

THE

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The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust  
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THE LONDON HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS TRUST  
is an independent charitable trust whose objective is to promote education  
about historic parks and gardens in London,  
and to seek to conserve and enhance these gardens  
for the education and enjoyment of the public.  
The Trust was established in 1994.

The Trust aims to draw together a wide range of knowledge,  
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on the protection and management of historic garden land,  
and to provide a valuable centre for the education, information,  
research and creative projects for the improvement and conservation  
of London's extensive fabric of historic gardens, for the benefit of everyone.

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5. Princess Louise's signature on the plinth of the Queen Victoria statue at Kensington Gardens  
(PHOTOGRAPH DESIRÉE DE CHENAI)

6. The unveiling of the Statue of Queen Victoria in Kensington Gardens, 28 June 1893  
(ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, 8 JULY 1893)

touches to the statue herself to give it its final expression. In order to highlight the authenticity of her work, she furthermore inscribed the plinth at the rear with her first name incised as if it was her hand-written signature (fig. 5).

For the erection of the statue Louise could rely on the assistance of Alfred Gilbert who was in charge of superintending the works. The heavy statue and pedestal had to be placed on a wide plinth of York stone, which, in turn, stood on a firm foundation of brick and cement.<sup>16</sup> The day of the unveiling, 28TH June 1893, was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Queen's accession. Despite a sudden downpour it was a spectacular event, which brought Princess Louise much publicity. Special stands with around 2,000 covered seats for invited guests had been put up around the statue. After the reading of an official address to the Queen, Princess Louise handed her mother the cord to pull off the Union Flag from the statue, and children with flowers paid their homage while a band played the national anthem (fig. 6).<sup>17</sup> Newspapers reported in detail about the event and highlighted the statue's particular connection to Kensington as the Queen's early residence, as well as its wider meaning as an imperial monument. Quoting from the address at the unveiling, the popular women's magazine *Ladies' Treasury*, for example, called the statue 'a gift to her Majesty's subjects the wide world over – a token of the unflinching and unchanging loyalty and devotion of the inhabitants of Kensington to the Queen's person, throne, and empire.'

With the unveiling ceremony, the jubilee statue was officially transferred to the charge of the Board of Works who were responsible for its maintenance and security. This included regular washing to prevent stains, and, above all, adequate measures to protect the statue from vandalism. It was considered necessary to enclose it with unclimbable iron fencing. The Parks Inspector even recommended putting a night watchman on permanent duty as 'on many occasions, in Kensington Gardens, the rough and mischievous element is very plentiful indeed'.<sup>18</sup>

16. National Archives, WORKS/20/77.

17. For a description of the event, see Anon., 'The Queen at Kensington', *The Times*, 29 June 1893, p.6.

18. Report of Inspector John Hogan, dated 8 August 1893, National Archives, WORKS/20/77.

As with many other public statues in prominent locations, there was a constant risk of injury 'by a missile thrown by a mischievous person at a distance of fifty yards', as the inspector put it.

Today, the statue's significance has changed from an active symbol of the British Empire to a historical monument testifying to Princess Louise's relevance as a remarkable royal sculptor. The protection of public statues in London is no less an issue in the twenty-first century, but the recent architectural solution of surrounding Queen Victoria with an elegant pond rather than a forbidding iron fence subtly integrates the marble statue into the natural surroundings of Kensington Palace.

#### THE GARDENS OF WITANHURST, HIGHGATE, LONDON

By Kristina Clode

Witanhurst is an enormous neo-Georgian mansion situated at the top of Highgate ridge, in extensive grounds with far-reaching views across Hampstead Heath to Kenwood and central London. Reputed to be the second largest private house in London after Buckingham Palace,<sup>2</sup> Witanhurst was built during the First World War by soap magnate Sir Arthur Crosfield, as a venue fit for his ambitious young wife's social aspirations.

Crosfield commissioned the renowned garden designer Harold Peto in c.1913 to design an Italianate scheme for the thirteen-acre hillside grounds.<sup>3</sup> His designs overlaid eighteenth and nineteenth century landscaping by successive owners of the previous house on the site, *Parkfield*. Following further additions of land to the estate, Crosfield employed the garden designer Percy Cane to create a small 'East Garden' in c.1929.

After a downturn in fortune for the Crosfields the house and grounds went into decline. Left unoccupied from the mid 1960s,

1. Nikolaus Pevsner & Bridget Cherry, *London 4: North* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), p.414.

2. Display Advertising: 'Benham & Reeves', *The Times*, 28 June 1971, p.11.

3. The total site was 13.3 acres. See Paul Crosfield's planning application of 7/10/1968, National Archives, ref: AT 41/187.





7. Sir Arthur and Domini Crosfield, 1918

(REPRODUCED FROM W. HULME LEVER, 'LOOSE LEAVES FROM THE LEWS - BEING CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE GUESTS AT LEWS CASTLE, GRIMERSTA AND MORSGAIL, IN THE ISLAND OF LEWS, AUGUST 25TH TO SEPTEMBER 12TH 1918, PRINTED FOR A VERY PRIVATE CIRCULATION' (1918), p.47)

the lower parkland was built on in the 1980s leaving five and a half acres of formal gardens and mansion intact. Numerous development proposals for the remaining site floundered in the years that followed until 2008 when the estate was sold to an unknown buyer who is now extensively redeveloping the house and garden under a shroud of secrecy.<sup>4</sup> Peto's architectural garden features were in poor repair in 2008 and their fate today is unknown, although planning documents lodged with Camden Council suggest their restoration is in progress.<sup>5</sup>

Arthur Crosfield (1865-1938),<sup>6</sup> Liberal MP for Warrington from 1906-1910, bought Parkfield in 1912 to transform it into a glittering mansion fit for his beautiful young wife Domini to further her ambitions as a high society hostess.<sup>7</sup> It was to be a sumptuous monument to Domini and Arthur's love of sport, music and cultured society.<sup>8</sup> As a bachelor Arthur had lived in a modest flat in London,<sup>9</sup> but his marriage in 1907 to twenty-three year old Domini Elliadi (1884-1963) was to change his world (fig. 7). Domini was the daughter of a wealthy Greek merchant of Smyrna who had taken British nationality and settled in Stockport. Her family had connections with Greek royalty.<sup>10</sup> Twenty years Arthur's junior, Domini was beautiful, clever, talented, energetic and an extremely ambitious young woman. It was Domini who was the driving force behind the creation of

Witanhurst and the social whirl that was to follow.<sup>11</sup>

Parkfield was almost totally demolished to make way for the new sixty-four room house,<sup>12</sup> designed by George Hubbard (1859-1936)<sup>13</sup> and inspired by Hampton Court Palace (fig. 8).<sup>14</sup> Arthur Crosfield commissioned Harold Ainsworth Peto (1854-1933) to design the Witanhurst gardens. Several of Peto's garden plans for Parkfield dating from October 1913-November 1914 are held at the RIBA.<sup>15</sup> Harold was the fifth son of Victorian railway and public works contractor Sir Samuel Morton Peto, Bt (1809-1889). He had begun his career as an architect<sup>16</sup> and had been in partnership with Ernest George (1839-1922) from 1876-1892, during which time they built numerous country mansions and highly fashionable London town houses.<sup>17</sup> Peto had terminated his partnership with George in 1892, a condition of which barred him from practising architecture in England. Instead he had set up his own independent practice in interior<sup>18</sup> and garden design, gaining many commissions from prestigious clients both at home and abroad.

11. See Antoinette Pernetta-Crosfield: Collection of audio cassettes of interviews with Kathleen Smith, late secretary of Sir Arthur and Lady Crosfield, about life at Witanhurst during her employment there from 1930-1962 (October 1987 to 3 November 1987) & Carswell 1992, *op. cit.*, p.48.

12. London Metropolitan Archives - Appendix from GLC Historic Buildings Board, Architect's Report of 11/3/1971, Item 14, EP532 - Witanhurst, Highgate West Hill, Camden - Proposed demolition - ref.: GLC/DC/PTI/H/2/25; see also Percy Lovell & William McBeath Marcham, eds., 'The Village of Highgate: The Parish of St. Pancras, Part 1', *Survey of London*, vol. xvii, (London: London County Council, 1936), p.72.

13. London Borough of Camden: Ecclestone, Appendix A. The house is listed Grade II\*, ref.: 798-1-8695, date of listing: 16 December 1970. RIBA Drawings Collection: *Designs for Parkfield, now Witanhurst, West Hill, Highgate, Camden, London, for Sir Arthur Crosfield, by George Hubbard 1914-15*, ref.: PA996/1 (1-6). A significant increase in rateable value was not recorded until 1920; it therefore seems that the house was not completed until this date. See John Richardson, *Highgate: Its History since the Fifteenth Century* (New Barnet, Herts.: Historical Publications, 1983), p.93.

14. Recollection of Antoinette Pernetta-Crosfield, first wife of Paul Crosfield.

15. RIBA Drawings Collection, ref.: PA992/1 (1-5) & PA993/1 (1-3).

16. Harold's architectural training began in 1871 with J. Clements of Lowestoft, with two years prior jointery training at Lucas Bros. He moved to Karslake and Mortimer of London before Ernest George. See Anon., 'Contemporary British Architects: Harold Peto', *The Building News*, vol. LVIII, No.1848, 6 June 1890, p.793 & David Ottewill, *The Edwardian Garden* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), p.146.

17. Robin Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto, From the Archives of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press, 2007), p.9.

18. Peto designed interiors for West Dean, Sussex for William James (c.1892), the first-class accommodation of the Cunard *Mauretania* Atlantic liner (1907) and interiors for the houses he built on the French Riviera. See Whalley 2007, *op. cit.*, pp.22 & 42.

4. Ed Caesar, 'House of Secrets; Who owns London's most expensive mansion?', *The New Yorker*, 1 June 2015.

5. London Borough of Camden planning applications 2011/1666/P, 2011/3037/P, 2013/1795/P.

6. Arthur was elevated to baronet in 1915 and in 1929 he was also made G.B.E. See 'Obituary', *The Times*, 23 September 1938, p.14.

7. Carol Shaw, 'Witanhurst - Highgate's Great Enigma', *Buzz*, no.120, Autumn 1992, p.10.

8. Domini entertained high society on a lavish scale with functions based on her and Arthur's considerable sporting and musical talents and contacts. Domini had been tennis champion of Smyrna at the age of twelve, and later competed at Wimbledon. She was also a brilliant pianist who had studied at the Paris Conservatoire. Arthur won the French Open Amateur Golf Championship in 1905, was a talented amateur billiards player and played the violin and piano. See John Carswell, *The Saving of Kenwood and the Northern Heights* (Henley-on-Thames: Aidan Ellis, 1992), p.44 & John Fothergill-Crosfield, *The Crosfield Family: A History of the Descendants of Thomas Crosfield of Kirkby Lonsdale Who Died in 1614* (University Press Cambridge, 1980), pp.521-24.

9. Such extravagance had only recently come within his grasp, as Arthur Crosfield owed his fortune to the 1911 sale of the family soap manufacturing business, Joseph Crosfield and Sons Ltd. of Warrington, of which he had been majority shareholder and chairman from 1901-1909. See Carswell 1992, *op. cit.*, p.48 & Shaw 1992, *op. cit.*, p.10.

10. Christopher Gotch, 'Palatial Witanhurst', *Hampstead & Highgate Express*, 2 July 1971, p.28.



Of particular interest to Arthur Crosfield would have been Peto's high profile commissions in and around Cannes on the French Riviera, where he designed several complete compositions of villa, interior and garden. The Crosfields were part of elite society in Cannes, where they took regular holidays.<sup>19</sup> Many holiday villas were being built in the area at this time, but Peto's designs, which were featured in *Country Life*, were considered by Avray Tipping<sup>20</sup> to be far superior to the 'perfectly commonplace type' that prevailed.<sup>21</sup> He felt that Peto alone had truly read the character of the region, which evoked 'the Italy of the past'<sup>22</sup> and designed modern villas 'that produced the beauty and charm of old Italian architecture and life'.<sup>23</sup> Peto was so popular that the headland of Cap Ferrat, where three of his villas were built, became known locally as 'Peto Point'.<sup>24</sup> The Crosfields must have known of these prestigious gardens, and would probably have visited them. Perhaps their choice of Peto for the gardens of Witanhurst sought to bring a fashionable piece of Cannes to their London abode.

One of the decisive factors in Arthur Crosfield's purchase of Parkfield must have been the stunning westward views it commanded across its hillside grounds to Hampstead Heath and the picturesque eighteenth-century Kenwood House, with Harrow Hill beyond and the expansive plain of central London to the south.<sup>25</sup> He was passionate about nature and the great outdoors; a walker and climber, he founded and was chairman of the National Playing Fields Association and throughout his life tirelessly fought to preserve open space for the masses.<sup>26</sup> When the Kenwood estate was threatened by housing development, Sir

Arthur led a successful campaign (1916-1925) to purchase the land for the nation and add it to Hampstead Heath.<sup>27</sup> His book *Reminiscences of Kenwood and the Northern Heights* (1925), dedicated to the campaign's contributors,<sup>28</sup> clearly shows his heartfelt enthusiasm for the topography, nature and historic associations of the Heath. Arthur reflected these sentiments in naming his new house 'Witanhurst', which he constructed from 'witan' the Anglo-Saxon King's council<sup>29</sup> that he believed lent its name to nearby Parliament Hill and 'hurst' from the ancient forest of Middlesex,<sup>30</sup> a remnant of which he liked to think was preserved in his grounds.

In selecting a garden designer for Witanhurst, Sir Arthur would have wanted to ensure that the topography and views he so highly regarded were sympathetically treated.<sup>31</sup> A 1911 *Country Life* article on the recently completed Peto gardens at Isola Bella, Cannes had described Peto's approach as a 'just and sensitive appreciation of every particularity of situation and of circumstance in the ground and of the character and purpose in the client'.<sup>32</sup> Its description of the Isola Bella site highlights obvious similarities with Witanhurst: 'a hillside of considerable declivity...amorphous and objectless grass slopes', a large dignified chateau with extensive grounds that 'demanded' formality. Here Peto's solution of a Renaissance Italy inspired 'delicately wrought architectural scheme that sympathised with the pronounced natural features of the magnificent environment in which it was to be set', reads like a design brief for the Witanhurst site.

27. Montagu H. Cox, *Opening of Ken Wood* (London: London County Council, 18 July 1925), p.6. A plaque was erected at Kenwood House by English Heritage in 2001 commemorating Arthur Crosfield's role in saving the estate. See Anon., 'Sir Arthur Crosfield honoured at Kenwood', *The Heath and Hampstead Society Newsletter*, Vol.32, No.1, January 2001.

28. Crosfield, *Reminiscences 1925*, *op. cit.*, p.1.

29. 'Witan' was derived from 'witenagemot' - 'witan', *A Dictionary of World History*, Oxford University Press, 2000. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Birkbeck College. 27 July 2007 [www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=T48.E3965](http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=T48.E3965).

30. Crosfield repeatedly refers to Ken Wood as a historic remnant of the Forest of Middlesex: see Crosfield, *Reminiscences 1925*, *op. cit.*, pp.7-8 & 31.

31. Peto was renowned for creating schemes well-related to their surroundings, providing fitting formal settings for houses following a site's existing topography, with clever use of native and ornamental informal planting to melt into the surrounding landscape. See Miles Hadfield, 'Harold Peto: Architect and Planter', *Country Life Annual* (1966), p.92 and David Otteywill, *The Edwardian Garden* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), p.147.

32. Anon., 'Isola Bella, Cannes', *Country Life*, vol. XXIX, No.743, 1 April 1911, p.450.

19. Arthur was captain of the prestigious Cannes golf club and was a close friend of its President, the exiled Grand Duke Michael of Russia. See Carswell 1992, *op. cit.*, pp.43-44 & 127-128.

20. *Country Life* contributor H. Avray Tipping was a lifelong friend of Harold Peto. See Robin Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917* (Marlborough: Libanus Press: 1993), p.6.

21. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Villa Rosemary, Alpes Maritimes', *Country Life*, vol. xxxi, No.795, 30 March 1912, p.468.

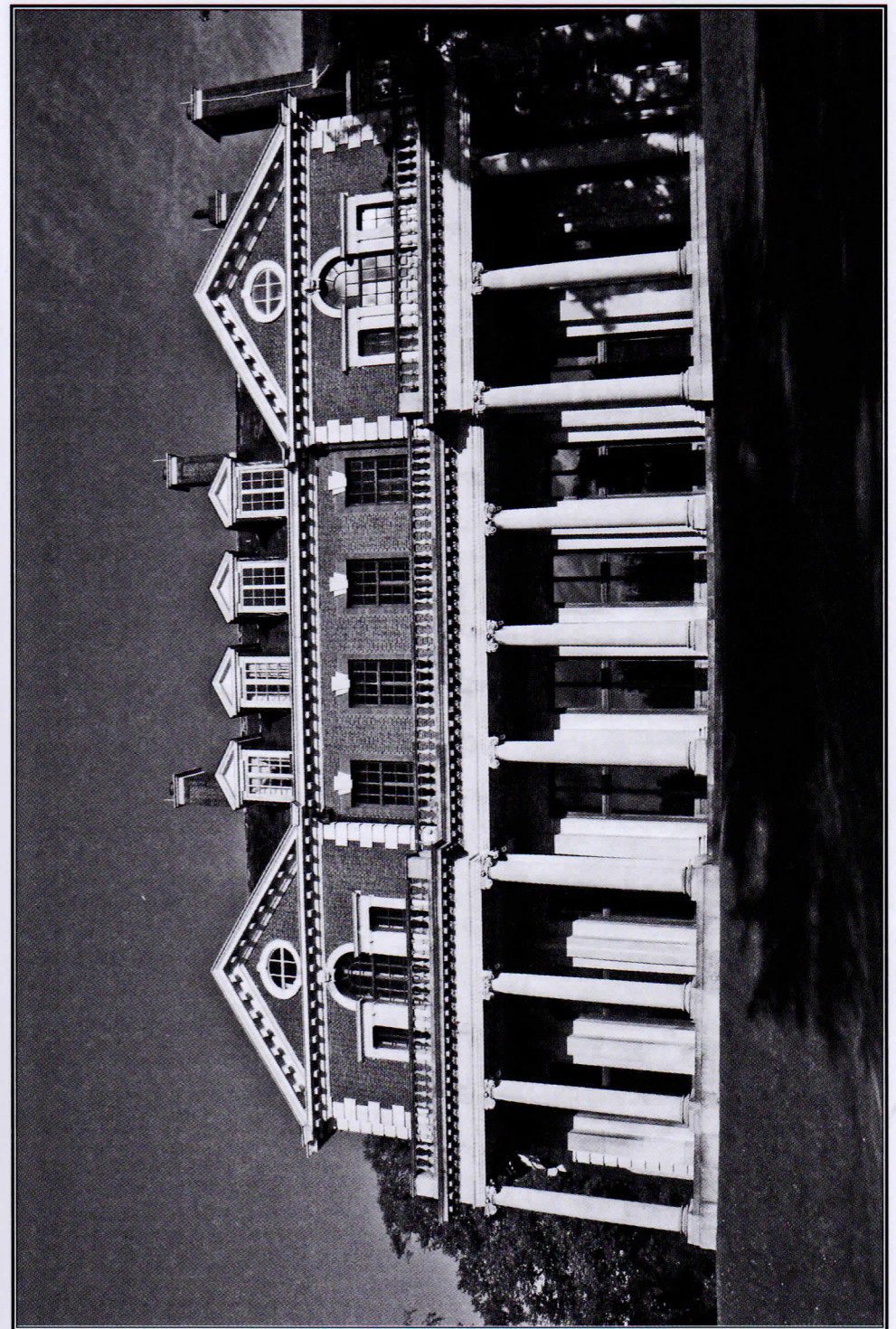
22. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'The Villa Sylvia, Alpes Maritimes', *Country Life*, vol. xxviii, 16 July 1910, pp.90-92.

23. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Villa Rosemary, Alpes Maritimes', *op. cit.*, p.474.

24. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens 2007*, *op. cit.*, p.21. The three Cap Ferrat villas were Villa Sylvia (1902), Villa Maryland (c.1904) and Villa Rosemary (c.1910-1911).

25. Sir Arthur Crosfield, *Reminiscences of Kenwood and the Northern Heights* (London: Country Life, 1925), pp.19 & 30.

26. Carswell 1992, *op. cit.*, p.130.



8. South-West Garden Front, Witanhurst, 2006  
(PHOTOGRAPH KRISTINA CLODE)



Peto's design for Witanhurst can be divided into three main areas: 1) the Italianate garden constructed within a pre-existing three-tiered walled kitchen garden to the south-west; 2) an informal ornamental woodland garden at the southern end of the upper parkland, linked by a path to the Rose Garden at the far end of the walled Italianate garden; and 3) the grand staircase descending the existing west-facing steep slope from the mansion to a balustraded terrace overlooking an existing tennis lawn, a new tennis pavilion and the wider views to Hampstead Heath and beyond. The 25" OS Map of the Witanhurst grounds in 1935-1936 shows these features labelled (fig. 9).

The walled Italianate garden's origins were a former walled kitchen garden *in situ* since at least 1801, when it was terraced with two compartments sloping south-west.<sup>33</sup> From at least 1863 the upper compartment was divided into two, creating a set of three enclosed terraces (fig. 10).<sup>34</sup> Harold Peto kept these three enclosed terraces, converting them to a set of formal 'Italian' flower gardens, linked together by a central path. He rebuilt the enclosing brick walls stepping them down the hillside with elegant curved stone copings (fig. 11).

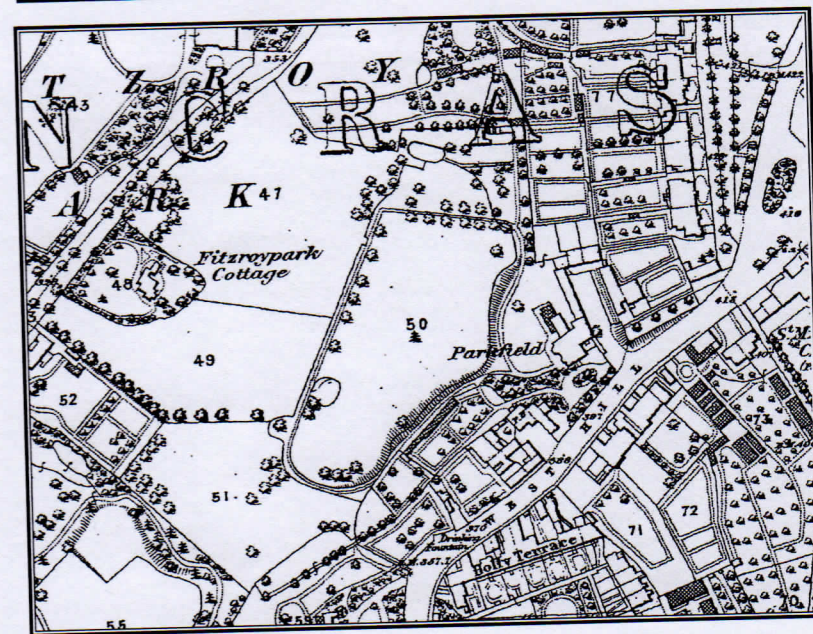
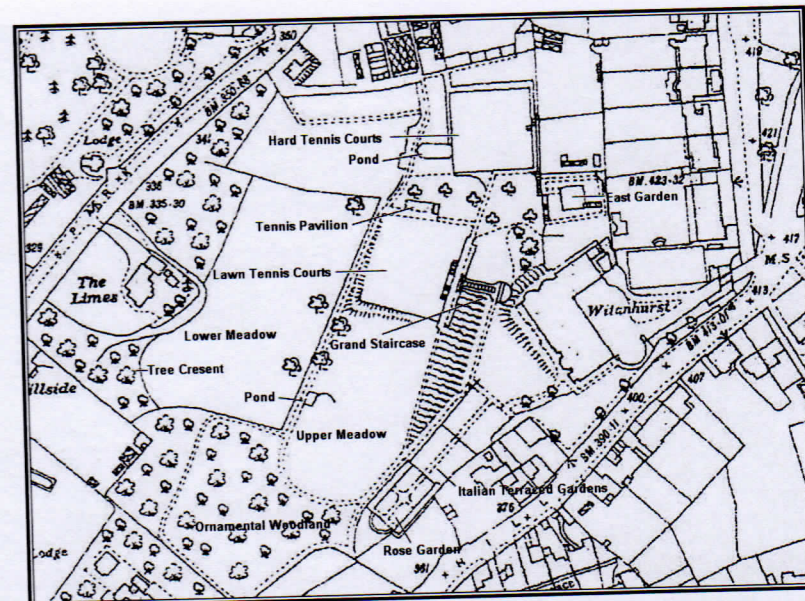
Entered down a flight of steps at the centre of the enclosing brick wall, the square top terrace is quartered by crazy-paved pathways, with a low, stone-capped circular fountain at the centre.<sup>35</sup> This fountain, lined with blue mosaic tesserae, originally had a lead *amorino* centrepiece.<sup>36</sup> Each quarter of the

garden had a symmetrical pattern of flowerbeds marked out by crazy paving, with a stone statue on a pedestal at the centre. The statues of two male and two female figures are thought to have represented the four seasons.<sup>37</sup>

A wall divides the Italian 'Statue' garden from the middle terrace, which is entered from the central path, down a flight of steps. The crazy-paved path continues straight across the centre of the Middle Terrace to a decorative cast-iron gate leading to the bottom terrace through a high brick wall topped by stone balustrading (fig. 12).<sup>38</sup> Harold Peto's original planting plan from November 1914 exists for the Middle Terrace.<sup>39</sup> Four 'cut' Yew specimens were symmetrically arranged in rectangular lawn areas around the central path,<sup>40</sup> with large herbaceous beds around the edges. Here Peto specified a range of flowers in mainly yellow and blue/purple tones, with a predominately late-summer flowering period, including *Helenium*, *Aster*, *Rudbeckia* and *Golden Rod* with an edging of *Nepeta* throughout. Highlights of scarlet were provided by *Oriental Poppy* and *Lychnis chalcidonica*, with *Delphinium* and *Lupin* contributing eye-catching vertical accents to the arrangement. *Yuccas* punctuated the path-side corners of the bed, with further structure provided by shrubs such as *Choisya* and *Forsythia* in the rear corners and the surrounding walls clothed with climbers such as *Jasmine*.

Peto made plans in October 1913 for a classical brick gazebo with stone quoins and tiled mansard roof, presumably sited in the north-west corner of the Middle Terrace,

THE GARDENS OF WITANHURST, HIGHGATE, LONDON



9. Witanhurst Section of the 25" OS Map, sheet 11.9, 1935-1936 revision (COURTESY CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES CENTRE)

10. Parkfield Section of the 25" OS Map, sheet 11.9, 1863-1869 (COURTESY CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES CENTRE)

33. Parkfield was then owned by John Crutchfield. See Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, Holborn Library (Camden Local Studies): John Tompson, *A Plan of the Parish of St. Pancras situate in the County of Middlesex* (1801), sheet 2, scale: 3 chains to an inch, ref.: 85.244. A newspaper advertisement for the sale of John Crutchfield Sharpe's estate in 1843 describes it as an 'excellent walled kitchen garden, clothed with an abundance of choice fruit trees', see Camden Local Studies: Anon., 'Sale Advertisement: Desirable Residence, gardens and land, beautifully situate at Highgate', by Messrs. Skinner, Dyke & Co., c.1843, Heal Collection ref.: A 111 4.

34. Camden Local Studies: 25" OS Map, sheet 11.9, 1863-1869. A Parkfield sale catalogue of 1899 describes 'kitchen and vegetable gardens' and 'a range of Vineries in three compartments', see Camden Local Studies: Debenham, Tewson, Farmer and Bridgewater, *Sale Catalogue of Parkfield* (8 October 1889), Heal Collection ref.: A 114 16.

35. Listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-19025, date of listing: 9 October 1998.

36. Several photos of the lead *amorino* are in Antoinette Pernetta-Crosfield's (first wife of Arthur & Domini's adopted son Paul Crosfield; resident at Witanhurst 1954-1960) personal collection, c.1958. The *amorino* had been replaced with a stone shell basin on a pedestal by 1999 but this is also now missing, photograph in English Heritage, Witanhurst File, 1999. Listed Grade II: Fountain and pond in the Italianate Garden, Reference No: 798-1-19025, date of listing: 9 October 1998 (Ecclestone, Appendix A).

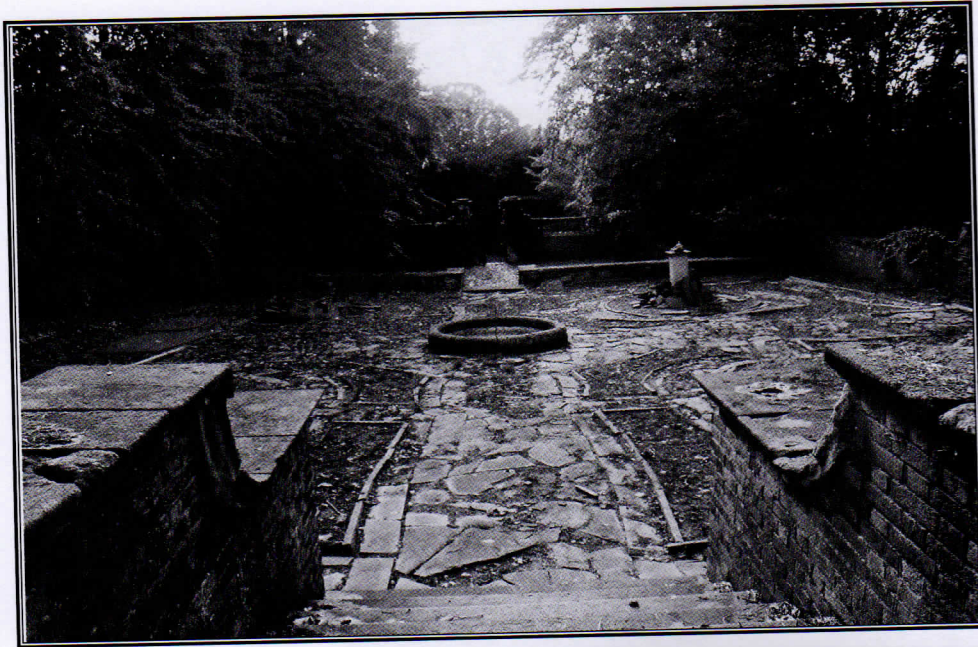
37. Listing Description - Listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-19035, date of listing: 9 October 1998. The statues were in a poor condition when photographed in 2000 by John Browning and have since been stolen, see Browning Associates: John Browning & Mark Loxton, Dr. Bob Gibbons, John Arundell (The Adams Loxton Partnership), Hazel Fryer & Phillada Ballard (Parklands Consortium Ltd.), *Witanhurst Highgate, Grounds Development Plan: Volume 1, Survey*, Commissioned by Mounir Developments SA (London: JBA/ALP/Parklands, 2000). One of the statue pedestals remains *in situ* and the rest have been removed for safe keeping, London Borough of Camden: Joanne Ecclestone, *Witanhurst, 41 Highgate West Hill - Urgent Works Notice, Report no. 15915* (29 September 2005), 1.6.

38. Listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-19015, date of listing: 9 October 1998.

39. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: P4992/1(4), Harold Peto, November 1914.

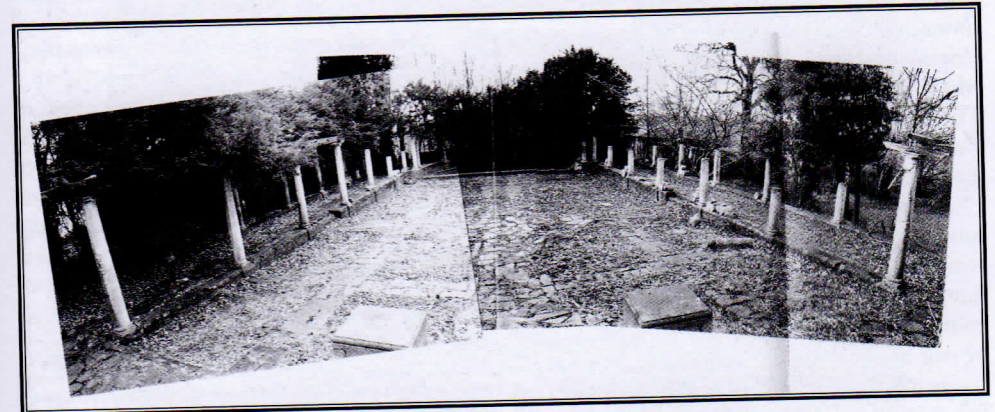
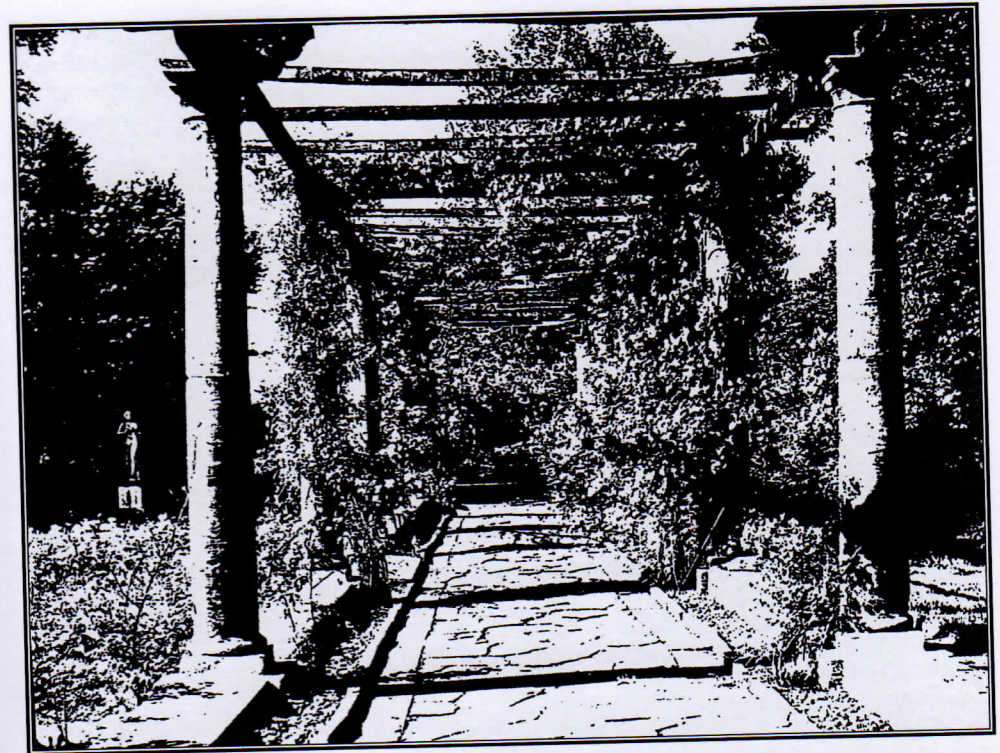
40. The unlabelled rectangular areas appear to be lawn in the RAF aerial photograph from 1947 NMR: Air Photos Library, Sortie no.: RAF/CPE/UK/2040, Library no.: 614, Frame: 5092, National ref: TQ83870-TQ276870, scale: 1:4800 (27 April 1947).





11. Top Compartment of the Terraced Gardens, Witanhurst, 2006  
(PHOTOGRAPH KRISTINA CLODE)

12. Middle Compartment of the Terraced Gardens, Witanhurst, 2006  
(PHOTOGRAPH KRISTINA CLODE)



13. Rose Garden Pergola clothed with climbers, unknown date  
Note the statue of a female figure on the stairway plinth in the background  
(COURTESY HIGHGATE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION: WITANHURST PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION)

14. Rose Garden, Witanhurst, 2000  
(PHOTOGRAPH © JOHN BROWNING)



against the wall overlooking the Rose Garden on the lower terrace.<sup>41</sup> The gazebo was not executed and this decision must have been taken before November 1914, as Peto does not indicate it on his planting plan for the Middle Terrace.

Passing through the iron gate from the Middle Terrace, the Lower Terrace or 'Rose Garden'<sup>42</sup> is reached down a flight of steps with a square landing half way down, splitting the remaining steps in three directions. Large stone plinths either side of the central stairway once supported statues, one of which was a female figure (fig. 13). The rectangular Rose Garden was enclosed to the north and south by a pergola of stone Tuscan columns with oak beams and rafters and a crazy paved path beneath, all in poor condition by 2006.<sup>43</sup>

A rough planting plan of Peto's c.1914 exists for a small section of the Rose Garden pergola.<sup>44</sup> A summer-long floriferous display was created along the pergola's length, with climbers including Wisteria, Clematis, Rose, Ceanothus, Jasmine, *Polygonum baldschuanicum*<sup>45</sup> and *Bignonia radicans*<sup>46</sup> in narrow beds either side of the path. Foliage texture was varied through the inclusion of the coarse-leaved *Aristolochia macrophylla* and *Vitis coignetiae*, which also provided stunning autumn colour. The occasional shrub was planted amongst the climbers, such as *Buddleja globosa* and *Kerria japonica*, perhaps to vary form.

The pergola walkways led to the far south-western end of the garden, which was terminated by an exedra-shaped sunken pond, lined with blue mosaic and surrounded by a continuation of the Tuscan colonnade topped by oak beams (fig. 14). There may have been a statue of Venus<sup>47</sup> and possibly sculptures of fish,<sup>48</sup> in the vicinity of the exedra pool, but,

together with the blue mosaic, all have since been lost. A Yew hedge formed a backdrop to the exedra pond and southern section of the pergola. Stone crazy-paved paths criss-crossed the central area of the garden, forming a symmetrical arrangement of rose-beds.<sup>49</sup>

On Peto's rough planting plan for the pergola there is also a planting sketch for a semi-woodland area of ornamental shrubs surrounded by a 'walk' of distinctive outline, bordering the 'Rose Garden' and a 'Field'.<sup>50</sup> Here Peto planted amongst Oak and Chestnut a collection of ornamental trees including a clump of *Acer negundo*, a standard Laburnum, Catalpa, *Cedrus deodara* and *Cedrus atlantica* (f.) *glauca*. He also specified an under-planting of flowering shrubs including strongly scented Philadelphus, Clerodendrum, Kalmia, Lilac and Buddleja, together with *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*, *Azalea molle*, *Kerria japonica* or Colutea and a general scattering of Gorse, Thorn and Rubus. A path wound through the centre of this woodland to the 'glade' beyond.<sup>51</sup>

Two Peto planting plans exist for 'The Glade'; a sketch<sup>52</sup> and the presentation plan derived from it dated November 1914.<sup>53</sup> Bracken and clumps of *Ruscus racemosus*,<sup>54</sup> Hypericum and Solomon's Seal provided a green foil behind the 'broad stretches of primroses, bluebell, *Scilla campanulata* and daffodils, surfaced with *Vinca minor* blue & white, *Omphalodes verna*' and 'delicate ivies' bordering each side of a Woodland Walk. Between the Woodland Walk and a 'New Walk' were a large Chestnut tree, a bank of seven Poplars and a grove of Silver Birch

49. The bed pattern can be seen in the 1947 RAF aerial photograph. NMR: Air Photos Library, Sortie no.: RAF/CPE/UK/2040, Library no.: 614, Frame: 5092, National ref: TQ83870-TQ276870, scale: 1:4800 (27 April 1947).

50. This shape of pathways can be seen on the 1935-1936 OS Map enclosing woodland to the west of the Rose Garden and was determined by the field boundaries existing since 1863.

51. This informal planting hid from view the Kitchen Garden which Peto presumably re-sited here to replace the one lost to the Italian terraced gardens. The kitchen garden was enclosed by a privet hedge on all sides except that of the north-west where there was a wall. The wall is marked on the 1951 OS Map, see Camden Local Studies: 1:1250 OS Map, 1951, Plan TQ2887SW & 1985 Land Registry Title Number: NGL517259.

52. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: PA992/1(2), Harold Peto, c.1914, scale 1/6" to 1 foot.

53. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: PA992/1(5), Watercolour, Harold Peto, November 1914, scale 1/6" to 1 foot. The path labelled 'New walk' in the presentation plan was a continuation of the path skirting the western boundary of the garden, with a 'Woodland Walk' splitting off to the north. Peto suggested a screen of Austrian firs along the northern boundary with 'Hillside' and a Laurel Hedge on the western boundary, with a continuous screen of *Rhododendron ponticum* in front.

54. Now *Danae racemose*.

41. RIBA Drawings Collection: Watercolour ref.: PA993/1(1), Harold Peto, October 1913, scale 1/4" to 1 foot. The north wall of the Middle Terrace garden is labelled 'New Wall' above 'present wall' in the elevation of this section of the gazebo. It should also be noted that this wall does meet the Rose Garden dividing wall slightly before its end, allowing space for the gazebo to slot into, had it been built.

42. The entire Rose Garden is Listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-19015, date of listing: 9 October 1998.

43. The pergola could be directly entered from the Middle Terrace through an opening in the wall in the south-east corner, and could be exited from the north-west corner straight into the parkland, down a short stairway.

44. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: PA992/1(1), Harold Peto, c.1914, Pergola - scale 1/8", Woodland - scale 1/16".

45. Now *Fallopia baldschuanicum*, common name: Russian Vine.

46. Now *Campsis radicans*.

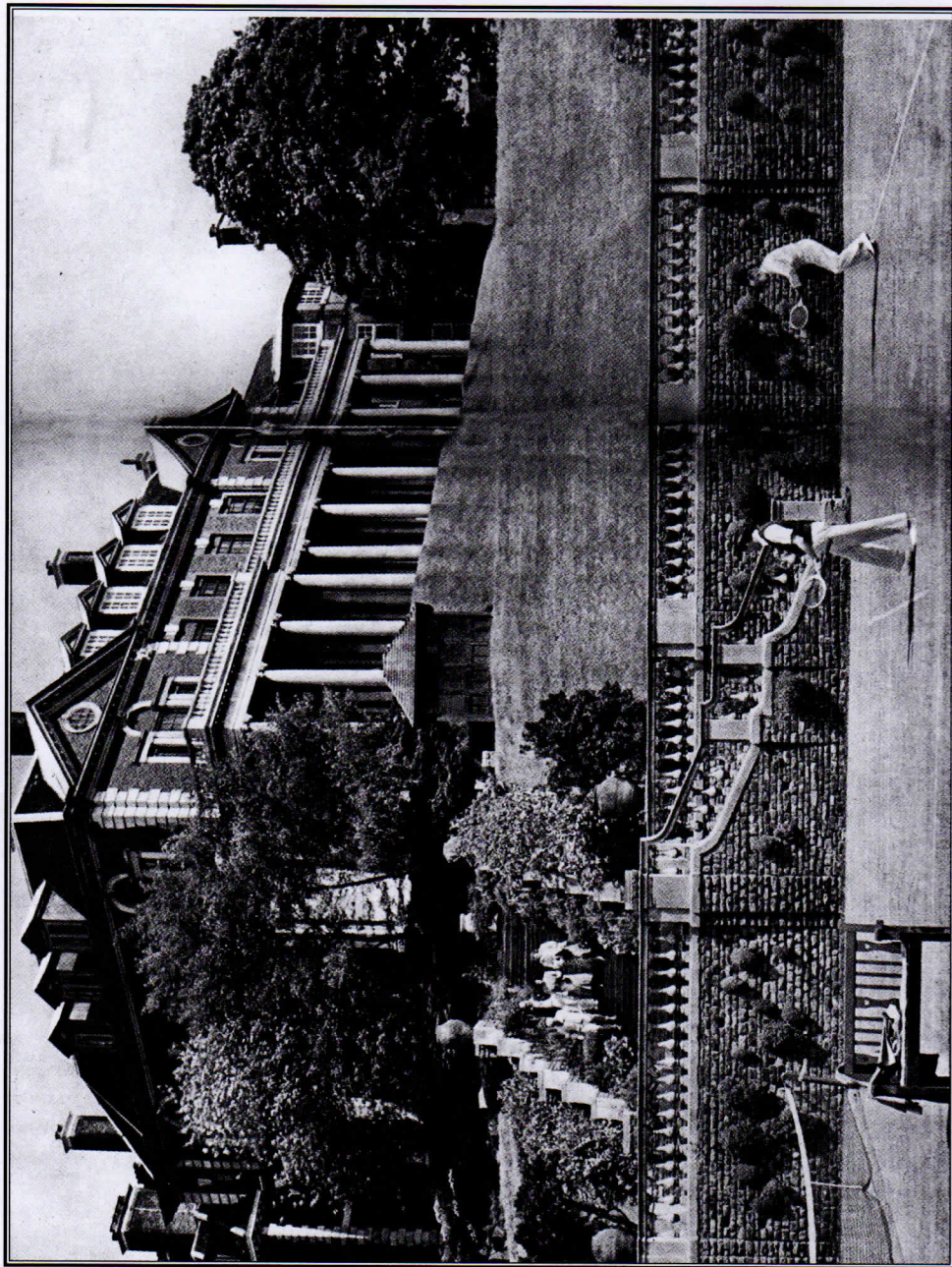
47. Shaw, 'Witanhurst - Highgate's Great Enigma' 1992, *op. cit.*, p.10.

48. Recollection of Antoinette Pernetta-Crosfield, first wife of Paul Crosfield, resident at Witanhurst 1954-1960.



15. South Front of the Tennis Pavilion, Witanhurst, 2006 (PHOTOGRAPH KRISTINA CLODE)





16. The Grand Staircase from the Lawn Tennis Courts, 1950  
'Judges played Tennis Internationals at Lady Crosfield's House in Highgate', *The Tatler and Bystander*, 14 June 1950  
(COURTESY MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY)

under-planted with Bracken. Clumps of flowering shrubs occupied the central space including fragrant Lilacs and Philadelphus, together with Weigela, Spiraea, *Berberis thunbergii*, *Forsythia suspensa*, *Hypericum henryi*, *Polygonum sachalinensis*<sup>55</sup> and *Tamarix hispida* 'Aestivalis'. Peto left an 'open glade' through these shrubs to lead the eye, through the ornamental woodland, to a 'view' of the Rose Garden colonnade in its elevated position to the south-east.

To the east of the woodland areas was a wide expanse of meadow,<sup>56</sup> at the northern end of which was a level tennis lawn created pre-1889<sup>57</sup> and expanded to two courts by 1893.<sup>58</sup> Peto built a classical open loggia brick pavilion with paired Ionic columns and a hipped mansard roof on the north side of the courts.<sup>59</sup> It was in poor condition in 2006 (*fig. 15*). Two of Peto's original plans for this pavilion exist: one dated October 1913 entitled 'Loggia by Tennis'<sup>60</sup> and the other a watercolour dated May 1914, which is closest to the final execution.<sup>61</sup>

To the east of the tennis lawn Peto created a grand Italianate stairway aligned from the north-west corner of the mansion to the centre of the lawn tennis courts.<sup>62</sup> Elegant stone balustrade, in poor repair by 2006, tops the imposing retaining walls and terrace alongside the lawn courts, opening to a central viewing platform from which a diverging balustraded staircase descends to the courts. Peto softened the expanse of retaining wall with pockets of alpine plants like Aubrieta, dotted along its length (*fig. 16*).

55. Now *Fallopia sachalinensis*.

56. Originally part of Home and Cooks Fields in 1801 and relatively unaltered since those days, with their original dividing boundary still separating the upper meadow from the lower, see Camden Local Studies: John Tompson, *A Plan of the Parish of St. Pancras situate in the County of Middlesex* (1801), sheet 2, scale: 3 chains to an inch, ref.: 85.244. Since at least 1863 a circuitous walk of the upper meadow had been in place, rounding its southern end and heading back up the slope to the mansion.

57. Camden Local Studies: Debenham, Tewson, Faremer and Bridgewater, *Sale Catalogue of Parkfield* (8 October 1889), Heal Collection ref.: A IV 16.

58. Camden Local Studies: 25" OS Maps, sheet II.9, 1893-1894.

59. London Borough of Camden: Ecclestone, Appendix A. The pavilion is listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-8715, date of listing: 9 October 1998.

60. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: PA993/1(2), Harold Peto, October 1913, scale 1/2" to 1 foot.

61. RIBA Drawings Collection: ref.: PA993/1(3), Watercolour, Harold Peto, May 1914, scale 1/4" to 1 foot. The main difference between them is the treatment of the window dressings and a reduction in the height of ground to architrave from 11 to 9 feet.

62. Listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-8725, date of listing: 14 May 1974.

Opposite the tennis court viewing platform, a 'Grand Staircase' of twenty-nine stone steps ascends the steep bank to a crazy-paved circular enclosure located just below the north-west corner of the mansion. A stepped rusticated stone block wall with curved dressed-stone copings flanks the staircase, with piers at the top, centre and bottom, which once supported large old oil jars. Between the walls and stone steps are a series of stepped flowerbeds enclosed by stone slabs on edge. At the bottom a semicircular crazy-paved platform is embraced by curved walls, terminated by a pair of piers originally surmounted by oil jars. Either side, bordering the terrace walkway, Peto designed long herbaceous borders bounded by brick walls to the rear and sides.

Peto's planting plan survives for the 'Grand Staircase' and the flanking herbaceous beds on the terrace (*fig. 17*). The stepped beds either side of the main stairway were mirror planted with a predominance of late summer to autumn flowering perennials of mainly yellow tones including *Rudbeckia speciosa*, Golden Rod, Rue, Achillea and *Helenium autumnale* var. *pumilum*, with a flash of crimson provided by *Helenium* 'Riverton'. Edging plants included Santolina with its aromatic glaucous foliage and Othonnopsis or *Saxifraga ligulata* 'Purpurescens'.<sup>63</sup> Structural plants were located alongside the oil jars, with 'bushes' at the top of the staircase and dramatic groups of three Yuccas at the middle and bottom. Bordering the terrace Peto designed a summer-long display of colourful herbaceous flowers. Red Lychnis, scarlet Salvia, *Penstemon* 'George Home' and Oriental Poppies sizzled with the yellows of *Rudbeckia speciosa*, *Helenium*, Golden Rod and African Marigolds. Cooling blue *Aster amellus*, *Iris pallida* var. *dalmatica*, Nepeta, Delphinium and Salvia provided respite from the hot colours, whilst drama was provided at the centre of the bed with a large group of *Helenium* 'Sun of Garden' teamed with Oriental Poppies and large leafed tropical Canna either side. White Everlasting Peas clothed the surrounding walls and structural 'bushes' were planted in the corners of the beds.

63. Syn. *Bergenia f. ligulata*



Later the staircase and terrace planting appears to have been modified, probably to bring forward the main flowering period to early June to coincide with Lady Crosfield's annual pre-Wimbledon tennis tournament attended by high society.<sup>64</sup> The first of these parties was not held until the summer of 1923 so Peto would not have had this in mind when designing the original scheme. A photograph of the Duchess of York and Lady Crosfield on the Grand Staircase in the early 1930s shows beautiful spires of Delphiniums and Lupins dominating the new planting, with groups of coarse foliage *Bergenia* providing textural contrast to the display.<sup>65</sup> Flowering shrubs were also planted outside the flanking walls of the staircase, softening transition to the turf banks either side and effectively widening the expanse of the staircase. These shrubs do not appear on Peto's planting plan and hence were probably not his specification. In 1951 colourful Lupins continued to be part of the planting scheme and bedding plants such as bright pink *Petunias* edged the circular platform at the top of the stairs, where Princess Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth II) and Lady Crosfield were photographed during a pre-Wimbledon tennis party at Witanhurst.<sup>66</sup> The planting in the terrace beds was changed to a predominance of flowering spires, such as *Delphinium*, with an edging of *Nepeta*.<sup>67</sup>

Peto could have continued the staircase straight up to the house from the circular platform, but he instead opted to send the York stone flagged path south, along the edge of the existing steep grass bank.<sup>68</sup> He made this the principal route to and from the lawn tennis courts to enable guests to admire the grand mansion set above the smooth lawn to the east

and to the west the magnificent view, as extolled by Percy Cane:

...the central turf which extends, like a stretch of country park or meadowland, into the valley, and carries the eye in one broad sweep to the heights of Ken Wood beyond. So near to London it is an exceptional site.<sup>69</sup>

Sir Arthur purchased land to the north and east of Witanhurst in c.1929, prompting a new wave of garden works. He commissioned the architects John A. Seely (1899-1963) and Paul Paget (1901-1985) to build a grand entrance on the east side of the mansion.<sup>70</sup> He also employed the garden designer and author Percy Cane (1881-1976) to create a garden on a rectangular plot of land to the north of the mansion, which became known as the 'East Garden'. Cane had decided to become a garden architect in 1919 following a visit to Easton Lodge, Essex, where the Italianate and Japanese gardens designed by Harold Peto had impressed him to such an extent that he decided to follow in his footsteps.<sup>71</sup> By 1929 Cane was one of the most sought-after garden designers of his day, having completed commissions at Llannerch Park, North Wales (1927-9); Ivy House, Hampstead (1926); Hascombe Court, Godalming (1928-1929) and Bodens Ride, Ascot (1929).<sup>72</sup> Cane considered the 'harmonious relation of the garden to the house' and 'to the surrounding scenery' to be of paramount importance, advocating 'the inclusion of formal terraces and gardens suitable to the character of the house' in relation and contrast 'with beautifully balanced glades and planting'.<sup>73</sup> In this Peto and Cane would have been in agreement, and it is perhaps this close alignment in design ethos that led Sir Arthur to select Percy Cane.

64. Domini's pre-Wimbledon tennis party, held in aid of charity, attracted a veritable 'Who's Who' of the day both as players and spectators. It continued right up to 1961 during which time many of the international Wimbledon amateur tennis stars of the day played exhibition matches on Witanhurst's two grass courts. An American tournament was also held simultaneously on the two hard courts in which professional players partnered illustrious celebrities. See Lady Domini Crosfield, 'The Crosfield Exhibition Matches', *World Tennis* (November 1953), pp.25-28 & Fothergill-Crosfield 1980, *op. cit.*, p.523.

65. Fothergill-Crosfield 1980, *op. cit.*, p.524.

66. Anon., 'The Princess goes to a Tennis Party', *Picture Post*, Vol.52, No.8 (25 August 1951), p.25.

67. Fothergill-Crosfield 1980, *op. cit.*, p.523 & Anon., 'Judges played Tennis Internationals at Lady Crosfield's House in Highgate', *The Tatler and Bystander* (14 June 1950), p.563.

68. The steep bank had been built out and straightened off by Walter Scrimgeour c.1893, see Camden Local Studies: 25" OS Maps, sheet 11.9, 1893-1894.

69. Percy Cane, *Garden Design of Today* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p.149.

70. T.F.T. Baker & M. A. Hicks, 'Hornsey, including Highgate: Highgate', *The Victoria County History of Middlesex*, vol.6, T. F. T. Baker, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.138 & C. Aslet, 'An Interview with the late Paul Paget 1901-1985', *Thirties Society Journal*, no.6 (1987), pp.16-19.

71. R. Webber, *Percy Cane, Garden Designer* (London: The Garden Book Club, 1976), p.18.

72. Charlotte Johnson, 'Cane, Stephen Percival [Percy] (1881-1976) garden designer and writer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press 2004).

73. Percy Cane, 'Modern Gardens British and Foreign', C. Geoffrey Holme & Shirley B. Wainwright eds., *Special Winter number of "The Studio" 1926-27* (London: Herbert Reich, 1927), pp.1-2.

Cane described the making of this 'small old-world garden' in his book *Garden Design of Today* (1936), which included a plan and a perspective view (fig. 18).<sup>74</sup> Initially an unpromising 'uneven and steep' site of 'rough grass...overshadowed by old fruit trees', Cane drew inspiration for his design from the old brick Dorchester House walls 'mellowed with age', which enclosed the garden to the east, creating a formal geometric flower garden of stepped red brick basket-weave pathways, in which the flower colours seemed to 'take on added value' from the old walls that formed their backdrop. Interspersed with areas of lawn and fruit trees were flowerbeds 'filled with scarlet dahlias...crimson monarda, red geums and yellow heleniums, the grey-foliaged *Senecio Greyii* with its yellow flowers, apricot hemerocallis, and at the back of them the tall spikes of...delphiniums'.<sup>75</sup> At the centre of the garden Cane placed a brick and stone octagonal birdbath on an octagonal brick-paved area, around which was planted 'a blue garden' of *Delphinium* and 'ivory white' Lilies, edged by *Nepeta mussinii*.<sup>76</sup> In the north-east corner, in the angle formed by the enclosing walls, Cane built a 'garden shelter' from which to admire the view to Kenwood.<sup>77</sup>

Witanhurst was one of the last commissions of Peto's career by which time he had developed an Italianate style, strongly architectural in character incorporating 'old buildings or fragments of Masonry' to 'carry one's mind back to the past', in combination with a 'just proportion' of flowers and planting.<sup>78</sup> He aimed to recreate the 'great charm' of the old gardens of Italy, which he admired during many visits, whilst also incorporating other influences from his travels

elsewhere in Europe and beyond.<sup>80</sup> Many of the features at Witanhurst were recurring Peto themes, developments of his favourite architectural devices, refined through earlier commissions and adapted to Witanhurst's site and specific requirements.

Peto's finest gardens were on hillside sites where he created or developed existing terracing linked by dramatic axial stairways aligned to fine views framed by statuary, ornaments and planting. Several of his gardens contained staircases similar to Witanhurst's 'Grand Staircase' utilising rustic stone retaining walls with dressed stone coping and crazy-paved steps or intersections. In c.1904 at Villa Maryland, Cap Ferrat, on the French Riviera, Peto created a long shallow stepped stairway leading down a central avenue to a circular paved platform (see fig. 22). Sun-loving glaucous leaved plants such as Lavender and *Echium*,<sup>81</sup> punctuated with groups of *Yucca*, encroached on the stairway from stair-side beds in a similar style to Witanhurst. The stairway leading down to the Water Garden at Buscot Park, Berkshire,<sup>82</sup> created by Peto c.1911<sup>83</sup> also incorporated a circular platform, pre-empting that included at the top of Witanhurst's stairway. Peto utilised curved stone copings at the stepped intersections of the Buscot stairway's retaining walls, a technique he had originally used on the lower section of the hanging garden stairway in his own gardens at Iford Manor, Wiltshire, pre-1907 and went on to repeat on a larger scale at Witanhurst.

Peto's original design for the staircase at Buscot had oil jars decorating the coping at the stepped intersections, but these were not included in the final composition,<sup>84</sup> although he did use oil jars to ornament other areas of the water garden. Two huge oil jars bought by

74. Cane, *Garden Design of Today* 1936, *op. cit.*, pp.149-152.

75. This old brick wall was part of the c.1600 supporting boundary wall to the terraced gardens of Dorchester House, see Percy Lovell & William McBeath Marcham, eds., 'The Village of Highgate: The Parish of St. Pancras, Part 1', *Survey of London*, vol. xvii, (London: London County Council, 1936), pp.87-89. The wall is listed Grade II, ref.: 798-1-16105, date of listing: 14 May 1974.

76. Cane, *Garden Design of Today* 1936, *op. cit.*, pp.149-152.

77. *Ibid.*, pp.149-152.

78. It had a pan-tiled roof supported by brick piers and may have been fitted with electric lighting, heating and telephone, see Webber, *op. cit.*, pp.176-177.

79. Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, *op. cit.*, p.32.

80. Peto's travel diaries from 1880-1898, held at the Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office, reveal numerous trips to Italy, other European countries, and beyond to Egypt, Greece, America and Japan. His evocative descriptions of architecture, art, landscape and horticulture reveal the lasting impression these countries made on him, see Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office: Harold Peto and the Peto Family: Travel Diaries (1880-1898), ref.: 2780/1-13 & Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, *op. cit.*, pp.18-19.

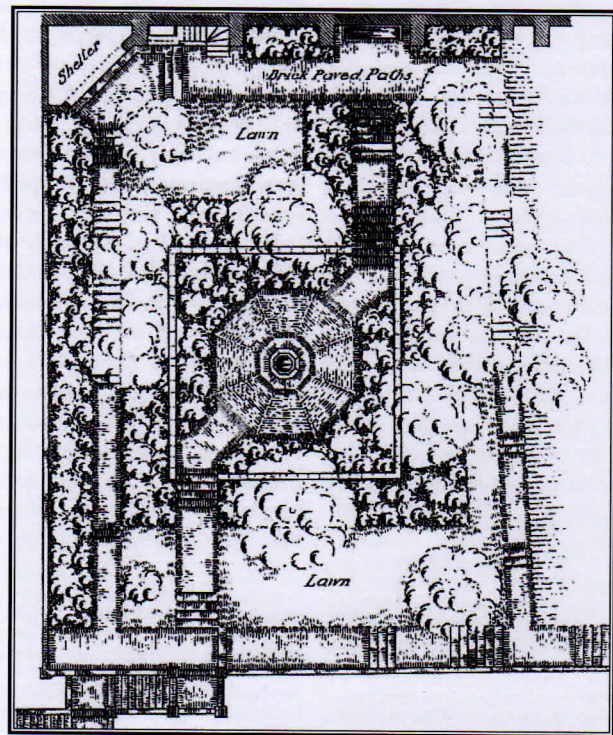
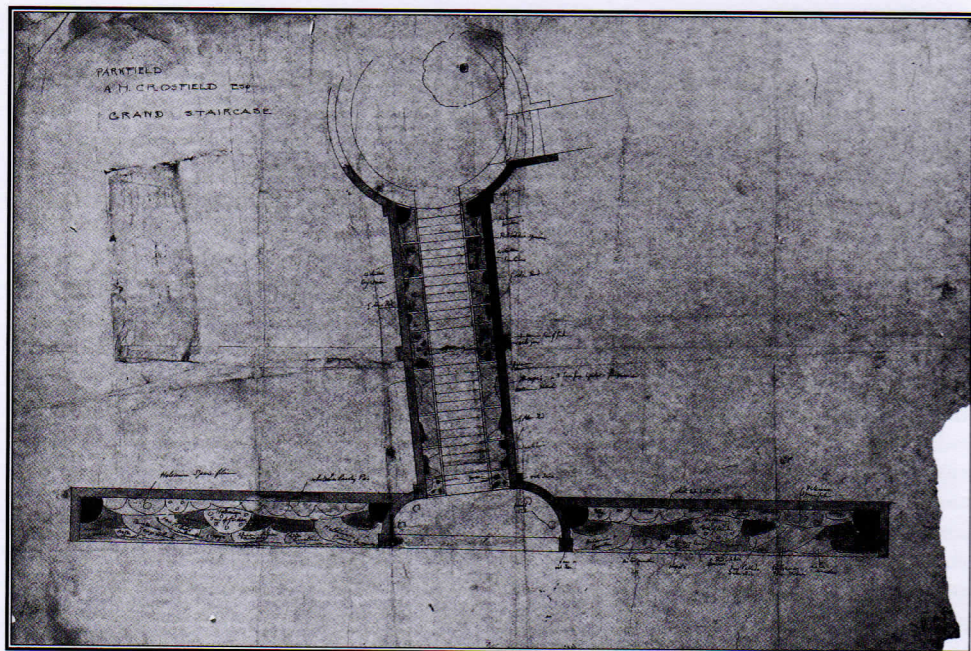
81. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Maryland - II. Alpes Maritimes', *Country Life*, vol. xxviii (10 December 1910), p.862.

82. Now in Oxfordshire.

83. Anon., 'The Gardens at Buscot Park', *Architectural Review*, vol. 33 (April 1913), p.75.

84. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, *op. cit.*, p.79.





17. Harold Peto, *Design for the gardens at Parkfield (now Witanhurst House), West Hill, Highgate, London, for Sir Arthur Crosfield*: plan of the 'grand staircase' with border planting instructions, 1913 (© RIBA DRAWINGS COLLECTION, RIBA41586)

18. Percy Cane, *Plan of the East Garden, Witanhurst, c.1929* (REPRODUCED FROM PERCY CANE, *GARDEN DESIGN OF TODAY* (NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, 1936), p.150)

Peto from Nice<sup>85</sup> were placed on the retaining wall coping either side of the base of the Iford stairway and pairs of oil jars at intervals also decorated the coping of the long imposing staircase at the Isola Bella, Cannes, created by Peto in 1910 and stretching from the base of the hill through an oval colonnade up to a garden house (fig. 19). Lining either side of the staircase, between the treads and the retaining walls, were flower borders punctuated by Yucca. Peto repeated both the oil jars and the flower borders with Yuccas on the Witanhurst 'Grand Staircase'.

Another feature Peto often included in his garden designs was classical stone colonnades or pergolas. At Witanhurst the constructional detail of the Rose Garden's Tuscan stone-columned pergola with oak beams (see fig. 13) closely followed one created by Peto at High Wall, Oxfordshire, c.1912 (fig. 20).<sup>86</sup> Peto had also used a similar construction for the long pergola at West Dean Park, West Sussex, in 1911-1912.<sup>87</sup> Beneath the West Dean pergola Peto laid 'York stone map-paving',<sup>88</sup> known today as crazy paving, with planting borders either side for climbers and herbaceous plants, as at Witanhurst.

At Witanhurst the Rose Garden pergola curved as a single colonnade around an exedra shaped sunken pond, lined with blue mosaic. Peto later designed a semi-circular exedra of coupled columns surrounding a Roman bath at the Villa Salles, Beaulieu, French Riviera, sometime before 1926.<sup>89</sup> Peto had previously used the combination of semi-circular formal pool embraced by curved pergolas at Villa Maryland c.1904, Hartham Park, Wiltshire between 1903-1907 and Bridge House in 1906

85. Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.39.

86. Both pergolas have the same Tuscan capitals topping their stone columns, supporting carved oak pads with wooden running beams above, on which lay the overhead cross beams. The base of the columns also match, sitting on a brick parapet with stone coping, with a narrow planting border running alongside. Tuscan columns were also a feature of the double colonnade with stone cornice at the west end of the great terrace at Iford Manor, made sometime between 1907-1913, see Whalley, ed. Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., pp.11 & 36.

87. However the column capitals are Doric-style with a hollowed abacus. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., pp.42-44 & 47.

88. *Ibid.*, pp.44 & 47.

89. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., p.153 & date from E.H.M. Cox, 'The Villa Salles, Beaulieu, A. M.', *Country Life*, vol. LX, No.1561 (18 December 1926), p.964.

(fig. 21).<sup>90</sup> In each of these cases Peto built a classical pavilion at the centre of the exedra and embracing pergola, as a termination and focal point to a central axis. At Hartham and Bridge House this central axis had been a canal, but at the Villa Maryland, in a similar style to the Rose Garden at Witanhurst, it was a path that passed through a quartered formal parterre (fig. 22).

At Witanhurst the blue mosaic lining of the fountain in the upper Italian terraced garden and exedra pond in the Rose Garden was another recurring Peto feature. Similar blue mosaic pool linings appear at Iford; West Dean; Isola Bella and Inacullin, Garinish Island, County Cork, Ireland, created in 1911. Peto liked the way the blue glass tesserae tinted the water colour<sup>91</sup> and his influence was probably the Moorish fountains with 'old tiles' he had seen in Tangier<sup>92</sup> and in the courtyards of the Alhambra,<sup>93</sup> during his travels. The Witanhurst fountain on the upper terrace contained a lead *amorino* centrepiece, and this too was a feature seen elsewhere in Peto's gardens. At Maryland a lead or bronze *amorino* formed the centrepiece to a marble 'tazza' fountain in the cloister<sup>94</sup> and at Villa Rosemary, Cap Férrat, c.1910-1911, a bronze *amorino* spouted water into a marble tank on the terrace.<sup>95</sup> Stone *amorini* sculptures also regularly appeared in Peto's gardens including the Isola Bella, Hinton Admiral and Iford. In fact the 'absence of a host of leaden *amorini* at High Wall' struck Lawrence Weaver in 1917 as a 'novelty and something of a relief'.<sup>96</sup>

Elegant garden houses were often a feature of Peto's gardens and were usually based on Italian or Spanish models, or a hybrid of the two.<sup>97</sup> Pavilions with open loggias were included by the exedra ponds at Maryland, Hartham and Bridge House (as seen in fig. 21). At Iford Manor Peto created a loggia attached

90. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Bridge House, Weybridge', *Country Life*, vol. xxiv, No.616 (24 October 1908), p.565.

91. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., p.43.

92. Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office: 2780/1 - Peto Diary: Tangiers, 1880, p.3.

93. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., p.136.

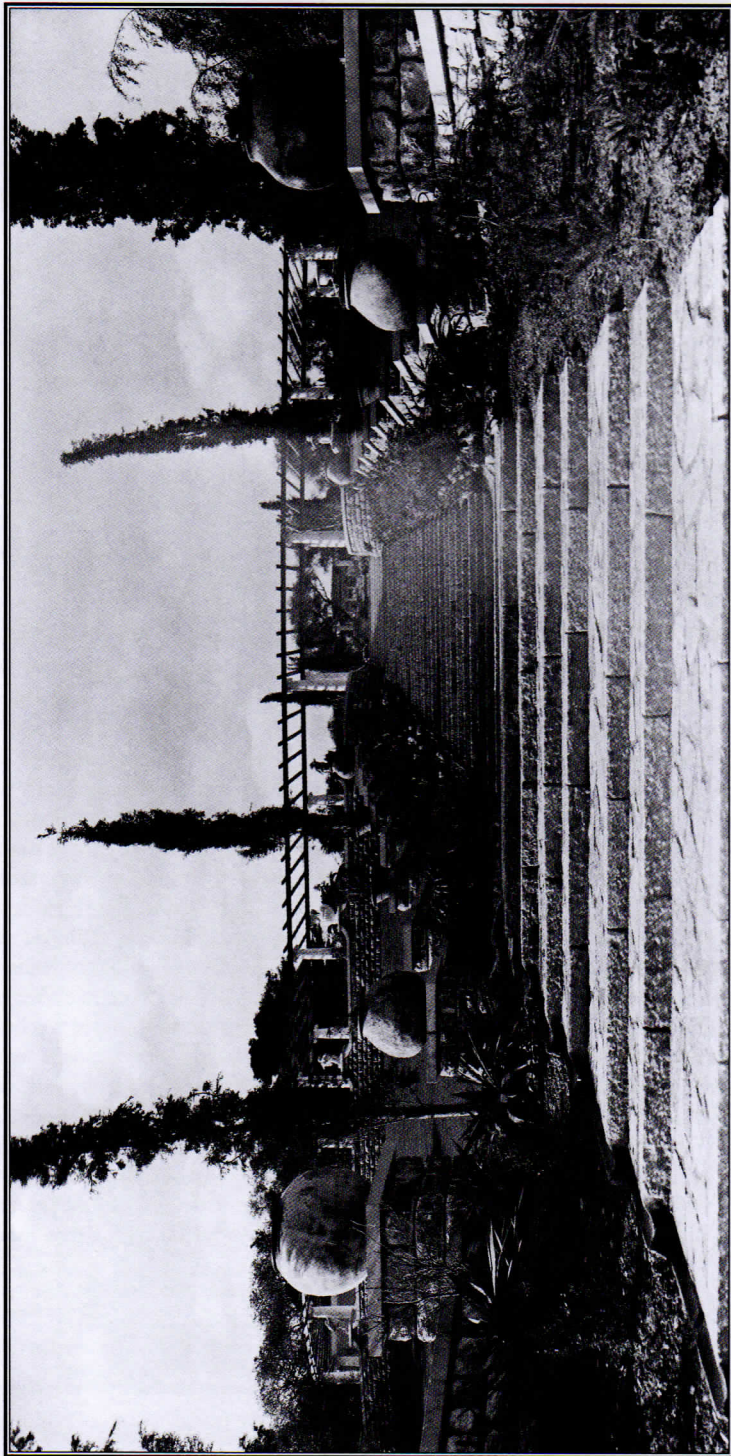
94. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Maryland - I. Alpes Maritimes', *Country Life*, vol. xxviii (3 December 1910), p.820.

95. 'T.' (Avray H. Tipping), 'Villa Rosemary, Alpes Maritimes', *Country Life*, vol. xxxi, No.795 (30 March 1912), p.474.

96. Lawrence Weaver, 'The Garden at High Wall, Oxford, Designed by Mr. Peto', *Country Life, Supplement* (17 November 1917), p.4.

97. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., p.188.





19. Staircase at the Isola Bella, Cannes, 1911

(REPRODUCED FROM ANON., 'ISOLA BELLA, CANNES', COUNTRY LIFE, VOL. XXIX, NO.743, 1 APRIL 1911. © COUNTRY LIFE)

to the house pre-1907<sup>98</sup> and the 'Casita' garden building c.1913, which most closely resembles the tennis pavilion at Witanhurst (see fig. 15).<sup>99</sup>

Witanhurst is one of the only Peto gardens for which several original planting plans still exist, for both formal and informal areas. They are not only invaluable to an understanding of the Witanhurst garden as a whole, but also to relate back to the general garden design principles outlined by Peto in the *Boke of Iford*, which he wrote during the First World War.<sup>100</sup> In the *Boke* Peto said that 'for a garden to contain the highest development of beauty it must have a combination of Architecture and plants...in just proportion',<sup>101</sup> and at Witanhurst this is clearly the case, as within the architectural framework of the formal gardens ample provision for flowers and shrubs had been made.

Peto also establishes the importance of form in the *Boke*; he does not like herbaceous borders to run 'riot in masses of colour irrespective of form'<sup>102</sup> and at Witanhurst he ensures the formal planting beds are clearly defined, bounded by walls, slabs on edge and terrace walkways, although he did allow the lines to blur with controlled 'overgrowth' of plants over paving, wall and pergola. He also plants 'bushes' or *Yucca* at key positions in each border to provide a solid framework for the perennial planting. This skill was recognised by Gertrude Jekyll in Peto's planting of the Italian sunken garden at Easton Lodge, commenting that his use of 'a good stiffening of shrubby growths symmetrically placed' to offset the 'importance and solidity of the stonework' resulted in 'gardening and architecture working in intimate mutual intelligence – stimulating, supporting, and adorning each other'.<sup>103</sup>

Jekyll was a friend of Peto's and a great admirer of his work, considering his 'thorough knowledge of plants and keenly discerning perception of their best use' a valuable quality 'in connexion with his matchless work in garden design'.<sup>104</sup> She included many examples of Peto's works in both the 1918 and 1927 editions of *Garden Ornament*.<sup>105</sup> Peto also counted amongst his friends two other prominent plantspeople of the Edwardian age: Maria Theresa Earle<sup>106</sup> and William Robinson, who uncharacteristically praised Peto's summerhouse at Bridge House in the 1898 edition of *The English Flower Garden*.<sup>107</sup> Both Jekyll and Robinson gave Peto signed copies of several of their books and he clearly made use of them, underlining and making notes on numerous passages.<sup>108</sup>

At Witanhurst Jekyll's influence is clear to see in Peto's formal planting plans; he utilises many of her favourite plant varieties in similar combinations, such as 'scarlet penstemon, orange African marigold...dwarf scarlet salvia; *Helenium autumnale* var. *Pumilum*'.<sup>109</sup> Peto includes *Iris pallida* var. *dalmatica* in the main terrace planting, which Jekyll considers one of the few Irises that should be admitted to the flower border as it maintains 'its leaves in beauty to near the end of the year'.<sup>110</sup> Also included in this border are white Everlasting Peas planted behind Delphinium, just as Jekyll recommends, so they may be trained over their stems after flowering.<sup>111</sup> Of *Yuccas* Jekyll believes that 'no plants make a handsomer full-stop to any definite garden scheme', which is precisely how Peto uses them at Witanhurst, and in a grey border she recommends them used in combination with *Santolina* and *Rue*, just as Peto does on the Grand Staircase at

98. Avray H. Tipping, 'Iford Manor, Wiltshire, The Seat of Mr. H. A. Peto', *Country Life*, vol. xxii (28 September 1907), p.452.

99. The tennis pavilion at Witanhurst had an open loggia of three bays with a shallow-pitched roof, its design of coupled Ionic columns without arches, set into a long low elevation with enclosed outer bays and hipped slate roof resembles the 'Casita' at Iford Manor, see Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boke of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.21.

100. Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boke of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.5.

101. Harold A. Peto, *The Boke of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.32.

102. *Ibid.*, p.32.

103. Gertrude Jekyll, *Wall and Water Gardens*, 5th edn. (London: Country Life, 1913), p.177.

104. *Ibid.*, p.175.

105. Gertrude Jekyll, *Garden Ornament* (London: Country Life, 1918) & Gertrude Jekyll & Christopher Hussey, *Garden Ornament*, 2nd edn. (London: Country Life, 1927).

106. Mrs Earle regularly appears in Peto's visitors book, see Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office: Harold Peto and the Peto Family: *Herdon House and Iford Visitors' Book (1892-1932)*, ref.: 2780/31 & Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boke of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.20.

107. Whalley, *The Great Edwardian Gardens of Harold Peto 2007*, op. cit., p.96.

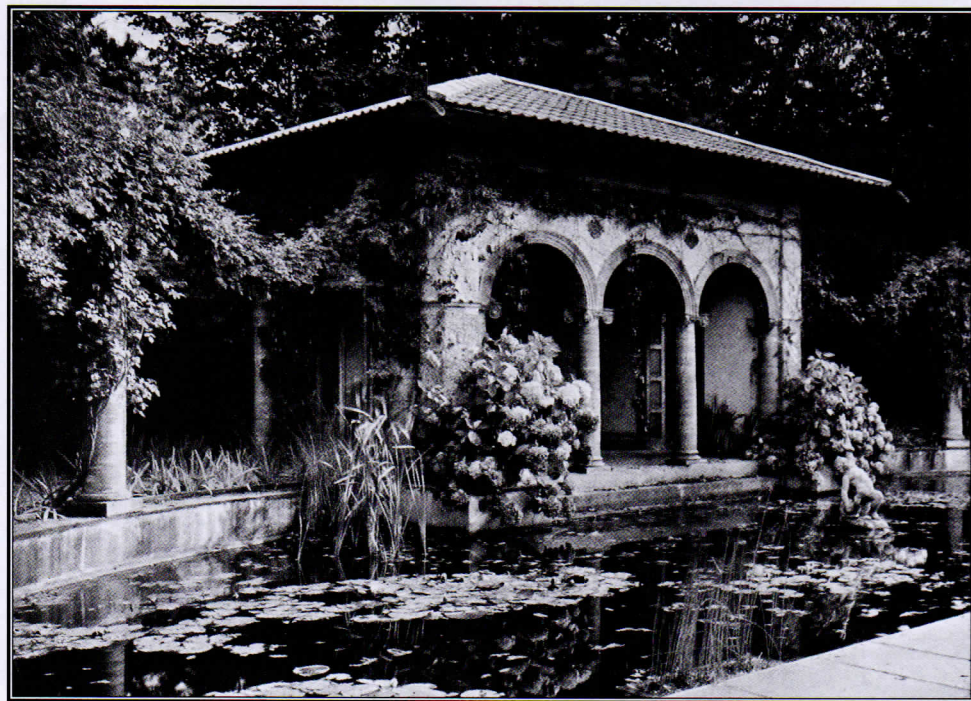
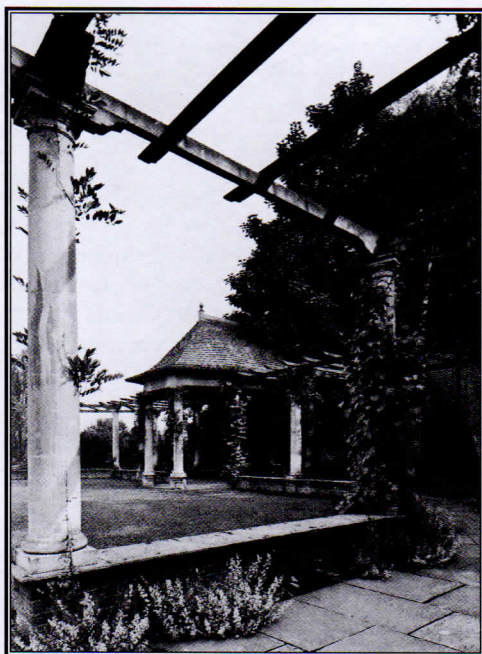
108. Graeme Moore, *Gardening Books from the Collection of Harold Peto* (Blackwood: Forest Printers Blackwood, 2015).

109. Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* (London: Frances Lincoln, 1988) [1st edn. 1914], p.94.

110. *Ibid.*, p.80.

111. *Ibid.*, p.73.





20. The Pergola at High Wall, Oxfordshire, 1917  
(REPRODUCED FROM LAWRENCE WEAVER, 'THE GARDEN AT HIGH WALL, OXFORD, DESIGNED BY MR. PETO',  
COUNTRY LIFE, SUPPLEMENT, 17 NOVEMBER 1917 © COUNTRY LIFE)

21. The Garden at Bridge House, Weybridge, 1913:  
Pavilion, exedra pond and embracing paired stone columns with creeper-draped chains at the head of the canal  
(COURTESY THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW)

Witanhurst.<sup>112</sup> Peto also edged the beds of the Middle Terrace with *Nepeta mussinii*, a plant that Jekyll considered could 'hardly be over-praised'.<sup>113</sup>

Robinson's influence<sup>114</sup> can be discerned in Peto's treatment of the informal areas at Witanhurst, where native woodland species mix with ornamental shrubs to create a wild, 'natural' effect, forming the transition from the formal gardens to the wider landscape. However, Peto's numerous emotive descriptions of cultivated and wild plants and their surroundings in his travel diaries confirm that he was also a plantsman in his own right.<sup>115</sup> He certainly gained inspiration from the plants he saw on his travels, incorporating them into his designs to 'evoke' the 'distant places...he loved'.<sup>116</sup> His use of Wisteria to climb over pergolas and loggias in many of his gardens, including Witanhurst, is one such example, as he frequently describes Wisteria sightings in his diaries, in both wild and pergola settings.<sup>117</sup>

Arthur and Domini Crosfield created the palatial Witanhurst mansion to entertain high society on a grand scale. Spectacular new gardens were required to provide a suitable classical setting for the 'Queen Anne' house, a beautiful venue for their tennis-oriented garden parties, and a showcase for the stunning panoramic view across Hampstead Heath to Kenwood and central London. The job demanded a high profile classical garden architect, experienced in dealing with hillside sites and able to redevelop existing garden features and blend a garden into its surroundings. For the Crosfields, Harold Peto was the obvious choice. Then at the height of his career, Peto was the epitome of French Riviera chic. The Crosfields, who were part of the Cannes elite, would have known of his stunning hillside Italianate gardens, which in many ways shared similar sites to Witanhurst.

112. Gertrude Jekyll, *Colour Schemes for the Flower Garden* op.cit., p.95.  
113. *Ibid.*, p.67.

114. Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.20.

115. Robin Whalley, 'The "Plantsman" of Iford Manor?', *Wiltshire Gardens Trust Journal*, No.31 (Spring, 1995), p.7.

116. Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., pp.21-22.

117. Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office: Peto Diary: Florence (1887), ref.: 2780/2, p.4 & Japan (1898), transcript - ref.: 2780/13, pp.35, 58 & 64.

Peto was also renowned for his sensitivity to his client's requirements and to a site's topography and relation with the wider landscape. All of these would have been important to Arthur who liked to romantically ponder Hampstead Heath and Kenwood's ancient past and its connections with his Witanhurst grounds.

To Peto it was important to let the 'landscape dominate the design'<sup>118</sup> and at Witanhurst he certainly made the most of the hillside position and magnificent views. Throughout the Witanhurst garden Peto created a network of pathways, leading the garden visitor through a wealth of varied experiences and moods. Beautifully engineered vistas made the most of the topography of the site and surrounding scenery. He left the dominating mansion to stand alone at the crest of the hill, with a wide expanse of lawn directly below, sending visitors around its edge to enable them to appreciate the full extent of the house whilst drawing them past the central vista of the Italian terraced gardens and on to appreciate the expansive views over Hampstead Heath to Kenwood, culminating in the axial Grand Staircase to the all-important lawn tennis courts. The enclosed formality of the impressive Italian terraced gardens led to the dappled shade, meandering walks and sensuous aromas of the ornamental woodland. Here a glade provided a view back to the sunlit Rose Garden colonnade, whilst the bright open parkland to the east beckoned the visitor towards the tennis pavilion and the impressive view of the stunning Italianate staircase back up to the mansion. It was indeed a marriage of art and nature.<sup>119</sup>

In his garden designs Peto did not feel the need to sweep aside all that had gone before. This, he summed up by his aphorism '*Le Meieux est l'ennemi du bien*', 'to leave what is good well alone'.<sup>120</sup> At Witanhurst he overlaid his design onto the bones of the pre-existing Parkfield garden. He seized the opportunity to create the Italian terraced gardens within the

118. Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.5.

119. Anon., 'Isola Bella, Cannes', *Country Life*, vol. xxix, No.743 (1 April 1911), p.456.

120. Written on the flyleaf to the *Boko of Iford* in 1897, Whalley, ed. 'Introduction: Harold Ainsworth Peto, 1854-1933', Harold A. Peto, *The Boko of Iford: Harold A. Peto from all the sources available in 1917*, op. cit., p.5.



framework of the original three-tiered kitchen garden and constructed the Grand Stairway to connect the previously terraced edge of the upper lawn to the tennis lawn below. He developed existing pathways in the area west of the Rose Garden, changing the planting to enhance the mood and smooth the transition to the wider landscape. Peto thus maintained the garden's historic connection with its past and gained the weight of historic association for his new design.

Witanhurst, as one of the last commissions of Peto's career, exhibits his final manifestation of dramatic stairway, colonnaded pergola, apsidal pool, leaden *amorino* sculpture and classical pavilion. These features have been shown to be typical of Peto's work, refined from previous garden commissions to suit the existing topography and landscaping of the Witanhurst site and the requirements of his patron, Sir Arthur Crosfield.

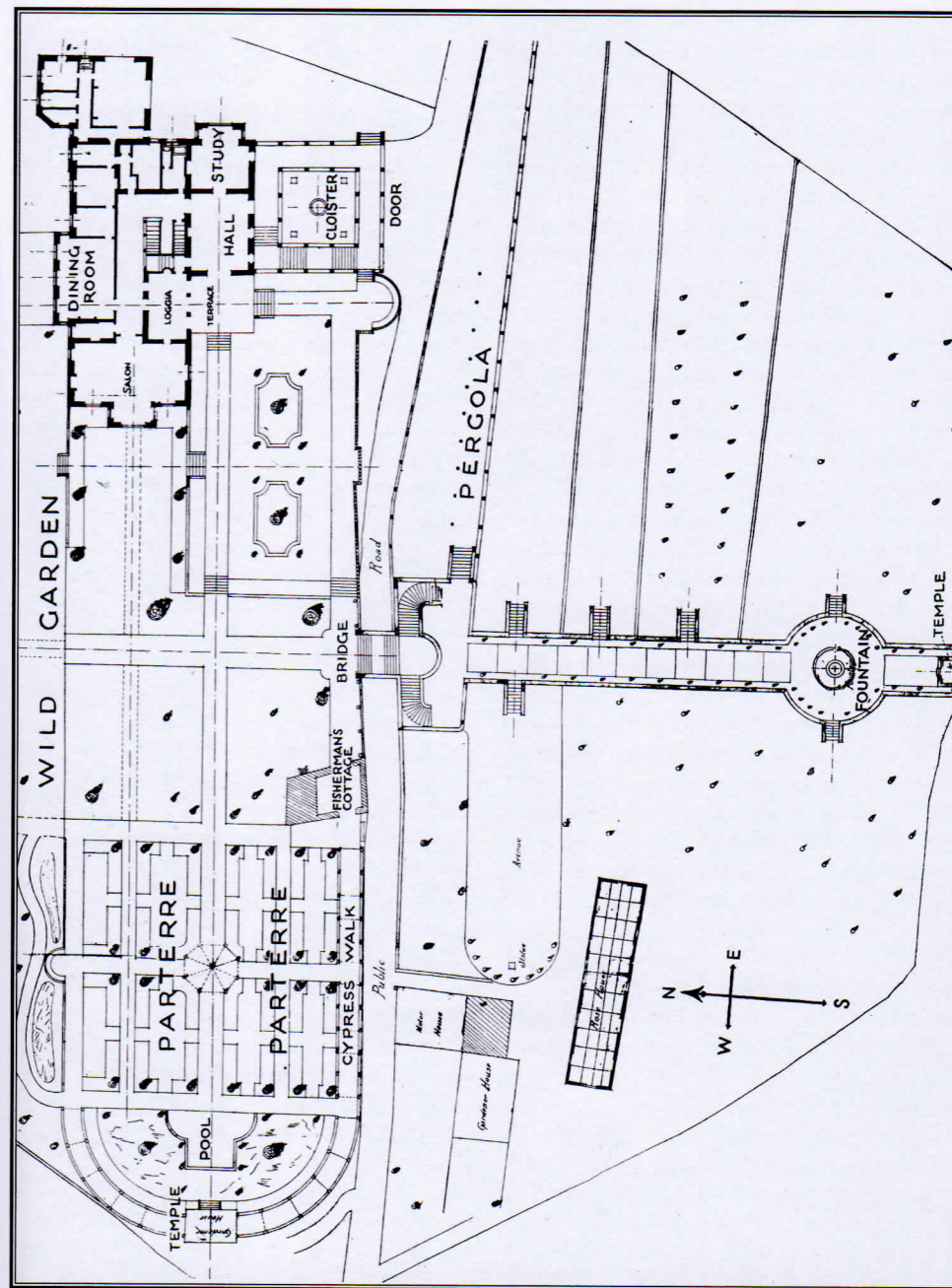
The unique survival of several of Peto's planting plans for Witanhurst offer a rare insight into his planting style, horticultural knowledge and influences. His formal planting of herbaceous beds with managed 'overgrowth' held in check by a shrub framework, clearly owes much to Gertrude Jekyll. Jekyll in turn acknowledged Peto's abilities as a plantsman, praising his balanced combinations of form and texture in relation to his architectural schemes. His plans for the ornamental woodland glade show a combination of native and exotic planting, and suggest influence from William Robinson and the 'natural' Japanese gardens from his travels. Peto is often considered, first and foremost, a designer of architectural garden schemes and the existence of these Witanhurst planting plans confirm his equal talents as a horticulturist.

The later c.1929 addition to the Witanhurst garden of the 'East Garden' by Percy Cane was constructed on a new plot of land, completely separate and out of sight from Peto's scheme. Cane's garden, though formal in layout, was not architecturally grandiose and was intended to have a simple 'old world' feeling, offering a setting for gentle contemplation and admiration of the Kenwood view. It had little impact on Peto's garden, but is an interesting illustration of Cane's design theory for small gardens.

Although overgrown and in poor repair, much of the architectural fabric of the Witanhurst garden remained intact in 2006 and ripe for restoration. The loss of the lower parkland and Peto's ornamental woodland to housing development is unfortunate, but the grandeur of the original scheme and the wider setting can still be discerned. Peto's original planting plans for the Middle Terrace and pergola of the Italian gardens and the Grand Stairway would enable a complete recreation of his vision for these areas. However it has been shown that most of the iconic photographs of the Grand Stairway contain a different planting scheme to Peto's and there would be a strong case to restore this in preference to his original design. These photographs picture some of the most famous personalities of the day, including the most senior members of the British royal family, enjoying the Witanhurst gardens during Lady Crosfield's famous pre-Wimbledon tennis parties. This event contributed to Witanhurst's reputation as 'one of the most famous of London's mansions',<sup>121</sup> and this highly decorative planting scheme, in place far longer than Peto's, perhaps provides a more accurate historical image of this area of the garden.

Witanhurst mansion and garden have been frozen in time, a manifestation of Edwardian opulence and high society ambition. Sited at the top of the Highgate ridge, the mansion and its wooded grounds form part of a well-loved view from Hampstead Heath. Peto's garden at Witanhurst has great significance as one of his last gardens and the final development of many of his iconic recurring features. The hillside site enabled him to create a dramatic hanging garden with parallels to his famous French Riviera compositions, which would have been so familiar to his clients, the Crosfields. It is one of the only gardens for which several of his original planting plans survive, offering the opportunity to fully comprehend his vision. As an important Peto garden, an iconic venue for the Crosfield's famous tennis parties and a feature of the Highgate landscape, these gardens deserve to be restored.

121. Anon., 'Obituary: Sir Arthur Crosfield', *The Times*, 23 September 1938, p.14.



22. Plan of the Villa Maryland, showing formal parterre, pool and temple to the west, and the long staircase and circular platform to the south, 1910 (REPRODUCED FROM 'T.' (AVRAY H. TIPPING), 'MARYLAND - II. ALPES MARITIMES', COUNTRY LIFE, VOL. XXVIII, 10 DECEMBER 1910 © COUNTRY LIFE)