

COUNTRY GARDENS

John Singer Sargent RA, Alfred Parsons RA,
and their Contemporaries

Broadway Arts Festival 2012



Myles Birket Foster *Ring a Ring a Roses*

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CLARE A. P. WILLSDON

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John Singer Sargent RA, Alfred Parsons RA,
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at the premises of
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Frontispiece: Myles Birket Foster, *Ring a Ring a Roses*, watercolour, 20 x 26.5cm, Courtesy Haynes Fine Art, Broadway, Worcs.

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Plate 1 Alfred Parsons *The Garden*

Country Gardens: John Singer Sargent RA, Alfred Parsons RA, and their Contemporaries

In the late nineteenth century, the Cotswold village of Broadway hosted a colony of artists, writers, musicians, and others from the world of arts, who were drawn to its tranquil country character. John Singer Sargent, originally from the USA, first came to the village in 1885; so too, it is thought, did Alfred Parsons, an English painter who later became President of the Royal Watercolour Society. This exhibition takes its theme from Sargent's and Parsons's pleasure in gardens. One of Sargent's best-loved works, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (Figure 1), was, after all, painted in a Broadway garden, whilst Parsons not only painted but also created gardens. One of the closest friends of Sargent and Parsons, meanwhile, the novelist Henry James, considered lying in the grass of 'an old garden with old gates and old walls and old summer houses'¹ as the very epitome of life in Broadway.

From 1903 Parsons developed a splendid garden of his own at Broadway (at Luggershill), of which traces still remain today, and this is thought to be portrayed in *Orange Lilies*, his 'Diploma work' marking election as a Royal Academician in 1911 (No. 42). He also created gardens at Russell House and Court Farm in Broadway, as well as many elsewhere for patrons including Princess Louise². Like his contemporary the great 'Arts and Crafts' horticulturalist Gertrude Jekyll, he regarded gardens as themselves 'pictures', and we can of course compare this idea with Claude Monet's description of his garden at Giverny, also developed at this period, as 'my most beautiful work of art'³. Whilst the first Broadway Arts Festival exhibition, in 2010, focussed on Sargent⁴, 'Country Gardens' puts Parsons to the fore, together with examples of the wider tradition of rural garden painting at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which forms the context for Parsons's and Sargent's work.

As cities and industry expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, country gardens were perceived as vital defences against industry, pollution, and the ill-effects of cities; Henry James described the 'English love of flowers' as 'the most unanimous protest against the greyness of some of the conditions'⁵ in his introduction for a 'Gardens and Orchards' exhibition Parsons held in London in 1891. On a copy of its catalogue preserved in the Huntington Library in California, we in turn find some fascinating notes made by another member of the Broadway colony, the writer Edmund Gosse. These not only record the flowers portrayed by Parsons – 'roses, gladiolus'; 'red hot pokers'; 'vast masses of michaelmas daisy' and so on – but also the evocative effects of his works: 'a maze of reds'; 'wonderful Indian red foliage'; 'concentrated luminous glow'; and 'liquid intense'⁶. It is as though, by looking at Parsons's paintings, Gosse was already gathering ideas for the nostalgic poems on gardens, with their 'alleys I have loved so long', which he was later to publish in collections such as *The Autumn Garden* of 1908⁷.

Gardens as 'pictures'; paintings as poetry. We can already begin to see both the close-knit nature of the Broadway colony, and the rich inspiration offered by gardens. This was the age, after all, when gardens acquired an astonishing new diversity of colours, scents, and forms. Plants discovered through colonial and scientific exploration became widely grown, whilst hybridisation introduced ever-increasing numbers of varieties. The gladiolus noted by Gosse in Parsons's work, and later grown by Parsons in his own garden at Luggershill (No. 24), is an example; introduced from South Africa in the early nineteenth century, it was much developed both in Britain and France. Parsons himself visited Japan in 1892, bringing back plants for his gardens, and publishing a



Plate 2 John Singer Sargent *In the Orchard* 1886-7

lively description of the flowers and trees he saw there;⁸ one of his views of Japanese horticulture is included in the present exhibition (No. 28). He also illustrated the horticulturalist Ellen Willmott's *Genus Rosa* (No. 69), recording her many new hybrids.⁹

At the same time, however, a return to traditional native flowers, such as cabbage and musk roses, nasturtiums, and poppies, was under way, in response to the ideals of horticulturalists such as William Robinson, whose influential books *The Wild Garden* and *The English Flower Garden* were illustrated by Parsons¹⁰. Old 'country gardens' also became an important stimulus for modern horticulture. Gertrude Jekyll, who admired Robinson, thus mixed old and new plants in her famous 'country house' garden at Munstead Wood, as Parsons also did at Luggershill. The creamy spikes of varieties of exotic *Yucca*, for example, a plant introduced to Europe from America, are used to point up the pinks and oranges of traditional country hollyhocks and nasturtiums in Helen Allingham's painting of Jekyll's famous herbaceous border at Munstead Wood (No. 3). With such botanical aspects in mind, the list of exhibits in the present catalogue includes identifications of the key plants portrayed, generously provided by David Mitchell of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh.

However, country gardens were of interest not only for their flowers. The work by Sargent in the exhibition, *In the Orchard* (Plate 2), illustrates the important role they played as 'outdoor studios'. It shows an orchard without any blossom in flower, and the figure amidst the tussocky grass is huddled in an overcoat, instead of a summer frock. For she is a painter, studying – like Sargent – the visual poetry of outdoor light. She is

thought possibly to be Gosse's and Alma-Tadema's sister-in-law Emily Epps Williams, but her identity is not important here. Sargent's interest is really in the magical, transformative action of the sunlight, as it filters through the branches, and picks out the red roof of Russell House, home to several of the Broadway colony. In this broadly brushed out-of-doors sketch, a country garden serves as inspiration for an almost decorative harmony of colours.

We might in fact compare Sargent's picture with the line by his friend the poet Robert Louis Stevenson in his *Child's Garden of Verses*, published at the same period, which calls the sun itself 'the gardener of the World'¹¹. Sargent's time at Broadway marks an important break with his earlier work as a society portraitist in Paris and *In the Orchard* clearly uses the country garden of Russell House to experiment with what Monet described as his own aim at this period, 'figures *en plein air*...done like landscapes'.¹² When he arrived in Broadway, Sargent had recently been working out of doors alongside Monet at Giverny in France. The pictures in the 'Country Gardens' exhibition can in turn be broadly divided into those where the detail of flowers, trees and figures is combined with effects of light and shadow, as in Parsons's works, and those, like *In the Orchard*, where the sun is the 'gardener of the World', and the *plein-air* method prompts a broader, more impressionistic handling. However, there are also intriguing connections between these two groupings. Parsons admired the French Barbizon artists, such as Camille Corot, a precursor of the Impressionists, as well as Henri Fantin-Latour, who made the play of natural light on flowers from his country garden at Buré in Normandy a key feature of his work (No. 6)¹³. And like Sargent, Parsons strongly believed in the necessity of working out of doors. This was the means to capture plants as living organisms, responsive to the sun, the moisture of the earth, and the coolness of the shade, and it takes us to the heart of the 'artists' colony' ideal.

The origins of the Broadway colony lie, after all, in the summer visits made during the 1870s and 80s to Broadway Tower by the Arts and Crafts designer and pioneer socialist William Morris, together with his colleagues Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones. They came to enjoy nature at first hand. Broadway Tower lies a little above the village, and from it Morris had gazed on what he called 'sunny slopes, lovely of outline, flowery and sweetly grassed, dotted with the best-grown and most graceful of trees'¹⁴ – a vision of the countryside as itself already something very like a garden. When Sargent, Parsons, and their colleagues the artists Edwin Abbey, Frank Millet and Frederick Barnard in turn came to Broadway, they consciously followed Morris's lead, and Sargent's motif in *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* indeed transplanted to England the 'pretty garden with roses' he had cultivated in Paris, as an outdoor complement to his house there, which was described by a friend as 'all done up with Morris papers & rugs and matting'¹⁵. In turn, whilst at Broadway, Parsons and Abbey often took jaunts into Oxfordshire to visit Morris in his old Elizabethan manor at Kelmscott, with its fine garden full of traditional country flowers.

This sense of attachment to a particular environment makes the artists' colony at Broadway not so very different, in essence, from the 'colonies' of native and northern European flowers in natural plantings which Parsons's horticulturalist friend William Robinson advocated¹⁶. Robinson argued that colonies of freely-growing hardy plants should replace the geometric plots of 'bedded out' exotic flowers, raised in greenhouses, which had become the norm in fashionable gardens. In this, he was echoing Morris, who had railed against 'bedding out', and even before him, John Ruskin, who hated the artifice of modern gardens¹⁷. We can think in turn of the country garden and its users as creating a microcosm of such 'natural' growth. Gardens, after all, seem to have been a

significant part of life in the Broadway colony, as its members not only painted in them – or lay in their grass like James – but also used them for outdoor living, with numerous parties, games and celebrations, from lively rounds of tennis to boisterous birthday parties.¹⁸ James actually likened ‘a good garden’ to ‘an organised revel’, implying that its flowers were like people – the characters in an Elizabethan masque or revel, or perhaps even his Broadway colleagues¹⁹. Before considering in more detail some of Parsons’s country garden paintings it is helpful to look a little more closely at several pictures in the exhibition which illustrate the rise of painting from nature in artists’ colonies.

Artists in nature

One of the earliest artists’ colonies began at Barbizon in the Forest of Fontainebleau in France in the 1840s with Camille Corot as its leader. The Barbizon painters turned Romantic individualism – ‘I should paint my own places best’, as the British artist John Constable had put it²⁰ – into a shared, communal experience. They were aware of Constable’s work, which had been shown at the Paris Salon in 1825; an example is seen in *Golding Constable’s Kitchen Garden* (Plate 3). In this small, intimate picture, Constable shows the brassicas, fruit-bushes, and pear and nut trees of his father’s garden as a threshold to the Suffolk fields he loved.

Constable’s example led via the Barbizon group to the colonies established in the late nineteenth century for *plein-air* painting. These included Grèz-sur-Loing in France, where Robert Louis Stevenson was a visitor; Worpswede in Germany; Staithes on the Northumbrian coast; Skagen on the Danish coast; and, of course, Newlyn in Cornwall – to name but a few²¹. Newlyn was where William Teulon Blandford Fletcher (No. 7), and in the early twentieth century, Harold Knight and Sir Alfred Munnings, came to paint. Knight’s *In the Spring* (Plate 4) captures the canopy of blossom framing an intimate tea-time tête-à-tête, as children play games and the sea shimmers in the background.



Plate 3 John Constable *Golding Constable’s Kitchen Garden*, c.1815

It clearly deals with a moment of heightened sensory experience: the golden light of summer unites with tastes, scents, the sound of children’s laughter and the distant murmur of the sea. Munnings in turn, painting in Constable’s own home area of Dedham, put the lessons of his Newlyn period to effect in the dazzling colour of his *Path to the Orchard* (Plate 6). Here, the horse’s white coat heightens the brilliance of the red and pink phlox in the foreground – and once again, there is an almost palpable sense in the tactile brushwork of the passing breeze which carries the spicy scent of the phlox. Meanwhile, Constable’s art itself underwent a rediscovery from the late nineteenth century, being seen as a native antecedent for British versions of Impressionism.²² Alfred Parsons and William Robinson admired it, and *Golding Constable’s Kitchen Garden*, together with its partner view of Constable’s mother’s flower garden at Dedham, was in fact purchased by Sir Cuthbert Quilter, one of the patrons for whom Parsons designed a ‘landscape-garden’, at Bawdsey Manor in Suffolk²³.



Plate 4 Harold Knight *In the Spring*, 1908-9

Part of the appeal of local, traditional gardens, both for artists working in the Impressionist tradition and for Camille Pissarro himself and his son Lucien (No. 54; Plates 18 and 19; No. 58), was the opportunity they provided for observation of shifting nuances of light and colour on a daily, even hourly basis. The colony of mainly American artists which developed around Monet in his garden at Giverny from the 1890s included several painters who developed their own ‘cottage gardens’ as painting motifs²⁴. Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, for example, used her garden at the Villa Bêsche in Giverny as an outdoor studio when she settled in the village in 1894 with her sculptor husband Frederick MacMonnies, and she is thought to have been directly inspired by Sargent’s *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, shown to acclaim in Paris in 1889, when she painted *Roses and Lilies* in her garden (Plate 5). In this picture, the dazzling light of summer plays over the shimmering white dress of the artist herself as she bends over her infant daughter Berthe-Hélène, so that the tall white lilies behind – the traditional flower of the Virgin Mary – are suggestively linked with MacMonnies’s role as a mother. The brilliant sunlight in turn associates Berthe-Hélène’s pink dress, and the red costume of her doll, with the

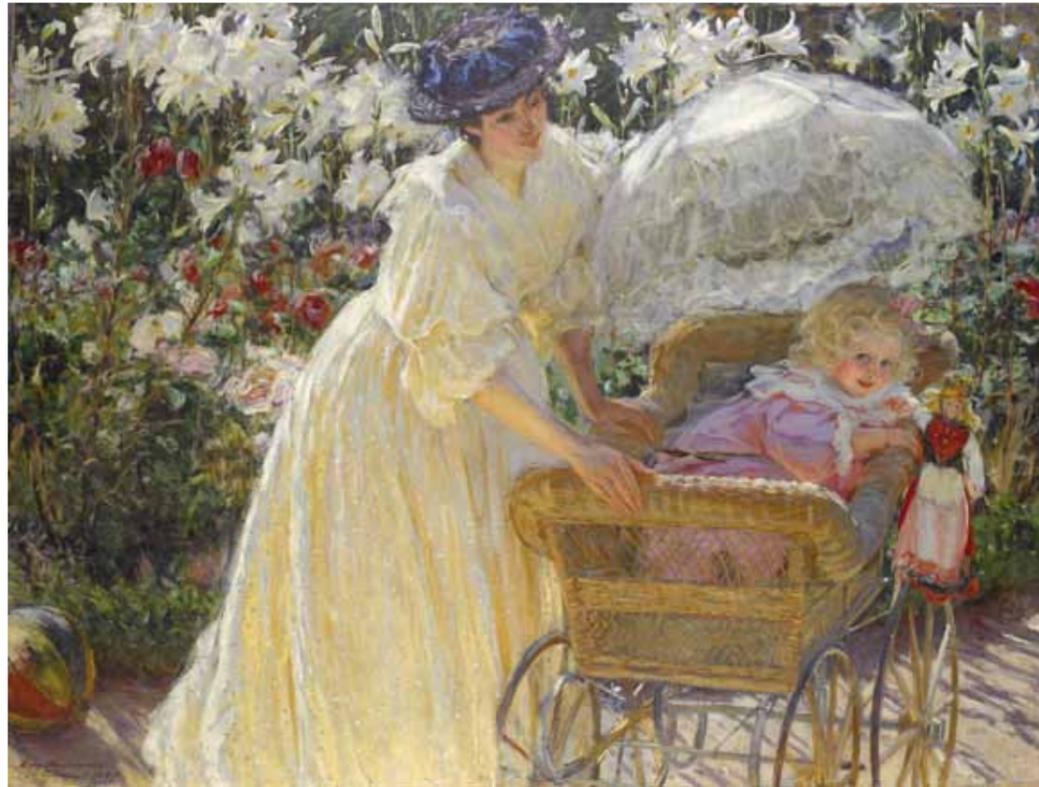


Plate 5 Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, *Roses and Lilies*, 1897



Plate 6 Sir Alfred James Munnings, *Path to the Orchard*, 1908

colours of the garden's roses; even the shadows are brightened by blues and purples. The bond between mother and child is echoed in the pleasure of the rosy-cheeked Berthe-Hélène – implicitly a future mother – in her doll.

Though an incomer to Giverny, MacMonnies's imagery in *Rose and Lilies* clearly resonates with the themes of motherhood and child health so prominent in France at this period, as a declining birthrate and high urban infant mortality raised fears about the nation's future military strength.²⁵ This resonance with French concerns surely contributed to the picture's success at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900, where it was awarded a gold medal. Indeed, the child's doll may well be one of those dressed in French regional costumes which the progressive French educationalist Marie Koenig had recently popularised. Koenig had displayed these not far from Giverny the year before MacMonnies's painting, in a government-sponsored exhibition at Rouen; she had also shown them at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago,²⁶ where Mary MacMonnies, along with Mary Cassatt, had contributed to the mural decoration of the Women's Building. It is possible that the bodice, red skirt, and apron worn by Berthe-Hélène's doll are intended to evoke the Alsace-Lorraine costume which had featured prominently in Koenig's displays – the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to the Germans in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was still bitterly resented in France. At the same time, MacMonnies remained closely linked to the late nineteenth-century circle of American admirers of William Morris to which Millet and Sargent belonged. Millet had overseen her decoration at the Chicago Exposition,²⁷ and we can view her Giverny garden as a country counterpart to that kept a few years earlier in Paris by Sargent to complement his Morris furnishings there.

The interplay of the 'foreign' and the 'native' to be seen in *Roses and Lilies* was typical of many artistic colonies, as their members brought their own traditions into relationship with those of their adopted locales. However, in contrast to the emphasis at Barbizon, Newlyn or even Giverny, the Broadway group was concerned not only with painting. The poet Austin Dobson was a member of it, as well as James and Gosse, the musician Sir George Henschel and the American actress Mary Anderson Navarro²⁸. Many of the Broadway colony's artists were themselves closely associated with the written word, as illustrators for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, the American popular journal. We thus also need to remember another antecedent for its work: the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, who used Ruskin's emphasis on truth to nature for symbolic or narrative purpose, often inspired by literature. William Morris was closely associated with this group, and their approach was continued in the work of Helen Allingham and Myles Birket Foster (Nos. 2, 3, 8; Frontispiece). The latter now 'embellished' nature, however, rendering derelict cottages as whole, and so projecting an ideal rural world despite the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century. Their country garden scenes have been interpreted as emblems of 'English' and even imperial identity in the nineteenth century²⁹. In turn, at Naworth Castle in Cumbria, George Howard, Lord Carlisle juxtaposed humble runner beans with the artist Caroline, Lady Lindsay (wife of Sir Coutts Lindsay the founder of the famous Grosvenor Gallery in London), as if to symbolise his friend William Morris's ideal of harmony between utility and beauty (No. 12).

At first sight, such images seem a world away from the ebullient *plein-airisme* of the pictures by Sargent, MacMonnies, Munnings, Knight, and



Fig 1 John Singer Sargent
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
1885-86

even from the more restrained effects of light and colour in Fantin's and Parsons's work. Yet the technique of small, vibrant brushstrokes adopted by Foster and many of the Victorian watercolourists actually had a very direct successor in the 'pointillism' developed by Lucien Pissarro and others in the late nineteenth century (Plate 19; No. 56). For Foster's 'stippled' technique was inspired by Ruskin's advocacy of small, precise brushstrokes in place of the traditional broad watercolour wash used by earlier artists such as John Crome and John Sell Cotman – and it was Ruskin's discussion of this new technique in his *Elements of Drawing* (1857) which was quoted in turn in Ogden Rood's *Modern Chromatics* (1879), a book closely studied by the French Pointillists³⁰.



Plate 7 James Bolivar Manson, *Mrs Crump's Garden*, 1925

In this context, it is only logical that Lucien Pissarro should have found repeated inspiration in the rural gardens he encountered when he settled in England from 1890 (Plates 18, 19; No. 58), prompting the British critic Frank Rutter to write that, apart from Sargent's colleague Philip Wilson Steer, no other member of the progressive New English Art Club 'was painting rural England with so much truth and beauty...[Steer] excelled in painting the wide open spaces of England [but] Pissarro gave closer and more intimate views of her cottage gardens, her copses and her orchards'³¹. Lucien Pissarro, however, has a double claim to inclusion in this exhibition, for he too was a keen admirer of William Morris. He modelled his Eragny Press on Morris's Kelmscott Press, and was closely involved in the British Arts and Crafts movement in the 1890s and 1900s. Later, in 1919, he was to form the Monarro Group in London with James Bolivar Manson, a future Director of the Tate Gallery – a group of artists dedicated to promoting the influence of French Impressionism in Britain. Yet here again, we find the inspiration of the traditional country garden firmly to the fore, in Manson's *Mrs Crump's Garden* with its jewel-like colours suggesting flowers such as michaelmas daisies, nasturtiums and poppies (Plate 7).

* * * * *

As these examples begin to show, 'country gardens' crossed national boundaries as well as evoking 'Englishness'. They inspired many different, yet often interlinked approaches, and it is possible in the present exhibition to give a sample only of their connections and conjunctions. However, given the sense at the period of Broadway as a 'garden' linking past with present time, and the many 'walks' which featured both in Parsons's gardens and his paintings³², it is helpful to turn in more detail to the themes of 'time' and 'place' in the country garden, and the way that Parsons and his colleagues invite us to interact with these.

First, however, we should note that in 1883, the year before Sargent, Parsons and James first met, Parsons had provided illustrations for an article on Charles Darwin in *The Century Magazine*, by Alfred Russel Wallace, which put 'time', 'place', and the relationship of living things to their environment to the fore with a new scientific as well as emotional power. Wallace quotes Darwin's revolutionary discovery of 'a wonderful relationship...between the dead and the living' – his analysis of fossils and plant structures which now conflated past and present time by showing that the species of today are descended from those of past millennia, in a process triggered by adaptive response to the environment³³. And as a prelude to this, Parsons gives an illustration of 'Darwin's Usual Walk': the 'thinking path' through the garden at Down House which Darwin took each day, to stimulate ideas through direct contact with nature³⁴. Parsons places a garden roller and a hedge to one side of the receding path in his illustration – reminding us of the active, human side of 'garden work' – but he also suggestively frames the path with a freely-arching spray of foliage, which attracts the eye with its natural beauty. The path in turn leads to a glimpse of wider countryside, and birds circle freely overhead. He thus evocatively identifies the 'country garden' with our physical and also emotional experience of time, movement and place – and in so doing, offers in embryo the 'path' composition he was to use for his *Orange Lilies* (No. 42). In this view, believed to show his own garden at Luggershill in Broadway, and in a related watercolour (No. 43), a glorious herbaceous border now substitutes for the roller and hedge at the left of the Darwin illustration.

This new Darwinian sense of what Wallace called the 'relations' of organisms, and of man and the environment³⁵, forms a suggestive context for the ease with which time, place, and the garden were perceived as symbolically connected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Let us look first at country gardens and time.

The past in the present: country gardens as living history

The nucleus of the Broadway colony was formed by the American artists – Abbey, Millet, and Barnard – who, along with Parsons, sought inspiration in the village for their illustrations for the numerous articles on old-world England, and the charms of rustic life, old-fashioned songs, and 'old-fashioned flowers' being published in *Harper's Magazine*, and books such as Nos. 67 and 68. At a time of American nostalgia for 'the mother nation', these offered a reassuring antidote to the urban unrest which had accompanied the recent influx of immigrant workers in East-Coast America³⁶. Equally, for British readers, they projected a golden, ideal age, remote from the tensions and pressures created by the agricultural depression and industrial expansion of the later nineteenth century. Country gardens and orchards, with their flowering plants and trees, were indeed potent metaphors for ideals of social harmony: 'There is nothing in the world more democratic in its tendencies and teaching than is a garden...A white lily or a rose or a pansy beside a cottage door may be as fine as the lily or the rose or the pansies in a queen's garden' wrote the British horticulturist F.W. Burbidge in an article on 'Old Garden Flowers', illustrated by Parsons, in an 1887 edition of *Harper's Magazine*³⁷.

In this dialogue of past and present, Shakespeare had a key role. The ‘Roses of Shakespeare’ were described by the nineteenth-century horticulturalist Canon Ellacombe as ‘the emblem of all that is loveliest and brightest and most beautiful upon the earth’³⁸, whilst the lines by Shakespeare’s contemporary Robert Herrick, ‘Gather ye Roses whilst ye may, /Old time is still a-flying, /And the same flower that smiles to-day /Tomorrow will be dying’, gave a poignant reminder of the inherent fragility of that ‘beauty’. Just as the American actress Mary Anderson, a member of the Broadway colony, performed Shakespeare’s rural idyll *As You Like It* to enthusiastic audiences at Stratford-upon-Avon, so it was an edition of Herrick’s poetry, including ‘Gather ye Roses’, that Parsons and his Broadway colleague Edwin Abbey illustrated already in 1882.



Plate 8 Alfred William Parsons, *A Courtyard, Russell House*, exhibited 1922

Roses of course feature prominently not only in Sargent’s *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (Fig. 1), and Parsons’s *Sundial in a Rose Garden*, and *Genus Rosa* illustrations (Plate 17; No. 69); they also appear in many of the other works in ‘Country Gardens’, such as Blandford Fletcher’s *Farm Garden*, painted in 1888 in Worcestershire (No. 7). But other flowers carried potent symbolic associations too. The hollyhocks portrayed by Parsons in *The Garden* (Plate 1), for example, which mix modern double varieties with single specimens to create a dazzling display of vibrant pinks and reds, are flowers believed to have been introduced to England by Queen Eleanor from her travels to the Middle East on a Crusade with Edward I in the thirteenth century. Their name combines the word ‘holy’ with the Saxon word for mallow (‘hoc’) – hence, clearly, Parsons’s symbolic inclusion of a misty glimpse of Broadway’s mediaeval church in the background – and they are mentioned by Jon Gardener of Kent in the first English-language book of horticulture, the *Feate of Gardening* of c.1400-40. Their association with Queen Eleanor surely explains why, after Parsons’s death, a contemporary member of royalty, Princess Louise, chose *The Garden* as her gift to the Royal Watercolour Society in his memory (he had been the Society’s President).

We should also remember, however, that the pigments in hollyhocks were believed to have healing properties (the Latin name for hollyhock, *Althaea*, derives from the Greek verb *άλθουμαι* meaning ‘I am healed’ or ‘I am made whole’). Like lavender – associated with cleanliness, and shown in Parsons’s *Old Lavender Bushes* (No. 41) – they thus reinforced the ‘healthful’ connotations of the country garden, and were a mainstay of the ‘cottage garden’ images which found a buoyant market in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Those of Strachan and Woodlock, for example (Nos. 64 and 65), bring to mind the play of memories and sentiments in the popular poem by the English-born American Edgar E. Guest, the so-called ‘people’s poet’: ‘The garden of my boyhood days /With hollyhocks was kept ablaze;... /And when to-day their blooms I see, Always the mother smiles at me...’³⁹.

In Parsons’s *A Courtyard, Russell House* (Plate 8), however, the way the hollyhocks protectively screen the building and point indoors up the stair seems to hint at deeper, more subtle associations. It was Millet’s wife Lily who lovingly tended the flower gardens at Russell House during the heyday of the Broadway colony, and hollyhocks are flowers traditionally associated with female presence or ambition, and fecundity, as well as with healing. Those in Parsons’s picture were presumably planted by Lily Millet, so that they evoke her presence in the otherwise empty courtyard. This has some echoes of Ruskin’s ideal of the mother as a gardener who nurtures the citizens of England⁴⁰. But after 1912, when her husband Frank died tragically aboard the *Titanic*, the picture would have held particular poignancy. Henry James’s pocket diaries record how, in London on nineteenth April 1912, he found himself visiting ‘Alf Parsons, 14 Bedford Gardens to ask about Lily Millet since the *Titanic* horror. She is there – but couldn’t see me’⁴¹. Parsons’s hollyhocks would, in this situation, have offered ‘healing’ solace; at once an evocation of Lily Millet’s presence, and a declaration of confidence in nature’s renewing powers, which clearly draws on the famous precept of Shakespeare’s contemporary Francis Bacon that a garden is ‘the greatest refreshment of the spirits of man’⁴².

The identification of people and emotions with flowers, plants, and gardens was, of course, a central feature of Shakespeare’s imagery, and it was revived in Victorian and Edwardian times in the popular ‘language of flowers’. Many ‘cottage-garden’ painters drew on this ‘language’. A work such as Frederick Smallfield’s image of a child eating raspberries – the ‘symbol’ of remorse in the language of flowers – is probably a form of moral tale (No. 61). Just as the child indulges in the sharp, seedy fruits she has been picking, so the hollyhock, that flower of female ambition and fecundity, has finished its flowering, and is already marked with insect damage. Sargent’s *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, with its juxtaposition of the innocence of childhood, the white lilies of purity, and the roses of perfection and beauty, is clearly a fin-de-siècle successor to this kind of flower-child identification, and modern art historians have proposed that it subverts this to offer homoerotic meanings, in the children’s fingers which seem to ‘pollinate’ lanterns⁴³. Yet the picture, with its festive lanterns, was also surely very much part of the kind of highdays and holidays described by Millet’s sister at Broadway in the 1880s. On one occasion, for example, each artist donned a floral wreath – Millet’s were of dahlias and Parsons’s of the roses he so loved⁴⁴. We can see more clearly why James called a garden ‘an organised revel’. Its plants were surrogate people, enjoying themselves in nature, and the viewer is invited to join them.

Sargent’s twilight effects in *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* are nonetheless also part of the turn from Impressionist *plein-air* approaches to a more ‘Symbolist’ evocation of atmosphere, mood and ambiguity at this period. We cannot ‘read’ his image precisely as we can those of Smallfield, or of Myles Birket Foster, whose *Gathering Lilac*



Plate 9 William Herbert Allen, *Stranger's Corner*, 1903

(No. 8) partners young girls with the flower associated with youth and first love. Rather, we can compare it to Munnings's use a few years later of a tranquil cottage garden of foxgloves and Canterbury bells to evoke the meditative mood of another stage of life – old age – in *Daniel Tomkins and his Dog* (Plate 10). This early work by Munnings shows the garden near Norwich of his first patron, and has affinities with the *Stimmungsimpressionismus* ('mood impressionism') developed by Max Liebermann and Lovis Corinth in Germany at this period⁴⁵. Time is now internalised, as the long slow passage of the years within the sitter's mind, which the viewer apprehends through contrast with the short-lived flowers.

Though more detailed in style, Parsons's *Courtyard, Russell House*, with its mood of silent stillness, can also be regarded as part of these Symbolist trends. Henry James, brother of the pioneer psychologist William James, was certainly sensitive to Parsons's elision of past and present time, noting that his garden paintings captured 'happy nooks [that] have grown slowly...fortunate corners [that] have had a history'⁴⁶, and that he was the 'messenger' between different 'phases of our consciousness'⁴⁷ – imagination and reality. In *Stranger's Corner* (Plate 9), meanwhile, one of the most vibrant 'country gardens' in this exhibition, William Herbert Allen, Director of Farnham Art School, realised Gertrude Jekyll's ideal of the herbaceous border as a 'picture'. This painting shows his own garden at Farnham, conceived in the spirit of Morris as a defence against industrialisation⁴⁸.

By the 1920s, in the work of the Liverpool-born painter Tom Mostyn, imagination was to gain the upper hand, perhaps in response to the horrors of reality in the First World War. Mostyn's gardens (Plates 12 and 13) were painted entirely from imagination⁴⁹, placing British cottage-garden flowers such as larkspur in gardens inspired by those of Italy where, in actuality, the heat would not have allowed them to grow⁵⁰. These images give a new direction to the interest in the evocative effects of 'formal



Plate 10 Sir Alfred James Munnings, *Daniel Tomkins and his Dog*, 1898



Plate 11 Richard George Hinchcliffe, *In the Orchard*, before 1913

gardens' captured earlier in George Howard's *Lemon Grove at San Remo* (No. 13), or the view at the *Villa Borghese* (No. 4), originally owned by Sir George Henschel, and painted by his Broadway colleague Alma-Tadema. Meanwhile, however, in the art of Sargent and Parsons, reality and dream, like past and present, lay in a finely-tuned balance. Their association brings us back to 'place', for the paths which lead through 'country gardens' are not only walks through time, but also walks in the wider landscape.



Plate 12 Thomas Edwin Mostyn, *The Cardinal's Garden*



Plate 13 Thomas Edwin Mostyn, *Garden overlooking the Sea*

William Morris and the garden of nature

For all its seclusion, Broadway was by no means the limit of its colony's attentions. Lucia Millet, the sister of Frank Millet, refers repeatedly to long walks and excursions over the Cotswold hills, or trips on the river Avon. On one occasion in 1885, Parsons hired a steam launch, with a table as long as its deck, laden with 'Rabbit pie, a goose, a pair of chickens, a huge roast...olives, pickled walnuts and mushrooms'.⁵¹ This vessel took a fourteen-strong party from Evesham to Pershore, past many of the scenes included in Parsons' exhibition that year of works illustrating 'Shakespeare's River'⁵².

Exploration was natural for artists largely new to the English countryside, as were the American members of the Broadway colony. But it also surely chimes with Parsons's comment in his book on his 1892 visit to Japan, that 'the farther you walk the more you think'⁵³ – another reflection, perhaps, of his interest in Darwin's 'thinking path' through the garden at Down House, as well as of Morris's 'garden strolling' to make notes on his flowers⁵⁴. The colony's wider 'reach', after all, clearly harmonises with Ruskin's and Morris's vision of England as an extended garden. Ruskin had called for England to become like 'a little garden'⁵⁵, whilst in his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, published in 1890, Morris dreamt of a future better England as a place where nature absorbs and transforms the towns, and man lives as if in a garden. Hammersmith in this text becomes 'an old country garden' filled with roses; in Trafalgar Square, blackbirds 'sing their best' amongst 'cherry trees laden with fruit', whilst the fields are a 'garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all'⁵⁶.

The introduction Parsons wrote for his 'Shakespeare's River' exhibition, is, however, hardly less idyllic. It describes the Vale of Evesham as 'covered with market gardens and fruit orchards', whilst 'on the river banks are...willows, with wild rose and bramble growing out of their decayed old stems...[at Pershore] you

may see...acres of plum trees and orchards of old pears all white with blossom'⁵⁷. It is as though Parsons has discovered Morris's paradise-on-earth of the future already by the Avon, and his text might almost be a blueprint for his large oil *The Pear Orchard* (Plate 14), and his views of the Broadway, Hereford and Warwick districts (e.g. Plates 15, 20; Nos. 26, 48), some of which may have been part of his 'Shakespeare's River' exhibition. But what is particularly suggestive is the way that Parsons conceives – both in his pictures and his text – of the gardens made by man as continuous with the wider landscape, just as the wild rose by the Avon, and the *Ancient Thorn* (No. 22) make a garden out of nature. These ideas are clearly at one not only with Morris but also with William Robinson's *The Wild Garden*, in which Parsons's illustrations bring before our eyes the hardy, 'outdoor' flowers advocated by Robinson. Robinson's book went through numerous editions, and we can see its echo in the way that Parsons offers views to the surrounding landscape in his paintings of gardens, thereby connecting wild and cultivated nature (cf Plate 16).



Plate 14 Alfred William Parsons, *The Pear Orchard*, 1903

Equally, the ideals of Robinson are surely behind the tangle of freely-growing plants with which Sargent surrounds the children in his *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*. The order for 'fifty lily bulbs' – no less – which Sargent placed whilst painting this picture, for Lily Millet to grow at Russell House as props for it, clearly recalls the kind of extravagant planting of 'drifts' and 'colonies' of flowers favoured by Robinson. In turn, in his own later watercolour of tulips opening in springtime in his garden at Luggershill (Plate 16), Parsons leads the eye along the meandering garden path to a view of the hills beyond the garden, suggestively punctuated by Broadway Tower – the place from which Morris himself had admired the garden of nature below, with its trees dotting the fields. In Parsons's picture of his Luggershill garden at Broadway, the tulips similarly 'dot' the grass. Although they include what appear to be modern pink varieties, departing from Morris's affection for strictly 'old-fashioned flowers' and suggesting a date of after 1912⁵⁸, the garden is clearly at one with Morris's vision of gardens as integral with nature. The arcs of massed flowers, and the curving forms of the trees, meanwhile, are picked up by the mobile patterns of the clouds, whilst the path extending into the viewer's space pulls us powerfully into the scene.



Plate 15 Alfred William Parsons, *Figures before a Country Cottage*



Plate 16 Alfred William Parsons, *The Artist's Garden, Luggershill* c. 1912-20

Plate 17

Alfred William Parsons,
A Sundial in a Rose Garden,
c. 1905-20



Similar effects occur in *Orange Lilies* (No. 42), with its rambling rose recalling the Robinsonesque wild rose cascading over a tree in Parsons's description of the Avon scenery. The white doves on the lawn echo the white of the clouds, and the path which reaches forward from the viewer leads to a glimpse of landscape or lawn beyond the garden. Artfully trimmed yew trees throw into prominence the softer contours of the clouds, and a table and chairs invite us to treat the garden as the kind of 'outdoor room' favoured by Gertrude Jekyll. This marriage of Robinson's 'wild' ideals with aspects of the formal garden tradition came increasingly to mark Parsons's approach to garden design, but it also again makes the painting something in which we feel almost bodily present. We 'walk' along its path, exposed to sensations of touch, perfume, temperature and even sound (cooing doves), just as James loved to lie in Broadway's grass, and just as he, Parsons and the other colonists engaged with the wider Broadway landscape by walking, travelling and thereby emotionally 'mapping' its 'garden' world.

In Parsons's *Old Lavender Bushes* (No. 41), the plants seem almost recklessly neglected, leaning at drunken angles, and of a size which suggests they may be up to twenty-five years old⁵⁹. Yet once again this provides the essential visual link to the broad, open forms of the drifting clouds above – nature beyond the garden. Even the rows of roses in *Sundial in Rose Garden* (Plate 17) are framed by a mass of irregular trees, the pattern of their sunlit heads leading the eye to that of the mackerel clouds above, and the glimpse of blue hill on the horizon. The invitation here would seem to be to let our thoughts 'wander', or even to 'dream', just as Parsons 'thought' by walking in flower-filled Japan. Furthermore, we find ready precedents for his interrelationship of land and sky in the work of Constable. In Constable's view of his father's kitchen garden, for example (Plate 3), the garden is linked to the surrounding landscape by the panoramic viewpoint, and the sun suggestively illuminates the fields through which Constable had walked with so much pleasure with Maria Bicknell, the woman he wanted to marry. Like Constable, Parsons believed that the purpose of art was to communicate feeling, noting that 'The artist's mind seems to me to be like a rain gauge which collects all the little dribblets of sentiment & enables us to measure the feelings of his time'.⁶⁰

In his *News from Nowhere*, Morris alluded to 'the feelings of his time' by mentioning the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier⁶¹. Morris's sense of the garden as a part of wider nature, and of the nation itself as a garden is, like Ruskin's, essentially similar to the vision of the whole of France as a 'vast garden' that Fourier's French followers, such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, had developed⁶². The origins of this idea lie in part in French admiration for the eighteenth-century 'English landscape garden', with its associations with liberal politics. In late nineteenth-century France, it found a direct artistic response in the work of Camille Pissarro, a keen admirer of Proudhon⁶³. Pissarro's late views of his garden at Eragny near Rouen project our gaze from his upper-floor studio window to the orchard trees beyond, inviting us to delight in the poetry of early morning mist (No. 54), and to empathise with nature's seasonal change.

This synthetic view of the garden as part of wider nature was directly taken up in many of Lucien Pissarro's compositions; *Cottage Garden, Fishpond*, for example (Plate 18), guides us past the complex textures of the overgrown garden, with its bushes of yellow broom, to a luminous vista of the wider landscape beyond. Some years earlier, in *The Fairy*, painted at Coopershale Hall in Essex (No 56), Pissarro had similarly used his shimmering 'Pointillist' technique of tiny dots of colour to suggest the magical



Plate 18
Lucien Pissarro,
Cottage Garden, Fishpond,
1915



Plate 19
Lucien Pissarro,
The Garden Gate, Epping,
1894

transformations created by the play of light, which makes the child in the garden an ethereal, fairy-like being, and the garden the threshold to some imagined realm.

Epping Forest, meanwhile, which Pissarro portrays through the gate of his garden in *The Garden Gate, Epping* (Plate 19), was, of course, William Morris's much-loved childhood haunt; the place where Morris first fell in love with the 'garden of nature'. In the 1890s, when Lucien Pissarro juxtaposed its delicately interlacing boughs with the crisper outline of his garden gate, Morris was in fact waging an ardent and very public battle with those who wanted to cut down the ancient hornbeams of Epping Forest⁶⁴. And just a few years later, Lucien Pissarro made his own highly suggestive contribution to the theme of the 'garden of nature' by printing Francis Bacon's historic 1625 essay 'Of Gardens' at his Eragny Press, complete with border decorations inspired by plants and flowers⁶⁵. Bacon's essay had been quoted by William Robinson in his *Wild Garden*, for a key feature of the ideal garden it describes is an area devoted to a 'heath' – a pioneer 'wild garden'. Pissarro's frontispiece for his edition of it shows a country garden where women pluck fruit and a gate opens onto the landscape beyond.

Such affinities and parallels should not, of course, be pushed too far; Parsons did not look directly to Pissarro, any more than Pissarro to Parsons. But once again they help to point our attention to the deeper layers of meaning which, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, had come to colour the 'country garden', and the artistic inspiration it offered. The 'artist's gardens' created and painted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by artists such as Camille and Lucien Pissarro in Eragny and Epping, Parsons in Broadway, Mary MacMonnies at Giverny, or Allen at Farnham were, of course, the counterparts at this period to Monet's great garden at Giverny, as well as Max Liebermann's at Wannsee near Berlin at this period. Analysis of the wider phenomenon of the 'artist's garden' at this period lies beyond the scope of the present catalogue⁶⁶, but its connections, via Morris's ideals, to the 'garden of nature' are nonetheless intriguing. Sargent's Broadway garden pictures developed directly out of his contact with Monet in the years when Monet began his garden at Giverny, whilst Liebermann's Wannsee garden had many affinities with the British Arts and Crafts tradition of garden design developed by Jekyll and practised by Parsons.

It is clear, in short, that the English 'country garden' at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a place of rich suggestion, evocation and association. Perhaps its most delightful expression in Broadway would have been found at Court Farm in the 1890s, the home of the actress Mary Anderson, where Parsons, in the place 'where pigs had wallowed', had 'made a rose garden'⁶⁷. Sweet floral scent, drifting through the music room windows, would have mingled with the sound of English folk songs being sung by Sir George Henschel, transporting the audience – which sometimes included Sir Edward Elgar himself – to places of memory and dream. It is hoped that the paintings in the present exhibition may give corresponding pleasure.

Notes

- 1 James 1889, p. 52.
- 2 See Mako 2006 for Parsons's Broadway gardens, and Milette 1995 and 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 181ff. for his garden design partnership with Captain Walter Croker Saint-Ives Partridge and Charles C. Tudway, whose work included the garden at Rosneath, Gareloch, of Princess Louise (1899-1901, probably shown in No. 43). Parsons's first garden design was at 'Clouds', Wiltshire, for the Hon. Percy Wyndham (1884); he also created Henry James's garden at Lamb House, Rye (1898).
- 3 Quoted in Hoschedé 1960, Vol. 1, p. 70.
- 4 See Ormond 2010.
- 5 James 1891, p. 5.
- 6 Gosse, annotations on copy of *Gardens and Orchards*, exh. cat., Fine Art Society, London, 1891, held by Huntington Library, San Marino, California, USA.
- 7 Gosse, 'Melancholy in the Garden', in *The Autumn Garden*, 1908.
- 8 Parsons 1892.
- 9 Parsons's seventy watercolours for this are held at the Lindley Library, Royal Horticultural Society, London; see Milette 1997, Vol. 1, p. 157, and the many references to their progress in the Ellen Willmott Archive, Warley Place, Great Warley, Essex.
- 10 Robinson 1870 (with editions from 1881 illustrated in whole or part by Parsons); Robinson 1883. See also Bisgrove 2008, pp. 71-83; Helmreich 2002, pp. 39-65; and Hobhouse and Wood 1988, p. 13ff. Robinson built on an existing tradition of appreciation for 'wild' effects; see Elliott 1985.
- 11 'Summer Sun' in Stevenson 1971, p. 402 (first pub. 1885).
- 12 Monet, letter to Théodore Duret, 13 August 1887, quoted in Bourguignon 2007, p. 67.
- 13 See House and Ingram 2011, p. 28 and pp. 18-19 for *Nasturtiums* and Fantin's Buré garden.
- 14 Morris 1915, p. 127.
- 15 Letter from Vernon Lee to her mother, 23 June 1883, quoted in Olson 1986, p. 100.
- 16 E.g. Robinson, *The Wild Garden*, 3rd edn., London, 1883, p. 20.
- 17 See Helmreich 2002, pp. 42 and 47; Bisgrove 2008, p. 99, and Hamilton 1998, p. 16-19; for Ruskin's interest in wild flowers, see Ingram and Wildman 2011.
- 18 See Olson et al, 1986, pp. 18-22.
- 19 James 1891, p. 5; this metaphor also carries overtones of the 'theatrical' gardens displaying 'the gaieties of nature', created by Horace Walpole in the 18th century; cf Strong 2000, p. 269. In 1894 Parsons in fact designed the garden stage-sets for James's play *Guy Domville*.
- 20 Constable, letter to Dunthorne, 29 May, 1802, quoted in Eitner 1970, p. 64.
- 21 For artists' colonies, see Lübbren 2001, and Jacobs 1985; for Newlyn see Fox and Greenacre 1985.
- 22 See McConkey 1995, p. 72.
- 23 See Parris and Fleming-Williams 1991, nos. 5-6, pp. 90-1; for Quilter's garden, see *English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*, at: http://www.parksandgardens.ac.uk/component?option=com_parksandgardens/task/site/id,4386/tab,description/itemid,292/ (accessed 8.5.12).
- 24 See Bourguignon 2007, and Willsdon 2004, pp. 241-5.
- 25 See Thomson 2004, p. 19.
- 26 See <http://www.poupendol.com/koeniggb.html> (accessed 8.5.12).
- 27 Sargent's protégé the artist Bay Emmet and her sister Rosina (cousins of Henry James) visited the Villa Bêsche as MacMonnies was painting *Roses and Lilies* there; see Willsdon 2010, p. 155 and Robinson and Cartwright 2001, p. 67 and 71. For MacMonnies's biography, see Smart 1984.
- 28 For the history and membership of the Broadway colony, see Simpson 1990 and 1993, and Olson et al, 1986.
- 29 See Helmreich 2002, pp. 2-5 and p. 66ff. 30 See Wilcox and Newall 1992, pp. 34-5. 31 Rutter, *Art in My Time*, 1933, quoted in Thorold 1983, p. ix.
- 32 For the 'flowery way' Parsons made to connect Abbot's Grange (the house bought by Frank Millet in 1890) and Russell House, see 'T' 1911, p. 57 and Mako 2006, p. 54; other garden walks created by Parsons's garden design partnership included that of 1899-1905 at Welbeck Abbey, ¼ mile long and flanked by 6 metre wide herbaceous borders, for the Duke of Portland; see Milette 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 270-322.
- 33 Wallace 1883, p. 425.
- 34 Parsons's illustration is in *ibid*, p. 424.
- 35 Wallace 1883, p. 422.
- 36 See Keyes and Simon 1996, p. 81.
- 37 Burbidge 1887, p. 20.
- 38 Ellacombe 1896, p. 264.
- 39 For this reference and the other information given here on hollyhocks' history and symbolism, I am grateful to David Mitchell, Curator – Projects, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.
- 40 For this ideal, see Helmreich 2002, pp. 20-22.
- 41 James 1987, p. 357.
- 42 Francis Bacon, *Of Gardens. An Essay*, first pub. 1625.
- 43 See Syme 2010, pp. 145-89 and review by L Dixon, at <http://19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn/1/review-of-a-touch-of-blossom-john-singer-sargent-and-the-queer-flora-of-fin-de-siecle-art-by-alison-syme> (accessed 8.5.12).
- 44 Letter from Lucia Millet, 19 September 1886, Francis Davis Millet and Millet family papers, 1858-1984, Archives of American Art, Roll 5904, frame 1135; see also Olson et al, 1986, p. 18, and Simpson 2011.
- 45 Like Corinth's *Frau Else Kaufmann seated on a Garden Bench* of a few years later (1911, Kunsthalle, Kiel), the picture suggests a knowledge of the composition of Manet's *In the Conservatory* (1879, Staatliche Museen, Berlin), perhaps gained on Munnings's Continental travels with the sitter's son.
- 46 James 1891, p. 4.
- 47 James 1889, p. 59.
- 48 Ellis et al 2006, p. 64.
- 49 Baldry 1912, pp. 267-8.
- 50 Information kindly provided by David Mitchell, Curator – Projects, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.
- 51 Letter from Lucia Millet to her parents, 22 September 1885, Francis Davis Millet and Millet family papers, 1858-1984, Archives of American Art, Roll 5904, frames 938-41; see also Olsen et al 1986, p. 18.
- 52 Parsons 1885.
- 53 Parsons 1896, p. 121.
- 54 Morris, quoted in Hamilton et al 1998, p. 55.
- 55 Ruskin, 'Lecture II. Lilies: Of Queen's Gardens', 1864, quoted in Helmreich 2002, p. 21.
- 56 Morris 1897 (first pub. 1890), p. 15; p. 44; p. 215.
- 57 Parsons 1885, pp. 19-20, quoted in Simpson 1993, p. 256.
- 58 See botanical information for No. 23 in List of Works Exhibited in the present catalogue.
- 59 Information kindly provided by David Mitchell, Curator – Projects, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.
- 60 Parsons, letter to William Robinson, 1880, in Lindley Library, Royal Horticultural Society MS RHS Gilpin Bequest: Package 12, # 128, quoted in Milette 1997, Vol. 1, p. 90.
- 61 Morris 1897, p. 71.
- 62 Proudhon 1939 (first pub. 1865), p. 281; see also Willsdon 2004, p. 60.
- 63 See Willsdon 2004, pp. 193-4; 2010 (Edinburgh and London), pp. 92 and 160; and 2011 (Madrid), p. 151ff.
- 64 See Hamilton et al 1998, p. 22.
- 65 Bacon 1902.
- 66 See Willsdon 2004, pp. 203-229; 2007, pp. 131-140; 2010 (Edinburgh/London), pp. 43-5; 2010 (Madrid), pp. 212-19.
- 67 Anderson 1936, p. 25.

Plate 20 Alfred William Parsons, *Thatched Cottages in Broadway* 1897



List of Works Exhibited

Artists listed in alphabetical order, with notes giving probable identifications of plants of interest in selected works, from information kindly provided by David Mitchell, Curator – Projects, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Dimensions of works are given in height before width.

1. **William Herbert Allen**, RBA, ARCA (Lond) (1863-1943)
Stranger's Corner, 1903 (Plate 9)
Oil on canvas, 102 x 120cm, The Museum of Farnham, Farnham, Surrey
Climbing red rose to left, with pink-purple foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*), Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*), and white and blue lupins in both central borders. Along the path edge are white border carnations or a type of chrysanthemum. At foreground left, a tall group of rhizomatous iris in two shades (white and pink; pure white).

2. **Helen Allingham**, RWS (1848-1926)
A Buckingham House at Penstreet
Watercolour, 33.5 x 51cm, courtesy Haynes Fine Art, Broadway, Worcs

3. **Helen Allingham**, RWS (1848-1926)
The South Border at Munstead Wood, c. 1900
Watercolour and pencil, 40.5 x 29cm, The Garden Museum, London
Purple and pink hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*); blue lavender, perhaps *Lavendula angustifolia*; yellow globe-shaped flowers suggest pot marigold *Calendula officinalis* or African marigold *Tagetes sp*; iris; *Yucca* either side of path (probably *Y. gloriosa*, *Y. recurva*, *Y. flaccida* and/or *Y. filamentosa*) and *Lilium candidum* at extreme left (all favourite plants of Jekyll). Mulein or *Verbascum sp* to right of arch, probably with orange nasturtium (*Tropaeolum speciosum*), clam shell-like leaves of *Bergenia sp*, and *Pelargonium* in foreground.



4. **Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema**, OM, RA, RWS, RE (1836-1912)
A Corner of the Gardens of the Villa Borghese, 1876
Oil on canvas, 34.9 x 22cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford
The Italian setting means the large twiggy flowering shrub may be a type of *Tamarisk*, perhaps *T. ramosissima*, but the branch structure tends to suggest a small-blossomed flowering cherry.



5. **John Constable**, RA (1776-1837)
Golding Constable's Kitchen Garden, c.1815 (Plate 3)
Oil on canvas, 33 x 50.8cm, Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, Ipswich
Carefully managed fruit trees at right, probably including apples; those on the wall are likely to be pears, benefiting from shelter and reflected heat. Flower borders; green blue leaves suggestive of brassicas, kale, young cauliflowers or Brussels sprouts. Tree at centre right may be cob nut or hazel nut (*Corylus avellana*), or possibly young oak (*Quercus sp*), elm (*Ulmus*) or sycamore (*Acer*), and has either been allowed to grow too large (thereby shading and drawing moisture from the garden), or is exaggerated in scale by Constable. Poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'), first introduced from Italy in 1743, at background right.

6. **Henri Fantin-Latour** (1836-1904)
Nasturtiums, 1880
Oil on canvas, 62.8 x 42.5cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Tropaeolum majus or nasturtium, thought to have been introduced from Peru to Europe c. 1686; flowers used in salads; the plant also has medicinal properties. Frost sensitive, and therefore grown in pots to facilitate overwintering indoors; the double-flowering variety shown here was sterile in the 19th century, so 'had to be propagated

by cuttings, resulting in clonal, uniformly coloured flowers' (House and Ingram 2011, p.28).



7. **William Teulon Blandford Fletcher** (1858-1936)
The Farm Garden, 1888
Oil on canvas, 61 x 51cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford
Rambling roses on the house wall; purple asters in foreground, possibly with *Helinium* or *Rudbeckia* and *Helianthus annuus* beyond; a solitary sunflower to far right.



8. **Myles Birket Foster**, RWS (1825-1899)
Gathering Lilac, c. 1865
Watercolour, 23 x 33.2cm, Godalming Museum, Godalming
The lilac is most likely *Syringia vulgaris*, first introduced c.1600, and named after Syrinx, the Greek nymph pursued by Pan and transformed into a hollow reed (lilac stems can be hollowed out); associated by the Victorians with youth, young love, pride, and beauty. An apple tree or bird

cherry (*Prunus avium*) at the left. The hedge bank suggests a mixture of roses, privet, and ivy, a plant not traditionally brought indoors for fear of bad luck.

9. **Myles Birket Foster**, RWS (1825-1899)
Ring a Ring a Roses (Frontispiece)
Watercolour, 20 x 26.5cm, Courtesy Haynes Fine Art, Broadway, Worcs



10. **Kate Greenaway**, RI, RWS (1846-1901)
Three Girls in White, 1880-1900
Watercolour, 19.5 x 36.6cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Fruit trees, possibly pears (associated with the Goddess Hera; emblems of fertility and marriage). The blue carpet of flowers is probably meant to represent violets; often found in orchards and associated with Aphrodite the goddess of love, these were traditionally presented to a bride or bridegroom, and dried and placed in family Bibles.



11. **Richard George Hinchcliffe**, PRCA (1868-1942)
In the Orchard (Plate 11)
Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 60.9cm, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead (gift from the Birkenhead Art Club, 1913)
Carrot family flowers in the foreground, probably a type of parsley, chervil, alexanders, angelica, hemlock or hogweed.

12.
George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle, HRWS (1843-1911)

In the Garden at Naworth, Lady Lindsay, 1875
Oil on canvas, 39.4 x 49.5cm, Castle Howard Collection, Yorks

The tall staked plants with red flowers are almost certainly runner beans; the blue flowers to the right are probably a form of delphinium, and the low orange blooms to the front of the border English marigold (*Calendula officinalis*). The group of tall shaped evergreen domes are almost certainly yew (*Taxus baccata*).

13.
George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle, HRWS (1843-1911)

Lemon Grove at San Remo
Watercolour, 38.1 x 55.9cm, Castle Howard Collection, Yorks



14.
Harold Knight, RA, ROI (1874-1961)

In the Spring, 1908-9 (Plate 4)
Oil on canvas, 132.3 x 158.2cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne

15.
Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (1858-1946)

Roses and Lilies, 1897 (Plate 5)
Oil on canvas, 133 x 176cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen
The lilies are *Lilium candidum* (Madonna lily), a plant steeped in symbolism, including that of purity, innocence, chastity and femininity; it can also represent the soul and the love which transcends death.

16.
James Bolivar Manson, NEAC, LG (1879-1945)

Mrs Crump's Garden, 1925 (Plate 7)
Oil on canvas, 50 x 60cm, Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Possible identifications include cosmos (yellow-centred,

purple-petalled flowers in the foreground); michaelmas daisies (the taller purple flowers at the right); nasturtiums; poppies; and lilies. The pale blue flowers at the path edge may be lobelia or campanula, with a pale-coloured iris at the front. The yellow flower at the far end of the left border may be golden rod (*Solidago sp.*).

17.
Thomas Edwin Mostyn, ROI, RWA, RCA (1864-1930)

The Cardinal's Garden (Plate 12)
Oil on canvas, 49 x 67cm, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke on Trent

The blue flowers suggest delphiniums and therefore artistic licence, since the painting probably represents the Villa d'Este garden in Tivoli, whose climate would be too warm for them. The large pink shrub also seems somewhat out of place, though is possibly oleander; the three conical evergreen trees in the background are probably *Cupressus sempervirens*, the Italian or Mediterranean *Cupressus*.

18.
Thomas Edwin Mostyn, ROI, RWA, RCA (1864-1930)

Garden overlooking the Sea (Plate 13)
Oil on canvas, 49 x 60cm, Bushey Museum and Art Gallery, Bushey, Herts
The blue flowers are probably delphiniums; the orange to the lower left may represent poppies; the pink flowers growing on the walls may be roses.

19.
Sir Alfred James Munnings, PRA, RWS, RP (1878-1959)

Daniel Tomkins and his Dog, 1898 (Plate 10)
Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 66cm, Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum, Dedham
Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) and Canterbury bells (*Campanula medium*) in both the white and blue forms are visible in the border. Behind Tomkins's shoulder are hints of an indistinguishable flower with four petals.

20.
Sir Alfred James Munnings, PRA, RWS, RP (1878-1959)

Path to the Orchard, 1908 (Plate 6)
Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 106.7cm, Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum, Dedham (Plate 00)
The colours of the phlox appear somewhat exaggerated, but may be some of those included in Robinson's *English Flower Garden*, e.g. *Phlox panniculata* 'James Alexander' (rich crimson); 'Lothair' (bright scarlet); 'Robert Paterson' (rich crimson); 'William Blackwood' (rosy salmon) and 'Major Molesworth' (scarlet with crimson eye).

21.
Sir Alfred James Munnings, PRA, RWS, RP (1878-1959)

Violet, My Wife, in the Garden, c.1933
Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61cm, The Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum, Dedham.

Works by Alfred William Parsons, RA, RI, PRWS, NEAC (1847-1920)

22.
An Ancient Thorn
Oil on canvas laid on board, 25 x 34cm, Private Collection

23.
The Artist's Garden, Luggershill, c. 1912-20 (Plate 16)
Watercolour, 44.5 x 59.5 cm, Private Collection
Cherry or perhaps apple blossom in background. Single late tulips, possibly including at middle right of path the white 'Zwanenburg' (raised by Van Tubergen, 1912); the pink 'Clara Butt' (raised by E. H. Krelage & Son, 1889); and the 'Bleu Aimable' (raised by E. H. Krelage & Son, 1916) or 'Greuze' (raised by E. H. Krelage & Son, 1905). Blue flowers at end of path may be *Aubretia x cultorum*; white and green ones may be *Iberis saxatilis*, both recommended as partners for tulips in Robinson's *English Flower Garden* (4th edn., 1895).

24.
Artist's Garden, Luggershill, Gladioli
Watercolour, 37 x 27cm, Private Collection
Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson spoke very highly of gladioli, South African flowers introduced into cultivation c. 1774 by the Scottish plant collector Francis Masson whilst working for Kew under Sir Joseph Banks. Those here may perhaps represent a clone from the *G. x colvillei* group raised in 1823.



25.
Artist's Garden, Luggershill, Japanese Paeonies
Watercolour, 51.5 x 26cm, Private Collection
Probably *Paeonia moutan* (pink) and the smaller herbaceous *Paeonia officinalis* (white) (both recommended in William Robinson's *English Flower Garden*).

26.
An Old Bridge near Warwick, 1880
Watercolour, 47 x 74cm, Private Collection



Alfred Parsons,
Artist's Garden, Luggershill, Japanese Paeonies.

27.
Bredon
Watercolour, 34 x 51cm, Private Collection
Tall trees at left almost certainly poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica').

28.
A Chrysanthemum Show, Yokohama,
Watercolour, Private Collection

29.
A Courtyard, Russell House, exhibited 1922 (Plate 8)
Watercolour, 36 x 53cm, Private Collection
Hollyhocks (cf No. 34).

30.
The Courtyard, Russell House
Watercolour, 53 x 36cm, Private Collection

31.
Fallen Willows, Bredon, exhibited 1899
Oil on canvas, 25 x 35cm, Private Collection

32.
Figures before a Country Cottage (Plate 15)
Watercolour, 30.5 x 46.5cm,
Private Collection

33.
A Garden in Herefordshire
Watercolour, 52 x 36cm, Private Collection

34.
The Garden (Plate 1)
Watercolour, 33.7 x 18.7cm, Royal Watercolour Society, London
Mix of single and double-flowered hollyhocks, *Alcea rosea* (syn. *Althaea rosea*); possibly sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis* var *albiflora*) or *Phlox maculate* behind.

35.
A Herbaceous Garden Path with Arched Trees, 1869
Watercolour, 24 x 33cm, Private Collection

36.
Iris
Watercolour and gouache, 11 x 13cm,
Private Collection

37.
Kate Millet on Honeymoon in Russell House Garden,
1906
Watercolour, 16.5 x 37cm, Private Collection

38.
Landscape inscribed 'To Kate Millet from Uncle Alfred
Parsons July 1906', 1906
Oil on canvas, 28 x 41cm, Private Collection



39.
Lechlade
Oil on canvas, 26.5 x 47cm, Private Collection
Pollarded willows, whose erect trunks suggest common
osier (*Salix viminalis*), used for basket making. The vertical
red flashes to the right suggest the seed head of docks
(*Rumex sp.*).

40.
Love in a Mist
pen and black ink on Bristol board, 30.7 x 25.6cm, Royal
Academy of Arts, London
Illustration presumably of 'Flower Piece' No. 2 ('Love in
a Mist'), in Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Century of
Roundels*, 1883.

41.
Old Lavender Bushes, exhibited Royal Academy 1922
Watercolour, 30 x 40cm, Private Collection

42.
Orange Lilies, 1911 (cover picture)
Oil on canvas, 92 x 66cm, Royal Academy of Arts, London
Standard rose at right; border includes white lilies (*Lilium
candidum*) and orange lilies (*Lilium bulbiferum var.
Croceum*).



43.
Orange Lilies along the Path
Watercolour, 48 x 31.5cm,
Private Collection

44.
Orchard with Memorial Stone
Watercolour, 27.5 x 43cm, Private Collection

45.
The Pear Orchard, 1903 (Plate 14)
Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 110.5cm, Falmouth Art Gallery,
Cornwall
A view overlooking Broadway, with Bredon at the left. Early
spring scene with fruit trees clothed in blossom; daisies,
bluebells and daffodils on the orchard turf.

46.
Rhododendrons
Watercolour, 39.5 x 51cm, Private Collection

47.
The Old Road to Wells, exhibited Royal Academy 1922
Watercolour, 48 x 75cm, Private Collection

48.
The Avon at Stratford-upon-Avon, exhibited West Ham,
1897
Watercolour, 43 x 79cm, Private Collection

49.
A Sundial in a Rose Garden, c. 1905-20
(Plate 17)
Oil on canvas, 64 x 77cm, Private Collection
The pergola appears to display a rambling rose; the beds
almost certainly contain different varieties of hybrid tea
roses, e.g. 'Ophelia', 'Madame Butterfly' or 'Lady Sylvia'
(all pink), and possibly 'George Dickson' (red, bred 1912).

50.
Thatched Cottages in Broadway, 1887 (Plate 20)
Watercolour, 17 x 38.5cm, Private Collection

51.
'To the Cuckoo', design for letter 'N', inscribed 'Not the
whole warbling grove Part II. Misc Sonnets. To the Cuckoo',
21.5 x 14cm, Private Collection
Thought to be for *Poet Laureate. A Selection from the
Sonnets of William Wordsworth*, New York, 1890, and
London, 1891, with illustrations by Alfred Parsons. The
flower portrayed is Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*),
also called cuckoo flower, a member of the *Cruciferae*.

52.
Warwick Castle
Watercolour, 43 x 33cm, Private Collection
Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), a traditional
symbol of opulence and luxury as it does not produce edible
fruit; bullrush (*Typha sp.*).

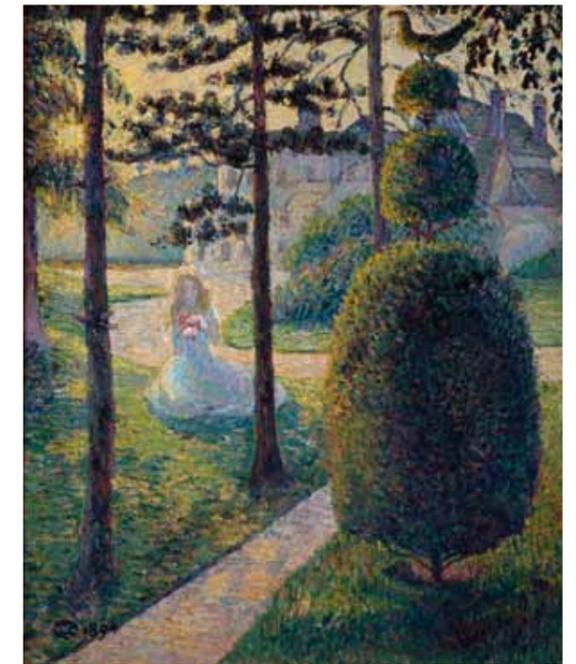
53.
A Country House
Watercolour, 23.5 x 34.5cm, Private Collection



54.
Camille Pissarro (1831-1903)
Autumn, Morning Mist, Éragny-sur-Epte, 1902
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55cm, Ashmolean Museum, University
of Oxford

55.
Lucien Pissarro, NEAC (1863-1944)
Cottage Garden, Fishpond, 1915 (Plate 18)
Oil on canvas, 53 x 65cm, Ashmolean Museum, University
of Oxford.

The wispy erect branches with yellow flowers appear to
be broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). The blue could be borage,
a bugloss or pulmonaria, or campanula; the hints of orange
suggest poppies.



56.
Lucien Pissarro, NEAC (1863-1944)
The Fairy, 1894
Oil on canvas, 73 x 60cm, Ashmolean Museum, University
of Oxford

57.
Lucien Pissarro, NEAC (1863-1944)
The Garden Gate, Epping, 1894 (Plate 19)
Oil on canvas, 54 x 65cm, Ashmolean Museum, University
of Oxford

58.
Lucien Pissarro, NEAC (1863-1944)
Hoar Frost, Chiswick, 1906
Oil on canvas, 39 x 46cm, Ashmolean Museum, University
of Oxford

59.
Giclée print reproduction of:
John Singer Sargent, RA (1856-1925)
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose, 1885-86 (Figure 1)
Oil painting, 174 x 153.7cm, Tate Britain, London
Tall white flowers probably *Lilium auratum*, distinguished
by their speckled and narrow pointed petals; red roses; pink
carnations.

60.
John Singer Sargent, RA (1856-1925)
In the Orchard, 1886-7 (Plate 2)
Oil on canvas, 61 x 73.7cm, Private Collection



61. **Frederick Smallfield, ARWS (1829-1915)**
Picking Raspberries, 1868
 Watercolour, 64 x 44.5cm, Courtesy Haynes Gallery, Broadway, Worcs
 Raspberry plants (*Rubus idaeus*) appear quite insignificantly in the back ground; to the fore instead is the spindly hollyhock – traditional symbol of fecundity, female ambition, and the mother – which has, however, here finished flowering. Buttercups (*Ranunculus sp*), symbols of ingratitude, benevolence, and childishness, but also of riches, are suggested by the yellow touches near the foot of the child's dress. The upright plant at left looks very like *Amaranthus sp*, possibly *A. cruentus*, representative of immortality and indifference in the 'language of flowers'.

62. **Lilian Stannard (1877-1944)**
Ornamental Garden with Lily Pond
 Watercolour, 23.5 x 16.5cm, Private Collection
 Hybrid water lilies, perhaps *Nymphaea marliacea carnea*, now known as *N. carnea*, which Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson favoured. At the left, the yellow patch may be sun rose (*Helianthemum sp*) in front of sweet william (*Dianthus barbatus*). Climbing roses in various shades on the pergola. At the centre, a large clump of white lilies, probably *Lilium longiflorum*, with sun rose beneath; to its right, a low-growing clump perhaps of white border carnations. The stiff, upright white flowers at centre right suggest a type of *Anaphalis sp* such as *A. triplinervis* or pearl everlasting. Other flowers appear to include five stems of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), blue pansies, and poppies (*Papaver orientale*).

63. **Arthur Claude Strachan (1865-1932)**
Gathering Flowers
 Watercolour, 26 x 17cm, Private Collection

Chrysanthemums, probably derived from the form known in the late 19th/early 20th centuries as *C. indicum*. Varieties described in William Robinson's *English Flower Garden* include 'Lady Fitzwygram' (White), 'G. Wermig' (pale yellow) and 'Gustave Grunerwald' (pink), but those shown here cannot be conclusively identified; rather, Strachan suggests the chill of early morning or late evening, the best times to cut flowers. We can almost sense the chrysanthemums' moist, woody, and sweetly musty smell.

64. **Arthur Claude Strachan (1865-1932)**
Washing Day
 Watercolour, 26 x 17cm, Private Collection
 White daisies (extreme left), with a carpet of blue flowers suggesting a type of *Nemophila sp* or a clone derived from it; the splashes of yellow may be corn marigolds or pansies. The climbers on the wall are probably some sort of clematis; *Lilium candidum* at foreground right.

65. **David Woodlock (1842-1929)**
Cottage Garden, Watercolour, 29 x 19cm,
 Private Collection
 Hollyhocks; delphinium; sweet william (*Dianthus barbatus*) or *Lychnis flos-jovis*, associated with love. The orange blooms may represent corn marigolds (*Calendula officinalis*) or nasturtiums.

Cabinet Display

66. **Alfred William Parsons,**
Botanical Sketchbook, 1880-1918,
 Royal Watercolour Society, London

67. **Old Songs** published by Harper Brothers,
 New York, 1888, illustrated by Edwin A. Abbey
 and Alfred W. Parsons
 Private Collection

68. **The Quiet Life,** published by Harper Brothers,
 London, 1889, illustrated by Edwin A. Abbey and
 Alfred W. Parsons
 Private Collection

69. **Ellen Willmott, The Genus Rosa,** London,
 1910-14 (illustrations by Alfred Parsons), Lindley Library,
 Royal Horticultural Society, London
 Documents the roses grown by Ellen Willmott in her
 gardens at Warley Place, Great Warley, Essex; La Tresserve,
 Aix-les-Bains, France; and Boccanegra, Italy.

The exhibition also includes selected paintings of local scenes.

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Clare A.P. Willsdon
University of Glasgow, June 2012

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- Redecorated and refurbished patient rooms

To come in 2012/13

- New Oncology Department
- New regional Bowel Clinic
- New outreach clinics in Cheltenham and the Cotswolds



Spire

South Bank Hospital

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