



# FOLAR Newsletter

Issue 1  
December  
2014

FRIENDS OF THE LANDSCAPE LIBRARY & ARCHIVE AT READING

## Mission

- to support MERL & the University of Reading maintain and grow the landscape collections in their care
- in partnership with the Landscape Institute help promote awareness of the landscape collections at Reading

## FOLAR & new beginnings for the Landscape Institute's Library & Archive!

### Why the acronym FOLAR?

*Friends of the Landscape Library & Archive at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), part of the University of Reading's Special Collections* is the accurate way to describe the affiliation of the Friends' group. Unfortunately, its also a mouthful to say. So, we've shortened it to FOLAR: *Friends Of the Landscape Library & Archive at Reading.*

### Delivering our mission

FOLAR will be pro-active in our support of MERL and the University of Reading (UoR). We will offer specialist advice when it is needed. We will encourage the promotion of the landscape collections at MERL to a wider audience. We want to see these collections grow to reflect the changing nature of the landscape profession over

time, so that it becomes an important source of research and inspiration. We will maintain our close relationship with the Landscape Institute (LI) and will forge stronger links with other, well established organisations, such as the Landscape Research Group, the Landscape Design Trust, the Garden History Society, and, in the US, the Cultural Landscape Foundation.

### Masthead Image: Lake

**Vyrnwy, Powys.** Built by Liverpool Corporation to supply the City with Welsh fresh water, Lake Vyrnwy was the largest artificial reservoir in Europe at the time of its design and construction (completion: 1892). While municipal engineers were responsible for the design at Lake Vyrnwy, it was the increasing influence of landscape architects such as **Sylvia Crowe** who, in the 20th C, helped ensure that visual impact was treated as on a par with engineering criteria when designing large scale interventions in the rural landscape.

## Friends' AGM & Event, Saturday 21 March 2015

On Saturday 21st March 2015, we are holding FOLAR's first AGM at the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), when we will formally approve our name, constitution and other matters such as annual subscriptions, programme of events and activities for the coming year. In order to attract more to attend, the AGM will be combined with a Brenda Colvin Study Day. There will also be a chance to purchase some duplicate books from the LI library.

**Please note: while the AGM is free, there will be a charge of £10.00 pp to attend the afternoon talks. Refer to separate sheet for further details and reply slip.**

Contact details on p6 of this newsletter.

### Programme :

- 10.30 Display of **Brenda Colvin** archives in MERL's Reading Room
- 11.30 AGM (details to follow in the new year)
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Talk by Hal Moggridge on Brenda Colvin and the Colvin & Moggridge practice.
- 14.40 Talk by Reading University Archivist on archival issues relating to the Brenda Colvin collection
- 15.30 Close

Location: Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), University of Reading, Redlands Road, Reading RG1 5EX

**FOLAR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONS TO ARCHIVE (LI CORPORATE RECORDS): LI YEARBOOKS (all years) and MISSING ANNUAL REPORTS 1990-1992; 1996-1997; 2003 ONWARDS** Contact: folar1234@gmail.com

### Inside this issue:

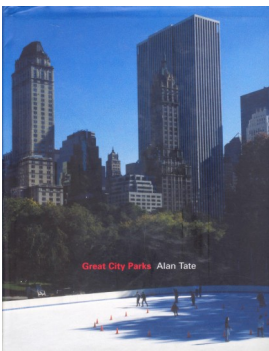
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TO DATE, 9 BLOG POSTS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN MERL'S 'DISCOVERING THE LANDSCAPE' SERIES

The University of Reading received its Royal Charter in **1926**. The Institute of Landscape Architects (ILA) was founded three years later, in **1929**.

University of Reading advertisement published in **Landscape and Garden**, Winter **1934**. It reads:

*'The Faculty of Agriculture & Horticulture, in conjunction with the School of Art, provides a three-year course leading to the Diploma in Landscape Architecture. The course is designed for those who intend to take up this subject as a career. It includes tuition in Art, Building Construction, Surveying, Horticulture, and cognate subjects.'*



Duplicate book bought at Friends' Inaugural Meeting at MERL, Feb 2014: Alan Tate's *Great City Parks*, Spon Press, 2001 (1st ed). Alan Tate, a Past President of the LI, is Assoc. Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Manitoba, Canada

## PROGRESS AT MERL

Substantial progress has been made to sort and catalogue the Landscape Institute's library & archive since its arrival in Reading late 2013. Of the whole LI archive collection, 35.5% is now fully catalogued, 22.5% fully sorted, 15% partially sorted and 27% unsorted. With the library, approximately 1,000 modern books have been catalogued and are on the shelves. 20 books have been passed to MERL's rare book cataloguer to be added to the closed access collections. Other library work that is ongoing includes checking for duplicates, labelling for open access and basic cleaning and repair. Work on the LI journals will be complete by the end of December 2014.

**MERL objectives for the Institute's L&A in 2015:**

**Archive:** catalogue Peter

Youngman collection & the EDA collection; sort & box the Michael Brown additional deposit, catalogue & digitise Clifford Tandy photographic collection. Commence cataloguing of Milner White & Jakobsen collections.

**Library:** continue to catalogue books & rare books, add list of journals to website, continue to undertake basic conservation & repair when needed; prepare books for open shelves & make available

**Discovering the Landscape** MERL'S Spring 2015 Seminar Series (held on Tuesdays 1.00pm to 2.00pm) will focus on the LI's library and archives. The programme is as follows:

**10 February 2015**

*From garden space to masterplan: The Landscape Institute collections at MERL*

(Speakers: Caroline Gould, Deputy University Archivist/Annabel Downs)

**17 February 2015**

*Changing landscapes of farming & estates after the First WW* (Jonathan Brown, MERL Honorary Fellow)

**3 March 2015**

*Gertrude Jekyll: Artist, gardener, craftswoman* (Richard Bisgrove, garden historian, former Director of Landscape Management, UoR)

**10 March 2015**

*All around is Fairy ground: Pleasure and the Regency garden* (Tim Mowl FSA, Professorial Research Fellow, University of Buckingham)

**17 March 2015**

*Order in the Landscape: Rediscovering Preben Jakobsen* (Karen Fitzsimon, MA Garden History, landscape architect)

The webpages [http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives\\_A\\_to\\_Z/merl-SR\\_LI.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives_A_to_Z/merl-SR_LI.aspx) created for the LI archive & library have been updated. This includes the addition of the handlists for the now catalogued Susan [http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives\\_A\\_to\\_Z/merl-P\\_JEL.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives_A_to_Z/merl-P_JEL.aspx) and Geoffrey Jellicoe collections [http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives\\_A\\_to\\_Z/merl-AR\\_JEL.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives_A_to_Z/merl-AR_JEL.aspx). Nine blog posts have been published on the MERL blog in the 'Discovering the Landscape' series <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/merl/>, exploring highlights from the collection, providing updates on cataloguing and inviting guest posts. A Pinterest board <http://www.pinterest.com/UoRmerl/discovering-the-landscape/> has been created using images from the LI collections. (Links updated as at 2 December 2014)

## DUPLICATE BOOKS

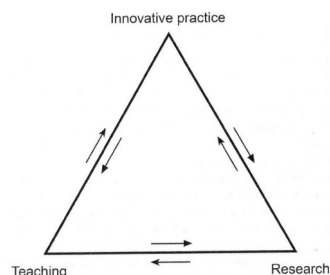
At the Friends' inaugural meeting in February of this year, some of the first duplicate books and pamphlets from the LI library were offered to the small band of Friends present, in return for a suitable donation to MERL. **£120** was collected on the day. The plan is to repeat this sale at our next AGM in March next year with the money going

towards the purchase of new, more recently published titles (as the LI made no purchases from 2008 onwards when the library was placed in closed storage). These more recent titles, however, are reviewed on the LI's website. It would be good if the LI's reviewers could be persuaded to donate their review copies to MERL to add contemporary titles to

what still remains a live library collection. The Institute's ambition since its earliest days was to hold the most comprehensive collection of landscape related publications in the country. Now that the library is at MERL there is every reason to honour that ambition and continue to collect contemporary publications whether printed or digital.

## RESEARCH & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE Alan Simson

In spite of having an impressive professional archive resource to hand, published research by landscape architects in the UK – with a few notable exceptions – is noticeable by its absence. Research has never really been considered to be a fundamental aspect of the profession. Indeed, the ‘Knowledge Triangle’, promoted at the conference ‘The Knowledge Triangle : Shaping the Future of Europe’<sup>1</sup> [Gottenburg, 2009] as the ‘interaction between research, teaching/education and innovative practice’, has made little headway in the UK profession, unlike in many other EU countries. This, together with the lack of published, refereed papers, has arguably lessened the



impact of landscape architecture as an ‘academic’ profession, in spite of the fact that in its Strategic Plan 2011 -2016, the Landscape Institute identified research as one of the strands of its ‘Upholding and Advancing the Arts and Sciences of Landscape Architecture’ priority. It is to be hoped that under the LI’s current *Landscape Futures* initiative, deemed to comprise ‘ambitious and radical ideas for the long-term

*future of the profession’,* research will be encouraged, valued, promoted and published as a fundamental aspect of a profession that is going places and destined to play an increasingly significant role in the interaction between people and their planet.

**Alan Simson** is Professor of Landscape Architecture + Urban Forestry, Director of Research, School of Art, Architecture + Design, Leeds Beckett University

**Note:**

<sup>1</sup> van den Brink, A, & Bruns, D, [2014] *Strategies for Enhancing Landscape Architecture Research*, in *Landscape Research*, Vol 39, No1, pp.7-20. Routledge

‘THE VALUE OF AN ARCHIVE OF ORIGINAL DRAWINGS AND PAPERS (...) CORRESPONDS TO A MASSIVE STORE OF ENERGY’

**Edward Hutchison**

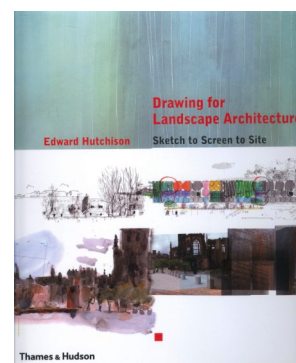
## THE VALUE OF ORIGINAL DRAWINGS Edward Hutchison

The opportunity to engage with and closely examine the original drawings and papers of a great designer can offer a uniquely valuable experience in understanding and interpreting their method of thought and design. Original drawings, whether in pencil, crayon, ink or watercolour, possess a subtle personality far more fully appreciated when seen in the flesh. Reproductions, however good they may be, are invariably remote in comparison. My own understanding of this came through holding a signed drawing of Sir Christopher Wren’s proposed front elevation for the Bishop of London’s palace at Fulham. The draughtsmanship was poor and devoid of

detail but contained a reference to copy the existing masonry details of a Mr Stone’s house in Hammersmith. Not at all what I had expected! Handling this original drawing forged an engagement with its author; it was as if we shared a confidence and revealed a fragility and vulnerability in his design process. Accessing drawings digitally is a very different experience; nevertheless the facility to be able to view a wide range of drawings without moving from one’s desktop is a wonder of technology and an invaluable aid in any research. Today’s images are very seldom unique: created

electronically, they can be multiplied hundreds of times. The value of an archive of original drawings and papers personal to pre-digital designers corresponds to a massive store of energy, their inspiration and immediacy of vigour readily available to generations to come.

**Edward Hutchison** is principal of a landscape practice in London, whose work has won many awards. His drawings were featured in the exhibition *Drawing Space* at the Garden Museum, also in London



Front Cover of Edward Hutchison’s book: *Drawings for Landscape Architecture Sketch to Screen to Site*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2011

## VOLUNTEERING AT MERL Annabel Downs

I volunteered partly to pass on knowledge about the Institute's archive to the MERL team and helped identify the provenance of small range of ephemera, slides, photos, pens, medals.

With others I helped to digitise Cliff Tandy's wonderful, huge collection of slides covering ancient tin mines to doughnut shaped medieval bell pits; Buddhist temples in Java to Stonehenge (when people could still walk between the stones). Brian Clouston said Tandy walked everywhere with two cameras around his neck, one for slides, the other film. All his slides perfectly labelled and catalogued by him. It would be good to know more about the uses he made of his slides – talks to students perhaps or work related?

I catalogued entries for a miscellany of correspondence and newspaper cuttings associated with the Milner White practice. These had been acquired by Dorking Museum on behalf of the LI for **Sheila Harvey**.<sup>\*</sup> Fascinating accounts of commissions with overseas nobility; involvement with the 1935 Universal & International Exhibition in Brussels and lack of recognition of the British Garden in its guide; cuttings and criticisms - from William Robinson, no less - about the short lived Crystal Palace School of Gardening which Milner founded in 1881. With Sheila Harvey's help, I also identified Susan Jellicoe's negatives in MERL's store at Worton Grange.

**Postscript:** Most recently, I visited MERL with a US author

who wished to track down a connection between Peter Shepherd and a cookery writer. The archive is full of interesting material – so work and research is always surprising. MERL is a welcoming place to volunteer. The staff are friendly and helpful, tea & coffee facilities available. Takes c.15 minutes to walk from Reading Station and parking on site is available.

**Annabel Downs**, CMLI, is a landscape architect and former archivist of the Landscape Institute

**\*Sheila Harvey**, MBE, is a LI Hon. Fellow. Her fellowship was awarded in recognition of her long and dedicated service as the LI's librarian. It was Sheila who ensured the Jellicoe's archive collection were donated to the Institute

University Museums and  
Special Collections Services

University of  
Reading

### Volunteers for museums



[www.reading.ac.uk/volunteersformuseums](http://www.reading.ac.uk/volunteersformuseums)

## ORAL HISTORY Lindsey Abbott

### LI Northern Ireland (LINI)'s Oral History Project:

January 2014 at the Craigavon Conference 'Changing Landscapes' recordings were made of all speakers by PLACE for the LINI. This was followed in April by an interview with Flo & Brian Woods, transcribed by Susan Wilson and short clips created. June 2014 Bill Cairns interviewed with PLACE as partner and recorded on film.

In 2011 I was invited to join the LI's heritage assets working group to develop an oral history project that had started over the last 30 years or so. In the 1980s Ian C Laurie, Michael Lancaster and Janie Thomas were all involved in interviewing then senior members such as Brian Hackett and Bodfan Gruffydd and there was talk of recording TV programmes featuring Sylvia Crowe and Jeremy Purseglove (*extracts, library committee minutes, 1988 & 1989*). Commercial recordings (*Pidgeon a-v*) of figures such as Geoffrey Jellicoe and Preben Jakobsen were also purchased for the LI library at this time.

So, when I began to look at this the passage of time had given me two advantages. The first was that oral history recordings are now

of the archival canon and there is a lot of help out there. Secondly, with modern technology, accessibility is no longer an issue and, in theory, material can be posted online the same day as the recording and made available to all.

I went on a one day course at the British Library and developed my methodology from that, which I tried to use for each interview to encourage a level of organisation and consistency. Inevitably, most of the interviews I conducted were related more to the nature of a conversation between a young designer just setting out on a career and the contrast with the career of much more experienced one!

In the limited time available, I was able to interview the following people: LI Past Presidents, Alan Tate, Hal Moggridge, Tim Gale and

Brian Clouston; practitioners: Richard Flenley and Richard Hannay, both of LUC and Merrick Denton-Thompson, LI Trustee and founder of the charity *Learning through Landscapes*. Last but not least, Wendy Powell, now retired from a distinguished career with the landscape practice, Gillespies.

The recordings exist at MERL in a raw digital state accompanied by hand-written notes and other supporting material about each interviewee. The goal is for these recordings to be made available to researchers at MERL and in time edited versions should appear online much in the same way as the Cultural Landscape Foundation (<http://tclf.org>) have captured the North American practitioners.

**Lindsey Abbott**  
Landscape architect &  
LI Licentiate Member

## LI Collections at MERL: The Brenda Colvin Collection

**Saturday 21 March 2015.**

In the afternoon of FOLAR's AGM at MERL next year there will be two talks about the Brenda Colvin Collection (see the separate AGM notice).

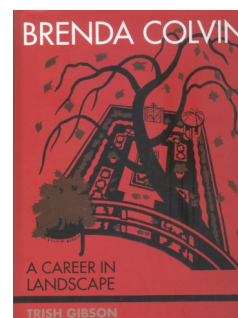
This collection was donated to the LI and transferred to MERL in February of this year by Hal Moggridge of the landscape practice, Colvin and Moggridge. The MERL team were delighted to receive this valuable collection of one of the

landscape profession's foremost 20th C pioneers. It was an added bonus that Colvin & Moggridge compiled a detailed schedule to accompany the donation. FOLAR, the Landscape Institute and MERL wish to record their thanks to Hal Moggridge, PPLI, OBE, for this most important and generous gift to the LI collection at MERL.

**Brenda Colvin** (1897-1981) was a founder member of the Institute of Landscape Architects. In 1969 she invited Hal Moggridge to join her as a partner in her practice at Filkins, Lechlade when she was then in her 70s. When Hal joined the practice it was renamed Colvin & Moggridge:

<http://www.colmog.co.uk>

The practice continues to thrive today, some 80 years after its founding.



Front Cover:  
Gibson, Trish  
*Brenda Colvin A Career in Landscape*,  
Francis Lincoln Ltd,  
London, 2011

## The Preben Jakobsen Collection

Karen Jakobsen, on behalf of her father, Danish born plantsman, Preben Jakobsen, donated his collection to the LI in early 2013. Already research work has been undertaken on this collection by landscape architect Karen Fitzsimon (MA History, Bath) and her essay 'Rediscovering Preben Jakobsen' won the 2014 Garden History Society (GHS) Prize. Karen Fitzsimon will be giving a talk on Preben Jakobsen at MERL on 17 March 2015 (see details

on p.2).  
Jakobsen's obituary was posted on the LI website in 2012 but two years later posts were still being added (the last in May 2014). Michael Tartaglia-Kershaw, CMLI, posted his comment on the LI's website in March 2012. Here is a short extract: *'Those who knew Ben well will never forget his...use of English. We used to keep a book of 'Bens Bon Mots' in the office, sadly long lost. I leave you with just a few examples:*

*'Falling between three stools', 'I find I am becoming biased towards both sides'.... It is a mark of Ben's inspiration that I still remember these words after 30 years!'*  
And this from Nicholas Hall (March 2012): *'Ben was an incredible inspiration to me ... his design crits at break times were an enormous help to me in understanding the essence of good design. The profession has suffered a great loss but his work does live on'.*



Preben Jakobsen  
(1934-2012)

## The Milner White Collection

Many landscape architects of a certain age will remember the landscape architect, **Frank Marshall**. Rather fewer will know that, single-handedly, Frank preserved the archive of the oldest landscape practice of the 20th C with its roots in the 19th C and its connection to **Joseph Paxton** (1803-1865). Milner White, like other practices based in London lost a lot of its records during WWII and the bombing raids of the early 1940s. What

remained were eventually preserved and looked after by Frank after he joined the practice in 1960. After the practice closed in 1995 he transferred all that remained of the Milner White archive to his home in Kent. On his death in 2012, Frank's family made contact with the Institute with a view to donating this Milner White archive material and it is thanks to the family and to Rachel Binnington, the consultant archivist employed

by the LI at this time, that the Milner White Collection is now safely a part of the LI Collections at MERL.

The Marshall family have made a generous financial contribution to MERL to accompany this gift. Their only stipulation is that the monies should be used for the benefit of students who might wish to follow some supervised study of the Milner White archive.

KAREN FITZSIMON,  
CMLI, WINS 2014  
GARDEN HISTORY  
SOCIETY PRIZE  
FOR HER ESSAY  
'REDISCOVERING  
PREBEN  
JAKOBSEN'

## LI Branch News in Brief

**Wendy Tippett, CMLI**, awarded MSc (Bath) in September with dissertation entitled *'Unloved Landscapes - the Bristol Schemes of Sylvia Crowe'* Wendy researched records in Bristol RO & at Reading where she reports that *'MERL staff, particularly Nancy Fulford, were a fantastic help. Nancy was v. kind in archiving the LI's Crowe material in time for my research'*.

### LI's Northern Ireland Branch (LINI)

LINI are working to tell the growth of landscape architecture in the island of Ireland over the last 50 years. Central to that story is Robert Carson, MBE, who in recognition of his contribution was awarded the LI's prestigious gold medal in July of this year: *'His mark is stamped throughout the province, and Robert's direct personal influence extends to three generations of landscape architects, planners, architects, engineers and others'* (extract from LI website downloaded 2/12/14)

### Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) 150th Anniversary, 2015

LI plans an educational event in June 2015 to commemorate Joseph Paxton's design of Crystal Palace (Milner White Collection at MERL includes original plan for Sydenham Park) and his design of Birkenhead Park that so influenced Olmstead, the designer of New York's Central Park. The **LI's North West Branch (LINW)** hope to organise a similar event with LI HQ support at Birkenhead Park, also in June. This could be an opportunity for FOLAR members living in the NW to meet up socially. More details to follow.



Plan (p51) from **Management Plan Birkenhead Park** Metropolitan Borough of Wirral May 1991 (unpublished)

## Editorial: building on precedent

*'Education for today's (landscape) students is about building on precedent'*\* Sometimes, it's a simple remark like this that lingers. The new very rarely springs forth fully formed without at least a good understanding of what went before it. To illustrate this point – would London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park have been as successful had those involved not learnt from the precedent set by earlier Olympic Parks in Athens and Sydney, or in the UK by the example of the first International Garden Festival (IGF) held in Liverpool back in 1984? In 2004, LI members voted on which UK scheme they considered to have been the most influential from the last

20 years. Liverpool's IGF won that vote and part of the reason for this may well have been that while the Festival aimed high it was not an unqualified success. Rather, it failed in important ways, not least of which was a complete lack of legacy planning. It is possible that critically examining what works and what does not will always lead to advancement, whereas lauding success uncritically probably doesn't. To that extent, therefore, the study of unpublished contemporary records of significant projects, and in whatever form, are an untapped resource which should be valued and preserved accordingly.

This first issue of FOLAR's newsletter is an experiment. Its design, its content and even its distribution is not fixed as yet. FOLAR aims to publish at least two newsletters a year and welcomes contributions, critical or otherwise, to future issues. We reserve the right to edit or omit such contributions and in these days of the 140 character tweet, less is more. We also plan to set up a FOLAR website in early 2015 and will post future issues there. We will also distribute some paper copies, but most copies will be sent, as this newsletter has been, by email.

**Penny Beckett, FLI**  
Chair, FOLAR

\*quote: Ed Bennis, former Head of Landscape Research, MMU, personal communication, 2010

### Temporary CONTACT DETAILS for FOLAR UK

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EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTERS of the landscape collections at MERL, University of Reading

F O L A R

**Landscape Institute**  
Inspiring great places

**MERL**  
Museum of English Rural Life

**University of Reading**