

The Tully Japanese Garden, Co. Kildare, Ireland

A small garden with a large theme
Barbara Beaven

Barbara Beaven lives in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and would like to hear from other members in those parts. But her article here describes something in quite another region—the Republic of Ireland.

THIS is a small gem of a garden, tucked away in a corner of the Irish National Stud. Although it does not cover a large area of land, the layout creates an impression of space; always there is a suggestion of something interesting around the next corner, the hills seem higher than they are, the paths seem longer.

The garden has all the qualities of a Japanese garden but it also has something extra, which makes it engaging and accessible to

anyone. What makes it special is the theme of the garden, which is universal—it follows the story of a journey through the life of man. This means that the garden can be enjoyed at various levels, for those who have a specialist knowledge its spiritual and aesthetic qualities can be appreciated, but you can also take the children who will have fun following the map and making choices of pathways to follow in their 'journey through life'.

The main garden is basically laid out as a hill and water garden, but it also incorporates a tea garden as part of the design. It contains a number of 'features' of a Japanese garden, including stone lanterns, extensive use of rocks, bridges and winding paths leading to views. Many of the ornaments and the tea-house were imported

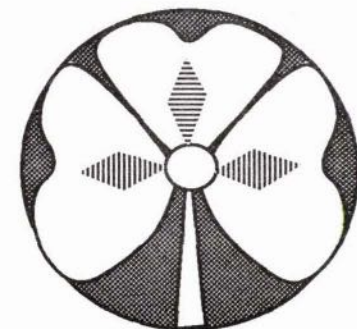
from Japan when the garden was created early in the present century. Features such as hills and planting have been used to give an illusion of space, but there are also enclosed areas with a tranquil atmosphere to encourage meditation.

There is a balance in the planting, between Japanese plants such as maples and pines, and local shrubs and perennials which are sympathetic in terms of shape and texture. It is typical in that it is mostly green, with touches of colour provided by occasional flowers or berries.

Much of the charm of this garden lies in the thought put into its layout which was designed with ingenuity and wit (see the plan overleaf). There were a number of features which I particularly liked—the tunnel near the beginning which started you off with a sense of mystery and anticipation, the 'easy paths' which were offered as a choice at various stages of the journey and left me wondering if anyone was ever foolish enough to take one, and miss out on the



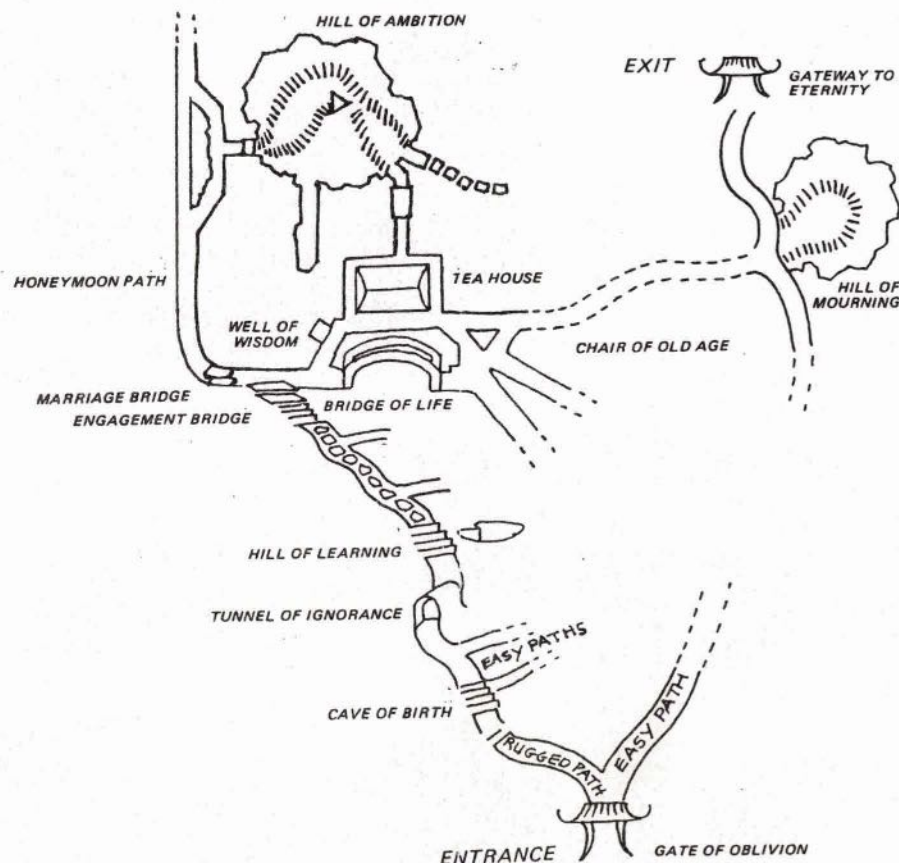
The tea-house, Tully Garden



delights of the 'rugged path' ahead! As well as these there was a curving path with stepping stones which started in dry ground but gradually led into water, turned a corner revealing a view of the Island of Joy and Wonder, with more stepping stones to take you there.

Built into the plan are clever twists and turns to illustrate a point or to give insight—so that if you take the marriage path, further on you will turn your back on the path of bachelorhood. The marriage path is wider so that you can walk abreast with your partner—until you come to an obstruction in the path

representing the first conflict. The path divides, but comes back together soon as the couple are reunited and go on together towards the Well of Wisdom and the Hill of Ambition. It is interesting that as we are coming to the end of this century, a journey through life which was planned in its early years is still relevant.



The Tully Garden — plan

The garden was commissioned by a millionaire Scottish brewer, with racing connections, who later became Lord Wavertree. He was one of a number of wealthy patrons who at that time became excited by the qualities of Japanese gardens and wanted to incorporate one into their estate. His was to be built on an Irish bog, and a Japanese master gardener Tassa Eida was engaged to design the garden and oversee its creation. It took four years and thirty labourers to make the garden. Hundreds of tons of limestone were transported, and large Scots pines were lifted and transplanted. Many items, including a miniature Japanese village, were imported from Japan. The garden was completed in 1910, and in 1915 it was presented by Lord Wavertree to the British National Stud. There followed a period of neglect until the Irish National Stud became the new owners, in 1945, when the garden was restored.

The original design did not include a dry garden, but one was added to the main garden in the 1970s, continuing the theme to take man beyond death into eternity.

From the beginning, the brief for the garden was 'to show man's journey from the womb to death', using the traditions, materials and symbolism of Japanese gardening, and the design produced was a brilliant success. Eida and his gardeners managed to stay true to the conventions of Japanese gardening and to build the garden in a western setting without it looking inappropriate, to a design which is accessible to anyone.

The Tully garden is located one mile from Kildare Town, following the local signs for the National Stud. It is open from Easter to October—the times need to be checked with Tourist Information.

A leaflet including a map is available at the entrance, and there is a small shop selling plants suitable for a Japanese garden.



Trees, stones, and water in the Tully Garden