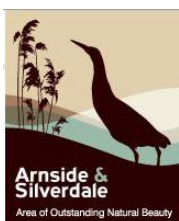


Arnside & Silverdale AONB Historic Designed Landscapes Phase 2: **Bleasdale School** **Care & Management Guidelines**

September

2015

Ed Bennis



Prepared for the
**Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB Partnership
and Lancashire County Council**

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1. Introduction

These Care and Management Guidelines form the second part of the Arnside & Silverdale AONB Historic Designed Landscapes Phase 2 research project and accompany the Phase2 Bleasdale School Research Report.

1.1 Purpose of the Care and Management Guidelines

Management plans are often an integral part, indeed a requirement, of new or renewed designed landscapes particularly where grants have been approved. These normally relate to designated or listed landscapes on the Historic England register or areas such as Conservation Areas, a local authority designation. These gardens are neither on the register nor within a Conservation Area; as such, the guidelines should be viewed as recommendations for the care of those landscapes and not as a requirement.

It is the intention of the project to provide useful guiding principles which will act as a sustainable approach to the care and management of the gardens. There are many facets to the word sustainability including climate change, change of ownership, divided landownership, natural degradation and renewal. The guidelines have considered these issues as well as current and longer term resource implications as a key component for the sustainability of these important historic designed landscapes.

1.2 Approaches to Conservation

Every site is unique, and while there is advice from many specialists, there is no single approach to dealing with the qualities and issues of a garden. Ideas and theories that underpin gardens evolve slowly, normally reflecting past designs and allowing them to evolve within a more modern idiom. Mark Treib elaborates on this in that 'unlike architecture and painting, modern landscape design made no cataclysmic breach with the past. It retained, for most part, the materials and many of the conceptual structures of previous eras: the site as the point of departure for the design, for example. Gardens and public spaces in traditional forms continued well into the twentieth century...'¹ Treib's point is relevant to any period as change in the garden is slow and evolving, and often imperceptible.

The first point is to recognise and understand what we have and what constitutes a garden. It is as much physical and geographical as it is intellectual and theoretical. There are concepts or ideas that form the basis of the physical composition and it is critical to understand these.

1.3 Evolution of Gardens

There are distinct differences between what a garden looks like, how it is used and how it performs in different design periods. Most gardens of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the AONB demonstrate a specific spatial form, function of space and the use of ornament. These gardens are often show pieces to view, to display plants and to demonstrate the owner's good taste and position in society. They followed an accepted pattern and there are many physical features associated with the period. Yet even in this brief time frame, there is an evolving pattern from the

¹ Treib, Mark *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review* MIT Press, Cambridge Mass. 1993 pxi

Victorian/Edwardian to the Arts and Crafts period and then a brief foray into modernism.

Perhaps the most significant change is the way gardens evolved from being show cases for plants and decorative features, to ones that were more associated with pleasure. Ornament remained important within the garden, however, it was more restrained and controlled as compared with the earlier period. Essentially there was a reaction to the often excessive exuberance of the Victorian age. This same reaction was seen in architectural form and in interior design. There were key figures that influenced the form, use and structure of the garden. J C Loudon and his wife had a major impact on the garden both in layout and the use of plants. Edward Kemp, later than Loudon, wrote 'How to Lay-Out a Garden' in the mid-19th century. This work was a major reference to the new middle classes and half a century later Thomas Mawson continued to refer to the principles set down by Kemp in his 'The Art & Craft of Garden Making'. Many gardens were influenced by William Robinson's 'The English Flower Garden' that went through innumerable editions. It was in stark contrast to 'The Formal Garden in England' by Regional Blomfield who advocated an entirely different approach. The early 20th century saw the continued influence of Mawson, but also of Gertrude Jekyll who promoted a newer approach to planting. There was no single answer, no single style of garden.

There was great choice and variety and as a result many gardens reflect what Loudon identified as the mixed style: formal and informal in parts. Few gardens are of a single style and all have been altered by various owners as the gardens develop, mature and decay. The garden we see today reflects the changes enacted by both nature and man which is part of the natural development of a garden. Gardens may be considered as living exhibits that have both beauty and utility and that the very nature of the garden is change. A garden will never be as it started, but an evolving entity.

2.0 Understanding the Heritage

2.1 What Heritage Means

In its simplest form, Heritage is about valuing something from an earlier period. How old and what it is, is contentious and debateable. Even more difficult is what to do with something that is considered a heritage asset. These assets cover not only parks and gardens but buildings as well; but, in an expanded form, heritage can include furnishings, printed matter and even languages. There are organisations related to almost every area that campaign for the conservation and preservation of these assets. Gardens are no exception.

There are issues associated with the term as it can become a 'flag waving' exercise for the protection of virtually anything. Certainly the tourist industry has capitalised on this in marketing literature. Despite this, a heritage asset is something which has perceived value with reference to its historic relevance. In terms of gardens, the value is identified due to its importance within a number of categories such as uniqueness, rarity, association with individuals, ecological diversity, special collections of garden ornament and/or plant species, representative of a period of thought and design, designer, completeness, location, etc.

These assets are often only recognised as important if they have been identified by a specialist society, charity or government body such as Garden Trusts, National Trust, and Historic England. However, there has been increasing concern about those gardens that are not recognised by a national body. The European Landscape Convention refers to the importance of 'everyday landscapes'. This denotes the broader scale landscape as well as small and unrecognised landscapes which can be the walk to school or shops with overhanging trees and wildflowers or well-tended gardens, to larger scale areas such as Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB.

Heritage supports an individual's national and local identity; it provides a sense of place, a form of psychological DNA about who we are and from where we come. Our parks and gardens support many aspects of our daily lives giving pleasure and places for recreation. They are places where memories are formed and where we return in later life. Tatton Park in Cheshire demonstrates that gardens are indeed more popular than buildings with the public. The Park has over 700,000 visitors per annum, yet its impressive Georgian mansion has only 40,000 visitors per annum. The majority are return visitors to the gardens, whereas few return to the mansion. From the earliest stages of civilisation, gardens were and still are, a reflection of an earthly paradise. Francis Bacon² wrote that 'God almighty first Planted a Garden...As if Gardening were the greater Perfection'.

2.2 Arnsdale & Silverdale AONB

In partnership with Lancashire County Council, detailed research has been carried out on several gardens within the AONB. The initial purpose was to discover what existed in the area and then to consider what the best possible action was in order to identify, assess and conserve the most important historic designed landscapes. These landscapes are seen as a special aspect of the AONB and are considered to be important character defining elements of the greater landscape. It is important to recognise and retain the qualities and specific character that these landscapes contribute to the region.

There are no plans to impose conditions for the restoration, conservation or preservation of these gardens. The 'Care and Management Guidelines' has been produced for owners to consider options and the best approach for caring for those gardens. The AONB Partnership welcomes positive and sensitive action by the current owners that is carried out in accordance with local planning policy and would be pleased to advise owners on their actions at an early stage.

2.3 Historic England

English Heritage has undergone restructuring and is now divided into two parts: English Heritage (EH) and Historic England (HE). English Heritage is responsible for managing and promoting sites that it owns. Historic England is responsible for grants and for guidance to owners, listing of parks and gardens, and developing and implementing government policy. The recent changes have seen several national lists or registers combined under the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). This

² Bacon, Francis *Of Gardens* 1625 'God almighty first Planted a Garden. And indeed, it is the Purest of Humane pleasures. It is the Greatest Refreshment to the Spirits of Man; Without which, Buildings and Pallaces are but Gross Handy-works: And a Man shall ever see, that when Ages grow to Civility and Elegancie, Men will come to Build Stately, sooner than to Garden Finely. As if Gardening were the Greater Perfection.'

includes lists for buildings, scheduled monuments, battlefields, wreck sites, world heritage sites (UNESCO) and parks and gardens. Currently there are approximately 1600 parks and gardens on the register, a substantial contrast to the near 1 million buildings or structures on the buildings register.

HE is reluctant to add more parks and gardens to the current list as they wish to deal with a manageable number, unlike the large number of listed buildings which is a major administrative problem. While their guidelines refer to several considerations for listing, there is little likelihood of a park or garden being added to the register unless it is exceptional and under immediate threat. This usually refers to substantial development that affects the site. Overgrown gardens or those with poor maintenance are not normally considered to be a threat. They also refer to town gardens that are 'ambitious'³ in their design and detail, meaning that 'lesser' gardens are unlikely to be considered.

It is useful to understand some of the key points from the *Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide: Urban Landscapes*. This gives a better understanding of their criteria and regulations. The following are selected notes from HE website that relate particularly to gardens in the AONB.

Date and Rarity

- Sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact...
- Special selection criteria is required for sites from the period after 1945
- Sites of less than 30 years old are normally registered only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat

Further Considerations

- Sites which are influential in the development of taste, whether through reputation or reference to literature
- Sites which are early or representative examples of a style or layout or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance
- Sites having an association with significant persons or events
- Sites with strong group value with other heritage assets

In addition to these guidelines, HE will take account of condition, planting and ornamental features within a garden. In terms of grading, the register is divided into three bands or grades of significance. The three grades are Grade I (of exceptional interest), Grade II* (of more than special interest) and Grade II (of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them). Over 35% parks and gardens are Grade I and II*; however, only 8% of buildings fall into these categories.⁴ Unlike the Register for Buildings, the Register for Parks and Gardens does not offer statutory protection.

2.4 Parks and Gardens Data Services (PGDS)

This is a database that provides free public access to 6,500 records of designed parks, gardens and landscapes of which over 5000 are in England. Established in 2007 as a partnership with the Association of Garden Trusts and the University of York, the

³ English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide: Urban Landscapes* 2013 p14

⁴ English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide: Urban Landscapes* 2013 p16

database has been developed through volunteer time from members of county garden trusts, local authorities, individuals and other heritage organisations. The database covers far more than private gardens and includes plant nurseries, community gardens, botanical collections, urban green spaces and many other forms of designed landscapes. In addition, there are over 2000 biographies of people associated with gardens, a glossary, and articles.⁵

The level of information on each garden within the database is extremely variable and is dependent on the individual who provided and downloaded the information. The database is simply a source for information which should be verified by other sources prior to any use of it as the information may not be correct. It is not a register as operated by Historic England and has no official or legal status; however, contained information may be used as material consideration. At present, only Ridgeway Park, listed as Greywalls on the data base, appears on the PGDS. There is very little information as it was part of a desk-top study for English Heritage by Bennis and Dyke (1989).

2.5 Local Authority Heritage Lists

Referred to as Local Listing, local authorities are responsible for drawing up local lists of heritage assets that they consider to be of local importance. The focus has been traditionally based on the methods and criteria of English Heritage and mostly related to buildings and structures, although not of national importance. However, Councils may set their own criteria for local listing. Baroness Andrews stated that local lists 'recognises that the importance we place on the historic environment should extend beyond the confines of the planning system to recognise those community-based values that contribute to our sense of place'. She also promotes the list as 'playing a crucial part in helping to conserve or even enhance local character'⁶. It is intended that the local community has an active role in the development of these lists.

The Local Lists serve as a 'recognition of local distinctiveness and character to ensure that these values are taken into account when changes affecting the historic environment are proposed'⁷ and is backed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF recommends that Local Planning Authorities set out 'a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment' in their Local Plan⁸. While the Local Lists of heritage assets do not offer statutory protection, it does mean that that they may be of 'material consideration' in planning matters.

2.6 Garden History Society & County Garden Trusts

There are a number of societies involved in the conservation of gardens as well as specific trusts for individual parks and gardens. The Georgian Society, The Victorian Society and The 20th Century Society have some interest in gardens, however their focus is mostly on structures and associated artefacts. The primary society for parks and gardens in terms of research and publications is the Garden History Society (GHS). It is the oldest learned society in the world that is concerned with the history of parks and gardens. The society has a large number of historians and academics as members with peer-reviewed publications. The Association of Garden Trusts (AGT)

⁵ www.gardenhistorysociety.org accessed 10 June 2015

⁶ English Heritage *Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing* May 2012 p5. Baroness Andrews was the Chair of English Heritage

⁷ English Heritage *Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing* May 2012 p6

⁸ English Heritage *Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing* May 2012 p7

supports County Garden Trusts (CGT) in each county of England. The county trusts vary in terms of their activities but most offer visits and talks to their members, as does the GHS. Some are active in research, dealing with planning applications, publication and education.

The AGT and the GHS have merged to form a larger and stronger voice in the protection of our parks and gardens. The GHS is a statutory consultative body on development or change to parks and gardens on the Register of Parks and Gardens; this role has been passed to the new joint society and is known as The Garden Trust. The Parks and Gardens Data Services will be part of their responsibilities.

In terms of value, The Garden Trust is a primary source for published research and information. Local advice will still operate through the local membership of the CGTs which will operate independently, but under the auspices of The Garden Trust. Within most CGTs, there are historians, landscape architects, architects, horticulturalists and planners which may be able to offer advice directly to owners, or direct them to a professional organisation that can help. Depending on the issues, Lancashire County Council and organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society, Society of Garden Designers, the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute and others may be of assistance.

2.7 Adaptability & Change

Gardens, more than any other heritage asset, are subject to change through the actions of nature and man. The change is often slow and imperceptible as we fail to see the ingress of nature through growth and decay, the influx of dominant or invasive species, or the even intentionally adding new plants to an existing garden. The fourth dimension of time is deceptive and unnoticed.

The very essence of a garden is change through the seasons and the years, as well as hours of the day. As such, the initial design should be considered as a starting point of the garden and not the finish. Plants that were introduced at the earliest stage have often performed better than expected, grown larger than ever anticipated or have taken over a garden like an invading army. Others are quite the opposite and have never grown well. In the 19th century, John Claudius Loudon said that the life of a garden is about 25 years. As such, a garden should be reassessed in terms of its historic fabric, condition, economic issues and purpose. Structural features are often easier to deal with while planting often proves more difficult. There will be the need to remove overgrown plants, hard prune others and re-plant entire sections of a garden. Areas that were sunny are now in shade will need different types of plants to reflect changing conditions.

The use of a garden can also change from its initial concept but it is perhaps the economics of a garden that dictate change more than anything else. A garden that had six gardeners may now only have one, or it is the home owner that has to manage the garden personally. This clearly places limitations on the entire garden in terms of its management and appearance. Provided that a garden is sensitively managed, it is possible to retain a quality that responds to its concept and allows it to co-exist within the confines of economic restraints.

3.0 Setting Goals and Objectives

3.1 Approaches to Conservation

It is only in recent years that there has been a good level of information related to historic parks and gardens in terms of their conservation. There are numerous publications from English Heritage⁹ as well as other organisations such as UNESCO, the Historic Houses Association, and learned societies such as the Victorian Society and the Georgian Society. There are different approaches to conservation as well as different terms in use often with no absolute agreed meaning. However, in the UK the term 'conservation' is generally used as the standard term to cover a number of distinct approaches.

Frank Clark, first President of the Garden History Society at its 1968 conference stated the need to understand and promote the values and traditions of great gardens. 'The inheritance of traditions confers both to an indigenous culture and responsibilities to the new generations that inherit it...Variety of visual experience, forms that are rich in association, forms that are expressions of richness and complexity of nature, forms that allow the process of life to go on; all of these are as important now as they were 200 years ago'.¹⁰ Clark also encouraged owners not to be too pedantic when conserving a garden as the very nature of a garden is about change.

Conserving a building is complex and a garden even more so. A key principle in conservation is that work should be reversible. A garden may be lost to nature, but it is recoverable in parts. A garden may be lost to functional features such as a tennis court or even a car park, but these are often reversible actions. However, a garden that is lost to a new building or a road is lost forever.

There are a number of terms that follow and an attempt has been made to clarify their meaning. No doubt there will be different interpretations of these terms but it is important to have an agreement on these when developing ideas, or in discussions with others including conservators, designers, planning officers, conservation officers, garden historians, gardeners, and the public. This will also provide the owner with a strong base for setting and developing goals and objectives.

Few gardens are suitable for one action or method and most will contain aspects from several different approaches. In any conservation approach, concessions are made but it is important to retain the idea and spirit of the garden. Dealing with an historic designed landscape requires a more considered approach than a normal garden

3.1.1 Conserve This is the most standard approach and suitable for most gardens. It allows for flexibility by identifying and safeguarding those features which are most important and relevant to the garden. Conserving permits new planting and features, and the removal of plants and features to achieve a unified

⁹ Most publications are authored by English Heritage; however, they are undergoing a rebranding exercise from dividing it into two divisions. Most publications regarding conservation will be rebranded and published under Historic England. Numerous publications are available for free on line as PDFs.

¹⁰ Jellicoe, Goode & Lancaster *The Oxford Companion to Gardens* Oxford University Press, 1987 p 126 (Article on Conservation and Restoration of historic Gardens by Mavis Batey)

whole that reflects the most important stages or periods of the garden. It is a sensitive and balanced approach that responds to the historic fabric and modern needs.

3.1.2 Preserve A term that is rarely used in the UK but it is still widely used in other countries. Preservation maintains the current features and conditions; it is a means of stabilising and preventing further decay. While preservation is often more associated with structures, in terms of the garden it is only used in occasional incidences and normally for built features. It is not possible to preserve plants within a garden as nature itself constantly changes them.

3.1.3 Restore This is a case of putting something back into the garden and to bring it back to its perceived original form or condition. The process of restoration requires change of the existing features and planting. It is questionable if true restoration can ever be achieved as original plants and other materials of a period are unlikely to be available. The earlier a garden the less likely that there is information such as an accurate planting plan. There is always the question of what date to restore a garden.

3.1.4 Enhance Gardens often have key features which have been partially lost due to vegetation or decay. These features may be 'tidied up' to make them read more clearly in the landscape. This is generally a very low level of intervention and can be associated with the idea of stabilising and enhancing an aspect of the garden in part.

3.1.5 Stabilise Generally meant to maintain a garden in its current condition and to prevent further deterioration. This may be done in whole or in part of the garden.

3.1.6 Creative Conservation A term used by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe that encourages new ideas or interventions within the historic fabric of a garden. Jellicoe was particularly successful with this approach at Sutton Place in Surrey.

3.1.7 Rehabilitation to revitalise a garden often with new uses while retaining some of the historic character.

3.2 Levels of Intervention

The reality of conserving a garden is one of great commitment of time, understanding, physical labour and depleting bank accounts. Conserving a garden is a matter of understanding what there is now, what there was, when and why things changed, and developing an approach which is an informed judgement. Every garden is individual and has its unique qualities as well as problems; each requires an approach that is tailored to that garden, to available data, and to resources that will ensure its long term sustainability.

It is generally not advisable to attempt to conserve a garden in a short period of time. A phased approach to reveal the garden both through on site investigation and the discovery of documentary evidence will result in a more considered solution. Time is required to discover the garden as well in making decisions.

The following examples demonstrate different approaches to conserving a garden. Even in its purest form, there are many concessions and at time questionable decisions to achieve the results



Hampton Court - Restoration: Above left shows the Privy Garden in 1975 prior to its restoration which is seen above right in 2005. This is the most comprehensive restoration of a garden in England. It required the destruction of a mixed period garden as well as the ancient yew trees which were contemporary to the original garden of William and Mary in the late 18th century. The replacement yews can just be seen in the 2005 photograph as small evergreen cones. Despite the apparent authenticity of the design, there was no planting plan so the planting is based on the ideas of the period, engravings, paintings, diaries and ledgers that show certain plants were purchased for the palace, but there was no indication as to where the plants were located.



Sutton Place Creative, Surrey – Creative Conservation: Jellicoe promoted the idea of new ideas in an historic designed landscape based on the premise that those landscapes are products of many generations of ownership, their ideas and aspirations. He believed that it was fitting for an owner to add something of their time to the garden, a similar principle used by the Historic Houses Association.

The garden to the top left is called the Paradise Garden with intimate spaces, heavily scented flowers, and a careful use of water for its sound effects. To the right is an oversized marble sculpture by Ben Nicholson that was specifically commissioned for the space. It sits in a position where a more traditional sculpture might exist yet changes the entire dynamics of the space, a space thought to have been originally designed by Gertrude Jekyll although there is no documentary proof for this claim.



Cheadle Royal Hospital, Cheadle - Revitalisation: originally built as a psychiatric hospital in the middle of the 19th century, Cheadle Royal was designed to imitate a country house with a formal access drive and formal gardens either side of the main entrance. The formal gardens were typical of the period with a perimeter walk, central feature and cross walks. It was one of the first institutional landscapes to be placed on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens.

Still used for the same purpose, the gardens fell into disrepair and the Friends of Cheadle Royal created a new garden, conserving the main walkway pattern but with new planting and seating areas. It was specifically designed for the Alzheimer's unit based on remembrance therapy and sensual stimulation.



Trentham Gardens Staffordshire- Conservation: There is almost every approach used in conservation within this garden. Above left shows part of the Italianate garden area with modern planting by Tom Stuart-Smith. His planting is far more exuberant than the original planting. Above right- Piet Oudolf used very modern planting in an area that is subject to flooding. Oudolf uses large swathes of grasses and perennials, a concept entirely different to the original gardens. In both examples, the planting is very much a modern interpretation yet fits comfortably within the framework of the gardens.

An area at the top of the garden retains a more traditional layout of formal planting, but even this has a modern twist. There is a mixture of flowers, herbs and small vegetable plants which at first sight appears as traditional Victorian flower beds.

3.3 Primary Goals

How should we approach an historic designed landscape? James Rose referred to Francis Bacon's comment about gardens being made by God and the purest of human pleasures. He counters that by saying he made a garden and it was hard work!¹¹ In most cases, a garden offers no financial return, it creates financial, physical and emotional hardship yet it is something that uplifts the spirit, gives pleasure and provides identity.

It is not possible to retain, conserve or restore everything. Information is never complete or absolute, and a garden is constantly evolving. And of course, resources are almost always limited; this includes time as well as money, but also the appropriate materials, craftsmanship or skills may no longer be available. When deciding what course of action is to be pursued, it is essential to consider the care and management after the initial action. How will a garden be maintained, who will do the work, are the skills available, and how will it be financially resourced? This is in addition to the key question, what are you trying to do and to achieve?

To establish a primary goal, the above issues must be taken into account and developed with the ideas in Section 3.1 Approaches to Conservation. It is advisable to develop goals within the equivalent of a business plan and using appropriate advisors such as garden historians, arboriculturists, ecologists, and specialists in the conservation of structures and gardens (architects and landscape architects). A 'hybrid' approach is most likely to be taken including methods such as restoration, enhancement, creative conservation, etc.

3.4 Establishing Objectives

While goals are overall aims in terms of what you would like to achieve, objectives are what is required to achieve them and are more specific.

A garden may be divided into zones which reflect different approaches and priorities, as well as a level of intervention such as low, moderate or full/complete. Even in a small site, or sections of larger gardens, goals may have interim stages and be phased over a number of years. This responds to planting seasons, growth periods and also resource issues. There should be a level of flexibility to account for new discoveries and changes due to resource restrictions, legislation, climate change, plant diseases etc.

Examples of objectives:

- Increase and/or enhance bio-diversity; be specific about where
- Repair specific structures and to what level
- Removal of invasive species; which ones, why and where
- Reinstatement internal and/or external views
- Restrict or remove specific views
- Protection of natural elements such as limestone paving
- Identify and conserve spatial form
- Use of historically appropriate new planting/or use of modern species
- Tree survey to establish condition
- Felling of dangerous trees near footpaths and structures
- Replacement of over mature planting; define where and what

¹¹ Rose, James *Gardens Make Me Laugh* Silvermine Pub, Conn, USA 1965

Every idea and action should be checked that it supports the goals and specific objectives. On a regular basis, the goals and objectives should be assessed and questioned as to how successful the actions are as there are likely to be amendments through time as more is discovered and understood about the garden.

4.0 Management Guidelines for Bleasdale School

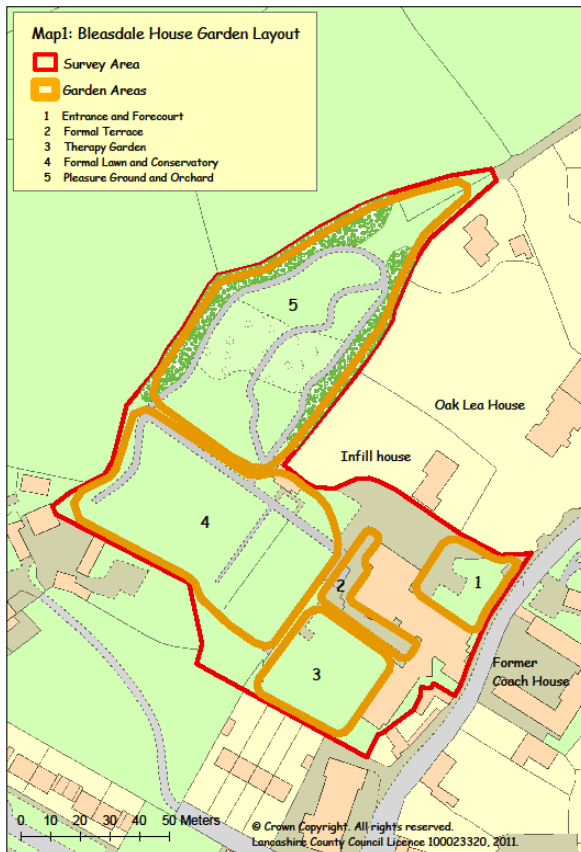
4.1 Introduction

The guidelines are concerned with the designed gardens and landscape within the boundaries of Bleasdale School/House. It does not address the area related to the former coach house opposite the school or with the garden to the left side of that building. While much has changed within the garden due to the needs of the school, the main structure of the garden has survived.

The earlier research turned up new information in terms of the Sharp family and the sale of the house in 1920. While it is clear that the estate had ornamental gardens and a pleasure ground, it was also highly productive with walled gardens, glasshouses and vineries; however, it is not clear where these were. It may be possible that these were not within the current garden and were on adjoining or nearby land as the Sharp family had extensive holdings including the adjacent Oak Lea house. The area between Bleasdale and Oak Lea has been subdivided and now contains a more modern house. It is possible that this land and land around the former coach house were part of the productive garden. In general, those types of gardens were not meant to be seen from the more formal gardens and the pleasure grounds. The main ornamental garden to the side of the house has been lost to a new therapy garden for the school while the fabric and detail for the rest of the garden area are fairly much intact.

The guidelines are presented for areas of the garden with a brief description and strategies for dealing with the spatial form, planting and structures. The guidelines have been developed to inform owners how to deal with the important heritage aspects of the garden. Locations of the former coach house etc. are for information only.

It should be noted that prior to any works being carried out, owners will need to have regard to any relevant planning or environmental designations, consents and legislation eg. protected species, habitats, felling licences etc. Consideration will need to be given to the use of herbicides in environmentally sensitive areas and will need to be used in accordance with good practice. Advice should be sought if in any doubt.



© Site Map courtesy of Lancashire County Council

4.2 Key Features

These three sets of features: spatial form, planting and structures, are seen as being essential to the historic nature of the garden and are character defining details.

4.2.1 Spatial Form

A garden is comprised of spaces with specific design functions such as enclosure, surprise, shelter, ornament, leading or drama. Bleasdale has a variety of spaces beginning with the street frontage where a high enclosing wall gives a sense of privacy and seclusion. The forecourt provides an interface between the building and the entrance drive. Although the area is principally used for parking and service vehicles, there is still the sense of privacy.

Typical of houses of the period, there is a terrace which wraps around two sides of the house offering views over the therapy garden (formerly a rose garden), over the large lawn and with long distant views to the bay. The lawn area merges into a smaller scale and informal space which was part of the pleasure walks around the garden. Beyond that is a remnant orchard and a service access into the lower garden area. Plants, walls, and land form are the controlling spatial elements of the garden.

4.2.2 Planting

Bleasdale is fortunate to have some fine specimen trees and extensive shrubberies along with some detailed planting areas. These give a sense of intimacy, permanence and comfort to the garden. There are some ericaceous plantings indicating imported soil, but these are limited to a few formal beds on a grass terrace. The therapy garden has modern planting appropriate to its current use.

The large lawn contains a well-tended shallow border of mixed herbaceous plants and shrubs beneath a low wall. There is a shelter belt to the SW side of the therapy garden and the large lawn and another around the pleasure garden; all are in need of renovation. Some small ornamental trees have been planted at the far end of the large lawn and are blocking part of the view to the bay.

4.2.3 Structures

Walls to the street frontage are constructed with rendered limestone with dressed stone piers at the entrance. There are recent replacement mild steel gates at the entrance. There are two areas of decorative limestone walls in the rustic style which are typical within the AONB, one adjacent to the main entrance door and another has been incorporated into a wall of presumably earlier service buildings.

The terrace is paved in in-situ concrete and enclosed with a natural stone balustrade. Ramps have been added at both ends of the terrace for disabled access. The therapy garden has a central pergola and walks are of different materials. A Taxus (Yew) hedge encloses the area to the NW side.

The lawns have subtle changes in level dropping away from the house. One level change is controlled by a low wall, and another with a shallow embankment. Tarmac walks run across the lawn as well as around the outer edges and connect the conservatory and pleasure ground. There are low stone plinths along the walk leading from the main building. There were steps between the plinths and are believed to still exist beneath the tarmac. The conservatory was restored in recent years.

4.3 Guidelines

4.3.1 Entrance and Forecourt

Features	Notes	Recommendations
Spatial Form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The original 'sweeping drive' has been lost to car parking and larger vehicle access. This is very much a service area to the front door. 2. A larger car park exists beyond the area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consideration could be given to a redesign of the space to provide a spatial form more in scale with the building and original ideas while still providing the required access. 2. Car park works well but consider impact of any expansion.
Planting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very large mature Beech trees. 2. Shrub under-planting is thin. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trees should be inspected by a qualified arboriculturist particularly for rot in main joints. Consider planting new trees to replace the mature trees if space can be found. 2. Consider re-planting with other species suitable for deep shade and shallow soil.

Structures	<p>1. Limestone walls to the street front and dressed stone gate piers.</p> <p>2. Modern steel entrance gates</p> <p>3. Rustic limestone wall and gate.</p> <p>4. Tarmac paving</p> <p>5. Low rockery walls and brick walls. Define edges to drive and parking.</p>	<p>1. Appear to be in good condition. Inspect on annual basis particularly capping stones to wall. Replace mortar as necessary.</p> <p>2. A recent replacement for the original wrought iron gates. Inspect for rust, clean and apply propriety protective paint. Paint on a 3-5 year cycle depending on condition and according to manufacturer's instructions.</p> <p>3. Inspect mortar joints on annual basis and repoint if required with limestone mortar. Mild steel gate to be treated as above for main entrance gates.</p> <p>4. Inspect annually, particularly after winter, and repair.</p> <p>5. Recommend replacing brick with rockery stones to be in keeping with the area.</p>
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Entrance and Forecourt: Use of different materials to edge parking and drive leads to a disunity of materials and place. Note new entrance gates on left with original gates in the right photo.

4.3.2 Formal Terrace

Features	Notes	Recommendations
Spatial Form	1. Raised terrace that links main rooms to the house and connects to the garden.	1. Links to internal rooms is key element for the terrace and sale plan of 1920 shows the 'garden entrance' from

	2. Important views over therapy garden and long views to the bay.	the house. Connections to be retained. 2. Views to be retained
Planting	1. Wisteria vine is the only planting on the terrace. 2. Plinths along balustrade	1. Vine should be thinned and trained to face of building. 2. Consider re-instating pots/urns with planting.
Structures	1. Stone balustrading in a classical manner and in a poor condition. Condition is serious and a likely safety issue. 2. Original steps and modern ramps lead from the terrace to the garden area. 3. Mild steel railings to ramps. 4. Pavement is in-situ concrete	1. Specialist stone conservator should be consulted. Where possible save original fabric, and replace those past restoration. 2. Original steps in reasonable condition, clean to remove any moss or slippery surfaces. 3. Inspect for rot and rust on regular basis and treat appropriately. Consider changing to a colour more appropriate to the environment. 4. Consider replacing concrete with natural stone to match balustrade and walls.

4.3.3 Therapy Garden

Features	Notes	Recommendations
Spatial Form	1. Rectangular open space set in location of former rose garden and links to the terrace. 2. Space controlled by buildings, pergola, hedge and terrace wall	1. Retain openness of space and link to the terrace. 2. Controlling elements are important to enclosure and scale. Retain
Planting	1. Ornamental planting such as lavender and box; some planting in raised beds 2. Central pergola covered in climbers. 3. Grass is the primary surface.	1. Good level of maintenance should continue. 2. Vines could be thinned to allow better sight lines and promote flowering. Clear Horse Chestnut and other weeds from top of pergola piers. Re-mortar if necessary. 3. Continue to maintain grass at current level.

	<p>4. Mixed shrub planting beyond pergola: Ilex, Aucuba, Hedera, and invasive privet, ground elder, lime trees and sycamore</p> <p>5. Yew hedge separates this garden and large lawn. Bottom of hedge thin and open in places.</p>	<p>4. Area should be cleared of invasive species and then determine action on remaining ornamental plants. A garden conservator should be consulted in terms of clearing, retention and new planting.</p> <p>5. Consider hard pruning in late winter to regenerate</p>
Structures	<p>1. Narrow walkways in different materials</p> <p>2. Central pergola as focus point</p> <p>3. Timber pergola between garden and mixed shrub planting</p>	<p>1. Walkways in reasonable condition but could be wider.</p> <p>2. Inspect pergola for rot in timber and replace as necessary. Timber should be treated on an annual basis with a preservative. Remove weeds from tops of piers.</p> <p>3. Consider replacing pergola and replanting. New pergola could be rustic in style as in the early photographs of the original garden</p>



Therapy Garden: The historic garden in the right photo (c1919) shows the terrace, hedge, and central fountain. Planting appears to be roses with grass walks between the beds. The walk from the fountain leading to the terrace aligns with the garden entrance from the house. The image to the left shows the garden today with the central pergola to the right side and in a similar position to the original fountain. While the detail has changed, this is a recoverable garden as the spatial form has not been lost.

4.3.4 Formal Lawn & Conservatory

Features	Notes	Recommendations
Spatial Form	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large and open with only low planting running across the space to sub-divide it into an upper and lower lawn area. 2. Planting and structures to each side control the views to the bay 3. Sight lines lead into pleasure ground 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain openness as it is a key feature to the entire site. Lawns in good condition and continue current management. 2. Maintain strong structural and spatial control. 3. Keep sight line open and leading into adjoining area.
Planting Upper Lawn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large rectangular space bordered by Yew hedge of the therapy garden and a low retaining wall with mixed low planting 2. Some modern sculptures and picnic tables. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Important that simple and open space is retained. 2. Fit with current needs of the school and these types of features can be encouraged.
Lower Lawn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Similar but larger than upper lawn but also with shallow embankment. 4. Mixed herbaceous and shrub planting below wall is well maintained. 5. Ericaceous planting beds 6. SW side, shelter belt. 7. Trees in shelter belt; many over mature 8. NW shrubbery-area at far end of the lower lawn. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Early photos show embankment was a rockery which could be reinstated if desired. 4. Continue with current level of management. 5. Fill in gaps within planting and apply ericaceous fertilizer to all similar beds. 6. Area is very overgrown and needs clearing, pruning, thinning and replanting. Ground elder should be chemically treated. Former vegetable area could be returned to grass lawn to reduce maintenance. All operations should be carried out with a consultant garden conservator. 7. Consider new planting for replacement specimen and shelter belt trees. 8. Shrubby area needs similar treatment as above in No.6 & 7. Recommend removal of some small ornamental trees which are currently disrupting view to the bay.

	<p>9. Laurel hedge to back of shrubbery planting.</p> <p>10. Conservatory and adjacent timber shed</p>	<p>9. Laurel hedge is well maintained and essential to keep it under control.</p> <p>10. Consider new planting to screen timber shed.</p>
Structures	<p>1. Retaining wall between lawns in good condition.</p> <p>2. Tarmac walks</p> <p>3. Stone steps and plinths</p> <p>4. Edging to ramp at the end of the retaining wall and adjacent to shelter belt.</p> <p>5. Conservatory</p>	<p>1. Inspect on annual basis and ensure that capping stones are well anchored. Lift and mortar if necessary</p> <p>2. Paths would benefit from being resurfaced and with good edgings.</p> <p>3. Clean on a regular basis. Ensure that stones are secure.</p> <p>4. Low wall/edging in poor condition and needs to be rebuilt.</p> <p>5. Carry out regular safety inspections on structure.</p>

4.3.5 Pleasure Ground and Orchard

Features	Notes	Recommendations
Spatial Form	<p>1. Best described as the English Style: open parkland with a stand of mixed trees and surrounding shrubberies.</p> <p>2. Open to main lawn and offering good internal and external views.</p>	<p>1. Retain character of open parkland.</p> <p>2. Retain views</p>
Planting	<p>1. Stand of mixed trees.</p> <p>2. Shrubberies to NW and SE sides</p> <p>3. Vegetable garden</p> <p>4. Orchard</p>	<p>1. Very mature trees and area would benefit from selective removal, thinning and re-planting under guidance of a garden conservator.</p> <p>2. These are very overgrown and would benefit from the same treatment as advised for the plantings around the therapy garden and the large lawn.</p> <p>3. Unused and overgrown and recommend removal of fencing and return area to a lawn for easier maintenance.</p> <p>4. Remnant orchard could be easily reinstated;</p>

		otherwise, retain fruit trees and treat simply by mowing grass.
Structures	1. Tarmac walks 2. Signs and sculptures 3. Scout Hut 4. Stone walls and service entrance gate	1. These are newer or more recently refurbished and in good condition. 2. Recent additions that are in good condition 3. Not inspected 4. Not inspected



Often the wrong plant is chosen or the situation has changed over the years. In this example, the plants were too large for the area and have been badly pruned to keep them under control. There is a point where it is appropriate to clear areas of all planting, save the best examples and re-plant the area.

5.0 Conclusions

Bleasdale is a rare example of a late 19th and early 20th garden that has retained its spatial and structural form. Villas within the AONB were located for fresh air and views of the bay or the Kent estuary and Bleasdale is one of the few that has retained that all important reason for its chosen location. What is even more remarkable is that the gardens have not been infilled with the housing or insensitive extensions that has occurred through much of the AONB.

Even with the change of use from a private home and eventually to a school, the fabric is still very much complete. There have been losses such as the formal rose garden, its fountain and rustic pergolas but these can be replaced in the future if desired. While the pool building has eaten into the space once occupied by the rose garden, the basic spatial form is still there. More unfortunate is the recent loss of the wrought iron entrance gates. Other features such as the steps on the walkways are believed to be covered in tarmac; an unusual means of conserving a feature but again fully recoverable. Similarly, the concrete terrace paving could be replaced with stone at a later date; however, it is important to retain and restore the stone balustrades before further deterioration occurs.

There is a good level of maintenance of planting areas nearest the main building; however, the structural form of planting is generally in a poor condition with mature trees, overgrown shrubberies and invasive species. This is a fairly typical situation as the emphasis is often placed on the more ornamental areas. Areas that are further away, are less obvious in terms of their needs. With a phased programme, these areas could be regenerated and bring new life to the garden and for generations to come. This is not a plea for restoring an earlier garden, but a method to recognise and enhance the historic fabric of the garden which may or may not be reinstated by a future generation.