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## Architecture and the Edwardian Era

DR TIMOTHY BRITAIN-CATLIN

We have known for a long time that there is something special about Edwardian architecture. For many of us, the picture we have of it was formed through reading the work of some of the very best of Britain's architectural historians – Mark Girouard, Andrew Saint, Clive Aslet, and in particular, Alastair Service whose enthusiastic and still authoritative books on the subject are deservedly still selling well after more than 40 years in print.<sup>1</sup> The architecture of that period was so exceptional that one can go on finding more to say about it, and the talk this evening is about a theme in Edwardian house design that perhaps has been overlooked, but which provides a new way of assessing the scope of that achievement.

Architects, big and small, have always altered old houses. But what we don't have is any acceptance that the remodelling of old buildings is a major theme in architecture in its own right. And this is what I want to say this evening about the Edwardian period: it was a sequence of alterations rather than of anything else that determined what the best buildings looked like. And when the best architects were not remodelling, they were designing new buildings that looked like remodellings. Edwin Lutyens in particular did this, and it is possible to see his work not only as that of a one-off genius but simply as a brilliant practitioner of an essentially Edwardian way of operating.

In fact, none of the three big houses that I would like to present to you this evening is currently established as being in the canon of great Edwardian architecture – but I believe they should be. To some extent when looking for the real story behind a movement one needs to look a bit further, beyond the tall shoulders of the celebrities and to those who created or simply most directly represented the original ideas that got it moving in the first place. These people often say little or nothing about what motivates them as architects: they just get on with it. You have to judge by what you see. So here is an opportunity to do that: the house you see here, Kingsgate Castle [slide 1] near Broadstairs in east Kent.

Kingsgate Castle was restored across the Edwardian era for John Lubbock, first Lord Avebury, in three stages from a major rebuilding in 1901 up to the completion of some extensions in 1912, including that Edwardian novelty the motor house for his collection of cars, just before Avebury's death.<sup>ii</sup> Now, Avebury is remembered today as the man who introduced the Bank Holiday. In fact, he had a quite remarkably successful and busy career for a back bencher, a Gladstone Liberal who became a Liberal Unionist after the party split. He is remembered among historians of conservation as the pioneer of what eventually became the first legislation to protect ancient monuments. But in his day, he was perhaps best known as a kind of populariser of science, mostly of Romano-British archaeology, geology and animal biology.

Now, Kingsgate Castle when Lord Avebury bought it in October of 1901 was a Georgian folly, a stable block on a prominent cliff-top site that had been designed to look like a fort. When he took it over, it had been made into a ramshackle residence. What Avebury did was to bring in a high-society architect not only to remodel it, but also to emphasise the difference between the eighteenth-century masonry and the new flint work.

In his diary, Avebury said almost nothing about architecture, although it was clear that he thought that some of his acquaintances' modern residences were a bit on the vulgar side; he did however write a lot about archaeological digs, and also about rock formations and strata: these things clearly moved him. I do not think it



is a coincidence that he ended up with a house that looks in some ways like a kind of rock stratum itself, with the old and new juxtaposed, and with every modern convenience including a large garage provided for under what the poet Thomas Grey had called – at Kingsgate – the ‘mouldering fanes and battlements’ – the ‘mimic desolation’ – of the Georgian folly.<sup>iii</sup>

The conventional way of looking at this type of house is to see it as a kind of fake – fake old, modern trappings intentionally obscured under a fake castle front. Furthermore, at Kingsgate the kitchen is hidden completely from view – in a way that high-art architects and critics disapprove of; the rooms inside the castle [slide 2] – and here you can see an image from the professional set that Avebury commissioned – were in a totally different style from the castellated exterior. But everything we know about Lord Avebury suggests that any suggestion of fakery on his part would be extremely improbable. His prodigious writing extols the logic, the clarity, the honesty of scientific research; in the Edwardian period when he rebuilt Kingsgate, his writing took on more of an explicitly Christian character, with ideas of truth and piety as mingled as they were in anything ever written by the strictest gothic revivalists. So I do not think that there is anything likely to be fake about Kingsgate Castle, and furthermore I would like to show you that there is a tradition to this layering of materials, of the old with the new, in high architecture that preceded Kingsgate by at least 50 years.

When you look beyond those celebrities such as Lutyens at the lesser known names, you begin to find those people who are called ‘architects’ architects’, that is, the designers who changed things profoundly but under the radar. What you see here is a place called Leicester Square [slide 3], which is located at the entry to the churchyard in the West Kent village of Penshurst. In 1848 – that is, when the gothic revival was only a few years old, and Pugin was still alive and working, this group of cottages was restored for Lord De L’Isle and Dudley by the architect George Devey.<sup>iv</sup> Now, the two cottages in the centre here were more or less old, and the ones either side were more or less new. But there is no real way of knowing where Devey’s work started and finished. This was a complete innovation: up to this point, architects whether great or small had designed alterations to cottages in a contrasting way. Pugin for example made tactful interventions to cottages but you can still tell which parts he did. What Devey seems to have done is to have gone into the original spirit of those old houses and breathed fresh life into them. When Mark Girouard visited them in 1971 for *Country Life*, he described Devey’s work as ‘rural archaeology’ – and that is a key phrase, and one which is part of the story that ends with the decade in which an archaeologist like Lord Avebury is building himself a modern castle.<sup>v</sup>

This is a detail from one of Devey’s best-known buildings – St Alban’s Court at Nonington near Deal on the other side of Kent from Penshurst [slide 4], from 1875-1879.<sup>vi</sup> You can see here that Devey appears to be giving the impression that a new red brick house was built on top of ancient stone remains, when in fact it was all designed and built by him at the same time. That sounds like it is fakery again. But actually, what he was doing was a variation on those cottages. Devey had presumably seen – he himself said nothing, like many architects’ architects – that it no longer mattered what was old and what was new. What mattered was what it was made of, what its logic was, how every element related to the one next door. I think that he was now abstracting historical elements – such as the idea of the stone and its qualities – and isolating them so as to emphasise the timelessness of the building – the opposite of the claim that St Alban’s Court is ‘fake-old’. I visited St Alban’s Court recently with the architect Charles Holland, and we came to the conclusion that none of this was random – Devey had almost certainly planned the position of every single piece of stone. It suits the mid-Victorian mentality very well to see it in terms of a scientific experiment that abstracts a sense of age and turns it into an objective building block, a demonstration of useful facts, and one that can be done on any scale. You are looking at the construction and you are aware of a sense of history, and yet you are aware too that this is all new and logical.

The high-society architect whom Lord Avebury employed at Kingsgate was called W.H. Romaine Walker, and he is for me a good example of what an Edwardian architect should be like. The son of a High-Church Pimlico vicar, he trained under a High-Church goth, George Edmund Street. His career in its earlier days involved altering or building small churches.<sup>vii</sup> Then in the 1880s everything took off when he made alterations to Canford Manor for the politician Ivor Guest. Soon after, at either end of the 1890s, after he was commissioned to design two vast new country houses: Rhinefield in the New Forest, and Danesfield by the Thames near Marlow in Buckinghamshire.

This is Rhinefield [slide 5]: it is staggering big and grand. It also helpfully tells us a lot about what a modern housebuilder requires, because the changing lifestyle needs, and technological progress of the late Victorian era



are important to what becomes its Edwardian successor too. There are various lessons to be learnt from it. The first is that if anything, it is vaguely palatial Jacobean in appearance, as indeed the architect's work at Canford Manor had been, and high-art Victorian architects very rarely designed in this style beyond the occasional enormous fireplace. Norman Shaw's highly regarded version of Jacobean was based on the vernacular late Tudor type, not the palace. The second is that what you see at Rhinefield is not necessarily what you get – for example, you cannot see the servants passing between the kitchens and the dining hall, because Romaine Walker designed a kind of ditch or ha-ha to hide them.<sup>viii</sup> And at Rhinefield there was an organ in the great hall, seen here as visitors to the Royal Academy and the readers of the *Builder* glimpsed it [slide 6], which apparently was considered frightfully vulgar, as was perhaps the Moorish smoking room. Rhinefield was, and was intended to be, a big modern house to enjoy.

Then Romaine Walker outdid all that and designed Danesfield [slide 7] – another Jacobean castle-house of even more gargantuan proportions. He built this for a client called Robert Hudson, late of Hudson's soap, for whom he designed a great deal at different scales in the immediate district. In 1900 *Country Life* ran an article on the exemplary farm and laundry buildings that Romaine Walker designed at Medmenham nearby as part of Hudson's scheme, praising its order and logic, and I wonder whether Avebury had seen this before commissioning him for Kingsgate.<sup>ix</sup> The cottages were very pretty and very unobtrusive in the village – they looked as if they had always been there – but they were new, they were efficient, and they were logical.

Romaine Walker continued his career as one might expect someone who reached their prime in the Edwardian era to do; by the 1920s and 1930s he was building large extensions to the Tate Gallery and, eventually, the difficult bits of the office blocks that had fronts by Lutyens. During the reign of King Edward, he was much taken up with making expensive alterations to Mayfair houses. The next architect I want to mention is very different – in fact I cannot find anything about his personal history at all, not even his Christian name: a Mr Lees, who in the 1890s turned a block of farm buildings called Daw's Hill in High Wycombe into a grand residence for the third Lord Carrington, and that is the second unfamiliar Edwardian house I would like to set before you.

Now, the conversion of humble vernacular buildings into comfortable houses was still an unusual idea. This building is the Old Granary [slide 8], on the Cam in Cambridge, and it was converted into a house for a member of the Darwin family by J.J. Stevenson in the 1880s. I imagine this was thought quite an eccentric move at the time. Carrington's project however went a lot further: in the first place, the buildings he was altering were modest in the extreme: a cow house, a cart house stable, a calving down box.<sup>x</sup> And in the second place, Carrington was grand, equally in the extreme: he was a major landowner in Lincolnshire as well as of much of High Wycombe; he had been governor of New South Wales, and then Lord Chamberlain of the Household, which meant spending long and dull summers with the Queen at Balmoral. But strikingly, he was also on the most progressive wing of the Liberal Party and after the Liberals came into power at the very end of 1905 he set about an ambitious programme of encouraging voluntary land redistribution, with legislation aimed at creating smallholdings from the estates of large landowners on mutually beneficial terms. In between he had been the Progressive member for St Pancras West of the new London County Council, and it may be that his Mr Lees was the district surveyor of the same name for that area.

Lees' new extensions to Daws Hill [slide 9] have been subsumed into more recent accommodation for Wycombe Abbey School, but we have an old postcard and a sales catalogue to go by [slide 10].<sup>xi</sup> It is very striking that Carrington chose to remodel these modest buildings into a comfortable and respectable house, and it may well have influenced his housebuilding Liberal friends, although they would have been aware that (like Avebury, in fact) he also owned other much larger houses, including in his case Gwydir Castle in North Wales, which he had bought himself. I think in any case that Carrington, the great exponent of new smallholdings, thought that small, smart, simple, quiet agricultural homes to some extent symbolised a new, rational and fair relationship for the English with their land, and evidently the magazine *Country Life* thought the same thing as well, as the editors put much effort into designing rural cottages and remodelling old ones from the dawn of the Edwardian period onwards.

There are two Edwardian houses which the magazine took a particular interest in just before the First World War, and which have never received the interest that they should. One of these is 'The Wharf', a converted riverside barn on the Thames at Sutton Courtenay, then in Berkshire, designed as a 'studio' for Margot Asquith



[slide 11].<sup>xiii</sup> The Asquiths commissioned a small Tudor-style house from the architect Walter Cave in 1912, and then they acquired and added to it the neighbouring older house.<sup>xiii</sup> But at the same time, Cave, presumably, converted the barn by the river at the end of the garden into a drawing room downstairs, and a bedroom upstairs, for the prime minister's wife to retire to. As anyone who has attempted to read them will know, Margot Asquith wrote down a continuous stream of thoughts on just about anything in at least two diaries simultaneously – but on this subject, she was strangely silent. She moved in aesthetic circles and she must have considered it a completely reasonable thing to do, to make a comfortable and artistic residence from what looks like a simple early seventeenth-century agricultural structure.

*Country Life* published this article about The Wharf, and also about a bigger agricultural conversion, and that is the third of the three unfamiliar houses I would like to present to you. Vann, near Hambledon in Surrey, was created from an old farm yard by the architect William Douglas Carøe from 1907.<sup>xiv</sup>

This is the plan that Carøe drew of his new house [slide 12].<sup>xv</sup> The parts in grey were there before – there was a mid-sixteenth-century timber-framed house, with a later chimney, and at the south end a later short extension. Carøe kept these with some alterations, making them into the parlour, study and drawing room of the new house – which in itself is worth remarking on, because Victorian house remodellers usually turned the old bits into the service wing and added smart, regular new reception rooms. All the areas shown in black here are his additions, and that includes the farmyard-like entrance wing and service areas, although in some cases, he was rebuilding or substantially remodelling where an old building used to be [slide 13]. At the western edge for example is what became his famous billiards and party room, built within an altered seventeenth-century timber structure. Over a period of time Carøe introduced into his house both new joinery of extremely high quality but also old timber panelling and an ornamental seventeenth-century plaster ceiling which went into the southern wing. In fact, it seems that his greatest interest was in working with the areas where old and new were mixed, the more mixed the better, and he himself moved old features to new locations and added to them. It is very hard to tell from the outside how much of the resulting house is Carøe and how much was there before – it is about the materials, not the chronology. Rosie Ibbotson has detected in its general layout more than a nod to recent planning innovations, for example in the new south west aspect in which she sees a reference to the butterfly layouts that arts and crafts architects liked to experiment with [slide 14].<sup>xvi</sup> It is extremely appropriate that the house was chosen to play the part of Howards End in the recent BBC adaptation because for all its ancient appearance, as Forster would have wanted, it was actually designed and built at exactly the time when Forster was writing the novel.

It was very striking that the old barn was hardly recorded, and certainly not accurately, in the survey drawings that Carøe was working from. That makes me think that Carøe rebuilt it quite substantially, and therefore that the *idea* of rebuilding, rather than just doing it, had taken on some power of its own. And this in turn reinforces the idea that rebuilding and remodelling were more of a consistent theme that we have thought up to now.

Think of Lutyens' best known houses – many of them were rebuilds. That is true of Lindisfarne and Great Dixter [slide 15], and Lambay Castles, of course, of Temple Dinsley, Abbotswood and Canons Ashby, and it is especially true of Folly Farm where each extension to the old house came in an earlier style to the structure that immediately preceded it, but at the same time advanced back to the original early timber-framed farmhouse from which the whole thing had started. It is true of New Place at Shedfield, where he built a house of, apparently, circa 1580 for an existing, imported interior of about 1630. But surprisingly it's also true of Great Maytham Hall, near Rolvenden in West Kent [slide 16]. This does not look like a rebuilt house, but it is: the shell of its early eighteenth-century predecessor is located within it. And it is more than just a case of handily reusing the masonry. When Lawrence Weaver wrote about Great Maytham Hall for *Country Life*, nearly all of his text is about the history of the old house and very little is about the new one.<sup>xvii</sup> In fact Weaver wrote that Lutyens had 'picked up the thread of early eighteenth century design' where the original builder had 'dropped it', one of several allusions in the magazine to the idea that a new architect has found some of the original DNA of a house and regenerated an extension or a remodelling from it.<sup>xviii</sup> Weaver and his fellow writer H. Avray Tipping very often did this when describing remodelled houses – it was as if the recasting of the history of the place was the main pretext for the article.<sup>xix</sup> It was as if Lutyens had gone back into the history of the old Hall and re-expressed it for its modern usage – as the residence, in fact, of Margot Asquith's brother Jack Tennant, whose brother Frank had recently commissioned Robert Lorimer to restore Lympe Castle nearby.





There is something else that Lutyens did in the design of new houses which fits well with this way of looking at them – he designed houses that looked as if they had been built at different times: at Little Thakeham, for example, he places a screened stone staircase of about 1630 in a house that otherwise draws from about a century beforehand [slide 17]. At Tigbourne Court in Witley, he designed in 1899 a Tuscan entry loggia to what is otherwise a late Elizabethan house [slide 18]. That one interests me in particular because if you go through the pages of *Country Life* before the War you will see that they twice illustrated South Wraxall Manor, in Wiltshire, which has a loggia like this, inserted in about 1720 into a late sixteenth-century wing.<sup>xx</sup> In fact the magazine repeatedly showed houses with plain early seventeenth-century exteriors and ornamental late seventeenth-century interiors, and architects during the Edwardian decade copy this motif many times over when designing new houses, in small as well as in large ones.

One of the characteristics of the Edwardian period, or at any rate the years between the late 1890s and the First World War, is the stupendous amount of publishing of illustrations and commentary on the design of new houses. These books launched the careers of several architects, such as W.A. Forsyth, Niven and Wrigglesworth, who became highly regarded house restorers and remodellers. *Country Life* itself is particularly helpful in its early years even before any of its well-known writers were contributing. The first reason for this is that it addressed the tone of its articles towards the interests of landowners rather than towards the architects who were doing the designing; another is that it drew material from a very large range of sources, rather than from images sent to them by architects themselves: in fact it provides a proper narrative commentary on many aspects of a house and the life in it that the professional press did not. A third reason is that the magazine ran a long campaign to improve rural housing from the end of 1899 at the latest, which meant that it entered into some detail about it, looking carefully and rationally at windows, chimneys and building materials in different combinations, in both thematic photographic essays and in articles on the nuts and bolts of cottage design. In fact, in the second part of that article from 1971 about Penuhurst, Mark Girouard wrote the founding of the magazine was ‘the natural culmination of the Devey frame of mind’.<sup>xxi</sup> This campaign began when landowners reported that they were unable to extend their tenants’ cottages in sympathetic historical styles, because the rigidity of the building bye-laws imposed conditions on them. And these conditions required that all new country cottages had to resemble urban houses or terraces of a style-less, unhistorical kind. *Country Life*’s campaign went on for about a decade, waning only as the bye-laws themselves were modified. In 1913 Lawrence Weaver published the ‘*Country Life*’ *Book of Cottages*, and the following year the book on house restoration and alteration that included The Wharf and Vann. Weaver himself commissioned a former Devey employee, Percy Morley Horder, to make a peculiar remodelling of his own house in St John’s Wood in which the basement became the entrance floor.<sup>xxii</sup> Some of the most picturesque architects building Tudor houses in the 1920s and 1930s were in training during the Edwardian era – Blunden Shadbolt, Ernest Trobridge, Edgar Ranger [slides 19 and 20], for example, not to mention Walter Godfrey, who was articled to Devey’s former assistant James Williams.<sup>xxiii</sup>

But remodelling of old houses and especially designing new ones to look as if they had been remodelled was a constant theme in the other publications too. *The Architectural Review* had been founded in late 1896, only just before *Country Life*, and in five successive years from 1908 to 1912 the editor Mervyn Macartney published a set of volumes showing the latest examples of domestic architecture.<sup>xxiv</sup> Volumes four and five opened with large houses which had been substantially rebuilt by Ernest Newton. But perhaps one of the most telling witnesses is Hermann Muthesius, who was attaché at the Imperial German Embassy reporting on British design from 1896-1903. His three-volume *Das Englische Haus* was published in Berlin in 1904-1905 and was intended to bring to a German audience the quality and originality of British work. The first 100 or so pages of the first volume are about the history of the English house from pre-medieval times onwards, and as Muthesius reached the present day, he departed from his chronological account in order to stress the importance of vernacular architecture to what he called the ‘scientific’ approach to house design. He wrote that vernacular architecture was the ‘starting-point for modern domestic building’, and added that the ‘escape’, as he put it, from the bad architecture of the early nineteenth century ‘consisted in the architects recovering the traditions of the old master-mason, abandoning any suggestion of fine architecture and beginning to build simply and rationally like the old guild-masons’.<sup>xxv</sup> In other words, going back into the historical house and remaking and re-expressing it. One of Muthesius’ most recent houses was The Croft – Thomas Collcutt’s own house on Totteridge Green, of 1898 [slide 21].<sup>xxvi</sup> The combination of the building materials – a little ornamental plasterwork in a Jacobean artisan mannerist style as well as brick, stone, render and half-timber – make this look as if it had been built gradually, and not all at once. In fact, when Muthesius visited, this was all the more the case, because behind this



beautifully tended arts-and-crafts-style tree on the left there is a corridor at an angle linking the service wing to the house that surely had been intended to look as if it had been added later.

It must be an eternal characteristic of human nature that we like to look back into the past to a point where things went wrong and wonder how everything might have turned out differently if we could have made some changes to it. We are always told it cannot be done, but that is not altogether true. There have always been stories, mostly for children, some very sentimental, about remaking the past, or about finding redemption in the past. But it is not hard to find some very striking examples of writing in Edwardian times that take this further: George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, for example. The play was written in 1912 and it does this remaking of the past in two ways. The first is that it remakes Ovid's original story so that Eliza, his modern Galatea, notably fails to marry the man who created her. But you can look beyond this and see that what Shaw was writing about was the possibility of one human being entering the mind or the soul of someone else using scientific methods to remake a person as someone different, in this case more fulfilled, than she had originally been. This is a reasonable allegory to what architects were doing to those old cottages. In fact, the cottages are much more Eliza than they are Galatea, because they were always real; like Eliza they were scorned until that scientist took them out of the gutter. When Lord Carrington converted his old farmyard at Daws Hill into a grand residence, he turned an old potting shed where he remembered playing as a child into his new study.<sup>xxvii</sup> He was going back in time and making something noble from the clay of his youth. Charles Ashbee was doing something similar all the time, especially at Chipping Campden when he was remaking East End boys by remaking Cotswolds cottages.

Once you start to look at this process it raises other ideas about how to interpret these remarkable buildings. This is 73 Fitzjohn's Avenue in Hampstead, and what you can see here are some alterations of 1901-1903 by Charles Francis Annersley Voysey, a new bow window and porch, emerging from the fabric of a plain late Victorian house [slide 22].<sup>xxviii</sup> Voysey worked for George Devey after completing his articles, and the influence never completely wore off. At Fitzjohn's Avenue the Voysey additions clearly have much more of a sense of presence than the old house, and the feeling I had with it is that the Voysey work is occupying the old one almost as a kind of parasite within it, that has taken it over.<sup>xxix</sup> In many of the cottages and houses that appear in the long succession of Edwardian books on architecture you can see very cleverly detailed conjunctions of different styles of work of different times. The early and late seventeenth-century was a particularly favourite combination, but sometimes you could see fairly rough Elizabethan or Jacobean inglenooks rammed up against delicate Georgian panelling. What is often so exquisite about these is that the detailing of these complicated junctions is so rewarding – from what one can see from the outside of the Hampstead house, Voysey's especially so [slide 23].

For all that has been written about historical building reuse in recent years, there still is not any mainstream theory of historical architecture through juxtaposition and remodelling. An approach like this is not interested in whether something is old or new – it is the fabric that counts, the Devey argument. It is a characteristic of modern approaches to restoration or alteration that talking about whether parts of buildings were old or new has become the principal subject. But that was not the case then.

Sometimes I wonder whether the preponderance of Liberal Party politicians with a commitment to land-reform in the commissioning of houses of this type has something to do with remaking the past history of land ownership itself. J.J. Stevenson, the architect of the granary at Cambridge, was a Liberal from an intensively active Liberal family. The garden estate at Gidea Park in Romford is a further excellent example of this in action. This was the suburb built from 1910 on land purchased originally by the barrister and political activist Herbert Raphael.<sup>xxx</sup> Raphael had been the Progressive Party member of the LCC until 1892, when he had been replaced by Carrington; he had bought Gidea Hall in 1897 and with it 450 acres, of which a large part to the east was leased to the recently founded Romford Golf Links; in fact alongside the prevalence of Liberals comes the omnipresence of golf, which *Country Life* reported on every month, and which provided the nucleus for social activities at Kingsgate Castle, for The Croft in Totteridge and at countless other of the remodelled or apparently remodelled houses of the decade.

In 1902 Raphael gave 15 acres to Romford urban district council to form a small park to the west. This left the central area, beyond the house and park itself, for other purposes. In the Liberal landslide of 1906 Raphael was finally elected to parliament, as the member for South Derbyshire; then in 1909 he formed the Gidea Hall



Development Company with two others, the architect-MP John Tudor Walters, Liberal member for Sheffield Brightside, and Charles McCurdy, a director of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust (who became a Liberal MP in 1910) to develop the remaining part of the site in the middle.

Gidea Park is different from the well-known garden suburbs or cities by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin because the emphasis was on the design of the houses and not on the planning layout – in fact it is not clear who actually planned it, and there certainly was not any interest here in innovative land ownership arrangements [slide 24]. In July 1910 the suburb was formally announced, and architects were invited together with building contractors to submit designs for houses priced at £350 or £500 – and there was a competition for the best one in each category, in which Weaver of *Country Life* took a great deal of interest.<sup>xxxii</sup> The idea was to open the entire estate as a public building exhibition, with the houses offered for sale, and as you would expect from this period there was a very detailed catalogue for visitors, in which every house received some comment: from this it is possible to see just how aware not just the architect but the consumer could be about the fine details of layout, storage, and technical proficiency.<sup>xxxiii</sup> In fact that catalogue has another very Edwardian characteristic to it as well: it evokes in some detail the previous Gidea Hall, the mediaeval house that once sat on the site, but says nothing at all about the plain eighteenth-century classical house that had in fact replaced it.

The estate presents the Edwardian architect untrammelled by any consideration except by cost. Because most of the architects chose a coherent vernacular style – derived from Essex village houses from the seventeenth-century, by the look of it – the effect is coherent, but as a townscape it does not provide particularly photogenic street views: all the emphasis is on the houses themselves, and the communality comes from the pervading greenery, the neat and pretty gardens, the tall chimneys and the combination in many places of timber and brick exactly as readers of *Country Life* had seen many times over during the decade.. There is a sprinkling of early eighteenth-century-looking houses including a group by an architect called Ronald Jones, who went on building in the Wren domestic style, and Clough Williams Ellis first made his name here with a little dolls' house-like classical bungalow. H.M. Baillie Scott was by then the most proficient designer of the Tudor-type houses [slide 25], and vernacular, irregular cottages by Reginald Longden, one of which won a second prize, were praised by Weaver [slide 26].<sup>xxxiii</sup> These were all in brick, with ornamental chimneys and a little half-timbering filled with brick nogging; one sat in the estate's prize position at the corner of Reed Pond Walk where it widened around the wild central garden.

Gidea Park is not especially well known, and yet it should be: it is probably the largest and best kept collection of Edwardian houses which expressed what it was that made the period special and different. It also rattled the young neo-Georgians, bringing condemnation from ambitious neo-Georgians, one of whom wrote in the *Town Planning Review* that it was 'a fruitless effort ... to combine modern proportions, modern comforts and old-world effects', and that rooms should be arranged symmetrically, fireplaces should be 'refined', and that internally exposed brickwork 'should not be allowed'.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Criticism of this kind marks a sort of watershed; *Country Life* writers had been Tudorists and Jacobeanists through and through, and from this point on Weaver, for one, moved onto the defensive. But the beauty and variety [slide 27], not to mention constructional sophistication, of what remains shows a trajectory that began only at the end of the late 1890s and, over the course of scarcely more than a decade, produced an extraordinary number of extraordinarily beautiful buildings.

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<sup>i</sup> Service, A. (1975), *Edwardian architecture and its origins*. London, Architectural Press; Service, A. (1977), *Edwardian architecture*. London, Thames & Hudson.

<sup>ii</sup> The dates are from entries in Lord Avebury's diary, British Library Add MS 62684; my sincere thanks to Lyulph, 5<sup>th</sup> Baron Avebury, for his generous assistance with Avebury family papers.



- <sup>iii</sup> Gray, T., 'Impromptu on Lord Holland's Seat at Kingsgate, suggested by a view, in 1766, of the seat and ruins of a deceased nobleman, at Kingsgate, Kent', *The Works of Thomas Gray*. London, Harding, Triphook & Lepard, vol.1, 1825, p.187.
- <sup>iv</sup> Allibone, J. (1991), *George Devey: architect 1820-1886*. Cambridge, Lutterworth Press, p. 151.
- <sup>v</sup> Girouard, M. (1971), 'George Devey in Kent - 1'. *Country Life*, 1.4.1971, pp. 744-747; p. 745.
- <sup>vi</sup> Allibone, *Devey*, pp. 158-159.
- <sup>vii</sup> There is no comprehensive biography of William Henry Romaine Walker, although he is much referred to; information about him here derives mainly from his obituaries in the *Builder*, v.158, 17.5.1940 p.582, and 21.6.1940, p.723; the census of 1861; the *Buildings of England*; and Franklin, J. (1981), *The English gentleman's house and its plan 1835-1914*. London, Routledge Keegan Paul.
- <sup>viii</sup> Franklin, *The English Gentleman's House*, p. 104.
- <sup>ix</sup> 'An estate in the making - 1' [no author name]. *Country Life*, 18.8.1900, pp. 203-207.
- <sup>x</sup> Microfilm of the papers of Charles Robert Wynn-Carrington, Marquess of Lincolnshire, Diaries of Lord Lincolnshire, December 1890-July 1900, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford Diaries MS Film 1103, 3.8.1897, p. 215. My thanks to Andrew Adonis for directing me to these.
- <sup>xi</sup> My thanks to Tina Cunningham and Emily Boswell, Wycombe Abbey School for allowing me to see the catalogue and the School's own historical information.
- <sup>xii</sup> Weaver, L. (1914). *Small country houses: their repair and enlargement*. London, Country Life; pp. 53-56. Weaver's book chapters were drawn directly from his *Country Life* articles.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Patrick, J. (2012), *Walter Cave: arts and crafts to Edwardian splendour*. Andover, Phillimore & Co, 2012.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Weaver, L. (1914). *Small country houses: their repair and enlargement*. London, Country Life; pp. 36-41.
- <sup>xv</sup> Historic England Archive, CAR01/03.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ibbotson, R. (2008) *W D Caröe and the arts and crafts movement* [conference paper]. Hambledon, Surrey, UK: Vann Centenary Conference (in association with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings), 30-31.7.2008.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Weaver, L. (1913), *Houses & gardens by E.L. Lutyens*. London, Country Life, pp. 247-256; his original article had been published in *Country Life*, 30.11.1912.
- <sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.
- <sup>xix</sup> Brittain-Catlin, T., 2017, 'Good fairies'. *AA Files* 73, pp. 121-128.
- <sup>xx</sup> On 14.1.1905 and 15.4.1911.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Girouard, M. (1971), 'George Devey in Kent - 2'. *Country Life*, 18.4.1971, pp. 812-815; p. 812.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Phillips, R. (1931), *The house improved*. London, Country Life, pp. 46-51; Brittain-Catlin, T. (2014), *Bleak houses: failure and disappointment in architecture*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, pp. 130-131.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> See Campbell, D. (1983), 'Blundon Shadbolt 1879 -1949: architect of the house desirable'. *Thirties Society Journal* 3 (1983), pp. 17-24; Burton, N. (1983), 'Architect extraordinary: Ernest George Trobridge, 1884-1943'. *Oxford Art Journal* 5/2, pp. 63-64; Brittain-Catlin, T. (2015), 'Picturesque, Modern, Tudor-style: Edgar Ranger in Thanet'. *Twentieth Century Architecture 12: Regional practice and local character*, pp. 34-47; (2004-09-23). 'Godfrey, Walter Hindes (1881-1961), architect and antiquary'. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 25 Feb. 2018, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33430>.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Macartney, M. (1908-1924), *Recent English Domestic Architecture*, five vols, London, The Architectural Review, 1908-1912. Vol. 1, 1908; vol. 2, 1909; vol. 3, 1910; vol. 4, 1911; vol. 5, 1912. A sixth volume followed some time later.
- <sup>xxv</sup> English translation from Muthesius, H. (2007), *The English House*, vol 1. London: Frances Lincoln, p. 101.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Muthesius, *The English House*, vol. 1, p. 145.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Carrington Diaries, MS Film 1103, 17.1.1899, p. 17.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> The attribution and date are from Saint, A. (1980), notes for The Victorian Society Hampstead Walk, 13.4.1980.
- <sup>xxix</sup> I am indebted to a conversation with Maša Tatalovič at the Architectural Association for this observation.
- <sup>xxx</sup> The most useful descriptions of the early development of Gidea Park are the Twentieth Century Society guide 'Return to Gidea Park', by David Davidson and Nick Collins; and 'An afternoon walk in Gidea Park', July 1998, produced for the Twentieth Century Society in 1998, compiled by John East and drawn from earlier tour notes for the Victorian Society by Roderick Gradidge (1989); a publication called *The Romford Garden Suburb*, of the Gidea Park District Civic Society (1986); and the original guide to the exhibition, *The Book of the exhibition of houses and cottages, Romford Garden Suburb, Gidea Park*, published by the exhibition committee in London, 1911.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Weaver, L. (1913), *The 'Country Life' book of cottages*. London, Country Life, ch. 7.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> *The Book of the Exhibition*, 1911, which gives all the architects' names and all the ground floor plans.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> For example, in his 'Country Life' book of cottages, pp. 83; 85.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Adshead, S., 'Romford Garden Suburb, Gidea Park: Cottage Exhibition and Town Plan'. *Town Planning Review*, vol 2, July 1911, pp. 124-127; p. 126.



## Architecture and the Edwardian Era

Timothy Brittain-Catlin

Gresham College, 13 March 2018

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