

# A files

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*AA Files*

Architectural Association  
36 Bedford Square  
London WC1B 3ES  
T +44 (0)20 7887 4000  
F +44 (0)20 7414 0782  
aaschool.ac.uk

*Publisher*

The Architectural Association

*Editorial Board*

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George L Legendre  
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*Design*

John Morgan studio

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*A Note on the Display Initials*

The display letters in this issue, again drawn by Adrien Vasquez from the John Morgan studio, appear within Gabriela García de Cortázar's essay on the battle drawings of Andrea Palladio. Printed in the bright blue Pantone 072U of this issue's second colour, the letters are made up of cavalry figures in the style of Palladio's illustrated edition of Polybius' *Histories*, which the architect worked on in the years immediately before his death in 1580. (The work was never published, and the British Library holds one of only three copies in existence.) The *Histories* itself was written c 140BC and offers an account of the various Roman campaigns, including the defeat of Hannibal and the destruction of Carthage. These particular figures feature the Roman *equites* or cavalrymen and their mounts in regulated alignment and, like those by Palladio, are rendered to show the minutiae of their every helmet, lance, hoof and swishing tail.

# Good Fairies

Timothy Brittain-Catlin

Not all school trips are miserable. One early summer, back in the mid-1970s, a group of young urban teenagers flew by British Airways helicopter from Penzance to the Scilly Isles for three or four days. We stayed in Hugh Town on St Mary's in an actual hotel, and no more than two to a room, leaving our classmates to their youth hostels and dormitories in North Yorkshire or Snowdonia, their bracing walks up hills to nowhere, their communal washing up, their hideous freezing showers. Halfway into this unexpected treat, my friend Nick and I took a boat out to Treco to see the Abbey gardens and lost track of time. Towards 6.30pm it struck us that the return ferry was due any moment at the southern end of the island, and we hurried back, fearing we might miss it. But just as we rounded the final corner, racing towards the pier, it steamed into view. We were not marooned. I still remember this as a pleasing moment of comfort, set within that flat and grassy landscape below the ruins of an old stone battery, the rocks and islands shimmering and sparkling between the blue late-afternoon sea and sky.

Possibly one of the reasons that the experience sticks in my mind is that Nick's father Alastair Service, having heard of my interest in his book, *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins*, not long afterwards sold me a copy at his author's discount. Later he also gave me his *Edwardian Architecture: A Handbook to Building Design in Britain, 1890-1914*, in which he wrote a long and generous inscription. And thus, like most other people, I learned to look at Edwardian domestic architecture through his eyes, for 40 years ago Service provided the first comprehensive overview of the period and nothing has come

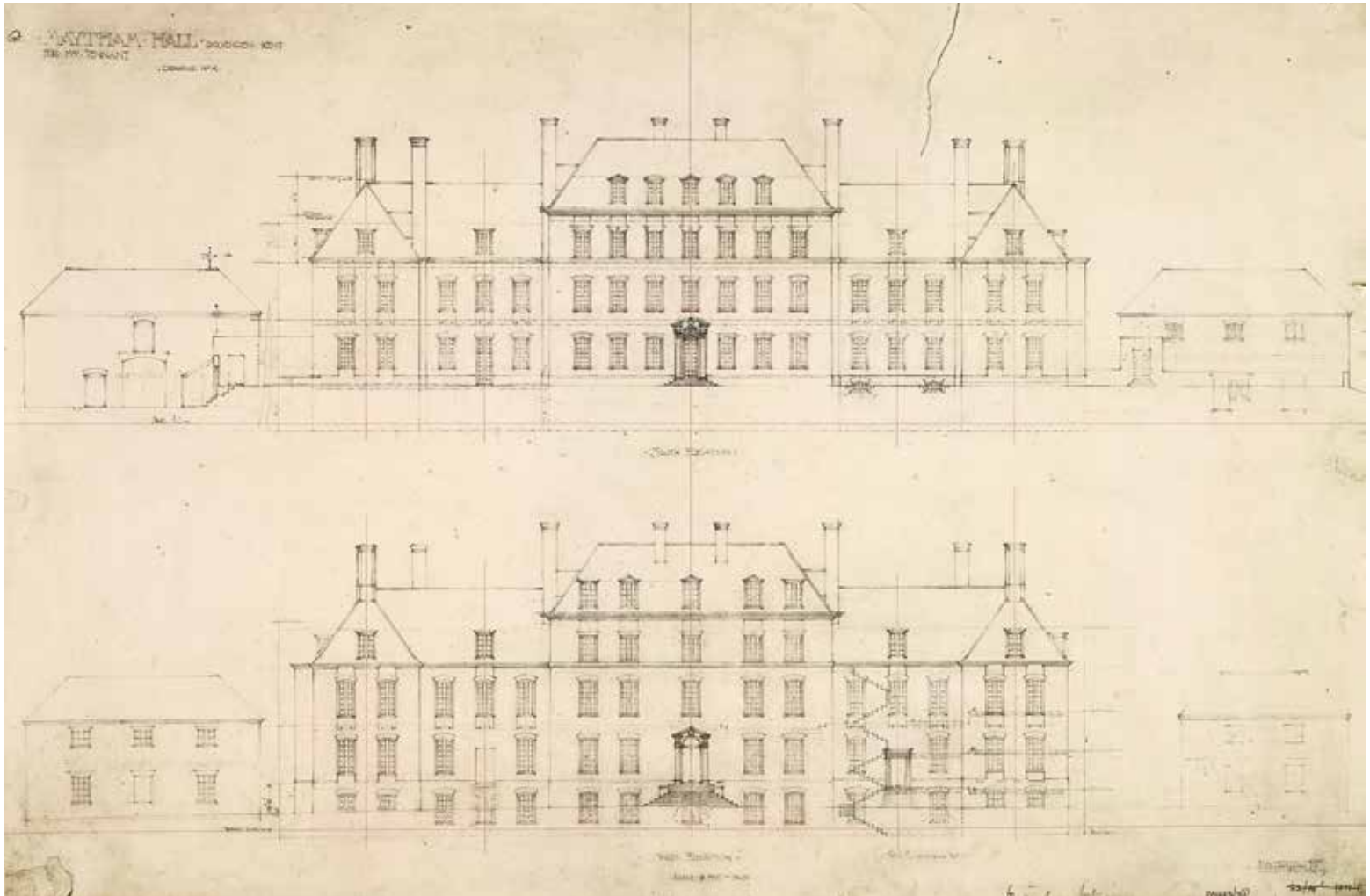
up since to challenge it. The consistent message has been that the houses in this period were the culmination of cash and genius, especially in the case of Edwin Lutyens, who was lavish with both. Charles Latham's much reproduced *Country Life* photographs of artistically contrived interiors reinforced the idea that Lutyens'



houses, in particular, were intense set-pieces that could only be discussed in terms of a hermetic formal beauty – a beauty destined to shrivel as the Great War decimated the ranks of the housebuilders.

Nearly all of Lutyens' greatest houses were designed over the 'long' Edwardian era that runs between the late 1890s and the beginning of the Great War. It is worth seeing the names and dates in succession to be reminded of what an extraordinarily productive period this was: Orchards and Tigbourne Court were underway in 1897–99; Greywalls and Deanery Garden in 1899–1901; Little Thakeham and Lindisfarne in 1902; Marshcourt in 1904; Lambay in 1905; Heathcote and the additions to Folly Farm in 1906. In 1909 he completed Great

Other studies, such as Clive Aslet's *The Last Country Houses*, and *Edwardian Country Life*, Helena Gerrish's account of the garden designer and architectural editor H Avray Tipping, are unusual in that both write about this period as if it was beset with moving and memorable moments of personal experience or imminent threat. This is actually what makes both authors so convincing as storytellers, for it surely cannot be true that houses of this scale are reducible to exercises in aesthetics and exhibitionist workmanship, with so little engagement with the many other aspects of real life that the housebuilders of the 1910s would have known. Real people are not that interested in architects; real people spend their lives trying



Maytham, and in the following three years he started the design of Castle Drogo, the Salutation in Sandwich, and then the astonishing extensions to Barham Court a few miles away, in which the narrow end of a William-and-Mary mansion is made to rear up, creep down and almost engulf a village lane – all this for a front door, a service wing and a billiard room.<sup>1</sup> From the books and articles on these houses you can learn how Lutyens' style changed from Jacobean to neo-classical, as his plans moved from the wilful to the intricate and the sophisticated, the moment of transition being provided by the development of Greywalls from the orthogonal early studies to the eventual geometrical masterpiece. There is some reference by Lutyens himself to his idiosyncratic use of proportions and detailing, mainly drawn from watching Surrey builders at work in the 1870s and 1880s, but that, and profuse allusions to genius, is about as far as the interpretation of these buildings has stretched.

*Previous and opposite:* Edwin Lutyens, front elevation and garden house, Great Maytham, Rolvenden, Kent, 1909  
From Lawrence Weaver, *Houses & Gardens* by EL Lutyens, 1913

to recapture the happiness they once knew or saw, even those fleeting sunlit moments; real people worry about life and death and bad health. If they can, they chatter about politics, or play at it, just as they play about with motor cars and billiards; they try to invest their money in projects that will represent the things that they believe in for a few years longer. Somewhere there will be messages about these, hidden in their houses and gardens.

#### Money

Money, then, first. It was a sudden supply of cash on a vast scale that created Lutyens' Great Maytham Hall, a large country house in a relatively austere mid-eighteenth-century manner at the centre of an agricultural estate near Rolvenden in West Kent. The architectural style of the house, its straightforward plan and its simple relationship with its garden do not

conform to the usual Lutyens mould, with the result that the Lutyens experts have had very little to say about it. And yet if probed from different angles it starts to yield some of the messages about Edwardian building that have so far been obscured.

Great Maytham was designed for Jack Tennant, the brother of Margot Asquith, the inveterate diarist, and thus the brother-in-law of Herbert Henry Asquith, the chancellor of the exchequer and future prime minister. Margot moved all her life through fascinating buildings of one kind or another and yet never showed any interest in their architects or the sort of things that appeal to architectural historians. Here she is writing on 13 June 1906, barely a week after the death of her father, the Scottish industrialist Sir Charles Tennant, describing the apportioning of his estate between his sons: 'Jack & Frank have got about 40,000 a year & Eddy about 80,000 – I confess without bitterness of *any* sort that I think papa made a mistake.'<sup>2</sup> The mistake, evidently, was not to provide as generously for his daughters. During his lifetime he had supported Margot and her husband in the maintenance of their house in Cavendish Square in London, but it turned out that that was where his generosity towards her ended. On the other hand, the two younger brothers' annual income of £40,000 each – nearly £2.3 million in today's terms – was based on the fact that they had inherited a million pounds apiece – the equivalent of well over £57 million a century later.

And evidently Jack, properly Harold John, Tennant (1865–1935), Margot's junior by a year, spent a considerable part of his inheritance on the building of Great Maytham. It was close to London, but very far geographically (and in spirit) to The Glen, the Victorian house in Peeblesshire where the family had grown up. It was far, too, from Tennant's parliamentary constituency of Berwickshire, which he had represented since a by-election in 1894, and furthest of all from the Tennant family's innovative bleaching works at St Rollox on Clydeside, the source of Sir Charles's fortune. But it is The Glen which provides the starting point for the architectural history of the Tennant family, the benchmark for everything they were to build in the twentieth century and, for some, an indelible monument in their history (incidentally, it still belongs to them). It had been designed by David Bryce in 1854–55 in what Osbert Lancaster called the 'Scottish Baronial' style – a style possessed by 'mental and moral gloom' according to *Country Life* in 1912.<sup>3</sup> But Margot loved it, even declaring that 'the hills at Glen are my true biography' in her own 1920 score-settling autobiography.

A few days after Sir Charles's death, Margot mused on how Jack, who was apparently her father's favourite,<sup>4</sup> might fill his shoes: 'Jack has got more of his push & ambition, keenness & self-confidence but Jack is more touchy & self conscious & not so generous in a losing game.'<sup>5</sup> A week later, deprived of a legacy, she asserted that 'Money is a horrible thing: it changes the best – no one hardly puts it in its true proportion to the shortness of Life.'<sup>6</sup> By the time work began on Great Maytham in January 1909 her husband had become prime minister and her brother had risen to his most senior government post to date: parliamentary secretary to Winston Churchill at the Board of Trade.<sup>7</sup> Yet still Margot was sniping: 'Papa made a foolish will. He left money to people who have not the scope to use it' (the subtext being that she definitely knew how to spend).

Although she had several friends in the area and was a frequent visitor to both Folkestone and Margate on the Kent coast, Margot did not visit her brother's magnificent residence until



1911, well after its completion. A further sign of the nature of their relationship was Jack's failure to respond to his sister's request for money to cover the expenses of her extended family in 1913 – as prime minister, Asquith earned much less than he had done in private life, as a lawyer. Four years later Jack was still warning Margot about her extravagant ways.<sup>8</sup> Despite outwardly maintaining good terms with her brother and regularly visiting his family, Margot, one of the most voluble of all Edwardian high-society hostesses, had nothing at all to say about the house, least of all about its style, plan or detailing.<sup>9</sup> Nothing useful at all to the architectural historian, that is – except possibly, as we shall see, a probably spiteful comment on the 'sensible' character of Jack's second wife, May. Great Maytham is therefore a story about money and the bad feeling it can bring as much as it is about anything else.

#### *Politics and Building*

The role of money is again important here, because it not only offered Lutyens a new commission, but also contributed the necessary backdrop to an influential political and social circle. Margot moved among artistic people as much as politicians, and their interests tells us about the aesthetic background in which Great Maytham was conceived and designed, as well as its significance and its status. JM Barrie was a friend, in her eyes 'a prince among children',<sup>10</sup> and she enjoyed the elevated if gossipy intellectual life of a coterie of Oxford university graduates called The Souls, which centred, by the beginning of the twentieth century, on the Balfour family, with the eventual Conservative prime minister AJ Balfour and his brother Gerald at its heart.

The family home of the Balfours was Whittinghame, a conventional neo-classical house in East Lothian by Robert Smirke and William Burn that Margot thought looked 'municipal'.<sup>11</sup> But for her sentimental affection for the baronial gloom of The Glen, it might reasonably have been assumed that Margot shared the prevalent taste among the aesthetic gentry for the romantic, picturesque neo-Georgian, which had evolved from the free 'Queen Anne' style of the 1880s, created by architects, notably JJ Stevenson and TG Jackson, who were politically Liberal. A deluxe edition of JM Barrie's gen-

teel 1906 'Regency' comedy *Quality Street*, with watercolour illustrations by Hugh Thomson, depicted interiors and houses in this style, mixing early eighteenth-century proportions with

*Opposite:* Edwin Lutyens, front and rear elevations, Great Maytham, Rolvenden, Kent, 1909 © RIBA Library, Drawings and Archives Collection

features a century younger: shallow bow windows, verandas and delicate ornaments applied to solid 'Queen Anne' brickwork. Real buildings were also made like this: many of the best were designed by the 'artistic' architect Horace Field, who counted prominent Liberal Party members among his clients in Hampstead, Westminster and Surrey. In 1904, not long before Great Maytham was commissioned, Field had designed a pair of houses in Great College Street behind College Garden in Westminster for two members of the

Liberal government from the northeast of England, Charles Philips Trevelyan and Walter Runciman.

Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of this core group of Edwardian Liberals and Liberal Unionists – and a few Conservatives, such as the Balfours, who were on intimate social terms with them – is quite how much they built, and how original it often was. In this sense, Great Maytham can be seen as an outstanding example of a continuous building campaign by the Liberals and their

social circle that lasted at least from the 1880s up to the outbreak of the First World War. Initiating this campaign, Clouds, in Wiltshire, was perhaps the first great new Liberal country house and the centre of much bohemian activity associated with the party and its social circle, commissioned in 1886 by Percy Wyndham, the grandfather of Pamela Wyndham, who was married to Jack and Margot's oldest brother Eddy, later Lord Glenconner. But if the architect of Clouds was Philip Webb, most of this social circle would turn to Lutyens when they wanted houses that precisely suited the new ways of living of the period – not just large new mansions for those who had missed out on inheriting an old one, but seaside villas and country cottages with garden rooms, playrooms, garages for motor cars, and much else.

#### *Enter the Good Fairies*

The former 'Souls' were increasingly bound closer together by family connections and friendship. Margot's early suitor Peter Flower, considered an unsuitable match by her family, was the younger brother of the Liberal politician Cyril Flower, Lord Battersea from 1892, who commissioned Lutyens to design The Pleasaunce in Overstrand, Norfolk, in 1888, and she met her future husband for the first time at one of Cyril's London dinner parties.<sup>12</sup> But it was the Liberal Unionist Alfred Lyttelton, the client for Lutyens' Greywalls, who was most likely the dominant figure in the rebuilding of Great Maytham and the appointment of Lutyens as its architect. Lyttelton sat at the heart of The Souls and he seems to have acted as an inspiration for those around him.<sup>13</sup> 'The good fairies at his birth gave Alfred Lyttelton every gift of body and spirit' wrote the *Spectator* in 1913, in a long and effusive obituary at his death from a cricketing injury at the age of 56; it went on to say that 'his mind was of the Whig cast, warmed and broadened by the early influence of Maurice [sic] and Ruskin'.<sup>14</sup> Lyttelton was a nephew of the Liberal prime minister William Gladstone, and had been briefly married to Jack Tennant's adored sister Laura, who died in 1886, just a year after their



wedding. He would have known Lutyens through Barbara Webb, whose circle met regularly at Flower's Overstrand Hall and at Mells, the Somerset home of the Horner family, who were also friends and clients of Lutyens. Lyttelton, parting from Gladstone over Home Rule for Ireland, served as colonial secretary in A J Balfour's Conservative government; his second wife Edith, known as DD, was part of the extended Balfour family and A J's brother Gerald, member of parliament for Leeds Central, was married to Lutyens' sister-in-law Betty. It is striking that Gerald chose Lutyens to design his house, the Jacobean-vernacular Fisher's Hill in Woking, even though his own brother Eustace was a successful and fashionable architect.

The fairies had given Lyttelton amongst other things a gift for sporting prowess, and by the turn of the century he had developed a passion for golf: Greywalls, of 1900, was located close to Muirfield golf course and the Balfour lands at Whittinghame in East Lothian. In 1906, the year in which he left active politics in the wake of the defeat of the Balfour government, he commissioned Lutyens to remodel an old rectory at Wittersham in Kent, not far from the smart links courses near Rye. This was a small work, an interpretation of an early eighteenth-century type of house: seven bays, two floors; a relatively large proportion of fine brickwork wall to windows, and these had exposed sash frames and small panes in the real Queen Anne manner. Its elevations incorporate a number of eccentricities: a pediment ornamented with a Venetian window; a narrow colonnade with Tuscan columns that stands in front of an entrance wall that sinks into the house in a gentle curve; unexpected large round windows on the upper floor of the garden front. These features testify to the great pleasure that Lutyens had in engaging with the materiality of buildings, an outstanding example of an Edwardian rethinking the earlier realism of the gothic revivalists. As Jane Ridley has pointed out, that same year Lutyens also designed one of his last Elizabethan-style houses – New Place, in Botley – and was disappointed by it: it seems it was from this period onwards that his interests became almost exclusively neo-classical. And Ridley also notes that DD did not like the small windows that up to that point had been characteristic of Lutyens' vernacular Jacobean style.<sup>15</sup>

As Wittersham House was being remodelled, work began on the restoration of Lympne Castle, on the other side of Romney Marsh. The architect was Robert Lorimer, brought down from Scotland, and the client was Jack Tennant's brother, Frank, presumably keen to spend his equally large share of the family fortune. Here, too, proximity to a golf course influenced the choice of location – as the Tennant family biographer Simon Blow has commented, 'with an income of £40,000, there was no need to go near an office'.<sup>16</sup> If, as Margot seemed to imply, Jack Tennant was not a particularly original person, then this combination of factors may have been enough to persuade him to embark on his own building programme in the area. Drawings from the Lutyens office at the RIBA Drawings Collection indicate that Great Maytham was designed over two years beginning in 1907, with the elevations finalised towards the end of that period.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, Lutyens' office drawings give the client's name as 'Mrs Tennant', rather than Jack Tennant himself. Perhaps he was not able to muster the enthusiasm to manage the commission for his own house.

In fact, the client's less than forceful personality, his choice of architect, his remodelling of an old structure, the house's proximity

Edwin Lutyens, dining room fireplace,  
Great Maytham, Rolvenden, Kent, 1909  
From Lawrence Weaver,  
*Houses & Gardens by EL Lutyens*, 1913

to London, the golf courses at Rye and the houses of fellow politicians are all ingredients that make Great Maytham usefully characteristic of Edwardian country houses in general. And yet at the same time the house that Lutyens built here is in many ways remarkable. Though it looks quite different from most of his other houses, it does resemble Wittersham House in its general style, but is much longer and narrower. Its wide northeast front faces the entrance drive in a palatial way that contrasts strongly with many of Lutyens' earlier complex routes. Being part of the landscape, rather than a contrivance in it, was not a typical characteristic of Lutyens house and garden ensembles. A striking aspect of the design is that the entrance hall is low, rising to double-height only over the staircase to the left of the front door; the room seems underscaled relative to the mass of the house. In fact, the historian and conservation architect Peter Inskip saw this hall as being merely part of an entry sequence through to the large garden behind, which is open to the landscape to the southwest beyond, the unexecuted (or demolished) external terraces or stairways around its edge intended to amplify the effect.<sup>18</sup> At the earlier Greywalls a visitor would go through a number of changes of angle *en route* from the entry lodge to the drawing room and walled garden in what was to become the consistent Lutyens theme; at Great Maytham, by contrast, one proceeded directly from the gatehouse to the entry hall, from the entry hall to the drawing room, and from the drawing room to the terrace and view all without a single change of direction. Even the new stables are aligned with the house, for they are incorporated into the large symmetrical gatehouse at the road end of the entrance drive. As at Wittersham, however, there is some idiosyncratic detailing along the entrance front: here, the two entrance doors in the recesses either side of the five-bay central block ought to be symmetrical, but they are not. The layout of the house suggests some direct substitution of Edwardian pleasures for Georgian necessities: the laundry building in an out-house to the southern side of the main block survived the reconstruction and was turned into a squash court with a games room attached; and Jack's billiard room – he had been an enthusiastic player in his youth – was incorporated into the main body of the house, close to his bedroom.<sup>19</sup>

Some have seen the design as consciously austere; in a catalogue note for the Hayward exhibition Colin Amery described the house as the 'Lutyens version of the traditional Whig seat' – that is, a mansion intended to represent the mercantile or agrarian culture of the immediate post-Stuart, post-baroque era.<sup>20</sup> Ridley calls it 'a conventional great house'.<sup>21</sup> In other words, architectural histories of Lutyens are disappointed by Great Maytham and cannot quite plumb its depths. Certainly, when compared to Heathcote, the intense and ornamented neoclassical villa in Ilkley designed immediately beforehand, the style, planning and detailing do seem to be austere; in fact Great Maytham shares only the use of lush, purplish *fleur de pêche* as a decorative marble, albeit in a more restrained way.

#### *History and Place*

If Great Maytham is seen the way that Edwardians saw it, it appears more remarkable still. Ridley refers to a letter Lutyens wrote to his wife in April 1911, in which he declares that Edward Hudson at *Country Life* had been 'awfully pleased with it', and praised the effect achieved for the budget.<sup>22</sup> Hudson's staffer



Lawrence Weaver wrote it up for the magazine, and it was one of the buildings chosen for inclusion, alongside Wittersham House, in his subsequent *Houses and Gardens by EL Lutyens*.<sup>23</sup> In this description Weaver retold from Hasted's 1798 *History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* the story of the Great Maytham site: its original ownership by the Carew family, and its transfer to the Monypennys in 1714. Seven years after that, James Monypenny built on it a five-bay, two-storey brick house with structures at the side in the early Georgian manner, of which there is some record.<sup>24</sup>

Under a later ownership in 1893, this first Great Maytham was badly damaged by fire, and was cheaply rebuilt because the insurance payout was inadequate – according to Jack's daughter Alison, quoted in a recent historic buildings survey.<sup>25</sup> Its most famous resident, the children's novelist Frances Hodgson Burnett, who lived there before the Tennants bought it, nevertheless found this second and short-lived incarnation of the house to be

*a charming place with a nicely timbered park and a beautiful old walled kitchen garden. The house is excellent – panelled square hall, library, billiard room, morning room, smoking room, drawing room and dining room. Seventeen or eighteen bedrooms. Stables, two entrance lodges to the park and a square tower on the roof from which we can see the English Channel.*<sup>26</sup>

In photographs, this phase has something of Osbert Lancaster's 'Wimbledon Transitional' style, with pale rendering covering the brickwork and a row of heavy half-timbered gables; a clumsy porch was added, as were the lodges, which still exist.<sup>27</sup> Weaver's article noted that very little of this house survived; his helpful plan suggests that the footprint of the new central bay of the house sat over the shell of the old one, the string course marking the height of the original structure. In fact the article is remarkable for how little it says about the design of the new building, nearly all of the text being taken up with its history, some observations about materials, and discussions of the garden and stables.

Thus for the most part Weaver saw the house as a foray into a form of historical experimentation: 'Mr Lutyens has picked up the thread of early eighteenth-century design where Monypenny dropped it in 1721', he wrote. It is possible that the history of the core of the house was part of a larger idea that was circulating in Weaver's mind at the time. The year after his article on Great Maytham appeared, *Country Life* published his book *Small Country Houses: Their Repair and Enlargement – Forty Examples Chosen from Five Centuries*. If there is one aspect of Edwardian domestic architecture that has not yet received its due attention, it is the interest paid to the domesticating of old buildings, especially of run-down vernacular ones, an idea that seems to have been launched by the conversion in 1885 of an old granary in Cambridge into a home for the astronomer George Darwin by JJ Stevenson. Weaver's case studies included WD Carøe's own home, Vann, remodelled in 1906 from a group of farmyard buildings near Godalming in Surrey, with a garden room added by Gertrude Jekyll. The former barn became a billiard room with little alteration and, all in all, the project realised the picturesque house and garden utopia of the arts and crafts movement.<sup>28</sup> Another building included in the book was Margot Asquith's Wharf. In 1912 Margot asked the architect Walter Cave to design a small house on the Thames at Sutton Courtenay in Oxfordshire, and this went up in a plain brick style that is part Tudor and part Queen Anne. More remarkably, she then asked Cave to attach and remodel the old house next door as

an extension, and to turn a barn on the waterfront into a 'studio' – in fact, a sitting room and bedroom – as a private retreat for herself. This was perhaps the first time in the history of progressive architecture – that is, in the buildings of creative architects of high reputation working for fashionable and influential people – in which the reuse of old work formed so central a role (Philip Webb's Red House had, after all, imitated vernacular work rather than actually incorporated it).

Once the arts and crafts approach to architecture had been established on a large scale – and it suited the political atmosphere of the late Victorian and Edwardian period for it to take off in this way – texts on design tended to shift from the original polemical claims of the movement's founders and to speak more about the sentimental and associational values of old buildings. Many of the projects in Weaver's book – and plenty of others, for example by Lutyens, most famously twice at Folly Farm – give the impression of adding to old buildings when in fact they were all of a piece. Similarly, the farm buildings designed by Lutyens on the Great Maytham estate at Rolvenden Layne were carefully vernacular and ahistorically styleless, and Lutyens (and the Tennants) left the eighteenth-century walled garden in its place, designing new ornaments around it. Edwardian architects in precisely this period were playing around with how the history of a building was perceived – perhaps a potent of the future discontent with historical work altogether.

#### *Life and Death*

There is another important aspect of Great Maytham which not only represents a concern of the period, but reflects the life of the Tennants themselves. The family had been plagued by tuberculosis: Jack and Margot had lost four young siblings to it, and Jack's first wife Helen and their son also died prematurely. One of the first appointments Jack received from his brother-in-law HH Asquith was secretary to a departmental committee charged with investigating the health of workers exposed to toxic hazards; it was here that he met his 'sensible' second wife, who was knowledgeable in this field.<sup>29</sup> Could the long narrow plan and large windows of Great Maytham have been imposed on the architect by his clients, responding to the latest advice for the design of sanatoria? The timing of the project might suggest this possibility. In November 1909 *Country Life* published an article on the new King Edward VII hospital near Midhurst in Surrey, designed soon after 1901 by H Percy Adams, who specialised in this type of building. Surely the Tennants knew about this project, in addition to any other technical information they were aware of. The hospital had been designed around narrow wings with single-loaded corridors to improve cross ventilation, then considered essential for the health of the patients. Much of the building is in a more-or-less Tudor style, but the windows of the patients' rooms have proportions similar to those of early or mid-Georgian houses, and in fact originally had the same green-painted shutters that Lutyens chose for Great Maytham Hall (as well as a garden designed by Lutyens' collaborator, Gertrude Jekyll). Looking at the plan of the Tennants' house one can see not only that the two main bedrooms had windows on three walls – there are in fact no fewer than six windows in Jack's bedroom – but also that there are wide and open corridor spaces between them. With Lutyens, such ample circulation areas are generally intended to increase the grandeur of the spaces they connect. At Great Maytham, however, they are simply very wide corridors, the central one on the first floor

oddly turning 90 degrees to reach nothing but a window. Large numbers of windows are unphotogenically open in Weaver's images of 1912 (although that was not unusual in the book). Maybe the direct axial plan of the house and landscape are developments by Lutyens of the theme of health, the cold air blasting through the entire ensemble? It seems very likely that there was a connection, and not one that Hudson, Weaver, Lutyens or the Tennants would have articulated in public. How much Edwardian architecture was designed around health, around the personal and intimate worries of the people who paid for it?

*The Fairies Had Been Here Before*

Thus Great Maytham illustrates the renewal of an old house and its garden landscape that reconnected with the pre-Victorian, pre gothic-revival age, but also contained elements that spoke distinctly of its time – the up-to-date sporting and gaming facilities; the open garden and the relation with the county's distant landscapes – and possibly even a morbid fear of disease. Jack Tennant's very lack of original ideas about anything cultural, for which he was so lampooned by Margot, was therefore the reason why his house had so much to say about the current state of Edwardian architecture; but it was also why he was able to insist on a healthy, large-windowed style when his friends and his architect had not otherwise discovered it.

Yet not everything is rational. It turns out that Alfred Lyttelton was not the only person connected to Great Maytham whom the fairies visited. They had earlier appeared to Burnett, the famous writer, who according to her son had found there a 'Fairy Tree' ... 'a splendid place for fairy-storytelling'.<sup>30</sup> Burnett's relationship with the house was sentimental on a grand scale, and the interesting thing about her fictional version of its walled garden, memorialised the world over as *The Secret Garden* in 1911, is that it was based on a conscious exaggeration on her part, or at the very least on a misunderstanding. She had rented the house from 1898 to February 1907, when the owner, Powell Edwards, negotiated its sale to Jack Tennant. The house, and in particular its walled garden with 'its leaping cascades of roses',<sup>31</sup> seems to have been something of a consolation to her after she divorced her much younger husband (and former assistant) Stephen Townsend in 1901, after only a year of marriage. Burnett's biographer, Anne Thwaite, considered that Burnett saw Maytham Hall as being 'her English country house' – that is, the model for the English country houses of her novels. 'How splendid to be like Maytham: hospitable, welcoming, rich, important', Burnett trilled.<sup>32</sup> As the critic Alison Lurie has noted, Burnett spent much of her latter life actively



Edwin Lutyens, garden elevation,  
Great Maytham, Rolvenden, Kent, 1909  
From Lawrence Weaver,  
Houses & Gardens by EL Lutyens, 1913

recreating for the benefit of local children the romantic scenes she had earlier invented.<sup>33</sup>

Of Maytham, Thwaite wrote that 'it was here in the rose garden that she felt the first ideas for *The Secret Garden*, as she made friends with a robin which would come to take crumbs from her hand 'the instant I opened the little door in the leaf-covered garden wall'.<sup>34</sup> The truth, however, was more complicated, as Burnett's son explained. By now living in Plandome, Long Island, in a house usually called 'Fairseat' but occasionally 'Maytham', she heard from some unkind correspondent that the new owners had turned her beloved rose garden into a vegetable patch.<sup>35</sup> But this was not so. According to Vivian Burnett,

*Mrs Burnett's cherished rose-garden was changed, it is true, but transformed into a delphinium bed of unbelievable size and beauty. But Mrs Burnett never revisited the district, and was to carry with her always the picture of the rose garden reduced to rows of*

cabbage and turnips and lettuces under 'cloches'. Out of her regretful feeling about her rose garden grew one of her best beloved books, *The Secret Garden*.<sup>36</sup>

What's more, as recent research has pointed out, the layout and walls of the garden had never corresponded to Burnett's recollections of it.<sup>37</sup> So in fact the setting for *The Secret Garden* was as much a sentimental reimagining as a reality, just as one would expect from one of the most successfully sentimental writers of her age. And possibly this sentimentality and reimagined history were more a part of Edwardian architecture than we have allowed ourselves to think, as the same thing is true, of course, of Lutyens'

recreation of the house of 1721. For just as the sickly Colin in *The Secret Garden* is restored to strength by reconnecting with nature – and thus also restored to his inheritance, which otherwise would have gone to his doctor – so Maytham becomes a great house again, its healthy windows wide open to its eighteenth-century past and its landscape. A magical moment or a regretful feeling, whether of a garden, a tree, a landscape, or a house, surely somehow became for Lutyens, as for Burnett, the prism through which a reimagining, a reliving, a remaking of the past were triggered. As it was for at least one of the boys who rushed down to the sunlit pier he would never forget.

- I would like to thank Terry Farrell for his generous support throughout.
1. Texts from Margot Asquith's diaries are reproduced by kind permission of Christopher Osborn and Chris Fletcher, Keeper of Special Collections, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. I am particularly grateful to Colin Harris, Superintendent of Reading Rooms, Bodleian Library, Oxford, for his generous assistance. These dates are drawn where possible from the chronological list provided by the Lutyens Trust.
  2. *Margot Asquith's diary*, 13 June 1906, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Eng d 3204,165r-v. Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock's Margot Asquith's Great War Diary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), explains the problems of attributing an exact date to her diary entries, pp xvii–iii.
  3. *Country Life* article about Hill of Tarvit, designed by Robert Lorimer, a house which combined the Scottish rural vernacular with dainty classical or Georgian decoration. 'Hill of Tarvit', *Country Life*, 20 November 1912, p 746.
  4. Margot Asquith, *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith*, vol 1 (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1920), p 23.
  5. Margot Asquith, diary, 9 June 1906 but transcribed later, MS Eng d 3204, 162r.
  6. *Ibid*, 165v.
  7. Margot Asquith, diary, 31 January 1909, MS Eng d 3207,9r. Jack Tennant's only appearance in Roy Jenkins' biography of Churchill (London: Macmillan, 2001), the most complete to date, is as under-secretary to the War Office under Lord Kitchener, a position he held from 1912 until just after Kitchener's death in 1916; Churchill was at that point First Lord of the Admiralty. He then served briefly in the cabinet as secretary of state for Scotland until his brother-in-law was replaced by David Lloyd George as prime minister in the cabinet coup at the end of that year. Margot despised both Churchill and Lloyd George, but she does not seem to have minded Jack's association with them.
  8. Michael Brock and Eleanor Brock, *op cit*, p xcvi, n 1.
  9. Simon Blow's description, in Simon Blow, *Broken Blood: The Rise and Fall of the Tennant Family* (London: Faber, 1987), p 112. The only references to Jack Tennant in Margot Asquith's diary for 1914–16 are when he came over to tell her pleasing gossip about Kitchener.

10. Margot Asquith, diary, September 1908, MS, Eng D, 3205.
  11. Margot Asquith, *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith*, *op cit*, p 23.
  12. *Ibid*, p 221.
  13. Alfred Lyttelton's central role can be observed, for example, from the detailed description of Lutyens' clients' social circle in Jane Brown, *Lutyens and the Edwardians* (London: Viking, 1996).
  14. 'Alfred Lyttelton', *Spectator*, 19 July 1913, pp 48, 49.
  15. Jane Ridley, *Edwin Lutyens: His Life, His Wife, His Work* (London: Pimlico, 2003), p 129.
  16. Simon Blow, *op cit*, p 126.
  17. RIBA Library Drawings Collection, PA1623/3 (1–11); and see catalogue notes.
  18. Peter Inskip, *Edwin Lutyens* (London: Academy Editions, 1979), pp 24–25.
- The terraces are shown in a print kept at Great Maytham.
19. Margot Asquith, *The Autobiography*, *op cit*, pp 12–13.
  20. Hayward Gallery, *Lutyens: The Work of the English Architect Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944)*, exhibition catalogue (London: Arts Council, 1981), catalogue entry 170, p 122.
  21. Jane Ridley, *op cit*, p 174.
  22. 14 April 1911; *ibid*, p 178.
  23. Lawrence Weaver, *Houses & Gardens by EL Lutyens* (London: *Country Life*, 1913), chapter 19, pp 257–56. The original article had appeared shortly beforehand in *Country Life*, 30 November 1912.
  24. Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol 7 (Canterbury: W Bristow, 1798), p 191. There is a thorough documentary history of the house

- and gardens in WA Landscape and Heritage's Landscape and Building Study, 'Great Maytham Hall, Rolvenden, Kent', ref 67240, for Sunley Group of November 2007: www.wessexarch.co.uk/system/files/67240\_Great%20Maytham%20Hall,%20Rolvenden.pdf. This includes early maps and views of the house, although no view of the 1721 one. A sketch of this can be seen in John Faviell, *Great Maytham Hall*, printed privately, 1982, and on a website established by a member of the Monypenny family: www.robertsewell.ca/homes/MonypennyHomes.html.
25. WA Landscape and Heritage, *op cit*, 2-6-7, p 7.
  26. Anne Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849–1924* (London: Faber, 1992), p 179.
  27. There is a photograph of this version of the house in Vivian Burnett, *The Romantick Lady* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1927), plate and caption facing p 346.
  28. Lawrence Weaver, *Small Country Houses: Their Repair and Enlargement – Forty Examples Chosen from Five Centuries* (London: *Country Life*, 1914), chapter 6.
  29. MC Curthoys, 'Tennant, Harold John (1865–1935)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/58263.
  30. Vivian Burnett, *op cit*, plate and caption facing p 322.
  31. *Ibid*, pp 405, 313. See also Anne Thwaite, *op cit*, pp 209–10: much of Thwaite's description of life at Maytham is derived from Vivian Burnett's account.
  32. Anne Thwaite, *ibid*, p 179.
  33. Alison Lurie, *Not in Front of the Grown Ups: Subversive Children's Literature* (London: Sphere, 1991), pp 161–62; Anne Thwaite, *ibid*, p 181.
  34. Anne Thwaite, *ibid*, p 182. About this friendship she later wrote a story called *My Robin* (London: G P Putnam's Sons, 1913). Vivian Burnett recorded that his mother often sat in the walled garden to write. See *Romantick Lady*, *op cit*, p 293.
  35. The alternative name of 'Maytham' appears in the caption to Vivian Burnett's photograph of the house: Vivian Burnett, *Romantick Lady*, *op cit*, figure opposite p 328.
  36. *Ibid*, p 327.
  37. WA Landscape and Heritage, *op cit*, 2-7-3, 2-7-4, p 7.



Illustration by Charles Robinson for Frances Hodgson Burnett's, *The Secret Garden*, 1911

# Contributors

*Fabrizio Ballabio* is an architect and writer, and currently teaches at the AA and at the RCA while undertaking independent research on late baroque architecture in southern Italy. He has recently lectured on this and other subjects at the AA, the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Barber Institute (University of Birmingham), the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II and at the Bauhaus Kolloquium in Weimar (2016). He is the co-founder of *àyr*, a London-based art collective, and part of the online research platform on industrial architecture, *Factory Futures*.

*Eva Branscome* is an architectural historian and teaches at the Bartlett School of Architecture and UCL's department of art history. She has also recently completed a post-doctoral fellowship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation. She was co-editor of *The Post-Modern Reader* (2011), and her research has been published and exhibited worldwide.

*Timothy Brittain-Catlin* is researching the domestic architecture of Edwardian politicians but is otherwise interested in architects as losers and failures. He taught architectural history and theory at the AA from 2001–07 and is now at the Kent School of Architecture, University of Kent. He is also vice-chairman of the Twentieth Century Society.

*Alessandro Contí* (1986–2012) was an Italian architect, musician, Kung Fu black belt and connoisseur of architectural history. His published research included studies on the architecture of Castel del Monte, Flora Ruchat-Roncati, Ivo Trümpy and Aurelio Galfetti's Lido in Bellinzona and the baroque investigations of Roman architect Luigi Moretti.

*Mike Dempsey* is a graphic designer and founder of Studio Dempsey. He has created everything from stamps for Royal Mail and film title sequences for Ridley Scott, Louis Malle, Dennis Potter, David Hare and Bruce Beresford, to visual identities for English National Opera, the South Bank Centre, Design Museum, the London Chamber Orchestra, British Screen and the UK Film Council. He also writes, broadcasts and blogs regularly.

*Hans Frei* teaches at the ETH, Zurich and works as an architect, focusing largely on theoretical and conceptual issues. A graduate of the ETH and the University in Zurich, he wrote his PhD on the architecture of Max Bill. Together with Cornell Näf he was a founding member of the design collective m22, and from 1997 to 2003 he was professor of architectural theory and design at the University of Kassel.

*Gabriela García de Cortázar* is a PhD candidate at the AA, supported by a scholarship from the Chilean government. Her thesis, on the chorographies of the modern city, will be examined at the end of this year. She studied architecture in Chile where she is a registered architect, and in 2010 she obtained an MA in architectural history at the Bartlett, UCL. She has taught architectural design and history at the University of Chile and at the AA.

*Patrick Hodgkinson* (1930–2016) was educated at the AA and worked first with Alvar Aalto before securing a position with Leslie Martin, where he developed a housing proposal for St Pancras borough council, and designed Harvey Court for Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge and the Bodleian Law Library, Oxford. In 1959 he secured the commission for a large complex in Bloomsbury for housing and shops – later named the Brunswick Centre – a job which soon afterwards became the basis for the setting up of his own practice. After the completion of the Brunswick Centre in 1972 he moved into academia, teaching at the AA and Cornell, before finding a more permanent position at Bath University, where he worked from 1981 through to his retirement in 1995.

*Ida Jager* is the author of a number of books on Dutch architecture, including separate monographs on Willem Kromhout and P J H Cuypers & J Duiker; an analysis of Amsterdam's late nineteenth-century infrastructure, *Hoofdstad in Gebreke*; a survey of twentieth-century graphic design in Rotterdam; and, most recently, a volume dedicated to the work of the Kraaijvanger brothers, *Evert en Kraaijvanger, architectonische noblesse*.

*Matthew Mullane* is a PhD candidate at the Princeton University School of Architecture, where he is currently finishing a dissertation on the history of observation in Japanese architectural discourse of the Meiji period. This research is an outgrowth of his interest in the phenomenon of 'world' architecture history and theory in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He has recently published essays on these topics and their contemporary ramifications in *Architectural Theory Review* and *Art Papers*.

*Nicholas Olsberg* is a historian, archivist, curator and writer. His recent books include studies of Arthur Erickson (2006), John Lautner (2008), the California ranch house (2012) and the work of Ernest and Esther Born (2015). He is also a regular contributor to *The Architectural Review*. He went to Rugby School, where he swam in Butterfield's pool, filed into his chapel every morning, read books in his reading room, did woodworking and calisthenics in his workshop and gymnasium, drew in his art museum, played on his racquet courts and was taught in his three school buildings. He then lived for two years in Butterfield's Grove Building at Merton College, Oxford, where his rooms overlooked the porch and tower of Butterfield's reworked chapel.

*Alberto Ponis* is an Italian architect. Raised in Nervi, just outside Genoa, he trained in Florence under Ludovico Quaroni and Adalberto Libera before moving in 1969 to London, where he worked first with Ernő Goldfinger and then with Denys Lasdun. In 1963 he was commissioned to design a prototypical holiday home by a financier investing in Sardinia's then largely undeveloped Punta Sardegna. This commission eventually prompted his relocation to the island and the setting up of his architectural office. Over the next 40 years he designed and built more than 300 houses, all located on Sardinia's north coast. A selection of this work has recently been published in *The Inhabited Pathway: The Built Work of Alberto Ponis in Sardinia* (2014).

*Alex Schweder* is a New York-based artist who works with architecture and performance and whose projects have been exhibited internationally, including at Tate Britain, New York's SculptureCenter, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Magnus Müller gallery in Berlin. He has been an artist-in-residence at the Kohler Company, Chinati Foundation and American Academy in Rome, and has been guest professor at the Southern California Institute of Architecture, Pratt Institute and the Institute for Art and Architecture in Vienna.

*Jonathan Sergison* studied at the AA and worked for David Chipperfield and Tony Fretton before setting up Sergison Bates architects with his partner Stephen Bates. Their work includes the Ruthin Craft Centre, Blankenberge city library, Hult Business School campus in London and the Novartis Welcome Centre in Shanghai. He has taught at a number of schools of architecture, including the AA, ETH Zurich, EPF Lausanne, ESARQ Barcelona, AHO Oslo and Harvard GSD, and is currently professor of architectural design at the Accademia di Architettura, Mendrisio, Switzerland.

*Ward Shelley* is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York who specialises in large projects that freely mix sculpture and performance. His work is in a number of museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Art Museum and the Elizabeth A Sackler Centre for Feminist Art. In 2004 he lived and worked for five weeks inside the walls of the Pierogi Gallery, New York, for an exhibition called 'We Have Mice', and he previously collaborated with Alex Schweder on 'Flatland' at New York's SculptureCenter in 2007. Before and during his art career he has also worked in advertising, construction, teaching, special events, theatre, rock bands and built a 11m sailing sloop.

*Mariana Siracusa* is an Argentinian scholar based in Milan. Her current research focuses on the effects of energy infrastructure on remote non-urban landscapes. Prior to this she was a researcher at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

*Helen Thomas* is an architect and writer who, with Adam Caruso, has jointly edited a series of books on the limits of modernism: *Rudolf Schwarz and the Monumental Order of Things* (2016) follows *Asnago Vender and the Making of Modern Milan* (2014) and *The Stones of Fernand Pouillon* (2013).

*Marrikka Trotter* teaches at Boston Architectural College and is a teaching fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she is completing a PhD dissertation which examines the intersections between geology and architecture in Britain between 1750 and 1890. She is also editor of the contemporary architectural theory anthologies *Architecture at the Edge of Everything Else* (2010) and *Architecture is All Over* (2017).