



Parks and Gardens



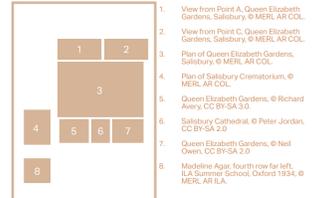
Landscape architecture is often said to have been more open to women because of its roots in garden design and women's prominent role in the evolution of designing the domestic sphere. A long lineage of female garden designers such as Gertrude Jekyll and Norah Lindsay paved the way for women looking for an independent career in the first half of the 20th century. Until the end

of the Second World War, Brenda Colvin's portfolio of work was predominantly garden designs for private clients, and despite the increasing number of large-scale commissions, she continued to take on garden design commissions throughout her career. Her private and public garden projects covered all different scales and included designs for Queen Elizabeth Gardens in Salisbury, Salisbury

Crematorium, the CEGB Headquarters, David Astor's gardens at Elm Tree Road and Sutton Courtenay, and her own garden, Little Peacocks, in Filkins, Gloucestershire, as well as the now lost Seething Lane Garden in the City of London. The skills that she developed as a garden designer were integral to the success of her public schemes, creating gardens and landscapes for all.

Public Spaces

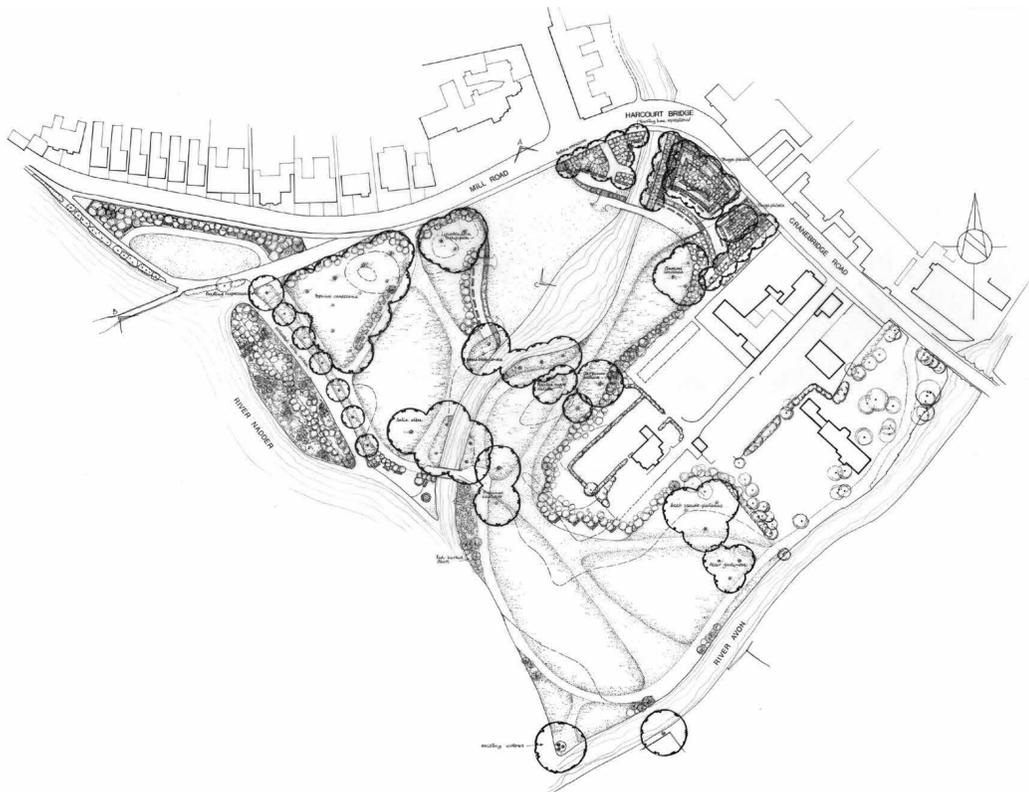
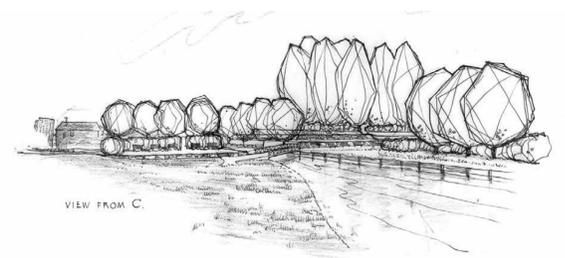
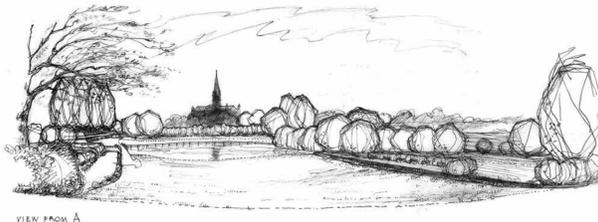
QUEEN ELIZABETH GARDENS, SALISBURY



1. View from Point A, Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Salisbury © MERL, AR COL.
2. View from Point C, Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Salisbury © MERL, AR COL.
3. Plan of Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Salisbury © MERL, AR COL.
4. Plan of Salisbury Crematorium, © MERL, AR COL.
5. Queen Elizabeth Gardens, © Richard Avery, CC BY-SA 2.0.
6. Salisbury Cathedral, © Peter Jordan, CC BY-SA 2.0.
7. Queen Elizabeth Gardens, © Neil Owen, CC BY-SA 2.0.
8. Madeline Agar, fourth row far left, I.A. Summer School, Oxford 1934, © MERL, AR I.A.

Colvin had two commissions from Salisbury District Council, the first of which was for a new crematorium which linked the open glades of the landscape with Salisbury's suburban edge. Writing in *Land and Landscape*, Colvin stated that 'the crematorium can have a park-like open treatment and be in appearance much like any public or private park. Properly designed, the crematorium can be a far pleasanter place to look at than the cemetery, and its maintenance is far easier and more economical because it dispenses with narrow footpaths and other obstructions breaking the simple stretches of grass'. The Crematorium is a Grade II listed landscape, due to its historic and design interest and the quality of its setting. Colvin presented plans, drawn up with the garden designer John Brookes, at the 1958 Chelsea Flower Show.

Following the creation of the Crematorium which had been implemented by the local authority's Parks Department, Colvin was commissioned in 1959 to design the Queen Elizabeth Gardens to commemorate her coronation in 1953. The land had been acquired by the Council to create a public garden, and was situated alongside the River Nadder and River Avon, with views of the Cathedral and water meadows. Colvin's design minimised the risk of vandalism using robust features and with an emphasis on landform, trees and water. The spire of the Cathedral was picked out in key views in the plan, whilst its impact on the landscape exemplified her belief in the necessity of placing large industrial structures with the same mindfulness of their presence in the landscape.



MADELINE AGAR



A group taken at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, after the joint meeting of the Institute of Landscape Architects and the Town and Country Planning Summer School. A line of the Institute members will be recognised. From Row (left to right): 1. George Ottensmeyer, 2. Richard Squire, 3. A. G. Jellicoe. Second Row (standing): 1. T. F. Thorneycroft, 2. Edward Wright, 3. Mrs. Edward Wright, 4. E. Florence Harrison, 5. Dr. Thomas Adams (Chairman of the Organising Committee, Town and Country Planning Summer School), 6. Gilbert H. Jackson, 7. J. W. & Adams (Hons. Secs.), 8. C. F. S. Third Row: 1. Brenda Colvin, 2. A. V. Clifford-Woolley, 3. L. Hilder White. Fourth Row: 1. Madeline Agar, 2. Walter S. Chamberlain, Landscape and Garden.

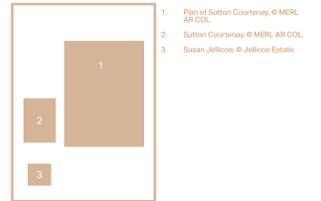
During her career, Madeline Agar (1874-1967) designed more than a hundred gardens, worked for the Metropolitan Parks and Garden Association (MPGA) in London, laying out public gardens and parks, advised the capital on tree planting and was the first woman to author a book on the theoretical and practical aspects of laying out gardens, titled *Garden Design in Theory and Practice* in 1911. She was an expert in roadside planting and advised local communities on the environmental dangers caused by smoke and pollution. Agar was educated

in Swanley Horticultural College under the direction of Fanny Wilkinson, who is regarded as the first professional woman landscape gardener in England, becoming principal in Swanley in 1902. At her appointment as principal, Wilkinson has been working for the MPGA since 1884 – a role in which Agar followed her footsteps. Agar also joined Swanley as a tutor in 1918, teaching surveying and plan drawing to students, including Sylvia Crowe and Brenda Colvin. She and Colvin became close collaborators in a variety of contexts. Colvin worked as Agar's

assistant when she was working for the Conservators of Wimbledon Common, they worked together in the Institute of Landscape Architects, developing together the Institute's education and examination policies and during in the Women's Farm and Garden Association (WFGA) that was originally set up by Wilkinson. Agar's professionalism was an example to follow for Colvin and her work in all aspects was crucial in creating a new image of the professional woman landscape architect.

Private Gardens

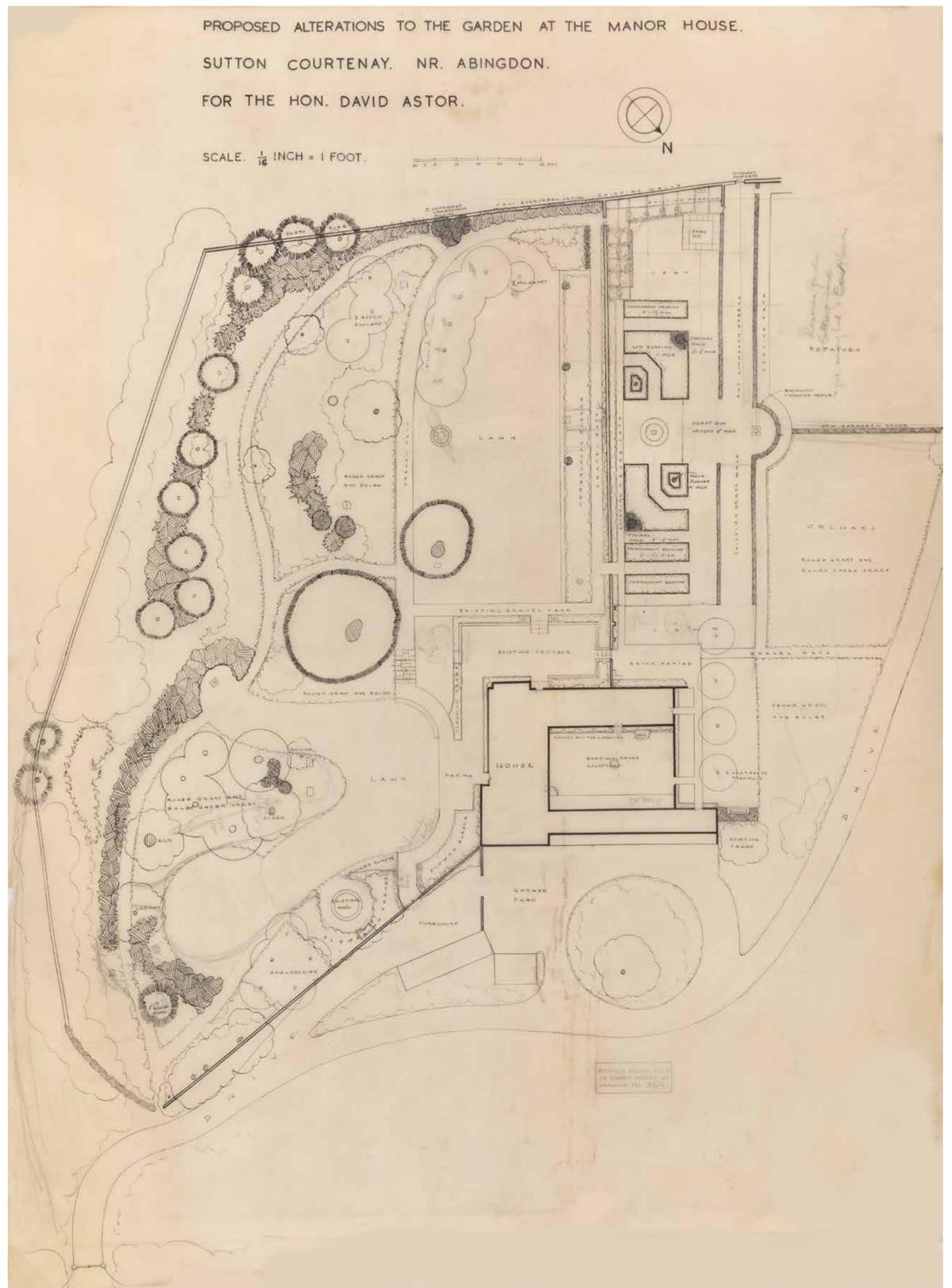
DAVID ASTOR, LONDON & OXFORDSHIRE



In 1948, the newspaper publisher David Astor, commissioned Colvin to redesign the garden of the Manor House at Sutton Courtenay, on the banks of the Thames in Oxfordshire, and in 1953 she was asked to design the garden of his London home, 12-14 Elm Tree Road.

The Manor House at Sutton Courtenay dated back the 11th century and the gardens had first been laid out by former resident and socialite garden-designer, Norah Lindsay, in the early 1920s. Between 1948 and 1953 Colvin completely remodelled the gardens, and was involved in small alterations after that as well. The house and gardens are both Grade II listed and are known for the distinctions between wild and formal gardens that Colvin implemented, the use of unusual varieties of trees, many of them kept from Lindsay's plans, and the abundance of wild spring flowers. Her design 'enabled the former gravel forecourt south-east of the house to be replaced by a paved terrace, the curved lines of which run out towards the informal garden beyond, in which mown grass-walks lead between ancient trees', as described in Paul Shephard's *Modern Gardens* (1953). She created a new 'jewel garden' and a riverside walk.

Colvin & Moggridge worked on the garden until the 1990s, and therefore it presents an important example of both decades of work and collaboration between client and practice as well as forming a lineage of female garden designers.



LADY SUSAN JELLICOE



Susan Jellicoe's (1907–1986) involvement in landscape architecture came through her marriage to Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, long term president of the Institute of Landscape Architects during the Second World War and prominent designer and writer. Although herself not trained as a designer, she influenced the profession in a number of ways. She was author and editor of a number of books, these included – her probably most famous – collaborations

with her husband, but also with other female practitioners, such as Lady Allen of Hurtwood, Sheila Haywood and Sylvia Crowe. Through her skills and interest in photography, she captured new trends in landscape architecture, and communicated new ideas visually to a broad range of audiences. Susan was also a highly talented plantswoman, a skill, she claimed to have learned from Brenda Colvin. Geoffrey remembered that 'Susan did all my planting plans', and

their collaboration led to a number iconic designs, such as the Water Gardens at Hemel Hempstead. Susan was also active in the work of the International Federation of Landscape Architects. As Sylvia Crowe highlighted 'she was an ambassador for peace as well as for landscape... Among her many achievements, the nurturing of international understanding through IFLA must rank high for it is a force not only for good landscape, but also for world peace.'

The Constant Garden

LITTLE PEACOCKS, FILKINS

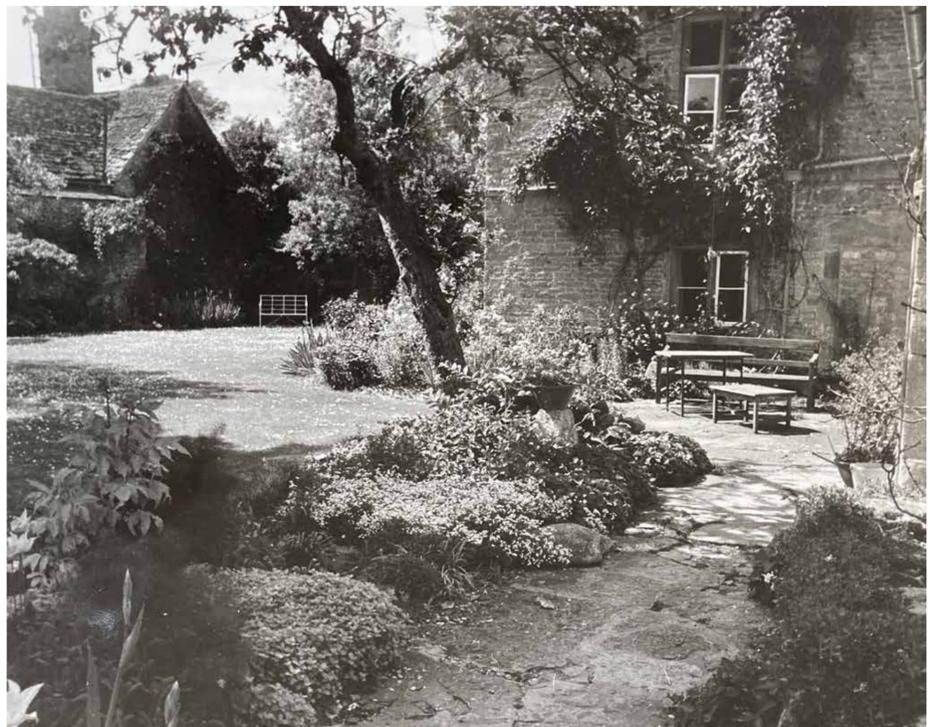
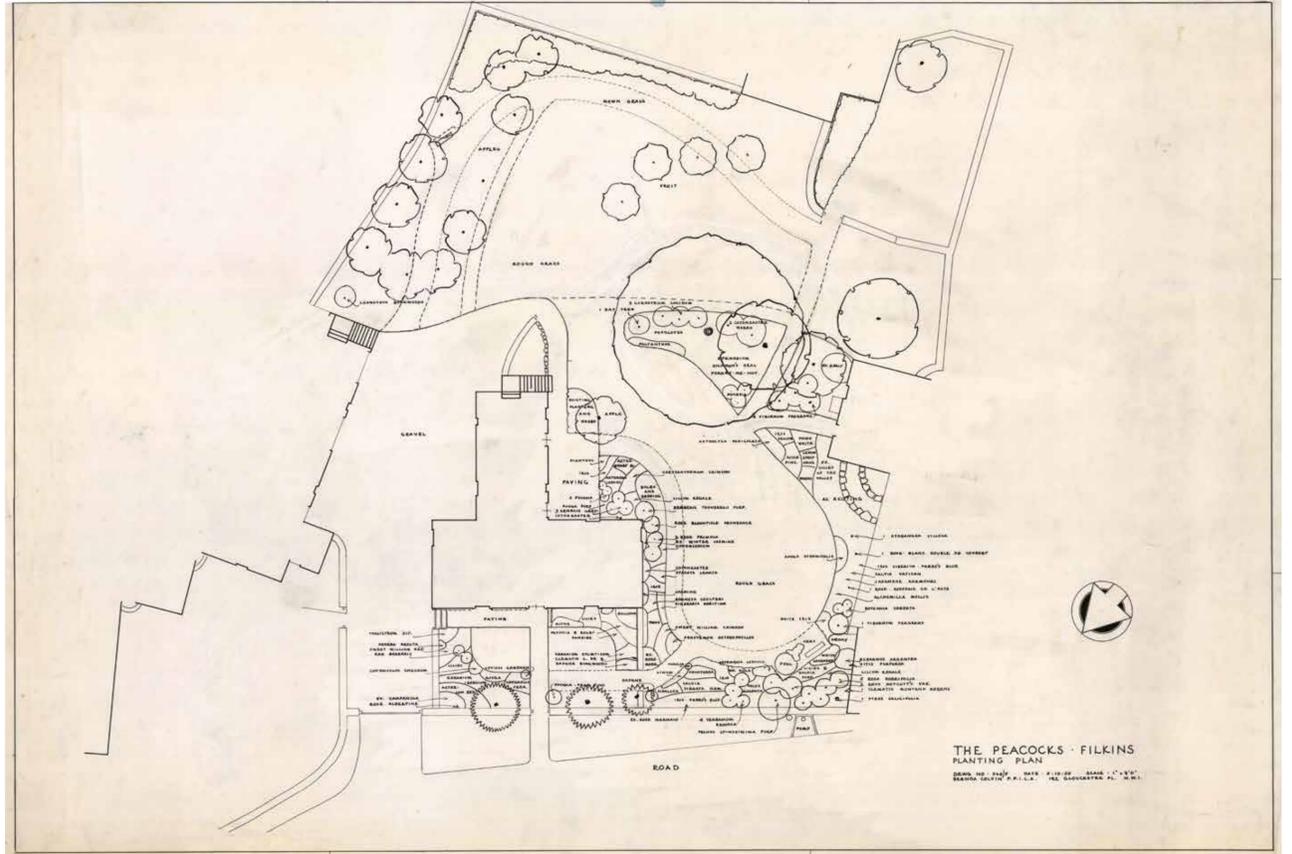


1. Planting plan for Little Peacocks, © Colvin & Maugeridge.
2. Beds in the Little Peacocks lawn, © MERL, AR COL.
3. Little Peacocks, © MERL, AR COL.
4. Lady Allen of Hurtwood, © Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library.

Describing her own 'Small Cotswold Garden', in *The Countryman*, Colvin remarked that a landscape architect's garden 'might be expected to display special design interest, but the layout of mine is determined almost wholly by existing buildings and walls in relation to the shape of the ground.' This self-deprecating appraisal is at odds with the personal pleasure that Colvin derived from the garden, which was at first a weekend retreat after she purchased it in 1954, and later her full-time home and office after she closed her London practice. The gardens had previously been a farmyard, which resulted in a characterful range of features to work around, as well as featuring a large horse chestnut tree. Influenced by the Arts and Crafts tradition, the garden was divided into a series of outdoor rooms, each with its own particular function.

Little Peacocks presented the opportunity for Colvin to experiment with different plants and planting combinations, with an emphasis on year-round interest and the quality and texture of foliage, rather than just summer colour. Her awareness of ecological processes led to the creation of the Bulb Lawn which was situated upon compacted hardcore and presented an otherwise challenging growing environment. The thin layer of soil proved to be a poor medium for grass, yet a spectacular medium for Mediterranean bulbs, with a number of species happily naturalising and providing continuous flowers throughout Spring. In amongst more exotic species were some *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* which Colvin had rescued from Gale Common when the ash-disposal site was being created.

Colvin's interest in gardens remained constant throughout her career, demonstrated by her last unfinished manuscript written in the 1970s, titled *The Garden for Four Seasons or The Constant Garden*.



LADY ALLEN OF HURTWOOD



Lady Allen's (1897–1976) name is synonymous with the Adventure Playground movement in the UK. Her work after the Second World War towards children's welfare was well known, and led to her involvement in international organisations, such as UNICEF and the UN. She recorded best practice in playground design both in the UK and abroad in a series of publications that promoted good quality spaces for the development of children of all ages. She was in partnership with Mary Mitchell, specialising in playground

design. While her work for children was transformational her work to promote and transform landscape architecture was not less important. Together with Brenda Colvin she was founding member of the Institute of Landscape Architects, and was honorary Vice-President, ahead of Colvin's election to president. She was a firm proponent of the profession for women, and as she wrote in an article for the *Evening Standard*' Your Daughter's Future series, 'as in all growing professions that are not fully recognised, a woman of ability and push must at

first actually devise new avenues for the expression of her work.' After studying Horticulture at the University of Reading, she was working as garden designer with Richard Sudell and co-authored several books about gardens with Lady Susan Jellicoe. She was also the initiator of the idea of an international landscape architectural exhibition in 1948 and the international conference that led to the establishment of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA).