Lutyens And Heywood In Context

A talk for the Twin Trees Festival 2019

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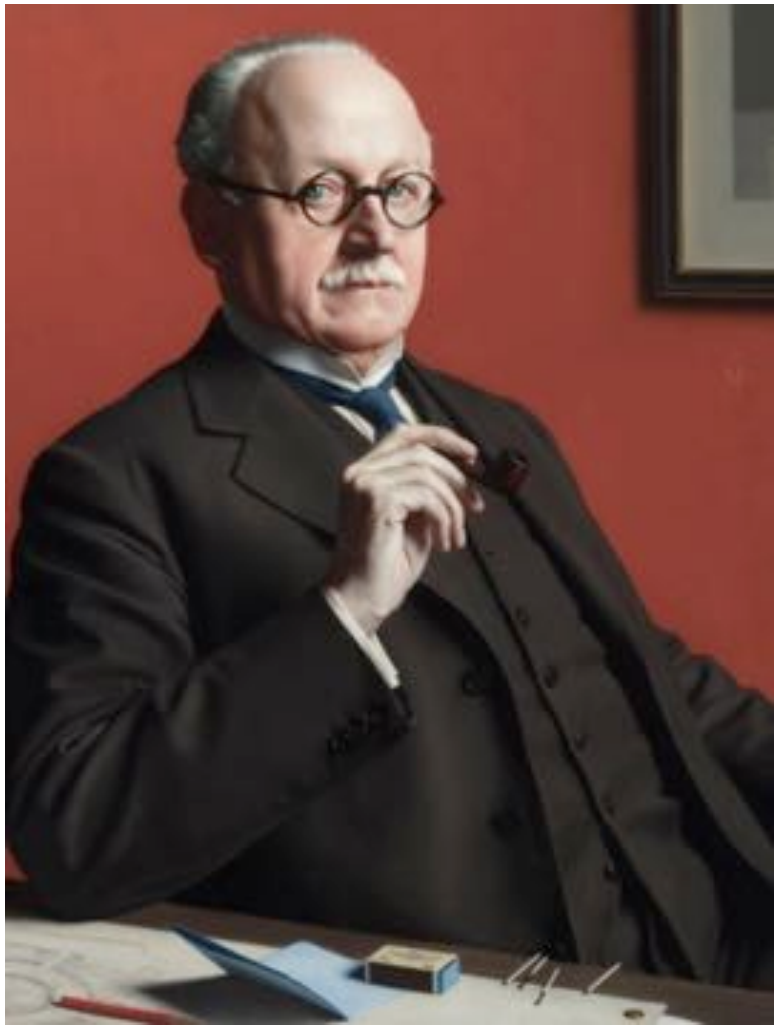
About Lutyens



Just over 150 years ago, Edwin Landseer Lutyens was born at No. 16 Orslow Square, London. He was the 11th child of Charles Lutyens, a struggling painter, and his Irish mother, Mary. Mary Gallwey came from Killarney where her uncle was agent to the Earl of Kenmare. Edwin's name came from his father's relationship with the renowned painter Sir Edwin Lanseer, who acted as a mentor and patron to his much less celebrated colleague.

Lutyens was to grow up to become the most celebrated architect of his generation who designed and realised a vast body of work encompassing country and town houses, war memorials, office and bank headquarters, and culminating in his designs for the new Viceroy's Palace in New Delhi, India.

What I wish to examine is how Heywood fits into this great body of work, both within the specific area of Lutyens' many garden designs and the wider body of work. Heywood was one of an important group of projects which were commissioned in Ireland and which survive in largely good condition today.

The Irish works are:
Lambay Castle and several other structures at Lambay Island, Rush, Co. Dublin (1905 onwards)
Alterations and additions to Howth Castle, Co. Dublin. (1910)
Heywood Gardens, Ballinakill, Co. Laois. (1909)
The War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin. (1930)
Fishing lodge at Tranarosan, Donegal. (not known)

Other works have been mentioned as possibly by Lutyens. Most plausible perhaps is a house in Connemara called Costello Lodge which was built for Joseph Bruce Ismay, formerly chairman of the White Star Line and completed in the 1920s.

Lutyens, photographed and a painting by Merideth Frampton, at the peak of his fame as an architect in a strikingly similar pose and serious suit. His circular glasses became iconic and were later incorporated into a more tongue in cheek bust (below) commissioned by his colleagues in the India office where he is wearing a hat based on the dome he designed for the Viceroy's Palace.

About Lutyens

Heywood was commissioned by Sir William Hutcheson Poe in the early twentieth century and constructed c. 1909 to 1912. To understand how Heywood fits into the canon of work it is useful to trace back to the origins of Lutyens' work and how this developed. As a child Lutyens was educated in part at home, a decision attributed in Jane Ridley's excellent *'The Architect & His Wife - a life of Edwin Lutyens'*, as much to economy as to the assertion that he was too delicate for public school. He does seem to have spent quite a lot of his childhood at home in Thursley, Surrey, passing the days by travelling the country lanes looking at the old buildings which fascinated him. In particular he loved to meet and talk with the builders and craftsmen whose skills remained wedded to the traditions of the vernacular architecture of the area. He would sometimes carry a pane of glass set in a wooden frame. On this he would sketch the buildings using a sharpened piece of soap. Throughout his life Lutyens retained a capacity to absorb and remember architectural details, filtering these through his acute architectural perception and translating them into his own particular and distinctive interpretations. In a letter to his wife from 1902 he referred to the moment when the architectural bug truly took hold. *'I got the architectural idea about fifteen or so, and then I was fired and went off at work and never went to bed!!'*. It was also said that the work of Randolph Caldecott, a famous artist and illustrator of the time, had helped to guide him towards architecture.

An illustration by Randolph Caldecott, whose work is said to have inspired Lutyens love of the vernacular buildings of Surrey

Watercolour of Thursley church by John Hassell, 1824
Surrey History Centre

As a child he loved to joke and make puns perhaps to compensate for his dislike of more academic pursuits. This love of the pun carried through to his adult life where he charmed both his clients and his children alike with amusing cartoons and witty jokes, many of which have become part of the Lutyens legend. After losing a particular architectural dispute with his friend and rival Herbert Baker, he referred to the debacle as his 'Bakerloo'.

He developed a keen sense of how, even then in the early 1880s, the idyllic setting of rural Surrey was under constant threat from the urbanisation of the countryside as the railways expanded. This was allied to the improving zeal of many a Victorian architect who regarded the simpler churches and houses as inferior, requiring a new and more ordered aesthetic. This resulted in the loss of much medieval material with early carvings and structures being discarded in favour of more 'correct' Victorian interpretations.

Lutyens and Architecture

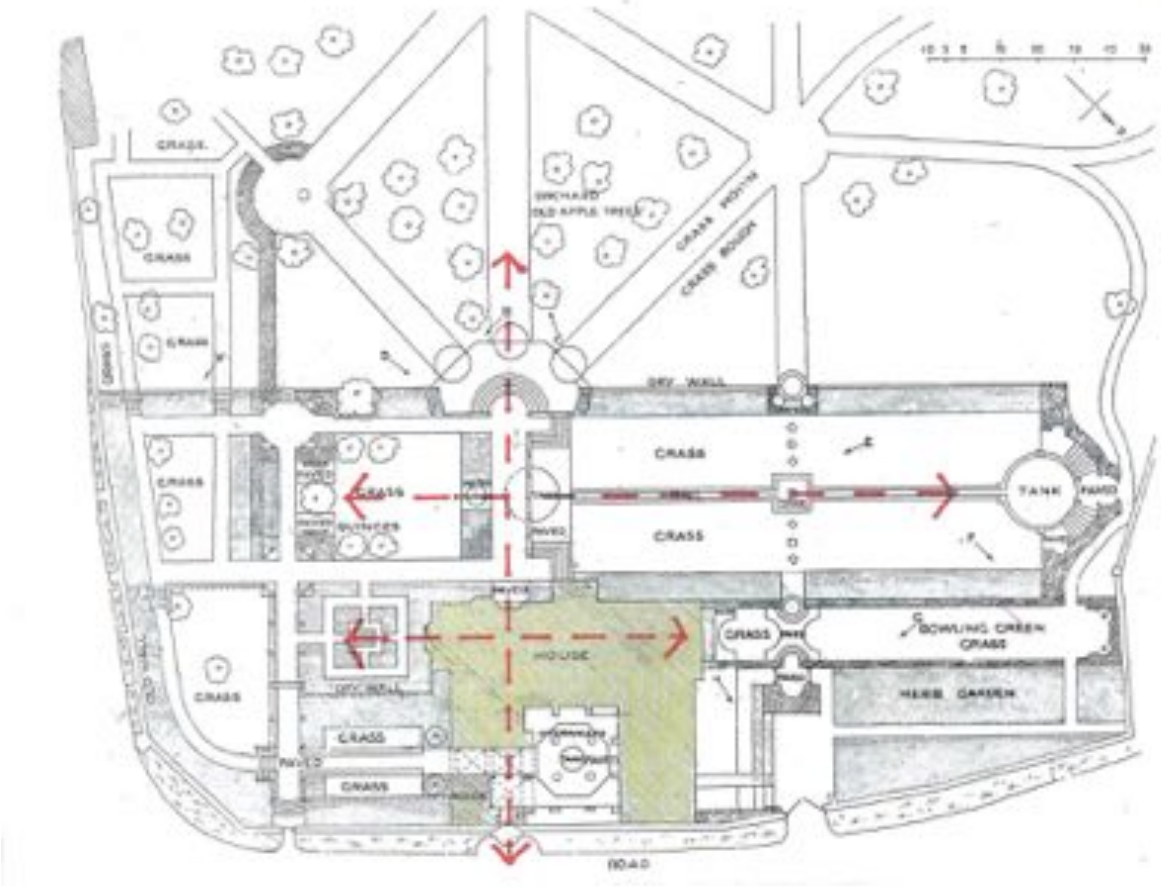
Lutyens left Surrey to enrol at the South Kensington School of Art where he got a grounding in the basic elements of architectural education. His early sketches were influenced by the work of Norman Shaw, a hugely successful architect of the time. From the school at South Kensington Lutyens left in 1887 to join the architectural office of Ernest George where he stayed for about eighteen months, claiming later that he had learned nothing from George whose work he did not particularly respect in spite of his commercial success. However it was at George's office that he met and made friends with a fellow trainee, Herbert Baker, who at seven years older than Edwin was more experienced. Their professional lives were to intertwine through later years as they worked in South Africa, and in particular collaborated on the designs for the new capital of India in New Delhi.

Whilst working on a commission for a cottage in 1892 Lutyens was introduced by his client to the formidable Gertrude Jekyll. It was an encounter that was to profoundly influence Lutyens' life. A painter turned garden designer some twenty six years older than her protégée, she was to commission the young Lutyens to design a house for her and to introduce him to her influential and prosperous circle of friends and family. It was to be the springboard to private practice and the foundation for his later achievements and projects.

Miss Jeykyll had already started to lay out her garden at Munstead Wood before she met the young architect, starting out on his life as an independent practitioner. Initially Lutyens designed *'The Hut'* for her as a place to live in while the larger house was being designed and built. Although rooted in the vernacular architecture of the Surrey countryside Lutyens lent his interpretations an ordering formality which presaged his later work and which also extended into the gardens which he designed and for which Miss Jeykyll would provide detailed planting plans. The garden of Munstead Wood was rooted more in the Robinsonian tradition of naturalistic layouts. This was very much the owners garden and not the architect's imposition of a formal extension of the architectural logic of the house plan. However as Lutyens developed his practice and his confidence in interpreting and realising his vision he became more confident in taking control of the garden layouts as an extension of the architecture.

A view of Munstead Wood, the house Lutyens designed for Gertrude Jekyll in Surrey, completed in 1897. Even in his early mature works, while incorporating the local traditions and forms, he creates a sense of balance and counter balance. The exaggerated chimney centres the design and the windows relate to each other in a subtle way. The harmony of solid wall to window is carefully articulated. This is a very conscious and architectural interpretation of the vernacular.

Lutyens and Architecture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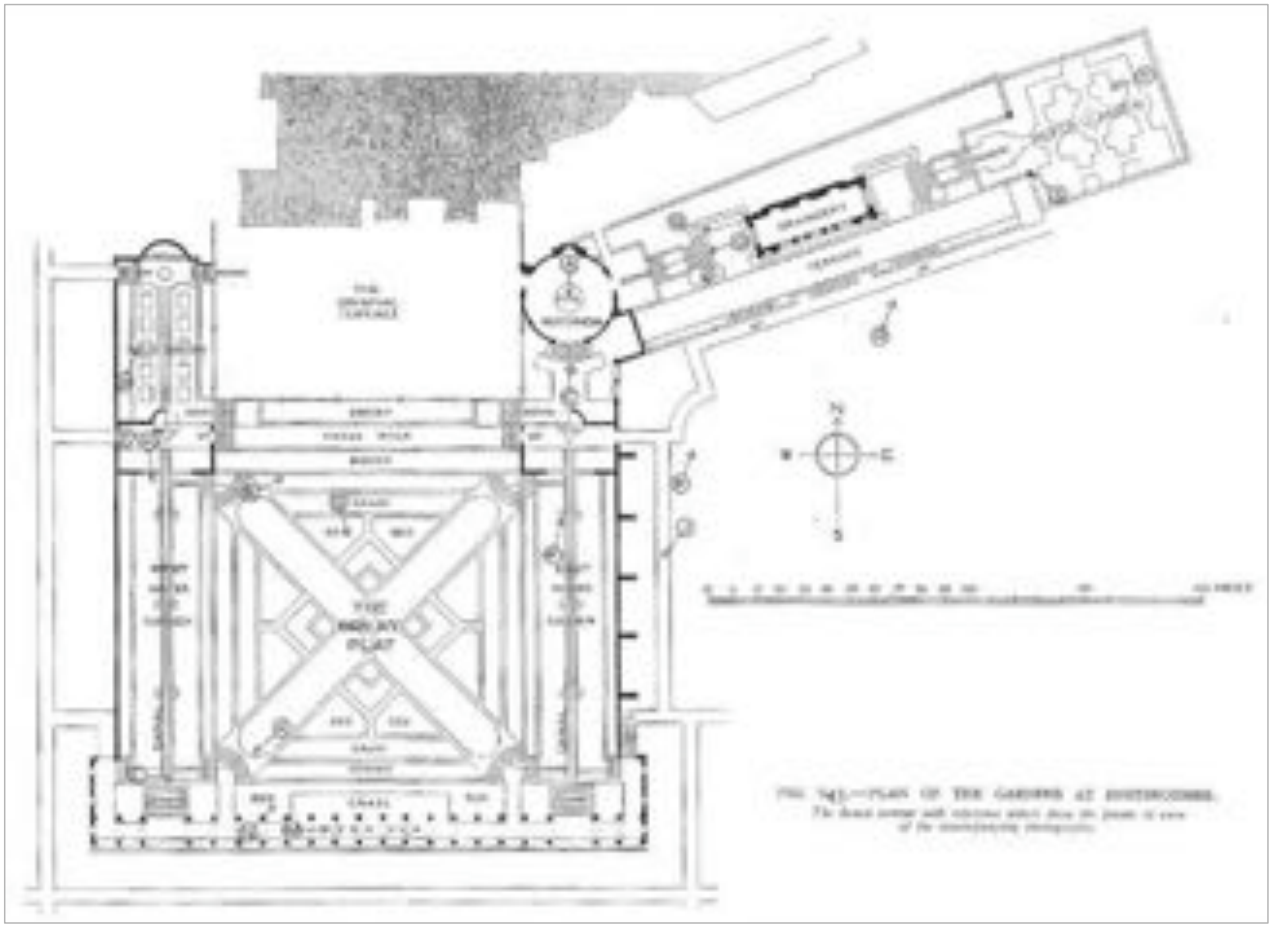
Lutyens and Architecture



The gardens at Hestercombe in Somerset are one of the most extensive and best preserved of the collaborations between Lutyens and Jekyll. Geometry is softened by Jekyll's planting with her painterly combination of colours based on her artist's training and intuition. The 'Great Plat' (below) is the centrepiece of these elegant geometrical games.

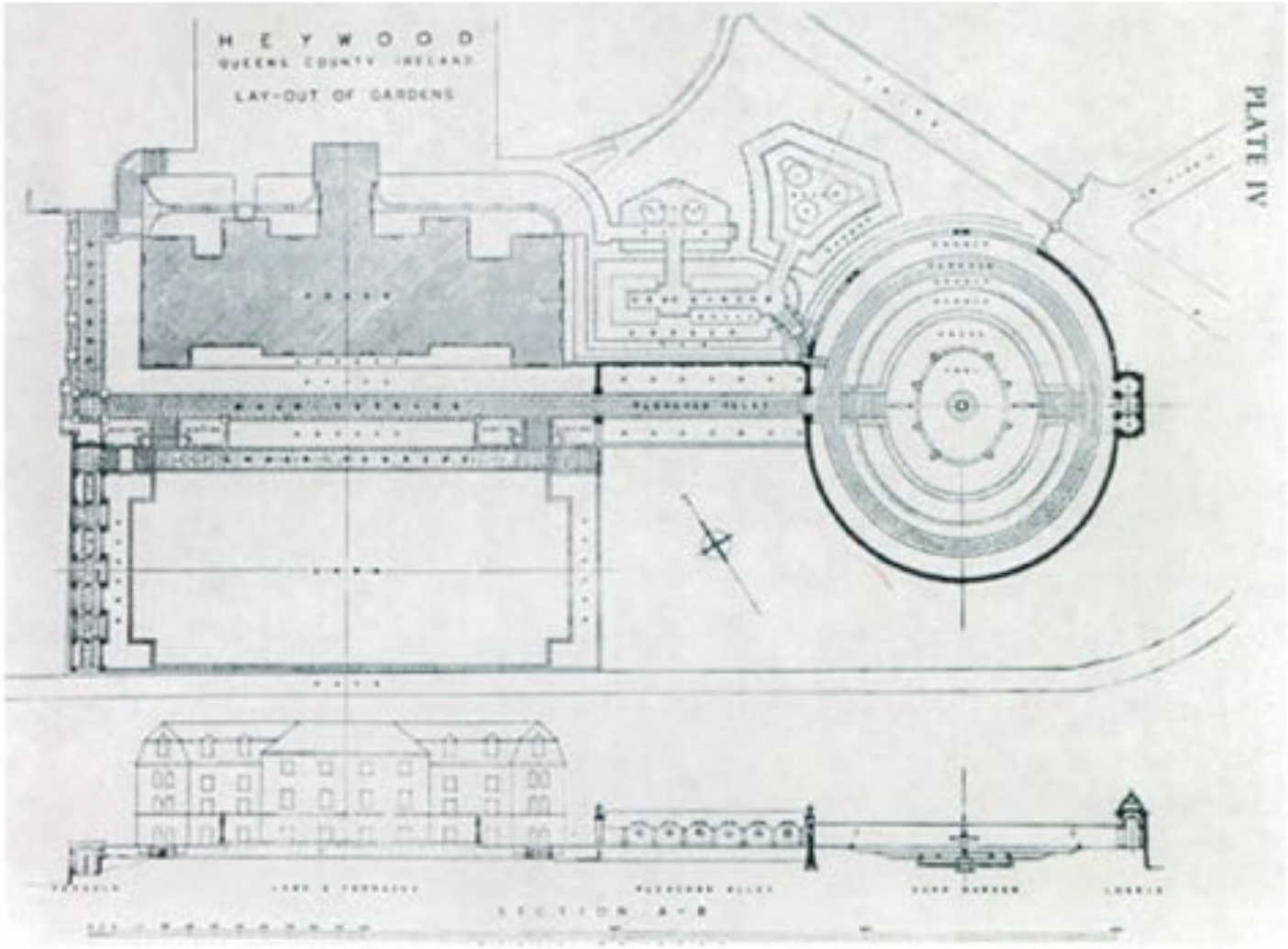
Architecture in Gardens

At Deanery Gardens Lutyens set up several axes and formal connections. One enters through a modest door, set within an old village wall and immediately a strong axis is established to the garden and from there to the steps leading to the wilder parts of the garden. Lutyens leads the visitor in different directions with cross axes, first towards the inner courtyard and then when one emerges into the garden, another cross axis leads the eye towards a formal circular pond or 'tank'. Miss Jekyll provided the planting plans but here was Lutyens using his strong liking for geometric devices to allow a garden to relate to the same ordering geometry of the house. Deanery Garden presents a carefully articulated set of elements which, although clearly not symmetrical, display a careful balancing of those elements so that they present both a formal logic and reference to the vernacular architectural spring from which they came. The house and its garden are inextricably linked.

At Hestercombe in Somerset, Lutyens created a large garden adjoining an earlier house.

Here we see again what distinguished Lutyens so particularly. Throughout his career he displayed a capacity to absorb the details and traditions of the locality in which his buildings were located and to then filter them through his unwavering architectural sensibility. Whether it was in Ireland, England, France or the United States, Lutyens always understood that for his buildings to have a sense of place they must understand the local materials and traditions. In Ireland he used the local stones and rooted his buildings in their own particular landscape. This was particularly true of Lambay where the island's existing buildings were translated into a higher level of poetic resonance. At Heywood, the loss of the house has to some extent dislocated the garden from its original context. The great wide lawn which related to the house now relates more to the view towards the river valley; where there is now an absence there was once a presence.

Lutyens and Architecture



Layout of the gardens at Heywood from the Lutyens Memorial Gardens. The great wide lawn forms one axis with the house while the pathway to the oval or fountain garden forms a cross axis with the sequence of architectural events revealed gradually.

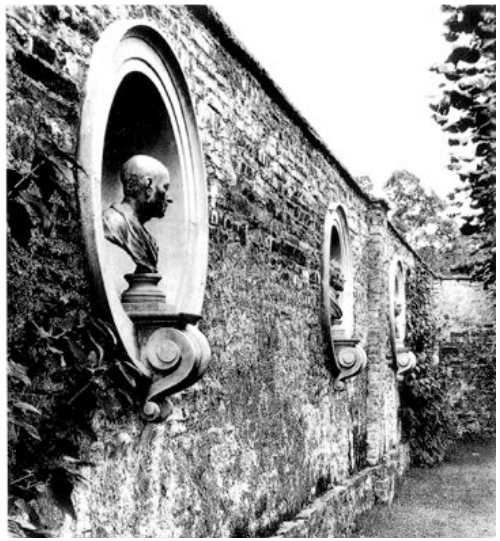
Lutyens and Architecture

The secret staircase from the upper gardens links to the fountain garden and provides both an element of surprise allied to an exploration of a complex geometry of curve meeting curve. It is typically Lutyens in its love of strong and complex forms.

Rustic stone piers are terminated by a more refined capping and classical urns.

Lutyens and Architecture

The great lawn is clearly related to the form and scale of the former house which was demolished after a fire in the early 1950s. Here although the lawn is simple and vast in scale, the indents to the corners create enough of a dilution of absolute formality to get away from the lawn being too rigid or banal. This simple and more obvious axis is traversed by the second major axis within the garden design. The eye is lead towards the stone piers which frame the pleached lime walkway that leads to the oval garden. The oval garden is suggested but little of its scale and grandeur is revealed, as the deep retaining walls which encircle the oval are not apparent from the original cross route. The pleached lime walk acts as a clear linkage between these major elements. As one progresses towards the gates of the oval or fountain garden the view to the valley and village beyond is retained but filtered by the lime trees. To the left the wall displays one of the other key characteristics of Lutyens handling and understanding of materials. Here he juxtaposes the rustic with the sophisticated using a series of oval niches of finely detailed architraves and scroll brackets originally supporting busts. The busts have been replaced now by urns. The wall is by contrast with the niches, formed of coursed limestone rubble so that the more refined elements are presented as an even more distinct artefact.



The niches on the lime walk shown in the Country Life photographs with the original lead busts and as presently found with urns in place of the busts.

The sketch shows the pavilion set behind the central fountain. The setting of the pilasters and archway supporting the double pitch roof are already clear in conception. The sketches also show early explorations of the form of the central fountain.

Lutyens and Architecture

The culmination of the cross axis is the oval or fountain garden with its pool surrounded by tortoise fountains and the garden pavilion. This once again displays Lutyens masterful handling of form and material. The rustic stone construction is carefully contrasted with the sophistication of the carved overdoors to the side openings and the central archway and keystone supporting a deep overhanging cornice. The roof form is broken down by the use of a double pitch and the circular forms of the central archway are echoed internally by the division of the pavilion into three chambers with the stone roof vaults and niches repeating and enhancing the circular forms. For a small building the pavilion packs an architectural punch. It is instructive to refer to some surviving sketches which Charles Hind of the RIBA drawings collection (and a Trustee of 'The Lutyens Trust') kindly offered for review.

One of the great surprises of the garden is almost hidden from view now by ivy but is an example of Lutyens clever architectural games. The rear elevation of the pavilion incorporates some 'found' architectural elements in the shape of four ionic capitals salvaged from a building being demolished at the time. These are set into recesses and placed above raised rustic stone panels which at once suggest both quoins and pilasters. Lutyens is challenging our perception of what constitutes the language of classical architecture and having a little fun in the process. These sorts of games occur again and again throughout his career. At the British Embassy in Washington Lutyens explored a similar idea where capitals are placed into a wall suggesting pilasters which do not actually exist otherwise.

Lutyens was also a master of playing with levels. At Heywood the oval is articulated with two changes of level bringing the eye down towards the central fountain. The terraces are softened by herbaceous planting but it is, as with so many of Lutyens strongly architectural designs, a case of the architecture driving the planting and not the other way around. Lutyens' mature gardens are always an extension of the architecture. Geometry is always in the driving seat.

Lutyens and Architecture

The garden pavilion references some of the great triumphal archways of history and anticipates the much greater scale of his India Gate in New Delhi completed some twenty years after Heywood.

Lutyens and Architecture

The rear of the pavilion exhibits one of the surprises of Heywood - a sophisticated architectural joke which Lutyens plays by using a salvaged set of ionic capitals placed above rustic raised stone panels to suggest both quoins and pilasters.

Lutyens and Architecture

The lower loggia with salvaged columns creating a private viewing platform to enjoy the views to the artificial lakes. The enjoyment of pattern is evident in the carefully laid out paving stones, while light and shadow are exploited using the strong lines of the pergola.

Heywood encompasses other elements aside from the principal axes and walkways. At the other side of the garden Lutyens placed a loggia terrace to exploit views over the artificial lake below and to create another element revealed not immediately but by walking down a set of stone steps. The loggia also incorporates found elements in the shape of a set of slender ionic columns set within a low wall and planting beds.

The complexity is further enhanced by the gardens skilfully placed into the awkward shape left to the side of the original house. Here Lutyens divides the garden using hedges into a series of smaller 'garden rooms', which the better known gardens at Sissinghurst and Hidcote Manor were to repeat later. Lutyens exploits these smaller spaces to provide an additional element of surprise and a typical ploy which was to set up a strong axis but to dilute the absolute seriousness of such devices with slight deviations. Here it takes the form of a beautifully curved staircase connecting the higher level of the upper garden with the lower fountain garden. Geometry was once again employed in the service of delight.

Heywood is placed solidly within the body of his best garden designs. The seminal work on the gardens of Lutyens and Jekyll is Jane Brown's 'Gardens of a Golden Afternoon'. Within the book Brown places Heywood in her list of the special two dozen gardens which remain in very good condition and which exhibit the best of the partnership. She places Heywood alongside perhaps the most famous of his gardens, Hestercombe which was another pure garden design where Lutyens had no hand in the house itself. She describes it's particular merit as follows: *'Heywood, with the most beautiful walled oval of several oval and circular designs*', This is high praise indeed especially when one considers that the culmination of the enormous gardens design attached to the Viceroy's Palace in New Delhi (now the President's Palace or Rashtrapati Bhavan) is a large circular garden.

The much larger and later circular Lutyens garden at Rashtrapati Bhavan (formerly the Viceroy's Palace) in New Delhi, India.

Lutyens and Architecture

In his biography 'The Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens', Christopher Hussey places Lutyens solidly within the humanist tradition. He notes in particular that he lived by his personal motto 'Metiendo Vivendum' - By measure we must live. He noted how throughout his life he endeavoured to bring together the principles of humanism within his work. He notes that Lutyens in his greatest works strove to *'embody in architectural language his 'true spirit', his faith in accumulated knowledge, his insistence on unity based on reality, and his humanity. In their systems of composition founded on visual effects they supply the ideal corrective to an architecture floundering between pure empiricism and 'nothing but' utilitarianism. They dispel pessimism by the vitality which they then illuminate his text.'*

Heywood lies solidly within that tradition and may be rightfully seen as one of his most accomplished garden designs, set quietly within the Co. Laois countryside.

Heywood described by Jane Brown in her seminal book, Gardens of a Golden Afternoon as 'the most beautiful walled oval of several oval and circular designs'.

Lutyens and Architecture

Aerial view of Heywood today.

Lutyens and Architecture

Notes:
Thank you to Caragh Burns-Sharma of the Twin Trees Festival for asking me to present the talk and to prepare this booklet on Heywood. Thanks are due also to Clive Aslet, former editor of Country Life Magazine and Charles Hind, curator of the RIBA drawings collection.

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Gardens of a Golden Afternoon	Jane Brown

Further information about the work of the Lutyens Trust can be found at www.lutyenstrust.org.uk

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www.architectdublin.ie