

thirty years the latter extended the farmhouse and made various improvements to create a large, self-sufficient estate, suitable for a country gentleman.

In 1852 the property was bought by one Mr Edlmann, and in whose family it remained until 1948. Edlmann changed the name of the mansion to *Hawkwood*, after the wood on the estate (subsequently called Pond Wood). In 1927 Col. F.J.F. Edlmann, eldest son of Mr Edlmann, bought 47 acres of woodland west of 'Willett Wood' (part of Petts Wood) from his neighbour K.E. Chalmers in order to preserve the wood and the view and to secure the estate as a recreation area for the nearby villages of Chislehurst and Petts Wood.

In 1950, after the death of Col. Edlmann, the house and grounds were put on the market. The estate was sold in 1958 and was bought by Mr Robert Hall - on the recommendation of his wife Francesca - with the intention of presenting the property to the National Trust. The Trust, however, did not initially accept the estate as there was not an endowment for its future maintenance. When Mrs Hall was left with Hawkwood House after the death of her husband in 1958, plans were drawn up for the renovation of the old property with the intention of providing a home for Mrs Hall. But when the full extent of the neglected property's decay was finally discovered, Mrs Hall decided that the old mansion should be demolished. In 1960 work began on the construction of two new houses, Hawkwood and Hawkswing. Following the death of Mrs Hall, the properties were leased to tenants which gave the Trust close control of their maintenance, usage and management.

Large parts of the estate are open to the public, except for the grounds around the various buildings, including Hawkwood Garden.

It is thought that the name *Petts Wood* was given to the wood by William Pett, ship-builder for Queen Elizabeth I. The Woods which supplied timber for Pett's shipyards in Deptford, was let to the Pett family by Lord Wooton, who passed the ownership to his half-brother Lord Chesterfield in 1700. It was then sold in around 1790 to Herman Berens, a London merchant of Dutch origin, and stayed in the family until the 1920s.

Petts Wood is closely connected with William Willett, who in the early years of this

century fought a campaign for *daylight saving*, an idea originally intended to give people the chance to enjoy their summer evenings. Mr Willett had been a resident of Chislehurst and it is said that it was while riding in Petts Wood that he first thought of the idea of daylight saving.

When Petts Wood was advertised for sale in 1925, an association dedicated to the remembrance of William Willett's *Summer Time Act* proposed to purchase part of the Wood as a memorial to Willett. In 1927 the Wood was bought with public support and a memorial sundial, set on summer time, was erected.

Petts Wood was donated to the National Trust and opened as a Public Open Space. One part of the Wood was saved from the developers, and the remainder was bought by Col. Edlmann in 1927, who added it to his estate.

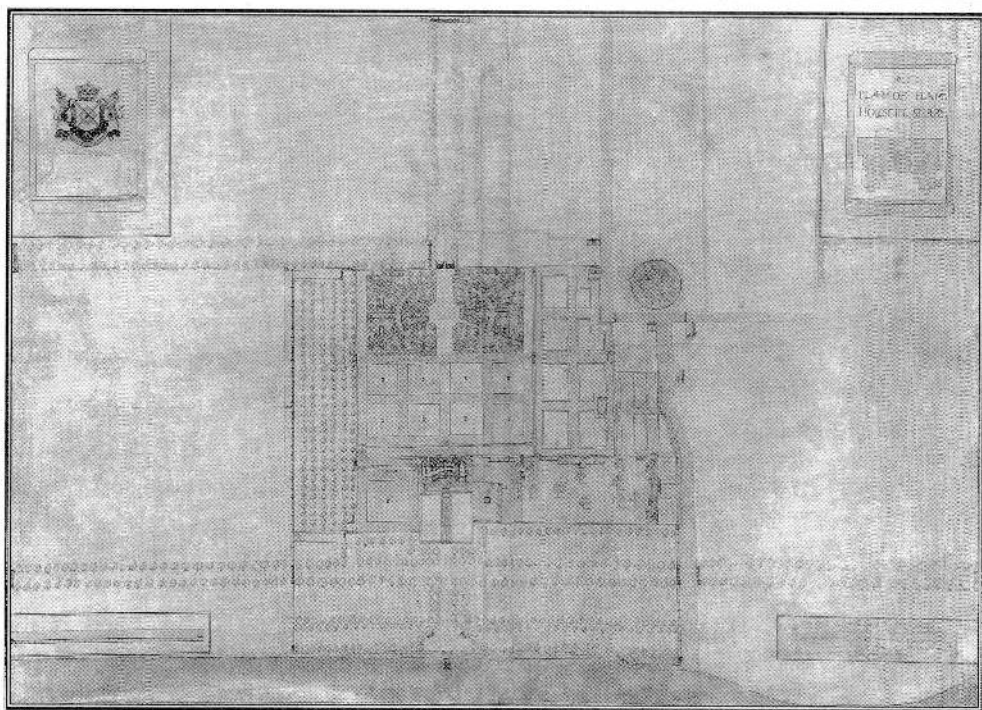
In 1935, after recommendations from the Trust's forestry expert, three circular plantations were made in the Wood, comprising oak, sweet chestnut, hornbeam, Scots pine and white poplar. Since 1935 the National Trust has continued to plant trees, replacing other species when needed.

THE HELMINGHAM PLAN: An EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SURVEY of the GARDENS at HAM HOUSE By Nino Strachey

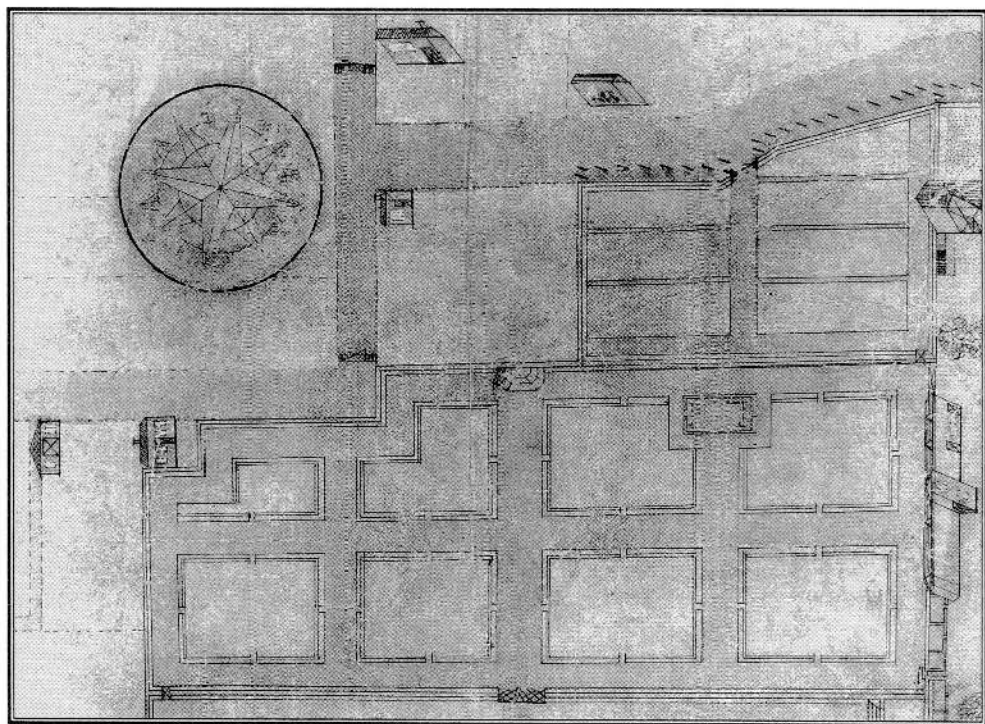
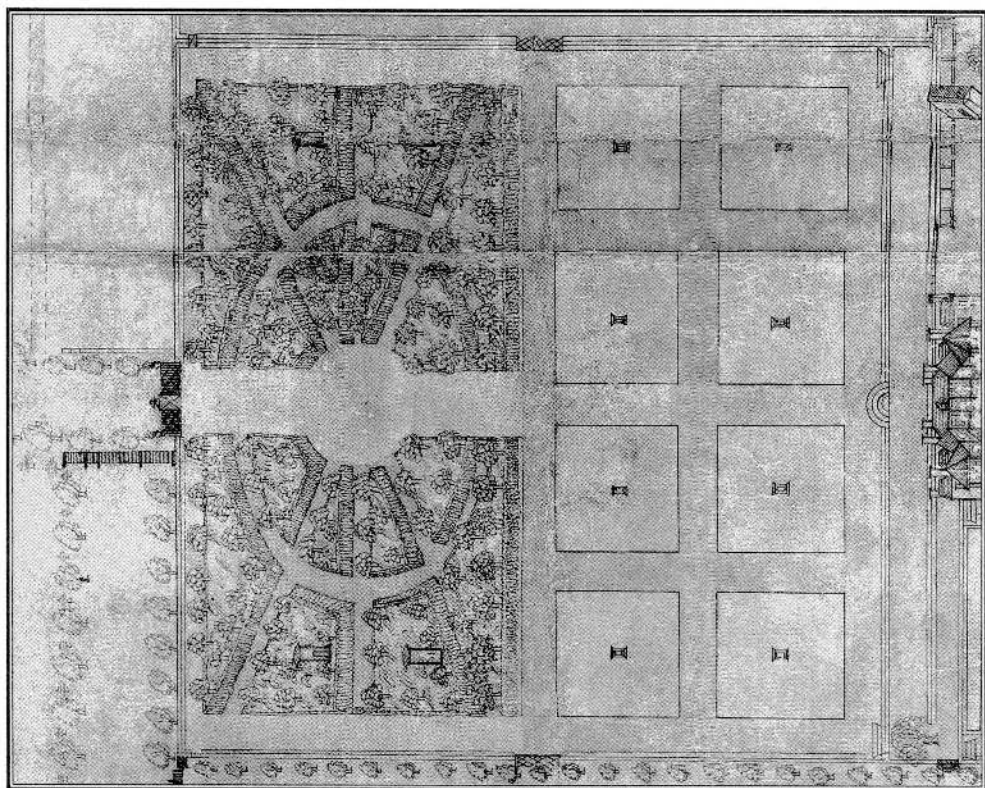
Few garden descriptions can be as brief and evocative as John Evelyn's account of Ham, written on a summer afternoon in 1678:

'After dinner I walked to Ham to see the Garden of the Duke of Lauderdale, which is indeed inferior to few of the best Villas in Italy itself; the house furnished like a great Prince's; the Parterres, Flower Gardens, Orangeries, Groves, Avenues, Courts, Statues, Perspectives, Fountains, Aviaries and all this at the banks of the Sweetest River in the World, must needs be surprising.'

The gardens at Ham were one of several ambitious landscape projects planned by Lauderdale and his second wife, Elizabeth, Countess of Dysart. In the months prior to their marriage in early 1672, Lauderdale commissioned a series of garden designs from the German engineer and surveyor, John Slezer. The surviving drawings cover two of the



15. Hawkwood Garden, west of the avenue, 1995. (PHOTO BY DAPHNE THISSEN)
16. *The Helmingham Plan of Ham House*, c.1698-1742. (BY COURTESY OF LORD TOLLEMACHE)



17. *The Heimingham Plan of Ham House*: detail of the South Terrace, Platts and Wilderness, c.1698-1742.

(BY COURTESY OF LORD TOLLEMACHE)

18. *The Heimingham Plan of Ham House*: detail of the Kitchen Garden and Orangery, c.1698-1742.

(BY COURTESY OF LORD TOLLEMACHE)

Duke's seats in Scotland, Thirlestane Castle and Lethington House, and Lady Dysart's own property in England, Ham House. Each is drawn to scale, and contains strikingly similar design elements: geometric arrangements of grass plats and gravel paths; diamond pattern parterres; wilderness areas with radiating winding paths, and massed avenues of trees. This relative uniformity may indicate the involvement of Lady Dysart's cousin, the Scottish architect Sir William Bruce. Bruce designed impressive entrance gates for Ham in 1671, and was consulted repeatedly by Lauderdale during this period.

Work on the new garden at Ham began in 1672, and was completed by 1675. Evidence that this work closely followed Slezer's plan was, until recently, fairly sketchy. Only one contemporary image, the Hendrik Danckerts painting of c.1675-9, recorded a completed area of the garden in any detail. The next known visual record, the *Vitruvius Britannicus* engraving of 1739, indicated that the bones of Slezer's design had been executed, but was too schematic to be conclusive. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that Slezer's own approach to the landscape at Ham may have been necessarily idealised: resident in Scotland for ten years, Slezer is not known to have travelled to England between 1669 and 1679.

In 1993 a plan came to light among the Tollemache papers at Helmingham Hall which answered many of the questions regarding Lauderdale's completed garden. Drawn in fading ink on discoloured varnished paper, it carried no immediate indication of date or author: an inscription beneath the coat of arms had been carefully cut out. What became immediately clear was that this was a measured survey of an existing garden, with amazing attention to detail. Gates, fences, garden benches, statue plinths and even water pumps were individually drawn. Buildings, including those outside the garden perimeter, were shown in perspective, and each tree in the surrounding avenues carefully delineated. Most tellingly, walls were depicted with their actual angles and kinks, rather than as schematic boxes.

Who had commissioned this remarkable plan? Close examination revealed a date range of 1698 to 1742. The coat of arms at the head of the drawing is that of the Tollemache Earls of

Dysart - only granted after the death of the Duchess in 1698, when Ham and the Dysart title passed to the descendants of her first marriage to Sir Lionel Tollemache. Equally conclusively, the perspective drawing of Ham House at the centre of the plan depicts a two storey frontispiece that was removed before 1742. Only two possible candidates accordingly emerge: Lionel Tollemache, 3rd Earl of Dysart (1649-1727), and Lionel Tollemache, 4th Earl of Dysart (1708-70).

Contrary to his miserly reputation, the 3rd Earl of Dysart appears to have maintained the formal gardens at Ham to a reasonable standard. Macky's *Journey into England* (1724) recorded that while the house was 'more neglected than one would expect for so great an estate ...the gardens are well kept up'. This is confirmed by the Orangery inventory taken after the Earl's death in 1727, which lists over two hundred trees and shrubs ready to be placed in pots and boxes for display around the garden. This expenditure appears to have been inspired by duty rather than affection - Lord Dysart inherited Ham late in life, and spent little time there, preferring the Tollemache estates of Helmingham and Harrington. His own gardening interests were focused on the elaborate Italianate terraced gardens at Harrington, created in the late 1670s, and there seems little reason to believe that he would have wanted a new survey of Ham.

The young 4th Earl of Dysart, who succeeded his grandfather in 1727, is a more likely contender. Lord Dysart returned from an extended Grand Tour in 1728, and married in the following year Lady Grace Carteret, daughter of the 2nd Earl Granville. The young couple made no distinction between the Tollemache and Dysart estates, and chose Helmingham and Ham as their two main seats. Substantial improvements were required at both properties, and in 1730 Lord Dysart commissioned a detailed structural survey of Ham from the architect John James. It seems logical to assume that a survey of the garden might have been commissioned at the same date.

If the Helmingham Plan was indeed drawn up in 1730, then what does it record? The overall layout, with some small but important variations, is extremely close to Slezer's original design of 1671. This would indicate not only that the garden was executed much according

to plan, but that few alterations had been made in the intervening fifty or so years. This is perhaps not surprising as neither the Duchess of Lauderdale nor her eldest son, the 3rd Earl of Dysart, were likely to have done more than maintain the *status quo*. The Duchess was left in substantial financial difficulty following the Duke's death in 1682, while her son (who inherited her debts) was disinclined to spend more on Ham than the minimum required to keep up appearances.

Examination of the Plan area by area serves to highlight the relationship of the finished garden to Slezer's design. In the Duke and Duchess' day the majority of visitors would have arrived by boat from the Thames, and approached the house from the North Meadow. The Helmingham Plan shows that Slezer's geometric grid of double avenues leading from the river to the house was slightly softened by the creation of a half circle of trees adjoining the river bank. Benches were placed here to allow a view of the river - invisible from the house through the dense tree cover. Once up the avenue, visitors entered the North Courtyard via Sir William Bruce's impressive entrance gates, and passed up a central pathway to the front door. The Helmingham Plan reveals that both the pathway and terrace in front of the house were paved with a distinct pattern, possibly in contrasting colours. This would have been similar to the arrangement at Thirlestane Castle, the Duke's main seat in Scotland.

Once inside the house, visitors could pass straight through the Great Hall and Marble Dining Room to the imposing South Terrace. From here they could look down on the eight grass Platts, surrounded by raked gravel paths, whose rigid formality provided a stark contrast to the artfully contrived *Wilderness* beyond. The Helmingham Plan reflects Slezer's design closely, but includes further embellishments: pedestals for statues were placed at the centre of each Platt, while four circular summerhouses were introduced in the Wilderness. The Helmingham Plan also records the three gateways in the external walls, added between 1675 and 1676, and indicates subtle changes in the layout of the Wilderness as the trees and ilex hedges grew to maturity. By 1730 the individual compartments appear to have been sealed off, and the meandering paths shown by Slezer

absorbed within denser undergrowth. Trees are also shown growing within the compartments, thus gradually breaking down the radial pattern of the initial planting.

At the eastern end of the South Terrace stood a single large *Quercus ilex*, specifically described in 1728 by Batty Langley in *New Principles of Gardening*:

'in the Gardens of that beautiful grand seat of the late Earl of Dysart at Ham, there are many fine hedges of this plant, as well as a wonderful large Standard growing at the End of the Terrace, next to the Melancholy Walk, from whose Acorns those hedges were raised.'

This important tree is clearly marked on the Helmingham Plan, flanking the entrance to a further walled garden.

Named as the *Flower Garden* on the Helmingham key, this area was known in previous bills and inventories as the *Cherry Garden*, and is the one section of the garden which appears markedly different from the Slezer design. At the southern end was a narrow terrace, accessible both from the main garden and (via steps) from the Duchess' private apartments. An arched iron *claire voyée*, clearly drawn at the end of this terrace, would have provided an enticing view of the park from the White or *Garden Closet*. Beneath the terrace lay a long rectangular border, flanked by twin sets of steps, and beyond this a single grass platt, ornamented only with a central pedestal. There is no indication of the grid patterned parterre planned by Slezer, which may never have been executed.

The eastern wall of the main gardens was overlooked by a closely planted group of trees, known from later descriptions as *The Melancholy Walk*. On Slezer's design the trees are flanked by a pair of puzzling narrow rectangles, one of which is marked with a small coloured square, indicating a building. Only on the Helmingham Plan do these elements become explicable: Slezer was attempting to represent a pair of raised viewing platforms, the northern of which bore a small banqueting house. This echoes the arrangement at Beaufort House, Chelsea, recorded by Johannes Kip in 1714. Strangely, the Ham mounts do not appear in the *Vitruvius Britannicus* engraving of 1739, although accounts show that they survived well into the 1750s. In 1752 a carpenter was paid for 'new palisade fences at ye end of ye mount at ye

Summer house, and making ye rails on each side of ye mount', while in 1753 the gardener George Long was required to look after 'ye two mounts in ye walks'.

To the west of the formal gardens lay the area always assumed to be the *Kitchen Garden*, but named as such for the first time on the Helmingham key. Despite its practical function this garden retained a semi-formal character as it could be viewed from both the Platts and the Orangery. Slezer depicts an idealised layout of thirty two identical rectangular plots, grouped in fours, and marked off by dotted lines with circles at the corners. The Helmingham Plan, which shows the kinks and slants in the actual Kitchen Garden wall, is more difficult to interpret. There are eight plots, basically rectangular, arranged to disguise the irregularity of the space; a further smaller plot has been fitted in jigsaw fashion on the west side. The plots are bordered by lines which vary from area to area: some are surrounded by triple lines, others have double lines, or sections with a single line. This detail is important, as elsewhere in the plan triple lines indicate walls with flowerbeds below them, which cannot be meant here. To complicate matters further, an angular feature is clearly shown at the foot of the wall opposite the gate to the main garden. This may represent a fountain, or steps leading to a statue; whatever the object, it would have formed the focus of a view from the Platts.

Behind the *Orangery*, and to the west of the house, lay the service courtyards. Within these is a small yard left blank by Slezer, but shown on the Helmingham Plan to have contained several important features. Known today as the *Orchard*, this once boasted a large circular central pond. North of the pond, at the base of the wall, the plan depicts three large rectangular objects, marked with a criss-cross diamond pattern. Between these are two smaller blank rectangles. In the southern corner is a further diamond-patterned rectangle, apparently surrounded by a wall. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that these might be the 'four birdcages on ye garden side' and 'two leaden Cisternes by the birdcages' mentioned repeatedly in the 1670s building accounts. The Duchess of Lauderdale was known for her fondness for exotic birds, and created a *Volury Room* within her house; these strange shapes may perhaps

have been the aviaries described by Evelyn on his visit in 1678.

The Helmingham Plan accordingly serves to both confirm and illuminate the Slezer design, revealing new elements and explaining others. Only with the help of an unknown eighteenth-century draughtsman can we truly retrace the steps which link a plan drawn up in Scotland by a German in 1671 with the finished garden of the Duke and Duchess of Lauderdale. Slezer's drawing became the basis of an elaborate London garden which was to survive with few major alterations for over a hundred years; it was not until the 1780s, under the 5th Earl of Dysart, that the geometric formality of Lauderdale's creation gave way to the open lawns and distant prospects of the English landscape movement.

The author would like to thank Lord Tollemache for allowing the reproduction of the Helmingham Plan.

CONSERVATION NOTES: A TOUR of LONDON'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE INITIATIVES
By Chris Sumner

Last year in these columns my notes were mostly on parks and gardens in the public realm; so, too, are they this year.

In revisiting some of these sites, I start with a notable scheme that has recently been completed, the restoration and replanting of the 250 metre-long pergola at *The Hill, Hampstead*. Built originally for Sir William Lever to designs by Thomas Mawson after 1911 and illustrated in the designer's *Art and Craft and Garden Design*, the pergola has been restored by the Corporation of London. The pergola is now open to the public again and looks wonderful, but before the new planting beds could be created and the fallen and damaged stone columns re-erected to support the new oak superstructure, extensive rebuilding and consolidation of the retaining walls and restoration had to be undertaken. Inverforth House, Lever's former home and now privately owned, is being turned into apartments; sadly, the implementation of the developer's plan to reinstate Mawson's flower and shrub planting around the formal garden is being delayed as a consequence of the divided ownership.