

CHAPTER 10

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THE PARK AND PALACE IN ŁĘŻANY AS AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPOSITION RELYING ON THE VALUES OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Geographical location of Łężany

Łężany is a village located 65 km off Olsztyn, on a road leading from Biskupiec to Święta Lipka, in the southern part of the commune (*gmina*) of Reszel. The area of the whole commune lies in Mrągowskie Lake District. This physiographic mesoregion belongs to the macroregion called Masurian Lake District. This is an area of rolling and partly hilly landscape, sloping down towards the north-west. In the nearest proximity of Łężany there is an interesting, isolated group of small lakes, known as the Łężany Lakes, including Legińskie, Widryńskie, Trzcino, Pastrzewo, Klawój and Mutek Lakes), whose waters are drained by the Leginka and Sajna Rivers to the north, where they flow into the catchment basin of the Pregola River. The village lies on a hill, descending towards the southern shores of Legińskie Lake. Legińskie Lake, which covers an area of 224 ha, is 2.45 km long and 1.93 km wide, with the maximum depth of 32 m. There is an islet on the lake, overgrown with a mixed forest, which is a water and mud fowl refuge.

The area of Reszel Commune is subjected to Ordinance of the Governor of the Province of Warmia and Mazury No 54 of 2008, on establishment of landscape conservation areas in the Province of Warmia and Mazury (Journal of Laws of the Province of Warmia and Mazury of 2005, No 175, item 1951), in compliance with which two landscape conservation areas (LCA) have been set up:

- the Guber River Valley LCA,
- the Legińsko-Mrągowskie Lakes LCA.

The village of Łężany lies within the Legińsko-Mrągowskie Lakes LCA, which contains 2,0615.9 ha in the administrative districts (*powiat*) of Kętrzyn, Mrągowo and Olsztyn, in the communes (*gmina*) of Reszel, Mrągowo, Mrągowo Town, Sorkwity, Kolno and

Biskupiec. The centre of the village is occupied by a former manorial estate, including a palace, a park and a farm.

Brief history of Łężany

The village has had exceptionally many names during its history, such as *Lusieyn*, *Lusygeynen*, *Luszian*, *Lossainen*, *Loßainen*, *Loszainen*, *Luzjany*, *Luzyany*, *Łedziany*, *Neu Lusogein*, *Neu Lossainen*, and in the late 18th century it was also called *Lozain Minus*. The history of Łężany is difficult to trace because the source information has been lost. Most probably, in the Middle Ages, this whole, hilly and lake-studded land belonged to a manor estate called Leginy, which was located on the opposite side of Legińskie Lake. The village named Łężany was established according to the Prussian chart in 1359, on a field known as *Lusien*, situated on *Sprogl Lake* (today's Legińskie Lake). A separate manor was not formed until the late 18th century. Although the new village was much smaller than Leginy, it began to assume growing importance when the estate grew larger so that it eventually acquired another nearby manorial estate, referred to as Plenowo (*Plönhöfen*). In the 1880s the Fischer family settled in Łężany. Reinhold von Fischer is this member of the family who had the biggest influence on the appearance of the palace, park and manor in Łężany. He is the one who created a marvellous Neo-baroque palace, raised in 1909-1010, surrounded by a landscape park, to the north connected with a natural forest, and the neo-Gothic farm buildings, located to the south of the estate (Karta ewidencyjna..., 2004).

A rear admiral in the Prussian Emperor's Navy, Reinhold von Fischer spent most of his life on a warship. His love of sea did not pass without a trace left on his home. It can be assumed that some of the elements in the spatial composition of his home estate are a reference to his life's passion. Also, the fact that he chose a hill facing a lake to build his home residence could have been conditioned by his profession.

After World War Two, the Łężany manor was taken over by the Polish state, as a result of which the manorial farm was turned into a State Farm and the palace, which escaped the war with little damage, was managed by the Workers' Holiday Fund.

On 10th April 1954, the former manor of Łężany was taken over by the Higher School of Agriculture in Olsztyn (at present, the University



Fig. 1. Sketch of Łężany made before 1945 r.
Source: Jackiewicz-Garniec M., Garniec M. 2001.

of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn). The Agricultural and Experimental Station was set up. Soon, the school was also given the ownership of the palace. The Łężany Agricultural and Experimental Station ran experiments in such fields as veterinary hygiene, animal nourishment, dairy production, environmental conservation and water supply conservation. In 1958, the farm in Łężany opened research rooms, laboratories and a meteorological station. These facilities were

a base for field experimentation, which enabled researchers to complete the basic elaboration of their results. Since 1958, fisheries experiments have also been conducted on Legińskie Lake (a research station, including boathouses with basic equipment, was set up), and in 1974 such experiments were started on Trzcinnio Lake (TARCZYŃSKI et al. 1999).

The composition layout of the palace and park complex in Łężany

Palaces and manor houses, often accompanied by manorial farms with interesting architecture of farmstead buildings, were an important component of the landscape of former East Prussia, being a valuable enrichment of the land's cultural heritage. Whole estates with surrounding parks perfectly blended with the environs, harmoniously merging borders of the areas shaped by man. The spatial composition of land estates was closely connected with the nearby landscape, therefore the location of a manor house was never incidental. The intricate solutions created by designers and architects involved not only the architecture of a palace or a manor and a park but also the accompanying farm buildings. Another significant element consisted of the scenic views of the landscape, which somehow complemented, lengthened and enriched the whole composition of an estate.

In East Prussia, three basic types of composition are distinguishable. One such type comprises palace- or manor-park complexes located by lakes. Their spatial composition is conditioned by a specific, topographic location. Water space is an element which enriches the spatial composition. In this type of composition, a country house always stands close to a lake shore, often on a hill, and always with a scenic view of the lake (JACKIEWICZ-GARNIEC, GARNIEC 2001). Palaces or manor houses built according to these rules of composition create the most picturesque complexes, which fully take advantage of the landscape values of this region – lakes, forests and hills. A perfect example of such a composition is the palace and park complex in Łężany.

The palace (photo 1) is in the centre of the composition. It stands in an irregularly shaped and large landscape park. The total area of the park is 6.5 ha. To the north-west, its natural border is Legińskie Lake



Phot.1. Front of the palace building. *Source: A.Urban, August 2004*



Phot.2. Stream seen from the edge of the gorge.
Source: A.Urban, September 2006



Phot.3. Stream forms a small pool. *Source: A.Urban, September 2006*



Phot.4 The stoned passage over the stream, close to the fence.
Source: A.Urban, September 2006.



Phot.5. Meadow seen from the front of the palace overlooking the Legińskie Lake in Summer. *Source: A.Urban, September 2006*



Phot.6. Meadow seen from the front of the palace overlooking the Legińskie Lake in Winter. *Source: A.Urban, November 2004*



Phot. 7 View toward the palace on the axis linking the palace to the island. *Source: A.Urban, September 2006*



Phot.8 The view from the tower of palace on Lake Legińskie. The visible island is located on the axis leading through the central part of the building. *Source: A.Urban, December 2004*

and a road, which runs along the fence. There are two drives leading from the main road to the estate – one running to the farm buildings, which is also the southern border of the park (it separates the park from the farm), and the other one, which is the main alleyway through the park, running from the central gate to the palace (the drive). To the north-east, the natural border of the park is formed by a deep gorge with a lively, meandering riverlet (photos 2 and 3). The rivulet turns northwards and gradually becomes shallower. The area of the park – flat and even around the palace – becomes depressed near the rivulet, which forms a small pool and flows into Legińskie Lake. In the past, this slow stream had a very rapid current. However, some farming treatments conducted on the neighbouring fields may have lowered the level of groundwater. Our comparison of bird's eye photographs made in 1979 and in 1997 suggest that the local water supplies have changed.

The motif of a free-flowing stream, especially a meandering one or one with water cascades, was another main feature of the composition of landscape gardens. Likewise, in Łężany, a naturally occurring stream was entwined in the composition of the park, in accord with the principles of creating such parks. The gorge, which is today difficult to traverse, in the past was passable by some bridges, which spanned its banks, which meant that it was possible to pass from the 'ordered' part of the park to the 'wild' one, merging with the natural forest that grew over the steep, sharply raised hill. One bridge was situated at the end of the lime alley and there were steps leading to it that ran up and down both sides of the gorge. Another bridge was located in the middle of the section of the river flowing through the park. Local residents claim that there was one more passage. The third bridge was to stand near the inflow of the stream, close to the fence, in the northern part of the park. This is suggested by the walking paths leading to this site on both sides of the gorge (photo 4), which can also be seen in a sketch made before 1945 (fig. 1). This passage over the stream creates a hub of the walking paths, which all run towards this place and, at the same time, take you to further parts of the park (BOGDANOWSKI, 2000).

Another popular component of landscape gardens near palaces was an open meadow in the place of a parterre featuring in earlier designs. The central meadow was picturesquely lined with trees and would typically slope down towards a water reservoir (MAJDECKI,

1993). In landscape compositions, the water surface had an additional function of a mirror, reflecting the surrounding trees, buildings or groups of plants on islets. It was an additional attraction, as part of the scenery. The park in Łężany is no exception to these rules. The central meadow lies in front of the palace, to its north, and slopes down towards Legińskie Lake (photos 5 and 6). The meadow used to be a starting point for an open scenic vista, which was crowned with a view of the lake. Unfortunately, over the past few decades, the empty places in this parterre meadow have been filled in with young trees, planted at quite regular intervals. As a result, the original spatial plan of the park has been greatly distorted, especially when the most important scenic view of the lake was obstructed. Nonetheless, the great meadow still remains to be an impressive park interior. Oblong in its shape and open up to a distant view, the meadow is the centre for connecting all other parts of the whole park. The inventory of the park completed in 1973 shows that the central meadow in front of the palace was closed with a crescent of lime trees (*Tilia* sp.), which have now disappeared without any trace. The trees had been planted at carefully planned intervals and rows, so that they would not obstruct the view of the lake, but make a framework for the perspective established by the viewing axes. According to the author of the book A Country House Garden Edward Jankowski, “the space enclosed with some surroundings, like a picture enclosed in a frame, and finished with some beautiful object, is a view. But above all, the view should not be excessively broad, as it then becomes blurred and scattered. It is better to draw the viewer’s attention to some features of the view, divided into several parts, using obstacles such as groups of trees.”

When framing the perspective with groups and masses of trees growing along obtuse lines, it is possible to build an impression of the target image drawn closer and, vice versa, when trees are planted along convergent lines, the objects seem further away – which is particularly important in small gardens. Deeper perspective was also obtained by introducing warm colours of the bloom and foliage of trees in the foreground and darker colours further away. Enhancing the clarity of the plans was also achieved through wing-shaped distribution of groups of trees and shrubs.

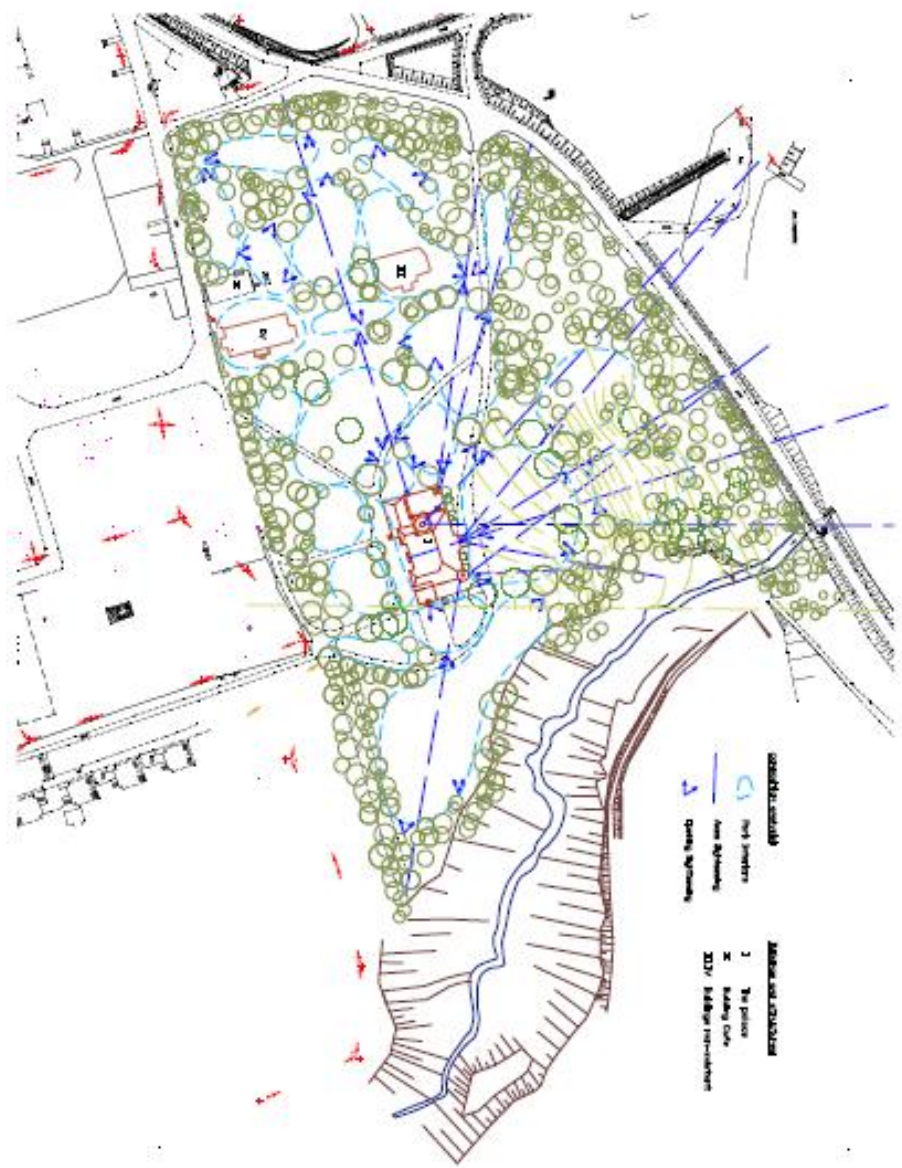


Fig. 2. Analysis of the park composition in Łężany. *Source: own data.*

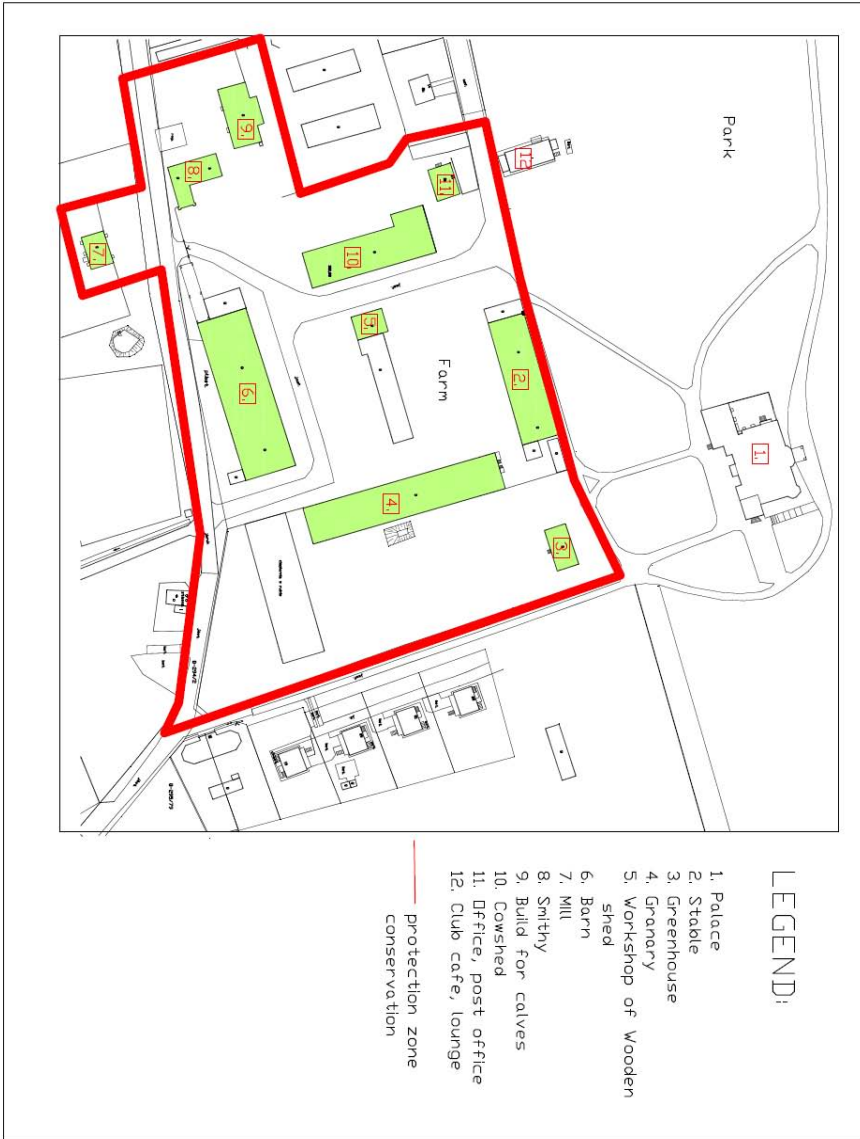


Fig. 3. Sketch of the marked location of the farm buildings.

Source: own data

The park in Łężany represents the type of landscape gardens. It has a distinctly rich and beautiful land relief, exquisite tree stand and excellent connection with a natural forest. As Bogdanowski [2000] put it: “A nature-like park is an execution of the concept of creating nature theatres. Partly taking advantage of the location and partly adding to it some singular elements, shaped around the architecture, changeable in the expression and mood.” Therefore, the location of the palace as well as its form, central within the composition of the park, was by no means incidental. The impressive home to the family of von Fischers was erected in the neo-Baroque style by an architect who was also familiar with the modernist style. The palace, built on a rectangular plan has a very compact shape, only slightly divided with wall projections, towers and verandas (KORPYSZ, 2003).

From four points in or near the building – the ball room, the corner tower, the tower with the lantern and the gazebo near the terrace to the west side of the palace, the viewing axes still remain clear, although they have been obstructed by excessively grown trees. Each of these vantage points (except the gazebo) is a starting point for an axis which crosses with the central axis. The principal viewing axis cuts through the central part of the palace, i.e. its façade, which is divided into nine vertical axes set by tall windows. In this part of the palace, on the ground floor, there is the ball room with a balcony, which looks like a captain's bridge, thus being another reference to the palace's founder, Reinhold von Fischer. From there, a view of the lake could be captured, with the islet lying on the viewing axis. It is possible that in turn the palace could have been well seen from the islet (photo 7), but is now largely hidden behind the trees.

The field study and our analysis of the inventory of the park made in 1973, as well as the plan of the park dating back to the years before 1945, enabled us to determine the other viewing axes (fig. 2) and to establish what points in the park could have been the target views of these axes, for example the aforementioned islet on Legińskie Lake, the descents to today's non-existent footbridges over the gorge or the entrance gate. The view from the tower topped with a lantern is more of an opening than a viewing axis (photo 8). The tall plants growing to the left of this opening and the hill behind the gorge overgrown with wood create a dense framework for the view spread in front of us. Likewise, the abundant and uniform tree stand to the south of the

palace encourages the spectator to pay more attention to the lake. Regarding the tree stand, some characteristic features have become evident, such as very close links with the viewing axes, mass numbers of trees planted at the edges of the estate whereas in the central part of the garden, clumps of trees were planted, and finally masking of the junctions of paths and alleys.

The slope of the hill on the other side of the gorge falls steeply on its western side towards the lake and the road to Reszel, which runs at the foot of the hill. On a narrow platform of a terrace formed on the hill, the Fischers founded a graveyard, and at the very edge of it, they raised a mausoleum. The mausoleum is a two-storey building with a chapel on the upper storey, accessible from the terrace level, and a spacious burial crypt underneath, to which access was given by a footpath, today completely overgrown, running from the foot of the hill (KORPYSZ, 2003). It is suspected that the architectural design of the chapel draws on the shape of a ship due to the profession of Reinhold von Fischer, who was a rear admiral and felt emotionally very close to sea.

The estate farm is an integral part of the whole land estate. It is situated to the south-west of the park (fig. 3), with open fields behind the farm buildings. The latter include horse stables, a barn and a cow shed, a granary, a mill, workshops, a large blacksmith's shop and a building to house calves. All these red-brick buildings, raised in the neo-Gothic style, have survived until the present day. The extraordinary care taken when creating ornaments on these buildings is still admirable. One of the most interesting buildings is the blacksmith's shop combined with a workshop. It presents two completely different façades on the opposite sides. Other noteworthy buildings are a conservatory, with some interesting architectural details, a mill and a horse stable opposite the entrance gate, to which it is directed with the gable wall, which features a clock at its top (Karta ewidencyjna, 2004).

The park and palace in Łężany is one of the best preserved complexes of this type in north-eastern Poland. It has been a witness to many turbulent events in history but it has not been damaged by the claw of time, so it has as much charm as it had a hundred years ago. As for the park, the most important is its historical value, the general composition, the planned spatial layout, including trees and shrubs, the land relief and the architecture of the palace. Documenting the

past, the park can serve scientific and educational purposes; as an assemblage of tall green plants, it is important for the landscape, climate and the health of local residents. Over the years, the type of use and the value of particular functions have been changing. For the park to maintain its importance, it is necessary to provide it with good care and protection.

The park and palace in Łężany are a perfect example of the composition which employs the most beautiful assets of the land of Warmia and Mazury, such as water reservoirs, hills and forests. The skillful use of the natural landscape has turned the park and the palace into an integral component of the environs. Water adds a dynamic element to the composition, but is also a link between the park and the environment, thus functioning as an extension of the composition. This is the reason why the park does not end with a fence but continues as far as the horizon set up by the lake surface.

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