

**1 CASTLE HILL
KENILWORTH
WARWICKSHIRE CV8 1NB**

HISTORIC BUILDING AND GARDEN REPORT

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BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The land currently occupied by the property known as 1 Castle Hill (formerly known as The Wantage) was originally land owned by the local monastic order: The Abbey of St Mary. This was founded around 1119 for Augustinian Canons but was closed down by Henry VIII as part of the Dissolution of The Monasteries in 1538. By 1600, most of the Abbeys buildings had been dismantled, although there are some surviving parts.

There has been significant hearsay about the boundary of the land owned by the Abbey (Abbey Fields) as being bounded by a wall. This would makes sense and walls were a normal way of bounding ones territory at the time.

After the Dissolution, the Abbey lands were handed to the de Flamock family who then sold the estate to Robert Dudley 1st Earl of Leicester in 1560. There is a suggestion that the original wall to the Abbey Estate ran just south of the current line of the High Street/Castle Hill. In fact the line of the High Street/Castle Hill is probably derived from the position of the wall and the properties that nestled beside it. These properties are the various late 16th century cottages that Robert Dudley erected for the people and services that he required to work his estate. No.85 The High Street is an example.

Map showing Abbey lands and cottages.

The earliest known map of the estate with interpretable information dates from 1692 which is known as the Fish Map. This divides the Abbey Estate up into parcels of land such as Abbey Hill (now on Castle Hill), Abbey Grounds (now fronts onto High Street), Abbey Meadow (where the lake is). Within these various parcels of land the monks would have had their Abbey, land for intensive cultivation, farming, grazing, and simply strolling to escape the grind of day to day.

Various photographs and prints over the ages show little change to Abbey Fields until 1870. This is when The principal owner of the Abbey Fields Estate the Rt. Hon George Villiers, 4th Earl of Clarendon died. The estate passed to his wife and when she dies in 1884 to the 5th Earl. He was more interested in sport where he played 1st class cricket for Cambridge University and went on to become chairman of what is now known as Watford Football Club. He put the land (Abbey Fields) up for sale for a price of £17,000.

The Town Council, then known as 'the Board' was comprised of the great and the good of Kenilworth, and it wished that the town could buy it, however at £17,000 it was too expensive. What the principal members then did was to form a syndicate: Joseph Burbury, William Evans, Samuel Forrest, and Luke Heynes, with the intent of selling off some of the land for development to enable the rest of the land to be preserved for the public. They appear to have used their own monies to achieve this and certain parcels of land were then divided between them as collateral.

The syndicate members appear to have been allocated parcels of land as security for either their money, or the banks money as collateral for the purchase of the whole.

Initially three parcels of land appear to have been distributed A) Castle Road west B) Castle Hill and C) Castle Road south. The aim appears to be non-profit making, just to sell sufficient land to recoup the borrowings for the site as a whole.

Additional areas are also divided up for security: E) to William Evans in the capacity as Church Warden, F) to Joseph Burberry and G) to George Turner who has taken over from Luke Heynes who dies in 1885 one year after the purchase of 1884.

The undeveloped land to the north of the site along what was to become "New Row" and is now called "Castle Hill" and the Church to the East is then parcelled up into 13 plots and divided between the syndicate members. Plot 1 was Sion House. There were some stipulations and conditions applied to these plots which included:

- No building should extend north of the line C-D
- No Building should extend south of the line EF, half way down the plots. This apparently is a sight line and it was thought that anything to the south of this line would impact on the view of the castle by William Evans who lived in Sion house.
- That no trade should be carried on and no steam engine erected.
- Each plot should contain one house or two semi detached cottages.
- The plots should be adequately fenced.
- No direct access to the fields should be opened without the consent of the town board.

The Syndicate sold the plots as follows:

2 & 3	William Evans (Syndicate Member)
4,5 & 6	George Turner (Syndicate Member)
7,8 & 9	Mary Draper
10,11,12,13	George Turner (Syndicate Member)

Although the Syndicate is selling plots to syndicate members ultimately it appears that the intentions are honourable, because as soon as the amount of borrowed money is recouped the land is returned to the Town Board for the benefit of the town people.

Apart from Block of land "A", the only building plots sold for development are 2,3,4 and 5, and of course plot 11 for 1 Castle Hill and later plot 12. Plot 13 is sold for The Orchard even later and plot 10 is sold to enable Miss Ellie Dennison (then owner of 1 Castle Hill) to own the cottage next door to 1 Castle Hill at No.85 The High Street.

It is interesting to note that at the time of the plot divide and allocation, the plots runs through the cottages straddling plots 9 & 10 with little regard. The Cottages also have an impact on the road line and the historic use of plots 11,12 & 13. On the 1888 OS map the line of what was probably the original Abbey Estate wall can be seen. At the western end of the wall nearest the castle we can see what were hovels, shops, or small dwellings clustered together probably scraping a living providing services for the castle. The Cottages referred to above were built later at the top of the hill and would have serviced the Abbey estate.



Fig (1) Boundary and wall of Abbey lands 1066-1538

The information contained in this modern OS map is taken from the 1692 map called the Fish Map. This map was prepared by the Earl of Leicester to mark out his land. The heavy black line was the original walled boundary, and the red lines indicate the monastic field divisions.

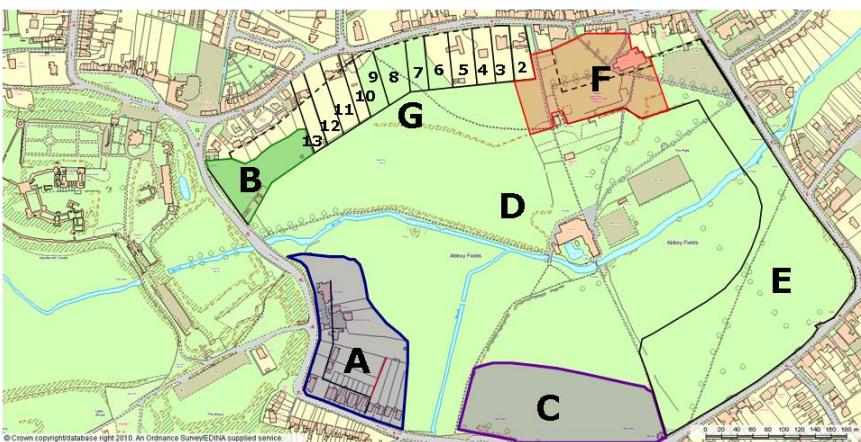


Fig (2) The sale and formation of Abbey Fields in 1884

The dwellings/businesses north of the wall on New Row would have required small strips of land (pre-enclosure) for cultivation for their own ends. Thus there would have been a cultivated strip between the wall of the Abbey estate and the "New Row" which ran up the hill from the Castle. The land to the west of the cottages (no.85 High Street) would therefore have originally been cultivated land for the use of the cottages. This is indicated as 'Orchard' on the 1890 OS maps, but probably represents cultivated land rather than orchard. See fig (3)

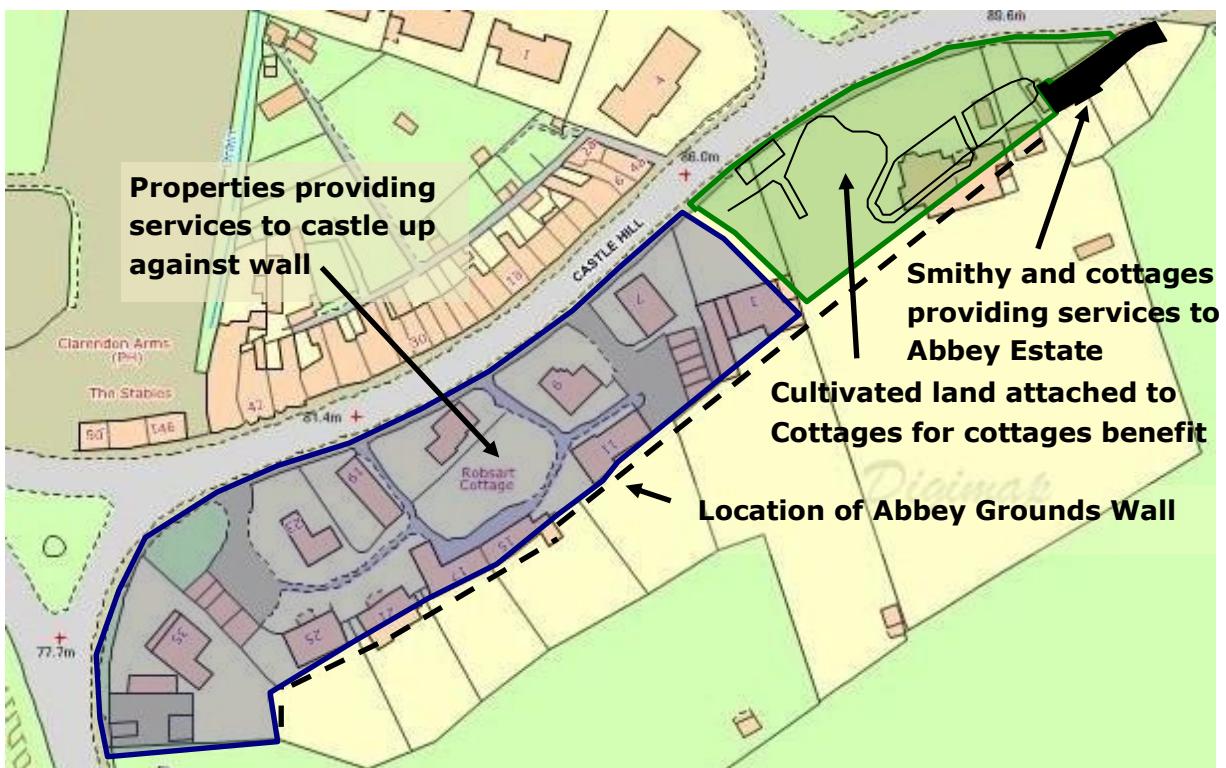


Fig (3) The Origins of Castle Hill—formerly known as 'New Row'

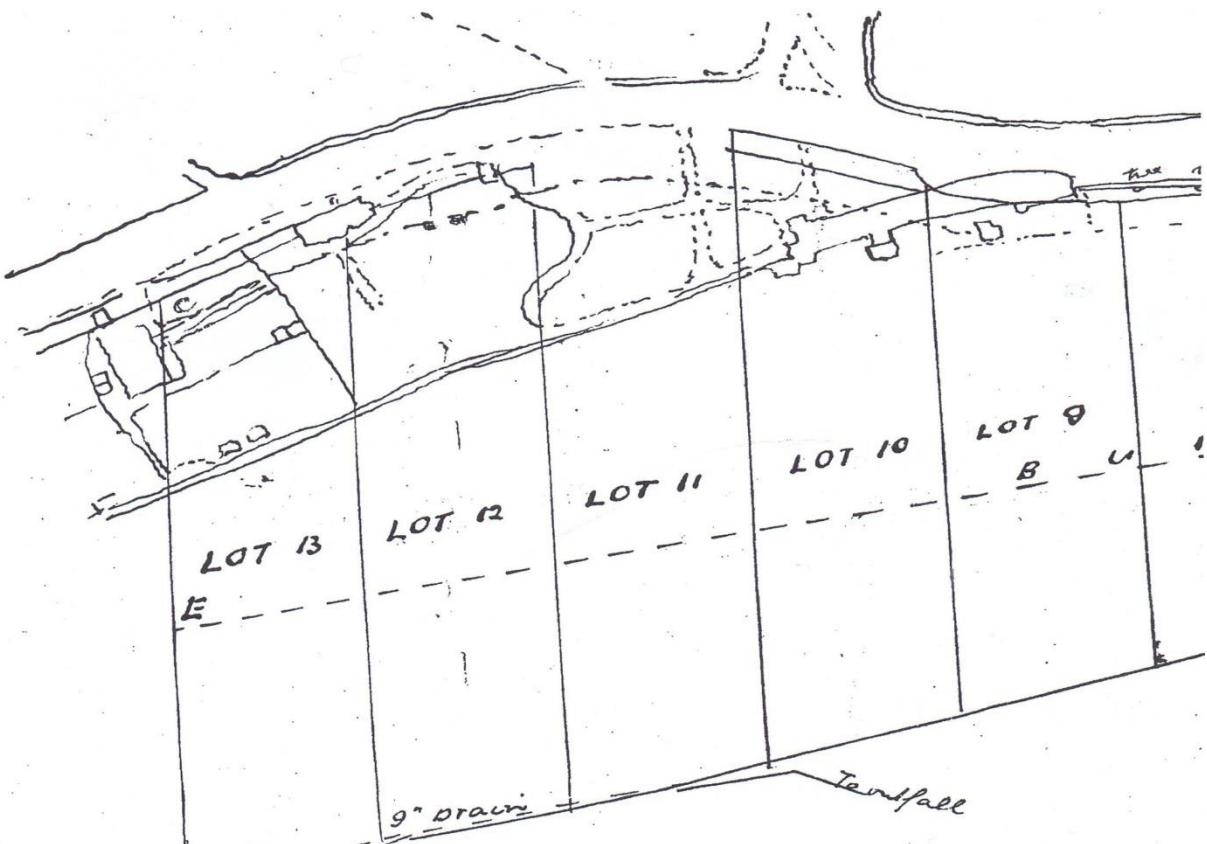


Fig (4) Extract from Deeds dated 24/12/1884 indicating plots and land to north of Abbey wall

1 CASTLE HILL TIMELINE

- 1538** Dissolution of Monasteries, Estate awarded to Flamock family
- 1560** Earl of Dudley buys estate from Flamock family
Cottages including No.85 built to accommodate Dudley workforce
- 1625** Earliest Map showing Abbey Fields. 3 no. parcels of land
i) Abbey Meadows
ii) Abbey Hill
iii) Abbey Grounds
- 1870** Earl Clarendon (owner of Abbey Fields) dies
- 1884** Abbey estate sold to Burghers of Kenilworth
Burghers retain Abbey Meadows but intent is to sell of Hill and Grounds
- 1888** OS Map shows Abbey field developed but Abbey Grounds are not
George Turner buys central section of land from Burghers: Abbey Grounds
- 1895** Aaron Dennison dies in January, Widow and daughter move to Kenilworth
- 1899** Plot 11 bought
- 1901** Plot 11, 1 Castle Hill complete and occupied by 1901 March census
- 1901** Plot 12 bought by the owner of 1 Castle Hill
- 1913** February, No 85, and plot bought from George Turner by the owner of 1 Castle Hill
- 1913** Later in year Ethel Dennison suddenly dies have set up trust for No. 85
Sister and brother in-low continue to live at 1 Castle Hill
No.85 converted and Trust lets out
- 1936** Garage plans approved
- 1937** Richard Dickinson buys 1 Castle Hill and restyles it 'Hillcote'
- 1938** Cottage Gardens hived off
- 1958** Alfred Bach buys 1 Castle Hill
When Alfred Bach dies Neville Spencer (from Clinton House) moves in with widow
- 2008** Neville Spencer moves out and house remains empty
- 2009** Current owner buys property.

THE DENNISONS

(The Builders of 1 Castle Hill)

Aaron Dennison was born in Freeport Maine in 1812. After a three year apprenticeship he went to work as a journeyman watchmaker in Boston in 1833. He was interested in the inaccuracies of workmanship and construction of even the best handmade watches. This area of Connecticut and Massachusetts, was the birthplace of large scale precision manufacturing where it churned out Colt revolvers and Springfield rifles.

Dennison was fascinated by this and understood the concept that precision manufacture on a large scale could be applied to other important areas—not just firearms. Around 1840 he invented the Dennison Standard Gauge and then developed the American System of Watch Manufacturing.

He had other interests too and could see a good idea and perfect it as well as anyone, but despite a number of diversions he returned to watch making. He went into partnership with Samuel Curtis and in 1854 built a new factory in Waltham, Massachusetts. The company eventually became the Waltham Watch Company and it produced the very first watch with interchangeable parts which was inexpensive, reliable and of 'Railway quality'. He was the founding father of the American watch making industry and did for watches what Henry Ford did for cars.

Probably either after, or as a result of the American civil war Dennison moved to Switzerland where he was fascinated with the watch and toy industries leading him to England where he set up a watch making business operating from 24 Villa Road, Handsworth in 1874.

Aaron Dennison died in early January 1895 aged 83 and his wife Charlotte and daughter Ethil then moved to Kenilworth. Number 1 Castle Hill, plot 11 was purchased and the property designed and built for them to be living in by the time of the 1901 Census (31st March 1901). Plot 12 (to the west) was bought in January 1901. At this point in time Charlotte was 89 and Ethil was a spinster aged 50. Ethil was the owner and builder of 1 Castle Hill.

It appears that about or on the death of the mother Charlotte, Ethil's sister and her husband Charles Terry move into 1 Castle Hill and then remain there until the last one dies in 1936.

Ethil dies in 1914. It is unclear whether her death was expected or unexpected, but it does seem to have been quite sudden. However she did arrange a Charitable action prior to her death. Whether she was going to do this anyway or did as a result of her imminent demise, Ethil decided that she was going to buy the Cottage next door—No.85 The High Street, for the purposes of it being occupied rent free or as low a rent as possible by poor ladies or women. The property was put in trust with an endowment of £200 (a lot in those days) for the maintenance and repair and the payment of rates and taxes. Also shortly before her death she caused the cottage to be altered and repaired. This was Plot 10 and was bought in early 1914, but the demise of the garden was never registered until the sale of the house in 1935.

SUBSEQUENT OWNERS OF 1 CASTLE HILL

After the death of Elthil Dennison in 1914 and the (hurried) purchase of plot 10 from George Turner, the deeds were amended to separate the cottage No.85 from 1 Castle Hill. This was set up in 1916. As an aside The Charitable Trust set up for the ownership and administration of No.85 that ran until 1961 when the Trustees handed the property back to Kenilworth Town Council.

In 1937 the last Dennison dies and 1 Castle Hill is then sold to Mr Richard Dickinson who re-styles the property "Hillcote". Planning permission is given for the garage on the front of plot 10 and adjacent to No.85. It is believed that this was built at the same time as the purchase of 1 Castle Hill by Mr Dickinson. It must have been part of this sale that the deeds and the allocation of Plot 10 was formalised. A small element of the plot was apportioned as garden to No.85, which had always been the case but it was formalised at this point. Various rights of way were also allocated and the remainder of Plot 10 became officially part of 1 Castle Hill. It is believed that Richard Dickinson probably made most of the alterations to 1 Castle Hill from its original design to how we see it today

In 1958 Alfred Bach buys 1 Castle Hill. We know from the next and last incumbent (Neville Spencer) that Mr Bach took the staircases out leading from the first floor to the attics. According to Neville Spencer Mr Bach thought the rates were too high on the property, and was told this was as a result of the number of bedrooms it had. As a result he had the attics boarded up and the staircases removed. It turned out it took him ten years to pay the carpenter off with the rates saving!

The final incumbent of 1 Castle Hill was Neville Spencer. He had been living in Clinton House after his wife had died. When Mr Bach died Neville Spencer then moved into 1 Castle Hill with Mrs Bach. He was allowed to live there until his death with the house then going to Mrs Bach's niece. Mr Spencer moved out in 2008 aged 97 to take up residency in a senior citizens home. Apparently, whilst at 1 Castle Hill, he lived in two rooms due to the appalling state of disrepair of the building which had occurred over many areas.

THE DESIGN OF 1 CASTLE HILL

When Ethil Dennison's father died she was a 45 year old spinster who had had to follow her father around the Eastern US and Europe, then to Birmingham. Moving to Kenilworth was probably the first opportunity she had had to do her own thing. Her father was very innovative and forward thinking, which would have rubbed off on her, so with that and a combination of being an American in a foreign country, commissioning a significantly modern house (for the time) would have been a comparatively comfortable experience for her. In fact it is fair to assume that her approach would have been forward looking rather than backward. Hence the very modern design.

The building plots on the top of the Abbey Fields were probably the best plots in Kenilworth. The plot size at Abbey Fields was the norm for building plots.

ORIGINAL BUILDING PLOTS



Land – Plots 2-13 divided up 24th December 1884

Plot 11 – purchased 13th November 1899

Plot 12 – purchased 4th January 1901

Plot 10 – purchase officially recorded 16th August 1935

EXTERNAL DESIGN ISSUES

Plot 10 on the eastern boundary was not purchased until 1913 and was never part of the garden or plans for the house, it was a charitable gesture on Ethil Dennison's deathbed. The garden and land division of this plot was not recorded until 16th August 1935; as such it was obviously not part of the original garden design as evident on plot 11. The eastern boundary of 1 Castle Hill itself is built only four feet away from the boundary of plot 10. This suggests that space around the house and proximity to other properties was not an issue for the client.

On this basis and the fact that Plot 12 on the western side of the house was only purchased at or close to Completion of 1 Castle Hill also suggests that space was not an issue as the house (and garden) had already been designed.

External Design Issues

In Fig (3) the land to the north of the original Abbey Fields wall was cultivated land attached to the cottages (No.85 High Street). As part of the divide of all the lands by the Board this land was regularised and an exact road/pavement position with the formation of 'Castle Hill' from 'New Row'. It was stipulated that no building works shall take place within the space of what is now is the pavement (A-B). Instead plots 11 to 13 built walls to form their new northern boundary.

The board stipulated that each plot should contain one house or two semi-detached houses/cottages, of a value that was significant for the area.

The ground level drops between the ground adjacent to the front door of 1 Castle Hill to the middle of Plot 12 by 2.7m.

As a consequence a retaining wall is built between Plot 11 and plot 12. Whether this was done by George Turner or by Dennison is unknown. Dennison can easily afford to buy plot 12 and we know that at this stage the 'Syndicate' is only looking to get its money back rather than making a profit from any development. Maybe they came to some arrangement that suited everyone?

Internally

The house is quite similar to how it was originally. There are several changes:

The external bathroom balcony on the south elevation has been removed.

The fireplace in the hall way has been blocked up.

The staircases between first and attic floors was removed sometime after 1958 by a previous owner

The Garden

Plot 11 (the building plot the house sits on) was purchased 13th November 1899 and the building was complete and occupied ready for the census of 31st March 1901. The design of the house and garden would have been integral with the building and landscaping required for the lower level are more than likely have occurred concurrently, as the only point of access was from Castle Hill. (As access to and from Abbey Fields was prohibited). In 1905 a picture of the rear of the house and the garden appeared in an issue of 'The Studio' magazine. The picture shows the garden to the rear of 1 Castle Hill (Plot 11). This was the only part of the garden which had been laid out. It is well

documented the rear of Plot 12 was in fact a vegetable garden and Plot 10 was not purchased until 1913.

PLOTS 10 & 12

Plot 10 was not purchased by Ethil Dennison until 1913. She would have been 64, and either knew she was dying or had a burning desire to carry out charitable work. For she bought the cottage (No.85 The High Street) for the benefit of poor women and set up a charitable trust with a significant endowment to administer it. She died before the building works to No.85 had been completed and more importantly the demise between the properties had been concluded. This was actually done in 1916. Any works to the rear garden of the Cottage or Plot 10 would have had to have been done after 1916.

The owner of 1 Castle Hill at this stage was Ethil Dennison's sister (Mrs Terry) who would have been around 65 years old as well. Bearing in mind she would have been living in the house for around 15 years at this point and was past her prime, it would have been unlikely if she suddenly wanted to embark upon major works to the garden.

When Mrs Terry died in 1935 (aged 85) the house was bought by Richard Dickinson. He owned it for over 20 years and therefore we assume he had the energy and desire to carry out the additional works we see today.

These were the building of the garage to the front of Plot 10 resulting in the removal of the kitchen garden. He must also have been responsible for the fenestration to the south elevation, the wooden structure to the rear entrance and the concreting of the yard to the south of the service sector of the property. The garage is not at all sympathetic to the original 1 Castle Hill Design and would be better removed.

Plot 12

Plot 12 was bought on 4th January 1901, some 1.2 years after the original plot 11 was purchased on 13th November 1899. The house was occupied by the client before the 31st March 1901 Census. The Census recorded that there were two servants and some guests in residence as well, so it is unlikely the house had been finished a few days before the Census, it would have been finished before Christmas or just into the New Year.

We have seen that this plot was not part of the original architects design, and was probably acquired because development profit was not being sought and George Turner was at the point of re-paying his part of the syndicated loan in any case. It seems as though it was simply mutually convenient to both parties to have the land acquired.

We have seen from the design of the garden in Plot 11 that it was an integral part of the design of the house, and due to no rear access would have been built concurrently with the house. Plot 12 must therefore have been purchased either just before or just after the completion of the house and garden of Plot 11.

The wall pier post on Castle Hill which separates plots 11 & 12 is much more substantial than the other piers thus denoting that the plots were separate and not one. The retaining wall on the western side separating the two plots sets out the plots. An integral design would have probably dispensed with this.

Garden Conclusion

The original garden designed for Plot 11 is a significant piece of design and integral with the design of the house.

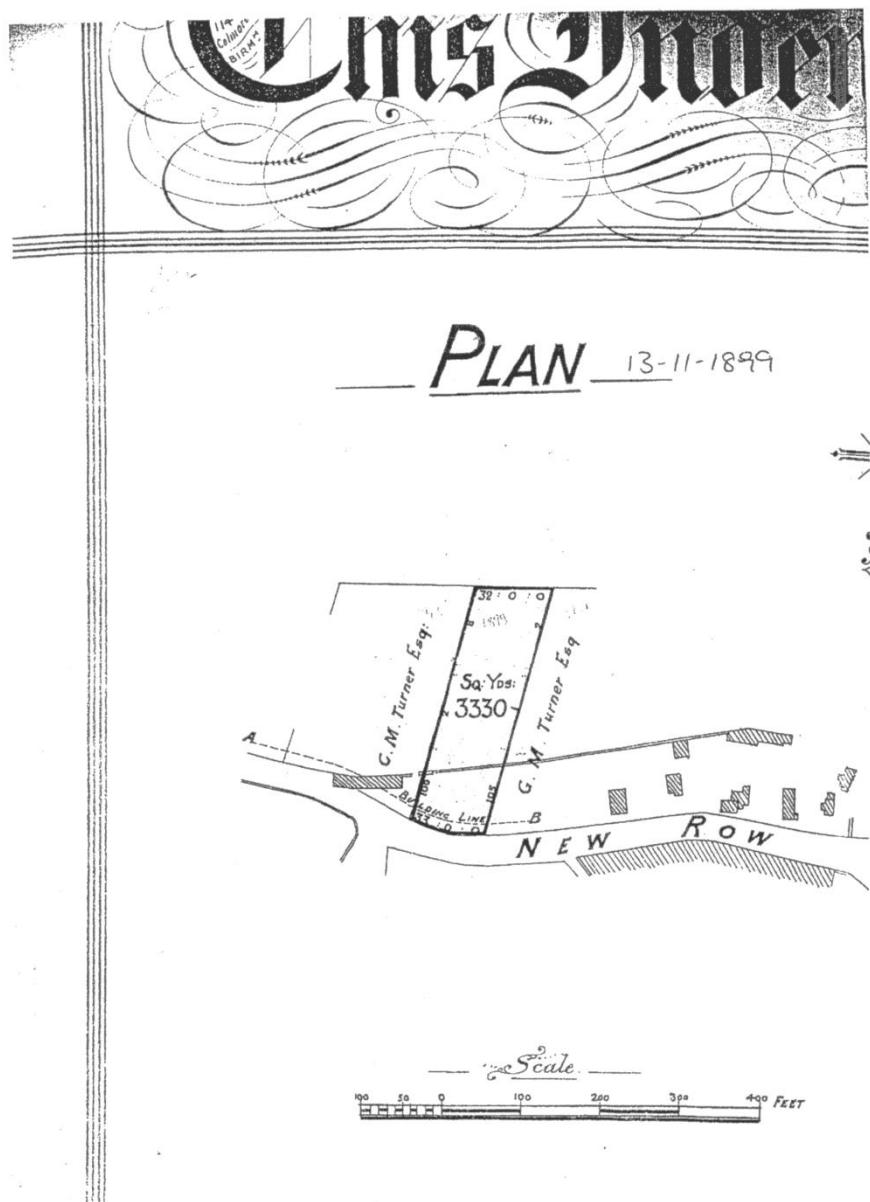
Plot 12 was purchased at or after completion of 1 Castle Hill and therefore was not integral to the design. This additional plot seems to have diluted the original design rather than added to it. The rear of Plot 12 as documented became a mere vegetable garden.

There is a suggestion that the addition of gardens within a garden was part of the Arts and Crafts Movement theory. This is true for larger sprawling gardens, but the main period for the Arts and Crafts was 1880 to 1910 and so plot 10 would never have been part of this, nor was plot 12. The architect's background at this stage was principally in domestic architecture in development strip suburbia, not sprawling gardens in the country.

The joy of 1 Castle Hill's garden design is what the architect managed to do within Plot 11, which 1 Castle Hill was built on.

The combination of Plots 10, 11 and 12 brings the area of 1 Castle Hill up to 1.6 acres which requires significant maintenance which is extensive.

APPENDIX I—Acquisition Plot 11



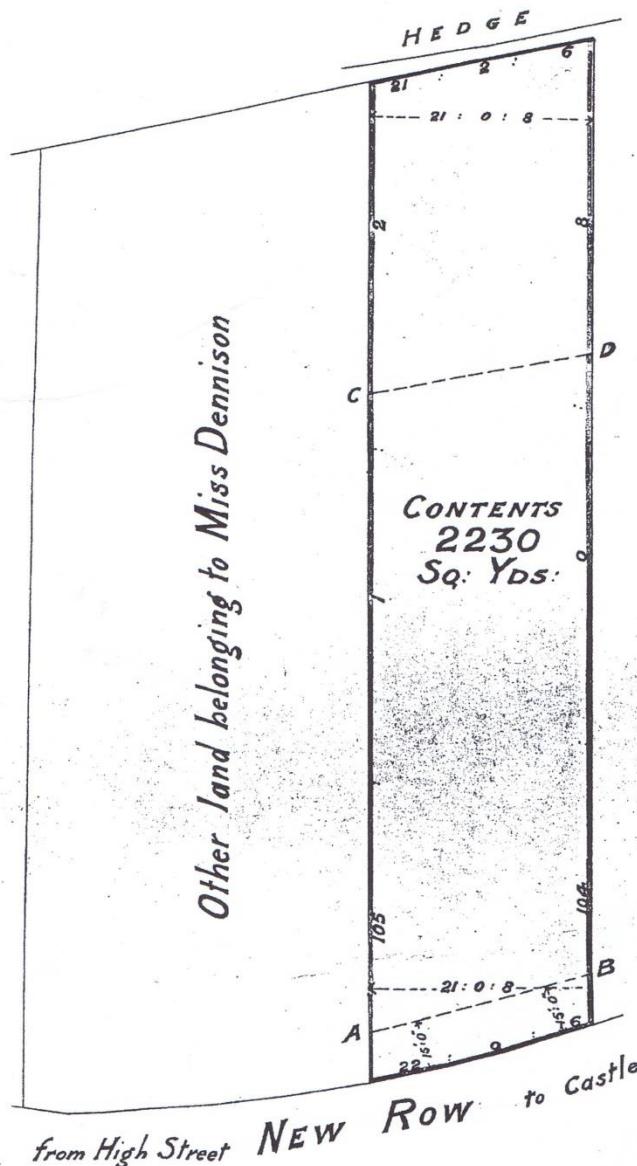
APPENDIX II—Acquisition Plot 12



PLAN

4-1-1901

PUBLIC PARK



Other land belonging to Miss Dennison

Other land belonging to G. M. Turner Esq.

from High Street NEW Row to Castle

Scale 41.66 Feet to an Inch

APPENDIX III—Acquisition Plot 10

