

Local History Bulletin

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*Painswick House — part of the vista to the Red House after extensive tree clearance during the summer 1985. The area either side has now been planted with period shrubs
(photo — Glos. County Planning Dept.)*

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EDITORIAL

Readers are well aware that 1985 and 1986 are the anniversary of the re-appearance of Halley's comet which thus links this year with the commemoration of Domesday Book, Gloucester and 1085, and the Bayeux Tapestry. Brian Frith's article on local astronomers is particularly appropriate since a Gloucestershire man, Dr James Bradley, succeeded Halley as astronomer-royal in 1742. A star of a different order was Dr Joseph Priestley whose escape to Gloucester from Birmingham is charted by Barbara Drake.

Finally, this edition comprises three other valuable articles by contributors to the annual local history conference in 1985, summarising garden history generally with West Country examples and illustrating two gardens at Highnam and Painswick.

BRYAN JERRARD (*editor*)

A GALAXY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE ASTRONOMERS

*First published in the Gloucestershire Record Office, Annual Report, 1984—85
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Not every county can claim to have produced an astronomer-royal, yet Gloucestershire can boast that two of its natives have held this important position. At the same time a number of lesser figures also emerged, who, if almost forgotten today, nevertheless played some small part in the history of astronomy.

Undoubtedly the greatest of Gloucestershire's astronomers was Dr. James Bradley, who became astronomer-royal in 1742, following the death of Edmund Halley. Bradley, described as "the best astronomer in Europe," filled that post until his own death 20 July 1762, at the age of 70. Trained and encouraged by his remarkable uncle, the Rev. James Pound, Bradley, after being ordained, later gave up his clerical duties in 1721 when he was elected Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. His discoveries of the aberration of light and the nutation (oscillation) of the earth's axis were two of his outstanding achievements, as well as a vast amount of other work of importance. He was buried in Minchinhampton churchyard,¹ having married a daughter of Samuel Peach of Chalford.

Bradley's birthplace was at Sherborne, being a son of William and Jane Bradley, but there is a gap in the Sherborne parish register for the years 1690 to 1793 during which time his baptism would have been recorded. The Dictionary of National Biography states that he was born there in March 1693, whilst another account suggests March 1692.² Apparently no-one had thought of checking for his baptism in the Bishop's transcripts of Sherborne,³ which happen to survive for the period missing in the parish register. A search will show that he was baptised there 3 October 1692, so that we may assume that he was born just prior to this date. Thus March 1692 would seem to be too early, whilst March 1693 is obviously too late.

American Connections

Employed as one of Bradley's assistants was a native of Sapperton or Bisley, named Charles Mason, who was baptised at the former place 1 May 1728.⁴ We know little of Mason's education, but he turned out to be a careful and experienced mathematician and surveyor, and he was sent to Sumatra to observe the transit of Venus in 1761, whilst in 1763, together with Jeremiah Dixon, he began an important task. This was to survey the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the work continued, with many set-backs, for some four years. This boundary line is known even to this day as the Mason and Dixon line.

In 1777 Mason, then in Sapperton, compiled tables that "gave the place of the sun and moon, both longitude and latitude, within 15 seconds, as appears by comparing them with a regular series of observations made by the late Rev. Dr. Bradley."⁵ He was to claim a reward of £5000 offered by act of parliament for the discovery, but though the calculations were used, he did not receive the sum expected. From 1770 to 1781 he received some £1317⁶ from his various calculations. Mason moved to America and died in Philadelphia 25 October 1786. His wife Rebecka, who died in 1759 at Greenwich, was buried in Sapperton Churchyard, and her memorial can be seen there to this day.

It is possible that some of his first lessons in mathematics could have come from a schoolmaster named Robert Stratford who is known to have

had a great interest in that subject. This man, described as of Sapperton, schoolmaster, was married to an Anne Stanley, 15 June 1742, at Hatherop, and his bride was given as being of Saint Ebbe's in the city of Oxford.⁷ This place of residence is of some interest as will be seen later. At the time of Stratford's marriage, when we know that he was in Sapperton, Charles Mason was about 14 years old, and they must surely have come in contact.

Tetbury Scholars

In later years Mason was living with a Robert Williams in Tetbury,⁸ and this man has been wrongly described as being headmaster of the Grammar School there. His name appears in a list of headmasters for the year 1786,⁹ based, it would seem on the entry in the Tetbury register of 17 May 1786 for the burial of "Robt. Williams, Schoolmaster." Perhaps our first notice of him appears in a list of Tetbury householders c.1737,¹⁰ but in 1747 he advertised that he ran a boarding school there and taught a range of mainly mathematical subjects such as trigonometry, surveying, the use of the globes, and other mathematical instruments. He also bought and sold books, and lent them out at twenty shillings a year.¹¹

Obviously a man of this type would have been an ideal companion for Charles Mason, but we know little of Robert Williams' activities generally whilst he lived in Tetbury, and he does not seem to have been a native of the county. His wife Margaret died in 1767 and the next we hear of him is in 1786 when, no doubt in failing health, he advertised the disposal of "upwards of 650 volumes of valuable books, treating on a variety of subjects too numerous to comprehend in an advertisement."¹² Also for sale were his land-surveying instruments, quadrants, telescopes, globes and his "choice and valuable collection of antiquities, consisting of precious stones, shells, part of Shakespeare's mulberry tree, his own manuscript writings and calculations, on celestial, earthly and temporal being, with a variety of other wonderful and surprising curiosities." It was a sale to last for two days. Just what his writings and calculations were is unknown, but perhaps they exist somewhere, possibly unidentified. It is possible, too, that Charles Mason's own work was carried out using the facilities available in Tetbury at that time.

Earlier, also in Tetbury, was another figure about whom even less is yet known. He was Nathaniel Thomas, who in 1731, had invented "a machine for the Discovery of the Longitude" and he intended submitting it to the Royal Society for their approval. Until he did so, the machine was to be on view in his house in Tetbury, for anyone who was interested.¹³ The present Librarian of the Royal Society has, however, reported that the Society has no record of such an approach being made. Just what the machine was remains a mystery, but it was probably a type of chronometer, and the need for such an instrument both for astronomers and navigators was considerable.

In 1713 Nathaniel Thomas had obtained a licence to marry Elizabeth Simpson,¹⁴ and the ceremony took place on 4 October 1713 in Tetbury. His wife died 10 January 1715/6 and he remarried 20 December 1716 at Long Newton, his bride being a Mary Adams of the city of London. In about 1737 he was living with his wife and four children and two servants, in Tetbury, but his subsequent movements are unknown, as is his occupation.

Following the death of Dr. James Bradley in 1762, the position of Astronomer-royal was given to Nathaniel Bliss, who, unfortunately, only lived another two years. Bliss was born in Bisley, and baptised there 6

December 1700,¹⁵ son of another Nathaniel Bliss, but of the father we know virtually nothing, apart from the fact that he lived in Chalford, where he died in December 1724. Young Nathaniel Bliss graduated M.A. at Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1723 and later succeeded Halley as Savilian Professor of Geometry in 1742, becoming F.R.S. in 1743. He frequently worked with Bradley and they must have known each other from their Gloucestershire days. For some years Bliss was rector of St. Ebbe's in Oxford, and was there at the time of the marriage, at Hatherop, of the Sapperton schoolmaster and mathematician, Robert Stratford, whose bride, as previously mentioned, was from St. Ebbe's. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to assume that Bliss and Stratford were well known to each other. If this was so, then there is a series of personal links between Dr. James Bradley, Nathaniel Bliss, Robert Stratford, Charles Mason, Robert Williams and Nathaniel Thomas. The area between Sapperton, Bisley, Minchinhampton and Tetbury was the home of a galaxy of astronomers and mathematicians, and this idea could well be pursued further. It is an interesting thought, too, that the astronomer-royal who succeeded Bliss was Nevil Maskelyne, whose family were not far away at Purton in Wiltshire, and some of that family were educated at the College School in Gloucester.¹⁶

Clerical Astronomers

Moving from that area, reference should be made to a strange clergyman, the Rev. William Smith, M.A., who was rector of Birts Morton, Worcestershire, and curate of Ashchurch, but who lived in Church Street, Tewkesbury. His somewhat scurrilous writings at the time of the 1796 elections led to a satirical ballad being written by Henry White, a local attorney.¹⁷ Of William Smith he wrote "he had taken a pilgrimage far in the East, And stole all the learning the Hindoos posses'd . . . his genius soar'd up to the regions on high, He saw all the wonders that float in the sky." Just what is meant by these words appears when his possessions were up for sale following his death, 6 November 1796 at the age of 60.¹⁸ These included astronomical, geographical and mathematical machines and instruments, "a very valuable reflecting and other telescopes, with micrometers, microscopes, globes, ring dials" as well as over 2000 books "in various languages, Arts and Sciences, many of them extremely rare and valuable." The monument he had erected to his wife in Tewkesbury Abbey churchyard must have taxed the skills of the stonemason, for it had many Hebrew inscriptions, and suggests his knowledge of that language and perhaps others. His own inscription is devoid of such lettering. Certainly with his various telescopes he could view at least some of the "wonders that float in the sky." His origins are not clear, nor is it easy to identify his name from the university lists of Foster or Venn.

Another clerical astronomer was the Rev. Thomas William Webb (1807-1885) who was born in Ross, Herefordshire, son of the antiquary, John Webb (1776-1869), whose writings we have to this day. The son was a minor canon of Gloucester Cathedral from April 1844 until 1849, receiving a basic stipend of £150 a year. He is said to have had a profound and accurate knowledge of astronomy and optics, whilst his chief interest was the moon. He also published a number of works and it is just possible that some of his astronomical studies were carried out in Gloucester.

In January 1907,¹⁹ at the age of 88, one William Johnston died in Gloucester, where he had lived for over 50 years as a furniture and antiques dealer. Born in Dumfries, this man was a keen astronomer, living for some years in St. Nicholas House, Westgate Street. He became a Fellow of the

Royal Astronomical Society and wrote a number of books on the subject, one of which, **Machinery of the Heavens** appeared in 1884 and is in the Gloucestershire Collection in Gloucester Library. Even so, his son, Councilor W. J. Johnston-Vaughan, is probably remembered more than is the father.

Some of the foregoing names may be of a very minor nature, but they all seem to have contributed in some way with the development of our present-day knowledge of the universe, and are, perhaps, worthy of memory.

BRIAN FRITH

NOTES

1. See Minchinhampton in Bigland's **Gloucestershire Collections**.
2. **Gloucestershire Biographical Notes**, by Joseph Stratford.
3. G.R.O., GDR: VI/210. 4. G.R.O., p282 in1/1.
5. See **Gloucester Journal**, 1 January 1777.
6. See **Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society**, Vol. 93, No. 2, 1949.
7. G.R.O., p167 in 1/3.
8. Letters from Nevil Maskelyne in 1767 and 1771, to the care of Robert Williams, teacher of Mathematics at Tetbury, referred to in **Proceedings** above, note 6.
9. See Lee's **History of Tetbury**, 1857.
10. G.R.O., D566 Z11.
11. See **Gloucester Journal**, 9 June 1742 and 24 November 1747.
12. **Ibid.** 13 February 1786.
13. **Ibid.** 27 July 1731.
14. G.R.O., GDR: Q3/31.
15. G.R.O., P47 in 1/1.
16. See Transcript of College Register, by J. N. Langston, Gloucester Library, 17675.
17. See Newspaper cutting pasted into G.R.O. copy of **The Tewkesbury Yearly Register and Magazine**, Vol. 1, p39.
18. See **Gloucester Journal**, 26 June 1797.
19. **Ibid.** 12 January 1907.

AN INCIDENT AT CONSTITUTION HOUSE, QUEEN STREET, GLOUCESTER

The year 1791 saw the turmoil in Europe of the French Revolution boiling over, chiefly with the storming of the Bastille in Paris and, with the spread of the ideals of 'liberty, equality and fraternity,' feelings also ran high with certain groups in England.

Of note were the Birmingham Riots which followed an entertainment in a Birmingham Hotel on July 14, 1791, to celebrate the destruction of the Bastille in 1789. The city, with a high percentage of sympathisers for the cause of the French revolutionaries, felt it to be an insult to hold such entertainment there and reacted violently, taking it out on the Dissenters. Their Chapel was wrecked and the homes of certain wealthy gentlemen of that persuasion were burnt down. Three troops of the 15th Light Dragoons were called in to put down the riot that lasted 3 days, with damage estimated at £100,000 and the deaths of 14 rioters.

One of the gentlemen who suffered severely at the hands of the mob was Dr. Joseph Priestly, an eminent scientist who researched the effects of oxygen and carbon dioxide, for which he received a medal from the Royal Society. He also did important groundwork in electricity. All his apparatus and library were destroyed in the fire — leading him to write a letter quoted in the **Gloucester Journal**, dated July 19, 1791, to the people of Birmingham expressing his sadness at this event.

He became a target because he was a leading Unitarian Dissenter, teaching at the Dissenting Academies at Warrington and Leeds, and preaching in their Chapels. He retired to Birmingham, where he continued his scientific pursuits and was fairly outspoken against the ideals of the French Revolution.

Dr. Priestly fled the attention of the rioters and took sanctuary here in Gloucester, at Constitution House, home of Mr Richard Chandler, a prominent Unitarian at the Barton Street Chapel. But his whereabouts must have been observed, as the following quotation shows:—

Gloucester Chronicle, April 5, 1902.

(H. Y. J. Taylor, a local historian of repute was talking to Mr Jones, Carpenter, about the Birmingham riots).

“I remember the Birmingham riots and will tell you why, They spread consternation through the land. I remember being in the midst of a crowd which, in July 1791, had assembled in the evening about 9 o'clock in front of Constitution House (known since 1883 as the Conservative Club). The miscellaneous crowd was tumultuously shouting ‘Priestly! Priestly! Turn him out! Turn him out! Turn out Priestly!’ The massive iron gate was locked and fastened, and resisted the force of the furious and excited populace. In a short interval, however, the front door opened and the occupant, Mr Chandler, appeared on the steps. He was a most venerable, benevolent looking man — his very appearance commanded respect. With his grand and noble head uncovered, he endeavoured to address the noisy and excited crowd. For a few moments his efforts to be heard were futile. Eventually he succeeded and in firm and melodious tone of voice, he expressed his pain, his regret and his surprise that any of his fellow citizens should have assembled before his residence in that menacing and tumultuous manner. He assured them that he had never injured or willingly offended any of his fellow citizens; on the contrary, he had never refused to help any of them in time of need or distress. He firmly assured them that Dr. Priestly was not in his house and ‘if he were here, I would do all I could to protect him from insolence and violence.’ He said his house was open and they could walk in and see for themselves. The short but emphatic speech of Mr Richard Chandler abashed and subdued the turbulent assemblage, and the crowd quietly and orderly dispersed. I, however, heard from several members of the Chandler family that Dr. Priestly had taken refuge for a night in the house. He was not in the house when the crowd assembled. He had been secreted or hidden in a summer-house of the garden, under the city wall. It stood upon a portion of the site of the present chemical factory . . .”

That summer-house stood in the ditch outside the City Wall, where the present City Museum and County Library now stand, with steps descending from the top of the Roman wall to the gardens below. Later a chemical factory obviously stood there, as the **Journal** mentions. The Museum and Library were built between 1897 and 1900.

The top of the down-pipe on the south-east corner is a lead vase-shaped cup, which bears the date 1750. This date can be substantiated approximately in the leases for the period. A lease in 1764 refers to ‘a New Built Capital message in Travel Lane . . . in possession of Mr Richard Chandler.’ We would know Travel Lane as Bell Lane and the house was on the corner of Bell Lane, Queen Street until the ramp up to the multi-storey car park altered the layout there.

BARBARA DRAKE

GLoucestershire Gardens

(being the substance of a lecture given at the Annual Conference of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council held at Gloucester, 21 September 1985)

I have been asked to say something this afternoon by way of a general introduction to the history of gardens, with special reference to gardens in Gloucestershire. First I must explain that most of what can be said is general rather than local; but, on the other hand, when it is not possible to deal with examples from Gloucestershire, reference will be made to gardens in the neighbouring ancient counties of Somerset and Wiltshire. When a county is mentioned it will be in the historic sense of boundaries as they were before about 1830. Almost all our reference books and county histories are arranged on this basis, which has lasted since Anglo-Saxon times.

To begin with, some time has to be devoted to the Middle Ages, because that is the period about which little has been published. It is, all the same, fundamental to our understanding of all later developments. Between the Norman Conquest and the reign of Henry VIII, rather less than 500 years, we can identify a great many gardens — including areas of deliberate planting of trees and landscape. Considering the map of Britain, there was a concentration of horticultural activity in the South-east, the South and the Midlands, thinning off northwards but with a substantial number of gardens reaching beyond Edinburgh. There were few gardens of importance in Devon, Cornwall, or in Wales, and not many in the North-west. This distribution suggests that influences from the Continent of Europe were important.

It is perhaps no mere coincidence that our first noteworthy document comes from the extreme South-east of England, at Canterbury. About 1165 a large diagrammatic plan was made of the Cathedral and Christ Church Priory, showing the water-supply and positions of fountains and reservoirs. Although only approximately to scale, and a combination of plan and bird's-eye view, this is accurate enough when compared to the layout of surviving parts of the buildings. What concerns us is the Infirmary Cloister, to East of the Great Cloister. The plan marks the western part of this Infirmary Cloister as 'Herbarium,' evidently the infirmarer's physic garden of medicinal plants. It is drawn with two trellis fences running across the plot. These are probably the earliest evidence for the design of garden fences with the diamond-shaped lattice-work which we still use. The plan does not mark beds but it is just possible to see plants in straight rows from East to West.

What a mediaeval garden was really like can be seen in almost photographic detail from a later illumination of about 1400. Painted by a distinguished Flemish artist, this illustrated the calendar for April in the famous Book of Hours of Turin. The original was destroyed in a fire early this century, but by good luck a complete set of photographs had been taken and reproduced as collotype plates two years earlier. So we can see all the information conveyed by the meticulous drawings, though not their colour. The trellised fences, carried on square posts, and also rectangular trellis to support vines on higher walls at the ends of the garden, can be clearly seen, as well as the arrangement of long narrow beds and borders. Each bed was some four feet wide, so that the gardener could reach half-way across from narrow paths between the beds. A few fruit trees were planted in the beds, probably used each for a single sort of plant, vegetable, salad, or medicinal herb.

Not only such utilitarian gardens but pleasure grounds too were being made. As early as 1090 the nuns of Romsey Abbey in Hampshire had their garden of roses and other flowers considered worth a visit. At Gloucester itself there is evidence of a good deal of gardening: within the ancient royal precinct of Kingsholm, to North of the city; inside the close of the Abbey, now Cathedral; within the royal castle; and above all in the very large property to South of the Castle and belonging to Llanthony Priory. There were groves of trees providing shady walks, and in the Severn an island called the Naight, which seems to have formed a secluded pleasure. When royalty stayed in the Castle, arrangements were made with the Priory to use their grounds for recreation, by throwing a footbridge across the moat. Richard II, holding Parliament at Gloucester, undertook that he would not claim a precedent if he were allowed by the monks to walk through their plantations of trees.

At Peterborough Abbey, a combination of archaeology, historical documents, and surviving old maps, makes it possible to reconstruct the precise plan of the Abbot's herbarium of trees and exquisite flowers, formed at great expense in 1302. The type of rectangular garden, reached by bridges across two concentric moats, appears also at Kenilworth Castle, where Henry V formed the Pleasance in the Marsh, more than half-mile from the Castle and accessible only by boat across the great pool. The inner rectangle contained four buildings: three small gazebos or summer-houses and a larger banqueting pavilion.

Further details of the typical pleasure garden are revealed by a miniature of c.1280 showing a game of bowls played on a level lawn, graphic information of the accounts which show that Henry III's grass lawns inside the Palace of Westminster were being rolled in 1259. A later miniature of about 1400, by an English painter named John, shows a king and queen playing chess, seated on turf benches on a grass lawn, and with flower borders along the garden fence and at the base of the embattled walls. A gardener trims the hedge with a bill-hook of the same traditional design still seen. Larger parks, with trees, and game, pools of water and streams, appear in other views.

The first pictures to show identifiable gardens are probably those of c.1410 in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, including the private garden of the royal palace in Paris, with a tunnel-arbour framed of poles and covered with vines; and at the Château of Dourdan, thirty miles South of Paris, a great pool comparable to that at Kenilworth, planted trees, and a stone-built pleasure-house across the lake, with a border of shrubs outside its precinct wall, and inside it a tunnel-arbour surrounding a chequer plan of square garden beds and grass-plots, with some flowering fruit-trees. Later paintings indicate details of planting of flower-beds, usually with separate sorts of plant: roses, lilies, flag-iris, by themselves. The deliberate design of tree-planting as specimens or in rows or clumps, appears from various French and Flemish drawings and is confirmed by English records.

Having reached the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, we can now consider the actual historic gardens of England which have left surviving remains in this region. In Somerset there is the buttressed wall of the Abbot of Glastonbury's great garden at Mells Manor House (c.1500—1520); and in Gloucestershire the site of the privy garden of Thornbury Castle, between the state apartments and the two-storied garden gallery along the churchyard. Begun in 1511 for the Duke of Buckingham, this garden had patterned knots laid out in 1520 by the duke's gardener, John

Wynde. From the end of the century we have Montacute, with its lawn surrounded by borders against the stone balustrades which had come to represent the older trellised fences. At the corners the stone gazebos survive.

Great formal gardens, inspired by continental models, were made during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, but were destroyed in the Civil War. After the Restoration of 1660 gardening took on a new lease of life, and the great estates imitated the formal avenues and canals of Le Nôtre made for Louis XIV at Versailles. Few such layouts have survived, but one of the largest, with an avenue over three miles long, is at Badminton, a design made about 1695 by George London, the great gardener and nurseryman. An example of the Dutch fashion in gardens, likewise formal but small in scale, was preserved almost miraculously at Westbury-on-Severn, where it has been restored since 1971 by the National Trust with advice from the Garden History Society. At King's Weston (c.1712—1718) the house and some remains of one of the last of the great formal gardens can still be seen.

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century the reign of formality and the use of clipped evergreens were under attack, and an approach to naturalistic style began. This was largely the work of private landowners assisted by their chief gardeners, men who really understood plants and were aware of the many new trees and flowers being introduced. The greatest triumph of the mid-century was at Stourhead in Wiltshire, where a lake and naturalistic tree-planting are combined with classical temples, a Gothic cottage, and the truly Gothic High Cross from Bristol, rebuilt in 1765. At Hestercombe too there was planting and a cascade made about 1750.

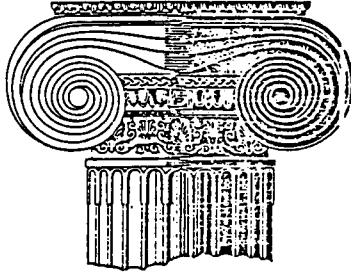
The return to naturalism reached a peak in the work of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, whose masterpiece at Bowood, Wiltshire, is of 1762—68. In the same year he was also laying out Doddington in Gloucestershire, where the chief gardener was James Maule from Scotland, father of the founder of one of the most famous of the nurseries at Bristol. Towards the end of the century the movement reached its final phase at Ammerdown, Somerset, where some 400 acres of bare sheep down were planted with more than 20,000 trees in the years 1795—99, again the work of the landowner rather than of a professional designer.

The artificial tastes of the nineteenth century are seen at Blaise Hamlet (1811—26), designed by the architect John Nash. A different kind of originality is shown by the mile-long avenue of cedars of Lebanon at Butleigh in Somerset, leading towards the Hood Column on Windmill Hill, planted about 1825. Extensive remains of Victorian gardens can be seen in various places, notably at Highnam Court in Gloucestershire and Orchardleigh in Somerset, but their labour-intensive system of bedding does not lend itself to restoration or revival. The great phase of early modern gardening is exemplified by Lutyen's architecturally designed garden at Ammerdown (1901—03) and by the new gardens at Hestercombe (1904—10) which he laid out in partnership with Gertrude Jekyll. The rediscovery of her fully detailed planting plans has enabled this to be restored. Still later developments include the enthusiasm for rare rhododendrons including the magnificent collection formed by the late Sir Henry Hoare at Stourhead in the 1920s and thus his personal contribution to the splendid estate which he gave to the National Trust.

JOHN H. HARVEY

ILLUSTRATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the general history of gardens see Miles Hadfield, **A HISTORY OF BRITISH GARDENING** (3rd edition, 1979), and for the world-wide background Christopher Thacker, **THE HISTORY OF GARDENS** (1979). For successive periods see: John Harvey, **MEDIAEVAL GARDENS** (1981); Roy Strong, **THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN IN ENGLAND** (1979); David Jacques, **GEORGIAN GARDENS: THE REIGN OF NATURE** (1983). For the more important gardens of the region at the present time, see John Sales, **WEST COUNTRY GARDENS** (1980).



HIGHNAM COURT GARDEN

Highnam Court lies some two miles north-west of Gloucester between the Ross and Newent roads. The history of the house is well recorded,¹ but the garden, as so often is the case, has been overlooked, though it has a fascinating history of which the following is only a summary.

In 1542 the manor of Highnam was granted by the Crown to John Arnold, who had leased it from Gloucester Abbey since 1516. It passed through various family connections to the wife of Sir William Cooke, MP, and in 1618 to his son, Sir Robert Cooke, who died in 1662 and is buried in the grounds. In 1769 the manor passed to John Guise (later Sir John), who was succeeded by his son, Sir Berkeley William Guise, in 1794, and he in turn by his son, Sir John Wright Guise in 1834. This Sir John sold the estate to Thomas Gambier Parry in 1837.

Although Thomas Gambier Parry made sweeping changes to the house and grounds it is worth noting the nature of the gardens in earlier periods. The first available map of the area was made by Ferdinando Stratford in 1757, and shows a 'Great Pool' of 11 acres in the fork of the Ross and Newent roads, a series of seven stew ponds to the front of the house, presumably created by the Abbots of Gloucester in the Middle Ages, a chapel to the south east, and considerable formal gardens to the south-west of the house. The Guises were to alter these features. Alterations — probably minor ones — were made in the 1770s, including the erection of a hothouse with a canvas roof, and the estate gardener and carpenter were sent to see the gardens at Piercefield (Monmouth) and Fownhope (Herefs.) at this time. The chapel was demolished in 1807, the stewponds made into a single landscaped lake in 1809—10, and the Great Pool drained in 1817—18 to produce a typical landscape of the period.

So the garden remained when Thomas Gambier Parry bought the estate in 1837. He was just 22 years old, fresh from Cambridge, cultured, wealthy and idealistic. He was to create a garden here that quickly became famous, using the best of men and materials and planting it with the latest introductions from abroad, conifers being his particular interest.

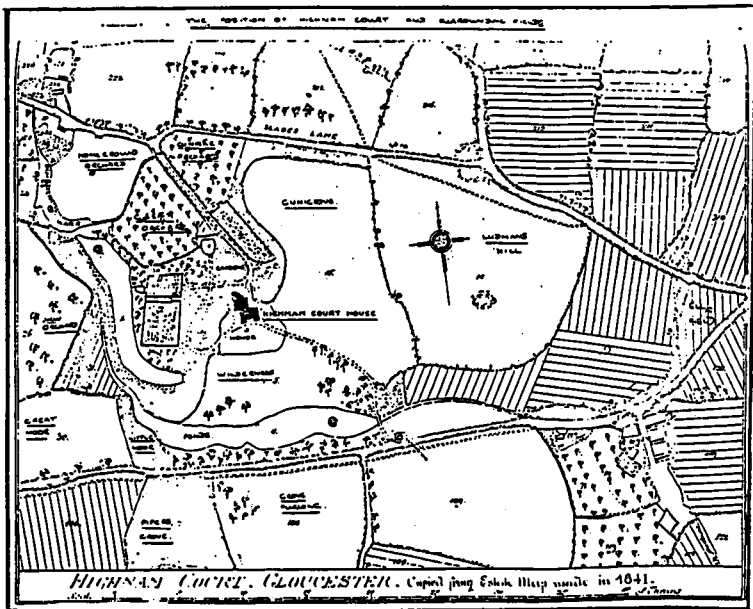


Fig. 1 Highnam Court park in 1841

In 1841, the estate was mapped for a second time, and the plan of this date is reproduced here (fig. 1). From it, the way in which the drive sweeping across the south front of the house and then along the west side of the stables prevented Gambier Parry from surrounding the house with pleasure grounds can be seen. The drive was accordingly re-routed to the rear of the house from a point on the public road east of the original entrance. The way was then clear for a raised terrace to be built against the south front of the house with ornamental gardens and terraced lawns overlooking the lake and parkland across a ha-ha. The terrace was planted with magnolia and bignonia (which remains today) and in box-edged borders below, standard roses were trained to iron posts; both posts and box edging can still be seen in the garden.

The area to the east was laid out in Victorian fashion with formal beds a conservatory and shrubberies. During all this work the site of the former chapel was discovered, and orders were immediately given to "discontinue work, slope the lawn up and plant May trees, deodaras and juniper to mark the site."³

To the west, development was prevented by the considerable area of water forming three lakes. The middle lake was drained and a garden created in its sheltered bowl with rockwork and ornamental pools. A broad walk led from the house through the former kitchen garden to this new 'winter garden' — so called because every plant in it was evergreen.

Main contractor for the work in the winter garden was James Pulham. Much has been written about Pulham recently,⁴ but it is worth repeating here that he was the leading exponent of rockwork in the 19th century, perfecting a technique of manufacturing artificial rockwork to match the

local stone. Pulham's first work was at Bayfordbury in Hertfordshire in 1845 for Thomas Gambier Parry's brother-in-law, William Baker. It seems obvious that Parry admired the work and engaged Pulham to work at Highnam in 1849.⁵ The rockwork at Bayfordbury has since been dismantled. Highnam Court, being one of the largest and earliest examples of Pulham's work to survive, is therefore of great importance.

The estate accounts for Highnam⁶ bristle with references to Pulham:

May 3, 1850 4/8 paid to 2 men to haul sand, gravel and stones for Mr Pulham.
August 9, 1850 Moulds made for Mr Pulham.

These references continue until 1862, and in 1853 £135 a month was being spent on the work in the garden and pinetum.

By 1855 the garden was becoming famous and a quote from an article in **The Florist** tells its own story.

"From the west front a straight walk connects the mansion with the winter or rock garden, a very interesting part of the grounds occupying a dell or deep valley. Advantage has been taken of the inequalities of the ground to form the rockery on a grand scale; this, as well as the accompanying water, has been tastefully executed and planted, and the ground being of considerable extent, forms altogether a very delightful spot, and from its sheltered position, particularly so in winter and early spring. A great number of valuable plants and trees is met with here."

As if all this was not enough, a Pinetum of some 20 acres was developed a mile or so to the west, occupying the summit of a hill. A shooting box surrounded by game cover was cleared away and conifers were planted in great variety at a time when many species were just being introduced. In the article referred to above, mention is made of a *Sequoia sempervirens* being 21 feet high (in 1855). This species was only introduced to England in 1843! Thomas Gambier Parry subscribed to plant hunting expeditions and shared seed with R. S. Holford of Westonbirt and Lord Ducie of Tortworth, both places which achieved fame as arboreta, while Highnam has been overlooked. Parry's Pinetum was started in 1844 and by 1853 there were no less than 385 specimens growing there; a prodigious planting rate.

Between the Pinetum and the Court, on the edge of a wood, lies Park Pool, once used for swimming by Parry's sons. In 1880 it was enlarged to about an acre and an existing bridge replaced by one supported on iron rails, purchased from the Great Western Railway when the broad gauge was done away with. These were heated and bent into a slight arch, and the bridge still exists today.

The garden is rich in urns and vases by Pulham, Blashfield, Falke and other makers, and many are in excellent condition. We are fortunate that the whole garden has had no subsequent overlay, and apart from the inevitable ageing and undergrowth it remains, waiting to be restored to its former glory.

JOHN CHAPPELL

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PAINSWICK HOUSE GARDEN AND ITS RESTORATION

The garden at Painswick is a unique survivor of a period of garden-making that flourished between the Renaissance with its strict formality and the irregularity of the landscape garden. The style was transitional in that it combined some elements of both, such as serpentine lines with formal shapes and vistas. These transitional gardens often reflected the contemporary mood of the Rococo movement in the arts, and this is certainly the case at Painswick. The spirit of the movement was the idealisation of rural life. Rococo paintings set people in an imagined Arcadian landscape and the new gardens sought to create a living piece of Arcady. The design of buildings and ornament in these Arcadian scenes was light-hearted and even whimsical.

Freed from the strict rules of classical design, the Rococo garden could experiment with styles such as Gothic and Chinese. These were used rather superficially or even as a sham, with all the emphasis on delighting the eye and creating the right mood. The enthusiasm with which these garden-makers embraced the new architectural style meant that relatively small gardens were crammed with buildings and features, many at a near miniature scale. Their enthusiasm for rural life and its productivity enabled many of the garden layouts to incorporate kitchen gardens and orchard within the whole composition. Whilst the gardens have mostly disappeared, painted records of their existence have survived in good numbers. That most Rococo of English country house painters, Thomas Robins (1716—1770), was commissioned to depict many of these gardens, including Painswick.

The garden at Painswick can be fairly accurately dated as being laid out between 1738 and 1748 by Benjamin Hyett (1708—1762). His father, Charles Hyett (1686—1738), had in 1733 purchased from the Adey family a farmhouse called "The Herrings," and on this site built Painswick House, a fine stone mansion in the Palladian style. Benjamin, who inherited the property in 1738, must soon have set about creating the garden in the valley to the east of the house in the new Rococo style, but incorporating an orchard, a kitchen garden and a formal flower garden adjoining a Gothick exedra. It also contained two fish ponds, of which one survives.

Bishop Richard Pococke, who toured so many of the early landscape gardens in England, wrote in May, 1757:

'We came to Painswick, a market town prettily situated on the side of the hill, and esteem'd an exceedingly good air; just above it Mr Hyett built an house of hewn stone, in a fine situation, and made a very pretty garden; before it is a court with statues and sphynxes, and beyond that a lawn for the grand entrance; the garden is on hanging ground from the house in the vale, and on a rising ground on the other side and at the end; all are cut into walks through wood and adorn'd with water and buildings, and in one part is the kitchen garden.'

Benjamin Hyett's enthusiasm for Rococo garden-making extended to two other properties: his Gloucester town residence, Marybone House, and Pan's Lodge, the mysterious retreat built in a wood above Bull's Cross, then called Coldbourne Grove, but now known as The Frith. The garden to Marybone House had a Chinese pagoda, a very early use of such a garden feature in England.

All three gardens were painted by Thomas Robins. There is a bird's-eye view of Marybone House and garden, a matching one of Painswick House,



Clearing a path through the Grove to the Gothic Alcove, Spring 1985.

(Photo Glos County Planning Dept.)

one of Pan's Lodge, a prospect of Painswick and a smaller picture of an octagonal Gothick pavillion at Painswick, now known as the Eagle House. The bird's-eye view painting of Painswick is a wonderfully detailed portrayal of the garden as it was in 1748. In total it shows twenty-one garden buildings and structures, four statues, a fountain, a bathing pool, a tunnel arbour, a formal flower garden, woods with serpentine paths all combined with an orchard, kitchen garden and fish ponds. Benjamin Hyett appears not only to have been an enthusiastic Rococo gardener, but also an early patron of Thomas Robins.

After its creation, Painswick House garden suffered little from subsequent garden fashions. Some of the more ephemerally-constructed features disappeared, but there was little planting of the new exotics that came to our gardens in the 19th and 20th centuries, as happened at Stourhead. The only significant changes seem to have been that one fish pond became converted to a bowling green, and snowdrops were established in great profusion, notably in the Grove. Old photographs show visitors from the village enjoying the tradition of visiting the gardens on Snowdrop Sunday and being allowed to pick a bunch of precisely twelve stems. The snowdrops have survived to the extent that few gardens can rival the displays at Painswick in late February. Perhaps their establishment owes something to James Atkins (1804—1884), a noted grower of snowdrops who retired to Rose Cottage at Painswick. He is remembered by the tall, but slender-flowered snowdrop named after him, *Galanthus nivalis* "Atkinsii."

After World War II the gardens gradually became overgrown and neglected, and finally overplanted with forestry trees. In 1984, the owner Lord Dickinson decided to investigate the possibility of restoring this unique garden to how it looks in the Robins paintings of 1748. Miraculously five garden buildings have survived in a restorable state, as well as the bathing pool, well-heads, ram-house and the all-significant statue of Pan. If he succeeds, and much will depend on fund-raising, Painswick will once again have a Rococo garden of delight. So far, transforming Robins's painting to a plan and then to pegs in the ground, has proved that much of the painting is a real portrayal and can be restored on site. There has been a great deal of clearance, tree surgery, excavation of the fish pond, building of the cascade and planting of the orchard with old varieties as standard trees, new shrub and hedge planting, and formation of vistas. Work is shortly to start on repairing the existing garden buildings. In 1986 it is planned to have the garden open to the public from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on every Wednesday from 16th April to the end of September; every first Sunday of the month from May to September; and the Spring and Summer Bank Holiday Mondays.

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