

Rise of the machines



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In 1884 Thomas Mawson returned to the Lake District. By then, John Ruskin was leading the revival of the arts from his nearby home at Brantwood, on Coniston Water.



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Nearby Blackwell was built as a rural retreat for a Manchester brewery owner, Sir Edward Holt (1849–1928). Mawson built the gardens here on a series of terraces to make best use of the views from the house over the lake towards Coniston fells.

Thomas Mawson drew on the philosophy of the Victorian Arts and Crafts movement for his wealthy Lake District clients.

Mawson explored the worlds of art and nature to create expressive gardens. His approach was innovative because his gardens also matched the surrounding landscape; for example he used native species of trees and plants which he knew would cope with the local environment.

At Brockhole, the gardens were part of the house design. Local craftsmen built walls and paths using the stone and slate quarried from the ground here.

Brockhole and its gardens were designed to reflect the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, contained in books like 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture' by John Ruskin (1819–1900). Ruskin argued that technical advances in architecture had lost the spirit and vitality of the Renaissance.

Arts and Crafts?

People believed that standards in design had dropped as a result of Victorian industrialisation. The Arts and Crafts movement wanted people to value individual craftsmanship, local materials and traditional skills.

Inherit the earth

The kitchen garden at Brockhole has changed since Mawson first designed and built it, but its purpose has stayed the same.

The Gaddum family lived at this private paradise until 1945 when it was sold to the Merseyside Hospitals' Council. The garden continued to grow food for the kitchen and flowers for the house. In 1966 the site was sold again and soon afterwards Brockhole opened as the first National Park Visitor Centre. Although smaller than its original design, the kitchen garden retains its original function.



A photograph dated 22 August 1899 shows the house being built and the kitchen garden plots laid out. Is the figure beneath the large tree in the white outfit William Gaddum's young daughter Molly?



During the Second World War, kitchen gardens were a vital source of home-grown food. This 1946 image shows just how big the kitchen garden became.



The Brockhole kitchen garden is smaller today than in 1899 and 1946. The walls and terraces built by Mawson for the Gaddum family still stand today.