

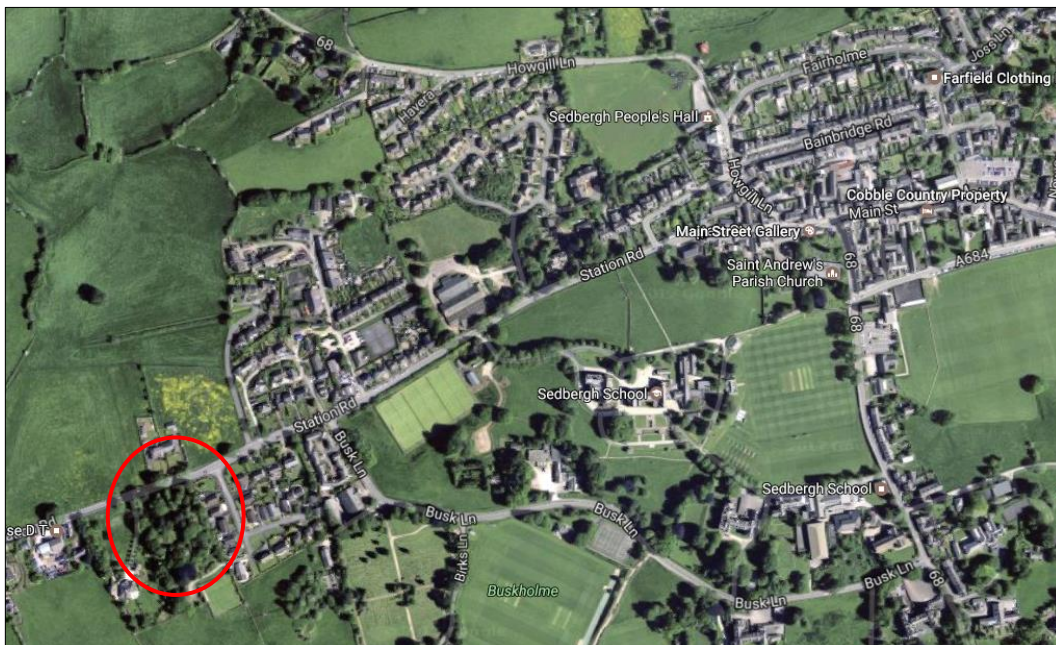
THE QUEEN'S MEMORIAL GARDENS, SEDBERGH

PART I: SITE EVALUATION: BACKGROUND & HISTORY

Introduction

In 1906, Queen's Gardens¹ were presented to the people of Sedbergh, by Mrs. Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, of Ingmire Hall², to commemorate the death of Queen Victoria, which had occurred in 1901.

The Gardens themselves are small, as public gardens go - just 0.95 ha., or less than 2.5 acres. They lie to the west of the town - curiously distant, it now seems, from the small, but densely-occupied, residential and commercial centre of Sedbergh. Britain is rich in exceptional public parks, often laid out in the later 19th or early 20th centuries; a scrap of green and lovely landscape for the benefit of residents and workers in increasingly crowded, industrial, towns and cities. Sedbergh, however, is surrounded by sublime landscape, and – despite the density of its early domestic and commercial buildings and the inevitable rural poverty many must have endured – has never been threatened by quite the squalid and polluted conditions which characterised so many larger towns and cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries. One must wonder, therefore, why this little gem of a park, designed by Thomas Mawson, one of the leading landscape designers of the day, found its way to this spot some five years after Queen Victoria had died. This Conservation Report explores something of the fascinating history of the Gardens and considers the circumstances and significance of its creation, as well as how it might remain an important focus of community life in Sedbergh in the 21st century.



Sedbergh town, to the east of the densely-planted Queen's Gardens, highlighted in red (this and other aerial shots - Google Earth).

¹ In its early years – and in *Historic England's Register* – this was, perhaps more appropriately, called Queen's Garden. From April 1908, however, the Parish Council Minutes describe it as 'Queen's Gardens', and that seems to be what most people call it today. We have used that appellation throughout.

² <http://www.outofoblivion.org.uk/record.asp?id=403>, Historical Environment Record No. MYD36569

Setting: landscape; geology; economy

Queen's Gardens are laid out in an area which lies at the heart of a spectacularly beautiful landscape, within the Yorkshire Dales National Park (extended in 2016 closer to the M6 in the NW and SW) and the Lake District National Park to the west, where opportunities to roam at will are plentiful.



The two National Parks: since 2016, even closer neighbours than hitherto. Sedbergh, highlighted in red, in YDNP & close to LDNP, across the M6.

Sedbergh itself is set at the confluence of four valleys and four rivers, where ancient trade routes from Kendal to York and Lancaster to Newcastle merged.³ To the south of the town runs the River Rawthey; overlooking the town from its northern side is Winder. The latter is one of the remarkably bare, hunched shoulders of the Howgill Fells, distinct because of their ancient and complex geology, comprising compact sandstone, Coniston Grit, laid down mainly during the Silurian age, 430-415 million years ago, 'some 60 million years older than the Carboniferous rocks that make up most of the Yorkshire Dales National Park'⁴. This very hard stone is resistant to weathering, thus giving rise to the smooth, rounded summits of the Howgill Fells, very different from much of the rest of this area.

³ [http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about-the-
dales/landscape/landscapecharacterassessment/lca_cumbrian-dales.pdf](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about-the-dales/landscape/landscapecharacterassessment/lca_cumbrian-dales.pdf)

⁴ See, 'The Southern Howgill Fells', [http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about-the-
dales/landscape/landscapecharacterassessment/lca_southern-howgills.pdf](http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/about-the-
dales/landscape/landscapecharacterassessment/lca_southern-howgills.pdf)



Sedbergh at the foot of Winder Fell, to the north.

Settlements in this part of the world are sparse, the fells and rivers having restricted development. The principal economic activity has long been associated with the land and agriculture remains an essential part of local life (even though it employs only some 5% of the working population). Given the challenging climate and the exposed, acidic grassland which prevails in the area, much of the higher land is unsuitable for arable management; hardy sheep graze the unenclosed hills, with rights to grazing the land being held by local farms. Wool was, for centuries, the staple export from the area, with yarn being carded, spun, dyed and knitted or woven, both by hand and in the water-powered textile mills of the locality. In the 19th century, several quarries were also active around the town. The economy and status of Sedbergh has long been further supported by two important developments, which are not directly associated with manual labour, skilled craftsmanship or even the early success of mass-production from mills fuelled by the rushing waters of the district. First of all, for many centuries, the sons (and now daughters) of the rich, ambitious and influential have been educated at the well-known independent educational establishment, Sedbergh School, founded in 1525 and a major employer in the area; secondly, tourism has long provided a link to the wider world⁵.

From the later 18th century, when a Romantic taste for the wilder reaches of the British Isles took visitors to the Lake District, some also made their way to the less-populated hills and valleys around Sedbergh. Their access was significantly improved from the later 18th century, when the limitations of old trading and packhorse routes were reduced by the introduction of new highways, organised by turnpike trusts and funded by the tolls that were charged every few miles. Toll roads came rather late to those areas encompassed by today's Cumbria - but, once constructed, there is no doubt that they contributed to speed of travel and trade. Sedbergh had to wait until 1762 before a new toll road replaced earlier routes which linked it to Kirkby Stephen in the NNE, Kendal to the west, Kirkby Lonsdale to the south, and thence much further

⁵ Not only did Wordsworth visit the area in 1799 – & did much to promote its wild beauties – he also sent his sons to Sedbergh School. Links with the Romantic poets were continued in 1837 and 1838, when Hartley Coleridge, the elder son of the poet, was headmaster at Sedbergh.

afield. Railways, of course, further improved travel and transport. A line built by the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway (L&CR) between 1858-61 linked Sedbergh, Kirkby Lonsdale and Ingleton (and, ultimately, Carlisle and Lancaster). This remained a branch line and, by the time the Ingleton branch was completed, in 1861, the L&CR was operated by the London and North Western Railway (L&NWR)⁶. Within a few years it was supplemented by the high-speed Settle-Carlisle route, with its famous Ribbleshead viaduct, completed by 1876. This had been built by rivals of the L&NWR, the Midland Railway (MR) and, perhaps not surprisingly, the latter advertised its line as the most picturesque journey between southern England and Scotland. There is no doubt that these new routes enhanced the accessibility of the Lakes, the Howgill Fells and the Pennines of North Yorkshire. Not only was it, relatively speaking, much easier to get to these places, but the advertisements issued by the train and travel companies did much to promote the glories of the countryside of the area, which was now visible from the train windows, as travellers sped past, taking advantage of a number of competing railway lines.



L&NWR travel poster for the English Lakes, 1921. LMS⁷ poster, probably 1930s

Thus, from the later 19th century, getting to Sedbergh by road and rail was, for the first time, not too challenging. And it is these improvements in access, and the facilities which grew up to cater for increasing numbers of both residents and visitors, that we can thank for the location of Queen's Gardens: one toll house – the Borrett Toll Bar – was situated at the junction of what is now the A683 and A684, just to the west of the Gardens, and Sedbergh Station was built slightly further out, on the western outskirts of

⁶ In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* described Sedbergh thus: 'The town stands on the river Rowther, in a romantic mountain vale, 1 mile E of the Ingleton railway...'. See, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/14195>.

⁷ By 1923, both the MR & L&NWR had been incorporated as part of the LMS, London Midland & Scottish Railway.

the town. Anyone travelling to or from Sedbergh and to the principal towns and cities further afield, had to pass Queen's Gardens, located, as it is, on Station Road.



Former railway station outside Sedbergh, to the west of the junction and Borrett toll house between the A683 and A684 and also of Queen's Gardens (all highlighted in red).

It is thus to be expected that, from the late 19th century, the town expanded westwards from its tight, historic centre. The character of both the fabric and people of Sedbergh – their self-reliant community, with its stone terraces, narrow roads and yards – was changed by these new developments. By 1889, Sedbergh School had begun to expand, 'in response to the increased demand for boarding school places from those serving overseas in Britain's expanding empire'⁸. New villas were springing up to provide accommodation for the School and to cater for new residents ('offcomers' as they have long been dubbed), in, 'Busk Lane'⁹ ... and the imposing Highfield and Guldrey villas ... at the western end of the town.'¹⁰

These new villas were quite substantial, usually detached or semi-detached houses and gardens, along new and wider roads which ran parallel or at right angles to Station Road and climbed the lower slopes of Winder.



Victorian and Edwardian villas on Highfield Road, west of centre of Sedbergh

⁸ *Sedbergh Conservation Area Appraisal*, 2009, p.12. <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/historic-buildings/conservation-areas/careview-sedbergh-main.pdf>

⁹ Thanks to Jim Atkins for pointing out that Busk Lane was developed to provide Sedbergh School boarding houses.

¹⁰ *Sedbergh Conservation Area Appraisal*, 2009, *Ibid*.

In the inter-War years, many bungalows and houses were also built along Station Road itself and these were followed, after the War, by more developments, including those off Queen's Drive, adjacent to the Gardens. Hence, until the railway line was closed to passengers in 1954, and then to goods in 1964, Queen's Gardens had become a natural focus of life in the town¹¹.

Today, the railway no longer provides access to Sedbergh. Nevertheless, the town has remained a popular tourist destination; so much so that, after the devastating impact of Foot & Mouth disease in 2001, the town adopted the designation of 'England's Book Town', in the hope of building on its appeal to tourists, by encouraging and retaining a growing number of visitors to the town¹². Tourists now tend to arrive in their private cars, however, and Queen's Gardens no longer appears to be central to the place. Instead, it feels somewhat isolated, hard against the busy Station Road and with no obvious safe place to park a car and no footpath providing safe pedestrian access to the three northern gates into the Gardens.

One cannot help but believe that Queen's Gardens has been absent from the minds of many of those who live in and help to manage Sedbergh for quite a number of years. But not all. In 1993, a group of 'stitchers' gathered, 'with the objective of creating a canvas work panel depicting the landscape, historic buildings and social background of the area'. The resulting two panels were completed in 2009 and are now marvellously displayed in St. Andrew's church¹³. The second panel includes both the Bowling Green and – signified by a rank of colourful tulips – Queen's Gardens.



Sedbergh Embroideries, Canvas 2, with panel 14 & 17, Bowling Green and Queen's Gardens¹⁴

¹¹ The tracks were lifted in 1967. Today the old goods yard site is the depot for W Dawson & Son Ltd., a long-established fuel company.

¹² <http://www.sedberghbooktown.co.uk/>

¹³ 'A record book of the Sedbergh Embroidery from 1993 to 2009 with background explanatory notes is held in the History room in the Sedbergh Information Centre'. See

<http://www.sedbergh.org.uk/activities/things-to-do-around-sedbergh/the-sedbergh-embroidery/>

¹⁴ <http://web.onetel.com/~junewestgate/page6.html>

Thus, the Queen's Gardens is, once again, being recovered as a significant feature of Sedbergh life. This may soon be reinforced. The new Local Plan has designated the field opposite the Queen's Gardens as suitable for housing – the area has the 'notional capacity' for 30 units¹⁵. This may well bring benefits to the Gardens, once again establishing them as a key asset of the town; in turn, the Gardens will certainly bring benefits to the neighbourhood, providing a site for community activities as well as for local leisure and pleasure.

In sum, the very distinctive character of Sedbergh has long been shaped by its environment. Set within a magnificent, but challenging, landscape, it has a strong, close-knit, self-reliant community, enriched and enlarged by economic and cultural influences which are national, and even international, in character. This is a resilient town with a strong sense of its own history; it is also an ambitious town and, when a local benefactor presented the Queen's Gardens to the town in 1906, it seems likely that this was regarded as a stamp of the Sedbergh's outward-looking and enterprising spirit.

Designations & Discussions

Queen's Gardens is included as Grade II on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest (now incorporated into The National Heritage List for England¹⁶). The Queen Victoria Memorial Cross – at the centre of the Gardens – is also listed Grade II¹⁷.

As already noted, Sedbergh lies in the western reaches of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. A large part of the town – though not Queen's Gardens – is included within a Conservation Area and there are numerous listed buildings and structures of national, regional and local significance in the area.

In recent years (especially in response to the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 {NPPF}¹⁸), there has been a good deal of work to define the character of the town and to develop a vision for its future. To this end, in 2009, the *Sedbergh Conservation Area Appraisal* was commissioned by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and prepared by Envision Consultants, with 'generous contributions from the Parish Council, local residents and business people'.

'In this character appraisal the approach has been to work with local people and the National Park Authority to examine the evolving role of the conservation area in the life of the communities of Sedbergh. A significant proportion of the project has involved discussion workshops and other consultation events that helped to identify the elements that are of special value to the people who live and work there and to visitors'.¹⁹

¹⁵The site reference is 69 and the allocation is for 30 houses. *Yorkshire Dales National Park, Local Plan 2015-2030*.

http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/596576/Publication-Local-Plan.pdf

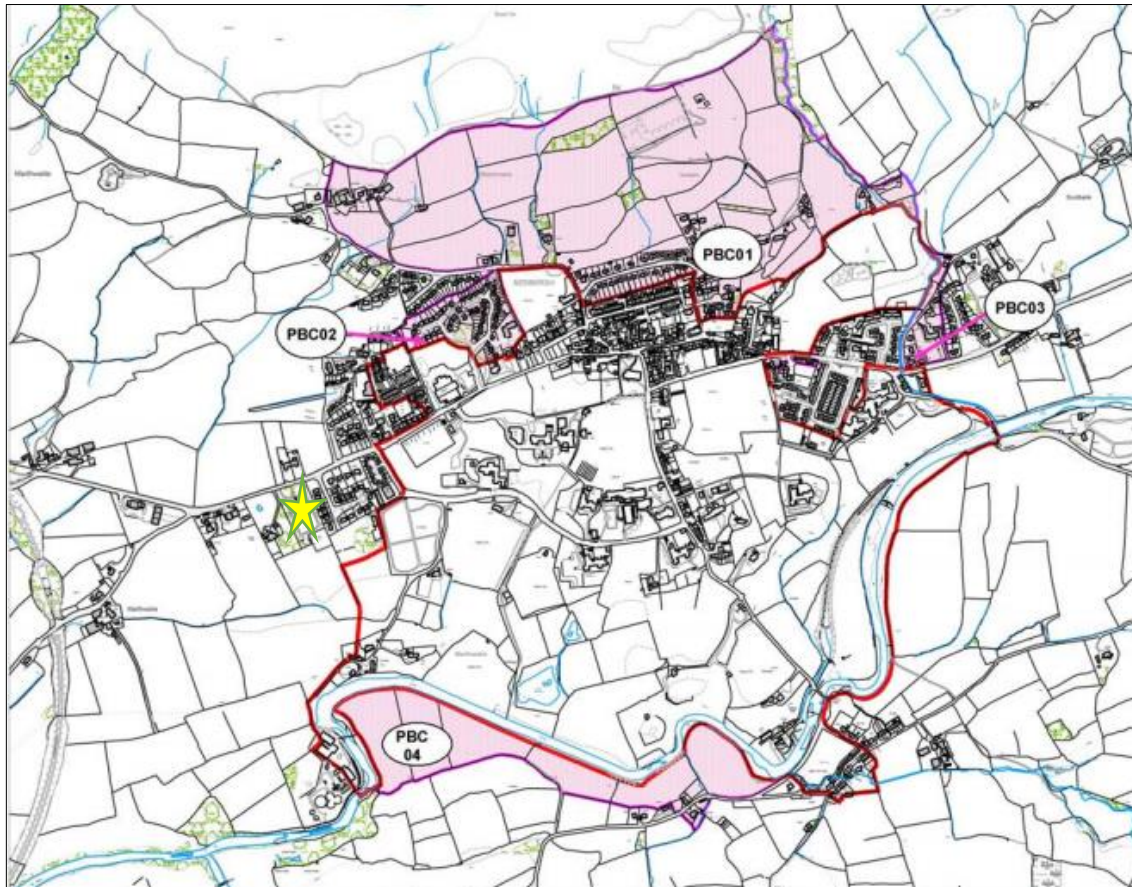
¹⁶ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1400679>

¹⁷ <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1400656>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

¹⁹ See para. 1.4, <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/historic-buildings/conservation-areas/careview-sedbergh-main.pdf> This work contributed to the Local Development Framework (LDF), designed to replace the Local Plan and to conform with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012.

In 2009, the report was issued for public consultation and it was thereafter adopted in March, 2010. At that time, the Conservation Area boundary was reduced in size and, disappointingly, did not include Queen's Gardens²⁰.



Map S1 (Conservation Area Appraisal, 2009), 'Sedbergh Conservation Area (proposed revised boundary)'. Red line defines Conservation Area, as adopted after report - but Queen's Gardens on the west of the town centre, highlighted with a yellow star, is excluded.

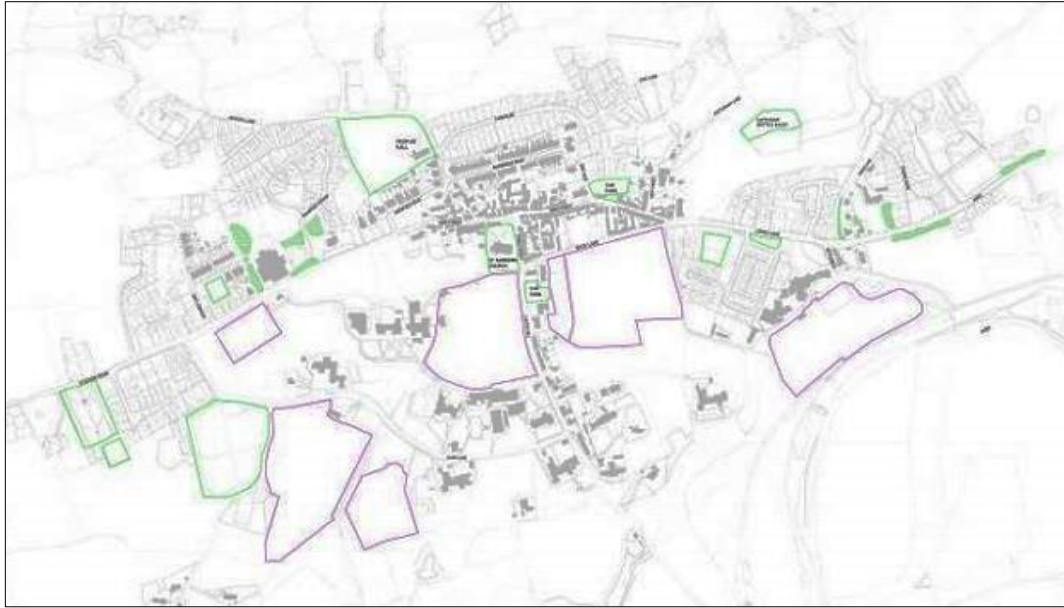
Nevertheless, we note the author's proper insistence that,

'The appraisal aims to provide a 'vivid succinct portrait' of Sedbergh as it is today, recognising that it is an evolving place with a vibrant community. Whilst an appraisal aims to identify the essential elements that give an area its character, it can only be a 'snapshot' in time. Elements and details of the conservation area may be important even if they are not specifically referred to in the document'.²¹

In this spirit, it is encouraging to find that Queen's Gardens is mentioned in the *Conservation Area Appraisal* report, as it is recorded on a plan showing 'Significant open spaces, trees and woodland'; curiously, however, its dense woodland does not invite specific designation as, 'protected trees and woodland'.

²⁰ Thanks to Jim Atkins for clarifying that the CA was reduced after this report was adopted.

²¹ See para. 3.3, <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/historic-buildings/conservation-areas/careview-sedbergh-main.pdf>.



Map S3, (Conservation Area Appraisal, 2009), 'Significant open spaces, trees and woodland', with Queen's Gardens outlined in green at west end of plan.

Beyond this single mention, Queen's Gardens is not referred to in any of what is, otherwise, a serious and carefully-considered report. It is as if the historic role of this important little park were so completely destroyed when the railway was finally eliminated, that it has fallen out of many people's minds and, therefore, off the map.

Two years later, another report was produced, *Sedbergh Townscape Project*, commissioned from another consultancy, Urban Practitioners²². It drew on and developed the 2009 document. The professed 'overarching aim' of this report was to, 'foster the economic well-being of the town'. The objectives were outlined in the Executive Summary.

- To reduce the amount of traffic running through the heart of the town.
- To create a better quality and safer public environment, especially for pedestrians.
- To support, promote and attract investment in the town, its businesses and facilities.
- To enhance the special historic character of the town.
- To improve the attractiveness of the town as a place to visit and stay.

All of these ambitions are important and their pursuit is necessary to the future prosperity and quality of life in the town. Once again, however, it is disappointing to find that Queen's Gardens was overlooked. It is omitted from all the plans and does not appear in any section of the report, which focuses on, 'The historic town of Sedbergh', 'Access and transport', 'School life', 'Public spaces and public realm' and 'Town life'. To be fair, one of the key concerns, here, was the management of traffic in and around the town and the report appears to make a reasonable analysis of this issue, which certainly poses difficult challenges for Sedbergh. Nevertheless, it is a sad omission to overlook both the contribution that could be made to the life and well-being of the town by Queen's Gardens – economically as well as culturally – and the challenges posed by the traffic which speeds along Station Road, unaccompanied by any pavement along the front of the Gardens.

²² <https://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/media/1069/sedbergh-report-final-may2011-low-res-1-1.pdf>

This rather doleful episode in the history of Queen's Gardens can, however, be brought to a happier conclusion. It is thanks to some keen local people, including the unusually well-supported and -led Sedbergh and District History Society (which has, over the years, collected an outstanding archive of information about Sedbergh and the area), an energetic Parish Council and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNP) that Queen's Gardens has once again, started to inspire interest and affection.

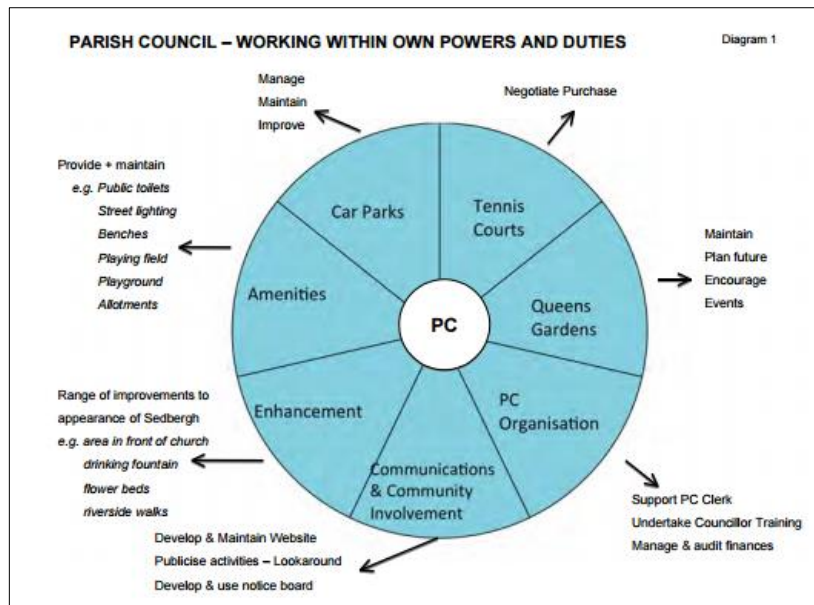
By the late 1990s, the Queen's Gardens were in a poor and overgrown state. It was at this juncture that, 'local people with help from the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust .. breathed new life into this secret corner of Sedbergh'²³. In 2012, the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II celebrated the monarch's 60 years on the throne. In Sedbergh, this event prompted the Queen's Gardens Committee – a sub-committee of the Parish Council – to consider how the renewal of the Gardens might make a contribution to the celebrations. One outcome was that, in January, 2012, the site was entered on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England* (now incorporated in the National Heritage List for England {NHLE}). And, from that time, more attention has been paid to managing the vegetation in the Gardens and encouraging activities which appeal to a variety of ages and interests. Hence, in recent years, some parts of the collapsing dry-stone walls around the Gardens have been repaired by local labour; the handsome wrought- and cast-iron gates have been repaired and re-painted; a new and informative sign has been placed near the entrance; and a new stretch of footpath has been created which facilitates entry to the Gardens, via a new gate (modelled on the historic pattern) in the north-east corner, thus providing some protection from the busy traffic of Station Road (though there is still no footpath providing access to any of the three main gates on the northern entrance front of the Gardens). Above all, more has been done to remind the inhabitants of Sedbergh about the existence of Queen's Gardens and to highlight what a significant treasure it is.

This busy period of working towards a sustainable plan for the future of Sedbergh and the wider area culminated when, in 2015, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan was finally adopted²⁴. In turn, the Sedbergh Parish Plan, 2016²⁵, sets out to clarify the role of the PC, in light of the changes that have taken place in recent years. In this document, the responsibilities of the PC are very clearly outlined, and the future of Queen's Gardens appears as a principal focus for the Council's attention.

²³ See <http://www.outofoblivion.org.uk/record.asp?id=403> The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust was set up in 1996 to, 'support the well-being of this special area'. <http://www.ydmt.org/about>

²⁴ <http://www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/living-and-working/other-services/press-office/news/recent/yorkshire-dales-national-park-local-plan-adopted> .

²⁵ <http://www.sedbergh.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Parish-Plan.pdf>



Sedbergh PC's role in improving the town; one of the primary concerns is Queen's Gardens.

So successful have these developments been to date that it would be very hard to imagine any survey of the features of Sedbergh today, 'that are of special value to the people who live and work there and to visitors', omitting to mention – and provide protections for – the Queen's Gardens. This site is now, in the minds of many, much more than a dense tangle of evergreens glimpsed as one drives into and out of Sedbergh. It is recognised as a real asset: a little gem of park design, of great historical significance, and a fitting place for some of the many public celebrations and private pleasures which make the town of Sedbergh such an attractive and lively community in which to live.

History & Background of Queen's Gardens

Mrs Frances Upton-Cottrell-Dormer

One can find a good deal of evidence about the function and layout of the Gardens by reading the Parish Council Minutes, from the late 1890s to the early 1900s²⁶. The first theme which emerges from these records is that the Councillors were always keen on making sure that Sedbergh benefited from modern developments: they were long preoccupied with ensuring that street lighting was introduced - and spent a good deal of time responding to those who complained there was too much, or not enough, light; they were keen to maintain the footpaths which criss-crossed the local area, often across land belonging to local farmers, who were not always particularly helpful with maintaining the rights of way; they kept in regular touch with the local police, keen to nip petty vandalism in the bud and to maintain law and order; and they felt the need of a recreation ground. In fact, in July, 1895, a Recreation Ground Sub-Committee was formed, 'to consider the advisability of procuring a field for the purpose of a Recreation Ground'²⁷. Accordingly, on 21st October, 1895, the Sub-Committee reported that members had contacted Mrs. Frances Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, of Ingmire Hall, 'with the object of procuring a plot of land for allotments or Recreation Ground'.

²⁶ These are held in the Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal County Offices, ref. WPC 32 / 1-3, volumes covering 1894-1926. All the following quotations from the PC Minutes are taken from this source.

²⁷ This Sub-Committee seems to have had the same membership as the Allotments Sub-Committee.

Clearly, the family who held Ingmire Hall, just to the west of Sedbergh, was regarded as a major local benefactor, as the estate held a large tracts of land in the area²⁸. Finding out a little more about Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, the widowed owner of Ingmire Hall, which lay two miles west of Sedbergh, has proved enlightening.

Born Florence Anne Upton, she was the youngest child of Thomas Upton and had grown up at Ingmire which, after the death of her elder sister, Eliza Frances Upton, she inherited. She married Clement Cottrell Dormer in 1858. The latter's family seat was Rousham, in Oxfordshire, and the Upton-Cottrell-Dormers probably spent most of their married life there. After the death of Clement, in 1880, however, it seems that Florence spent an increasing amount of time back at Ingmire and she became well-known as a local benefactor.

The first conclusion one can reach from this brief background is that there can be little doubt that the Upton-Cottrell-Dormers represented that band of long-established, influential, often provincial, nearly always old-fashioned Tory, landowners, lacking an inherited title but possessing extensive estates, who recognised it as their duty to improve the productivity of the land they managed and to adopt an active and philanthropic role in their local communities. In this context, it is interesting to find that Clement Upton-Cottrell-Dormer was amongst the first farmers to introduce agricultural machinery, to Rousham, in the 1870s. He was also keen to improve the education of the children of the estate and, in 1878, he established and supported a day school in a newly-repaired building close to the estate church²⁹.

The second conclusion is that husband and wife had grown up on estates wherein both houses and landscapes were remodelled and refined through the 18th and 19th centuries, thus introducing their owners to the experience of how architecture and landscape design can serve not only to bring practical benefits, but also to shape and enrich the emotional and intellectual lives of those who inhabit them.

Rousham, of course, is today recognised as being perhaps the most complete and eloquent of William Kent's landscapes; a layout commissioned in the 1730s and, to some extent, embracing changes already introduced by Charles Bridgeman in the previous decade. It was famous from its beginnings. Within the confines of a relatively small plot, Kent rejected architectonic geometry and, instead, exploited the capacity of winding paths, varied topography and ornamental features to offer a myriad of different views and experiences: sculptures, ornamental buildings and specimen trees providing eye-catchers and viewing points; water capturing the light of the sky and multiplying green reflections in shadowed glades; inviting enclosures allowing glimpses of the distant landscape beyond, framed by trees or revealed in clearings. This is a landscape which can only be fully appreciated by walking through it; the walk itself has been designed to introduce the visitor to different experiences and sensations. It is not surprising, then, that although the house was partially updated and restored in the 1870s, the power of Kent's landscape secured its survival – and it remains thus today.

The landscape at Ingmire has a somewhat less well-known history. It surrounds a 16th century house, which incorporated the remains of a pele tower and was enlarged both in the early 19th century and, again, in c.1900. The Hall nestles in the valley and is surrounded by terraced and walled gardens, thus maximising the opportunities for planting and shelter. But the most significant element of the ornamental landscape is the way it responds to the magnificence of the broader scenic setting. In fact, a

²⁸ The Ingmire estate had been acquired by Roger Upton in the late 16th century. By the late 19th century, the Upton estate comprised large areas of land in the vicinity of Sedbergh <http://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/township/sedbergh>

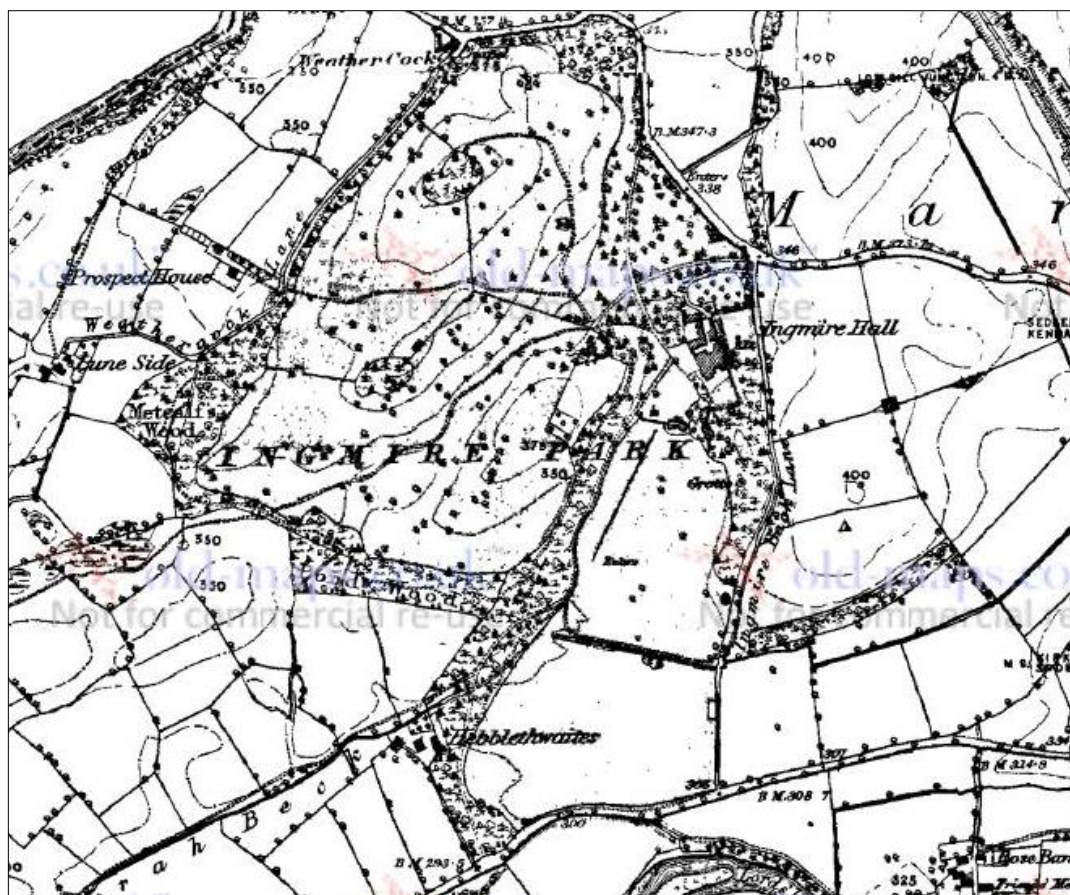
²⁹ The school closed in 1926. See, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol11/pp159-168>

study of contemporary OS surveys reveals that a good part of this ambitious and sophisticated layout was planted during the time Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer was there, in the later decades of the 19th century. True, the 1852 survey reveals what one might call conventional (nonetheless beautiful) parkland planting, perhaps coinciding with the early 19th century extensions to the Hall, with groups and copses of trees highlighting the topography, especially to the NW.

Considerably more ambitious and dramatic is the planting described by the mid-1890s. Along the crest of the hills to the NW of Ingmire, excluding all signs of roads and railway, there is a circular belt of trees, both broadleaf and coniferous. Protection of the house and gardens is provided by shelter belts of trees to the west and east and views northwards, towards the Howgill Fells, are afforded through trees planted in staggered groupings to soften the cold blow of the northern winds. The principal focus, however, is to the south and down the valley. Beyond the River Rawthey, the views of Holme Fell (with Middleton Fell beyond) are embraced by two belts of trees, extending, like welcoming arms, to the SW and SE. This is a poetic landscape which invites a response not only to the immediate setting, but also to the grandeur provided all around.



OS County Series, Yorkshire, 1852, 1:10,560



OS County Series, Yorkshire, 1895-1896, 1:10,560 - revealing the changes that were brought about, probably during the tenure of Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer.

There is one more aspect of the life of Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer which might tell us much about the way in which she defined her role in her home town of Sedbergh and, thus, her contribution to the Queen's Gardens. Living at Ingmire Hall, Florence could not have avoided knowing that the great poet and critic, John Ruskin, was living and working in the Lake District – in his house, Brantwood, overlooking Coniston Water – from 1872 until his death in 1900. Ruskin's influence was profound throughout the country: he railed against the evils associated with industrialisation and mass-production and promoted, instead, the personal and social benefits to be found in skilled, manual craftsmanship, where form and ornament were inspired by God and by His creation in the shape of the beauties of the natural world. In the Lake District, Ruskin's influence certainly contributed to the establishment of the Keswick School of Industrial Arts, which was responsible not only for teaching craft skills but also for the production of furniture, decorative copper and brass work and textiles. Likewise, one cannot imagine the work of Arthur Simpson of Kendal, whose furniture, produced in The Handicrafts workshop, was commissioned by Arts & Crafts architects such as Voysey and Baillie Scott, without the inspiration of Ruskin. And Ruskin himself regarded the rural arts revival of the Langdale Linen Industry as amongst the most successful of his practical interventions in promoting skilled, traditional craftsmanship (or, in this instance, crafts-womanship). Ruskin's philosophy might well have chimed with the interests and enthusiasms of Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer - and there is at least one clear piece of evidence for such a claim.

In the village of Marthwaite, more-or-less on the doorstep of Ingmire Hall, the Upton family (probably Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer's sister, Eliza Frances Upton) had been responsible for building the tiny chapel and attached school-room of St. Gregory's, to provide a living for a preacher called Thomas Fayers, brought into the

neighbourhood to care for the spiritual needs of the navvies working on the branch-line of the L&NWR, 1858-61. Fayers stayed on after the completion of the railway; on his death, in 1888, the chapel came under the purview of the vicar of Sedbergh. At this point, Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer endowed the chapel with funds, turned the school-room into a chancel, installed handsome oak pews, by Waring and Gillow, and added a set of stained glass windows. In addition to three fine William Morris windows³⁰, picturing Fortitude, Justice and Peace, there is a group of remarkable windows by a Frederick George Simon.

Frustratingly, we have been unable to find anything about this artist in stained glass. There can be no doubt that Simon was influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement and he may well have been a craftsman trained and / or employed by one of the local arts & crafts workshops, in Kendal or Keswick³¹. Whatever his background, Frederick Simon's glass, commissioned by Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, is extraordinary³². Unlike the whole canon of stained glass for churches in the 19th century – which witnessed a great revival of traditional, mediaeval, techniques and themes, and rejected the painted glass characteristic of the 18th century³³ – the windows include no figures at all: no saints, no God or Christ or the Virgin, no symbolic figures, no patrons or benefactors. In fact, these windows conjure nothing less than the Garden of Eden, before it was sullied by the activities of Man. In colours which have the brilliance of jewels, and without figures or inscriptions, we are treated to a vision of a world full of birds, trees, flowers, running water and scudding clouds. The foreground is certainly gardened: there are white lilies (are they Madonna lilies, *Lilium candidum* or – more likely, we think – *Lilium longiflorum*?; both of these have been employed to symbolise the Virgin Mary); red roses and other flowering plants, both native (one tree appears to be a damson, which is widespread in the Lakes) and exotic (including a flourishing vine, with grapes). But the background? There is running water, a timber fence or, perhaps, a stile, sheep and arable fields, as well as the silhouettes of steep, bare hillsides in the distance. These stained glass windows are replete with poetic symbols, and their narrative is located precisely in the landscape of this region. The subject matter of this stained glass is so exceptional at this period³⁴ that it has to tell us much about the ambitious and knowledgeable patronage of Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer.

³⁰ Morris was, of course, the leading spirit of the Arts & Crafts Movement, deeply influenced by Ruskin, amongst others. With his colleagues, in 1861, he had set up Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., their principal outputs being textiles, pottery and stained glass. In 1875, the company became Morris & Co.

³¹ Sara Haslam claims that, by 1900, 'south Lakeland's receptiveness to Ruskin's teachings' had created, 'a concentration of handcraft workers probably larger than in any other region of England'. See, *John Ruskin and the Lakeland Arts Revival, 1880-1920*, 2004, p.133.

³² In the gem-like brilliance of the colours, one is reminded, here, of William Morris's windows in Philip Webb's extraordinary church, St. Martin's, in Brampton, consecrated in 1878.

³³ John Ruskin was amongst those who spoke most strongly against 18th century painted glass, which he regarded as an anathema. 'In the case of windows, the points which we have to insist upon are, the transparency of the glass and its susceptibility of the most brilliant colours; and therefore the attempt to turn painted windows into pretty pictures is one of the most gross and ridiculous barbarisms of this pre-eminently barbarous century.' John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, Appendix to Vol. II, 1853-55.

³⁴ The only parallel that comes to mind are the 1928 Tiffany windows in Battell Chapel, Yale University, Connecticut - &, of course, Tiffany's work was deeply inspired by the British Arts and Crafts Movement.



Four of the stained glass windows by Frederick George Simon, commissioned by Mrs Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, for St. Gregory's chapel, Marthwaite

This, then, was the benefactor who was responsible for the Queen's Gardens: her manner and aspirations were, to a considerable degree, as her class expected; her taste, on the other hand, was absolutely shaped by some of the most aesthetically and socially radical ideas of her day. This taste must have been refined by, living in a landscaped garden at Rousham that had long been regarded as one of the most important – one of the most poetically eloquent – in the country and by living in another fine landscaped garden at Ingmire, to which she made assured additions, taking advantage of the Sublime (in the Edmund Burke sense) setting which surrounded them. Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer really did understand the power of art to influence people's lives. One should remember this, when we come to consider Queen's Gardens in more detail.

Parish Council

We return, now, to the activities of the Parish Council. In October, 1895, the PC had received a letter from Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer to say that she was willing to, 'let the field known as the 'Old Cricket Field' on a lease for 21 years. This did not wholly satisfy the members, who had bigger plans for their Recreation Ground. In January, 1896, it was proposed and accepted that the Council should ask their benefactor if she would sell the Old Cricket Field³⁵. It seems likely that the debate continued back and forth but, on the 14th September, 1896, when the Council asked if she would 'part with' the field, for the 'lowest selling price', Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer refused.

The subject came up again on 25th November, 1901, when it was reported to the Council that there might be an opportunity, 'of procuring a field known as 'Pond Field' which might be used as a Recreation Ground'. Once again, the Council set up a new committee, whose task was,

'to interview the owners and ascertain if they were disposed to let the field for that purpose and if so at what rent'.

Lack of further information might suggest that the Upton-Cottrell-Dormers resisted this approach. It seems more likely, however, that the project was overtaken by other events, associated with the death of Queen Victoria, in January, 1901. The Council had recorded its sorrow and deep sympathy for the Royal Family in February, 1901. By October 13th, 1902, a deputation, from the, 'Queen's Memorial Committee', attended the Parish Council meeting and, 'stated that their object was to ask the Parish Council to formally take over and manage the Memorial Garden in Station Road'. It would seem that, perhaps even before the PC had received any proper answer to the request for a site for a Recreation Ground, Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer had upstaged them and had already commissioned Thomas Mawson, one of the most distinguished landscape designers of the day, to create an ornamental landscape, which was for the benefit of the town and dedicated to the memory of Queen Victoria.

Thomas Mawson

Thomas Mawson was born into a modest family in Scorton, near Lancaster, in 1861. Aged twelve, he left school to work in Lancaster, at his uncle's building business. In 1875, he returned home, to work with his father, then setting up a nursery in Ingleton, Yorkshire. Before the business could get established, Mawson's father died, in 1877, at which point Thomas Mawson moved to London. There, he began working with John Wills, who had been gardener to Sir Philip Egerton³⁶, at Oulton Park, Tarporely,

³⁵ We have been unable to identify which field this was - can anyone help?

³⁶ Sir Philip Grey Egerton, 1806-1881, the 10th Baronet, Tory politician, Trustee of the British Museum, and serious palaeontologist, FRS, Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire

Cheshire³⁷. Wills had then set up business in London, in 1867, where he, 'invented a new profession - that of floral decorator, or florist'³⁸. When Mawson joined him, Wills had been running his own business since 1872; indeed, by the mid-1870s, he was even producing work for the royal family. One of, 'Wills' specialities was the creation of floral landscapes, often on a geographical theme'.

'One display for the ballroom of the Royal Horticultural Society in the 1870s featured scenery from the Arctic to the tropics; and for the reception at Charing Cross Station to celebrate the return from Berlin of Lord Beaconsfield in May 1878, he transformed the whole platform into a Palm Grove'.³⁹

Mawson moved on and went to work for at least two different nurseries, one of which was Thomas S. Ware's Hale Farm Nurseries, in Tottenham (then an area which was host to several nurseries and market gardens). In the 1870s, this was one of the largest general nurseries in the country, with a busy breeding programme.

It must surely be that these early years were more important for Mawson than sometimes recognised. It is well known that he gained practical experience in facing the challenges of building and growing plants in the north and then in London. At least of equal value must have been his education in understanding how design can communicate dramatic and poetic narratives. Furthermore, in London, he was introduced to experts who had a national reputation and clients who came from the highest rungs of society. Thus, when he returned to Windermere, in the Lake District, in 1885, where he planned to establish himself as a nurseryman and landscape designer, it is not quite true to claim that he had 'no qualifications' and found himself, in social terms, 'at the very bottom of the pile'⁴⁰. These early years are likely to have fostered Mawson's ambition and his marriage, in 1884, to a doctor's daughter, also helped him to climb the social ladder out of what seems to have been fairly impoverished and unsettled early life. His commitment to exceptionally hard work and his Non-Conformist religion must also have aided him. Nevertheless, on the face of things, it is true that, by leaving London and setting up a nursery with his brothers in the Lake District, Mawson would have found himself turning his back on some of the professional contacts and social advantages he had already established in the south.

But this was a canny move. Mawson must have recognised that an increasing number of wealthy industrialists and professional people were having new houses built for themselves in some highly picturesque and dramatic settings in what is often a very theatrical landscape. These houses were frequently intended as weekend or summer retreats, or as places in which to retire, and they were made possible by the flourishing of new railways serving the area and providing links to some of the major industrial centres of the midlands and northern England. Given the promise of the landscape setting, many of these houses were located to take advantage of magnificent views of mountains or water. Hence, the opportunities to heighten the natural glories were numerous - and the Mawson nursery could offer detailed and knowledgeable advice about what could, and could not, be grown in this fairly harsh climate. It was not too long before Thomas Mawson's plan to develop a business designing landscapes, which could then be planted with material supplied by the family nursery, began to thrive.

³⁷ Oulton Hall was burned down in the 1926. The park is now a motor racing circuit.

³⁸ Toby Musgrave, *The Head Gardeners*, Chapter 5, *The Head Gardener*

³⁹ Musgrave, *Op.cit.*, Wills was based in Onslow Crescent, Kensington, with a nursery at Fulham. See also, ed. Ray Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists*, 1994, p.745.

⁴⁰ Walter Cook, 2010 review of Janet Waymark's *Thomas Mawson: Life, Gardens and Landscapes*, 2009. <https://environmentalhistory-au-nz.org/2010/08/review-article-thomas-mawson-life-gardens-and-landscapes/>

Fascinatingly, we find that Mawson's first commission was to lay out gardens for 'Bryerswood', Far Sawrey, Windermere⁴¹, built in c.1886 for Joseph Ridgway Bridson to the design of Richard Knill Freeman, an architect well-known in the north, with a practice based in Bolton. It seems that Mawson was recommended to Bridson by none other than Ruskin's niece Joan, Mrs. Arthur Severn, who was Ruskin's closest blood relative, then living with her husband at Brantwood, helping to look after and keep house for Ruskin. This was an auspicious start. First of all, to receive the *imprimatur* of Ruskin (even if it were at one remove from the great man himself) was of real importance and would have helped to establish Mawson's credibility as a designer in the Arts and Crafts spirit. In turn, Bridson was a JP for both Westmorland and Lancashire. Amongst his many contacts was Colonel Sandys, whose large, Tudor, property at Graythwaite adjoined Bryerswood and who was also having additions made to his house, to the designs of R. Knill Freeman, at this time. In some ways even more valuable for Mawson was that he met the young Dan Gibson⁴², who was acting as on-site architect for both Bryerswood and Graythwaite. Mawson and Gibson set up a formal partnership which operated in 1897-1900 and they worked together, on a more *ad hoc* basis, for years before and after these dates⁴³. Together, they were responsible for some of the most sensitive and sophisticated compositions of house-and-gardens-and-landscape that were created during these years, in places across the country. In Cumbria, from their joint hand came Brockhole, near Windermere⁴⁴, as well as Graythwaite itself, where Gibson and Mawson were working on extensions and alterations for several years, and where the thoughtful care of the Sandys family continues to conserve and enhance this outstanding work of art.

⁴¹ The house is now gone, though some of the landscape layout remains.

⁴² Gibson, having worked with Knill Freeman and gained on-the-job experience as site architect at Graythwaite, then spent a year or so in the offices of Ernest George and Harold Peto, in London. Their patrons and the range of their domestic work, which regularly embraced new houses with new gardens, conceived as one composition and influenced by Arts & Crafts ideals, must have introduced Gibson - and thus Mawson - to some very influential and thoughtful potential clients.

⁴³ Thomas Mawson's son, John William Mawson, was an articled student in Gibson's architectural practice.

⁴⁴ Now the Visitor Centre for the Lake District National Park. Sadly – and rather shockingly, given the aims and role of the National Park – Gibson's house has been stripped of many of its significant interiors and fittings and was, for a time, even threatened with demolition. Mawson's gardens have fared somewhat better. Although there is a foolish anomaly in that the gardens are registered and the house (presumably because of its poor condition) is not, amongst the most significant aspects of Brockhole is that it is a composition of house / gardens / landscape. Each of these elements is intrinsically part of what was once a remarkable whole, created between 1899 and 1904, by Mawson and Gibson.



Mawson closely supervised all his work; here at Brockhole in the late 1890s - one of many photos in the Gaddum family albums at Brockhole today

Characteristic Mawson features are still very legible at Graythwaite. He negotiates the relationship between the formal architecture of the house and the informality of the wider landscape by leading from the house with a series of architectonic stone terraces and steps. The deliberate use of rough stone walls – at Graythwaite, the slate-stone of the district – dressed with tooled ashlar (here millstone grit), can be read as a narrative, articulating this vital link between the 'natural' garden and the 'civilised' house. Next, extensive yew hedges, which are trimmed with a degree of martial regularity, are employed to create (in current parlance) 'outdoor rooms'; again, these nod, politely, back to the house and forward to the natural colours and dynamic growth found in the wider landscape. Within some of these enclosed garden rooms, we really see the nurseryman Mawson showing his confidence in playing with (showing off?) his skilled understanding of plants - the beautiful, sculptural topiary which he creates by grafting golden yew onto green is found not only at Graythwaite, but also in other Mawson gardens⁴⁵. Finally, the wider reaches of the gardens are host to some of the wealth of trees and shrubs which were available to the landscape designers in these years: not only native trees – oak, beech, Scots pine – but also those imported from overseas, or bred by ambitious nurserymen. They included conifers and broadleaf trees, statuesque in their deportment or ornamental in blossom or leaf; vigorous shrubs, glorious in their habit and colour - such as the very numerous hardy hybrid rhododendrons which were cultivated in the later 19th and early 20th centuries. These parts of the garden, often at some distance from the house, are deliberately informal in layout and bold in scale. They act like musical passages, linking two, somewhat different, musical movements: the house, with its functions, formalities and ornamental detail, and the wild and dramatic landscape which – at Graythwaite – lies beyond.

⁴⁵ For example, Dyffryn, not far from Cardiff. It's worth noting that it is difficult to manage these pieces of topiary, as the golden yew grows so much more slowly than the green!



Mawson terraces at Graythwaite



Mawson Dutch Garden at Graythwaite. The widespread use of yew hedges, and the topiary crafted from golden yew grafted onto green, are devices Mawson employed elsewhere. Their architectonic form is consolidated by the sundial, designed by Dan Gibson.



Employing statuesque coniferous trees and some of the best selections of hybrid rhododendrons is typical of the way Mawson handled the reaches of the garden that negotiated between the more formal layout round the house and the wider, wilder setting. Scots pines and rhododendrons thrive in the acid ground and the trees provide cover from the roughest of weather.

Graythwaite and Brockhole manifest tremendous skill and confidence in handling a large-scale landscape composition and managing an impressive array of themes and materials - that is, not just solid forms, textures, scent and colour, but also spatial relationships, volumes of air, contrasts of scale, dynamic manipulation of directions and contrasts of views. These are not the works of an uncertain or inexperienced landscape gardener. We have already referred to the importance of Mawson's early years, of his sympathetic understanding of Arts and Crafts ideals and of his early familiarity with some of the leading practitioners and patrons of his day. What we also need to consider is what Mawson learned from some of the hectic debates which were going on, in lectures and in print, throughout the country in these years. These were debates about what styles should be used for new houses and their gardens. This seems simple enough - and, surely, unimportant in the great scheme of things? But, in fact, these debates were crucial to the development of late Victorian and Edwardian architecture and gardens; and they were not just about style; they were also about class. And, in the end, these were issues which were of real significance for Mawson's work and reputation, both in his own lifetime and - extraordinarily enough - after his death.

Thomas Mawson had found himself launching his new career at a time when there was a keen rivalry between those who promoted a 'natural' or 'wild' garden - such as the irascible William Robinson - and those, like Sir Reginald Blomfield, for whom a formal garden should be subject to the architectonic pattern of the house it surrounded. These differences were articulated in their major publications. *The Wild Garden*, 1870, and *The Formal Garden in England*, 1892, were profound; they dealt with both taste and social class and they signalled a period when horticulture, as a manual occupation, was the province of the working man, whilst the practice of art and design was the province of the thinking - and therefore educated - man. Blomfield was content for the gardener to recommend plants, but he had no truck with the idea that gardeners could design gardens. Robinson, in turn, shunned the

'artificial' constraints an architect, ignorant of plants, might impose on his palette of colour, scent and form. We have seen that Mawson's approach was to marry the two: architecture and ornament near the house; wild vigour in the wider reaches. And, at all times, he understood (or worked closely with someone who understood) the capacities and limitations of the materials he employed. It may seem simple, but no other designer of the period so successfully and prolifically did his best to support and promote this marriage. Curiously, however, we have to recognise the fact that, after his death in 1933, Mawson's reputation collapsed, for as much as forty or fifty years. We have to ponder about this.

Firstly, no matter how he had educated himself, Mawson was of working stock; indeed, in another time, he would have been described as of peasant stock. He could certainly have fitted into the Robinson mode and made a successful living – as many others did – as a nurseryman, horticulturist and landscape gardener. But, this would have meant that his role, on any site, would have been quite divorced from the architecture and from those who designed and executed the buildings. This would not do. Mawson believed that a landscape or garden design was, in some way, capable of contributing to the expression of ideals and poetic ideas - and to achieve success, it was essential that house, gardens and landscape all formed a coherent, expressive, narrative. He accepted Ruskin's dictum that, architects and artisans had a responsibility to think of the poetic message embodied in their work, 'because all the world will hear you; they cannot choose but look'⁴⁶.

This is a very powerful sentiment. The world 'cannot choose but look' and 'will hear you'. Both now and in the future, 'the world' will view the composition and, in looking, will see something; either a lucid, intelligible work of art, or a disjointed collection of items, whence the message was, perforce, confusion.

There were several consequences of all this. First of all, it made Mawson work very hard to understand, and then to reconcile, the different approaches articulated by Robinson and Blomfield. It made him describe himself as a 'landscape architect' - the first time such a term had been coined and expressive of his deliberate aligning of his profession with that of an architect, the epitome of the 'thinking man'. Thus he became the first President of the newly-established professional Institute of Landscape Architects, in 1929⁴⁷. In 1903, after the formal partnership with Dan Gibson had closed, Mawson was elected an Honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and he became a member of the influential Art Workers Guild in 1905⁴⁸. Then, in 1905, Mawson published what was to become his seminal book, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, which went into many editions and proved hugely influential. Herein, he declared,

'Landscape Architecture is the art of co-relating the component parts of a scheme over large areas. It aims at the rhythmic, balanced, and co-ordinated relation of all units, utilitarian or decorative, within the area under

⁴⁶ 'Influence of Imagination in Architecture', from *The Two Paths*, in *Works of Ruskin*, ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, XVI: *A Joy Forever and The Two Paths* (1905), pp. 346–74 (p. 369). Ruskin taught that architecture and design had the possibility of making an impact on all who came in contact with it over the course of many generations, long outliving those who built it. Therefore, the responsibility for the quality of that communication was a heavy one.

⁴⁷ Mawson was also a founding member of the Town Planning Institute and served as President in 1923. His influential book, *Civic Art, Studies in Town Planning, Parks, Boulevards and Open Spaces* was published in 1911.

⁴⁸ The Guild was founded in 1883-4, by young architects and designers deeply influenced by Ruskin and associated with Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. Early members included architect Ernest Newton and painter and garden designer Alfred Parsons. They believed that there should be 'unity of all the arts'; the fine arts (painting, architecture) and the applied arts (wood carving, pottery, furniture etc.) should be placed on an equal footing.

treatment. It aims at producing a collective effect from the scattered units, whether they be ecclesiastical, public, or domestic buildings, trees, greensward, roadway or flower beds, giving everything its proper place in relation to the whole...

.. the term 'Landscape Architecture', as usually understood, conveys nothing more to the mind than a slight and partial infusion of colour, neatness and prettiness; a smoothed-out, drilled and marshalled effect, superimposed as a veneer over the area treated...but..

.. This is (the Landscape Architect's) province, to infuse the drab necessities of existence with an inherent beauty, to divert the common crowd from low ideals by the elevation of their environment, and to cause those who never really loved art... to rise to more worthy aims ... fired with a great desire for ... (the) advancement (of his art), he expresses out of his own soul his passion, and persuades his audience to see what he chooses by materializing his dream, using ... architecture, verdure, flowers, and other materials of his craft, weaving the whole into one rhythmic, harmonious composition.'⁴⁹

So - the best of Mawson's work may be judged as a manifestation of his dream, as 'one rhythmic, harmonious composition'. This is indeed an ambitious dream; and it is a dream which must be communicated to his contemporaries *and* to the future. Hence, it is not hard to find evidence of Mawson's genius – a justifiable term – in composing and orchestrating magnificent works of art, some breath-taking landscapes which, at their best, can inspire and enhance our lives.

And yet, Mawson's reputation suffered after his death. Why? It is just worth repeating that the clear distinction between the fine arts and applied arts – between the educated man (or, occasionally, woman) and the working man – was deeply ingrained by the early 20th century. Despite the professional admiration and reputation Mawson had secured by the end of his life, his name subsequently disappeared from the canon of Edwardian garden designers which, for so long, was dominated by the architect, Edwin Lutyens and his colleague, the artist (and garden designer), Gertrude Jekyll (with other architects / designers, such as Harold Peto and Ernest Newton following closely behind). This can only be because, during his lifetime, Mawson's work did not attract the attention of the 'smart' press - for example, *Country Life*⁵⁰, which did so much with marvellous photography to promote the work of Lutyens and Jekyll. The fact that Mawson had not been blessed with a formal education, and was a Non-Conformist with roots deep in northern soil – and, indeed, sometimes his hands were muddy from that soil – meant that he could not easily relax in the company of the 'artistic sensibilities'⁵¹ of Hudson and Co. Moreover, Mawson was responsible – brilliantly responsible – for the design and layout of many public parks, from Burslem in the Potteries to Newport in South Wales and Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria. Thus – though a good number of his clients were wealthy and élite (not least the hugely energetic & successful businessman, Lord Leverhulme, for whom Mawson produced several of his most remarkable landscape designs) – his clients

⁴⁹ These paragraphs are from pp.15-16, 20, Chapter II of the most important, 5th, edition of this book, published in 1926 – but expressing views Mawson had been working with for more than a quarter of a century.

⁵⁰ Edward Hudson's *Country Life* did much to support and promote Lutyens's work - but Mawson's output was not covered at all. Hudson owned three homes which had benefited from Lutyens's attention: Lindisfarne Castle, Deanery Gardens, Berkshire, and Plumpton Place, Sussex. Lutyens was also responsible for the new offices for the *Country Life*, in 1904-5.

⁵¹ 'Edward Hudson, 'Huddy', was a great favourite; he was an affable little man, with a deceptively fussy manner but with great artistic sensibilities.' *Aileen Fox, Aileen: A Pioneering Archaeologist*, 2000, p.25,

were not all from society's top rungs. Sometimes, the beneficiaries of his creativity were the ordinary, working men and women of the newly-industrialising towns and cities.

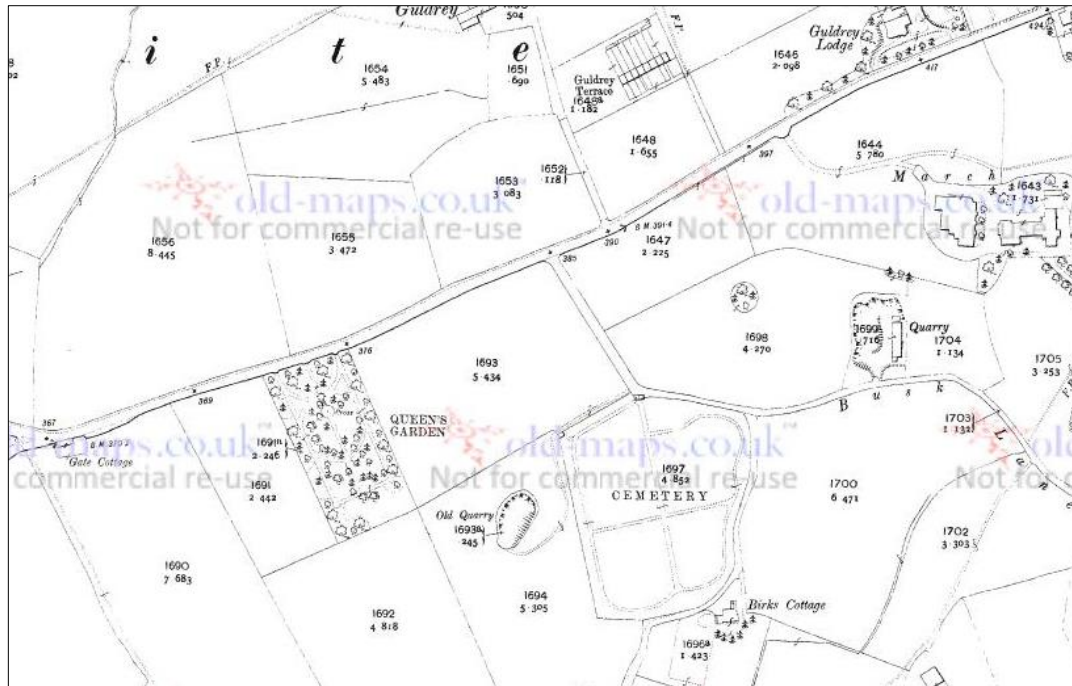
It is not ridiculous to suggest that it has taken the gradual democratisation of our society, which took place in Britain after World War II, to awaken our interest once again in the work of a really exceptional designer. One has to be thankful that the Queen's Gardens has survived so well thus far, during a period when so little credit was given to its author.

Queen's Gardens

The plot of land that was laid out as Queen's Garden was, as we know, a small one. It encompassed the eastern half of a field, where there was considerable irregularity of levels. By the time the Gardens were laid out, there was already a large, elegantly laid-out, cemetery, just to the SE. It is also clear that there was more than one quarry in the vicinity. This area was, by the early 20th century, dedicated to more than just agricultural purpose.



OS County Series, Yorkshire, 1852 1:10,560 (area of Queen's Gardens highlighted red)



OS County Series, Yorkshire, 1909, 1:2,500

We have seen that, on 13th of October, 1902, a deputation, from the, 'Queen's Memorial Committee', attended the Parish Council meeting and, 'stated that their object was to ask the Parish Council to formally take over and manage the Memorial Garden in Station Road'.

The Council must have been faced with a difficult decision. They must have known that Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer had been busy planning a small commemorative garden. They could not have failed to notice a good many months of busy, on-site activities, as they passed to-and-fro, between town and station. Moreover, at the heart of the garden was the fine, memorial cross, which was to be unveiled by the Lord Bishop of Ripon on October 31st, 1902. But the PC seems to have been shocked at the prospect of taking on the responsibility for the site. The initial reaction – judging by the lack of recorded discussions at the PC meetings – was to ignore it. By April, 1903, one of the Council, Mr W.P. Boustead, 'remarked that unless something was done the Garden was going to be in a bad state'. We learn that, 'some discussion took place and various opinions were expressed, but at present the Council could take no action'.

It was three more years before the PC was faced with the necessity of discussing the matter once again.

'Dear Sir,

For reasons of her own, Mrs Dormer is anxious to convey the land on which Queen's Garden stands to the Parish Council without delay.

Although the land would then be the property of the Parish Council she would like to keep the garden in order until further notice.

As the land, all round, will no doubt in time be built on there would be a clause in the Deed of Gift against using the Garden as a site for an infection hospital.

If the Council see fit to take it over perhaps you would communicate with me at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,

Cecil R. Pugh'

This letter from Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer's agent to the Council is dated October 30th, 1905. The PC met on 27th November. Cecil Pugh's letter was read out, after which, 'considerable discussion took place'. When a vote was taken, the acceptance of the offer – 'on condition that the terms of the conveyance are favourable' – was not unanimous. It was, however, passed, with seven out of ten in favour. The draft conveyance was presented to the PC in their meeting of 12th February, 1906.

'All that piece of land known as 'The Queen's Garden' containing .. Two Acres one rood or thereabouts .. To Hold the same unto and to the use of the Council and their successors in fee simple In Trust to the intent that the said piece of land may be used for the purpose of a Public Park or Recreation Ground for the benefit of the inhabitants of the said Parish of Sedbergh and for no other purpose whatever. And the Council .. will at its own expense keep the said piece of land in good Order and condition and properly laid out ... '.

After 'considerable discussion', the PC accepted and it was recorded that, 'the best thanks of the Council be given to Mrs Dormer'.

There is, again, a strange hiatus in reported information or discussion for the rest of 1906. We learn only – from a letter dated 26th August, 1906 – that, 'Mrs. Dormer is quite in favour of' a bowling green on the SE of the Gardens (for which she would donate another small parcel of land), and 'has no objection to' there being a playground for children. We have a hint that Mawson was still busy at the Gardens, for on 27th August, the PC met and reported that, 'Mr. Mawson or one of his men had been over looking at the place': was this in order to judge where a bowling green might be located? In January, 1907, however, Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer died, and there was – as yet – no bowling green. On 25th February, 1907, the Chairman of the PC reported that he had received the keys of the Queen's Garden.

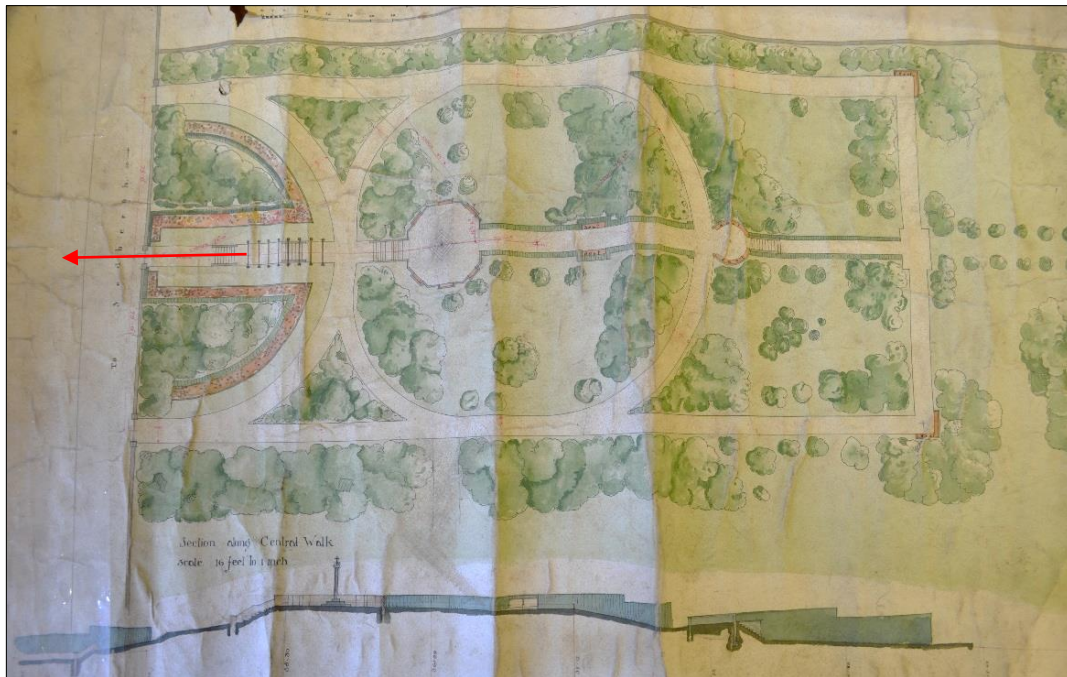
Mawson: the design for the Queen's Gardens

The Plan

Like so many of the plans which issued from Mawson's office and are now stored in the Kendal Archive Centre, the carefully drawn and painted layout prepared for Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer⁵² is not dated - but we must assume that it was completed a

⁵² 'Proposed Memorial, to be erected at Sedbergh for Mrs. Cottrell Dormer', Kendal Archive Centre, Kendal County Offices, WDSO 264/17 (the plan is the property of Sedbergh History Society).

few months after the death of the Queen, in January, 1901 and before 13th October, 1902, when the Parish Council was first asked if it would 'take over and manage the Memorial Garden in Station Road'. It is reasonable to assume that this was designed by late Spring 1901, and then the plans began to be implemented during the winter months of 1901-02, probably by the gardeners from Ingmire Hall. There are two early photographs of the Gardens in summer, dated 1903, and here, although the hard structures are in place and we even see some handsome seats surrounding the memorial cross, the planting appears very new - perhaps this is work undertaken during the winter months 1902-03?



'Proposed Memorial to be erected at Sedbergh for Mrs. Cottrell Dornier', c.1901-2
North - & Station Road - shown with red arrow.



Queen's Gardens from the N, towards the memorial cross, 1903, ©Francis Frith Collection



Queen's Gardens, Sedbergh, from the NE, 1903, ©Francis Frith Collection

There are several features included on the Mawson plan that were probably never implemented. There was to be a set of steps and then a pergola, part of which was accompanied by a second set of steps, all on the first few yards of the entrance path. Even though – as the 1903 photographs show – this motif was modified and no pergola was included, the many steps are not only a practical necessity, given the contours, but they also secure an architectural formality in the northern part of the design, emphasising the processional role of the entrance and ascent towards the cross.

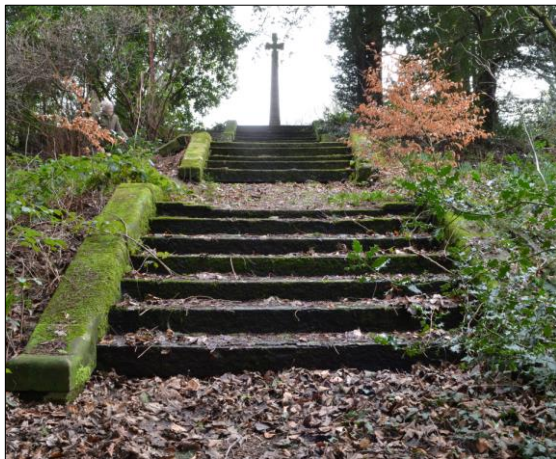


Mawson's detail of the entrance, with pergola (not executed) & steps.

There is more: the fact that these steps – though divided into three flights – constitute what Mawson called, 'straight up' steps is significant. In his *Art & Craft of Garden Making*, Mawson devotes several pages to the design and construction of steps⁵³.

⁵³ Thomas Mawson, *The Art & Craft of Garden Making*, 5th ed., 1926, pp.96-97.

Many of his landscape designs are disposed on steep hillsides – so that it is possible to command extensive views from the terraces – and he recognises that different layouts necessarily serve to create different ways of experiencing the climb and, therefore, different ways of responding to the garden and landscape as one ascends or descends. A relaxed climb, offering opportunities to pause or rest could be managed with 'spreading steps' – for e.g., a flight of semi-circular steps, each step being formed from a semi-circle with a wider radius – or with changes of direction, with frequent half-landings. Steps which are a 'straight-up series of ascents' (Mawson employs the steps at Villa d'Este, Tivoli, as a comparison) are for the grand occasion and they demand attention: there is no opportunity to stop, pause, gaze around. The focus is singular - and, at Queen's Gardens, this is the memorial cross.



Mawson's northern steps - not quite Villa d'Este, but nonetheless what Mawson described as 'straight-up' steps, which demand attention, are focused on the cross & allow no lingering.

The 'lookout' circle, at the top of the southern steps, was initially intended to be constituted as a circular seat, from which panoramic views would have been afforded. In the end, it was circumscribed by a wall - rough slate-stone construction, with beautifully worked ashlar coping. Seated or standing, this lookout is a place to stop, to regard the imposing cross at the north end of the wide path - and to cast one's eyes around the magnificent southern landscape.



Circular lookout bastion - plan shows it was originally intended to be a seat.

As built, the lookout bastion provides a platform, where one stands as if on the prow of a boat. The command of surrounding views may once have been panoramic; plainly, nothing like this is now possible, because of the surrounding trees. Mawson was particular about how a landscape should be managed to facilitate access to key views. The terrace - or, in this case, the circular lookout bastion,

'being the centre round which the pleasure grounds or woodlands are arranged, attention would first be directed to discovering and framing those features visible from it which have elements in them of the picturesque, or which in any way give character and individuality to the site ... and it is for the creation of such effects that the designer must aim in the arrangement of his terraces ... steps and the placing of seats, .. or bastions so as to emphasize them ... at the same time taking care that the balance and symmetry of the scheme as a whole are not endangered in the treatment of individual features.'⁵⁴

Hence, the lookout alerts us to the fact that views are absolutely necessary to complete this motif - and some of those to the south, which are, at present accidental rather than framed and presented, still give clear evidence of the magnificent potential waiting to be rediscovered and refined here.



View southwards, from the lookout circle

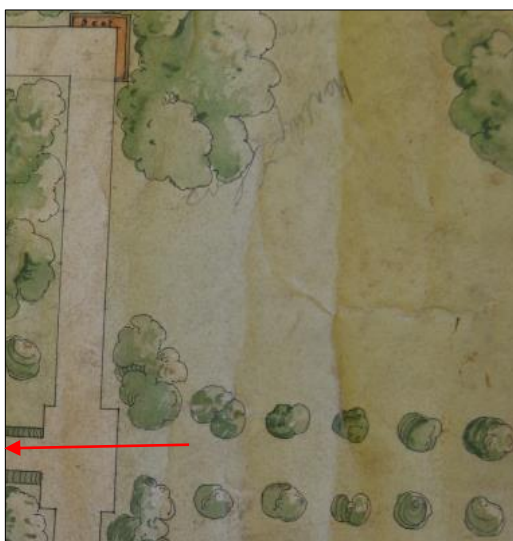
Not directly illustrated by the Mawson plan, but spectacularly available from the top of the knoll on the SE, which accommodates two seats (one broken), is the whole panorama to the south. This is a treat not to be missed.

⁵⁴ Mawson, *Art & Craft, Op.cit.*, p.86.



View southwards, overlooking the Bowling Green, from seat on SE of Gardens

On the plan, at the southern end of the Garden, a parallel row of trees or shrubs – perhaps the latter, as the motifs are relatively small and informal – was initially proposed. Regularly spaced, but fairly loose in habit, these shrubs would suggest a gently relaxed transition from formality into an environment that was much more natural, much wilder. It might well have been the addition of the bowling green that saw the death of this piece of the plan; as built, there is no escaping the fact that there is something curiously unfinished about the southern end of the Garden today – perhaps made more apparent because the bowling green is now in separate (and attentive) management.



S. end of the Garden as planned, with parallel lines of shrubs; instead, the Bowling Green fills the SE corner.



Entrance to the Gardens & Bowling Green, looking eastwards - lacking any clear character.

The Queen's Gardens Memorial Cross

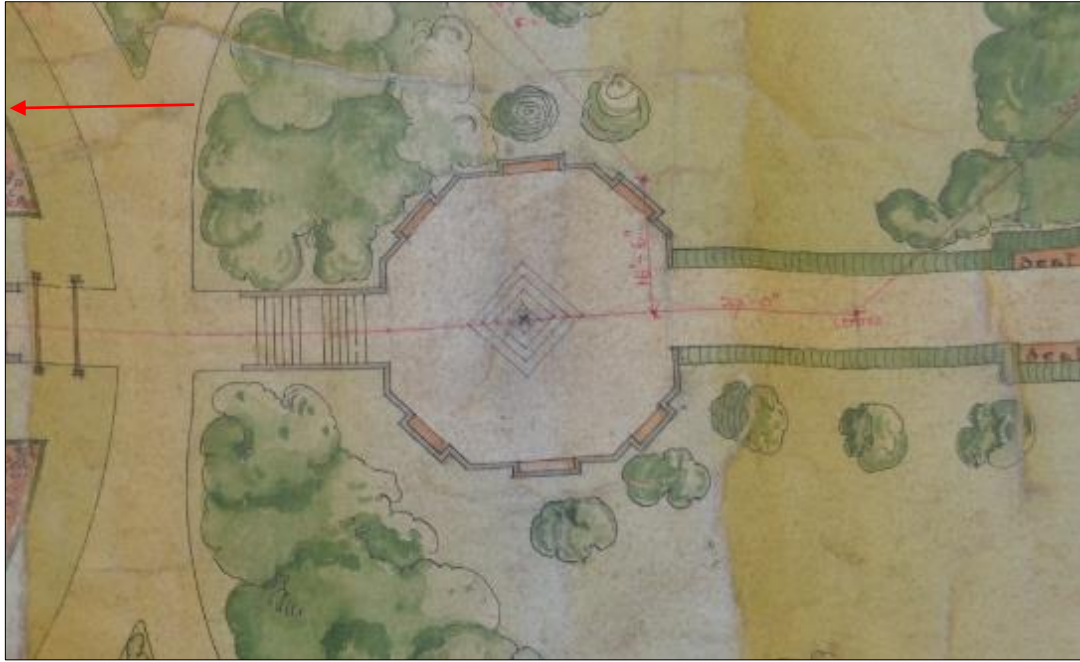
One feature which is central to the Gardens is the memorial cross itself. Mawson highlighted the importance of this part of the design by planning for a path – along the crest of the high ground and between the steps on the north and the south – which was to be 9 feet wide, flanked by trim yews; this is the only path intended to be on this scale, the rest being at most 8 feet. As we might expect, Mawson had clear views about the purpose and character of paths. A garden's comforts and success,

'depend greatly upon the arrangement and quality of its walks. Flowers are delightful, trees and shrubs are interesting, but if, in order to reach them, it is necessary to traverse a walk unnecessarily circuitous, or one badly constructed or with steep or uneven gradients, the pleasure in the flowers or and trees is largely discounted. Walks, may do much to make or mar the composition of the various garden scenes, and may either be so placed as to help the perspective and scale, or may cut across the view with a hard line out of harmony with everything.'⁵⁵

Mawson goes on to counsel against a multiplicity of walks, against laying a path which has no apparent purpose and a path which is too narrow (less than 6 feet) and looks 'mean'; he emphasises the importance of 'easy gradients', 'harmonious lines', perfect finish. By the latter, he means that the construction of a path without a substantial camber, in order to throw off water and create a sense of ease, would be short-sighted and damaging. Even now, it is apparent that this important path – linking the cross and the look-out bastion – which was meant to be 9 feet wide, also has a camber that is more pronounced than elsewhere. Moreover, it is the area which accommodates the majority of the seats. This was a place in which the visitor should spend time. It is the principal path, with the glories of the landscape to the south, and the cross, the dramatic heart of the design, on the north. To this we now turn.

Mawson planned that the octagonal platform, framed by seats, should have, at its centre, a high, stepped base for the cross; and his section drawing reveals that the latter was to have been very tall and imposing. Apart from the stepped base to the cross, all this was realised.

⁵⁵ Mawson, *Art & Craft, Op.cit.*, p.135.



Mawson plan, showing the octagonal platform with seats, the wide central path & the stepped dais for the memorial cross.

In the event, a simple, slightly tapered, plinth was built. The tall, Grade II, cross it supports is magisterial⁵⁶.



Memorial Cross, Queen's Gardens, from the south

⁵⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1400656>



Memorial Cross, Queen's Gardens, from the SE

The Queen Victoria Memorial Cross is recorded as having been designed by Hicks and Charlewood, an architectural practice based in Newcastle⁵⁷. Hicks, who died in November, 1902, was architect to the diocese of Newcastle. Links with Sedbergh had been forged in 1897, when the practice designed the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Drinking Fountain, close to St Andrew's church, on Finkle Street, which was widened to commemorate the 60th year of Victoria's reign⁵⁸. The mason who so beautifully carved the Queen's Garden cross, however, was H.T. Miles, from Ulverston (on the Furness peninsula). And, here, we find a fascinating link to the Ruskin cross, erected in 1901, in the churchyard at Coniston, following Ruskin's death in January, 1900.

The Ruskin cross was also carved by H.T. Miles, probably just a matter of months before he was working on the Queen's memorial cross. The former had been designed by Ruskin's secretary – who was also an artist, historian and writer of considerable standing – W.G. Collingwood⁵⁹. In the Lake District, both Ruskin and Collingwood were preoccupied by what they perceived as the early mediaeval patterns of architecture, sculpture and language indigenous to the area. Collingwood, in particular, was in close contact with the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society; he wrote articles, became the editor of the annual *Transactions*, in 1900, and president of the society in 1920. Collingwood's interest in the early mediaeval sculpture of the district led him to explore the impact of both Roman and Norse culture on Anglo Saxon crosses, one of the most notable of which is situated close to the Scottish border, in the hamlet of

⁵⁷ http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=207755

⁵⁸ <http://www.geog.port.ac.uk/webmap/thelakes/html/lgaz/lk15122.htm> Was this drinking fountain funded by the Uptons or Cottrell-Dormers? We have not been able to discover this.

⁵⁹ Collingwood moved to the Lake District in 1881 and there he acted as Ruskin's amanuensis and remained until his own death in 1931. A fascinating account of Collingwood's work, by Jane Hawkes, can be found in, *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer15/hawkes-on-collingwood-artist-art-historian-critic-archaeologist-and-anglo-saxonist> .

Bewcastle. Though damaged at the top, this remarkable 7th or 8th century cross was amongst those thoroughly studied by Collingwood. Of this and Ruthwell cross, some 30 miles further north, in Dumfriesshire, Pevsner proclaims that they, 'are the greatest achievements of their date in the whole of Europe'⁶⁰. These are sentiments with which both Ruskin and Collingwood would have agreed⁶¹.

We know, of course, that the English Arts & Crafts movement was, to some extent, inspired by Celtic culture and the pre-Norman north. Morris, famously, made several journeys to discover Icelandic – and Norse – stories and culture in the 1870s, and Collingwood, in particular, was fascinated – and knowledgeable – about Celtic art. This can all be seen as signs of 'romantic regionalism', of 'the importance placed in Victorian and Edwardian England on locating regional identity in the medieval past, and tracing presumed 'cultural continuities' from the past to the present'⁶². What is also important is that this history was rooted in the early Christianity of England, a history perceived through the lens of Bede's 8th century *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*⁶³, and through the scrollings and figures of the early mediaeval illustrated religious texts, including the remarkable Lindisfarne Gospels. This is the context in which we should see the Ruskin Cross and the cross in Queen's Gardens.

In the crisp and exquisitely carved palmate leaf, the interlaced tendrils, which punctuate the north and south shafts, and the interlaced patterns which frame the leaf, there is a clear evocation of the Anglo-Saxon crosses of the north - an evocation which is typical of the Arts & Crafts Movement as it found its expression in the north of England. The scale of motifs is delicately reduced as they climb the cross - a detail of handling which tends to emphasise the tapering of the cross and the sense of height as one stands to look at it. What we are looking at in Queen's Gardens is a cross commemorating not just the great Empress of India, but a monarch who was the latest in a long line of those who helped to define an English, and British, identity, a line which reaches back to the mists of the Anglo-Saxon period, a monarch who was the epitome of the best of Christian Englishness.

Are we also looking at a cross commemorating Ruskin's – and, perhaps, Florence Upton-Cottrell-Dormer's – notion of the embodiment of the perfect English woman? One could spend some time pursuing this question, prompted, as it is, by the fact that 'Of Queen's Gardens' is the title of the second of the two halves of Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, first published in 1865⁶⁴. Although, not surprisingly, many modern critics have forcibly rejected Ruskin's apparent insistence on the necessity of women

⁶⁰ Nicholas Pevsner and Matthew Hyde, *Cumbria*, 2010, p.153. Pevsner linked the style and quality of the figures on the Bewcastle cross to Romano-British influences. In contrast, the Celtic influences manifest on the Anglo-Saxon Ruthwell cross are perhaps derived from Norse iconography, as well as from the Bible.

⁶¹ Collingwood studied many Anglo-Saxon crosses in the north. His publications included, *The Ruthwell Cross in its relation to other monuments of the early Christian age*. Trans., Dumfriesshire & Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Soc., 3rd ser., 5, 1916-18; & *Northumbrian crosses of the pre-Norman age*, 1927.

⁶² Jane Hawkes, *Op.cit.*

⁶³ The most influential editions and translations of Bede were produced in the late 19th / early 20th centuries: for e.g., Charles Plummer's 1896 *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, 1896, and A.M. Sellar's 1907 translation, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*.

⁶⁴ 'Of Queen's Gardens' was initially the title Ruskin gave to a lecture he delivered to girls and women in Manchester, a centre of the mass-production, industrialisation & selfishness which he saw as the clear signs of a society in moral and political decline. Women – educated women – he saw as the only possible saviours of such a society, but that redemption was only bought by the strength of women's 'natural' modesty and goodness. On the west face of the Ruskin cross, his later writings were invoked, including *Sesame and Lilies*.

subjugating themselves to men, it is also possible to read his essay as something more positive. Certainly, in the context of later Victorian England, at a time when Ruskin despaired both of the greed and the poverty associated with mass-production and mass-consumption, 'Of Queen's Gardens' could be read as a paean to the 'natural', prudence, modesty, moral superiority and dedication to service of educated women. Only women could curb, by example, the terrible appetites of men, which lay at the root of much suffering. As Ruskin proclaimed to his female audience, 'It is for you to choose their (men's) cause for them, and to forbid them when there is no cause'. Failure was catastrophic.

'There is no suffering, no injustice, no misery in the earth, but the guilt of it lies with you.'⁶⁵

Women – let loose in libraries and gardens, as Ruskin allowed in 'Of Queen's Gardens' – should carry the heavy burden of being the guardians of private, and thus public, probity and virtue⁶⁶.

This is not the place to pursue this fascinating theme in any more detail. What we can say is that both Queen Victoria and (from what we have been able to glean) Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer seem to have been conscious of their role as beneficent women, whose task of bringing up children (9 for the Queen, at least 10 – some records show 14 – for Mrs U-C-D) was critical to the improvement of the age, as was their role in ruling / guiding their respective constituencies. At the least, it is manifest that the Queen's Gardens cross derives some of its superlative, interlaced, carved patterns from Anglo-Saxon crosses and the quality of the carving matches that of Ruskin's cross. Both are deliberate essays in Arts & Crafts design and execution, both are invocations of the depth of English – and by association, British – Christian history.

⁶⁵ Ruskin compared himself to J.J. Rousseau and he drew on the latter's Romantic *La Nouvelle Heloise*, 1761, for a model of the goodness and moral sensibility which was taught by Nature, and which could most productively be acquired by women, who were the most 'natural' in their attributes.

⁶⁶ See an interesting article by Jennifer M Lloyd, 'Raising Lilies: Ruskin and Women', *The Journal of British Studies*, 1995, Vol.34, issue 3, pp.325-350.
<http://www.academicroom.com/article/raising-lilies-ruskin-and-women>.



Bewcastle cross, S & E faces, 7th / 8th C



Ruskin cross, Coniston, by WG Collingwood, 1901



Ruskin's cross, with St George



Queen's Gardens cross

Both carved by H.T. Miles

Planting of The Queen's Gardens: orchestration

Thus far, we have considered the layout and detail of the Queen's Gardens, how it reflects the care with which Mawson and his patron planned not only what it looked like, but also how people would move through and use it, where they would view the most significant elements of the composition or the wider landscape, where they might comfortably stop and contemplate. All this was created with, 'architecture,

verdure, flowers, and other materials of his craft ... one rhythmic, harmonious composition'.

With this in mind, it is inevitable that the planting – especially the trees and shrubs, which would constitute the more permanent planting – was also carefully selected and located. Yes, Mawson would know perfectly well what would survive in this part of the world and we can see, even from the remnants of his layout, that this was successful. But plants had other functions, too. And, of course, Mawson had views about this. He insists that learning about how to design and plant with trees represents a lifetime's occupation.

'The infinity of curve in tree forms, the silent complexity of their myriad parts, their natural architecture .. baffle and defy description. .. A man may have the most perfect knowledge of trees the world over, and yet be devoid of the artistic qualities needed to plant suitably.

Let it suffice to state the three leading principles to which all others are tributary. First – *Unity in composition* – to dispose all the trees, single, groves and clumps, to fill a place in one complete unified scheme... Secondly - *A happy balance of parts*. In an ideal landscape ... there exists a balance of parts which is the counterpoint of order; this principle of balance underlies every successful work of art .. *Thirdly - Arrange foliage in masses of one species of tree by themselves*, and (then) whatever varieties of flowering or evergreen trees or shrubs are introduced, the predominant keynote must be in accord with the prevalent trees of the district...'.⁶⁷

The imperative, then, is to balance breadth and form with finer detail, to consider the composition in whole and in parts. It is interesting to see that Mawson invokes the compositional language of architecture, music ('counterpoint') and art. And he does this many times.

'Remember in the case of a garden that it is a design; and pattern and rhythm are the soul of design. Directly either the artist, musician, architect or gardener considers his design, he must have a degree of formality'⁶⁸.

Thus, the first thought is to plan the whole; and within the compass of one small garden – such as Queen's Gardens – this should mean that the visitor should not be distracted by diversions of poorly-managed trees or shrubs, or plants competing for light, or volunteer trees overwhelming the more select material, or miscellaneous plants scattered around, without apparent regard for context and composition. To orchestrate the Gardens in the first place, and to manage them thereafter is an art, a matter of judgement - and that judgement needs to be informed by the expertise, practice and refinement of an, 'artist, musician, architect or gardener'⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Mawson, *Art & Craft, Op.cit.*, p.286.

⁶⁸ *Op.cit.*, p.296. Referring to 'formality', here, Mawson is not necessarily talking about symmetry. What he wants, instead, is, 'balance without symmetry'.

⁶⁹ It is clear that, today, the Gardens have been managed in a different way, in some places, perhaps with the aim of encouraging a 'natural' wildness and in others, to plant new, select but single, specimens. There is no doubt that there is, now, dedicated care of the Gardens - & this is to be admired. But, so long has it been since they were recognised as a work of art, that it must be almost impossible to have a vision of how to look after them.



Parts of Queen's Gardens today, not managed as an orchestrated whole: competing undergrowth & single specimens, *Liriodendron tulipifera* and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*

Planting of The Queen's Gardens: musical movements

If we have some idea of the necessary governing principles, it is worth examining, briefly, some of the motifs which seem to be by Mawson's hand.

On entering the Gardens through the principal gate on the north (or, rather, on entering via the central, north gateway, as one should, though it is not possible, because of the busy road), one is immediately faced with a dark, dominant avenue of tall conifers. These are planted opposite one another, rather than diagonally from one another; and this imposes a formal order, which Mawson generally recommended for avenues where the tempo was to be 'restrained', with a degree of 'grandeur'⁷⁰. As is evident on the original plan, and as advised by Mawson, such avenues should also, where possible, be, 'enclosed between clipped hedges'; this may have been the case originally, but the scale of the conifers now makes this impossible. The designer also observes that, 'avenues are somewhat meaningless without suitable architectural features to focus the vista'. So, we know that there must be a focus, here - and that focus, of course, is the cross.

We even know what mood was to be evoked when walking through this avenue of conifers: majestic *Thuja plicata*, western red cedar, is useful in formal settings, though, like *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, it is also 'funereal'. Thus, the dark tunnel – surely the Valley of the Shadow of Death? – then leads one, with deliberate pace, to climb the ranks of steps, unmediated by suggestion of rest or tarrying, until one faces the cross. Approaching from the north, the cross would usually be cast in shadow, so only the silhouette signals the promise of redemption. The simplicity of the vocabulary – a group of dark conifers, steep steps and the silhouette of a cross – prevents this extraordinary journey from being melodramatic. But it is theatrical and it is

⁷⁰ Quotations here are taken from Mawson, *Op.cit.*, p.72.

experienced on the move: both of these themes are central to so much of what Mawson produced during his long career.

The pattern of the planting today suggests that three or four of the original conifers have gone; though the group on the NE seems to be the most complete. In the latter, the southern end of the walk is marked by a *Cedrus deodara*, a weeping cedar (an appropriate choice), which, from its size and condition, suggests it probably was an original selection. If so, it is probable that it was matched by another on the west side of the walk. Instead, there is a group of *Acer platanoides*, Norway maple, certainly planted at a later date. On this western side of the walk, there is also a *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, Douglas fir – described by Mawson as, ‘a handsome tree of very rapid growth’ – which has been planted between the first two thuyas. This seems unlikely to have been original and, as it is growing very close to the thuyas, it was probably an *ad hoc* introduction some time in the mid-20th century.



Three *Thuja plicata* climb the eastern flank of the entrance walk, with a *Cedrus deodara* (No.4 & in detail on right) at the southern end. The central walk is overgrown and – because the gate is closed – does not get used all the time. Hence, the message this sends out contradicts the formal drama of the Mawson plan.

We then arrive at the next movement, perhaps the most theatrical piece of the whole composition: the setting of the cross. On the west and east sides, the cross is framed by groups of *Pinus sylvestris*, Scots pine. And, although Mawson describes this as a very useful pine, one of the few pines which associated well with the English

landscape'⁷¹, it is, in fact, much more significant that such a passing comment might imply.



Groups of Scots pines provide a frame for the Queen Victoria Memorial Cross

Scots pine is one of the three native conifers, the others being yew and juniper. It is, of course, a tree which is most associated with the ancient Caledonian pine forests, where some of the remaining trees are of a magnificent size. It was widely used in construction and put to other functional purposes, so much so that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, planters would argue about how to make sure that they employed only the seeds from these ancient forests, instead of seeds imported from elsewhere in Europe, which generally produced stock of smaller stature. Not surprisingly, then, a principal reason for plantations of Scots pines was their usefulness: at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, gold medals and bulging purses were offered by the Society for Silviculture for, 'sowing, planting and enclosing timber trees', which would include larch and Scots pine. But, during the long history of Scots pines, other meanings have become attached to them.

First of all, of course, they were Scottish and Queen Victoria's attachment to Scotland was fully recognised. Moreover, it was popularly believed that ancient Scottish warriors might have Scots pines planted on their graves, as a sign of both their native vigour and their hope for immortality. Again, what could be more suitable for the Queen?

But, since the mid-18th century, Scots pines had been employed in ornamental landscapes to signify another monarch: King Alfred. In the first half of the politically turbulent 18th century, when there was a fear that the constitutional settlement

⁷¹ Mawson, *Op.cit.*, p.314.

agreed in the 'Glorious Revolution' was being cast aside, there were those who were politically alienated from the seat of government and who went back to their landed estates and laid out magnificent landscaped parks. Amongst them was John Aislable (disgraced by the 'South Sea Bubble') who, at Studley Royal, laid out what remains one of the country's most remarkable historic gardens - a beautiful and profound political and personal manifesto. Here, Aislable did not introduce figurative references to King Alfred (as Cobham did, in his Temple of British Worthies at Stowe); he planted Scots pines to evoke this ancient heritage. He associated his Scots pines with Gothic-style buildings: together, they represented the Anglo Saxon roots of an ordered society, when King Alfred began to pen a constitution for Wessex, codified the law, built towns, encouraged education⁷². There was a conviction that the basic principles of English parliamentary authority and liberty could be traced back to *Magna Carta* and even further back, to King Alfred⁷³. Some of the Scots pines at Studley are saying nothing less than this.

We are not suggesting that the Scots pines which provide such a splendid backdrop to the Queen's memorial cross are a signal of political turbulence; quite the reverse, as King Alfred had become, by the second half of the 19th century, a model for the British character as a whole⁷⁴, but we have no doubt that the pairing of the Anglo-Saxon-influenced cross with the ancient Scots pines can be read as a sign of Christian, constitutional liberty and the rule of law. The joining together of Queen Victoria and King Alfred – who, in 1901 and 901 had died just 1000 years apart – is, after all, a happy union⁷⁵.

There is one more group of trees here – which can be read as partners to the Scots pines – that are worth particular mention: the beautiful cut-leaved beeches, *Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia'. Although those on site are various in size, we believe that they were planted together, by Mawson. As he recommended, these highly ornamental trees have grown to form one impressive, harmonious, whole. Mawson admired this particular form of beech.

'The light pea-green of the foliage in spring is delightful, and in the summer, when it has assumed more sober hues, there is much to admire in the narrow serrated leaves'⁷⁶.

We have described it as a 'partner' to the Scots pine because, in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was sometimes planted as the delicately 'feminine' partner to the ruggedly 'masculine' Scots pine⁷⁷. Here, it seems to reflect Mawson's invocation of

⁷² These were themes which had underpinned the political philosophy of John Locke (1632-1704), Enlightenment thinker and hugely influential.

⁷³ For further information on the persistent cult of King Alfred, see, Simon Keynes, 'The cult of King Alfred the Great', *Anglo-Saxon England*, Vol.28, Dec. 1999, pp.225-356.

⁷⁴ Dickens's *A Child's History of England*, 1851-3, described Alfred as, 'the noble king ..(who) in his single person, possessed all Saxon virtues. Whom misfortune could not subdue, whom prosperity could not spoil, whose perseverance, nothing could shake. Who was hopeful in defeat and generous in success. Who loved justice, freedom, truth and knowledge'. See Barbara Yorke's fascinating essay on, 'the reputation of King Alfred the Great, and the enduring cult around his life and legend', *History Today*, Vol.49, Issue 10, November 1999. <http://www.historytoday.com/barbara-yorke/alfred-great-most-perfect-man-history>

⁷⁵ And one should note that Queen Victoria, in 1844, gave birth to the first Prince Alfred since the Anglo-Saxon period.

⁷⁶ Mawson, *Op.cit.*, p.278.

⁷⁷ There is sometimes a deeper narrative, too (tho' not, we think, at Queen's Gardens). Beech was sometimes regarded as a symbol of Rome and Classical culture – even a symbol of Diana

musical composition, creating balance by employing counterpoint, so that the whole contributes to, one 'rhythmic, harmonious composition'.

The Queen's Gardens – owned by the people of Sedbergh

In the early years after Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer's death, the Parish Council regularly discussed how best to manage and develop the Gardens. They needed money: the first reported donation was £10, in March 1907, from the Charity Trustees. They needed tools: on 27th May, 1907, we learn that Mr Upton kindly presented 'the tools and lawnmower which were got for use in the Queen's Gardens'. They needed a gardener: Henry Metcalfe was engaged to spend 20 hours a week looking after the Gardens. They needed to make sure the gates were shut at night: at least one of the gates was made self-closing, with a spring lock. They needed to control the behaviour of youngsters who were, 'throwing stones at the pillar heads' (presumably the stone balls) on the gate posts; they wrote to the police to ask them to keep, 'a sharp look out'. They needed to control the rabbits and store the seats as winter approached. This gift was proving to be something of a burden.

Then, on 23rd May, 1907, it was reported that Mr. Pugh, the Upton agent, had written to say that, 'There is in the Ingmire Gardens a good sized shelter which Mr Upton is prepared to give to the Parish Council for erection in the Queen's Gardens if they would be at the expense of moving it'. It seems that the shelter had enjoyed an earlier life as a pen for 'fancy pheasants', but that Mrs. Dormer had converted it to a garden shelter. It was hexagonal & roofed with wood, covered with zinc. It was not a completely closed summerhouse, but protection from the wind and weather was provided by glazed screens. In the same meeting, it was reported that Mr. Upton had requested that an inscription should be placed on the memorial cross, 'to the memory of Mrs Dormer'⁷⁸. The PC agreed to the latter request and agreed to consider the former and inspect the shelter.

It was not a unanimous decision but, after yet another round of 'considerable discussion', The PC agreed, on 3rd February, 1908, to accept the shelter. The AGM on 13th April, 1908 recorded that the shelter had been removed from Ingmire and was then being built in the Gardens. In the following weeks, it was painted and its roof was repaired where water had been getting in.

Another introduction to the Gardens was at the behest of Mr Upton. On 22nd February, 1909, a letter arrived from the estate. 'There seems to be a general wish on the part of many of the inhabitants of Sedbergh that there should be a Bowling Green'. The letter included the sweetener, 'it might be possible to raise something towards the upkeep of the Gardens which I have always regretted should be a drain upon the rates'. Thus – although we know that Mrs Upton-Cottrell-Dormer had already agreed to transfer some land for a Bowling Green and this plan had foundered, because of her death – the estate now gave a new piece of land at the

/ Artemis, goddess of (among other things) nature - a partner to the 'early mediaeval' Scots pine. Planted closely together (as at Studley Royal) they could be read as the foundation stones of British constitutional liberty and learning: the shared inheritance of Classical scholarship and Anglo-Saxon constitutional liberty.

⁷⁸ On 23rd July, 1907, the PC received a letter asking if the Upton family could build a cottage hospital at the southern end of the Gardens, to commemorate Mrs Dormer. The PC may well have been relieved when they could report that the Deed of transfer of ownership of the Gardens specifically precluded the Council's giving up any of the land for any purpose.

back of the Gardens, 'and would remove and re-erect the boundary wall around the additional ground free of cost'. The PC did not respond immediately. A public meeting was held on 1st March. There was unanimous support for the suggestion. And a new access road from the east was agreed. The Bowling Club opened on 28th July, 1910. Thus we learn that, before 1909, the only approach to the Queen's Gardens was from Station Road; and that today's narrow eastern access drive, as well as the somewhat unfinished appearance of the southern end of the Gardens, are a consequence of the introduction of the Bowling Green.

It was at this same time, too, that we find the first mention of a brass band playing in the Gardens. The PC was pleased to reply in the affirmative to a request for the band to play: any weekday and on Sundays, between 3.00p.m. and 5.00p.m., when the music should be 'sacred', The PC required that a programme should be sent to them for approval, before the event. Twelve chairs were to be painted, a tool house erected and the roof of the shelter was to be tarred, to protect the band. The Ingmire shelter, then – erected in the SE corner of the Gardens – was now the bandstand.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt at all that the Queen's Gardens is a gem. It brings together so many strands of the history of Sedbergh and is a remarkable work of art, designed by Thomas Mawson just at a time when he was tackling some of the most challenging and interesting new gardens, landscapes – and ideas – for his first major clients, in the Lake District. His patron, the admirable Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, was, clearly, a driving force in the area and she must have recognised, in Thomas Mawson, a landscape designer – a *landscape architect* – who shared her passion for the Arts & Crafts philosophy which had been so lively an influence in Cumbria and region. The fact that the Gardens are intended as a setting for the refined and powerful cross, a memorial to Queen Victoria, adds considerably to the historic and artistic interest of the site - and it alerts us to the iconography of Thomas Mawson's design, as well as its beauty.

Remarkable, too, is that fact that, although the Gardens lost something of their purpose when the railway line was taken up, it retains a good deal of its original character. That the Bowling Green, on its SE corner, is still very busy and carefully looked after not only reminds us of the history of the whole layout, but also adds a degree of lively activity to the setting. Furthermore, the likelihood of additional housing being built on the northern side of Station Road, directly opposite the Gardens – and with it, one must hope, will come a zebra crossing and even a pavement – means that this will serve as a local park for still more people.

One of John Ruskin's first publications, 'The Poetry of Architecture', published in 1837, emphasised the close connection between the mental and emotional impact of a building or a work of art. As we know, Ruskin advised architects and artisans to take care, because 'all the world will hear you; they cannot choose but look'. This is the thread of Mawson's work, too. He knew how to capture and convey stories, emotional charges, awe and inspiration. His materials were the colours, shapes and scents of, 'architecture, verdure, flowers', trees and 'other materials of his craft'; they were also more nebulous things, such as views, poetic and spatial relationships, direction, light and movement. He recognised that all these materials could be

manipulated so that they helped to shape the way people looked at, enjoyed and understood the Gardens, then, now and in the future. He was working with the promise that, long after his own death, 'all the world will hear you; they cannot choose but look'.

Registered as a Grade II landscape, increasingly well-used by local people and rich in potential for accommodating special events and celebrations, the Queen's Memorial Gardens offer an opportunity for local people and visitors to learn and understand a great deal about:

- the beauty and diversity of the Gardens themselves;
- the trees and shrubs which grow in it;
- one of the most significant landscape designers of the day - a local man, who ultimately commanded international influence;
- a long-established local family at Ingmire Hall;
- the power of the Arts and Crafts philosophy in Cumbria;
- the significance of Queen Victoria and her reign;
- the significance of the memorial cross - and its links to other crosses in the region, both contemporary and from the Anglo-Saxon period;
- philosophical debates about the role and practice of designers.

Above all, by understanding more about the Queen's Gardens, the people of Sedbergh will be able to learn much about the development of Sedbergh itself, about its local communities and politics, about its region and about its role in a much wider world.