

Dame Sylvia Crowe

Landscape architect and writer, Sylvia Crowe was involved in promoting landscape architecture in the UK and internationally through her work and her involvement with the Institute of Landscape Architects (ILA) and the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA). After training in horticulture and an apprenticeship with Edward White at Milner, Son and White she spent 13 years working as a landscape and garden designer for the nurserymen and garden contractors William Cutbush until the outbreak of the Second World War. She joined the ILA during this period and was elected onto Council in July 1939. Through the Institute she met and became friends with Brenda Colvin, and after the war with no job to return to, Colvin offered Crowe a room at her London office at 28 Baker Street, they moved to 182 Gloucester Place in 1952. In 1965 Colvin moved permanently to Little Peacocks at Filkins in Gloucestershire, but Crowe remained at Gloucester Place until 1982. Over the years they shared staff as well as office space, including Wanda Zaluska the Polish secretary, Carol Møller, John Brookes, Ivor Cunningham, Michael Laurie, Barbara Oakley, Janet Jack, Barry Newland and Peter Hodgson. Many staff came to gain experience in a landscape drawing office as part of their professional training, and students from Europe and the USA also came to work during the summer. Anthony du Gard Pasley and Wendy Powell as experienced professional members of the ILA were Crowe's Associates throughout the 1960s, during which time she carried out a wide range of projects; Sally Race was her main assistant from 1972.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of her work is that she handled landscapes of hugely diverse scales, from small garden details to hundreds of acres of new towns, forestry and reservoir margins. Final drawings for projects were prepared by drawing office staff from her rough sketches, and she was able to achieve much with a relatively small practice. With each project she always showed acute awareness of context. In her drawings her contribution to schemes appears predominantly in terms of planting, but these drawings do not fully reflect the influence she had already exerted on the projects, persuading interdisciplinary teams to recognise the significance of views, landform and local character in determining the location and impact of new interventions in the landscape. The ILA Nominations Committee recommended Crowe for work and Geoffrey Jellicoe passed commissions on to her, including the provision of a landscape report for Hemel Hempstead New Town.

Sylvia Crowe passed on her knowledge and passion for landscape to all who worked with her, as well as serving on the ILA's Examination and Education Committees for many years. She wrote a series of books confronting the challenges of new landscape issues, and her textbooks on garden design are considered classics. Her drawings and some by her staff were donated to the Landscape Institute by her nephew after her death in 1997. Crowe's drawings are typically hastily executed and occasionally scruffy but invariably demonstrate her great clarity of thought.



Sylvia Crowe, photograph by Shelia Harvey (1988)

Sylvia Crowe

15 September 1901 – 30 June 1997

Landscape architect, author
PPILA

Honours:

CBE 1967; DBE 1973

Associate ILA 1934; Fellow ILA 1945

Hon sec IFLA 1949-54; Vice President IFLA 1954, 1962, 1964-1969; General Secretary IFLA 1956-59; Co-opted member of Council 1960-61

President ILA 1957-59; Corresponding member of ASLA 1960; Acting President IFLA 1970; Chairman of Tree Council 1974-76

Hon FRIBA 1969; Hon FRTPI 1970; Hon DLitt, Newcastle 1976; Hon DLitt, Heriot-Watt 1976; Hon LLD, Sussex 1978; Hon Fellow Australian Institute of Landscape Architects 1978; Hon Fellow Institute of Chartered Foresters 1984; LI Gold Medal 1986; American Society of Landscape Architects Medal 1988; RHS Victoria Medal of Honour 1990; Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Gold Medal 1990

'Woman of the year' AJ 1960

Education:

Educated at Berkhamsted Girls' School and by her mother at home, studied horticulture at Swanley Horticultural College, Kent 1920-22; pupil to Milner White 1926

Practice:

1926-39 Wm Cutbush Ltd Nurseries
1945 Sylvia Crowe
c1963-70 Sylvia Crowe and Associates
c1971-74 Sylvia Crowe and Associate

Work:

Landscape architect to William Cutbush: contouring and planting at Southover[?] Hall
Water gardens and grounds at Lower Soughton, Flintshire; water garden at Wargrave [?]
Conversion of old gravel pits to lake stream and bog garden at Arkley Mill
Conversion of rubbish dump and ash tip to contoured rest park for Standard Telephones
Planning and planting of rest garden and village green at Well House estate for Barnet
UDC
Planting trees and shrubs in key with surrounding country to form wind-breaks and
hazards at Hadley Wood Golf Course
Informal part of Borough of Islington crematorium (10 acres)
Tree groupings and glades at borough of Tottenham crematorium (20 acres)
Grounds surrounding slum clearance flats for the Borough of Islington
Grounds of Linen and Woollen Draper's Cottage Homes Mill Hill, (about 30 acres)

Consultancies:

1948-58 Harlow New Town
1949-62 Basildon New Town
1948-68 Central Electricity Generating Board
1957 Essex County
1963-76 Forestry Commission

Landscape plans:

Coastal reclamation, Mablethorpe and Sutton on Sea, Lincolnshire
Harlow New Town
Basildon New Town
Coastal pleasure gardens, caravan camp and dune gardens, Mablethorpe and Sutton on
Sea, Lincolnshire
US Air Force housing, Brize Norton, Greenham Common, Fairford, Alconbury,
Lakenheath, Mildenhall and Woodbridge
Friern Hospital, Friern Barnet
Lower Swansea Valley, South Wales
Swansea foreshore, South Wales
Teacher's training college, Norham Gardens, Oxford
Planting for Royal Albert Hall steps, Imperial College, London
Gardens at Mander College and County Hall, Bedford
Nevill Hall Hospital, Wales
Darlton Quarries, Derbyshire
Joseph Lucas Research Centre, Warwickshire
Commonwealth Gardens, Canberra
Washington New Town, Co Durham
Passmores, Stewards and Kingsmoor neighbourhood housing areas, Harlow New Town
Newbury-Swindon south east study
Riverside Park, Keynsham, Somerset
Masterplan for Warrington New Town, Cheshire
Royal Marines camp, Bickleigh Devon

River Cuckmere, East Sussex
Newton Aycliffe New Town expansion, Co Durham
Playing fields, Eton College, Berks
Grove Farm PIY

Landscape reports:
Hemel Hempstead, accompanying town planning report
Hartlepool
Portsmouth

Gardens designs, semi-public:
St Mary's Churchyard, Oxford
Rose Garden, Magdalen College, Oxford
Tutor's house, Fellows' car parks and Masters' garden, University College, Oxford
Courtyard for Barnet Press, Barnet
Small town garden, garden for Cement and Concrete Association, Wexham Springs, Bucks
Commonwealth Institute, London
Goodhart quad and Logic Lane, University College Oxford
East quadrangle and Rector's garden, Imperial College, London
New water garden, Wexham Springs, Bucks
Scottish Widows Fund and Life Assurance HQ building, Edinburgh
Churchyard, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire
College park, University College Bangor, North Wales
Forestry Commission HQ, Edinburgh
Garden design for British Pavilion, International Garden Festival, Liverpool

Gardens designs, private:
Whalebones, Barnet
Spence House, Hants
Hailey House, Oxfordshire
North Stainley Hall, North Yorkshire
Rolle, Restormel, Cornwall

Forestry:
Advisory work in Scotland, England and Wales
Forestry Commission model forest, International Garden Festival, Liverpool

Reservoirs:
Bough Beech, Kent
Bewl Lake, Kent
Rutland Water, Rutland
Arlington Reservoir, East Sussex
Delta project, Zuiderzee, Netherlands
Wimbleball reservoir, Somerset
Study for reservoir sites in Devon and Cornwall
Colliford reservoir, Cornwall
Turlough Hill pumped storage scheme, Co Wicklow
Ardingly, W Sussex

Transport:

Aquadrome, Herts
Cumberland Basin Bridges, Ashton Gate junction, Bristol
Abbotsinch airport, Glasgow
Approach to Blackwell tunnel, London
Esher by-pass, Surrey
Parkway stage 2-3, Bristol

Power:

Bradwell Power station, Essex
High voltage transmission line routing, Southern England
Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, North Wales
Wylfa nuclear power station, North Wales

Books:

Tomorrow's landscape. London: Architectural Press, 1956
Garden design. London: Country Life, 1956
The landscape of power. London: Architectural Press, 1958
The landscape of roads. London: Architectural Press, 1960
Space for living: landscape architecture and the allied professions (ed.) Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1961
Shaping tomorrow's landscape. Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1964
Forestry in the landscape. London: HMSO, 1966 (With Zvi Miller)
Landscape planning: a policy for an overcrowded world. Morges, Switzerland: IUCN, 1969
The landscape of reservoirs. London: Association of River Authorities, 1969
The gardens of Mughul India a history and guide. London, Thames and Hudson, 1972 (with Sheila Haywood, Susan Jellicoe and Gordon Patterson)
The pattern of landscape. Chichester: Packard Publishing, 1988 (with Mary Mitchell)