

The Gardens and Designed Landscape of Mount Stuart, c.1716–1900¹

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This article describes the development of the designed landscape of Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute from the early eighteenth century to the turn of the twentieth. Particular attention is paid to the Georgian and Victorian periods. The author highlights individual items and series of records from the privately owned Bute Archive at Mount Stuart, with a specific emphasis on estate surveys. An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the archive itself is made, indicating the usefulness of a private estate archive to researchers of garden history. It concludes that an archive containing the perspectives of various individuals involved in the development of a designed landscape (landowners, designers and estate workers) provides the best starting point for those researching its history.

Mount Stuart is a private estate located on the Isle of Bute, an island off the west coast of Scotland which is separated from the mainland by the Firth of Clyde. It comprises a country house and its surrounding grounds, and the name of Mount Stuart refers to both. The estate is situated slightly inland along the south-east coast of Bute and is around five miles distant from Rothesay, the largest town on the island. For almost three centuries, Mount Stuart has been the ancestral home of the Earls and Marquesses of Bute since the construction of the first house, a modest neo-classical affair, in around 1718. But the name of Mount Stuart is more closely associated with the second and present building, which represents Britain's finest surviving domestic example of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture. At present, the house and gardens are run as a tourist attraction by the Mount Stuart Trust² and together they form an important part of the visitor experience on Bute. Up until now, it has been the houses, their creators and their inhabitants which have gained the most attention from both tourists and scholars alike.³

¹ This article is based on a paper given at the Scottish Records Association conference on *Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes* in Perth on 12 November 2011. I am grateful to the seventh Marquess of Bute for permission to reproduce the images in this article. My thanks are also due to Lynsey Nairn for supplying them, to Andrew McLean, Mount Stuart Trust's previous archivist, for his help with preparing the conference paper and to the anonymous reviewer whose comments were invaluable in improving the article.

² <http://www.mountstuart.com>.

³ J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (London, 1981), passim; J. Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute* (Cardiff, 1981); F. Russell, *John, 3rd Earl of Bute: Patron and Collector* (London, 2004); R. Hannah, *The Grand Designer: Third Marquess of Bute* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Yet Mount Stuart is also a designated landscape, a nationally significant site which is listed in Historic Scotland's *Inventary of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland*.⁴ Mount Stuart is classed as 'outstanding' in five areas (Work of Art; Historical; Horticultural, Arboricultural and Silvicultural; Architectural and Scenic) and as 'high' in Nature Conservation. It should be noted that this entry was compiled during the Inventory's pilot in the early 1980s and, although access was given to key items in the archive, the description does predate the extensive cataloguing work undertaken in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. Clearly, the policies, walks and gardens, some of which date back to the original Mount Stuart in the early eighteenth century, are as worthy of consideration as the houses.⁵ This article will briefly outline their history, highlighting the developments of the Georgian and Victorian periods in particular, and explain the contribution which certain individuals made to the gardens and designed landscape. It is not intended to serve as a definitive history but as an example of what the sources in a private family archive can contribute to this particular field of research.

The Bute Archive (BA) at Mount Stuart is a private collection comprising the personal, business and estate papers of the Earls and Marquesses of Bute and the families to which they are connected by marriage. There were successive custodians of the archive throughout the twentieth century but it was not until 1997 that an extensive programme was initiated to store and describe the various archive collections to contemporary professional standards.⁶ As other priorities in recent years have overshadowed this cataloguing work, the collection has generally remained closed to researchers and is not currently available for public access. But the desire of the Mount Stuart Trust to make a feature of the gardens provided the impetus to review the extensive garden-related sources held in the archive (including reports, correspondence, journals, various types of land survey, plans and photographs) to trace the development of Mount Stuart's landscape.

The Stuarts of Bute have resided on the island since the thirteenth century, originally at Rothesay Castle and then at the Mansion House in Rothesay's High Street for a relatively short period. After the castle's ruination in 1685, the family required a new home but, by this time, a fortified residence was no longer necessary. Comfort and elegance now dictated the construction of houses for the landed classes. Due to the cost, some were forced to maintain and alter their existing medieval residences;⁷ this was not the case on Bute.

⁴ Available at <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/gardens.htm>.

⁵ In fact, the gardens of Mount Stuart form one of the chapters in R. Peel and K. Taylor, *Passion, Plants and Patronage: 300 Years of the Bute Family Landscapes* (London, 2012). This article bears no relationship to that volume but does draw on many of the same sources within the Bute Archive.

⁶ A. McLean, 'Around the Archives: The Mount Stuart Archives', *Scottish Archives*, 8 (2002), 121–30.

⁷ R. Gibson, *The Scottish Countryside: Its Changing Face, 1700–2000* (Edinburgh, 2007), 16; D. Turnock, *The Making of the Scottish Rural Landscape* (Aldershot, 1995), 229.

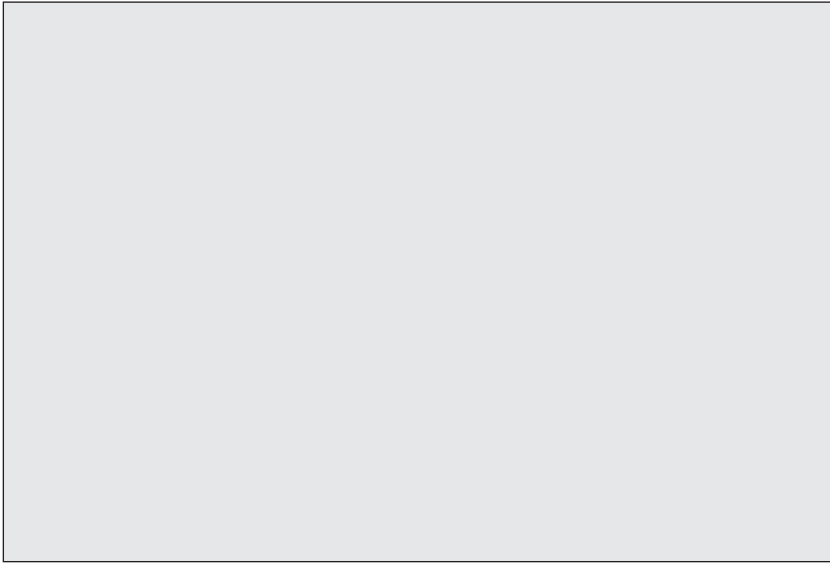


Plate 1 Map of Mount Stuart's grounds, 2001 (copyright Mount Stuart Trust).

In *c.*1716, James Stewart, second Earl of Bute (died 1723) began making plans for a new seat. He chose the enclosure of Kerryhaven in the south of Bute to form the basis for his new designed landscape: Mount Stuart. The natural landscape of this area offered fertile farmland and beautiful views: an excellent combination for a country seat. Most mansions of this period were being complemented by capacious policies⁸ and Kerryhaven provided ample opportunity for extensive grounds. Today, these comprise various gardens (Rock, Kitchen and Wee); planned walks (Shore, Pinetum and Lime Tree Avenue) and features such as the *Via Dolorosa* (Calvary Walk), all of which are shown in Plate 1.

The first stage in the development of Mount Stuart's gardens occurs during the eighteenth century. Several figures loom large during this period, including the second and third Earls of Bute and the architect, Alexander McGill. Some of the BA's earliest references to the new gardens occur among the second Earl's correspondence. For example, in letters dated December 1717, the Earl receives news that his gardener's journey from Edinburgh with four cartloads of (unidentified) trees has begun.⁹ Another letter written during the same year reveals the Earl's discussions on importing alders from Holland and planting seedlings supplied by the seedsman, William Miller: the seedlings should be

⁸ Turnock, *Landscape*, 229.

⁹ BA, BU/2/14/22 and 23.

‘nothing but what wold have success in probabilitie and at as easie rates as possible’.¹⁰ Planting was heavily debated between those who endorsed seed-planting and those who used nursery-grown trees.¹¹ However, this letter suggests that it was not an issue during this early planning stage of the gardens. Robust specimens were necessary to ensure the survival of these early plantings, which were an essential component in the creation of the new designed landscape.

It was important that policies were laid out to complement the altered or newly built mansion house which they surrounded.¹² The formal scheme for Mount Stuart was executed according to the design of Alexander McGill (c.1680–1734), who was also the architect of the first building to bear the Mount Stuart name. McGill was closely associated with Sir William Bruce of Kinross (c.1625–1710) and Bruce’s last project, the House of Nairne in Perthshire, was completed by McGill after his death. In terms of landscape design, Bruce was the driving force behind the introduction to Scotland of Baroque gardens (those with formal, geometric layouts, which complemented the house’s architecture). This style became one of the principal influences in Scottish landscape gardening during the eighteenth century.¹³ McGill, like Bruce, was concerned with the area around the house, both in terms of its landscape and in the layout of courts and pavilions. This concern is in evidence from the existing original designed landscape which is in keeping with the ordered Baroque style. It is the execution of McGill’s design which underpins much of Mount Stuart’s current landscape but although the archive contains the architectural plans for the first Mount Stuart, the original plan for the gardens no longer exists. There are also few external sources which refer to the gardens at this time. Daniel Defoe, in *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, undertaken between 1724 and 1727, comments: ‘nor is there anything else considerable to be said of either of the islands [of Arran and Bute]; for as for their present condition ... they have nothing considerable in or about them’.¹⁴

Indeed, except correspondence, the archive holds very few contemporary references to the origins of Mount Stuart’s grounds. Partly, this is due to the death of the second Earl in 1723 when the care of the house and grounds was left to his widow, Lady Anne Campbell (1692–1736), in the interim before his eldest son reached his majority. It is this son, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute (1713–92), who provides additional information about the original layout and plantings, albeit from a distance of almost twenty years. The third Earl is one of the family’s most famous members, being a noted politician who became

¹⁰ BA, BU/2/14/19.

¹¹ Turnock, *Landscape*, 220.

¹² Gibson, *Countryside*, 16.

¹³ J. Lowrey, ‘Bruce, Sir William, first baronet (c.1625–1710)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004; online edn, May 2006), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3760> (accessed 1 September 2012).

¹⁴ P. N. Furbank, W. R. Owens and A. J. Coulson (eds), *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain by Daniel Defoe* (London, 1991), 377.

First Lord of the Treasury in 1762. However, prior to this life of public duty, the third Earl was a keen amateur scientist with a particular interest in botany, which he explored during his youth on the Isle of Bute.

His experiments at Mount Stuart were recorded in his planting and weather journal, begun in 1734. This is the first of two journals¹⁵ which he kept during the 1730s and 1740s to chart the improvements he made to the policies of his ancestral home.¹⁶ This journal also records the development of the gardens during the second Earl's time, information which was discovered by the third Earl through researching his father's papers. Despite this search, the third Earl confesses that 'the time and manner of [the first laying out of the gardens] I can't directly tell'.¹⁷ Subsequent entries detail the third Earl's additions: a bowling green, a more extensive network of pathways and the planting of Mount Montague, a natural hill to the west of the policies which was named in honour of the Earl's wife, Mary Wortley Montague (1718–94). These are all features which have survived to the present day. From the information contained within the journals, it is also known that during this time the third Earl directed the planting of Lime Tree Avenue. This is a six hundred yard long avenue, running along a west–east axis that ends almost at the shore where the island meets the Firth of Clyde. In its original planting, the avenue was lined with more than 150 lime trees, some of which still survive today. Tree planting made the policies more pleasant, outlining various walks to attract the viewer's eye to distant prospects.¹⁸ This addition to the policies of Mount Stuart is evidence of the trend in garden design at this point to tend away from formal, structured layouts and instead highlight the beauty of the natural landscape.¹⁹

It is also through the third Earl's concern about his own house and policies that two of the more interesting series of garden records were created. The first is a series of reports on the progress of the house and gardens, written by George Robertson at the request of the Earl.²⁰ The series spans some six years and comprises thirty-eight reports, which thoroughly outline the work undertaken. Interestingly, the first of these reports (dated 7 November 1737) lists not only a brief summary of each completed task but also the full name of the workman or gardener who undertook the work. For example, '[John Ramsay] and his sone all day digging the brake of straberries & the short beds of

¹⁵ BA, BU/154–5.

¹⁶ The third Earl of Bute was not alone in maintaining his own estate records. See J. Anderson, 'Around the Archives: The Archives at Blair and Glamis Castles', *Scottish Archives*, 9 (2003), 101 for reference to the fourth Duke of Atholl and his forestry notebooks.

¹⁷ BA, BU/154, 1.

¹⁸ Gibson, *Countryside*, 17; T. R. Slater, 'The Mansion and Policy', in (ed.) M. L. Parry and T. R. Slater, *The Making of the Scottish Countryside* (Montreal, 1980), 230–1.

¹⁹ Gibson, *Countryside*, 17.

²⁰ BA, BU/156.

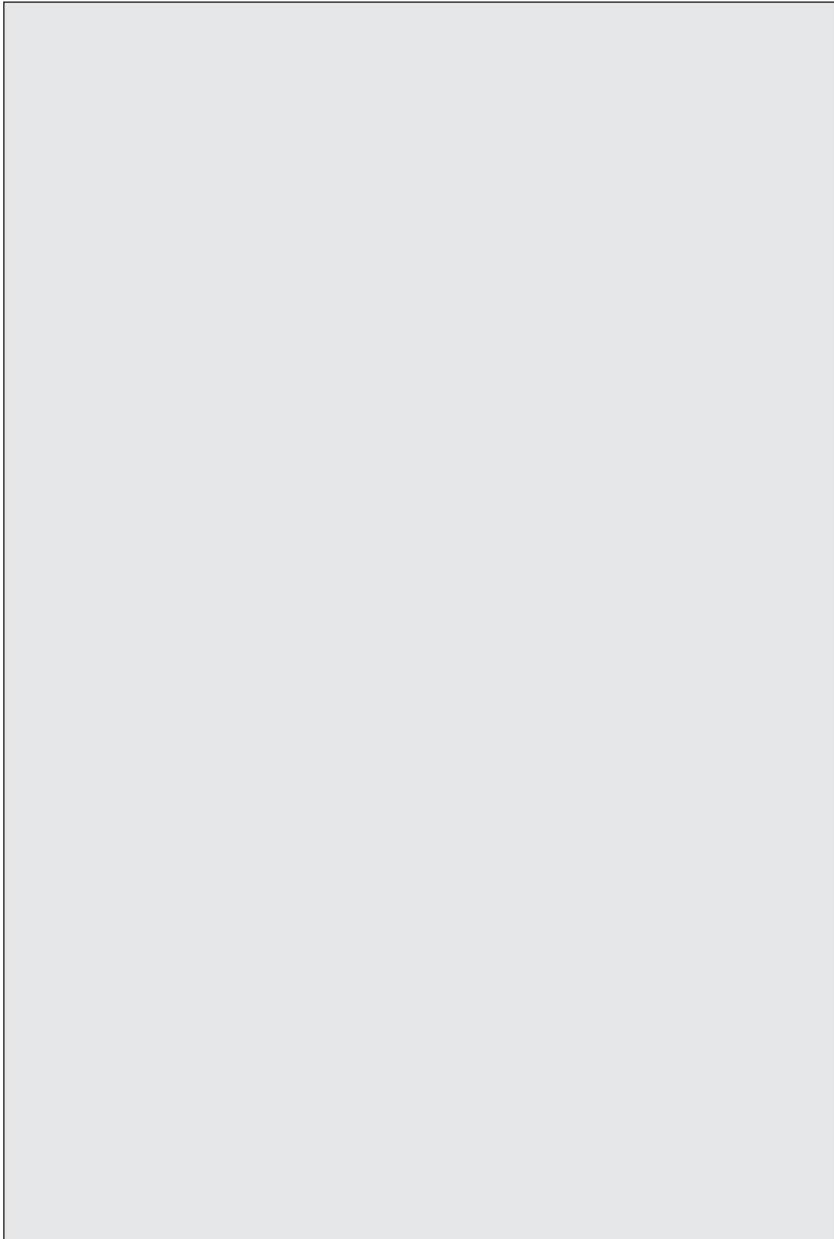


Plate 2 First page of the weather and gardens report which Alexander McGregor sent to the third Earl of Bute, 30 April 1746 (ref: BU/157/1/1) (copyright The Bute Archive at Mount Stuart).

straberis in south gardens'.²¹ Therefore, these reports are a crucial record of the contribution which estate workers made to the development and cultivation of Mount Stuart's gardens.

The second series of records are also reports, which concentrate instead on the weather. Although the third Earl left Bute to pursue his political career in England in the mid-1740s and never returned to Scotland, he continued his deep interest in Mount Stuart's gardens. He commissioned one of his gardeners, Alexander McGregor, to send weekly updates on Bute's weather and its effect on Mount Stuart's plants (see Plate 2). This particular series is unusual in that it is the personal account of an estate worker, albeit a senior one, who was involved with the practical aspects of managing the gardens. Ordinarily, his opinion would not have been recorded in documentary sources and, indeed, there are few references to him in the archive aside from these reports. But because of the third Earl's absence from home, McGregor is given a voice²² and he first uses it to give a detailed account of planting in the garden on 30 April 1746, interspersed with a summary of the plants: 'the narcissuses no. 57 are all in fleur'.²³ This type of record is particularly useful in revealing the 'intimate relationship between laird and gardener'.²⁴

After the third Earl's departure there were no significant works undertaken on Mount Stuart's landscape, although two important surveys were drawn up during his absence. Estate surveys in Britain had existed in various forms since the late sixteenth century but, by the eighteenth century, they had become more detailed and accurate. This was the period of the Enlightenment in Scotland when the theory and practice of agriculture became subject to the same scientific enquiry and evaluation which was being applied to the fields of medicine and literature. The overall aim of such analysis was to rationalise and improve the existing, haphazard systems of working the land to ones which would more effectively support the growth of industry and trade in the eighteenth century.²⁵ Estate owners and factors commissioned land surveys to evaluate contemporary land use and plan future developments.²⁶ Many estates in Scotland commissioned one or more surveys for their lands in the period c.1700–1840 and these often depicted the changed landscape rather than the one which existed pre-Improvement.²⁷ In particular, they can show evidence of ornamental gardens, a feature once exclusively found in the grounds of

²¹ BA, BU/156/1/1.

²² See Slater, 'Mansion', 233 for other examples of correspondence between a laird and his gardener.

²³ BA, BU/157/1/1.

²⁴ Slater, 'Mansion', 233.

²⁵ Turnock, *Landscape*, 198.

²⁶ I. H. Adams, 'The Mapping of a Scottish Estate', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 84, no. 1 (1968), 248.

²⁷ I. H. Adams, *The Mapping of a Scottish Estate* (Edinburgh, 1971), 2.

royal palaces and monasteries.²⁸ As such, these plans are a significant source of information to the student of historic landscaping in general and the development of Scottish policies in particular.

The first survey of the Bute Estate to be commissioned was undertaken by John Foulis, who produced his Survey of the Isle of Bute in 1758–9, making it the earliest surviving plan of Mount Stuart’s grounds held in the BA.²⁹ The third Earl of Bute owned most of the island at the time and Foulis’ survey represents the first real attempt to systematically describe and assess Bute’s holdings. It is both written description and drawn map and is divided into separate areas of the island: Mount Stuart’s entry gives its total area as 305 acres, including the garden and plantations, deer park and eight small closes and paddocks.³⁰ As there is no earlier map of the grounds than this, there is nothing to which it can be compared. Normally, improvements on a Scottish estate began with the house, policies and its home farm,³¹ but in the case of Mount Stuart, only recently established, it cannot be supposed that its gardens and parks needed much improvement.

The survey is also important in being one of only two extant works by John Foulis, listed as having worked in only two Scottish counties, Bute and Ayr.³² Foulis surveyed lands at Culzean in Ayrshire for Sir Thomas Kennedy, ninth Earl of Cassillis.³³ It was not uncommon for a land surveyor to produce only one or two maps before disappearing into professional obscurity. It was a relatively short-lived profession, the members of which were drawn from those already equipped with the knowledge and skills required to divide the land equally and systematically: architects, schoolmasters, farmers and nurserymen.³⁴

Foulis’ survey shows an already changed Mount Stuart, adding ‘further detail to the transformations that had already happened’.³⁵ The Foulis map is also distinguished by the inclusion of comments on the quality of the ground: ‘The only plantation that is backward is Mount Montague being a cold, weeping, spungy, moory soil & much expos’d to these storms.’³⁶ Judgements of this kind mostly appear on maps created between 1750 and 1800, a feature which separates them from those concerned solely with simple improvement.³⁷

The second survey to show Mount Stuart was undertaken by John Leslie

²⁸ Gibson, *Countryside*, 16.

²⁹ BA, Survey of the Isle of Bute by John Foulis, uncatalogued.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹ Gibson, *Countryside*, 37.

³² S. Bendall *et al.* (compilers), *Dictionary of Land Surveyors and Local Mapmakers of Great Britain and Ireland: 1530–1850*, vol. 2 (London, 1997), 185.

³³ A. Sclater, ‘Picturesque Privacy: Landscape Improvement at Culzean from c.1750’, *Scottish Archives*, 1 (1995), 19.

³⁴ Adams, ‘Mapping’, 248–9.

³⁵ G. Geddes and A. Hale, *The Archaeological Landscape of Bute* (Edinburgh, 2010), 41.

³⁶ BA, Survey of the Isle of Bute by John Foulis, uncatalogued, 17.

³⁷ Adams, ‘Mapping’, 248.

in 1766.³⁸ According to the extant historical record, Leslie's career as a land surveyor lasted considerably longer and covered a more extensive geographical range than that of Foulis.³⁹ Notable features on his plan are the orangery and hothouses, neither of which survive in the present landscape apart from foundation remains in the soil. On the survey itself can be seen the court, the north and south sides of which were planted with Scots firs (a fact confirmed in the third Earl's first journal).⁴⁰ Indeed this reforestation of the landscape was a key goal to the landowner seeking improvements in both his arable land and designed landscape. In the centuries preceding the eighteenth, many trees across Scotland's countryside were sacrificed to clear space for farms and grazing livestock as well as to supply the lucrative timber trade with wood for the construction of buildings, ships, furniture, utensils and for fuel.⁴¹ Certainly, Mount Stuart's plentiful plantations ensured that the estate was protected to some extent from the often inclement weather in addition to offering a pleasing prospect to the viewer.

Unfortunately, a period of neglect began in the decades after the surveys' production, which is partly explained by the third Earl's absence and also by Mount Stuart no longer being the family's only residence by 1774. The third Earl had acquired other properties and left the charge of the Bute Estate to his brother, James Stuart Mackenzie (1719–1800). The relative isolation of the estate worked against it: time and money was instead spent on the estates on which the family stayed.

The situation did not significantly change until the turn of the nineteenth century with the advent of John Crichton-Stuart, second Marquess of Bute (1793–1848), who changed and increased his family's fortunes when he exploited the coalfields on his estates in the south of Wales. Only a few years prior to his inheritance, Mount Stuart had been described in Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791–1799* as follows:

There are some plantations of fir trees, etc; but the largest plantations are round the house of Mount Stuart, the seat of the Earl of Bute, where there are a great many fine trees of different kinds ... [the soil has been properly cultivated] in some farms, but particularly about Mount Stuart, where fields have been, and are full cultivated to the highest perfection, for crops of barley, turnip, rye-grass, and clover of every kind.⁴²

Significant changes to the gardens at Mount Stuart were made by the second Marquess and his wife, Maria North (died 1841), including the introduction

³⁸ BA, Survey of Mount Stuart by John Leslie, uncatalogued.

³⁹ Bendall, *Dictionary*, vol. 2, 315.

⁴⁰ BA, Survey of Mount Stuart by John Leslie, uncatalogued.

⁴¹ Gibson, *Countryside*, 45.

⁴² Rev. J. Thorburn, 'The Parish of Kingarth', in (ed.) D. J. Withrington and I. R. Grant, *The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791–1799* edited by Sir John Sinclair, XX (Wakefield, 1983), 454–5.



Plate 3 Eastern elevation of Mount Stuart, *c.*2007 (copyright Mount Stuart Trust; photographer: Keith Hunter).

of the misleadingly named ‘Wee Garden’ (which occupies five acres). Maria asked for plans to be drawn up in 1823, which are now held in the archive. A comparison between this plan and the garden as it exists today reveals that there are several survivors from the original planting scheme, including the cork oak, the Chilean Lantern Tree and the Silk-Tassel Bush. In addition to this, many of the orderly avenues and pathways reminiscent of the Baroque style installed during the time of the third Earl were allowed to become overgrown, in the fashion of the time.

The premature death of the second Marquess in 1848 heralded another period of inactivity in relation to the gardens and landscape. His six-month-old only child and heir, John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, third Marquess of Bute (1847–1900) became celebrated as the richest baby in Britain but would not fully come into his inheritance until he turned twenty-one. Such a significant period of time without an active head of the family meant a reduction in work on the house and grounds.

A change occurred after the third Marquess came of age in 1868. The Georgian Mount Stuart was ruined by fire in 1877 and he took advantage of the opportunity to create a far grander residence in the Victorian Gothic Revival style (see Plate 3). As a consequence, the third Marquess desired policies

which would match and complement the new house. The completion of the second Mount Stuart took decades and work on the gardens did not begin until the late 1890s. The third Marquess had ambitious plans for his grounds, both of which were executed by Thomas Mawson (1861–1933), the celebrated English landscape designer. One project centred on the creation of the Rock Garden (incorporating Mawson’s favoured water features) to replace the court which had existed to the west of Mount Stuart.

But by far the most innovative garden work undertaken during the Victorian period was the *Via Dolorosa* (‘sorrowful way’) or Calvary Walk. The third Marquess had converted to Roman Catholicism upon reaching his majority and the desire to celebrate his adopted religion led to Mawson’s commission to recreate the path which Jesus Christ took on his journey to the Cross. It traverses the entire estate, from beneath Mount Montague on the western boundary to the shore on the east. One of the earliest references to the *Via Dolorosa* comes in a letter from Gwendolen Bute (1854–1932), the wife of the third Marquess, to the factor:

Dear Mr Stuart, I am sorry to have forgotten to send you any message about the man Mawson – I wrote at the last minute to Wills to send some one as Bute was very anxious to have a beginning made for the Way of the Cross, which has been so long projected & Heron is totally incapable witness – the ponds.⁴³

Heron was head gardener at Mount Stuart at the time and this example illustrates that the family also used external expertise as well as that offered by their own staff.

The *Via Dolorosa* features cascades, falls and pools and incorporates the existing Wee Garden (see Plate 4). It was intended to have architectural adjuncts, including Stations of the Cross, a small chapel and a thirty-foot-high crucifix. However, Mawson’s scheme was never finished due to the third Marquess’ premature death in 1900, which halted the work. Unfortunately, Mawson’s designs for the scheme are lost: he had them destroyed but later regretted this action as he considered it one of his finest works.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the storytelling aspect of the *Via Dolorosa* is something which is still present in the grounds today.

This chronological survey of the major developments in the history of Mount Stuart’s designed landscape has been illustrated by key documents held within the archive. At this point, it is useful to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the archive for those interested in garden history in general and country house policies in particular.

There are several drawbacks. Most importantly, although a considerable amount of work has been undertaken in this regard, the archive is not yet fully catalogued or indexed. It is more than likely that not all of the garden-related

⁴³ BA, BU/21/349/234.

⁴⁴ T. Mawson, *The Life and Work of an English Landscape Architect* (London, 1927).

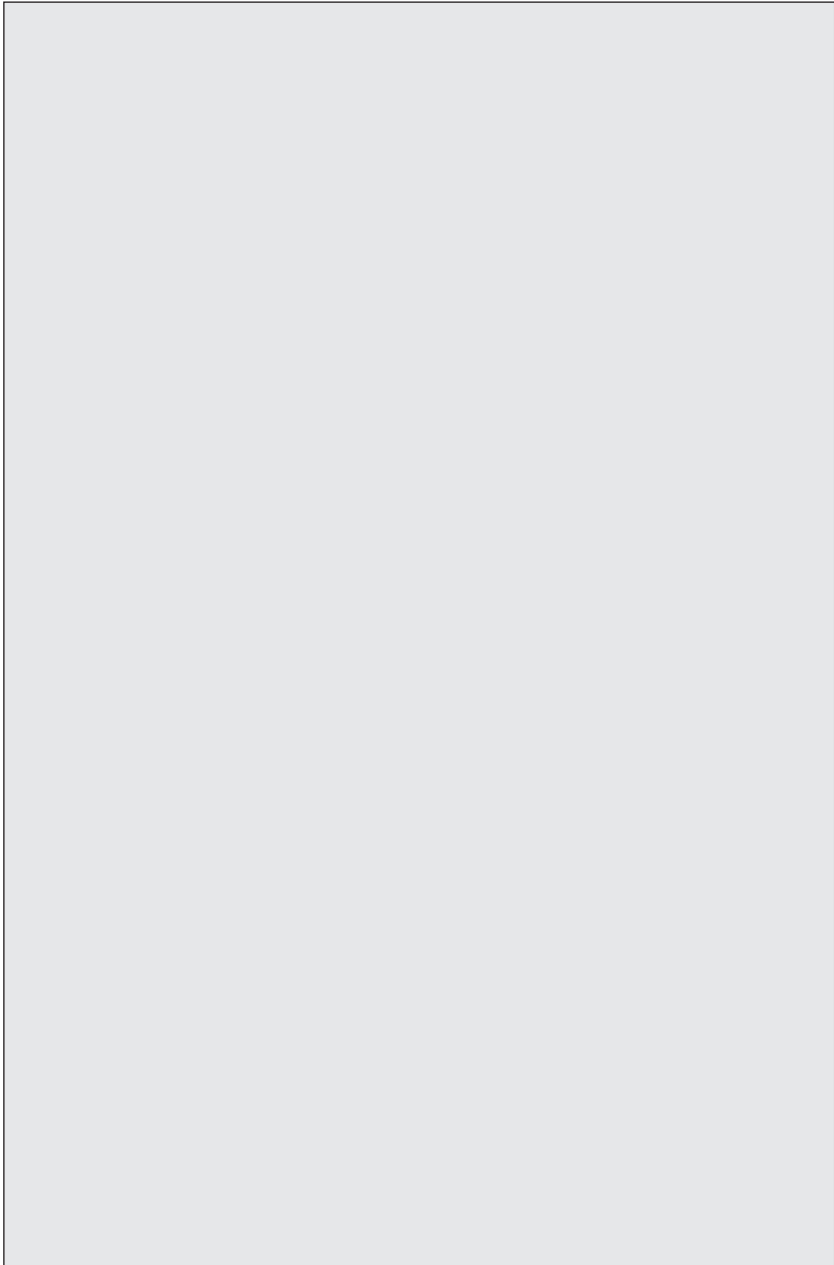


Plate 4 A section of the *Via Dolorosa*, c.1900 (ref: uncatalogued) (copyright The Bute Archive at Mount Stuart).

sources have been identified or noted. In particular, the correspondence of the the second Marquess, as well as the letter books maintained by various factors, are sources which could potentially yield more detail not only about what was done to develop the landscape (and by whom) but also what plans were considered and abandoned, and why. The estate's nineteenth-century financial ledgers would contain valuable information about whose services were used to develop the gardens – the names of tradesmen and suppliers and the nature of their services. A deeper analysis of these sources, which record the blending of a rural and urban landscape⁴⁵ by dealing with the Bute Estate and the country seat of Mount Stuart as an inseparable unit, may provide evidence of the exact nature of their relationship.

It is also true that there are gaps in our knowledge of Mount Stuart's garden history because of a lack of documentary evidence, particularly relating to its origins and early development. At present, the exact nature of the land at Kerryhaven is not known or what was altered to accommodate the new house and gardens. Perhaps this information was never recorded at all. Maybe most of the decisions relating to the layout and content of the gardens were discussed rather than written down. It is also possible that these discussions were preserved on paper but the records did not survive to become part of the archive. Certainly, the collection in which it would be natural to find such records – the papers of the second Earl of Bute – does not yield as much information as would be expected. It is also important to remember that the BA is not a complete archive of the family: as a discrete collection it can provide unrivalled insight into the lives, activities and business concerns of various family members, but as individuals branched off from the main family tree, so too did some of the records. Papers of many of the key family members discussed here are found in both public and private collections throughout the United Kingdom. Therefore, although some of the most illuminating and important archives for the development of Mount Stuart's gardens are held in this collection, it cannot and should not be used in isolation. It is also true that certain of these key pieces may have skewed our interpretation of the development of the gardens by virtue of the fact that few contemporary sources exist to either corroborate or contravene them: the estate surveys are a prime example of this.

However, these are relatively minor weaknesses in an archive which represents the continuous record of one family from the twelfth century to the present day. Although the collection may be complemented by archives in other repositories, the BA alone contains the sources for the main body of a comprehensive review of Mount Stuart's garden history. It gathers different types of sources from many of those involved in the planning, execution and development of the grounds, from patron and designer to gardener and labourer. It is also unusual to have such a body of unbroken records, which are

⁴⁵ C. R. Wickham-Jones, *The Landscape of Scotland: A Hidden History* (Stroud, 2001), 47.

still held in the place of their creation.⁴⁶ That is one of its key strengths, one that is not often matched by other, similar estate archives.⁴⁷

This has only been a brief outline of what sources are available in the BA for research into the landscape of the estate. The sources range from written documents such as reports, letters and journals to pictorial sources like maps, plans, surveys and photographs. The wide date range they cover, from the inception of the estate in the early eighteenth century up until the present day,⁴⁸ offers a rare opportunity to chart in detail the development of the grounds and to focus on the people who contributed to this development. Mount Stuart offers the sources for a detailed case study on the changing styles and tastes of landscape design. From the Baroque-influenced garden of the early eighteenth century to the pretty wildernesses of a century later and the passion for storytelling prevalent in Victorian patrons and garden designers, each has played a part in the development of the historically important, and beautiful, policies of Mount Stuart.

⁴⁶ Anderson, 'Blair and Glamis', 99.

⁴⁷ Sclater, 'Picturesque Privacy', 17–30; A. Tindley and C. Anderson, 'Highland Estate Management and Mapping: Holdings at Golspic, Sutherland, c.1870–c.1920', *Scottish Archives*, 17 (2011), 26–43; M. Storrie, 'Recovering the Historic Designed Landscape of Islay Estate', *Scottish Archives*, 7 (2001), 59–77.

⁴⁸ The BA is a living archive which receives regular accruals.