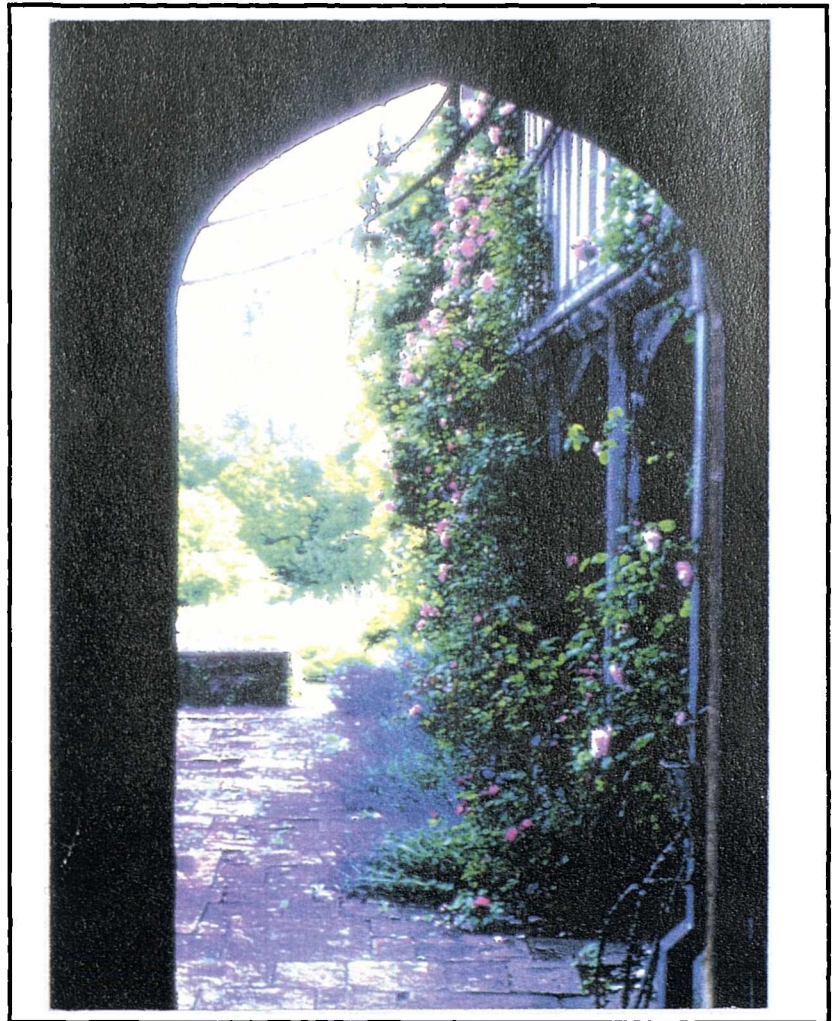


Figure 95 Climbing roses at Great Chalfield



Figure 96 Stone steps at Great Chalfield.



Figure 97 Wightwick Manor. Topiary garden attributed to A. P.



Figure 98 Wightwick Manor: roses and hedges.

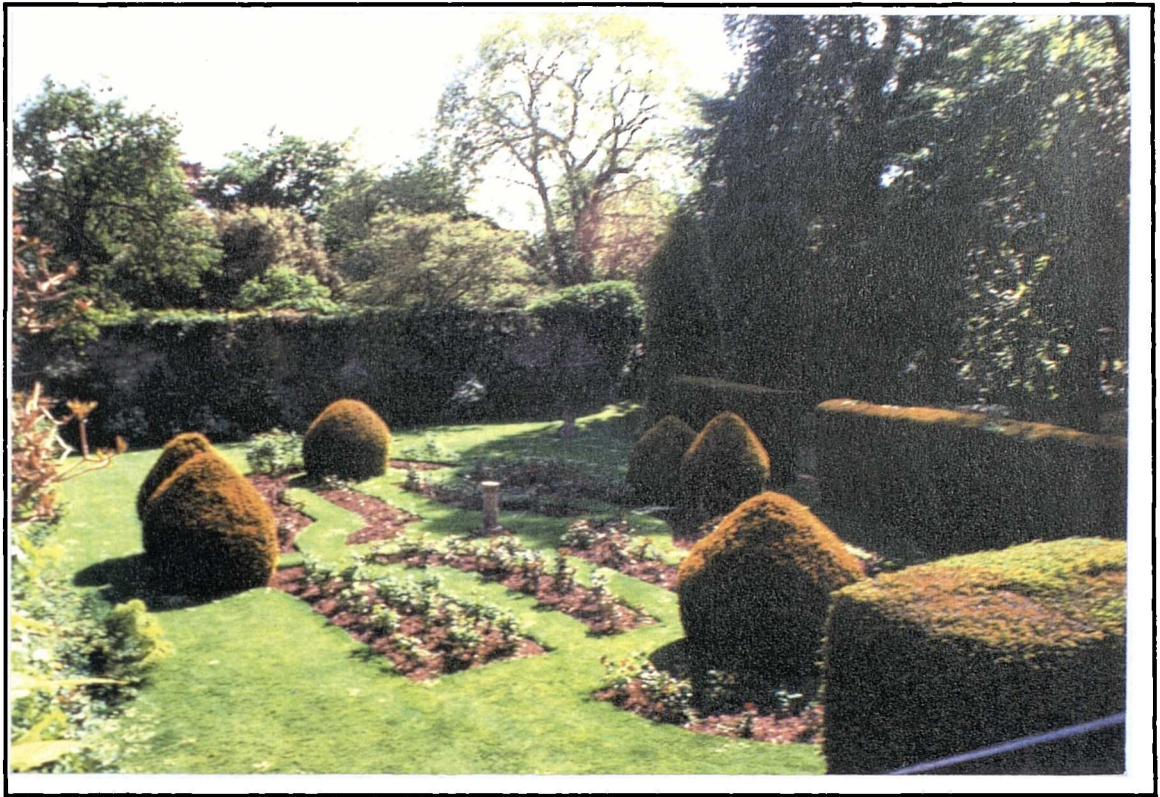


Figure 99 The Provost's Lodging. Worcester College. Oxford



Figure 100 Lamb House, Rye. Henry James's house and garden.

4.9 THE MILTON LODGE SKETCH: 1913

The following is very significant to sustain part of the main argument of the thesis because it shows that Parsons was still doing garden design as late as 1913, although documents between 1906 and 1913 are very scarce at the Somerset Record Office²⁰⁵. Parsons did a few sketches for Charles Tudway and Partridge explained exactly what Parsons wanted for Milton Lodge:

I saw Parsons in town on Tuesday, and talked over your garden steps with him with the following result. STEPS ON WEST SIDE NEAR GARDEN HOUSE. These to be guarded by a wrought iron railing as per enclosed plan. You will see that I have got him to do away with the dress tearers, C. and iron scrolls should be substituted as shown in red ink on the plan. Please note Parsons remarks in pencil, that "all the curves might be longer and more flattened." I would strongly recommend your sending the plan to F.C. Hardy, Esq. C/O Messrs Johnson, Bros, Wisemore Works, Walsall, and get them to give you an estimate for the railing. You will, I think, find their prices quite reasonable, and they do excellent work. They would supply you with a scale drawing, and you should ask them for a price for fencing fixing. Parsons is now of my opinion that a low wall or coping to stand, say, 6 or 9 inches above the angle of these steps would be a great improvement. VIDE the red ink line on coloured sketch sent me by Fewtrell. WITH REGARD TO THE STEPS ON THE EAST SIDE [Milton Lodge; 27th Feb 1913] we both think that a retaining wall with a straight slope instead of a swag would look better. He has made a rough pencil sketch of this on one of the plans, and I have dated same 26th February in red ink. You will notice we suggest the wall should be 1ft 4" above the angle of the steps, and that the pier at the bottom should be set back, one step so that the latter (which should be rounded off) would show beyond the retaining wall. The existing pier at the top of the present cross wall should be raised 4 inches so that the coping of the wall guarding the steps may come under the cap. I think this will give you all the information you require, and I trust the result will be satisfactory to you and Mrs Tudway in every way.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ For example there is nothing relating to Great Chalfield.

²⁰⁶ 27th February 1913. Ms SRO Box 47 FL 9

4.10 JUDGE AT THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW: 1915

Parsons judged rock gardens at the Chelsea Flower Show during the three years 1914-16.²⁰⁷ The reputation gained doing The Welbeck Garden is related to his social responsibility at the Chelsea Flower Show. As already mentioned, Austin Chester had published a long article on Parsons in 1910, mentioning his design at Welbeck.²⁰⁸

A Silver Challenge Cup has been presented to the Society by the Proprietors of the Daily Graphic and is offered by the Council in Open Competition at the Chelsea Show on May 18th, 19th and 20th, 1915, for the best Rock Garden, judged, not from the point of view of size, but for-

(1) The natural artistic grouping of the stones.

(2) Evidence of design in construction, and

(3) Suitability to the growth of Alpine Plants.

Space up to a maximum area of 250 sq. feet in the open will be given.

The rarity or other wise of the plants themselves is to carry but little weight in this competition.²⁰⁹

In 1914, Parsons awarded the Daily Graphic Cup along with E. A. Bowles and Sir Frank Crisp.²¹⁰ In 1915, a fourth judge was added, Frederick J. Hanbury. Finally, in May 1916, the number of judges was back to three: Parsons, along with Bowles and Thomas Carmichael.

Interestingly, Parsons was also a judge of 'Pictures and Statuary' in 1915 and 1916. The other judges in this category were Bowles and the Rev. W. Wilks; in 1916, the fourth judge was Edward White.²¹¹

The fact that Parsons, a lover of wild gardens is associated with judging 'Pictures and Statuary' is a puzzling piece of information, which puts Parsons as a landscape-gardener in sympathy with formal gardeners, horticultural specialists and plant collectors.

²⁰⁷ There was no Chelsea Flower Show in 1917 and 1918. In 1919, the Daily Graphic Cup was given to Messrs R. Wallace, but the names of the judges are not mentioned in the Proceedings. Parsons could have been a judge in 1919 but he died early in 1920.

²⁰⁸ Chester, 1910: . See page ?

²⁰⁹ *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*. 'Proceedings' Arrang. 1915, Report 1914: 81

²¹⁰ It is interesting to speculate that Alfred Parsons gave friendly advice to Sir Frank Crisp in the creation of his eccentric garden Friar Park.

²¹¹ *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*. 'Proceedings' Vol 40, 1914-15: xcvi-xcvii
Ibid Vol 41, 1915-16: lxxxvi-lxxxvii. Ibid Vol 42, 1916-17: lxxxii-lxxxiii

In 1903, 'D.' had written:

It is sadly true that garden making has fallen from its former high standard as an art; and Mr. Thomas H. Mawson in his book, "The Art and Craft of Garden Making", assigns the reason to be "the inattention of those most capable of guiding and advising." (...) nearly all sympathy between the one and the other has vanished, and the architect must as much confine himself to the mansion and buildings as the gardener to the garden and grounds. Co-operation seemeth imperative between these professional men, (...) But the jealousy and Hauteur which has alienated the two sets of workers for nigh a hundred years, will probably continue, unless where the employer voices his own commands. These few short notes are a plea to the unrestricted landscapist, to favour more than has been the case during the past twenty-five years, the introduction to gardens and ornamental grounds of certain architectural elements whose presence never fails to impart a sense of either dignity, magnificence, stateliness, quietude, charm, or brightness when properly disposed.²¹²

By 1915, this message signed 'D.' had been accepted.

²¹² 'Architectural in Gardens. Vases, Sundials, Statuary, and Fountains.' *Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener*. March 12, 1903: 234. The article was illustrated by an engraving of a 'Sundial in a Garden'.

4.11 LAST YEARS AT LUGGERSHILL: 1917-1920

In 1914, Parsons left his house in London to establish himself definitively in Broadway:

Feb 6 1914 / My dear Spielmann / I am keeping well & working hard down here but I find many more things to distract me in the country than in London: there is always something in the garden which needs attention.²¹³

E.V. Lucas wrote Edwin Austin Abbey's biography, which was published in 1921. He visited Parsons in 1917 at his house in Broadway. On 14 May 1917, he wrote him this thank you note:

Dear Parsons, that was a very good idea, albeit going in the wrong direction. Thank you for a memorial time. Your Broadway I find distinctly beautiful; few other places will satisfy one any more. No where else [20] stones grow into houses instead of being laid one on the other. With kind regards to Mrs Cosset & her brother.²¹⁴

His final years were spent with friends such as the Messels at Nymans and with his roses at Luggershill. Of his character the author can say: in spite of his artistic achievements and status in society Parsons always remained humble, generous and dedicated to his art and all the social responsibility it involved.²¹⁵ In 1925, Mrs Comyns Carr, wrote:

Alfred Parsons had a positive genius for friendship. Perhaps the fact that he was a member of an extremely large family had bred in him the tact which made for sympathetic social intercourse. Anyhow, he knew hosts of people in every walk of life, many of whom came to him for sympathy and advice. Probably few men have listened to more confidences of have known more interesting family secrets than Alfred Parsons.²¹⁶

On Boxing Day 1919, Alfred dictated his last will and testament before Albert W. Bilby, a retired grocer of Tower View, Broadway, and W. H. Burrows, a baker living at The Green, Broadway. His will mentioned both John Green the gardener, and Maude Collins, the housekeeper. Twenty-three days later, on 16 January 1920, Alfred Parsons died.²¹⁷

²¹³ MS NAL Letters to Spielmann 86 PP 18: letter # VII-12

²¹⁴ [MS HWRO xxxix] Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1933) essayist and critic. "Letter of thanks for visit to AP commenting on beauty of Broadway."

²¹⁵ "[At Raku-raku-tei in Hikone] I was shown into a gorgeous apartment with gold screens, its floor raised above the level of the rest of the house, which no doubt was intended for great people who in the old days must often have come here to see the Daimio, Ii Kamon no Kami; but I felt I could not live up to this, and after viewing the rooms overlooking the lake, and those built on piles over the fish-pond, I selected some that looked out into the garden, with a trellis of wistaria just in front of which the purple trails of blossom nearly a yard long were still hanging." [Parsons, 1896: 51]

²¹⁶ Carr, 1925: 118-119

²¹⁷ Parsons died of Chronic Pancreatitis as certified by L. F. Leslie, M. R. C. S. on January the 16th 1920. [General Register Office, Catherine House, London: Certified copy of an entry of death, 16-01-1920.]



Figure 101 Garden at Nymans. Photographed by the author.



Figure 102 The rose garden at Nymans. Photographed by the author.

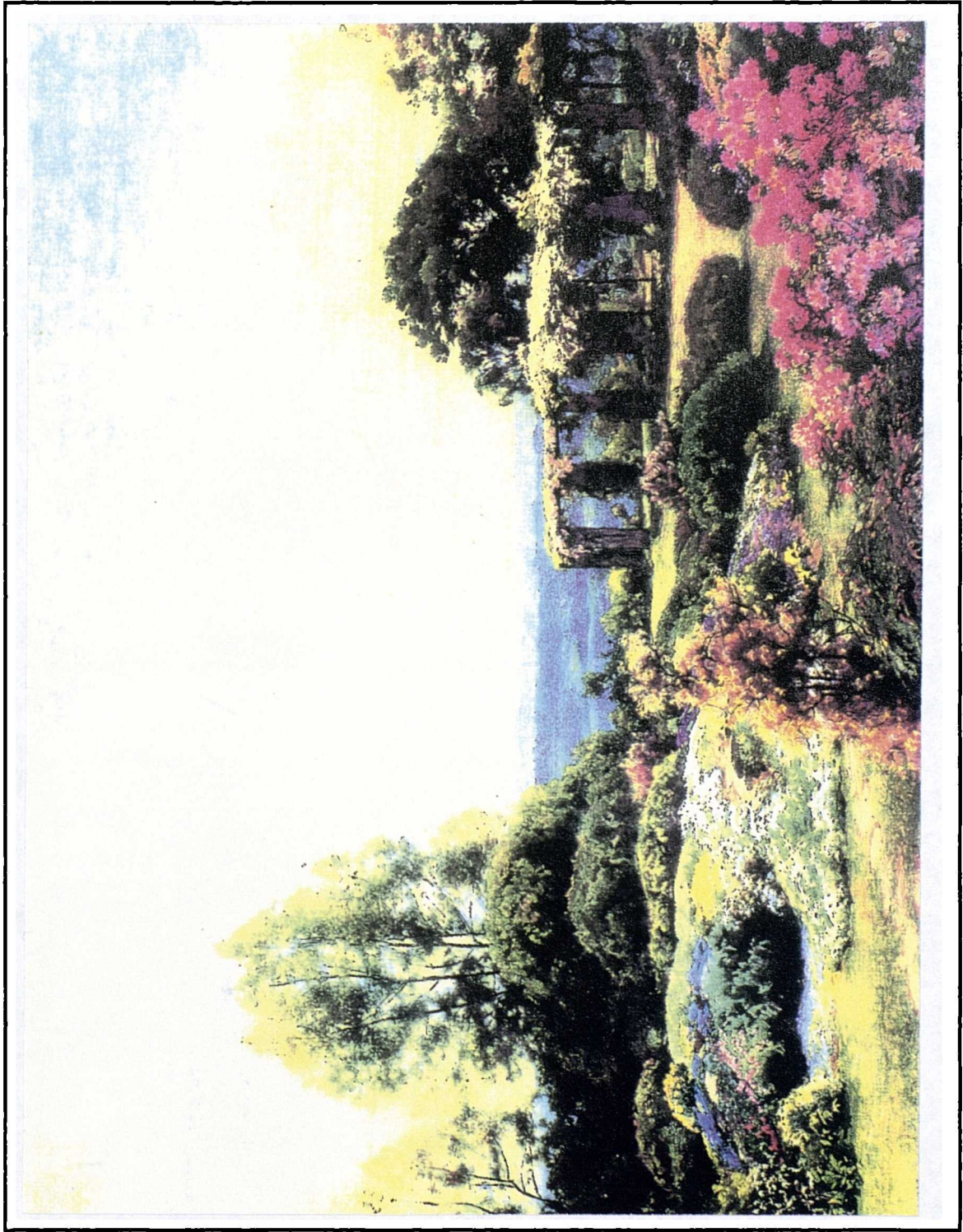


Figure 103 Alfred Parsons's watercolour of Nymans. [Hobhouse, 1988: 62]

When Sir Alan Parsons, who had just inherited the house, sold it in 1940, the contents were scattered. These were the difficult years of World War Two.²¹⁸ Luggershill, with 2.2 acres, was for sale again in 1993. Mr. Clive Gunter, no relation, was then the owner. The photographs of Luggershill's rooms, in the sales leaflet of 1993, displayed an artificial tidiness. Paradoxically, when Henry Batterbury, as a boy, visited Uncle Clem²¹⁹ in Broadway, he was impressed by a drawing room absolutely filled with Japanese artifacts, hung with exotic swords.

4.12 POSTHUMOUS EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

In 1920, six obituaries repeated most of what was known about Parsons; one praised the fact that he had not been corrupted by Impressionism.²²⁰ Critical acclaim in several obituaries drew important links between Parsons's talent as a painter and his skill as a landscape-gardener.

Posthumous exhibitions were held at the Royal Watercolour Society in the winter of 1920. In 1921, a posthumous exhibition was held at the Leicester Gallery, *Watercolours by the late Alfred Parsons, R.A., P.R.W.S.* and at the National Book League, Flower Books exhibition in 1950.²²¹ Various sales were also held at Christies and Sotheby's.

²¹⁸ Confirmed by Mrs Prudence Morris, daughter of Sir Alan Parsons.

²¹⁹ Clement had inherited the house from Alfred in 1920. See the genealogy on page 351.

²²⁰ "His landscapes have little of that structureless drawing which was common to English painting in the mid-Victorian era. His pre-occupation to suggest form is carried out to the smallest detail." [*The Daily Telegraph*, Thursday, Jan. 22 1920]

²²¹ Pavière, 1964: 87

5 CASE STUDIES

Country house gardens created for those with sufficient money had a wide range of features: paved terraces around the house; herbaceous borders and rose gardens; often a formal water garden; yew hedges used extensively to make enclosures or vistas; and around the garden's perimeter areas of woodland that were opened up with winding paths and, if the soil was suitable, planted with the flowering trees and shrubs such as magnolias, rhododendrons and camellias being introduced from overseas. Further variation was provided by fashionable oddities: Japanese gardens enjoyed a widespread vogue as knowledge of that hitherto mysterious country began to filter back to the west towards the end of the 19th century; rock gardens, often constructed on a massive naturalistic scale, were championed by plant collectors such as Reginald Farrer (...) Tender exotics were now usually confined to greenhouses and cultivated- along with sumptuous fruit - for bringing into the house as decoration for that most Edwardian of inventions, the house party.¹



Figure 104 Welbeck Abbey. The Front entrance to the West. [Author's photograph 1995]

Sharing contemporary attitudes about the Arts and Crafts, Parsons and Partridge, largely inspired by the spirit of the place and opportunities that presented themselves, created various luxurious gardens. The partners were hired by people with sufficient money, as suggested above, and they utilized all the options for gardening then available. The originality of their partnership lay in the fact that the designer of the team, Parsons, was a professional artist; one whose services were in demand because of his social status as well as for his links with a long-standing tradition in garden design.

The various elements existing in Edwardian gardens, listed by Plumtre in the quotation

¹ Plumtre, 1993: 128-9

above, were all present in the various gardens designed by the partners. Two case studies have been chosen to illustrate the work of Parsons & Partridge.

The first one is The Welbeck Garden. After various inquiries made on site at the Welbeck Estates Company Ltd, at Welbeck College, at the Harley Foundation, at Nottingham Central Library, and at Nottingham Archives Office, indeed at all possible sources of documentation on Welbeck Abbey, no proof of the involvement of the partnership at Welbeck was found. Further inquiries were also unsuccessful: neither The Lady Anne Bentinck² nor the Earl of Portland³ had any recollection of papers relating to Parsons and Partridge. Two of the rare public mentions of Alfred Parsons's work at the gardens of Welbeck can be seen first in the article by Austin Chester published in 1910 and in Parson's obituary published in *The Daily Telegraph* in January 1920.

Always gardening, and a devout lover of gardens, Mr. Parsons was frequently consulted in the matter of laying out pleasure grounds, the gardens at Welbeck owing much to his initiative and taste.⁴

It thus became imperative for the author to make some contribution to knowledge about The Welbeck Garden, because of its crucial role in the successful launching of the landscape gardening partnership of Parsons and Partridge. The main issue of this case study was to prove that the partners really did work at The Welbeck Garden.

² "Thank you for your letter. I am glad you enjoyed your tour round the gardens at Welbeck Abbey, but I am afraid I am unable to help you with your questions. / I am afraid I have no photographs of the gardens between 1885 and 1920, but you may be able to get some of these from back numbers of *Country Life*. / I have no correspondence between Mr. Parsons or Captain Partridge with the 6th. Duke of Portland, neither have I any sketches or drawings or any survey of the grounds or aerial photographs. / I am sorry not to be able to be of more help. / Yours sincerely, / Anne Bentinck" [Letter to the author dated 10th October, 1994]

³ In a letter dated 8 May 1995 to the author, the Earl of Portland mentioned that the 'enormous' content of the Welbeck Library was sold and he regretted that the turn-of-the-century records relating to additions to The Welbeck Garden might have been in it.

⁴ Phillips, Sir Claude. 'Alfred Parsons's obituary' *The Daily Telegraph*. January 22, 1920

The second case study is 'Battledene', a now completely unknown garden, a show-piece garden for Parsons and Partridge where the best of their knowledge and experience was put into practice. As Battledene was Captain Partridge's private garden, one which was proudly shown as an example of the partnership's landscape gardening capabilities, the main issue here is to bring this work to light for the first time.



Figure 105 Welbeck Abbey. The Oxford Wing. 1995

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE WELBECK GARDEN CASE STUDY

5.1.1 Opportunities for aristocratic commissions:

Here are two examples that illustrate how Parsons and Partridge, after obtaining the Welbeck commission, circulated in high society in order to meet potential clients and thus gain other commissions.

The first example concerns Lady Warwick, in 1900, inviting Parsons to Warwick to discuss her garden.

I have got to go to Welbeck for a couple of days, either at the end of this week or the beginning of next week, to see how they are getting on. / Parsons is going to do a Garden at Antibes. **He was at Warwick yesterday, having been sent for by Lady Warwick about the Garden. If his visit leads to a job I shall take precious good care to see that the money part of it is all right.** We have finished the Garden at Wolverhampton.⁵

Although there is no evidence that any work was implemented by Parsons and Partridge at Warwick, it remains pertinent to the argument of this thesis to understand the social context related to receiving such an invitation. The name of the garden is not mentioned in the correspondence, only Lady Warwick's name. Partridge mentioned to Tudway in another letter that he and Parsons had been invited to White Lodge, Richmond, (a crown property), "to do the gardens"⁶ and as Lady Warwick had been the mistress of Edward VII and had frequently invited him to Easton Lodge, the author of this thesis makes an informed guess that Parsons

⁵ April 30th 1900 MsSRO 1/6

⁶ " ... / Just rec - yours of the 16th forwarded from Battledene - I enclose you Mrs G Cannings letter also plan & list of plants. You will see she approves of the planting in the garden marked A in the plan (in pencil) & we must modify B [Hartpury] Personally & strictly between ourselves I think she is right - It is absolutely necessary we should meet soon I have got you the Petty France order, & I think the following are sure to come Preston Hall, Brockhampton Park Trysull Manor besides many others in prospect but it must be attended to at once. Could you equally make it convenient to come down to Battledene Wednesday evening, stay here the night & go to Wells Thursday I have to go to the Isle of Wight Monday on business & make a valuation. If you came Wednesday morning it would mean me having to return Tuesday afternoon & I dont see how I could get thro ' the work , but it is so important for me to see you I should throw over the valuation & get back but it would mean losing a good fee - I return home today Please wire me without fail on receipt of this to let me know what you decide - I enclose Mrs Harveys letter recd this morning also Manders his would be a big order for you, so I think we can work it thro the cattle line only I must see you about it all. It is really an opening for you & it would be a thousand pities to throw away the chance - Saturday 26th Today we go to see a new garden near town where they want a lot of planting done I hear. Sunday to Preston Hall garden & **we have been sent for to do the gardens at White Lodge Richmond Park.** Please return all enclosures / Yrs Ever / WP I shall be terribly disappointed if you dont come Wednesday for the [weight?] if you could so manage it Thursday we could go & see Mrs Harvey 's garden." [18th Oct 1901 MsSRO 1/7]. See the appendices on page ? for more on White Lodge.

was really being consulted about the garden for Easton Lodge. Elinor Glyn⁷ has written about Lady Warwick and her garden, Easton Lodge, near Dunmow, Essex.⁸ Lady Warwick was a well-known figure in turn-of-the-century English society: “The loveliest woman in England, of high rank, ample riches, and great intelligence”.⁹ Glyn declares that Easton Lodge “represented the last word in perfection, judged by the standard of those days.”¹⁰

The second example concerns the garden of Mr and Mrs Comyns Carr who were well-known for their involvement with the fashionable Grosvenor Gallery.

One of our most ‘useful’ visitors was our old friend Alfred Parsons, R.A., the landscape-painter. As our cottage was perched on the side of a cliff there was little scope for a real garden, but when Alfred came down he laid it out charmingly and christened it ‘The Quarter Deck.’ Alfred Parsons had just finished planning the grounds at Welbeck Abbey, and he proposed to plant at Winchelsea specimens of some of the foreign trees which he had been using for this larger undertaking.

We had an old odd-job man helping Alfred to transplant spring seedlings who did not entirely approve of the introduction of ‘furrin’ plants’, so when I inquired one day, ‘What are these, Field? Will they be short for the front or tall for the back of this border?’ he merely replied, ‘When they grows up, mum, we shall see.’

Alfred Parsons, who happened to overhear this, was much amused, but he won old Field’s heart by saying gently, ‘You’ve never said a truer word. None of us know until they come up.’¹¹

It was the early commission for The Welbeck Garden that opened other such aristocratic doors to the partners. The following is the first case study.

⁷ “Glyn, Elinor (1864-1943), novelist. (...) [Wrote] The visits of Elizabeth (...) Its success encouraged her to write several more ‘society’ novels before turning to a passionate romanticism in which her heroines were haughty, her heroes masterful, her settings luxurious, and her plots improbable. Judged by later standards her novels are only rescued from absurdity by her genuine ability to tell a story. In her own time they were much admired.” [DNB]

⁸ For a very good description of that garden in 1907, consult *The Gardeners’ Magazine*, 2 March, 1907. ‘Lady Warwick’s Garden.’ : 135-138. It is highly possible that Parsons was consulted on the following components of Easton Lodge’s garden: the rose garden (which amongst several others, had ‘Félicitée Perpétue’ and ‘Allister Stella Gray’ roses, two roses often used by Parsons), the geometric flower garden (similar to Welbeck garden), the water garden (to be compared with the water garden at Welbeck and at Callis Court), the sunken Italian garden (to be compared with the sunken garden at Welbeck), the American garden (to be compared to the arboretum at Milton Lodge, Tudway’s garden in Wells, Somerset), the rock garden (Parsons judged the rock gardens at Chelsea Flower Show from 1915 to 1917), the Shakespearian garden (Parsons is reputed for his knowledge of literature and often exhibited paintings at the Royal Academy with Shakespeare in their title and who illustrated: Kingsley, Rose. ‘Shakespeare’s Country’ *The English Illustrated Magazine* in 1885. More specifically, the Easton Lodge Japanese garden and its tea house might have been designed by Parsons who had written *Notes in Japan*, published in 1896.

⁹ Glyn, 1936: 66

¹⁰ “I choose Easton Lodge, as this was the most delightful of all the houses in which we used to stay. (...) The parties at Easton consisted of about twenty people, sometimes more, composed of the crème de la crème of England’s aristocracy, (...) and King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, was amongst the guests.” [Glyn, 1936: 66-68]

¹¹ Comyns Carr, 1926: 116

5.2 THE WELBECK GARDEN: 1900-1905

5.2.1 Proof of the involvement of Parsons and Partridge

The history of Welbeck Abbey and the Portland family is very well documented. Much has been written on Repton's Red Book for Welbeck. The history of the creation of the turn-of-the-century additions to the garden has not yet been written. Approximately seventy letters between Parsons, Partridge and Tudway concerning the making of The Welbeck Garden are kept at the Somerset Record Office. They constitute the main proof of the partners' involvement at Welbeck. But there exists even better evidence of their work here.

One of the important moments in the research for this case study occurred in January 1996.¹² Fifty Lumière Autochrome¹³ stereoscopic plates of gardens at Welbeck, at Walmsgate in Lincolnshire, the Dallas Yorke family home¹⁴, and at Rufford, produced between 1911 and 1915 (some perhaps later), were shown to the author of this thesis in January 1996.¹⁵ They constitute an important confirmation of the quality of work done from 1900 to 1905 at The Welbeck Garden by Parsons and Partridge. These slides are an integral part of this stereoscope. They are eventually to be reproduced in photographic form.¹⁶ Fortunately a written description of these slides exists and permission has been given to include this text in the appendices.¹⁷

The final and obvious proof was the discovery of their signature left on the site.¹⁸

¹² This discovery was a direct result of the author's request for information in her 1995 publication on Parsons.; very positive feedback and a key element for the rest of the research.

¹³ It is assumed that it was a Lumière stereoscope because of the 'autochrome' label on the slides. Autochrome was a Lumière process.

¹⁴ Based on the 24th June 1899 letter, it is tempting to assume that Parsons also designed part of the garden at Mrs Dallas Yorke's residence. More research is needed to prove this informed guess.

¹⁵ In a private collection.

¹⁶ At great cost since the stereoscope must be carefully dismantled.

¹⁷ See page 452. A personal comment must be here included here. The viewing of these slides was crucial to the understanding of Parsons's and Partridge's work. Before seeing the 3D slides, the author had doubts on the quality of the work the partners could produce. Only the garden at Callis Court had produced some confidence in their designs. The author believed that Parsons's work was overrated in certain circles because of his social status. But after seeing the slides, she felt tremendous relief; all the effort put into her research were not in vain: Parsons really did have an 'artistic' talent in landscape gardening

¹⁸ One of the author's original contributions to knowledge. Half an hour before leaving the site, the two signatures caught the eye of the author; pure chance helped by an insatiable curiosity.



Figure 106 Base of the double herbaceous border's Italian fountain. Acronyms of the Duke and the Duchess.

The previous chapter has shown that word of mouth was important in obtaining commissions from the aristocracy and upper classes.¹⁹ Other motives for the Edwardian additions to The Welbeck Garden can be proposed. In 1899, the sixth Duke of Portland decided to improve his property for three reasons, the first being that his predecessor:

the late Duke was so absorbed with his vast work of building and digging out the underground rooms and tunnels that he was oblivious of everything else. He pursued this hobby without any idea of beauty, a lonely self isolated man.²⁰

And the results of this neglect were to be removed by the great splendour of the turn-of-the-century improvements to The Welbeck Garden.

The second reason was that because of the sixth Duke's intense social life a proper garden was needed according to the fashion of the day.

Another summer gathering comes to mind, in August, 1904, when the alterations and rebuilding after the fire at Welbeck were completed....²¹

The third reason, not to be neglected, rested in his desire to please his mother-in-law, Mrs

¹⁹ See the section 'Verbal recommendation' on page ?

²⁰ [Portland, 1937: 32] The present author does not agree with the sixth Duke: the fifth Duke had a very developed sense of the aesthetic. But this is not important to the development of the main argument of the thesis.

²¹ Portland, 1937: 32

Dallas Yorke.

5.2.2 A description based on a literature review

South of Worksop all in OS SK5070, Nottinghamshire

Size: 16,000 acres

Gardens (including Market Garden area) 22 acres. Area covered by glass - 57,263 square feet.

Owners of Welbeck: "Since 1943 the legal ownership has vested in the Seventh Duke of Portland, K.G., and his daughter, The Lady Anne Bentinck, whereas the equitable ownership has vested in the Welbeck Estates Company Limited since its formation in 1926."²²

Who has not heard of Sherwood Forest, and revelled in the accounts of Robin Hood and his merry men, as they alternately robbed the rich and gave to the poor within its sheltering glades; living a charmed life when pursued by the myrmidons of the law, and keeping high revelry beneath the very noses of the king's soldiers and forest-keepers? The forest tenancy of the presumed outlawed Earl of Huntingdon and the foundation of the Abbey of Welbeck in its precincts were coincidences of the reign of Henry II, the Abbey ultimately coming into the possession of the Portland family in 1734 by a marriage with a daughter of the joint houses of Oxford and Newcastle, who thus brought the estate to her husband, the second Duke of Portland.²³

Background to Parsons's and Partridge's historical overlay. ²⁴

The fifth Duke of Portland, William John, owned Welbeck from 1854 to 1878. According to Lady Ottoline Morrell, very little was left in terms of gardens around the new buildings.

The collection of buildings-stables, riding school, dairy, coach stables, laundry, offices and another longer riding school with a tan gallop about a quarter of a mile in length-made a village in themselves. They were all built in the same grey stone, without any trees or gardens.²⁵

When the fifth Duke inherited the estate, it had been over one hundred years since Francis

²² Document, not signed, given to the present author by Keith Crossland, Assistant Bursar, Welbeck College.

²³ Spencer Warren, 1899: 628

²⁴ See the complete list of overlays in the appendices on page 449

²⁵ Portland, 1937: 35. Ottoline Bentinck's description of her arrival at Welbeck in 1879.

Richardson had designed the kitchen gardens in 1744,²⁶ and over fifty years since Humphry Repton, in 1790, had moved earth to the West front of the building thus turning the ground floor into a basement. Repton had also deepened and extended the lakes, which are now more than three miles long.

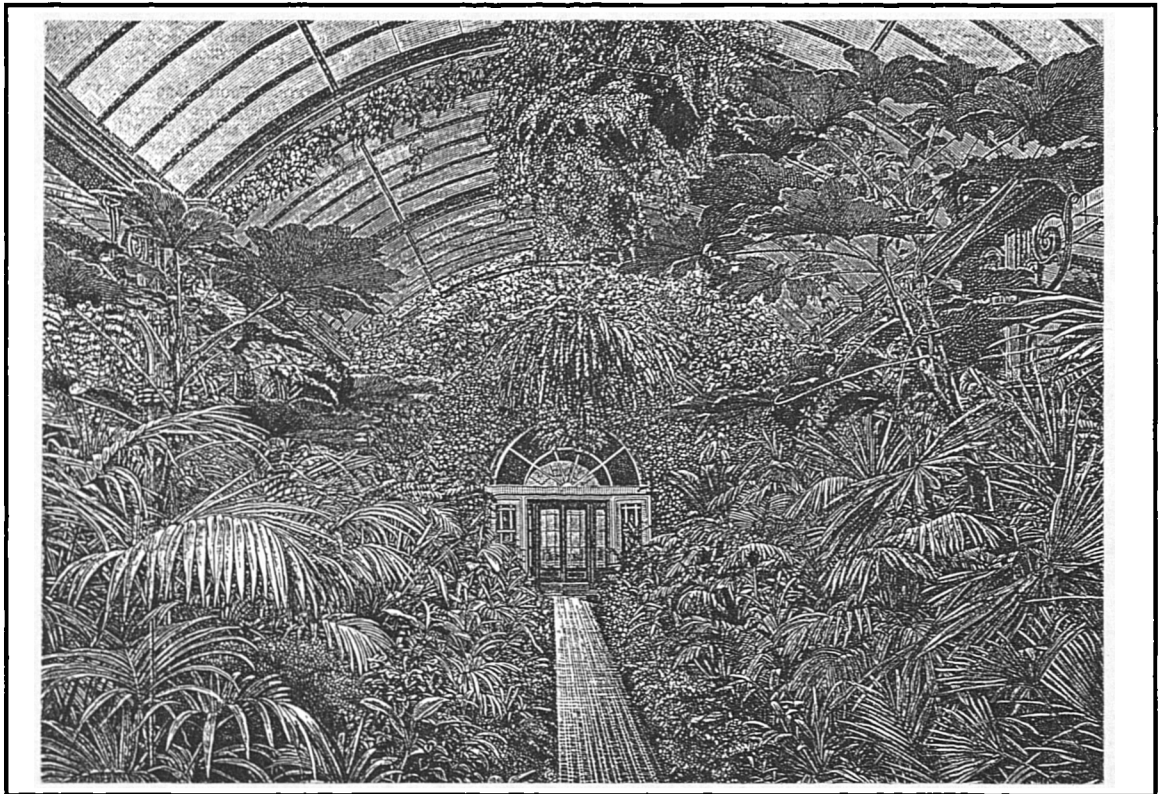


Figure 107 "Palm House, Welbeck Gardens. [G. C. 15 August 1891: 195]

The fifth Duke had an interest in gardening. He built hothouses that were over eight hundred feet long, and he was very keen on growing his own grapes and fruits on an industrial scale. He also built the magnificent sunken palm, rose and camellia houses. (Figure 107) The fifth Duke was responsible for the construction of miles of tunnels linking various buildings on the estate. It can be said that he was of the Robinson/Ruskin school of thought and that he did not favour bedding-out nor showy artifice. When Ottoline Morrell (the sixth Duke's cousin) moved to Welbeck on the death of the fifth Duke, she probably expected to see a High Victorian garden. She was disappointed with what she found there. This is understandable, since she arrived just a few days before Christmas 1879, a time when no flowers were to be seen. Also most of the architectural improvements were to be seen below ground.

When the 6th Duke of Portland, K. G. (William John Arthur Charles James Cavendish-

²⁶ Plan uncovered by Mrs Hazel Fryer. Mrs Hazel Fryer is presently reading for a doctorate on Humphry Repton at the University of York. One of her case studies is Welbeck Abbey.

Bentinck) succeeded to the title , on 28 December 1878,

Welbeck entered the most exciting era of its history. From being the stark home of a strange recluse, it suddenly became one of the real social centres of England, The Duke and his beautiful Duchess [Winifred Anna, only daughter of T.Y. Dallas-Yorke of Walmsgate] entertained constantly for fifty years. Many Kings, queens, heads of state and distinguished people from all over the world visited Welbeck during this period...²⁷

John Singer Sargent, Mary de Navarro, Ellen Willmott were all guests at Welbeck.²⁸ In July 1911, Prince Henry of Prussia had lunch there. To these names the sixth Duke of Portland, in his memoirs, added the name of W. Egginton, a lesser known painter. His watercolour views of the garden could be used to recreate part of the original planting.²⁹



Figure 108 Steps leading to the palm house, seen from the picturesque tunnel in front.

²⁷ "The sixth Duke's half-sister, Ottoline Bentinck, was raised to the rank of a duke's daughter and is better known as Lady Ottoline Morrell. She was a leading light in the Bloomsbury set and her home, Garsington Manor, was a hothouse of writers and artists including people like Bertrand Russell, from 1915 to 1927" [Innes-Smith, 1974: 8]

²⁸ "I must certainly not omit the name of my friend Mr. W. Egginton, who has for many years painted beautiful water-colour landscapes, many of them in Caithness and other parts of Scotland, for which country he seems to have a special affection." [Portland, 1937: 223]

²⁹ As most of them are still in Caithness, the present author has not yet been able to see them. (Caithness is located in the North of Scotland).



Figure 109 Entrance to the sunken Palm House. 1995

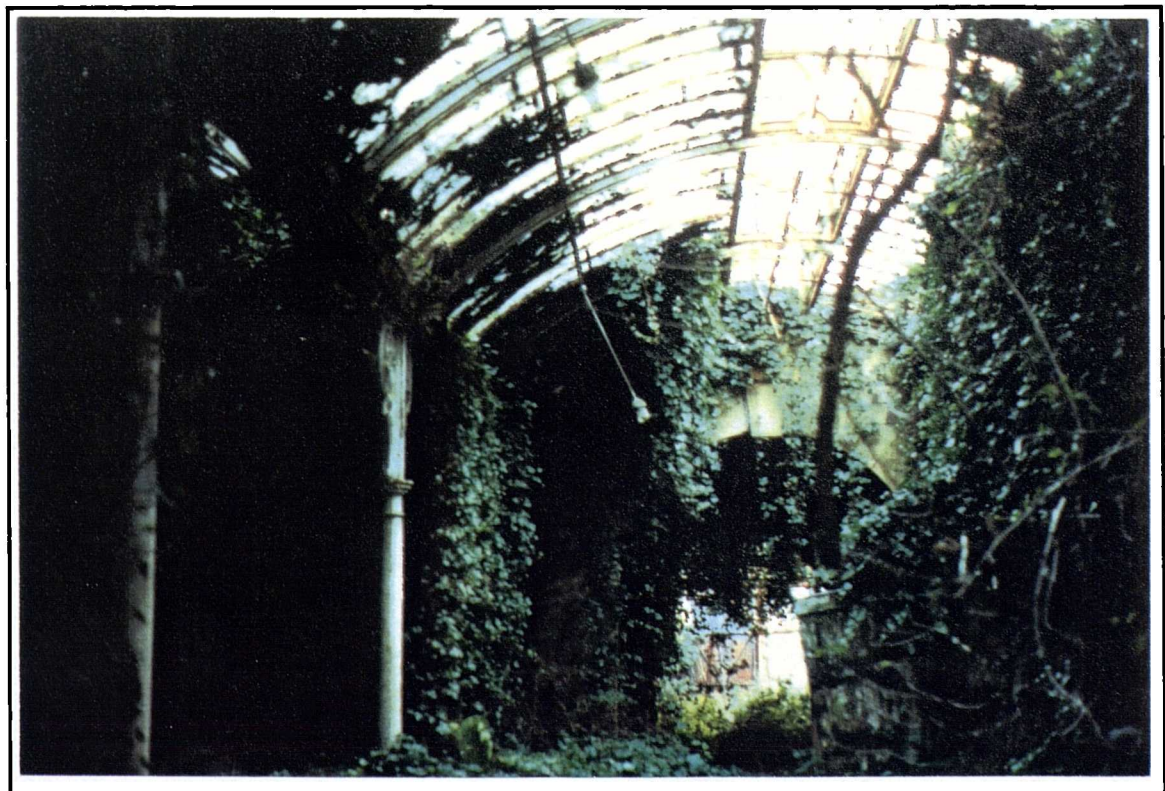


Figure 110 Interior of the Palm House. 1995. Fortunately the structure is still standing.

5.2.2.1 Current management of the gardens

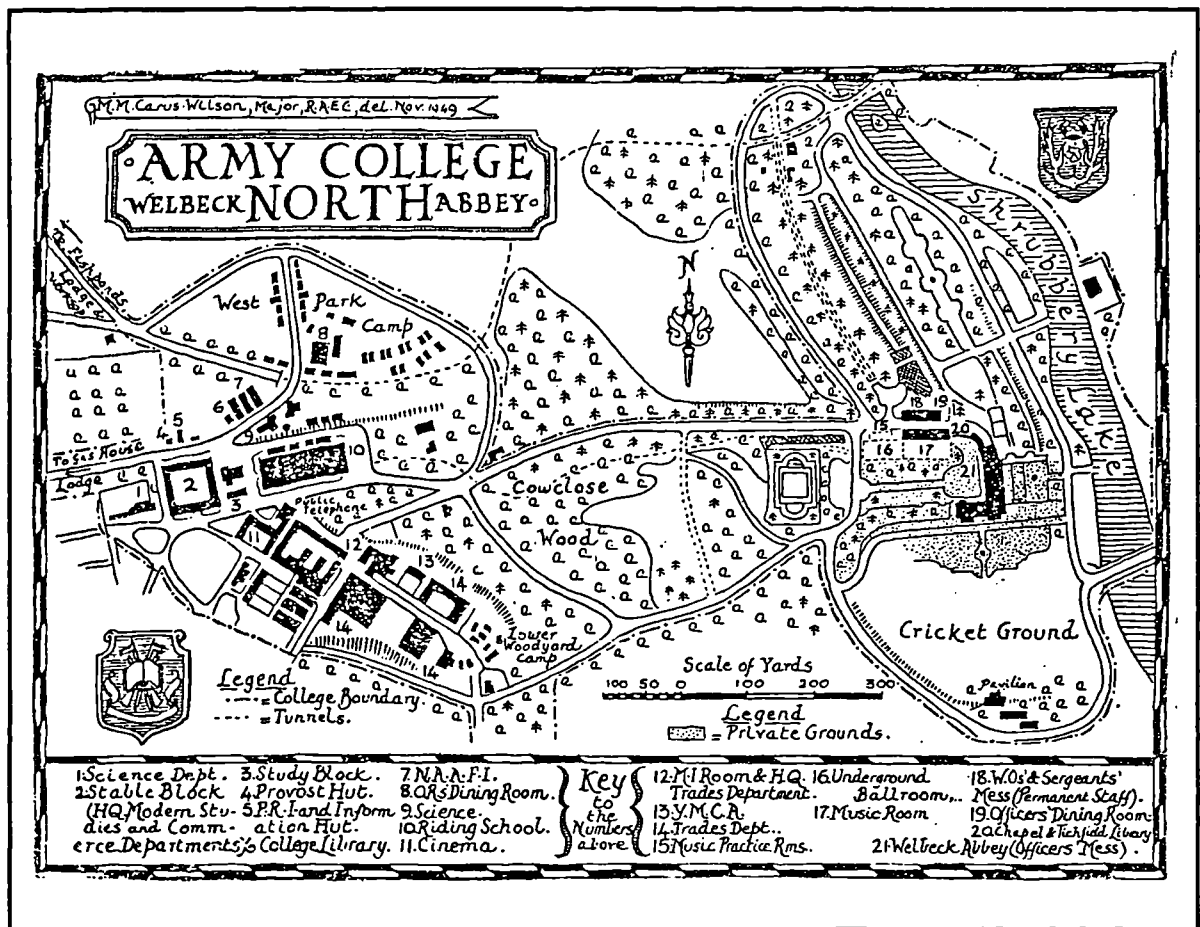


Figure 111 Army College North Welbeck Abbey. Map by M. Carus Wilson, Major, R.A.E.C. Nov 1949

Welbeck Estates Company Limited (1926), which now manages the property, has an office on the grounds. Eighty of the Welbeck buildings were listed by the Department of the Environment in 1985.³⁰ The gardens are maintained by Welbeck College which rents part of Welbeck Abbey from the Estates Company.

³⁰ From Nott. Central Lib. Class L90.2: Welbeck Estate. Chad 11-07-1985. Simon Mapletott

5.2.3 Parsons and Partridge beginning work at Welbeck

Here are extracts from letters confirming the beginning of work by Parsons and Partridge at Welbeck after their proper introduction to Mrs Dallas Yorke:

Dear Mr Parsons, / I am very glad to be able to send your letter to the Duke of Portland, I have asked him to communicate directly with you. I am really anxious that the gardens should be confided to your care, otherwise I am sure we shall learn to conjugate the verb repent in all its tenses, & as you say, there is no harm done yet that cannot be repaired. I am going to London for a few days next week & shall gladly avail myself of your kind invitation to visit your studio on Friday. How sad that you are deprived of the wonderful sunshine that has been our portion here ever since my return home. Yrs truly. [G.?] Dallas Yorke.³¹

The reader should notice that the visit to Parsons's studio is mentioned by Mrs Dallas Yorke. This reinforces the main argument that Parsons's activities as a landscape-painter were an integral part of the process of his obtaining commissions in landscape gardening.

Dear Mrs Dallas Yorke, Thank you very much for your letter about Welbeck. There is no harm done at present & I feel sure that it is possible to make a garden or series of gardens on the East & South that will add greatly to the look of the house as well as to the interest & pleasure of its inhabitants. The Duke did not say definitely that he wished me to take charge of the work & I think it will be best, before I go down there again, to tell you the conditions on which I should be willing to undertake it. In the first place it must all be my own designing subject only to the wishes & criticism of the Duke & Duchess. Of course I should consult with the head gardener & clerk of the works that is most necessary. I mean that no other designer shall be employed while it is in my hands. Then as to payment for the work- when we have settled the amount to be done, I would make the necessary plans & my partner in these affairs, Capt Partridge would decide what fee we should charge for our services. He thoroughly understands what I want & without interfering in any way with the employees of the Estate, he would [run?] down occasionally & see that the plans were being satisfactorily carried out. Without some superintendence of this kind, which I have not time to give, mistakes are apt to arise which either make the work unsatisfactory or entail much expense for alterations. Neither Capt Partridge or I like the system of commissions or percentage & we think it better for all parties that we should charge a definite fee according to the amount of work undertaken. I venture to write these details to you as it was through your kindness that I went down to Welbeck. It will give one great pleasure to come & see your garden later. Yrs Truly Alfred Parsons.³²

Two weeks later, first Parsons, then Partridge, were to make their first visit to the garden. The third, silent partner Tudway was to be brought in later on, providing large quantities of yews from 1900 to 1904.

When in the autumn of 1900, the sixth Duke had to reconstruct part of the Abbey,

³¹ March 10th 99 MsSRO 1/7

³² March 17th 99 MsSRO 1/7. Another important hint in Parsons's answer is the fact he would, with great pleasure, come & see Mrs Dallas Yorke's garden later. A token of gratitude is understandable. The present author believes that Parsons also gave advice on the making of Mrs Dallas Yorke's garden. That garden is also part of the 3D stereoscopic slides. More research is needed to prove this assumption.

On our return to Welbeck, we found the upper part of the Oxford wing completely burnt (...) and other parts (...) practically destroyed.³³

the architects of these improvements were to be Sir Ernest George & Alfred B. Yeates.³⁴

Yeates had become a partner of George after Peto had started his own private practice.

Sir Ernest George was recommended to me by Mr. Bertie Mitford, at one time Secretary of H.M. 's Office of Works and afterwards created Lord Redesdale, for whom Sir Ernest restored Batsford Park in Gloucestershire.³⁵

Parsons was to become the second follower of the Arts and Crafts to be commissioned to do work at Welbeck and Sir Ernest George the third. In 1891, J. D. Sedding had been commissioned to design the library and the chapel. Upon Sedding's death, Henry Wilson carried out the work. Parsons's work was commissioned later, in 1899. Connections made through the Art Workers Guild and the SPAB may also have helped Parsons become involved in the works at Welbeck.³⁶ The chapel George and Yeates built at Welbeck was inaugurated in December 1892.³⁷ The reader should also remember that in 1896, Parsons illustrated *The Bamboo Garden* for his very good friend, Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford,³⁸ Baron Redesdale, who had Batsford built under the direction of the architect Guy Dawber, another Arts and Crafts architect known to Parsons. Circles of acquaintances and attitudes towards design were crucial in obtaining such commissions for design work at that time.

³³ Portland, 1937: 53. The South wing fire was in early October 1900.

³⁴ Sir Ernest George (1839-1922). George and Peto were the architects at Shiplake Court in 1894-7, and Parsons did the garden in 1905.

³⁵ Portland, 1937: 10

³⁶ See the section on the SPAB on page 124.

³⁷ Spencer Warren, 1899: 635

³⁸ See page 193

5.2.4 Principal phases of the commission:

From April to December 1899, Parsons and Partridge designed and supervised the construction of the South and East Terraces. Another commission followed in January 1900, one that was to last for the next two years. It is believed that the long double herbaceous border, a formal rose garden in front of the new chapel (North-East of the Abbey) and the rose garden with the mulberry grove at the end of the South Terrace were all part of this second phase that lasted from 1900 to 1902.³⁹ The third phase probably involved the Sunken Garden in 1903-1904. A final scheme was alluded to in April 1905, and Partridge was worried in proving to the Duke he could manage it alone. This is the year that Parsons had his knee operated on, a problem which might have compromised Parsons & Partridge obtaining this final commission. Another fact supporting the main argument of this thesis is that it was Parsons's designs that the clients wanted, not Partridge's.⁴⁰

The Duke of Portland telegraphed yesterday asking if he could come over and see me [Captain Partridge] here. My Wife wired back to say I was away but that she would be very pleased to show him round the garden. He replied it was so wet that he thought it would be better to come another time. I am rather wondering whether he has been thinking over the advice I gave him about the big scheme I mentioned to you. I should not be at all surprised if he does it. I feel pretty certain he will do it some day and I shall not be surprised to find that is principally what he wanted to see me about and to have a look at the garden to see whether I was competent to run a job of this sort alone. I am extremely glad I went down there the other day and if I can spare the time, I intend to go round all the jobs we have done.⁴¹

³⁹ If Marks doesn't want all the yews it would be worthwhile trying Welbeck but somehow I cant fancy 3' 6" yews there they would look lost, however if there are no others to be had one must make the best of it. (...) I heard yesterday from Parsons. He reached New York the 22nd Dec. and the letter took 10 days. He wrote on board I enclose a photo (please return it) of Welbeck it will show you what the place was like when we started there. The mound in front of E wing (where the flag is shown) was grass & the bank where the Temple (singers) now is was grass - You will see the [Dam?] wants alley ! (...) He wrote on board ship. I enclose a photo please return of Welbeck. [4th Jan 190[2] MsSRO 1/?]

⁴⁰ Parsons eventually recovered and was involved in landscaping Great Chalfield from 1907 to 1912.

⁴¹ 30th April 1905 MsSRO 1/6?

5.2.5 A description based on a site visit

Welbeck Abbey is often described as being one of the most secretive stately homes in the country. On the contrary, the author of this thesis was privileged to have been given all the assistance needed to help complete this research.

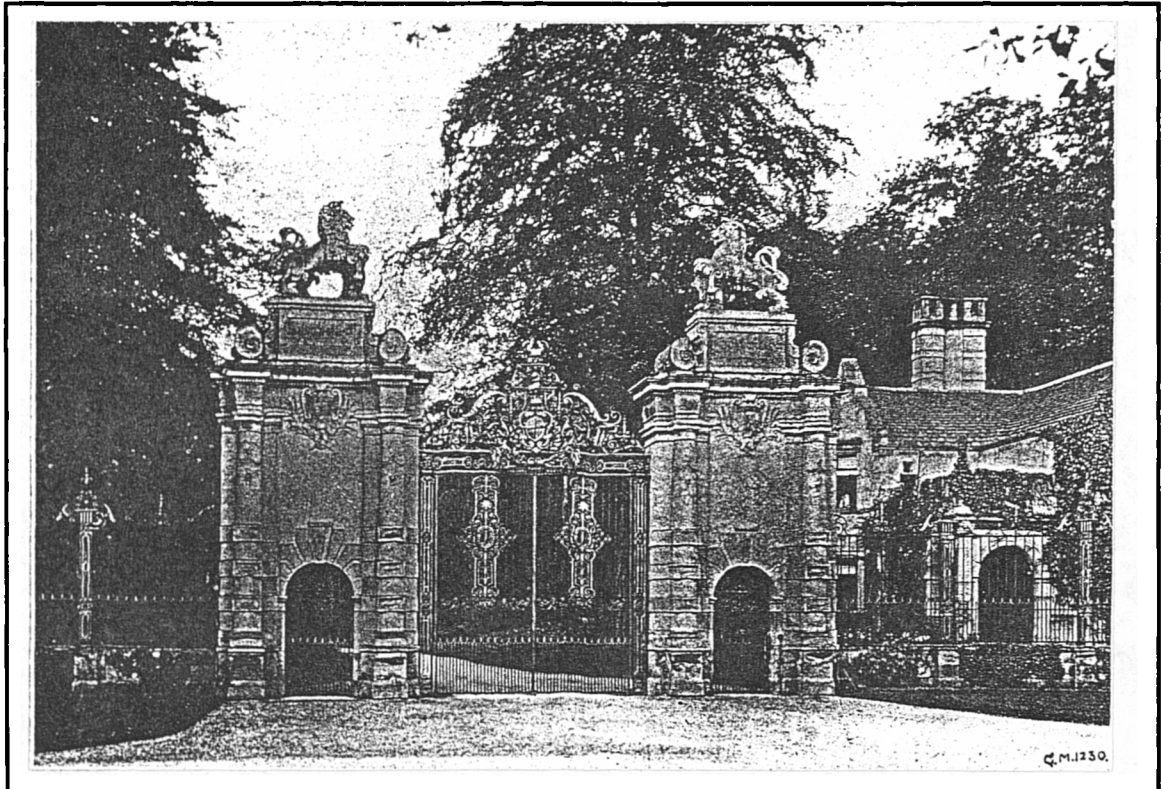


Figure 112 Principal Entrance to Park and Grounds, Welbeck Abbey. [*G. M.* 11 June 1910: 450]

Welbeck is an estate of some sixteen thousand acres. The major part of Welbeck Abbey, the principal building on the estate, is now occupied by the Northern Command Formation College, a sixth form College, most of whose grounds are private. Since 1946, this tenant has prevented major modifications to the grounds. The first floor of the East wing of the Abbey is now occupied by the family, Mr and Mrs William Parente.

It was the sixth Duke of Portland, K. G. (William John Arthur Charles James Cavendish-Bentinck), who commissioned Parsons and Partridge, in 1899 to landscape part of the grounds when Welbeck Abbey was still his private residence. The sixth Duke moved to Welbeck Woodhouse in the early nineteen-thirties. The gardens at Welbeck Woodhouse are not to be confused with those of The Welbeck Garden which surround the private house of the Lady Anne Bentinck, owner of The Welbeck Garden in trust. The Welbeck Woodhouse gardens, which are sometimes open under the National Garden Scheme, are not related to the work of Parsons and Partridge at Welbeck.

What strikes the visitor to The Welbeck Garden, is the scale of the surrounding landscape. It is comparable in size to that at Versailles. The modern approach to the Abbey is along old Gasworks Road now called Black Boxes Road. The main entrance to the building is still the West entrance. The Tan Gallop corridor is parallel to it on the West side of the Abbey.

The older and more formal entrance to the property is located some two miles away from the Abbey's front door. It gives onto the road from Worksop to Ollerton. The lodge gates here were erected in 1894.⁴² See figure 112.

It is said that the entrance road first winds itself through a thick wood on 'Manor Hills' which is covered in snow drops, daffodils and blue bells in the Spring. Then the view opens out, on top of the hill, towards the lake, the Abbey and to the wilderness where stands the 'Greendal oak'.⁴³ Coaches come down the hill which faces the East façade, and cross the lake at the South-East corner of the Abbey over a quasi-bridge (a dam over Shrubbery Lake). Then they go round the cricket ground, to finally reach the main door of the Abbey which is on the West front. No object distracts the viewer from this vast man-made landscape. The Manor Hills, covered with Lord Harley's wood, are part of the natural geography of the place. The illustration below shows the South façade in 1730.

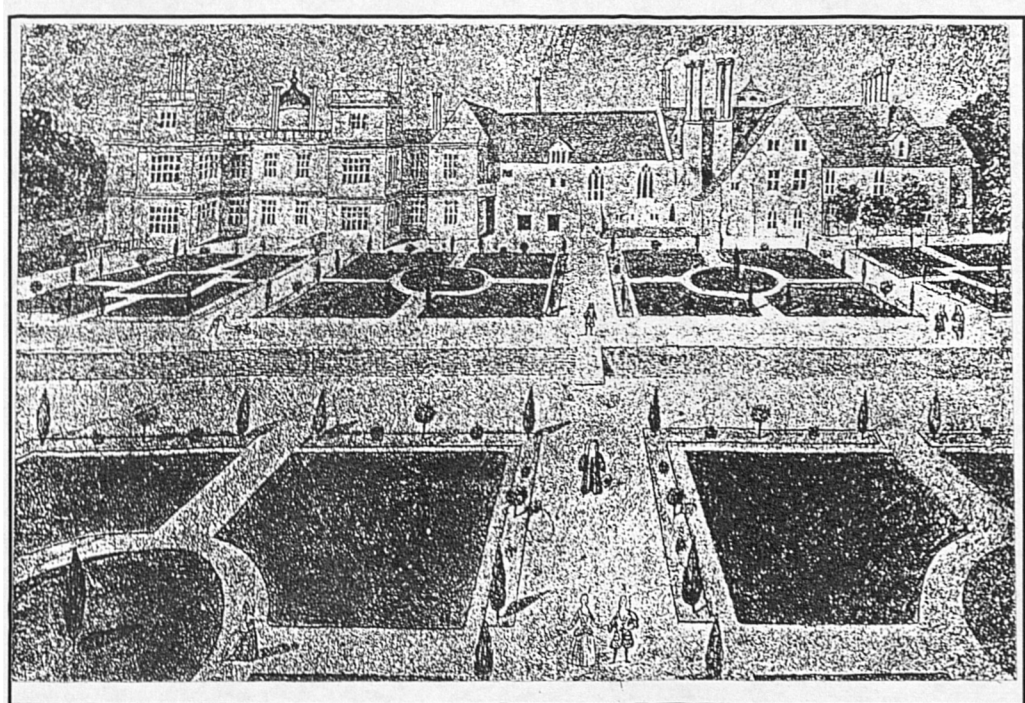


Figure 113 Welbeck Abbey from the south. C. 1730 [Thompson, 1938: 27.1]

⁴² "The lodge gates at the entrance to this drive, which were erected in 1894, are bold in design, of great beauty, and in keeping with the stately mansion and the noble park. The finely carved pillars and lions by which they are surmounted are of white stone, and the gates are of hammered iron." [*G.M.*, 11 June 1910: 450]

⁴³ The present author regrets not having been able to walk along this approach on a nice Spring day.

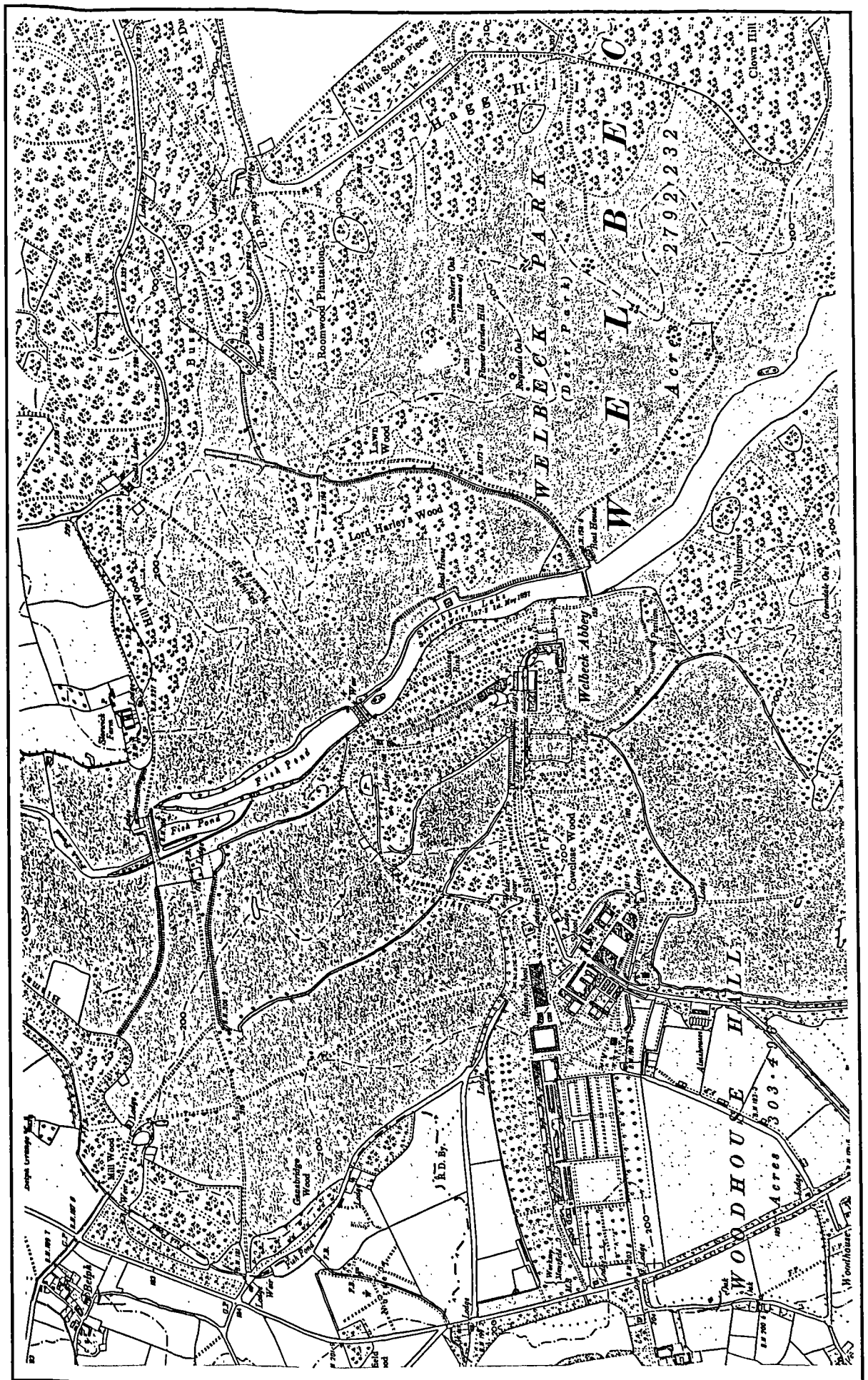


Figure 114 Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1888

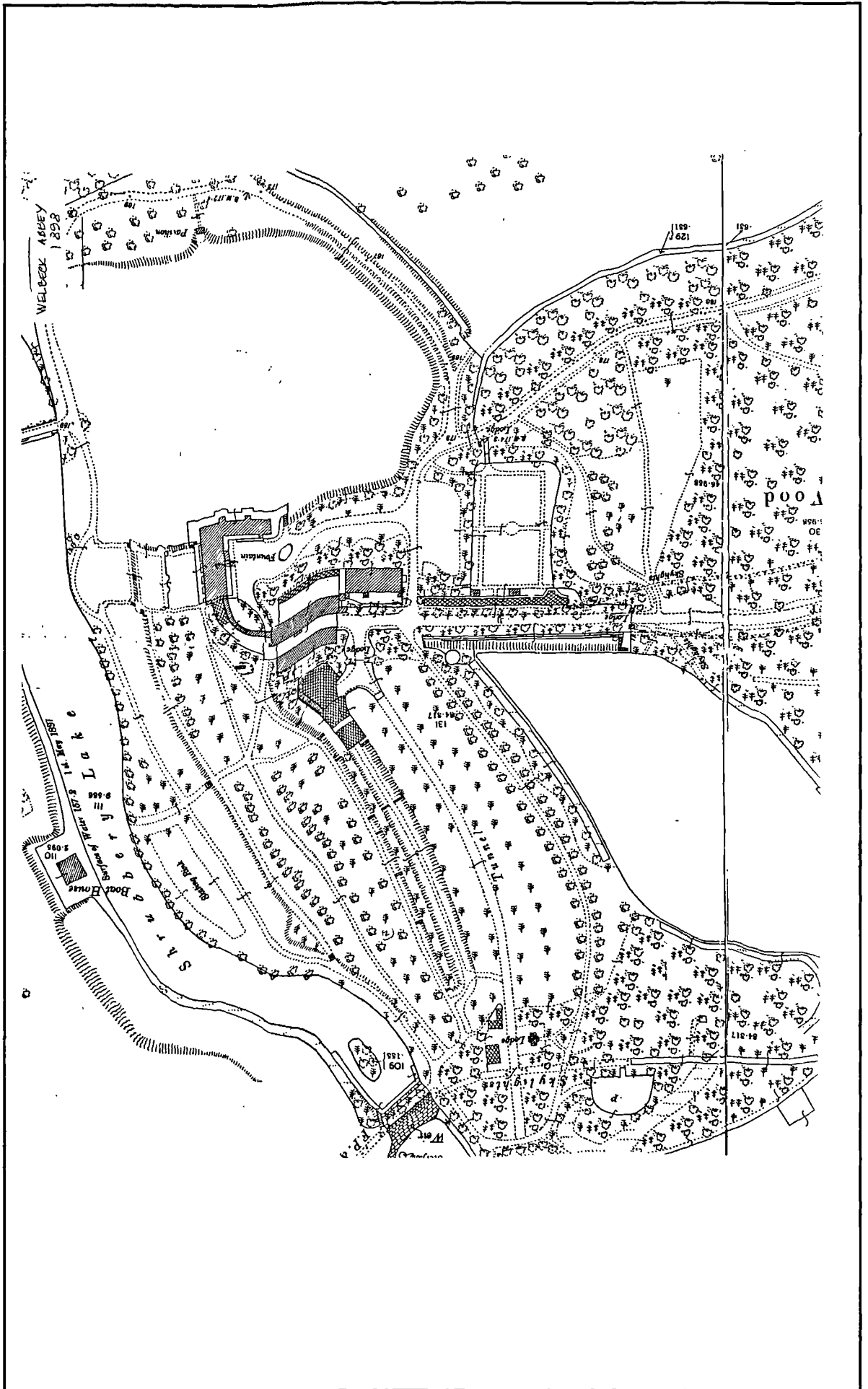


Figure 115 Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1898

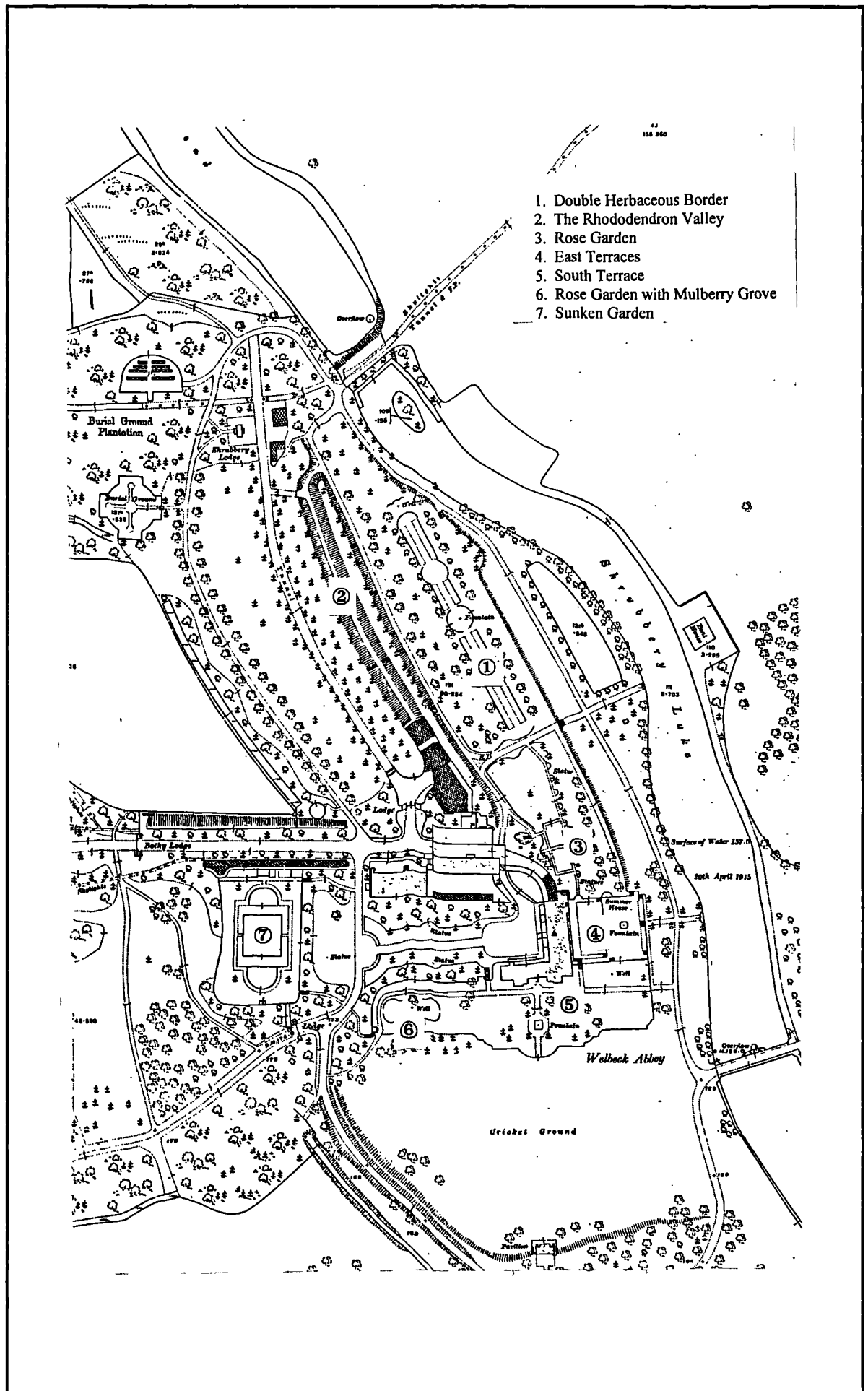


Figure 116 Welbeck Abbey. Ordnance Survey Map 1919

The porch, added to the East facade of the Abbey by Sir Ernest George in 1902, is now the private entrance to the family quarters (See figure 118). The Abbey is located along a 'Repton' lake, in a semi-valley with flat land to the North, West and South and in front of a hill to the East, across Shrubbery Lake. A post-card view shows the Abbey before the 1900 fire (figure 117). Although dated 1903, this photo was actually taken before 1900. Compare this image with that of figure 118 which shows George and Yeates' intervention of 1902.

From the North, turning around the Abbey, ending the panoramic turn on the South-East view, the illustrious Tan Gallop⁴⁴, the Sunken Garden, the Rhododendron Valley, the herbaceous borders and formal rose garden, the lake itself, the East Terraces, the South Terrace, the cricket ground, and the wilderness were all touched by the hand of a human designer (See figure 119 to figure 127).

⁴⁴ It was one of the longest of England. "An arcade of about 1,270 feet in length, covered in by 64,000 feet of glass; this, built for the exercise of horses in bad weather, cannot be equalled in Europe." [Warren, 1899: 630]

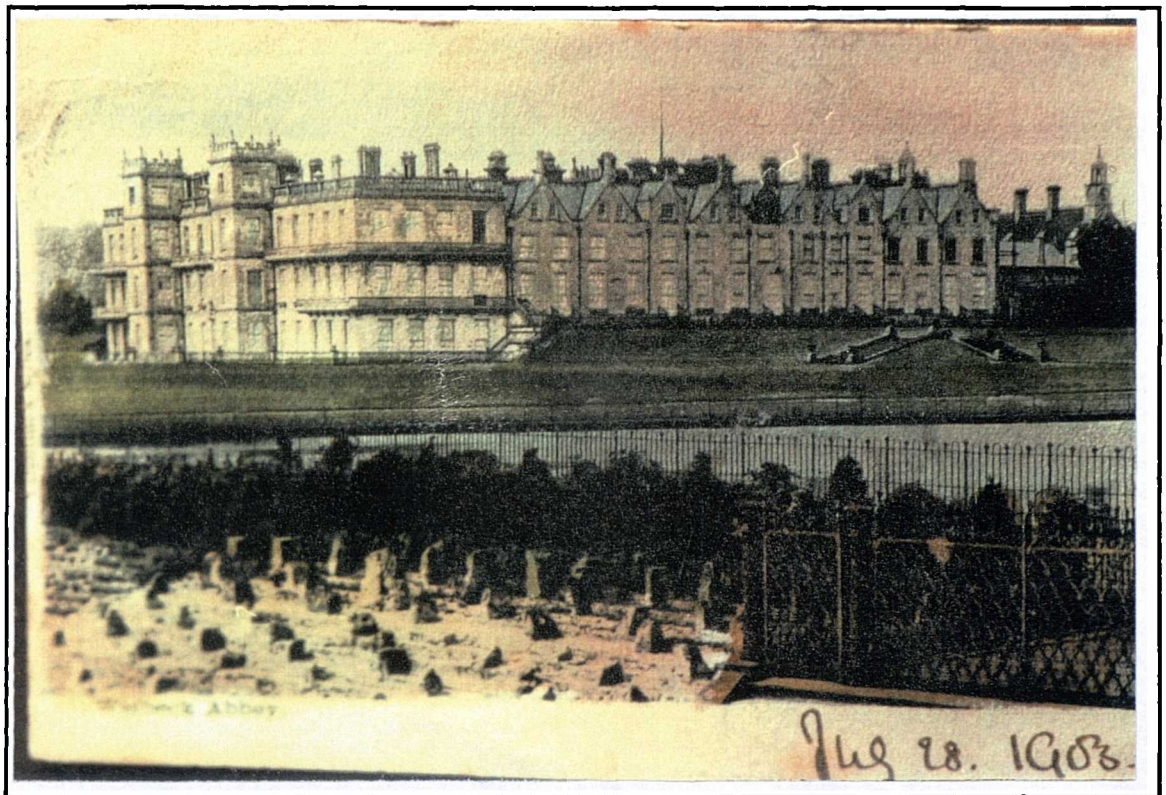


Figure 117 Welbeck Abbey. Postcard not dated. [1895?] Brent Elliott's collection.



Figure 118 Welbeck Abbey. Postcard not dated. [1905?] Brent Elliott's collection.



Figure 119 The Welbeck Garden looking North. The location of formal rose garden (now gone) in front and the beginning of the double herbaceous border in the foreground.



Figure 120 The Welbeck Garden looking North. Author's photograph 1995.

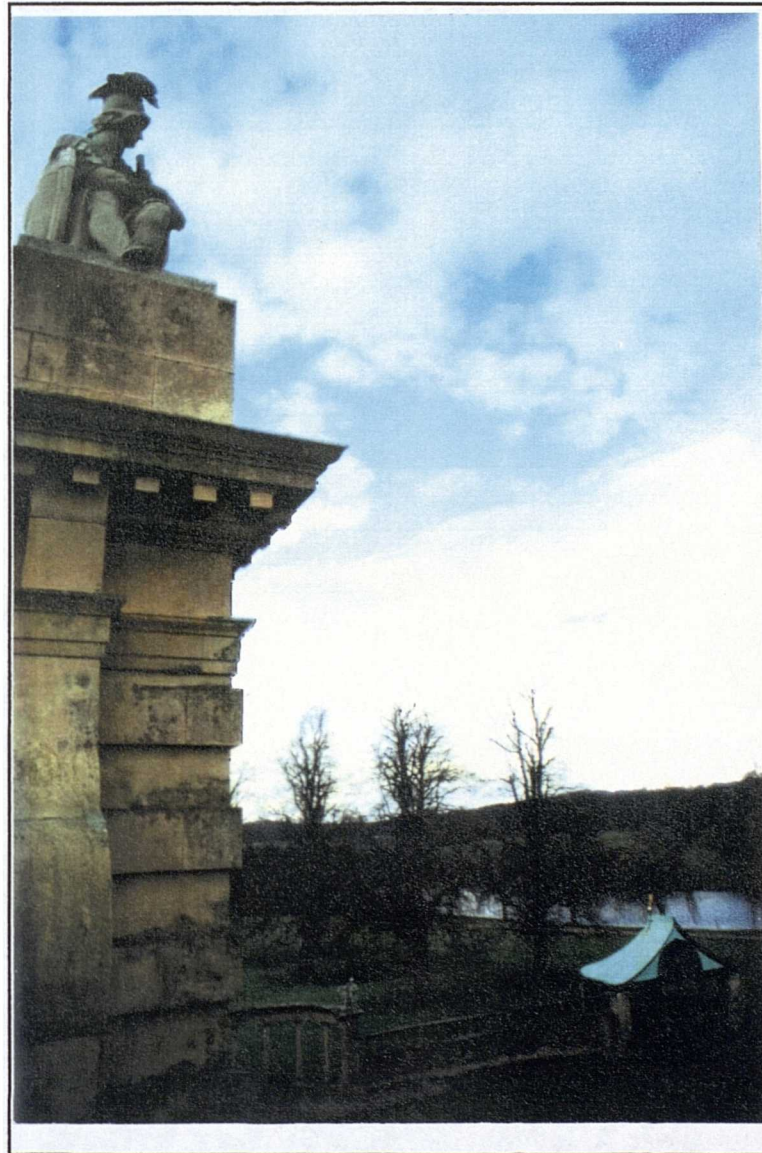


Figure 121 The Welbeck Garden looking North-east-East.



Figure 122 The Welbeck Garden. Summer House, front view.

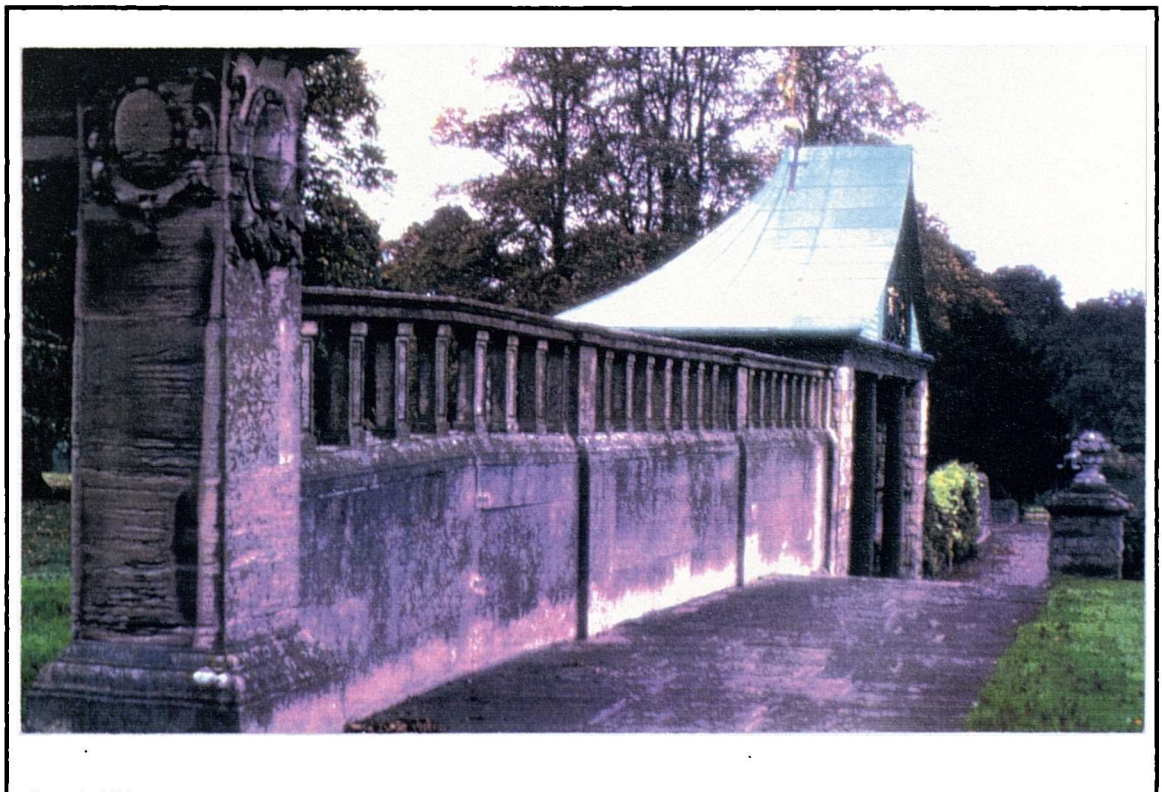


Figure 123 The Welbeck Garden. Ornamental wall dividing the East terraces from the North section.



Figure 124 The Welbeck Garden. The East Terraces.



Figure 125 The Welbeck Garden. Looking South-east at the modification to the East Terraces in 1995.



Figure 126 The Welbeck Garden. The South Terrace with the South-west Cricket Ground.



Figure 127 The Welbeck Garden. The South Terrace with the South-east Cricket Ground.

The 1888 edition of the Ordnance Survey map (figure 114) is included to show how very few modifications were done during the following ten years. It is well worth comparing the next two editions: 1898 (figure 115) and the 1919 (figure 116). Several differences are noticeable.

On the 1919 map, the pleasure grounds are greatly modified: starting from the West, hedges have been added on both sides of the front entrance, with statues, the sunken garden has a pergola walk added on with two large pools at each end. A temple has been added to the East end. The rose garden with the mulberry grove and well, have been created to the West of the new and enlarged East Terraces and these have been modified with the addition of a 'summer house', fountain and well. The path along Shrubbery Lake has been modified with the addition of an alley leading to the centre of the East Terraces. An additional formal rose garden is located near the Chapel and Titchfield Library building. Several trees and hedges have been planted along the Rhododendron Valley. More statues, a third fountain from Italy and a third well now decorated a new double herbaceous border are located between Shrubbery Lake and the Rhododendron Valley. Lastly a burial ground has been created at the end of the Rhododendron Valley, slightly to the West of it.⁴⁵ The siting of the Abbey itself has been modified according to the restoration work done after the fire of 1900. It is believed that most of these modifications to the garden shown on the 1919 Ordnance Survey map were the work of Parsons and Partridge. Although the previous description relates to the turn-of-the-century components of this garden, the sunken toilets (c. 1870), built by the fifth Duke, were certainly useful during the numerous garden parties given by the sixth Duke.

⁴⁵ This burial ground was for members of the family. For example, Parsons's advice was asked on the design of a funeral cross. See [15th April 1904] and [23rd April 1904] on page 319. It is believed that it was for Lord William A. (second son of Arthur, Lt.-General and Baroness Bolsover) who died unmarried in 1902. The content of this burial ground was moved to St Winifred's Chapel which had been built in 1910.

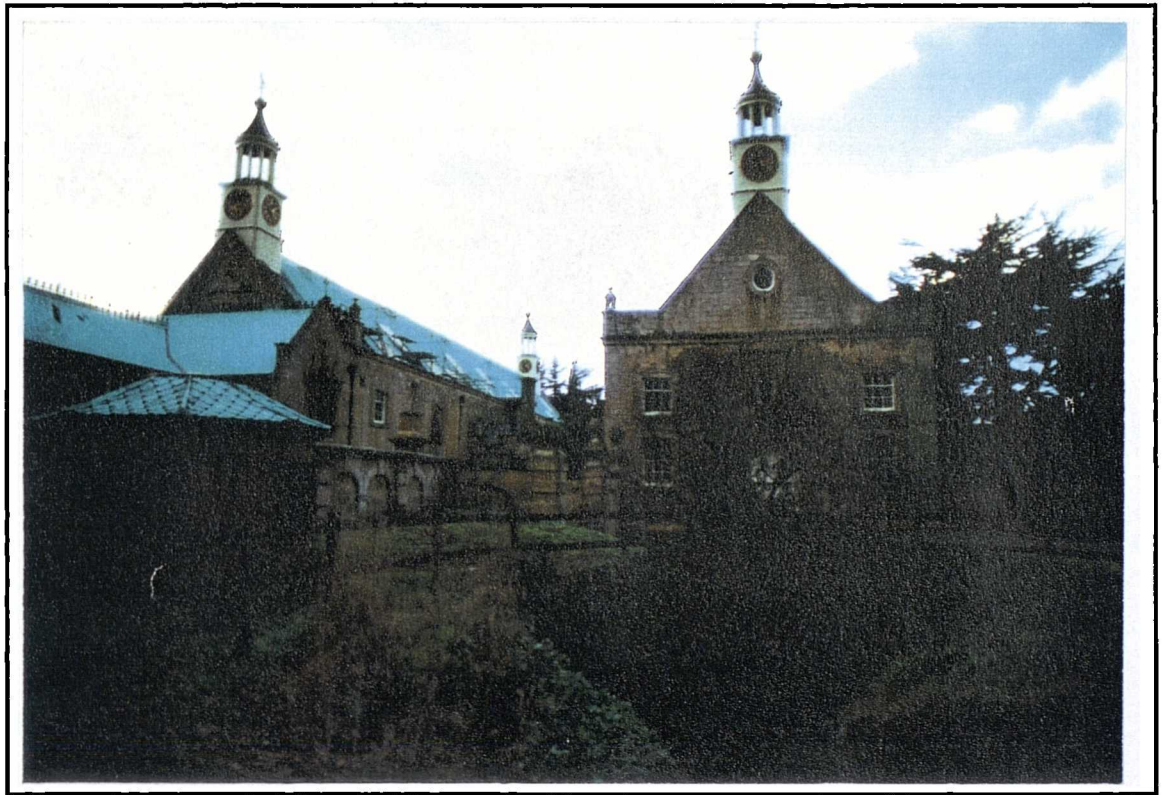


Figure 128 The Chapel and Titchfield Library to the left (in the old riding school built by Smythson in 1622) To the right, the 1749 kitchen wing. In the foreground: grotto entrance to the subterranean toilets.

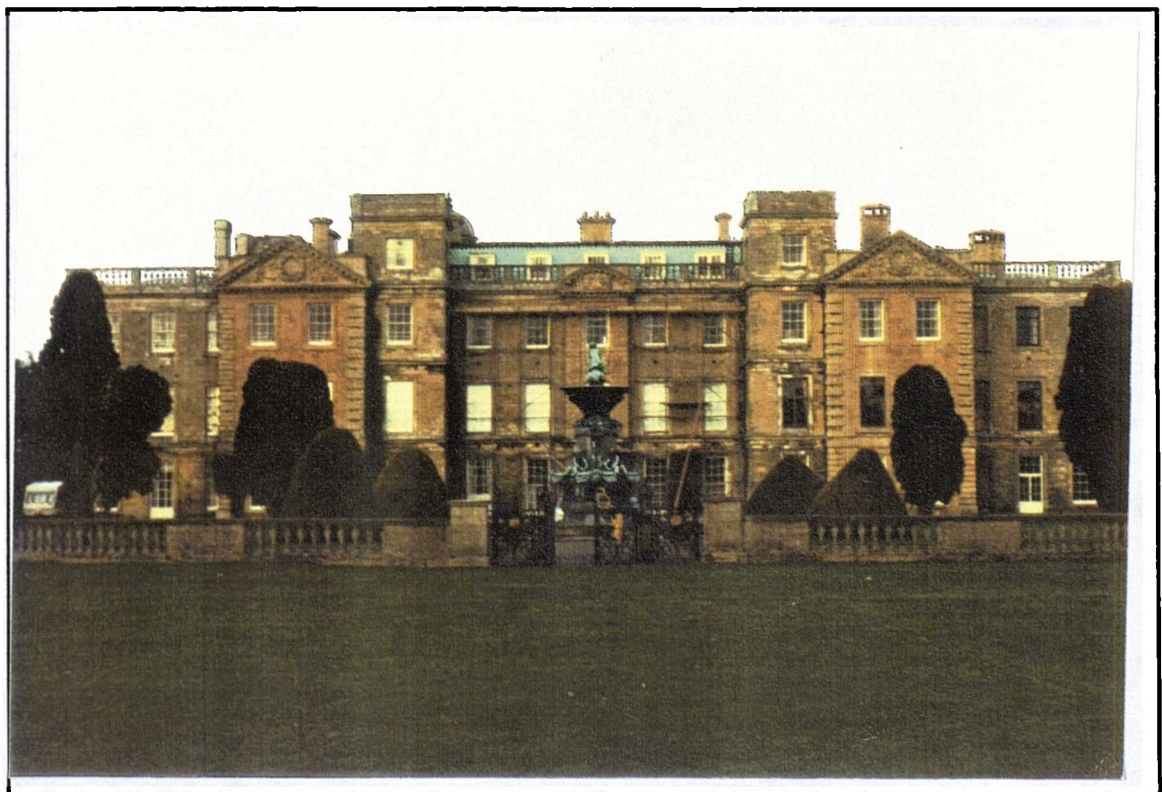


Figure 129 Welbeck Abbey. The Oxford Wing seen from the cricket ground.

5.2.6 Analysis of Parsons's contribution

A series of articles in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* in August 1891, twelve years after the sixth Duke succeeded, gives an extensive description of the gardens managed at the time by Mr Horton. A conservatory, vineries, pits, frames, propagating-houses and span-roofed greenhouses for cut flowers are all present. A sunken rose garden is described, also referred to, in other sources, as the Bachelor's Garden or the Duchess' Garden. The pleasure ground includes thousands of rhododendrons and shrubs, a long avenue of young limes, flower beds, an aquatic garden and a rock garden. The Rhododendron Valley leads to a succession of three sunken houses: the Palm House, the Rose House and the Camellia House.⁴⁶ More research is required to determine which of these features can be attributed to the fifth Duke. As the glasshouses, the Rhododendron Valley, the Sunken Rose Garden, and the Rose Walk are all mentioned as being part of the garden in May 1899, it is believed that Parsons and Partridge were brought in to modify the planting of some selected areas and to design the terraces in the immediate surroundings of the Abbey.

⁴⁶ *G.C.* Aug 15 1891: 185-6 with ill. Page 195 and Aug. 22, 1891: 215-6

5.2.6.1 The East and South Terraces

The first Parsons and Partridge commission was started after some other unknown designer had done work in the garden. Parsons and Partridge's terraces added to the South and East of the Abbey, enclosed by long balustrades, improved the scale of the design, and greatly enhanced the approach from the East. Formal gardens had existed on the East front of the Abbey, at least since 1730. (Figure 113) Parsons and Partridge's terraces were done in the Italianate style of the late Victorian period. The partners even collaborated on the finding of lead sculptures to adorn them.⁴⁷ Some of the lead figures in the following photograph were relocated on the balustrade. Only the last two seem to be in their original location. Vases from Impruneta, near Florence, still adorn the East Terraces. (Figure 134 and Figure 135)

It is interesting to compare three views of the East Terraces taken respectively in 1908 and 1910. The 1910 view is taken from the East terraces with the Abbey in the background. (figure 131) The author of this *Gardeners' Magazine* article, George Gordon, was not enthralled with the design of the planting:

On this terrace there is a magnificent fountain surrounded by formally cut hedges of golden yew, with spacious beds of roses, lilies, and various other subjects that find favour for flower garden embellishment at the present day.⁴⁸

This author seems to imply that the only quality of this planting design is its relation to the fashion of the day. He is more enthusiastic about other parts of the garden:

the magnificent borders of hardy herbaceous plants (...) Certainly one of the most attractive, of the many features of the Welbeck Abbey Gardens.⁴⁹

These two 1908 illustrations when compared to the 1910 *Gardeners' Magazine* suggest that Parsons, when designing, had in mind the view from top of the hill rather than the view from the Abbey. It is true that the East Terraces, as seen from the Abbey, presents a rather poor foreground feature when compared to the magnificent, vast and peaceful landscape beyond.⁵⁰ The other two figures (figure 132 and figure 133) both are taken with Shrubbery Lake in the background. This is definitely not the best example of Parsons's work at Welbeck. The present author would classify this design effect as a 'Geometrical scattering of bushes'. But

⁴⁷ See the following extracts in the section on page 316 : 9th July 1900 1/6; 16th July 1900 1/6; 4th July 1901 1/3.

⁴⁸ *G. M.* 11 June 1910; 451

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ This assumption made by the present author could only be confirmed by Parsons's own writing on the subject.

no coloured views have come to light. Lady Rockley in 1938 wrote that “the formal layout below the house itself presents a remarkable show”⁵¹ but she failed to give an illustration. Holme, who chose these illustrations, wrote in his ‘Notes on the illustrations’ that:

The intention which has directed the choice of these illustrations (...) has been to show chiefly what may be defined as the pictorial successes of gardening, the instances in which the details of a rightly planned design have come into absolutely correct agreement.⁵²

But writing specifically about the Welbeck views he went on adding that:

The flower garden is laid out in a formal pattern, but the smallness of the beds relatively to the total amount of space over which they are distributed causes this pattern to seem disjointed, and the absence of boundary hedges and defined paths increases the feeling of disconnection. (...) Great places like this are, in fact, less gardens in the true meaning of the word than parks into which some of the details of garden design have been introduced. (...) Even when there is some concentration of details, as in the East Garden at Welbeck, the immensity of the place cannot be forgotten and the idea that comfort has been sacrificed for the sake of magnificence persistently obtrudes.⁵³

It is unfortunate that Holme did not choose to also show the herbaceous borders or even better, the Rose Garden or the Sunken Garden at Welbeck so as to better balance our overall impression of Parsons’s talent. Parsons’s name was not mentioned.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Rockley, 1938: 210

⁵² Holme, 1908: xxi

⁵³ Holme, 1908: xxxvi

⁵⁴ Parsons’s name was however mentioned in an article about Shiplake Court in Oxfordshire in 1906. [*Country Life* v.20, 1906: 594-602]



Figure 130 The Welbeck Garden. The East Terraces looking South. Spring 1995, lead figures.

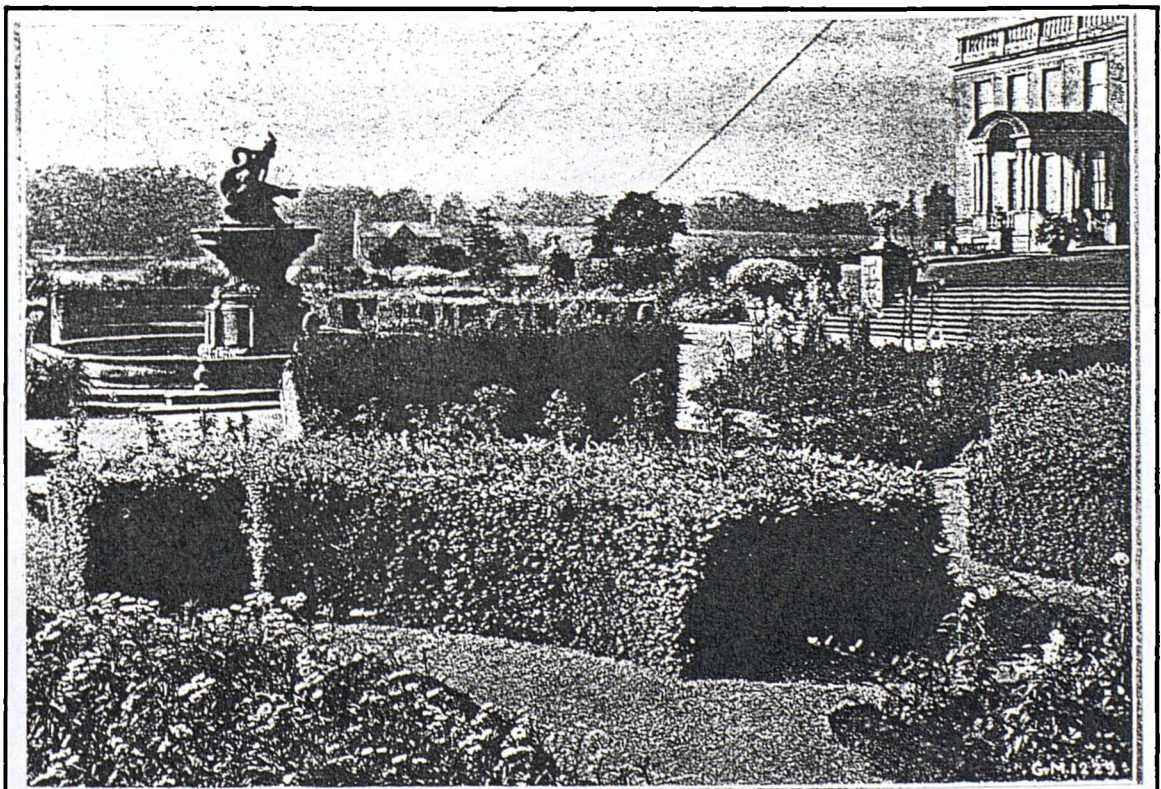


Figure 131 The Welbeck Garden. Hedges of Golden Yew and Flower Beds on East Terraces. [G.M. 11 June 1910: 451]

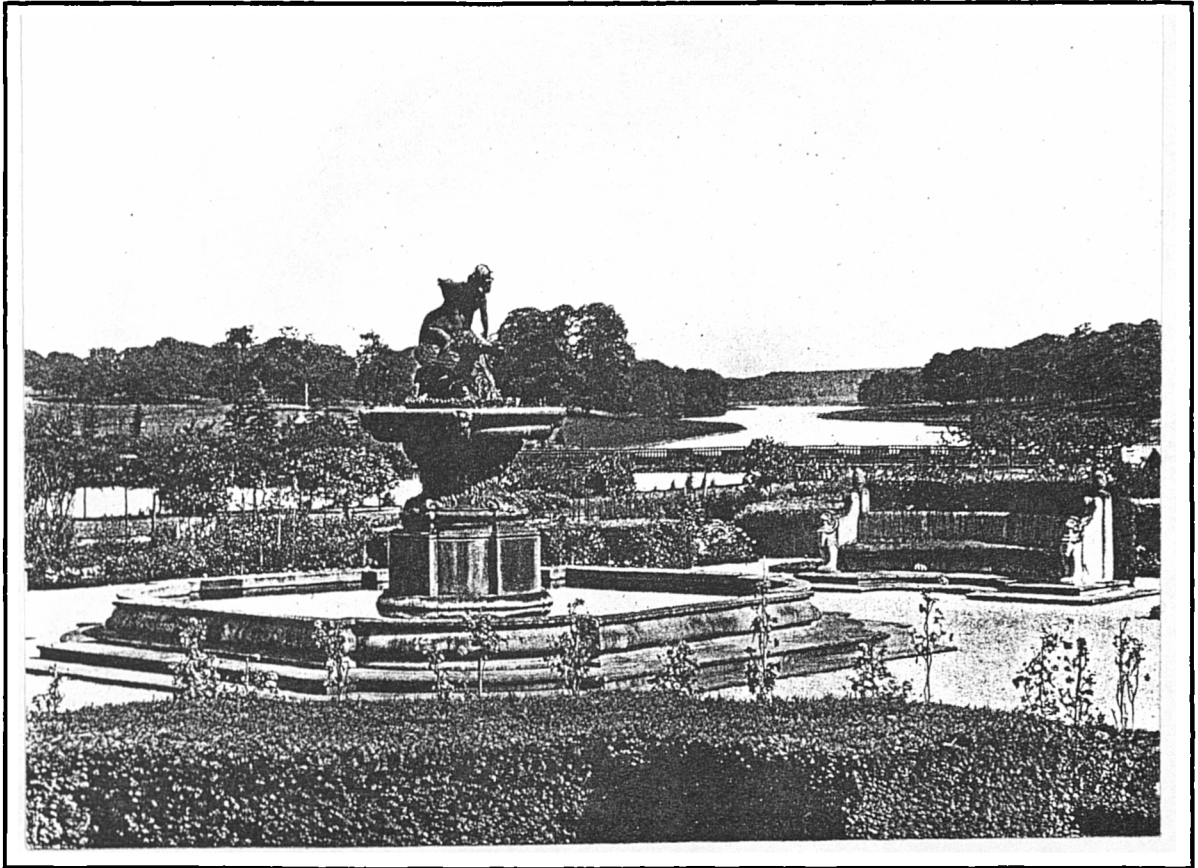


Figure 132 East Terraces and Fountain at Welbeck Abbey. [Holme, 1908: plate CXXV]

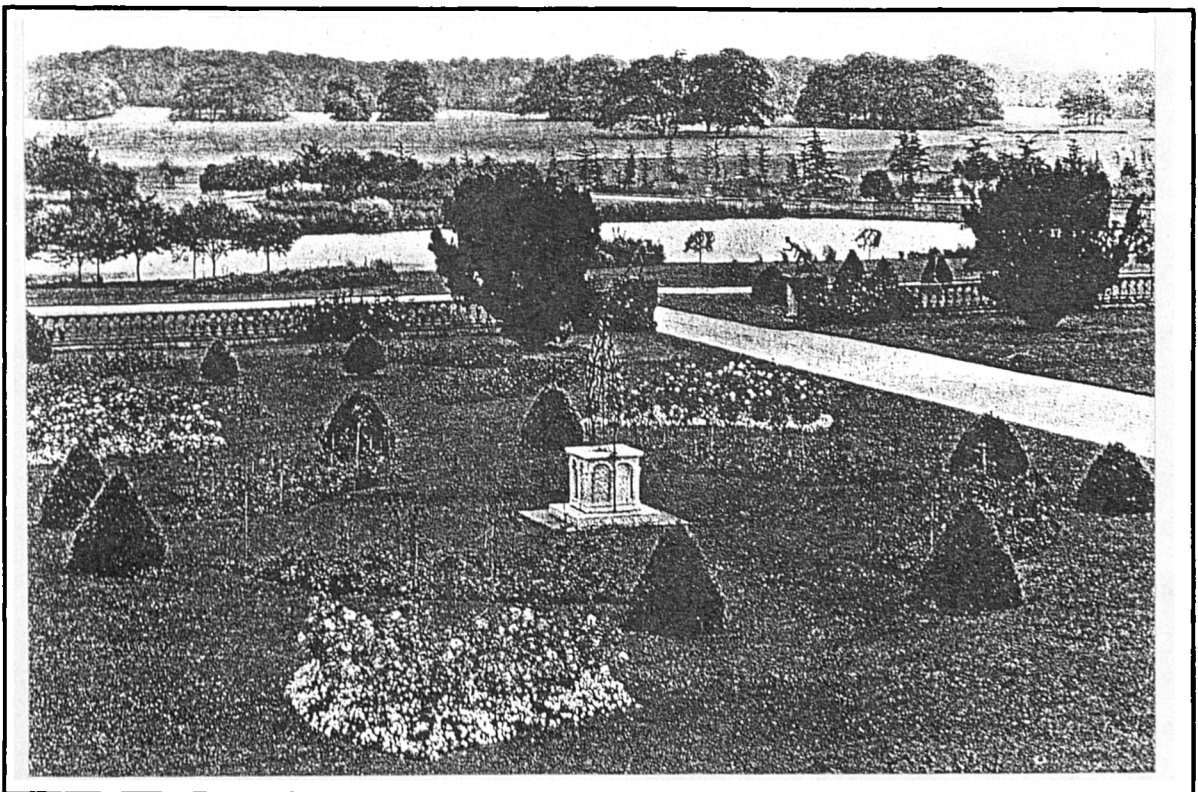


Figure 133 Flower Garden and Venetian Well at Welbeck Abbey. [Holme, 1908: plate CXXIV]



Figure 134 The Welbeck Garden. East Terraces looking towards the Abbey. Alley adorned with Italian vases.



Figure 135 Italian vase from Impruneta. Detail.

If one compares the East Terraces with the following view of Shiplake Court in Oxfordshire, the late Victorian taste related to the creation of these two gardens becomes obvious. Shiplake Court was also a Parsons's garden done in the same period for the stockbroker Robert H. C. Harrison. As mentioned, Parsons was very 'flexible' and would adapt his landscape gardening decisions to the place, the client's taste and the budget. It is important for the argument of this thesis to understand that Parsons was not only linking himself to the past, to 'merry old England' as argued by Helmreich, but that he was truly a man of his time.

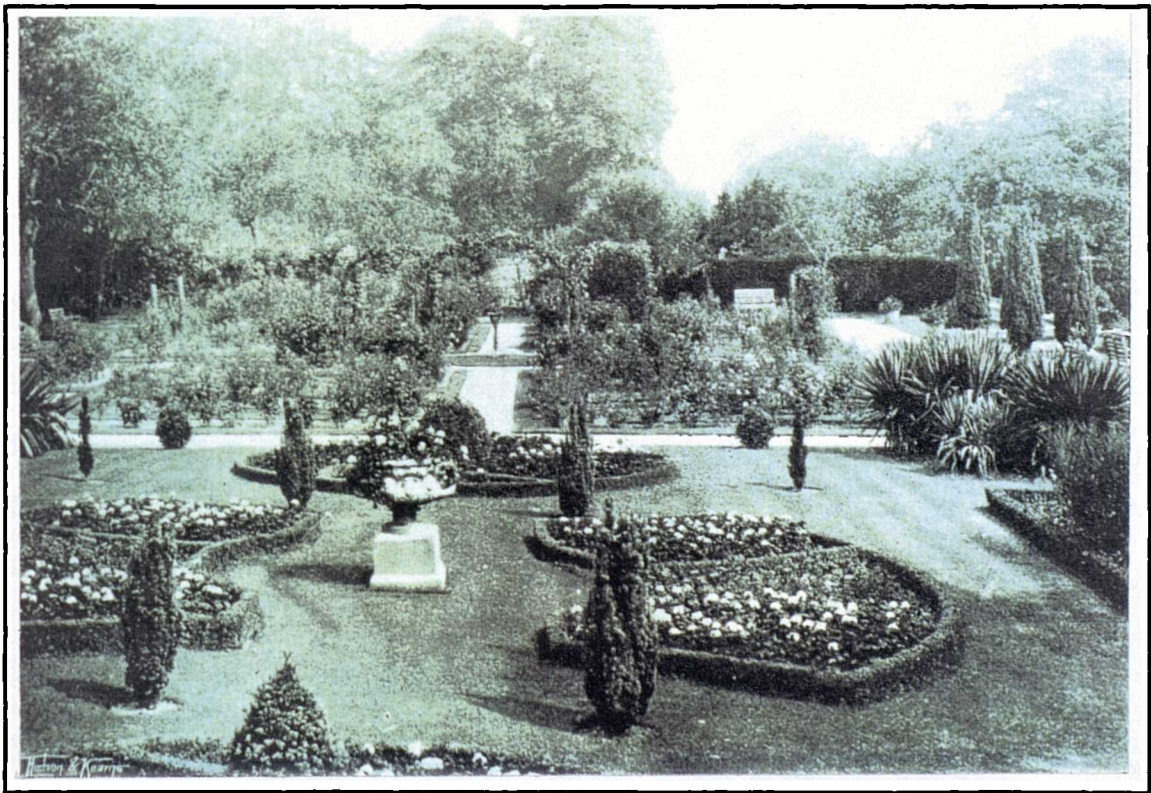


Figure 136 Shiplake Court. *Country Life*. 27 Oct 1906

5.2.6.2 The Double Herbaceous Border

In figure 121 the start of the double herbaceous border is at the top part of the photograph. In an article on herbaceous borders, Thomas Hay mentioned the abundant scope for freshness and novelty in the effective arrangement of herbaceous borders. Two gardens were chosen to illustrate his views, Hopetoun House's garden and The Welbeck Garden:

If there is a choice of position in the garden the border should be a winding one, and it should be fronted with a broad belt of grass, as is shown in the photo of a portion of one of the fine borders recently planted [1909] at Welbeck, and appearing in this issue. If the background should be of high trees or shrubs the position may be considered ideal.⁵⁵

This effectively was the case at Welbeck and beyond the yew hedges and the trees lay Shrubbery Lake. It took the author almost an hour to walk in a leisurely manner from the East Terraces all the way to the North end of the border. In the past the effect of the flowers along this peaceful 'river' lake must have been sumptuous. Along the border were statues, now gone, which have been replaced by temporary equipment related to the physical activities of the students of the sixth form Welbeck College. At the North end of the border there was probably another fountain or sculpture effectively framed in an alcove of yews. The surviving yews have been cut shorter than they would have been in 1910. Fortunately their line of planting is still obvious thus making the reconstruction of the alcove possible.

⁵⁵ *The Gardeners' Magazine*, 1909: 803

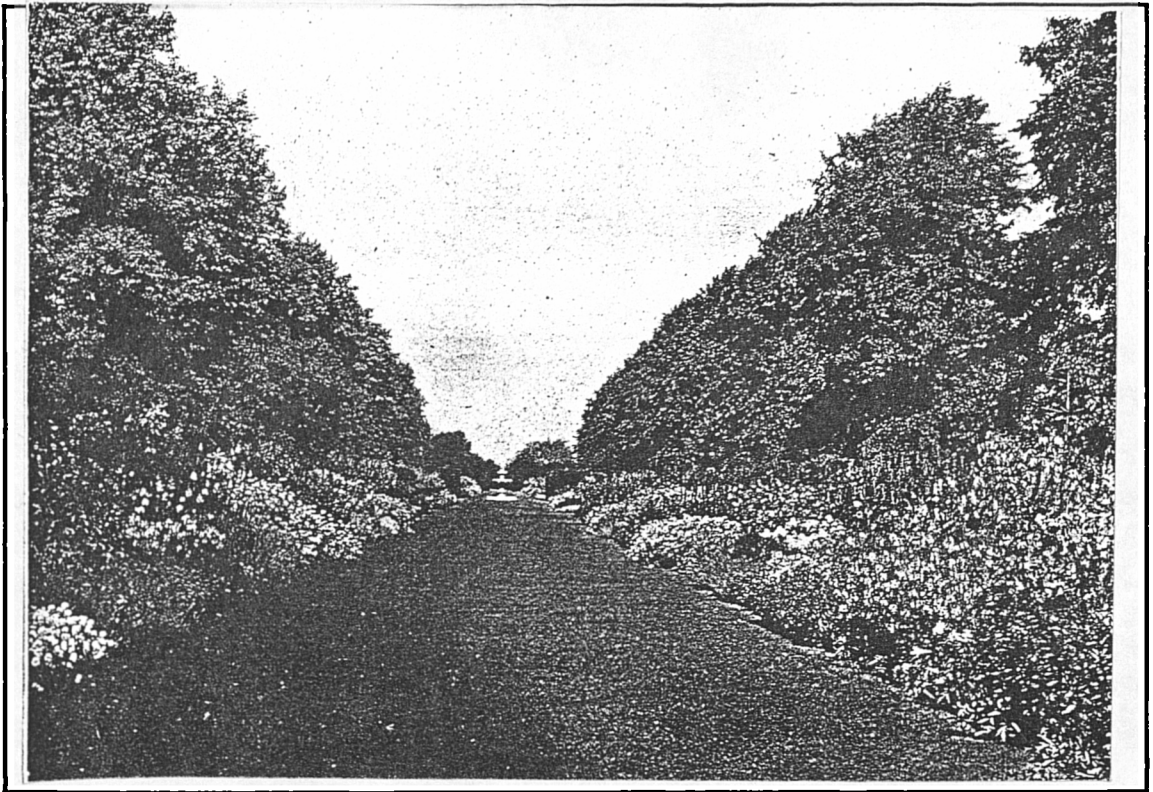


Figure 137 "Borders of Hardy Flowers at Welbeck Abbey." [G. M. 11 June 1910]

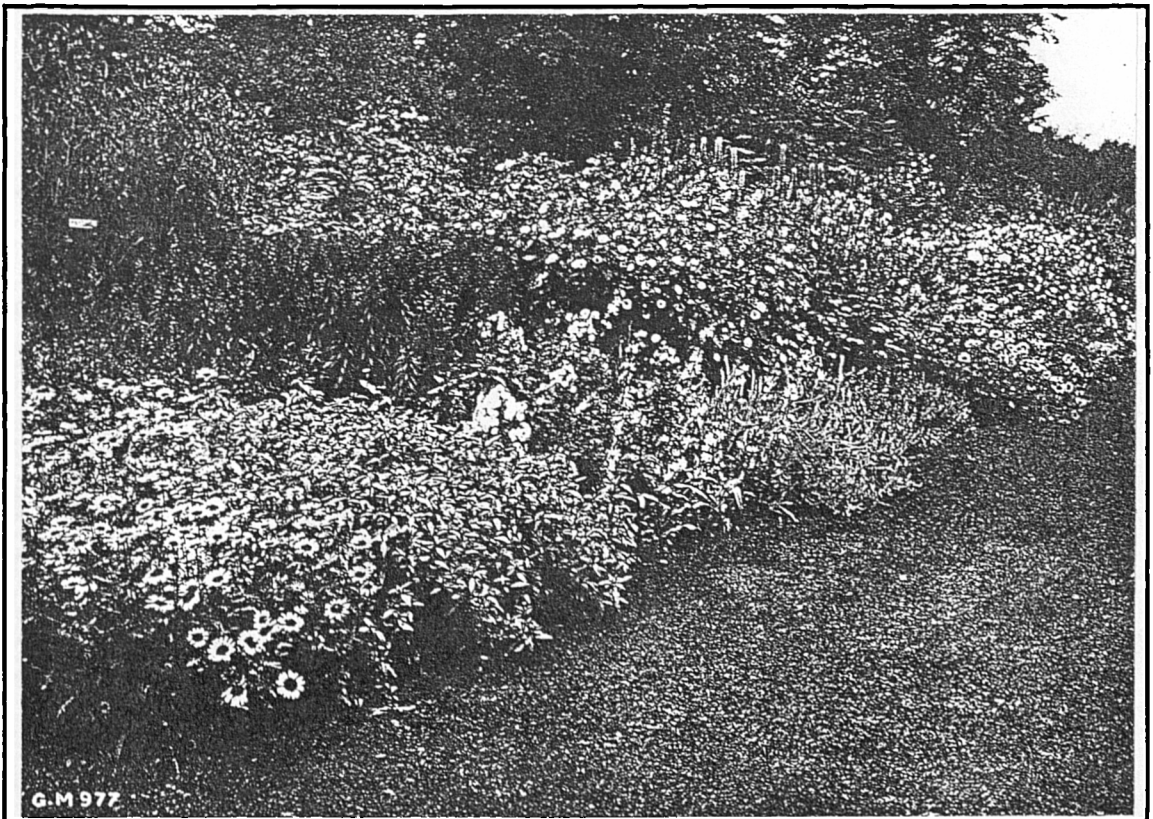


Figure 138 "A Portion of One of the Herbaceous Borders, Welbeck Abbey. The Seat of the Duke of Portland." [G. M. 16 October 1909: 802]

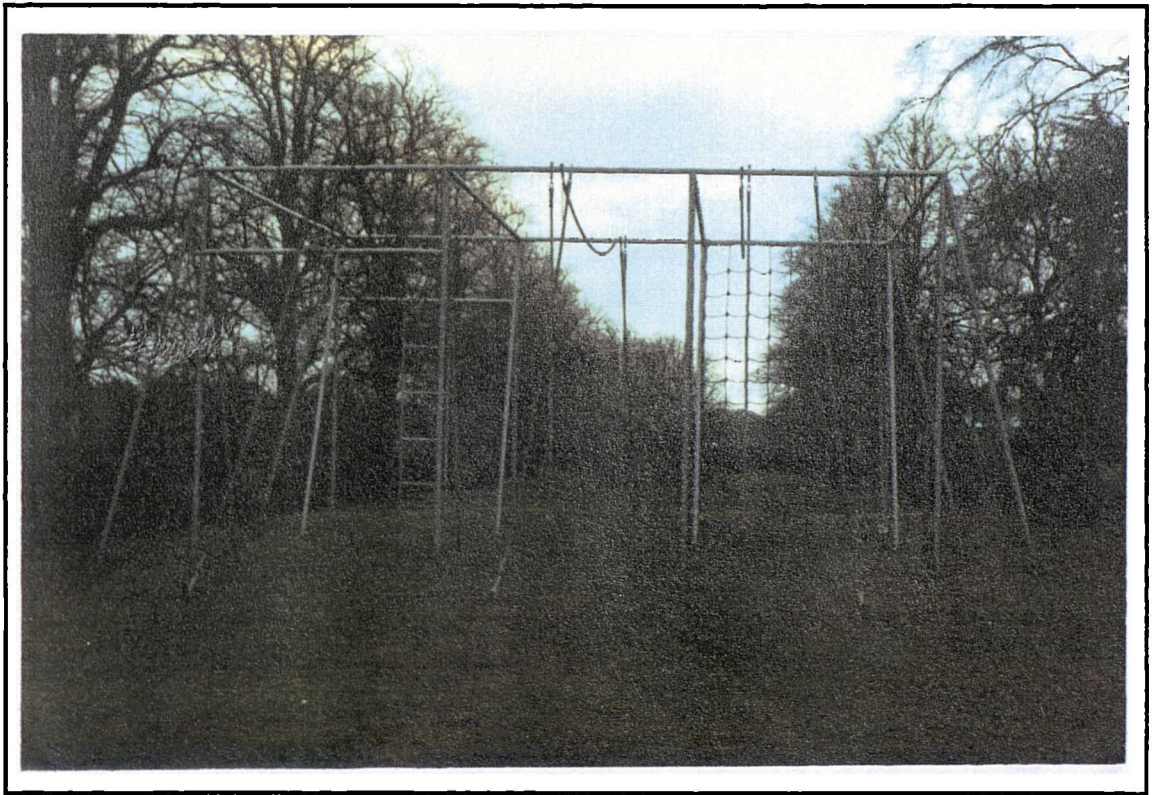


Figure 139 Temporary equipment elevated in the middle of the double herbaceous border. (North of border)



Figure 140 The Welbeck Garden. Hardy flowers between the Double Herbaceous Border's former location, and the Rhododendron Valley.



Figure 141 The Welbeck Garden. Spring 1995. The Italian Fountain: centre of the Double Herbaceous Border.



Figure 142 The Welbeck Garden. Acronyms at the Base of Fountain brought from Venice in 1901.

5.2.6.3 The rose garden with the mulberry grove.

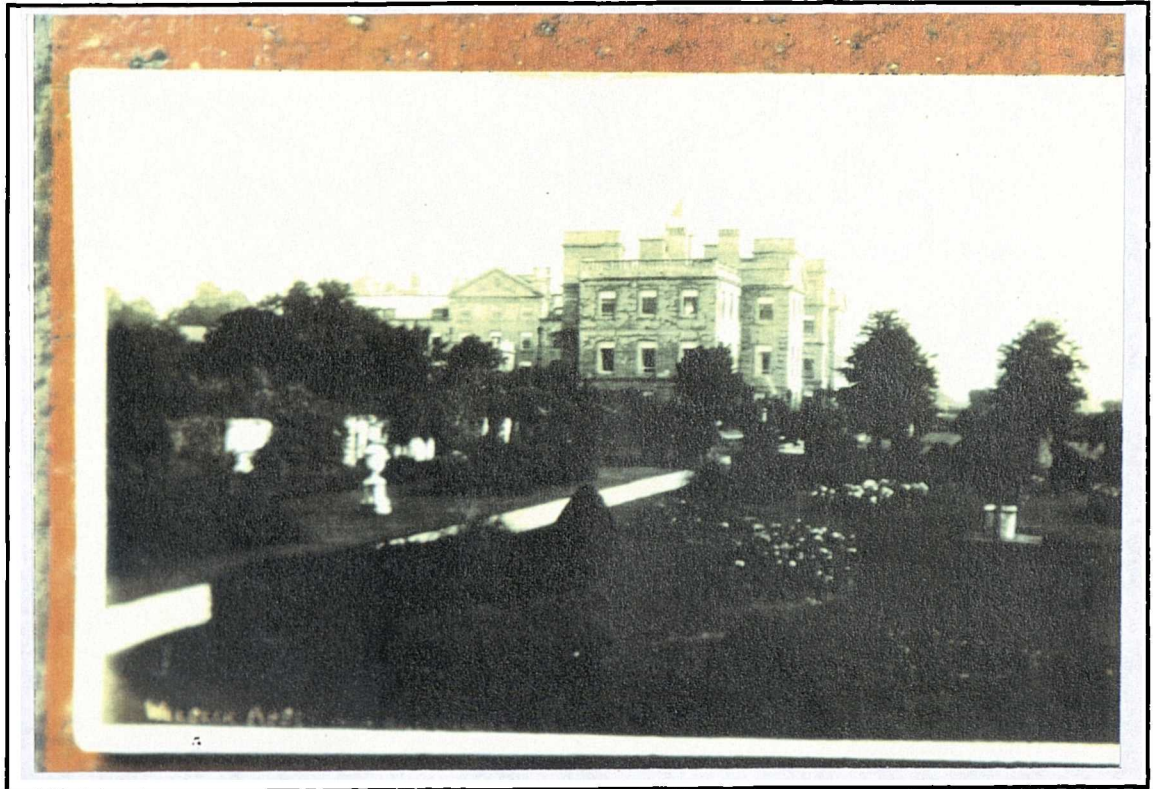


Figure 143 Welbeck Abbey. The Rose garden with the Mulberry grove. Brent Elliott's post card collection. [1910?]

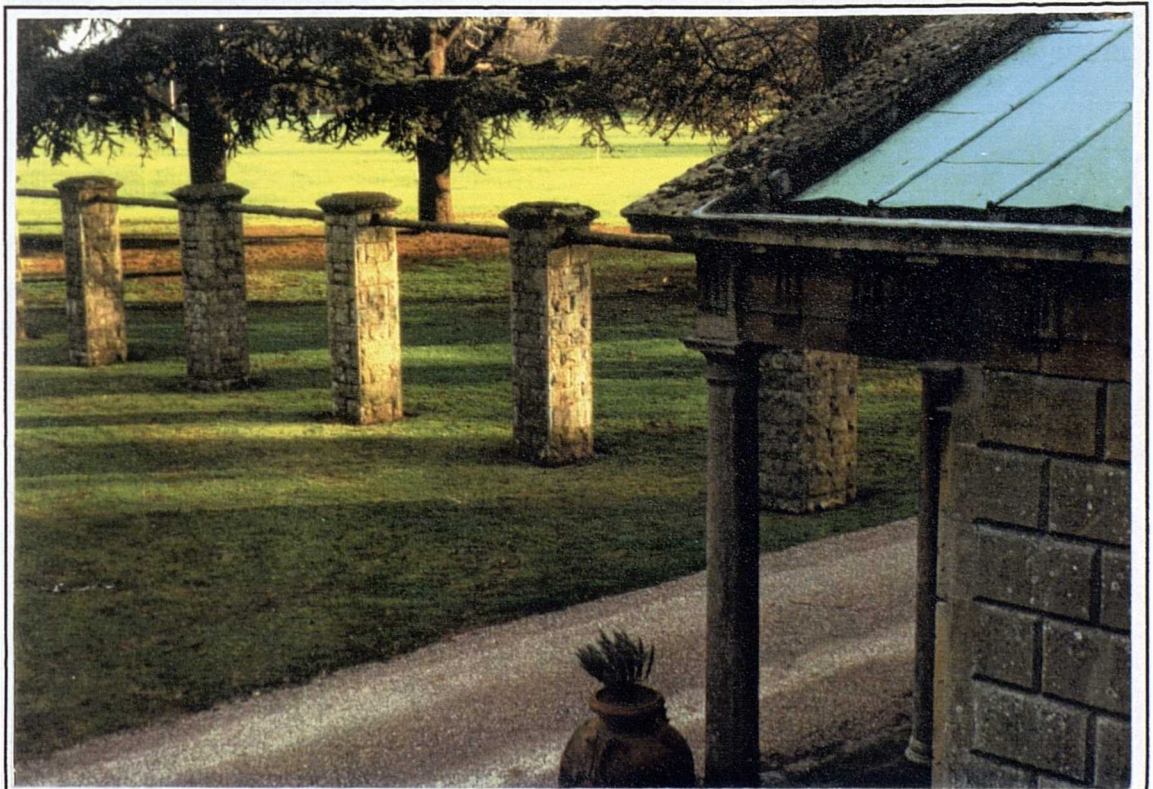


Figure 144 Welbeck Abbey. East side of the Rose Garden with the Mulberry Grove, looking at the South Cricket Ground.

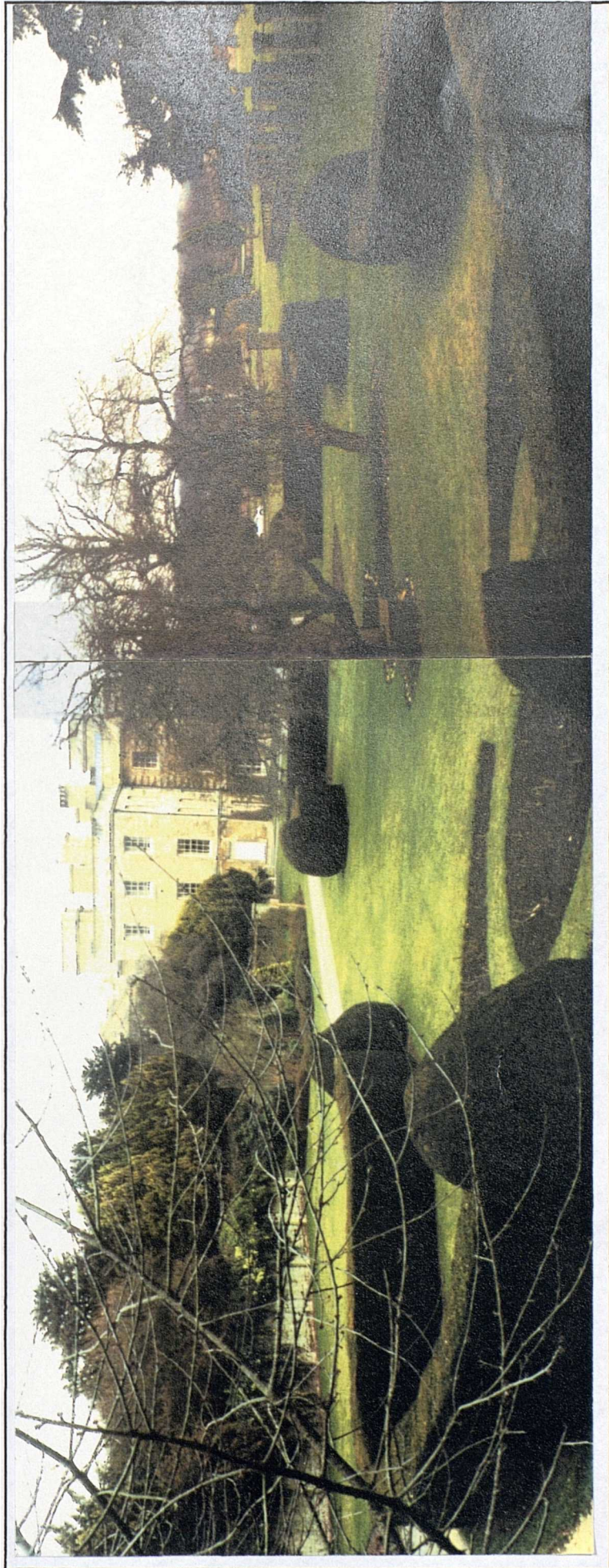


Figure 145 Welbeck Abbey. East side of the Rose Garden with the Mulberry Grove.



Figure 146 The two pergolas enclosing the Rose Garden. Seen from the South Terrace.

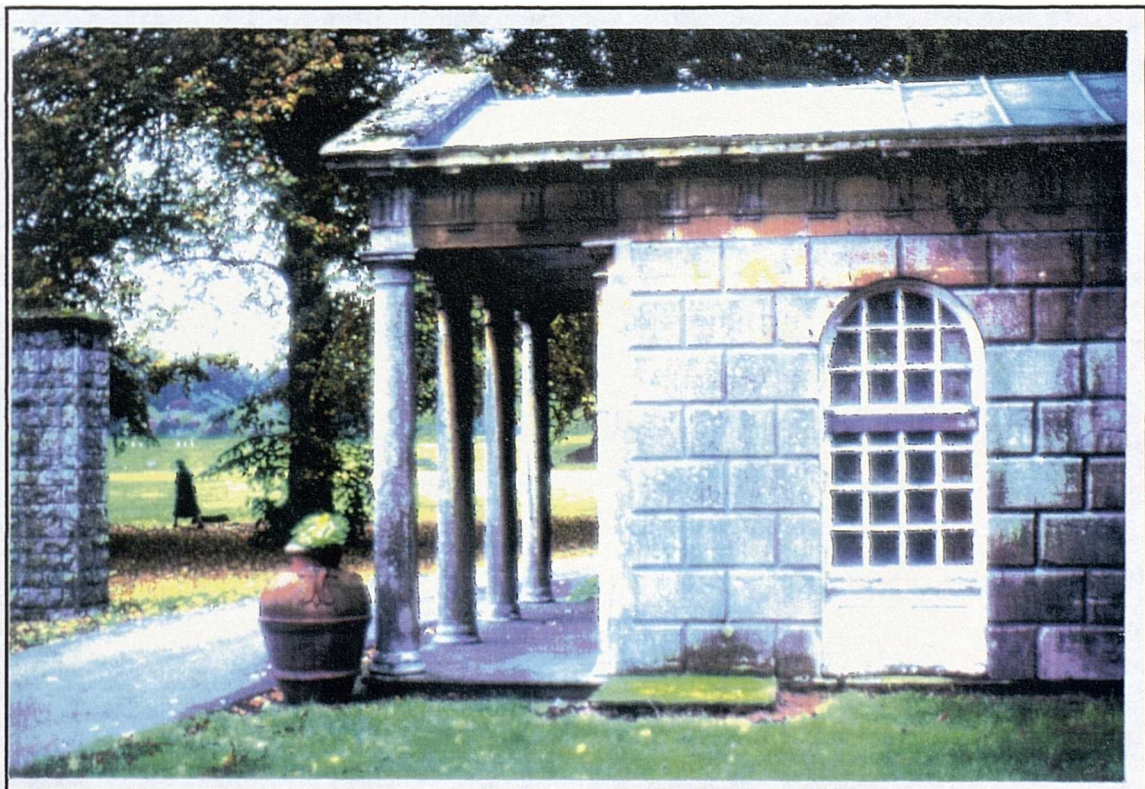


Figure 147 The Rose Garden. The Summer House. [Date unknown] Looking to the Cricket Ground.

The rose garden is relatively the smallest enclosed garden of the Welbeck Garden.⁵⁶ Two pergolas are still in place. One to the South, divides the garden from the Cricket Ground, the other separates this rose garden from the South Terrace in front of the Abbey. Like the Sunken Garden, this rose garden is secluded and offers to the visitor a good relation to the human scale. This is where one can get the closest to a feeling of cosiness or intimacy in the gardens at Welbeck. Partridge thought that this was a perfect design, absolutely original with its grove of mulberries worked into it.⁵⁷ Like hawthorns, mulberry trees are imbedded into the English tradition.⁵⁸ Three of the original four mulberry trees have survived.

⁵⁶ Consult the OS map on page 286.

⁵⁷ 22nd Jan 1900 MsSRO 1/7

⁵⁸ Gordon, George. 'The Mulberry Tree' *The Gardeners' Magazine*. Dec 1894: 762-4

5.2.6.4 The Sunken Garden

The sixth Duke of Portland, upon his arrival at Welbeck in 1879, found an area that had been dug out for the foundation of a future sunken 'bachelor's room'. It had been started by the fifth Duke, and was stopped by his death.⁵⁹



Figure 148 The Sunken Garden. Christopher Stannard painting. Private collection.

The Sunken Garden, previously known as the Bachelor's Garden, covers two acres in area and measures 120 yards by 80 yards. It is among the best work done by Parsons and Partridge between 1899 and 1905. See figure 148, a detail from a Christopher Stannard painting.⁶⁰ From around 1880 to 1900, when Pulham was brought in, this area became a rose garden known as the Duchess Garden. The present author assumes that Parsons designed the paths, pergola, and pools, as the details are quite similar to other gardens designed by Parsons, for example at Callis Court.

⁵⁹ "Bentinck-Scott, William John Cavendish, fifth Duke of Portland (1800-1879) (...) He succeeded to the title of marquis of Titchfield, and to the seat of the late marquis in parliament as member for the borough of King's Lynn (...) He succeeded to the dukedom in March 1854, but did not take the oaths and his seat until 5 June 1857. (...) By assiduous care he succeeded in bringing the demesne and grounds of Welbeck Abbey to a high degree of perfection, his hothouses and greenhouses being reputed the best in the kingdom." [DNB]

⁶⁰ Private collection.

Perhaps Parsons added in the South summer house and moved or rebuilt the North one.⁶¹ This is all based on assumptions linked to the length of time Parsons and Partridge were involved with the Welbeck Garden. The present author in particular refers the reader to the correspondence of 1903-1904-1905.⁶²

In my humble opinion this last bit of work is going to make more show and effect than any alterations we have yet carried out.⁶³

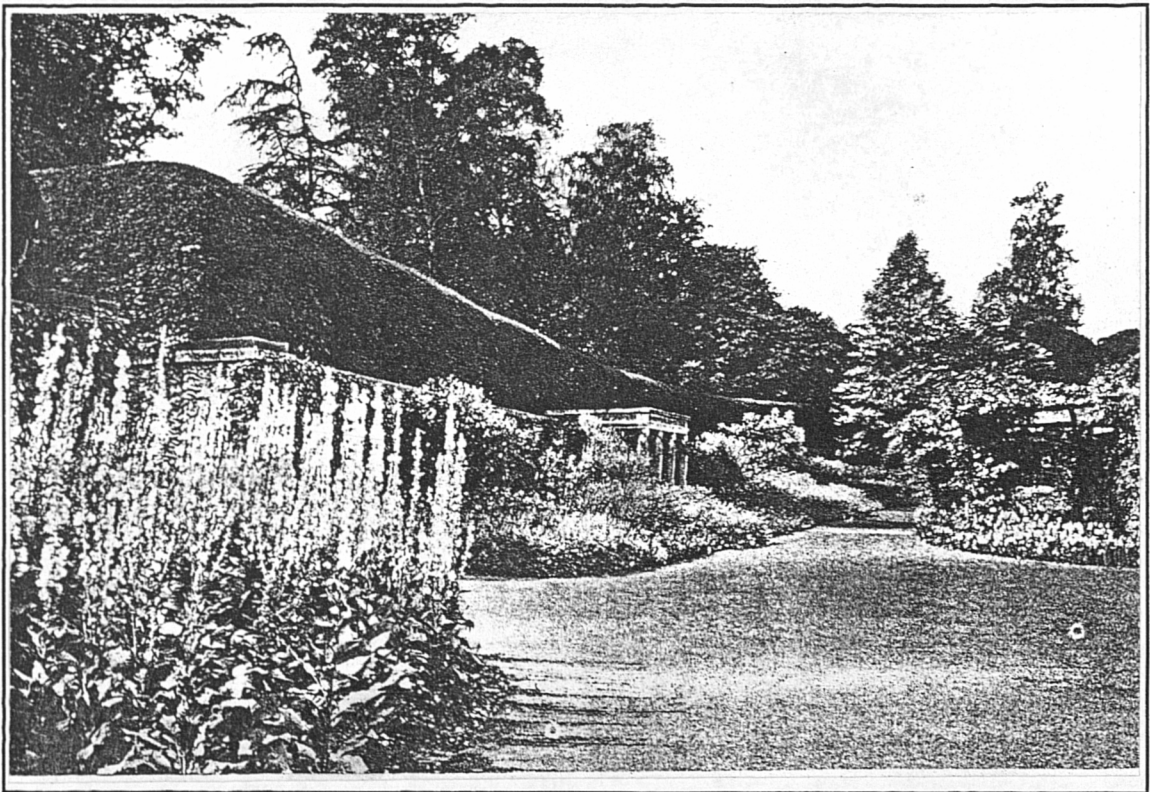


Figure 149 “[The Sunken Garden] herbaceous borders 120 yards and 80 yards long respectively, which provide magnificent displays.” Rockley, 1938: 210, plate 71

⁶¹ Mrs Sally Festing is currently doing research on the Pulham firm. She believes that they built the pergola, but no specific drawings by Pulham have surfaced as yet.

⁶² See the following section.

⁶³ 28th Feb 1903 MsSRO 1/5

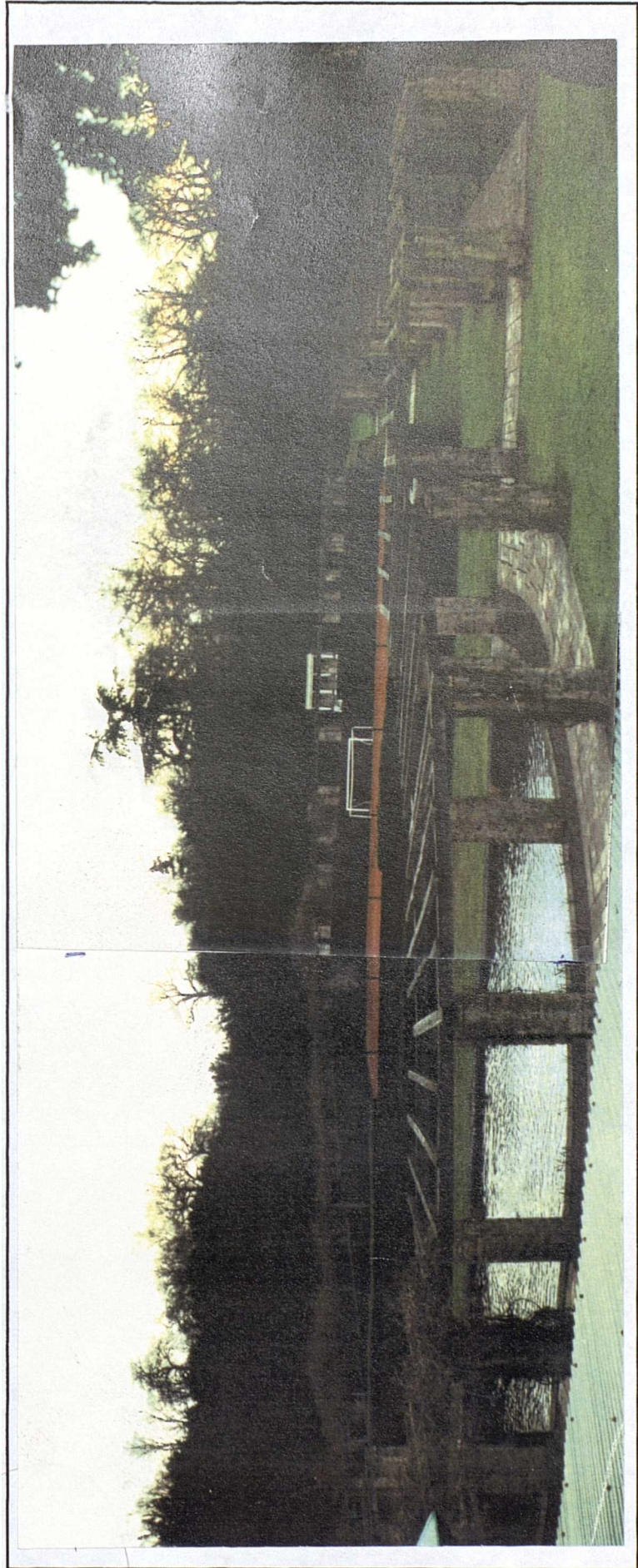


Figure 150 The Welbeck Garden. The Sunken Garden in the autumn of 1995.

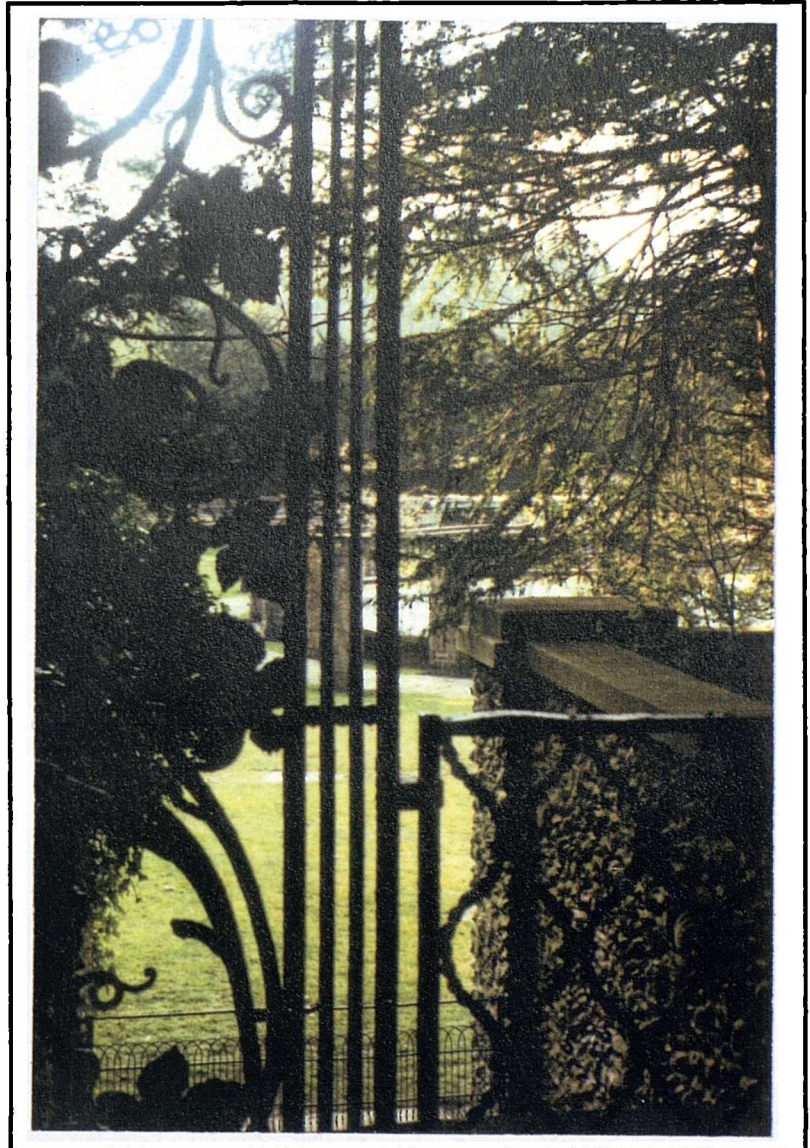


Figure 151 The Welbeck Garden. Pulham wall vermiculated artificial stone cladding.

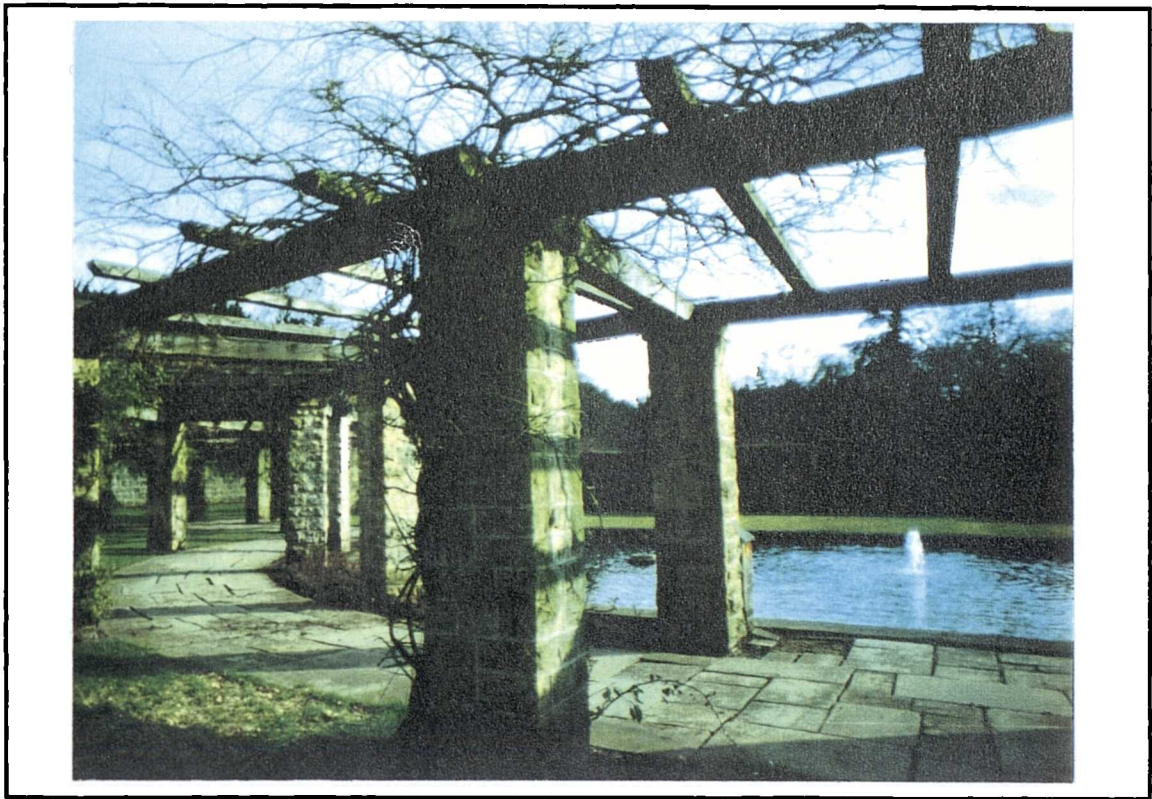


Figure 152 The Sunken Garden. The curved Pergola.



Figure 153 "Sunken Gardens, Welbeck Abbey." [Brent Elliott post card collection. c. 1910]

5.3 QUOTATIONS CONCERNING THE WELBECK GARDEN, FROM MSSRO.

The following text is so enlightening that it has been decided not to relegate it to the appendices. These quotations are extracted from a total of seventy letters held at the Somerset Record Office (MsSRO) which mention the word 'Welbeck'. The author of this thesis could not afford to photocopy all the letters at MsSRO and spent at least ten full days, on site, to type the letters in a computer file. (This excludes several months of work for further deciphering, typing and analysis.) It is possible that a few more letters held at the Record Office could relate to Welbeck Abbey. As usual the letters are mostly from Captain Partridge to Clement Charles Tudway, otherwise mentioned."

24 th Feb 99 1/7	"visit between 8 th and 14 th March to advise about the garden"
28 th Feb 99 1/7	"Meets with Mrs Dallas Yorke at Captain Martin's place inviting Parsons at Welbeck"
10 th March 99 1/7	"Mrs Dallas York anxious that the work starts"
17 th March 99 1/7	Reply to Mrs Dallas Yorke, "There is no harm done at present & I feel sure that it is possible to make a garden or series of gardens on the East & South that will add greatly to the look of the house as will as to the interest & pleasure of its inhabitants. [A. P.]"
27 th March 99 1/7	"I have had very satisfactory letters this morning from the Duke & from his agent - Mr Stevens, the clerk of works, is coming to see me [A. Parsons] tomorrow morning."
31 st March 99 1/7	Partridge's announcing next week's visit "& shall then be in a position to inform you what our fee would be in connection with the above."
3 rd April 99 1/7	Partridge not knowing which day yet he will visit "What is desirable to arrive at, is a scheme fair & just to us all & one easily worked."
7 th April 99 1/7	Letter from Lion Hotel, Worksop "I had a letter from the Dukes agent asking me to come down & arrange business matters." Partridge would like the arrangement for partnership to be written at Rooper's
24 th April 99 1/7	"Parsons goes to Welbeck on the 2nd May to stay a few days there."
4 th May 99 1/7	"We have just got back from Welbeck"
7 th May 99 1/7	"I have had a very satisfactory letter from Turner to say the Duke has seen my letter about our fee & accepts our terms. - (...) I will settle them à la Welbeck.[them = eventual clients]"
9 th May 99 1/7	"I am also very glad the financial part of the Welbeck business is so satisfactorily settled"
11 th May 99 1/7	"I had <u>such</u> a nice letter from Welbeck."
24 th June 99 1/7	"On Wednesday Parsons goes to Welbeck & thence to Mrs Dallas Yorke."
30 th July 99 1/7	Letterhead Welbeck Abbey: "I came down here yesterday for a few days stay & to see how the work progresses - it is a slow business & there is not much to show at present. [A. Parsons]"
2 nd Aug 99 1/7	"Welbeck 650 Gs"
4 th Aug 99 1/7	"I had a very depressed letter from Parsons this morning he returned from Welbeck with Influenza"

27 th Aug 99 1/7	"I am afraid it is quite impossible for me to get away, on the 5 th Sept I go to Welbeck for 2 or 3 days"
4 th Sept 99 1/7	"Please put Dickson's letter [A man altering levels for the garden at Wightwick Manor] in an envelope & send it to me by return to Welbeck Abbey, Worksop. I want to show it to Parsons."
17 th Dec 99 1/6	"I think I told you of one journey from Welbeck to town. I hope we shall get this big job there a 2 years one, they seem very pleased with everything, & if we dont get it I am confident they wont give it to anyone else"
22 nd Jan 1900 1/7	"The more I see of gardens the more foolish I think people are to do them themselves. I mean the <u>designs</u> & <u>schemes</u> . I should always call in a professional to get out a scheme & workout the details myself. Parsons designs seem to me to improve everyday. I go to Welbeck next week to set out the Rose garden it is a perfect design absolutely original with a grove of mulberries worked into it"
30 th April 1900 1/6	"I have got to go to Welbeck for a couple of days, either at the end of this or the beginning of next week, to see how they are getting on."
22 nd June 1900 1/6	"We are going to Welbeck that day [\pm Monday 25 th June 1900]. As far as I can make out, 70 out of the 100 yews I got from Roger's are dead."
9 th July 1900 1/6	Looking for figures for Welbeck
16 th July 1900 1/6	"then will have a look at the figures you told me about at Newports."
13 th Aug 1900 1/6	"am going to Welbeck next Monday. I wish I could see you there but I dont know how it could be managed (...) Malmaison carnation for Welbeck"
19 th Aug 1900 1/6	"I [Captain Partridge] am off to Welbeck tomorrow."
24 th Aug 1900 1/6	Welbeck Abbey letterhead "We have been here the last week. Parsons departed today & I am going on to Clumber, tomorrow to see Hibberd at the Gilliards & home same day."
26 th Aug 1900 1/6	"perhaps if you are not engaged then we might do the Peterboro' sale & Welbeck the next day. (...) Would you like some Malmaison Carnations (just rooted) from Welbeck if so I will keep you some. They are the best sorts."
30 th Aug 1900 1/7	"I will send you the Malmaison Carnations when I receive them from Welbeck"
3 rd Sept 1900 1/6?	"I heard from Welbeck that they are sending off the carnations."
4 th Oct 1900 1/7	"I never saw finer specimens of trees in my life. The Golden yews [from Anthony Waterer for Welbeck], Golden Hollies [from Anthony Waterer for Welbeck] etc etc are a perfect sight. / I am going to look over Prince's Nurseries at Oxford some day next week to select the Roses for Welbeck [from Prince's] and one or two other places. The Nurseries are 10 miles from Oxford which is the nearest Station, so they will take some getting at. Prince is just getting his new catalogue out and I am waiting for this before going there. "
22 nd Oct 1900 1/7	"I had a very successful visit at Welbeck"
28 th Oct 1900 1/7	"I am going on Friday to select Roses at Princes Oxford [for Welbeck] "
19 th Jan 1901 1/5	"Wednesday, I go to Welbeck"
13 th June 1901 1/6	"Will you put the Welbeck letter in the enclosed envelope and post it to-night as I want Parsons to get it on his way through Town. My Wife will give it to him."
4 th July 1901 1/3	"Many thanks for writing me about the lead figures [for Welbeck]"
26 th Nov 1901 ?	"If we go there [Ballimore] next month we shall take Welbeck and Lord Zetland's place en route, he has written to ask us to go there and advise about the Aske Gardens."
28 th Nov 1901 ?	"We [Parsons and Partridge] go to Welbeck on the 13 th Dec and from there to Lord Zetland's."

10 th Dec 1901 1/5	"On to Welbeck next morning and from there to Lord Zetlands Friday, remaining till Monday the 16 th . (...) A letter addressed to Welbeck Abbey, Worksop will reach me up to first post Monday next."
12 th Dec 1901 1/5	"We couldnt do anything here today for the snow, it is a great bore."
4 th Jan 190[2] 1/6	"If Marks doesnt want all the yews it would be worth while trying Welbeck but somehow I cant fancy 3' 6" yews there they would look lost, however if there are no others to be had one must make the best of it. What sort of prices can you get say 2'6" to 3' yews ? I should like to see a sample of one of Waterers 450 yews - (...) I heard yesterday from Parsons. He reached New York the 22nd Dec. and the letter took 10 days. He wrote on board I enclose a photo (please return it) of Welbeck it will show you what the place was like when we started there. The mound in front of E wing (where the flag is shown) was grass & the bank where the Temple (singers) now is was grass - You will see the [Dam?] wants alley! (...) He wrote on board ship. I enclose a photo please return of Welbeck."
Monday evening [March 1902 or 1901?] 1/6	"I am writing Mrs Codrington & Turner (Welbeck) re next work."
10 th April 1902 1/6	"I hope to be able to write you to- morrow night after seeing Parsons and let you know about the arrangements and dates for Preston Hall and Welbeck."
16 th Oct 1902 1/3	"He goes to Lady Agnew['s] garden tomorrow, then we have to go to (...) Welbeck..."
3 rd Nov 1902 1/3	"Saturday till Monday Welbeck, and two days at Birmingham..."
21 st Dec 1902 1/3	"29 th impossible for Welbeck..."
Xmas [1902] 1/3	"I shall probably have to go to Welbeck on Friday the 2 nd & that will mean going down to Sheffield the evening of the 1 st / Would that suit you?"
29 th Dec 1902 1/6	"So glad you will come to Welbeck Thursday by <u>it is useless</u> thinking of leaving Worksop Friday at 12:27 it would only mean 2 hours at Welbeck & if you go there you may as well see the whole show, & it will take you <u>hours</u> to do so."
8 th Jan 1903 1/6	"If Mrs Calverley doesnt want the yews I think they might be very glad of them at Welbeck, but I will see <u>later on</u> ."
24 th Jan 1903 1/6	"They would do for Marks say 100 of them if they are not wanted at Welbeck."
14 th Feb 1903 1/3	"I will let you know when I am ready for the others [yews for Welbeck?]"
23 rd Feb 1903 1/5	"I am absolutely confident that the success Parsons and I have had in this Garden business is mostly due to our never leaving anything to chance. / I got a letter from Welbeck on Saturday to say that the levelling was done, and I am going off to-morrow to Sheffield so as to be over at the Gardens Wednesday morning just to satisfy myself that all is right, so you see we dont allow mishaps to occur if we can possibly help it. I shall get back here Wednesday night and will await Parsons's arrival on Thur."

27 th Feb 1903 1/5	“Yours of the 24th inst received here on my return from Welbeck last night. I am glad that you have decided not to keep yourself disengaged for Woodcock on Monday next as I think it is very doubtful whether Parsons will arrive in Liverpool on the Germanic to-day. You are quite right I shall be more than pleased to see him back, there is a great deal of planting work to finish up in many of the gardens and the season is getting on, if therefore he will come round the different places with me next week it will be all right and I shall feel that I have carried the business through during his absence to a successful issue. Everything at Welbeck has worked out even better than I anticipated and I think you would be surprised to see the change that has taken place in the ground I dealt with when we were there together. In my humble opinion this last bit of work is going to make more show and effect than any alterations we have yet carried out. I feel very pleased and thankful about it and I am in hopes that Parsons will see I have not injured the interests of the Firm during his absence. I never saw a better lot of yews than those Roberts got from Dicksons, so much so that I got the Agent to wire and secure all they could supply at the price.”
4 th March 1903 1/5	“Parsons arrived in London on Friday afternoon, and we started off on a Garden Tour Saturday morning (...) I think Parsons and I do the Firs and Welbeck. [next Friday]”
7 th March 1903 1/5	“...& to Welbeck with him on Friday.”
8 th March 1903 1/5	“I never saw a better lot [yews] than he [Lanes?] sent to Welbeck ...”
17 th March 1903 1/4	“I got back from Welbeck on Saturday night and am glad to say I found everything going on there very satisfactorily and Mr Parsons was extremely pleased with the work we had done during his absence.”
12 th April 1903 1/3	“I have not yet heard from Welbeck about a date for my visit there”
6 th May 1903 1/5	“We start off at 6.30 am tomorrow for Welbeck returning same night”
15 th April 1904 1/6	“I believe your mason [Mills] at Wells did the cross for Miss Wilmotts brother-in-law at Spetchley - if so could I get a copy of the design in such case of course the mason ought to get the job for Welbeck.”
23 rd April 1904 1/6	“Mills has sent me the drawing of the Spetchley Cross, I cannot say however that I am greatly impressed with it. It certainly would not do for Welbeck as it appears to me to be only suitable for a Roman Catholic Cemetery. However Im forwarding it on the Stevens with a few remarks. Certainly Parsons is very funny in some things he recommends. Whatever Cross is put up at Welbeck I will do my best to get Mills the order. Of course we shall make no use of his sketch without letting him have a proper consideration.
? Friday night 11.30 [12-08-4 hand-written on back]	“It is very satisfactory to know that they are all so pleased at Welbeck...”
26 th Aug 1904 1/7	“Partridge & I have just been to Welbeck together... Alfred Parsons”
24 th Nov 1904 1/3	“Parsons at Welbeck on Monday & Tuesday where we have another small job.”
24 th Jan 1905 1/7	“Parsons has just come back from Welbeck. He tells me that Roberts has been sacked owing to extravagance. All this shows the signs of the times and how hard up everyone is, and until this beastly war is settled, I am afraid things wont improve very much in the business line.”
2 nd Feb 1905 1/8	“If you know of a real good man for Welbeck I wish you would write to Parsons as I think they have asked him to make inquiries...”
9 th Feb 1905 1/3	“also have you heard anything more about a man for Welbeck / The wages are £170 a year, house, coals etc etc.”

20 th April 1905 1/4	“I returned late last night from the North where I had a very cold time of it. (...) I must tell you the details of the journey and visit to Welbeck...”
30 th April 1905 1/6?	“The Duke of Portland telegraphed yesterday asking if he could come over and see me here. My Wife wired back to say I was away but that she would be very pleased to show him round the garden. He replied it was so wet that he thought it would be better to come another time. I am rather wondering whether he has been thinking over the advice I gave him about the big scheme I mentioned to you. I should not be at all surprised if he does it. I feel pretty certain he will do it some day and I shall not be surprised to find that is principally what he wanted to see me about and to have a look at the garden to see whether I was competent to run a job of this sort alone. I am extremely glad I went down there the other day and if I can spare the time I intend to go round all the jobs we have done.”

5.3.1 Primary source descriptions

The first reference to work being done in the Welbeck gardens at the turn of the century is to be found in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* of October 1900, curiously with no public mention at all of Parsons and Partridge:

The pleasure grounds are of great extent, the grass upon the lawns being cut with steam mowing machines; but as the noble proprietor, and Mr. J. Roberts, his gardener, are at present engaged in making these more pleasing.

In 1910, an article was published in the *Gardeners' Magazine*, five years after Parsons and Partridge completed their work at Welbeck. Again their names are not mentioned. It is probable that as in other cases involving the aristocracy, it was considered proper only to mention the name of the owners and their head gardeners.

Both the Duke and Duchess of Portland appreciate to the full the pleasure that well-planned and highly kept gardens are able to afford, and it is evident they have not been sparing in time, thought, or money to make the gardens that surround their historic mansion as interesting and as attractive as possible. They have not been satisfied with the traditions of their gardens, and these are great, but have had them so modified and enlarged as to adequately represent the more advanced ideas of present-day gardening.⁶⁴
[Note that not even Repton's name is mentioned!]

Improvements have been many, but probably none have been of greater importance in the flower gardens and pleasure grounds than the remarkable extension of hardy flower culture. Next in importance probably ranks the increase in the cultivation of both dwarf and rambling roses.⁶⁵

Then follows a description of the grounds in which these quotations touch upon the work of Parsons and Partridge:

Along the drive from the principal entrance to the Park and Grounds, built in 1894, (...) great masses of flowering plants of diverse character have been formed in suitable positions alongside the drive where it intersects the woodlands. Near the Abbey much has been accomplished in the naturalisation of various bulbous plants, and the myriads of bluebells, daffodils, and a few other subjects that carpet the woods, must during the spring season produce a series of pictures of wondrous beauty. (...) The spacious terrace with its handsome balustrade that extends along the east and south fronts of the abbey, is a quite modern addition, and adds immensely to the attractions of the gardens. On the east side the terrace is of sufficient area to allow of the formation of a geometrical garden of large size, and a considerable breadth of grass. On this terrace there is a magnificent fountain surrounded by formally cut hedges of golden yew, with spacious beds of roses, lilies, and various other subjects that find favour for flower garden embellishment at the present day. As an additional contribution to the attractions, Mr. J. Gibson uses rather freely finely grown specimens of hydrangeas and agapanthus, the majority being of immense proportions. Not far distant from the east terrace, and on the north side of the mansion, is the rose garden, a comparatively recent addition to the grounds. This garden is somewhat formal in design, with beds in the grass, and is intersected by broad flagstone

⁶⁴ *G. M.* June 11, 1910: 449

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 450

walks. On either side of the central path is a line of pillars of rambling roses which have now clothed their supports, and in their season produce a display of great beauty. Prominent among the ramblers are the well-known and highly appreciated Dorothy Perkins and Lady Gray. (...) Behind are the pillars and beds of dwarf roses, wherein are the finest of the hybrid teas and hybrid perpetuals, and these grow so vigorously, and bloom so profusely as to afford proof that they have the advantage of cultural skill of a high order. (...) Proceeding in a north-westerly direction through the grounds, the magnificent borders of hardy herbaceous plants are reached, and those constitute an important, and certainly one of the most attractive, of the many features of the Welbeck Abbey Gardens. (...) Illustrations (...) fails to convey an adequate idea of the marvellous effectiveness and surpassing beauty of these two borders. (...) Foxgloves rising to the height of eight feet, and groups of delphiniums nine feet high were plentiful. (...) The borders have a total length of nearly a quarter of a mile, and a width of eighteen feet. They are interrupted in the centre by a circular space enclosed with a yew hedge, and provided with garden seats, and the opportunity thereby afforded for rest adds greatly to the enjoyment of the immense displays of flowers that are produced in the borders. At the extreme end of the avenue, and set some distance back from it, are pillars clothed from ground line to apex with Dorothy Perkins rose, which arrest attention immediately the resting place is passed, and as seen from a distance, they present during the season of flowering the appearance of a huge cascade of flowers and foliage. (...) Her Grace the Duchess of Portland takes the greatest interest in the arrangement of these magnificent borders, and the harmonious blending of colours is, Mr. Gibson informs us, wholly due to her great taste. (...) Chief among the more notable additions that have been made to these gardens within recent years are the numerous span-roof plant houses that have been built in the north-east corner of the kitchen garden. (...) This fine block of houses, with their connecting corridor, were built by Messrs. Messenger and Co., of Longborough, and heated by two steel Cornish boilers. (...) In walking through the kitchen garden (...) note is made of great beds of carnations and roses, these presumably being grown for the supply of cut flowers. Another noteworthy feature of the department is the fruit arcade, two hundred and fifty yards long, over which apples are trained, and bear well. George Gordon. ⁶⁶

An article in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* (27-09-1924) gives a complete description layout of the gardens and plant schemes twenty years after the end of the work of Parsons and Partridge. It mentions that, unfortunately, the gardens suffered during the war. Parsons's style is recognizable in part from these descriptions, especially those of the formal rose gardens and the use of hedges and topiary.⁶⁷

For more on The Welbeck Garden see the bibliographical sources in the appendices on page 447. See also the summary of historical overlays on page 449 and finally the list of maps compiled by the author and included on page 451.

The following case study is of a quite different scale, but nevertheless very significant for understanding the partnership's *modus vivendi*.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 450-53

⁶⁷ See the list of plants mentioned in this article in the appendices of page 455

5.4 BATTLEDENE

5.4.1 Introduction

Traherne⁶⁸ arrived here yesterday afternoon & has given us the job which he wants done bit by bit , & the valley part first- I am afraid he will want it much over planted - eventually turned into a collectors garden which to my mind is usually most depressing & uninteresting. He was very nice & seemed pleased with this place [Battledene].⁶⁹

Battledene was the property of Captain Walter Croker St-Ives Partridge.⁷⁰ As Partridge thought very highly of his garden which although not 'a collector's garden, had been good enough to bring the Duke of Portland to visit the site, the author thought it would make an interesting case study. Another important factor for this choice is that part of Battledene has survived.

It is also interesting to have an example of a 'new' garden , like several others designed by the partners.⁷¹

5.4.2 The purchase of Battledene

Partridge, who had been married to since 26 July 1881, was a member of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineer (militia).⁷² Upon leaving the Militia on 12 May 1888, Partridge had become an estate manager. Captain Partridge's initial work with Parsons from 1894 to 1898 has been discussed in the section on Bishopswood.⁷³

[Captain Walter Croker St-Ives Partridge] could have studied landscape drawing - many RE officers did - and fortification and bridging. It is possible he developed a love of landscape gardening and his training would certainly have come in useful. He will possibly have received some training in architecture. (...) The Royal Mon RE (Militia) will certainly have received a comparable training - they were regarded as the senior of the militia regiments.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ The full name of Traherne was never mentioned in the MsSRO. Two Trahernes are mentioned in the horticultural directories, the first owned a garden named [Bryngarw?] the second owned [Coedriglan?]. [23rd Dec 1904 MsSRO 1/6] "I wonder if his job is likely to come to anything?" Partridge further discusses plants: lilies, briar and gooseberries for Traherne 's garden. [30th Jan 1905 MsSRO 1/4] Partridge discusses Cholmondeley 's garden and Mr Traherne's. Were these two gardens close to each other? Preshaw House was R. H. Cholmondeley's garden. (Hants SU 5723) More research has to be done.

⁶⁹ 29th May 1905 MsSRO 1/3

⁷⁰ For more on Captain Partridge, consult the appendices on page 424. Captain Partridge is still a mysterious character as none of his descendants have been traced. The author of this thesis will not give up, but unfortunately, it could take years to be successful!

⁷¹ Callis Court is interesting in that sense, and survives to this date.

⁷² Ex-Royal Monmouthshire Militia (Light Infantry).

⁷³ See that section on page 181.

⁷⁴ 17th June 1994. Letter to the author signed Beverley Williams, Assistant Curator, Royal Engineers Museum, Kent.

When the owner, Henry Leslie Blundell McCalmont, decided to sell this well-designed estate and gardens (Bishopswood), Partridge made McCalmont a low offer on the property.⁷⁵ They failed to come to an agreement and Partridge had no choice but to move temporarily to 30 First avenue, Hove, Brighton, where his wife had relatives. This was to be the first address of the firm 'Parsons and Partridge'.

Captain Partridge was living with his wife, Alice Edith MacKenzie, and their two daughters Edith [Enid?] St-Ives and Evelyn [Ivy?] St-Ives, now aged seventeen and fifteen respectively. They soon moved from Brighton, to Elcot, Caversham, Reading, from where they searched for a new home.⁷⁶ Partridge wanted to remain in that area because there was plenty of work to be done in estate management and in landscape gardening around London.⁷⁷ He was looking for the ideal place to build his own house and garden. The family had a few household servants and there were to be several gardeners under McLean, the head gardener. On 19 November 1899 Partridge bought Battledene, with an already existing house on the site.

⁷⁵ "I shall go up to Town from the Lords on Friday the 22nd & hope to meet you at Barnes the next day. We might go down there together in the morning. I hope McCalmont will be there so that I may have a chance of hearing what his views are with regard to this place, & whether he would be likely to accept a low offer for the property." [April 16th 1898, MsSRO 1/3]

⁷⁶ "I dont see how I can take the agency if I cant get a place near. The suburbs of Reading appear to reach 3 miles out I dont think I could possibly settle down in a suburban villa..." [7th May 1899 MsSRO 1/7]

⁷⁷ "I am doing a lot in letting & selling places just now." [2nd Oct 1904 MsSRO 1/7]

5.4.3 The making of Battledene



Figure 154 Battledene. The Lodge. Photograph of 1995.

Captain Partridge hired Huckvale, an architect from Tring, who had done work at Bishopswood. They made important alterations to the existing house which had been built between 1880 and 1900. The surviving lodge gives us an idea of what the house looked like. Compare the three ordnance survey maps. On Figure 155 (1880) there is no house shown immediately South of 'The Hermitage'. Figure 156, of 1900, shows a smaller house than the one on figure 157 (1911), and 'Glendale Lodge' is the new name for 'The Hermitage'. In the last two figures, the lodge is shown and seems identical. This lodge survived the demolition of the house in 1954. See the lodge in Figure 154. On 27 August 1899, the family moved into the renovated house.

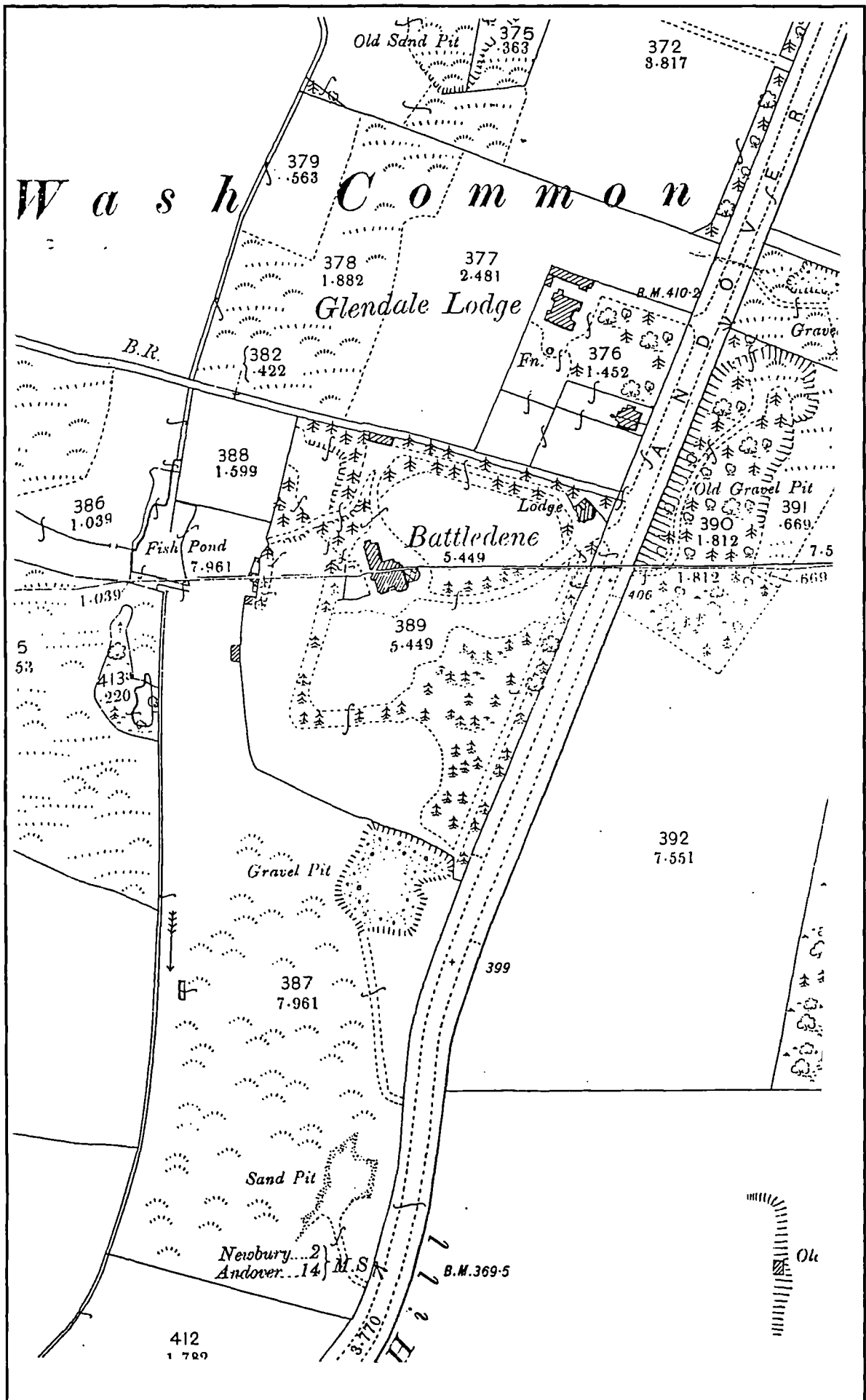


Figure 156 Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map Second edition (1900) [Berks 42.8 & 42.12; 25"]

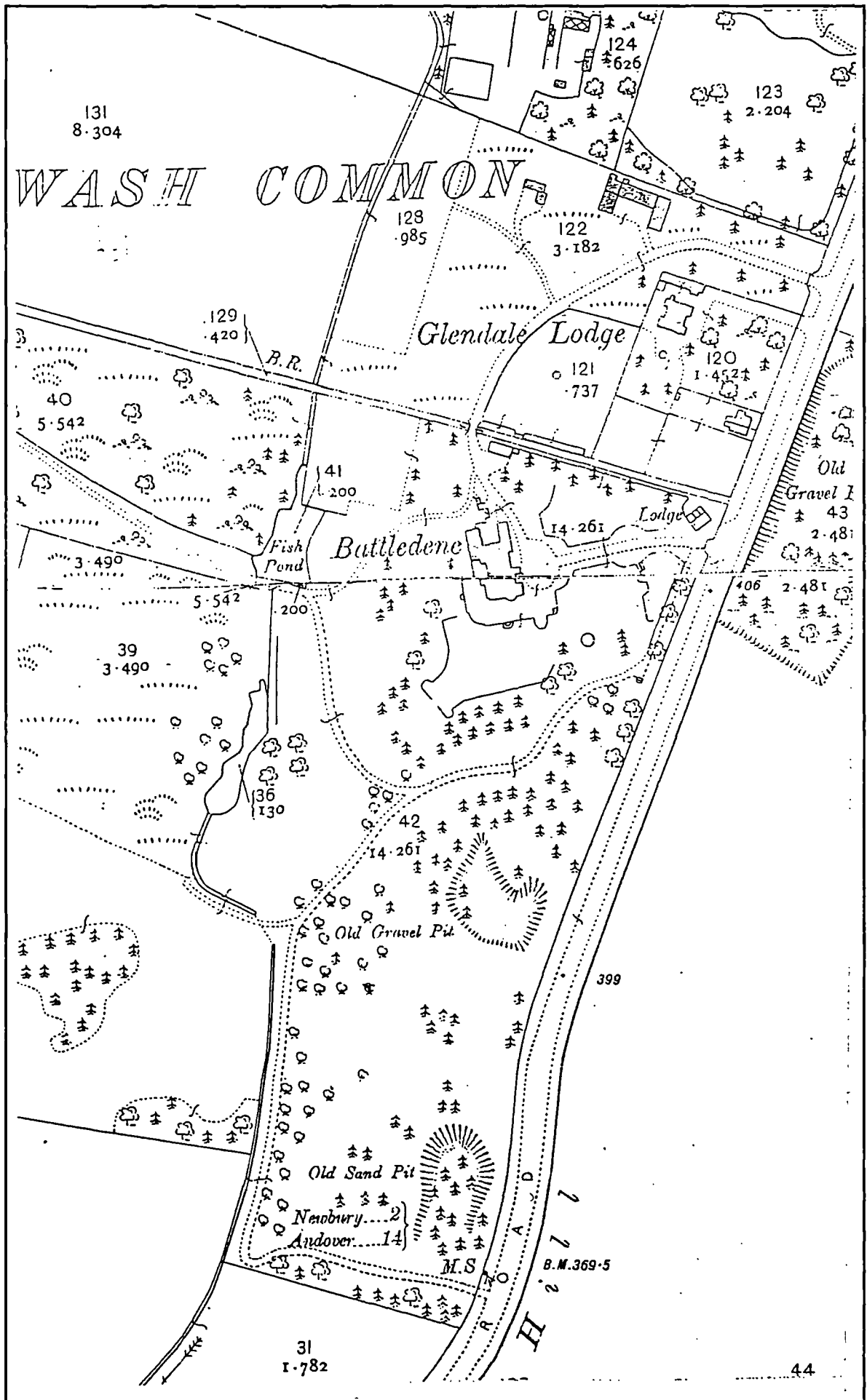


Figure 157 Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map 1911. [Berks 42.8 & 42.12; 25"]

5.4.4 Quotations concerning Battledene Garden, from MsSRO

The following quotations relate to the design of Battledene house and garden. Several plants used at Battledene were mentioned in the correspondence between Sept 1899 and June 1905. They are listed under [Battledene] in the appendices.⁷⁸

15 th Sept 1899 ?	Huckvale is going to do the building job for us, then we start. I much want you to come and see Battledene before we touch it.
24 th July 1900 1/7	I should so much like to show you the plans of the proposed alterations to the House, and I should also much like you to have a talk with Freer. Of course it is very early days to judge but he seems to understand his work. We [Parsons and Partridge] have pegged out the Rose Garden and I think you will like it, and have also made some alterations to the Entrance gates.
16 th Sept 1900 1/6?	“You must come here for a couple of nights on Tuesday...You will then be able to see the conservatory being taken down & I do so want to have a good chat with you”
28 th Oct 1900 1/7	“We are in a mess here - Part of the roof off the house drawing room being built onto & the new Terrace being built right round the house.
22 nd Jan 1900 1/7	“It is very kind of you trying to get me a garden job. I want a job of some sort badly, this place [Battledene] has about broke me.”
20 th Oct 1901 1/7	“... then have the afternoon here in the garden, so many things to show you & discuss as to planting - the new beds”
28 th Dec 1901 1/5	“Parsons & I did a real good days work here [Battledene] , & I think the result will be a capital effect under the new boundary wall by road.”
10 th April 1902 1/6	“The Thatchers (W. Oldfield and Sons, Whittlesea, Peterboro) are coming down on Monday next to start the Summer House and hope to get it done by the 19 th . I told them I had two Gentleman coming down to look at that I hoped the work would be really well done, as it would be a good advertisement for them and for myself. I wish you would drop them a line to say that you are coming over here to inspect their work. They would be more likely then to take greater pains and send a really good man.”
16 th Nov 1902 1/3	In November 1902, Partridge alluded to being on a board meeting of Johnson Bros. They were the firm who built the fruit tunnel at Battledene in 1904, two years later.
26 th Aug 1904 1/3	Working on the fruit garden
2 nd Oct 1904 1/7	“We leave here the 6 th , Enid [their eldest daughter?] & I return to Battledene , & my wife & [Ivy? Evelyn, their youngest] go to town till the End of October when I hope the house will be ready & the painting & papering finished - I am sick of the sight of work people, & the drain on ones pocket is awful. The garden was looking very well the other day & all the trees etc doing A1, & growing fast - But we want a lot more colour - unfortunately I can never get hold of Parsons to talk over the gardens, it is quite impossible to get much out of him. (...) I enclose you the plan of the new fruit garden at Battledene showing the proposed Fruit Tunnel. Please let me have it back as I want to send it off to Johnson Bros who are going to make the Fruit Tunnel. Hudson is leaving me at Xmas he has been with me nearly 5 years, & I think quite long enough. He will be difficult to replace, & hope he will get something good, he wants a place with clerks under him. He has got a bit too big for his boots, & I am not sorry he is going. Let me know if you hear of anyone likely to suit me, & anything to suit Hudson. He is an excellent clerk & draftsman & surveyor & his wife a very nice person.”

⁷⁸ See the list of plants named in the correspondence between the partners on page 442.

5 th Oct 1904 1/7	"Do you think you could manage to run down to Battledene Sunday for the day to go unto the fruit question etc with Glasheen on the spot. - It would be very nice if you could manage it without putting yourself to any inconvenience. There are several points I should like to talk over with you about garden matters & garden colour schemes. Frantic Haste for post./ Yrs ever / WP We shall be home (Enid & I) tomorrow afternoon. My wife & Ivy go to Elmestree for 10 days & then to town & I hope we shall get the house settled by the end of this month & the painters out of it."
11 th Dec 1904 1/6	"John Waterer turned up here the other afternoon so I gave him an order for the hollies for the hedge. he said he could let me have some good Hodginsii about 4 feet high and 3 feet through at 3/6 each so I ordered them, also some other stuff in the way of rhododendrons. (...) If it were not that business, (especially sales and purchase of properties) was very good just at present we should be absolutely broke. For what with the garden, carpets, and furniture, there is no end to the outgoings. / We bought a beautiful old Bookcase for the Hall. (...) The Fruit garden looks very well and I hope and think the trees will do well."
17 th Jan 1905 1/8	"The palms are doing A1 and are quite the making of the House. I feel sure you will be delighted with the look of the Drawing room since it has been papered and redecorated. It looks quite a different room and seems to be greatly admired. / Ronald Mackenzie and his Wife have just left us. They were awfully surprised and pleased with the House and could not believe it was the same place."
24 th Jan 1905 1/7	"We shall be wanting a lot of box for edging to the new paths in Fruit garden."
9 th Feb 1905 1/3	"What could you do me one dozen well transplanted Thuja Lobbii, anything above 6 feet high. I want them for a screen. / You will be amused at my planting these things but just at this particular spot I think they will look all right."
15 th Feb 1905 1/3	"The trees I want are I think called Cupressus Lawsoniana. I want some tall good bushy plants trees to make an immediate screen. I enclose you a piece of the tree I have in my mind. Have you any and if so what could you do them for? I want to plant these trees in front of the old stables here to screen them from the House and back drive as much as possible, so you will know the sort of thing I want. 8 or 9 feet high would be none too big if the trees would move and transplant properly."
29 th May 1905 1/3	The garden suffered a severe frost.

5.5 BATTLEDENE: A SHOW PIECE FOR PARSONS AND PARTRIDGE

In June 1904, Captain Partridge decided to get rid of his gardener A. MacLean, hired on 13 June 1901. He wrote the following letter to an eventual candidate, recommended by Charles Tudway. This letter constitutes an important statement of how Partridge valued Battledene.

Dear Sir [Mr Skinner], Mr Tudway has sent me your name and address and recommended you as likely to suit me as a gardener. I shall be in want of one in about a months time. I think it will be far better for you to write Mr Tudway and get his independent opinion whether you would be likely to suit the place and the place suit you. I require a man who is thoroughly well up in all out of door work, and herbaceous plants. I have no glass whatsoever, and so not intend to put any up except perhaps later on a few pits for propagating purposes. / I am by profession a Landscape-gardener in partnership with Mr Alfred Parsons ARA and am most particular as to the up keep of the garden. I have been making this garden [Battledene] for the last 4 years and it is not yet completed but even in its present state it is one of the most beautiful you could meet with and quite unique in its kind. Therefore an experienced man is absolutely essential to me. / I want a man who is pleasant mannered not put off by difficulties, not afraid of work, and who can grow plants well, so that the garden is a blaze of colour during the summer. This is a really good place for a good man who wishes to improve himself and to learn what real landscape gardening is. Please let me know whether you are married or single and if the former whether you have any family, and if so how many, and their ages. Also state your age, wages required and the different places you have been living at and how long you were in them. / I feel sure the best plan will be for you to write Mr Tudway and ask him exactly what this place is like. / I am most particular but at the same time do not interfere with the detail of my gardeners work. / I keep 3 men beside the head gardener and one of them has to clean the boots and knives in the morning. Yours faithfully. / W Partridge (Capt) / Mr Skinner.⁷⁹

In another letter it is clear that Partridge intended Battledene to be a show-piece:

I was rather late and a good many of the Rhododendrons were over. I however selected a lot for this garden and bought about £50 worth. This is really more than I ought to have done, but I want to get a good show here next season if I can.⁸⁰

On other occasions, Parsons sent possible future clients to visit Battledene.⁸¹ This is relevant to the argument of the thesis. It is really unfortunate that such an important garden did not survive.

⁷⁹ 29th June 1904 MsSRO 1/3

⁸⁰ 13th June 1901 MsSRO 1/6

⁸¹ For the moment, the present author cannot trace the quotation relating to Parsons sending people to Battledene.

5.5.1 The sale of Battledene

This took place in 1919. A Mr Cookson bought Battledene from a C.L. Vine. In 1925, Charles Gilroy in turn bought it and nine years later sold Glendale House in 1934. (It seems he already owned Glendale House in 1925). In 1939, Robert Band bought it from Gilroy. Band conveyed the estate to the Carmelites in 1946. In 1953, Quitner & Co bought it as an investment and the site was sold at auction six years later in 1959. The Battledene estate, broken up shortly thereafter, has been subdivided and is now covered with several 1970s houses.

5.5.2 Surviving elements:

Several trees and hedges planted around 1900 are still standing. They constitute a 'plus' for the existing houses.

Jennifer Pearson, a resident visited at Battledene in 1994, was raised in a new house built on the Battledene estate in the nineteen-fifties. Her mother still lived there in 1994 and both ladies enjoy gardening. Mrs Pearson, in December 1994, listed the surviving elements on a copy of the 1911 map that the present author had left with her (Figure 158).

She described the Summer House as a "thatched with paved floor, open all round, roof supported by wooden pillars rustic style facing West, with wooden bench seating round Eastern sector."

She also mentioned that for several years there had been an abandoned wooden boat in the pond and that they use to play around it. See Figure 159 to Figure 161, all photographs of 1994. These photographs cannot account for what was once Battledene. Hopefully they will trigger the curiosity of another researcher who will find more on this garden.

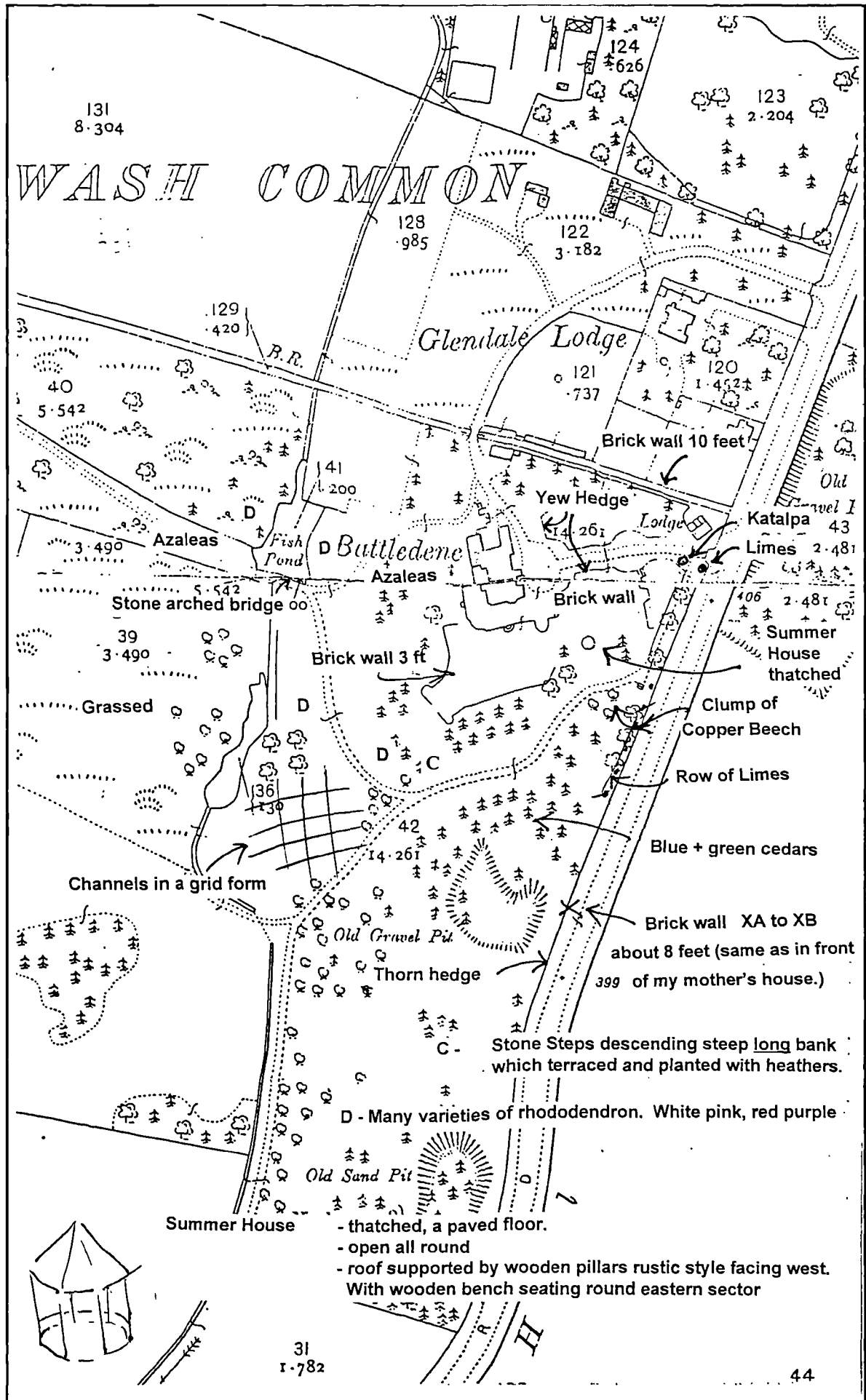


Figure 158 Battledene. Ordnance Survey Map 1911 with Mrs Pearson's additions.



Figure 159 Battledene. Wooden gate at the entrance.



Figure 160 Battledene. Drive leading to the main entrance.



Figure 161 Battledene. Yew hedge above old brick wall.

6 CONCLUSION

Dear Mr Noble

The greatest pleasure an artist has in life is to find that he has succeeded in conveying to others some of the enjoyment which the lovely things in nature have given him. Yours sincerely

Alfred Parsons.¹

6.1 PARSONS'S CONTRIBUTION TO HISTORY : PART OF A CONTEXT.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, the complaints expressed about the end of older artistic ways helped to create an atmosphere in which a landscape-painter turned landscape-gardener, such as Alfred Parsons, was likely to be favourably received. The greatest pleasure the author of this thesis would hope for is to find out that some of Parsons's gardens would still convey enjoyment to people of the twenty-first century. As seen in Chapter Two, from 1880 some of the English plutocrats of the upper-middle class revived a tradition, that had been very much alive during the rise of the British Empire, although they adapted

it to smaller estates.² They commissioned Alfred Parsons, the landscape-painter, landscape-gardener to do their gardens. The process of gaining the Welbeck commission is now discernible: Parsons joined the SPAB in 1881, became a co-founder of the AWG in 1884, won the Chantrey Bequest in 1887 and was made A.R.A. in 1897. Two years later, in 1899, he was first introduced 'by some friends' to Mrs Dallas Yorke, who agreed to visits Parsons's studio in London, and recommended him to the Duke. The Duke of Portland commissioned Parsons and Partridge to landscape The Welbeck Garden. For two consecutive years, the partners continued their work at The Welbeck Garden, often staying overnight. Several garden parties were given by the sixth Duke, and people in his circle enjoyed walking between the two long

¹ Manuscript letter held at the Bodleian Library. Bequeathed by Mr Percy Noble in 1937. [MS Don e 85 Dated Nov. 13 1911]

In February and March 1909 Parsons had a solo exhibition at the Leicester Gallery; painting number fifty-eight was entitled 'Pæonies and Poppies' and bore the following text: "Summer's lease hath all too short a date.". This could have been what Mr Noble bought.

² "The position of the gentry was undermined [around 1870] in very direct ways in, for example, the loss of the traditional powers of the country justices, greater taxation, and the emergence of modern political parties to cut back the traditional ascendancy of hereditary influence. But the gentry 'old style' intermingled with the 'new gentry' born of industrial and commercial expansion. Influence found new ways to operate, and hereditary positions found new ways to reassert themselves. New strengths were found for the traditional qualities of England's aristocratic 'grandees'." [Rider and Silver 1970: 65]

magnificent herbaceous borders where the Italian Fountain was in the centre of the vista.³ Although The Welbeck Garden was very ‘young’, Parsons and Partridge received more and more commissions through word of mouth. The ‘up-the-ladder’ image of the landscape-painter combined with Alfred Parsons’s affinity with William Robinson, and hence with the most influential ideas on landscape gardening at the time, attracted several “nouveaux riches” as clients, including Members of Parliament and industrialists. The First World War brought this brief revival to an end.

Alfred Parsons the active landscape-painter, who chose to call himself a landscape-gardener and practised his profession with respect for the past, is another example of how an established tradition, although modified, required a long time to be completely replaced by new ones. It can also be understood as a sign of clever market analysis by Parsons and Partridge. The establishment fought for distinction by creating outstanding gardens, in tune with the fashion of the day. Parsons and Partridge were fashionable and sought after.

Leisure, therefore, in the second half of the century, became subsidiary to the ‘struggle to outdo one another’. The city population especially ‘push their normal standard of conspicuous consumption to a higher point’ (...) The requirement of conformity to this higher conventional standard becomes mandatory (...) this requirement of decent appearance must be lived up to on pain of losing caste.⁴

This study reveals what the author of this thesis believes to be a step towards a ‘closer-to-the-reality’ view of Alfred Parsons and of a brief period in English cultural life. Several articles in *Country Life* showed photographs of Parsons’s work but rarely gave him credit. These views of his gardens have until now been almost anonymous. Several articles in *Country Life* and other magazines, discussing the gardens Parsons had designed, did not mention his name. These articles promoted the English love of herbaceous borders, a fashion that has survived to the present day. As Parsons designed sumptuous herbaceous borders, it is worth reviving his work. His gardens belong to the eclectic Edwardian period. Alfred Parsons’s role in the history of landscape design, although virtually anonymous, is real. It is difficult at the present time to assess precisely his contribution to the history of landscape gardening. The purpose of this thesis was to lay the foundations for the study of Alfred Parsons and also to stir interest in his work. Part of his role, as it can now be understood, was to ensure that knowledge about landscape gardening was transmitted to future generations rather than being completely forgotten or recreated. One of Alfred Parsons’s contributions to the making of gardens, clearly

³ It is not known who designed the ladies and gents facilities, hidden in a grotto, to the South of the herbaceous border walk. It is obvious that the numerous visitors were well taken care of.

⁴ Rider and Silver 1970: 68 quoting Thorstein Veblen *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, NY, 1899: 1912 ed. : 37-88. See especially Chs III, ‘Conspicuous leisure’, and IV, ‘Conspicuous consumption’

an area for further research, is to be found in the Japanese rooms that he was able to integrate perfectly into his garden designs. 'Easton Lodge' had such a room, but Parsons's contribution there is currently pure assumption. For the moment, Parsons, like many other landscape designers of his period, was willing to use imported species of plants, particularly roses. This makes him more of a late Victorian landscape-gardener than a member of the old-fashioned revivalist school of gardening. It is now certain that the partners did not use only old-fashioned flowers and plants in their gardens. From the plant lists in the appendices, ghent azaleas, chrysanthemums, fuchsias, geraniums & zonals (all pelargoniums), azalea mollis and lilac strongly suggest a link with late Victorian tradition.

Brent Elliott, commenting on the list of trees and shrubs the partners used, has written:

With tree and shrub choice the difference is not always so clear-cut, but the following are exotic trees that, while not inconsistent with having an old-fashioned garden, would tend to have been used in the pleasure ground away from the revivalist part: berberis, catalpa, skimmia, pernettya, rhododendrons.

From the same list, Elliott mentioned:

The following plants may be considered linked to old-fashioned revivalist gardening: Apple trees, beech, briar roses, delphiniums, herbaceous plants, holly, hornbeam, lavender, lilies, plum trees, Portugal laurels, roses, cedars, thorns, yews.⁵

Steve C. Desmond, MA M Hort., was even more definitive in his verdict; he mentioned that Parsons was using materials characteristic of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century which would have been widely available commercially and as sources of gifts or as material for propagation from friends' gardens. Typical examples were Ilex 'Hodginsii', one of the most popular nineteenth-century holly cultivars; all those rose and Pelargonium cultivars; and Olearia macrodonta, a New Zealand native which had only received its First Class Certificate from the RHS in 1895. Desmond added that it is of course not possible to speculate from such a list whether Parsons might have been using these plants in a 'antique' manner (ie in layouts intended to evoke a period atmosphere) but at any rate, he was no historical purist or even a romantic in terms of his plant choice. Another horticulturist, Val Hepworth, M. A. in Conservation of Historic Parks and Garden, was of exactly the same opinion.⁶ One can conclude from these consultations that Parsons cannot be classified strictly as having used only old-fashioned species. He liked both old and new plant material.⁷

⁵ Brent Elliott. Meeting of 10 January 1997 and list of comments and corrections to Chapter five.

⁶ Mrs Hepworth was instrumental in creating the Yorkshire Garden Trust.

⁷ See the list of roses Parsons used, with their introduction dates, in the appendices on page 439.

As stated in Chapter Four, Parsons adapted his designs to the needs of the client: he did work in what might be interpreted by purists as ‘contradictory styles’.⁸ As Parsons may have been the last landscape-gardener working for an aristocratic and upper middle class clientele, in an old-fashioned way, not using drawings but making decisions on the spot, staking the principal lines of his designs on site just as Repton used to do, very little written testimony of his landscape gardening work remains. His contribution resides in the sites themselves: old hedges, stone paths, sundials, sculptures, fountains, etc. Parsons’s contribution to history also provides the possible future pleasure of research for several historians of garden design, as he has left us enough clues to permit the reconstruction of these gardens.

One of the finest testimonies to the history of landscape gardening left by Alfred Parsons is to be found in the three-dimensional coloured photographs of the Welbeck Garden during its heyday. Produced in 1912, they constitute definitive proof of the talent of Alfred Parsons for landscape gardening.

Other artists occasionally did garden designs after Parsons’s death. Cedric Morris (1889-1981)⁹, John Nash (1893-1977) and John Codrington (1830-1922) all designed their own gardens. They were all dilettante garden designers, working occasionally for friends, rarely receiving any payment. It is argued here that, mainly through the wide publicity given by various horticultural and ‘cultural’ magazines, these dilettante garden makers were inspired by the long tradition of landscape-painters as landscape-gardeners, such as Kent, Repton and Jekyll. For future generations it is possible to add Alfred Parsons as a possible influence.¹⁰

⁸ See the section “Parsons’s ‘landscape gardening’ styles” on page 230.

⁹ His garden was ‘Benton End’ near the town of Hadleigh.

¹⁰ Several of Parsons’s gardens were publicized in ‘primary sources’ magazines. Although only the owners often got the credit for the design, the influence of Parsons’s designs was real.

6.2 PARSONS'S VARIOUS EXHIBITION VENTURES: CONTINUITY.

Parsons's landscape paintings, in harmony with the work of Frederick Walker¹¹ or Jules Bastien-Lepage, and thus in line with past tradition, pleased patrons who had not been privileged to inherit eighteenth-century English landscapes. Concerning his long-time art exhibition activities dating from the Dudley Gallery in 1868 to the Leicester Gallery in his later years, it is important to remember that, contrary to Helmreich's opinion, Parsons never 'branched out' from the production of paintings.¹² The long list of paintings exhibited at both the Royal Watercolour Society and the Royal Academy until his death proves this point.¹³ The extensive correspondence with Spielmann, from 1897 to 1915, also shows Parsons's constant involvement with the Arts. Also worth mentioning: Parsons exhibited at the Liverpool Walker Art Gallery from 1878 to 1920, at Glasgow's Institute of Fine Arts from 1877 to 1917 and at the Manchester City Art Gallery from 1872 to 1914.

6.3 WHY HAS ALFRED PARSONS BEEN FORGOTTEN BY HISTORY?

After writing about and reading about many of Alfred Parsons's gardens, the present writer does not believe that Parsons was forgotten because of a lack of talent. Several explanations are possible. The fact that at the turn of the century it was considered good form 'to do one's own garden' or to be one's own gardener', meant that Parsons's name was rarely mentioned in the articles about the gardens he designed. Books like *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, first published in 1898, just as Parsons was starting his career, were widely read.¹⁴ This encouraged owners, men or women, to do their own garden design, taking over responsibility from the designer and head gardener. At the same time, these owners wanted the best possible

¹¹ (1840-75). English illustrator and painter. ... His scenes of peasants in a Landscape, treated with grace and pathos, had considerable influence in England. [Osborne, 1992 under Walker]

¹² "Parsons eventually branched out from painting gardens to designing them for wealthy clients." [Helmreich, 1994: 72]

¹³ "He has been especially a depicter of nature. One of his earliest exhibits was of Cley Hill, from Longleat; and of his latest, the glorious peep over the Vale of Avalon from the East Somerset railway between Frome and Wells." [*A local paper*. 'Alfred Parsons's Obituary' 23 Jan 1920. Source: Somerset Record Office] 'The Vale of Avalon' had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1911, of which a large reproduction was printed in *The Art Journal* [1911 X: 170]. Parsons exhibited large landscapes at the R. A. every year until his death. See the list on page 381.

¹⁴ [Arnim, 1898] The book was reprinted three times: 1901, 1906 and 1909. It was reviewed in *The Garden* LV Jan 14 1899: 17.

advice so as to create the most wonderful gardens. It was very aristocratic to spend a lot of money on hired help and not to mention it openly, in words, but only as a manifestation of extravagant effects. Sotto-voce, the magnate could also be admired for the power and prestige that his money provided. Obviously with this attitude, owners often got all the credit for Parsons's work.¹⁵

The impact of two world wars is surely important in explaining the fading from memory of Parsons and Partridge's work. The First World War halted their activities just when their landscape gardening knowledge and experience were at their apogee. Partridge lost his house and garden, 'Battledene', just after the First World War. The end of the First World War saw the transformation of the society from which Parsons and Partridge drew their clients. The new austerity imposed upon the land-owning classes was accompanied by numerous sales of estates and the disappearance of pre-war extravagance in garden design.

Parsons died in 1920 and his brother Clement inherited his house and most of its contents. When Clement died in 1940, Alan, Alfred Parsons's nephew, who was posted in India, returned in order to organize an auction of Parsons's effects.¹⁶ Little survives: there are no photographs, no diaries. Parsons's writings were thus destroyed or lost. Was he too busy to write his memoirs? Or were they too compromising? The present writer hopes to be able to answer these questions in the near future.¹⁷

A final reason for the decline of Alfred Parsons from social memory lies in Parsons's own character. He surely did not boast of his contribution to landscape gardening. He got his clients by word of mouth, not through publicity in specialized magazines like the *Horticultural Directories*. He was a very sociable and busy man, probably too much 'alive' to make careful plans for his own reputation after his death.

It is important to note that Parsons's style of painting, although out of favour today, could very well be fashionable in the future. Up to the 1980s, Victorian or Edwardian paintings, including those by Parsons, could be acquired for very little money, but this has changed. Kenneth McConkey is the latest art critic adding to the under estimation of Parsons's work:

¹⁵ William Andrews Nesfield got his commissions through word of mouth. His formal style was so recognizable that, unlike Parsons, whose style can be confused with the dominant eclectic style of the turn of the century, Nesfield is well remembered.

¹⁶ Alfred Alan Lethbridge (Sir Alan Parsons, a financial advisor to the government of India). Second child of Joshua Frederick Parsons (Alfred Parsons favourite brother, only two years younger). Consult appendices on page 353.

¹⁷ Write to Nicole Milette, 4479 avenue Oxford, Montréal, Québec, Canada. H4A 2Y7. Or send an email at nmilette@francomedia.qc.ca if you wish to help this ongoing research.

Parsons produced a sophisticated compromise acceptable to the Chantrey Bequest. He was, nevertheless, a modern painter who stayed well clear of Impressionism; although he illustrated Fontainebleau for a series of articles by Robert Louis Stevenson, *Bredon on the Avon*, one of his Academy-pieces of 1912, typifies his entire production. The synthesis achieved in *When Nature Painted all Things Gay* was highly significant and Parsons was unable to escape its inevitable consequences.¹⁸

McConkey implies that 'Impressionism' was a more valuable style of landscape painting than that of the 'Idyllic School' to which Parsons belonged. The author of this thesis believes that the relative value of an art work is an ephemeral and cultural phenomenon. The "inevitable consequences" of Parsons entire production are not clearly stated by McConkey. It is believed that McConkey means that Parsons was trapped in that lower style, now even less fashionable, of the 'Idyllic School' of landscape painting. If Parsons, in 1987 (one hundred years after winning the Chantrey Bequest), had submitted 'When Nature Painted all Things Gay' for consideration by the jury of the Turner Prize, he would surely have failed to win it. But what if he were to submit it in 2087?

¹⁸ McConkey, 1995: 74

6.4 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The original contributions to knowledge of this thesis are principally the following:

- i A new framework of analysis for the understanding of other makers of gardens at the turn of the century, namely landscape-painters as landscape-gardeners.
- ii A demonstration that Parsons was primarily a landscape-painter in oil and watercolour for fifty consecutive years was provided in Chapter Three. A list of almost all of his exhibited works is given in the appendices. He was more than an illustrator.
- iii An explanation of how he chose, mainly for cultural reasons, to become a late nineteenth-century 'landscape-gardener', thus reviving a long-standing tradition in England, was provided in Chapter Two and Chapter Four.
- iv The revelation that Parsons produced numerous garden designs between 1884 and 1914, (including Florham, a garden in America for McKown Twombly, Vanderbilt's brother-in-law)¹⁹, thus making him a professional landscape-gardener, was provided in Chapter Four and Chapter Five; two case studies of specific gardens were discussed in Chapter Five.
- v The discovery that Parsons was a horticultural writer (in *The Garden*) and that he was encouraged by William Robinson to do landscape gardening, offers clues as to why Parsons's garden design services were being recommended within informed circles.
- vi The list of Parsons's and Partridge's gardens, assembled here for the first time²⁰, contributes to a better understanding of the historical layers of several English gardens. This is part of the appendices.
- vii The revelation that Parsons designed gardens in other countries.
- viii The estimate of the length of time Parsons contributed to *Harper's* magazine has been extended from 2 years, as mentioned in several short bibliographies (1891-92), to fifteen years. (1880-1895)
- ix The extent of his collaboration as an illustrator and writer with *The Garden* has been revealed. (See the appendices)

¹⁹ Probably Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1843-1899). See the footnote on page 237.

²⁰ Previously published by the present author on 24 June 1995.

6.5 PROPOSITION

Welbeck is a garden with a long-standing history. It presents different layers of history with important qualities, from the Repton lake to the later terraces, hedges, paths and tree planting done by Parsons and Partridge. The Welbeck archives, the private property of the owners, could make possible the re-planting of the Sunken Garden and the re-creation of the double herbaceous borders, both prime examples of the work of Parsons and Partridge. The existence of the 1912 stereoscopic coloured slides makes all this possible; these images were produced just seven years after the gardens were completed.

It would be very costly to re-create such splendour today, but as a unique example of Arts and Crafts work, it can be hoped that the general public might one day be able to see this garden as it was.

It is hoped that this thesis will be one factor that will encourage the present owners of Parsons's gardens to find practical ways of conserving and occasionally opening their gardens to the public.

6.6 THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research could bring to light other landscape-painters who also practised as landscape-gardeners at the turn of the twentieth century. It could reveal the extent of the concept of 'landscape-painters as landscape-gardeners' between 1884 and 1914.

Upper middle-class people adopted Parsons's garden designs in part so as to gain social recognition from their peers. Were specific aspects of these gardens particularly coveted as well? Further research could answer this question with factual examples: 'What was it that people liked about Parsons's gardens and why did they like it?'²¹ So far, this thesis has given cultural reasons as an answer.

Throughout Parsons's career there seems to have been ambivalence on his part between first his keeping his landscape gardening activities at a low key in public, and secondly, in private, within a closed circle, being proud of them. During the eighteen-nineties, was it acceptable for a serious landscape-painter also to have a kind of hobby as a serious second professional activity? To answer this question, more research must be done.

²¹ The formulation of this partially unanswered research question came while reading Jay Appleton's book *The Experience of Landscape*. After a fascinating discussion with Mr Appleton in February 1995, the present author concluded, in agreement with Mr Appleton, that the cultural reasons for liking a landscape, and by extrapolation, for liking a garden, were the most important reasons to investigate. It helped to focus the readings and the research.

More research is also required in order to find more examples of the main characteristics of Parsons's garden designs. The fact that most of 'his designs were typical of the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements' could then be proven in greater detail, with more examples. As Peter Burman justly mentioned :

The Arts and Crafts Movement is of continuing interest and value to us in the late twentieth century. It provides a relationship to the Green Movement, an ethical approach to human values and opportunities, an ethical response to the dignity of labour and craftsmanship and an ability to combine creativity with a respect for the past.²²

Parsons's designs are of continuing interest. The assumption that many were influenced by his knowledge of Japan, could also be verified. More research needs to be done to find Captain Partridge's papers. Several of the people named in the correspondence between the partners have not been identified, and more research could reveal other gardens.

More research from the viewpoint of horticulturists and landscape architects needs to be done on Parsons and Partridge's long list of garden designs. The seventy-two sites uncovered so far merit further research in local Record Offices all over the United Kingdom and maybe the garden in Antigua, could be identified.

The surviving gardens could be visited described and surveyed, studied and compared.

²² Burman, 1997: 12

6.7 PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THIS THESIS

There is a sufficient new contribution to knowledge for this thesis to be useful. The original intention of the author was to write the biography of a humble Somerset boy, with the intention of bringing to light a talented illustrator. This vision of the man changed as the research progressed. After five years of hard work, the present author still enjoys the topic of the research.

The present author cannot guarantee that several of Parsons's gardens were outstanding, but Parsons was regarded by some of his contemporaries as being an exceptional landscape-gardener. More research will reveal if his contribution to the history of landscape gardening was

unique. Any further research into Parsons should assume that he was exceptional.²³

The present author is particularly proud of providing a new framework that will help to identify other landscape-gardeners of the period who shared the same system of values and who linked themselves, consciously or not, to the same tradition.

The disappearance of Battledene garden is a great loss, one that could have been prevented had more been known in the nineteen fifties about Parsons and Partridge. This research could be very useful for protecting some of Parsons's still surviving designs. Seminars and talks could be given to spread the new contribution to knowledge formulated in this thesis. This would encourage the conservation of some of Parsons & Partridge's designs and prevent further losses.

A tremendous amount of work has been accomplished and deserves credit but so much more needs to be done. If time were not limited, Nicole Milette would hand in this thesis just before her death, perhaps around the year 2050.

²³ "A proper scientific caution is welcome when all the evidence is clearly not yet in. 'One shouldn't imagine that we all have a high intellectual destiny. Most of us are just trying to sort out one little bit of the garden.' And that, [Simon Conway Morris] believes is a very worthy activity." [Wavell, Stuart. *The Sunday Times* 'Dissent about descent' 5 January 1997: 21 Wavell was reviewing Simon Conway Morris's book: *The Crucible of Creation*, to be published later in 1997]. Parsons's life would have deserved to be researched and remembered, even if he had been only a "humble Somerset boy".

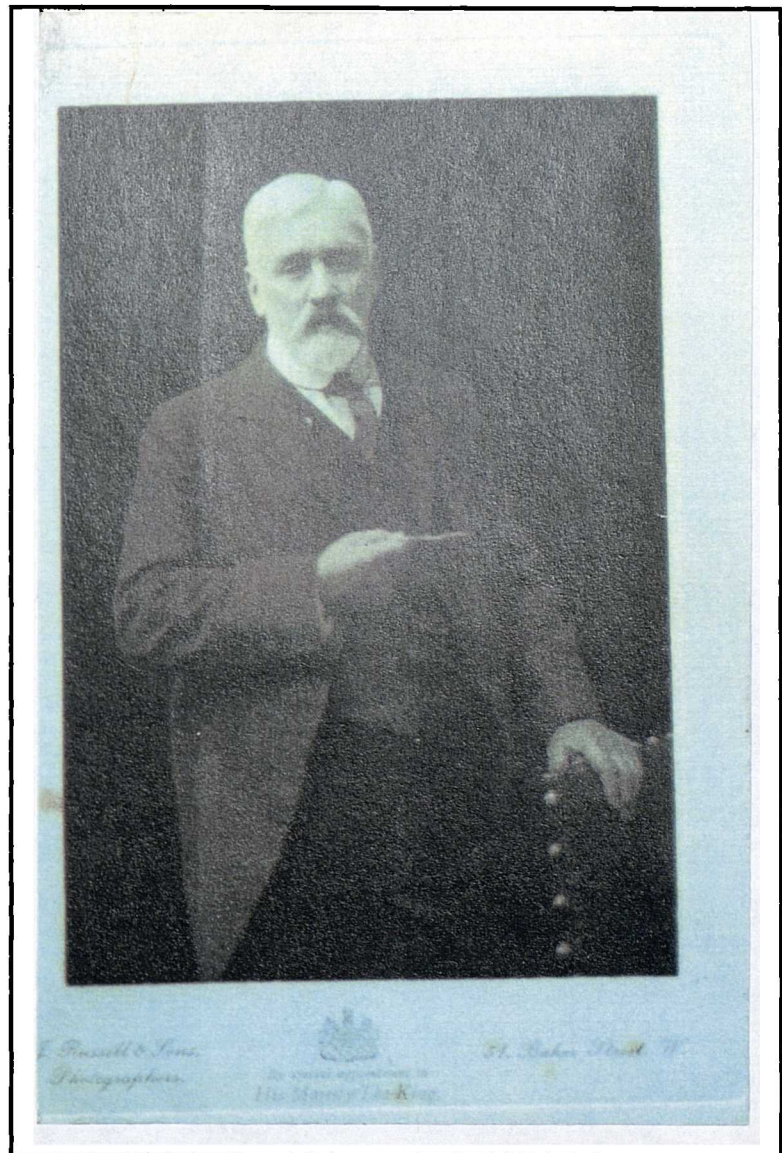


Figure 162 Alfred Parsons in old age. [Sir Richard Parsons's collection.]