

## **Guildford Design Awards 2023 Entry Requirements**

### **RHS Garden Wisley – Bowes Lyon Pavilion**

1. Address of Scheme including postcode

RHS Garden Wisley  
Woking  
Surrey  
GU23 6QB

2. Category of Project

Conservation Project

3. Name of Client

The Royal Horticultural Society

4. Architect, Design Consultants or Artist

In 1962, the design for a new garden pavilion for the Rose Garden was run as a competition and was won and subsequently designed by Mr Derrick Lees ARIBA. The architect's statement is attached.

A programme of conservation of the building commenced some 50 years after the building was constructed, concurrent with the Rose Garden redesign, culminating in recent works that have fully restored the intentions and context of the design.

5. Key contact - Email address, phone number, etc.

Matthew Pottage  
Curator  
matthewpottage@rhs.org.uk  
07970138308

6. Brief description of the Project including key features of the design, maximum 1 page A4

### **Significance**

The Significance of this garden pavilion lies in its position within the earliest-registered grade II\* Registered Park and Garden on Historic England's list; the context of the evolution of the garden as it expanded at the time, creating a gateway between the formal and informal; and the unusual Modernist, almost machine-age design.

The design is a simple canopy structure, made up of octagonal sections that are reminiscent of parasols for shade and contemplation. This is supported on slight and elegant columns that contribute to the airiness of the design, but also bring an aluminium aircraft inspired design, topped with pineapple decorative finials. The flourish of Perspex 'starburst' skylights completes the exuberance of the cedar clad soffits, pointing towards the sun and bringing light into the space. All thoroughly modern and looking to the future, with horticultural references but perhaps also reminiscent of eastern garden designs for shade and ornamentation.

Remarkably, the steel and cedar furniture, stone floor scape and memorial stone all remain in place. The memorial records Sir David Bowes-Lyon (younger brother to The Queen Mother) as RHS President from 1953 to 1961.

### Conservation programme

The programme of conservation has taken place in phases due questions over the future of the building and to the availability of funds. The redesign of the Rose Garden by Robert Myers in 2011 was an impetus to enhancing the significance of the Pavilion to retain it as part of the history of the Society. The decision to retain the structure has been validated by the popularity of the building as a Place in the garden, although not all admire the yet unfashionable design.

The phases of work have included:

Phase I – removal of column finials and specialist cleaning and refurbishment of the columns

Phase II – Manufacture of Perspex 'starburst' lights to original designs and repairs to roof.

Phase II – repairs and redecoration to soffits, fascia's, rainwater goods and columns and re - presentation of surfaces

Over time, trials have also taken place with grass solutions that are sufficiently robust, with a natural turf now being adopted.

Completion of Restoration programme – 2023 following works undertaken by conservation contractors Stead bury Ltd.

The programme of conservation that is now complete is testament to the commitment by the RHS to retain and honour the history of the Society, the Rose Garden and the work of the Bowes Lyon family and the royal connections to the RHS. Where Horticulture is the first call on RHS resources, this conservation programme of a building has been achieved by the commitment of the Wisley team, and is put forward for this award an example of small scale, sensitive and faithful work to a rare building of its time.

David Alexander MA MRICS  
RICS Conservation Accredited

7. Photographs of the completed project (include existing photographs, plans and elevations, as appropriate for the Conservation Project and Regeneration Project categories)



Bowes Lyon Pavilion 2022 – completed works



Bowes Lyon Pavilion 2022



Construction Stage 1964



1964



1964

Before conservation works



2016

Original roof lights were replaced with the plain fixed skylights in the 1980s.



2016

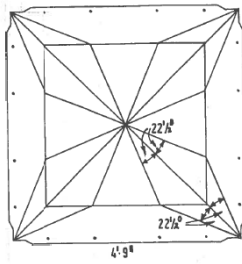


FIG 5 PLAN

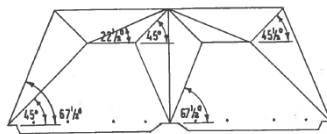


FIG 6 CORNER ELEVATION

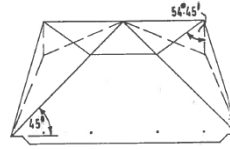


FIG 7 SIDE ELEVATION

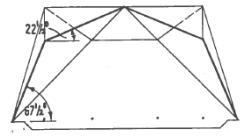


FIG 8 CROSS SECTION.

The Rooflights are a compound of the Octagon and the  $\sqrt{2}$  rectangle working in these dimensions. They therefore demonstrated a remarkable geometric spacial arrangement which the all perspex construction makes more ready to appreciate. All of the angles in Plan and both elevations are  $22\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ ,  $45^\circ$  or  $67\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  except for one at the  $\sqrt{2}$  angle of  $54^\circ 45'$  and one unknown but related angle. The cross section is half of an Octagon. The material is  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick clear sheet perspex with welded perspex medium joints which are then polished. The flange at the base is for extra cover at the fixing positions. A timber template was necessary on a basis for construction.



Extract from The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society relating to The Bowes Lyon Pavilion – architects design for Perspex skylights

THE BOWES LYON MEMORIAL PAVILION, WISLEY

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If you have any asters exhibiting these symptoms please send specimens, with a note of locality and the cultivar name if known, to the Entomologist, R.H.S. Garden, Wisley, Ripley, Woking, Surrey. Only the flower heads are required; these travel best in a polythene bag.

THE BOWES LYON MEMORIAL PAVILION, WISLEY

FELLOWS will remember the announcement in December 1962 of the Society's intention to hold a competition, open to Registered Architects and qualified members of the Institute of Landscape Architects, for a Garden Pavilion in memory of SIR DAVID BOWES LYON. Ninety-eight entries were received and were considered by a Board of Assessors the members of which were LORD ABERCONWAY, SIR WILLIAM HOLFORD, MR. GEOFFREY JELICOE, MR. PETER SHEPHEARD and MR. PETER YOUNGMAN, the President of the Institute of Landscape Architects. Their report, together with photographs of the winning design, submitted by MR. D. LEES, A.R.I.B.A., was published in the JOURNAL in July 1963. Models of the design and plans of others, highly commended by the assessors, were exhibited at Chelsea in that year.

LADY BOWES LYON visited Wisley with the PRESIDENT and LADY ABERCONWAY and considered a number of possible sites on which the Pavilion might be erected. The site suggested and adopted by Council was that at the top of the hill at the western end of the broad grass paths which runs between the long rose borders. This decision was undoubtedly influenced by SIR DAVID's love of roses and the presence of two fine specimens of Dawyck Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica fastigiata*) which helped to provide a ready-made formal setting. A Committee consisting of LORD ABERCONWAY, SIR GILES LODER and MR. G. L. PILKINGTON was formed to plan and co-ordinate the work.

The Pavilion, an interesting example of contemporary architecture, is now complete, and on July 2 HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN MOTHER with LADY BOWES LYON, LORD ELPHINSTONE and several personal friends of SIR DAVID paid an informal visit to the Garden, where they were received by the PRESIDENT and LADY ABERCONWAY with members of the Council.

HER MAJESTY inspected the Pavilion and the opportunity was taken by the President to present MR. DERRICK LEES, the Architect, MR. DAVID WINDERSLEY who carved the memorial stone and members of the Garden Staff who had helped in the construction.

MR. LEES the architect has written the following short account of the Pavilion.

"The design is contemporary, involving materials, techniques and ideas prevalent in this age. There are some classical elements in the design, which is formal and embodies a geometrical system of order that is carried through in three dimensions. Thus the measurements have their

own inevitability. The aim has been to bring all parts of the Pavilion together in one theme so that a sense of harmony and unity is created for the whole building. New materials have made possible new opportunities.

The Pavilion is approached up a slight gradient between two wide beds of roses which are about 150 yards long. The visitor gradually comes up, under and into the Pavilion. Just beyond and flanking it are two fine Dawyck Beech trees and beyond them a grove of Silver Birch, all of which are important elements in the composition. Yew hedges have recently been planted to shield the Pavilion and to form a backcloth behind the Silver Birch. Two spaces are created by the planting, one in and around the Pavilion and the other in the Silver Birch grove from where there is a fine view through the centre of the Pavilion and down the concourse of roses.

The basic idea for the design came to me very shortly after reading the conditions of the Competition. I envisaged an undulating timber roof apparently floating over the Memorial stone in its site at the top of the rose borders. The two faceted roof lights of perspex are unusual and perhaps the first of their kind while the deeply recessed aluminium mouldings round the pillars, which give strong vertical reflections and shadows, provide some of the qualities of classical pillars. The structure is steel with timber framing and a teak ceiling finish. The paving is formed of reconstructed York stone. In the centre of the floor of the Pavilion is the Memorial stone of black marble, the inscription on which is beautifully carved by MR. DAVID KINDERSLEY.

The men engaged in the construction have worked with enthusiasm and care and the standard of the resulting craftsmanship is very high.

The Memorial stone is of black Belgian marble and is shown in Fig. 137. The words carved on it are:

THIS PAVILION  
STANDS IN GRATEFUL AND  
AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF  
THE HONOURABLE  
SIR DAVID BOWES LYON  
K.C.V.O.  
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY  
FROM 1953  
UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1961  
JULY 1964

The work of clearing and levelling the site and laying the foundations was carried out by the Wisley staff in the winter of 1963-4. Then groups of specialist craftsmen in turn dealt with the various materials used in the construction of the Pavilion. This work completed, the Garden Staff laid the paving and memorial stone and carried out landscape work on the surrounding area. The hedges of English Yew were planted in April; the turfing was completed at the end of June. It is intended to replant completely the rose beds during the winter of 1964-5.



Photo: R. P. Seave

FIG. 134—The Bowes Lyon Memorial Pavilion at the top of the Rose Borders in the R.H.S. Garden, Wisley (see p. 363)





FIG. 136—The roof and interior of the Bowes Lyon Memorial Pavilion at Wisley  
Photo: Derek Lees (see p. 364)

FIG. 137—Memorial stone of black Belgian marble carved by Mr. David Kindersley  
Photo: Stearn and Sons (see p. 364)

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FROM 1953  
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JULY 1964

## APPENDICES

RHS Wisley Listing Description: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000126>

Rose Garden remodelling:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-the-rhs/publications/the-garden/the-garden-back-issues/2014-issues/January/a-new-dawn-for-wisley-s-roses>

RIBA Journal article on RHS architectural and conservation projects:

<https://www.ribaj.com/intelligence/royal-horticultural-society-clients-intelligence-isabelle-priest>