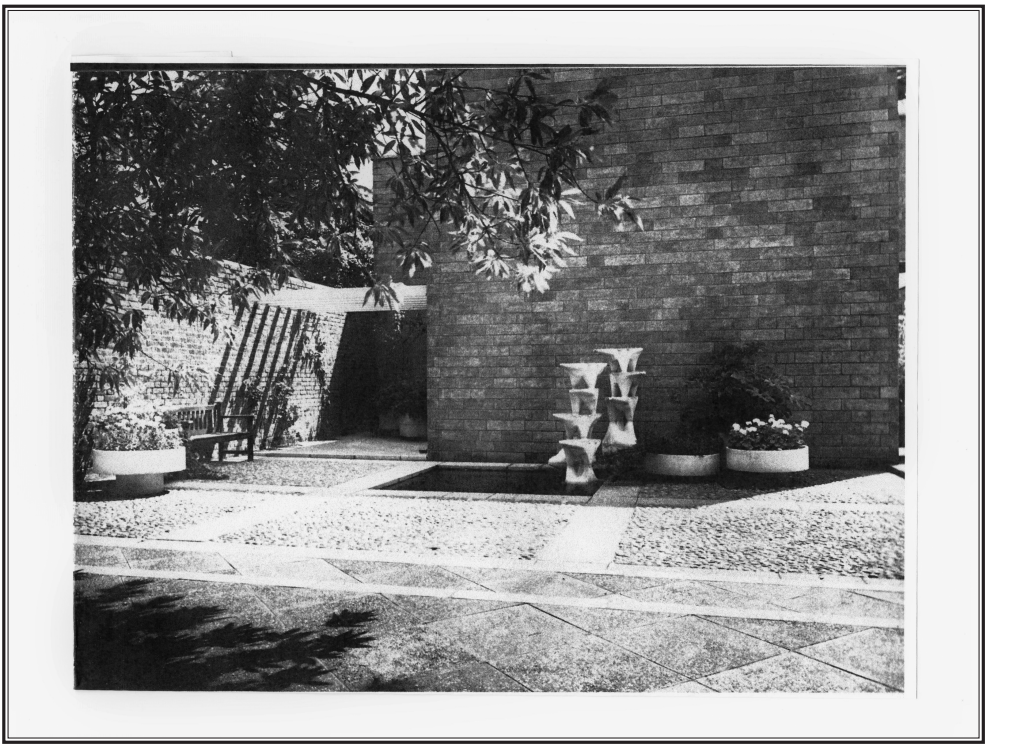
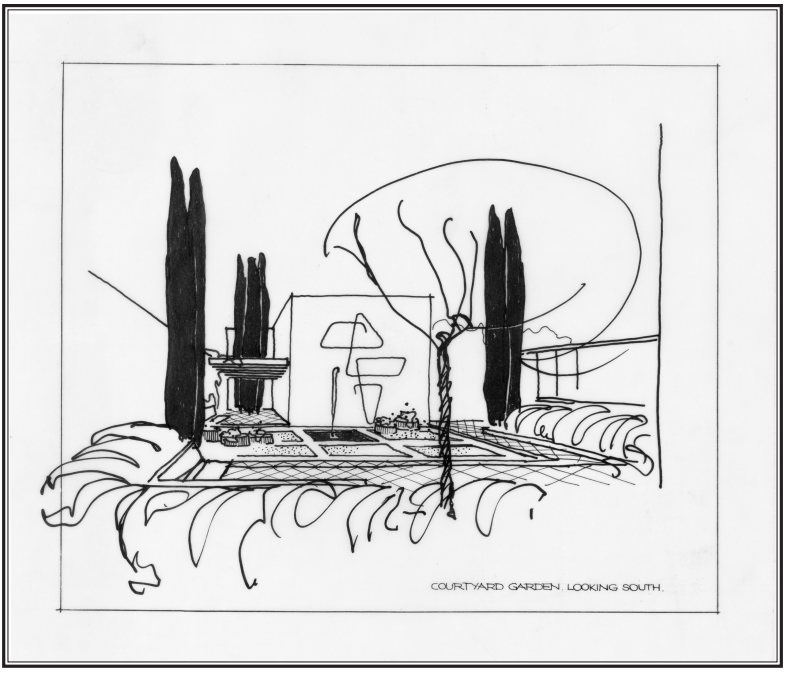




59. Crowe's use of concrete for the Cement and Concrete Association's Research Station, Wexham, photograph undated
(Photograph attributed to the CCA in Susan & Geoffrey Jellicoe, 'Modern Private Gardens', London 1968)

60. Sketch showing garden for the Cement and Concrete Association prepared in Crowe's office
(Reproduced by permission of The Museum of English Rural Life,
University of Reading/ Landscape Institute (Merl) ar cro doi/63/2)

Searching for Sylvia in London: Sylvia Crowe dbe, garden designer and landscape architect

By Joanna Roll

Sylvia Crowe (1901-1997) was so prolific and her work so diverse that it is hard to pin a label on her. Was she the modernist lover of geometry and concrete? ***(figs. 59 & 60)*** Or were contoured gardens and colourful planting inspired by William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll her *forte*? ***(fig. 61)*** Was she the creator of new reservoir landscapes that (echoes of 'Capability' Brown) were considered 'all natural' despite being almost wholly artificial?[1] Or was she the person who chose not to hide bold and brutal power stations but to cushion them within her newly created hills and forests? ***(fig. 62)*** The answer is that she was all of these things - and more: courtyard gardens, road schemes, New Towns, universities, cemeteries, car parks and rose gardens all fell within her range ***(figs. 63, 64 & 65)***.

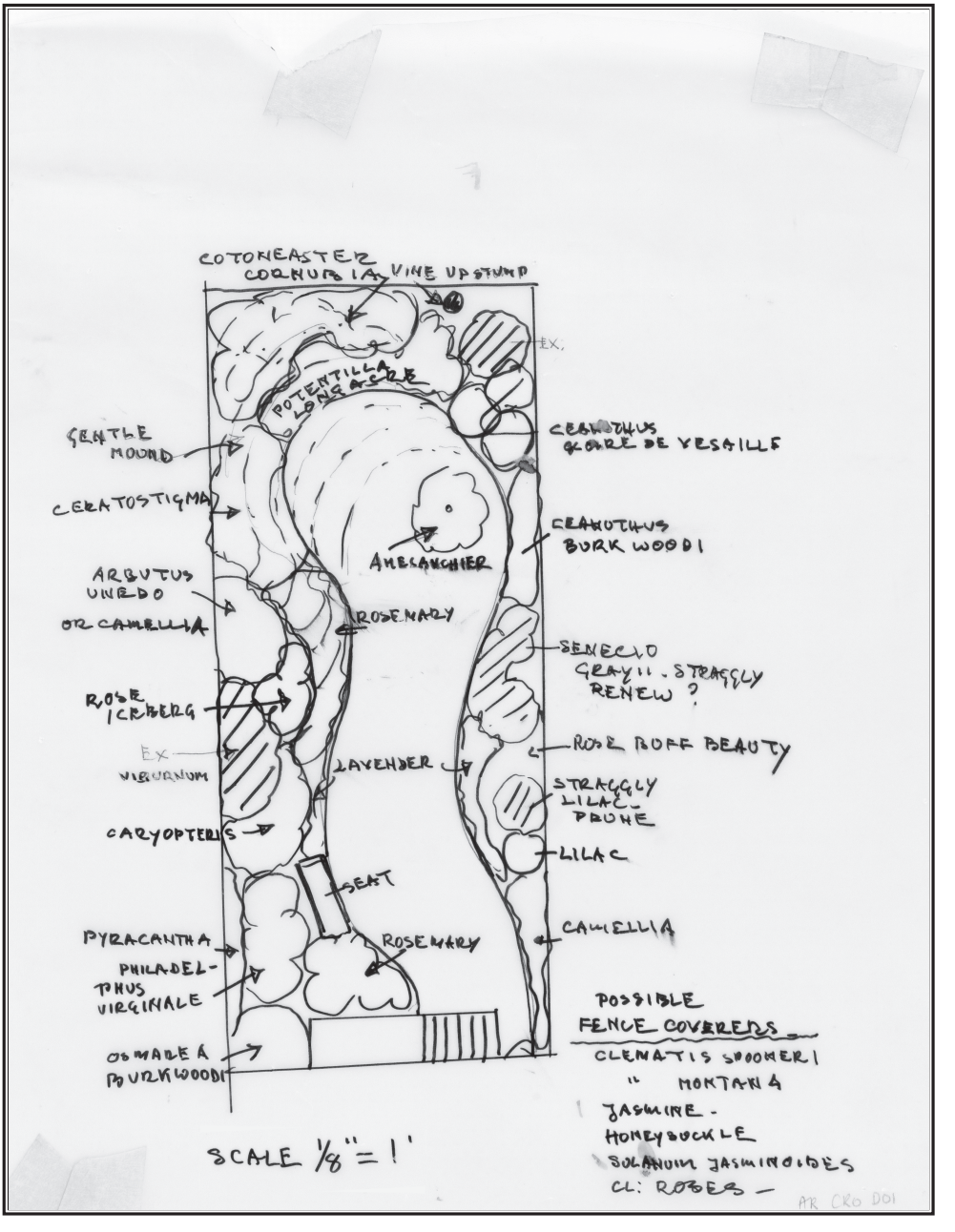
Crowe was both garden designer and landscape architect, and she was both practitioner and author. She trained as a horticulturalist, moved into garden design and then on to larger schemes, often related to the needs of the infrastructure projects that proliferated during the post-war period. She also helped to build up the new profession of landscape architect as an early member of the Institute of Landscape Architects (now the Landscape Institute) and the International Federation of Landscape Architects, where she was for a time President.

She was highly honoured for her work and was awarded the title Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1973,[2] apparently the first landscape architect to receive this level of honour since Joseph Paxton in 1851.[3] But, now, she can be seen as one of a generation of twentieth-century designers whose work is on the cusp of disappearing altogether - an issue to which a number of organisations are now trying to draw attention before it is too late.[4] Indeed, the search for Crowe's work in London reported in this article highlights a trail that has almost petered out although her ideas, revealed in numerous written texts, are still available to be judged – be it for their historic merit only or for their contemporary relevance.

By her own account, she found it professionally most rewarding to work as a consultant for the Forestry Commission (1964-76).[5] There she argued that the artist's vision could be combined with economic purpose and meet the needs of ordinary people.[6] In other words, a timber forest could look beautiful, provide recreational areas AND have material value. This was a theme that, despite the diversity of her enterprises, permeated her work not only in the countryside but also in town, for example, a playground that did not add to the beauty of a city by reason of its design or its siting was a playground at least half wasted.[7]

She was keen for the landscape in the country to keep its rural character and equally keen that landscape should take on a different, urbane civic dignity within the town.[8] She made plenty of disparaging remarks about towns spaces pretending to be country, referring to them as *pieces of amputated country*,[9] *marooned spaces*,[10] the *green void* in the middle of Welwyn Garden City,[11] and the *truncated country*[12] of Wandsworth Common in London (this was the mid-1950s), which she thought should be redesigned to meet urban conditions.

1. Jonathan Glancey, 'Sylvia Crowe (1901-1997)', *Architectural Review*, February 2017.
2. *London Gazette Birthday Honours*, 22 May 1973, Supplement: 45984 p.6479.
3. Alison Hilton 'Discovering the Landscape: Sylvia Crowe', MERL website, 30/7/2015, accessed 09/2020: https://merl.reading.ac.uk/news-and-views/2015/07/discovering-the-landscape-17-sylvia-crowe/.
4. See for example The Gardens Trust lectures on post-war twentieth-century landscapes run by Karen Fitzsimon, 2021; Susannah Charlton and Elain Harwood, eds., *100 20th Century Gardens & Landscapes*, (Batsford /C20 Society, 2020); and Historic England's newly protected twentieth-century parks, gardens and landscapes, 21 August 2020: *The Best of England's Post-War Parks, Gardens and Landscapes Protected*, Historic England. See also: *Dame Sylvia Crowe on the landscape of roads in Bristol*, FOLAR lecture by Wendy Tippett, 2019; Dr Luca Csepely-Knorr et al, 'Why the landscapes of post-war infrastructure matter', *Landscape Journal*, Spring 2020.
5. Shirley Harvey ed., *Reflections on Landscape: The lives and work of Six British landscape architects*, (Gower Technical Press/Landscape Institute, 1987), pp.34, 50.
6. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, pp.44-5.
7. Sylvia Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape*, (The Architectural Press, London, 1956), p.174.
8. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.166.
9. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.186.
10. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.187.
11. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.166.
12. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.174.



61. Sketch showing planting plan for Guy Mayer's garden, presumed to be *c.* 1989
(Reproduced from Crowe's archives by permission of Merl, ar cro doi/gi/3/3)





62. Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station, Snowdonia, built 1960s (now decommissioned): Basil Spence, architect and landscaping by Sylvia Crowe, photograph 2008
(Crown copyright, DS-2008_008-002 Trawsfynydd.
Reproduced with the permission of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, under delegated authority from the Keeper of Public Records)

63. Garden of 182 Gloucester Place, London nw1, as seen through window, undated photograph
(Reproduced from Susan Jellicoe archives by permission of Merl p jel phi/2358)

Yet she considered that in both town and country each project required careful attention to the specifics of the situation and to the context. In that sense, both required a similar way of thinking; there was no one size fits all solution in either case.[13] Both needed a conscious design input. Gone were the days when care of the countryside could be left to nature and the farmer; the growth and needs of urban populations had made that impossible. If it was to remain as a background to civilized life, the countryside would need to be cared for just as carefully if it was a garden.[14]

For these reasons, examining Crowe's work through a London lens can provide a useful entry to the diversity of her work even if it does not provide a comprehensive account. This article, which has developed out of a project on twentieth-century female garden and landscape designers,[15] reports on the traces of Crowe's work in London and the way that they fit within her overall vision.

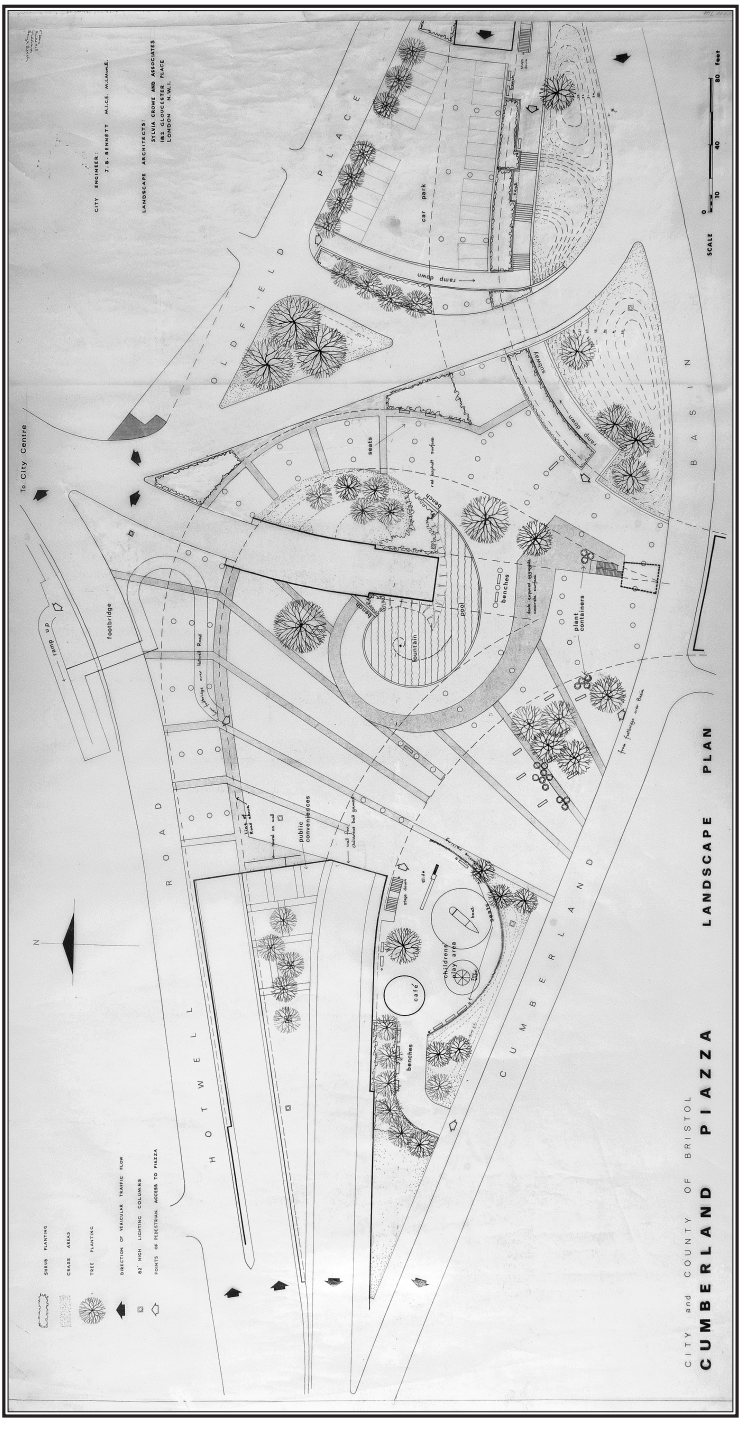
There is no doubt that Crowe had a close connection with London. Although she was born in Banbury, she worked from London for almost all of her working life and lived there for around seventy years. It appears that, notwithstanding her success, she lived for most of the post-war period until her death in 1997 in the same basement flat at 59-61 Ladbroke Grove (since renumbered). The flat had its own tiny garden, on which she continued to work after she retired, maintaining that such small private paradises should not be despised.[16] Linked to it were Hanover Gardens, private communal gardens that still exist today. They contain a bench created to commemorate her ninetieth birthday.[17] At the time of writing the Hanover Gardens Association is planning to refurbish the bench and says that her thinking remains a vital influence on managing and planting their woodland garden.[18]

Crowe studied horticulture at Swanley Horticultural College in Kent (1920-22). At that time it was a women-only college, from which sprang a number of successful female professionals, including Brenda Colvin (1897-1981), a landscape architect with whom she later shared an office in London.[19] She herself does not seem to have credited any of her success as a designer to the college, saying that her interest developed after she left, but she did find the education on plants was 'quite good'.[20] Nor does she seem to have credited it with her success as a woman, declaring years later than in her profession in the UK it did not matter whether you were a man or a woman. All that mattered was ability.[21]

By her own account, her career in London began a few years after she left Swanley with a brief apprenticeship to landscape gardener Edward White (1872-1952) of Milner Son and White, where she learnt to survey and draw. Thereafter until the outbreak of war, she worked as a garden designer for the garden contractors and nurserymen William Cutbush & Son, who were based in Barnet. She described the period at Cutbush as a tough one and not one of the most satisfying times of her life. She thought the gardens she designed were 'mostly uninspiring suburban plots' that nevertheless provided good training because Cutbush, the firm, had to carry out the work she designed and the small scale meant she could not 'smudge' anything.

Some impression of her designs at Cutbush may be gleaned for the work she did for the Chelsea Flower Show on behalf of the firm, in particular the garden for which in 1937 she won the firm a gold medal. She described it as an informal, contoured garden that had a bluebell wood, from which flowed a stream into a pond.[22] Contoured gardens in a relatively informal style like this one at Chelsea had, she

13. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.171.
14. Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape, op.cit.*, p.197.
15. The project was conducted by a research group of the London Gardens Trust led by David Sykes.
16. Susan Edwards, 'Interview with Dame Sylvia Crowe', *Landscape Architecture Magazine,* vol 76 No 2, March/April 1986, pp.96-7. Since 2017, the postal address of 59-61 Ladbroke Gardens has been renamed John's House, St. John's Gardens.
17. Hanover Gardens and the commemorative bench are described on LGT's Inventory: https://londongardenstrust.org/conservation/inventory/site-record/?ID=KAC071 accessed September 2020.
18. Email from Hanover Gardens Committee, 30 September 2020.
19. Other famous garden designers connected with Swanley College include Fanny Wilkinson (1855-1951) and Madeline Agar (1874-1967).
20. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.32.
21. Edwards, 'Interview with Dame Sylvia Crowe', *Landscape Architecture Magazine, op.cit.*, pp.96-7.
22. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.



64. Drawing showing Cumberland Piazza landscape plan, Bristol, 1960s
(Reproduced by permission of Merl, ar cro doi/r2/1/5)

said, become one of her preferences early in her career.[23] It may therefore be assumed that some of her other gardens were likely to have been designed in a similar vein.

The RHS list of Gold Medal awards in 1937 includes as one of the winners: 'Messrs Wm Cutbush, of Barnet, for an informal water garden'.[24] Although Crowe is not specifically mentioned, several sources, including her own statements, suggest this was her work.[25] A Cutbush catalogue of 1934 similarly does not credit the individuals working in its design department ***(fig. 66)***. Fate seems to be against finding further clues to her work in London from Cutbush records. At least one source says that the Cutbush nurseries were requisitioned for wartime food production and that documents relating to garden design were destroyed during the blitz in 1940.[26] But it is possible that further information may emerge from other places or even from Cutbush sources. There are in fact varying accounts of the way the nurseries came to an end and varying accounts of their location. Nevertheless the *London Gazette* does show that a liquidator was appointed on 22 November 1939 to a company called William Cutbush & Sons Ltd whose address was listed as: The Nurseries, St. Albans Road, Barnet, Herts.[27]

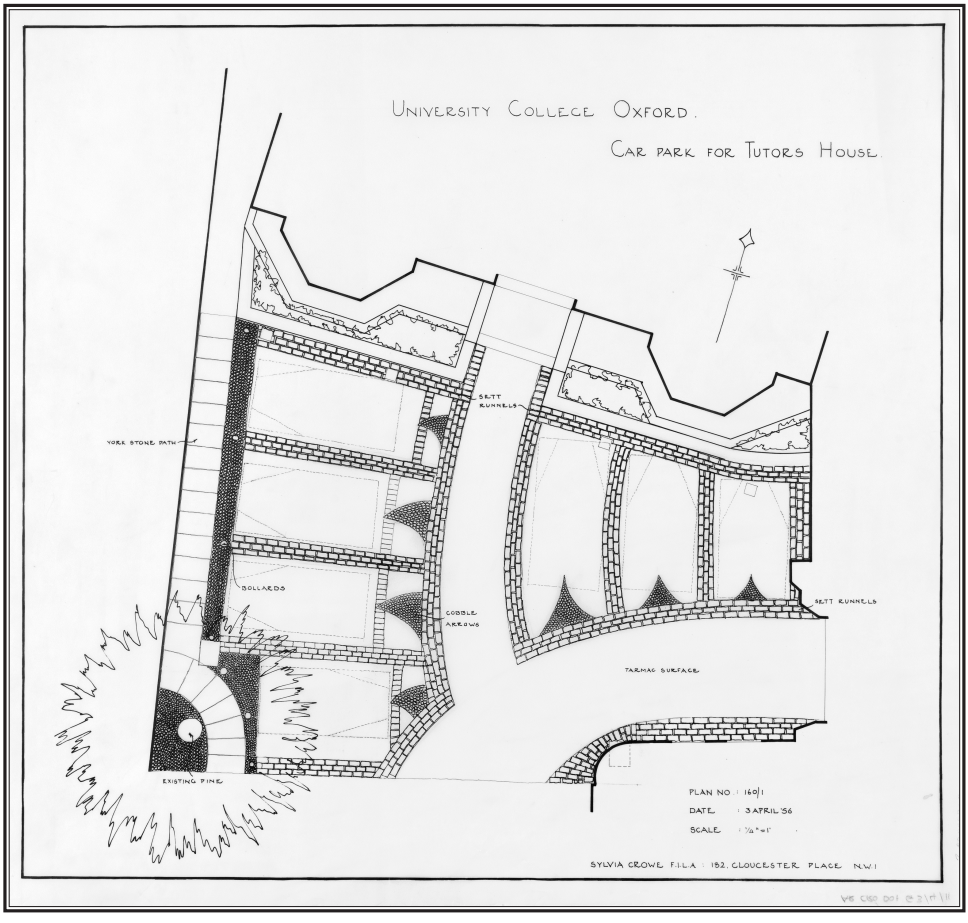
In an interview later in her life, when discussing how she acquired her design skills, Crowe said that on the whole she had had to find her own way.[28] But Cutbush Nurseries do appear to have had some influence on her; her nephew names John Coote, the managing director, particularly his enthusiasm for the Japanese use of hills and landform in garden compositions, ideas that he says were reflected in the mounds and hills that Crowe introduced into many of her designs.[29] Another influence at Cutbush was Shirley Wainwright, interior designer and editor of *The Studio Yearbook,* who worked at Cutbush when Crowe was there. She said he had a very strong design sense and that she owed him a great debt.[30]

Apart from these influences, Crowe did mention the childhood influence of William Robinson (1838-1935), to whose garden she used to cycle,[31] in particular his sculptural use of plants, judging that 'his informality had composition'.[32] Later on in her career she was impressed by the work of Scandinavian designers and their reinterpretation of Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), the skill of their planting, the use they made of both foliage textures and planting, with the occasional rock or boulder inserted as a sculptural form.[33]

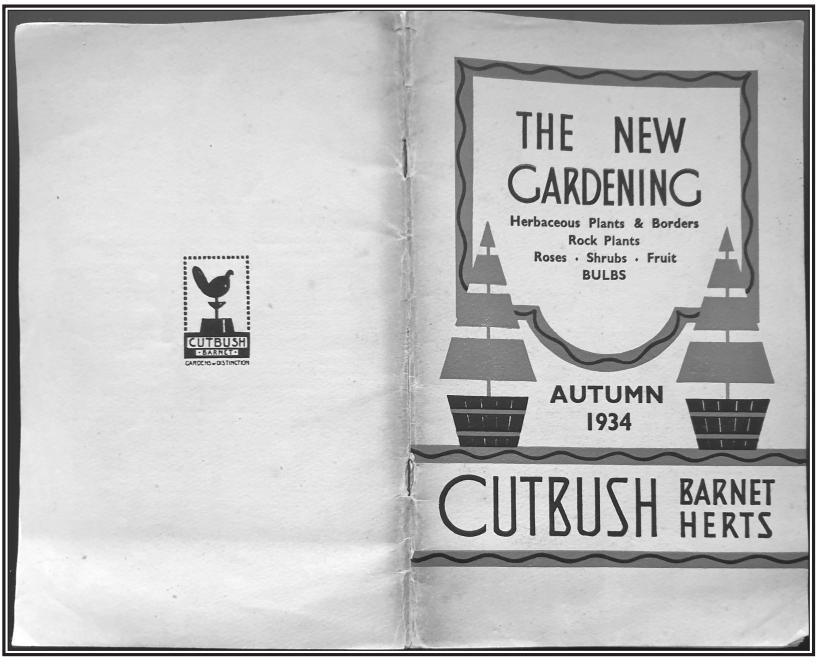
After the war, in 1945, Crowe was offered office space at 28 Baker Street by Brenda Colvin, and jobs were directed her way by her friend Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-1996),[34] an architect turned landscape designer and author, who was president of the Landscape Institute at that time.[35] She later paid tribute to them both for their encouragement.[36] Although they worked independently, Colvin and Crowe both moved in 1952 to 182 Gloucester Place (***fig. 63*** shows how they decorated the tiny courtyard outside their office window) also in the Baker Street area, where Crowe stayed until 1982, continuing there after Colvin moved out in 1965.[37]

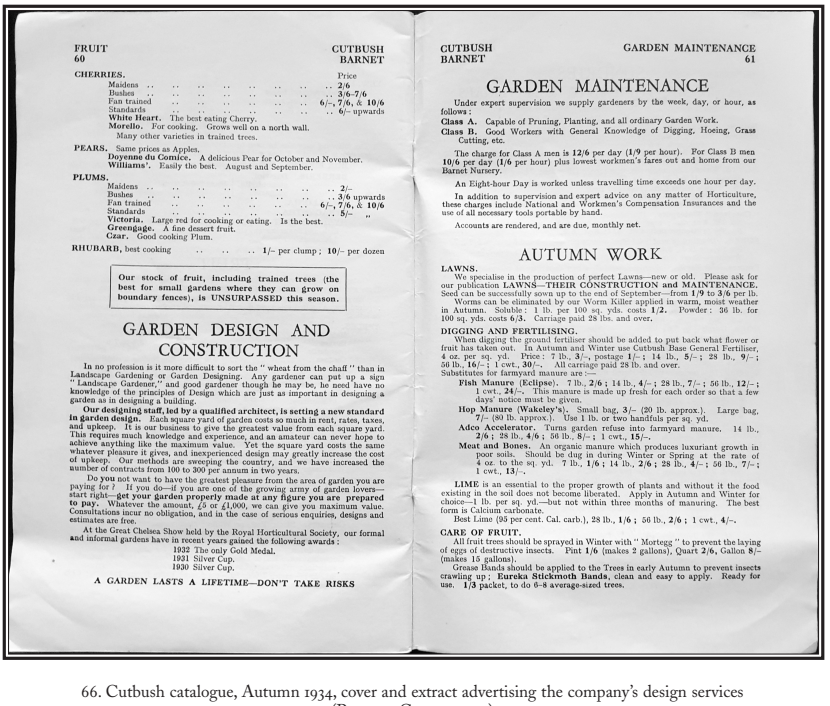
Crowe maintained some connection with the Barnet area after the war, becoming involved, with her friend Gwyneth Cowing and her friend's cousin, Trevor Jukes, in an apparently successful campaign to persuade Barnet Urban District Council to preserve the countryside around the Dollis Valley against encroachment by developers. This in turn led to the formation of the Barnet Society, [38] which

23. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.,* p.32.
24. *RHS Journal* Chelsea Report, 26, 27 & 28 May 1937, p.cxiii.
25. See for example Geoffrey Collens & Wendy Powell eds., *Sylvia Crowe - LDT Monographs No 2*, (Reigate: Landscape Design Trust, 1999): chapter on the Early Years by her nephew, Simon Crowe; and Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.
26. Collens and Powell eds. *Sylvia Crowe, op.cit.*, p.20.
27. *The London Gazette*, 2 January 1940, p.61.
28. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.
29. Collens and Powell, eds, *Sylvia Crowe, op.cit.*, p.17.
30. Collens and Powell eds, *Sylvia Crowe, op.cit.*, pp.17-18.
31. Collens and Powell, eds, *Sylvia Crowe, op.cit.*, p.13.
32. Harvey, ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.
33. Harvey ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.38.
34. Collens and Powell eds, *Sylvia Crowe, op.cit.*, p.20.
35. One of his famous creations is the landscape memorial to President Kennedy at Runnymede.
36. Harvey ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.
37. Details of the practice and link with Brenda Colvin are contained in her entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* by Hal Moggridge, 23 September 2004, accessed online via Islington Libraries, September 2020.
38. Robin Bishop, 'May blossom celebrating 75 years of the Barnet Society', *Barnet Society Newsletter*, 22 May 2020: https://www.barnetsociety.org.uk/component/k2/may-blossom-celebrating-75-years-of-the-barnet-society accessed September 2020.



65. Drawing showing car park for tutor's house, University College, Oxford, 1956
(Reproduced by permission of Merl ar cro do1/63/4/11)





FRUIT
60

CUTBUSH
BARNET

CHERRIES.

	Price
Maidens	2/6
Bushes	3/6-7/6
Fan trained	6/-, 7/6, & 10/6
Standards	6/- upwards

White Heart. The best eating Cherry.
Morello. For cooking. Grows well on a north wall.
Many other varieties in trained trees.

PEARS. Same prices as Apples.
Doyenne du Comice. A delicious Pear for October and November.
Williams'. Easily the best. August and September.

PLUMS.

Maidens	2/-
Bushes	3/6 upwards
Fan trained	6/-, 7/6, & 10/6
Standards	5/- ,,

Victoria. Large red for cooking or eating. Is the best.
Greengage. A fine dessert fruit.
Czar. Good cooking Plum.

RHUBARB, best cooking .. .. .. 1/- per clump; 10/- per dozen

Our stock of fruit, including trained trees (the best for small gardens where they can grow on boundary fences), is UNSURPASSED this season.

GARDEN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

In no profession is it more difficult to sort the "wheat from the chaff" than in Landscape Gardening or Garden Designing. Any gardener can put up a sign "Landscape Gardener," and good gardener though he may be, he need have no knowledge of the principles of Design which are just as important in designing a garden as in designing a building.

Our designing staff, led by a qualified architect, is setting a new standard in garden design. Each square yard of garden costs so much in rent, rates, taxes, and upkeep. It is our business to give the greatest value from each square yard. This requires much knowledge and experience, and an amateur can never hope to achieve anything like the maximum value. Yet the square yard costs the same whatever pleasure it gives, and inexperienced design may greatly increase the cost of upkeep. Our methods are sweeping the country, and we have increased the number of contracts from 100 to 300 per annum in two years.

Do you not want to have the greatest pleasure from the area of garden you are paying for? If you do—if you are one of the growing army of garden lovers—start right—**get your garden properly made at any figure you are prepared to pay.** Whatever the amount, £5 or £1,000, we can give you maximum value. Consultations incur no obligation, and in the case of serious enquiries, designs and estimates are free.

At the Great Chelsea Show held by the Royal Horticultural Society, our formal and informal gardens have in recent years gained the following awards:

1932 The only Gold Medal.
1931 Silver Cup.
1930 Silver Cup.

A GARDEN LASTS A LIFETIME—DON'T TAKE RISKS

CUTBUSH
BARNET

GARDEN MAINTENANCE
61

GARDEN MAINTENANCE

Under expert supervision we supply gardeners by the week, day, or hour, as follows:

Class A. Capable of Pruning, Planting, and all ordinary Garden Work.
Class B. Good Workers with General Knowledge of Digging, Hoeing, Grass Cutting, etc.

The charge for Class A men is **12/6** per day (**1/9** per hour). For Class B men **10/6** per day (**1/6** per hour) plus lowest workmen's fares out and home from our Barnet Nursery.

An Eight-hour Day is worked unless travelling time exceeds one hour per day.

In addition to supervision and expert advice on any matter of Horticulture, these charges include National and Workmen's Compensation Insurances and the use of all necessary tools portable by hand.

Accounts are rendered, and are due, monthly net.

AUTUMN WORK

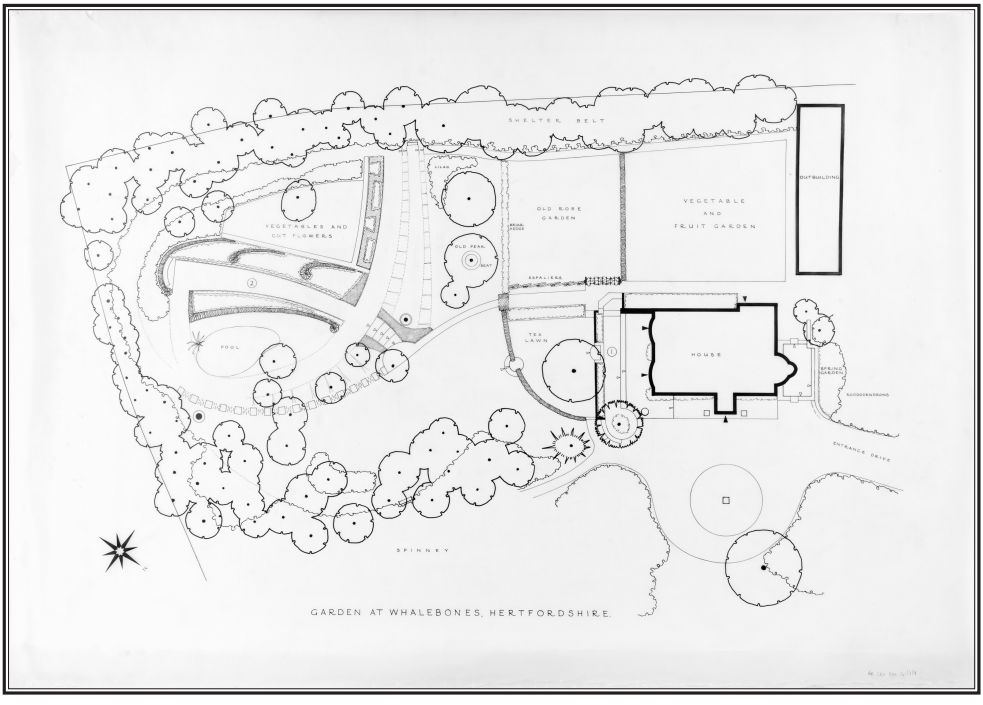
LAWNS.
We specialise in the production of perfect Lawns—new or old. Please ask for our publication **LAWNS—THEIR CONSTRUCTION and MAINTENANCE.** Seed can be successfully sown up to the end of September—from **1/9** to **3/6** per lb.
Worms can be eliminated by our Worm Killer applied in warm, moist weather in Autumn. Soluble: 1 lb. per 100 sq. yds. costs **1/2.** Powder: 36 lb. for 100 sq. yds. costs **6/3.** Carriage paid 28 lbs. and over.

DIGGING AND FERTILISING.
When digging the ground fertiliser should be added to put back what flower or fruit has taken out. In Autumn and Winter use Cutbush Base General Fertiliser, 4 oz. per sq. yd. Price: 7 lb., **3/-**, postage **1/-**; 14 lb., **5/-**; 28 lb., **9/-**; 56 lb., **16/-**; 1 cwt., **30/-**. All carriage paid 28 lb. and over.
Substitutes for farmyard manure are:—
Fish Manure (Eclipse). 7 lb., **2/6**; 14 lb., **4/-**; 28 lb., **7/-**; 56 lb., **12/-**; 1 cwt., **24/-**. This manure is made up fresh for each order so that a few days' notice must be given.
Hop Manure (Wakeley's). Small bag, **3/-** (20 lb. approx.). Large bag, **7/-** (80 lb. approx.). Use 1 lb. or two handfuls per sq. yd.
Adco Accelerator. Turns garden refuse into farmyard manure. 14 lb., **2/6**; 28 lb., **4/6**; 56 lb., **8/-**; 1 cwt., **15/-**.
Meat and Bones. An organic manure which produces luxuriant growth in poor soils. Should be dug in during Winter or Spring at the rate of 4 oz. to the sq. yd. 7 lb., **1/6**; 14 lb., **2/6**; 28 lb., **4/-**; 56 lb., **7/-**; 1 cwt., **13/-**.

LIME is an essential to the proper growth of plants and without it the food existing in the soil does not become liberated. Apply in Autumn and Winter for choice—1 lb. per sq. yd.—but not within three months of manuring. The best form is Calcium carbonate.
Best Lime (95 per cent. Cal. carb.), 28 lb., **1/6**; 56 lb., **2/6**; 1 cwt., **4/-**.

CARE OF FRUIT.
All fruit trees should be sprayed in Winter with "Mortegg" to prevent the laying of eggs of destructive insects. Pint **1/6** (makes 2 gallons), Quart **2/6**, Gallon **8/-** (makes 15 gallons).
Grease Bands should be applied to the Trees in early Autumn to prevent insects crawling up; **Eureka Stickmoth Bands,** clean and easy to apply. Ready for use. **1/3** packet, to do 6-8 average-sized trees.

66. Cutbush catalogue, Autumn 1934, cover and extract advertising the company's design services (Private Collection)





67. Drawing of *Whalebones* garden, Barnet, Herts, undated
(Reproduced by permission of Merl, ar cro doi/gi/3/4)

68. *Whalebones*, photograph taken by Crowe and reproduced in Sylvia Crowe, *Garden Design* (Suffolk, 1994)
(Reproduced by permission of Merl ar cro sp4/6/23)

today still campaigns for the preservation of green land in the Barnet area.

Characteristically, Crowe was soon working on some of the post-war New Towns created around the London Green Belt, which helped make such a Green Belt acceptable at a time of high housing demand. She was appointed Consultant to Basildon and Harlow around 1947/8 and from then on followed a series of appointments for major infrastructure projects, including positions as landscape consultant to the Central Electricity Generating Board (1948-58) and to the Forestry Commission (1964-76).

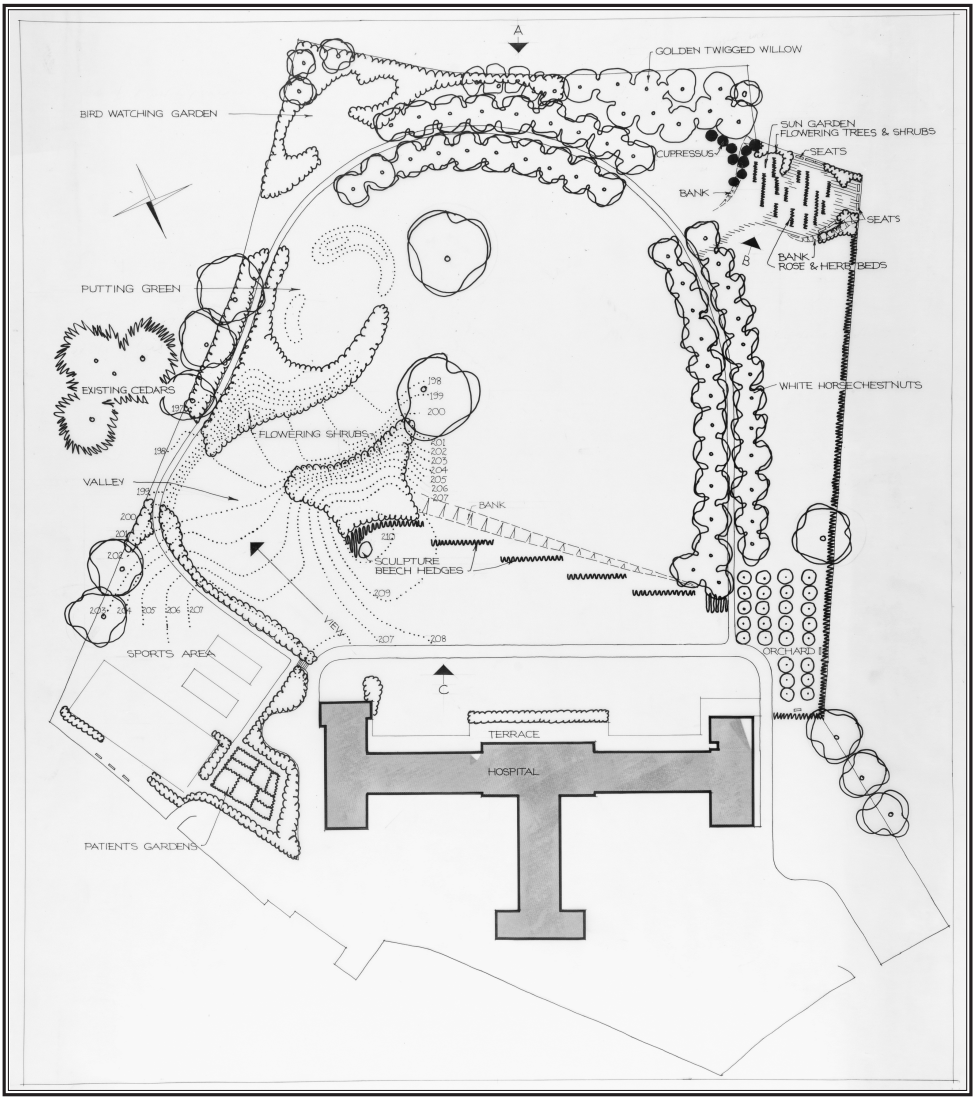
She did not abandon London gardens completely, however. Her Barnet friend, Gwyneth Cowing (who left Crowe £1,000 in her will),[39] owned a house and garden called *Whalebones*, which is one of the very few known extant gardens in London that Crowe designed ***(figs. 67 & 68)***. The current owners have been valiantly trying to restore the garden,[40] but despite the existence of a specification for part of the garden and a design plan dated 1956, much of the planting remains a mystery.

The design was noted by Alan Powers in an overview of landscape architecture in Britain during the period of 1940-60 and the plan was reproduced with the caption 'dynamic asymmetrical planting in a small private garden'.[41] In addition to the designs reproduced here, some idea of how it might have looked is provided by several small black and white photographs in her book, *Garden Design*.[42] According to their captions, one shows the effect of a single tree on garden composition and another the way trees and shrubs together could create a sense of privacy. We also know the size and shape of the vegetable and cut flower area, the 'Spring garden' and the 'Old Rose Garden' but not the particulars. The only list of named plants seems to be for the south-west corner of the garden. In the words of Crowe's specification, this was to contain: '103 English Yew of various specified sizes, 60 feet linear Box suffruticosa, 55 Box sempervirens, 36 Lavender munstead and 60 Lavender 'old English" (see footnote for botanical terms).[43] But all of this provides a far from complete picture.

There are a few plans of other London designs in Crowe's archives although these tend to raise as many questions as they answer. They include a set of sketches, at various stages of completeness, for a small, contoured garden, with mound (like the gardens of her Cutbush days), for a 'Guy Mayer' ***(fig. 61)***. These do include planting details, as well as the position of the neighbour's window and implied screening from it. On the back, there is a heading *'Soho Housing Association's 'Sources and Applications of Capital funds, 1989'*. But where was the garden supposed to be and who was Guy Mayer? Research has so far drawn a blank. Perhaps it is too long ago and perhaps the paper on which the sketches were made is a red herring? However, as well as showing us some planting, this set of drawings may illustrate Crowe's practice, recorded by John Brookes (1933-2018),[44] who had been a junior in her office, of drawing sketches that members of her office would turn into plans for her.[45]

A more formal plan thought to date from around 1959 of Friern Hospital, Barnet has also survived ***(fig. 69)***. Although it does not say so, when examined against plans of the hospital site, it appears to show Halliwick Hospital, a unit that was opened on 27th November 1958 by the Duchess of Kent. The King's Fund provided the funds for landscaping around the new building, which also suggests that this may have been the site of Crowe's plan.[46]

39. Last will and testament of Gwyneth Ray Cowing: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59b7b3dabebafb5c24ce7447/t/59be795d37c581cb5c5c2957/1505655134977/Last_Will_G_Cowing.pdf.
40. Personal email. There may be limited access by appointment for those with a special interest: email: paddypshanahan@gmail.com.
41. Alan Powers, 'Landscape in Britain' in Marc Treib, ed. *The Architecture of Landscape, 1940-60*, (Philadelphia, 2002), p.78 (excerpt available online through Google books: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=PbDL860Qx-oC&printsec=copyright&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
42. Sylvia Crowe, *Garden Design*, (Third Edition, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1994), Plates 10 e and f and 15c.
43. The intended botanical terms were probably: *Taxus baccata; Buxus suffruticosa; Buxus sempervirens; Lavandula munstead; Lavandula* (possibly *x intermedia or augustifolia*).
44. John Brookes became a renowned garden designer and author, famed particularly for popularising the idea of gardens as a room outside (see his *Room Outside: a new approach to garden design*, first published in 1969).
45. John Brookes in Collens and Powell eds., *op.cit.*, p.163.
46. David Berguer, *The Friern Hospital Story*, (Chaville Press, 2012), pp.229 & 119.



69. Drawing showing landscape proposals for Friern Hospital, Barnet, Middlesex, *circa* 1959, probably around Halliwick House/Hospital
(Reproduced by permission of Merl ar cro doi/h/1/1)

The plan shows little detail about the planting although some of the existing trees, such as an avenue of white Horse Chestnuts, are shown. There is also a detailed plan for a Rose Garden at the hospital, which does show a good range of plants as well as a variety of roses *(fig. 70)*. It is unlikely there would be any trace of either of these now (assuming they were executed). The hospital closed in 1993 and has been repurposed as a private development of luxury flats called *Princess Park Manor* while most of its enormous parkland was, or had already been, sold off for other developments. The smaller Halliwick Hospital within the grounds was demolished and replaced by new housing.[47]

There are further hints of possible works in London, although there appear to be no specific records in her archives for most of them. Below is a list (in no particular order) taken from several sources.[48] Some may have reached the planning stage only. So far, attempts to follow up several of these have been abortive.

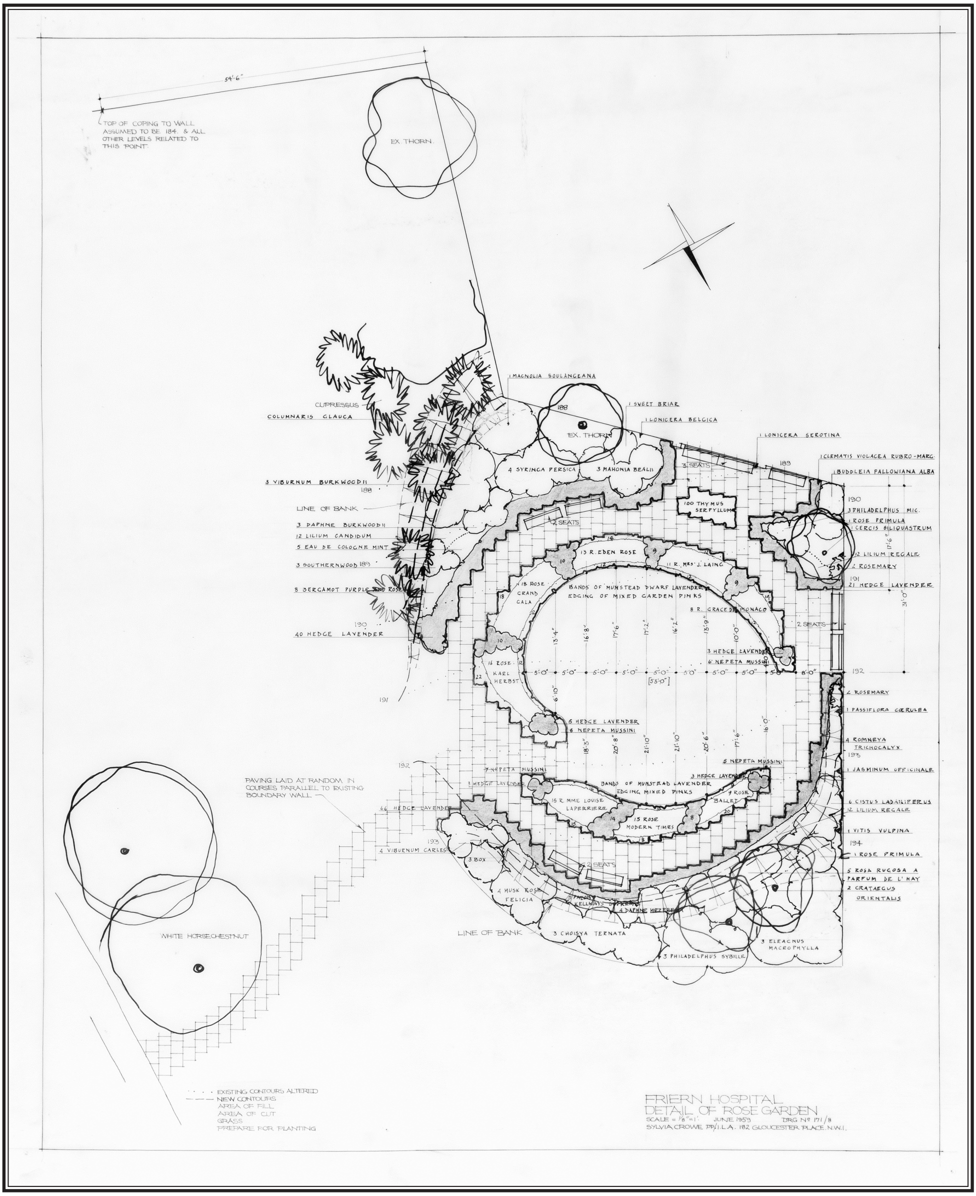
Landscape plan for approach to Blackwall Tunnel, London, 1966
Courtyard at Barnet Press, 1957
Conversion of old gravel pits to lake, stream and bog garden at Arkley Mill
Conversion of rubbish dump and ash tip to contoured rest park for Standard Telephones
Planning and planting of rest garden and village green at Well House estate for Barnet UDC
Planting trees and shrubs in key with surrounding country to form wind-breaks and hazards at Hadley Wood Golf Course
Informal part of Borough of Islington crematorium (10 acres)
Tree groupings and glades at Borough of Tottenham crematorium (20 acres)
Grounds surrounding slum clearance flats for the Borough of Islington
Grounds of Linen and Woollen Drapers' Cottage Homes Mill Hill, (about 30 acres)

By far the most famous London design with which Crowe was involved was the entrance to the Commonwealth Institute off Kensington High Street on the edge of Holland Park, which was opened in 1962 *(fig. 71)*. Even though her landscaping has now gone, many photographs and accounts of it remain, as well as memories of what has been described as 'this rarest of things – an English Modern Movement urban public landscape'.[49]

Was Crowe a Modernist? In other words was the landscaping around the Commonwealth Institute representative of her work? Although it is hard to pin a label on her, it is clear that she did sometimes employ elements of what is regarded as Modernist design, such as an emphasis on hard landscaping, often including concrete,[50] and on linear geometric forms with planting particularly valued for its contribution to the composition by virtue of its architectural form or its mass and colour.

Other examples of such Modernist work in London have proved hard to find but a much quoted example outside London is the one she designed for the Cement and Concrete Association's research station at Wexham Springs, Buckinghamshire (*figs. 59 & 60)*, a firm with which she seems to have first made contact during her years at Cutbush. She reports that they leaned over backward to help her with her design for a summerhouse at one of the Chelsea Flower Shows. This apparently horrified RHS 'die-hards', who disapproved of concrete in a garden.[51] It is thus possible that the Wexham Springs garden is of an early date and we know that by 1968 it had already been demolished.[52] The undated photograph shows the space dominated by six squares, five of them cobbled, the sixth a mirror pool. They are divided and extended by what appears to be concrete paving. There is also a fountain sculpture in precast concrete by sculptor, Anthony Holloway (1928-2000), and concrete tubs, of Crowe's own design, full of plants,

47. Berguer, *The Friern Hospital Story, op.cit.*, chapter 21.
48. See for example: Collens and Powell, Landscape Institute Biography: https://landscapewpstorageo1.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/migrated-legacy/SylviaCrowe preface.pdf, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, op.cit.*
49. Glancey, 'Sylvia Crowe (1901-1997)', *Architectural Review, op.cit.*
50. Barbara Simms, 'A distinct beauty of its own: new uses for concrete in post-war gardens', *The London Gardener,* vol 12, 2006/7, pp.19-32.
51. Harvey ed. *Reflections on Landscape, op.cit.*, p.33.
52. Susan and Geoffrey Jellicoe, *Modern Private Gardens*, (London, New York and Toronto: Abelard-Schuman, 1968), p.14.



70. Drawing showing detail of rose garden at Friern Hospital, Barnet, 1959
(Reproduced by permission of Merl ar cro doi/h/1/2)

while a lone Cypress tree and some rectangular beds add to the composition. The plants are listed as: *Rosa hugonis* and *Rosa pimpinellifolia* "Fruhlingsgold"; *Genista hispanica* with *Iris cordovan*; *Senecio greyii* with *Iris cordovan*; *Viburnum mariesii* with *Rosa hugonis* and *Helianthemum nummularium* "Wisley Primrose".[53]

But what of the famous Modernist creation, the grounds of the Commonwealth Institute? Crowe joined the design team in 1960 and it seems that she refined an existing design conceived by Maurice Lee,[54] architect with a special interest in landscape at RMJM,[55] the firm that had overall responsibility for designing the site.[56] Flagpoles and a covered walkway, for example, were already visible in a model of the site photographed in 1959.[57]

The building was undoubtedly famous for its hyperbolic paraboloid roof, but for some its great wonder was the route to it from the street.[58] More generally it was the 'strong unity between architecture and a designed landscape' that received praise, notably when in 1988 the building was listed Grade II* and the grounds were placed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens at Grade II.[59]

The main features of the grounds included a set of flagpoles for every country of the Commonwealth, which could be seen from way down Kensington High Street. Together with the rest of the design, this made a novel and exciting entrance, partly over water.[60] There was a formal water feature with a channel, fountains, and jets crossed by the covered walkway and bridge; a secluded shaded garden of lawn and shrubs planted against the east boundary wall, bounded by the lime avenue to the west; an open lawn enclosed by the water channels, the building and the access road to the west; plus the remains of a sculpture garden in the north-east angle of the site.[61]

Today, the Commonwealth Institute has been replaced by the Design Museum; the building has been redesigned although the hyperbolic paraboloid roof remains; there are several new blocks of flats where once the entrance was open to Kensington High Street; Crowe's designs have gone and the site has been removed from the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.[62] There were many protests and laments over the removal of what was regarded as a rare example of a 'Modernist' garden design in England, not least from Dominic Cole of the Garden History Society (now The Gardens Trust).[63] The full story of the demise of the Commonwealth Institute and its surrounding landscaping would merit a research project in its own right but there is no doubt that it leaves a gap in Sylvia Crowe's legacy.

This article has been a report of our search for Crowe's work in London: what the project has managed to find and what has gone. But her writings also reveal her views about the London townscape and demonstrate that her interests were wide-ranging, encompassing allotments, London town squares, wildlife reserves and the beginnings of an awareness of climate change. Her most popular book, *Garden Design*, mentions all of these and much more.[64] In it her own love of London parks shines through. In her view, St. James's Park was possibly one of the most perfect city parks in the landscape style, while Holland Park was quite distinct from any other in London due to its successful combination of different recreational needs with a high standard of design.[65] It was her

53. Jellicoe, *Modern Private Gardens, op.cit.*, pp.14-15.
54. See for example London Gardens Trust Inventory Site Record: https://londongardenstrust.org/conservation/inventory/site-record/?ID=KAC044.
55. Named after its founders Robert Matthews and Stirrat Johnson Marshall but generally referred to as RMJM.
56. See for example Historic England, Commonwealth Institute: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1227441.
57. Architectural Press Archives, RIBA Collections, Library Reference AP621/113A.
58. Timothy Brittain-Catlin, 'Commonwealth Institute Betrayed' *Architectural Review*, 21 September 2016.
59. See archived copy of Register entry: https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/commonwealth-institute
60. See entry by Dominic Cole in Charlton and Harwood, eds., *100 20th Century Landscapes & Gardens, op.cit.*, pp.134-5.
61. See archived copy of Register entry: https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/commonwealth-institute
62. See LGT Inventory for a brief history: The Design Museum (londongardenstrust.org).
63. See, for example: Dominic Cole for LGT and response from Historic England: https://www.londongardenstrust.org/features/Commonwealth.htm; Timothy Brittain-Catlin, 'Outrage: Commonwealth Institute Betrayed', *op.cit.*; C20 Society: https://c20society.org.uk/lost-modern/commonwealth-institute-london.
64. Sylvia Crowe, *Garden Design*, (Third Edition, Suffolk, 1994) (first edition 1958).
65. Crowe, *Garden Design, op.cit.*, pp.255 & 262.



71. A view of the Commonwealth Institute from the south-west
with the flags of all the Commonwealth nations flying on the paved concourse in front, photograph, 1 May 1963
(Reproduced by courtesy of Historic England, jlpo 1-08-065308)

local park and seems to have been her favourite. She also paid tribute to it in an article in the journal, *Hortus*.[66]

Underlying all of this was Crowe's belief in laws of composition and the inspiration of the artist.[67] As she put it, beauty was not an ornament; it needed to be all-pervading, be it in the private garden, the children's playground, the public parks, the city streets or the wider countryside.[68] This point was made in her 1956 book, *Tomorrow's Landscape,* referred to at the beginning of this article, and is repeated in the last edition of her book on *Garden Design* in 1994:

> Whilst we value our own private paradise we also need today a shared pleasance where urban dwellers can find again the refreshment, the sense of space and the contact with nature which our ancestors knew in the countryside in the course of their everyday lives.
>
> Consciously designed landscape, once confined to parks and gardens is now needed on a far wider scale to make a liveable environment for people wherever they may dwell, and to bring us back into contact with the natural species of this earth.[69]

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66. Sylvia Crowe 'Holland Park Garden', *Hortus* No 4, Winter 1987, pp.64-69.
67. Edwards, 'Interview with Dame Sylvia Crowe', *Landscape Architecture Magazine, op.cit.*, pp.96-7.
68. Crowe, *Garden Design, op.cit.*, p.xi.
69. Crowe, *Garden Design, op.cit.,* p.xii.

'Laughing waters':[1] *The Joy of Life* and other Mid-twentieth Century Fountains in London's Parks

By Sally Williams

In the early twentieth century London's parks and squares were evidently not well-blessed with fountains. This fact had not gone unnoticed in the Ministry of Works and in a Commons debate on 23rd July 1957, Mr John Rodgers MP remarked that 'apart from the fountains in Trafalgar Square, London is very deficient in fountains compared with other capital cities, and especially of good pieces of sculpture', to which the Minister of Works, Hugh Molson replied: 'when one compares London with Rome, one realises that there is a great need for additional beautiful fountains'.[2] However, this paucity had begun to be redressed and from the middle of the century a rush of fountains came into being, presumably not unconnected to the widespread need for spiritual replenishment after the Second World War. The exuberance of flowing water seems to encourage the lifting of spirits, epitomising a feeling of resurgence. The fashion for fountains has ebbed and flowed over the centuries, with a similar lack of public fountains observed in London in the early eighteenth century.[3] In recent years, new waterworks, with or without sculptural components, have become a common feature of public spaces, although maintenance and good management continue to dog these generally popular public amenities.

For the 1951 Festival of Britain, Russell Page's *Pleasure Gardens* in Battersea Park sought to combine 'beautiful landscaped gardens with fountains and illuminations', the early plans for these gardens invoking models like the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, which

1. Letter from May Cippico to Thomas Huxley-Jones, 20 January 1958. Mrs Cippico was the niece of Constance and Sigismund Goetze, and became Chairman of the Constance Fund after her aunt's death in 1951. She described Huxley-Jones's design as 'a most airy, smiling and cheering composition', which would have appealed to her aunt and uncle: 'My Uncle always visualised fountains as "laughing with water". Your conception is a most happy one.' Essex Record Office, T B Huxley Jones Papers (ERO TBHJ), D/DU 874/7.
2. See https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1957/jul/23/ornamental-fountain-hyde-park#S5CV0574P0_19570723_HOC_29.
3. See Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, 'The 'Pert Squirt': A History of the Fountain Court at the Middle Temple', *The London Gardener,* Volume 3, 1997/98.