

## 5

# Historical Appraisal

The discrete and distinctive landscapes of Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens share a common and interwoven history; the River Dour and its industrial heritage also inextricably links the two sites.

There is a rich history of ownership, industry and design, which makes the telling of the past for both Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens important, both locally and nationally.

## 5.1 Kearsney Abbey

There is no evidence of a ‘named’ designer being employed to assist with the layout of the Abbey grounds; possibly, the architects responsible for the house design supported the owner, John Minet Fector in realising a personal vision. What does seem clear, is the intention to create a grand setting for a new mansion, evidenced by the unifying of various land holdings and the footpath and road diversions which were carried out in the early C19 in order to consolidate the site; paddocks and open ground to the south were first leased and later purchased, to bring this land into the park and thus to control the whole landscape setting of the mansion to the south.

The layout of the grounds capitalised on the opportunities presented by the River Dour and the existing topography, making the most of the sweeping slopes and the wet valley floor, which was remodelled to create the lake and lake islands. The leat from Bushy Rough was channelled into a brick-lined culvert, and that from Kearsney Pond part canalised and part culverted, enabling water flows to the paper mill at River to be maintained without compromise, while also creating sweeping lawns to the lake edge.

The grounds evolved in the fashion of the time, following principles of the Picturesque and in harmony with the Gothic style of the mansion. The house was sited on the high ground to the north, on a level terrace which gave the impression of greater elevation on the south and east sides. To the north and east, a high boundary wall provided privacy and security from the adjacent road; the boundary was planted with trees and shrubs creating a softer effect. Lawns immediately around the house were kept quite open, with a few trees carefully placed to frame views from the house and terrace to the lake and islands.

Lawns immediately around the house were separated from those to the east by an open channel or canal running north to south, from Kearsney Mill Pond; the culvert beneath the icehouse is a practical solution to providing drainage and to helping to keep the icehouse cool. The canal seems to have started and finished within plantations, which would have integrated it into its surroundings; it was crossed at its mid point with a footbridge.

Lawns to the east of the open channel had a different character, with conifers and deciduous trees planted in the gardenesque fashion in groups; in this style, a variety of trees, often selected for their ornamental value, would have been placed with space for each specimen to mature, creating an arboretum or pinetum. The boundaries were planted with mixed planting, deciduous and coniferous trees and almost certainly with shrubs, which would have screened the boundary wall and provided a green backdrop to the gardens, and a strong sense of enclosure and seclusion.

The north-eastern bank of the lake was lined with trees, and separated from the lawns to the north of it by a shrubbery or small plantation. This extended over a tongue of land to the west of the ornate, arched, bridge over the lake, so that views to the bridge would have been controlled; there would have been an element of surprise at discovering the length and extent of the lake. The eastern end of the lake was embellished with an ‘eye catcher’, a bridge / weir and a red-brick castellated arch, in the gothic style. This would both have provided a focal point to long views from the central lake bridge, and a vantage point from which to enjoy the view over the weir along the mill pond, as well as completing a circular route around the grounds.

The mill at the western end of the lake was also re-modelled, using materials from the C16 Town Mill; part pump house and part folly, this appears to have been re-modelled at the same time as the house and grounds were laid out, to enhance the Picturesque landscape and to create a feature at the head of the lake.

The garden was further embellished with an orangery, an aviary and a boathouse, ornamental features that added interest and variety of experience, as did three fountains, one in the lake and the others on

each of the two largest islands and an obelisk on the island nearest the bridge. Rustic footbridges and stepping stones providing access to miniature gardens on the lake islands added a touch of the whimsical. Paths provided both practical access routes – between walled garden, lodge and mansion – and opportunities to circulate around the grounds for pleasure – the route around the eastern lawns, or across the bridges and along the south side of the lake.

South of the lake, a pair of avenues were laid out on the open hillside, aligned on the fountain in the centre of the lake; the avenues would have emphasised the steeply sloping landform, framing a view of Coxhill Mount on the horizon. By the last decades of the C19, the western avenue ended at a triangular enclosure planted with Scots Pine, about twelve of which survive today. The eastern avenue ended at the deciduous woodland on the south-eastern slopes of the Mount.

It is interesting to compare the location of the walled garden for Kearsney Abbey, sited on the opposite side of the lake and at a considerable distance from the mansion, with the layout for Kearsney Court some 80 years later, where the kitchen garden is located equally out of the main view from the house, but to one side of it and in close enough proximity to be convenient for owners and staff.

Kearsney Abbey, then, presents a personal interpretation of the prevailing fashion of the time. Remodelling on a large scale, and presumably at considerable expense, was undertaken to achieve a landscape with features typical of the Picturesque, harmonising with the gothic style of the house. As an ensemble, it is a typical example, in scale and embellishment, of a wealthy gentleman’s residence of the period.

### Views and Vistas

The main historical views were to the south to the lake, and to Coxhill Mount in the distance (see **Figure 5.1** which sets out the principle views). The foreground of the view from the house comprised the lake with its planted islands, the fountains and obelisk (view cone 1A) and beyond was a much wider vista of the lime avenues to the south leading the eye to the hilltop of Coxhill Mount.

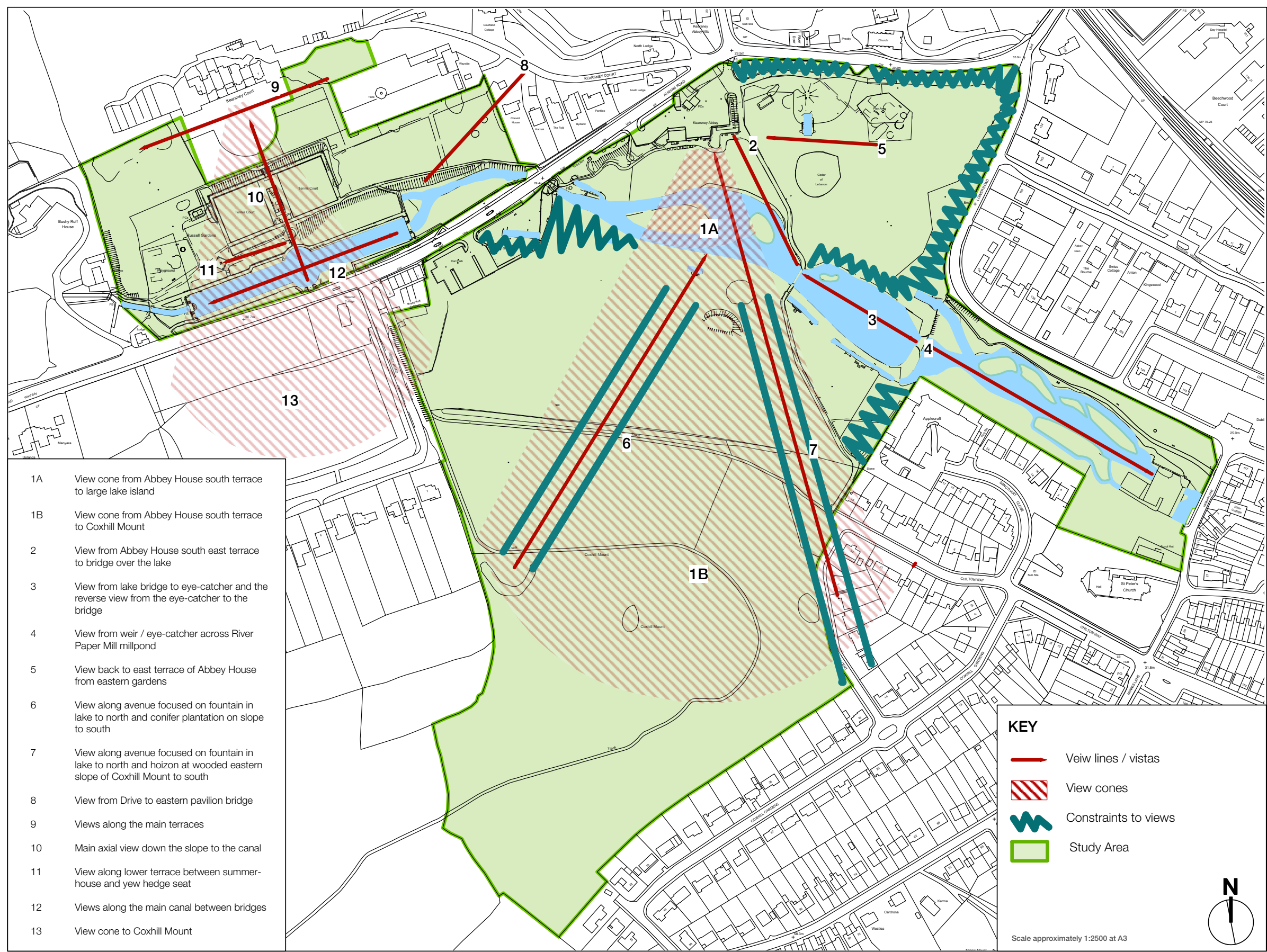


Figure 5.1

Historical Views and Vistas



From the eastern terrace there was a narrow view through the vegetation to the bridge over the lake (view 2), and from the bridge itself east to the eye-catcher (view 3), and then from the eye-catcher east again over the millpond towards River paper mill (view 4). Within the eastern lawns the views were constrained by planting to westwards views focused upon the house (view 5). Specific views were created through the avenues particularly at the end of C19 by which time a clump of pine was established on the slopes of Coxhill Mount as a focal point to the western avenue; there is also evidence that an offset eye-catcher of pine existed near the termination of the eastern avenue.

## 5.2 Kearsney Court: Thomas Mawson and the design of the garden

### The place of Kearsney Court in Mawson's career as a designer

The landscape design for Kearsney Court was produced by Thomas Mawson c.1899-1900, to accompany the construction of the house in 1900 for Edward Percy Barlow, director of Wiggins Teape paper manufacturers, and founder of the Conqueror paper factory in Dover.

It has been suggested that this represents one of Mawson's "*earliest independent commissions*".<sup>i</sup> This somewhat puzzling statement is presumably intended to mean that the work was carried out by Mawson, acting independently of the family nursery, Mawson Brothers, which was based at Windermere from 1885. Whether this interpretation is, or is not, an accurate interpretation of the documentary evidence, the importance of Kearsney Court lies in its being designed some fourteen years after his first landscape commission at Bryerswood, Lancashire (c. 1886) and about eleven years after he began his first major commission at Graythwaite Hall, Lancashire (c. 1889).

The design for Kearsney Court therefore demonstrates Mawson's landscape aesthetic as it reached maturity, and reflects the wide range of influences that he absorbed into his design. The design for Kearsney Court shares features with other major landscapes for which Mawson was responsible during the first decade of the C20, including his major schemes at Wych Cross Place, Sussex<sup>ii</sup> (c. 1904) and Dunchurch Lodge, Warwickshire (c. 1905).<sup>iii</sup>

Mawson clearly felt a degree of pride in the design for Kearsney and in its implementation: illustrations of elements of the landscape design,

and references to the site were included in the fourth and fifth editions of his seminal work '*The Art and Craft of Garden Making*', published respectively in 1912 and 1926,<sup>iv</sup> indicating that by 1912 the plan had been implemented to his satisfaction.

It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that the commission is not mentioned in Mawson's autobiography, published in 1927<sup>v</sup>, but by the time he was writing this work, the emphasis of his personal interest had clearly shifted away from his major pre-war commissions for wealthy private patrons towards his public and town planning work.

In summary, therefore, Mawson's design for Kearsney Court should be seen as a good example of his work for a private client, undertaken as his style reached maturity and his powers as a garden and landscape designer were arguably coming to full fruition. It sits within a group of sites designed during the first decade of the C20 for private clients, predominantly self-made men with connections to trade or manufacturing, rather than with established links to the landed aristocracy;<sup>vi</sup> and it shares with these sites many key features of Mawson's aesthetic approach which indicates that it should be considered a good and representative example of his style.

Kearsney Court also includes some striking features in Mawson's output, emphasising his individual approach to each site, tailoring his design to the specific features and limitations such topography, setting, soil, and drainage, as well as his client's requirements, preferences and convenience.

### Mawson's design principles exemplified at Kearsney Court

In '*The Art and Craft of Garden Making*', Mawson set out in some detail his design principles applicable to all sites,<sup>vii</sup> which are elaborated in subsequent chapters through reference to examples from Mawson's work. Features of the design for Kearsney which appear particularly to reflect Mawson's underlying principles include:

<sup>iv</sup> - The gazetteer entry for Kearsney Court in G Beard (ed), Thomas H Mawson a northern landscape architect (1976), p 56 which states that Kearsney Court was included in the first edition of *Art and Craft* published in 1900 appears to be incorrect.

<sup>v</sup> - T H Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect* (1927).

Mawson's health was also deteriorating quite rapidly by the time he came to write the autobiography which perhaps helps to explain some of its unsatisfactory aspects such as the absence of a coherent chronology and any attempt at a comprehensive catalogue of commissions.

<sup>vi</sup> - Mawson's single most significant client, both in terms of numbers of sites for which he commissioned designs and the sums expended on landscape design, was William Hesketh Lever, created first Viscount Leverhulme, founder of the Sunlight Soap Company. Lever was typical of the clientele for whom Mawson tended to work. Notable exceptions to this trend include Queen Alexandra and her sister, Marie, Dowager Empress of Russia to whom Mawson was introduced by Sir Samuel Waring and for whom he designed a garden at Hvidore near Copenhagen in 1908; and the Marquis of Bute, for whom Mawson worked at Mount Stuart, Bute (c1899).

<sup>vii</sup> - T H Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (1926), chapter III

- The drive and lodges, which were planned in such a way as to create a sense of arrival, of gravitas or status and an approach which, while convenient, also provided potential for views and for specific landscape or horticultural effects;
- The axial character of the garden design and formation of vistas, and the screening out of undesired views such as that to the south-west from the bastion terrace towards the Bushy Rough house and the paper mill below;
- The formation of the terraces including the semi-circular bastion, to provide both an architectural setting and base for the house, and a series of level, connected walks from which views over the gardens and wider landscape beyond could be appreciated;
- The formal treatment of water within the landscape, in this case, most unusually, to distract from the straight southern boundary of the gardens formed by the public road that precluded the transition in that direction to the natural landscape beyond the garden;
- The transition from formal areas around the house to more informal areas, creating a spatial hierarchy within the landscape design;
- The location of features such as the kitchen garden both for the convenience of the household, and also to create a further 'incident' of interest within the wider landscape design;
- The formation of level terraced lawns to provide facilities for games such as tennis and croquet, essential to pre-war social life; in this case neatly divided into two distinct areas by a central formal garden that continues the central axis of the garden design throughout the terraces.

### Features adopted at Kearsney Court find parallels in other designs by Mawson

The arrangement of double lodges at a distance from the house, marking the entrance from the rustic lane in a style appropriate both to the rural character of the surroundings and the dignity of the house itself, was echoed in many of Mawson's schemes, particularly the pair of outer lodges at Dunchurch Lodge (designed by Gilbert Frazer), which led from the road to a woodland drive under planted with rhododendrons, heightening the sense of anticipation on the approach.

The axial nature of the Kearsney Court garden layout is echoed in the vast majority of Mawson's designs. As a designer heavily influenced by historical precedent, derived from the C17 and early C18 and mediated through C19 designers such as Paxton, Kemp and Ernest Milner,<sup>viii</sup> it is

<sup>viii</sup> see T H Mawson (1927), p 26

<sup>i</sup> Historic England, Register of Parks and Gardens, entry for Kearsney Court

<sup>ii</sup> - Wych Cross Place, Forest Row, Sussex for Douglas W Freshfield, geographer and President of the Alpine Club

<sup>iii</sup> - Dunchurch Lodge, near Rugby, Warwickshire for John Lancaster, son of an iron and coal magnate

not surprising that Mawson should have devoted considerable attention to the formation of vistas and designed views in all his designs, whatever their scale or extent.

Similarly, the acknowledged influence of Humphry Repton on Mawson’s work<sup>ix</sup> helps to explain his preference for giving the principal building (be it house or park pavilion) a setting of terraces, allowing on the one hand a convenient transition from building to landscape, and on the other an appropriately architectural setting for the building. Again, the vast majority of Mawson’s designs incorporate terracing, ranging from extensive examples such as Kearsney Court, Dunchurch Lodge<sup>x</sup> or The Hill, Hampstead<sup>xi</sup>, to much more modest examples where perhaps a single terrace was required. Where topography precluded a terrace immediately adjacent to the house, a sunken garden might be formed leading to further terraces at a distance, such as the south garden at Wood, Devon (c. 1905);<sup>xii</sup> conversely, where convenience required the extension of terraces and level ground, as at The Hill, significant ground modelling could be undertaken.

Semi-circular ‘bastion’ terraces, affording obvious opportunities for ‘framed’ radiating vistas, are frequent features of Mawson’s designs. The garden at Maesruddud, Newport (c. 1907)<sup>xiii</sup>, for example, includes as its principal feature a large semi-circular terrace, corresponding closely in concept to that at Kearsney Court. Such terraces lent themselves to geometrical flower garden layouts, which provided a vivid contrast to the areas of terraced level lawn required by Edwardian social life, either for games such as tennis and croquet, or for large entertainments.

Mawson was insistent that the materials used for the construction of terraces should harmonise with both the building to which the terracing related, and the general landscape. The brick retaining walls of the terraces at Kearsney Court relate to the brick dressings and quoins on the main house; while the unusual, but not unique, use of timber balustrades<sup>xiv</sup> was also intended to relate to the vaguely ‘Jacobean’ style of the house. Such attention to detail exemplifies Mawson’s concern for harmonious design in all its parts.

Placing the kitchen garden close to the south-east of the house, making it both convenient and accessible for display, recalls the arrangement at

Dunchurch Lodge where the kitchen garden is placed immediately north-west of the house and accessed directly from the garden terraces.<sup>xv</sup> The glasshouse range and ancillary buildings at Dunchurch received an ornamental treatment, as seems to have also been the case at Kearsney Court, making them a ‘destination’ in their own right within the garden. At Wood, Devon, the kitchen garden with its extensive range of glass, was placed immediately below a terrace extending along the east facade of the house, allowing its layout with ornamental espaliers and rose arches to be appreciated from numerous vantage points.<sup>xvi</sup>

The formal treatment of water in the garden plan at Kearsney Court is particularly interesting. Canals are by no means a unique feature of Mawson’s garden designs; however, the scale of the canal at Kearsney Court is unusual. Mawson’s canals tend to be small features, such as the canal or large rill created in an enclosed formal garden at Ashton on Trent, Derbyshire;<sup>xvii</sup> the small formal lily pool on the west terrace at Dunchurch Lodge;<sup>xviii</sup> or the canals on the principal terraces at The Hill, Hampstead<sup>xix</sup> and Wych Cross Place, Sussex.<sup>xx</sup> A much more substantial ‘formal canal’ was formed by Mawson for Lord Leverhulme at Thornton Manor, Cheshire before 1911<sup>xxi</sup> as an extension to the lake, leading to a bathing pool and associated pavilion. This monumental canal extends between mown grass verges, backed by trees and woodland. Perhaps more comparable with the canal at Kearsney Court is one planned by Mawson for the west side of the Palace of Peace at The Hague (1908),<sup>xxii</sup> where, as at Kearsney, the centre of the canal is articulated by geometrical shapes, and its ends by architectural features, in this case bridges surmounted by pergolas.

The canal

Mawson clearly considered the canal at Kearsney Court, the most significant and unusual element of his overall scheme, to be a success:

*“The long water lagoon at Kearsney Court near Dover....is a notable instance of the formation of a large sheet of ornamental water which seemed immediately to fall in with its surroundings. The large elms and other full-grown timber trees which*

*bordered the boggy depression in which it was constructed, though not evenly spaced, or even of one kind, nevertheless gave an avenue-like effect and fall naturally into their place as part of a formal composition. It is rectangular in shape with a widened central portion. The bridges at each end are to be extended by means of a pergola on each side to the full width of the formal water, thus screening the narrow stream above and below the canal. Before the work was undertaken, the stream which now feeds the canal passed underground and out of sight, owing to the nature of the porous nature of the subsoil. This made it necessary that the whole of the bed of the canal should be concreted.”*<sup>xxiii</sup>

Mawson’s description makes clear that the existing surrounding trees, including those along the Alkham Road, formed an integral part of the original aesthetic composition<sup>xxiv</sup>.

The other key elements of Mawson’s design for the canal are the architectural bridges at the east and west ends of the water, and the boathouse that stands on the central axis of the garden design to the south. This group of structures probably represents Mawson’s most ambitious and accomplished approach to the formal design of water. A parallel can be found in the architectural ‘water steps’ created on the south side of the large pond, which forms the culmination of the garden design, at Dunchurch Lodge. Here, stone steps, flanked by balustraded recesses emphasised by tall obelisk finials, in a loosely late C17 or early C18 century style to harmonise with the Queen Anne Revival house, serve to emphasise the central axis of the garden design; they were intended to be backed (to the south) by a garden pavilion on the axis, which, like the pergolas intended to flank the bridges at Kearsney Court, was never constructed.<sup>xxv</sup>

The bridges and boathouse at Kearsney Court clearly have a distinguished, but separate architectural pedigree.

Bridges

As the listing description for the bridges correctly notes, their design is ultimately derived from Palladio’s designs for bridges published in his *Quattro Libri* (1570). However, this influence is heavily mediated, and in many respects Mawson’s design owes more to C18 English precedents that it does to its ultimate origin. In particular, the Palladian Tea House Bridge at Audley End, Essex, designed by Robert Adam c.

<sup>ix</sup> see T H Mawson (1927), pp 9, 26

<sup>x</sup> see plan, Mawson (1926), p 381

<sup>xi</sup> see plan, Mawson (1926), p 375

<sup>xii</sup> - see description, illustrations and plan, Mawson (1926), pp 393-400

<sup>xiii</sup> - see plan, Mawson (1926), p 31

<sup>xiv</sup> - Timber balustrades were notably used by Mawson at Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton (c1906) to ensure visual harmony with the half-timbered house built by Edward Ould in 1887 for Theodore Mander, a local paint manufacturer.

<sup>xv</sup> - see plan, Mawson (1926), p 381 and illustrations, Mawson (1926), pp 250, 261

<sup>xvi</sup> - see illustration, Mawson (1926), p 247 where the image of the kitchen garden and glasshouses at Wood are coupled with those at Kearsney Court

<sup>xvii</sup> - see illustrations, Mawson (1926), p 193.

<sup>xviii</sup> - see plan, Mawson (1926), p 381

<sup>xix</sup> - see illustration, Mawson (1926), p 376

<sup>xx</sup> - see illustration Mawson (1926), p 185

<sup>xxi</sup> - A plan for the canal, pavilion and pool was published in T H Mawson, *Civic Art* (1911), fig 169; and a photograph of the “formal canal” under construction was included in Mawson (1926), fig 281.

<sup>xxii</sup> - see plan, Mawson (1926), p 196 and illustration, Mawson (1926), p 197; also illustration, Mawson (1927), fig 30

<sup>xxiii</sup> - Mawson (1926), p 196

<sup>xxiv</sup> - Comparison of photographs of the original gardens and their state today suggests that mature elms played a significant role in key areas such as framing the entrance lodges. Their loss has affected the integrity of the design to some extent.

<sup>xxv</sup> - see plan, Mawson (1926), p 381



1780, and the Palladian Bridge at Scampston Hall, Yorkshire, designed by Lancelot Brown or Henry Holland c. 1775 seem to offer strong precedents for the Kearsney design. While the more famous adaptations of Palladio’s ideas in the Palladian bridges at Wilton, Stowe and Prior Park also offer a precedent for Mawson’s design, the scale and handling of these examples is significantly different from the more domestic and somehow acclimatised result achieved at Kearsney Court, which retains a certain lightness more akin to Adam’s work at Audley End.

In each example, the Palladian design was adapted, as at Kearsney Court, to create a feature terminating a stretch of ornamental water. The symmetrical composition adopted is unusual and satisfying in this formal context, while the reflection of the structure repeated at each end of the water helps to increase the illusion of length.

### Boathouse

The boathouse at Kearsney Court owes a very clear debt of inspiration to Joseph Paxton’s boathouse at Birkenhead Park, Merseyside (c. 1847). The composition, with a pavilion or loggia approached by steps surmounting the boat chamber very closely follows Paxton’s design.

Mawson acknowledged his indebtedness to the writings and work of both Paxton and Kemp (first superintendent at Birkenhead); he also noted in his autobiography that he went out of his way, early in his career, to visit “*every park and garden within reach which had been laid out by men of repute in my profession*”.<sup>xxvi</sup> Birkenhead Park is specifically mentioned as a site that he visited in order to study its design,<sup>xxvii</sup> thus making its boathouse the most likely inspiration for that subsequently designed for Kearsney Court.

### Context of the garden at Kearsney Court

Kearsney Court is unusual on two counts: it is one of a relatively small number of gardens in southern England which were designed by Mawson; and it has survived relatively intact and unchanged from its original design intention.

The vast majority of Mawson’s work was executed in the northern half of England, with a particular concentration of commissions in the northwest. Given his Lancastrian origins and on-going connections with the Lake District, and also the nature of his client base, with its bias towards industrialists and entrepreneurs, this was hardly surprising. Although attempts have been made to develop a comprehensive gazetteer of Mawson’s commissions, this work has never been

accomplished with success<sup>xxviii</sup> and it is impossible to be certain of the true extent of Mason’s work in southern England. However, the overall trend of his career is clear, and therefore Kearsney Court sits within a small and significant sub-section of Mawson’s output.

Given pressures of land use in southern England since WW II, it is hardly surprising that what began as a relatively small number of Mawson-designed gardens and landscapes have shrunk even further. Important sites such as Lululaund, Bushey, Herts designed for Sir Hubert Herkomer (c. 1912) have been largely lost to development. Even sites such as Dunchurch Lodge which survive have suffered change as a result of changed use of the house for which they were designed. Others, such as Wood in Devon survive almost intact, but have suffered through neglect and consequent decay as well as through economic vagaries.

At a very rough estimate, based on Geoffrey Beard’s 1976 gazetteer,<sup>xxix</sup> Mawson was responsible for at most a dozen major schemes for private clients in southern England;<sup>xxx</sup> of these, perhaps half survive today in discernible form. Kearsney Court certainly falls within this group.

Kearsney Court, as an extant Mawson design, is also significant for demonstrating precisely what Mawson did best: provide a designed landscape setting for the homes of wealthy, upper middle class families who owed their prosperity to trade and entrepreneurship, and who therefore formed a key component of contemporary society. That this garden has survived in southern England makes it all the more rare and significant.

### Views and Vistas

The main designed views were essentially north to south, up and down the hillside and east to west along the terraces (see **Figure 5.1**).

Mawson was an expert in creating landscape drama for visitors to his landscapes. Kearsney Court was accessed between two elegant lodges up a winding driveway that curved uphill towards the house. From the drive there was a fleeting view to the eastern pavilion bridge as a hint of what lay below before the drive levelled off to present the turreted façade of the main entrance.

Trees bordered the house itself and so the grandeur of the design was

not truly experienced until visitors moved through the house and onto the main terrace. From this point the whole view of Coxhill Mount and Kearsney Abbey parkland was revealed (**Figure 5.1**, view cone 13) with the wooded ridge of Frandham Wood and the open hilltop of Coxhill Mount and the open parkland below with its distinctive avenues.

A cascade of terraces fell away from the house with the main axial view (10) focusing on the boathouse to lead the eye – and feet – into the garden but without revealing the extent of the canal, which was hidden amongst the mature valley bottom trees, predominantly elms.

On each terrace there were views east and west of planting; more distant views of the valley were carefully controlled. Neighbouring Bushy Rough House and the mill below were screened with boundary planting. Controlled east-west views were enhanced with pergolas and small builds and structures as focal pints on the higher terraces.

Further down the hillside was the bastion, a hemispherical structure planted out with bedding and ornamental plants. From this vantage point were a series of radial controlled views falling within the view cone 13, **Figure 5**.

The sports terrace was a large flat terrace with tennis and croquet lawns either side of the Lily Pond with views east and west to sloping ground and woodland; hedges and other planting separated this area from the canal below, both physically and visually.

A designed view lay below this terrace, with a seat located on the main axis running to the west, defined by yew hedges and borders terminating in a white summerhouse with veranda (**Figure 5**, view 11).

The final and greatest surprise for visitors was left until last when the full extent of the canal was revealed, defined at each end by a pavilioned bridge over the water (**Figure 5**,view 12); reflections have the effect of emphasising the length and grandeur, and the pavilions effectively close the view at each end.

## 5.3 Kearsney Parks

### Character Areas

In the light of the historical analysis and understanding five broad historical character areas are proposed to aid understanding of the parks and to provide a framework for describing their future restoration and management.

#### Character Area 1: Russell Gardens

This embraces the entirety of the former gardens of Kearsney Court area owned by Dover District Council. It is an arts and crafts landscape

<sup>xxvi</sup> - Mawson (1927), p 26

<sup>xxvii</sup> - Mawson (1927), p 26

<sup>xxviii</sup> - eg G Beard, *Thomas H Mawson a northern landscape architect* (1976), which provides what the editor acknowledges to be a “work in progress” and therefore incomplete gazetteer; or Janet Waymark, *Thomas Mawson. Life, Gardens and Landscapes* (2009) which attempts, but fails to deliver, a complete gazetteer

<sup>xxix</sup> - G Beard (1976)

<sup>xxx</sup> - Taken here to include southern Midland counties such as Warwickshire.



Figure 5.2  
Character Areas

very typical of its designer, Thomas Mawson, and is dominated by a series of terraces across the hillside culminating in the canal at the valley bottom.

The gardens are further divided into four subareas based on their distinctive features:

- a) The canal and lower gardens: this covers the designed set piece of the canal, the two pavilion bridges and boathouse and associated gardens immediately adjacent to it
- b) Sports terrace: this includes the main tennis and croquet lawns that straddled the principal central axis of the Lily Pond plus the areas that later became a pitch-and-putt municipal facility in the second half of C20.
- c) Orchards: this area was originally planted with an extensive grid pattern of fruit trees. Adjacent to the bastion there was also a high fence, covered with espalier trained fruit trees.
- d) Woodlands: Kearsney Court was flanked by woodland planting to the east and west which extended down the hillside on the western boundary.

#### **Character Area 2: Kearsney Abbey**

- a) Abbey House, café and car parks: this area includes the site

and remnants of the original Abbey House plus the car parking and visitor facilities, that are all located adjacent to the Alkham Road

- b) Lawns: the open lawns running down the slope to the lake. Traditionally closely mown these would once have been framed with shrubberies set against the perimeter walls and enhanced with scattered specimen trees.
- c) Lake: containing the islands, fountains, bridges and eye-catcher; this was, and remains, the main feature in the picturesque landscape

#### **Character Area 3: Kearsney Abbey Parkland**

- a) Parkland: this comprises the land south of the lake, which rises towards the summit of Coxhill Mount. Avenues of trees leading the eye from the terrace of Abbey House to the higher ground dominated this grazed parkland. Additional multi-species tree planting added interest to the otherwise almost exclusively lime avenues.
- b) Scarp face: today dense secondary woodland, as little as 40-50 years ago this area was open chalk grassland. Secondary tree growth has engulfed remnants of the eastern avenue and

the continuing line of trees is now difficult to discern.

#### **Character Area 4: Coxhill Mount**

- a) Chalk grassland: this area comprises remnants of the grazed grassland that has not turned fully to scrub and eventually woodland. This area is now mainly rough grass and dotted hawthorn scrub
- b) Coxhill Woodland: mixed woodland marked on the oldest maps that clings to the steep south east facing slopes of Coxhill Mount towards the more recent Coxhill Gardens development. It is rapidly becoming encroached by secondary woodland developing along the south and west boundaries of the chalk grassland area.

#### **Character Area 5: River Paper Mill**

This is an area that is now predominantly wetland with the braided River Dour flowing east around a series of silty islands to the ruined mill. This was formerly the millpond of the Paper Mill; water levels have dropped with the ruination of the mill itself and the resulting alder and willow wetland has habitat value and provides a visual contrast with the more formal areas of the park.