

HOME IS HOUSE AND GARDEN: The Projected Symposium

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The fight for conservation of works of art and of public amenities is long and arduous, and in spite of our country's renown as a bulwark of traditionalism, we cannot claim that our efforts have been either speedy or successful. In the field of buildings, listing, recording and repair were already being officially organized in Germany by 1818, yet the first serious steps towards such coordinated work were not taken here until 1896 and then only in London, started by the private London Survey Committee and soon afterwards sponsored by the London County Council. Both Germany and France had been concerned for generations with the overall impression made by grouped monuments (*Stadtbild*) by the early years of this century, yet in Britain there was no national approach until the tentative Town and Country Planning Act of 1932. Listing of individual buildings, begun in London by 1896, published for an area of 70 miles square by the Manchester Society of Architects in 1904, and for the ancient County of Surrey by the Surrey Archaeological Society in 1913, was not nationally coordinated until 1940, when lists were begun in haste to provide for First-Aid repairs to historic buildings damaged by enemy action in the war of 1939-45. Even after 1947 it took years before the concept of 'group value' was accepted, and the losses to the nation of *officially listed* buildings of historic or architectural importance were horrific until the 1960s. These losses were largely due to the decision to deny statutory protection to 'Grade III' in the lists, covering the great majority of those listed and especially important for overall historic impression.

In the light of this tragic but instructive parallel we have to try to secure proper protection for the Garden in its own right. The word 'Garden' is here used to include designed Landscape, and it must be borne in mind that, as in the case of buildings, it is not only the relatively few large or outstanding individual gardens and parks that are in question, but the multitude of smaller yet—in the aggregate—highly significant works, of planning and planting. Some recognition of 'group value' even for the small front gardens of villages must be envisaged.

The recognition of gardens as works of art has indeed been slow in this country and, as in the case of buildings, the tentative legislation of 1974 and 1983 has been preceded by long periods of private endeavour. The promotion of gardening as both a scientific and an artistic concept has had formal existence since the founding of the (later Royal) Horticultural Society in 1804, but over 160 years were to pass before the Garden History Society

came into being. The Society's register of gardens, a preliminary towards listing, was launched in 1969, when the Society also published its *Occasional Paper No. 1*, devoted to restoration. (See also the Society's journal *Garden History*, especially volume III no. 4, 1975.) The first instance of seriously controlled historical restoration followed, at Westbury-on-Severn, in 1971. Even before that, casework on threats to historic gardens and landscapes had begun to take up a great deal of time and energy, and the increasing pressures of recent years may be gauged from the detailed account given by Mavis Batey (pages 114–122).

The passing of the National Heritage Act 1983 marks a highly significant stage in the development of conservation. In order to obtain the greatest benefit from its provisions it is evident that there must be carefully coordinated effort, conducted in the light of relevant experience. It is for this reason that the Ancient Monuments Society and the Garden History Society have come together to sponsor a one-day Symposium on the subject as a mutually complementary whole: Home = House + Garden. The programme is divided into two parts: I. Principles and Legislation; II. Restoration and Recreation, each subdivided into sections on separate topics to be introduced by one speaker, and followed by opportunity for questions. Finally, an Open Forum for raising of all relevant issues, will close the day. What follows here is a brief outline of the topics and problems (other than those dealt with in Mrs. Batey's detailed paper) to be covered under each main head.

I. PRINCIPLES AND LEGISLATION

I.1 After an opening address by the Chairman a speaker for the Ancient Monuments Society will relate its experience of working within the framework of the legislation brought into force for buildings since 1947.

I.2 The experience of the Garden History Society, working since 1965, and the main problems it has faced. The importance of securing parallel and uniform treatment for the whole of the United Kingdom: Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, will be stressed, and the desirability of a joint committee to coordinate effort. A matter for discussion is whether to press for some form of statutory protection of Gardens against vandalistic change by their owners, without undue interference with the rights of the gardener. The existing precedent of Tree Preservation Orders and the position within Conservation Areas are relevant here.

I.3 The role of the York Centre for the Conservation of Historic Parks and Gardens will be described, with the outline format for the detailed *Inventory*, compiled from all sources and largely by voluntary effort. In the formation of the *Inventory* early maps and plans on large scales are of outstanding importance and at

county level can easily be identified (see Elizabeth M. Rodger, *The Large Scale County Maps of the British Isles*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1960, etc.). From the general Inventory lists will be drawn up for submission to the National Heritage Commission as entries for the *Register of Gardens* to be given protection.

(A) The Inventory will be linked to a Map, on which eventually the boundaries of all 'Historic Gardens' will appear. These must include not only existing gardens which may qualify as entries on the official Register, but also all identifiable sites of former gardens of historic interest. While such sites can only rarely expect permanent protection, it is essential that their archaeological value should be recognized and opportunity afforded for excavation in the event of threatened destruction.

The criteria for inclusion in the Inventory will be extremely wide, but clearly distinguishing between a living garden necessarily subject to continual modification and replanting, and a 'relict' site no longer maintained or of purely archaeological concern (comparable to the distinction between Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments). Unlike the legislation on buildings, the relevant clauses of the Act of 1983 refer only to 'special historic interest'. This is understood to cover gardens over 50 years old at the date of statutory registration (and not designed by a person still living), and strongly representative of one or more of these factors:

1. a particular style of design;
2. a good example by a well known designer;
3. a garden which provides a setting for a historic building;
4. a garden closely associated with a famous person, or gardener;
5. containing an important plant collection.

(B) The Register, maintained officially by the Commission, is likely to involve some form of grading, but it is to be hoped that the former defects of grading (as applied to buildings) will be avoided. It would be helpful to have a single general grade, with additions such as 'Considerable Interest' or 'Outstanding Interest', as preferable to numerical grading which conveys a mistaken sense of the relative unimportance of minor sites. A garden ranked as 'Outstanding' should automatically qualify for some degree of grant-aid.

For the Register to give effective protection, it is clear that there must be an adequate system of advance Notification of Threats. As in the case of applications to demolish listed buildings (since 1969), it should be made mandatory that advance notices be sent to certain bodies, such as the Council for British Archaeology, the appropriate Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, the Garden History Society, and the

Council for the Protection of Rural England. Different categories of threat require definition: e.g. physical destruction of the whole or part, as for road works or felling trees; damage to settings, as by Noise or Smell pollution; interference in any form to outward views of the surrounding landscape. It is vital that the onus of notification be laid upon such official bodies as the Ministry of Transport, the Forestry Commission, and Local Planning Authorities.

I.4 Gardens seen as a part of Conservation of the National Heritage as a whole, including Nature Conservancy, as well as the man-made environment.

I.5 The case history of a single county where local experience has already been gained and various practical problems identified. (A pioneer study, of Oxfordshire, is J. St. Bodfan Gruffydd, *Protecting Historic Landscapes*, 1977; see also K. Bilikowski, *Hampshire's Countryside Heritage: Historic Parks and Gardens*, Hampshire County Council, 1983.) The degree of public access which must be guaranteed in order to obtain grant-aid, and the dangers of over-use causing serious damage (e.g. to turf); and security risks to the property, including a historic house and its contents. The need for a long-term Management Scheme, which should be drawn up together with the detailed design for any restoration or re-creation as an integral part of the designer's brief. Copies of every such scheme, with plans and photographs before and after treatment, should be filed, both in a place of central deposit (such as the National Monuments Record) and also locally (e.g. in a County Record Office).

I.6 Hope for help: the main sources of possible grants in aid, particularly from official funding.

II. RESTORATION AND RE-CREATION

II.1 The general principles underlying the restoration of historic gardens. Within a framework of authenticity, the need for somewhat elastic handling of plant material, which can only rarely be of exactly the same character as that obtainable at the time of creation of the original garden. A special case of this is the unavoidable replacement of Elms by other sorts of trees.

Restoration must be firmly based upon survey of the garden itself and all monumental features within, or in some cases, outside it but within view; investigation of all long-lived plant material and also of all tree-stumps as evidence. (The pioneering exemplar of method is John Phibbs, *Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire*, National Trust, 1980.) Wherever possible, excavational archaeology should be undertaken to establish the form of earlier gardens on the same site and, by the identification of stratified pollens and macrofossils, the species grown at

different phases of use. All known plans, plant lists, and other documentary sources will have to be studied in depth and related to the physical survey and archaeological finds.

The utmost care is needed in regard to the plants to be used. These can often be checked against surviving lists in the case of restoration, or against the literature of a period in the case of a recreated garden (as distinct from restoration of an individual garden with a recorded history). On the other hand, there are many difficulties in precise identification of species and varieties, and in the garden terminology of different periods. Methods of planting and grouping have to be considered as well as correct design and accurately identified plants. Inasmuch as most historic gardens retain features from more than one phase of development, great care is needed to avoid the destruction of one part of a garden's history in order to restore it to a perfect reconstitution of a single date. What is desirable is, not a set of rigid rules, but a careful consideration of each case on its own merits, with an over-riding regard for aesthetic quality in the result. Even markedly divergent styles, if carried out in the best possible way, can be accepted as harmonious parts of a single whole: '*Le beau et le beau se conviennent toujours*', as Didron wrote in 1845. To make every part beautiful in its own right is the golden rule.

II.2—II.6 Five case histories, representing gardens of the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, will be described: some of individual restoration, others deliberate *pastiche* representing a re-creation of a bygone style now lost.

III. OPEN FORUM

The day will conclude with an opportunity for free discussion of issues not previously considered.