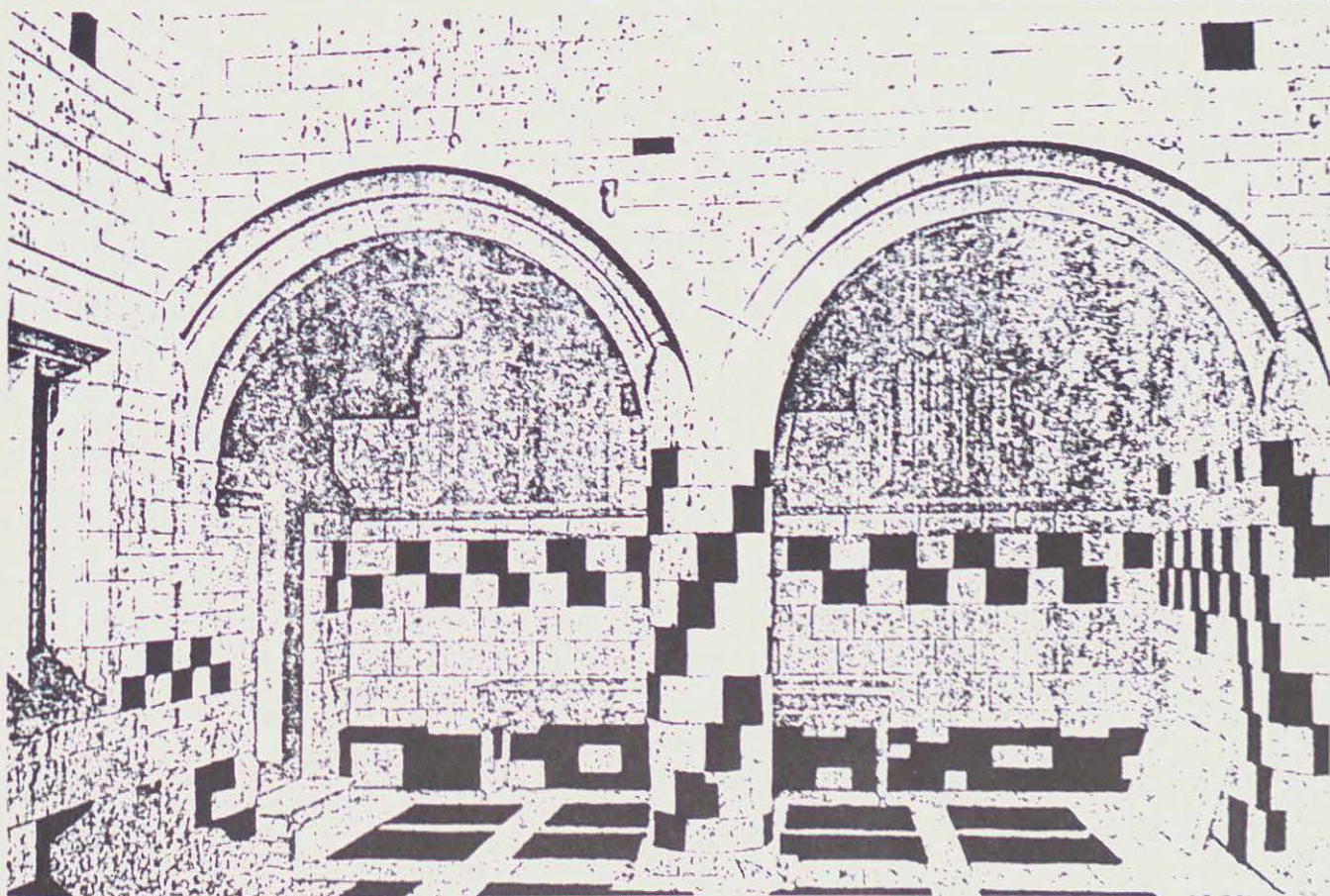


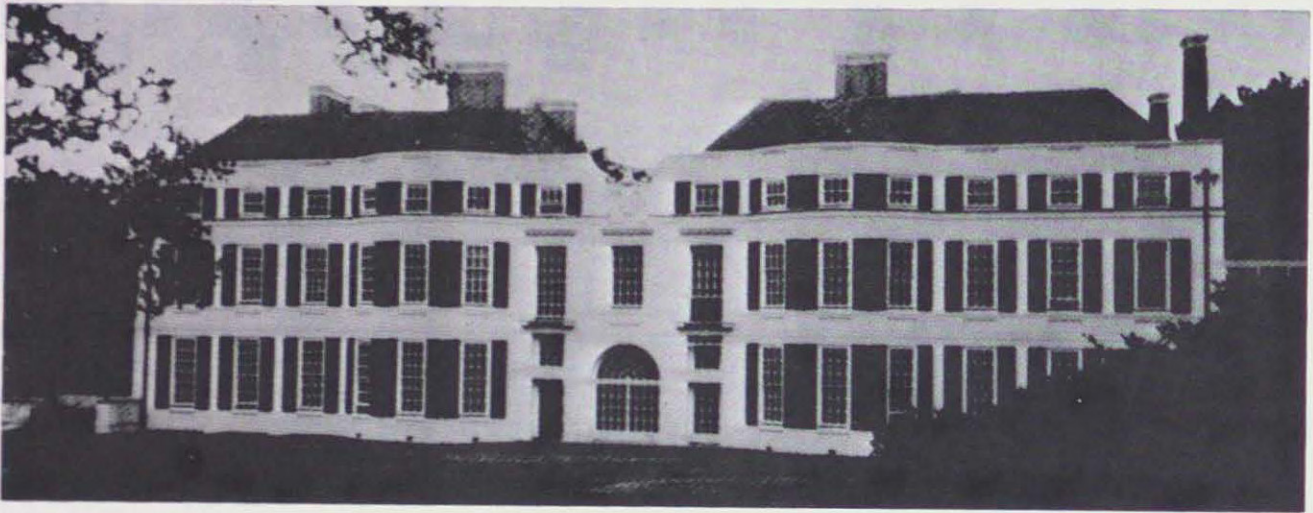
SIR EDWIN LUTYENS

1869 - 1944

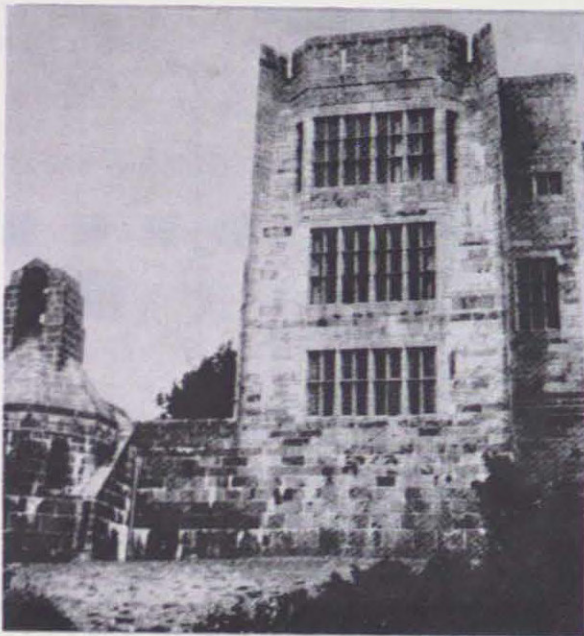
"None of them had his mastery of the architectural game, his fabulous dexterity in every conceivable situation" This notice in the Architects Journal, like the many that appeared at the time of his death in 1944, praised Lutyens as one of the outstanding practitioners of architecture of his day. His career spanned the Victorian and Edwardian eras as well as the birth and flowering of Modernism. He was overshadowed near the end of his career by the big figures of the Modern Movement such as Mies and Le Corbusier and ignored by a whole generation of architects who labelled him as part of the 'established system' against which they were reacting.

by Erich Marosi





Nashdom 1905-9, Buckinghamshire



Castle Drogo 1910-30, Devonshire

At a point in time when we ourselves are trying to understand and re-establish our links with the past, the history of buildings and styles, then it is well worth studying a body of work that evolves from and is deeply rooted in the history of architecture.

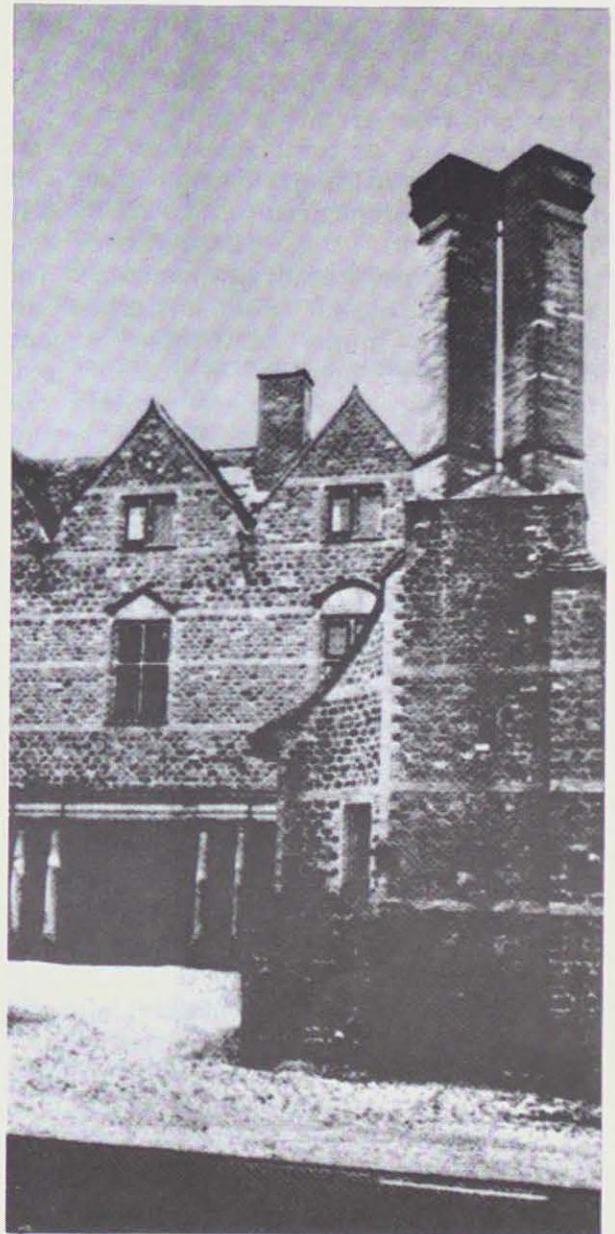
Lutyens once said that "architecture with its beauty and passion, begins where function ends" - a far more movingly beautiful and more accurate pronouncement than Sullivan's oft mis-used slogan. Lutyens designed from

the outside **in** as well as the inside **out**, thereby creating, as Venturi states, the necessary tensions which make 'architecture' and help make the wall an architectural event. The Modern Movement, by preaching the continuity of the interior and the exterior, denied the possibilities of richness inherent in their meeting the wall. Lutyens created drama by allowing for movement through a **series** of spaces and volumes. These rooms sometimes bend as in Nashdom to accommodate and to adjust to some formal pattern which has been set up on the exterior. The exterior becomes richer in meaning and this in turn breeds ambiguity and tension within. Lutyens' grammar of planning consisted of the devaluation of the cross-axis, deriving an asymmetrical circulation scheme within a symmetrical form. He separated movement and axes and accommodated minor elements within a rigid and largely preconceived form. He seldom planned continuous spaces or used surface articulation to achieve movement; the cross-axes were often occupied by a solid mass such as the stair in Tigbourne Court or the fireplace in Heathecotte. The **procession**, as opposed to the continuum, is therefore seen to be central to Lutyens' work.

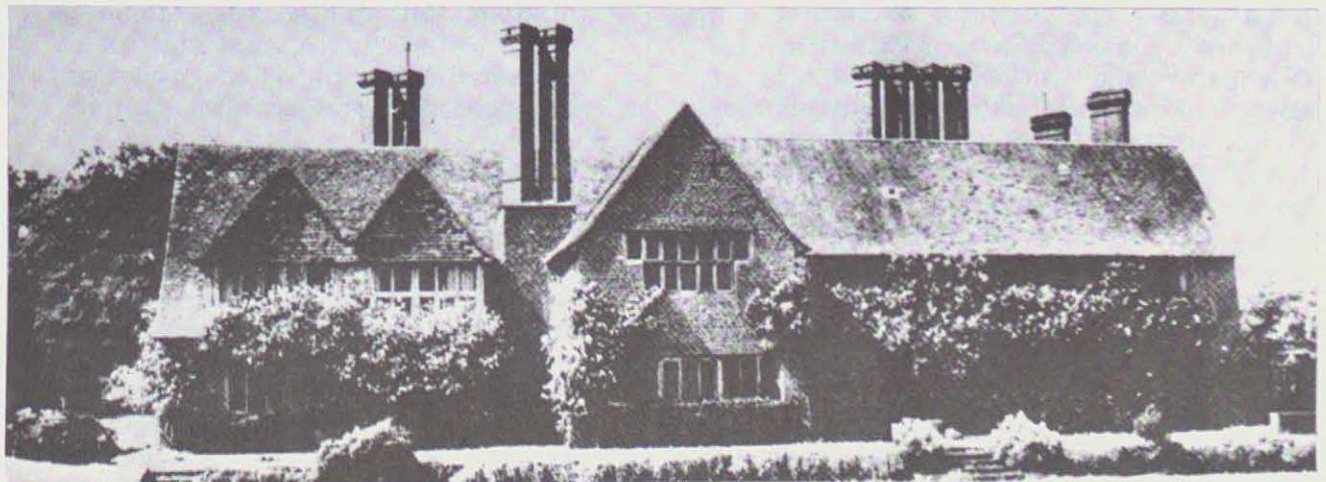
Are we not seeking in our own culture an architecture which is not reductive but reflects our complex age? And if we are to learn from the past then the work of

Sir Edwin Lutyens shines brilliantly in our own century as such an example, satisfying all our demands for richness by its ultra-inclusive nature. Again as Venturi states, "the complexities and inconsistencies of Lutyens' forms appear valid and poignant when matched against **our** attempts to accommodate the richness as well as the problems of our own environment and culture". Further more, Alan Greenberg also stresses that Lutyens' architecture acknowledges "incongruities and accommodation" and is based on the conviction that architecture is necessarily complex and contradictory by admitting the traditional Vitruvian elements of "firmness, commodity and delight".

The symptoms of our own age have been diagnosed by Robert Stern as "contextualism, allusionism and ornamentalism". these attitudes identify



Tigbourne 1899. Surrey, above and right
Orchards 1899. Surrey, below



what is essentially a new 'mannerist' style and are described as follows. First 'contextualism' - the individual building as a fragment of a larger whole. Next, 'allusionism' - architecture as an act of historical and cultural response (i.e.: the history of buildings is the history of **meaning** in architecture). And finally, 'ornamentalism' - the wall or facade as a medium of architectural **meaning**. This style recognizes that buildings are designed to mean something; accepts diversity and prefers hybrids to pure forms. The practitioners of this new style seek (as Stern remarks) to resolve the Modernist split between rationalism (i.e.: function and technology) and realism (i.e.: history and culture) and between culture and commerce.

By contrast, most modern buildings fall short of our expectations by being simple-minded; out-of-context or universal instead of vernacular, and devoid of meaning - unable to communicate.

Sir Edwin Lutyens' architecture on the other hand, satisfies all the attitudes of the new style. His architecture, with its emphasis on the careful articulation of movement and its interplay with axes; as well as its accommodating characteristics, of which expediency and ambiguity are aspects, and its love of paradox, allows it to operate inclusively and establishes it as a complex, non-reductive architecture.

Interestingly, it is ironic to note that Lutyens influenced the great masters of the Modern Movement, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. Greenberg parallels Frank Lloyd Wright's and Lutyens' plan types and identifies Le Corbusier and Lutyens as sculptors of architectural form without contemporary rivals. Also, Peter Collins emphasizes that, "Lutyens was probably the only contemporary architect whom Wright really admired and the four volumes of Lutyens' work were constantly referred to during discussions with students..." Le Corbusier introduced his work at Chandigarh with the following tribute, "New Dehli, the capital of Imperial India was built by Lutyens over thirty years ago with extreme care, great talent and

true success"

These tributes were sincerely given to a man who had absorbed the lessons of classical architecture, and who was perhaps the last great exponent of the European Tradition - built upon the classic, medieval and renaissance masters of architecture. He moved easily from an early picturesque and romantic style developed by his contact with the work of Philip Webb and R.W. Shaw and their contemporaries, to a more personal language formulated by his discovery of Inigo Jones, Wren and Palladio ("In architecture, Palladio is the name of the game" wrote Lutyens in 1903). The introduction of the classical vocabulary resulted in a greater use of symmetry, axes and a sense of a classical whole. He called classical architecture "the great game" and as A.L. Huxtable so aptly put it, "it was a game he played with an aerialist's skill".

His late style or 'elemental mode' was more abstract and stylistic dress tends to be disregarded. The forms are purer and proportionalized and harmony is achieved through the interrelation of the parts. It was a style which evolved from his War Memorial commissions and New Dehli commission and culminated in his Liverpool Cathedral project. Gavin Stamp describes this mode as "of an intellectual subtlety and abstraction rarely achieved by more formal Classicists and had a sculptural and massive power not possessed by the standard 'stripped-classic' of the 30's". And A.S.G. Butler in his introduction to the Memorial Volumes (1950) refers to Lutyens as one of the greatest masters of visible proportion who ever practised architecture.

In conclusion, it is only my intention to foster a greater interest in and explain some of the reasons I consider Lutyens work relevant and timeless and worthy of further investigation. The periods of his work are related by a mutual love of geometry and proportion and by roots buried deep in the history of architecture. It is part of a continuous dialogue with and commentary on the past. □