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**ROUSHAM, Oxfordshire:  
Preserving its Place in History**

**R. Claire Mason**

**M.Litt. Museum and Gallery Studies**

**University of St Andrews**

Submitted 30th September 1990



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## **ABSTRACT**

The development of the English Landscape Garden was a direct result of the political, social and cultural climate of 18th c. Britain. Rousham, Oxfordshire, as created by Charles Bridgeman and William Kent, may be seen as a transitional garden, included in that short phase of natural wilderness landscapes which lies between French and Dutch influenced formality and 'Capability' Brown's ruthless clearance and 'improvements'. Rousham, as Kent's only unaltered work, is of unique importance; for it is often said that it was with the advent of Kent's informality that British landscape gardening began to lead the world.

Charles Bridgeman was also an important figure in the move towards a less formal garden and it has not been fully established how great a part he played; therefore a detailed survey is made of the work at Rousham to assess his contribution.

Bridgeman's Rousham was still relatively 'formal', with straight lines and geometric shapes. Kent created a small but varied and relaxed garden with major plays of light, shade and perspective. Much of Kent's construction is reminiscent of Italian garden theatre scenes; Rousham is evocative, with ethereal concepts.

A wide range of influences were apparent in the design of Rousham; these, their representation and survival are discussed on the basis of fieldwork and contemporary sources which are listed at the beginning of Chapter Three.

In conclusion; Rousham's importance within the field of garden history is established, and an examination made of protection and maintenance to ensure survival of the features and mood of this historic survival.

## INTRODUCTION

The stated aims of this work are: firstly to establish the importance of Rousham , as the only unaltered Kent garden and a record of 18th c. views. Then to ascertain how much of the garden design is totally Kent's and how great an influence the earlier worker, Bridgeman, had on the final layout; as an extension of this is an assessment of Kent's importance within the field of garden history, and recognition of Bridgeman's contributions. Finally an analysis of the garden today and means of protection, maintenance and possible reconstruction is made.

## CHAPTER ONE: The Origins of the English

### Landscape Garden<sup>1</sup>

The 18th c. was a transitional period in most fields, each interconnecting to create a new moral and aesthetic philosophy. Hunt 1987 declares this to be a period of battles; art against nature, the ancients versus the moderns and classical opposing Gothic architecture. Britain was finally rebelling against the French domination of the Arts; together with the formality and restriction this suggested. The Grand Tour, an undertaking expected of all gentlemen, provided the new sources of inspiration; and the beliefs and surroundings of the ancients of Rome became those striven for.<sup>2</sup> The 18th c. was an age of literature and reference to the classical sites and writings. Out of this arose a different style of gardening, in which England was to become a world leader - the Landscape Garden; whether this was a new idea, or a revision of those of other times or countries is to be discussed; as is the way this style fitted into the genesis of the Picturesque and the changing trend in architecture towards a more formal, Palladian style, which at first glance seems totally opposed to the ideas expressed in 18th c. politics and arts.

In addition, indeed as a facet of this overall change in 18th c. attitudes, there was the ascendancy of the Whigs with their ideas of liberality, moderation and personal freedom, which were to affect the ideology of the time, resulting in the preference for a freer, less 'aristocratic' style of gardening; and so the geometric French and Dutch gardens in England were overthrown in 'The Great Garden Revolution'.<sup>3</sup> In fact the period of change from 'geometric' to 'formal' lasted about fifty years, within which Rousham is seen as an early example of the transitional garden; combining both the

emblematic elements of the former, and the expressive<sup>4</sup> of the later yet with a definite character of their own, which reflects contemporary economic, social, literary, philosophical, political, and artistic developments; though Pevsner believed they merely interpreted the nature of the Whig, being 'wiggly, puny and playful'.<sup>5</sup>

What caused the rejection of formal<sup>6</sup>, regular, 'unnatural' gardens is as hard to define as are the spheres of influence upon the new style. The move from Art (formality and constraint) to Nature was an important aspect of this transition, however 18th c. landscape gardens generally contained apparently geometric elements which may be explained by defining the contemporary interpretation of 'nature'. Throughout this period the meaning of the word was in flux; it could be interpreted as the essence of an object and therefore a 'natural garden' would use essential geometric forms; or have a similar meaning to that when used in reference to gardens today - translated into irregularity and wildness. Mr. Onions gives several definitions which were relevant in the 18th c. and encompass greatly varying approaches to landscape:

'essential qualities or innate character of; vital power dominating one's actions; creative and regulative power in the world; material world.....'<sup>7</sup>

Thus 'Nature becomes a tool in a complex struggle for economic and political power, at the centre of the redefinition of social meanings.'<sup>8</sup>

The history of the landscape garden and its various guises reflects the changing interpretations of 'natural'.

Pressure brought about by the leading philosophers and poets of the time contributed as much as anything to the alterations in the gentleman's garden - more than a century before the earliest landscape gardens, Bacon (1561-1626) in his *Of Gardens* was writing against the formal aspects of topiary. Publications by Sir

William Temple, Stephen Switzer, Batty Langley and Anthony Ashley Cooper the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who was reiterated by later workers: Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope, contributed to these changes in garden ideology.<sup>9</sup>

'nor is there anything more ridiculous and forbidding than a garden which is regular, which instead of entertaining the eye with fresh objects, after you have seen a quarter part, you only see the very same part repeated again without any variety.'<sup>10</sup>

Richard Boyle, Third Earl (and later Lord) of Burlington was a patron of the arts, he developed a circle of associates with views akin to his own based at his London Home, Burlington House. He was a patron of Kent, Alexander Pope and many more great men, and it was his general philosophy and Whig principles that were to so influence all the arts, and particularly garden design in the 1700s. The 'prophet' of this group was Shaftesbury who in 1709 wrote *The Moralists* in which he became the first to declare unequivocally that nature in its 'primitive' state was far preferable to:

'the artificial Labyrinths and Wildernesses of the Palace' <sup>11</sup>

'I shall no longer resist the passion growing in me for things of a natural kind, where neither art nor the caprice of man has spoilt the genuine order by breaking in upon that primitive state. Even the rude rocks, the mossy caverns, their regular unwrought grottoes and the broken falls of water, with all the horrid graces of the wilderness itself, in representing nature more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a magnificence beyond the mockery of princely gardens.'<sup>12</sup>

He was an admirer of nature as herself, but nature in the classical sense: the order of things, the intrinsic form in every object; as such he was an advocate of, and created a new enthusiasm for, an already long-standing style, following in the footsteps of Longinus and Locke (of whom he was a patron). The important change in attitude was from viewing nature not as the ruination of correct geometry but as the perfect form. It should be mentioned that his own garden, Wimbourne St Giles, Dorset, was in layout undoubtedly

geometric; here an order within which the mind could appreciate natural forms and beauty was the aim; it was left to his disciples, and William Kent in particular, to reinterpret his philosophy for the landscape in tune with the view that Nature did not ruin the beautiful line, but rather created one of her own.

John Locke was the leading Empiricist philosopher of the time; Empiricism being the belief that knowledge and opinions of the world derive from direct experience. Empiricist art has the characteristics of wildness, surprise and irregularity, which was becoming popular at the expense of calculated Cartesian art and philosophy (Versailles, by Le Nôtre, being an example of the Cartesian in gardens). His influence on Alexander Pope is made explicit when Pope gives his advice for the ideal garden:

'Let not each beauty everywhere be spied.  
When half the skill is decently to hide  
He gains all points who pleasingly confounds  
Surprises, varies and conceals the bounds.'<sup>13</sup>

Pope in turn had a large part to play in the development of the landscape garden; and was a friend and mentor of Kent. His own garden at Twickenham epitomises the philosophies he followed, and was greatly admired; but in practical terms Charles Bridgeman took the first steps towards the key features of such gardens some years earlier; in particular with his use of the ha-ha; which removed any obvious division of garden from countryside, and called in the surrounding landscape as Addison had advocated.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Empiricism and the belief in nature without formalities yet constrained by man as popularised in the literature, led to a fundamental change in attitude, and finally to practical changes. It was the return to classical values and ideology that provided the material for the transformations in the gardening world. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was well read; in which he describes parts of a garden where nature imitates art; Addison<sup>15</sup> links Ovid with enchanted ground, and he undoubtedly authorises the use of surprise and

mechanical delights such as the trick fountains. Horace's second Epode was the most frequently translated poem of the 17th c.<sup>16</sup> and advocated rural retreat; the Horatian idyll was to become a theme of the period, and part of the Whig ideology.<sup>17</sup> The classical authors and their attitudes towards gardens and nature may well have been reinterpreted by the 18th c. scholar with a bias brought about by the cultural ideals of the time, but Walpole was excluding many acting influences with his belief in a totally insular development of the English Landscape Garden, seeing Milton's *Paradise Lost* as the poetic inspiration:

"Of Eden, where delicious Paradise  
Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green,  
As with a rural mound the champain head  
Of a step wilderness, whose hairie sides  
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wilde,  
Access deni'd; and overhead up grew  
Insuperable hogth of loftiest shade'  
Cedar, and Pine, and Firr, and branching Palm,  
A Silvan scene, and a shte ranks ascend  
Shade above shade and woodie Theatre  
Of stateliest view."<sup>18</sup>

but it is easier to see this work as support for the move towards more natural scenes which began with a crystallisation of underlying philosophies.

The influence of Italy cannot be denied; when those devourers of classical literature embarked on their Grand Tour, the scenery to which their reading referred was to have a huge impact.<sup>19</sup> Allusions were made to temples, grottoes, groves, statuary, water and sacred spots; which could then be studied on the ground in both contemporary and ancient gardens; and for reference back home there were works such as Robert Castell's *Villas of the Ancients*.<sup>20</sup> The garden in Italy was traditionally seen as a place for pleasure and reflection, and this belief was soon transposed to Britain; as was gardening as a form of art. The gardens travellers saw in the 1700s no longer fully represented the ideas of their

creators in past millennia: they were now well-grown and possibly decayed, certainly any maintenance since would have altered the original design; modern Romans were often using their gardens as 'cabinets of curiosities', filled with old statuary and ruins. The visions of the ancients were muddied by time.

Italian landscape paintings were certainly a source of inspiration; Italian painters were reproducing the Italian *campagne* on canvas, and looking to Greek poetry for ideas; long before Milton they were portraying paradise as a natural landscape. Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin were great admirers of the ancients' habit of placing religious buildings in natural looking surroundings; such as the Temple of Sibyl, Tivoli; their use of strong, irregular foliage blocks; light and shade and perspective were imitated. Poussin's Arcadian scenes undoubtedly had a part to play in the popularity of such in 18th c. England; and pictures like Claude's 1652 *Landscape with Apollo and the Muses* can be seen recreated at Rousham, Stowe and Stourhead.

20th c. workers have often laid at Kent's door the origins of the Picturesque which was to play such a major part in late 18th and early 19th c. attitudes. The Picturesque was a movement in art towards the use of 'that which would suit a landscape painting'<sup>21</sup> and demanded the use of artist's techniques to make a natural and beautiful landscape. In 1794 a major debate into the definition and value of the Picturesque arose, but as it concerns William Kent the Picturesque was an underlying philosophy as yet undefined which his contemporaries and mentors were advocating, later to be taken to extremes; it basically led to a new language with which to appreciate the landscape. The 18th c. was a period in which the emphasis within painting was shifting from subject to form and handling<sup>22</sup> and thus was applicable to the management of garden scenes. Undoubtedly Kent was one of the first to apply painting skills to garden design, and this is where the attribution originates.

Italian theatre also had an influence on garden design; the outdoors was seen as a stage set, with those wandering the garden as players (as were the statues) but also spectators. Often Italian gardens contained a theatre, and plays contained garden scenes.<sup>23</sup> This was to be a major influence on Mr. Kent, who designed his gardens as stage sets which could be wandered into; and was also widely known for his work on theatre scenery.<sup>24</sup>

Architects also adopted the classical styles, Neo-Palladianism became popular; with its regular orders and straight lines seemingly the antithesis of the relaxation in garden layout; however the use of form and order in both were well suited, and the appearance of a strictly classical building within a natural landscape was normal in Italian scenes.<sup>25</sup>

The ideas of the landscape garden have occasionally been attributed to China as they also created gardens as works of art, with irregular and surprising features forming a natural picture.<sup>26</sup> Lord Burlington had a copy of views of Chinese gardens by the Italian Father Matteo Ripa, which was released in Europe around 1724. Hyams 1962, by a chronological study of contacts, argues against any such attributions; Italy was having such a huge impact on English thinking and creation that Oriental themes were not obvious until the late 18th c. British workers since the 1700s have jealously guarded England's ambitious claim to originating the landscape garden:

'The only taste we can call our own, the only proof or original talent in matter of pleasure; I mean our skill in gardening and laying out grounds. That the Chinese have this beautiful art in high perfection seems very probable from the *Jesuit Letters*, and more from Chambers' little discourse published some few years ago. But it is very certain we copied nothing from them, nor had any thing but nature for our model. It is not forty years since the art was born among us; and it is sure that there was nothing in Europe like it, and as sure we had then no information on this head from China at all.'<sup>27</sup>

In addition to popularised philosophies and new or revamped spheres of influence; 'sensible' reasons may be given for the change in garden style: economically formal gardens were impractical, requiring huge labour forces and continuous upkeep as Bridgeman and Wise's cost analysis for George II showed; with a more relaxed style and less interference with the vegetation, costs could be greatly reduced. England's rolling hills were not as suited to the geometric styles as France and Holland; and the country's climate means a grassier landscape - far more suitable for the new style. That England was the first country to begin this move towards nature is perhaps also due to a gentler climate and more biddable 'nature'.

The move towards nature and away from formality and geometry is perhaps a smoke screen; nature was never allowed to run wild but was directed and constrained by the ideals of the period. Gardens of fashion of the early to mid-18th c. combined formal elements such as canals and rectangular ponds with strictly serpented paths and areas of foliage carefully planted to appear natural yet convey a sense of perspective and colour.

'Thus dealing in none but the colours of nature, and catching its most favourable features, men saw a new creation opening before their eyes. The living landscape was chastened or polished, not transformed.'<sup>28</sup>

Walpole wrote that three new graces emerged in England; poetry, painting and philosophy, to establish a new style of gardening; to this we must add the characteristics of the English climate and terrain, and the overwhelming influence of Italy.

## Notes to Chapter One:

- 1 See Appendix One for definition
- 2 Hunt 1986 gives the history of the Grand Tour from the 16th c. to its peak in the 18th c.; during which time the popularity of gardens ascended
- 3 A term used by Clifford 1962
- 4 J.D. Hunt is one of the major writers on emblem and expression in gardens  
- see in particular Hunt, 1971
- 5 Pevsner 1944 in his conclusion
- 6 The term is now superseded by 'geometric' which describes more accurately the characteristic plans of the greatly diverse French and Dutch gardens.
- 7 Onions 1966 Pp. 604
- 8 Pugh 1988 Pp. 3
- 9 Details on the literature leading up to movement are found in: Müllenbrock 1988, Allen 1958, Pevsner 1944, Turner 1986 and Malins 1966 also considers the philosophical attitudes.
- 10 Langley 1720 (from BBC 1987)
- 11 *The Moralists* pt III. Pp. 205
- 12 Ibid Pp. 199
- 13 *Epistles to Several Persons* in Bateson F.W. *The Twickenham Edition of The Poems* Vol. III/ii 2nd Edition 1961 Pp. xxvi
- 14 Müllenbrock 1988 believes Addison to be the major literary influence on garden development at this time, citing his letter of 1699 to William Congreve; which, he declares, already outlines more modern gardening ideas
- 15 *The Spectator* (N<sup>o</sup> 417)
- 16 As stated by Andrews 1989
- 17 Horticulture is an ancient art and part of an orthodoxy - as God charged man with such duties in The Book of Genesis  
'Gardening is more Antique and nearer God's own Work, than Poetry'  
Pope to the Earl of Oxford 8th Oct. 1724 in Sherburn 1956 ii264
- 18 Paradise Lost, Book IV lines 132-142
- 19 Hunt, 1986 is the definitive work on the Grand Tour and the influence of Italian gardens on English thought.
- 20 Details of this work and how it may have influenced garden design may be

- found in Hunt, 1974 Pp. 21-23.
- 21 Rev. William Gilpin 1792
  - 22 As discussed by Hunt 1987 Pp. 34 - 35
  - 23 See Hunt, 1986 Chapt. 5 for the relationship of garden and theatre in more detail.
  - 24 Hunt 1987 Pp. 30 explores the possibilities that many of Kent's landscape drawings are actually theatre designs
  - 25 Hunt 1986 fully explores the influence of Italy on the gentry of England, and the garden owners and designers in particular.
  - 26 Particular reference is made to Sir William Temple's *Upon the Garden of Epicurus*, 1685 in which he considered the Chinese style as a curiosity; and to Sir William Chambers' *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 1772.
  - 27 Thomas Gray 1763. Letter. Reproduced in Colvin 1970
  - 28 Walpole 1770 reproduced on Pp. 22 of the 1975 edition published by Brentham Press, London

## CHAPTER TWO: The Protagonists - Charles Bridgeman and

### William Kent<sup>1</sup>

#### **CHARLES BRIDGEMAN (?-1738)**

We know little of Charles Bridgeman's early years, he was certainly apprentice to one of the most influential gardeners of the time, Henry Wise, at Blenheim by 1709 and was at Stowe by 1714. Mr Bridgeman's designs were to transform the French gardening idioms as used by Wise to English taste and open the way for Kent designs. He is seen as a 'poetic gardener' and very original; he was:

'the next fashionable designer of gardens....He enlarged his plans, disdained to make every division tally with its opposite, and though he still adhered much to straight walks with high clipped hedges, they were only his great lines; the rest he diversified by wilderness, and with loose groves of oak, though still within surrounding hedges....But the capital stroke, the leading step to all that has followed was (I believe the first thought was Bridgeman's) the destruction of walls for boundaries, and the invention of fosses - an attempt then deemed so astonishing, that the common people called them Ha! Ha's!<sup>2</sup>

His garden designs are basically geometric, with attempts at the assymetrical, and have little overall continuity, the underlying form being more important than the features (which would follow Shaftesbury's philosophy and gardening style more closely than did Kent's later works). He loved working on large scale, with great areas of grass and water, which makes Rousham quite unique as this small garden is not dwarfed by grandiose schemes but feels larger than it is. Typical of Bridgeman's designs are terraces and slopes, sinuous walks, temples and round ponds. Garden theatres are a common theme, as seen at Claremont, and on his plan for

Rousham. Bridgeman is often praised for his concern with the *genius loci*; his respect for the individuality of a site resulted in great variety between his gardens.

Bridgeman's best known works are Blenheim, Oxfordshire and Stowe in Buckingham<sup>3</sup>. This renowned garden was worked on by many of the most famous men of the time; including Kent who was to design buildings and the Elysian Field area several years later<sup>4</sup>. Stowe was owned by Lord Cobham, whose Whig beliefs, and later dissatisfaction with the Government dominated the garden themes; in 1720 he began a massive programme at Stowe which Bridgeman was to design. Bridgeman's plan is basically geometric, little remains today but the bones beneath the later works of Kent and Brown.

Mr. Bridgeman was certainly at Rousham by 1725<sup>5</sup> but possibly as early as 1715<sup>6</sup>; all that really links him to the garden is the attributed plan in the Bodelian, dated 1715 - 1721; which is obviously very similar to that of Stowe, with axis and nodes interspersed by half-hearted wilderness areas and winding paths; together with wide views out to the surrounding countryside and formal water elements. Another point of similarity with Stowe is the large ha-ha, which at Stowe delineates the garden, and within Rousham forms an almost invisible division from the Paddock.

#### **WILLIAM KENT (1685 - 1748)**

William Kent was born in Yorkshire (there is some controversy about the date); very little is known of his early life though he was apparently of humble origins and poorly educated. Kent was a multi-talented artist, known for his interior

decoration, architecture, furniture (in 1725 he was appointed Royal Carpenter), book illustrations, sculpting, dress-design and landscape gardening; but it was as a painter that he first achieved any acclaim. William Kent was 'discovered' by a group of gentlemen who were sufficiently impressed to finance travels abroad for the young man.

He arrived in Italy in 1714, where he began serious study as an artist, travelling widely; was introduced to the architecture and gardens of Italy, and met several influential British gentlemen on their Grand Tours, including Richard Boyle, Third Earl of Burlington, who was to be a great influence on Kent's life upon his return to England in 1719.

Kent was an inferior painter, and it appears his interest in gardens had already begun when in Italy. In mid-life, for no satisfactorily explained reason, he began his most successful career, that of a landscape gardener. His artistic training contributed greatly (the advantages of his sketches and perspectives over Bridgeman's technical plans, and their greater appeal to clients are clear). He altered many gardens for influential men, although creating none from scratch; often remodelling sites expensively designed by Charles Bridgeman just a few years previously; which illustrates how quickly Kent became fashionable. Contemporary writers saw Kent's gardens as utilising artist's techniques and comparable to painted landscapes; whereas Bridgeman's work was generally likened to Dutch gardens.

There is positive evidence of Kent's work at less than a dozen gardens, they show an increasing progression towards naturalism and lessening dependence on the

garden as a place for architecture; although he continues to successfully treat the garden as an architectural space, utilising his training. With Rousham as the only intact example of Kent's landscaping, it is only this and Kent's few sketches which show his original ideas.

Kent certainly did not originate the ha-ha, serpentine or irregularity as garden features, but played a major part in their popularisation. Walpole claims that Pope was a huge influence on Kent's approach to gardening, the two were certainly associated by 1721 as both were in the influential Burlington circle; Stowe and Claremont are cited as places where they met, and possibly worked together; and in a letter Pope shows Kent, General Dormer, Burlington and himself to be on conversational terms:

'The greatest news I have to tell you is, that the Signoier<sup>7</sup> is in perfect tranquillity, enjoying his own Being, & is become a happy but plumper copy of General Dormer.'<sup>8</sup>

Rousham is claimed, in concept, to 'fulfil to a remarkable degree the possibilities Pope had recognised a decade earlier at Sherbourne, Dorset.'<sup>9</sup>

Bridgeman was also a friend of Alexander Pope's, and possibly influenced his Twickenham garden; and via this means Kent; also Pope visited Stowe nearly every summer from 1725-1735. Several other gardens were worked on by both Bridgeman and Kent at roughly comparable dates so exchanges of ideas and practices between the three are likely.

In 1726. John Gay in his tour of Oxfordshire was to report that Rousham was 'extremely improv'd'<sup>10</sup>, before Kent arrived on the scene. We must ascertain which areas of those designed by Bridgeman were carried out by him; if Kent was advising on the garden whilst Bridgeman oversaw the works; whether Kent put any of his

predecessor's ideas on the ground; and which parts, if any are purely Kentian.

Unlike Kent, Charles Bridgeman was a specialist in one field, he did not have an artist's skills and this shows in his gardens which lack any pictorial scenes. The inventory of his goods after death showed he owned some 'landskips'<sup>11</sup> - although no Masters - so was not closed to such influences, and he may also have visited the continent in 1732<sup>12</sup> - he was certainly more technically adept than Kent, being responsible for even the most mundane jobs as Royal Gardener in the parks, and as Kent was rarely at Rousham above once per year, he would have actually done far more practical work. The long gaps between Kent's visits to Rousham meant the burden for decision making fell on the head-gardener's shoulders; so John Maclary's contribution to the design on the ground must be recognised. Maclary was a man aspiring to the acculturation of the gentry, indeed he shortened his name to Clary on discovering a 17th c. landowner of that name in Steeple Aston; and his letter shows he was not closed to the subtler moods of the garden. Once he moved to nearby Steeple Aston in 1754, purchasing Orchard Lea from Anthony Jepson, he built a simple summerhouse overlooking the steep garden in an attempt at Kentian design.

## Notes to Chapter Two:

- 1 For detailed biographies of Bridgeman and Kent see:  
Bridgeman - Willis 1977  
Kent - Jourdain 1948; Wilson 1984; Hunt 1987
- 2 Walpole 1770 Pp. 21
- 3 A plan by Bridgeman was published in 1739 by Mrs. Sarah Bridgeman as part of a folio of engravings and plans entitled *Views of Stowe*; copy remains in the Bodleian.
- 4 George Clarke, in his major study of Stowe, never conclusively proved Kent's involvement here, although it is generally accepted as fact
- 5 Willis 1977 dates his work here 1725 - 1737
- 6 The theory of Coffin 1986
- 7 'The Signor' was a nickname given to Kent referring to his love of everything Italian.
- 8 Pope to Earl of Burlington. 21 Nov. 1736. In Sherburn 1956 *iv* 43
- 9 Brownell, 1978 Pp. 54
- 10 John Gay to Brigadier Dormer 22 Nov. 1726. In Sherburn 1956 *ii* 416
- 11 Willis 1977, Appendix V Pp. 161-167
- 12 Bridgeman's name is recorded on a list of Joseph Spence's continental encounters recorded in British Library, Add M.S.2235 (Egerton Papers), fo.94

## **CHAPTER THREE: The Stage - Rousham**

Rousham sits in the county of Oxfordshire, a unique area containing a large number of important parks and gardens. Within the jurisdiction of West Oxfordshire District Council, the majority of which is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Rousham itself is in an Area of High Landscape Value. It is in the parish of Rousham, 11 miles due north of Oxford.

Rousham is first mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086; the estate passed through various hands<sup>1</sup> before being purchased by the illustrious Dormer family in 1635.<sup>2</sup> When General James Dormer (d. 1741) died with no issue the house, farm and estate passed to his cousin Sir Clement Cottrell who's son, Charles was to adopt the Dormer name. It is still owned by the Cottrell-Dormer family.

### **THE HOUSE<sup>3</sup>**

The house itself is basically a 17th c. H-plan mansion; William Kent added side wings, a battlemented pediment, octagonal windows and an ogee cupola for General Dormer in 1738 to create 'the earliest complete example of Georgian rococo'.<sup>4</sup> He was also responsible for some interior decor, in particular the Parlour designed for the General's bronzes; the ceiling is reminiscent of Kent's garden themes, it depicts romantic landscapes and arabesques with Ceres, Bacchus and Venus in the central

medallion. These themes are typical of Kent and it is likely that he transferred them to his garden designs, rather than intending an immediate link with the garden, which cannot be seen from the Parlour. The stable-yard buildings are also attributed to Kent.

William St. Aubyn was responsible for greater changes to the house; in 1860 he extended it by one room's width all along the garden (north) side in Jacobean style, which means far more of the house may be seen during a garden walk than Kent or Bridgeman ever intended. <sup>5</sup>

## THE GARDEN

**Sources:** The evidence surviving for the garden works comprises:

1 - A plan dated 1715-20 and attributed to Charles Bridgeman by virtue of a note in his hand; this is the only solid evidence linking Bridgeman to Rousham<sup>6</sup>.

2 - An estate map dated 1721 of which there were three copies, this delineates the site and shows some features attributable to Bridgeman or earlier. A cartouche encloses the words 'Scale of Perches measured by Edward Grantham'.<sup>7</sup>

3 - A plan dated c.1738<sup>8</sup> or later, generally attributed to William Kent but more probably by William White, the Chief Steward at Rousham, as the key is in his hand; however it is undoubtedly Kent's ideas that he is illustrating.<sup>9</sup>

These plans have major disadvantages as sources; firstly the scarcity of precise dates; also nothing differentiates mere ideas from later actualities. The Estate map is assumed to be the most reliable, as the purpose of such would be to show the Dormer's holdings as they were seen on the ground.

4 - Several sketches by Kent of the garden and buildings survive, but again one cannot tell whether these were intended or actual views. If done for the owner as a sales technique before any work began this would satisfactorily explain why features are so exaggerated. These comprise:

(a) Venus Vale - from in front of the Lower Cascade c.1737<sup>10</sup>

(b) Cuttle Mill c.1735-8<sup>11</sup>

(c) Dying Gladiator c.1735-8<sup>12</sup>

(d) View from garden including Eyecatcher and Cuttle Mill<sup>13</sup>

(e) Townesend's Building c.1735-8<sup>14</sup>

5 - Letters from the Rousham collection remained at the house, these include that by Maclary as transcribed<sup>15</sup> and a series of letters by White and Maclary on the works in the garden dating from 1738 on.<sup>16</sup> The former has the disadvantage of being written in glowing praise of the garden so may overemphasise certain facets and miss others. The latter are not always clear on which parts of the garden are being referred to, and some are undated.

6 - Also in the Cottrell-Dormer collection are some estate accounts of Colonel Robert Dormer.

Further drawings and photographs were used, the majority are held at the Bodleian, which reveal little more than the above main sources.

In addition we can rely on reports by visitors to the garden: views of gardens are very subjective, but if the constituent elements are merely listed any description is dull and unconvincing and excludes the most important facet: the sensations and emotions induced by perambulation within the garden; yet for an outline of the garden as it was left by Bridgeman and Kent and its impact on visiting contemporaries, we must rely on their writings, regardless of the many pitfalls, as few plans or pictures remain, and these too would be subject to the whims of their authors.

Before Kent began Pope was praising the beauties of Rousham:

'I lay one night at Rousham, which is the prettiest place for water-falls, jetts, ponds inclosed with beautiful scenes of green and hanging wood, that ever I saw.'<sup>17</sup>

Horace Walpole describes Rousham on a trip on July 17th 1760:

'The garden of 25 acres; the best thing I have seen of Kent. Gothic buildings, Arcade from ancient baths, temples, old bridges, palladian do., river, slender stream winding in a stone channel thro grass walks in wood, cascades

overgrown with Ivy; grove of Venus of Medici. the whole, sweet,...'<sup>18</sup>

Walpole reached Rousham twenty years after the major part of Kent's work, when the garden was reaching its proper growth, and perhaps overgrown as Sir Clement's legal work kept him in London. Fast-growing trees of more than around twenty-five years would begin to dominate the statues and buildings, rather than forming a back-drop as they do in Kent's sketches, so perhaps Walpole was privileged to see the garden at its peak.

### **GARDEN LAYOUT**<sup>19</sup>

The garden area under discussion is long and irregular in shape which can be attributed to only land of minimal agricultural use being converted. It is on a slope facing north-east running down to the Cherwell. The soil is clay above oolitic limestone. The 1721 Estate Map of Rousham designates the north-western plot the 'New Garden', measuring 7 acres, 1 rod and 22 perches, and indicates two square ponds, terracing on the Great Slope and some straight walks - how much of this was Bridgeman can only be guessed - Kent extended the garden: into Walnut Tree Orchard<sup>20</sup> to the east; to include part of the paddock near the house; elongated the garden and moved the road beyond to include a view of Heyford bridge to the north-west and make room for a pond in the south-west corner. Although Bridgeman's plan included some designs for the eastern area, these are sketchy, and there is no evidence that they were carried out. Adjoining the New Garden is the medieval area, little altered since 1750, comprising the walled Kitchen Gardens as described by Maclary; an orchard with a cylindrical 17th c. dovecote; and an allotment; flanking this area is the churchyard and the stableyard.

A straight avenue of trees heads south from the house across the estate, and the 1721 Estate map indicates such; this was merely a visual effect as there is no approach road in this direction, today a winding drive brings visitors in from the road to the west.

On visiting the New Garden, one walks around the house to see firstly the **Bowling-Green**; this is a large, closely-mown grass area, surrounded on all four sides by paths. With the house behind one has what Maclary describes as two green terraces running along either side, and beyond the furthest path the rougher grass disappears down the Concave Slope, so opening up a vista of the Cherwell valley. The name does not necessarily mean games were played here; in James' 1712 treatise on gardening a 'plain' bowling-green is merely a 'grass work'. Skelton's etching<sup>21</sup> shows how this area was before St Aubyn's extension; it appears sunken as would be expected of a bowling-green; with steps leading down, today the house is on the same level as the Green. The 1721 map shows the area as a simple rectangle of grass, with paths along all sides and forming a cross in the centre, the half nearest the house is narrower; which would indicate alterations planned by Bridgeman on the 1715-21 map, and carried out by Kent's arrival; William Townesend, the Oxford mason, was working here in 1725.<sup>22</sup> There is little difference in the appearance of this area between the 1715-21 and the c.1738 plan; the latter shows the area somewhat simplified. An ink drawing of the house<sup>23</sup> shows a path leading from the door in the centre of the garden frontage (as it was before St Aubyn's alterations) down the shallow slope to the main area of grass, thus dividing what is now a continuous green strip between house and Green; when this was created is unclear.

On the right is a large yew hedge forming a tunnel, which is unmentioned on

plans or in Maclary's letter; as it was probably planted to conceal the Kitchen garden wall beyond it would not have been seen as an important element of the garden, but a necessity unworthy of discussion; the trees are certainly old enough for it to have been here in Maclary's time.

The **Concave** or **Great Slope** forms a concave sweep from the end of the Bowling Green down to the river. Dr. Plot in his 1677 publication writes:

'And for a descent there are none like the Walks at *Rousham* in the Garden of the Worshipful *Robert Dormer* Esquire; where there are no less than *five* one under another, leading from the *garden* above, down to the *river* side, having *steps* at each end, and parted with *hedges of Coadlings & c.*'<sup>24</sup>

these terraces are clear on the 1721 Estate Map. On the 1715-20 map of Bridgeman the pencilled outline for the plan shows the slope at an angle of around 10° to the west of the Green and with parallel divisions which could represent the terraces; the finalised ink overlay is square on and has no such lines; implying that Bridgeman considered removing the terraces. Townesend was working here in 1725<sup>25</sup>, possibly just repair work. Kent's plan includes the levelling of the terraces to create a 'Concave Slope; White writes:

'... The Terra's crooked as a Ram's Horn, ye Earth that now lyes upon them taken away; all things thereabouts will appear Magnificent.'<sup>26</sup>

From the summit of the Great Slope one may follow the path Maclary describes or chose your own routes along the many interlinking winding paths.

### **PATHS AND WALKS**

Kent's garden is designed to be moved through; and a great choice of paths

exists<sup>27</sup>, although a recommended tour is to follow that described by John Maclary.<sup>28</sup> Unhappily the line of many paths has been altered, thus losing intended sights, and at times intruding upon a scene that should be grassed. This is partly explained by the loss of the feature to which the path led; such as the Garden Bridge which was reached by a path originating at the corner of the Kitchen Garden, a twisting worn track is present today. With, for example, the circular walk of 'Serpentine Gravel Paths' beside the Elm Walk as seen on Kent's map, the explanation could be that they were never there, as Maclary has as an alternative a walk through a grove by the river on a different alignment.

### **WATER FEATURES**<sup>29</sup>

The most important feature of any garden is its water; and at Rousham the use of this asset is superb. Several springs which run through the garden to the river below are controlled within natural looking cascades and some formal elements. A head of water was built up in two spring-fed ponds in the field above the garden, which are seen on the 1:2500 O.S. map of 1881; the 1721 map shows a stream running from Cliff Hill Field to the Square Pond. Bridgeman details this in his note on the 1715-21 plan:

'The Current or Fall of the water from the place proposed to bring it from the further springs, to the great square pond is 15 foot 6 inches- The length from [ye] further springs to the nether springs is 890 foot and from thence to [ye] Garden walls is [3]00 foot and from thence cross the Garden to the Square pond is 480 foot - in the whole 1670 foot.'

The water components of Bridgeman's plan are similar in position, but altered in detail, from those seen today, which leaves it difficult to assess the part played here

by Kent, whose water management is greatly admired by Horace Walpole:

'But of all the beauties he added to the face of this beautiful country, none surpassed his management of water. Adieu to canals, circular basins and cascades tumbling down marble steps, that last absurd magnificence of Italian and French villas. The forced elevation of cataracts was no more. The gentle stream was taught to serpentine seemingly at its pleasure, and where discontinued by difficult levels, its course appeared to be concealed by thickets properly interspersed, and glittered again at a distance where it might be supposed naturally to arrive.'<sup>30</sup>

The Cherwell itself is an essential theme, much of the garden opens out onto it.

Kent had the river cleaned and widened:

'...the river is pretty well cleaned & ye Banks everywhere par'd '<sup>31</sup>

By the 17th c. bridges were important ornamental features, Rousham already had the 14th c.<sup>32</sup> **Heyford Bridge** taking the road over the river, and Kent opened up the view to this; around this time the bridge was also widened with six arches added to the original medieval pointed four.

There was once a **Garden Bridge** and **Weir** across to the meadows from the garden between the Great Slope and the Pyramid Building<sup>33</sup> ; remnants are visible in both banks and it can be seen on the 1721 and c.1738 plans. All evidence points to this being a pre-Kent structure.

The central part of the garden is the **Vale of Venus** - a central pond and two cascades , where water and statues come together to create an enchanting scene, clearly of Italian descent.<sup>34</sup> It is very difficult to assess from the Bridgeman plan how much has changed, and we shall never know which parts were actually constructed, nor how much was altered during construction. Many believe that Kent merely softened Bridgemanic features; however the differences between the two plans are too great.

On the Bridgeman plan is a grass theatre overlain by a plantation, this overlooks the large pond in the centre of the Vale. Woodbridge<sup>35</sup> sees Kent reorienting this theatre thus losing the view of the ponds, although there is no trace of it today or on the c.1738 map. Walpole admits that Venus' Vale at least is derivative of Pope's Twickenham garden.

At the lowest point is the **Lower Cascade**; this is a rustic limestone three-arched opening, almost invisible from behind except as a grass bank, with steps down which water once cascaded into a semi-circular pond. The Lower Cascade on the 'Bridgeman' plan shows a circular basin to which a stepped cascade descends, although it is difficult to visualise his intentions from a two-dimensional sketch. In Kent's sketch of the Vale a fountain rises from this pond to a great height, and Maclary confirms this. Today the fountain no longer plays and the pond has been resealed so investigation would be fruitless; but quite possibly the fountain was never constructed; Maclary was attempting to put the garden in the best possible light and could well have described features to be as well as those existing (although Maclary declared in the 1750s that following instructions to stop turning on the fountains for visitors had lost him £60 p.a. in tips<sup>36</sup>). Fountains often acted as a backdrop in Italian garden theatres and as such would certainly have been a feasible part of this Kent design.

Beyond this is the **Octagonal Fish-pond** or **Great Pond**, with an impressive stock of golden orfe; into this runs the Rill, and a spring from further up Venus' Vale which seems to be diverted on both sides of the Upper Cascade to reach the Pond. The Pond is not discussed by Maclary, as he was describing one view of the Vale at a point from which it is indiscernible. On the 1715-1720 plan this pond is square, it would

seem that Kent therefore was responsible for cutting off the corners<sup>37</sup>; the c.1738 plan shows the pond with rounded edges so this detail was reconsidered later.

The **Upper Cascade**, in alignment with the Lower Cascade and the Octagonal Pond; is also rusticated limestone and embanked from behind, but with only one pedimented arch into the keystone of which was inserted a memorial plaque dedicated to Ringwood an otterhound 'of extreme sagacity'; this appeared in the early 1800s.<sup>38</sup> It has a stepped opening down which the water runs, similar to the Lower Cascade. These are akin to Kent's cascades at Chiswick - where he worked from 1725 on - which in turn is clearly similar to that at Villa Aldobrandini<sup>39</sup>, to Claremont and to the Shell Bridge at Stowe so undoubtedly these are by Kent; there is no evidence of a structure comparable in siting or appearance to the Upper Cascade in Bridgeman's plan. From the basin arises a fountain, but only in Kent's sketch of Venus' Vale, and with the view point of this work the fountain could be arising from the Octagon Pond; again no trace remains today of the fountain, although a thorough investigation may prove fruitful.

Behind, between Venus' Vale and New Grass Walk to Townsend's Building, and terminating the axis through these four water features is the **Upper Pond** or **Square Pond**; today all that remains is a tree-covered dip, but the shape is reasonably clear, as is the embanking that was necessary above the Upper Cascade to hold the water. These barriers were a major piece of work, involving days of soil and rubble build up around a framework, generally of wood, interspersed with compaction. Maclary does not mention this pond as it is invisible from his viewpoint, but describes a fountain 'playing Thirty feet high', which today only archaeological survey would verify. The pond is shown on both the Kent and Bridgeman plans and neither specifies any fountain

apart from that in Bridgeman's Theatre on Kent's map.

Mentioned by Maclary, and illustrated on the c.1738 plan, is the **Oval Fish-pond** or **New Pond** off-set to the south-west of the axis through the Vale; today no trace remains on the ground to even prove it ever existed. Whether it was the reservoir into which the stream ran directly from its entry to the grounds beneath the south wall is unclear; there is a small pool here at present.

Connecting to Venus Vale is the **Rill** and **Cold Bath**, creating the area known as the **Watery Walk**. The Rill carries water from an underground stream emerging beyond Townsend's Building, through the octagonal Cold Bath and into the Octagon Pond. It is a 26 cm wide, stone serpented canal, running down the middle of a path lined with yew; until the frost of 1983 it was contained by laurel hedges and totally separate from the rest of the garden, providing a cool, dark, and somewhat eerie walk. In February 1990 the trees here suffered severely in the winds, and the area has totally lost its character. The Rill at Rousham is claimed to be the earliest example of the Rococo 'line of beauty' applied to the garden<sup>40</sup>; however in *Brittania Illustrata* by Jan Kip, a meandering rill at Miserden is illustrated in the 1720 volume. Hogarth was to clarify the use and form of this line: the serpentine, in his *Analysis of Beauty*<sup>41</sup>, but it was much used before this date - though perhaps not as accurately as Hogarth would have wished for his precise serpentine ' the line of grace'

Use of this line was somewhat hypocritical, it being an element originated against formality and contrivance, yet with rules being formulated for its application. Kent used it in architecture and furniture as well as landscapes, indeed there are examples in Rousham House; and is acclaimed as being the first to use the serpentine

systematically in garden schemes; later landscape designers were to make full use of it, particularly Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

'His [Kent's] ruling principle was, that nature abhors a straight line. His mimics, for every genius has his apes, seemed to think that she could love nothing but what was crooked.'<sup>42</sup>

The serpentine may be used to define the gardens of this period, and is perhaps a more precise term than 'landscape garden', 'informal' or 'natural'<sup>43</sup>.

On neither plan is the Cold Walk delineated, both show a sinuous path which does not complete the line of today, instead of terminating at the Octagon Pond, it merges with another path winding from the bottom of the Vale up to the north end of the New Pond. On the Bridgeman plan is a line, which seems to mark the flow of the stream, but it runs straight from the boundary (today it arises below and to the east of Townsend's Building) to the pond, passing through the Bath. Thus it seems that Kent created the serpentine loops in the Rill within the line of the path. Maclary describes the Rill as 'a River' with trout swimming, this may indicate that the canalisation was later as no fish would stay in the Rill today; Walpole's 1760 reference to a stream in a stone channel<sup>44</sup> gives a definite date for such. Today the Watery Walk is relatively straight although the Rill still curves within it.

The Cold Bath was a fairly common feature of the 17th and 18th c. inspired by classical models; they were sometimes roofed. As they were often used for washing and cooling-off before water was plumbed to the house, it seems likely that the Grotto beside the pool was used as a changing room, other examples contained fires, but there is no evidence for such at Rousham. The Bath is rectangular on the Kent/White plan, so the octagonal shape must have been decided on later; on Bridgeman's plan it appears round, and conversion from circle to octagon would be far simpler than to a rectangle.

The **Theatre**, also known as **Bridgeman's Theatre**, on the path from the bottom of Venus Vale back to the Great Slope is worth mentioning here as Maclary's letter tells us of a shell fountain in what is now a small grassy semi-circular glade with three statues. It is on the later plan which a feature approximating a fountain appears - Bridgeman's showing only terracing - it seems this was planned by Kent before 1738, and never completed. Woodbridge believes the Theatre on Bridgeman's plan was never built; yet reports White on levelling it off in 1738, his argument would only carry if the earthworks were to create Kentian contouring rather than level Bridgeman terraces; or indeed if he is referring to the theatre Bridgeman is attributed with overlooking the Octagon Fish-Pond (then square).<sup>45</sup> There is no trace of a fountain, although the state of the ground indicates a spring here; the area has lost any contouring it may have once had, and only an irregular grass triangle with three statues and a vertical stone slab set into the hillside remain.

Garden theatres were a speciality of Bridgeman; indeed Pope describes the theatre in his new garden as 'Bridgemannik' and states that Bridgeman's men aided construction<sup>46</sup>. A grand example of a Bridgeman amphitheatre was built at Claremont; and the engraving of Claremont amphitheatre, lake and island temple<sup>47</sup>, gives an idea of how the Rousham theatre would have appeared.

Both plans show the Theatre screened from the river by trees, although Bridgeman's has terracing superimposed on this vegetation so he may have intended to, or indeed actually removed them; today there is no barrier. A path intrudes diagonally across the Theatre, destroying its symmetry; it is not apparent on any 18th c. plan and is not a necessary part of the garden today.

## GARDEN ARCHITECTURE<sup>48</sup>

Garden architecture within an 18th c. landscaped garden was to enliven a scene, form a contrast to natural forms, and often act as a view-point. It also provided a fairly cheap opportunity for experiments with architecture and building techniques. Palladianism was the new style leading architecture at this time and was widely used in the garden; adequately fulfilling the function of a contrast. The taste arising for the 'sublime'; including admiration for macabre novels and wild and rugged scenery resulted in an increase in grottoes, ruins and gloom.

Bridgeman was a gardener not an architect, although he would have acknowledged the fashion for garden buildings and other architectural features; his works incorporate the architecture of other men more renowned in this field, such as Vanbrugh and Gibbs at Stowe; his own achievements being limited to walls, terraces, ha-has and fountains rather than grand temples or ruinations. In contrast Kent had worked as an architect and created some superb edifices in landscapes such as Stowe, Claremont, Euston Hall in Suffolk, Richmond Park in Surrey and nearby Shotover. He is known for his rustication of garden buildings; and although his original architectural training was in the hands of Lord Burlington, his work is distinguished by flights of fancy and less purity or elegance. Kent happily worked both respectfully with Classical lines and exuberantly with his Gothicisms (creating his 'English rococo Gothick'<sup>49</sup>); he took his inspiration from Rome rather than Burlington and exulted in the contrasts he could create.

Of the structures surviving at Rousham the majority were designed by William Kent; Bridgeman dealt only with the boundaries and water features.

An 18th c. tour of the garden would begin at the Visitor's Gate - the **Palladian Gateway** or **Rustic Door** - in the south west corner of the garden; although Maclary takes the house as his point of departure, which indeed is where the family, for whom he describes the circuit, would start. The Gateway, is graded II\*, as are the majority of structures in the garden; and dated c.1733-40<sup>50</sup>. It is a heavy pedimented archway, of chamfered limestone, showing typical Kentian rustication of a basically classical design; surmounting a doorway to the road. Two urns flank the view over the Paddock to the house; and to the right as you face the view sits Cow Castle. There is no equivalent entrance on the pre-Kent maps; the garden was not a great enough attraction to warrant this until the foremost landscape designer of the time had been employed. On the 1721 Estate Map the entrance is shown in the position of the ironwork gates today, set in the wall halfway along the green walk from the Palladian Gate to Townesend's Building.

**Cow Castle**, as it is called by the family contains the 'large, handsome Garden Seat' with the view to the surrounding countryside and the Eyecatcher (no longer visible from here due to tree growth) as described by Maclary. An early example of the ferme ornée style, it is divided by the line of the ha-ha into a covered seat or lodge in the garden and a battlemented cow shelter in the Paddock. Also of limestone, it is two-storeyed with a gabled stone slate roof and red tiled floor.

On turning right along the edge of the Paddock one would reach the statue of the Dying Gladiator and eventually the Bowling Green, with the two **Pavilions** or **Green Seats** (so called because of their situation on the edge of the Bowling Green) over-looking the Great Slope, thus reversing the first route Maclary describes. The

pavilions are of white-painted timber on a stone foundation which rises to about two feet above the brick floor. They are five-sided with an open front, the back three walls are solid, the rest trellised with a zinc roof surmounting; and aligned opposite one another as viewing seats.

Following Maclary from Cow Castle and continuing straight ahead one passes, in the angle between the two walks, the traces of a square structure with deep foundations or actually a room with a sunken floor; it may be the remains of the '**pretty garden seat**' which Maclary mentions; if so it was a very substantial structure, the size of the foundations would imply a weighty roof. The remains show an entrance below ground level, whether there were stairs to a storage area is hard to tell. Certainly from this point a view of the house could be had (assuming the flora was less abundant here) which would match Maclary's description. Less possible is that these are the remains of Proserpine's Cave (see below), but the siting does not fit with the position Maclary gives.

We continue north-east along 'The New Grass Walk to Townesend's Building'<sup>51</sup> past the sites of the Oval (where no trace of the 'ugly Heavy Building in the middle of it' which Maclary criticises remains) and Upper Ponds. Close by was a path leading to a pile of rubble amongst the laurel; this was once **Le Privé** (simply translated to 'The Privy'), demolished within living memory. Although of little architectural importance, it undoubtedly was integral in the garden's character; that it only appears on the c. 1738 map would indicate that it was part of the Kent design; however it is perfectly feasible that Bridgeman did not include such a basic item on his plan.

The New Grass Walk once divided, the right branch Maclary states should terminate at the **Forrist Chair**: no evidence survives, and indeed with the alteration of the paths its setting is lost.

A path would then take you down to the bottom of the Watery Walk, past the position of the **Gothic Building** - Maclary's '**Proserpine's Cave**' our only evidence of this is from the letter which indicates that the head-gardener designed it, although his wording may imply that he designated the building as 'Proserpine's' rather than actually creating it . Here it is difficult to relate the letter to the ground, as the path of today does not relate to any of the 18th c., and emerges at the top of Venus' Vale. However the cascades appear only as grassed hillocks from behind, thus creating an entirely different scene with the Octagon Pond as the feature.

Following the Rill, one arrives at its focal point, the Cold Bath backed by the **Bath House**. This rusticated limestone construction appears on the plans of both designers, but is closer in shape to that on Kent's plan than Bridgeman's crescent; which indicates alterations during construction. Inside three brickwork niches are set into plastered stonework. Continuing along the Rill one emerges on the slope below Townsend's Building; at this point the source of the stream is apparent.

**Townsend's Building**, also known as the **Temple of the Echo**, is a limestone pavilion of a rusticated classical style with a hipped Welsh slate roof. Built on an octagonal plan it is fronted by a pedimented portico with two Tuscan columns. A front elevation and plan by Kent remain in the house, and although they differ somewhat from the construction (the original design being larger and having three porticoes, each with four columns) it was clearly designed by Kent.<sup>52</sup> Pevsner 1974

declares that the design was modified by William Townsend as he constructed the temple; however he died in 1739 before it was complete. A letter by Townsend in 1738<sup>53</sup> on the construction of the pavilion included a consideration of the water supply, perhaps to cater for dining in the garden. Today the building's prime function is as a viewing seat over the river, perhaps once Heyford Bridge could be seen. Inside is a Roman tomb and a single bas relief - which is probably an 18th c. forgery - originally there were four, together with busts of Socrates and Apollo.<sup>54</sup>

Turning back into the garden, to the south-west is the Elm Walk, with the statue of Apollo at its head, it terminates in Venus' Vale - although the most pleasing way to view the Vale is at the end of the walk through the river-side grove as Maclary describes; standing near the **Boat House**, which is a low drum-vaulted, rough stone building at water level, grass-covered to the extent that it merges into the garden as a hummock; this is unmentioned in any of the 18th c. sources, dated c.1733-40 and attributed to Kent.<sup>55</sup>

The Elm Walk frames a view of the **Arcade**, one of the most outstanding features of the garden, seen as its central pivot, and a grand example of Kent's garden architecture; it is best seen from this angle, front-on the Arcade becomes two-dimensional. The Arcade is reached from the Vale by a path winding up through trees; originally the trees screened the scene so that the view of the Arcade did not conflict with that of the Vale. Seven bays, with rough hewn arches below classical pediments, overlook the river, each with the original oak seat designed by Kent, between which are niches which once held busts.<sup>56</sup> The design was inspired by the series of gigantic terraces and ramps comprising the forecourt of the Temple of

Fortune, Praeneste (now Palestrina) near Rome; which undoubtedly Kent saw during his touring; which explains why the Arcade is so often referred to as the **Praeneste**; it can also be compared to the Vatican Belvedere (1503-11)<sup>57</sup>. Kent used a similar Arcade in an illustration for *The Fairie Queen* entitled *Noble Lake*<sup>58</sup> in which a four-arched version is set amongst vegetation on the hill forming the back drop. Surmounting the Arcade is the balustrade from which, standing by the Dying Gladiator, views of the countryside were admired on the way out; in front are traces of a retaining wall dividing the gravel path which fronts the Arcade from the steep grass sweep to the Cherwell.<sup>59</sup> Maclary has exaggerated the size of the balustrade on a similar scale to his estimations for the fountains, declaring it to be eighty feet in length when it is nearer twenty.

From hence one moves down again, into Bridgeman's Theatre; then, following the river bank, across the bottom of the Grand Slope, past the site of the old Garden Bridge and Weir, across the bottom of a smaller slope overlooked by the Pyramid to arrive at **Pope's Seat**, so named for the poet and philosopher who spent so much time at the house that he had his own small bedroom; there is another seat dedicated to Mr. Pope at Earl Bathurst's.<sup>60</sup> The seat is a limestone ruination, its appearance of being made-up from parts of old buildings is perhaps intentional; a gently curved recess in the garden wall of large blocks which protrude on the outer side of the wall, with six half-columns, it has lost its bench and roof - the line of which can still be seen in the stonework.

Visible from the seat is the cave which Maclary described as a source of drinking water for the house; nothing remains of the pond he mentions here but a

muddy puddle. The cave is set into a mound which functioned as a garden rubbish heap. Today it is this cave which is attributed with the function of icehouse; an earlier field investigator<sup>61</sup> described a square structure with rounded corners and accessed by ladder, filled in shortly after 1914, which would imply a second ice-house; he continues to elucidate its usage, with ice inserted annually and a straw covering (rather than alternate layers which was common practice), then brought out when required and placed in an insulated ice box in the kitchen.

Following an uphill course through shrubbery one arrives at the **Pyramid Building** described as a Gazebo by Kent and dated c.1733-40<sup>62</sup>; it is a single storey building on a square plan, of ironstone ashlar, with a pyramidal mid-late 19th c. tiled roof with finial; and buttressed sides. This building is often said to have been inspired by Vanbrugh's Pyramid at Stowe, at least in concept for in appearance they were quite distinct. Certainly the influence of the growing interest in Egyptian motifs was acknowledged; a stone relief of a head with Egyptian style hair arrangement is set into the triangular pediment between the entrance and roof. Inside is the original wooden bench; of the ornaments Maclary mentions there are only two bas reliefs surviving: Caesar and Calpurnia; plus a plaster figure which is a copy of a bronze in the house of two wrestlers.

#### **THE BOUNDARIES: Walls and Ha-ha**

The garden has few visual boundaries; namely the wall along the road, and the kitchen garden wall, and these are concealed by the flora; otherwise the garden is limited by the river Cherwell to the north-east, which is looked across to the meadows

and beyond; and the ha-ha of limestone rubble around the paddock on the southern side, which fulfils the function of such a feature, namely preventing animal movement beyond its line whilst being almost invisible until one actually stands upon the brink. It is apparent on the 1715 - 20 Bridgeman plan, here not stretching to its full extent, but only from the house to the corner where the viewing bastion was sited and the Gladiator is seen today; when Kent extended the garden apparently the ha-ha was continued to suit, and this would explain the official dating of c. 1733 - 40.<sup>63</sup>

The walls as seen today, which run along the road are dated mid.18th c., on the Bridgeman plan a double line with hatching running from the corner where the Gladiator is sited today around the perimeter of the garden along the road to the bridge indicates walling here and the same device on the lower half of the circular bastion point for overlooking Venus Vale represents a retaining wall. A wall reportedly ran along the edge of the river, there is no definite evidence for such.

Bridgeman used walls and ha-has to give straight edges and corners, which his paths ran parallel to; Kent uses the curves of the river - removing the wall; serpentises the paths and encroaches on the paddock to curve the originally straight ha-ha.

### **BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES**

The views at Rousham are terminated by one, sometimes both, of Kent's eyecatchers: the **Folly** and **Cuttle Mill**; both on land beyond the confines of the Rousham estate, they and their plots are now owned by the Cottrell-Dormers. The eyecatchers belong to the garden, and make sense only when viewed from here; although used to draw the eye into the surrounding countryside, they do not allow any

dilution of the idyllic landscape created within Rousham.

Also known as the Eyecatcher or **Triumphal Arch**, the Folly is a stagey two-dimensional arch set on a rise 2 km from the garden; 9m high and 21m long it seems insubstantial when seen from Rousham. It is of worked ironstone topped by rough hewn unmortared stone, piled into eleven pinnacles at regular intervals along the top; and comprises a central archway flanked by two smaller arches and separated from said by buttresses. Built as a ruin, it is a very early example of such; these achieved popularity both through the Gothic Revival, in which the architecture and ruins were to solidify links with the national past; and the trips to Italy where visitors would see Roman ruins included in modern gardens; as well as implying the triumph of nature over art. The Arch tilts away from Rousham, whether a result of the years, or as an intentional device to catch the light it is effective. Follies, in which the Rousham Arch can undoubtedly be included, are said to represent a great practical joke. That it functioned as a monument to the General's war successes in Spain is comparable to the Roman practice of triumphal arches, and is yet another link with Italy.<sup>64</sup>To General Dormer on his Building in Aston Fields:

Be this the image of thy fate in War.  
"TIS done! I view the rising scene from far  
When ages yet unborn shall read with pain  
The daring insults of Imperious Spain  
A gallant youth ('tis he, 'tis Litchfield's line,  
The features such and such th'air divine)  
Fir'd with his country's cause, and generous Pride  
To tread that Land which once his own defied,  
To Spain's proud Capital shall bend his way,  
And hear some cringing Don rehearse for pay,-  
"Here England fought, and there yon Portal stands  
"The monument of Spain and valiant Dormer's hands."<sup>65</sup>

Legends have grown around the Arch; locally it is believed that Kent placed it here to view his mistress' bedroom window through the middle arch; with at least some

basis is the claim that:

'This erection had, however, a further utilitarian purpose, as being in a direct line from Rousham House to Aynho House, it directed the eye to a system of flag signals which the families adopted to signify absence or presence, and other telegraphic (if I may use the word) signals.'<sup>66</sup>

Wilson 1984 claimed that the Arch may not have been a Kent design, yet with the whole garden focusing on the eyecatchers this cannot be substantiated; there are several examples of Kent follies, ruins and eyecatchers (often combined in one structure as here) throughout Oxfordshire which demonstrate his styles with such devices. Further proof of Kent's hand is the sketch by him of the view from the garden incorporating both eyecatchers - the scale here is out; the constructions are drawn much larger than in actuality; also the Folly is illustrated with higher arches and a more pointed silhouette.

**Cuttle Mill** has many titles: 'Temple of the Mill', 'Gothic Mill', 'Chapel of the Mill'; originally a mill house set on the river, Kent gothicised the front by adding a façade asymmetrically, with stepped gables, flying buttresses and Gothick windows to create 'the quintessence of the Picturesque'<sup>67</sup>. It is renovated and habited.

Also beyond the boundaries of the 'New Garden' is the **Cow House** or **Gothick Barn**, sited in fields opposite the front entrance to the house, approximately 400m away. Dated c.1733-40 and attributed to Kent<sup>68</sup>; it is of limestone with a gabled slate roof; a fairly rough rectangular building is fronted by a battlemented smooth stone façade with a semi-circular archway in the centre. This design has been incorrectly interpreted as for the Folly, which is much rougher and ruined. Like Cow Castle this is an early example of ferme ornée.

### Notes to Chapter Three:

- 1 See Elrington 1983 and Cottrell-Dormer F.E 1865 Pp. 7-11, 33-46 for more detail.
- 2 Evans 1912 and 'T' 1910 Pp. 310 give details of family offices
- 3 Dept. of Environment 1988, Hussey 1955 Pp. 155-160 and Pevsner 1974 Pp. 741-743 give detailed descriptions of the house
- 4 Hussey, 1955 Pp. 156
- 5 Plate 4 portrays the house before St Aubyn's work.
- 6 Bodleian MSGD a4fo.63 Reproduced on Plate 2
- 7 Oxford Record Office Cott I/1 Reproduced on Plate 1
- 8 Based on the letters by White of 1735 - 40 Woodbridge 1974(b) theorises that the plan is post -1739 as the siting of Apollo was not settled until this date
- 9 Hanging in Rousham House Reproduced on Plate 3
- 10 In Rousham House
- 11 Chatsworth 26 item 56
- 12 Chatsworth 26A item 51
- 13 Rousham House
- 14 Rousham House
- 15 Transcribed in Appendix Two Pp. 109
- 16 These letters remaining untraced by the owner; Woodbridge 1974(b) is used as a source
- 17 Pope to Martha Blount 4 Sept. 1728. In Sherburn 1956 // 513

- 18 Toynbee 1927 - 28 Pp. 26
- 19 Refer to c. 1738 plan -Plate 2 - for siting of features, areas and paths
- 20 As entitled on the 1721 map - Plate 1
- 21 Skelton 1823. As reproduced in Plate 4
- 22 Colonel Robert Dormer's account book. From Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 282
- 23 Buckler 1823 Bodleian M.S. Top. Oxon a68 no433
- 24 Plot 1677 Pp. 261
- 25 Colonel R. Dormer account book, from Woodbridge's 1974(b) extractions  
Pp. 282
- 26 White April 1738 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 284
- 27 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 Fig. 15 illustrates variations in route.  
Pugh 1988 Pp. 71 Note 8 lists several planned circuits of gardens  
commonly visited on the Grand Tour; and in Note 10 Pp. 72 gives English  
gardens with set itineraries
- 28 Pugh 1988 gives no credence to the garden as a place for wandering at whim,  
but sees the route as described in Maclary's letter as the fit and only way to  
view Rousham. In his hypothesis Kent constructed the garden as a specific  
circuit and all features are placed to be viewed as Maclary describes.
- 29 See Appendix Three for a schedule of water features
- 30 Walpole 1770 Pp. 22 1975 reprint: Brentham Press
- 31 White April 1738 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 284
- 32 Wing 1890-1 dates the bridge via Kennet's *Parochial Antiquities* , the  
incumbents were entitled Rector of Heyford, but after of Heyford *ad Pontem*;  
although possibly there was an earlier bridge. Cottrell-Dormer F.E. writes in  
1865: 'It is stated (on what authority does not appear) that this bridge was

- originally built by the Monks of Eynham (or Ensham), near Oxford.' Pp. 26
- 33 References: Maclary 1750 - Appendix Two; White April 1738 from  
Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 288
- 34 The Vale is compared to Pratolino and the Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati by Hunt  
1978
- 35 Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 282
- 36 BBC Open University programme 1987
- 37 The same shape-change was carried out at Heythrop Park, Oxfordshire on a  
Victorian pond
- 38 Cottrell-Dormer F.E. 1865 Pp. 30
- 39 As discussed by Hunt 1986
- 40 Department of the Environment 1988: section on 'Watery Rill'
- 41 Hogarth 1753
- 42 Walpole 1770 Pp. 25 1975 Reprint: Brentham Press
- 43 See Turner 1986 Pp. 81-83: he divides the Serpentine Style of gardens into  
three phases; Rousham being in the first or 'Augustan/Poetic'
- 44 As quoted here on Pp. 20
- 45 Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 285
- 46 Pope to Earl of Oxford 22 Mar. 1725/6 In Sherburn 1956 *iii* 37
- 47 Roque and Benazech 1754. Reproduced in Willis 1977 Pl.31
- 48 See Appendix Four for a schedule of structures
- 49 Term coined by Colvin 1978
- 50 Department of the Environment 1988. Rousham was first graded in 1957.  
GRADE II is defined by the Department: 'These are buildings of special interest  
which warrant every effort being made to preserve them (some particularly

important buildings in Grade II are classified as Grade II\*)

- 51 So entitled on the c.1738 plan
- 52 The Temple is depicted as by Kent in Vardy 1744 'Plan and Elevation of a Temple at General Dormer's at Rousham'
- 53 William Townsend's life and works were examined by Hiscock W.G.  
*Architectural Review* Oct. 1945
- 54 Described in Maclary's letter - Appendix Two
- 55 Department of the Environment 1988
- 56 Listed in Maclary's letter - Appendix Two
- 57 Pugh 1988 Pp. 38
- 58 Illustration II vi 20. V & A E.885 1928
- 59 White to General Dormer 1738 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 286 refers to the 'parapet wall'
- 60 Jones 1953 Pp. 31
- 61 Lahicles 1971
- 62 Department of the Environment 1988
- 63 Ibid
- 64 Discussed in Hunt 1987 Pp. 86-87
- 65 Aynho papers. Reproduced in Brookes 1929 Pp. 124
- 66 Wing 1877 Pp. 25 - by 1877, he adds, tree-growth had made such viewing impossible
- 67 Pevsner 1974 Pp. 745
- 68 Department of the Environment 1988

## CHAPTER FOUR: The Props

### GARDEN ORNAMENT

The ornamental features within a garden: sculpture, urns, sarcophagi and garden furniture; work in conjunction with the architecture to evoke the mood; and in some places to pass relatively strong emotional, and even political messages, as at Stowe. It is in this period that greatest emphasis was placed on designing a garden with meaning; and a major facet of garden history is to divulge these messages, although we must certainly not over-examine a site, reading ideas into it that were never in the designer's head; or risk losing the magic of a garden by concentrating too hard on the links that could be made with philosophy, poetry, Ancient Rome, politics and so on. Also the gardens were used as 'Cabinets of Curiosities' comparable both with the fashionable small collections which are the origins of our museums today; and to the gardens of modern Italy which were filled with the ruins, sculpture and other curiosities of bygone days; these gardens and contents were intended only to form such a collection, with no hidden meanings.

### **GARDEN FURNITURE<sup>1</sup>**

The history of garden furniture is an extensive area of research in its own right: following the Restoration extravagant tastes and foreign ideas dominated the early 18th c., together with an excess of publications on furniture design. The best garden furniture can be said to be that which is designed to suit the requirements of the

user; and in a style suited for its situation both in the garden as a whole, and in relation to that area in which it stands.

A remarkably large proportion of the originals survive at Rousham; mostly sited within the buildings; including in particular the seven curved oak benches in the Arcade by Kent. The 'Signior' was well known for his furniture designs; and inspired the work of Robert Adam; his designs show his work to be bold and direct, often incorporating the serpentine.<sup>2</sup>

### **SCULPTURE<sup>3</sup>**

Sculpture was a popular feature of the formal French and Dutch style gardens, used to terminate vistas and dominate path junctions as well as creating the focus of parterres and open spaces. With the movement towards the landscape garden the sculptures decreased in size, often to life-size, becoming less dominant and were absorbed into the scene rather than being features in their own right. Rousham displays its position in history as a transitional garden by using sculpture mainly to create a 'natural' scene, but also placing a Colossus at the end of the one remaining straight walk; the Gladiator in the centre of the viewing terrace above the Arcade, and the Horse and Lion as star attraction on the north front. At the time of the major works within the New Garden, Italy was casting her influence over the gentry; and with the resulting fashion for creating 'Italian' gardens, statuary - particularly with a classical theme - was not to lose its importance until Brown's regimented nature within which such frivolities would be an imposition although urns and vases were generally thought sober enough. The pictures of Claude and Poussin, with their inclusion of people and statues, encouraged the fashion.

Various sources were used in the design of these ornaments; classical originals were seen on the Grand Tour, copies were common in British museums, illustrated books were available, Temple Stanyan's *Grecian History* 1707 was much used, particularly for Stowe. Many sculptors of the time were immigrants from the continent, bringing their skills and inspirations with them; amongst those dominating the field were Jan Van Nost and Peter Scheemakers.

The placing of statuary deserved great attention, for establishing themes, moods and status - effigies of deities must look down upon those of common folk<sup>4</sup>. Kent's concurrence with such practices is shown by the effectiveness of each piece within its setting and the garden as a whole.

The most common materials for garden sculpture were lead and stone; stone statues were originals, but a lead casting could be repeated as many times as popularity demanded. The deterioration of stone in the British winters caused the increase in lead works from the late 17th c. on. The practice had been to box the susceptible objects for storage over winter; but with less floral distraction in the garden in this season, the absence of statues meant a featureless garden, despite:

'To see one's urns, obelisks, and waterfalls laid open; the nakedness of our beloved mistresses, the Naiads, and the Dryads, exposed by that ruffian Winter to universal observation; is a severity scarcely to be supported by the help of blazing hearths, cheerful companions, and a bottle of the most grateful burgundy.'<sup>5</sup>

The lead figures at Rousham are today coated with an elastic battle-ship grey water-proof paint, and treated with cow dung to create an authentic patina. Yet in the 18th c. figures were often painted naturalistically, or to resemble marble, bronze or brass. White implies such may have been the case at Rousham:

'- Lovell too will meet the same fate next Munday<sup>6</sup>, upon his return to finish in the church, for he has quite done here within doors, having this morning painted Venus for the last time, so the lady now in the hall shall, when thoroughly dry, be returned to the place from whence she came.'<sup>7</sup>

White was in a quandary: whether to site Apollo facing down the Elm Walk and into the garden, or looking out over to Heyford Bridge<sup>8</sup>; today he faces the river. It is the lead statues which look to the view, and the stone which face into the garden<sup>9</sup>, with the exception of Apollo. If one follows the common inclination to divide a tour of Rousham into an outward, and a return journey; all those on the return (from Townsend's building following the course of the Cherwell back to Pope's Seat) look out of the garden, whilst the visitor is looking in. The reverse is true on the outward journey which is on the higher ground, past the Horse and Lion, Cow Castle, the Dying Gladiator, the top of Venus Vale and on to Townsend's, here the statues are sited for viewing as the visitor looks past them to the country beyond. Thus it seems that the statues are not positioned to 'call in the country' by directing their gazes in this direction, but to face the onlooker. White agonised over Apollo as the statue can be approached from opposing directions.

On the plan of 1715-20 if we assume the hatched squares represent statuary, there is one at the end of the Elm Walk, two in the Theatre, and one at each corner of the Bowling Green; this would fit Bridgeman's approach to placement of sculpture; his placement is more obvious than Kent's, and in the earlier mode of terminating views and dominating areas. There is no means of interpreting the siting of specific pieces so an analysis of the impact of Bridgeman's use of sculpture on Kent's design is impossible.

## URNS/VASES

There are four urns in the garden, all fairly similar and comparable in style to Ancient Roman mortuary urns. They are assumed to be of Kent design. The pair near the Palladian gate are set on panelled pedestals with simple mouldings at top and bottom; and are decorated with palm fronds and a Vitruvian scroll. One of these is totally new; a reproduction was made following an accident. Those flanking the Praeneste are carved with palm fronds and stand on much larger, totally plain pedestals.

## JAN VAN NOST PIECES

Van Nost (1688-1729), the master sculptor from near Antwerp, is attributed with five works in the garden: the two figures flanking Venus in her Vale - **Pan** and a **Faun**, dated 1701; and the three inhabitants of Bridgeman's Theatre - **Bacchus**, **Mercury** and **Ceres**. All the figures are of lead, and typical of the themes of 18th c. garden statuary; Mercury is a copy of Giovanni Bologna's bronze, then in the Villa Medici, Rome and today in the Museo Nazionale, Florence. Faun and Pan traditionally are both gods with horns, hind legs and tails of goats; but it is a figure of a young man similar to Apollo occupying the pedestal on Venus' left inscribed 'FAUNE'; in Kent's sketch of the Vale this piece is pictured on her right. Later workers have identified the figure on Venus' right as Faun, despite the pedestal inscription and assumed the nude male to be a rare representation of Pan. There is no satisfactory explanation for this anomaly.

## SCHEEMAKERS ' PIECES

Peter Scheemakers (1691-1770) was a renowned worker in stone, generally with an heroic subject. He is responsible for the **Horse and Lion** surmounting the Grand Slope and the **Dying Gladiator** on the terrace above the Arcade. Both are copies of ancient marble statues now in the Capitoline Museum. Much research has been done into the background of the Horse and Lion; the pose, in which the lion is on top of the fallen horse with its jaws around the crest of the stallion, is one much used by Stubbs and can be seen elsewhere. The position of the head of the Rousham statue differs somewhat from the Capitoline original; it is closer to the early 17th c. copy at the Villa d'Este, Tivoli which symbolised the struggle and defeat of Tivoli (the horse) by Rome (lion). Scheemakers studied much in Rome, but was a journeyman in Copenhagen, so it is likely that Peter Husum's bronze group in Kongens Have, Copenhagen which was cast in 1619 was his inspiration.<sup>10</sup>

The Horse and Lion's placing is more typical of the 17th. than 18th c., as it terminates the long view from the house along the Bowling green, and is sited centrally as a foreground to the countryside beyond the river; it is a dominant feature from any viewpoint in this area. The date of the statue and following excerpt make it clear that a placement more typical of Bridgeman must in fact have been Kent's:

'...Be so kind as to call at Scheemakers' and quicken him. I am still in hopes he will be here by the end of August to set up the statue before the weather proves bad'<sup>11</sup>

## UNATTRIBUTED PIECES

Behind the two Pavilions are two terms of limestone, **Minerva** and **Athene** with a helmet.

In the Vale by the Upper Cascade, although originally sited by the Upper Pond, are **Venus** and a pair of **Swans** which once were ridden by cupids, all of lead. The Venus is a copy of 'the best Venus' of the 18th c. - the Medici Venus, as is the figure in one of the niches on the house.

Terminating the Elm Walk and looking out over the Cherwell is the lead figure of **Apollo**, also known as **Antinous** or the **Colossus**<sup>12</sup>. The design is taken from a Hermes in the Vatican, known in the 18th c. as the Belvedere Antinous.

Two stone figures on terms surmount the balustrade behind the Dying Gladiator, these represent **Hercules** and **Pan**.

The statues in the niches on the house are listed in the schedule; it seems they were quite often moved around, and in an ink by Buckler 1823<sup>13</sup> the four centre niches are vacant.

On Kent's sketch of Venus Vale there are two covered vases on pedestals by the Upper Cascade, in positions filled by the swans today, although Venus is included; on the c.1738 plan Venus and the swans are pushed back behind the Upper Pond; this, and the altered position of Faun and Pan would indicate either that the documents were preconstruction or that statuary was moved around and therefore was not so intrinsic to the overall design as researchers have thought. The Van Nost pieces predate the garden works, so possibly already belonged to the Dormers, if so the garden was designed to include them and they had a major influence on the underlying themes. The the sculpture is intrinsic to Rousham; and the highly educated General<sup>14</sup> was certainly

fully capable of ordering and comprehending the complexities and analogies the selection of theme and siting of statues imbued Rousham with.

## FLORA<sup>15</sup>

### FOLIAGE

John Evelyn's *Sylva* of 1664 had encouraged the planting of trees in a campaign which peaked in the next century; and resulted in the introduction of many new species and the planting and management of trees on estates becoming commonplace. This style of silviculture was to move into the garden as formal effects were shunned<sup>16</sup> in favour of the more natural and profitable plantations and groves. Groves had been seen in earlier gardens, but of a more regimented nature, often in star shapes or crosses; Bridgeman's planting as it appears on the plan was regimented in lines of trees; Kent

'always used to stake out his grovettes before they [were] planted, to view the stakes everyway, to see that no three of them stand in a line.'<sup>17</sup>

Gardening was a researched and documented art as the contemporary theses reflect.<sup>18</sup> The planting or resiting of well-grown trees was a common event;

Bridgeman is known to have overseen such activities as did Lord Dacre who:

'planted above 200 elms, the least of them twenty feet high, and many of them thirty'<sup>19</sup>

On the Kent plan three categories of vegetation are defined:

*Forrist trees standing in grass* which from Kent's sketches we can assume

were intended to represent those in Italian scenes, bare-stemmed and with light even crowns, trimmed where necessary to create a column effect. They also gave the impression of stage perspective.

*Underwood* which is drawn in blocks on the c.1738 plan, and provided visual barriers to scenes and paths. Maclary's letter shows that flowering shrubs were once intermixed with this undergrowth. The shape of the underwood blocks has suffered greatly; some in Kent's plan were pointed, this has been lost; and in many places the undergrowth has disappeared totally, opening up new and unwanted views; today yew dominates the garden so much that underwood is prevented from regrowth. Although Maclary describes many species comprising the undergrowth, it is now mostly laurel; this is very susceptible to frost and in 1983 the majority was killed; the following year 6000 small plants were purchased at a farm sale, these took a month to plant and are only now beginning to have a visual impact.

*Evergreens standing in grass* would form the backdrop to a scene (as Kent's sketches show). They replace the cypresses and ilex groves of classical scenes.

'.....levelling about the new pond and planting there 150 Scotch and Spruce firs from Faringdon. Also planting near the building in Aston Field two forest trees and five in Heyford Field'<sup>20</sup>

George Clarke's study of the sources for trees at Stowe discovered that a large proportion of indigenous species were brought in as seedlings from the surrounding countryside and grown on, with only the exotics purchased from nurseries; in contrast at Blenheim huge amounts were spent at the nearby Brompton Nursery.<sup>21</sup> No such study has been undertaken at Rousham, although various references are made to a nursery at Faringdon, and Maclary<sup>22</sup> complains of bringing flowering shrubs from London when they could be got cheaper locally.

'Groups of trees broke too uniform or too extensive a lawn; evergreens and woods were exposed to the glare of the champaign, and where the view was less fortunate, or so much exposed as to be beheld at once, he blotted out some parts to thick shades, to divide it into variety, or to make the richest scene more enchanting by reserving it to a further advancement of the spectator's step.'<sup>23</sup>

Thus Walpole described Kent's treatment of trees. The trees play an important role in the framing and screening of views; they were used by Kent to create screens whilst permitting visual penetration<sup>24</sup>, to create backdrops, and to carry the eye out towards the eyecatchers. Today they have grown to impose on the views<sup>25</sup> both within and out of the garden, in some cases totally concealing - such as the view from Pope's Seat down river which is blocked by a low branch.

Kent was known for his plantations, mixing deciduous and coniferous in belts and clumps, which Walpole thought he carried to excess 'till a lawn looks like the 10 of spades'. The small acreage of Rousham meant Kent had little space for dotting lawns with clumps; every group of trees had to fulfil its function of dividing spaces, backing scenes and framing views; here the effect is more woodland with glades than parkland with clumps as seen on his larger works such as Claremont.

Little is known about Bridgeman's planting; his plans indicate regular spacing and straight lines, with many avenues; he used vegetation to create openings in geometrical shapes along winding paths; groves were a common feature. The symbols, roughly o--o--o or o·o·o·o, which bound the walks, ha-ha and riverside apart from the stretch below the Arcade and Theatre, seem to represent planting; and the o o o o which Bridgeman used for trees in groves are placed in lines along the ha-ha which would impede any view; thus either destroying the purpose of the ha-ha or being trimmed to allow visual penetration.

In 1982 Hal Moggeridge undertook a tree survey in Rousham's "New Garden" ; his findings show the following trees survive from the 18th c.:-

210 Yew	2 Spanish Chestnut
24 English Oak	2 European Lime
20 Beech	2 Red-twigged Lime
3 Horse Chestnut	1 Cedar of Lebanon <sup>26</sup>

which demonstrates how the yew has come to dominate; unhappily many trees have since fallen to the winds. The elms which once graced the scene have been lost to disease; elms were Bridgeman's most utilised tree, and he is responsible for the Elm Walk, the only straight walk to survive, today its line is marked by mostly lime with laurel underplanting, and some beech and yew.

This survey also highlights the problems inherent in planting with little thought for the future; most trees on Kent's plan have a spread of 5-7 m., today the mature trees are mostly over 12m. in spread, thus Kent's spatial design is lost.

'Yet it is true too that the features in Kent's landscapes were seldom majestic. His clumps were puny, he aimed at immediate effect, and planted not for futurity.'<sup>27</sup>

This is a problem faced at other gardens, in Stowe the policy has been to replant trees beyond the optimum age of twenty to thirty years where possible, though keeping the magnificent mature specimens; rather than expend effort on preserving old trees which dominate the landscape at the expense of other features.

The yew tunnel is today a feature, and whereas other similar tunnels are created from two rows of yew; such as Castle Sudley, Gloucester which has clairvoyées, Rousham's is a single line of trees whose branches appear to have been trained down creating a tunnel with central columns, and then clipped square.

## FLOWERS

The use of flowers at Rousham today is minimal, just spring bulbs. Very few of Maclary's flowering shrubs are seen, and although Philip Southcote claims to have persuaded Kent to resume flowers, there is no such colour today. That flowers were commonly used in the gardens of the period is shown by descriptions of the beds and walks on Southcote's Woburn Farm, Surrey, and detailed considerations of their uses in contemporary garden manuals. Kent considered they had a place in the Rousham garden as the sources show; elsewhere gardens moving in the same flow of fashion seemingly used flowers only as they would grow naturally; scattered beneath trees and through grass; and interspersing flowering shrubs with non-flowering. Today we cannot tell whether the effect was contrived or indeed unwanted. Of Bridgeman's attitude to flowers little evidence survives.

## Notes to Chapter Four:

- 1 See Appendix Five for schedule of garden furniture
- 2 A series of Kent's designs are preserved in Vardy 1744
- 3 See Appendix Six for a schedule of sculpture
- 4 Switzer 1718 and Langley 1728 both devote some space to this subject
- 5 'The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone Esq. *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* London 1764 Quoted in Edwards 1965
- 6 White is writing on the discharging of workmen
- 7 White 6 December 1740 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 286
- 8 White letter of 1739 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 287
- 9 Mavis Batey first noted this as Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 4.1.2 report
- 10 Such is the subject of Christensen 1987
- 11 General Dormer to cousin July 1741 Quoted in Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 284
- 12 See Coffin 1986 Pp. 416 for the origins of these names, plus a consideration of what the statue depicts and how this fits into the garden themes
- 13 Buckler 1823 Bodleian M.S. Top. Oxon a68 no433
- 14 In February 1764 at auction in London were 3,000 rare works in various languages from the library of General James Dormer (Wing 1877)
- 15 Surveys into the planting and its survival have been undertaken by:  
Bodfan-Gruffydd 1977  
Moggeridge 1982  
Colvin and Moggeridge 1983
- 16 Topiary was rejected in Pope's satirical 'Catalogue of Greens' in a 1713

- edition of *The Guardian* and hedges were unfashionable by the 1730s,  
Switzer referred to them as 'prison walls'
- 17 Usborn Ed. Spence Anecdotes II 649
- 18 Workers advising on horticulture that Kent  
could have drawn on include James 1712 with great detail on  
laying-out, finding water and the values of 'Variety and Diversity'; Langley's  
*Practical Geometry* of 1726, Bradley 1717/18 and Switzer's various  
practical works
- 19 Lord Dacre to S. Miller from Belhus - Jan. 1748 . In Malins 1966  
Pp. 32
- 20 White March 1739 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 287
- 21 Clarke 1985 Pp. 72-83
- 22 Maclary early 1741 in Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 288
- 23 Walpole 1770 Pp. 22 1975 Reprint: Brentham Press
- 24 As illustrated in Kent's sketch of the exedra, Chiswick  
Chatsworth 26A; item 24
- 25 Detailed in Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 Particularly Figs. 17-19
- 26 Moggeridge 1982 Pp. 192
- 27 Walpole 1770 Pp. 25 1975 Reprint: Brentham Press

## CHAPTER FIVE: Psychology of Rousham

### ILLUSION OF SIZE

The extensive winding paths and walks, the choices of route; the elongated boundaries in relation to area; the 'calling in' of the countryside with views out, the variety of scenes and the technique of hiding each section of the garden until one is actually upon it all add to an illusion of size.

### **VIEWS<sup>1</sup>**

One of the major concepts of the design of Rousham by Kent is the 'calling in' of the surrounding countryside. Sited throughout the garden are points from which to look out; these views are not only picturesque diversions, they also create the illusion that the garden itself extends beyond its boundaries. The vistas created in formal gardens would have the same effect; but without the element of surprise. The views from Rousham indeed are fixed, predetermined by the design, yet give the appearance of chance scenes created by natural phenomena.

Heythrop Park<sup>2</sup>, also in Oxfordshire, is cited as one of the earliest to follow Switzer's instructions on uniting the garden and countryside<sup>3</sup>; although here the 18th c. part of the garden is so overgrown that it is difficult to relate it to Rousham.

Bridgeman's use of views was on the axes and vistas principle; he certainly

followed the principle of calling in the country, as his ha-has show; he may have gone further as the sketch of Heyford Church and a faint line straight out from Venus Vale on the 1715-21 plan imply integration of external points.

The most impressive views at Rousham are those out over the meadow to the north-east, terminating in the eyecatchers; that the meadow now belongs to Rousham Estate is a major point in favour of the survival of these views, it will continue to remain open, although tree scrub is beginning to invade the river bank.<sup>4</sup>

There are views within the garden, as well as out to the surrounding country. The views from the house can only be imagined by most visitors; its main vista is that dominated by the Horse and Lion along the Bowling Green; with the arable land seen beyond a great natural ha-ha. Across the Paddock views crisscross; the house can be seen from most points on the walk from the Bowling Green to Cow Castle, indeed the 'pretty garden seat' was set to view the house; and Cow Castle can be seen from the Gladiator. Venus Vale can be viewed from three points: below as a climax in the walk, the cascades creating a trompe-l'oeil effect; above when only the Octagon Pond is really seen; and from the path leading down from the Praeneste; in addition on the Bridgeman plan is a circular bastion for viewing the Vale from above - nothing of this remains today. The Rousham views are framed by vegetation, statuary or building entrances and are integrated with the garden by virtue of this frame.

One mile to the north of Rousham is a mass of trees planted along the river and up the slope, which hide the road into Steeple Aston, known as The Beeches. This is believed to be part of the Rousham plan of Kent; and the current campaign to plant new trees here is being supported by the reference of the local historian of the 1920s, Reverend Brookes, to Kent's design in planting for the view here. With the

tree-growth nothing may be seen of the Beeches from Rousham.

This utilisation of views is another link to Italy, where many villa gardens are situated on mountainsides, as is the Villa d'Este which greatly influenced Kent.

### **'SURPRISES, VARIES....'**

Surprises contribute to variety, and by creating more to amuse the eye and imagination they add to the illusion of size. Variety was seen as necessity in Italian gardens and was second only to decorum in 16th and 17th c. aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> It included the division into garden and grove; of garden and views out and the incorporation of eccentric features; screening off areas and a loss of geometric and predictable layouts. Views as well as being a hinge in the garden layout, maintain the surprise element. Contrast is a major facet of variety; and at Rousham gothick contrasts with classical; light with shade and themes in juxtaposition combine to compose a varied tour.

'The Variety and Diversity of the composition contributes no less to complete a garden, than the most discreet and well contriv'd Distribution; since, in the opinion of every one, the Gardens that afford the greatest Variety are the most valuable and magnificent.'<sup>6</sup>

### **MOOD AND MESSAGE IN THE GARDEN<sup>7</sup>**

Large gardens of the 18th c. are constantly analysed for their symbolism; with a garden as blatantly meaningful as Stowe a mere twelve miles away, Rousham was not to escape this dissection.<sup>8</sup> The topography, views, statues, buildings and their position

are all expounded as metaphors for multifarious alternatives, and indeed with all the influences exerting themselves on a gentleman<sup>9</sup> allusions were hard to avoid; some were intentional, others may have been created by visitors, and yet more may have been imposed by later researchers. The references were commonly to classical texts and philosophies; for example at Rousham Proserpine's Cave would be seen to represent her story, and to connect in literary terms with other scenes and figures within the garden.<sup>10</sup>

A common theme is the garden as paradise on Earth; with nature rampaging elegantly yet controllable; Walpole was responsible for overambitiously assigning Milton's poems as the starting point of the new taste in gardening; the paintings of Poussin, Salvator Rosa and Claude inspired this theme.<sup>11</sup> In addition the 'call back to nature' as expressed by Horace and Virgil and advocated by writers such as William Temple, Switzer and A.A. Cooper; with the land as a productive paradise of self-sufficiency was symbolised. Within this, many of the sculptures would be seen to represent the fertility of nature; Bacchus and Ceres equate with wine and corn, and are pictured supporting Venus and cupids as beauty and love in Kent's ceiling painting in the house. Ceres and Bacchus are nature humanised, and also represent labour-free plenitude. Venus was the Roman goddess of gardens as well as representing love. Venus is also argued as representing man's control of nature, his own lusts and women in general by her position both within myth and the garden.<sup>12</sup> She is watched by wild woodland spirits: Pan and a Faun, which could be allegories for unruly nature, or satyrs in lust.

Another interpretation is the view of Rousham as the Elysian Fields, that final home of the blessed (as Kent had produced at Stowe), Mercury as the guide is a suitable figure in such a scene of perfect happiness. The Elysian Fields are associated with

virtue, and into this Venus would fit; the Cherwell acts as the River Styx.

In contrast are the mortuary associations seen at Rousham; linked to the theme of life and fertility by Arcadia. The paradisaical land of rustic simplicity populated by shepherds, is seen to include death '*Et in Arcadia Ego*'<sup>13</sup>; a theme used by Poussin and popular in the 17th and 18th c. Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini delle deide gl'antichi* of 1556 (and many later editions - of which Kent had a copy) claims that Venus, Pan, Ceres and Proserpina worshipped in Arcadia.<sup>14</sup> The General was mortally ill during the last stages of the garden's construction; and the theme of death may be in tribute to him<sup>15</sup>. The Horse and Lion and the Gladiator represent a struggle against death.<sup>16</sup> The urns, Roman tomb in Townsend's Buiding<sup>17</sup> and sarcophagi<sup>18</sup> extend this theme. Ringwood's tomb, although later, shows a continuation of these ideas and a sensitive hand; it seems also to be a reference to the Elysian Fields at Stowe where a memorial to Fido exists.

This dichotomy of meaning is comparable to the Italian gardens, with the modern and the ancient side by side - which Kent took to extremes at Stowe, placing the Temple of Ancient Worthies opposite the Temple of British Worthies - to the detriment of the modern; and to the Roman ethos of enjoying life whilst contemplating death; a philosophy which the 18th c. gentry shared. The seasons conspire to juxtapose life and death; sobriety and gaiety; in winter shapes are stronger as concealing foliage falls, and evergreens predominate, the dark yew is particularly striking, in this season Rousham's mood alters; becoming sombre and dark. The sylvan scenes are no longer paradisaical. In Spring the garden takes on a new character as flowers appear everywhere; the Praeneste is set on a slope of primroses; daffodils frame the Vale and the Gladiator continues his struggle against death in surroundings full of budding life and energy.

Coffin 1986 sees the siting of the buildings as significant; their architecture being determined by their geographical location; with gothic to the north, Egyptian in the east and ancient Roman towards the south; this he links to Pope's 1711 allegorical poem the *Temple of Fame*, in which the Temple's four façades are in different styles. If such was intentional at Rousham it is probable that Pope was the inspiration.

Whately 1770 makes a distinction between 'emblematic' and 'expressive' (or 'associative') gardens, within which, yet again, Rousham forms the transitional phase:

'Character is very reconcilable with beauty; and, even when independent of it, has attracted so much regard, as to occasion several frivolous attempts to produce it; statues, inscriptions, and even paintings, history and mythology, and a variety of devices, have been introduced for this purpose'..... 'All these devices are rather *emblematic* than expressive; they may be ingenious contrivances, and recall absent ideas to the recollection; but they make no immediate impression, for they must be examined, compared, perhaps explained, before the whole design of them is well understood; and though an allusion to a favourite or well-known subject of history, of poetry, or of tradition, may now and then animate or dignify a scene, yet as the subject does not naturally belong to a garden, the allusion should not be principle; it should see to have been suggested by the scene; a transitory image, which irresistible [sic] occurred, not sought for, not labours; and have the force of a metaphor, free from the details of an allegory.'<sup>19</sup>

Hunt 1971 was the work which brought this distinction back into the vocabulary; he cites Pope's Twickenham garden as an example of the expressive, within which the winding paths through wilderness, free of emblems, are places for undisturbed thought and conversation. The Grecian Valley at Stowe is also expressive; a classical education is not required to capture the mood; and impressions are subject to the individual rather than dictated by the creator and demanding intelligent thought and knowledge for its interpretation; as such the area is an exception within this most emblematic of gardens. The 18th c. saw the change from emblematic to expressive

gardens; Hunt sees Rousham as a landscape providing 'opportunities for both 'allegorical' and metaphoric 'mediations.'<sup>20</sup> Thus the garden may be seen as a journey through life, or an entire plot; or as in the Horatian quote over the grotto on Pope's Binfield estate, Windsor:

*'Secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae'*<sup>21</sup>

or as a paradigm of the outside world, an enclosed and detached area which implies the world beyond, with statues facing out to the land ; the river and road passing through and the views out. This is emphasised by Maclary's letter which spends some considerable wordage relating the movement of travellers on the road beyond the meadow. One is tempted to walk through this plot by the very design of the garden, ethereal glimpses of water, part of a building or statue through the foliage encourage exploration; and the irregular plan means one cannot anticipate the next bend or scene.

More simply, the statues may be placed in the garden merely to create an air of antiquity; but the General was a learned man; he would be aware of the iconography at Stowe, and the possibilities for emotive and allegorical impressions on his own site; he was a passionate collector of sculpture and undoubtedly saw the surroundings of his pieces as important both aesthetically and ideologically. The similarities to Italy and theatre settings cannot be denied, and we must bow to the general opinion that Kent worked to these themes. In its entirety Rousham emphasises mortality, contrasting the vitality and fertility of life to the struggle against death; but by juxtaposition of elements rather than iconography. The underlying themes at Rousham, as well as its layout, allude to nature with the cycle of life and death; all are open to interpretation.

Certainly the psychological play at Rousham is the work of Kent, the General, and perhaps Pope as opposed to the less erudite Bridgeman.

## Notes to Chapter Five:

- 1 Maclary's letter of 1750 describes many of the views at Rousham - see Appendix Two
- 2 Comparable to (and earlier than) Rousham is the Classical Grove at Heythrop, Oxfordshire created around 1705-1716 presumably by Thomas Archer, in which a rill meanders through undergrowth and into an eccentric bathhouse with huge asymmetrically placed circular windows; it seems once a marble bath was sunk into the floor. There is also a bowling green here, this time circular with eight gloomy pathways created by yew and evergreen oak radiating off
- 3 Advocates of this new mode in gardening were: Pope with his invitation in 1712 to 'call in' the countryside and Switzer in *Iconographica Rustica* of 1718; whose theories were converted to a practical form by Addison to create: 'a whole estate thrown into a kind of garden' and so 'make a pretty landskip of his own possession' *Spectator* No.414 25 June 1712
- 4 Moggeridge 1982, Figure 13 illustrates the crisscrossing of viewlines to focal points over the meadow
- 5 Hunt 1986 Chapt. 7
- 6 James 1712 Pp. xii
- 7 Pugh 1988 discusses garden iconography and ideology of the 18th c. with particular reference to Rousham throughout his work
- 8 Major workers being Coffin 1986 and Pugh 1988
- 9 These influences are discussed in Chapter One

- 10 As discussed by Coffin 1986 Pp. 412
- 11 Claude Lorrain's *Landscape with Apollo and Mercury* is of particular interest; representing as it does figures seen at Rousham
- 12 Pugh 1988 Pp. 103 - 121 delves deeply into this theory; although giving valuable insights into possible ideologies this seems an extremely complex explanation of Venus' siting at Rousham imposed by a 20th c. specialist on an 18th c. gentlemen; and as Pugh explains in his introduction he is interpreting the garden in today's terms.
- 13 'And I (Death) too am in Arcadia': a theme supported by Coffin 1986 Pp. 413
- 14 Noted by Coffin 1986 Pp. 413
- 15 A further tribute to the General would be the military aspects of Rousham which Pugh 1988 Pp. 57-58 emphasises, despite such a garden in intent being the antithesis of the 'formal', geometric 17th c. landscapes whose phalanxes and squares were comparable to drilling armies. He points out the strategic situation of the estate on a ridge, the use of ha-ha which originated from a military defensive device, and the heroic warlike images - the Gladiator, Triumphant Arch, Hercules and busts of Marcus Aurelius and Caesar.
- 16 If placed on the sarcophagus as depicted in the Kent sketch the Gladiator would be still more relevant to this theme
- 17 Cottrell-Dormer F.E. 1865 researched this white marble sepulchral chest from Rome which arrived at Rousham 'last century' Gruter in *Inscriptiones antiquae totius orbis Romani* Amsterdam Edn. 1707 Pp. DLXXXIX, 8. states it is from the time of Emperor Claudius and was found at Casteletto on the Flaminian Way.
- 18 In addition to the sarcophagus on the mount behind Townsend's Building are the

remains of another in the Pyramid; these may be later than the Kent layout but more probably were integrated for their air of antiquity and sobriety

- 19 Whately 1770 Fifth addition (London 1793) Pp. 154-155, taken from Hunt 1971 Pp. 294-295
- 20 Hunt 1971 Pp. 313
- 21 'a secluded journey along the pathway of a life unnoticed'
- 22 A theory of Pugh 1988

## CHAPTER SIX: Rousham and its History:

### In Conclusion to Part One

The inconsistencies in dating Bridgeman's arrival at Rousham (1715 -1725) lead to difficulties in ascertaining dates for the work; clearly Bridgeman did not begin on a derelict plot; the terracing of the Great Slope must be attributed to an earlier anonymous worker. That the 1721 map shows apparently Bridgemannic features and has a positive dating would imply that his work began pre-1721; the dating of the Bridgeman map is very rough and cannot be used as proof of construction or timing.

How much of his plan was carried out before Kent arrived on the scene is imperspicuous. The letter of John Gay<sup>1</sup> reveals much work done by 1726, a long period before Kent was hired in 1738<sup>2</sup>. We can outline the garden as Bridgeman left it, with the entrance through the gate in the west wall; a ha-ha dug around the Paddock and a viewing bastion overlooking the central portion of the New Garden. The 1721 map shows the layout which Kent was to adopt already in position; with the Garden Bridge, Bowling Green, Upper Fish-pond, Octagon Pond (still square), straight walks and a building - perhaps Maclary's 'pretty garden seat'; and certainly the slope beyond the Bowling Green was terraced by this date. Venus' Vale was already opened up, with one cascade. The Watery Walk was a winding path, meeting the stream only at the Bath House and circular Cold Bath. Bridgeman's shapes, of grove and vale, pond and path, were all geometrical and regular, although the shape of the garden prevented any obvious symmetry.

Bridgeman certainly worked with Kent at Stowe, Kensington and Richmond, is

collaboration at Rousham likely ? If the dates are accurate, it seems impossible as Bridgeman died in 1738, at about the time when Kent appeared on the scene. We can assume Kent was working to Bridgeman's plan, and already constructed layout, with additions of his own.

Those areas which Kent extended the garden into are purely Kentian - no plan for these areas is made in earlier years; thus, undoubtedly Kent's, are Cow Castle, Townesend's Building and the Palladian Gate; also the Oval Pond if it ever was an actuality. The area of the Walnut Orchard which now holds the Pyramid and Pope's Seat is entirely Kent; although Bridgeman's pencil marks suggest uncrystallised plans. Indisputably Kent is responsible for the extension of Heyford Bridge; conversion of the Octagon Pond from a square; creation of the Forrist Chair within its clearing; the construction of views and the eyecatchers to hold them; the Gothick Barn and replacement of Bridgeman's viewing bastion with the Arcade and surmounting terrace and balustrade.

Kent was also responsible for the creation of scenes within the garden, Venus' Vale especially: blurring Bridgeman's edges; using dark conifers for backdrops and siting statuary. In the Vale he worked on the cascades<sup>3</sup>; their similarities to his other waterworks lead to the conclusion that the cascade on Bridgeman's plan was never built and Kent created both Upper and Lower. The placement of fountains is impossible to establish without more evidence; everything, including the head of water in Cliff Hill Field points to 'jetts' at Rousham and perhaps archaeological work could establish where, and thus extrapolate the when. The Green Seats appear on the c.1738 plan only, as does Le Privé; and were certainly part of the garden as left by Kent although when they arrived is not established. The Grand Slope is described as 'Concave' so Kent

certainly removed the terraces. Kent gave Bridgeman's paths subtler curves, although leaving two of his straight walks : the Elm Walk and 'The Walk to the New Garden' - which now changes direction with a curve rather than Bridgeman's junctions -; and the Watery Walk at some unestablished stage was continued to exit at Venus Vale rather than terminating on the path down past Le Privé as it does on both Bridgeman's and the c. 1738 plan. Proserpine's Cave with its classical allusions was in all likelihood a Kentian feature, but with no trace remaining it is impossible to establish its existence and author with certainty.

The artistic effects, and the references to classical literature and painting are unlikely to be the work of the down to earth Bridgeman; although General Dormer may have been responsible for the choice of themes, Kent's other works - in particular Stowe's Elysian Fields, show him admirably capable of creating such moods and messages. His work at Rousham is proven by the fantastical architecture; the iconography from a painter's handbook; and the choice of sculpture reflecting the pieces and scenes he would have seen in his journeys on the continent.<sup>4</sup> That the chief steward drew the plan is an inexplicable phenomenon; Kent generally was responsible for his own draughtsmanship.

Despite being an 'informal', 'natural' garden, one may still see the underlying ideas of geometry as created by Bridgeman; and as a study of contemporary gardening theses<sup>5</sup> shows, techniques for measuring and laying-out such designs were well established. Kent's work is again superimposed on the bones of Bridgeman's; merely softening the Bridgemanic lines; and retained the Bridgeman characteristics with added allegories following the instructions of the General.

## POST-1748

1748 was the year of Kent's death; the General had died seven years previously and the estate passed on to Sir Clement Cottrell. Kent's influence continued in the gardening world; at Middle Aston House 6 miles away Page carried out garden alterations unquestionably in the Rousham style. Around 1750 he replaced the medieval terraces with a concave lawn and combined two square medieval fish stewes into one 'natural' lake. There is oral evidence for pavilions and summer houses.<sup>6</sup>

The *Jardin Anglais* was then to spread abroad and a great flow of travellers visited the English gardens; Willis's list of sites where the theories of English Landscape practice were used<sup>7</sup> shows how farflung the British influence was; although the turf on which the appearance of the English landscape Garden so depended was less verdant in many of these countries, and a style as removed from the English as their's was from the Italian emerged, with more gravel and trees, and a greater proportion of shade.

Rousham itself was untouched by later workers, and it is this which makes it so unique in a country where Lancelot Brown was to ruthlessly improve on the goddess Nature in the country estates and gardens. As Kent was to supersede Bridgeman; 'Capability' Brown (1715 - 1783) inherited Kent's position as the leading designer of gardens; he continued along the path Kent had begun towards nature to create what is seen as typically English landscape today. It is he that was to create the final stage of the English Landscape garden; that extreme of Kent's ideas and practices through the

distorting lens of which William Kent is viewed today. Brown's landscapes were large scale, sweeping turf, shallow slopes, groups of trees and great expanses of water for reflections; they did not hold the cultural aspects of a Kentian garden; Brown thought of the garden in literary and intellectual terms, as shown by that often quoted description of his designing by punctuation.

Bridgeman set the way; the poets and philosophers gave their opinions, and Kent created the first of the English Landscape Gardens, which Brown was ruthlessly to improve on. As Walpole writes of Kent's practices:

'Succeeding artists have added new masterstrokes to these touches; p'haps improved or brought to perfection some that I have named.'<sup>8</sup>

## **Notes to Chapter Six:**

- 1 Gay to Brigadier Dormer 22 Nov. 1726. In Sherburn 1956 *ii* 416
- 2 This date is agreed upon by Kent's various biographers, based on his communications concerning the garden works
- 3 White 8 May 1738 from Woodbridge 1974(b) Pp. 285
- 4 Coffin 1986 Pp. 421-422
- 5 Such as Langley 1726 *Practical Geometry*
- 6 Sources: Austin 1989, Brookes 1929 Pp. 242
- 7 Willis 1977 Pp. 144-145
- 8 Walpole 1770 Pp. 22 1975 Reprint: Brentham Press

**PART II**

**Rousham Preserved**

## CHAPTER SEVEN: Restoration and Maintenance<sup>1</sup>

It was the general practice with an historic garden, as demonstrated by the National Trust, to reinstate the garden to one of its 'layers', these stratifications of time and authors are very commingled and discretion is required to arrive at a satisfactory approximation. Rousham is simplified by having only three layers that we know of: the work of the first gardener who created the terraces and possibly other features which Bridgeman found when he came to the garden in the early 1700s; the work of Bridgeman himself, and thirdly the garden after Kent; the decision has seemingly already been made to maintain the garden as an approximation of its 1750 state - as Kent left it, rather than as an example of Bridgeman's work. This both preserves the garden in its most valuable identity - as the only true example of the more renowned worker - whilst maintaining elements of Bridgeman without having to trace the author of each feature and then remove those uncharacteristic of the state the garden is chosen to represent.

A garden is a continually evolving art work and total recall of the Kentian days cannot be anticipated; however uniquely at Rousham we have a site where later owners had no interest in updating the garden, and little in imposing their own ideas, beyond a tennis court on the Bowling green in the 1930s, as such Rousham has been preserved as a time capsule, with only growth and decay changing the 18th c. scene. Here then the ethical problems of possible restoration faced at many historic landscapes are only minor. Inherent problems in returning a site to one phase of its history include the loss of later, possibly important features; unreliable or incomplete sources, such as Gunton Park, Norfolk where survey showed Bridgeman's 1720s/1730s plan was

executed but modified, reconstruction based on the plan would have been totally misleading; and the biases imposed by the 20th c., as at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia where the '18th c.' gardens created in the 1930s have, as a result of later research, been shown to be incorrect.<sup>2</sup>

Conservators generally therefore favour maintenance of a site, restoration can be destructive if not well-informed and done. Only rescue work is permissible.

' Generally speaking one's first position is to aim for the minimum degree of intervention that will maintain the historic character and features of the site.'<sup>3</sup>

Prior to any work on the garden an assessment needs to be made of the current status of the grounds: what survives has already been tackled in this discourse; the state of these features, and any rescue work required must be ascertained; much work on this level was prepared by Brenda Colvin and Hal Moggeridge.<sup>4</sup> Any restoration works first require an understanding of what the garden is being restored to.

Sources on which work on a garden such as Rousham is based comprise two major multi-faceted divisions:

Documentary: Including the maps, plans, paintings, sketches and diaries that survive for detail on that particular site. As important is a study of the social and political context of the site and its owners, one must 'get inside the mind' of the designer. Many garden theses from the early 18th c. survive which elucidate general gardening practice and from which a reconstruction of likely forms and fashionable features can be made.<sup>5</sup>

Field work: Comprises measurements of the site, vegetational surveys and comparison of findings from the documentary research with what is seen on the

ground.

Archaeology is the detailed study of any historic or prehistoric site, first through documentary research and detailed field survey, then the excavation itself which forms only a very small part of the entire process; next the laboratory work, analysis of results and production of reports; and finally the never-ending task of conserving the site (except in rescue archaeology where it is the imminent destruction of the site that has precipitated the examination) and finds.<sup>6</sup>

A contour survey should be the first part of any archaeological survey, to locate lost features by depressions or humps and to some extent indicate their original function; Moggeridge 1982 undertook such a survey, albeit to show Kent's gentle sculpting of the ground<sup>7</sup>, which is another factor such surveys reveal. Aerial photography in the correct light conditions will show accentuate traces of lost features. A magnetometer survey would reveal pipework, walls, ditches or beds beneath the ground surface, and therefore be invaluable in an estimation of the waterworks in particular. The Castle Bromwich experiments have yet to achieve satisfactory results for current resistivity surveys with the small-scale disturbances found in a garden; and would cost around £2500 for Rousham.<sup>8</sup> Reversed ionisation, a refinement of the resistivity survey, would cost yet more.

At Rousham excavation could be used to find the footings of original walling; the depth and width of the ha-ha; tree holes would indicate earlier planting and if parts of the root remain species can be discerned; pipes running from the stream inlet to the ponds and the fountain in Bridgeman's Theatre may be discovered. In addition an investigation could be made of any earlier activity on the site of the Lower Cascade as Bridgeman's plans for this site appear quite different from the Kentian. Soil sampling and analysis would show up any soil enhancers used, such as ash which would increase

alkalinity; and calcium analysis would reveal any liming. Magnesium analysis could be used to indicate where wood was used for example as path edgings. Phosphate testing is a possibility to comparatively date artificial soil build-ups such as the terraces; optical luminescent dating, based on the ultra violet light lost from the soil once buried, is unlikely to be applicable here. Environmental archaeologists would study pollen to elucidate the presence of exotic species, seeds and bone traces which may show the use of bonemeal; and would show if the advice of Bradley 1717/18 was followed, whereby a soil which was 'stiff inclining to *Clay*' was improved by mixing it half and half with 'Heath Turfs'; as totally foreign pollen and perhaps other plant parts may be found in areas of suitable preservation.

Thus not only does archaeology indicate the structure and planting of the site, but also its management; yet cost would prohibit a detailed survey in a garden still so close to its original state where restoration is not vital. The value of archaeology in uncovering the bones of old gardens and maintenance practices is clear; works in the Circus in Bath demonstrate such<sup>9</sup>; at Rousham it would be utilised only in limited areas as so much survives, but could certainly illuminate many questionable areas without the destruction that is often held as a reason for keeping the archaeologists out.

## **PATHS AND WALKS**

In the majority the official paths are of pea gravel; wider walks are, and always have been, on grass; the one exception is the route from Pope's Seat to the Pyramid which comprises brick and stone. Colvin and Moggeridge<sup>10</sup> surveyed the surfaces of the garden, pointing out that the additional gravel paths are there to cater for the 12,000 visitors annually; and made several recommendations towards restoring the original surfaces.

Additional paths to those in Kent's scheme have developed through usage, such as that from the Arcade down behind the Faun into the Vale - here both visual and physical penetration should be prevented by vegetation. Other routes are disappearing: that which descends past remains of Le Privé is merely a gap in the laurel. Bridgeman's Theatre now has three through routes: the original from the Arcade joins another originating at the bottom of the Arcade slope to exit between Mercury and Ceres, a third runs along the river bank.

Alignment of gravel paths could be improved, at present they fulfil the role of short cuts; stretching right across slopes and open stretches; they would be less visually intrusive if they followed the line of the vegetation. The two workers also wish restoration of winding serpentine paths enclosed by vegetation in the area along the river between the Vale and Townsend's Building, and around the Pyramid; this would be costly and require dense planting as the areas in question are very small - such a project would require special funding and there are more important tasks taking precedence.

The Green Walk down to Townsend's Building where Maclary describes the flowering shrubs has lost its serpentine form, control of the underwood would

gradually restore this. The path along the Paddock to the Palladian Gate needs redefining, with the encroaching vegetation gradually pushed back; the grass here is extremely worn and a gravel path may be advantageous. A photograph by Packer in the 1930s shows a path from the river up to Venus Vale, this may have been a short-lived phenomenon, and there is certainly no trace of it today or on the 18th c. plans; the visitor is permitted to wander at will with no damage as yet resulting.

## **WATER FEATURES**

The water at Rousham has faded to a secondary element, the loss of flow through Venus Vale resulted in a static scene without the grandeur and movement of fountains. Of the original ponds two are now gone (Upper Pond and Oval Fishpond) and those remaining have lost their definition with lower water levels, vegetation encroaching and build-up of debris in the water. Colvin and Moggeridge<sup>11</sup> see possibilities for reinstating the water features in their original leading role: a sluice in the Octagon Pond allows the Lower Cascade to run for ten minutes; and build up of water in the original reservoirs above the garden would allow periodic flow through the Upper Cascade; which apparently was the case in the 18th c. when the waterworks only operated when visitors were present. Traces of pipework can be seen at the point where the stream enters the garden, and above the Octagon Pond is an access to clay pipes which apparently run both sides of the pond; further investigation both by experimentation with the water flow and possibly archaeological survey would indicate the state of the pipes and feasibility of reusing them. Mr Cotterell-Dormer investigated the possibilities of pumping water from the River Cherwell below to fuel the waterworks, the river is too polluted for such a use, suffering frequent 'accidental'

dumping from the industrial areas of Banbury. The 1983 report<sup>12</sup> justifies the use of modern technology to restore the fountains and cascades, with all the workings underground and the pump housed in the restored Le Privé; until we are definite that fountains played here, such work would be an anachronism. Certainly the fountains would not have played up to fifty feet high as Maclary describes.<sup>13</sup>

Restoring the Oval Fishpond and New Pond would be extravagant and destructive of trees; marking the sites by some banking then grassing the areas was suggested<sup>14</sup>; although this seems irrelevant as such would not adequately represent the effects of water here with Kent's use of reflection and movement, and for the Oval Pond we have no evidence on the ground to suggest it ever existed; it would perhaps be legitimate to open up this area more to reveal the pool at the inlet to the garden.

The first priority however is conservation, the state of the two cascades means some structural work is required; the pools are relatively clear but require silt removal. The Octagon Pond has lost all shape definition, the eroded turf edges require paring.

As far as the river is concerned, the purchase of the opposite meadows from Corpus Christi has made management easier, however the river margins are too overgrown; nature is gaining control and needs taking in hand to maintain views of the river and country plus continue the image of controlled nature as current in Kent's era. Consideration should be given to reconstruction of the Garden Bridge and Weir, although the design of the Bridge is unknown so recreation would be dangerous, a weir built with the agreement of the River Authority would mean :

'The river surface would then again echo the geometry of the gardens, lying smooth past the central part of the garden where the controlling axes intersect, tremulous at the free extremities.'<sup>15</sup>

## GARDEN ARCHITECTURE

The garden structures are already well protected and listed, however money is certainly required for maintenance; Charles Cottrell-Dormer is showing some acumen for achieving this, such as the advertising of Wedgewood china by a double page photograph taken in the Arcade for which providing the location will have resulted in a substantial fee.

The Palladian Gateway has recently been repointed and generally restored; although now looking spanking new in bright stone and contrasting strongly with the surrounding mellowed stone of the garden walls.

In Cow Castle the red tiled floor requires some attention, some structural work to remedy the cracking is required.

The Pavilions are repainted every four years; they suffer severely from rot and were totally rebuilt several years ago; probably nothing original now remains. Although some may question the validity of such recent structures, there is no reason to believe that they are altered in appearance from the original and the replacement has been gradual and unavoidable; removal of these features would be a great loss.

Restoration of Proserpine's Cave, Le Privé and the Forrist Seat has been considered but is deemed unnecessary, expensive and dangerous when so little is known of the originals; although we have a good idea of Kent's intentions from his designs for other gardens, just those within Rousham show the variety he produced and prediction would be impossible, we could only construct our interpretation of these structures, trying to avoid the biases of time, superior technical knowledge and personal preference.

The Bath House externally is in good condition having recently been repointed;

internally some cracking and severely deteriorated plaster require attention.

Townsend's Building is in good condition, although the pillars are somewhat eroded. The valuable roof lead was removed illegally and has now been replaced with cheaper zinc; if this had been done earlier the owner could have replaced the lead at a profit.

The building most in need of restoration is the Boathouse which is collapsing, this feature is unmentioned in the 18th c. but does not intrude on the Kent garden and may well have been part of his scheme.

The Arcade is the best preserved and cared for building, perhaps its obvious significance within the garden has resulted in greater care being expended on this feature over the years than any other. The lead roof here was also stripped without permission and is now copper; occasionally people of a similar mind hurl the oak benches into the river but no great harm has yet been sustained, these require painting periodically.

Pope's Seat requires reroofing to bring it closer to its original; the roofline is apparent and could easily be rebuilt and tiled with old tiles from another building on the estate - unhappily weathered materials are now very difficult to obtain as a result of the current building conversion business peaking in Oxfordshire. Little imagination is necessary to recreate this simple roof and it is unlikely to result in an unhappy parody of the original. The seat would be harder to replace, a copy of a Kent garden seat design may be suitable but expensive; the current model is unobtrusive and obviously not a reproduction which seems the best solution. The wall by Pope's Seat is in dire need of attention.

## **THE BOUNDARIES**

The walls, being a long stretch of old stonework, require constant upkeep to prevent major repair work; a large proportion of the labour and costs of running Rousham are expended here on what is a subsidiary feature. Rebuilding of the wall along the river is not to be considered as it blocks views and was removed some time ago, possibly in the 18th c.

The ha-ha is in a poor state of repair although gradually being worked on. It still runs along its original line but certainly was deeper and wider than today, digging out an area would reveal the level to which the stone walling extended and thus the depth (remembering that some of the height generally comprises foundation) and basic archaeological study of layers would show the original extent of the ditch into the field. Whether the ha-ha is restored to its original size is a decision for Charles Cottrell-Dormer; it still fulfils its function of keeping the cattle in whilst being invisible from the garden; the stonework requires immediate attention. The trees along the edge as shown on the plans could be reestablished, fairly-well spaced with lower branches removed to maintain views over the Paddock.

## **BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES**

### **FOLLY , CUTTLE MILL, GOTHICK BARN**

That area of Rousham designed first by an anonymous worker, then Bridgeman with later additions by Kent, is set in the parkland of the Rousham estate, the atmosphere of which upon arrival is conducive to the emotions and thoughts a tour of

the designed landscape provokes. Indeed the environs including the charming small Rousham village and the farm are in no danger of great change, the farm buildings are listed and for the foreseeable future the Cottrell-Dormer family will continue to run the estate with respect for the environment and its history; the village is increasingly becoming a desirable residence and seeing the gentrification and geriatrication rapidly overcoming the rural areas of England, as such change is unlikely as these newcomers seeking a rural idyll actively promote conservation of their own homes. These areas cannot be seen from within the 'New Garden', but as with the medieval walled garden adjoining can be explored by the visitor and contribute to the overall experience and impressions.

The surroundings of, and more importantly the views from the garden are essential elements in the Kent design, their preservation is vital; at present there are some impositions on the countryside such as the RAF/USAF Airbase at Upper Heyford which impinges itself both visually and audibly; and growth and decay of vegetation has impeded some views and removed the frames of others. Modern housing has blocked the view to Steeple Aston church; and a new development by the railway in Lower Heyford - just across the meadow from the garden- is very visible at present although tree-screening should develop over the years and the new stone fade to a more muted tone. The changing vegetation beyond the garden also alters the views; a clump of trees growing behind the Eyecatcher means the silhouette of arches is lost; however permission has been obtained from Mr. Taylor to lop. Clumps such as that on the eastern skyline are decaying and Colvin and Moggeridge<sup>16</sup> recommended to HBMC financing the replacement of such clumps and removal of all trees blocking views plus screening planting. The river-side meadows must remain open, without any

distracting features as they are to be looked across not at.

Control over intrusive features in the landscape<sup>17</sup> is impeded by them all belonging to different owners and the fact that whilst Rousham is in the West Oxford District, the land it overlooks is in Cherwell District, a bureaucratic tangle requiring liaison between the two local planning authorities. The major 'inappropriate eyecatchers' are the 30m high water tank at the air base which could only be removed through the Secretary of State for the Environment; and the group of barns on the hill top opposite Rousham for which screening was a planning condition with which the farmer has yet to comply.

The sight lines which cross over the paddock are in no danger provided the cattle continue to control the scrub and prevent young trees from developing; however there is a mound which appears once to have been rubble or refuse - now grass-covered - which is an intrusive feature within the paddock and should be removed or levelled.

The report of Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 has had some effect, on the advice of this Charles Cottrell-Dormer persuaded the owners of the house between the meadows and the road to repaint their windows in lizard rather than the dazzling white that was clearly visible from the top of the Grand Slope. He is also growing trees in the meadow to hide the railway in preparation for the expected arrival of electric overhead lines; unhappily these will eventually block the view to Lower Heyford.

#### **GARDEN ORNAMENT**

Of the original thirty-two free-standing pieces in the garden only one has been lost; a stone vase which fell and broke within living memory - this has now been

replaced with a reproduction; the cupids have been removed from the swans by vandals or thieves and pieces have been resited; but apart from tree damage and the gradual effect of the years these sculptures have survived remarkably well and are a tribute to the owners. Only four of the original eighteen pieces within the buildings remain. Colvin and Moggeridge recommend replacing these with plaster replicas.<sup>18</sup> There are many debates into the value of using replicas and the ethics of presenting a piece which is not the original; whether it casts doubts in the audience's mind on the validity of the rest of the display and certainly expense is a major hurdle, as is the tracing of originals from which to cast the replicas.

Andrew Naylor prepared a report on the lead statuary in 1982<sup>19</sup>; he states the Rousham pieces to be good examples, and the initials I.N. (apparently for Van Nost, who rarely signed his works) on Pan and Faun to be of especial rarity interest. Naylor declares that urgent restoration and remodelling following unsympathetic repair-work are required and gave an estimate of at least £50,000 spent over three to five years to safeguard the statuary for the next century. This repair work was necessitated by falling trees; wind brought about the downfall of Mercury who is now reinstated minus his sword which is too removable, and Bacchus suffered at the hands of the repairers, he now leans backwards in an extremely unnatural position; Venus leans to the left most uncomfortably, and far more than her twin on the house. In recent years contractors brought a tree down on Apollo. Many of the lead pieces are cracked, a result of their method of construction, the frame on which the lead is fixed expands and contracts at a different rate from the outer metal, stressing the lead and eventually causing permanent damage.

The stonework suffers gradual weather erosion, in 1967 a new plinth was ordered for the Horse and Lion and Athene is losing her facial features. Both the Lion

and the Gladiator have been broken and the mend is obvious; whether their lichenous state is correct for pieces as presented in the 18th c. is dubious, but it is certainly as one expects to see them today.

## FLORA

The vegetation has greatly altered since the 18th c.; of the originals, longer living species have become more dominant, particularly yew; new species have been brought in and changed the character. The beech had become scarce in the garden with beech-bark disease and loss of new plants to grey squirrel attack; poison for these bark-strippers - who attack trees as mature as forty years - has got the matter in hand. Dutch Elm Disease has removed all elms in the garden, most noticeably along the Elm Walk. The two limes flanking the Upper Cascade have grown enough to conceal the evergreen behind which once created a dark background for Venus. The 'two open groves' Maclary describes at the two northern corners of the Bowling Green are now much changed; one has lost any semblance of grove and is an arbitrary collection of trees; the other has lost its Scotch Firs which formed the backdrop for Minerva and comprises lime, yew and cedar; such is the situation in many other parts of the garden.

Kent's map shows the planting layout, and his sketches show the intended impressions, thus this is one of the few areas where we have sufficient knowledge to fully recreate if so desired. The availability of species is well documented and this together with Maclary's letter will illuminate the plants used. Undergrowth is marked on Kent's map and can be brought back into line by planting, clipping and moving shrubs although some of the lines and angles may not be restored for easier

maintenance; the underwood should be thick enough to prevent visual penetration between paths and preserve the 'surprises' even in winter; areas where the underwood is pushed back should be regrassed and holly and box would give winter solidity. With the dominance of yew in the canopy total recreation of the underwood is unlikely so undergrowth should be developed just beyond to maintain spatial segregation.<sup>20</sup>

The columnar effect of the 'forrist trees' with the lower branches trimmed should be reinstated, some do still survive showing bare trunks to around 5m above ground level.<sup>21</sup>

The extent of grassed areas is shown fairly conclusively on the Kent plan and should be maintained as such. The shapes of the terrace above the Arcade and the Theatre could be defined by gravelling the areas<sup>22</sup>; there is no evidence that the latter was anything other than grass, and the figures of Mercury, Ceres and Bacchus indicate a natural scene such as the woodland grove which the site portrays, rather than a more formal appearance as gravelling would create; for the terrace this might be beneficial, making the area more of a feature and drawing attention to the balustrade and thus the view which is not seen until one walks off the path and past the Gladiator. The length of grass is important in the overall look of the garden; at Rousham it is cut weekly in the growing season with light tractor-mowers and hover-mowers on the steep slopes; some areas are left for spring flowers but mown when these are over. The Bowling Green mown in stripes impossible in Kent's time. The grass areas require edging periodically, this results in gradual incursion into the grass area and wider paths if done too frequently, a balance must be maintained between grass growth and trimming.

The laurel and hedge pruning is undertaken yearly by local labour. The Elm Walk is cut every approximately ten years, although it is often too waterlogged

to bring in the necessary machinery without damaging the ground.

In most gardens the process of conservation includes the periodic restoration of all parts in turn. Most important is the conservation, and in some areas restoration of the views within and out of the garden on which the vegetation is impinging, or needs replacing to recreate a backdrop or frame. The new structures which can be seen from the garden require some screening, but not to the extent that the view is lost all together which seems dangerously likely with , for example, the owner allowing the view to Cuttle Mill to be blocked as this also hides the now busy B4030. With many of the deciduous trees now dangerous the present is ripe for a review of the planting; although gradual replacement is preferable, and far less radical, to ripping out all the old and beginning with an entirely new generation which, although achieving the true Kentian effect within a few decades, would rapidly require radical restoration again. Where Maclary actually names species these could be replaced, such as Scotch firs on the two hillocks behind the pavilions were today lime, yew and cedar stand.

Colvin and Moggeridge<sup>23</sup> recommend restoration of vegetation following the descriptions in Maclary's letter; then continual gradual replacement to maintain a fairly young tree community as Kent's design implies. Forestry practice felling and renewal programmes can be applied to the Rousham wooded areas, with for example 20% of trees replaced every decade so within fifty years a stand of youthful trees could be developed and maintained. Sadly this will mean the no more of the grand old trees we see as so much a part of the English landscape but is necessary for historical correctness, to maintain the proportions in the garden and to prevent the problems aging trees incur arising again. Only when they become a problem should these magnificent specimens be removed; so far the inherent dangers of 'replant diseases', to which a similar species in an infected site would be susceptible have not become

apparent, but it is important to continue the practice of removing or burning the wood.

The flowering shrubs Maclary described would increase costs, but their impact on what is basically a foliage garden would be great reward; although not in profusion all over the garden, instead concentration in the walks and areas where colourful displays would not distract attention from the architecture and sculpture is preferred.

The specimen trees in a garden, such as the Cedar of Lebanon beside Townesend's Building, raise problems of their own, by now those in Rousham are overmature, tree-surgery can ensure they remain safe as long as possible but eventually they will have to come down; it would be wise to grow on a young tree to replace the original in another area of the estate. Indeed the Cottrell-Dormers grow saplings from seeds gathered in the garden, particularly beech and oak, in the kitchen gardens.

The recent tree loss caused by high winds needs remedying, the Cold Bath is the area which suffered most, and with the trees gone the Rill now looks very bare and artificial. Little planning was made for such an eventually, no underplanted saplings are ready to replace the fallen giants, although where the yew dominated they would not have grown.

Essential in the maintenance of any historic garden at a particular layer of time is to utilise only those species available for the original design, as J.C. MacGregor IV the horticulturist said:

'My biggest gripe ? The wrong plant materials in a so-called period garden. The Victorians regularly used lobelias, geraniums, coleus and brilliant flowers to give their gardens a showy character they never had in the 18th century. To use some of those same plants in what is supposed to be a period restoration of an earlier garden is a distortion.'<sup>24</sup>

## MAINTENANCE<sup>25</sup>

Conservation policy should be integrated with the general management of the garden. The garden's maintenance programme is an essential element in its survival; with limited funding - money for maintenance is far rarer than for restoration, there being no obvious reward for money spent and no limit to requirements - and manpower, and much decay (although the garden has greatly improved during this century<sup>26</sup>) co-ordination and rational thinking are required. Within living memory five men were employed, by 1974 only Reginald Fox and Ernest Pinch were gardening at Rousham, today the family spend a lot of time maintaining the landscape; with extra labour brought in for activities such as laurel pruning. With the government having encouraged increases in agricultural wages - labour consuming up to 75% of maintenance costs - and a dearth of skilled labour and incentives for new labourers, strategy to maximise efficiency and minimise labour is desired.

Thus management is required for efficient maintenance, to organise staff and equipment, plan in the long-term and define maintenance policies. Projects such as dredging and tree-felling should be organised well in advance and in order of priority, undertaken over a period of years; works requiring heavy machinery should be combined to minimise damage. Emergency maintenance measures require some leeway in the planning: the drought of 1990 meant pumping water from the Cherwell into the head of the Rill to feed the Octagon Pond, and pumping water out and spraying it on the surface to oxygenate.

It should be noted that slight alterations occurring over a long period for easier maintenance, such as losing angles as curves are easier to mow, can over two

centuries accumulate into major changes in the gardens appearance; in an evolving garden whose design is gradually changing to meet the times this is to be expected and indeed welcomed, but an anachronism such as Rousham could lose character by such - short-cuts must be guarded against; the loss of the hedges along the Elm Walk which appear in a 1930s photograph by Packer may have gone for this reason; although we have no way of knowing how well established they were. That Rousham is very labour un-intensive for a garden of its size is a virtue of its style, and a contributing factor to its remarkable survival. Peter Goodchild likens conservation and maintenance of such a garden to conducting an orchestra that is playing a continuous piece of music.<sup>27</sup>

## Notes to Chapter Seven:

- 1 'Preservation' is not the correct description of the exemplary attitude towards historic landscapes; being continually evolving heritage features which cannot be fixed at one stage of development like a preserved fruit. Recently 'preservation' has also come to mean the care and protection of [environments and organisms]; but not withstanding this, 'conservation' is considered better terminology despite its implying protection against change. 'Maintenance' and 'protection' are the correct terms for future strategy at Rousham.
- 2 A further debate ensuing is whether to preserve Colonial Williamsburg as a good example of a 1930s interpretation, or create the 1990s view of the 18th c. to perhaps later discover another anomaly
- 3 Peter Goodchild - of Centre for the Conservation of Historic parks and Gardens. Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies. University of York - speaking for all conservators and garden historians. Personal communication Oct. 1989
- 4 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 Figs. 16 - 19 show their detailed proposals for the garden. This report was presented to H.B.M.C. and is still to be acted on; although some of the more easily tackled and less expensive recommendations have been followed
- 5 An example is to combine technical advice on path layout of James 1712 and Langley 1726: James would like to allow for at least 3 feet per person on a garden walk, making an optimal minimum of 12 feet to allow four to walk abreast; Langley 1928 gives the measurements: 10 - 25 feet width, and 35 - 40 feet for grand walks.

- 6 Within garden history, the work at Castle Bromwich is leading the field in British archaeology; here two research archaeologists are being financed on the Leverhulme garden Archaeology Project; constructed in 1600 - 50, the gardens still retain their formal character.
- 7 Moggeridge 1982 Fig. 11
- 8 Based on quotations of Dept. of Archaeological science, Bradford University 1989
- 9 Bell 1990
- 10 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 3.7
- 11 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 3.5.6-3.5.8
- 12 Colvin and Moggeridge 1985 3.5.7
- 13 Moggeridge 1982 Pp. 194 reinterprets these measurements using Kent's sketch of Venus Vale and arrives at the more practicable heights of 9m for Lower Cascade, 6m for the fountain behind and 7.5m for that in the Theatre.
- 14 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 3.5.6
- 15 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 3.6.4
- 16 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 Section 2
- 17 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 List these features
- 18 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 4.1.6
- 19 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 4.1.7-4.1.9 summarise this report
- 20 Recommendation of Colvin and Moggeridge
- 21 Moggeridge 1982 Pp. 191 advocates this
- 22 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 3.7.4
- 23 Colvin and Moggeridge 1983 Section 3
- 24 Olmert 1984 Pp. 14

- 25 Wright 1982 Pp. 11 defines maintenance as  
'the routine, day-to-day or week-by-week operations involved in the upkeep  
of gardens, such as grass mowing and weeding, or the clipping and pruning of  
hedges and shrubs.'
- 26 See photographs in 'T' (*Country Life*) 1910 and Hussey 1942 for  
comparisons
- 27 Ibid.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: Conservation: Legislation and Funding

As G.S. Thomas<sup>1</sup> states, gardens need preservation against Nature and people: the two weapons of Nature being weeds and decay, those of people being wear and tear and the changing tastes of the owners. Fashions, and garden design alter with fluctuations in prosperity, wars, travel and so on as well as a continual desire to impress fellow man, be different and lead the crowd. Today the concentration is on the plants more than the design, and these are often imposed on earlier gardens as with Mrs Cottrell-Dormer's planting of exotic species imported since the 18th c. in Rousham.

Most important is defining and preserving the philosophy of the 18th c. gardens; conservation of the earlier geometric gardens is far less demanding of an understanding of the underlying themes, the current social and political state and the views and status of the owner and designer play as great a part in the character of the garden as do the arrangement of water, vegetation, soil and stone. Homogeneity is a danger if gardens comparable in age and design lose individualism beneath the reinterpretation of the 'typical' 18th c. landscape garden.

Legally the architectural features of Rousham garden are protected by the listing in the Department of the Environment's *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest*, however this does not cover the garden in its entirety and there is no measure to preserve the whole experience: the land forms, planting, vistas and natural features such as streams; the first listing was undertaken in 1957 and included Rousham house, statuary, water features and garden buildings<sup>2</sup>.

Rousham is now a Grade I site on the official *Register of Gardens and Parks of Special Historic Interest*, which comprises 44 county volumes and lists 1085 parks and gardens. English Heritage has appointed an Inspector of Historic parks and Gardens, who is now responsible for the Register. Published in April 1988, the Register is formatted in a comparable manner to the historic buildings listing.

The Registers provide no statutory legal protection but act as a reference for grant aiding and highlight areas deserving special treatment from owners and developers. 'Taskforce Trees', set up in answer to the storm damage of October 1989 and February 1990 used the English Heritage Register as the basis for defining those sites most in need of repair-work. The next stage now being much debated is legal protection; comparison can be made to the effectiveness of that for historic buildings, as well as tree preservation orders where fear of any development being prevented leads to unnotified destruction or alterations. The identification and description would have to be in a legally acceptable form, which cannot cover rapidly changing details such as vegetation which require constant interference in the form of maintenance, but delineates land-form, water and trees.

Protection is maintained by planning permission, whereby the Local Planning Authorities have some control over areas where development is intended; or the designation of Conservation Areas under section 277 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - in 1977 Rousham and surrounding countryside was proposed as a Rural Conservation area to West Oxfordshire District Council, and strongly backed by Charles Cottrell-Dormer, no agreement was reached. Informal agreements are a particularly satisfactory measure,

and can be formalised by recourse to the Section 106 Agreements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Purchase of sites by Local Authorities can be a method for protection in drastic cases, this then leaves the problems of maintenance in the council's hands; and effectiveness is dependent on the resources and expertise, as well as attitude to the site, within the Authority. Financial incentives could be used, such as that to preserve field monuments by annual payment to farmers; this is only feasible if the payment roughly equals the gains to be made from utilising the site in a less conservationally sound manner.

Vandalism is already guarded against by the British legal system, however at Rousham this is as far as the protection goes, there is little to prevent entry to the garden and no means of securing the statuary or garden furniture in place; indeed when the cupids were welded to the swans, only a few weeks later they were wrenched off. Bolting down movable objects would be advisable as a deterrent, but so far there has been no major problem with vandals, and few protective measures are available that do not interfere with viewing of the pieces.

The question of whether to conserve has its own implications: control measures can be argued against for the limits they place on agriculture, gravel extraction and home and business developments and hence on 'progress'; however such activities are greatly increased from the time when there was no restraint on them and have more impact; also the man-made landscapes are important to both urban and rural communities for recreation, aesthetics and the ecology. Conservation is not just an aesthetic measure demanded by the educated it also is a necessity; the national heritage is the key factor

in promoting overseas visitors and the income they bring.

Gardens such as Rousham are also of educational value: the Centre for Environmental Interpretation at Manchester Polytechnic and the Heritage Education Trust at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill both have facilities for promoting the use of historically and environmentally important landscapes in education, mostly in schools and sixth form colleges. Rousham is not really accessible to children as a means of understanding history - what it represents is too complex and requires some background knowledge; and encouraging schools would increase visitor numbers, perhaps with detrimental effects on the garden. However its underlying philosophies go unseen by too many visitors who merely breathe the atmosphere, touch the statues sit in the buildings and admire the views.

## **FUNDING**

Tax concessions<sup>3</sup> are the most utilised, and so far effective in the long run, method of giving owners of gardens of heritage importance financial aid; partly due to lack of knowledge on the grants available and an unwarranted fear of Government intervention into what the owner regards as his/her own piece of history with the conditions imposed with grant-aid<sup>4</sup>; but mainly because the granting mostly covers only initial expenses, and it is continued maintenance which is most resource-draining.

At Rousham grant aid for the house and statues has been received from the Dept. of the Environment since the site was listed in 1957. The house itself is opened to the public at the owner's discretion, generally for a couple of days a month; there is little

visitor supervision, an automatic ticket vendor charges £2 , only at weekends is there a ticket-seller; within the gardens there is merely the occasional gardener to restrain the public. More money could be brought in by increasing opening hours; however a guide would then be needed, and parts of the house require reinforcement as well as increased visitors producing more demand on local amenities and the garden itself. At present the locality is well able to deal with the tourism, and with Woodstock and Oxford so close little expansion would be required.

This then is the situation faced by historic gardens, and indeed the majority of S.S.S.I. s, local beauty spots and historic and ancient features; those such as Rousham which are too small or fragile to withstand greatly increased visitor pressure in return for additional admission fees are the hardest hit. Undoubtedly this Oxfordshire garden could increase its income through advertising; increasing opening hours and allowing children into the grounds. Today Rousham shows little sign of damage from undue visitor pressure; children were banned several years ago as the Great Slope was suffering erosion from their speedy descents; because they could not be restrained from climbing the statuary and because the noise they generally created destroyed the atmosphere of Rousham as a tranquil scene for contemplation and reflection.

Rousham is a connoisseur's garden - fountains, tumbling cascades and other attractions restoration would bring could create a popular beauty spot with all the detriments resulting from too much visitor pressure. Limiting access to Rousham must continue to preserve this unique relic.

## **Notes to Chapter Eight:**

- 1 Jellicoe and Thomas 1980 Chapt. 1
- 2 A new survey of architectural features and their environs in England and Wales was begun in 1990 by the Dept. of the Environment and is expected to take ten years
- 3 As detailed by Wright 1982 Pp. 148-149
- 4 Various bodies have published guides on the availability and applicability of grant aid, some are listed in Lorrain-Smith 1989 Pp. 14

## In Conclusion

### Rousham in History

The 18th c. saw the field of 'self-conscious observers'<sup>1</sup> extending from the poet, philosopher and painter to the gentry who were dabbling in these arts, and indeed their gardeners. This term defines those who looked at the landscape and were conscious of the way in which they viewed it; using generally accepted comparables and models. Dominating these models was the 'return to nature' - of which landscape gardening was only one facet - within which classical values, reinterpreted in the light of the 18th c. held centre stage; reinforced by the Grand Tour, classical literature, and the political status which opened the way for such influences. Links to Italy both modern and ancient were seen in all the arts; and that the English Landscape garden was a development from the Italian scene rather than a British invention is clear; however once the temper of 18th c. England was imposed these gardens had a character of their own right; it is Kent's Rousham which encapsulates the mood of the 18th c.

Walpole however over-simplifies the progression of tastes in the 18th c.; naturalism was not totally across the board, and Art was never neglected. A landscape such as Rousham, imitating not presenting nature, is an encapsulated ideal - what should be, not what is; labour, insubordinate Nature and the harsh realities of country living are subsumed in a pastoral idyll. It can be placed within the beginnings of the Picturesque movement as putting Nature in a frame, the garden boundaries dividing reality from ideals.<sup>2</sup>

'The 'nature' of the garden was labour-free (disguising its construction), unconfined (hiding its boundaries, self-yielding (obscuring cultivation)).'<sup>3</sup>

There was a clear gap between theory and practice in irregularity and natural; Rousham is as contrived as Versailles and represents the early 18th c. concept of 'natural' and 'irregular' defined on the basis of the French and Dutch influenced designs.

Rousham is a garden of contrasts and juxtapositions; the analogies are ambiguous and as such effective. It is the mood of Rousham today, rather than the features and their arrangement; its representation of 18th c. thought and its position in formulating and popularising English Landscape gardens which marks it as an outstanding garden in any age.

### Kent in History

The importance of Kent and his design for Rousham to the Landscape Garden movement and for the English countryside as we see it today; is confused by prolepsis, for which Horace Walpole takes most of the responsibility with his belief that Kent led the way towards a 'natural' pleasure garden:

'At that moment appeared Kent, painter enough to taste the charms of landscape, bold and opinionative enough to dare and to dictate, and born with a genius to strike out a great system from the twilight of imperfect essays. He leaped the fence and saw that all nature was a garden.'<sup>4</sup>

Both Kent and Rousham are seen as watersheds in the history of designed landscapes. Kent is seen as an innovator by many; by others as the natural progression from Bridgeman. Little is known about Bridgeman which makes it difficult to establish

his part in the development of English gardens. Already designing with more freedom than was attributed to the geometric gardens influenced by Holland and Italy he created the axes and controlled the water upon which Kent's semi-formal units were to create a 'natural' paradise, with allusions to the classics, portions of Italian gardens and theatrical scenes. Bridgeman also used views out, winding paths, wilderness areas and formal waterworks. Bridgeman and Kent were almost acting as a team at several contemporary gardens; Bridgeman laying out and Kent later softening lines and detailing; and the contributions of the less renowned workers, such as White and Maclary at Rousham, should not go unrecognised.

Kent's innovations can be summarised as his use of an artist's perspective, colour and light and shade; and the great influence of theatre on his landscape designs - using foliage as backdrops; statues as actors and creating garden scenes comparable to those on the stage, and particularly to Italian gardens and their garden theatres. Also at Rousham he is responsible for the iconography, architecture and surprise and variety; such themes and features were already written of, and being incorporated in other landscapes; we can see Kent as popularising an already current trend in the arts and garden design in particular; as such his innovativeness has been exaggerated, but his influence was overwhelming.

### Rousham, Oxfordshire: Preserving its Place in History

Rousham is a relic, a museum piece, but its medium has altered; our impression differs from Maclary's or Walpole's; the structural features are now slightly ruined, statues have the patina of age; the garden has a shady, overgrown

charm not apparent in the 18th c. when the trees were young; the stonework new and the conceptions *à la mode*.

Landscapes cannot be preserved; growth and decay cannot be halted; but they can be protected; recognition of the importance of our historic gardens as fulfilled by the *Register of Gardens and Parks of Historic Interest in England and Wales* is a major step in this direction; the validity of further protection is still in question.

Reconstruction of gardens to a particular period is steeped with dangers; but a full analysis of all available sources would ensure maintenance and repairs alter the concept as little as possible. As such Rousham should see no increase in visitor numbers, currently a happy balance is maintained with access not restricted, but little advertising; this should be maintained to prevent possible damage from visitor pressure. Work on the garden is required to remedy deterioration of structures and vegetation. Labour, funding and continued protection of the garden is necessary.

A recent view amongst workers in garden history is that gardens should be allowed to evolve to suit the current age; achieving a tapestry of fashions, gardeners and designs to record the garden's overall history; so individuality is guaranteed, but clarity of vision lost. Rousham has remained relatively unchanged for several hundred years and this unique representation of 18th c. life and ideas should retain its purity.

## **Notes to Conclusion:**

- 1 Raymond Williams 1973 from Pugh Pp. 122
- 2 The views, wilderness areas and gothicisms at Rousham may also be seen to herald the Picturesque
- 3 Pugh 1988 Pp. 12
- 4 Walpole 1770 Pp. 22

## APPENDIX ONE

### 'Landscape Garden' Defined

Onions 19661 defines landscape as adopted from the Dutch as a painter's term; and meaning a picture representing natural inland scenery, or a view of such scenery. 'Landscape' is the countryside viewed through a Claude lens of the precepts of culture or a painter's use of colour; and indeed is an imaginary prospect of what should be; and became 'a series of visual signifiers which makes it possible to 'recognise' and appreciate 'natural beauty'<sup>2</sup>. 'Garden' at its most basic means an enclosed area; or an area of ground used for growing flowers, vegetables or fruit.

When the two definitions are combined to form 'landscape garden' a vague term results, which does not delineate the stylistic differences between a still semi-formal but relaxed garden such as Rousham; and the rigidly controlled landscapes of Brown. 'Le Jardin Anglais' is a similar blanket description, referring to this style of landscape which began in England. Gardens of Rousham's ilk have also been categorised as 'emblematic' and 'poetic' or 'learned'.<sup>3</sup>

'Pastoral'<sup>4</sup> would be a suitable term for the underlying philosophy of a 'landscape garden', it encapsulates the idealised images of the countryside which were brought into the rural retreat totally unsullied by hard work, poverty or the wilder side of nature. Pugh 1988 emphasises the garden's boundaries as dividing rich from poor, the ideals from actuality; and the differences status brought to one's views of the garden, only the labourer would see the manual work involved for no visible productivity. In a similar vein, the owner and labourer would approach nature from opposing angles: the gentleman seeing a wayward but beautiful spirit merely requiring

careful handling, Paradise by definition being - at least in appearance - labour-free;  
the worker is employed in the constant battle to prevent nature overpowering the art of  
the garden.

**Notes to Appendix One:**

- 1 Onions 1966 Pp. 514
- 2 Pugh 1988 Pp. 135
- 3 Paulson 1975
- 4 'Pastoral' is defined by Pugh 1988 Pp. 136 - 137

## APPENDIX TWO

Still preserved today at Rousham is a unique record of the garden as Mr. Kent left it, John Maclary<sup>1</sup>, the head gardener wrote a vivid epistle to the Dormers in London asking them to return to Rousham; this letter, together with the plan attributed to Bridgeman and Kent's few surviving drawings and design plan, are the basis of any research and theoretical reconstruction of Rousham garden<sup>2</sup>

Letter addressed to Sir Clement Cottrell's wife, from John Maclary,  
head gardener and foreman of the works, 1752:<sup>3</sup>

Madam, I'Afraid my Master and all of you have forgot what sort of a Place Rousham is, so I have sent you a description of it that it may not quite creep out of your Memorys.

When you walk out at the Hall Door, you come into a Large parterre, the middle of which is a Large Bowlinggreen, with a Gravel Walk all round it, and on each side is a fine large Green Terrace Walk, at the end of which is two open groves, backt with two Natural Hilllocks planted with Scotch Firrs, and two Large pedestals, you walk forward to view the Lion nearer, when your eye drops upon a very fine Concave Slope, at the Bottom of which runs the Beautiful River Charvell, and at the top stands two pretty Garden Seats, one on each side, backt with the two Hilllocks of Scotch Firrs, here you sit down, first in the one, and then in the other, from whence perhaps at this time you have the prettiest view in the whole World. Tho the most extensive part of it is but

short, yet you see from hence five pretty Country Villages, and the Grant Triumphant Arch in Aston Field, together with the natural turnings of the Hills, to let that charming River downe to butify our Gardens, and what stops our long view is a very pretty Corn Mill, Built in the Gothick manner but nothing sure can please the eye like our Short View, their is a fine meadow, cut off from the gardens only by the River Charvell wheron is all sorts of Cattle feeding, which looks the same as if they was feeding in the Garden.

and through the middle of the garden runs a great High Road, which goes from several Cities to several Cities. There you see Carrier's Wagons, Gentleman's Equipage's, Women riding, Men walking, and sometimes twenty Drovers of Cattle goes by in a Day, then you see a Hayford Bridge (which carries the Great Road over the River Charvill) which is a fine Stone Bridge Six Hundred feet Long, and thirty Broad, with a parripet Wall on each side, finely coped, and is supported by ten Spacious Arches, here you see the water comes gliding through the Arches, and all the pretty natural turnings and windings of the River, for half a mile and one yard, which is the length of the Gardens by the River, and Turn a bout you see a good old House uninhabited, on each side of which is a Wing newly built, and on each wing, is two niches, wherein stands four fine figures. A Dancing Fawn, a Bacchanal, A Venus and An Apolo.

Then you turn away to the right Hand, Through a fine Open Grove of Oaks, Elms, Beachs, and Black Cherrys, Thirty feet High, backt with a very fine close Beach Hedge, which brings you to a pleasant opening Faced wit a Stone Ballustrade, eighty feet long,

on the one end stands Hercules, and the other Pan, upon Terms, and in the middle is a Dying Gladiator upon a large pedestal.

from hence you have the same view as you have from the top of the Great Slope, but nearer and prettier,

from hence you turn along a pleasant Green Walk, backt with all sorts of Flowers, and Flowering Shrubs, when you come to the middle, you find a pretty Garden Seat, where you set down and view the House, and a pretty paddock, devided from the Gardens by a Ha Ha ditch, the paddock is stockt at this time with two fine Cows, two Black Sows, a Bore, and a Jack Ass.

you keep along the same walk which brings you to a Rustic Door, that lets you out into the Road, on each side of the Door is a nich, wherein stands two Marble Figures, Flora and plenty, and before them stands two Vases upon handson carr'd pedestals, and by stands a Large Handson Garden Seat, where you set down and have a pretty view of the Arch in aston Field.

you walk down a pretty concave Slope, which brings you to a fine Large oval Fish pond (sadly spoiled by a ugly Heavey building in the middle of it) which you goe by in to one of the noblest Green Serpentine Walks that was ever seen, or even made, view narrowly as you walk along, and youl prehaps see, a greater veriaty of evergreens, and Flowering Shrubs, than you can posably see in any one walk in the World,

at the end of this walk stands a four Seat Forrist Chair, where you set down and view what, and where, you walked a long,

their you see the deferant sorts of Flowers, peeping through the deferant sorts of Evergreens, here you think the Laurel produces a Rose, the Holly a Syringa, the Yew a Lilac, and the sweet Honeysuckle is peeping out from under every Leafe, in short they are so mixt together, that you'd think every leafe of the Evergreens, produced one flower or a nother;

From hence you turn down a little Serpentine Graviil Walk, into a little opening, made with Yew and other Evergreens as dark and melencholly as it was posable to make it, and

on one side of it stands a pretty little Gothic Building, (which I designed for Proserpine's Cave, and placed in it five Figures in Bass Relife, done by the best Hand in England, the two princeable figures, was pluto and proserpine, the other three, was proserpines Chaplain, Doctor, and her Apothecary, but my Master not liking the Doctor, I chopt them all down,)

you keep down a Serpentine Gravel Walk which brings you to a large Serpentine Green Walk, bounded on each side with Evergreens, and Flowering shrubs entermixt, and all along the middle runs a pretty little Serpentine River, well stockt with fine Trout, (I saw this day no less than twenty fine<sup>4</sup> trouts swemming in it at one time) about the midle of the Walk and the River is a large Octagon Basson, and by it is a little Building, or Cave cool and pleasant, when your at the end of the River, you turn to the

Left hand, through a fine Grove of Evergreens, to a pavilion, built in the Tuscan order, where you goe in & sett down and hear a very fine Echo, from hence you have a view of the Arch in Aston Field, and the Gothick Corn Mill, and a very near view of Heyford Bridge, and the fine Clear Stream comeing Gliding through the Arches.

Turn about you view the inside (where you set down) which you finde to be a Square Roome with the Angles cut of, on it are two niches, in the one stands the Head of Apolo, in the other is Socrates, in the four Cants is a Bacchus drunk Lead between two Satturs, Demosthenes setting upon the Alter before he is put to Death, a Bacchanal, and Jupiter setting on this Throne, all in Bass Reliefe,

from hence you goe down one of the prettiest concave Slopes in England, which brings you to the River Charvill,

Look to the left hand, youl see a Door that letts you out upon Heyford Bridge, which is the end of the Gardens,

You move on to the right, Through a fine open Grove, of Oaks, Elms, Beach, Alder, plains, and Horsechestnuts, all in flower now, and Sixty feet high, this Grove is a Hundred feet Broad, and five Hundred feet Long, on one side runs the River, the other is Backt with all sorts of Evergreens, and Flowering shrubs entermixt.

when you come to the end of this Grove, you comes to two Garden seats, where you set down, but sure no Tongue can express the Beautyfull view that presents itself to your eye,

you see a Fountain four inches Diameter, playing up fifty feet High, in the middle of a Clump of Old Oaks, and backt with a Cascade, where the water comes tumbling down from under three Arches, through Ruff Stones

from hence you carry your Eye on, you see on each side natural Hilloks planted with Large trees of differant sorts, and

in the middle stands a nother Cascade, where the Water come pouring down one Arch, on the right of which stands Faun, on the left stands Pan, upon pedestals.

you carry your eye still on you see a Fountain playing thirty feet High, that is five inches Diameter, behind which stands a figure Venus, on each side of her stands a Cupid riding upon swans Backs, all three upon handsom pedestals, and all this Backt with very fine tall Evergreens of Deferant Sorts.

From hence you goe up a Serpentine Gravel walk, which brings you to A Arcade, a Hundred feet long, in which are Severn Arches, and against each Arch is a large nich, wherein stands a very pretty carv'd Seat, and between them is a six small niches, and in them stands the Busts of a young Cleopatra, Shakespeer, a Bacchanal, Alexander, the Roman Listener [?], and Niaba, before it is a large Gravel Walk, faced with a Stone Ballustrde, with a large vase at each end,

you turn down a Serpentine Gravel walk, which brings you to a very fine Fountain, that plays fourty feet high, and falls down among shells, behind it stands a Mercury upon a pedestal, backt with a very fine wood, and on the one side, stands

Bacchus, on the other Ceres, upon pedestals, backt with two natural Hilloks, well planted with evergreens. from hence you cross the Bottom of the Grand Slope, which brings you to a Wooden bridge that Carryes a privat Bridle Road over the River Charvell, under which there is a very pretty natural Cascade,

you keep strait forward by the Riverside, through a open Grove of Oak, Elm, Ash, Beach, and plains, forty feet high, which brings you to a large nich, that makes a very handsome Garden Seat, where you set down, and view the River and Garden, from one end to the other,

from hence you turn up a Serpentine Gravel Walk, by a little Cave (wherein stands a fine spring that serves the House with Drinking Watter) which brings you to a little pond,

from here you goe through a Gra'Serpentine Walk, which brings you to a Egyptian pyramide, here you goe in and set down, and have a very pretty view of the Meddow, the Road, and the Bridge, and two parrish Churches, together with the pretty naturial turnings and windings of the River, and the delightfull naturial Cascade that falls down under the Wooden Bridge.

look round and you find your self in a large square Handsom Room, in the Back wall of which is a nich, with a Roman in it<sup>5</sup>, and on one side is the Head of Julius Ceasar, on the other is Calpurnia, in Bass Reliefe, on each side is a nich, in which stands the Busts of Marcus Arielus, and Socratus,

from hence you goe down a long Serpentine Gravel walk, which brings you to the Kitchen Garden Door, which when you enter in, it makes you forget all they Beautys you have seen befor, it looks more like paradise than a Ketchen Garden <sup>6</sup>

There is three Kitchen Gardens Joining to each other, in which are four Fishponds, and the Water is carried from one pond, to the Other, in little Riverlats, which makes them both usefull, and pretty; their wall'd round with Brick walls twelve feet high, well planted with choise Fruit trees and their large Gravel walk with Box edgings on each side, goes quite Round, and twice through the Middle, by each side of the Gravel walk is

a very handsom Espalier, painted Green and planted with the best sorts of Apples and pears, in England,

here you pass by a very large Handsom Hothouse, well stockt with very fine pine Apples

before I leave the Kitchen Garden, I must let you know how it is stockt; First we have a pretty maney peaches and nectrons, Great plenty of Apricots, Figgs, Grapes, and Mulberrys, few plumbs, pears, Apples, Cherryes, Currants and Goosberries, and as Great plenty of all sorts of things for the Kitchen as a Oxfordshire garden can produce;

From hence you goe into a pretty Little Flower Garden, well planted with all sorts of pretty Flowers.

here is a Rustic Door, through which their is a privat road to the Church,

From hence you goe into the Darey Yard, in the middle of which is a large Square pond, well stockt with fine Fish, and all the yard was handsomly Layd with Gravil,

faceing you stands a very large Building which is the Darey, and Darey House, and their is two Wings one of each side which is a Coach House, and Hen houses,

Look to the Left and you see as pretty a set of pigg Stighs, as aney in England,

Look to the right you see the Gate, which letts you into a large Gravil Walk, which Leads to the House, but before I leave the Darey Yard I must let you know how it is stockt,

here you see one Hen Turkey nursing eighteen fine young ones fitt, for the spitt, and the other three Hen Turkeys are setting again, and the Hen that is the nurse Lays again,

and here you see a nother fine sight, a old Hen looking after Twentyfour fine Chickens, fitt for the Spitt, and severall more old Hens nursing Large Broods of Chickens under their wings, in all to the number of Sixty Six,

and here you see the old Ducks sweming a bout the pond with no less than forty young ones of Deferant sizes sweming after them,

here you see several old Hens setting, and two of them upon Guinea Fowls Eggs,

from here, you goe through the Gate and up the Gravel walk to the House, you go by a very pretty Lader with never a bit of vettles in it.

Their is one thing I had like to forgot, which is a thing I believe none of you knows aney thing of, which is a most noble view we have from one place in our Gardens, we look into four Countys, and see no less than ten parrish Churches at one time.

Now madam if all this wont induce you, once more to set your Faces towards Rousham, I beg you'll be so good and to inter cede with my master, to give us his Estate, as well as his House and Gardens, theirs one good thing, if you dont come soon, my Master will have but small Butchers Bills to pay for wee shall be forst to live one Day upon Turkeys, another Day upon Ducks, another upon Chickens.<sup>7</sup>

## **Notes to Appendix Two:**

- 1 'Maclary' is found spelt several ways, i.e. 'Macclarey' (Pugh, 1988) or 'Clary' in the White letters as printed in Woodbridge 1974(b) and the choice seems arbitrary.
- 2 Pugh's 1988 work is a detailed analysis of Maclary's letter.
- 3 '1750 (or 60)' is the date given by Colvin and Moggeridge, 1983.
- 4 Pugh 1988 transcribes this as twenty five.
- 5 Sir Charles' copy of the letter said 'Roman Urn',
- 6 It seems that Maclary was in charge of this area of the garden, so his high praise is understandable, if immodest.
- 7 The letter is transcribed from a copy kindly leant by Mr. Cottrell-Dormer

## APPENDIX THREE

### SCHEDULE OF WATER FEATURES: Moggeridge 1986 Pp. 223

PLACE AND ITEM	BUILDING MATERIALS	/=Mentioned in		
		Kent Drwg	Maclary Letter	TODAY (/=as original)
<u>N.E. Boundary</u>				
River Cherwell	Natural banks except below Praeneste where inner curve was reinforced by a stone wall	/	/	/ -but free flowing rather than dammed
<u>S. of Great Slope</u>				
Cascade, probably 400m high	Stone weir		/	Gone, but footing still visible on N. bank
Spring and Pond	Stone arched cave		/	Cave remains, but dry
<u>Theatre</u>				
Fountain, probably 7.5m high	Stone shell basin	/	/ (40 ft)	Gone
<u>Venus Vale</u>				
Lower Fountain probably 9m high	_____	/	/ (50 ft) (4 in dia.)	Gone
Semi-circular Pool	_____	/	/	Part of Lower Cascade
Lower Cascade, 3 arches	Rough masonry	/	/	/ -(little flow)
Octagonal Pond	Stone edged	/	/	/ -(very silted up)
Upper Cascade,	Rough masonry	/	/	/ -(arch leaning)

	1 arch				
Square Upper Pond	Probably natural banks	/			Gone (outline shows)
Upper Fountain	_____	/	/		Gone (shown in upper
probably 6m high				(30 ft)	cascade in Kent drawing)
				(5 in dia.)	
<u>Woodland Walks</u>					
Oval Fishpond	?	/	/		Gone
Water Inlet	Stone masonry			/	
Serpentine Rill	Masonry channel			/	-described by Maclary as a
					larger stream; mentioned by Horace
					Walpole.
Octagonal Cold Bath	Stone Surround	/	/		/-(rectangle on Kent plan)

## APPENDIX FOUR

### SCHEDULE OF ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES<sup>1</sup>

ITEM	/=Mentioned in		TODAY (/=as original)
	Kent Drwgs	Maclary Letter	
Palladian Gate	/	/	/ - renovated
Cow Castle	/	/ <sup>2</sup>	/
Two Pavilions	/	/	Totally rebuilt
Seat near Gladiator	/	/	Foundations remain
Building in Oval Pond	/	/	No trace
Forrist Chair	/	/	No trace
Le Privé	/	/	Demolished
Proserpine's Cave	/	/	No trace
Bath House	/	/	/
Townesend's	/	/	/ - lost bas reliefs and busts (bar one)
Boat House	/	/	/
Praeneste	/	/	/
Pope's Seat	/	/	Lost roof and seat
Pyramid	/	/	/ - lost internal features
Icehouse	/	/	Filled in
Ha-ha	/	/	/ - dilapidated
Wall bounding garden	/	/	/ - except by river
<u>Beyond garden<sup>3</sup></u>			
Eyecatcher	/	/	/
Cuttle Mill	/	/	/
Cow House	/	/	/

### **Notes to Appendix Four:**

- 1 N.B. further structures included as water features in Appendix 2
- 2 Mentioned as 'pretty garden seat'
- 3 The plans do not extend far enough to include the structures beyond the garden

## APPENDIX FIVE

### SCHEDULE OF GARDEN FURNITURE

<b>Place and item</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Today</b>
		(/ = as original)
<hr/>		
<b>Cow Castle</b>		
Seat	Wood	/
<b>Green Walk</b>		
Four seat Forrist Chair	?	No remains
<b>Townsend's Building</b>		
Benches	?	Benches here today - uncertain date
<b>Venus' Vale</b>		
2 Viewing seats	Wood ?	Gone - 2 modern garden benches are sited in Venus Vale today
<b>Arcade</b>		
7 Carved seats	Painted oak	/
<b>Pyramid</b>		
Bench	Wood	/
<b>Pope's Seat</b>		
Bench	Wood ?	Replaced by modern garden bench

N.B. Maclary's letter is the only source for the furniture not present today

## APPENDIX SIX

### SCHEDULE OF SCULPTURE<sup>1</sup> - Moggeridge 1983, Fig. 26

Place and item	Building Materials	/ = Mentioned in		
		Kent's Drwgs	McClary Letter	Today (/ = as original)
<u>House-North Front</u>				
Apollo in Niche	Lead		/	/
Venus in Niche	Lead		/	/
Bacchus in Niche	Lead		/	/
Faun in Niche	Lead		/	/
Busts on Pedestals	Stone			/
Vases on Pedestals	Stone			/
<u>Bowling Green</u>				
Lion and Horse by Scheemakers	Stone 1740 1743 <sup>2</sup>		/	/ <sup>3</sup>
Minervas on Terms	Stone c. 1733-40		/	/
<u>Pyramid</u>				
Busts in Niches	Plaster		/	Remnants of one figure (Socrates) remain
Bas Relief set in Wall	Stone		/	/
Bas Relief over Archway	Stone			/
<u>Theatre</u>				
Ceres on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth <i>all</i>	/	/	/
Mercury on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth <i>early</i>	/	/	/
Bacchus on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth <i>18th c.</i>	/	/	Recently restored
<u>Praeneste Top Terrace</u>				
Hercules on Term	Stone		/	/

Pan on Term	Stone		/	/
Dying Gladiator on Plinth	Stone 1743	4	/	/
<u>Praeneste Arcade</u>				
Busts in Niches in Arcade	(Plaster ?)		/	All gone
Large vases on Plinths	Stone c.1738		/	/
<u>Palladian Door</u>				
Flora in Niche	Marble		/	/
Plenty in Niche	Marble		/	/
Vases on Plinths	Stone c.1733-40		/	1 broken, 1 crooked <sup>5</sup>
<u>Venus' Vale</u>				
Faun on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth 1701	/	/	/
Pan on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth 1701	/	/	/
Venus	Lead c.1738-40	/	/	/ - Originally sited above top square pool on a pedestal
2 Cupids on Swans	Lead	/	/	Swans remain. Cupids recently stolen. Originally sited above top square pool.
Tablet to Ringwood	Stone			/ - one side slightly damaged
<u>Woodlan Walks</u>				
Sarcophagus	Stone			/ - site shown empty on Kent's plan
<u>Townesend's Building</u>				
2 Heads in Niches in building	(Plaster ?)		/	Gone
4 Bas Reliefs in building	Stone		/	Only one survives
Roman sarcophagus in building	Stone			/
Large Apollo on Plinth	Lead, stone plinth c.1739	/		/ - Recently repaired

## **Notes to Appendix Six:**

- 1 All statuary is graded II\* - Dept. of the Environment 1988
- 2 Dates from Dept. of the Environment 1957 survey as given in op. cit. 1988  
inserted in italics
- 2 New pedestal
- 3 A sketch by Kent of this figure resting on a sarcophagus plinth survives as  
reproduced in Hunt 1987
- 4 Restored

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A Catalogue of the Genuine and Elegant Library of the Late Sir Clement Cottrell

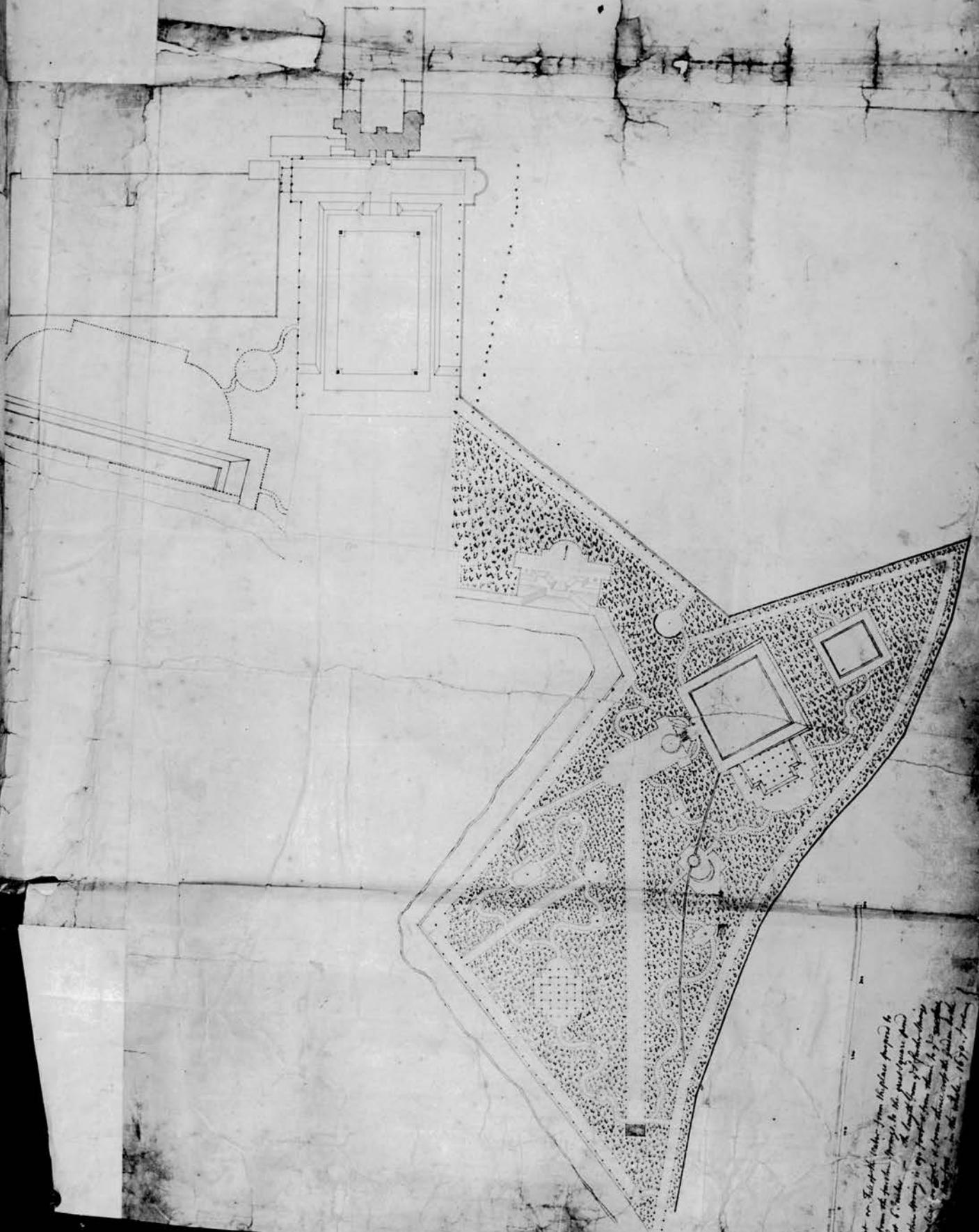
Dormer

For auction - Collection of Lieutenant General James Dormer 1764

Plate 1



Plate 2

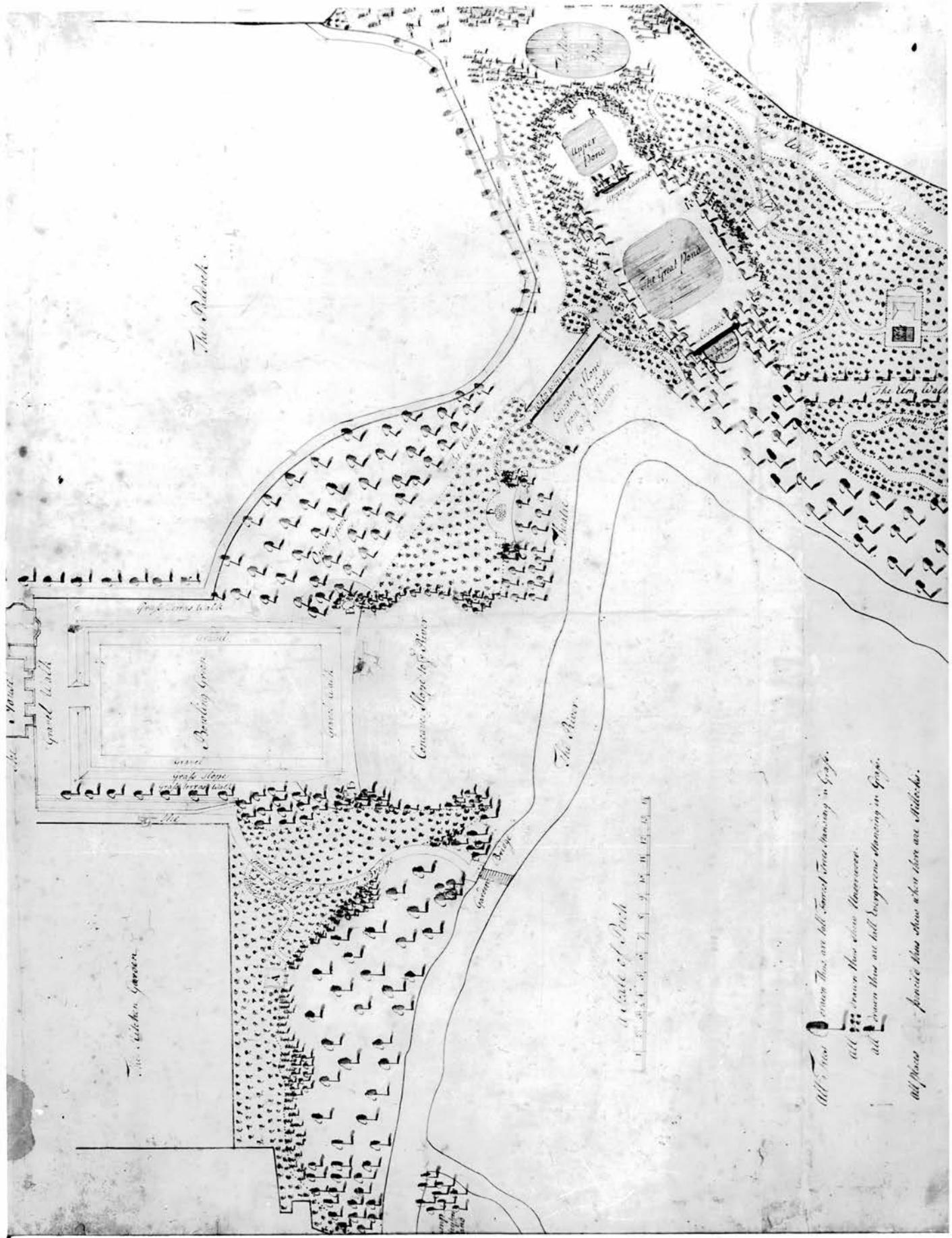


The ground on the right side from the place proposed to  
 being at present the garden. Proposed to the great square plan  
 of the 17th century. The length from the square to the  
 garden being in 1711, the ground was then in the  
 hands of the Duke of Devonshire, who in 1711, the  
 Duke of Devonshire, who in 1711, the Duke of Devonshire, who in 1711, the

Plate 3

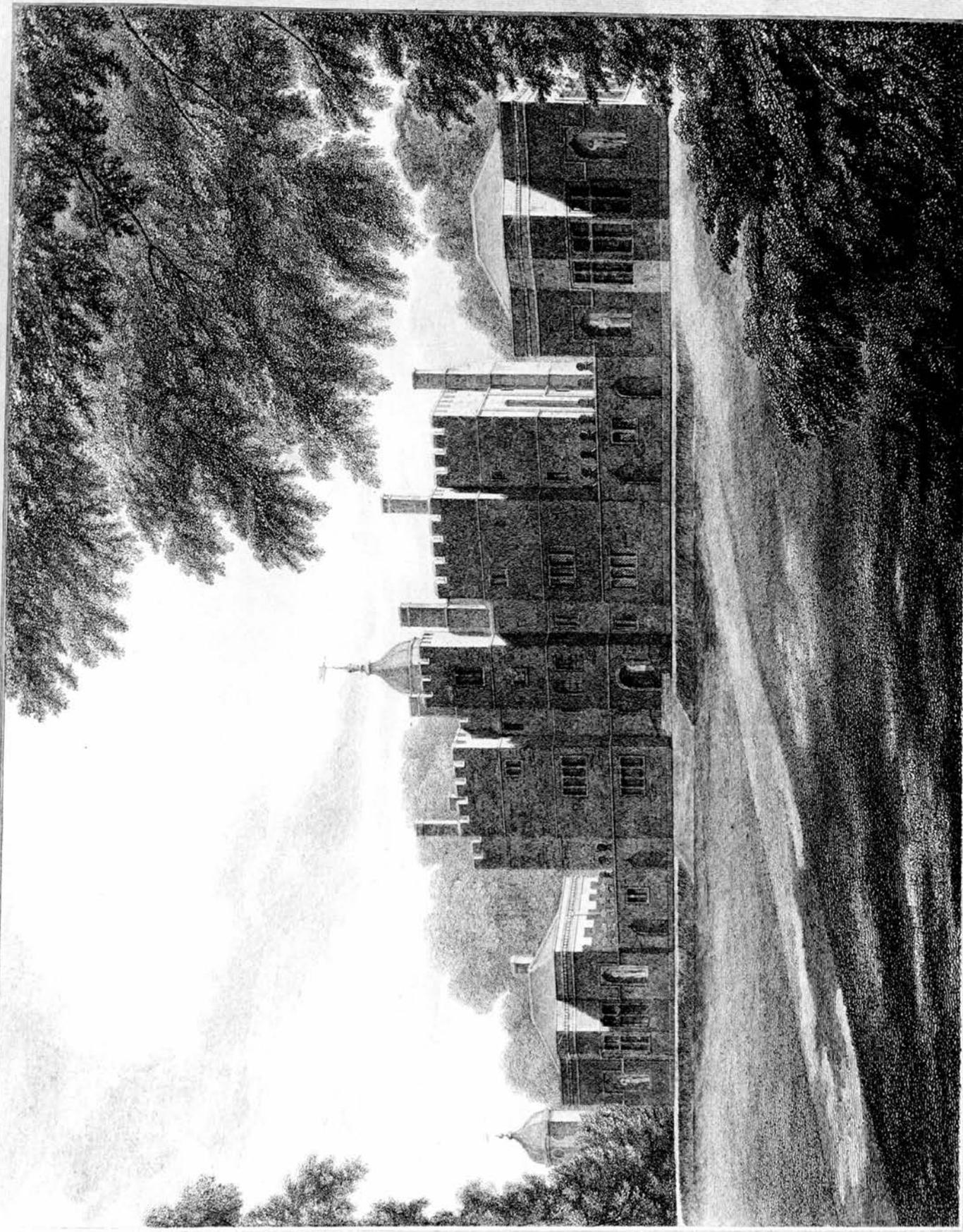
Key from the 1738 map:

- A The Pyramid Building
- B B the Two Green Seats at ye top of ye Great Slope
- C the Figure Ceres
- D the Figure Mercury
- E the Figure Bacchus
- F H the Two Swans
- G the Figure Venus
- I the Figure Pan
- K a Faun
- L Le Privé
- M Townsend's Building
- N the Figure Apollo



all trees  
 all trees  
 all trees  
 all trees

Plate 4



ROUSHANI, THE SEAT OF LADY COTTEFFI



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 10



Plate 11



Plate 12

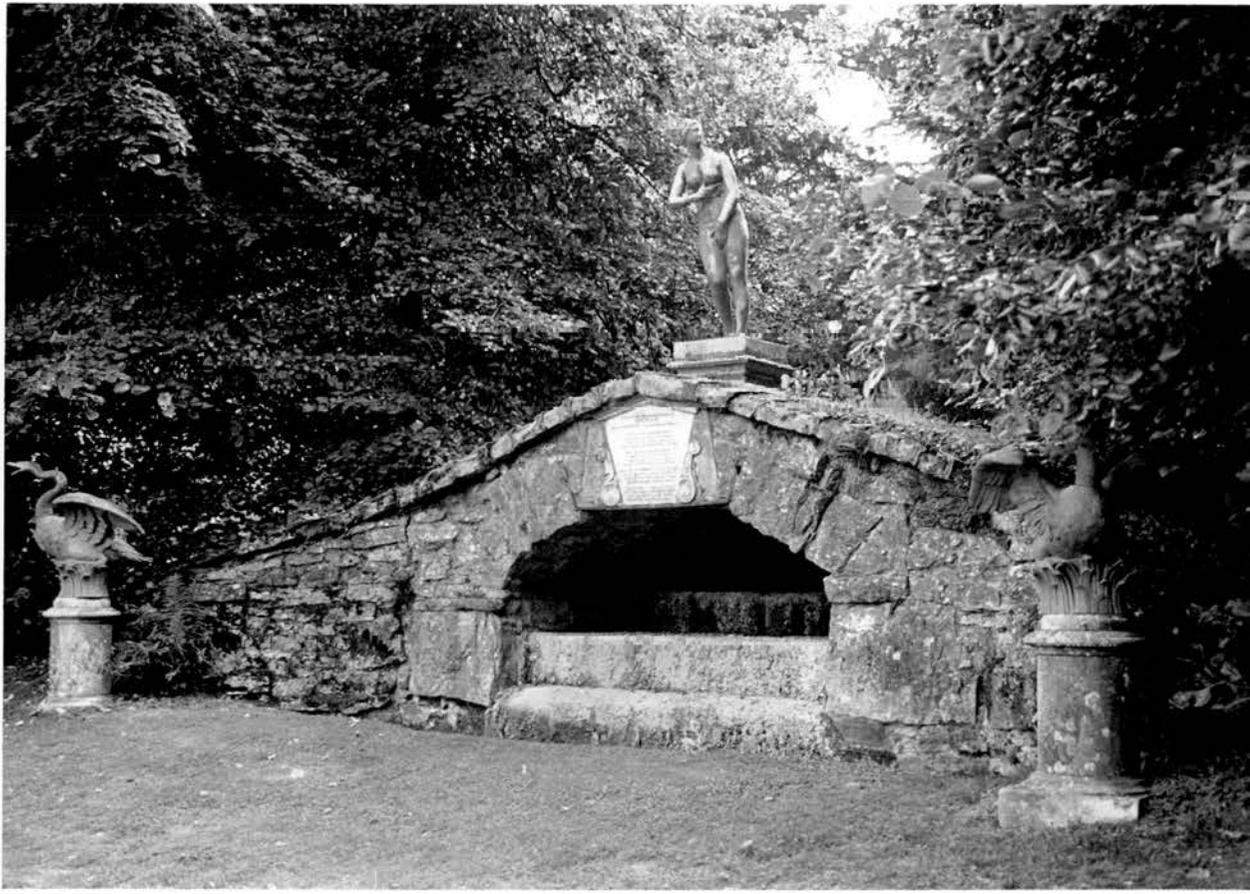


Plate 13



Plate 14



Plate 15



Plate 16



Plate 17



Plate 18



Plate 19



Plate 20



Plate 21



Plate 22

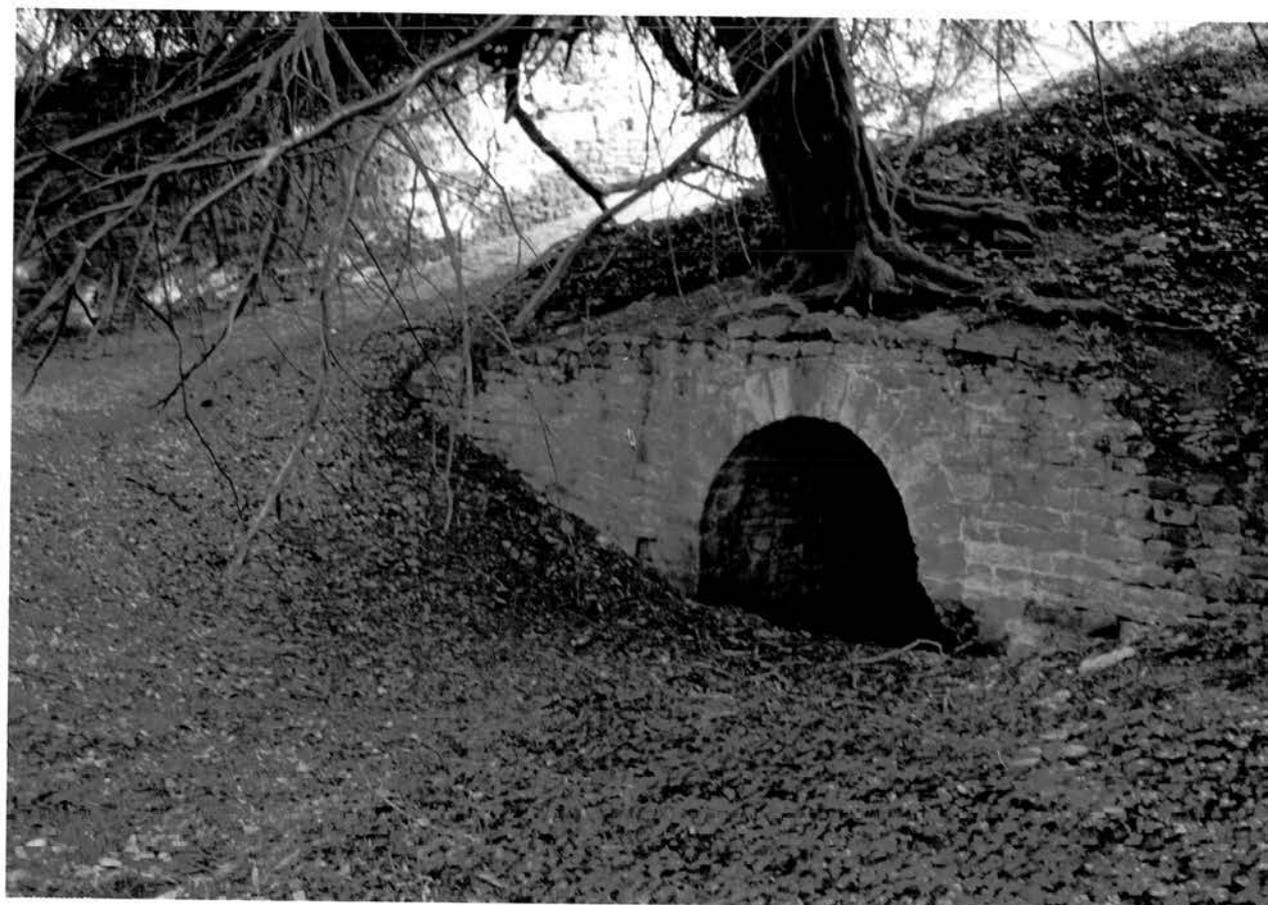


Plate 23



Plate 24

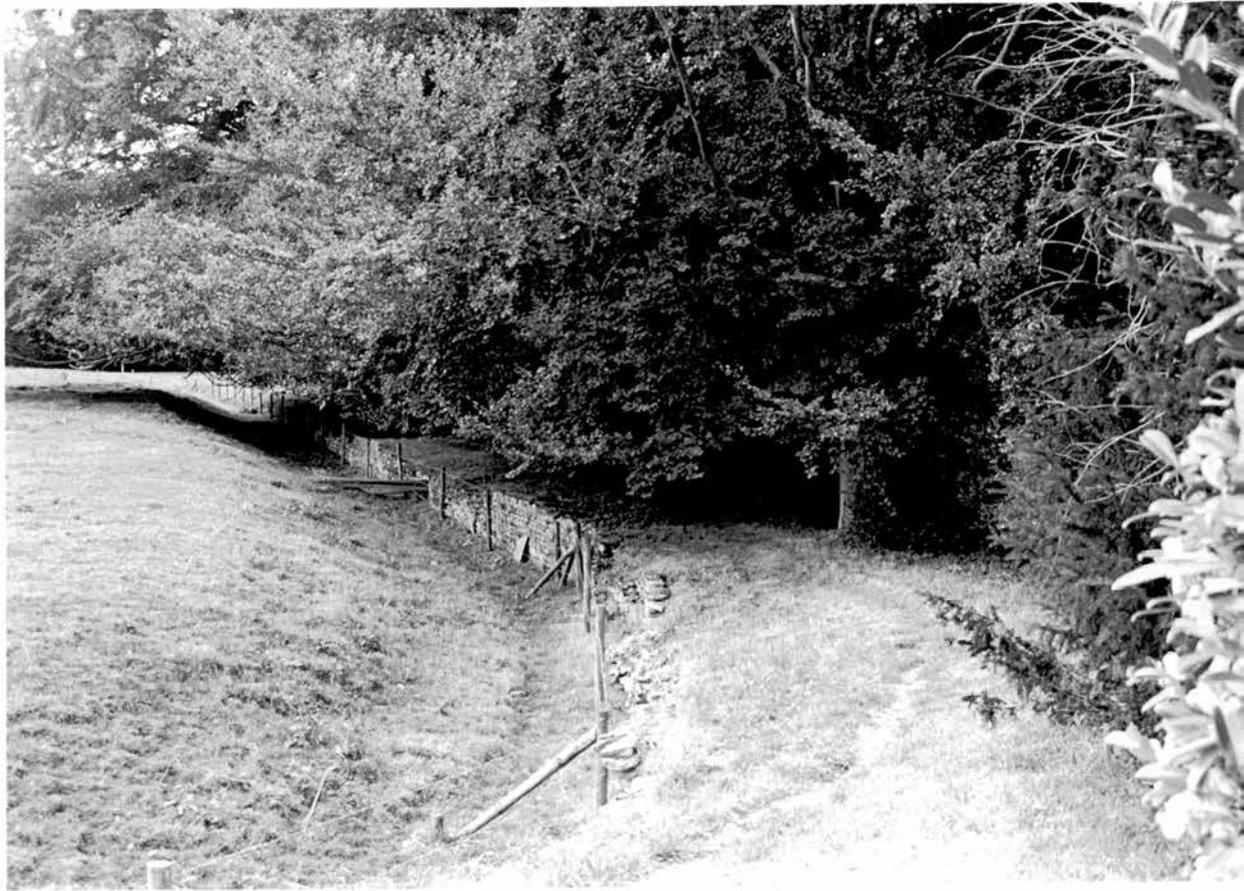


Plate 25



Plate 26



Plate 27



Plate 28



Plate 29



Plate 30



Plate 31



Plate 32



Plate 33

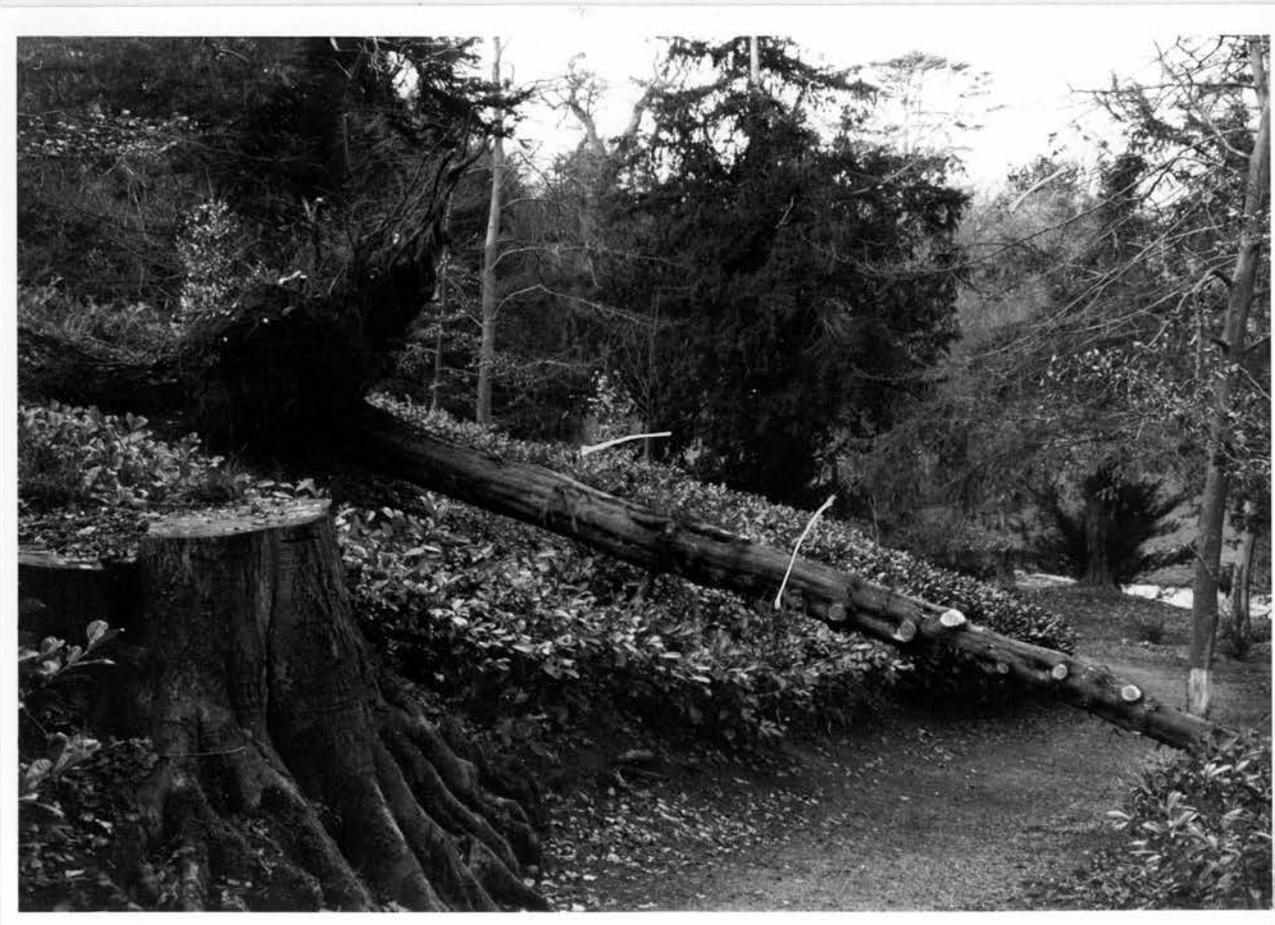


Plate 34



Plate 35



Plate 36