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INFORMATION SHEET

Garden History in Scotland

This is one of a series of information sheets issued by Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage, intended to introduce people to the subject of garden history, to encourage research and to promote the conservation of historic gardens and designed landscapes in Scotland.

Introduction

In this summary history of gardening in Scotland, the term 'garden' is understood to include a wide range of designed landscapes, ranging from large estates and deer parks, through villa and cottage gardens to allotments, together with botanical gardens, public parks and garden cemeteries. All of these have a part to play in the history of Scottish gardening. While there are many parallels with the development of English and European gardens, Scotland has its own distinctive story to tell, reflecting its unique climate, topography and history. Some garden types are particularly well-developed in Scotland – for example terraced gardens, walled gardens, picturesque and sublime landscapes, American gardens and Himalayan gardens. Scotsmen and Scotswomen have had an important part to play in the development of gardening in Britain, whether as gardeners, garden designers, plant hunters or writers. At the end of each historical period described below, examples are given of gardens which can be visited.

Early gardens and landscapes to the 16th Century

Little is known about the design and layout of Scotland's earliest gardens. Ornamental gardening, drawing on European traditions, was probably introduced around the 11th century, at which time it was confined to monastic houses, royal palaces and the houses of the nobility, many of whom were well-travelled on the continent. Records suggest that ornamental planting was combined with the growing of herbs, fruit and vegetables, mostly within the bounds of walled gardens grouped around the main house, often referred to in old records as 'yards'. Gardens of the period would have included features such as raised beds, hedges, alleys, fish-ponds and arbours. Outwith the gardens, hunting parks surrounded by walls and/or paling fences, some wooded, were a feature of most royal palaces and many high status houses. Many houses of the period were designed with defence in mind.

EXAMPLES : Culross Palace (Fife), Falkland Palace (Fife), Holyroodhouse and Abbey (Edinburgh), Jedburgh Abbey (Scottish Borders), Soutra Aisle (Midlothian), Stirling Castle and the Kings Knot (Stirling).

Gardens and landscapes in the 17th Century

Gardens, generally surrounded by high walls, were still grouped around the main house with little use being made of the surrounding scenery. Garden layouts were frequently geometrical and/or symmetrical, with Italian, French and Dutch influences evident at different times. Where the topography allowed, gardens were often formed into terraces. Larger gardens were mostly subdivided, the quarters closest to the house being planted for ornament, those further away being used for growing fruit and vegetables. Larger houses, sometimes compared to French *chateaux*, were often topped by viewing platforms. Defence was still a consideration, with some gardens liable to suffer damage or destruction in times of conflict. Key figures include *Sir William Bruce* (1630-1710) and *John Reid* (1656-1723).

EXAMPLES : Aberdour Castle (Fife), Drummond Castle (Perthshire), Edzell Castle (Angus), Pitmedden Garden (Aberdeenshire), Drumlanrig Castle (Dumfriesshire).

Gardens and landscapes in the early 18th Century

Many gardens were extended, often in the 'grand manner', mirroring French and Dutch gardens of the late 17th century, characterised by radiating avenues, formal water features, and so-called 'wilderness' plantations cut through with criss-crossing alleys. The emphasis was on straight walks and broad vistas some of which were aligned on distant eye-catchers such as hills or mountains, or on man-made features such as ruins, garden buildings or statues. With defence no longer a consideration the neo-classical style of architecture became more common, as older tower houses and castles were abandoned or demolished and/or remodelled to create more comfortable accommodation for their owners. By the mid-18th century formality was decreasing as more naturalistic elements began to appear in some landscapes. Key figures include *Alexander Edward* (1651-1708), *William Boucher* (d.1738), *Sir John Clerk of Penicuik* (1676-1755) and *William Adam* (1689-1748), *Henry Home*, *Lord Kames* (1696-1742).

EXAMPLES : Blair Castle (Perth & Kinross), Castle Kennedy (Dumfries & Galloway), Dumfries House (Ayrshire), Hopetoun House (West Lothian)

Gardens and landscapes in the late 18th and early 19th centuries

The development of 'landscape gardening' brought with it a further reduction in formality. Straight edges, avenues, vistas and direct approaches gradually gave way to more sinuous boundaries and sweeping drives fitted to the local topography. Terraces, formal gardens and parterres close to the house were swept away to be replaced by lawns and parkland, either open, or dotted with clumps and/or standard trees. Walled gardens, once clustered around the house, were often removed and rebuilt some distance away. The wider landscape was incorporated into many designs with the use of the sunken wall or 'ha-ha', allowing uninterrupted outward views. This was an age of agricultural improvement, leading to a transformation of Scotland's rural landscape through enclosure and tree planting. Where circumstances permitted, natural landscape features such as rocks and waterfalls were brought into the design, sometimes combined with artificial ruins and view-houses, to create picturesque and sublime landscapes. Key figures include *Rev. William Gilpin* (1724-1804), *Thomas White* (1736-1811), *Humphry Repton* (1752-1818), *Alexander Nasmyth* (1758-1840) and *William Sawrey Gilpin* (1762-1843).

EXAMPLES : Culzean Castle (Ayrshire), Dunkeld Hermitage & Falls of Bruar (Perthshire), Falls of Clyde (Lanarkshire), Glamis Castle (Angus), Haddo House (Aberdeenshire).

Gardens and Landscapes in the mid-19th century

World exploration and the discovery and introduction of new plants led to a craze for plant collectors' gardens including pineta, arboreta, American gardens and shrubberies. Formal terracing and flower gardens were gradually reintroduced around the house, leading eventually to elaborate ornamental schemes with carpet bedding and ribbon borders and rock gardens. Glasshouses and conservatories, made possible by the mass production of iron and glass, became a feature of many Victorian gardens. New country houses were built, many funded by the profits of trade and industry, in a variety of architectural styles – Gothic, Elizabethan, Jacobean and Baronial. Social reforms and philanthropy led to the creation of public parks and garden cemeteries in town and cities to serve an ever-increasing urban population. Popular books and magazines did much to encourage an interest in gardening at all levels of society. Key figures include *John Hay* (1758-1836), *John Claudius Loudon* (1783-1843), *William Burn* (1789-1870), *William Andrews Nesfield* (1793-1891), *David Douglas* (1799-1834), and *Joseph Paxton* (1803-1865).

EXAMPLES : Baxter Park (Dundee), Drummond Castle (Perthshire), Dunrobin Castle (Sutherland), , Mellerstain (Scottish Borders), The Necropolis (Glasgow), Scone Palace (Perthshire).

Gardens and landscapes from the late 19th century until the First World War

The late Victorian period saw a reaction against the excessive formality of the mid-century Victorian garden, and a move towards a more relaxed and naturalistic style of planting, often combined with Arts and Crafts architecture. Characteristic features of gardens in the Edwardian period include rustic stonework and paving, rockwork, pergolas, water features and elegant garden furniture. There was a brief interest in Japanese gardening c.1890-1910. The Garden City Movement inspired by Ebenezer Howard, which included the creation of greenbelts, tree-lined boulevards and public green spaces, had an influence on urban planning from the 1890s onwards. Architect Robert Lorimer was among the first to revive old traditions, and to attempt 'authentic' garden restorations. Key figures include *Gertrude Jekyll* (1843-1932), *Ebenezer Howard* (1850-1928), *Reginald Blomfield* (1856-1942), *Thomas Mawson* (1861-1933), *Robert Lorimer* (1864-1929).

EXAMPLES : Broughton House (Dumfries & Galloway), Cowden Japanese Garden (Clackmannanshire), Crathes Castle (Aberdeenshire), Greywalls (East Lothian), Kellie Castle (Fife) and Mount Stuart (Isle of Bute).

Gardens and landscapes in the mid-20th century

From the beginning of the 20th century onwards it becomes more difficult to identify distinct styles or trends in garden design. Many larger gardens declined after the First World War through the loss of staff, increasing costs and changing social circumstances. The Second World War dealt a further blow to those gardens which had survived, with many country houses sold off or demolished by their owners. The creation of large gardens became more and more the province of commercial organisations and civic authorities, alongside the creation of smaller specialised gardens by private owners. The first half of the century saw a number of Himalayan gardens developed with plants sent back by plant collectors from the Far East. The 1930s saw the founding of the National Trust for Scotland and Scotland's Gardens Scheme – the latter half of the century seeing several important gardens brought into the care of the NTS. Extensive planting and landscaping was also an important feature of Scotland's New Towns, created between the 1940s and 1960s. Key figures include *George Forrest* (1873-1932), *Percy Cane* (1881-1976), *Geoffrey Jellicoe* (1900-1996), *Sylvia Crowe* (1901-1997) and *Frank Clark* (1902-1971).

Examples : Achamore (Isle of Gigha, Argyll), Branklyn Garden (Perthshire), Castle Kennedy (Dumfries & Galloway), Scotland's New Towns (e.g. East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Irvine)

Gardens and landscapes into the 21st century

The listing of historic gardens as part of Scotland's cultural heritage began with the publication in 1987 of AN INVENTORY OF GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES IN SCOTLAND, now extended, updated and available online, and with the passage of protective legislation. The conservation of historic gardens since the millennium has been helped by grant aid from Historic Environment Scotland and the National Lottery, with public parks and cemeteries benefiting in particular from the Lottery's Urban Parks Programme. While this has helped to conserve the best of what we have inherited from the past, some new gardens have been created in the last few decades which can be seen as leading Scottish gardens into the new millennium. Key figures include *Ian Hamilton Finlay* (1925-2006) and *Charles Jencks* (1939-2019).

EXAMPLES : Little Sparta (Lanarkshire), Garden of Cosmic Speculation (Dumfries & Galloway), Landform (Edinburgh), Jupiter Artland (City of Edinburgh).