

**TEMPLE DINSLEY
THE LUTYENS FORMAL GARDENS**

SUMMARY OF RESTORATION PROPOSALS

BY

GEORGE CARTER

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FIG. 372.—GATES AND FORECOURT.

George Carter Design Ltd
Silverstone Farm
North Elmham
East Dereham
NR20 5EX

george@georgecartergardens.co.uk

Introduction

The site of the present formal gardens is an historic one and one in which today we see the remnants of an important Lutyens/Jekyll collaboration. This however overlaid a series of earlier gardens the evidence for which is outlined in the various heritage documents listed below. Some of the surviving walls remain from the 18th century garden notably in the forecourt and surrounding the area that in the early 20th century was the Herbaceous Garden.

Lawrence Weaver wrote: “One odd characteristic of the old house is apparent from a glance at the plan. The entrance hall was to the south and the garden front to the north, instead of vice versa”. (*Houses and Gardens by E L Lutyens*, Country Life 1913, p.224) Lutyens layout of the house and garden kept this arrangement probably because of the pleasing approach from the village and the attractive surviving 1714 entrance forecourt with its brick walls, piers and ironwork. Thus, the main parts of the formal garden are to the North and West, the service wings having always been on the East side of the 18th century core. That to the West (The Rose and Herbaceous gardens) on slightly rising ground towards the village of Preston and that to the North the Pergola garden, Orchard and North terrace arranged around a sunk central lawn. The only long view in the formal garden is that from the Lutyens Belvedere which has a fine North-East view down the valley towards Little Almshoe.

The garden designed by Lutyens and Jekyll is well documented in early 20th century photographs, though no plans survive of Jekyll’s planting schemes. One drawing by Lutyens for the paving in the Magnolia Garden survives in the RIBA Drawings Collection. Lawrence Weaver’s *The Houses and Garden by E.L. Lutyens*, published a plan of the North Terrace paving, as well as 14 photographs of mainly the exterior and garden pp. 221-231). This work, together with the photograph collection belonging to Sebastian Fenwick, and in the Country Life Library, documents the garden at the key period 1909-1913. It is this period under the patronage of Violet and Hubert Fenwick who initially commissioned Lutyens, and who sold the house in 1918, that has provided the benchmark for the proposed garden restoration.

The house and garden changed hands several times between 1918 and 1935 after which it became a school, The Princess Helena College, until 2021. The latter organisation did much work on maintaining and preserving the formal gardens and with the help of the Hertfordshire Gardens trust formulated a restoration strategy. In 2014 Princess Helena College commissioned a Parkland Management Plan from the Landscape Agency. The formal gardens and walled garden were excluded from these proposals though the history and development of the site was well documented in it.

The formal gardens were adapted and simplified to suit the needs of the school between 1935-2021. However, the basic hard-landscaping structure of the garden survives relatively intact, though substantial restoration is required to paving, steps and retaining walls as well as to the pergola garden and pool area.

As Jane Brown wrote (*Gardens of a Golden Afternoon*, Allen Lane, 1982, p.121):

“Steps and paths were never merely a way of keeping the feet dry, they were used to unify the whole garden design and state the relationship of every feature with the house.”

The materials and design of Lutyens garden paths and steps vary according to the location, using materials appropriate to the local topography as well as stylistically relating to the style of the architecture. It is for this reason that the surviving Lutyens garden structures are important, and this report suggests a detailed repair programme.

While Miss Jekyll took the view that most paved surfaces looked better with small plants in their crevices, she bowed to her architect's pride in the design by saying that the plants must accentuate and not obscure the pattern of the material. In the case of Temple Dinsley, it seems appropriate that the joints in the paving should be mortared rather than left with soil joints – not least because the paths and terraces will get more use than they would have had as a private house. Changes to the paths have been limited to providing accessible ramps in a few key areas.

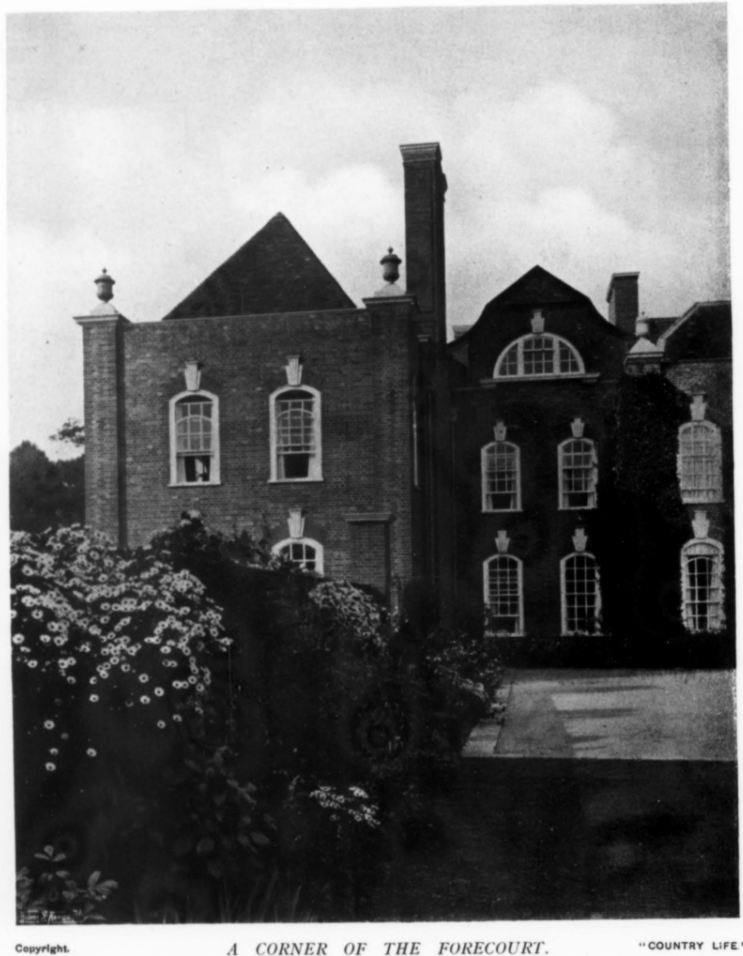
The Park and Garden are listed Grade II* on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens - Park and Garden (List Entry Number:1000919. Date first listed:10-Jun-1987)

The Entrance Forecourt

The proposal is to turn the forecourt into the form in which it is portrayed in the attached early 20th century photographs.

The proposal includes the reconfiguring of the gravel and grass to the layout shown. Borders are recreated on the East and West walls. The York-stone edging between grass and gravel and beds and gravel is reconfigured as in these photographs. Vehicles are to be excluded from this area, though private cars are to be admitted by special arrangement. The brickwork of the surrounding walls is to be restored and repointed with lime mortar as needed. The outer gate piers of the S curved walls are to be restitched back to the E and West walls and rebuilt as necessary to achieve this. The coursing and mortar joints to be carefully followed in doing this. The ironwork screen and gates are to be carefully repaired and repainted. The stone copings and cappings are to be carefully cleaned and repaired as necessary.

The borders against the East and West walls up to the East and West gates (nos 15 & 16) are to be planted based on the photographic evidence but the beds under the house and between the E and W gates are to be removed to improve drainage to the 18th century core of the house.



The South Front and forecourt c.1912 showing the proposed configuration of grass and gravel and borders flanking the E and W walls within the walled enclosure. L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens, (1913) pp 222.

The Pool Garden

The entrance steps to the pool garden (The Diamond Garden) and the associated hard-landscaping are to be carefully cleared of planting and the York-stone paving, brick steps and risers restored and repointed as necessary. The modern swimming pool is to be reconfigured and the early canal-like pond re-instated nearer to its original level. A new trough for aquatic plants, is proposed to be built around the perimeter of the existing swimming pool shell. A UV filtration system is to be installed possibly using the present pumping arrangements and suitable perimeter aquatic planting introduced to improve the water quality. The internal surfaces to be an applied *in situ* black resin coating.

The balustrading and retaining walls to be carefully cleared of vegetation and the brickwork repaired and repointed as necessary. New York stone paving to be installed at the East West end of the pool. Around the edge of the new aquatics troughs would be a mown grass path retained by metal edging on the outer and inner sides. The Border to the North (no 17) replanted with evergreen shrubbery to mimic that in the photograph below. The small beds to the N of the access steps (no 18) to be replanted with evergreen flowering shrubs informally disposed.

The timber and brick service sheds to the South to be removed. The canopy of the existing trees to the South to be raised and evergreen underplanting to be introduced.

New metal fencing of park rail type to replace the existing fencing and gate on the East side of the pool and a new metal gate to match between the North axis piers.

The paving, steps and retaining walls to be repaired and repointed as necessary. The terracotta balustrade to the North to be repaired and strengthened.



FIG. 379.—THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER AND THE UPPER POOL.

The pool garden c.1912. L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens, (1913) pp 227.

The Rose Garden

The Rose Garden is well documented in photographs and other images and is the primary foreground to the West wing of the Lutyens extension. Its layout was designed by Lutyens. The local Rose growers R Harkness and Co. supplied the roses in 1909/10. The colour scheme was pink and white for the main parterre of beds, and this was illustrated in colour photograph in Harkness's catalogue for (1912). It is also illustrated in black and white photographs and in a painting by Annie Swinnerton of Violet Fenwick's two sons David and Benedict.

The beds (nos 9 & 10) to be planted with roses pink and white. The perimeter beds (nos 1,2,3,4,5 & 6) to be planted with climbing roses and low shrub roses in the same colour

scheme. The bed against the north wall (no 7) to be planted with 6 fan trained fruit trees. The beds (no 8) below the West front of the house to have wall planting removed and replanted with a continuous band of catmint or lavender.

Two pre-existing buildings on the N side of the rose garden were re-designed by Lutyens into a pair of pavilions linked by a pergola style loggia. This group of buildings is to be restored and turned into a single unit of accommodation.

The paving around the main lozenge shaped beds is of irregular York-stone, as is the central path and a linking path from the entrance forecourt next to the house. The path from the central axis running along the house wall Northwards is a concrete path of more modern construction as is the path from the NE corner of the rose garden to the pavilions. These lead to two doors inserted into the North wall by the school. They access post war art rooms which are to be converted to apartments.

The plan is to restore the random York-stone paths – resetting them in a suitable lime mortar and to retain the more modern concrete slab paths to be used as access to the new apartment in the Art Rooms.

The planting against the retaining wall to pool garden on the S side of the rose garden is to be removed so that the wall itself can be repaired and replanted. The bed will be replanted with controlled clipped evergreens.

The central paved bay in the centre of this wall on the central axis of the pavilions was obviously designed for a bench and it is proposed to install a painted timber bench here to one of Lutyens' designs.

The centre of the rose garden consists of a square bed originally planted with low roses surrounding a lost lead statue of Father Time on a stone plinth. It is proposed to re-site an existing sundial base on a new raised plinth at the centre of this bed to be surrounded by low shrub roses.

The steps and platform on the central axis to the West is to be cleared of planting and the brickwork and paving restored and repointed.

Grass platts next to the house were arranged symmetrically about the E/W axial path. They are shown in the Harkness photographs without low box edging, and it is proposed to relay the turf without box edging and with metal edging where needed.

The bed against the North Wall is to be cleared and replanted with fan trained wall fruit as is shown in the Harkness photograph and in the 1790s watercolour of the original wall which was in a similar position to the present one rebuilt by Lutyens.



FIG. 378.—AND FROM THE WEST.

Photograph of the Rose Garden and Pavilion from the West Wing, L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1913 pp226



Portrait of David and Jonathan Fenwick in the Rose Garden, Annie Swynnerton, C.1915, (Thankful to Major Charles Fenwick for providing this photograph)

The Herbaceous Garden

The Rose Garden was continued to the West on rising ground on the same axis. This area was named the Herbaceous Garden and consisted of a broad grass walk between old brick garden walls which follow the lines of those in the rose garden. It is proposed to clear and regrade this area reinstating a wide central mown path defined by York-stone edging to replicate that which originally bounded the borders. This garden terminated at the West end with a transverse paved path of which of which vestiges remain. Investigation will show whether it is possible to reinstate this path. If not remaining York stone will be lifted for re-use in repairing paths elsewhere in the Lutyens garden areas. There was a central gate into the village in the West perimeter wall (shown in the two images below). This wall and the East and West walls are proposed to be cleared of vegetation and repaired and repointed as necessary. The better trees at the North end of the herbaceous garden to be retained and evergreen underplanting to be introduced (*Ruscus aculeatus*, *Taxus baccata*, *Ilex aquifolium*).

The presently grassed area to be regraded and the central path between York stone tramlines to be mown. The large swathes of grass either side to be planted as meadow grass with coppiced hazel (*Corylus avellana*) as a row flanking the mown path. This makes a reference to Gertrude Jekyll's fondness for Nutteries and offers a way of framing the N/S axis beyond the rose garden in a simple way.



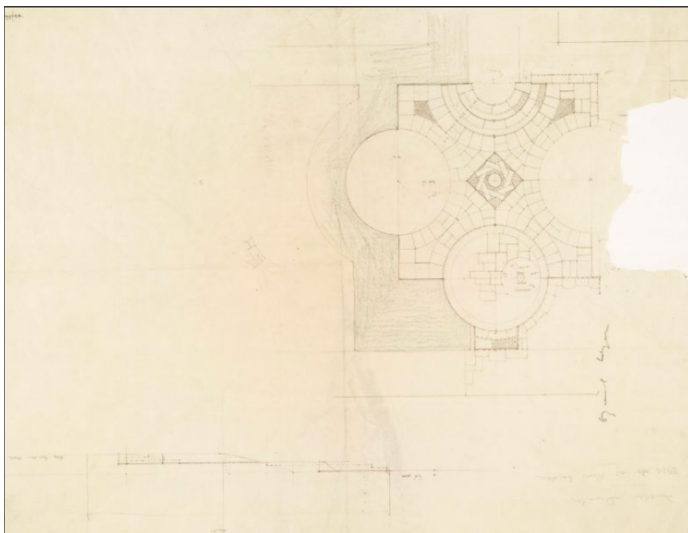
View towards the Herbaceous Garden from the Rose Garden, MK BIM, 2024

The Magnolia Garden

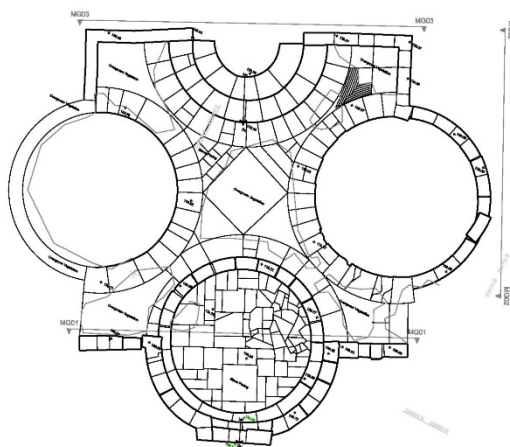
The Magnolia Garden has a surviving Lutyens drawing for the paving layout which is not quite identical to the surviving paving detail (see drawing below). This garden was originally surrounded by a yew hedge which was linked to the 2nd Rose Garden to its North also enclosed by yew hedges. These linked gardens were therefore discreet gardens rooms not visible in the landscape at large, though N/S, E/W axes gave glimpses of them from other areas. The 1924 Ordnance survey (see below) shows these hedges. It is proposed that the very overgrown yews from the original hedge surrounding the 2nd Rose Garden be removed and both hedges replanted at a scale of 1.2m high.

One well grown Magnolia survives in the East circular bed. That in the West bed is a less good shape but should be retained. There was a third existing tree when Lutyens made his paving design (1908-13 RIBA Drawings Collection). This was off-centre in the Southern circle of paving but has been subsequently removed.

The paving steps and retaining walls will be restored following the surviving pattern.

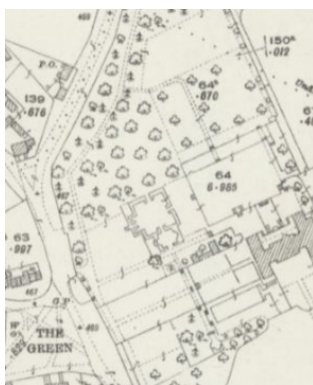


Lutyens' drawing for the Magnolia Garden paving , RIBA Drawing Archive



(Left) Magnolia Garden paving (in plan) , MK BIM, 2024

(Right) Magnolia Garden paving, MK BIM, 2024



Ordnance Survey map showing the yew enclosures to the Magnolia Garden and 2nd Rose Garden, 1924

The Second Rose Garden

This Rose Garden was a yew-enclosed garden to the North of the Magnolia Garden and was arranged on its N/S axis.

It is proposed to replace the overgrown yews, which are the remnant of the original hedging, and to plant new yew hedges at 1.2 m high. 4 new rose beds are to be created (no 11) and would be planted with roses approved by Gertrude Jekyll. As it is not known what colour scheme this garden originally comprised, suitable groups from Jekyll's books, *Colour Schemes for English Gardens* (1908) and *Roses for English Gardens* (1902) will be devised. Four new simple Lutyens benches will be included in this area sited on flush York-stone paving set into mown grass.

An accessible E/W path is to be introduced across this garden which will provide a wheelchair accessible route from the village to the Pergola Garden and beyond. The site of the West staircase in this garden (now derelict) will be turned into a ramp, at a suitable gradient, with extended retaining walls. This path offers an accessible link from the village to the Summer House apartment and beyond to the Pergola Garden.

The Pergola Garden

The new ramped path leads from the 2nd Rose Garden to the Pergola Garden. Its route cuts behind the large *Quercus ilex* to the East via a new ramp that skirts round the central steps linking the 2nd Rose Garden with the central axis of the Pergola Garden lawn. This path leads to the East end of the Pergola Garden created by widening the narrow stone skirting to the South side of the lawn.

The Pergola Garden and its sunk central lawn had some minor alterations in the early 20th century, but it is proposed to retain the present configuration on the North and South side of the lawn. There are attractive views to the orchard and woodland to the North both from the lawn and from the North front of the house. The early photographs show that the pergolas were relatively unclothed with climbers, which gave a more open aspect to the space.

The long East pergola and its terminations to the North and South is to be cleared of planting and replanted with controlled climbers – the underplanting of principally *Bergenia* to be removed and split before replanting. The central paved paths to be re-laid and repointed.

Similar simplification to the planting of the central North pergola and clearance of planting around the Belvedere. The Pergola to be repaired and the West facing steps, which have subsided, rebuilt to the correct level.

Simple repairs to the pergola, its retaining walls and paths with some replacement of oak transoms



The East side of the Pergola lawn today, showing what was originally low planting on the North Terrace and relatively open planting on the East Pergola and the beds below it. The lawn was originally set out as two grass tennis courts, MK BIM, 2024



The North Terrace c.1912 showing low planting on the various terraces. The left-hand bay window on the 18th century central block had a yew “canted bay” on the right for the sake of symmetry, This conceit predated Lutyens. L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1913pp 223

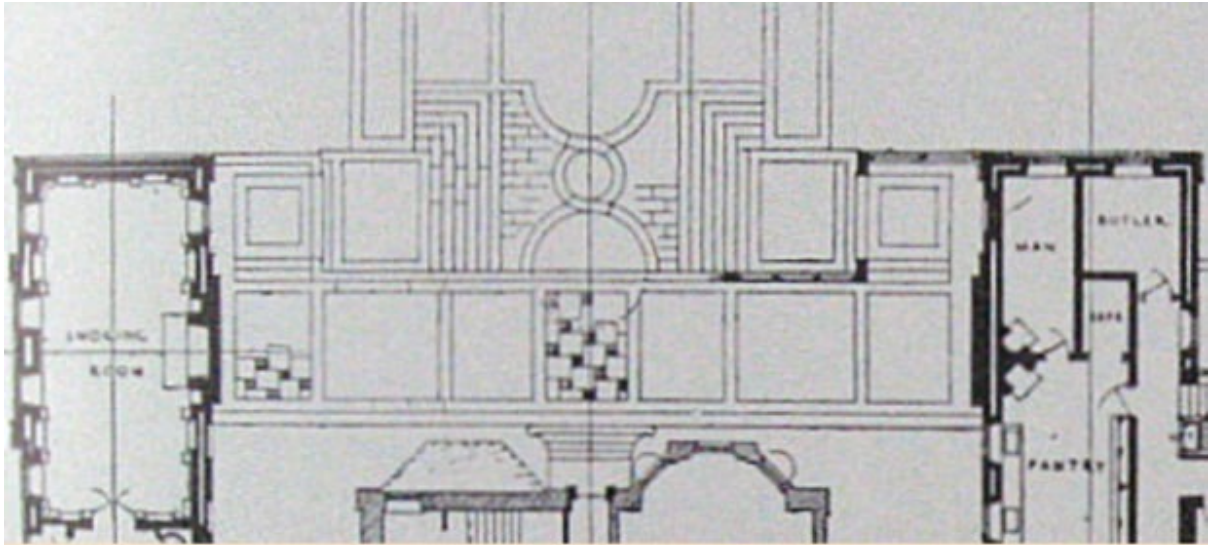
The North Terrace

The photograph above shows that the planting for the North terrace was low and minimal. In the earlier image there were low yew blocks flanking the central wide steps, and these formed a full stop to the flanking beds which led up to the brick niched pool. It is proposed that these would be re-instated and that the planting of the two beds (no 13) would be low structured planting of grey and silver foliage.

Lutyens’ North Terrace was a complex essay in retained levels linked by symmetrical staircases. Planting played a minimal part in the effect as the photograph above shows. The drawing illustrated by Lawrence Weaver shows the pattern of paving very much as it now survives, and the plan here would be to remove most of the overgrown vegetation and to restore the hard landscaping. This would be an area where discreet lighting could be introduced to highlight the staircases and the semi-circular pool niche.

Beds (no 12) would be planted as a continuous swathe of mainly grey foliage with low Portugal Laurel mop heads rising out of it at regular intervals.

The dense planting of trees and shrubs to the far East at the upper level to be thinned and enhanced with underplanting with a weed-suppressing bark top dressing between planting. The yews on The Eastern retaining wall to be pruned back and lowered.



The paving pattern of the North Terrace from Lawrence Weaver shows the paving pattern very much as it survives today, L Weaver, Houses and Gardens by Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1913 pp 228

The Orchard

The deer fence to be hidden behind a beech hedge 1,2 m high on all sides. Replace defective trees with similar varieties. The more overgrown fruit trees pruned to a better shape.



The Orchard looking north from the Tennis court garden, MK BIM, 2024

The Small Orchard (Quincunx)



The Quincunx Orchard today looking north towards the Belvedere to be replanted, MK BIM, 2024

The Belvedere

The Belvedere is to be carefully cleared of ivy and other overgrowth. The yew hedge running North South terminating at the Belvedere is to be clipped back to a formal hedge and the overgrowth against the Belvedere to be removed to help re-instate the NE view from the East window.



The Belvedere today as seen from the west, MK BIM, 2024

Temple Dinsley – The restoration of the historic fabric of the garden

The proposed restoration of the historic garden concentrates on the Lutyens designed elements of the 1908-1918 period when Lutyens was working for Violet and Hubert Fenwick, but it also respects other later interventions by other owners. However, the prime period is considered to be that of 1908-18 when the garden was exceptionally well documented in particular by Country Life Magazine and by Lawrence Weaver's *The Houses and Gardens of E L Lutyens, 1913*, also published by Country Life.

The herbaceous and shrub planting at this period seemed to have been for the most quiet simple and of low height which gave the architecture and garden structures the prominence and purity that Lutyens seemed to prefer, though the softening effect of planting was also appreciated. Lutyens took advantage of pre-existing planting and of garden walls and contours from earlier periods, carefully overlaying his geometry on the that of the various earlier owners.

Though the garden has lost much of its planting of the Lutyens period, the survival of paths, walls, paving, steps and garden structures make this garden important. Under the ownership of the school the paths, steps and retaining walls were maintained though some dilapidation has occurred. A recent complete survey of all the built structures and paving in the Lutyens areas has been commissioned and a marked up set of these surveys is submitted with this Pre-App. A further on-site survey will be carried out after the removal of overgrowth so that spalled brickwork can be repaired, cracks and degradation of foundations dealt with, and cappings and copings replaced or re-set. In particular, the state of the early 18th century iron, stone and brick screen at the entrance front will be assessed and repaired. Cars are not, as a general rule, to be allowed to access the forecourt because of the narrow 18th century gates and their vulnerable fabric.

No planting specification survives for the garden, but the colour scheme for the Rose garden is known and the plants were supplied by Harkness of Hitchin. The suggested varieties below would reproduce the effect shown in the painting of the garden by Annie Swinnerton and in the colour photograph from the Harkness catalogue.

Most of the mature trees within the formal gardens will be retained and in some cases the canopies reduced. There are a few ornamental shrubs and climbers that are shown as retained. These include several magnolias and a few of the climbers – particularly those on the S detached pergola steps. Bergenia and Alstromeria are much in evidence in border no 12 and these are to be removed and divided for use elsewhere. All of the few surviving roses are of recent date and these are to be assessed. A few on the main pergola walk could be pruned and retained.

Suggested Planting Lists

Bed 1 and 2

Bed below no 17 North facing in Rose Garden. A series of structured evergreen wall plantings and shrubs to act as a dark background to the rose beds (Jekyll, *Roses for English Gardens* 1902,p.233-4).

Taxus baccata columns, *Pyracantha coccínea* columns, *Garrya elíptica*, *ilex aquifolium* columns all pruned flat against the wall with low controlled evergreen shrubbery in front such as *Sarcococca*, *Osmanthus* and *Phillyrea latifolia*.

Beds 3, 4, 5 & 6

West and North Side of Rose Garden

These are shown as planted with climbing and shrub roses in pink and white. Appropriate roses would be: The Garland, Captain Christy and Felicité et Perpétue (Climbing) and low shrub roses such Caroline Testout, Baroness Rothschild, White Lay, La France, White Pet and Killarney. An outer edging of the beds in *Stachys lanata* or lavender would be a way of defining the beds.

Bed 7

East end of N wall

4 No Fan trained fruit trees

Beds 8

Below West front

A continuous band of catmint or lavender

Beds 9 & 10

Main central rose beds

Low growing pink and white Shrub/HT roses with some central standard roses

White pet, Caroline Testout, The Fairy

Beds 11

4 new beds in the 2nd Rose Garden.

There are no records of the planting of these beds so that a colour scheme could be devised based on Gertrude Jekyll's *Roses for English Gardens*, 1902, with a less formal arrangement than in the main Rose Garden.

Beds 12

Long beds at the top of the North Terrace retaining wall. A continuous band of low mixed planting punctuated by short (10 No) Portugal laurel standards at regular intervals.

Iris pallida "Argenteo variegata", *Liriope muscari* "Alba", *Santolina incana* "Nana", *Rosa* "Little White Pet", *Cerastium tomentosum*, Silver thyme.

Beds no 13

2 symmetrical beds with low mixed planting in grey foliage, blue and white, including: *Stachys lanata*, *Helichrysum italicum microphyllum*, *Artemisia schmidtiana* "Silver Mound", *Hebe* "Pewter Dome", *Lychnis coronaria* "Alba", *Convolvulus cneorum*, *Nepeta* "Walkers Low", *Dianthus* "Mrs Sinkins", *Cerastium tomentosum*, *Salvia officinalis*, *Thymus* "Silver Posy". At the North ends of the beds 6 *Taxus baccata* arranged as a low block.

Bed No 14

Either side of long Pergola Walk

Re use *Bergenia* from existing planting and add *Alstomeria* from present Bed no 12. Climbing roses and clematis at intervals below columns. *Rosa* "The Garland", *Rosa* "Sombreuil" "climbing, *Clematis armandii*, *Holboelia corriacea*

Beds no 15 & 16

Both sides of entrance forecourt against East and West walls

Aster novi-belgii “white opal”, Euphorbia wulfenii, Buddleia davidii “Silver Anniversary”, Cynara cardunculus, Eryngium “Miss Wilmott’s Ghost”, Elaeagnus ebbingei compacta, Hollyhock “Chater’s white”, Lupin “Noble Maiden”, Perovskia atriplicifolia “Prime Time”, Achillea millefolium “White beauty”

Bed No 17

Bed at the upper level of the wall between the pool garden and the rose garden – a continuous barrier of structural evergreens clipped irregularly.

Ilex aquifolium, Ilex x meservae “Blue Prince”, Phillyrea latifolia, Portugal laurel, Laurus nobilis, taxus baccata.

Beds no 18

Two beds flanking the steps to the pool shown in the early 20th century as planted with evergreen flowering shrubs

Camellia japonica, Viburnum tinus

REFERENCES

Country Life, 29 (22 April 1911), pp 562-72; 40 (30 December 1916), pp 2-6

L Weaver, *Houses and Gardens by E L Lutyens* (1913), pp 221-31

G Jekyll and L Weaver, *Gardens for Small Country Houses* (5th edn 1924), pp 219-20

J Brown, *Gardens of a Golden Afternoon* (1982), p 170.

Temple Dinsley History & Restoration Proposals (1992)

The Landscape Agency, Parkland Management Plan, 2014

RIBA Drawing Archive, RIBA

