

The gated community, the private road, the private golf club, the policed shopping mall is their realm. The municipal library, the town square, the swimming baths, the public park are utterly alien to them. The rhetoric of local democracy, devolved power, or fairness, is all a choking poisonous smokescreen, behind which central government is working, as it did under Thatcher, in precisely the opposite direction. This is not about a fairer or bigger society; it is just about tearing open the public sector to the profiteering of the private sector.

In the end parks are political - you either believe in the civic realm and its maintenance or you don't. Parks were produced by an enlightened middle-class - you could argue that it too had its own self-interest in making parks - which believed in one nation. Civics means a society being taxed for the benefit of all, but especially of the poorer and weaker members of the society. It is essentially a redistributive agenda. The Victorians got it, because it was a Christian, Anglican, agenda, and because the fear of social unrest was still present. Now, with bread and circuses liberally distributed to the underclass, and Christian socialism, or even liberalism, seen as an oxymoron, there seems little prospect of a revival of that faith.

GERTRUDE JEKYLL'S LOST LEGACY IN WIMBLEDON

By Tony Matthews

In the years just before World War 1, Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) was commissioned to design three gardens in what today is the London Borough of Merton - two in Wimbledon, one just to the south in Merton Park. At least two of these were successfully created and seem to have survived to some extent for half a century before disappearing from view. One of them was restored in the early 1990s and, although now closed to the public, remains largely intact. The third commission was for a garden that may never have got off the drawing board. However, the property for which it was intended has just been rediscovered and the current owners may even be considering implementation - nearly 100 years later. This is the story of all three commissions.

Jekyll was at the height of her career in the early 1900s. She designed more than 100 gardens with the architect Edwin Lutyens alone and is known to have been commissioned no less than 346 times between 1868 and her death in 1932, albeit in most cases for garden sections rather than complete gardens.¹ Working from Munstead Wood - her home near Godalming - from this period onwards she concentrated on properties within a 25-mile radius, so Wimbledon fitted the bill. It was also home to many prestigious figures from all walks of life so offered a highly attractive client base.

In 1906 Sir George Stegmann Gibb (1850-1925), former head of North Eastern Railways, moved south as managing director of the Underground Electric Railway Company of London - the Tube - and subsequently saved it from bankruptcy.² He had a large three-storey house built a few yards from Caesar's Camp, the site of an Iron Age fort on Wimbledon Common, which was recognised as a national monument despite the destruction of its ramparts by a developer working for landowner John Samuel Sawbridge-Erle-Drax MP some years earlier.³

In November 1906 Jekyll was commissioned to design a garden for Gibb's new house. The original plans show an elaborate creation with winding pathways, steps, a holly border, a multiplicity of flower beds containing roses, lavender, hollyhocks, berberis, lilies and many other species, a rock garden, and a six-bed kitchen garden with clearly defined borders.⁴ Jekyll also stated succinctly which plants she could supply and others that were recommended.

The project was evidently successful as Sir George, his wife Dorothea and their children lived at No. 1 Caesar's Camp (fig. 30) - soon renamed 35 Camp Road - from 1907 until 1919 when he returned to the North Eastern Railway after chairing a series of government bodies during the war. An aerial photograph shows the property outline intact in 1923 (fig. 31) and the house continued to be occupied by a series of residents until 1959⁵

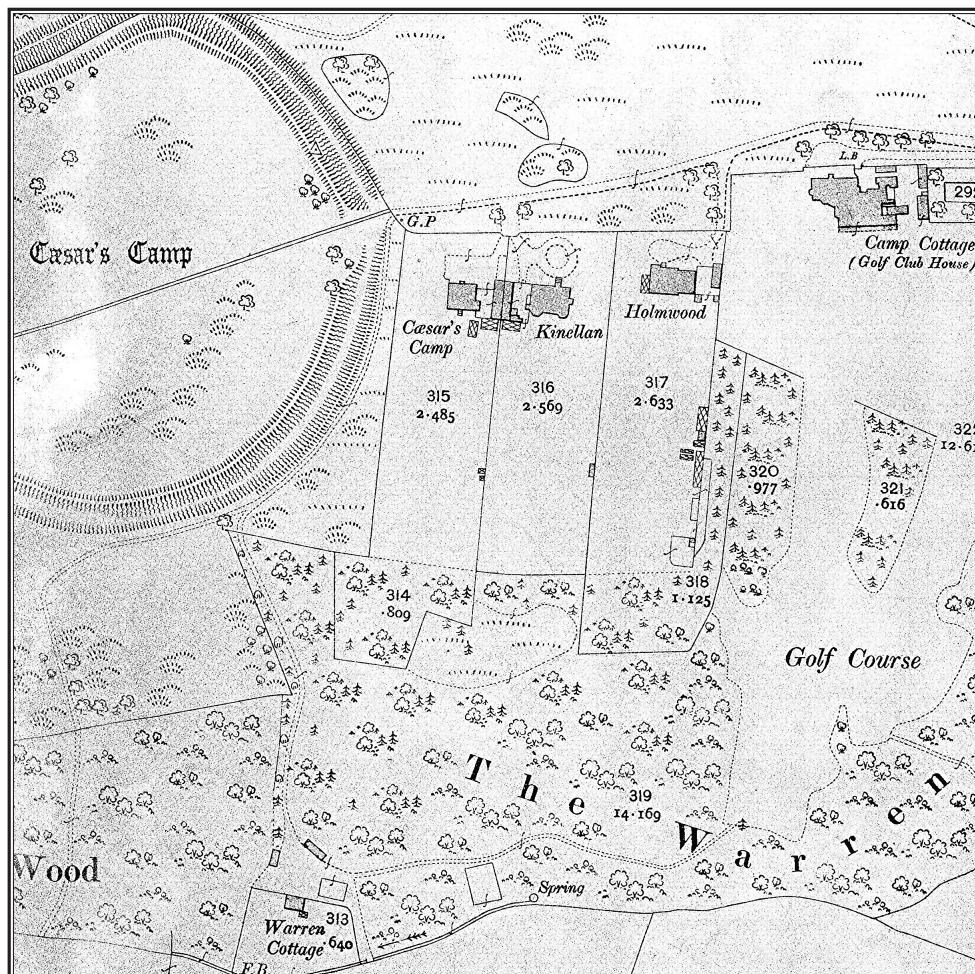
1. Jane Brown, *Gardens of a Golden Afternoon* (Penguin Books, 1982), Introduction.

2. *Dictionary of Business Biography 1860-1980* (Butterworths).

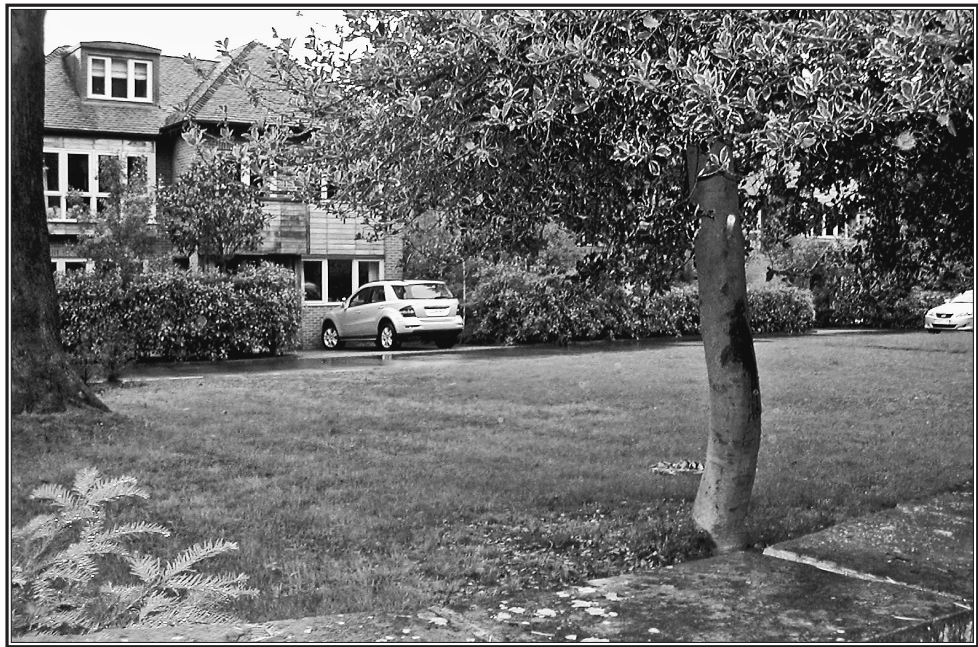
3. Richard Milward, *Historic Wimbledon* (1989), pp.1-5.

4. Reef Point Gardens Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

5. *Electoral Registers*, British Library and Merton Local Studies Centre.



30. Ordnance Survey map of 1913, showing Camp Road constructed
(REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF MERTON LIBRARY AND HERITAGE SERVICE)



31. Aerial photograph of Caesar's Camp, 1923
(COURTESY THE WIMBLEDON SOCIETY, REPRODUCED FROM RICHARD MILWARD, *Historic Wimbledon*, 1989)

32. Site of No. 1 Caesar's Camp today
(PHOTOGRAPH TONY MATTHEWS)

Mostyn Road, Merton Park		Merton R.D. Merton Park	
G. H. Hadfield Esq.		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	
ref. J. S. Bocklesby Esq. R.R.I.B.A.		1 Bunder [6 yards by seat]	
1 [5 Laurels]		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	2
2 [2] 2 [2] 2 [2] 2 [2]	4	1 Bunder [6 yards by seat]	1
15 [2] 18 [2] 18 [2] 18 [2]	4 3 4	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	1 6
2 [2] 2 [2] 2 [2] 2 [2]	3	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	5 10
3 [2] 3 [2] 3 [2] 3 [2]	2 6	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	5 6
4 [2] 4 [2] 4 [2] 4 [2]	3	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	8 3
1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2]	1 6	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	5
5 [2] 5 [2] 5 [2] 5 [2]	4	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	2
1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2]	6	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	5 3
1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2]	2 3 4	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	1 8
6 [2] 6 [2] 6 [2] 6 [2]	1 7 6	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	3
1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2] 1 [2]	2	1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	7 4
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	1 4
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	2 3
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	8
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	1 9
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	1
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	2
		1 [6 Rows] 1 Blank R.	2

33. Gertrude Jekyll's notes for 'Greystones', 1913, page 1
(COURTESY GODALMING MUSEUM, SURREY)



34. Greystones, Merton Park before restoration October 1991
(COURTESY CHRISTOPHER SPENCER)



35. Greystones, Merton Park after restoration June 1992
(COURTESY CHRISTOPHER SPENCER)

when it was demolished and the site taken for offices, the Jekyll garden becoming a car park. These too have recently disappeared with the site now replaced by a gated housing estate (fig. 32).

A happier long-term fate befell the second of Jekyll's commissions, this time in the newly developing garden suburb of Merton Park, a couple of miles to the south on land owned since the 1880s by property developer John Innes (1829-1904). Innes had bought up 500 acres of farmland near the new railway line from London and had built large detached houses and semi-detached cottages along a new avenue called Mostyn Road. He himself had moved into the local Manor Farm and, after his death, its grounds were converted into John Innes Park, opening to the public in 1909. This was largely designed by local architect John Sydney Brocklesby (1879-1955)⁶ and, while working on it, he had visited Jekyll at Munstead Wood. In 1910 she in turn visited the new John Innes Horticultural Institution nearby in her role as former editor of *The Garden* journal.

Brocklesby continued developing Innes's former estate in Arts and Crafts style and in 1913 built Greystones, a house with a Dutch gable, at No. 29 Mostyn Road. His client, paint manufacturer George Hadfield, commissioned Jekyll for the garden. All of her planting notes are now held at Godalming Museum in Godalming, Surrey (fig. 33). Greystones exemplified her use of plant and colour combinations. One of the most striking features was her use of box and yew hedging to separate the narrow lawns and beds. The notes also show heavy use of laurustinus (now known as *Viburnum tinus*), skimmia, white foxglove, columbine, rosemary, many different sorts of rose, hollyhock, aster, gladiolus, delphinium, chrysanthemum, clematis, snapdragon, peony, London Pride, rudbeckia, white lily and iris. Rhododendron and dwarf lavender featured alongside shrubs such as choisya, spirea and mahonia. Trees included laburnum, dwarf cherry, white lilac and many fruit varieties.

Jekyll visited Greystones several times to implement her plan and Brocklesby's own sons

assisted her with the planting. Years later one of them remembered her throwing daffodil bulbs up in handfuls and ordering them to be planted where they fell. She also planted some beds herself and her professional assistant remained as gardener to the house for many years afterwards, well known for obstructing any alterations to the garden.

It survived intact until Greystones was sold in 1965 to TV actor Alan Stratford-Johns. At some stage he had a large swimming pool installed at the back of the house and the property was converted into a playground for his family. Jekyll's box hedging and flower beds were replaced by a large lawn. However, he sold the place to Chris and Sue Spencer in 1982, saying the garden had been designed by "a woman with an unusual name".

Jekyll's design plan had been lent to an exhibition in the 1970s and was lost. Despite this, the Spencers developed an interest in the origins of their home and contacted Brocklesby's sons to learn first-hand about the garden. In May 1991 they discovered Jekyll's notes at Godalming and although the swimming pool was now immutable they decided to restore the front garden as closely as possible to the condition that Jekyll had designed nearly 80 years earlier.

What happened next was covered in four *Gardeners' World* TV programmes filmed by the BBC as the original garden was restored and re-established over two years. Using pitchforks in the front lawn to assess soil hardness, the Spencers located the exact positions of the original beds and narrow lawns, although entirely concealed by turf (fig. 34). From old photographs they were able to see exactly where the original box hedging had been and how Jekyll had structured the garden. Hanging ivy had once hung around the front door and a conifer had stood beside the front path. The hedges had stood perhaps 5½ feet high. Restoration began on 3rd November 1991 and the first programme was televised on 3rd April 1992. By June 1992 the initial restoration was largely completed (fig. 35) and for the next six years the Spencers maintained the garden as it had been in its early days, watching it develop. Before they moved out in 1998 it was opened for specially invited tours, but subsequent owners have closed it to all visitors.

6. Christopher Spencer and Geoffrey Wilson, *Elbow Room – The Story of John Sydney Brocklesby, Arts and Crafts Architect* (1984), p.60.



37. The front of Windyridge (Bowerbank), photograph taken in the 1920s
(COURTESY HELEN ELLIS/SARAH BALDWIN)

38. The rear garden of Windyridge (Bowerbank), photograph taken in the 1920s
(COURTESY HELEN ELLIS/SARAH BALDWIN)

Jekyll's last commission in Wimbledon is the most intriguing because it is still unclear whether her detailed plans and plant lists were ever implemented. Yet they remain today in the Reef Point Gardens Collection of her designs at the University of California, with copies at Godalming, and are referred to with detailed illustrations in a book about her work published in 1992.⁷

On 16th September 1912 Sir Arthur Carr (1855-1947), chairman of the biscuit firm Peek Frean & Co, bought a 1½ acre plot of land in Marryat Road, Wimbledon Village, with permission to build three houses. It is unknown whether he intended to live there himself as he was already a long-term resident elsewhere in Wimbledon. However, a local architect William E. Hewitt was engaged in 1913 to build a large house on a site to be known as *Bowerbank* and in February 1914 Jekyll provided detailed designs for both front and back gardens with complete plant listings for each bed, carefully chosen trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals (*fig. 36*). The back garden followed a symmetrical pattern around a large rectangular tennis lawn. Her cost estimate went to Walter Hewitt on 25th February and some plants were actually sent to Messrs. Luff & Sons (gardeners?) "at new house Bowerbank" on 3rd March.⁸

Nothing further is known of Bowerbank. It seems likely that World War I may have intervened in Carr's plans, perhaps reducing the availability of construction workers. Carr himself apparently remained resident at his home, No. 10 The Downs, and no evidence has yet emerged that he ever lived at Marryat Road. What is now clear, however, is that the house built by Hewitt at No. 21 Marryat Road was first occupied in 1920 under the name *Windyridge* by a publisher, Hugh Nathaniel Hunter.⁹ Hewitt had died the previous year so the house must have been finished at some point by 1919, if not occupied (*figs. 37 & 38*). After Hunter's death in 1933 it was occupied by his son Hugh Curling Hunter, a well known racing driver. It was requisitioned for offices during World War II

and – now known as Windyridge House – has been divided into two separate residencies, Nos. 19 and 21, since 1956. The back garden, which exactly matched Hewitt's Bowerbank plans, was split and its lower part sold off for development.

Ongoing research in 2010 has just confirmed the match between Windyridge and Bowerbank, previously unknown. The present owners of both 19 and 21 Marryat Road are keen to discover whether Jekyll's garden designs were ever implemented and may even be considering doing so themselves in what remains of the "Bowerbank" grounds. Jekyll's legacy in Wimbledon may not yet be lost.

THE HOUSES AND GARDENS OF BERTRAM WODEHOUSE CURRIE AND HIS LIBERAL FRIENDS AT COOMBE 1860-1900

By Barbara Simms

On 13th October 1860, Bertram Wodehouse Currie (1827-96) married Caroline Louisa (1836-1902), the youngest daughter of Sir William Lawrence Young, former Conservative MP for Buckinghamshire. He was the second son of Raikes Currie, Liberal MP for Northampton (1837-57) and a prominent City banker, head of the family firm, Currie & Co; his mother, Laura Sophia Wodehouse, was the daughter of the 2nd Baron Wodehouse of Norfolk. At the time of his marriage Bertram Currie owned a 'small ... gentlemanlike' house in Green Street, London W1, and had a short lease on Camp Cottage 'situated beyond the Alms-houses and National School, on Wimbledon Common and near the old Roman camp ... his favourite home'.¹ He so 'delighted in the air of the Common' and the isolated cottage with 'picturesque Scotch firs in the foreground to the South' that as its lease was due to end he sought to buy land in the vicinity on which to build a substantial family house. In 1861 Currie obtained a long lease from Prince George, 2nd

7. Richard Bisgrove, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (Francis Lincoln Publishers, 1992).

8. Godalming Museum, Godalming, Surrey.

9. *Kelly's Street Directories*, Merton Local Studies Centre.

1. Caroline L. Currie (ed.), *Bertram Wodehouse Currie 1827-1896: Recollections, Letters and Journals*, 2 vols, vol. II (Roehampton: Manresa Press, 1901), pp.3, 8. From henceforth, *Recollections*.