

Confluence of the Times

by Michael Gilson

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Confluence of the Times:

Richard Sudell, the Forgotten Man of Early 20th Century Landscape and Garden History.

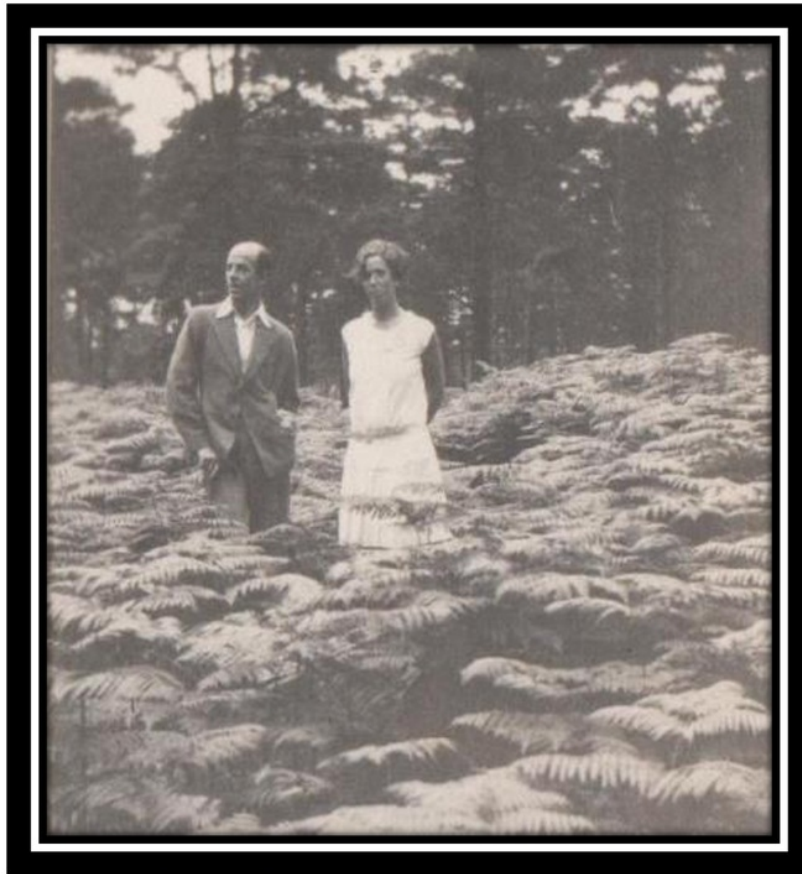


Fig 1 Richard Sudell and his wife Ida (Family Archive)

Candidate: 170261562

MA Garden and Landscape History

Institute of Historical Research, University of London

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Contents:

1) Introduction	3
2) Early life and beliefs	7
3) The rise of the suburban gardener	13
4) Evangelist for the labour-saving garden	20
5) The birth of landscape architecture	28
6) Evidencing the work	35
a) De Havilland Company Headquarters (1933)	38
b) Dolphin Square Courtyard Garden (1937)	43
c) City of London Cemetery Memorial Garden (1953)	48
7) Conclusion	53
8) Bibliography	57
9) Appendix	62



Fig 2. Richard Sudell with his wife Ida (Family Archive)

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1) Introduction

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.¹

In many ways Oliver Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village*, published in 1770, serves as a fitting beginning to any appraisal of the life and work of Richard Sudell (1892-1968), founder member of the Institute of Landscape Architects (ILA), established in 1929, and post-World War One suburban garden pioneer (Fig. 1,2). Goldsmith's cry against the enclosure of common land, rural depopulation, the accumulation of excessive wealth and, indeed, the creation of large landscape gardens, could be said to serve Sudell's philosophy well. Sudell, the man now largely forgotten to early 20th century garden and landscape history, carried with him a powerful conviction that the beauty and tranquillity of landscape, large public spaces or small private gardens should be enjoyed by the many not the wealthy few. We know of his affinity with Goldsmith's poem because the quote above was to be set beneath the title of what he thought would be his mobilizing work, a call-to-arms book to be titled *Towards A New Britain* that would explain how the landscape of the post-war country should look.² It would be a properly planned and designed nation with open spaces serving the majority, wresting power for the decisions on these issues from what he called 'the present ruling class'.³ Yet *Towards A New Britain* was never published, symbolic perhaps of Sudell's forlorn struggle to establish himself as a primary voice in the emerging discipline of landscape architecture. Subjects as big as those to be addressed in *Towards A New Britain* were for others.

This dissertation will argue that Richard Sudell's influence on interwar garden and landscape culture was profound. His work was concentrated not in the poetic nor even, primarily, in the ideological, but deep down in the new soil of the practice. While his role as a prime mover in the establishment of the ILA was key, it is as an influential proponent of a new post-war suburban gardening culture, as thousands of new houses with gardens were built to replace inner city slums, which will also be explored. This manifested itself in hundreds of journal and newspaper columns both on the estate where he lived immediately after the war and

¹ Letter from Sudell to Jellicoe. 31/3/41. Museum of English Rural Life (MERL). SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

during his subsequent career as a gardening editor for a national newspaper and magazines, as well as in his prodigious authorship of practical gardening books all aiming to inspire people, primarily from the newly situated working class, to take up gardening, to improve and beautify the environment.

Born to a relatively poor family, Sudell became an apprentice gardener at the age of 14.⁴ He was a conscientious objector during World War One for which he was jailed three times and given hard labour. It is possible Sudell was a Quaker, or at least had sympathies with Quaker positions on many issues. Sudell was first arrested for refusing military service while a student at the Quaker-run Woodbrooke College in Birmingham.⁵ Woodbrooke was the former home of George Cadbury, founder of model village, Bournville, and chocolate maker. The concept behind Bournville contributed much to the Garden City Movement of which Sudell remained a staunch advocate.⁶

Little documentation survives that gives tangible clues to Sudell's thinking and there are few secondary sources to aid us. A few letters populate the ILA, now Landscape Institute, archives but there are no complete records of the many garden and landscape designs he undertook, principally municipal sports and play areas and cemeteries as well as private garden commissions both in Britain and abroad. The most well-known of the few works which still survive is his courtyard garden at Dolphin Square, Pimlico, London, currently under threat from redevelopment. Sudell also designed the Memorial Garden at the City of London Cemetery, some of which remains, and the landscape that fronted the De Havilland Aerodrome headquarters at Hatfield, which is now in a poor state. By paying particular attention to these works this dissertation will seek to identify underlying themes that point to a garden and landscape philosophy.

By examining in detail his speeches, writings, correspondence and journalism, this dissertation will contextualize the important role Sudell and others had in sparking debate on the rebuilding of Britain, placing open spaces at the centre of a battleground for an improved and improving vision of the country. Practical advice, written in plain language, was Sudell's modus operandi but this research will examine how this large body of work encapsulated an egalitarian ethos that reflected the wider political debate inter- and post-world wars.

⁴ A. Downs, Sudell entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk>> [Accessed 21 March 2019].

⁵ Anon, *Woodbrooke Chronicle* Spring 1916. Woodbrooke College archive (WC).

⁶ R. Andrews, 'The Development of the Residential Suburb in Britain 1850-1970', *Urbani Izziv*, 28/29 (1995), p. 20

Sudell's links with the emerging suburban gardening culture meant he was also associated with the criticism that came with the development of the new housing estates, namely that they represented a stifling conformity. As post-World War Two landscape architecture began to move towards experimentation, Sudell could be seen as a 'conservative' influence with his small garden advice. Yet by examining his writings closely we can see that his garden philosophy was a rallying cry, seeking to empower people to influence their own environment, a mission as equally important as his desire that rigorous, peer-tested landscape architecture should lead the debate about what the new Britain should actually look like.

In garden history terms still relatively little has been written about the gardening classes post-World War One nor the battles in which newly professionalised landscape architecture fought to play a role. *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies* by Oliver, Davis and Bentley could be considered a key text on the rise of the new housing estates interwar and the socio-economic, cultural and aesthetic issues that swirled around them, as could Roger Bowdler's essay 'Between the Wars: 1914-1940'.⁷ *Landscape and Englishness* by David Matless has much to say on the battles of interpretation that were had over the landscape in the 20th century.⁸ In much the same way Raymond Williams's seminal book *The Country and the City* is required background reading for landscape historians seeking a political and literary framework for understanding how capitalism and class structure interprets that history.⁹ Sophie Seifalian and Jonathan Musgrave do reference Sudell's journalism and its influence on residents of the new housing estates, but their work has no space to examine the wider context of his life and work and why, as this dissertation will argue, this makes him an overlooked figure with much to tell us about early 20th century gardens.¹⁰ As for the ILA, it could be argued that Sudell has been virtually airbrushed from its history despite his pivotal founding role. The Institute's own book, *Reflections on Land: The Lives and Work of Six British Landscape Artists*, has little mention of Sudell other than summary accounts of his

⁷ P. Oliver, I. Davis, I. Bentley, *Dunroamin. The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (London, 1981); R. Bowdler, 'Between the Wars: 1914-1940', in A. Saint (ed.), *London Suburbs* (London, 1999).

⁸ D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (London, 1998).

⁹ R. Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1973).

¹⁰ S. Seifalian, 'Gardens of Metro-Land', *Garden History*, 39, (2011); J. Musgrave, 'Innovation and the Development of the British Garden between 1919 and 1939' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, 1996).

swift removal as its first chairman and a dismissive description of one of his books as ‘utterly useless’.¹¹ This dissertation examines why this is so.

It can thus be argued that Sudell sits somewhat uneasily in the space between the suburban garden and the reimagining and planning of the country, the former often heaped with derision for its conservatism and the latter stretching the horizons of the possible. That Sudell was able to play significant roles in both fields makes him an important subject for study. This dissertation is divided into chapters designed to illustrate both these roles and the core themes of his life that tie them together. Chapter Two examines Sudell’s early life and the experiences that forged a philosophy he was to bring to landscape and garden. Chapter Three shows how he was to put this into practice on the Roehampton ‘cottage estate’ where he briefly lived after World War One and how that work can be contextualised within the socio-economic conditions of the times. Chapter Four will focus on the influence his garden journalism and authorship had on the emerging gardening classes and what his words tell us about the rapidly changing interwar landscape. For Chapter Five, Sudell’s pivotal role in the founding of the ILA will be examined and the internal debates about the role newly professionalised landscape architecture should play in the reconstruction of Britain analysed and Chapter Six will place particular focus on three aforementioned existing works by Sudell. Here examination will be made of his plans and descriptions of the work together with analysis of how this tangible evidence serves as testimony to his lifetime garden and landscape philosophy.

¹¹ S. Harvey, (ed.), *Reflections on Land. The Lives and Work of Six British Landscape Architects* (Aldershot, 1987), p. 108.

2) Early Life and Beliefs

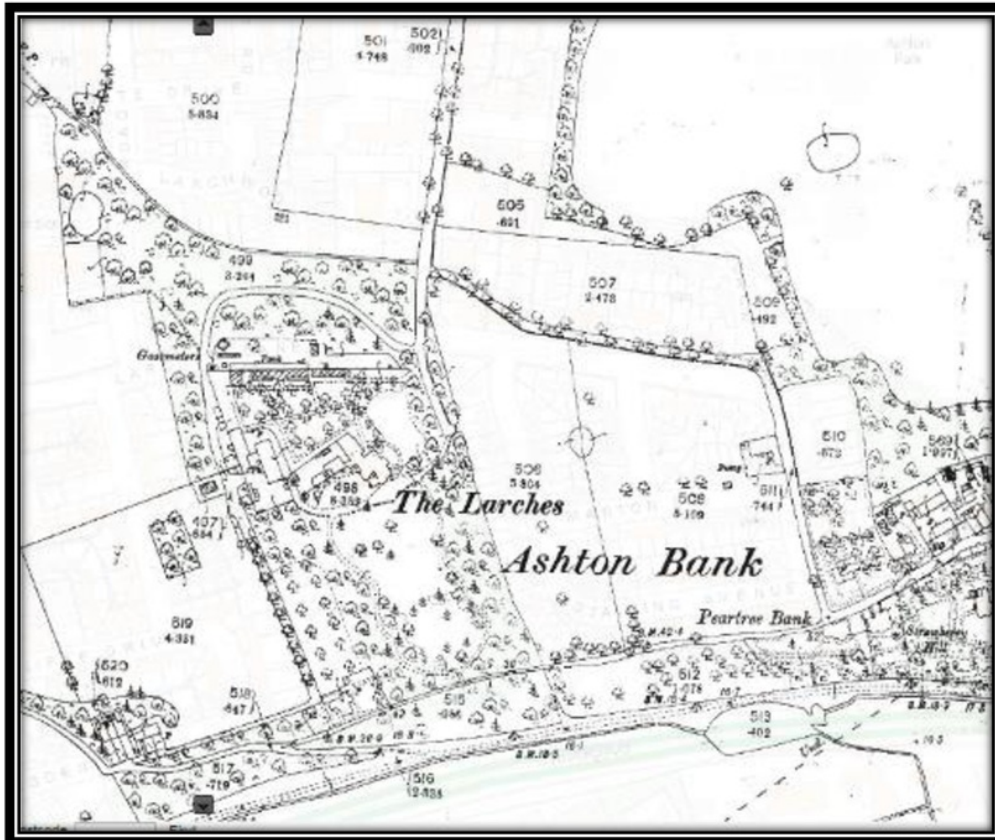


Fig. 3 OS map of The Larches (Lancashire County Council Archive)

Mr Sudell has since been rearrested, court-martialled and sent to Prison for a further term of one year's hard labour.¹²

In later life Richard Sudell was often described as gentle and accommodating (see Appendix 1). Certainly when unceremoniously ousted from the chair, after the first meeting in his own office, of what was then the British Association of Garden Architects, he had been 'extraordinarily gracious' in moving aside, according to fellow founder Geoffrey Jellicoe.¹³ What Jellicoe and others, such as Gilbert Jenkins and Oliver Hill, who climbed to the top floor of that Gower Street, London, premises, may not have known was that Sudell had a steel core of beliefs forged by his poor upbringing and his experiences during World War One. None had spent months during the conflict sleeping in a prison cell without a mattress, under an enforced regime of silence and tasked to sew mailbags for hours on end, as Sudell had done as a conscientious objector. It is one of the facets of Sudell's life that makes him a useful prism for understanding both the social history of the early 20th century and the garden and landscape story that flows from it.

Sudell was born in September 1892 at Newton with Scales near Preston, Lancashire, the eldest of four children to George, a hay and straw dealer, and Annie.¹⁴ Leaving school at 14 and with an interest in horticulture he gained employment as an apprentice gardener in the 10-acre garden at The Larches in nearby Ashton, the property of a local mill owner (Fig. 3). He moved into lodgings in the village of Greavestown. Files held at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, show he was employed there for six years, before moving to work with orchids for a Mr W. Duckworth and then with garden contractor William Addison from 1912 to 1914.¹⁵ Almost eight years as a gardener had given him the confidence to apply for a job at Kew in letters notable for their forthrightness, 'I should like to work in Kew Gardens for about 2 years to gain experience', and evidencing that he had begun to enjoy encouraging others towards horticultural endeavours.¹⁶ He tells Kew he is 'requested to give a lecture to our local Gardeners Mutual Improvement Association, this I would like to do ere I leave',

¹² Conscientious Objector Information Bureau report on Sudell, NCF/COIB Report LXXIII 18.5.17, Working Class Movement Library (WCML).

¹³ Harvey, *Reflections on Land*, p. 11.

¹⁴ A. Downs, Sudell entry.

¹⁵ Sudell file, Library, Royal Botanic Garden, Kew (RBGK).

¹⁶ *ibid.*

before his potential employers had confirmed there was even a vacancy. His persistence was rewarded when he was granted employment at Kew beginning in March 1914 with a reference from the head gardener at The Larches supporting him: 'His work has always been done with that devotion and thoroughness which gives satisfaction and demands respect.'¹⁷ Kew's files confirm that Sudell left its employ a year later in March 1915. By then Britain was at war and conscription was less than a year away.

Sudell returned to Greavestown in 1915 and the following year enrolled in Woodbrooke College near Bournville, from where he was arrested by military police in May of that year just a month after the Military Service Act enforcing conscription had been enacted.

In the middle of a glorious afternoon our fellow student, Mr Sudell, left under escort to testify to the faith that is in him on the question of military service. He was tried on Monday morning and sent to Warwick.¹⁸

The vast majority of students at Woodbrooke, although not all, were Quakers and the reference to 'faith' in the diary entry above might suggest Sudell was a Friend, although this cannot be confirmed. Similarly, in the spring of that year the college newsletter, *Woodbrooke Chronicle*, carried a list of students who had been brought before the Local Tribunal for refusing to sign up. Under Sudell's entry are the words 'Absolute Exemption', a policy adopted by Quakers after a special session of their yearly meeting in January 1916 in which followers were urged to accept no alternative the tribunal might offer in lieu of military service.¹⁹ Absolute Exemption was also the policy of the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), a secular organisation, which often worked closely with Quaker resistance to conscription during the conflict. Both at the tribunal and its inevitable appeal, Sudell was given Exemption from Combatant Service, which usually meant service with the Non-Combatant Corps set up under the Act as a unit of the army for conscientious objectors which put members to physical work without going to battle or carrying weapons. Sudell refused this. Subsequent trial in the local police court would have seen him handed over to the army and court martialled. In June of 1916 he was sentenced to one year's hard labour at Winson Green

¹⁷ John Bradshaw (08/12), Sudell file, (RBGK).

¹⁸ Diary entry, 20/05/16, *Woodbrooke Chronicle*, 1916.

¹⁹ T. Kennedy, 'The Quaker Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern British Peace Movement, 1895-1920', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 16 (1984), p. 260.

prison.²⁰ This would have included a period of solitary confinement without a mattress on his bed and mundane and repetitive work tasks such as sewing mailbags.

Thus began almost three years of defiance from Sudell, which saw him serve three sentences under the Military Services Acts and a total of two years in prison, eight months of which were on furlough. As well as the obvious hardship for Sudell, these years were formative in developing his political beliefs while maintaining his horticultural interests. This can be illustrated by an option he took, while on furlough from his first sentence, to work with the Vacant Land Cultivation Society (VLCS), a body set up by American philanthropist Joseph Fels before the war to turn idle land in London into allotments for the poor and given a government-backed new lease of life when the conflict started as the need for new sources of fresh food grew. Sudell agreed to take on work as an assistant superintendent organising meetings of plot holders and giving gardening instruction. Yet after five months of this work the Home Office ordered him to Wakefield Work Centre, one of a number of such places set up to control conscientious objectors. Sudell had already refused to attend the centres as an alternative to prison and now the Home Office partially relented, allowing him to continue working with the VLCS providing he resided at the London Work Centre in Millman Street. Sudell wrote to the Conscientious Objectors Information Bureau taking up the story: 'I refused to accept the conditions, pointing out that as a Free Agent I was willing to help organise the production of food – but as an industrial slave never!'²¹

This is one of the few first-hand accounts from Sudell of his powerful conviction, combining as it does both a horticultural philosophy, earlier in the letter he had described the VLCS as having 'definite social value', and the political. Not only did he object to war but also to what many were beginning to describe as the government's industrial conscription policy. Sudell's experience was reported to MP Edmund Harvey, a prominent Quaker who had taken up many cases of the treatment of conscientious objectors in Parliament. In a letter to Harvey, a woman named Christine Gregory wrote that Sudell's refusal to comply had seen him sent back to prison for another year of hard labour: 'He is an objector to militarisation and industrial conscription and believes that the greatest protest against war and its attendant evils

²⁰ Pearce Register. *Lives of the First World War* website. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/lives-of-the-first-world-war>. [accessed 20 November 2018].

²¹ NCF/COIB Report LXXIII 18.5.17. (WCML).

is to refuse to be a direct participant in the organisation of the country for war purposes whatever the personal consequences of that action may be.²²

In early 1917 after being court martialled for refusing to attend the Work Centre, Sudell accepted service with the Non-Combatant Corps and was sent to barracks in Weymouth, Dorset. However, he appears to have had a change of heart and, returning to the 'Absolute Exemption' principle, deserted on April 8 of that year. On April 17 his desertion was published in *The Police Gazette*, a weekly Home Office publication alerting the public and the police force to those wanted for crimes, where he was described as a 23-year-old student.²³ Records show, for that desertion, he was again court martialled in Weymouth in May and given one year's hard labour; and again, for unrecorded reasons, in Weymouth in October of the same year, was handed a two-year hard labour sentence. These were partially served at Dorchester prison.²⁴

Sudell was clearly a hardline conscientious objector. Whether he took inspiration from Quakers or the NCF, it is clear from his record that he was an absolutist at heart (see Appendix 2). Sudell never wrote about his prison experiences so it is difficult to gauge how it affected him, but for most conscientious objectors prison regimes were chastening in the extreme as the experience of Clifford Allen, chairman of the NCF, and soon to be a friend of Sudell, describes: 'This experience has been a greater strain than even I thought. Solitude is a terrifying thing when it is enforced. You cannot stop thinking for an instant. And if you seem to, it is only to listen intently to the beating of your heart drumming in your ears.'²⁵

The war left Sudell hardened by prison, stiffened in political resolve and through that with the beginnings of a garden and landscape philosophy. This had begun to take shape back at The Larches, taken hold in Bournville and the VLCS and was fuelled by a sense of a social ideal that all should have access to self-improving land and fresh air. These passions would continue to emerge throughout Sudell's life. From here it was a short step to membership of the National Allotments Society and a constant interest in food production even in suburban gardens; the Gardens Trust with its inner city window box competitions, of which he was secretary; the National Playing Fields Association established to preserve playing spaces for

²² Ibid.

²³ *The Police Gazette* (17/04/17) p. 4

²⁴ Pearce Register.

²⁵ Kennedy, 'The Quaker Renaissance', p. 267.

all sections of society, of which he was member; and even the Prison Gardening Association with its 'most excellent influence' on inmates, of which he was secretary.²⁶

At Woodbrooke, for a short space of time, Sudell would have experienced the potential for a different way of living. Philanthropist and Quaker George Cadbury brought his factory out of the back streets of Birmingham and created his own utopia in fresh fields on the outskirts of town. Bournville estate, begun in 1894, would make it easy for 'working men to own houses with large gardens free from the danger of being spoilt...by interference of the enjoyment of sun, light and air'.²⁷ For Cadbury it was simple: 'the only effective way is to bring men out of the cities and into the country and to give every man his garden where he can come into touch with nature and thus know more of nature's God'.²⁸

The end of the war brought considerable social upheaval and a challenge to the old order of which the way people lived and their relationship with the landscape was a significant part. Released from prison, Richard Sudell was both a part of this clamour for change and a willing disciple of an ill-defined but powerful movement to reconnect people with the soil. His move to a modest home on one of London County Council's (LCC) new housing estates was a chance for him to put his ideas into practice. Roehampton was where he could, literally and metaphorically, get the garden soil under his fingernails.

²⁶ Sudell letter to *The Spectator* (29/03/30) p. 23.

²⁷ M. Harrison, *Bournville: Model Village to Garden Suburb* (Chichester, 1999), p. 39.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

3) The Rise of the Suburban Gardener

Monopoly is Bad ! Competition is good for all !

Roehampton Estate Garden Society
 Is holding its 2nd Annual

FLOWER and
VEGETABLE **SHOW**

— AND —

SPORTS GALA

On SATURDAY, AUGUST 4th, 1923
 At TWO p.m.

Prizes Value over £30 for Exhibits.
 £5 allocated for the Best Front and Back Gardens.
 Special Prizes for Allotments.

Confined and Open Events.
 Estate Residents Eligible for all Entries.
 Members Exhibit Free. Non-Members 3d. each Exhibit.
 Special Children's Classes.
 Sports for all ages - - Valuable Prizes.
 All Children's Sports - FREE.
 Military Band. Dancing. Side Shows.

SEE SMALL HANDBILLS FOR SCHEDULE.

Further Particulars and Entrance Forms from Organising Secretary,
 W. G. BALL, 46, Pleasance Road, S.W.15.

Do not confuse this with the Estate Festival.

Fig 4 Roehampton Garden Society Poster (Roehampton Estate Gazette)

Mr R. Sudell, who was formerly on the committee but has now left the neighbourhood said he wanted the co-operative spirit to continue among the tenants and to see if they could not make that into a little garden city.²⁹

A stigma was attached to many of the 16,000 World War One conscientious objectors, both during and after the conflict, particularly among those who had fought or who had lost loved ones. Many suffered fractures with friends and family that never healed, others verbal and physical abuse. There is no evidence that anyone outside of Sudell's intimate circle knew he was an objector. In some ways Roehampton was the perfect place for Sudell to move to with his first wife Emily. As all were new tenants there was an element of an anonymous fresh start and Sudell was in the right place at the beginnings of a suburban gardening culture he was eminently qualified to encourage.

It is not known when Sudell moved to Roehampton, but he was certainly there for the inaugural meeting of the estate's garden society in January 1922 at which he was elected chairman and by which time there were 607 houses on the estate. In total double that number were built by the time the estate was completed in 1927.³⁰ Roehampton was to become the LCC's showpiece. Started in 1919 when the council bought 147 acres of parkland from the private estates of Dover House and Putney Park House, the 'cottage estate' was one of the first built as the government moved to respond to social upheaval after the war and the demand that those who fought in it should return to better living conditions than those they had left. Fuelled both by commitment to honour the sacrifice of those who fought but also fears of a repeat of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, promised 'Homes Fit For Heroes'. It is perhaps ironic that one of the beneficiaries of this policy, which saw at least four million council and private houses built in the 1920s and 30s, was Sudell.

The mechanisms for this vast change in social policy were to be Acts of Parliament driven by those inspired by the Garden City Movement. Echoing examples like Bournville, the 1918 Tudor Walters Report recommended densities on the new estates of only 12 houses to the acre and back gardens of about 400 square yards. The Housing Act of 1919 enshrined these

²⁹ Anon, 'Roehampton's New Club and Institute', *Wandsworth Borough News*, (06/06/24), p.13.

³⁰ Minutes of general meeting of inaugural garden society on Roehampton (26/01/22). Private archive (PA).

principles and gave generous subsidies to local authorities to build affordable homes for rent.³¹ Garden city pioneers were in the driving seat for this change. Architect and town planner Raymond Unwin, who had been part of the team which designed the first garden city at Letchworth before the war, was a hugely influential member of the Tudor Walters committee. Unwin designed Letchworth for the 'father' of the garden city, Ebenezer Howard. Howard's 1898 book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* became the bible of the movement, providing practical detail on designing new communities of no more than 32,000 people in order to free them from inner city slums, arrest the decline of lives connected to the land and indeed to protect that land from the encroachment of modern cities.³² His Garden City Limited company built both Letchworth, before, and Welwyn after the war.

The line stretched back to Thomas More's *Utopia*, a 1515 treatise on an idealised society containing one of the first proposals for the construction of a new town. In the early 19th century so-called utopian socialists, such as Robert Owen at New Lanark and Charles Fourier in France, revived the philosophy. In the same century 'religious utopians' who built model villages, such as Titus Salt with Saltaire, William Lever with Port Sunlight and Cadbury at Bournville, continued the cause.³³ All believed that industrialised urbanisation, of which they were of course partially responsible, had created communities that were 'irretrievably inappropriate for the well-being of the human condition, either physical or moral'.³⁴

By the time Sudell moved onto Roehampton the garden city ethos had mutated into the construction of garden suburbs which were in some senses in danger of directly undermining one of Howard's principles of protecting rural areas. Nevertheless, Sudell's quote at the start of this chapter, at the opening of Putney Park House as the estate's first community centre, shows how committed he was to the principles of the movement. For Sudell the right to have a decent living environment and access to gardens and fresh air was crucial. For a growing number of critics, the growth of suburbia was a cause of concern and even ridicule, but for Sudell there was practical work to do encouraging his neighbours to throw themselves into self-improving work on their gardens.

³¹ A. Ravetz. *The Place of Home, English domestic environments, 1914-2000* (London 1995), p. 185.

³² P. Batchelor. 'The Origin of the Garden City Concept of Urban Form', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 28 (1969) p. 185.

³³ S. P. Albert. 'Evangelizing The Garden City', *Shaw*, 19 (1999), p. 48.

³⁴ Andrews, 'Residential Suburb', p.18.

The estate on which he began his mission had a remarkable variety of Arts-and-Crafts-inspired house designs built in clusters with side gardens, three allotment sites and trees preserved from the old estates:

Cottages are arranged with varying degrees of formality around communal green spaces, the size and shape of which varies considerably. Clustering cottages around intimate green spaces was undoubtedly a deliberate attempt to create a sense of place and engender a feeling of community within the Estate as a whole.³⁵

From the start, the adherence to garden-city thinking was, initially at least, total: ‘Houses were termed as cottages. The pavements were very wide and planted with almond and laburnum trees, as were the front gardens, which were edged with privet.’³⁶ When Sudell moved in most of the gardens were simply plots of earth, perhaps with a bit of turf, left the required size by the builders. There was much to do. Documents unearthed for this research show he seized his chance, throwing himself into organising the Roehampton Garden Society just as he had with the VLCS when on furlough from prison.³⁷ The documents, minutes from the garden society meetings he chaired, show him immediately offering garden instruction to his new neighbours, organising competitions and flower shows, lecturing on allotment growing, writing letters to the LCC urging it to deliver on its promise to plant more trees and organising the purchase of communal gardening tools. Members of the society who paid their two-shilling-a-year fees would gain access, ‘at very low charge’, to a shared lawn mower and roller.³⁸

For Sudell, then, it was the perfect combination, his practical skills as organiser and horticulturalist combined with service on a new housing estate built to an ethos in which he believed - a decent living environment for the working classes. Here Sudell was getting his hands dirty for the cause, the degree to which he did so, according to the minutes, quite remarkable. Having stepped down as chairman after a year to concentrate on building his own garden practice he returned in August 1923 during a financial crisis caused by the treasurer’s suspect book-keeping: ‘Since there were no funds, the committee thankfully

³⁵ Dover House Estate Conservation Area Appraisal. Wandsworth Borough Council, (London, 2007)

³⁶ D. Bayliss, ‘Council Cottages and Community in Inter-War Britain: A Study of Class, Culture, Politics and Place’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1998), p. 91.

³⁷ Society minutes (26/01/22) (PA).

³⁸ Advert. *Roehampton Estate Gazette* (12/1922). p. 6.

accepted the offer of Mr Sudell to type out 600 notices concerning the [AGM] meeting.³⁹ Sudell, having built membership up to 600, stood down as chairman at this meeting.

It would be a mistake to assume Roehampton was simply a sunny upland escape for pre-war working-class slum dwellers. While there were undoubtedly hundreds of families who had never lived in such a spacious environment and certainly never had a garden, the new tenants were extensively interviewed in their existing homes to test for suitability for residence, with the LCC Director of Housing explaining the estate would appeal only to 'those of the working class whose standards and ideals are the highest'.⁴⁰ The estate earned the nickname 'Uniform Town' because it was home to so many relatively better-off workers such as policemen, postmen, middle-ranking civil servants and tram drivers. In many ways Roehampton was the quintessential new suburban estate that became the subject of intense attack from writers and architects, when opinions such as those of town planner Thomas Sharpe were not uncommon: 'Taste is utterly debased. The town, long since degraded, is now being annihilated by a flabby, shoddy, romantic nature worship.'⁴¹ In London, particularly, this was the time of 'Stockbroker Tudor', of ribbon development, of John Betjeman's Metroland, all speaking of dull conformity, suburbia spreading out from what, in many critics eyes, should have been dynamic newly built city centres and encroaching on what should have been rural idyll. They were in effect 'not a pleasant town and country blend but an indeterminate place; visually, socially, sexually'.⁴² They further argued that the new estates' privatisation of space had created humdrum lifestyle where the man of the house had become a 'modest, garden-concerned and common-sensical suburban male'.⁴³ It was not a compliment.

By 1935 the new planners and architects of the Le Corbusier-inspired Modern Movement were in full cry against the spread of suburbia. In a BBC broadcast debate entitled *Suburbs or Satellites*, Geoffrey Boumphrey, a member of the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS Group) declared, 'the mad building of suburbs must be stopped before it strangles the towns themselves'.⁴⁴ Against the negative opinions of most of the programme's witnesses, it was left to John Cadbury, a housing manager of the Bournville garden village

³⁹ Society minutes (19/10/23) (PA).

⁴⁰ M. Swenarton, *Homes Fit For Heroes* (London, 1981) p. 25.

⁴¹ Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 57.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Oliver, Davis, Bentley, *Dunroamin*, p. 42.

and a member of the extended chocolate family, to defend the suburb: 'I do not call it a waste of land to give a man his own home and garden, where he can feel that it is his own to do with as he wishes and where at least he can have more than enough fresh air around him.'⁴⁵

Sudell was not a major voice in this debate as it first emerged and this dissertation does not argue that he was prominent in the theoretical argument that surrounded the suburbs and the new gardening culture they heralded in. Yet his brief time on Roehampton reveals exactly why it can be argued that his contribution to garden history rewards study. It was in his actions, from buying lawnmowers on the estate to his subsequent writings and his advocacy within the ILA, that we find his importance. In his deeds and words Sudell gives us insight into early 20th century garden and landscape history and the wider social, economic and political context of the times. As he stepped into the chair of the Roehampton Garden Society and began his horticultural evangelising he was introduced as Secretary of the London Gardens Guild. Between leaving prison and moving on to Roehampton, Sudell had wasted no time in combining his politics with his horticultural expertise to join the charity set up by Revd Horace Rollo Meyer. Meyer, also a keen horticulturalist who went on to be awarded the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Victoria Medal of Honour, founded the Guild with his friend the MP Noel Buxton before World War One to encourage flower growing in deprived areas of the inner city.⁴⁶ Even as Sudell was trying to convince the new residents of Roehampton to take up gardening in their new, enlarged living spaces he was still concerned with those back where many of his new neighbours had come from, convinced of the self-improving, uplifting nature of a garden, no matter how small. In 1928, now as Honorary Secretary of the expanded National Gardens Guild, he wrote to *The Times* announcing a nationwide window box competition with a first prize of £100.⁴⁷

As in deeds so in words Sudell gives us insight into the landscape and wider cultural debate of the times. *The Roehampton Estate Gazette* was a 'parish pump' monthly newsletter produced by the Roehampton Estate Tenants' Association full of the activities of a typical community. From its second edition Sudell wrote a gardening column that in many ways set the tone for his garden journalism and authorship over the next three decades: 'The first consideration in planning the garden is its aspects. Wherever possible paths should be made

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁶ P. Kemp, Rollo Meyer entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
<[www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk](http://www.oxforddnb.com/catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk)> [Accessed 11 January 2019]

⁴⁷ *The Times*, (14/01/28) p. 7.

to run North and South.⁴⁸ The first words of advice he ever wrote remained typical of his work, unadorned in style, practical in the extreme but gently encouraging. His hundreds of articles and scores of books offer garden historians tremendous insight beyond simply planting plans, but into the heart of the debate over the shape of Britain after the First World War. Sudell began writing for the new mass circulation magazine *Ideal Home* in the Spring of 1928. Two years later on, reporting from the Ideal Home Exhibition for the magazine, he wrote: 'To enter the Garden Section of the Ideal Home Exhibition gives a sense of pleasant relief. This at once reveals the real purpose of a garden – to give rest and quiet after the turmoil of the day.'⁴⁹ While debate about the suburbs raged and the stirrings of a movement to modernise landscape architecture were being felt, Sudell never strayed far away from a grassroots understanding of what he was doing with his garden work nor what new gardens symbolised for most people. His garden refuge from the 'turmoil of the day' was for his former neighbours on Roehampton, his newly acquired readers and for himself.

⁴⁸ R. Sudell, *The Roehampton Estate Gazette*, (12/22) p. 11.

⁴⁹ R. Sudell, 'Gathered Ideas for the Garden', *Ideal Home*, (04/30), p. 27.

4) Evangelist for the Labour-Saving Garden

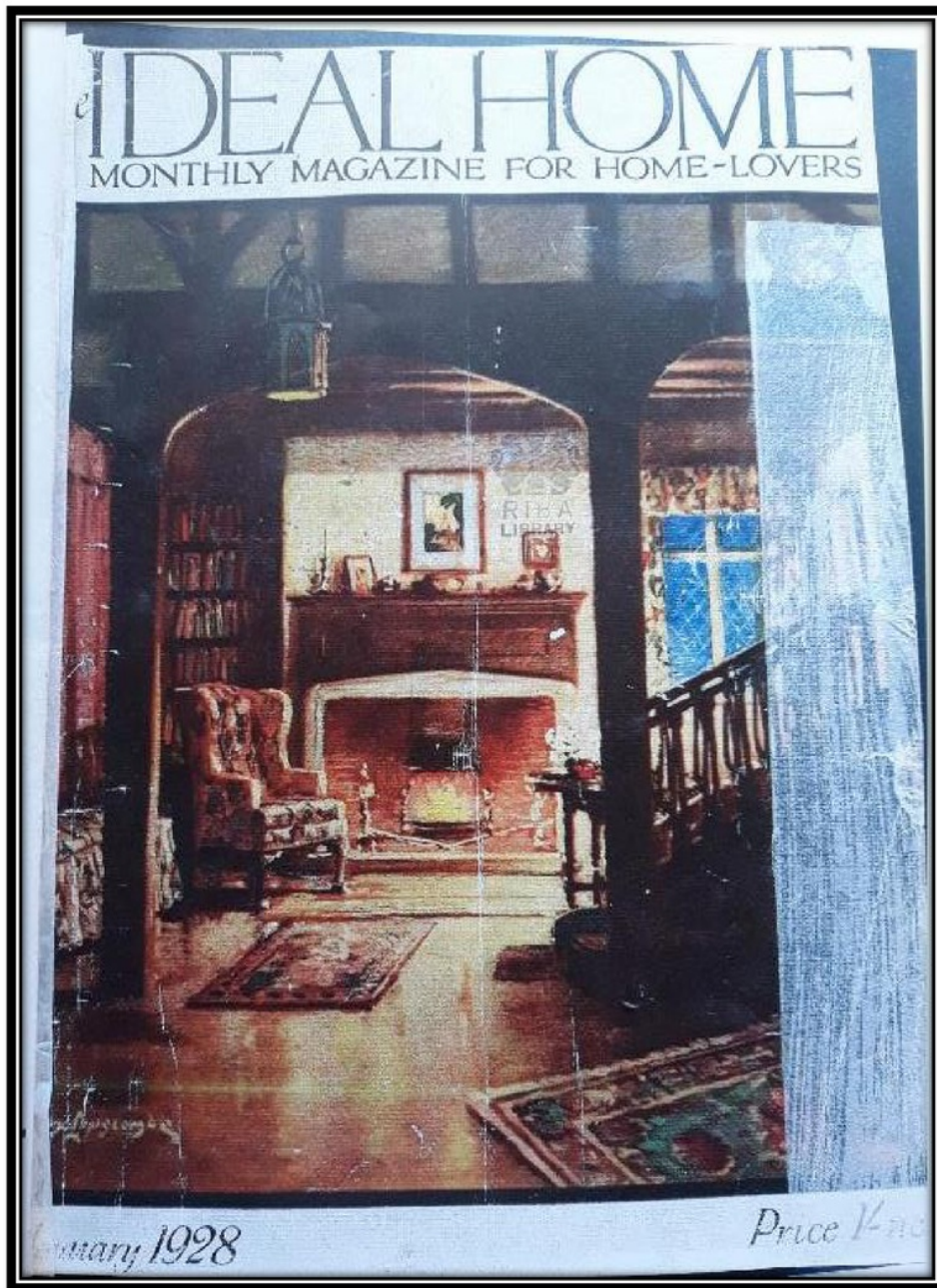


Fig 5 Front cover of Ideal Home Magazine which contains Sudell's first article (Riba Archive)

If there is one crying demand on most housing estates it is the need for trees and shrubs that will give the necessary degree of exclusion from the world.⁵⁰

Sudell left Roehampton in 1924 but he continued to write for the *Estate Gazette* for another two years, evidence, it could be argued, of an almost evangelical zeal to inspire his former neighbours to improve their environment. With the explosion of the suburbs came the demand for advice of what many new tenants and homeowners should do with their newly acquired land. Sudell had started to feed this appetite and with funding from the London Gardens Guild had published his first book in 1924, *Town Gardeners' Handbook*, which, the secretary of the Garden Society told *Gazette* readers, had been written by 'a resident on the estate and undoubtedly an authority on gardening questions. The word practical should be written on every page'.⁵¹ The *Gazette* later reported that the book had sold like 'hot cakes and additional supplies are needed'.⁵² Finally, just before he left, the newsletter reported how Sudell, who had stepped up to chair the Roehampton Estate Tenants Association, had received a 'standing ovation' at a meeting when talking about the progress made with gardens in the neighbourhood. This ringing endorsement is in many ways an illustrative, small piece of early 20th century garden history revealing how people like Sudell were taking practical steps to transform the environment, new housing estates bursting into colour, the beautification of post-war Britain growing inch by hard-dug inch. The gardens Sudell was promoting would soon come under attack, as would the estates on which they were located, but for now he was in a perfect position to join a publishing explosion: 'Suburbia is coming into its own. The balance of horticultural power shifts continuously from the country to the suburb... it is a fundamental revolution.'⁵³

With this revolution came a plethora of magazines and books all addressing the market for practical advice for the newly aspirational gardening class. Sudell was still focused on the *Roehampton Estate Gazette* until Spring, 1926. Fruit growing in small gardens, the Morello cherry was a Sudell favourite, appeared in the edition of February 1923; archways for town gardens in May of that year; dealing with greenfly with paraffin in July; hardy shrubs and

⁵⁰ R. Sudell 'Layout a Lovely Garden', *Ideal Home* (05/30) p 36.

⁵¹ Anon, 'Society Notes', *Roehampton Estate Gazette* (04/23) p. 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, (05/23) p. 7.

⁵³ E. Percy Scholfield in Seifalian, 'Gardens of Metroland', p. 225.

trees for small gardens in January 1924 and roses the next month and so on.⁵⁴ As his practice began to grow away from the estate and the success of the *Town Gardener's Handbook* was noticed, he secured a column with *Ideal Home* magazine, launched in 1919 by Odhams Press to ride the wave of new interest in suburban house and garden and perhaps the first lifestyle magazine in Britain.⁵⁵ *Ideal Home* was a curious mixture of practical advice and articles on houses, many of which were beyond the means of its readers. From his first column Sudell wrote about what had proved successful on Roehampton. In 'Making a New Garden' he writes of the importance of screening from adjacent gardens using Lombardy poplars with yew and holly hedge in between, the poplars to be removed within five years as the other shrubs grew.⁵⁶ Sudell's embrace of small gardens which gave relief from the 'turmoil of the day' or 'exclusion from the world' were typical leitmotifs of his philosophy, a style in the crosshairs of the modernists who detested the privatising spaces suburbia symbolised. It could be argued that Sudell's lived experience and understanding of what these new houses and gardens meant to the suburban dweller gave him insight that the theorists could not muster.

Ideal Home was often exercised with the problem of co-ordinating modernist houses with what one architect dismissed as 'old-world gardens' leading to claims that a Sudell column in 1929, 'New Ideas for Garden Design', addressed this issue.⁵⁷ Close reading of the column, and indeed much of his other writings for the magazine, does not back this up. The article's standfirst does indeed mention that 'modernist spirit has extended to the garden', and the piece itself begins by stating that in 'these days of greater culture and wider knowledge all things need revision'. And yet after the first few paragraphs Sudell is back to what he, and it can be argued his readers, know best. Ever the plantsman he quickly returns to species of shrub to consider, 'dense tufts of rock plants among stones' and mixed borders.⁵⁸

Three months later any hint of modernism is decisively forgotten when, in an article on creating elm chairs, Sudell offers the advice that readers could 'introduce, for example, a rabbit or a squirrel at a corner of crazy paving'.⁵⁹ This is far from saying that Sudell was behind the times. What he was acutely aware of, as he had learnt on Roehampton, was that

⁵⁴ *Roehampton Estate Gazette*. (02/23), p. 7; (05/23), p. 12; (07/23), p. 13; (01/24), p. 7; (02/24), p. 8.

⁵⁵ Seifalian, 'Gardens of Metroland' p 225.

⁵⁶ R. Sudell, 'Making a New Garden', *Ideal Home* (04/28) p. 22.

⁵⁷ Seifalian, 'The Gardens of Metroland', p. 227.

⁵⁸ R. Sudell, 'New Ideas in Garden Design', *Ideal Home* (04/29) p. 26.

⁵⁹ R. Sudell, 'Leisure in the Garden', *Ideal Home* (07/29) p. 53.

the improving nature of gardens and the environment they created could only be achieved by taking gardeners with him, nudging people along to experimenting with new blooms, shrubs and features. His troubles with what became a landscape architectural vanguard can be summed up in the forward to his own book, considered his seminal text, *Landscape Gardening*, published in 1933. In his foreword, President of the RHS's Conference on Landscape Design, Sir William Lawrence, opines: 'Crazy pavement is bad enough, but intolerable when stuck over little plants and looking like galantine.'⁶⁰ By page 114 Sudell is showing his readers how to lay just such a path leaving spaces for plants adding 'crazy paving can form a charming semi-formal pathway', as indeed he had in the *Gazette* to his small garden neighbours. Crazy paving almost stood as a symbol for a connection Sudell had with suburban gardeners that, it could be argued, some of his fellows at the ILA and RHS did not.

That is not to say Sudell's gardens were not in themselves modern, in that they spoke of a style suited to the new times and as such are rich in historical meaning. A strict formalism characterised Sudell's approach to gardens in his instruction, writing and books. Order and compartmentalisation is important, a definite move away from William Robinson's wild gardens, and the Arts-and-Crafts-inspired profusion of small country house planting that became associated with garden designer Gertrude Jekyll. In some ways crazy paving, so often used in Sudell's gardens, serves as a useful introduction to elements of the debate that surrounded suburban garden development. Derided by many, crazy paving added to the formality of the garden, necessitating straight lines and delineated spaces. But this formality is rooted, for Sudell and others, in a realisation that many of the people who were now gardeners did not have the time to create works of garden art; for them the stylisations of the country-house approach were a virtual impossibility given the need to work long hours to pay new rents, mortgages and feed families. What Sudell was concerned with was the labour-saving garden, still a thing of beauty with an abundance of planting advice but an achievable way the environment in which many people now lived could be improved: 'Many busy people owning small homes have no less garden love than their more leisured friends. But then circumstances demand that their gardens must be maintained side by side with other occupations and must not be too exacting.'⁶¹

⁶⁰ R. Sudell, *Landscape and Gardening* (London, 1933) p. 9.

⁶¹ R. Sudell, 'Small Gardens and Labour Saving', *Ideal Home* (02/39), p. 125.

In his *Ideal Home* articles, while other writers had readers longing for the unattainable small country house or state-of-the-art kitchen, Sudell showed that self-improvement and beauty were actually possible in the garden. In one article, describing how holidays in any hilly district reveal ‘undreamt loveliness’, with their combination of stone, grass, soil and flower, he urges readers that they too can recreate such a thing in their own gardens, the smallest of banks serving as a rock garden in ‘Nature’s own sweet way’. But conscious as always of his readers’ lives, he adds: ‘To plant a rock garden so that excessive labour is unnecessary, avoid rare Alpines, especially the diminutive ones, which are usually choked with weeds.’⁶²

Sudell started working for *Ideal Home* in 1928, was first bylined as gardening editor in 1935, and finished in 1958, although by then he had been reduced to a very small ‘gardener’s diary’ column. His articles are a mixture of the prosaic, ‘Webb’s standard carrot, a stump rooted kind, is a remarkable cropper’,⁶³ to the occasionally poetic, ‘the priority of the white Madonna lily never shows to better advantage in the garden than when it is associated with the towering cathedral spires of delphiniums’.⁶⁴ Evidence that Sudell understood only too well that a house and garden must work in harmony was clear. In May 1930 he tells readers that near the home ‘formality of design is essential. Every outlook should present a picture to the eye and the main lines of the garden should lead to objects of intrinsic beauty’.⁶⁵ Later he tells readers, ‘every home window and doorway should frame its own garden picture’.⁶⁶

What Sudell was doing in *Ideal Home* was not unique. A plethora of magazines, *Popular Gardening*, which was first published before the war, *Garden Work for Amateurs*, *Amateur Gardening* and *House and Garden* were some of many dispensing practical garden advice to a voracious new market. Yet as Sudell began to develop his garden business away from Roehampton he also expanded his audience. His work with Odhams Press made him the perfect fit to take the role of gardening editor on the left-wing mass-circulation *Daily Herald*, relaunched in 1930 with the *Ideal Home* publisher taking over a 51 per cent stake from the Trade Union Congress and ready to serve a new market that arose with the increasing popularity of the Labour Party as an emerging alternative to the Tories. Its readership was almost exclusively working class. When, in 1933, the *Herald*’s circulation rose to become the

⁶² R. Sudell, ‘Joy of the Rock Garden’, *Ideal Home* (08/29), p. 76.

⁶³ R. Sudell, ‘Your Seed Order’, *Ideal Home* (01/35), p. 96.

⁶⁴ R. Sudell, ‘The Flowers in Your Garden Now’, *Ideal Home* (07/36), p. 92.

⁶⁵ R. Sudell, ‘Lay Out a Lovely Garden’, p. 36.

⁶⁶ R. Sudell, ‘The New Garden’, *Ideal Home* (Aug 1936), p. 31.

biggest in the world, Sudell's influence had, in the space of a decade, expanded from 2,000 readers a month on the Roehampton estate to two million across Britain every week.

The *Herald* articles, which he wrote without break until the early 1950s, did effectively mirror those of *Ideal Home* and the *Estate Gazette*, concerning themselves with small urban gardens, what to plant and when and what would look the best without undue effort: 'Sooner or later in most gardens the problem arises of how best to reduce the amount of necessary labour.'⁶⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly crazy paving was one solution mentioned in the same article. By the mid-1930s, with a combined audience of *Daily Herald* and *Ideal Home* readers, it can be argued that Richard Sudell had an influence among the new gardening classes unrivalled by those whose legacy in the field of landscape architecture, such as Geoffrey Jellicoe, Brenda Colin and Sylvia Crowe, would last way beyond his. His productive partnership with Odhams Press, he with the expertise and the journalism, it with an ever-growing market to feed, led to the publication of a large number of Sudell-authored books (see Appendix 3).⁶⁸ This was an astonishing workload, his garden practice, his journalism, authorship, membership of horticultural bodies and founding role in the ILA and the battles therein, all combining in a flurry of activity, instruction, practice and advocacy in the service of landscape architecture and gardens.

Sudell never got to write *Towards a New Britain*, the outline of which he described in a letter to Geoffrey Jellicoe in March 1941.⁶⁹ Instead, he used his time within the Institute of Landscape Architects during World War Two to increase his agitation that the body should seize the moment to be ready to lead in the rebuilding of Britain once the conflict had ended. *Towards a New Britain* would undoubtedly have been his manifesto for this. The book's proposed subtitle, 'Planning the Countryside, Village, Town and City in the Modern Landscape', summed up the huge scope of Sudell's ambition. The first section, entitled 'Things As They Are', would describe good and bad examples of current practice in planning but even include commons, mountains, rivers and parks and how these were currently being managed. The second section, 'Things As They Might Be', would have started with a call for a national planning policy, examining the inter-relations with town and country with industry

⁶⁷ R. Sudell, 'No More Back-Breaking Gardens', *Daily Herald* (17/10/37) p. 15.

⁶⁸ In total the British Library has 47 titles and revisions authored or edited by Sudell, although not all published by Odhams. These include *The New Garden* (London, 1935), *Everybody's Gardening Guide* (London, 1935), *The New Illustrated Gardening Encyclopaedia* (London, 1937), *Herbaceous Borders and Waterside* (London, 1938), *Secrets of Successful Gardening* (London, 1939), *Practical Gardening and Food Production in Pictures* (London, 1948) and *Practical Home Gardening Illustrated* (London, 1949).

⁶⁹ Letter Sudell to Geoffrey Jellicoe 31/03/41. (MERL). SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19.

and agriculture and 'sources of wealth'. It would end with a proposal for a National Planning Board 'with the power to initiate and direct local and national effort', and an explanation about how all this was to be financed. Here Sudell was echoing calls in the early 1930s for a national planning policy led by town planners such as Patrick Abercrombie who demanded action to ensure new development was in harmony with its settings while conserving the existing rural landscape to prevent its disfigurement from encroaching new build (see Appendix 4).⁷⁰

We do not know why the book was never produced although it is certain Sudell's radicalism would not have found favour among all in the ILA and it is uncertain that publishers would have taken the risk of selling such a challenging, and potentially uncommercial, text, not least of all from a man who had hitherto made a success of telling gardeners when to plant their carrots and hyacinths.

In the absence of *Towards a New Britain*, the volume often considered Sudell's major work is *Landscape Gardening*. Although the formal gardens, summer houses, statuary and tennis courts he describes in the book were well beyond the means of those on the Roehampton estate, *Landscape Gardening* showcased an emerging Sudell theme of how gardeners and landscape architects could come together to improve the country. For the first time he includes publicly what he and many in the ILA were arguing, that the beautification of Britain should take in housing estates, factories, hotels, golf courses, roads and even petrol stations.⁷¹

In his preface Sudell talks about wanting to show his readers the principles that underlie good garden design and 'the modern tendencies at work' in garden design including 'a drift towards simplification and specialization. Rationalization perhaps!'. He succinctly identifies social changes which were leading to the breakup of old post-war landed estates and how what replaced them must be the work of the landscape architect: 'Not only have scientific inventions revolutionized the appearance of architecture, a fact which alone would necessitate the creation of a new style in garden design, but changes in the social order are having an even more far-reaching effect in the matter of gardens.'⁷² The book carries an introduction to the history of the English garden by Thomas Mawson, who swiftly replaced Sudell at the head of the ILA five years earlier, and chapters on international design, including one by

⁷⁰ Patrick Abercrombie, *Town and Country Planning* (London, 1933), p. 228.

⁷¹ R. Sudell, *Landscape Gardening* (London 1933), p. 11.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 11.

fellow ILA member Brenda Colvin on American gardens. Sudell authors sections giving planting advice and year-round 'what-to-do' lists for the amateur gardener. ILA member Peter Youngman, however, described it as an 'utterly useless book', perhaps reflecting again a dismissal of Sudell's appeal to the amateur gardener and what were imagined to be 'conservative' tastes.⁷³

One can also look for clues as to why some may have dismissed Sudell's approach within the pages of the ILA's own house journal *Landscape and Garden*, of which he became founding editor in 1934. In the first issue, while Geoffrey Jellicoe writes of the 18th century garden theatre at Herrenhausen, Hanover, in contrast Sudell contributes an article, 'Design in the Town Garden', that challenges garden architects to think of designs to fit a 'back yard', advising on small water features and even lead statuary: "'one little leaden lad" can as the years pass, acquire something of the companionship that most of us recognize in an old loved tree'. Straight after this article, an anonymous review of his *Landscape Gardening* book reveals what he is up against and opines, 'it is a pity that there are so few (pictures) obtainable showing the possibilities of newer materials such as glass and concrete which might replace the thatch and stone crazy paving to which we are all too accustomed'.⁷⁴

⁷³ Harvey, *Reflections on Land*, p. 108.

⁷⁴ Anon, 'Book Review', *Landscape and Garden*, Spring 1934, Vol 1 No 1. pp. 54-56.

5) The Birth of Landscape Architecture



Fig 6 Richard Sudell (third from left, front row) next to Geoffrey Jellicoe (fourth) at a meeting of the ILA and the Town Planning Institute, 1934 (Merl Archive)

Sudell was in the chair and it was decided to found the Institute. Gilbert Jenkins whispered in my ear 'we must get Sudell out of the chair and we must get Thomas Mawson in'.⁷⁵

That Sudell's place as a key driving force in the birth of a professionalised landscape architecture has been overlooked can perhaps be partially explained by the quote above. The whispering took place in February 1929 in Sudell's small offices at the top of the building in Gower Street. That people like Jellicoe, Jenkins, George Dillistone, Oliver Hill and Edward White were there was entirely due to the drive of Richard Sudell. While many of the names who climbed the stairs went on to make names for themselves in landscape architecture developing successful practices creating landmark work, Sudell, in that particular field, did not. Removed as the chairman immediately after that meeting it was not until 1955 that he was eventually made president of the organisation.

Possible reasons for this have their roots in the very beginnings of the Institute itself. Jellicoe recognised it was Sudell who had taken the 'initiative' to put together people who could begin to have a collective voice on the landscape of Britain.⁷⁶ After the war, Sudell became a member of the RHS, his work at Kew earlier introducing him to the organisation, where he began to meet people like White, Dillistone and Mawson. That Sudell was vocal in urging his fellow horticulturalists and architects to seize their chance can be evidenced from October 1928 when the RHS hosted the International Exhibition of Garden Design and Conference on Garden Planning. Exhibitors in the British group included Brenda Colvin, Percy Cane, Edwin Lutyens and Stanley Hart.⁷⁷ Hart and Sudell, who were friends and colleagues, thought the British section lacked unity of purpose compared to their foreign counterparts. It was Sudell, though, who took the initiative placing a notice in the *Gardener's Chronicle* magazine inviting people to attend the February meeting at his office of what he called the Society of Garden Architects.⁷⁸ At a further meeting at the Chelsea Flower Show in the summer it was

⁷⁵ Harvey. *Reflections on Land*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ Downs. Sudell entry.

⁷⁸ *Gardeners' Chronicle*, (09/02/29), p. 16.

agreed that the body be renamed British Association of Garden Architects but that Sudell would be chairman.⁷⁹

By this time more established names such as Prentice Mawson and Barry Parker had rallied to the call, now architects and planners joining horticulturalists, bringing more kudos and existing professionalism. After deciding on their overthrow in Sudell's offices back in February, Mawson was elected as first president at the first ever full council meeting in December 1929 and the name was changed to the Institute of Landscape Architects before the year was out.

At the next meeting we proposed that although Sudell had done splendidly in starting the thing off, an Institute must have a great name to get it launched and Sudell was extraordinarily gracious and resigned from the chair and Thomas Mawson, in name only, became President because of the prestige of his name. Our small group grew.⁸⁰

Removing 'garden' from the title was a clear statement of intent and undoubtedly wrested control from the plantsman and horticulturalist. There was a sense that the mission was too important to be left to mere gardeners both because of what it wanted to achieve and perhaps, as Jellicoe alludes to above, who it had to influence. Certainly, Thomas Mawson was a name and by 1928 an establishment figure with a landscape and town planning practice that spread to North America, particularly Canada, and Europe, particularly Greece, where he was awarded the Order of the Saviour by the King for his work on the replanning of the fire-destroyed city of Salonika. He was President of the Town Planning Institute in 1923 and a founder member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, alongside Lutyens, in the same year.⁸¹ Although described by one critic as an 'ego in search of a crown' with as many failures as successes, he clearly had the reputation that many in the newly-formed Institute thought they needed to compete for the ear of government alongside more established bodies.⁸²

While Mawson did become a figurehead for the new institute, Sudell, who was made a Vice President and a Fellow of the new body, did not retire from the fray. Indeed, he continued to lobby for the Institute to take a robust line in the promotion of good landscape architecture,

⁷⁹ Downs. Sudell entry.

⁸⁰ Harvey. *Reflections on Land*, p. 12.

⁸¹ D. Mawson, 'T.H. Mawson (1861-1933) Landscape Architect and Town Planner', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 5331 (1984)

⁸² J. Freeman, 'Thomas Mawson: Imperial Missionary of British Town-Planning', *Canadian Art Review*, 2, (1975).

design and planning. What Sudell, among others, had recognized, but for which he seems to have received little credit, was that by ‘professionalising’, the Institute would be well placed to gain work from a public sector charged with rebuilding. Indeed it quickly transpired that councils and other public bodies did come to the Institute for recommendations of member practices which could landscape design new sports facilities, parks, estates, cemeteries, road landscapes and even aerodromes. Typical of his industry in the Roehampton years, Institute archives sketch out his uncompromising drive to ensure Britain’s landscape is transformed in a utilitarian manner. In correspondence mainly with new President Geoffrey Jellicoe in the 1940s, Sudell repeatedly states his belief that the Institute remain forthright in asserting that landscape architecture should be at the centre of reconstruction wresting power away from vested interests: ‘The present ruling class will never radically change Britain and we shall have to find new and more virile leaders if we are really going to get things done.’⁸³

He is furious when Jellicoe declines to set up a sub-committee to promote the proper design of aerodromes during and after the Second World War, describing the decision as ‘undemocratic’: ‘But we are an Institute of LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS. The design and treatment of open air spaces is our job and a vital process is in operation which is rapidly changing the landscape of these Islands.’⁸⁴ He objects to Jellicoe’s plan to make Lord Reith the President of the Institute on the grounds that he is not a landscape architect and possibly because of his role as a ‘bogyman’ of the Left at the time, having in an earlier letter offered, ‘Personally I do not like Sir John Reith...’⁸⁵ Many times Sudell’s desire for social change through reconstruction is palpable: ‘With cities going down like ninepins - if we can manage to live through it - it is our job to see that the new Britain arises on better lines than the old.’⁸⁶

Sudell’s file at the Landscape Institute archive is relatively thin compared to the collections held on people such as Jellicoe and Colvin, yet nevertheless gives a glimpse of a restless energy to seize the moment, cajoling and advocating members to press their case particularly for a key role in the rebuilding of Britain post-World War Two. He had divorced Emily and married Ida Schlittler in 1931. Ida came from a family of wealthy doctors and industrial chemists and together with a growing practice Sudell was becoming materially more comfortable, the couple moving to bucolic Sandy Lane in Cobham, Surrey. Yet this did not quench Sudell’s thirst for change. He urges the organisation to draw up a list of experts to

⁸³ Letter to Jellicoe, (MERL) 31/3/41. SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 30/04/42.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 31/03/41.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 21/03/41.

talk at a conference he wants to hold 'so that the ILA can be fully equipped with the necessary knowledge to play its part in post-war reconstruction'.⁸⁷ These experts would talk for five minutes each on a specialist subject. He suggests Brenda Colvin talk on private gardens, Edward White, municipal gardens, George Dillistone, forestry, Lady Allen, flat gardens, Edward Prentice Mawson, the son of Thomas, coastal towns and himself on aerodromes. Again, later in the war, he presses his case for a 'Design in Landscape' tour of 12 provincial cities, with the same speakers as proposed for the conference, to explain to the public what could be done after the war with 'gardens, parks, sports grounds and open spaces generally', the places to be visited by this travelling band of landscape evangelicals to include Edinburgh, Manchester, Hull, Belfast, Maidstone and London.⁸⁸ While the conference did take place in 1942, there is no record that the tour occurred. As with the aerodrome sub-committee proposal Sudell often had plenty of forward-thinking views but not always the power base to get them enacted.

Despite the occasional setback, Sudell continued to press his case, sending the ILA his definition of landscape architecture; 'the Art and Science of design applied to open air spaces for human use and enjoyment. Any area open to the sky is a potential field for the work of the Landscape Architect', and expressing concern when others try to move into, what he considered, a specialist field.⁸⁹ Shortly after the end of the war he is dismayed that the Roads Beautifying Association, established in 1928 by the then Minister of Transport, Lord Mount Temple, had offered the government advice on how a new network of roads across the country should look: 'The RBA are not in a position to implement their offer of free advice since they employ no Landscape Architect.'⁹⁰ On that subject he had, two years earlier, suggested to Jellicoe that the ILA begin to put together 'contrasting photographs' of well-planned roads with poor examples to press their case. For the latter he proposed they use the, 'Great West Road at Hounslow. It is a shocker'.⁹¹ It is not suggested that Sudell was the only person making these points. Issues of reconstruction and national planning were key battles for the ILA during and after World War Two with Jellicoe particularly forthright: 'We are now at the beginning of the struggle between the old and the new. It is the work of the landscape architect to adjust the differences and lead the way in creative design.'⁹² Yet Sudell

⁸⁷ Letter to secretariat, (MERL) (13/05/41) SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19.

⁸⁸ Ibid. (15/07/44).

⁸⁹ Memo to ILA, (MERL) (06/01/43) SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19.

⁹⁰ Letter to Jellicoe, (18/05/46).

⁹¹ Ibid. (22/06/44).

⁹² G. Jellicoe, *Landscape and Garden* (Autumn 1938) p. 6.

was often in the background, advocating and proposing, taking the lessons learnt from his experience of an earlier wartime and its aftermath and applying them to this.

Sudell's skill as a garden journalist saw him appointed editor of the ILA journal *Landscape and Garden* from its first edition in 1934. He ceased in 1941 when Jellicoe briefly edited a truncated version, *The War-time Journal*, and returned in 1946 when it was renamed the *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*. The first edition set the template for the journal under Sudell. Maud Haworth Booth writes on 16th century Gravetye Manor, Brenda Colvin on the relation of plant form to architecture, Madeline Agar on the rose in garden decoration, E.P. Mawson on the function of the landscape architect and, of course, Sudell on town gardens. The breadth of the content showcased perfectly the range of work Sudell and his fellows at the ILA considered within the remit of landscape architects. In the first editorial the journal does not forget the amateur gardener, with a message perhaps not unfamiliar to the members of the Roehampton Garden Society. Calling for proper planning of towns and cities the gardener is reminded that they must play their part too and ask themselves, 'does my share of the picture add to its charm?': 'Privacy, as the modern Landscape Architect can easily prove, is not incompatible with a beauty that is shared by others.'⁹³

The ILA conference of 1942, which Sudell had proposed, was reported in the wartime journal. Sudell used his five minutes to touch on aerodromes but also on a subject close to his heart, namely the need for landscape architecture courses at university and, as a horticulturalist, the necessity that every student should understand plants, trees and shrubs. He urged those thinking of establishing training centres of the 'need for thoroughness in training students in the practical use of plant material'. Yet he went on to stress that education should not be 'overweighted' with detail that 'the precious gift in design and creation is prevented from its natural expression'.⁹⁴ In his Presidential address in October 1955, which was covered in the journal, Sudell returned to these themes. The profession in Britain itself, however, had begun to be absorbed within local authorities and their parks departments. Even here the battle was still to be won to ensure public gardens, children's playgrounds and even allotments were brought back to the centre of the country's cities, the wealth released from, what he pointedly called, 'wasteful war production' flowing into reconstruction. Sudell again

⁹³ 'Editorial', *Landscape and Garden*. 1, (Spring, 1934).

⁹⁴ R.Sudell, 'Review of Policy', *The War-time Journal*. (Spring, 1943) p. 7.

called for landscape architects to involve themselves in 'missionary' work down in the roots of the country just as he himself had done three decades before.⁹⁵

Some, even within the ILA, were blind to Sudell's contribution both to the professionalization of landscape architecture and his work helping turn interwar Britain into a nation of gardeners. It is true that Sudell did not have the high-profile reputation built on the back of landmark work that many of his colleagues had, yet in 1984, almost 20 years after his death, Sudell's pioneering work was still being dismissed. At a lecture and discussion on the life and works of Thomas Mawson, the man who replaced him in 1928, Sudell was described as 'not really of a very high order' by chairman Peter Youngman, a past president himself of the ILA and the man who had already described *Landscape Gardening* as 'utterly useless'.⁹⁶ But it can be argued again that, in words and deeds, Sudell rises above such considerations and deserves a reinstatement in the story of early 20th century garden and landscape history. In his Presidential speech Sudell looked forward to the next 25 years of landscape architecture, combining his grassroots knowledge of the human relationship with land and a utopian vision of how far that relationship might take society:

So far we have only touched the fringe of landscape beauty in relation to human environment. We shall in the future create towns and cities of undreamt beauty and purpose. I forsee a noble architecture arising amidst a landscape fashioned to meet the desires and aspirations of man.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ R.Sudell, 'The Next 25 Years', *The Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*. (Spring, 1956) p. 3.

⁹⁶ Mawson, 'T.H.Mawson', p. 199.

⁹⁷ Sudell, '25 Years', *The Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects* (Spring, 1956) p. 4.

6) Evidencing the Work



Fig 7 Artist's impression of Dolphin Square in Sudell's brochure (City of Westminster Archive Centre)

Historic interest: one of a limited number of schemes known to survive by Richard Sudell, an important and influential figure in the development of mid-C20 landscape design, and a pioneering theorist, writer, and advocate of the profession.⁹⁸

The decision last year by Historic England to register Sudell's courtyard garden at Dolphin Square as a Grade 2 landmark of historic interest represents a significant enhancement of his legacy. The quote above from the listing entry is certainly the first time an official evaluation of his contribution to interwar garden and landscape history recognises its worth. Dolphin Square was by some distance his biggest project and is the only surviving example of his work wholly intact. There is no complete record of his portfolio and we are left to piece together evidence from the clues he and others left behind. In truth, much of Sudell's landscape work could be considered mundane, evidence perhaps of a reputation that did not match some of his peers but also reflecting the need to win contracts to keep the business afloat. According to David Lee, who was a young partner in Sudell's company at the time of his death and who took over the landscape contracts, contacts within the London County Council, perhaps stretching back to his Roehampton years, ensured a steady supply of municipal work. According to Lee the company also had a contract with the South Eastern Gas Board to landscape its works in Essex, which involved screening gas holders and landscaping plant works: 'Sudell was an unassuming, modest man who never pushed himself. He never forgot he was a gardener. As for work he went after anything and everything he could get.'⁹⁹ Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe have stated that Sudell had an 'extensive overseas practice' and in his ILA membership files he did list a private garden in Bhutan as a principal work, but Lee insists the amount of work undertaken abroad is overstated.¹⁰⁰

In those ILA files Sudell lists Dolphin Square and the Bhutan garden, alongside a memorial park in Bath and an allotment park in Sunderland, as his principal projects, although there is no detailed record of his involvement in the latter two nor evidence now of their existence. We know from his correspondence that he designed a number of playing fields and sports facilities, and, from speeches he gave, we are also aware of his work landscaping elements of

⁹⁸ From Historic England listing for Dolphin Square: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1455668>> [accessed 11 November, 2018].

⁹⁹ Author interview with David Lee, (12/01/19).

¹⁰⁰ G. and S. Jellicoe, *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, (Oxford, 1986), p. 323.

crematoria at Oxford, Peterborough, Silvertown, London and the City of London.¹⁰¹ It is surprising that Sudell did not record his partnership with Marjory Allen, later Lady Allen of Hurtwood, on the Selfridges Roof Garden in Oxford Street, London in 1930. The pair had met at RHS events as their individual practices grew and they were part of the ‘gardener’ faction of original founder members of the ILA. Through Marjory Sudell met her husband Clifford, a figure of historical importance in the formation of the Labour Party who was to become a director at the *Daily Herald* during Sudell’s time there. The pair shared much in common in politics and through their wartime experience of conscientious objection and imprisonment. It was Marjory Allen who had the idea of creating a roof garden at Selfridges even though she had never worked on one. In 1930, having won permission to create the garden, she asked Sudell to partner her on the project. The two horticulturalists set to work on the asphalt roof, allowed only eighteen inches of topsoil, creating an English garden, scent garden, rose garden, water garden, lawns and herbaceous borders, which required 60,000 plants a year. In total the pair shifted a thousand tons of material onto the roof using the store’s lifts before opening time. The garden was such an instant success, crowds flocking to take tea or watch the summer fashion shows, that they were awarded a three-year contract to maintain it. However, towards the end of that time store management wanted to use a proportion of the space to display garden equipment including gnomes, toadstools and, what Allen described as, ‘other colourful God-wottery’: ‘When we told them they would have to decide between the gnomes and us, they chose the gnomes.’¹⁰²

In the 1950s and 60s Sudell significantly grew his practice bringing in specialist architects to work on projects which required new build and landscape to work together, principally sports grounds which were often funded by war memorial subscription. Newly named Richard Sudell and Partners, the company designed and built the Stirling Corner Memorial Sports Ground in Barnet, London, in 1954 and in 1966, with architect Michael Dixey joining the company, designed the Merton College sports pavilion in Oxford. In what might be thought ironic, given the earlier backdrop of debate that coincided with Sudell’s pioneering suburban garden work in the 1920s and 30s, Dixey was a disciple of Le Corbusier. The pavilion’s modernist clear-lined look was widely praised with the *Architects’ Journal* in 1969

¹⁰¹ R. Sudell, *Planning the Garden of Remembrance* (Speech to Cremation Society of Great Britain, 1953).

¹⁰² Lady Allen of Hurtwood. *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady*, (London, 1975), pp. 98-102.

comparing its 'prestigious nature' favourably with other sports facilities in the country.¹⁰³
The building is Grade 2 listed by Historic England.

This dissertation will now examine three works of Sudell that survive to understand the garden and landscape philosophy that underpins them and the place they occupy in the garden history story of the times.

De Havilland Company Headquarters, Hatfield (1933)

It is perhaps typical of Sudell's forgotten status in the history of 20th century landscape architecture that evidence of his work on the gardens fronting the new De Havilland headquarters in 1933 has to be stumbled upon. Certainly, Sudell himself never referred to the commission and in the voluminous literature around Hatfield Aerodrome's pivotal role in post-World War One aviation history there is no mention of the planning or landscaping of the development. The only clue that he did indeed design the grounds is the appearance of a caption in an article in the Sudell-edited ILA journal *Landscape and Garden*, winter edition 1936. The article, on factory gardens, does not mention De Havilland but a picture of the striking Art Deco frontage of the building with fountain pond is captioned, 'Gardens Designed By Richard Sudell F.I.L.A'.

Hatfield has a key place in the history of British aviation. When Captain Geoffrey de Havilland moved to its aerodrome in 1930 to establish a new headquarters and factory his eponymous company was already a multi-national business. He had designed his first plane in 1909 and in 1912 established a British altitude record of 10,500 ft flying one of his own designs. By World War One many of his aircraft were used in combat by UK and US forces. He set up the De Havilland Aircraft Company in 1920. His Moth aircraft proved particularly successful, so much so that he outgrew his Stag Lane Aerodrome base in Edgware and moved to Hatfield in 1930.¹⁰⁴ His two-storey headquarters building was designed and built by James M. Monro & Son of Glasgow and originally included a clubhouse, swimming pool and sports complex at the rear, none of which remains. The remaining building is Grade II listed by Historic England. Sudell's task was clearly to complement the striking building, but rather

¹⁰³ Historic England listing for Merton College Pavillion: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1419922>> [accessed 5 January, 2019].

¹⁰⁴ De Havilland Heritage Trail Leaflet. University of Hertfordshire.

than create sightlines that could be viewed from the offices as he had advised his suburban readers with their homes, this small, narrow garden was to serve the boldness of the structure, to enhance its design clarity as the gaze went towards it. Sudell was to help Monro give De Havilland a 'statement of intent' headquarters reflecting its pre-eminence in a rapidly growing industry.

We have already seen that *Landscape Gardening*, published in the year Sudell began designing De Havilland, had referenced 'the modern tendency... towards simplification ... rationalisation' and here he was putting it into practice, with a garden perfectly sympathetic to the architectural disciplines of Art Deco or, more accurately, its 'Streamline Moderne' derivation. Both within the ILA, as we have seen, and within the pages of *Landscape Gardening* Sudell was insistent that the aerodrome or airport be properly planned and landscaped: 'In the future visitors will receive their first impressions as much from its airports as its harbours. The present arrangements... will be inadequate.'¹⁰⁵ Indeed in his ILA conference speech during the Second World War, Sudell had predicted an explosion of airports catering for long distance travel post-conflict, the increase in passengers demanding that standards of planning and design would have to be raised: 'The public will be able to see all your mistakes! They will see the landscape from a new angle, the air.'¹⁰⁶ While there is no written record of Sudell's work on De Havilland, it is from the air that we have testimony to the development of the both building and garden. Determined to record the establishment of the new headquarters for posterity, a series of aerial photographs, now commonplace but rare in 1933, were commissioned by the company showing it take shape (Fig. 8,9). What can clearly be seen is that Sudell's design was minimalist and formal in the extreme, subsuming itself to the demands of Streamline Moderne with its long, simple straight lines, rounded corners and reinforced concrete structures that were invariably kept to a disciplined white. A manicured lawn runs parallel to the frontage of the building with sporadic tree planting, mainly willow, and a row of small rectangle, evenly spaced, planting beds interrupting the turf nearest the offices. At centre stage is a fountain and lily pond, bordered by paving stone and turf, and crowned by a stone font and fish-shaped water spout, that perfectly complements the central, defining fascia and entrance to the building, the eye being drawn through the water to the main doors. Indeed, how successfully it harmonizes can be seen by a

¹⁰⁵ Sudell, *Landscape Gardening*, p. 417.

¹⁰⁶ Sudell, 'Policy Review', *The War-time Journal*. (Spring, 1943) p. 7.

ground level, night-time picture of the building in which the neon-lit frontage reflects beautifully in the tranquillity of the lily pond (Fig. 10).

Perhaps most strikingly Sudell borders the lawns, the immediate outside of the building and pond with clipped and triangular-shaped yew, a nod to the French Baroque style of gardens such as Vaux Le Vicomte, which in 1953 he would describe, somewhat frugally given its majesty, as ‘one of the loveliest little things in the whole of Europe’ (Fig. 11).¹⁰⁷ While the De Havilland garden might be thought atypical of Sudell’s ‘suburban-style’, and certainly it has differences with his later and only other surviving works at Dolphin Square and City of London Cemetery, it would be a mistake to imagine him incapable or unwilling to adopt a little classicism or modernism into his gardens. As we have seen, De Havilland contained elements of both and, 20 years later, at the cemetery he had planned the sort of sunken garden he had so admired at Hampton Court: ‘To peep through the gates on a summer day and see the tiny jet fountain in the centre gives some idea of the dignity and distinction that the Sunk Garden can add to the garden scheme.’¹⁰⁸ While this dissertation argues he never strayed far from his own formal, minimalist, plantsman, suburban style which served his philosophy and politics well, it does not follow that he was incapable or unwilling to adopt or appreciate the shifting garden trends of past and present.

We have seen that, within the ILA, Sudell had been the key advocate that landscape architecture had a role in the development of aerodromes. We have also seen his displeasure that, in 1942, the ILA ducked the issue of setting up an aerodromes committee to look at post-World-War-Two development. ILA files appear to show this committee was to include the members of the London County Council but the idea had been vetoed by the LCC’s chief architect John Forshaw, who at the time was busy preparing the County of London Plan which was to address the replanning of the capital post-war and was published in 1943. Sudell clearly felt the aerodromes that surrounded the capital should be included in the remit, sending a copy of a memo to Forshaw that spoke of the employment possibilities they would bring, the importance of research in the United States and elsewhere and the ‘need to make Aerodromes attractive and efficient’.¹⁰⁹ Not for the first time Sudell’s ambition was thwarted. There is no record that he worked on any other such project. Today the aerodrome is no more and the headquarters is a police station. The garden is in a poor state, the land to the right of

¹⁰⁷ Sudell, ‘Planning the Garden of Remembrance’ (Cremation Society of Great Britain, 1953).

¹⁰⁸ Sudell, *Landscape Gardening*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ Memo To Forshaw. (MERL) 27/02/42. SRLI AD2/2/3/4/19

the building, looking towards it, lost to a car park, the yew, long gone, the lawns uncut, the pond now without water, its font crumbling and its fountain defunct (Fig. 12).



Fig 8 Aerial view of development (BAe Archive)



Fig 9 BAe aerial, undated (BAe Archive)



Fig 10 *Tranquillity* (BAe Archive)



Fig 11 *Triangular-shaped Yews bordering the pond* (BAe Archive)



Fig 12 *Defunct fountain* (Author, April 2019)

Dolphin Square, Pimlico, London (1937)

The courtyard garden at Dolphin Square is both the largest project on which Sudell worked and also a perfect summation of the philosophy that he articulated to his neighbours on Roehampton, his colleagues at the ILA and the millions of readers of his books, magazine and newspaper articles. The Square itself, 1,250 flats surrounding his 3.5 acre garden and completed in 1937, is located on the busy Grosvenor Road near the Thames (Fig. 13, 14). Despite the location close to the Houses of Parliament, Sudell designed a garden that gives residents of this densely populated development, the largest block of flats in Europe at the time, the refuge from the ‘turmoil of the day’ and ‘exclusion from the world’ he had so often articulated as the chief purpose of a garden. Buffered by the high-rise, Art-Deco-style blocks of flats, the noise of the city is almost non-existent, but Sudell’s design also skilfully allows its hundreds of residents to find solitude (Fig. 15). It is a garden that is at once striking yet also modest as if a collection of suburban gardens. Writing in the residents’ magazine *The Dolphin* in July 1937 Sudell told them exactly what his aim was: ‘In every respect the gardens are designed to make you forget they are in the centre of a great city.’¹¹⁰

Originally the project of a New York businessman, Fred French, who wanted to import the concept of serviced apartments from the United States, Dolphin Square was taken over by British builder Richard Costain when the American failed to find financial backing. It is not known how Sudell came to win the contract, although it is thought Costain approached him directly.¹¹¹ What Sudell created were communal gardens that highlighted his expertise as a plantsman together with his understanding of geometric delineations which would create different experiences and vistas depending on where the residents were situated, either in the garden or looking out from their windows. He realised that much of the gardens, surrounded by at least 10 storeys of building, would be in deep shade for large parts of the day and yet, as he explained to residents, he created something for them to see all year round: ‘The planting scheme is planned to display colourful flowers in season and to give a changing panorama of colour.’¹¹² In essence, the gardens are aligned north-south with three large gardens of different character and function dominating the central section. The most southerly is the main lawn divided by an avenue of horse chestnut trees, leading to a fountain and rose garden

¹¹⁰ R. Sudell, ‘The Garden at Dolphin Square’, *The Dolphin* (07/37), p. 5.

¹¹¹ Dolphin Square Preservation Society submission to Historic England (Dec. 2017).

¹¹² Sudell, ‘The Garden’, p. 5.

and finally up through a loggia to a higher-level Spanish garden, planted because it received the most sunlight (Fig. 16). Cleverly, Sudell then created around the outside of the central gardens five pairs of smaller more ornamental planted gardens that sit in recesses created by the spurs of the building. These showcase styles as diverse as Italian, Japanese, Dutch and Old English sunken garden, which together with the three central gardens create an astonishing complexity of sightlines and intimate spaces. Box plants clipped as birds and animals in the Dutch garden, clipped cypress bay in the Italian, bridges and stone lanterns in the Japanese and crocus and snowdrop in the English section add to this feel of variety and difference.

Sudell clearly uses his skill as a suburban garden pioneer to introduce pathways, many of them made of crazy paving, recesses, raised walls for impromptu seating, and pergolas to help create a sense of intimacy. A number of large, decorative concrete pots echo the work he completed at Selfridges with Marjory Allen. In fact, Dolphin itself is largely a roof garden, the central fountain lawn built over an underground car park for 300 cars and the higher Spanish garden sitting over a sports club and restaurant. That it was considered a success can perhaps be evidenced from the decision to replace elements of the garden like for like when 17 bombs fell around the site, including one direct hit on the fountain garden and another on the chestnut lawn, during World War Two (Fig. 17).¹¹³ The whole effect of the garden can be described as idiosyncratic with its riot of different features quelled by the serenity of the planting and the quiet spaces created. It is a style, it can be argued, entirely in keeping with the philosophy he outlined in his writings and entirely consistent with the characteristics of a 20th century garden style he helped to pioneer even if it is only now that his role is beginning to be properly recognised.

That recognition is being won chiefly through the efforts of campaigners to save Dolphin Square from a plan by its American owners, Westover Partners, to demolish the six-storey northern block and replace it with a 10-storey building and add one floor to the remaining buildings. Most of the redevelopment proposal is for hotel and short-term letting use. In June this year, against the recommendation of its officers, Westminster City Council's Planning Committee rejected the redevelopment, although an appeal by Westover is thought likely. If the plans had been approved, the northern half of Sudell's gardens, down to the fountain garden, would have been replaced with a modern design to accommodate the new building,

¹¹³ Dolphin Square Preservation Society submission.

and the rest of the garden altered. Sudell's name has been summoned up as part of the battle to save the complex after the Dolphin Square Preservation Society, backed by the Twentieth Century Society, succeeded in securing Historic England Grade 2 status for the gardens. This new official appraisal of the gardens was one of the key reasons the planning committee refused permission, alongside the square's location in a conservation area and the proposals for, what the committee considered, too many short-term let apartments in a residential area.

Historic England confirms that Dolphin Square's courtyard garden is of note and importance to the landscape history of the time. More than 80 years earlier, Sudell himself was very clear about what he had created. In uncharacteristically ebullient tones he tells readers of *The Dolphin* in October 1937: 'There will be nothing in London to equal the Square when it is completed. London's eighteenth-century squares are beautiful indeed, but Dolphin Square will surpass them all in brightness, variety and originality.'¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ R. Sudell. 'Riverside Rendezvous', *The Dolphin*, (10/37), p 9.



Fig 13 *The new Dolphin Square courtyard garden emerges* (City of Westminster Archive Centre)



Fig 14 *Dolphin Square today* (Author, July 2018)



Fig 15 *Finding solitude* (Author, July 2018)

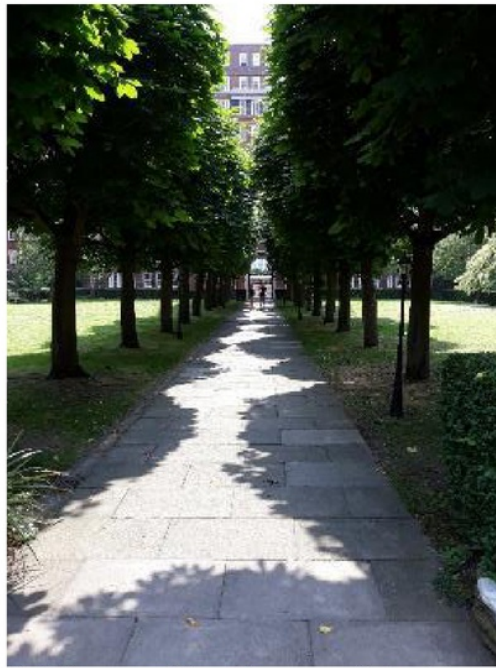


Fig 16 *The avenue of Horse-Chestnut trees* (Author, July 2018)



Fig 17 *Bomb damage at Dolphin Square during WWII* (City of Westminster Archive Centre)

Memorial Garden, City of London Cemetery, Manor Park, London (1953)

A corner of the 200-acre City of London Cemetery, one of the largest such municipal sites in Europe, unmistakably belongs to Richard Sudell. Opened in 1853 the cemetery was designed by William Haywood, the chief engineer of the City of London Commission of Sewers, amid concern about the health risks of continued burial within individual parish churchyards. Haywood created his cemetery landscape on a grand scale, designed to awe visitors with its park-like spaces, wide avenues and woodland trees.¹¹⁵ The Victorian individualistic tradition of lavish memorials and grandiose, ornate tombstones set within wide open spaces quickly gave character to the new site. Today those graves remain but the cemetery's reflection of changing social attitudes to death and the landscape design that gave them expression, is evidenced in Sudell's memorial garden. For the garden is a striking example of mid-20th century landscape history, a series of vignettes that articulate the combination of a philosophy witnessed in his writings and his evangelical zeal for suburban gardens while also referencing his previous design work, particularly Dolphin Square.

Sudell's plan for the Memorial Gardens reflects much of post-war and post Festival of Britain design theory – egalitarian and determinedly modern. His design was characterized by its use of modern materials, extensive paving, bright colours in hard and soft landscaping, geometrical forms, economical choice of plants... the design had close and reassuring affiliations with the domestic gardens of the mourners (Fig. 18).¹¹⁶

Sudell was commissioned to design and build the 10-acre Memorial Garden in 1953 to cater for the rising demand for cremations that followed World War Two. Cremation had only been formally recognized and legally controlled by the passing of the Cremation Act 1902 and even in 1953 there was residual resistance to the practice, arising from Christianity's Judaic-rooted belief in the resurrection of the body. The establishment of the Cremation Society in 1874 to push for this form of interment together with the pressure on burial space at cemeteries led to a gradual change of policy. The City of London built its first crematorium in 1902 but take up was slow with only 69 cremations in the first four years out of a total of

¹¹⁵ City of London Cemetery History Leaflet

¹¹⁶ City of London Cemetery Conservation Management Plan (2004), p. 203.

more than 4,000 body disposals a year.¹¹⁷ Increasingly it was landscape that was seen as the answer to boost numbers of cremations, creating spaces of tranquility and reflection for relatives. However it was not until the early twenties at the City of London Cemetery that a very small garden of remembrance was constructed near the crematorium and in 1930 a slightly larger memorial garden was created.¹¹⁸ The appointment of Sudell in 1953 was the first serious attempt to create a coherent landscape plan to promote the service which was by then handling 2,500 cremations a year.

We have already seen that Sudell and others at the ILA saw cemeteries as one of the essential public spaces to be influenced by landscape architecture. For Sudell the importance of the development of these gardens was two-fold. In a speech to a conference of the Cremation Society of Great Britain in the same year he began his work at the City of London Cemetery he told his audience that without a full-scale switch to cremations burial sites would devour rural land in the same way new towns were threatening. Then he returned to a familiar concern, namely that land for food production be protected: 'We see that with cemeteries we are outstripping food, our vital heritage'.¹¹⁹ As importantly, these spaces, either in churchyards or cemeteries, should be used to bring back beautiful open spaces in blighted urban areas, for the use of all. Referencing his start at Manor Park he told the audience: 'My belief is these gardens should become almost public parks where people can go, and believe me, in that part of London they do need open spaces.'¹²⁰ Indeed six years later, at a symposium organized by the society, Sudell went further, calling for the beauty of the garden to take precedent over interment of ashes which would be replaced by ceremonial scatterings and a Book of Remembrance: 'We haven't the space to do this dedicated plant material.'¹²¹

Original Sudell design drawings for the memorial garden (Fig. 19) housed in back offices at the cemetery's management building reveal familiar tropes. He designs compartmentalized sections of differing feel divided by straight lines. Everywhere there are geometric patterns created by paved surfacing, using York stone, gravel, brick or coloured chippings rolled in asphalt and interspersed with planting. Most striking of these, perhaps to the point of incongruity, is probably a checkerboard that appears to the northern end of a straight gravel walk (Fig. 20). As at Dolphin Square, his plantsman skills come to the fore with a

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹¹⁹ Sudell, 'Planning the Garden of Remembrance'.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ R. Sudell, 'Symposium on Planning a Crematorium' (Cremation Society of Great Britain, 1960).

horticultural plan to give all-year-round colour, including an informal *Erica* garden and enclosures of grass with scattered bulbs or shrubs such as roses and azaleas. Of course, formal beds of roses are to the fore but he was careful to gently lead mourners to other options, planting dedicated beds of carnations, delphiniums, irises, azaleas and lilies, having warned society members in his 1953 speech that if they were not careful they would find their gardens full only of red roses, the firm favourite of the bereaved. Elsewhere he plans the removal of some trees but fits his design around others worth keeping, such as a horse chestnut he proposes to surround with bench seating (Fig. 21). A sunken garden, beautifully cross sectioned in the drawings (Fig. 22), and a lily pond are also proposed. Changes of mood, tone and pace in the garden are rapid, just like many of the suburban garden plans he had drawn in his books. Mourners certainly had choice in Sudell's garden:

I have introduced a design which is a little out of the ordinary because I have broken it up into six little gardens. There I have planted, or I have indicated planting, about 5,000 dedicatable objects – plant material in the form of roses, shrubs trees and so forth – as well as seats.¹²²

The drawings show that most of Sudell's plan was implemented over the period 1953-57, although some were not executed. Possibly because of a, not inconsiderable, cost for the time of £10,000 the lily pond and the sunken garden were never started, a shelter replacing the former. For Sudell what was important was that cemetery gardens were designed as fitting tributes to the dead but, perhaps, for him, even more importantly, they were one small component of realizing his lifetime landscape philosophy: 'We have here a fulcrum to bring into being a new beauty in our towns, cities and villages.'¹²³

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Sudell, 'Planning the Garden of Remembrance'.



Fig 18 Sudell's original design for Memorial Garden (City of London Cemetery Archive)

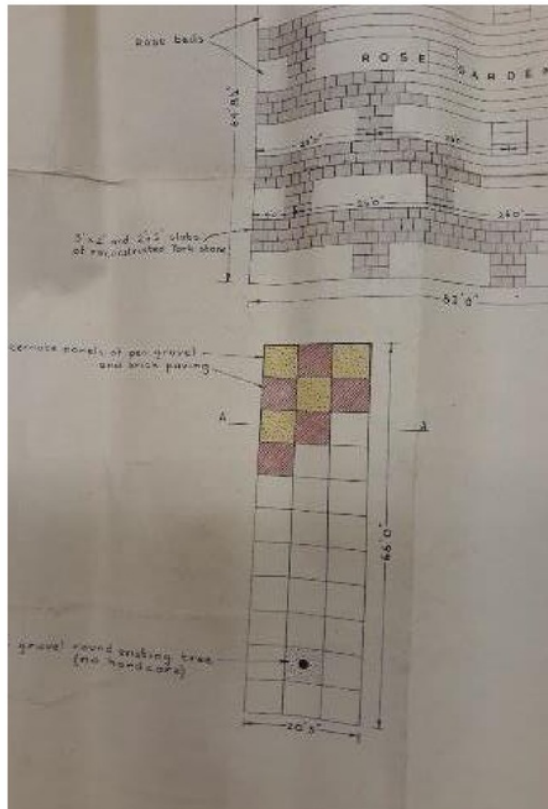


Fig 19 Original drawings, featuring checkerboard (City of London Cemetery Archive)



Fig 20 The checkerboard today (Author, January 2019)

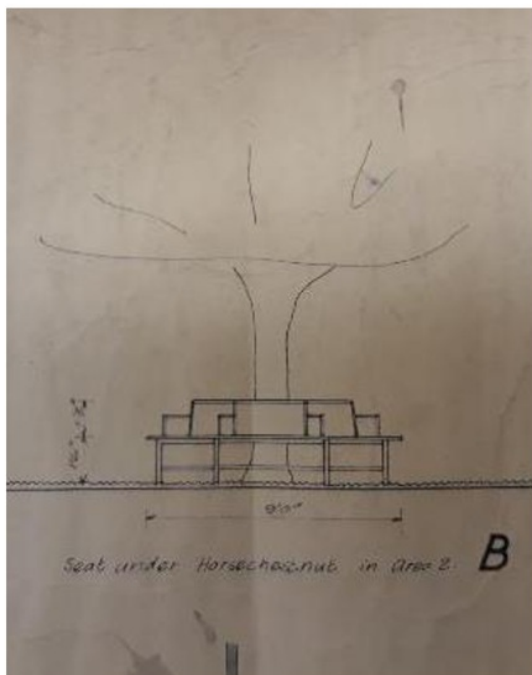


Fig 21 Plan for Horse-Chestnut tree (City of London Cemetery Archive)

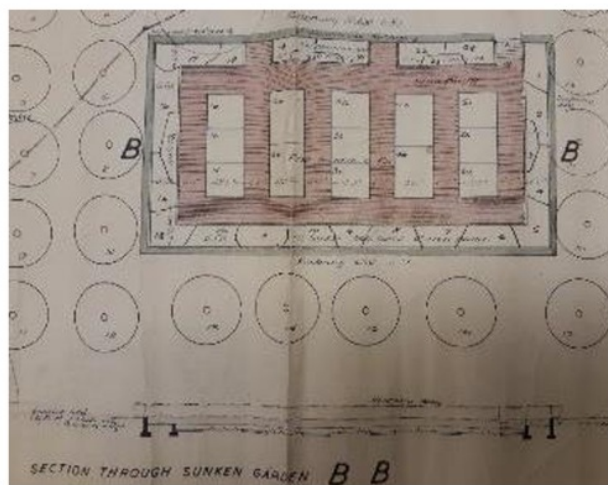


Fig 22 Plan for the sunken garden (City of London Cemetery Archive)

7) Conclusion

A visit today to Roehampton estate, now renamed the Dover House Estate, shows us how far from Sudell's ideal the suburb has travelled. Ground floor maisonettes within houses that were rented by one family of inner-city dwellers after World War One are now on the market starting at half a million pounds, a legacy of regulations that created a garden suburb of space, light and air within striking distance of the centre of London. The existence of a co-ordinated pattern of brightly coloured gardens that Sudell spent years promoting is not evident, although green spaces remain protected. Some front gardens have even been removed to cater for off-road car parking (Fig. 23). Recognizing the special nature of the estate and the risk it was under led Wandsworth Borough Council in 1978 to apply for conservation area status which attempts to limit development not in keeping with the original ethos of the garden suburb. The council urges residents, virtually all homeowners, to consider replacing brick walls and fences with privet hedges and gives advice on how to do this (Fig. 24). Meanwhile, Sudell's Roehampton Garden Society is still going strong and, in the 1970s, successfully saved two of the estate's three allotment sites from the threat of housing development. While it no longer concerns itself with gardens it manages the two allotment sites which are thriving (Fig. 25).

This dissertation has argued that Richard Sudell is the forgotten man of 20th century garden and landscape history. We have seen that his name is largely missing from historical accounts and records of the time. The results of this research strongly indicate that he is overdue a restoration to the story of what was a pivotal moment in British garden history as huge societal changes ushered in a time when land, no matter how small, became available to the many not the few. In the suburban gardens themselves, in the pages of newspapers and magazines and within letters and meetings connected to a newly professionalized landscape architectural movement, Sudell's words and, as importantly, actions show how key a figure he was in advocating the democratization of the land, the beautification of Britain for the majority, the right of all to enjoy open spaces, to find refuge in them from the strains of everyday life.

Politics cannot be separated from landscape in the Sudell story. He lived at a time, particularly interwar, when demands for an egalitarian society were heightened and, while many took to the soapbox to argue for this, Sudell planted trees, showed the working classes

how to sow for all-year-round colour, lay their crazy paving to save labour, and argued that roadsides, cemeteries, any open spaces, could be uplifting experiences for the population. This modest man's vision was actually sweeping in intent, 'any area open to the sky', but destined never to be realized. It can be argued that Britain today is certainly not planned, designed and landscaped in the way Sudell and many of his contemporaries wished for. For all his efforts he has been overlooked and even, at times, quite brutally dismissed. Sudell's work was of the times, but he was not a modernist and for that he would be associated with all the 'conservative' connotations that came with the suburban gardener. Yet that is to overlook the radicalism of what he was doing, the gentle cajoling of millions of people to create their own spaces, understand the rhythms of seasons, grow their own food, create their own environments. Having lived the experience, Sudell understood what those small suburban gardens meant to residents in a way any number of theorists and Modern Movement advocates simply could not. While his style of garden and landscape did become associated with an alleged suburban conformity it can be argued that, in a post-modern world, such gardens, together with those inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, still hold sway in Britain today perhaps because those compartmentalized, delineated, colourful, private spaces still give relief from the 'turmoil of the day' as they did when Sudell embarked on his life's quest.

This dissertation does not argue that Sudell was at the centre of the intellectual debate about landscape and architecture in the first half of the 20th century nor does it seek a restoration of the reputation of his key works, the existing evidence of which serves powerfully to illustrate a philosophy and historical significance rather than necessarily standing as examples of excellence. In this story there is a confluence of tumultuous social history, a revolution in our relationship with landscape and a fierce debate about the environment in which people lived. It is here that we find Richard Sudell. It is here that he richly rewards study.



Fig 23 Dover House Estate today (Author, May 2019)



Fig 24 Colourful gardens remain, protected by privet hedges (Author, May 2019)



Fig 25 Sudell allotments, still thriving (Author, May 2019)

8) Bibliography

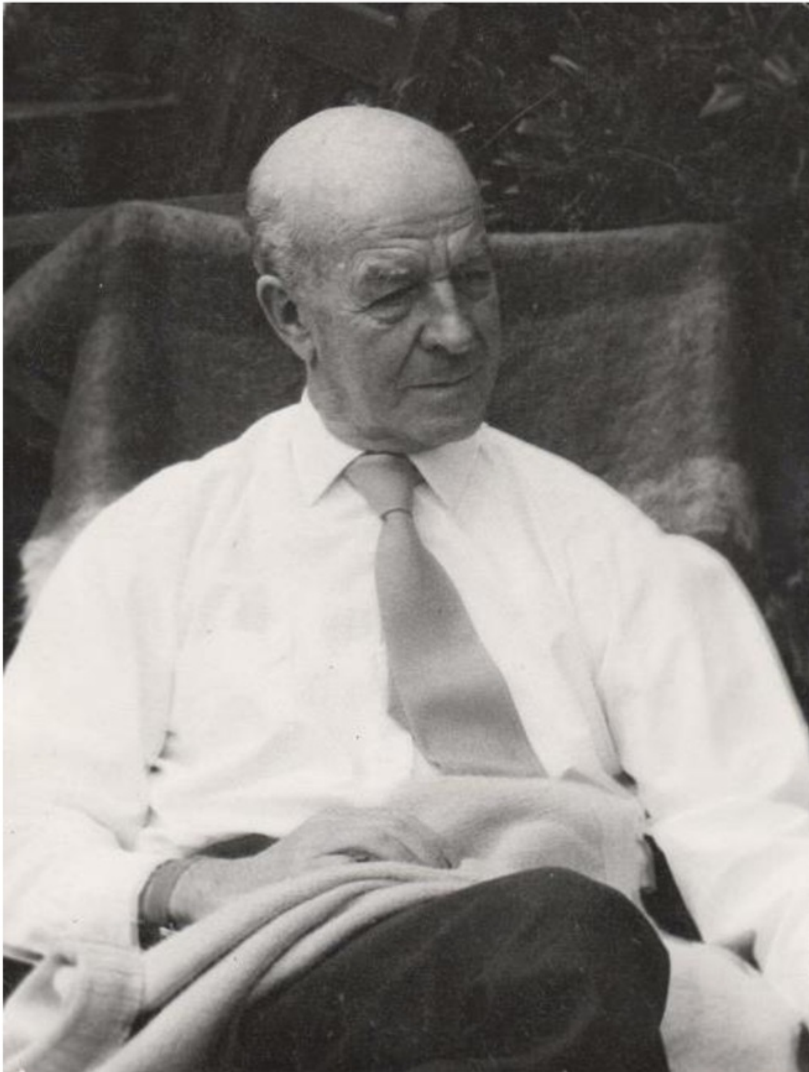


Fig 26 Richard Sudell shortly before he died (Family Archive)

Key to sources:

Archive material from British Newspaper Archive (BN), City of London Cemetery (CoL), Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB), Imperial War Museum (IWM), Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), Roehampton Garden Society Private Archive (PA), Royal Botanic Gardens Kew archive (RBGK), Times Archive (TI), Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC), Wandsworth Town Library (WT), Westminster Reference Library (WBL), Woodbrooke College archive (WC), Working Class Movement Library (WCML).

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Appendix 1

'He was a born optimist'

There are many testimonies to Sudell's graciousness and kindness especially in the encouragement of young people to take up landscape architecture. In his obituary in the *Journal of the Kew Guild* a colleague who worked with him was quoted thus: 'He had many trainees learning and practicing in his office from various parts of the world and he was continuously encouraging the future landscape architects. He often arranged tree planting schemes for children in new public parks. Richard was a great lover of flowers and generally sported a rose buttonhole and always had flowers in his offices. He was a born optimist and was always eager to experiment and to spend money on new projects. During his last year he was trying out prototypes of new ideas of playing equipment designed by his assistant. On his staff he had architects who specialised in sports centres and pavilions. He was a great believer in roof gardens and the creation of gardens in difficult situations.'

The Journal ends by adding; 'Like so many Kewites, Sudell was a great and successful pioneer'.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Anon, 'Richard Sudell', *The Journal of the Kew Guild*. (May, 1972) pp. 64-65.

Appendix 2

'Martyrs for their Faith'

Among Quakers there were those who accepted positions with the Non-Combatant Corps or even on the frontline with the Friends' Ambulance Unit. Quakers had, in the decades running up to the conflict, begun debating afresh a fundamental tenet of their faith called the peace testimony, a calling against the act of war and 'the spirit that makes war possible'.¹²⁵ When conscription was introduced and Quakers were given the possibility of exemption from combat by declaring their faith, many younger followers rejected the opt-out. They would become 'martyrs for their faith'.¹²⁶ Many were also attempting to ally their religious beliefs with anti-capitalism through the Socialist Quaker Society. Similarly, the No-Conscription Fellowship, founded in 1914 by young socialist intellectuals, such as Clifford Allen and Fenner Brockway, initially at least, adopted Absolute Exemption as a policy. However, as it became by far the biggest pacifist organisation in Britain, with around 10,000 declared members, all with diverse views and beliefs, it had a harder time holding this line and later began to support members who took alternative options to military service to avoid, or be relieved from, the degradations of prison.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, 'The Quaker Renaissance', p. 250.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Appendix 3

‘Like a Medieval Manuscript’

Take one example, *Practical Gardening and Food Production in Pictures*, written towards the end of his book-writing life and certainly by today’s standards hardly an alluring title. In 1948 the book claimed to be produced under an ‘entirely new principle’, namely that all instructions were accompanied by illustration. Although Sudell’s books had often been accompanied by garden plan drawings, this book had pictures and illustrations making up almost half of its pages and the words serving those images, almost as captions.

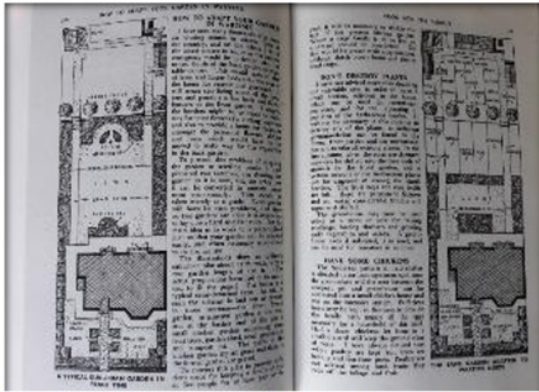


Fig 26 *Practical Gardening* pp.316-317 (London, 1954)

This two-page spread is typical of the book and in many ways of the advice Sudell gave throughout his career. Although World War Two is over, rationing is still in place and fresh food hard to come by, Sudell shows the reader how to partially convert a typical suburban garden for vegetable production and even to keep chickens. It represents a familiar theme in Sudell’s writings, harking back to his work on allotments, that even the smallest of suburban gardens should have some food-producing capability, probably a few fruit trees or a kitchen garden, usually divided off from the lawned area and placed at the back of the garden. But more than that the text is simply and concisely written and the layout of the spread is beautiful to gaze upon. Book art academic Susan Johanknecht likens it to a ‘medieval manuscript’ and praises its ‘spot the difference’ drawings, which show ‘rose arches disappear in wartime, herbaceous beds shift to cabbage and an Anderson shelter appears “inconspicuously” near a newly-created chicken run ... Located where the domestic meets the political, and painfully practical, this double spread is probably a complete work in itself’.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Author interview with Susan Johanknecht, subject leader of MA Book Arts at Camberwell College of Arts, (21/01/19).

Appendix 4

Evidence of Political Standpoint

Evidencing Sudell's political leanings he tells Jellicoe he wants socialist MP George Hicks, at the time Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Buildings in the wartime coalition government, to write the foreword to the book. 'I know George Hicks slightly but have not yet approached him in connection with my book.' Hicks was a former bricklayer and trade unionist who had been a founder member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904. He had been prominent in the London building trades lockout of 1914 as workers were punished by employers for a series of earlier strikes over wages and workplace conditions and was a supporter of syndicalism at the time. He was elected a Labour MP for Woolwich East in 1931. Had it been published it could be argued that Towards a New Britain would have set out clearly Sudell's philosophy and would have cemented his position in the socio-economic and political context of the time.